

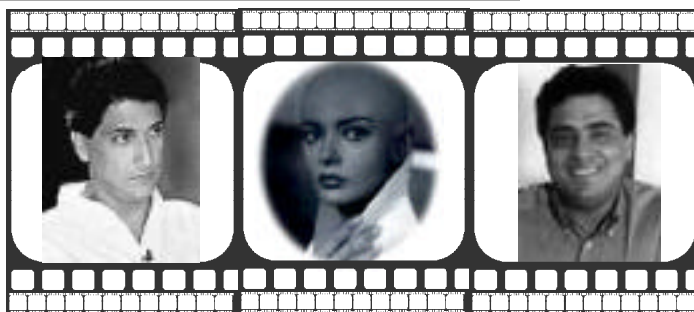
publication of the world zoroastrian organisation

# HAMAZOR

4  
issue 2006



Freddie Mercury,  
**the King  
of Queen**



Parsis of Bollywood - p 31



# Contents

04	Tribute to Lt Gen (Retd) Adi Sethna - ava khullar
06	"Coming together, To work together"
08	Myth & Legend of the wives of Zarath-Ushtra - n d minocher-homji
10	Conversion - where angels fear to tread - mehlli bhagalia
15	Wellness & Weight management - aban kekobad
16	Myths on food & food habits - jehangir mehta
19	Avestan emphasis on right-handedness - sam kerr
21	The meaning of Christmas - rustom kevala
22	Parsis & Nursing profession - virasp mehta
23	Lord Billimoria's maiden speech
25	Freddie Mercury, the King of Queen - sohrab anklesaira
27	Shayan Italia - Zubin Mehta - Farita
29	Parsis of Bollywood - farishta dinshaw
33	"The Zoroastrian Diaspora" - review - ramyar karanjia
34	"Arms & Armor from Iran" - review - ann feuerbach
35	Irani 'chai dukan' - yesmin madon
40	Mumbai's Irani hotspots - sarika mehta
42	Non-Zoroastrians in Zoroastrian percepts - adi davar
48	Aryan revival in Tajikistan - meher master-moos
51	The Noshir Gowadia case - mitra mehr
54	Gujarat floods, 2006 - wzo update
55	Events that shaped our religion - rustom kevala
62	Farsi article - rostam mobed kaikhosrow vahidi
63	A year later - wzo update
68	Earthquake area visited - diana dinshaw-mana
71	Membership Form with details

## PHOTOGRAPHS

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## From the Editor

Another year has ended - there has been much talk in the Parsi Zoroastrian community especially in India. Concerns still run high, for disposing of the dead and the fear of mass conversion. These issues persist and will persist till the leaders come up with a solution so that the subcontinent can once and for all adapt with the times. "Leaders" from all over the world will be attending the 'round table' conference in January at Mumbai, and one can only hope these leaders have the vision and foresight to solve this dilemma as the problem is simply not going to disappear.



The reader may wonder why the earthquake that took place a year ago in northern Pakistan, should carry on being mentioned in the Hamazor. The only reason is that vast sums of money were donated from individuals both Zoroastrians and non Zoroastrians as assistance for those who lost their homes, through me, hence I feel responsible to be accountable to you. You may rest assured no money will be allocated for any project, till there is full satisfaction on its feasibility.

In closing I wish to thank all the contributors for their articles in Hamazor, without whose contribution this publication would not be possible; to my very dear and talented friend, Tannaz Minwalla, for the covers of each issue, making Hamazor a delight to pick up and then hopefully encouraging you to read the contents.

Best wishes to all our readers for a very happy, productive and cohesive 2007.

*Toxy Cowasjee*

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

# A Tribute to Lt Gen (Retd) Adi Sethna

by ava khullar

After an illness with cancer that took rapid strides, Lt Gen (Retd) Adi Sethna, was taken away from our midst within a matter of a few months. An enthusiastic fighter for all good causes he espoused, a truly tireless crusader who lent a sympathetic ear to anyone in need and translated his concern into positive action to help, he sadly lost his last fight too soon - so is the will of Ahura Mazda.

A very large gathering of family, friends, colleagues, admirers from civilian and military life gathered to bid farewell to this most gentle, and kind man. As the final military honours were given, the guns were lowered, the bagpipes played, the wreaths were placed on his body covered with the Indian tricolor and in the end the bugles sounded the last call and the guns gave their salute,- a moving and fitting send off to a great soldier.

A caring family man, loved and adored by his wife Khorshed and his brood of daughters, sons in law, five grandsons and a grand-daughter, his absence will be sorely felt, but his inspiration will no doubt continue to guide them.

During the span of a distinguished military career, Lt Gen Sethna was assigned important positions. He joined the Army after graduating from the Doon School and Allahabad University. He began his military career fighting in Malaysia during the Second World War. He was one of the few Indians to attend both the Imperial Defence College and the Camberly Staff College in England. He was ADC to the first Governor General C Rajagopalachari as well as Dr Rajendra Prasad, the first President. He

also played an active role in the strategy for the Bangladesh campaign. Universally respected for his organizing skills, and integrity, during his military career he was awarded the AVSM, the PVSM as also one of India's highest awards, the Padma Bhushan.



However it is his life of public service mainly for the Zoroastrian community for which he will be remembered fondly.

His retirement from the army brought other responsibilities: he guided the Delhi Parsi Anjuman and the Federation of Zoroastrian Anjumans for 20 years, his religious faith tempered with a forward looking vision for his crisis ridden Parsi community. Under his benign leadership, the Parsis of Delhi worked productively in a united

manner, the community being almost totally free of conflicts and tensions. He constantly endeavoured to bring the Parsi community closer to other sister communities and it is to his credit that there was a healthy interaction between the various religious groups. The Parsis little known outside Mumbai and Gujarat, became known and appreciated by non-Parsis in the capital.

As the Zoroastrian member on the National Minorities Commission, his contribution towards helping Parsis, especially in the rural areas of Gujarat and his willingness to approach the highest authorities of the land, be it a Chief Minister or even the Prime Minister to plead for justice and fair play stood him apart from others holding similar positions of power and influence. I recall a gutsy Parsi lady from rural Gujarat who had fought for her land which was being encroached by the tribal and the local

mafia, going up to Mrs Sonia Gandhi at a Parsi function in Delhi and entreating her to ensure that Gen Sethna who had finished his second term on the Commission be reappointed, not as a member, but as its Chairman, for she explained "No Parsi had even heard of the Minorities Commission until General Sethna started working on it". She certainly had first hand experience of his helping hand as I am sure several other Parsis will also testify. The lady's plea was heard and he became the first person to be nominated for a third term on the National Minorities Commission.

Having worked with him closely over a long period of time what was most strikingly noticeable was the magnanimity of spirit in all his dealings, helped greatly I believe by a notable feature of his personality, the total absence of ego - that harmful personality trait which most spiritual philosophies warn us against and encourage us to shed - but which none of us frail mortals are free of. This helped him to work amicably with every one and enhanced his leadership qualities, making him play the role of a peacemaker, shunning destructive conflicts and bringing rational compromises in most situations. The Delhi Parsi Anjuman was fortunate to have him at its helm for two decades.

The beautiful prayer, Yenge Hatam states,

"Those men and women both do we adore, Whose every act of worship is alive With Asha, the Eternal Law of Life; Who are in the sight of Mazda Ahura As best and noblest mortals recognised; These are the truest Leaders of Mankind" (Translation by Irach Taraporewala).

What it says is that in the ultimate analysis it is not temporal power or material wealth or status (all of which Gen Sethna had in good measure), on the basis of which a person's worth will be measured, but on a life of goodness, humility, compassion and purity. Such are the men who we should emulate and recognize as our true leaders. Adi Sethna was such a man. We salute him.



Dear Mrs. Sethna,

I am deeply sorry to hear of the untimely demise of Lt. Gen. A.M. Sethna. I was in fact, looking forward to meeting him at the Iftar on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct at my residence. Fate has willed otherwise. His death has created a void, which will be difficult to fill.

My wife Gursharan joins me in offering our deepest condolence to you and your family members. I pray to Almighty to give you the strength to withstand this irreparable loss.

With regards,  
Yours sincerely,  
Manmohan Singh  
Prime Minister of India

Lt. Gen. A.M. Sethna was that rare human being who brought grace, integrity, and high standards of professional excellence to everything he touched.

He was a man of many parts - an officer and a gentleman, a brave soldier and an able administrator, a doer and a thinker, and a man of deep humanity and compassion, who was unwavering in his commitment to human rights and secularism. He was also a loyal friend, and a person of great personal warmth and charm. All these qualities marked his tenure in the many high offices he held, both in the army and in civilian life, and won him countless friends and admirers.

On this occasion, which is also Gen. Sethna's birthday, we deeply mourn his loss, and express our heartfelt gratitude for his rich contribution to national life. India will always honour his memory.

Sonia Gandhi  
President  
All India Congress Committee

*Ava Khullar is a social scientist and has been researching various aspects of the Parsi community for over three decades. She also has a special interest in Parsi embroidery which she has been trying to revive for many years.*



Lt Gen A M Sethna

## *“Coming together to work together” roundtable*

Mumbai, January 8, 2007  
9:00 am to 5:00 pm



**ohinton Rivetna, President, World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce writes,**  
‘Our purpose is to “Come Together and Work Together in the spirit of Hamazori”. We know we can accomplish much by working together. That shall be the tone of the meeting. Today, we are a “Community Without Borders.” Many of us in the diaspora will be visiting Mumbai during January. All persons, from Mumbai, as well as those visiting, interested in participating and contributing to the discussions, are welcome.

### **Energizing the Zarathushti Spirit of Hamazori**

A short list of action/discussion items based on the complete list generated at London in 2004 during the WZC Congress.

#### **Near-term Actionable Items:**

1. Establish a liaison office in India to provide services for Zarathushtis living abroad. Establish a “Zarathushti Shop” to provide supplies and services for Zarathushtis living abroad.
2. Coordinate donations from abroad - child assistance programme.
3. Support Meherji Rana Library, Navsari - build an annexe with upto date facilities for storage/restoration of priceless, archival manuscripts and documents.
4. Participate in UN Peace efforts with other Zarathushtis - Zarathushtis are viewed as “bridgebuilders” worldwide. Develop religious NGO status for other Zarathushti organizations.
5. Develop a comprehensive web-based Worldwide Zarathushti Directory

#### **Discussion Items:**

6. Discuss the role of Zarathushtis living abroad - their duties to the mother country and reciprocally their rights and privileges in mother countries.
7. Worldwide calamity preparedness (eg. earthquakes, floods, global warming effects ...)
8. Organize “Doctors without Borders”.
9. Cultivate the ethic of collective giving - demonstrate its power through organizing small projects, enhancing self-help.
10. Zanzibar Agiari demise - a lesson.
11. Commemorate the memory of Dadabhoy Naoroji - a Dadabhoy Naoroji memorial/monument/library in Delhi.
12. Assistance for installation of a continuously burning fire in North America.

13. Coordinate Interfaith dialogue and service on Interfaith organizations.

14. Develop a process for an RFP for 10th World Zoroastrian Congress (following the 9th Congress in Dubai).

15. Develop a "Code for mutual trust and respect" - tearing down of walls between Zarathushtis. Promote co-existentialist values, with respect for diversity and a striving for harmony amongst diverse views.

16. Develop a "Code of Civil Conduct" - inspire civility. Refrain/restrain from maligning each other in public, making ourselves a public spectacle in the media.

17. Address concerns about rise of Interfaith marriages.

18. Address concerns about Zarathushtis being drawn to other ideologies/faiths/cults.

19. Establish local Zarathushti Mandals in Mumbai to form a network - need for smaller parochial units.

20. Develop a network of Mobeds worldwide

21. Develop Worldwide Youth Network

22. Passing on the torch to the next generation.'

Anyone wishing to attend this meeting are welcome to, but please let Rohinton Rivetna know at:

USA tel: 630-325-5383  
Mumbai tel: 2412 7496  
rivetna@aol.com

## A riddle that will kill your brain

Think of words ending in "-gry". "Angry" and "hungry" are two of them. There are only three words in the English language. What is the third word? The word is something that everyone uses every day. If you have read carefully, I have already told you what third word is.

## Udvada day



Udvada day was to be celebrated on 24 November 2006, when the Chief Minister Hon Shri Narendra Modi was to inaugurate The Zoroastrian Information Centre being the Parsi Parivar Mohtsav – Udvada Day.

The Chairman of the Foundation for Development of Udvada, Vada Dastur Khurshed Dastoor Kaikobad Dastoor, informs this event has been postponed till a new date is issued by the Government of Gujarat.

The postponement has been necessitated as the Election Code of Conduct becomes effective from 15 November, due to which any government aided functions cannot be held during the period in question, nor can state, district level government ministers or employees participate.

Announcement will be made when the new date is given by the Government of Gujarat for the opening of the ZIC.



*The Five Parsi Films can now be viewed online at <http://video.google.com>*

The links are as follows:

**Dadar Ormaj, maney jaldi bolaavo** <<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-2339649114343353315&hl=en>>

**Bedpan** <<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=5566869995786780413&hl=en>>

**Invisible Parsis: The poor of a prosperous community** <<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=5032917910364473713&hl=en>>

**Non-Parsi** <<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=5088943902531582779&hl=en>>

**Parsi Wada, Tarapore - Present Day** <<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4747120951075853467&hl=en>>

*Parsi Wada, Tarapore - Present Day* has been selected to be screened in the Indian Panorama section at the International Film Festival of India in Goa in November. *Invisible Parsis* was screened at the same festival in 2004.



# The myth and legend of the wives of Zarath-Ushtra

by late dastoor n d minocher-homji



Some time back we heard a Zoroastrian speaker saying that our Prophet had three wives. Many people approached us about the explanation of this strange statement so we decided to give a talk on the subject. We had given a similar talk before, on "The Holy Family of Zarath-Ushtra". Zarath-Ushtra belonged to the Magava group, the Brotherhood of Wisdom. The group was dedicated to the welfare of humanity. So great and important was the ideal of Service to them, that they had renounced social married life. So Zarath-Ushtra, the holiest ideal soul was living a monastic life, the life of a member of the celibate order. There is no mention of the companion soul to the Prophet in the Avestan literature. Then who is Havovi? More properly what is Havovi? It is really the name of the family – Hvogvaa. It is the name of the family Hvogvaa to which Prashaoshtra and Jamaspa belonged. They were so attached and faithful to the Prophet that the later Pahlavi literature called the name of the family Hvogvaa (Yasna 51.17, 18) was understood to be that of his wife. The reason behind this is the following; the celibate order had a decline and fall in their character.

They fell in repute and the elders of religion thought it advisable to have no celibate order and have a married priesthood. To accentuate the idea of the sanctity of marriage, the Prophet was 'given' a 'wife' and the tradition had a strong continuity. Now we come to the 'sons and daughters'. Why exactly 'three sons and three daughters'? Ahura Mazda is the *Ahu-Ratu* of both the *geti* and *mino* lives, and Ahura Mazda has six emanations or supreme attributes, out of which the first three are masculine (2, 3, 4), and three are feminine (5, 6, 7). Now Zarath-Ushtra is the *Ahu-Ratu* of this *geti* life only, but still he has the six emanations – three masculine and three

feminine. Their very names and meanings reveal that they represent His soul powers, through which he served his mission (Yasna 28.4) and fulfilled it (Yasna 53.1).

*Isat-Vaashtra* represents the Prophet's will to guide the Man on the right path. The result of this function is the corresponding 'sister' Freni, ie. Love, which is the result of the removal of malice and hatred from mankind. *Urvatat-nara* represents the Growing Humanity, as the result of the working of the above first 'pair', and the natural result is Faith – Thrity. Faith in the guidance of the Prophet and in the essential goodness of man. Then lastly comes *Hvare-Chithra* (Avesta) – Khurshed-Chehr (Pazand) representing the Manifestation of the Heavenly Light in the world, where once darkness dominated (Yasna 29.1). The natural consequence of the diffusion of Light is Pouru-Chistaa or the Fulness of Wisdom. The tradition tells me that Jamaspa 'married' Pouru-Chistaa. Jamaspa was a personality suffused with the Light of Religion, and Light and Wisdom are inseparable. As there was the 'wedding' of Hvogvaa with Zarath-Ushtra, so was it that of Jamaspa with Pouru-Chistaa. Tradition tells me again that Zarath-Ushtra consecrated four things.

- ✱ the grape juice
- ✱ milk
- ✱ the flower
- ✱ the pomegranate

Jamaspa was offered the flower, and by virtue of it, he got full Enlightenment (Pouru-Chistaa). Thus, one can formulate the table of the three 'sons' on the left side, with the corresponding 'daughters' on the right side. By a close and constant study of this table, one can easily understand the allegory behind these significant names.

It is further stated in the Avestan literature that three 'saviours' would be born to three

'virgin mothers', called Fedhri. This is a significant term for 'mother'. The names of the three future 'saviours' are:

- ✱ Srootat-fedhri
- ✱ Vanghu-fedhri
- ✱ Eredat-fedhri

They mean,

- ☞ one born of the 'parentage' of Obedience to Religious Commandments
- ☞ one born of the 'parentage' of Virtue and Wisdom of religion,
- ☞ one born of the 'parentage' of Nobility of Life, respectively.

The ordinary word for 'mother' in Avesta is 'maatar'. Hence, the saviours are not born of the three earthly mothers, but they are the consequence of the spread of Light and Wisdom of Religion. We may also add here that the term used with the names of Zarath-Ushtra's sons is Zarathushtroish, and not Zarathushtra-hey, which is the usual genitive or possessive case suffix, meaning 'of' or 'belonging to do'. Zarathush-oish means Zarathushtrian pertaining to the Soul and Spirit of Zarath-Ushtra. Now this Avestan concept of the three future saviours, and especially of their so called 'mothers' have been sadly confused in the later Pahlavi literature. So we have the sorry picture of the three 'wives' of Zarath-Ushtra! Any Zoroastrian of common sense with respect for the spiritual stature of the Prophet, would refrain from talking something which is on the face of it wanting in wisdom.

We may sum up our subject by three clear conclusions:

- a. That Hvogvaa was the name of the Holy Enlightened family, quite attached to the Prophet, through Service and Devotion and these virtues turned the family name into his 'consort'.
- b. Like the six Emanations of Ahura Mazda, there are six Attributes or Soul-characteristics of the Prophet, latterly taken to be his 'sons' and 'daughters'.
- c. So also the three Holy 'Parentage' of the three future Saviours were taken to be very strangely and sadly as his three 'wives'.

We would end with this wise observation, placed on the title page of "The Divine Songs of Zarath-Ushtra" (1951) by Dr Irach J S Taraporewala:

**“Read the things of the flesh with the eyes of the Spirit,  
Don't read the things of the Spirit with the eyes of flesh!,,**



#### Notes:

1. Pausanius, the traveller, geographer and chronicler, who flourished in 174 AD and born in Lydia, notes in his work Book V, that the Magii enjoyed a great socio-religious reputation, and their prayers had great effect. So great and renowned was their effectual prayers, that they were known to be MAGIC, which is an adjective from Magus or Majus.
2. The references Hvogvaa as the name of the family are to found in Yasna 51.17, 18: Farvardin Yasht, paragraph 139; and Din Yasht paragraph 15 (See S.B.E. Vol. XXIII, page 267).
3. The feminine aspects of Ahura Mazda are: Spentaa Aramaiti, Avan (Aban), Daena (Deen) and Ashish Vangh. Unfortunately, Rev Dr Mills has translated 'Aiwi-stoc-threm Geh, paragraph 9, the term (ghenaa) as the wives of Ahura Mazda (S.B.E. Vol. XXXI, page 386).
4. Dinkard notes the divine preparations about the birth of Zarath-Ushtra: They began in his 9<sup>th</sup> ancestor Spitama. But there is no corresponding reference to his life companion, in the extant Avestan literature.

Ervad Sheherairji Bharucha, one of the renowned students of K R Cama, the 'lay Dastoor' said: "If you find a statement in the Pahlavi literature, for which there is no corresponding support in Avesta, take that statement in Pahlavi as of little importance." (See Rististan, introduction, 1977)

The origin of this misinterpretation of the 'marriage' or Jamaspa with Pouru-Chistaa has in the Pahlavi commentary on Yasna 51.17, where the term 'Kehrpa' is wrongly taken to mean 'daughter'. Kehrpa really means the subtle form, approximating to the daenaa, visualized by the soul at the end of 72 hours of the physical dissolution with consciousness (Yasna 55.2) and (Yasht XXII S.B.E. Vol. XXIII, pp 134-323; the kaleidoscopic pictures seen by a soul of its past good or bad life).

Dr Mahrugh Joshi posted this article on creatingawareness sometime ago.

# Conversion - where angels fear to tread

by mehli bhagalia

## Introduction

**M**r Kanga, in his article in the Hamazor, Issue 2, 2006, has once again, exhumed the corpse of CONVERSION (repeatedly buried), to reignite rancour within the community.

In the early 1900s, Dasturji Dr Manekji Dhalla, the author of *The Zoroastrian Theology*, was called as an expert witness in the case of Bansda navjotee, Mr Sukhadia. The noble Dastur gave a long lecture contending that the Zoroastrian religion championed conversion. However, when asked, *"Would you as a Dastur do such navjotes yourself"* the answer was, *"No, he himself would not perform the navjote of a son born of a Parsi father by a non-Parsi mother."* When asked *"Why, Dasturji saheb?"* Dasturji replied, *"Because the collective conscience of the community is strongly opposed to such navjotes."* When pressed further Dhalla said, *"It would not be permissible as it would be breaking a 1200 year old tradition"* (See p.699 of Dastur Dhalla's Autobiography). This was the death knell, tolled by the doyen of the reformist conversion movement himself, and the final nail in the coffin of conversion.

It is the responsibility of the worldwide Zoroastrian community not to allow misguided, incomplete and false information about our religion to go unrefuted, as it would be a collective sin of commission and omission by the community, as mentioned in Gatha Ha 32, and in the *Khordeh Avesta Patet Pashemani* prayer, *Karda 7*, (*"mediosast"* - to tell lies and to point to the wrong path).

Before writing or talking on any religious subject, it would help to understand what is given in our scriptures.

In the Gatha, Ha 32.7 through 32.13 we are admonished not to – teach false doctrine, distort sacred verses to destroy the wisdom of men – as such persons are considered wicked.<sup>1</sup>

Ha 30.2 mentions the "Freedom of Choice" which, when correctly translated and understood, is the choice only between the two paths of life - "good" and "evil". There is not even a hint of conversion as, in the Prophet's time, there was no other organized religion except the Mazdayasni Zarthosti deen.

Ha 30.3 explains that "good" and "evil" are *Spenta Mainyu* and *Angre Mainyu*.

Ha 45. 3 "Then do I declare the foremost of this life, which the wise Ahura Mazda revealed unto me: those of you who shall not practice here this holy word, as I think and speak, unto them shall be woe at the end of life." The penalty for misguiding people of our faith, mentioned in Gatha Ha 45.3 is "woe to the end of life". The "life" referred to here is not human life, but the life of one's soul which may mean over endless lives.

In the *Vendidad Fargard 19*, Asho Zarathustra speaks: "Even if my bones are broken, even if my soul leaves my body and even my memory is lost, I shall not forsake my good Mazdayasni religion." These are words for every true Zoroastrian to live and die by.

Our "Belief" is the cornerstone of our survival (Hamazor 2/06 p14)

It is this very same belief, custom and practice, which Kanga calls "parasitic" that has allowed our religion and our tiny religious communities around the world, to

survive in the midst of overwhelmingly superior numbers of all the majority communities. It has enabled the Kanga name and every other Parsi/Irani name to survive for over several centuries. If what Kanga is proposing today had not been strongly opposed by the community all these years, Mr Kanga and this writer would now be John Smith or Mohammad Ismail or Arun Chaterjee.

The real parasite is the “promotion of conversion”. If it is not purged, it will lead to the destruction of our community and religion. This parasite can only be effectively purged by a deep study and understanding of our ancient religion.

#### So-called scholars (Hamazor 2/06 p14)

Very few of the “so called scholars”, who are the protagonists of conversion today, may have studied any of the ancient languages of Avesta, Pahlavi or Pazand. If they did, they would not twist the meanings to prove their agenda, and parrot from the *Zoroastrian Theology* which has been discredited in a court of law, years ago.

The persons who have opposed conversions are ALL internationally known Zoroastrian priests of the highest repute in the Parsi community today, and scholars of Avesta, Pahlavi, Pazand and Sanskrit who can read, understand and correctly translate these languages.

☞ Ervad Pheroze Masani - Attorney—*Zoroastrianism Ancient and Modern*.

☞ Dasturji Hormazdyar Dastur Kayoji Mirza – *The Conversion Caucus* - published by the Dastur Kayoji Mirza Institute Udvada Bombay.

☞ Dasturji Dr Firoze M Kotwal - *Religious implications of Mixed Marriages*.

☞ Dasturji Hormazdyar K Mirza, Dasturji Kaikhusroo Jamasp Asa, Dasturji Firoz M Kotwal - *Conversion in Zoroastrianism* - A myth exploded.

☞ Dasturji Hormazdyar K Mirza, Dasturji Kaikhusroo M JamaspAsa, Firoze M Kotwal - *A Zoroastrian Heresy*.

☞ Ervad Dr Minocher D Karkhanavala – *Survival of the Community*.

☞ Jehangirji Chiniwala – Savant, Attorney, author of many books - 60,000 pages

☞ Ervad Marzban Hathiram – Editor – Journal - *Frashogard*

☞ Ervad Kaikhusroo Dastur - Religious savant, Attorney, Editor - *Dini Avaz*

☞ Mr Adi Doctor- Editor - *Parsi Voice*

#### Tolerance - Voice of the collective conscience of the people (Hamazor 2/06 p14)

Perhaps Kanga is unaware how tolerant our community has been, for so many years, of actions by certain persons to subvert our religion, and even edit and wrongly translate our pristine scriptures to suit their agenda of increasing the number of their own *juddin* followers by conversion. The tolerance of the community has been stretched too far and taken advantage of for too long. As the voices of religion and reason within the community are not being heard, the community’s pent up anger is being released.

No one of any other community would dare to do what the reformists have inflicted on the Parsi/Iranian Zoroastrian community and our religion. Would any member of the Muslim or Hindu community ever dare to edit the Koran or insult Prophet Mohamed or edit the Hindu or Sikh scriptures? It has been this endless tolerance and our “live and let live” policy, in respect of matters concerning our religion, which has led to this.

#### BPP to solve this problem? (Hamazor 2/06 p 20) - like asking a wolf to guard the sheep.

The BPP with it’s present structure, and the trustees themselves, are part of the problem. How can they be a part of the solution? Under the Indian Constitution, the BPP cannot subvert the collective voice of the community pronounced through the repeated Resolutions of the Samast Anjuman on record. Mr Kanga, the BPP Trustees and the Trustees of all the religious institutions, should read the Indian Trust Law and the legal decisions thereof, and caution themselves, in respect of the

most serious civil and criminal consequences personally and collectively for anyone, if they tried to subvert or contravene, the provisions of the religious trusts, under which all our religious institutions are founded and are functioning. I am not even talking of the religious consequences which would be much, much worse.

Going through the smoke screen of survival and sentimentality.

The advocacy of conversion did not, and does not arise from an alleged anxiety for the survival of the community. It is merely an attempt to justify the marriage of Parsi men and women outside the community. *Juddin* marriages led to the question of *juddin* navjotes, and then to the question of “who is a Parsi Zoroastrian”. A lot of confusion has been deliberately created to bring forward the question of conversion.

The “conversion” protagonists have three main props for argument. They say:

1. Our scriptures advocate conversion of an alien to the Zoroastrian religion.
2. Justice Davar and Justice Beamon’s judgments lay down some legal definitions of a Parsi, which is binding and constitutes the law of the land.
3. If we did not accept as Parsi Zoroastrians the children of Parsi fathers and non-Parsi mothers or of Parsi mothers and non-Parsi fathers, our population would be reduced to zero.

These props are hollow.

- a. The scriptures are turned and twisted beyond any reasonable limit.
- b. The judgments of Justices Davar and Beamon do not lay down any legal definition of a Parsi, nor do they set out the legal binding law that a child of a Parsi father and non-Parsi mother is a Parsi and should be accepted as a Parsi.
- c. Putting forth the fear of dwindling population is just an eyewash or, much better, a brainwash.

Ervad K N Dastoor, a savant and scholar of Avesta, Pahlavi in *Din-I-Awaz* :

*“A group of humans can preserve its identity and individuality only by remaining unmixed by marriage with other groups. Once the import and export of blood and genes begins, the group’s existence is in danger. This is a fact, both historical and scientific. It applies with greater intensity to Parsi Zoroastrians because we have in our religion certain spiritual disciplines and ‘yogas’ and institutions which would crumble if the import-export is not checked; and along with that would crumble this race of the Parsis. The community has been aware of this danger. And that is why it has repeatedly and vehemently opposed, in innumerable resolutions of the Samast Anjuman, any attempt at mixing of the blood and genes – whether through non-Parsi fathers or non-Parsi mothers.”*

Where is it in the scriptures that conversion is forbidden (Hamazor 2/06 p15).

Persons making this statement show their ignorance of our scriptures, and of our most ancient of ancient history. There was only one race and religion in existence at the time of the Prophet - The Mazdayasni. As such there was no question of any conversion from or to Mazdayasni. No other persons but the Mazdayasni Zoroastrian stock are mentioned throughout the Avesta scripture. Only the *Poiriyotakaesha*, ie. the far advanced souls who were either Mazdayasni before the advent of Asho Zoroaster or Mazdayasni Zoroastrians after the teachings of the Prophet, are remembered (and revered). There is not a single word or passage in our scriptures that encourages or permits conversion.

Ervad Pheroze Masani an attorney and scholar emeritus of Avesta, Pahlavi and Pazand examines this question in its entirety and has put to rest, with correct incontrovertible scriptural and historical evidence, any controversy on this score in *Zoroastrianism Ancient and Modern*, Chapter II Pgs 48-106.



“Can they explain why when the Vendidad even advises when to cut hair and nails, there is no clear mention in any scripture against conversion?”

This question itself again arises out of ignorance of the nature of the 21 *nasks* and the entire system of natural laws they expound and what the Vendidad the 19<sup>th</sup> *nask* is. It expounds the laws of *ashoi*, one of the natural laws.

To turn the question around - Where is it mentioned in the scripture that conversion is permitted?

If “conversion” means to discard one’s own ancestral religion and to adopt an alien religion, then conversion is unknown in the Avesta, in the Zoroastrian religion and in ancient Iranian history.

#### Other Misleading Information

The misleading use of –

- Report of the expert committee (**Hamazor 2/06 p15**) - without mentioning that it was totally rejected by the Samast Anjuman in 1908 is disingenuous.
- Ceremonies performed before admitting *juddins* (**Hamazor 2/06 p15**) - without mentioning that none of the special institutions needed are available today or can even be created. No one today has the religious capacity to undertake the arduous and long disciplines and ceremonies, least of all present-day intermarried Parsis, who do not wear a *sadro kust* and have forgotten to recite their prayers, or *juddins*. Remember, we are not talking about a one hour navjote ceremony and then hanging up the *kusti* on a door knob! Dastur Sanjana’s incomplete remarks taken out of context are just misinformation to the community.
- Mrs J R D Tata Case - The opinion of Dr K R Cama was just that, only an opinion and did not win the case for the Tata family.
- Navjote of Neville Wadia - The Tata and the Wadia cases are an anomaly. They are only an example of the power of the Parsi aristocracy of that time, (reminiscent of Henry VIII) to bully the clergy, to commit a

sinful act. The community has been paying an extremely high price for those two sins - one by the priesthood and the other by the laity – for many years.

The Paradox – according to Kanga (Hamazor 2/06 p17)

There is no paradox here. The priests however renowned they may be, who commit such acts of conversion (*Yasna Daruji*), and the scholars named by Kanga, however distinguished and eminent they may be and who encourage it, are not above religious law and are both guilty of misguiding people as per Gatha Ha 32 and the *Khordeh Avesta*, *Patet Pashemani Karda 3* - (“*mediosast*”- to tell utter lies and to point to the wrong path).

#### Learn from the past history of our community

After the Arab conquest, the groups of Zoroastrians, who left Iran to settle in Europe and Asia, assimilated through their “open-door” policy of inter-communal marriage and proselytism. These Zoroastrian communities perished because they were absorbed into the ethnic and racial identity of the larger host communities. In time, they lost touch with their religious traditions, rituals and customs and by adopting a newer way of life of the host communities, they lost their religious identity as well. There are no living, practicing Zoroastrian descendants of these groups in existence today. Only some archaeological evidences stand as mute testimony to the annihilation of the Zoroastrian communities who intermarried, proselytized and perished outside of Iran and India!

It was in India alone, that the migrant Irani community of Zoroastrians, the Parsis, not only survived but flourished. Our sagacious ancestors were able to preserve their religion and religious identity because they adhered to their traditions and rituals, and practiced *boonak-pasbaani* or the “closed door” non conversion policy. They are the only group outside of Iran to survive for over thirteen centuries - even through persecutions and massacres!



Mehlli lives in Carlsbad, CA, with his wife Perin. His search for spiritual knowledge, took him on an intensive journey of over forty years into the Oriental Martial Arts, Hindu, Chinese, Christian and Buddhist philosophies with Masters in India and China. He was blessed to see what Zoroastrians with eyes will not see. Here was the knowledge he was looking for. Events along the way - Bachelor's degree in Economics and Law; Regional Manager-Bank of India; General Manager of two merchant banks, Bank Examiner with the New York State Banking Department, Registered Master Yoga Teacher with over 30 years teaching experience in Yoga and Ayurveda in India and the US, member of the American Ayurvedic Medical Association, giving public talks and on Public TV on these subjects. He can be reached at: 760-438-7596 or email : mehlli@adelphia.net

Justice Davar in his judgment in the *juddin* case for admission of non-Parsis, predicting this fate, aptly said: *"If their contentions are to prevail, the ruin of the community would be accomplished in as many days as it has taken generations to attain to that position of prominence and prosperity which the Parsees of India have now achieved."*

#### Real cause of confusion

One cause of confusion in the mind of an average Zoroastrian is that he is inundated with unauthorized translations of all our scriptures by supposed scholars who have never studied, the Avesta or Pahlavi, thus misguiding the unsuspecting ordinary Zoroastrian, who has been following his religion with faith and devotion.

#### The final word on this matter is however this

Mr Kanga's case for conversion again collapses, as every Samast Anjuman (which is the voice of the community) since 1908 till today has been overwhelmingly against conversions and mixed marriages. AND, the highest courts in the land, supported by the Indian Constitution, have never gone against the wishes of any religious community.

#### The Indian Constitution guarantees the right of freedom of religion

In all the High Court judgments in India where a religious practice or custom has been challenged, the highest courts in the land have invariably stated that Articles 25 and 26 of the Indian Constitution, guarantee every religious community or section thereof, the inalienable right to practice it's religion as the community decides. No one and no court in the land can challenge that right. As such, as the Parsi Irani Zoroastrian community or even a section of it, ie. the orthodox, considers and believes that not only the scriptures but also it's long established practices and beliefs are part of it's religion and that conversion has never been part of it's custom, practice and belief, no court in India would interfere by taking away that

fundamental right enshrined in the Constitution, from the Parsi Irani Zoroastrian community.

#### The only real solution

Taking a leaf out of the Christian and Jewish faiths where there were disagreements in the interpretation of the Bible and the Talmud, may be a solution.

The intermarried and their children, with their affluent reformist friends, who want conversions, could build their own separate reform religious institutions, temples and places for the disposal of their dead, have their reform priests and ceremonies, and have their own reform scriptures.

Reformists could then live side by side with the conservative/orthodox Zoroastrians without rancor and discord. They could then have cordial civil and social relations and join together like the Christians and Jews in all matters of common civic and social interest and events. We would then be able to, in spite of our religious differences, present a united front against all external aggression.

#### Conclusion

The following words of an "impartial and objective" student of our religion, Mary Boyce, may bring some sanity to this debate.

#### *The Continuity Of The Zoroastrian Quest - Mary Boyce (pp 618-9):*

"The adoption, by the reformists, of so many European conceptions has forced them to charge their ancestors with a lack of both fidelity and understanding, and they have had to take the unfortunate position that the religion for which their forebears suffered so much was nine-tenths confusion and malpractice. The orthodox have been more loyal to their traditions, and now Western scholars are gradually coming to admit that the misunderstandings have been on their side, the result largely of unfounded preconceptions. These misunderstandings have done harm both to scholarship and, more seriously, to the Zoroastrian community itself; but as the cloud of misapprehension slowly lifts, it can be seen that

whatever changes and developments may now be desirable, the tradition of this community is one deserving of the utmost respect.

"The Zoroastrians, it is claimed, remained in prosperity and adversity staunchly faithful to the teachings of their prophet, which though complex, were so lucid and logical and formed so clear a system of belief that even the humblest of His followers, helped by the prescribed devotions, could understand and live by them. They were, moreover, very positive teachings which went with, not against, the normal bent of human nature, and helped men to live satisfying and fulfilled lives. In the light of all this, it ceases to be remarkable that Zoroastrianism survived for some 8500 years and that the community though cruelly reduced, and of late perplexed, has still not lost the courage and vitality inspired by its prophet's original message."

#### Reference:

1. All Gatha quotes are translations from Ervad Kavasji Kanga's Gatha-ba-Mani.



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Aban Kekobad, previously from Mumbai, moved to New Zealand and is currently settled in Australia on the beautiful Gold Coast, where she lives with her husband and twin sons aged 26. She is a housewife doing a "Work at Home" business. Her hobbies include cooking, listening to music and painting.

## Myths on food and food habits busted and blown

by jehangir mehta

As I begin to write this short article I wonder how much more flavour and confusion I will add in the minds of people who are already trying to promote wellness, fitness and weight loss through different diet regimes. Are you one of those on the dieting merry-go-round. Are you one of those on all protein diets, or on only carbohydrates diet or on that deprivation diet? It is true that while one man's food is another man's poison, it is not what you eat, but rather when you eat and how you eat, that is said to give you energy and help in the weight loss process.

One evening at a social dinner, I was introduced to this book *Fit For Life* by my friend in Perth. At that time, I did notice the transformation in her - she looked fit, healthy and radiated a pink glow resembling that "phoren" look. For sometime I patiently tried to duck and dodge her conversation revolving around healthy eating. Imagine one Parsi telling another Parsi that under no circumstance should meat be eaten with a vegetable. What? No mutton in veggies! That would amount to blasphemy towards this all important pleasures of life. My myths on food were shattered. She went further to add insult to injury that you can have curry rice but without meat or fish. That you should not combine carbohydrate with protein. Imagine any Parsi home having dhansak without meat or a curry minus the *botas* (meat)! Well at least the vegetarian section of Katy Dalal's book *Jamva Chaloji* would remain unaffected, but the Rice and Parsi Wedding Feast contents would need to be removed. Goodbye to *govar sing-ne-gharab no-patio*, *lasan-ne-kothmir-nu-bhejoo*. Goodbye to traditional recipes which are a hallmark of Parsi cuisine.

All these years I have taken the position of one that I live to eat and not eat to live. On the lighter side of life, I always thought that

our lives are not in the lap of God, but rather in the lap of the cook. That eating is meant to be enjoyed - ***Serenely full, the ep'icure would say - Fate cannot harm me, I have dined today.*** What is completely new and different to me is that it is not only what you eat that makes the difference, but also when you eat it and in what combinations. This new system is said to give lasting results with least disappointment. Having read the book I have realized that indeed the greatest gift of all is the human body and the immense intelligence that directs it. Harvey and Marilyn Diamond - the co-authors of the book tell us that *"mechanisms for the body's self preservation are built in at birth. Health is your birthright, and being overweight and unhealthy is not health."*

I always believed that a big hearty Aussie breakfast would give you a kick start for the day. At home in Dadar we always had an omlette or an *akoori* or *altei paleti* with bread and layers of butter, jam and cheese. It was instilled in us that you must eat breakfast like a king, lunch as a prince and dinner as a pauper. This would give a chance to burn the calories during the day. *Fit For Life* blows away this myth. Digestion of food takes more energy than running, swimming or bike riding. Remember energy is the essence of life. When you wake up in the morning you want to feel energetic all day. Eating a big breakfast will sap the energy in digestion. **This now makes commonsense to me** and I have slowly (much against my will) started following this morning routine of only eating fruits and fruit salad and fruit juice. Fruit goes to the intestine within minutes giving instant energy. I was not much of a fruit fan apart from an occasional banana. I think a lot of Parsis are banana buffs - don't ask me why. I know for a fact that Zoroastrian Iranis consume huge quantities of fruits and raw

nuts. This small step in changing my eating habit in the morning has made a huge impact in alleviating the discomforts associated with my long standing constipation. This means no more milk with muesli, no more yoghurt, and my favourite ham and eggs or Egg Benedict. Ouch! What?

Talking of yoghurt or plain *dahi* - this was the miracle formula of our grandparents to stabilize stomach disorders. Yoghurt as health food! *Fit for Life* condemns yoghurt as catastrophe. The friendly bacteria you are supposedly getting when you eat yoghurt are something that your body already produces in quantities about which it knows best. Don't have it with fruit as it will ferment and putrefy in your stomach.

Our biological body clock has three cycles - 4 am to 12 noon is the elimination cycle. 12 noon to 8 pm is the eating and digestion cycle. 8 pm to 4 am is the assimilation or the absorption cycle. Our traditional eating habits - including eating too much at wrong time, not eating enough fruit and vegetables, eating wrong combinations, eating too much meat, have obstructed the all important elimination cycle resulting in excess weight and build up of toxins. I know a few young Parsi boys who will go to Subway (healthy version of MacDonald's) and have a meat burger with zero vegetables and salads inside. And when they come over for dinner at our place - meats, meats and meats is the order of the day. Eating high water content foods like fruits and veggies helps in removal of toxins, and expedites elimination cycle. The other tool that is talked of in maintaining health and vigour is the proper combining of foods. Human body is not designed to digest more than one concentrated food at a time. Proper food combining optimizes the energy required to digest the food. What happens when you combine say a nice sirloin steak with rice or potato? Protein requires acid juice to break it down. Rice or potato requires alkaline juice. Net result is they neutralize each other. Body then has to secrete more juices. This takes time and energy, and this 'Catch 22' goes on till this

undigested and putrefied food is forced into intestines and cannot be assimilated. **Does it make common sense to you? Yes it does to me.**

But in saying that I am not about to give up on my favourite *sali-boti* or *papeta-ma-gosh* or *sali-par-eddu* or my chicken curry rice. But I have also found other simple ways to balance out this combining tool. I conscientiously avoid potato or rice with fish or steak. Instead I have copious amounts of vegetables and salads with my meat. So you're not going to go hungry eating like that, are you? Of course not. The other tool that is suggested for weight loss is the principle of correct fruit consumption. I had absolutely no idea and neither did my wife Phyrooza that there is a *when and how to eat a fruit*. Most of the fruits pass through the stomach within 20 minutes giving us instantaneous energy. I am used to eating fruit before breakfast, with meals, and after meals. *Fit For Life* recommends that fruit should not be eaten with or immediately following anything. And that means NO FRUIT even after a sandwich. Allow at least three hours before you can eat fruit after the meals. We now have at least 3 - 4 servings of fruit in the morning before lunch. We still eat fruit - all that has changed is we don't eat them with our meals any longer. We will not delve in to the problems that result if fruit is eaten on top of other foods. **This makes commonsense to me.**

Have I talked about exercise? I remember a simple advice by my Chinese Herbalist - exercise till you get a little sweat on your forehead each day. And in his Chinese accent he would tell us to do "humping"- he meant jumping on a trampoline. Daily 30 minutes brisk walk would be considered a good cardio work out. While the modern day gym comes complete with various cardio machines and fitness instructors, I still remember the basic gymnasium at Dadar back in 1967. The order of the day then was mainly weights and dumb bells. Five gardens at Dadar - Mumbai where I grew up provided an ideal spot for people taking their early morning walks. Amongst a variety of people from different backgrounds I could



only see a sprinkle of Parsis doing the daily routine. But today I am encouraged to see many Zoroastrians doing the rounds of the gardens. People are beginning to realize the importance of good eating habits with an exercise programme.

So has this blown away your eating habits? We all have our habits to eat a big breakfast, to mix proteins and carbohydrates, to eat fruit after meals, to drink water with our meals, to eat late at night. While I have no intention to strictly follow the food combining aspect due to my love for tasty Parsi cuisine, I have become a convert towards fruit and fruit juices and eating fruit correctly. **This article is not meant to dispense any medical advice or diet prescription, however what has helped me may genuinely help some other person.** As I said before in my article, life's gift to you is your body and in return we must look after it. Thank you to my "**health conscious friend**" for giving me this gift to better understand our old habits and make changes to them for a healthier lifestyle. Well, at least till such time as science and human minds concoct new nutrition guidelines. And we go back to the old habits. People are confused!



Recommended reading - Fit for Life by Harvey & Marilyn Diamond. Angus and Robertson Publishers



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

*Timeless beauty is one who has warmth, sparkle in her eye and elegance. – author unknown*

## **Avestan emphasis on right-handedness** (*right hand preference*)

by sam kerr

As there is hand preference, there are also foot, eye and ear preferences. The cliché - "put your 'best foot' forward" is known all too well. (Grammatically, instead of 'best' the word really ought to be 'better'... of the two feet). Even among the Parsi Zoroastrians of the subcontinent it was not uncommon for elders to make sure the right foot was first used in any movement forward during auspicious rituals and while going up steps or entering a house.

Over the last 150 years, the link between **hand preference** and a possible functional specialization of the Brain Hemisphere has been seriously pursued. The significance of the exact relationship between hand preference and brain function remains somewhat unclear. Of importance is the Corpus Callosum, which lies below the two halves (Cerebral Hemispheres) of the brain and connects the two halves by carrying over the bundle of nerve fibres for communication between the two. The Corpus Callosum is wider in the brains of women than in those of men to allow for greater cross communication between the hemispheres - possibly the recognised basis for women's "intuition". It also explains a predominance of single-task orientation of males, relative to female learners. The smaller Corpus Callosum in the male makes it harder for the left and right sides of the brain to work together. This explains the superior **feminine ability to perform multitask actions** with ease. Precisely, this very fact about a larger Corpus Callosum has been observed in persons of both genders who have a **mixed hand preference**, which carries the ability to multitask performance. Further, in partial or complete absence from birth of the Corpus Callosum there is gross impairment of hand-eye coordination, apart from the

lack of mental and physical development and memory .

It is estimated that persistent, lifelong left-handed persons comprise only 2 - 3% of the population though **left-handed persons** generally comprise about 10% of the population. **Mixed-handed persons** make up 70 - 80% of the left-handed population.

Nerve fibres from the opposite side of our Brain Hemisphere control our muscle movements on each side of the body. It has been observed that mixed handed persons are less likely to be creative but more likely to be hypochondriac. This can be explained by the observation that the **left hemisphere controls rational thought**, while the **right hemisphere is the world-view surveyor**, recognising the flaws when contradictory thoughts becomes apparent and eliminating entrenched ideas. In mixed-handed persons, a larger Corpus Callosum will help the right hemisphere revise its beliefs more frequently. For example, in the case of hypochondriacs their reaction to a minor injury makes them dwell on the issue as if it were a major catastrophe.

Apart from the widely accepted observations, whether, and to what extent, these differences are associated with behavioural and cognitive differences between males and females is unclear. Be that as it may, we are here more interested in our own Avestan experiences in a Parsi Zoroastrian way of life on the subcontinent. I am not fully aware this was so in the upbringing of children in Iran, although the experiences of a close friend of mine, from whom I gather valuable material about the Zoroastrian way of life in Iran, reassures me the behavioral pattern of parents towards children was the same.

In those days it was not uncommon for a parent, teacher and grandparent to discipline (most times, quite strictly so, too) the left-handed child to change over and literally force the child to use the right hand. The innocent child had no alternative but to obey the commands. In my early days as a medical practitioner I have myself advised



Golden plaque showing a Maghavan holding a bundle of Barsom Rods in the right hand. A dagger hangs from its halter on the right side (in case of urgent defence).



Warriors from Darius I & Xerxes II Palace at Susa showing warriors with the quiver (holding arrows) strapped to the left shoulder.



Shooting an arrow: Showing the bowstring being pulled with the arrow held by the right hand. This seal attributes the bowman as Darius the Great hunting lions in the inscription cuneiform script on the left. The metal seals were etched cylinders, which were rolled on wet clay to create an impression in the soft clay. Once the clay was baked, the hardened clay tablet could never be altered.



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mothers to try and use their left hand when offering anything to the child positioned in front of them. This was based on the premise that the child is more likely to pull out the right hand (being nearer to the mother's left hand) to handle the offering rather than take the trouble of crossing over the left hand to take whatever is being given. This advice certainly helped the so-called **'learned' left-handed** children but not those born **genetically left-handed** (20% are believed to be genetically determined and some to a **birth injury aetiology**, believed to be damage to the left Hemisphere sustained at birth since the right-handed person has the speech centre in the Left Hemisphere highly developed).

As a student surgeon in England trying to go through my paces in the operative procedures in the region of the face, nasal and post nasal passages, mouth, oral passages and prolonged cancer operative procedures in the neck I was taken to task strictly by one of my determined senior superiors. He maintained that, since the operative work was performed in these very limited, cramped spaces with vital structures superimposed and in close proximity, it is of advantage to operate on the left side of the patient with the right hand and vice versa, thus keeping the operative field in the middle clear to view at all times. It was an extremely nerve wrecking experience to change in the mid twenties of life. He seemed to have dedicated 'spies' in the operating rooms and word spread fast as soon as I reverted to crossing my hands during extremely crucial moments. It took 18 months of anxiety and sweat to develop the ambidextrous procedure of operating, which luckily persisted advantageously throughout my working life.

My thoughts thus veered towards seeking ancient evidence derived from our Avestan historical documentation. Manuscripts, pictures, bas reliefs and clay tablets point towards a culture, which presumed and promoted right-handedness as the expected norm. The sword always hung from its halter at the waist on the left side and the quiver with its arrows was always strapped

to the left shoulder, clearly making them easier and quicker to draw with the right hand. The battle scenes are always depicted with the sword, spear, javelin etc., in the right hand and the stretched bowstring and arrow held with the right hand.

Possibly, many a left-handed prince, who would otherwise have become a potentially dedicated and just ruler, may well have been demoted from ascending the throne for being 'clumsy' in daily practices and 'incompetent' to lead in warfare. ■■■■



Sasanian coins showing the sword hanging from its halter at the waist on the left side and the short (9 inches) Barsom rods being held in the right hand in reverence. The right hand was also used as a sign of reverence when holding the royal 'Mace'. The larger bundles (3 feet and 5 feet) of Barsom rods were held with both hands.



However, where the Fire on the Altar needed tending it had to be the right hand and the bundle of Barsom rods was transferred to the left hand. The dagger however was kept ready at the waist on the right side of the halter for urgent defence.

# The meaning of Christmas

shared by rustom kevala

These holidays are not just Christian religious festivals. Obviously, there is a connection between wisdom, charity and gift-giving and the Magi. During this time, Jews celebrate Hanukkah, African-Americans celebrate Quanzaa, and we Zoroastrians celebrate Yalda.

The celebration of Christmas owes much more to the ancient traditions of the Persians and the Egyptians than most people realize.

Luke's account of the shepherds and the "Light of Glory" at the time of Christ's birth suggest Zoroastrian influences. Matthew's account adds the visit of the wise men from the East led by a star. The bright star Sirius rising on the horizon had been for millennia the watched-for sign that announced the rising of the flood waters of the Nile. It was the custom to spend the night in singing and attending to the images of the gods on the eve of that night. Today, this "Day of the Magi" is celebrated on January 6 in the Greek Orthodox Church.

The present custom of celebrating the Nativity on December 25 was instituted in 353 or 354 in Rome, under Pope Liberius, possibly to absorb the festival of Mithra. According to legend, Mithra had a virgin birth from the mother rock. Christ, like Mithra, was recognized as the risen sun, the renovator of the world.

Jews had enjoyed complete freedom to observe their religious practices under the Achaemenians. After Judea became a province of the Seleucid empire, Antiochus ordered the Jews to install Greek statues in their temples. Hanukkah (or Chanukah) celebrates the victorious struggle of the Jews to drive out the Greeks. They rededicated their temple by lighting a perpetual oil lamp on the 25th day of Kislev, which falls on Dec 15 this year. Hanukkah is

observed by decorating homes, gift-giving, and entertainment of friends and family. Some Jews erect a Hanukkah bush during the holidays.



Photograph from Hamazor archives

During first century BC, the Essene tribe of pious Jews retreated to the desert of Qumran overlooking the Dead Sea to await the arrival of the Messiah. The Qumran texts give detailed instructions for the preparations for the coming Armageddon between the sons of light and the sons of darkness – clearly influenced by Zoroastrian belief in the arrival of the Saoshyant, who will lead us to finally remove the forces of evil from the physical world.

## The Celebration of Yalda

Yalda, a Syric word imported into the Persian language by Syric Christians during Sasanian times, means birth. "Shab-e-Yalda" or "Shab-e-Cheleh" is the celebration of winter solstice on December 21st, the last day of the month of *Azar*, and the longest night of the year. The next day, the first day of the month of *Dayh*, is known as *Khore rooz* (the day of the sun). Since the days will now be getting longer and the nights shorter, this day marks the victory of the sun over darkness.

Shab-e-Yalda is a social occasion, when family and friends get together for fun and merriment, reading of poetry and the Shah Nama. Children are allowed to stay up all night. Dried fruits, nuts, seeds and fresh winter fruits are offered. As the sun rises in the morning, Mithra (Mehr) is welcomed as "the light of the early morning" with communal recitation of *Havan gah*.



## Parsis & Nursing Profession

by virasp mehta

“DON’T you ever become a nurse lest spinsterhood be your fate!”

More than a century ago this wasn’t just a gentle advice but a stern warning handed down to young Parsi women who dreamt of following in the footsteps of the Lady with the lamp. This patriarchal warning verging on orthodoxy prevented many a Parsi woman from becoming a future Florence Nightingale. And sadly enough deprived the community of its rightful claim to be the pioneers in nursing profession among diverse communities of India.

Let’s not be disheartened if we couldn’t be the pioneers in nursing profession. Just shift the curtain that covers two centuries and see how nursing profession emerged in India.

Sir Jamshedji Jijeebhoy’s munificence saw establishment of J J Hospital at Bombay in 1845. But for next 35 years till 1880, there were no nurses in the hospital. The reason being that there was no facility for training of nurses at that time in the country. And generally ward boys rendered nursing of some sorts in the hospitals.

Neither there were proper maternity homes, nor foreign qualified gynecologists, not even well trained midwives in those days. Surprisingly, under such dire circumstances Parsi

ingenuity had solved the problem, by maintaining a room at the ground floor of every Parsi building, expressly kept for pregnant women ready to deliver a child. There were very few Parsi women who could perform a job of a *dai* (midwife). Majority of *daians* were non-Parsi women who thrived in this profession, and inexperienced as they were in the care of a newborn a soaring child mortality was a common reoccurrence.

In midst of this gloom, what was improbable happened. In 1877 nuns of the *Order of All Saints Sisters*, of Oxfordshire spurred by missionary zeal came to India. They rendered their services at hospitals and dispensaries, and even in private homes as nurses; and were commonly referred to as *sisters*. From then on it became customary to address nurses as sisters. In 1879 a new order of *Anglican Church Mission of All Saints Sisters* was established in Bombay. In the following year Bombay’s British Government impressed by the work of these missionary sisters approached them with a request to take charge of nursing at the J J Hospital. Initially two nursing-sisters were given the responsibility of a ward. Their services proved successful and gaining popularity, the first step to impart nursing training to Indian women was laid. It appears that in next ten years Indian women were gradually filling the ranks of trained nurses.

Impressed by this momentum on the part of Indian women to nurse the ill and infirmed, Sir Muncherji Bhawnagri, a member of the British Parliament built a hostel for trainee nurses, in memory of his sister the late Avabai Bhawnagri. Women from Kerala mostly availed of this facility.

There is no record whether our young women availed of this early opportunity of becoming trained nurses. However, at some time and somewhere, there must have been bold and determined Parsi women who had courage to defy the old restraining order and entered the nursing profession. Though much later in the day, and certainly not in large numbers, eventually our women proudly walked the wards of large and small hospitals, all angelic in their spotless white dress. Some more proficient and with more years of service than others, qualified as matrons.

In this higher rank of nursing profession stands out the name of Ms Tehmina K Adranwalla, who had the honour to be the first Indian matron of J J Hospital. She joined the nursing training course in 1917. At that time she was reminded of the fate that awaited her, to wit, spinsterhood that befell a Parsi woman who became a nurse. Undeniably behind all this nonsense was the stubborn Parsi orthodoxy that held back Parsi men to come forward and marry a Parsi nurse.



Sir Jamshedji Jijeebhoy, courtesy Marzban J Giara





The J J Hospital, courtesy Jehangir Patel

That's what happened to Tehmina Adranwalla, who unfortunately remained unmarried. Perhaps there may be some more from this noble profession who met a similar fate as Ms Adranwalla's, but not all. There were some on whom fate smiled and blissfully favoured them with a happy married life.

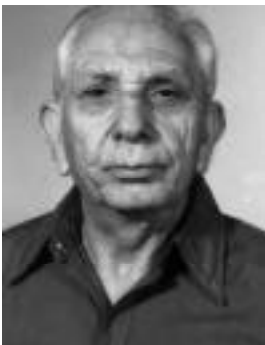
These days we don't hear of our women becoming nurses. Although, today they are freer to choose this profession than they were before. Could it still be the fear of spinsterhood that holds them back from becoming nurses? Probably not: Those days when our women chose either nursing or teaching as a profession, have disappeared with changing times. Today the field of vocation is wide for our women and they are found well placed in many other vocations.

Yet spinsterhood looms large on the communal horizon - an enigmatic problem, which our social reformers would prefer to leave it to fate!

Acknowledgement: Recourse has been made to Yadono Varghodo. Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly's article of June 11, 2006.



Virasp Mehta was born in Karachi in 1925 having lived there throughout. A few years ago he moved to the USA. He is the managing trustee of Informal Religious Meetings which publishes the monthly bulletin on the Zoroastrian religion and is also electronically available. He writes poems and songs and is the author of numerous plays which have been performed in Karachi.



## *Text of Lord Bilimoria's Maiden Speech on 27th November 2006 published in the House of Lords Hansard*

Lord Bilimoria: My Lords, from the time that I walked into this House I have been showered by kindness from everyone; from my fellow Peers, the Convener of the Cross-Bench Peers and his team and all the officers and staff of the House. My supporters, the noble Lord, Lord Dholakia, and the noble Baroness, Lady Prashar, have both been an inspiration to me for many years. I am deeply grateful for the warmth of the welcome that I have received from everyone.

When my appointment was announced, I was surprised to discover that I was the first Zoroastrian Parsi to become a Peer. The Parsi community migrated to India from Persia more than a thousand years ago. Today, the Parsis number fewer than 100,000 people in India, a nation of more than a billion. To me the Parsi community has exemplified the principle that it is not good enough to be the best in the world, one must also be the best for the world. The Parsis historically have always put back into the community. I am so proud of what our tiny community has achieved, not only in India but also in producing the first three Asian MPs in Britain. The first was Dadabhai Naoroji, a Liberal, in 1892; the second, Sir Mancherjee Bhownagree, a Conservative; and the third, Comrade Sak, Shapurji Saklatvala, a Communist and Labour Party member. Then, of course, I realised that my appointment to the House of Lords has finally squared the circle, as I am a Cross-Bencher.

I came to this country as a 19 year-old from India for my higher education. I qualified as a chartered accountant in the City and graduated in law from Cambridge. But within six months of completing my studies I started my career as an entrepreneur. By this time my father, General Faridoon Bilimoria, was General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Central Indian Army. I remember that he said to me despairingly, "All this education, and you're becoming an import-export wallah".

Being an obedient son, I started Cobra Beer from scratch. Entrepreneurship and enterprise were conspicuous by their absence in Her Majesty's gracious Speech, in fact there was very little mention of business at all, and yet today there is a movement in entrepreneurship in this country. As it happens, the same week of the gracious Speech was Enterprise Week, now in its third year and with 3,000 events spreading the spirit of enterprise throughout Britain. In addition to Enterprise Week and many other initiatives, two years ago the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship was established by the Chancellor to encourage university students to consider starting a business as a career choice. I am proud to be its national champion.

How far we have come? When I was a student at Cambridge in the 1980s, the words "business" and "entrepreneurship" did not exist in the university vocabulary. Today, Cambridge has a flourishing business school, Cambridge Enterprise, and the Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning.

**Lord Beaumont of Whitley:** “I may say that I have not heard a better maiden speech in my 37 years in your Lordships’ House than that of the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria.”

**Lord Vallance of Tummel:** (Former Chairman British Telecom)

“I add my congratulations to the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, on his highly refreshing, entrepreneurial maiden speech.”

**The Lord Bishop of Manchester:** “The maiden speech of the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, was especially appreciated on the Bishops’ Bench, and if I may go beyond printed convention, I congratulate him on it.”

**Lord Oakeshott of Seagrove Bay:** “I was most impressed by the splendid maiden speech made by the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria. If he has a bottle of Cobra on his coat of arms, may it always be full.”

**Baroness Wilcox:** “In the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, I welcome our first Parsi. He is an entrepreneur—how terrific—and, better than that, he makes Cobra beer, which is the only beer I have ever been able to drink. It is absolutely delicious, and I am delighted that he is here.”

**Lord Sanderson of Bowden:** “I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, on an extremely good speech from a real entrepreneur ... Perhaps I may finish by citing the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, who said that, to succeed, this country has to punch above its weight. What a true saying that is.”

I am also proud to be chancellor of one of Britain’s truly modern universities; Thames Valley University, which is headquartered here in London. I like to call it “tomorrow’s university today”. It is a university that supports lifelong learning. Talking about lifelong learning, it is truly a privilege for me to be a Member of this House. What I am looking forward to more than anything is not only contributing as best I can, but to learning, and learning, and learning from my noble colleagues here.

When I came to the UK in the early 1980s, Britain was the sick man of Europe and had no respect in the world economy. There was also very much a glass ceiling here. In fact, I was told by my family and friends in India that I would never get to the top because I would never be allowed to get to the top. But look at Britain today—it is a true meritocracy, with opportunity for all regardless of race, religion or background. One of Britain’s greatest strengths is our open and free market. There is no way that I would have been able to start a beer brand from scratch with £20,000 of student debt, in the most competitive beer market in the world, if it had not been a true free market. A free market means huge competition, but it also means that anyone can have a go. I would much rather have it that way round.

What has changed as well is that we now live in a globalised world, where countries are not only interdependent but also far more integrated. I was very happy to see in the gracious Speech that the Government will work to take forward the World Trade Organisation Doha talks. For the past three years, I have served as the UK chairman of the Indo-British Partnership Initiative, which is supported by UK Trade and Investment. We have created the Indo-British Partnership Network, and our mission is to increase trade, business and investment between Britain and India both ways.

The India that I was brought up in as a child was inward-looking, insular and protectionist. Even today, sadly, 300 million people in India live on less than a dollar a day. India is a country with enormous challenges; however some people fail because of, and others succeed in spite of. In spite of all its challenges, today India is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, growing at 8 per cent a year. There is a thirst for liberalisation and reform and a new-found confidence in India, which is well on its way to becoming a global economic superpower. And yet, today India accounts for only 1 per cent of Britain’s total trade; and Britain has historically been a great trading nation. India accounts for less than 1 per cent of Britain’s investment abroad; and yet we are great outward investors. Although India is an enormous challenge for Britain, it is more importantly a tremendous opportunity for our country and for British business.

The Government’s role with regard to business has changed worldwide, from command and control to government being a catalyst, a helper and a supporter of business. For Britain to meet these new global challenges and opportunities, it is vital that the Government do all that they can to encourage and champion education, science and technology, entrepreneurship, innovation, and creativity. The Government must help British business to do business with India. The combination of government, education and business working together is very, very powerful. Britain is a tiny nation; we are just 1 per cent of the world’s population, and yet we have always punched above our weight. Today, we are still one of the five largest economies in the world. If we can stoke the flames of entrepreneurship in Britain, there is no limit to what we can achieve.

My great grandfather, D D Italia, came from the city of Hyderabad in India, where I was born. He was a Member of the Rajya Sabha, the Upper House in India, and he was a man in whose footsteps I am proud to follow here in our Upper House, the House of Lords. I am also proud to have been inspired by his motto, “to aspire and achieve”. My company and I have adopted this as our vision and added, “to aspire and achieve against all odds, with integrity”.

It may seem against all odds for Britain in this global world, up against giants like China and India, but we must aspire, and we must continue to achieve, and most importantly we must do so with what we have always been renowned for, and that is our integrity.

[courtesy ZTFE]



# Freddie Mercury, the King of Queen

by sohrab anklesaria

The lights go off ... its twenty one hundred and the crowds cannot control themselves any further. Chants roar for miles, "FREDDIE! FREDDIE! Freddie we love you!" And then one man steps into the azure hue spotlight. As the man can be heard taking his breath, like an eagle leaping from its ledge, ready to soar, the crowd goes ballistic with the four words "I WANT IT ALL" and then "AND I WANT IT NOW!" Fire works erupt from the stage and the band *Queen* begins one of its many epic concerts. "QUEEN", the classic British rock band formed by Freddie Mercury, Brian May, and Roger Taylor in London, England, in 1970 from the remains of *Smile*, with John Deacon completing the lineup the following year, was also Britain's most successful band of the past three decades. *Queen* became popular during the mid-to-late 1970s and to this day retain an extremely large international fan base. But why you may ask, that I go on about this larger-than life group? It is because this band was also fronted by one of the most powerfull and spectacular vocalists of this era, none other then Farrokh Bulsara better known as Freddie Mercury.

Mercury was born Farrokh Bulsara in the city of Stone Town on the African island of Zanzibar (at the time a British colony, now part of Tanzania). His parents, Bomi and Jer Bulsara, were Parsi-Zoroastrians from India. The family had emigrated to Zanzibar in order for Bomi to continue his job as a middle-ranking cashier at the British Colonial Office. Mercury had one younger sister, Kashmira. Mercury was sent back to India to attend St Peter's boarding school near Bombay (now Mumbai). It was at St Peter's where he learned to play the piano and joined his first band, *The Hectics*. He stayed in India for most of his childhood, living with his grandmother and aunt; and



Young Freddie, from the Queen's website

completed his education at St Mary's High School in Mazagon before returning to Zanzibar. He was 17 when he and his family finally fled to England, as a result of the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution. In England, he earned a Diploma in Art and Graphic Design at Ealing Art College, following in the footsteps of Pete Townsend. He later used these skills in order to design the *Queen* crest.

Widely considered as one of the greatest vocalists in popular music, Freddie Mercury possessed a very distinctive voice. Although his speaking voice naturally fell in the baritone range, his singing voice was that of a tenor. His recorded vocal range spanned nearly four octaves (falsetto included), with his lowest recorded note being the F below the bass clef and his highest recorded note being the D that lies nearly four octaves above. In addition to vocal range, Mercury often delivered technically difficult songs in a powerful manner. However, due in part to the fact that he suffered from vocal nodules (for which he declined surgery), he would often lower the highest notes during many concerts. Mercury also claimed that he never had any formal vocal training. Although he had a very close girlfriend named Mary Austin for many years, Freddie Mercury had always been fairly open about his sexuality. In a March 12, 1974 interview for *New Musical Express*, he told the interviewer: 'I am as gay as a daffodil, my

Tamara Barshak of ITV contacted WZO London for assistance re the TV programme to be broadcasted to time with the birth anniversary in September. Farrokh Vajifdar was interviewed and Dinshaw Tamboly assisted in Mumbai but neither were shown on the programme. But at least in the credits, both Vajifdar & WZO were acknowledged. Farrokh V writes in a personal exchange: "I think he should be regarded as the greatest Parsi ever. No one – not even Dadabhai Naoroji, nor Pheroze Shah Mehta, etc. – has ever enjoyed such recognition on a world-wide scale as FM! (And I never even knew the fellow!)" - Ed.

*dear!" Beginning in the late 1970s, Mercury began a series of affairs with men, which ultimately resulted in the end of his relationship with Austin. However, the two remained close friends through the years, and Mercury often referred to Austin as his only true friend. In a 1985 interview, Mercury said of Austin, "All my lovers asked me why they couldn't replace Mary (Austin), but it's simply impossible. The only friend I've got is Mary, and I don't want anybody else. To me, she was my common-law wife. To me, it was a marriage. We believe in each other, that's enough for me. I couldn't fall in love with a man the same way as I have with Mary."*

In 1983, Mercury found a new lover named Jim Hutton. Hutton lived with Mercury for the last six years of his life, cared for him when he was ill, and was at his bedside when he died. According to Hutton, Mercury referred to him as his husband, and died wearing a wedding band that Hutton had given him.

Mercury possessed a notable overbite of his teeth that he had wanted to fix for many years. Early in his career, he commented that he wished to have work done, but regretted that he did not have time to do it. He also expressed fears that such an operation might damage his voice. While smiling Mercury would often cover his mouth with his hand, in an attempt to hide the overbite.

According to the January 2004 edition of *Cat Fancy*, Mercury possessed a great fondness for cats, at one point owning as many as ten. Mercury's personal assistant, Peter Freestone, wrote that his boss *"put as much importance on them as any human."* The album *Mr Bad Guy* and the song *Delilah* were dedicated to cats, and Mercury wore clothes featuring cats in videos and on album covers.

Mercury kept his Indian descent a secret from most of his fans, rarely mentioning his heritage in interviews. He would sometimes refer to himself as "Persian," perhaps alluding to his identity as a Parsi. Many

friends expressed their view that Mercury felt ashamed of his ethnic origins and feared racial backlash in a country that had long been troubled by race riots and violence against Indian immigrants. On the other hand, fellow band mate Roger Taylor suggested that Mercury downplayed his heritage simply because he did not feel that it would fit well with his rock musician persona.

According to Mercury's partner, Jim Hutton, Mercury was diagnosed with AIDS in the spring of 1987. Mercury claimed to have tested negative in an interview published that year, and continued to deny that he had AIDS. On November 22, 1991, Mercury called *Queen's* manager Jim Beach over to his Kensington home, to discuss a public statement. The next day, November 23, the following announcement was made to the press:

*"Following the enormous conjecture in the press over the last two weeks, I wish to confirm that I have been tested HIV positive and have AIDS. I felt it correct to keep this information private to date to protect the privacy of those around me. However, the time has come now for my friends and fans around the world to know the truth and I hope that everyone will join with my doctors and all those worldwide in the fight against this terrible disease. My privacy has always been very special to me and I am famous for my lack of interviews. Please understand this policy will continue."*

A little over 24 hours after issuing the statement, Freddie Mercury died at home in the presence of close friends, at the age of 45. Although he had not attended religious services in years, Mercury's funeral was conducted by a Zoroastrian priest. He was cremated at Kensal Green Cemetery, and the whereabouts of his ashes are unknown, although some believe them to have been dispersed into Lake Geneva, or are in his family's possession. The remaining members of *Queen* founded The Mercury Phoenix Trust, and organised The Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert. He left £500,000 to his chef, £500,000 to his personal assistant, £100,000 to his driver, and £500,000 to his partner, Jim Hutton. Mary Austin, his life-long friend, inherited the estate and now lives there with her family.

Fans worldwide commemorated the life of Freddie Mercury who would have celebrated his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday on the fifth of September 2006. A garland on one of his posters, a whole day of partying in ones back yard with close friends listening to the rock phenomenon, would surely suffice, but definately not enough to show the complete love and appreciation of the world which Freddie "ROCKED".



Photograph taken by Sooni Taraporevala, from her book *The Parsis*, with permission

Fifteen years after his death in 1991, the legendary rock star Freddie Mercury's music is still enjoyed around the world. On the occasion of his 60<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary a CD, *The Very Best of Freddie Mercury*, and a DVD *Lover of Life, Singer of Songs*, were released by EMI Music.

Parties in London and Cologne were thrown by EMI and *Queen* which revolved around a performance of *We Will Rock You* one of Freddie's greatest performances. The Swiss erected his statue in Montreux and in Britain a stamp was issued in his honour.

On his 60<sup>th</sup> "would have been" birthday, his family exposed their family album for a special TV tribute to the legend. In Zanzibar his birthplace, a beach party was planned at the Mercury restaurant but due to local Muslim fanatics, (who did not approve of Mercury's flamboyant ways) this was disapproved of.

As a fellow vocalist playing in a small local Karachi band it is my honour and privilege to exalt this massive icon and beloved performer. To tell the tale of a man who has, who is to this day and for many generations to come, Rock minds, hearts and souls of all who desire and inspire the art of Rock across the earth from Zanzibar to Mumbai. Freddie Mercury, you are the champion my friend, thank you for "We are the Champions", "I want it all" and thank you for bringing a little bit of "Bohemian Rhapsody" into our music. ■■■■



17-year old Sohrab is studying for his GCE O levels at the Karachi Grammar School. He loves the English language, wrote poetry till a couple of years ago whenever he felt he couldn't cope and enjoys singing. He is now trying his hand in writing lyrics.

## *The Real Story of Freddy Mercury*

by Mariam Ahundova

In Russian, now available in English

<http://allofqueen.on.ufanet.ru/book.html>

The real story of Freddie Mercury written by Russian author Ahundova, destroys many stereotypes and prejudices, created around the rock icon.

The influence of the Zoroastrian environment upon Freddie Mercury is discussed in the very first chapter. The second chapter deals with falsification and concealment of the facts, connected with his childhood, which in the author's opinion, is to conceal the influence of the Zoroastrian environment upon the formation of Freddie's personality.

Ahundova believes Freddie Mercury's private and public life answers the description of a righteous Zoroastrian and that he brought the light of his religion and his soul into his music. She devotes chapter 6 to analyzing religious motives in Queen's songs and points out numerous symbols that can be seen in his songs, such as the fravahar in *Who wants to live forever* video and the symbol of Fire in the video of *Made in Heaven*; and the picture of a Symurg in the crest of the rock group, Queen. [appeared in FEZANA Journal, Winter 2005]



"My name is Shayan Italia and live in UK and am the artist/songwriter of the album *DELIVERANCE*, which was released online on 23 July 2006. I also happen to be the first Zoroastrian to ever release a mainstream music album on International waters since Freddie Mercury died over 25 years ago.

I am pleased to mention that I have now signed a worldwide digital distribution deal to have the album distributed online in over 25 countries. In light of this I wish to make all Zoroastrians across the globe aware of the same."

More on Shayan including samples of his music on his website: [www.shayanitalia.com](http://www.shayanitalia.com)

You can hear excerpts from his songs on the album *Deliverance*, as well as see his music video. He was featured in the June 2006 issue of *Parsiana*.



## Zubin at the White House



Photograph taken in the Blue Room of the White House on 3 December, sent by Shahrokh Mehta. On the extreme right is Zubin Mehta with President Bush and Mrs Bush in the centre. The other four honorees are from the left : singer and songwriter Willam "Smokey" Robinson; musical theater composer Andrew Lloyd Webber; country singer Dolly Parton; film director Steven Spielberg;.

"We

ent went for Zubin [Mehta] to the Kennedy Center Honours," writes Dhunmai Dalal from Los Angeles. "It was a spectacular event and will be televised on CBS on 26th December at 9 pm EST. It was an honour to honour the honorees - Andrew Weber, Dolly Parton, Smokey Robinson, Steven Spielberg with Zubin. They were given their awards at the White House by the President and a Reception by the State Department.

"The President, Mrs Laura Bush, Dick Cheney, Alan Greenspan, and many Senators, Congressmen and guests by invitation were present among the honorees' friends and family. There was dinner/dancing afterward and a beautiful Black Tie event with ladies in gowns turned out elegantly. We were thrilled to be there and glad to honour our *apro* Zubin." [see Hamazor Issue 3/06 p 61]

## Australia's Farita

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artia's debut CD is available as an exclusive offer to the 4th WZYC 2007. This young Zoroastrian's music is a mix of spicy and sweet - a fusion of Pop / R&B with an Indian edge. Farita is donating a portion of the CD sale to the WZYC. She will be performing live at the Congress in 2007 which is being held at Ballarat, Australia.

Farita is in the 2006 Broadjam Pop Top 10, the Contemporary R&B Top Ten, The Production (Other) Top 10, The Female Vocal Top 10, The California Top 10 & The Australian Top Ten. An internationally recognized event, Farita has just received the Music Aid award as Australia's best female artist.

To order your copy Farita, *Karma - The EP*, log on to [www.farita.com](http://www.farita.com)



# Parsis in Bollywood

by farishta murzban dinshaw

Note: This article is a sweeping overview of the contribution of Parsis to the film industry in India and is not meant as a comprehensive historical feature. If you have additional information or biographical details that you would like to contribute, please send them to [toxy39@attglobal.net](mailto:toxy39@attglobal.net) for publication in future issues.

**B**ollywood (from Bombay and Hollywood) is the popular name given to the Indian film industry and although some sticklers for accuracy criticize the name, arguing that it makes the industry look like a poor cousin to Hollywood, it seems the term is here to stay now that it has made it into the Oxford English Dictionary. Hindi cinema (another misnomer as the term encompasses films made in Tamil, Bengali, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada and other regional languages) has become a genre in its own right with over 12 million viewers worldwide. One of the distinctive features of the Bollywood genre is song-and-dance numbers woven into the script. Would you believe that it was a Parsi who started the ball rolling or hip shaking as it is in this case?

On March 14, 1931 Ardeshir Irani of Imperial Movietone created history when he released *Alam Ara*, the first full-length Indian talkie at the Majestic cinema in Bombay. The movie had a wafer thin plot which served to string together a series of songs of which *De de khuda ke naam par* has the distinction of being the first song recorded. The music in the film that ended the era of silent movies was composed by Ferozshah M Mistri, and B Irani. Ardeshir's partner Abdulally Esoofally in the Indian Talkie Silver Jubilee Souvenir, "*In those days, the queue system was not known to filmgoers and the booking office was literally stormed by jostling, riotous mobs, hankering to secure somehow, anyhow a ticket to see a talking*



Ardeshir Irani

*picture in the language they understood. All traffic was jammed and police aid had to be sought to control the crowds. For weeks together tickets were sold out and blackmarket vendors had a field day".* The phenomenal success of the movie launched the trademark "talking singing dancing" formula of the Indian cinema and every major studio had their own music department. In an interesting side note, India's first woman composer Saraswati Devi's real name was Khurshid Minocher-Homji and she composed music for the company Bombay Talkies.

Parsi influence on the Indian cinema dates back to much before this historic milestone, as far back as 1853 when Parsis in Bombay started staging Gujarati plays. Faramjee Gustadjee Dalal owned the Parsee Natak Mandali (Parsi Drama Company) which was the first to stage the Gujarati drama *Rustam and Sohrab*. Later, in order to appeal to a larger audience, Dadabhai Patel, affectionately called Dadi Patel, initiated presenting plays in Urdu. It was he who first produced his Urdu musical play *Benazir Babremunir* on the Parsi stage. Dr P V Vaidyanathan (2004) writes, "*Parsee Theatre was a confluence of various theatre streams: different dramatic genres; four languages - English, Gujarati, Urdu and Hindi; historical, mythological, social, political story - lines and those adapted from the English stage; varied musical scores drawing on Western, Indian and Arabic music heritage, making use of different 'ragas' of Indian classical music; variety of songs and dances; the English and Sanskrit dramatic styles; impressive stage decor, newer stage techniques etc. Integrating the*



Saraswati Devi

All photographs are from Google

*best from among all these sources and assimilating them the Parsee Theatre thrilled Indian people with some of the best dramas."* Initially, the first movies were filmed version of theatrical performances and was the fore-runner of the largest film industry in the world. (It is estimated that India annually produces over 800 movies). Farooqui (2006) states, *"Parsi Theatre, the omnibus term, which is used to describe the pre-independence commercial theatre in India, was, in many ways, the mother of Hindi cinema. It unselfconsciously adapted anything and everything that was likely to sell. It was highly eclectic in its choice of themes and languages and relied heavily on melodrama and music and it had a vast reach."*

As in other field in Indian history, the contribution of Parsi pioneers to Indian cinema is unparalleled both onscreen and behind the scenes. One of the most prominent figures in the industry was Sorab Modi who is credited for shaping the tastes of the cinema-going public in India. He moved away from the traditional religious myths and adaptations of Shakespearian plays to make films about contemporary social issues such as illicit passion *Jailor* (1938), remade in 1958 alcoholism in *Meetha Zaher* (1938) the right of Hindu women to divorce in *Talaq* (1938) and incest in *Bharosa* (1940). However, he is best remembered for his lavish epics about kings and warriors. One of his greatest films was *Sikander* (1941) which immortalized Prithviraj Kapoor playing the title role of the Macedonian king Alexander and is remembered particularly for its rousing and spectacular battle scenes and nationalistic sentiments when Porus (played by Modi) stops the advancing army with his eloquence. Given the global tension of World War II and following Gandhi's call to Civil Disobedience the movie was banned in some of the theatres serving army cantonments. Modi also directed India's first Technicolour movie *Jhansi ki Rani* (1953) for which Modi had technicians flown in from Hollywood.

In pre-Independence India, Parsis owned cinema theatres and cinema studios. In

1904, Manek D Sethna, who owned a cinema, started a touring cinema with the screening of the film *Life of Christ* on a regular basis in Bombay. In 1918, J F Madan, the Parsi pioneer of cinema in Calcutta, claimed to control over one third of the 300 cinemas in India. Jamshed B Wadia and Homi Wadia set up Wadia Movietone in the 1930s which produced the pre-Independence era "action flicks" with spectacular stunts notably *Hunterwali* (1935) which launched the career of arguably the most famous action heroine of the Indian cinema, Nadia. She was actually an Australian of Welsh-Greek extraction who later married Homi Wadia. The Wadia brothers were responsible for a series of "first" in the Indian film industry including **the first camera crane** to be used in Indian cinema built in the Wadia workshop and *The Court Dancer* (1944) the first Indian Talkie which had English dialogue. The Wadia legacy continued even after Jamshed and Homi. In 1993, Jamshed's grandson Riyad Wadia produced *Fearless: The Hunterwali Story* which was screened at over 50 international film festivals and was selected by the Indian government as one of the 10 best documentaries. In 1996, he pushed the cinematic envelope with *BomGay*, a series of vignettes exploring gay identity in contemporary India and *A Mermaid Called Aida* about India's famous transsexual Aida Banaji.



J F Madan

Parsis in the film industry have played many parts in bringing it prominence. Jehangir Bhowmashree, winner of the coveted Padmashree award (1968) for his service to India, was the Chief Advisor (Films) in the India Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and Chairman of the Jury for short films at International Film Festival of India held in New Delhi in 1965, as well as the Aurecy Animation film Festival in 1979. Freni Variava won international recognition as producer of such thought provoking and critically acclaimed films as *Ankur* (1974) *Bhumika* (1977) and *Mandi* (1983).

Currently, there are several young Parsi movie makers including Kaizad Gustad

(*Boom* 2003, *Bombay Boys* 1998) and Homi Adjiani (*Being Cyrus*, 2005), who make headlines because of the controversial nature of the films they make. Other Paris behind the screen include producer Ronnie Screwala whose *Rang de Basanti* (2006) is the official Indian entry for the Oscars this year; screenwriter Sooni Taraporewala, whose first screenplay was for *Salaam Bombay!* (1989) which earned an Academy Award nomination for Best Foreign Language Film; Shiamak Davar, choreographer for award winning movies like *Dil Tau Pagal Hai* (1997), *Bunty Aur Babli* (2005) and *Dhoom 2* (2006).

On screen, perhaps the best known Parsi face was Persis Khambatta who did not create too many waves in Bollywood but initiated the current trend of Indian actors moving westward by starring in Hollywood movies such as *The Wilby Conspiracy*, and *Night Hawks*. Her biggest break as an actress was playing the bald Lt Aliea in the 'Star Trek' movie. The current crop of Parsi actors include Boman Irani, best known for his comedic roles in the *Munna Bhai* series, and Perizad Zorabian, who won rave reviews for *Joggers Park* (2003) and *Morning Raga* (2004), and of course the awfully pretty John Abraham whom many Parsis conveniently claim as *aapro* [ours] because his mother is Parsi.

Although this feature is about Parsi presence in the Indian film industry, it would be remiss not to mention Parsi presence at the most talked about event in cinema worldwide. So far, Parsis' link to the Oscars has been tenuous (as in Sooni Taraporewala's and Bapsi Sidhwa's contribution to *Salaam Bombay!* and *Earth* respectively), but one Parsi did make it to the podium: at the 52nd Annual Academy Awards in 1980. Persis Khambatta was the co-presenter with William Shatner for Best Documentary, Short Subjects & Features. ■■■



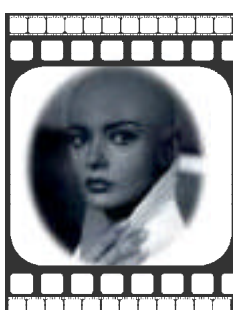
Ronnie Screwala



Sooni Taraporewala



Shiamak Davar



Persis Khambatta



Boman Irani

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## Some Films with Central Parsi Characters Plot summaries from the Internet Movie Database

**Khatta Meetha [*Sweet and Sour*] (1978)** Homi Mistry (Ashok Kumar) has been a widower for several years now, and looks after his four sons, their small house, and a job at the factory. Nargis Sethna has been widowed; is a housewife, has two sons and a daughter, and a large house. Then Soli (David), Nargis' and Homi's friend, suggests that the two get married, then at least the children will have a mother and father, as well as a larger house. They do get married, and hilarious chaos results, as the family and the children try to accomodate each other and fit in with their new family and surroundings.

**Pestonjee (1988)** Phirojshah (Naseeruddin Shah) and Pestonjee (Anupam Kher) are two close friends. They attempt to do everything together, and they hope that they will marry the same day as well. Unfortunately, both go to see the same young lady, Jeroo (Shabana Azmi), and Pestonjee ends up getting married to Jeroo. Phirojshah has been stricken by Jeroo's beauty and decides not to marry, and takes a transfer away from the couple. During the years, he keeps in touch with the couple by mail. While on a visit to the couple, he finds out that Pestonjee has a mistress, and Jeroo does not know of this. How will this effect Phirojshah's friendship with Pestonjee? Does Phirojshah stand a chance with Jeroo?

**Earth (1998)** 1947 Earth is shown from the perspective and memories of an eight year old Parsee girl Lenny. In the film it is said by one of the main characters: "Hindu, Mussalman or Sikh, we're all bastards. All beasts. Like that caged lion which scares Lenny baby lying in wait for the cage to open." A cage, whose opening frees the evils of murder, loot and kidnappings. In the film the opening of the cage is depicted with the Britishers leaving India and therewith causing tensions between Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. Between these religious groups stands a Parsi family, who has to see how their friends are either fleeing or being killed. In all this hatred the tragedy of the Hindu servant Shanta is embedded, who is equally loved by Dilnawaz and Hasan. These three characters



provide a reflection of a maddening society, where friends become enemies and are even prepared to kill each other.

**Such a Long Journey (1998)** Circa 1971, Gustad Noble lives in a one bedroom hall rented apartment in Byculla, Bombay. He travels to work everyday by Central Railway to Victoria Terminus and walks to Flora Fountain to his place of employment, namely the Central Bank of India. He has three children, Sohrab - who has finished his college studies and is now being admitted, much to his dislike, to Indian Institute of Technology (I.I.T.); while Darius, his second son, and daughter, Roshan, are school-going; his wife, Dilnavaz, looks after the children and the household. Their neighborhood is filthy, people urinate and defecate near the wall which encloses their building. Gustad asks a pavement artist to move near his building, draw pictures of religious Gods and Goddesses depicting the four main religions: Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Sikhism. The Artist agrees, and soon the place is transformed into a huge temple where people of all religions come to pay their respects. It is only a handful of people who know that Gustad is involved with a rebel RAW Agent, Major Jimmy Billimoria, who is actively involved with an extremist organization in East Pakistan, Awami League, aiding them financially and with manpower to overcome the Pakistani Government. The question remains what will Gustad's plight be when the news gets out of his involvement in this activity, especially when he receives 10 lakh rupees to be deposited in small installments in his Bank, in the midst of sentiments running high, war being declared between Pakistan and India, emergency blackout conditions and air raid sirens.

**Being Cyrus (2005)** This film revolves around the Sethna family residing in the hills of Panchgani. A retired sculptor Dinshaw (Naseeruddin Shah) heads the family. Other members of the joint family comprise of Dinshaw's wife Katy (Dimple Kapadia), brother Farokh (Boman Irani), sister-in-law Tina (Simone Singh) and second brother Fardoonjee (Honey Chhaya). Then arrives Cyrus (Saif Ali Khan) at the Sethna house and stays on. As the movie proceeds it gains a psychological insight into the family and reveals that everything is not all right with the Sethna family. Not just that, even Cyrus comes across as a bizarre personality.

**Parzania (2005)** The film, based on a true story, tells the tale of a middle-class Parsi couple — film projectionist Cyrus (Naseerudin Shah) and his wife Shernaz (Sarika) — who live in a Muslim-dominated area with their children, 10-year-old Parzan and eight-year-old Dilshad. The Gujarat violence changes their lives as Parzan goes missing and the film traces the couple's struggle to trace its son. ■■■■



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

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

## Conan Doyle and the Parson's Son: The George Edalji Case

This is the only non-fictional account of the George Edalji miscarriage of justice case and covers the period from 1876 until 1914. This includes the harassment suffered by the Edalji family from the police and local vested interests over a period of twenty years; the events leading up to George Edalji's conviction in 1903, engineered by the police and acquiesced in by the judiciary and the Home Office; and the campaign for George Edalji's release, which brought support from prominent figures including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and an eventual but grudging pardon for George Edalji. George, the son of Reverend Edalji, a Parsee convert to Christianity and vicar of a parish in South Staffordshire, was a practicing solicitor in Birmingham at the time of his arrest. The outcome led to the creation of the Criminal Court of Appeal. The work, Conan Doyle and the Parson's Son: The George Edalji Case provides an account of social attitudes, legal processes, the operating practices of the police, the role of the judiciary and of government departments during the late Victorian and Edwardian era. The book would be of interest to students of sociology, social studies, political science, Victorian and Edwardian history, ethnic studies, police studies, bureaucracy, law, legal studies, and the life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. An invaluable read for students, for lovers of mystery, and for those who believe that fact can be stranger than fiction. This new work, researched and written by Gordon Weaver, was recently published by Vanguard (Pegasus Elliot Mackenzie) and is available from good bookshops, wholesalers, Amazon Books, internet, Pegasus publishers. For a synopsis of this work visit [www.theplebeian.net](http://www.theplebeian.net) [Arthur & George by Jules Barnes, a novel, on the same characters was reviewed in Hamazor Issue 2/06 p 70, which is an excellent read - Ed]

# *The Zoroastrian Diaspora - Religion and Migration*

by Prof John R Hinnells  
Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005  
ISBN: 0-19-826759-2  
Pp 865

**Reviewed by Ervad Ramyar Karanjia**

An abridged version

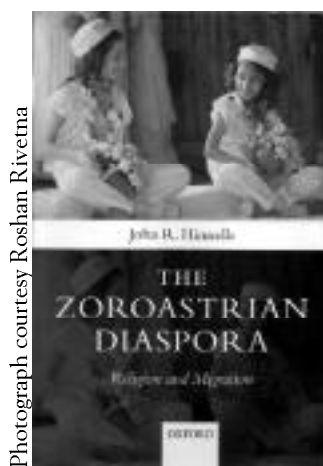


he book has grown out of the prestigious Ratenbai Katrak Lectures delivered in 1985. The author has laboured for 20 years, travelled to five continents, 11 countries and 24 cities, covering 250 thousand miles. and has produced a very interesting book, which he has dedicated to his mentor, the late Prof Mary Boyce.

Bar a few, Zoroastrians have never been good in recording their own history. This excellent book of 865 pages is not just a diaspora study but an integral book on Zoroastrian history of the last 100 years. It not only has substantial archival material, but also results of field-work covering a survey of 1,840 Zoroastrians all over the world, who have answered 170 questions in each questionnaire. The last 60 pages of the book is an analyses of the data gathered from the surveys. The book also has good maps of most of the places with Zoroastrian presence.

The term 'Diaspora' can loosely be described as the study of issues concerned with migration of a community or race. The term is ably explained by the author.

The book covers the Zoroastrian diasporas of Hong Kong and China, Karachi (before partition), East Africa, Europe (principally London), United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Being a non-Zoroastrian writer, the author has shown a remarkable insight and perspective in Zoroastrian matters - its strengths and weaknesses, its successes and problems, and all this with great sensitivity with a Zoroastrian perspective. It is neither over critical nor



Photograph courtesy Roshan Rivetna

over sympathetic. Throughout the author has highlighted the lofty teachings of Zoroaster.

The author has strived to base his book on historical data and archival material. In their absence, the author has relied on personal views and opinions, correspondence, accounts of individuals as well as the popular press, mainly *Parsiana*, local news, letters and WZO archives.

The history of each diaspora follows a particular pattern - first the political history of the place, then the history of the Parsis, followed by an analysis of the survey data. Possibly, the book devotes a considerable number of pages to the history of the places where the Parsis have settled.

There are instances, where some of the information in the book is factually incorrect, but they are minor in nature. For example, Mr Adi Doctor was never an editor of *Jame Jamshed*.

For a book of this magnitude, certain omissions are understandable. For example, in the chapter on Parsi politics in Bombay, two main figures in the last three decades have inadvertently been missed, namely, late Mr Rusi Mehta and his family and Mr Rustom Tirandaz - all Corporators of Bombay Municipality.

The book contains several short biographies of renowned Zoroastrians from Sir Jamshehdji Jeejeebhoy to the present



day. It also refers to contributions of little known Zoroastrians such as Mr H N Mody, who was instrumental in establishing the Hong Kong University.

The book succinctly covers major events that have caused a rift or a controversy in the community like the Mazgaon navjotes of 1882, the Roxan case of 1990, JRD Tata's funeral in 1993 and Neville Wadia's navjote in 1994, the movie *Wings of Fire*, Peterson's navjote, the growing influence of Dr Ali Jafarey and the recent controversy on dokhmas.

The findings of the survey are interesting, startling as well as revealing. They cover issues like inter-marriages, conversion, identity, wearing of *sadra-kasti*, attendance of non-Zoroastrians at religious ceremonies and funeral services, generational problems, tensions between the Iranis and Parsis and Orthodox versus Reformists.

The book covers The World Zoroastrian Congress at Houston and the endless debates about The World Zoroastrian Organisation, acrimony, debates and court battles in the various diasporas.

Prof John Hinnells has rendered a great service to the community through this important and significant work, for which the community is beholden to this inveterate scholar.



*Ervad Dr Ramiyar Parvez Karanjia, is a full-fledged priest from Athornan Boarding Madressa, Dadar. He has obtained his PhD in Avesta-Pahlavi from Bombay University through St Xavier's College, Mumbai.*

*He is the Principal of Athornan Madressa, Dadar, and Sir J J Z and Mullan Feroze Madressas (Institute for Indo-Iranian Studies). He gives talks all over the world on Zoroastrian religion and Iranian history to children, youths and adults.*

## *Arms and Armor from Iran: The Bronze Age to the Qajar Period,*

by Manouchehr Moshtagh Khorasani is, in one word, inspirational. As an academic whose work is referred to in the text, is undertaking active research in the subject area, and is teaching University courses in the archaeology and history of the Middle East and Central Asia, my knowledge of this vast field is strong (yet ever growing). I have no affiliations with the book. I was not consulted by the author or anyone affiliated with the book in any way. This is my personal opinion. As the foreword by Richard Dellar states, it "is a work that will immensely increase our knowledge and understanding of the arms and armour of Iran throughout the ages" (Khorasani, 2006, 13). I know it increased my knowledge greatly and I have not yet studied the contents of the book in great depth!

Mr Cooksey's contribution discussing the relationship between art, technology and long term cultural change is very important and a topic I am heavily involved with researching. Iranian and Persian weapons often fall under the topics of either Sasanian or Islamic arms. In Islamic studies, the Middle East and Arab influence is often stressed, whereas the influence of pre-Islamic Iranian and Central Asian lands is often ignored by scholars. Cooksey (p14) correctly states that the Arab conquest "did not swallow or overpower native culture and artistic traditions". The book illustrates that and, although the arrival of Islam influenced the art of Iran, it did not eradicate traditional artistic themes and styles. For example, the use of images of people and animal for decoration remain after the arrival of Islam particularly in the artwork of the people of Iran and Central Asia.

I find Dr Farrokh's section "Iran's Silent Legacy" to be an accurate short summary of the very complex situation of Persian history. It is well known that there are cultural connections between the early people of Iran and those of India. This is exemplified by the fact that Zoroastrianism (the religion of the Persia before Islam) and Hinduism (the religion of India) have the same roots. Although, I would have left out the suggestion that the so-called Aryan warriors of Iran "invaded" India, as the evidence of an "Aryan invasion" is a hot topic for debate. However, the influence of proto Indo-Europeans on India's culture is evident from the archaeological and historical literature. Furthermore, the influence of the Iranian Empires (Achaemenids, Parthians, Sasanians, in the sense of people who lived in that area under their rule, not an ethnic group) on world history has been downplayed in European scholarship. If it was not for the Persian Empires, much of the knowledge of "The Classical World" would have been lost.

A large part of scholarly research is reliant on the accuracy of work of others. I admire that the author does not reiterate all the myths and misinformation regarding "Damascus steel", but rather takes an objective and scholarly presentation of the available evidence. Too many publications state the same generalisations but do not

# Irani 'chai dukan' - tea shops

by yesmin madon

Karachi Zoroastrians reminisce on a lost culture

A Karachiite, having recently chosen to inhabit the cooler climes of the United States, reminisces about a childhood Irani Gujarati verse he picked up from somewhere:

*Chai-biscot na dukan bi kholech  
Irani sherbet piyech nay paich  
Iran mahra mader vatan chay  
Asli vatan – Iran!*

Another, also having left Karachi for the States, enjoying his superb Starbucks java, finds something missing yet from this exhilarating experience. It dawns on him – emerging from the innermost recesses of the palate of his mind – that he is craving for the excellent *garam chai* (that the Parsis of old unabashedly downed with a prominent slurp, often from the saucer itself), *batasas* and *khara biscuits* (brushing off the crumbs from their white *daglas*), and the *bun-maskas* that were the renowned fare of Bahman Irani and other tea shops, that so many Karachiites get nostalgic about, to this day! And where is the incessant chatter around the shop and around the owner's stand whence emerge the booming commands at the waiters to serve their orders faster than lightning! The other thing that this dreamer yearns for are the scrumptious *samosas* and the friendly company that he enjoyed as a college student in 'Meherwan's *dukan* at Gari Khata' during morning recess.

Irani tea shops were very much a part of the Karachi scene in the pre-partition years, and even much earlier; they were dotted all over city. For almost every new building that came up, there was an enterprising Irani ready to open shop on the ground floor. Generally, the Irani shop tea came ready with milk and sugar – this was the more delicious one; the frowned upon *gora sahab* version was the one that came in a tiny tea pot, a milk jug and sugar bowl separately.

The oldest of these ubiquitous joints, the **Jehangir Restaurant** dates back into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Jehangir Irani himself was known to have been churning an ice cream mould on a pavement across from his house in Sadar. A specialist confectioner from Bombay, working there, turned out the best Christmas cakes known in Karachi then. The confectioner then opened the later day famous P F Pereira bakery. Jehangir Restaurant still stands where it was, but now is no more in the hands of Irani Zoroastrians though it still bears the same name. This teashop became a must after late movies or early morning prayers for its excellent tea.

Sometime in 1934-35, two Bahais, Ardeshir (a former employee of Bahman Irani, and Aspandiar Irani opened the **Parisian Restaurant**. It has been said with certainty that the person, who came to be known as "Lawrence of Arabia", used to frequent this restaurant when the British were here as an occupying force. This shop sold quality bakery goods; but, not being content with just serving *chai* and *biscot*, for the first time, an Irani tea shop started serving cooked food: *dhansak* now made its debut in these circles. 'Parisian' is no longer a restaurant today, but not far from its earlier location, on Preedy Street, stands their bakery, still serving *curry-puffs*, *sukka batasas* and *biscot*. Go there, and quite likely, their old waiter – now sans all teeth – will recognize you and mumble a greeting.

During World War II, two more Irani cafes sprang up a little distance from each other on Frere Road : (i) **Cafe George** – whose speciality was *jelly-cream* amongst other favourites – was opened by a Bahai Meherwan Irani and partner Gustad Irani (formerly of Jehangir Restaurant), and (ii) **Fredericks Cafeteria**, noted for its patties, pastries and excellent *faluda* and other

[Having received a brief article on Mumbai's Irani tea shops, I felt why not do one on Karachi's Irani 'chai dukans', which unfortunately are no more. This article has become an archival piece of information, at least for us Karachi Zoroastrians, due to the extensive research the author has carried out. Sadly, tried as we did to find photographs of the old establishments, we were not successful. - Ed]

food, was opened by Fardoon Irani, a Bahai, who was a well-known personality in the racing circles of those days. He took a personal interest in the items churned out by his venture, he had employed the services of a superior confectioner, and made his famed chocolates himself. These two cafes are now no more.

Behli Irani, who lives in Karachi even today, says that out of interest, he too made chocolates calling them *Milco-milk*, and sold them from his home. And they were quite in competition with Frederick's own. Behli, once an employee of Bombay Tea Shop, and owner of **Cafe Lyric**, which he inherited from his father, Khudamurad Behram Irani, now leads a retired life, and as a hobby, much to the delight of his guests, serves his own home baked mouth watering biscuits of various types, which he stores in the big tin *ghee-dabbas* of old. He does not sell. A regular client of Cafe Lyric was so in love with their butter-fried eggs, (and because he couldn't get the same taste at home), he once carried the fresh eggs and butter from the cafe to his home; much to his regret, he still didn't get the eggs right! The Pan Am staff were regular customers who came here for their delicious *dhansak* or *kheema* and *gutli*.

The hardy Iranis who sat at the *galla* (cash counter) and served *chai-biscot* were a class by themselves. They generally conversed in Dari, a Farsi dialect, and their Gujarati, breaking all norms of grammar rules, and an accent so Iranian, that Parsis invariably used it as the butt of their jokes, much to the enterprising Irani's chagrin. It was quite common to go in an Irani teashop for a glass of water at no charge. One such incident records that when a thirsty chap broke a glass, the bearer called out, in no soft tones, "*Khaya piya kuch nahi, ek glass tora, bar anna laiv*". (Ate & drank nothing, broke a glass, take 12 annas)

In the early 1940s, on Burns Road, in a favourite haunt of collegians, **Avalon Restaurant**, allowed the students to have their lunch from their own home filled *tiffin* boxes. The friendly Irani would encourage

eating competitions, involving his biscuits and sponge cake pieces stored in huge glass jars. One such student – now an octogenarian – says they could down a jarful of these in record timing, though not very easily! It wasn't a piece of cake!

An aerated drink – Lavo – was a unique delicacy available here. It was a hybrid of the old Vimto and today's Coke. Only a few individuals were privileged to enjoy this taste as it was unknown to the coming generations due to Avalon's extinction.

The same person recalls another taste of the old times – the *milk rose* as made by **Cafe Victoria** that stood on Victoria Road opposite the now crumbled Hotel Metropole. The drink, made out of a yellow *rose sherbet* using thick milk, was lip-and-glass-lickin' good for the youngsters of those days. The owner, Ardeshir Khairabadi (Noshirwani), also gave birth to the **British Imperial Hotel** (the only British license holders) during WWII, opposite the Napier Barracks. This purely catered to the British soldiers serving tea, English breakfast and meals – fish-and-chips topping the list of popularity. The family lived upstairs in Braganza House. They also ran a four billiard-tables room for the English within the same premises. This very restaurateur later opened up a chain of related outlets, mainly in the neighbourhood of Empress Market. These included **Empress Bakery** with its *karak rotis*, **Empress Tea Shop** and billiard room, **Cafe Empress**, and **Empress Restaurant**, which was unique in its structure with no doors and windows; it remained open for 24 hours. A family member has it that late comers from the KGA dance hall often came here for their out-of-this-world *naan* and *kheema*. This was a popular joint in the area where travellers coming in from the interior used it to their advantage. One particular camel cart driver would deposit his ware at this corner of the footpath, and it had become so routine a practice that he didn't even have to 'ask' his camel to stop; the beast

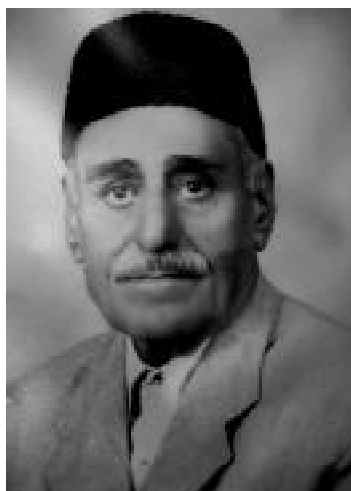
did it without being told! **Cantonment Tea Shop**, belonging to the same owner, found a location on the other side of the Cantonment Station, after crossing its bridge.

The British Imperial Hotel, after the British left, became the **Lucky Star Restaurant**, which was run by the partners Ardeshir, Sohrab and Jamshed Irani. This spot became the famous landmark of Karachi, and was ultimately sold off to a Muslim Iranian at the time of partition.

Ohja building, which today stands on its last legs, opposite Collector Baug, harboured the **Pehlavi Restaurant** owned by Faredun Mughani. It used to serve excellent food. The eatery has changed hands, and is now named Cafe Durakhshan by a Muslim owner.

The eldest son of Khudamurad Irani talks of his father's ownership of several teashops scattered over Karachi. Neither he nor his siblings are aware of the names, number and locations of these little joints. What he does recall is one name – **Irani Tea Shop** – which was housed in Baimai Pestonji's building in Jackson Bazaar in Keamari. The trusting owner had left his managers to run his shops, and would daily visit each on his bicycle to collect the day's income. Not difficult to guess what happened ultimately: he discovered he was being taken for a ride, to the extent that he couldn't bear his losses, and had to give up his enterprise.

The Karachi Parsis have, as their biggest item in their collective memory boxes, the unique culture of their favourite joint – the Boman Irani Tea Shop, as they called it. The owner, Bahman Abadan Irani, initially a darvish, found himself in a situation, which led him, with financial help of Jamshed Nusserwanjee Mehta, to start his humble venture of a tea shop. With diligence and hard work, he prospered and built his own **Bombay Tea Shop** on the corner of Somerset Street and Preedy Street. The side facing Preedy Street held



Bahman Abadan Irani, courtesy grandson Kayomars Faredoon Abadan

a long signboard displaying the name 'Boman Abadan Irani & Co.' The name Bahman, on the sign, was 'anglicized (to Boman) for the benefit of the British', says a grandson living in Karachi. This was the side opposite the to-date famous *phoolwallas* (garland sellers). The footpath hugging the shop on both sides was the vendors' site for

selling their belts, shoe polish, shoelaces, etc. Many a Parsi, keen on a shoeshine, would put his foot up, one after the other, on the shoe shiner's box for a brilliant job on their proud shoes!

The shop had two wings; the 'lordly' Zoroastrian patronized the side facing Somerset Street, and they sat there in the 'privacy' of partitioned booths (open on one side). The other locals went for their food and drink in the other wing facing Preedy Street. This was a big hall where no customer needed or wanted privacy, and where they paid a little less for their tea, etc.

Bahman Abadan became part of landed gentry and owned a farm at Malir, which turned out to be the favourite picnic spot for toddy guzzling Parsis. But it was his landmark shop, situated opposite the tramcar junction, which became the regular haunt of the general public before going to, and after coming back from work. They just had to get into the shop for the best cup of tea they had ever known! Upon the scribe's asking what made the *chai* that great, it came to light that his turnover and service were so fast that his samovar would yield about 40 cups of tea in five minutes! And he always had two samovars going at any one time. Of course, this aspect was supplemented by the use of good quality ingredients,

Granddaughter Shirin Irani writes to the Editor "My mum's grandfather, and my grandfather Boman Abadan Irani, both as young men left Kerman, Iran, by road. They were both orphans, extremely poor, and hitch hiked their way to India, where they lived on the streets, worked in the Irani restaurants in Bombay. They saved all those pennies and learned the trade of a tea shop and bakery, and were on their way to open their own business when, to keep their friendship strong, they tossed a coin between them. Boman Irani left Bombay and made his fortune in Karachi when he opened the Bombay Tea shop, and my mum's grandfather made his fortune in Bombay, and became well known as Khodadad Kermani, becoming a very rich man in those days. He built the Bombay race course, owned the Kermani Ice factory, and in Dadar they have the Khodadad Circle, named after him. He did not open a restaurant as Boman Irani, but both were very successful in business, from being penniless they became very rich and well known. These two men matched up my dad ShahBehram and my mum Poorin to get married because of their friendship, whose marriage lasted for 60 years."



Yesmin holds a master's degree in Microbiology, enabling her to work as a Quality Control Chemist, Chief Chemist, and Works Manager – in that order – in Karachi in a UK-based semi-pharmaceutical parent company, where she had her initial training in Hull. In 1985 she joined her alma mater as a teacher, six years later she became the Head Mistress in the 'O' Level section of The Mama Parsi Girls' Secondary School. After a break of a couple of years she became Principal of two Montessori's simultaneously having to quit once again due to family health problems. She was employed by the Oxford University Press as an editor for a brief period in 2005, and as an Executive Secretary for another short stint in 2006, by AGP – a pharmaceutical company. Her volunteer work kept her busy as the Joint Secretary for three years with KZBM, and for three years with KPI, from 2000 to 2006.

and the method of preparation. The owner himself blended the tea liked so well by his clientele.

This shop was another hub for punters discussing the weekend races, and on holidays the shop's family rooms would generally be crowded for the eagerly awaited *faluda* treat – the ice cream for which was made by the owner himself. He had his own bakery that produced the exquisite mince patties, cheesecakes, almond cakes, almond macaroons, the *khara biscot*, *batasas*, butter biscuits, and the unmatched ginger biscuits for which he insisted on mixing the ingredients himself. One had to be 'properly educated' in how to partake of and enjoy the delicacies – the *batasa* always had to be dunked in the tea before taking a bite, the bun bit into first, immediately followed by a gulp of tea, and the *khara biscot* could be enjoyed in either way.

The set-up had an old charm with wooden stands that stacked jars filled with biscuits and confectionery, and glass counters filled with cakes. At Christmas time, the shop was busy turning out fruit cakes bought as precious gifts for the discerning palate.

The decor was complete with huge mirrors on the walls, round or oval marble-top tables and bentwood chairs. Right in the centre was the cash counter where sat the burly Irani or a relative to collect payment. There was no system of cash memos; the bearer that served a table would shout out the amount to be paid – all those present inside would know what each person paid for his consumption. From behind their counter, even the sons of the patriarch, after his demise – Shah Behram or Faridoon – would be heard bellowing to the kitchen staff to hurry with this or that order.

Bahman Abadan is remembered as an intimidating personality and a strict disciplinarian of children and adults alike, and all his staff stood in awe of him. His *makan* was on top of his *dukan*, and

sources know that from above, he kept a vigilant eye on the cash drawer below his window by means of a tube-like structure he had specially built for this purpose. The back of the shop had a small office, which had a staircase leading up to the house. 'And,' says a grand daughter from California, full of intrigue, 'it was like a secret passage, and from the top window, we kids would stand and watch the workings of the bakery, and my dad sometimes making the *sherbet* himself. Another relative remembers a day when, in the absence of the grandfather, a grandson was turning cartwheels and exhibiting a perfect head balance in full view of the tea-sipping clientele. This could have passed off as mere amusement, but during these antics, the older grandson was soliciting payments of *do anna*, *char anna* from the patrons when grand dad chose to put in an appearance of the 'stage' floor. We leave it to the imagination of the reader to determine how outraged the old man was and what he did to the brats; they were severely grounded for sure!

ShahBehram was known to open his shop at 5:00am, when there was already a queue of eager Parsis waiting to get their morning bite of the *garam*, *garam bun-maskar* or *gutli-maskar* (buttered crisp bun). The *gutli* supply was exhausted by 9 o'clock, and the next lot would only be available the next morning.



ShahBehram Bahman Irani, courtesy of daughter Shirin

This much remembered chapter of the history of Karachi wound up upon the death of ShahBehram and Faridoon's mother. Around the year 1975, the sons sold off the shop, which after five years of the new ownership, was razed to the ground to make way for other commercial projects of the city.

Many tea shops still abound in Karachi, "but these *malbari* shops cannot be equated to our beloved Boman, Parisian, Cafe George, Frederick's and Jehangir's". Many have changed hands, and many no longer exist, and yet numerous *bhathiaras* have sprung up which can no longer cater to our 'superior taste'. ■■■■

Sources (emails and interviews):

Kayomars Abadan, Behli Irani, Rustom Irani, Shirin Irani, Kershaw Khambatta, Behram Mehri, Jehanbux Mehta, Virasp Mehta, Noshirwan Noshirwani.

# Owners

# Name of Establishment

# Location

Atlatoon Hamavandi, Faredoon Mehn and others	Central Coffee House	Victoria Road, next to Jabees Hotel
Ardesheer Irani (pre-partition) now Behram Mehri	Oriental Restaurant*	Shahrah-e-Iraq, Sadar
Ardesheer and Asfandiar Irani	Parisian Restaurant & Bakery* (only bakery)	Preedy Street
Ardesheer Khairabadi (Noshirwani)	British Imperial Hotel Cantonment Tea Shop Empress Bakery Café Empress Empress Restaurant Café Victoria	(present day Lucky Star) behind Cantt. Station opp Empress Market opp Empress Market Ghadiali Building, Sadar Victoria Road
Asfandiar, Jamshed and Shahrugh Irani	Café New York	Electric House, Elphinstone Street
Asfandiar Irani and Jehangir Mondli	A1 Restaurant*	Bunder Road
Bahman Abadian Irani, later Shah Behram & Faridoon (sons)	Bombay Tea Shop	Preedy Street/Somerset Street
Behram Hormazdarian and Sheriar Felfelli	Café Asiatic National Coffee House Café Victor*	opp Custom House opp Karachi Port Trust Merewether Tower
Fardun Irani (Bahai)	Frederick Cafeteria	Frere Road
Faredun Mujghani	Pahlavi Restaurant* (under new name Darakhshan)	Diag opp Kandawalla Building
Faridoon Irani	Café Royal	Street opp Empress Market where tramline turned towards Cantt. Station
Faridoon Kaikhosrowzadah & partner (up to 2003); now Kaikhushrow & 3 other partners	United Coffee House*	Talpur Road, off I.I. Chundrigar Road
Gustasp Garshasbi	Café Adil	Frere Road
Dinyar Irani	Café Firdausi*	opp old Godeon Cinema
Gustad Rustom Irani	Jehangir Restaurant*	Frere Street
Jamshed Irani (Bahai)	Elphinstone Restaurant	Elphinstone Street
Jamshed Irani & partners	Lucky Star Restaurant*	Mansfield Street
Kaikhushro Irani	Café High School*	diag opp Dow Medical College
Khudadad Irani	Café Ideal	next to old Rex Cinema
Khudadad and Rasheed Irani (brothers-in-law)	Avalon Restaurant Café Iran Rainbow Restaurant	opp NED College Said Manzil, Bunder Road opp Star Cinema, Bunder Road
Khudamurad Irani, later (son) Behli Irani	Café Lyric	Inverarity Road
Khudamurad Irani	Irani Tea Shop names unknown	Jackson Bazar, Kemari one in Soldier Bazar one at Kemari harbour, and other unknown locations
Khudaram Irani and Sheriar Irani	Shahpur Restaurant	street opp Empress Market, at corner turning left towards Sadar agiary
Meherwan Irani & partners (Bahais)	Café George	Frere Road
Meherwan Irani	Café Saadi	Pakistan Chowk
Shahbehram and partner	Yazdani Bakery	Soldier Bazar
Sohrab Shishbaradaran	Café Crystal* Yakli Bakery* Coffee Club*	opp Muhammadi House near old Sezdegar, Sadar Muhammadi House 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor

\* denotes eateries which are functioning



# Mumbai's Irani hotspots

by sarika mehta

Courtesy, The Hindu Business Line, Friday Oct 6, 2006, ePaper

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/life/2006/10/06/stories/2006100600020100.htm>

Largely frequented by the working class, these cafes are a big draw because they are reasonably priced and hygienic.

Bollywood, BSE, *vada pav*, *dabbawallas* ... these are some of the more talked about elements of Mumbai. However, this melting pot is also home to many sub-cultures such as the quaint and charming Irani cafes that dot the city. Churning out mouth-watering fare for almost a century now, die-hard customers continue to drop in for the crisp butter *kharis*, layered salted biscuits, and the Irani *cha*, a thick overly milky, sweetened tea delicately flavoured with cardamom.

**The Sassanian Bakery and Boulangerie** at Dhobi Talao in Mumbai has been whisking delicious omelettes-*maska pav* (Rs 25) and *akuri* (a scrambled egg preparation perked up with spices) since 1913.

Sharook K., one of the partners, explains that the bakery got its name from the Sasanian dynasty of Iran. At one time these Irani cafes were popular hangouts for the affluent set, upcoming writers and even film stars.

Sassanian was a favourite with the derby participants, jockeys and racecourse dealers.

Many of the Irani cafes still offer a mind-boggling and innovative spread of sweet and salted biscuits like rawa (semolina) coconut, til rawa coconut, the traditional *nan-khatai* (sweet, crisp and flaky Irani biscuits), Madeira-cake (tutti-fruity biscuits), all priced modestly between Rs18 and Rs20 at Sassanian. Mihir Mehta, a student, swears by the vegetable puff at Sassanian. "I have it almost thrice a week," he says.

**Kyani & Co** is another popular Irani cafe in Mumbai. "*The cherry cream custard here is to die for,*" says Shahnaaz, a regular. At Rs18 it is indeed good for two — thick, creamy, cold and just right with the cherry on the top! The cheese *khari* biscuits, coconut jam and milk biscuits are the other favourites here.

Glass cabinets lined with colourful scones, mawa cakes and the all-time favourite plum cakes beckon you to step in for a bite. The kheema and mutton patties at these places are the best, as most non-vegetarians would vouch.

"*The good part is that the prices have not changed drastically over the years,*" says Patel, a Kyani regular



Inside the Sassanian Bakery & Boulangerie since 1931

The classic format of these cafes is basic with a subtle colonial touch; high ceilings with black, bent wooden chairs (now cane in some cafes), wooden tables with marble tops and glass jars that allow a peek into the goodies they hold. With huge glass mirrors on the walls to create a feeling of space, visitors are greeted with eagerness and a whiff of baking. The speed of operations is impressive and service quite hassle-free.

for 25 years. There is nothing fancy about the place but the ambience is infectious.

**Olympia** at Churchgate dishes out excellent mutton kheema and pav, which is popular among the college kids in this area. *"It is one of the most delicious and affordable meals around,"* says Pooja, a student. Largely frequented by the working class, these cafes are a big draw because they are reasonably priced and hygienic. **Britannia** at Ballard Estate largely serves authentic Parsi meals and is on the hot-list for corporate executives. The fragrant berry pulao, veg/chicken dhansak and biryani are staple fare here. The dhansak, a spicy broth acclaimed for its nutritive values with lentils, pulses and veggies/ chicken, is served with fried potato crisps.

A Parsi meal is usually never complete without the legendary Dukes raspberry drink. This is the community favourite and not easily available except near Parsi colonies and at the Parsi Gymkhana. The *Lagan nu custard*, cool and pamper the taste buds at the end of a spicy meal. A lavish meal for two at Britannia would cost Rs150-200. The Parsi bhonu (meal) is now available at most Irani restaurants.

The people who started these joints are Zoroastrians who migrated to India from Iran at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Legend has it that in their early days in India, the Iranis (the second generation of migrants) worked in Parsi (the first generation of migrants) homes and later gathered in the evenings to reminisce about their homeland. At one such gathering, one of the men apparently served tea to the rest and charged a small amount for it. This sowed the idea for Irani cafes.

With the closing down of **Bastani**, a popular Irani joint opposite Kyani in Mumbai, the entry of fast foods such as pizzas at many Irani cafes, and the establishment of in-house permit rooms, it is evident that the younger generation of Iranis is not interested in preserving the legacy of the cafes in their traditional format. If that were to happen, Mumbai would lose a part of its heritage and cultural legacy. ■■■■



Kyani & Co



# Non-Zoroastrians in Zoroastrian percepts : Do they have a place?

by adi j davar

Part I was published in the last Hamazor, Issue3/06

## Synthesis of Part I

It summarized the ethnocentric view of the faith held by many in our community, and urged respectful and scholarly analyses of its various rationales. It then provided evidence on the topic which is not easily available to most Zoroastrians, to enable them to weigh it in the balance of their thinking against the traditional evidence they have, and reach their own conclusions. Towards that goal, the surviving portion of those Gathas which Zarathustra composed while spreading his teachings, were extensively cited to examine the following questions: (i) Did Zarathustra envisage his faith as a universal one which anyone, anywhere, could choose to adopt, or as one available only to the ethnic descendents of those who came to listen to him? (ii) Did he discriminate between men and women regarding the pursuit of his faith? (iii) Was he emphasizing that both could do so, by attaching male and female gender "attributes" to the Supreme Creator whom he called Ahura Mazda? (iv) Did his Gathas envisage reincarnation, which could validate the ethnocentric belief that only persons born of two Zoroastrian parents could practice his religion, because Ahura Mazda reincarnated persons as Zoroastrians in their last birth on earth? Part I concluded, that based on the evidence of those Gathas, it seemed clear that Zarathustra wanted his faith to be chosen by any and all persons, man and women alike, and there is no concept of reincarnation in his teachings.

Other beliefs underlying the ethnocentric view will now be examined in Part II.

## Part II

### POST-GATHIC SCRIPTURES & RELIGIOUS WRITINGS

Let us turn to religious scriptures and writings subsequent to the Gathas and learn what they say. Influences different from the Prophet's time, are reflected in them. Limited space, however, permits a cursory examination.

Some years after Zarathustra died, syncretism began in the faith. The first of the compromises reached over Zarathustra's teachings, are reflected in the Haptanhaiti Gathas. Thereafter, several Yashts were composed in the ancient Avestan language. Among the oldest, is the **Farvardin Yasht**. In **its Karde 31**, Zarathustra's birth is joyously welcomed and then 250 men and women from many lands and ethnicities are venerated for joining him in his mission of spreading his teachings to their lands and people. Indeed, the same lines are repeated in many subsequent Yashts composed centuries after Zarathustra.

A later **Yasna 42.6** reveres the deeds of **"priests who went to remote lands to**

**promote Righteousness among their people, many never to return."** Yasna 61.2 speaks of priests and disciples spreading the faith to people of far away lands. **Yasna 9.24** talks of a foreign ruler, Keresani, preventing Iranian priests from visiting his kingdom to preach Zoroastrianism.

Even in the more recent Pazand language, there is a prayer that most Zoroastrians recite daily: "*Dade din beh mazdayasni agahi ravai, gao frangani bad, hafta keshwar zamin. Aeidun bad*". The respected Parsi-Zoroastrian Gatha scholar Irach Taraporewala freely translates it thus: "**May the knowledge, practice and fame of the commandments of the Mazdayasni religion increase over the world, and pervade the people of all seven regions**".<sup>8</sup>

In another daily prayer, also in Pazand, Zoroastrians pray: "*Din berast, va dorost, ke kodai, bar khalaq ferestadeh, in hast, ke*

zarhost, avordeh hast". A Parsi-Zoroastrian scholar, F Rustomjee (in his *Daily Prayers for Zoroastrians*, 1976) freely translates it thus:

**"A religion that is noble and just, as well as complete and effectual, which Ahura has made known for the people of this world, such it is as Zarathustra has brought."**

A scripture, the **Dinkard**, written from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century AD many years after these daily prayers, and which is often quoted by those holding the traditional view, says:

**"Ormazd has commanded Zarathustra that His excellent religion should be spread among all races of mankind throughout the world."**<sup>9</sup>

As the eminent Zoroastrian priest-scholar Dasturji Maneckji Dhalla succinctly summarizes in his **History of Zoroastrianism** (pp. 692-693, 1963): **"From the Gathas down to the other Yasnas, Visparad, Yashts and Vendidad and throughout the entire Avesta-Zend, clear and unambiguous commandments to spread the faith can be found. Several books composed in the Pahlavi language of the later day Sasanians, also strictly enjoin acceptance of non-Zoroastrians. ... The Dinkard states that the most virtuous deed a non-Zoroastrian can perform, is to relinquish his own religion and embrace the Zoroastrian faith. One can mount evidence upon evidence that the theology of the faith as preached by Zarathustra, and for centuries after him, does not proscribe conversion to Zoroastrianism. Rather, the theology envisions it and commands it"**.

#### Practices followed by Zarathustra & his immediate disciples

Did the Prophet and his immediate disciples practice the theology of spreading their universal faith? In **Yasna 46. 1**, Zarathustra laments about not finding any converts except his cousin Maidhyoimaongha, after years of preaching: **"To what land shall I turn? Where shall I bend my steps? From self-reliant pupils and friends, they**

**keep me separated apart. Not one of the co-workers brings me any joy. And all the Rulers, hold on to Untruth. How shall I then please Thee O Ahura Mazda?"**

But being a realist, he travelled to countries distant from his homeland in search of men of power who would follow his teachings. His first success was with the powerful Fryana princes and their tribe. They accepted his teachings and became his allies in propagating them (**Yasna 46.12**). This is telling, as this was a Turanian tribe living on the northern side of the ancient Iranian plateau and were hereditary enemies of the clan kingdoms, perhaps ethnically different from them, living to their south. He then proceeded southwards to Zabol, the capital of the Kyanian kingdom lying in the Helmand valley of what is the Sistan province of modern Iran. There, he found his first kingly convert, King Vishtaspa. His Queen, family, courtiers and eventually, his subjects accepted his teachings. As Max Mueller (in **Sacred Books of the East, Vol. 23, p204**) writes: **"The King and Royal sons then ... wandered to Arum (Asia Minor) and Hindee (India) outside the realm, for propagating the religion."**

While in Vishtaspas's court, Zarathustra dialogued with and won over sages from other lands who had initially come to challenge his religious philosophy. They eventually not only accepted it, but also propagated it on return to their homelands. Those whose names appear prominently in Greek writings are Tutianush (a Greek) and Hindu Brahmins, Vyas (Bias) and Changranghacha - who on his return to India initiated 80,000 Hindus into the faith.<sup>10</sup> Among the 250 men and women venerated in the said **Karde of the Fravardin Yasht** for spreading Zarathustra's religion in other lands, are Saena from China and Gaotamahe – the 5<sup>th</sup> of the 7 rishis mentioned in the Rig Vedas.

Much as many Zoroastrians still resist the idea of accepting non-Zoroastrians into the faith, they could perhaps reflect on, and consider, the following questions: While all

persons in Zarathustra's time were born in a polytheistic milieu, including his disciples Maidhyoimanongha, Frashaostra and Jamaspa, the Turanian Fryana princes and tribesmen, Vishtaspa, his wife, their family and subjects - were they still not non-Zoroastrians when Zarathustra initiated them into the faith? Did the nomadic tribes, who roamed from the Caucasus in the west to Bactria in the east and whom the Prophet and his disciples also initiated into Zoroastrianism, not have ethnicities other than Aryan? Is it irrelevant that men and women from other nations and cultures were also persuaded to give up worshipping deities, and join the faith? Do such actions not show that Zarathustra and his disciples wanted men and women from all lands to have a place in Zoroastrianism?

The likely rebuttal might be: "such questions are irrelevant, since those holding the traditional view are talking about acceptance of adherents of monotheistic faiths after Zarathustra's; Zoroastrian scriptures and tradition forbid their acceptance". However, the sample of post-gathic scriptures mentioned earlier in this paper, does not seem to forbid it. But one should always be open to being enlightened about other scriptures which specifically do.

#### Historical practices after Zarathushtra, upto 18<sup>th</sup> century AD

Perhaps the support for the ethnic belief can be found in traditions established after the times of Zarathustra and his disciples. Ample historical evidence - stretching over many subsequent centuries - suggests however, that Zoroastrian practice was to accept non-Zoroastrian men and women of differing ethnicities from many lands into the faith, not the other way around. Let us briefly recapitulate this evidence.

After the Kyanian king, his family and subjects espoused Zarathustra's teachings, Zoroastrian priests travelled from Sistan through the Khorasan Gap to Central Asia. They persuaded people of other nationalities living there, to accept the religion. It then progressed eastwards

across the Pamirs, to Chinese Turkistan (modern China's Xingjian province). Zoroastrian Sogdian traders who plied the Silk Road did this. Taking their families and priests, they established base stations along the road, to facilitate their long and arduous journeys. Is it credible that over the centuries, these traders and their progeny did not intermingle with the natives of the various nations along the Silk Road, or that their priests did nothing to spread the faith?<sup>11</sup>

That Zoroastrianism took root and spread for centuries in that part of the world, is partly corroborated by Sir Harold Bailey's work. It related to 6th century BC Buddhism, in the Khotan, Khasgar and Tarim basins of the said Xingjian province. He unearthed texts which indicate that before the advent of Buddhism, Zoroastrian beliefs had dominated the region and some of its concepts were deeply and inextricably embedded in Khotanese Buddhism.<sup>12</sup>

The practice of Zoroastrianism must have been extensive in East Asia for over many centuries and thereafter. Otherwise an ancient Chinese logographic manuscript "**Sei Pein Nein Pau**", from the reign of Emperor Ling Wang (571-545 BC) of the Chou dynasty in North China, would hardly have specifically mentioned the prevalence of Zoroastrianism before the subsequent emergence of Confucianism.

It was **only around 559 BC**, or nearly twelve hundred years after Zarathustra preached, that Zoroastrianism returned to what is modern Iran. It did so when Cyrus the Great of Media conquered Sistan and began establishing the Persian Achaemenian Empire, with Zoroastrianism as state religion. As that Empire expanded, so did the faith. It first moved westwards throughout the rest of modern Iran including Pars. It then spread to Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and up to Greece, as well as southwards across the Arabian peninsula, Israel, Egypt, Libya and Ethiopia. The trend continued with the successor Persian Parthian and Sasanian Empires, both of which declared Zoroastrianism as their state religion.

But despite being the state religion, it was not imposed by most of these Zoroastrian kings on their conquered non-Zoroastrian subjects. Nor did their priests (Magi) proselytized it among them. On the contrary, they adopted the prudent policy of allowing them to worship their own deities and initiating them into the faith only if they chose to do so. Those who served Zoroastrian families were also allowed to join the faith, if they so decided. That appears to be the Zoroastrian tradition during these three Empires.

None of these Empires observed the rule of primogeniture for kingly succession. Before risking his life in major battles, a king often named a successor from among his sons, or generals, who were not necessarily born of Zoroastrian wives. They ruled as king, when he died. The satraps of the Empires were also known to have taken non-Zoroastrian wives, and some of their children became provincial Zoroastrian kings. Daughters were given in marriages to non-Zoroastrian kings and princes to forge political alliances. Their children ruled or governed those kingdoms as Zoroastrians.<sup>13</sup> Is it plausible to think that lower-level Zoroastrian administrators, or commoners, did not follow the kingly or satrap practice of marrying non-Zoroastrian spouses and raising their children in the faith?

A few specific historical examples of such practice, **as late as those in the Sasanian era**, are given in the *Shahnameh* (Warner, Vol.VII, p. 139) and by **Mary Boyce** (Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs & Practices, pp.53, 54, 97, 111, 124, 139, 143, 1979): the Sasanian King Vahram V (421-39 AD) entrusted his Indian Hindu bride to the high priest of the revered Adar Gushnasp fire temple to undergo purification and initiation into the faith: one of the last Sasanian kings, Khosrow II (621-628 AD) married Shirin – a Christian – and their son, was the Zoroastrian King Kavad II.

Dastur Kirdir, the principal compiler of the Avesta-Zend of the Sasanian era and which is considered as the “main Zoroastrian scripture” by the traditional Zoroastrians,

records that while accompanying Shahpur I in his wars, he found sacred fires in Syria, Cilicia, Pontus, Armenia, Georgia and Albania, tended by priests to serve the needs of those who practiced Zoroastrianism in those lands. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cappadocia (eastern Turkey) and Georgia were Zoroastrian until they adopted Christianity after 300 AD.

Professor Humbach established from multilingual inscriptions on coins of the 750 AD vintage (i.e., a century after the Arab conquest of the Persian Sasanian Empire) that the Turkic kings of Kabul (Afghanistan) and their subjects had not become Muslim and still adhered to Zoroastrianism. To this ethnic mixture of men and women espousing the faith **after the Sasanian Empire ended**, one should add those in modern Kyrgyzstan, southern Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. They remained Zoroastrian until the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, before becoming predominantly Moslem.

Looking further eastwards again, it seems that those practicing the faith were numerous enough for Chinese records to talk about ministers for Zoroastrian matters, during the Northern Wei and Sui dynasties **(386-618 AD – a period almost co-terminus with the Sasanian Empire)**. Three centuries later, the noted Arab historian Masudi visited China, in 905 AD. His annals talk of seeing Zoroastrian fire temples and meeting Persians having Chinese Zoroastrian families. He also records that they were descendants of Piruz (son of the last Sasanian King Yazdegard III) and his small army that was defeated by the Arabs, and who were given refuge by the Tang emperors in Ch'ang-an (modern Xian).<sup>14</sup> In one of his articles, Professor Humbach also mentions that he found in a tomb of that period in Xian, Pahlavi inscriptions in Chinese dedicated by a Chinese dignitary to the memory of his Chinese Zoroastrian wife. Published Chinese archeological work since the 1980s, is increasingly unearthing more and more of such evidence. A Chinese text, **Yao Kuan**, probably written later **around**



**1131AD** in the Sung dynasty, clarifies that Zoroastrianism was first called “Pai Hou” (Fire Faith) and later corrected to “Hou Hein” (Heavenly Faith).

Let us now turn to the practices of Zoroastrians who fled not Pars (as many Zoroastrians still believe), Parthia (modern Turkmenistan). They ultimately settled in 936 AD in Sanjan, India and were called Parsis.

Little is recorded of their first few hundred years, except in a 16<sup>th</sup> century historical poem, *Qissan-e-Sanjan*. Perhaps more to the point are the records of many missions sent by Parsi-Zoroastrians between 1478-1773 to Iran, to seek guidance on the religion and religious practices from its Dasturs. The questions and answers are collated in twenty six **Rivayats**. On questions relating to the acceptance of those of other faiths into Zoroastrianism, the replies were that Zarathustra had thrown open its gateways to all humanity and hence, there was no objection to performing navjotes of non-Zoroastrians serving Zoroastrian families and who wished to join the faith, or of children of mixed marriages.<sup>15</sup> Does this guidance not make it implicit that there is no objection to performing a marriage between a Zoroastrian mother or father of such a child to his/her non-Zoroastrian parent, or navjotes of the latter?

Further, there is ample evidence that over the last 400 years, Zoroastrians on the Indian sub-continent took Hindu, Christian and Moslem women as wives or mistresses, and some initiated their children into the faith. Those who went for trade to China, Japan, Thailand and the Far East and settled there, married Buddhist, Shinto or Muslim women. Their children were often initiated into Zoroastrianism, and some even did missionary work.<sup>16</sup>

However, less clear evidence is available about marriages between Iranian-Zoroastrians and Muslim men or women, or whether children of such unions were raised as Zoroastrians. Zoroastrians did live

persecuted lives in Iran until the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But since the Iranian dasturs replied in the Rivayats that such practice was permissible, it seems logical to assume that some must have done so, despite the fear of persecution by Iran’s Muslim rulers?

In essence, the weight of historical practice and tradition over centuries after Zarathustra’s time until 18<sup>th</sup> century AD, suggests that: (i) some proselytization was pursued; (ii) those of other ethnicities or faiths, who wanted to embrace Zoroastrianism, were allowed to do so; (iii) children of mixed marriages as well as non-Zoroastrian spouses were initiated into the faith; and (iv) such practices were followed as much by Persian kings and noblemen, as by commoners. In other words, the tradition was that non-Zoroastrians had a place in the practice of Zoroastrianism.

#### Anthropological antecedents, before & after Zarathustra, of his followers

Is there a genuine anthropological basis for the ethnic view of Zoroastrianism that: the faith can be practiced only by those born of two Iranian and Parsi parents, because they are descendants of Aryans to whom Zarathustra preached; and therefore, acceptance of non-Zoroastrians into the faith would adulterate their Aryan and Iranian ethnic heritage? Let us explore this.

As indicated earlier, there was no country like modern Iran at the time Zarathustra and his disciples preached. The area known today by that name, was then divided into a number small clan and tribal kingdoms. Zarathustra’s first adherents, the Turanian Fryana princes and tribe, were arch enemies of different ethnic tribes living south of them in that area. Vishtaspa’s Kyanian kingdom lay around its eastern border, and included not only today’s Sistan but also lands in modern Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Its subjects therefore included Iranian and non-Iranian tribes and clans. Their language was the Gathic dialect of the ancient Avestan language, in which Zarathustra composed his Gathas.

However, the polytheistic tribes and clans in what is modern Iran spoke different languages, including the Semitic Elamite one.

Indeed, among the 16 countries mentioned as being created by Hormazd in the **1<sup>st</sup> chapter of the Vendidad** (written in the late Parthian-early Sasanian times), Pars is not even mentioned. This is telling, because those holding the ethnic view of the faith, believe Pars to be their Iranian homeland.<sup>17</sup> Pars derived its name from the Parsua tribe, which lived - according to 835 BC Assyrian records - south of Lake Uremia in southern Russia from 700 BC until it moved around 900 BC southwards to settle in Parsuash (later abbreviated to Pars) on the Iranian plateau,<sup>18</sup> under Semitic Elamite rulers.

The **Fravardin Yasht**, a prayer centuries older than the *Vendidad*, also names tribes who accepted Zarathustra's teachings. They included the Airyas (Aryans), Tuiryas (Turanians), Sairimas, Sainies and Dahaes, and countries unknown to recorded history.<sup>19</sup> **Herodotus** lists three leading tribes: Maspians, Marphians and Parsagades, and four small ones: Germanii, Mardii, Panthialaei and Sagatti. This was then the mixed ethnic landscape, not Aryans alone, in which the Prophet addressed his teachings.

When Cyrus melded such tribal and clan kingdoms and contiguous nations into his Persian Achaemenian Empire centuries thereafter, it was a melting pot of many nations and cultures. Stretching from the Hindu Kush to Greece, Ethiopia and Arabia, that Empire absorbed voluntary converts from those lands. After Alexander defeated the Achaemenians, the Seleucid Greeks ruled their Empire. They ousted the Parthians, who were not Aryans, but ruled as Zoroastrians. That added the Greeks and Parthians to the ethnic cocktail.

Hence, by the time the Sasanians from Pars defeated the Parthians in 232 AD, even they were themselves not pure Aryans. The Empire they won, was a crucible in which several cultures and ethnicities of successive

kingdoms and empires had been melted over the preceding 2,000 years. Besides, as indicated earlier, those who settled in Sanjan, originated from Parthia (today's Turkmenistan), not Pars. Yet, many Parsi-Zoroastrians still think of themselves as legatees of pure Aryan blood under the belief that their forebears came from Pars. Is it correct to do so? Each one can decide that for oneself.

It seems that to stand against acceptance of non-Zoroastrians into the faith on the grounds of "tradition" or practice, is a matter of misplaced ethnic pride and insufficient knowledge of anthropological facts. It has little to do with reality or Zarathustra's vision that all mankind could, if they so chose, become believers in the revelations of Auhra Mazda.

(to be continued)



#### Notes & References (numbering cont. from Part I)

8. A Few Daily Prayers of the Zoroastrians, 1959. Some Zoroastrian scholars aver that "keshwars" should not be translated as "regions", since 6 of them are of the evanescent world and only the 7<sup>th</sup>, "Khwanirath Bami" - at their center - is of the material world on this earth. Even then, one can logically conclude that this prayer invokes the reciter to pray that Zarathustra's teachings should pervade the entire evanescent and earthly worlds, not some lands in it.
9. Madan D.M., Ed., Dinkard, Bk. 5.14, p.12, 1976
10. Dhalla, op. cit., pp. 455, 456; Wadia J., Spitma Zarathustra, 1967, as quoted by Homji H., O Wither Parsis, p. 6, 1978
11. Malandra W., Introduction to the Ancient Iranian Religion, p. 26, 1982; Boyce Mary, History of Zoroastrianism, Vol. 2, p.73, 1973
12. Bailey H., The Culture of the Sakas in Ancient Iranian Khotan, pp. xxii, 48, 81, 92-97, 1982
13. Karaka D.F., History of the Parsis, Vol. 2, p.25, 1884; the infamous Cleopatra was the granddaughter of the Zoroastrian Parthian King Mithradates II through his daughter Cleopatra Tympane whom he married off to Pharaoh Ptolemy XII Auletes of Egypt
14. Cited by Balsara R.P., Highlights of Parsi History, p. 13, 1963
15. Dhalla, op. Cit., pp. 687-693
16. Reinaud's Abulfeda, quoted by Karaka, op. cit., p. 27 note E
17. Cama K.R., Collected Works, Vol. 1, p. 6
18. Herzfeld, E, Iran in the Ancient Near East, 1941; Ghirshman R., Iran from the Earliest Times to the Islamic Conquest, 1961
19. Boyce, op. cit., pp. 39, 40



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

provide the evidence or the sources of the information. In my view this is one of the great strengths of the book ... it concentrates on primary sources of information, texts and objects. For an academic like me, this is wonderful and it is what makes the book inspirational. It inspires me to undertake new paths of research. Even a book this size does not answer all the questions about the Arms and Armor of Iran. Indeed it would be sad if it did ... it would leave no room for new insights and debate. In one passage, the author states that one of my research statements is not entirely correct (p 102). Does this upset me? Does it make me less of a scholar, no. Quite the opposite. It shows that my research has been read, considered, and built upon!

Are all the dates of manufacture of the objects correct? Perhaps yes, perhaps no. Dating blades can be tremendously difficult; blades were reused, new grips, new styles, old "revival" styles etc. Unless an object has an unquestionable provenance, the date is debatable from an academic standpoint. Those who find fault with any information present in the book should research where the author gathered that information from, and prove the information wrong, rather than basing your judgment on your opinion, rather than on hard evidence and facts. No true scholar minds being proven incorrect, provided they did the best they could with the information that was available to them. Research is all about challenging existing ideas, assumptions and preconceptions.

Unfortunately, many of us will not be able to visit Iran and see the objects for ourselves. Apart from the production of a CD where I could enlarge the photos to see small details, the author gives us the next best thing. While some of the photographs may not be perfect, I am glad they are given. Having taken photographs of swords in foreign museums myself, I am well aware that time is often at a premium. (Once, I had one hour to document, photograph and sample 18 blades!). One takes as many photographs as one can for documentation, because one is well aware that the opportunity may never arise again. The result can often be "less than perfect" photographs, however, I would much rather see a imperfect photograph than none at all or, the ever frustrating and almost useless, single photograph of the overall object with no close-ups!

Personally, I do not like the use of the term "wootz" in many of the descriptions of the blade's metal. The term implies an Indian origin for the steel. The text gives many examples of the production of crucible steel (pulad) in Iran and neighboring regions. The term crucible steel should have been consistently used until more research allows us to confidently state where the steel was made.

As a person who does most of her reading on public transportation I do feel the book may have benefited for being in two volumes. However, the use of a Table Mate II (as seen on TV) eliminated the weight issue and allowed me to take notes without having to balance the book on my legs. Perhaps, if the publishers mistook the book as a "coffee table book" the size would be justified, but it is a scholarly publication which will be used by all those interested in the Arms and Armor of Iran, for many years to come. My only protest is the book leaves me wanting more (like a good meal or a visit from an old friend). The early Persian and Sasanian blades beg me to analyse them, to determine if they are crucible "Damascus steel". I want the complete translation of Omar Khayyam Neishaburi, not a teaser! It inspires me by highlighting avenues of research which I want to undertake. The book provides a strong reliable foundation upon which further scholarly research can be built.

Reviewed by Dr Ann Feuerbach  
(courtesy CAISnews@aol.com)



## *Aryan revival in Tajikistan*

August – September 2006

Excerpts from the report sent by Dame Dr Prof Meher Master-Moos, President, Zoroastrian College, Mumbai, who led the delegation

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Thousands of years ago in Ariyana Vaeja, Pourushasp and Doghdo, the parents of Asho Spitama Zarathushtra lived on the banks of a river, presently known as the Dargoh river, flowing through Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, where the birth of our Holy Paegamber Saheb took place. These are the ancient historical lands of Saka, Chorasmia, Soghdia, Balkh and Bactria, where the historical events recorded in our Avestan texts of Yashts and Vendidad and the Shahnameh of Firdausi, actually occurred during the Peshdadian and Kyanian dynasty epochs. To the north is the Syr Daria, to the south the Amu Darya, and in between the mighty Zorovshon rolls its gold laden waters into the orchards of Central Asia. In recent times during the past decade and a half, after the former USSR gave independence to its Republics, these lands are known by the names of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. Uzbekistan lays claim to being the birthplace of Paegamber Saheb and Tajikistan as being the place where he passed away from planet Earth. As is stated in the Avesta, Asho Zarathushtra from his birthplace in the north (what later became Sogdia and Uzbekistan) walked southwards to Balkh and Bactria to the Kyanian kingdom of Kai Vishtasp, (what later became known as present day Tajikistan).

Modern Tajik people are proud that Zarathushtra first taught his Divine Message to their ancestors, to the Court of King Vishtasp. They are proud of their ancient "Kyani Tokhum." This fact was visible repeatedly throughout the Republic celebrations, during all the events and stadium parades which always commenced with the scene of Zarathushtra holding the holy fire.

### 2006 THE PRESENT SCENE: MAKING HISTORY

The ZC delegation consisted of nine persons, five from India, two from Iran, one from Canada and one from Australia.

The Tajikistan government had invited other Zoroastrians from various countries including the daughter of late Mr Faridoon Zartoshty and many other non Zoroastrian persons, professors and scholars; the total official "Hukumat Mehman" list was over a hundred persons; the President invited all of us for dinner at the President's Palace at Dushanbe and next day at his hometown Kulab, where we were flown by special planes and given a right royal welcome.

Voroh Village at over 23,000ft, in this tiny ancient Zarathushtrian village our mobeds performed a Jashan in the chill mountain air in full view of the entire village, representatives of the Penjikant Mayor's office and archaeologists of the Sarazm 5,500 years old Firetemples excavations. These Sogdian people openly said "we have ancient Zarathushtrian blood flowing in our veins".

Official Government Republic anniversary programme in Dushanbe and Kulab

In every speech President Emomaly Rahmonov exhorted people to follow the ethical teachings of Zarathushtra, whom he described as the first "Hero" of Tajikistan. At the Government parades in Kulab and Dushanbe, the Opening Ceremony depicted Zarathushtra in front of a huge fire reciting manthras; scenes from the Vendidad were enacted - the long horns blew the power of manthras all over the country.

The walls of the cement factory at Dushanbe are decorated with 110 scenes of Avesta and Shahnameh epic stories including pictures of Jamshed Padshah, Asho Zarathushtra, Avesta scriptures and Asho Farohar.

In Dushanbe, the Government has given grant of land to Mr Sassanfar from France, to construct a Zoroastrian Cultural Centre cum Darbe Meher; and also in Istaravshon, where his building is already under construction facing the Mayor's office.



### Excerpts from Ervad Khushroo Fali Madan's impression on his trip to Uzbekistan & Tajikistan

**M**y main aim and purpose of going there as a mobed was to support the Zarathushtis living there, by teaching them Zoroastrian culture, rituals, Avesta prayers, etc. When we started our trip, the very first thing impressed me in the plane from Delhi to Tashkent was an article I read on Zoroastrianism in the Uzbekistan Airways Inflight magazine. What a wonderful coincidence and what a lovely and appropriate Zarathushti start of our journey.

While crossing the Oybek border to enter Tajikistan from Uzbekistan the funniest sight was a donkey cart, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century carrying our luggage. The poor beast of burden was overloaded with our 27 bags, big and small, that had to be heaved through the road customs and security checkpoint on the Uzbek side of the border.

In Khujand, their Mayor's office gave us a right royal welcome, as indeed did all the Mayors and Mayoresses in Aini, Istaravshan, Penjikant and Kulab. The Khujand Mayor's office sent a representative to the border with a minibus to escort us and our baggage into Tajikistan where we stayed at the lovely countryside residence of a very good Zarathoshti, Prof Rustom Fuzaylov.

We consecrated the actual place, ground purification ceremony, (by performing afargan of Aspandarmad Ameshaspand, etc.) where a Fire Temple (Atash Dadgah) will be enthroned shortly. It is a lovely place, located near a lake, in an orchard of the biggest, reddest pomegranate trees and greenery. This moment, my joy knew no bounds and I consider myself very lucky to have done such a wonderful work of our holy prophet Zarathushtra.

The scenes on the way from Khujand to Istarafshan and in Aini and Penjikant, were fantastic - rivers, snow-peaked mountains, greenery, you name it and it was there. My colleagues who had earlier visited Switzerland and USA said that the beauty they saw here was breathtaking and better than anything they had seen.

The various excavation sites and many museums, libraries, historical monuments, etc. we visited all

over Tajikistan, show distinctly that Zarathusti religion and culture started here in Tajikistan and proves beyond doubt the ancient Aryan civilization's existence. We were amazed to see the excavated atash kadeh sites, dokhmas, astodans, kusti jantar, chatrī, pav mahl alaats like havnim, lalo, Shahnameh manuscripts, etc. Wherever I went, I felt like I was visiting my old motherland, meeting my Zarathushti brothers and sisters who were extremely hospitable, living their lives by practising the true Zarathushtrian principles of Humata, Hukhta, Hvarashta, - they are very keen to revive the Zoroastrian culture and religion.

We also met local Zoroastrians who are actually wearing sudreh and kusti in this village from ancient times - a great delight to watch such sincerity and dedication towards Zoroastrianism and its culture.

In Dushanbe, the four days Government official programme for the 15<sup>th</sup> Republic Celebrations was out of this world. The symposium, President's speech and the various cultural programmes where over a thousand participants acted in concerts, were mind boggling, colourful and gorgeous. The fireworks were so beautiful that the delegates from USA, Canada, Australia, France and other affluent countries said that they had never seen something like this in their entire life.

In their two Republic Day parades in Dushanbe and Kulab, concerts, the plays, Zarathushtra and his life history were very well enacted - a sight one can't imagine - how happy we Zoroastrians from India were to see this with pride.

President of Tajikistan Mr Emomaly Rahmonov is a very sincere, hardworking and practical person, who is sincerely working towards the revival of ancient Aryan culture and civilization. He shook hands with us during the two grand banquets he hosted in honour of all the foreign guests and the celebrations of the Republic Anniversary.

In Uzbekistan (Tashkent) we could see the Zarathushti spirit, and met many good people rightfully claiming to be Zarathushtis. There, Prof Rustom Abdukamilov is working



Istarovshan

zealously to form a Zarathushti Anjuman. He is the government appointed teacher, teaching Avesta and our other ancient languages to over six hundred school-students and students in various institutions as per the Government regulations. We realized that the people in different states of Uzbekistan like Bactria, Balkh, Sogdia, speak these as living languages as we in India use Gujarati, Hindi Marathi etc as state languages. These are living languages and taught in the schools in Tashkent.

We performed 28 navjotes in Tashkent of very prominent and elite Zarathushti persons who sincerely wanted to be

properly initiated into the Zoroastrian religion and culture. We also performed Jashan on the very first day of our trip in the home of a Zarathushtrian lady.

Overall it was a very fruitful tour for me, and we have made a good beginning in our endeavor to revive the ancient Aryan civilization and Zarathushtrian religion and culture. *Atha Jamyad Yatha Afrinami.* ■■■■



Sarazm/Penjikant

# The Noshir Gowadia case

by mitra mehr

(Based on a press release found on the websites of the US Attorney and Department of Justice and several articles in the press. Unfortunately the November 2006 indictment [49 pages] is not available on the internet)



N

oshir Gowadia, a 62 year old Indian born, Zoroastrian, engineer has been in federal detention since October 2005 on charges of selling military secrets to China and seven other countries. His trial is to take place in a federal

court in Honolulu, Hawaii on July 10, 2007. Mr Gowadia was indicted on six counts on October 26, 2005. At the time, he faced a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison. However, on November 9, 2006, a federal Grand Jury handed down an 18-count indictment that supercedes the previous indictment. Certain charges in the superceding 49-page indictment carry a term up to life imprisonment and possible death penalty, if certain statutory conditions are met. Certain charges also carry a maximum fine of up to \$250,000 or twice the gross gain derived from the violation, including possible forfeiture of property. The US Attorney's office has not yet decided whether to seek the death penalty in this case.

According to the superceding indictment, Mr Gowadia allegedly sold classified defense technology related to the B-2 bomber engine's exhaust system to China. This technology allows the B-2 bomber to avoid detection by infrared sensors. As part of its strategy for a swift response to any future Chinese threat, the US government regularly deploys B-2 bombers for short periods of time on the Pacific island of Guam. In fact, the Pentagon recently completed a major upgrade of bomber storage facilities there. This B-2 bomber technology is extremely useful to China and other foreign governments since it allows

them to reverse-engineer for it and build systems that can avoid detection by US air-to-air missiles. Sharing of this technology has therefore compromised the interests of the United States.

Mr Gowadia is also charged with providing extensive technical assistance to Chinese weapon designers in developing a cruise missile exhaust nozzle that is capable of evading detection and interception by the US missile defense system. In addition, the cruise missile can intercept US air-to-air missiles. According to the superceding indictment, Mr Gowadia assisted Chinese weapon designers in developing the cruise missile exhaust nozzle and improving their testing facilities for it. Mr Gowadia allegedly flew to China on at least six occasions from 2002 to 2005 to discuss, design and test this technology. The indictment describes Mr Gowadia's covert entry into China and travel within the country for the purpose of assisting the Chinese government in developing the stealthy exhaust nozzle. According to the indictment, through the use of covert email addresses Mr Gowadia conspired with Mr Henry Nyo and Mr Tommy Wong, whom he later met in China. Mr Wong is described as an official of the People Republic of China's Foreign Experts Bureau which conducts research and development of Chinese fighter aircraft and cruise missiles. The superceding indictment charges Mr Gowadia with performing a defense service without first obtaining the necessary licensing approval from the US Department of State.

The superceding indictment also charges Mr Gowadia with laundering funds paid to him by the Chinese government. The



indictment provides notice of the US government's intent to seek forfeiture of property which facilitated the espionage or

was a proceed of Mr Gowadia's alleged money laundering. Mr Gowadia is charged with being paid at least \$110,000 by Chinese officials for the highly classified technology although the indictment states that it is believed that Mr Gowadia's actual income may

be significantly greater. Investigators have placed that figure at \$2 million, some of which remains in foreign bank accounts. The luxury home that Mr Gowadia and his wife, Cheryl, built in Ha'iku, Maui and that was assessed at \$1.64 million in 2004 could be subject to forfeiture based on the argument that it may have been built and bought with illegal funds.

In addition, according to the superceding indictment, from 2002-2004, Mr Gowadia sent e-mails which offered "top secret" data to Israel, Germany and Switzerland. This data related to US stealth technology which was intended for use in the TH-98 Eurocopter as well as for foreign commercial aircraft. According to the superceding indictment, Mr Gowadia continued to be engaged in a conspiracy to sell classified technology through January 2006, even after his arrest.

Mr Gowadia is a naturalized US citizen, who immigrated to the United States from Bombay when he was 18. From November 1968 to April 1986, Mr Gowadia worked as a design engineer with Northrop Grumman. During this time, he was a chief designer of the B-2 propulsion system that makes the B-2 Spirit Bomber difficult for enemy missiles to detect. Mr Gowadia later worked as a contract engineer at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico.

Upon leaving the defense industry, Mr Gowadia worked as an independent

engineer in defense research. During this time, Mr Gowadia set up NSG, Inc., an S corporation that reported about \$750,000 in gross receipts between 1999 and 2003. Mr Gowadia also set up NTech-E, based in Switzerland and NTech-A, based in Australia. Mr Gowadia lectured and advised on projects at the University of Alabama, Georgia Tech and Purdue University's School of Aeronautics and Astronautics. According to the allegations, during this period, Mr Gowadia marketed himself as a "father" of the unique technology that hides the B-2 bombers propulsion system and sold classified information for personal profit.

The case against Mr Gowadia is, in part, based on the information that was retrieved by federal agents from Mr Gowadia's house in October 2005. According to the indictment, on October 13, 2005, FBI agents, the US Air Force Office of Special Investigations and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement executed a search warrant in Mr Gowadia's residence in Honolulu. During their search, they discovered a number of classified documents dating back from Mr Gowadia's employment at Northrop and Los Alamos. The US government has requirements regarding the maintenance, handling, storage and communication of national defense information and classified information. At the time, Mr Gowadia stated that he was aware of the responsibilities with respect to maintenance and dissemination of classified material and denied possessing any such material. The next day, however, when confronted with the fact that classified documents had been retrieved from his residence, Mr Gowadia provided a written statement where he stated: "I disclosed classified information and material both verbally and in papers, computer presentations, letters and other methods to individuals in foreign countries with the knowledge that information was classified . . . the reason I disclosed this classified information to establish the technological credibility with the potential customers for future business. I wanted to help this [sic] countries to further their self

## Gowadia's Home in Hawaii



GARY T. KUBOTA, Honolulu Star-Bulletin

aircraft protection systems. My personal gain would be business.” During the interview, Mr Gowadia allegedly admitted that he provided classified information to approximately eight named countries.

According to the allegations, Mr Gowadia held documents containing graphs and other technical information which Mr Gowadia apparently traced from existing classified documents. Mr Gowadia traced these information separately so that individually the documents are not classified. However, the two documents would likely be categorized as classified when transposed on top of each other so that the information on each could be viewed together. In his October 14 statement, Mr Gowadia admitted that his intent in making the tracings was to “preserve the classified information in two forms which were separately unclassified but would be classified when combined.”

Mr Gowadia’s son, 40 year old Ashton Gowadia has described his father’s arrest as “a misunderstanding that is blown way out of proportion” and has stated that the government’s case is “false.” In an interview with the Associated Press on November 9, 2006, Mr Ashton Gowadia stated that his “father insists that all information that [he] has discussed has always been basic, theoretical, research information.” In an interview with a Honolulu paper on November 10, 2006, Ashton Gowadia stated that “there is a huge discrepancy between what is classified, what isn’t and what is available in the public domain” and added that his father only consulted and shared information that is part of the public domain and not classified. Ashton Gowadia asserted that his father stopped working on the stealth project in 1986, three years before the first test flight; therefore, he could not have obtained information about the B-2 bomber that was not already in the public domain.

In October 2005, federal Judge Barry Kurren detained Mr Gowadia without bail, stating that his international contacts make him a flight risk. According to the judge, Mr

Gowadia’s access to secret material may also make him in danger since his clients may want to have him silenced.

The US government is apparently awaiting additional information on this matter from the governments of Lichenstein, Switzerland and Australia where Mr Gowadia had incorporated businesses and had bank accounts. On November 15, 2006, The Australian newspaper published an article stating that Mr Gowadia was a joint director in NTech-A along with Arthur Lazarou, a retired Australian navy officer who is a supervisor in Defence Material Organisation. According to The Australian, N-Tech-A received at least \$1 million in Australian Defence Department contracts to adapt stealth technology to Australia’s RAAF aircraft. The article also reported that Attorney-General Philip Ruddock appointed former inspector-general of intelligence and security Ron McLeod to head an official inquiry into the Gowadia matter. According to the article, the official report is expected to be completed in April 2007, several months before Mr Gowadia’s long awaited trial.

As for Mr Gowadia, on November 9, 2006, he entered a plea of “not guilty” before US magistrate Judge Kevin S C Chang. According to his son, Mr Gowadia is “eager to go to trial” and prove his case.



*Mitra Mehr is an corporate attorney currently residing in Washington DC.*

***“When God leads you to the edge of the cliff, trust Him fully and let go. Only one of two things will happen, either He’ll catch you when you fall, or He’ll teach you how to fly” - author unknown***

## Gujarat floods 2006

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Rs2,718,833 : Amount collected up to 31 October 2006

Rs2,507,427 : Amount spent so far

Rs 211,406 : In hand, to be utilized for further requests that are under investigation and consideration.

### Breakup:

Rs 70,000 : Immediate supply of Kathi to five agyaries (Surat Farvardian, Adajan, Bhatha, Siganpor, Ichhapore) as the kathi in stock had become wet and temporarily unusable.

Rs 347,427 : For providing immediate relief measures (food grains, blankets etc) to 375 Zoroastrians (102 at Surat, 16 at Ichhapore, 13 at Bhatha, 30 at Rander, 43 at Adajan, 30 at Siganpore and 141 through Surat Parsi Punchayet).

Rs1,040,000 : Rehabilitation inputs to 25 Zoroastrians whose properties/homes, furniture/fixtures, household utility items have been damaged or destroyed.

Rs1,050,000 : Rehabilitation inputs to 19 Zoroastrians whose businesses have been severely affected.



Ervard Amrolia of Bhatha Agyari trudging through the mud to meet the WZO team

Donations by cheque or draft in the name of WZO Trust, Shanti, 5th floor, 6 Banaji St, Fort, Mumbai 400 001, India are most welcome



Floods at the Bhatha Agyari, the gates are submerged



The water mark being pointed by a Zoroastrian whose rice and flour mill was devastated

# Events that shaped our religion

by rustom kevala

## Part IV- The Sasanian Theocracy

### Introduction

This series of papers highlights the major turning points in history that have shaped present-day Zoroastrian religion and worldview.

**Parts I-III** covered the events from the founding of the religion during Zarathushtra's time (1350 BC) to the end of the Parthian period (226 AD). Zarathushtra's message (c 1300 BC) spread from the Bactrian highlands to the western Indo-Iranian tribes without fanfare for over 700 years. Recorded history of Zoroastrian religion starts with the Achaemenian king Cyrus the Great (558 BC), who exhibited great tolerance for all the local religions within his empire. Darius (581-486 BC) left detailed inscriptions declaring that he was a follower of Ahura Mazda. Darius's successors continued to follow the Mazda-yasna religion, but included the worship of other divinities such as Mithra and Anahita. The Achaemenian Empire included Greek Asia Minor and Ionia, but the Persian and the Greek religions remained distinct.

After Alexander defeated Darius III at Gaugamela in 331 BC, a period of Hellenization began, which lasted for less than 200 years. Many of the surviving Zoroastrian scriptures were lost because Zoroastrian scribes were no longer supported by the rulers. Religion now became pure rituals for propitiating divinities and warding off pollution and the demons, recited orally in a language that was already out of use.

Ashk (Arshak) founded the Parthian dynasty in 256 BC. The Parthian period was one of much religious syncretism. The notion of the cosmic Messiah (like Saoshyant) entered Jewish thinking between 200 BC and 100 AD. But the gospel of Christ, which contended that Love was the answer for conquering evil, was difficult to counter with Zoroastrian rituals in poorly understood languages. Blash (Valkash) ordered the re-assembly and transcription of Zoroastrian scriptures in the Pahlavi script <sup>1</sup> (60 AD). This task continued intermittently until the dynasty ended.

## Part IV

### The Sasanian Theocracy

#### Zoroastrian Restoration

Ardeshir Papak defeated the last Parthian king Ardavan V in hand-to-hand battle in 226 AD. Ardeshir commemorated his victory by building several Atash Varhans <sup>2</sup> and six new cities named after himself <sup>3</sup>. He appointed Tansar as the High Priest, who compiled a standard version of the doctrine and practice of the Zarathushti religion, which for the first time in history, became the State religion.

Ardeshir's son Shapur I ascended to the throne in 241. During this time, the Roman Empire was in disarray. Emperor Valerian was taken as prisoner and brought to Ctesiphon in 260. This victory is recorded in the rock relief at Naqsh-e Rostam. Roman historians claim that Valerian was displayed to the public by burying him to his neck in the middle of a road. However, Firdausi records that Valerian (Bazanush)

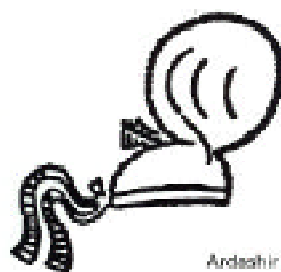
and his Roman engineers were asked to build a bridge over the river Karun at Shushtar, and were freed after the bridge was completed in three years.

Shapur continued to build Atash Varhans. He ordered the collection of writings on medicine, astronomy, movement, time, space, substance, creation, becoming, passing away, qualitative change, logic, and other arts and sciences. His High Priest Kirdar (Kartir) examined the possibility of basing every form of academic discipline on the Religion of the Worshipers of Mazda.<sup>4</sup>

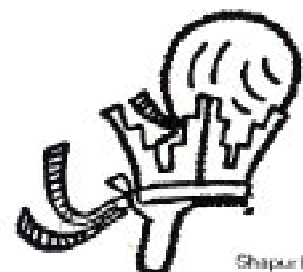
### The Heresy of Mani

A challenge to the reconstruction of the Zoroastrian Heritage arose in the teachings of a new Babylonian prophet of noble Parthian blood, Mani<sup>5</sup>, who began his mission in 242 AD. Mani preached a synthesis of Zoroastrian, Buddhist and Christian-Gnostic ideas which appealed to Shapur, who appears to have been a broadly humanistic ruler. Mani's writings, recovered recently in Chinese Turkestan, indicate that he was a dualist, believing in the supreme God Zurvan, the father of twins Hormuzd and Ahriman. This dualism had entered into the Zoroastrian religion during the Achaemenid times, but now it took a firmer hold with the encouragement of the Sasanian monarchs and mobeds. Kirdar, however, did not accept Mani's adaptations of his own doctrines of Zurvanism. Mani was declared a *zandik*, one who put his own perverse interpretations upon holy texts. When Shapur passed away in 272 AD, his son Bahram I (273-276) ordered the execution of Mani for teaching heresy. According to legend Mani, like Christ, was crucified.

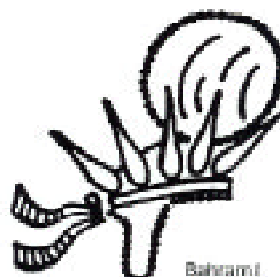
Bahram's crown (see Figure 1) was decorated with rays of the sun, symbolizing Mithra. High Priest Kirdar consolidated his power during the reign of the next four rulers. The Sasanians were seeking a unifying force that would weld their empire together<sup>6</sup>. Kirdar claims to have "chastised, upbraided and improved" Jews, Christians, Manicheans, Buddhists and Brahmins.



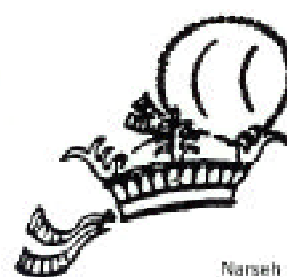
Artashir I



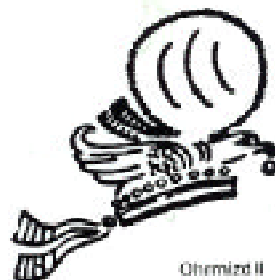
Shapur I



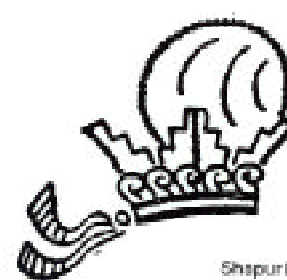
Bahram I



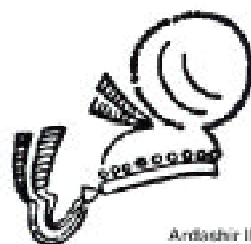
Narseh



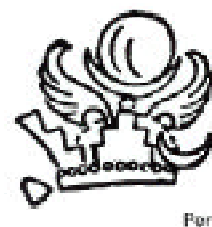
Ohrmizd II



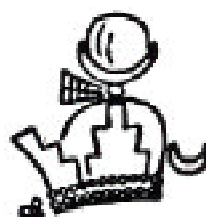
Shapur II



Artashir II



Farqat I



Khosrow II



Yazdegard III

Sasanian Crowns. Note the crescent and star symbol on the crown of Yazdegard III, which was later adapted as the symbol of Islam [from *Persian Mythology*, by John R. Hinnells, Peter Bedrick Books, New York, 1973].

Shapur II (The Great) 309-379 regained the territory between the Tigris and Euphrates from the Romans in 360. High Priest Adarbad Marespand composed Pazand prayers and Pahlavi commentaries to the Avestan texts, which are still in use as our daily prayers.

### Doctrinal Discord

The Denkart records that: *“Shapur summoned all men from all lands to examine and study all doctrines, so that all cause for dispute might be removed”*. The key question was that of the relationship of Anghra Mainyu to Ahura Mazda; or the origin and ultimate nature of evil. After Adarbad had been vindicated <sup>7</sup> by the consistency of his argument against all the other representatives of the different sects, doctrines, and schools, he issued a declaration: *“Now that we have seen the Religion upon earth, we shall leave no one to his false religion and we shall be exceeding zealous4.”* The entire physical Creation was now divided into the Good Creation of Ahura Mazda and the evil and noxious creations of Anghra Mainyu.

The Bundahish, the Zoroastrian Creation story and other sacred texts were edited and amplified. Arda Viraf described his visit, while still alive, to the Chivat Bridge and beyond.<sup>8</sup> He described in detail how a soul of the departed remains seated upon its body for the first three nights, after which it meets its own Fravashi at the entrance of the Chinvat Bridge. Arda Viraf was then shown heaven and hell, the reality of God and the Archangels, the non-reality of Anghra Mainyu and his demons; the resurrection of the dead and future body. Dante’s “Inferno”, written the 13<sup>th</sup> century, parallels Arda Viraf’s descriptions in many respects.

For the Christians, the chief knot of discord was the divinity of Christ. After Emperor Constantine made Christianity the State Religion throughout the Roman empire, he convened a Council at Nicaea (325) to define “the will and nature of God” to all mankind. However, the arguments flared

up again, and a second Ecumenical council was convened by Theodosius II in Constantinople in 381. Gnostic doctrines were revived again by Nestorius, which were ultimately crushed at a Council at Ephesus in 431. Mary was declared as the Mother of God. Nestorius was exiled in Egypt where he was later murdered by a monk.

### Treaties with Rome

Yazdegard I (399-420) is praised in western writings as the good, merciful king, as he treated Jews and Christians well. The Roman Emperor Arcadius appointed him as the guardian of his son Theodosius. Yazdegard’s son Bahram V (Bahram-gur<sup>9</sup>) was educated in the court of Munzir, the king of Yemen, and was backed by Arabs. Bahram-gur concluded a treaty with Theodosius, which guaranteed freedom of religion to Zoroastrians in the Roman empire and Christians in the Iranian Empire. Bahram-gur went to the court of King Vasudeva of Kanauj in India, disguised as his own ambassador. There is a painting of a Persian embassy in the Ajanta caves, which is believed to refer to Bahram-gur<sup>10</sup>.

### Mazdakism

During the reign of Kobad I (487-531), a man named Mazdak<sup>11</sup> began preaching a doctrine of equality of mankind as the solution for all ills. Kobad was impressed by Mazdak and ordered his courtiers to share their wealth, which included their women, with the subjects. Kobad’s son Khosro debated Mazdak and showed that if Mazdak is taken seriously, it would be impossible for a father to recognize his son. Who will rule and who will serve? The master will become the servant, the labourer the master, and the ruler and slave will become equals<sup>12</sup>. Mazdak was executed.

### Beginning of the End

Khosro inherited the throne in 531. He was a just ruler, and was called Anoshirwan

(immortal soul). The game of chess was introduced in Iran from India. Backgammon (nard) was invented. A new Avestan alphabet was invented. In 540, Christians or Lazica on the Black Sea sought and were granted protection from Roman persecution. His son Anoshzad, born of his Christian wife, had accepted Christianity. When Khosro Anoshirwan died in 579, Anosad claimed the throne, but was not accepted by the noblemen or even by Rome.

The last "Great King" was Khosro II Parviz (590-628). When his general Bahram Chobin revolted, Khosro fled and asked the Roman Emperor Maurice for help. Maurice helped him to banish Bahram Chobin and gave him his daughter Maria in marriage. When Maurice was murdered, Maurice's son Theodosius took refuge in Iran. Khosro next captured many of the provinces in Asia Minor from the Romans. His general Shahr-baraz seized Damascus, captured Egypt, and advanced on Palestine. The True Cross was taken to Ctesiphon and given to Khosro's wife Maria. Emperor Heraclius sued for peace.

This was the high point of the Sasanian empire, which now covered as much land as the Empire of Darius. But Heraclius now started attacking the ports of Asia Minor from the sea and scored several victories over the Iranian armies. The famous city of Dastgard near Ctesiphon was plundered in 628. The True Cross was returned to Jerusalem. Khosro was murdered by his son Sherweh in 628.

### Rise of Islam

Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, was born in 570 at Mecca, during the reign of Khosro Anoshirwan. He began to preach his religion in Mecca in 610, but had to flee to Medinah in 622, where his religion took hold. He now addressed letters to Khosro II and Emperor Haraclius, calling upon them to embrace Islam. Khosro is reported to have become enraged at this and ordered the governor of Yemen, Badhan, to capture Muhammad. By the time Muhammad received the news, Khosro Parviz had been murdered. Muhammad predicted to his

followers that the great Persian Empire will fall one day and the "polytheists" will accept Islam. Hearing this, Badhan accepted Islam<sup>13</sup>.

### Salman-e-Parsi

At about this time, a learned Zoroastrian named Behzad, who had accepted Christianity, fled Iran and was captured by Arab mercenaries who sold him to Muhammad as a slave. Muhammad treated him well and he accepted Muhammad's religion; whereupon Muhammad freed him. Behzad, now known as Salman-e-Parsi, is reputed to have written most of the Qur'an as dictated by Muhammad.

### Arab Conquests

After Muhammad passed away, Abu Bakr, father-in-law of Muhammad and the first Caliph, received reports of the unrest in Iran. He sent Khalid bin Walid to launch an attack on Hafir, a Persian province in Iraq. Khalid challenged the governor, Hormuz, to accept Islam or duel him. Hormuz chose to duel, but was killed and Khalid cut off his head. The Persian army retreated. It is said that a section of the Persian army had chained themselves with the determination of winning or dying, which impeded their retreat. This battle is known as *Dhat-us-Salasil* because of these chains. After the conquest of the province, Khalid made the inhabitants pay the *Jizyah* tax and appointed a Muslim governor. Hormuz's crown, valued at one hundred thousand dinars, was taken by Khalid.

Khalid now marched on different citadels in Iraq, some of whom were under Roman rule and some under Arab tribal leaders and Persian governors. By 631, all of Iraq was under Muslim domination. Khalid now conscripted the converted Iraqis to advance on Syria. The Roman army, under the command of the brother of Haraclius, was defeated at Yarmuk. After these unprecedented victories, Abu Bakr's successor in Medinah, caliph Umar Faruq sent armies to capture the rest of Syria and Jordan.



### Advance on Persia

Now Rustam Farrokhzad, the governor of Khorasan and prime minister of Iran, began military preparations to repulse the Arabs. Rustam entrusted Behman Jidhwah with a well-equipped army along with 300 war elephants. He was also handed the Kavyani Banner, which was believed to make the Persian army invincible. The Persian and Arab armies faced each other now across the Euphrates. A bridge was constructed and Behman Jidhwah asked his counterpart to choose between fighting from their side of the river or his. The Arabs chose to cross the river and immediately faced the huge elephants. The Arabs were routed and retreated back across the river.

The Arabs were allowed to escape. They regrouped, received reinforcements, and met the Persian army again at Buwaib. The Persian army was now under the command of Mehran Hamadani, who had been brought up in Arabia. This time, the Persians crossed the bridge and the Muslims were crowned with victory. The Muslims broke the bridge to prevent the Persians from retreating<sup>14</sup>.

### Holy Wars

The defeat of Mehran Hamadani raised an outcry in the Persian court. At that time, a woman, Queen Purandokht, was on the Persian throne. Purandokht was dethroned and four princes and a princess vied for the throne. Finally, Yazdegard III, grandson of Khosro Parviz, was installed on the throne in 632. His coronation at the age of 21 infused a new life into disheartened Persian nobles. Persian camps and military outposts were fortified and strengthened.

Now Umar Faruq issued orders for the Arab troops to fall back towards the frontiers of Arabia. The season of Hajj had arrived, and Arabs poured into Medinah and joined groups of warriors. Umar wanted to personally lead his followers now against Persia. But the commanders objected. Umar sent a strong Arab army under Saad bin Waqqas for a Holy War against Iran.

Saad entered Iraq, ravaging several towns on his way and encamped at Quadisiyah on the river Euphrates in 636.

Yazdegard ordered Rustam Farrokhzad to march against the Arabs with an army of 60,000. Rustam spent about six months covering the distance from the capital Mada'in to Quadisiyah. He was joined by Jalinus with 40,000 men, Hormuzin with 30,000 and Mehran bin Bahram Razi had 30,000 troops. The Persians army was finally arrayed against the Muslims. At first, several Persian wrestlers challenged the Arabs. The elephants charged next and the battle ensued for a whole day without a resolution. The next day, the Arabs received reinforcements and challenged Behman Jidhwah for a duel. The Arabs were on camels, which appeared to scare the Persian horses. The battle continued all day and through the night. Rustam was overthrown from his charger and wounded. Jalinus was killed. The Persians were routed.

In 641, Umar sent Amar ibn Yaser, who defeated Yazdegard's army at Nihavand. The sovereignty of the Iranian Empire passed into the hands of the Caliphs. Yazdegard spent the next 10 years trying to raise an army to regain his throne. In the end, he was murdered by a miller for the jewels he was wearing.



Rustom Kevala is the president of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America. He lives in Florida with his wife Yasmin.

**“Kindness is more important than wisdom, And the recognition of this is the beginning of wisdom.”** Theodore Isaac Rubin

## سرودها و بخشهای گاتها

سرودهای گاتها در بحر هجائی تنظیم شده است یعنی بندهای هر سرود در بیتها و مصراعها دارای هجای مشخصی هستند. اگر چه اشو زرتشت سرودها را در قالبهای مختلف هجائی سروده است، اما موبدان و دانشمندان دینی سرودهای یکسان را در کنار یکدیگر گذاشته و در جمع آوری آنها بخشهای مشخصی را ایجاد نموده‌اند. به این ترتیب ۱۷ سرود گاتها به پنج بخش همگون شعری تقسیم بندی شده است.

بخش اهونه وئیتی یا اهنود که دارای ۷ سرود در بحر شعری سه بیتی و شانزده سیلابی است. مصراع اول دارای ۸ هجا و مصراع دوم دارای ۹ هجا میباشد. بخش اوشته وئیتی یا اشته ود که دارای ۴ سرود پنج بیتی و یازده هجائی است. مصراع اول هر بیت ۴ هجا و مصراع دوم ۷ هجا دارد. بخش سپنتامینیو یا سپنته‌مد که دارای ۴ سرود در بحر شعری چهار بیتی و یازده هجائی است که درنگ پس از هجای چهارم است. بخش وهوخشتره یا وهوخشتر که دارای یک سرود در وزن شعری سه بیتی چهارده هجائی است. درنگ مصراعی پس از هفتمین هجا است وهیشتوایشتیث یا وهیشتواش که دارای یک سرود در وزن شعری چهار فردی کوتاه و بلند دوازده و نوزده هجائی است. در بیت کوتاه درنگ پس از هجای هفتم و در بیت بلند دو درنگ پس از هجاهای هفتم و چهاردهم داریم.

شناخت بیشتر از وزن شعری گاتها مستلزم نگارش مطالب مفصلی است که در این مقاله نخواهد گنجید. باید گفته شود که سرودهای گاتها نخستین شعر هجائی مکتوبی است که بدست ما رسیده و از نظر ساختار شعری و زیبا شناسی هنری، در نوع خود بی‌نظیر است. در اوستا به هر بند شعر وچس تشتی، به هر بیت شعر افسمن و به هر مصراع پده می‌گویند.

## اصول عقاید اشو زرتشت در گاتها

اشو زرتشت در گاتها باورهای خود را درباره آفریننده، پیامبری، رستاخیز و همچنین درباره نیکی آزادی و خوشبختی به زیباترین بیان و اندیشمندانه‌ترین فلسفه و حکمت انسانی ابراز نموده است. اصول عقاید اشو زرتشت که امروز توسط همه زرتشتیان باور داشته می‌شود و زندگی و خانواده و جامعه زرتشتیان جامعه مهانی روشنائی می‌بخشد در طول سده‌ها و از طرف بسیاری از دانشمندان و فلاسفه و حتی سیاستمداران ستوده شده است. در زیر به اختصار به این اصول اشاره می‌کنیم.

## آفریننده

در گاتها آفریننده جهان و انسان و دیگر پدیده‌ها مزدا اهورا می‌باشد و شیوه شناسائی اهورا مزدا اشراق یعنی رسیدن به روشنائی درونی است. اشو زرتشت اهورا مزدا را نیکی مطلق می‌داند و او را چون دوست و یار مهربان خود ستایش می‌کند و آرزو دارد او را ببیند و با وی هم سخن شود.

منم آن زوت (= موبد بزرگ) که از اشا(= راستی)

راه درست را بیاموختم.

از وهومن (= نیک اندیشی) خواستار خرد ورزی هستم

ای مزدا اهورا مرا این آرزوست

که تورا ببینم و با تو همپرسگی کنم.

یسنا ۳۳/۶

تفکر اشراقی اشوزرتشت پایه گذار حکمت خسروانی و سیر حرکت درونی به سوی خداوند یا نور

الانوار است.



Mobed Rostam Mobed Kaikhosrow Vahidi is a Chartered Accountant with a PhD in the Avestan and ancient Iranian Languages, living in Iran. He is the Editor of the Fravahar bimonthly Community Journal, published by the Fravahar Zarthoshty Youth Organisation of which he is a senior Board Member as well.

در دهه ۵۰ خورشیدی شادروان موبد فیروز آذر گشسب گاتها را به فارسی ترجمه و تفسیر نمود و پس از چهل سال که از ترجمه گاتها توسط شادروان استاد پورداوود که برای پژوهشهای دانشگاهی کاربرد داشت می گذشت، سرودهای پیامبر زرتشت کم کم در میان زرتشتیان و به ویژه جوانان شناخته شد. از همین دهه نویسنده تدریس گاتها سرودهای اشو زرتشت را نخست در کلاسهای عالی دینی سازمان فروهر و سپس در دبیرستانهای انوشیروان دادگر و فیروز بهرام آغاز نمود و جوانان و دانش آموزان با این سرودها و به خصوص مفاهیم آن آشنا و شیفته اندیشه های تابناک اشو زرتشت شدند. سپس مسابقات اوستا شناسی و گاتها شناسی مانتره توسط کانون دانشجویان زرتشتی عامل مهمی بود که توانست جوانان نسل جدید را با گاتها و بررسی و پژوهش درباره مطالب آن آشنا سازد.

خوشبختانه امروز چه در ایران و چه در کشورهای دیگر جوانان ایرانی با گاتها سرودهای اشو زرتشت آشنائی دارند و مجموعه اوستا و به ویژه گاتها با سرودهای مقدس خود از نظر فکری، سنتی، آئینی و اجتماعی در میان همه زرتشتیان تاثیر عمیقی دارد. اشو زرتشت نیز به عنوان یک چهره اندیشمند و اهورائی از دیدگاه بیشتر دانشمندان و ایران شناسان به نیکی یاد می شود و گاتها نیز با ارزش و اعتبار فلسفی و اخلاقی خود افتخار ایرانیان را صد چندان کرده است.

### سرودها و بخشهای گاتها

سرودهای گاتها در بحر هجائی تنظیم شده است یعنی بندهای هر سرود در بیتها و مصراع ها دارای هجای مشخصی هستند. اگر چه اشو زرتشت سرودها را در قالبهای مختلف هجائی سروده است، اما موبدان و دانشمندان دینی سرودهای یکسان را در کنار یکدیگر گذاشته و در جمع آوری آنها بخشهای مشخصی را ایجاد نموده اند. به این ترتیب ۱۷ سرود گاتها به پنج بخش همگون شعری تقسیم بندی شده است.

بخش اهونه وئیتی یا اهنود که دارای ۷ سرود در بحر شعری سه بیتی و شانزده سیلابی است. مصراع اول دارای ۸ هجا و مصراع دوم دارای ۹ هجا میباشد. بخش اوشته وئیتی یا اشته ود که دارای ۴ سرود پنج بیتی و یازده هجائی است. مصراع اول هر بیت ۴ هجا و مصراع دوم ۷ هجا دارد. بخش سپنتامینیو یا سپنته مد که دارای ۴ سرود در بحر شعری چهار بیتی و یازده هجائی است که درنگ پس از هجای چهارم است. بخش وهوخشتره یا وهوخشتر که دارای یک سرود در وزن شعری سه بیتی چهارده هجائی است. درنگ مصراعی پس از هفتمین هجا است وهیشتوایشیش یا وهشتواش که دارای یک سرود در وزن شعری چهار فردی کوتاه و بلند دوازده و نوزده هجائی است. در بیت کوتاه درنگ پس از هجای هفتم و در بیت بلند دو درنگ پس از هجاهای هفتم و چهاردهم داریم.

شناخت بیشتر از وزن شعری گاتها مستلزم نگارش مطالب مفصلی است که در این مقاله نخواهد گنجید. باید گفته شود که سرودهای گاتها نخستین شعر هجائی مکتوبی است که بدست ما رسیده و از نظر ساختار شعری و زیبا شناسی هنری، در نوع خود بی نظیر است. در اوستا به هر بند شعر وچس تشتی، به هر بیت شعر افسمن و به هر مصراع پده می گویند.

## گاتها و نگرش اجتماعی به آن

موبد دکتر رستم وحیدی

ایران - اردیبهشت ۱۳۸۵ خورشیدی

### پیشی گفتار:

گاتها سرودهای اشو زرتشت از نیایش‌های دوره باستان است که تاکنون باقی مانده و با سبک زیبا و فلسفی خود اصول باورها و آموزه‌های پیامبر ایران باستان را بیان می‌کند. گاتها که ۱۷ سرود را در بردارد به زبان اوستائی و به شیوه شعر هجائی است و می‌توان آن را نخستین شعر هجائی ایرانی نامید که از آرامنه کهن باقی مانده است. سرودهای گاتها در مجموعه کتاب مقدس اوستا و در بخش یسنا جای گرفته است و چون نگین گرانبهائی بر تارک تاج زرین اوستا همواره درخشیده است و چون بعنوان گفتار دلنشین و هنرمندانه زرتشت سرودهای کهن ایرانی و پایه‌های اعتقادی همه اقوام و نژادهای سرزمین ایران بزرگ را مورد تاثیر خود قرار داده است.

سرودهای گاتها به زبان اوستائی و به لهجه ویژه و کهنی است که آن را از سایر بخشهای اوستا که به لهجه جدیدتری هستند متمایز می‌سازد. اگر چه برخی از قسمتهای اوستا مانند یشت‌های کهن از گاتها قدیمی‌تر هستند، اما زمان گردآوری و تدوین آنها احتمالاً "در زمانی صورت گرفته که گاتها سرودهای اشو زرتشت نیز با قدمت و ویژگیهای زبانی خود در مجموعه سرودهای دینی اوستا جای داده شده است.

### سابقه آشنایی با گاتها در ایران

تا اواسط دهه ۴۰ خورشیدی زرتشتیان کمتر با گاتها آشنائی داشتند و سرودهای گاتها فقط در مراسم در گذشتگان به نام اوستای یشت سرودش توسط موبدان سرانیده می‌شد و معنی مفهوم آن نیز مورد توجه قرار نمی‌گرفت. چه بسا اگر کسی در مواقع عادی اوستای یشت سرودش را می‌خواند افراد سالخورده به او ایراد می‌گرفتند که خواندن این اوستا شگون نداشته و بهتر است اوستای دیگری خوانده شود.

نویسنده نیز در سال ۱۳۴۶ خورشیدی با خواندن کتاب پیام زرتشت که در بر گیرنده ترجمه یک چهارم از سرودهای زرتشت بود، با گاتها آشنا شدم و بطور شگفت انگیزی سرودهای زرتشت و مفاهیم آن به من تاثیر روانی بخشید. درحقیقت از این زمان دل داده سرودهای زرتشت گردیدم و همچون تمام کسانی که این کتاب را خوانده بودند در راه تازه‌ای که همانا خواندن و درک حقیقت دین زرتشت از راه سرودهای پیامبر بود قرار گرفتیم.

در دهه ۵۰ خورشیدی شادروان موبد فیروز آذر گشسب گاتها را به فارسی ترجمه و تفسیر نمود و پس از چهل سال که از ترجمه گاتها توسط شادروان استاد پورداوود که برای پژوهشهای دانشگاهی کاربرد داشت می‌گذشت، سرودهای پیامبر زرتشت کم کم در میان زرتشتیان و به ویژه جوانان شناخته شد. از همین دهه نویسنده تدریس گاتها سرودهای اشو زرتشت را نخست در کلاسهای عالی دینی سازمان فروهر و سپس در دبیرستانهای انوشیروان دادگر و فیروز بهرام آغاز نمود و جوانان و دانش‌آموزان با این سرودها و به خصوص مفاهیم آن آشنا و شیفته اندیشه‌های تابناک اشو زرتشت شدند. سپس مسابقات اوستا شناسی و گاتها شناسی مانتره توسط کانون دانشجویان زرتشتی عامل مهمی بود که توانست جوانان نسل جدید را با گاتها و بررسی و پژوهش درباره مطالب آن آشنا سازد.

خوشبختانه امروز چه در ایران و چه در کشورهای دیگر جوانان ایرانی با گاتها سرودهای اشو زرتشت آشنائی دارند و مجموعه اوستا و به ویژه گاتها با سرودهای مقدس خود از نظر فکری، سنتی، آئینی و اجتماعی در میان همه زرتشتیان تاثیر عمیقی دارد. اشو زرتشت نیز به عنوان یک چهره اندیشمند و اهورائی از دیدگاه بیشتر دانشمندان و ایران شناسان به نیکی یاد می‌شود و گاتها نیز با ارزش و اعتبار فلسفی و اخلاقی خود افتخار ایرانیان را صد چندان کرده است.

## A year later

An update from Toxy Cowasjee on the assistance given through WZO, to those affected by the earthquake

A year has gone by since the earthquake took place in the NWFP & Azad Kashmir – it was time to pay a visit once again, the main reason being to verify if the shelters given were still up and being used by the recipients.

**14 November:** Arrived at Islamabad airport at 9am and went directly to Gheri – the village where we donated 60 shelters and stoves. On the way we visited Muzzaffarabad which seems to be bustling once again as a large town. The roads are in a good condition, the rubble has been removed but no reconstruction was visible.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> heavy rain had fallen, and the track leading to Gheri, was completely broken to such an extent it was non-jeepable. The dilapidated wooden bridge which leads from Azad Kashmir across the river to Gheri, has been repaired and painted, making the walk easy, but then it is all an uphill climb. Our gracious villagers were waiting for us, with the President and Secretary of their committee - Mohammed Aslam Abbas and Mohammed Nawaz - having come down to the bridge to escort us.

The village has been cleared of all the old rubble and most of the broken structures. The tents have gone barring a few which house their livestock. The shelters are all standing and seem to have withstood the last winter, as well as the recent heavy monsoons. Each of their shelters are kept neatly, and on the ledge which runs around the walls, their plates and utensils stand. Though cramped for space with families consisting of six or more, they are most grateful to you, the donors. Gheri is a credit to us, the donors.

Hospitality being most gracious wherever one goes in Pakistan, they had arranged for us French toast and tea, and mind you the name “French toast” was mentioned by them. I could have fallen off the charpoi! One can only be amazed and at the same time amused, that up here, at 5,000 ft sitting in a shelter, one is being offered French toast when they have so little in their lives. You may recall that an elder of the village, Fareed Khan, had given me his walking stick when I last visited Gheri, which of course I carried back with me this time round, using it with gratitude. Being financially better off than the others, he is in the process of building a family home in concrete blocks of a ground plus one floor. To his credit he has also built an underground room, in case another earthquake strikes. He is one of the fortunate ones, who do not have to wait till the Government gives the promised compensation.

The villagers of Gheri have joined together and are rebuilding their mosque, a sight we saw wherever we went. For them, the house of prayer takes precedence over the building of their home.



Villagers at Gheri



Fareed Khan's home destroyed - right, new one under construction



Temporary kitchen where our hostess made French toast & tea



Rebuilding of mosque. Note builder is right on the top

As we were leaving, they requested if a small bridge could be paid for as each time the rain comes, the river overflows onto the track road, making entry and exit into the village very difficult. On behalf of you the donors, I have said we will pay for this which is Rs200,000 (US\$3,279), which includes OAKDF's 10% for overheads. The funds are with me. Additional Rs50,000 will be the contribution of the village by way of cash, kind and labour.

**15 November:** A trip was lined up to see the recent devastation of the landslides caused by the flash floods in October, to visit the BHU (Basic Health Unit) donated by us, and then to go high in the mountain where so much work has been carried out by OAKDF (Omar Asghar Khan Development Foundation).

One imagines landslides to be earth moving away from mountains and blocking roads; at least this is the image for me. The worst section which we saw was at Gul Dhori near Ghari Habibullah, though the situation goes on for miles and miles where mountains have just crumbled and come into the valley, making a dam in the river. These villages have been wiped out, even saw a concrete home sunk and the top floor filled with river mud. With the damming of the river the course has changed, and those who normally had the benefit of the river are now deprived of water. Electricity pylons, huge trees, structures, all in a crumbled state is the landscape one sees as you drive past, mile after mile. Due to the earthquake last year, the ground is now very fragile and any inclement weather seems to bring on another catastrophe.



Twisted pylon lying on the ground



Landslide at Gul Dhori. The mountain has just disappeared



Concrete home sunk & filled with river mud



The two containers converted as a BHU at Ghari Habibullah

A visit to Dahola near Ghari Habibullah where we had donated two containers, converted as a BHU had been planned, and though the area was being vaccinated by the government against polio, the Health Officer was waiting for us. The re-conditioned containers are truly very well appointed, with wooden floor and panelling for the walls, complete with couch, desk and shelves, looking good after nearly a year in use. The second one is the residence of the Health Officer, appointed by the Government. The land on which the two containers are situated has been leased and OAKDF are paying the monthly rent. On the request of the village, a boundary "wall" has been erected by OAKDF.

Within a short span of minutes, the village committee and elders were all there to air their concerns. Without exception, each was thankful for this BHU, especially in the early days after the earthquake. Medicines and other necessities had been supplied



by OAKDF from the donations received by them but now the supply comes under the umbrella of the Government. They are issuing bandages and antibiotic for bronchitis/pneumonia during the winter months and diarrhoea related problems mainly during the summer. But this is under stringent jurisdiction – 16 bottles a month of medication are issued and the patient has to pay Rs5 per consultation. Hardly enough for six patients! The people have no other alternative but to go to Ghari Habibullah where a doctor's consultation costs with transportation, approximately Rs500 (US\$8). A no win situation.

The team of OAKDF are encouraging the villagers to fight for their rights by writing to their local body, and have even offered to go with them to the authorities at Islamabad but till some incentive is taken by the villagers themselves, OAKDF are reluctant to assist further in the medical area. Their policy is to encourage self-help. The men of this Council are a strong force and showed their worth after the earthquake, but now seem to have the attitude that everything should come their way without effort. One tries to help in time of need, but sadly with the abundant assistance given, they seem to have lost their self-esteem.

In this same area the Women's Friendly Space (mentioned in *Hamazor* as Safe House for Women) was to be built by us, the land had been selected, the ground broken and even the foundation laid, but the flash floods which took place in June/July, have proved to be another disaster. Prior to the earthquake there had been very little rain for over seven years, but now the water table has risen making the erection of the building in this location futile. Though I have been disappointed in the delay, it is a blessing in disguise, as the women of Dahola do not seem to be motivated at all and if after building this permanent structure for them it is not utilized to its fullest, we will have achieved naught. A new location has been selected, in the Union Council of Dahola, in a village called Sirla, where the women's committee seems to be enthusiastic and committed to make this pilot scheme work. The community have agreed to donate the ground which is a plus, as building costs have doubled since April 2006. The construction of the building with fittings is now Rs1,867,536 (US\$30,615); the same amount that was quoted with running expenses for a year when we agreed to sponsor this venture in April. OAKDF will now find another donor/s to fund the running expenses for a year enabling this project to go ahead. During the year the women will be trained on various skills to earn money to independently run the WFS.

The female staff of OAKDF has been going to the various villages to meet with the women folk to find out their specific needs for the Women's Friendly Space and giving it a unique name. Most of the women have asked for a place where they can come to read, play board games, buy items of feminine hygiene and a place to bathe. It would never occur to us that a shortage of water would affect marital relationships. A cleansing bath after the monthly periods is required before conjugal relationship between husband and wife can resume. The men are able to go to the public bathhouses to bathe, but there is no appropriate place with sufficient water for the women.

Going up to the village of Sirla, gave us a different topography, fir trees in abundance, with views which takes one's breath away. One could see hundreds of shelters, scattered in the most precarious places, all through OAKDF, who have reached the remotest villages in NWFP. Under normal



The high water table at Dahola where the WFS was going to be constructed



Wading across the stream, which never was, to get to their 'homes' at Dahola



Little ones after school at Sirla. They are sitting on the floor of the school, situated high on top, destroyed by the earthquake



Poster at OAKDF's office at Abbottabad, encouraging women to demand their rights



circumstances, to have a home in any of these locations would be something to dream for, but these people have to climb up the mountain face to get to their home. Schools are everywhere, but they are either in the open or in tents. 1pm strikes, and children are seen walking home, either singly or in groups, in uniform, straight up or down mountains, without a fear in their mind.

We never made it to Kophana which was even further north, as the latter part of the road was unjeepable. Whilst we were trying, the gear slipped and we started rolling down the precarious track. It seemed wiser to just abandon the idea though the village was expecting us and had prepared “bajri ki roti” (maize unleavened bread) and “sarsoo ki dal” (mustard seed dal). We (means myself) could never have climbed that incline, for two reasons, the sheer track going up and having no ‘shoulder’, having a vertical drop to the valley below. Even whilst writing, I can feel the nausea of fear creeping up. Our excellent driver, manoeuvred down these dangerous slopes in reverse whilst we walked down to the more reliable road silently saying *atha variyo*.

On the way home, we stopped at Ghari Habibullah to have “chapli kebab” (flat large kebabs - “chapli” meaning slippers), the specialty of the town. And it lived up to all expectations, especially after the death thrills of going to Kophana, wrapped in nan and newspaper. A Paki version of fish and chips in newsprint!

**16 November:** A trip to Balakot, Danna & Darra was the order of the day. Last November when we drove to Balakot, it was bumper to bumper with trucks laden with aid. Now there is minimal traffic, besides the country jeeps taking their passengers from one village to another. The hundreds of tents have gone, the destroyed homes are mostly all there, the rubble from the roads has been cleared away and the people are back. Small make-shift shops line the roads in the town itself, selling vegetables, fruits and other necessities. The Balakot Government School that was destroyed, is now in GI sheeting structures, too hot for the summer and too cold in the winter. The dividing walls for classrooms are of chipboard, and though tube lights have been fixed they do not work. One wonders which era and in which year these children of Northern Pakistan will have proper schools to go to.

We drove a further 10 kms north to see where the new city of Balakot is to be built. At the moment it is just a location and was informed the people of Balakot have no desire to move to this new area, though they are in the “Red Zone”.

A back track was required to go up to Danna where we had given 34 shelters with stoves. I had never been here and what a paradise it was. High up in the mountains the people live in their shelters built on the edge, which are scattered due to the shortage of space. The ones which were accessible (for me), walking up a “puck dandi” whose width was no more than 18 inches, having once again a sheer drop of thousands of feet on the outer edge, was manoeuvred with heart in the mouth, the trusty walking stick and hanging on to Naeem, my



One year later and these are the schools children go to

gallant escort. At the top were four shelters, belonging to one extended family of 40 persons, built as a quadrangle leaving a small part in the centre for entry. If one can imagine sitting on top of a mountain on a charpoy (string bed), surrounded with trees and crisp weather, that was it – sheer bliss. I did tell them that else where in the world one would have to pay an arm and a leg for such a site, but naturally that was no comfort though they were amused.

The visit to Darra was abandoned where further shelters had been given, due to lack of time as my flight from Islamabad was rescheduled at 7pm, though I had hoped to catch the late night flight back to Karachi. Although we left Danna at 1pm, I literally made it to the aircraft just in time, thanks to the goodwill of the PIA staff, despite the fact the counter had closed.

**Constructive aid:** As funds are still remaining with me, if running water was made available it would be a Godsend, as water is a major issue for most villages. It is ofcourse the women who walk for miles carrying water containers on their heads. Such a scheme to service a village would cost Rs500,000 (US\$8,197), inclusive of OAKDF's 10% overheads, but a No Objection Certificate is required from the ERRA. However the project can be done under community initiative and I have requested OAKDF to work out the logistics and the legal implications. They have selected the village of Khori Kheter which is in the Union Council of Nammal, high in the mountains, marginalized and vulnerable.

The medical aid as mentioned earlier is far from satisfactory, and OAKDF feel if a lady gynecologist is employed full time by them, the doctor could form a rotor system of visiting villages and looking after the needs of the women more satisfactorily, than having one base camp. One year's salary would be Rs360,000 (US\$5,902). We may have enough funds to finance this project for a year.

And lastly there may be a possibility of assisting the owners of The Foundation Public School, which is a well run private school in Karachi, by donating a further room, or furniture for the two initial classrooms, for their school which is being constructed in Silona village in Tehseel Shinkari and situated just off the Karakoram Highway. This couple are financing the school personally with the hope of bettering the prospects of these children. At first there will be 30 to 40 children in the age group of 3 – 5 years, co-ed, commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007 after the cold winter season. The school is ready and built according to earthquake specifications. A special curriculum has been formulated by the senior teaching faculty of the FPC suitable for the village children, in English, Urdu, Math and Life Skills. A BA graduate lady residing in the village has been employed as a teacher, as well as a teacher's aid, thereby giving employment to two persons. The owners have requested the senior faculty of FPC for a commitment to go to Silona village in a rotor system for a couple of weeks each, during the summer to give their valuable input.

As you can see much can be done to improve the lives of these people living in oblivion, but one needs resources and dedicated/caring human beings. The OAKDF team consisting of about 25 persons, are all committed individuals, each spending time in the field including the Chairman, Ali Asghar Khan. This is the secret of their success, knowing first hand what the needs are. ■■■■



'Puck dandi'  
at Danna



Artist's impression of the RKM Private School, Silona

## Earthquake area visited

by diana dinshaw-mana

A

week after the first anniversary of the earthquake that devastated the valleys and mountains of North Pakistan, Toxy Cowasjee and I visited some of the affected areas to see the progress made in the year to help these people. For Toxy this was a follow-up visit and a first for me.

Even after a year some of the problems remain the same and in fact have spiraled due to escalating poverty and unsuitable government policies. The presence of the multitude of NGO's is not so visible but the tribulations of the people are looming larger than life. These people are stuck in a circle of nature and politics so vicious that an educated person like me felt dizzy trying to find a solution for their problems.

Uncountable people lost their homes in the earthquake and were given temporary tents which were soon replaced by temporary shelters. After a year these so called *temporary* shelters still cover the picturesque mountains and valleys of Hazara Division of North West Frontier Province. From talking to the people in the mountains it seems like the policy makers were sitting in the comfort of their heated offices when they made the policies and decided on the subsidy amount.

The Government had promised to give a subsidy of Rs175,000 (approx US\$2,870) to each household. This subsidy amount is to be distributed under the "One Roof One Compensation" policy. Before the earthquake there were many families that lived independently in their own section of a house under one roof. Lack of land space up in the mountains and a culture of joint family system were some reasons for this arrangement. Under the "One Roof One Compensation" policy a household of three or four families will get only one subsidy cheque. It is needless to say that this amount is not close to sufficient to make a twenty by twenty room let alone a home for two or three families. Especially for those families that live up high in the mountains where there are no paved roads and the cost of taking up the government specified standardized materials is exorbitant.

The government policy also stipulates that the subsidy cheque will *only* be given to the *male* head of household. As a result men who were working in large cities to support their family have not been able to return to work because they need to be there to frequently follow up on the status of their subsidy cheques. The subsidy amount is given in two installments. The government has provided standards for rebuilding the homes in the earthquake zones. While setting the standards on the material to be used the policy makers have not taken into consideration the terrain or the accessibility and cost of transporting the materials to remote mountain areas.

After the first installment the people are expected to build the foundation and then report to the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA). A representative from ERRA will come to inspect if this is done according to government specified standards and if so the balance amount will be given otherwise not.

The individual stories about the compensation told by our drivers, cooks and guards working in our homes are uncannily the same even though they are from different villages and districts. One cook proudly boasts that he got the full compensation even though his house was not damaged in the earthquake because he is related to the *Nazim* of the area. My chawkidar Ramzan is still waiting for his cheque even though his neighbours have all received theirs, because his account is in Habib Bank and the compensation cheques are being given through National Bank of Pakistan (NBP). The people at Habib Bank promise him that he will get his money once they get it from NBP. A friend's driver patched

up his home last winter to protect his family from the cold. So he didn't get his compensation because the inspector from Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) ruled that his home had not been damaged in the earthquake.

The process of waiting for the first installment, building the foundation, waiting for the inspection and then the balance cheque can take years during which time the families are confronting the harsh winter and loss of income.

Families that had men folk working in cities are not the only ones facing the difficulty of lost income. Even farmers are facing a crisis because their water sources have been blocked or diverted from rubble left from the earthquake or landslides caused in the monsoon season. Some of them have not been able to grow wheat and corn because the earthquake shook up the soil and it is not suitable for growing these crops anymore.

It is expected that by the time majority of the affected families receive their first subsidy cheque they will be so much in debt that they will have to use that money to pay off their debts and without a foundation to the house for the ERRA representative to inspect there is no hope for the balance amount and hence for generations to come these people are going to be living in the *temporary* shelters.

As bleak as the housing situation seems a heart warming sight to see were the children of every age, girls and boys, in the towns and in the mountain villages dressed in uniforms going to school. It goes without saying that their schools were in unheated tents or under the open sky. Money has come in from all over the world through Save the Children and UNICEF to rebuild schools in this area and as expected the process of reconstruction is stuck in red tape. At this point the ERRA is only at the point of taking tenders from construction companies for building the schools. NGOs like The Citizen Foundation are independently building schools because they will privately run schools with their own curriculum and staff. Private donors willing to build the school structure and furnish it are

## The Wrath of Nature

"Can you please check if the river has stopped flowing?"

This is what the police officer at the Police Station in Gari Habibullah asked the police officer in Balakot.

In October the rain was coming down hard from the mountains east of the river Karan but there was no rain fall north of the river from where the river starts to flow, causing the river level to be low. The rain came down so hard that it brought with it trees, rocks and debris that had been loosened by the earthquake a year ago. The mud and debris coming down with the rain made a dam across the river and literally blocked the forward flow of the river. The river flowing from the north had nowhere to go so it changed its course and flooded the village of Gul Dhori destroying the homes of the residents and carrying away their belongings and livestock.

The residents of Gul Dhori had returned to their village after the earthquake and had just started rebuilding their homes when once again their homes were demolished by nature. These families are now living in tents in a camp waiting for the area to be cleared so they can go back home and restart their lives.

The monsoon this year has not only caused floods but also major landslides that has wiped out roads that are the only access to many remote villages, trapping the people for days. And even when the mud and debris is removed the roads have become so narrow that it is next to impossible for vehicles to travel on those roads and people have to make their way up and down the mountain on foot.

Unable to reach the market in the nearest towns the people in the mountains are cutting down trees to burn and patch up their shelters. The resulting deforestation is bringing the mountain lions and leopards into the villages looking for food. The wild animals are killing the goats and sheep that are kept by the villagers for their own sustenance. And the cycle of survival between man and nature continues.

And now as winter approaches the people of Hazara Division of NWFP are trying to prepare for whatever nature brings to them in the form of snowstorms and thunderstorms.

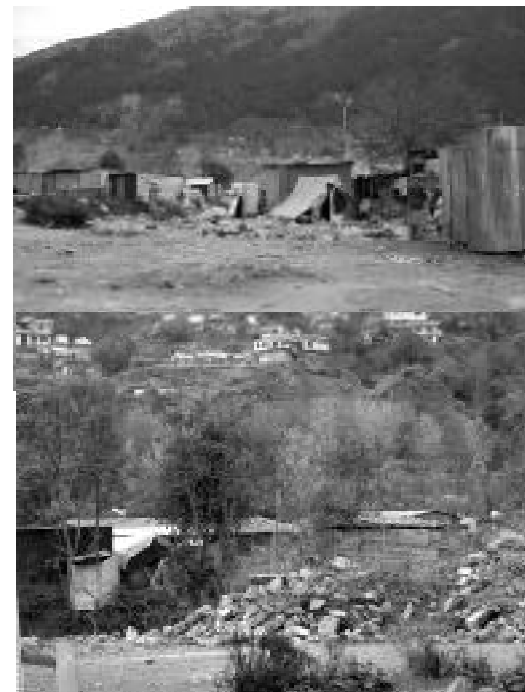
facing the problem of running the school because the government will not provide them with staff and faculty. Other NGOs are also having the same problem of assigning money for the continued running of a school and would rather spend their money in other areas as they know that the government already has plenty of money for the school project.

Shortly after the earthquake ERRA built a temporary steel and chipboard school structure in Balakot with the promise of building a permanent and better than before school in the area. A year later the steel structure that is too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter is still school for about 600 boys from grade six to ten. Soon after this school was built this area of Balakot was declared a *Red Zone* and all construction in this area stopped. A new area has been allocated by the government for the people to rebuild their homes and the city but no work has started yet. What hope can the people have from a government that has not been able to clear the rubble from the school backyard a year after the earthquake?

Comfort and safety of a home and education should be the basic rights of every human being but in the villages and small towns of Northern Pakistan these are a rare luxury. After spending three days in the villages of Hazara Division and seeing the plight of these people I wanted to provide immediate relief and quick solutions to their problems. It would have been so easy to take out my cheque book and donate my savings. But I soon realized that my money would only further cripple these people and my ideas and experiences are too foreign to tackle the evils of corruption and inhumanity of the people in power. Small steps with long term impact like educating the people of their rights, building communities, advocacy and appropriate representation in the government are some solutions to break the cycle of nature and politics that is trapping these people.



Balakot Government School



The rubble and temporary housing behind the school



*Diana Dinshaw-Mana is a special education teacher and a holistic practitioner currently teaching Reiki and Yoga in Chatham, New Jersey. She has given workshops on a variety of topics ranging from Accupressure and Reiki to Dyslexia and Learning Disabilities.*

*As Director Education Supervision for a private school in Pakistan she worked on mapping the curriculum and staff development.*

A fund raising luncheon spearheaded by Ann Keene for the earthquake relief was held at her home in Gloucestershire, England on 24<sup>th</sup> September. The Newent Inner Wheel Club, which Ann is part of, were keen to help in some way towards the relief and when they discovered the work carried out by the OAKDF, between them they donated a handsome sum of £1072.75 that afternoon.

Ann writes "I received a third of the money in donations from people who could not come, but were anxious to be involved and do something to help. I had your photos running all day on the DVD player on my television and your Hamazor articles open for people to read. I found that everyone was particularly pleased to be involved because they know that the money will be going direct to where it is needed. It was a lovely day and they were able to start out having drinks and nibbles in the garden before coming into the house for lunch. It was nearly 6 pm before the last people left! ... We feel we have so much ourselves and take so much for granted and this is the least we can do for these people who have lost their homes and live under such difficult circumstances." (Ann was my school friend and even though we left 50 years ago, the friendship continues - Ed)



# The World Zoroastrian Organisation

135 Tennison Road, South Norwood, London SE25 5NF

Registration No 1510380 Cardiff, England

A Company Limited by Guarantee

Incorporated 1980

## APPLICATION FORM FOR MEMBERSHIP

\_\_\_\_\_ 20 \_\_\_\_\_

The Joint Honorary Secretaries  
The World Zoroastrian Organisation

Dear Sirs,

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

I 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 Seconder 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, 39 Buckingham St, Whakatu, Hawkes Bay 4250. Tel: +64 6 870 1171



“With hands outstretched, Wise One,

I shall serve you ... with truth ...

You, moreover, with the skillfulness of good thinking.”

yasna 50.8  
*Insler translation*

