

publication of the world zoroastrian organisation

# HAMAZOR

1  
issue 2007



## Four Zoroastrians

in India  
at the forefront  
of their  
professions.

Honoured by  
the President of India



L to R: Ursula & Sammy Bhiwandiwalla, Alex & Valerie Burns  
WZO entrusted with GBP400,000 - p 34

# Contents

04	WZO invited on Human Rights Day - report by chairman, WZO
05	Report on Navsari & villages - sam bhiwandiwalla
08	Zoroastrian congresses
11	WZCC: celebrating six years - roshan rivetna
14	Coming together in Hamazori - report by roshan rivetna
18	The Titans
22	Update on the Church of Cognizance case - rustom kevala
24	Art of Sasanian Iran
26	Non-Zoroastrians in Zoroastrian percepts - adi davar
32	Pherozechah Mehta Bhavan & Research Centre - noshir dadrawala
34	WZO entrusted with GBP400,000
39	Farsi article - ardeshir khorshidian
40	Zoroastrianism : A Universal Religion - report from ARZ
42	Behind the scenes of The Parsi Panchayat Case (1908) - ferzeen bhadha
45	From Parsi priests to profits : say hello to Tata
48	Finding Parsis in Burma - mitra sharafi
51	Our North American Entertainers make news
62	Cyrus Todiwala, MBE : chef extraordinaire - shernaz engineer
65	The bas relief of Cyrus - sam kerr
66	WZO's calendar of events - 2007
67	Membership Form with details

## PHOTOGRAPHS

Courtesy of individuals  
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the magazine or as  
mentioned

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## *From the Editor*

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*a* A new year and a new beginning - NouRuz - the first day of spring and now celebrated in many countries around the world. Hamazor, to match the mood, in this issue carries success stories of individuals, institutions, corporations, associations and our own WZO.

It is hoped you enjoy reading these pages and share the admiration one feels for our very successful coreligionists. Thankfully we have many young Zoroastrians who have been recognised in their chosen fields not only in their countries of abode but internationally. This summer at Toronto, at the North American FEZANA congress, the organisers have taken the initiative of inviting the Titans for a question/answer session which should inspire our youth to aim for the stars. Some years ago when I was young, I was told "treat life as a hill, strive to climb to the top as there is plenty of room there, compared to the lower slopes where it is crowded." With the will to excel one can achieve, as we are too few to sit back and bask in the past glory of others.

*Toxy Cowasjee*

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



## **WZO** invited to represent the Zoroastrian Community on Human Rights Day, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2006

Reported by WZO's Chairman

In the elegant yet restrained interior of St Peters Church, Eaton Square, London, a multi-faith service of Thanksgiving by candlelight was held to celebrate 20 years of achievement by **Rights and Humanity** an internationally respected multi-faith human rights charity.



Julia Hausermann, President of Rights & Humanity

It's Founder and President is Julia Hausermann, a barrister at Law and MBE. She is also a consultant to the UN, the governments of the UK, Jordan and South Africa, as well as numerous international organisations. Its global Patrons amongst many others include H H The Dalai Lama; Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan.

December 10<sup>th</sup> is celebrated globally as Human Rights Day. It marks the day in 1948 on which the

Member States of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration was proclaimed in recognition that a world in which all human beings enjoy freedom of speech and belief, and freedom from want or fear, is the highest aspiration of humankind.

Rights and Humanities work has had far reaching effects on the welfare of people across the globe, through pioneering a



WZO's past President Shahpur Captain & Chairman Sam Bhiwandiwalla

human rights approach to development, which is a globally accepted framework for poverty elimination. They champion putting people at the heart of development efforts to ensure that they can lift themselves out of poverty and injustice. They work behind the scenes at the highest levels of the UN and governments as well as at grassroots level.

Shahpur Captain and Sammy Bhiwandiwalla were in attendance for the service of commemoration amongst representatives of various faith communities. In a moving ceremony of church music and prayer, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Jain and Sikh faith community representatives presented their multi-faith readings to the audience. Shahpur Captain on behalf of the Zoroastrian community narrated a verse from the Avesta.

The evening concluded with a review by Julia Hausermann MBE on the achievements of the organisation and a presentation of its Strategic Work Plan for the period 2007-2011.

Our sincere thanks to Julia Hausermann MBE and to Rights and Humanity for extending their invitation to WZO. [[www.rightsandhumanity.org](http://www.rightsandhumanity.org)]



# Report on the trip to Navsari & the surrounding villages

by sam bhiwandiwalla

February, 2007

**P**aris, Rome, New York and now to Navsari and the villages. When I first informed my wife Ursula about this trip I expected the worst, even though she is a seasoned traveller. *"Yes, lovely she retorted, I'd love to go there. Is the food really as good as they say?"*

On reaching Mumbai, during the first few days, we had endured the burning heat of the sun, the incessant honking of car horns and took our lives in our hands every time we tried to cross the streets.

Thankfully all this came to a temporary halt as we joined Bachi and Dinshaw Tamboly together with Alex Burns and Rohinton Irani both visitors from the UK, on what was to be an eye opening, bone shattering (as you will see) experience of a life time. The drive out of Mumbai became visibly quiet with less traffic on the roads as we reached Sanjan to make a well deserved stop at the WZO Sanatorium and refresh ourselves. The sanatorium which offers accommodation at truly modest prices away from the hustle and bustle of places like Mumbai is currently undergoing substantial external renovation. A magnificent building donated to WZO Trust Funds it is situated in a walled and well laid garden to the front and a recently planted orchard at the rear.

Moving on to Navsari we stopped at the Senior Citizens Residential Home, currently full to capacity and were greeted with great joy by the occupants. The evening was spent walking through the streets of Navsari, a place resplendent with architectural gems first built by the Parsis in a bygone era. Truly, if there is a place outside Mumbai with its institutions built by the Parsis then it must be Navsari where so much of our history and culture is intertwined within the fabric of the city. Let us hope that the Heritage Trust and the People for Heritage Concern, which is working with the WZO Trust Funds in India succeeds in preserving the many institutions and homes, many of which are now occupied by non-Parsis. The population of Parsis are below 4000. Those who are opposing this protection of our heritage simply have no understanding of the immense benefits we have witnessed in the UK with organisations like English Heritage.

The following day at the crack of dawn all six of us boarded a mini bus together with trusted lieutenant Farrokh Kasad to visit the villages of Vaghai district. To protect our delicate western constitutions we carried our own food and bottled water. The roads we encountered in many cases were no wider than the width of a single vehicle and with heavy on coming vehicles we had to rely on the driving skills of the bus driver. As it turned out on the very first day we had an encounter with an oncoming truck loaded with aggregate hurtling down a steep hill which could have ended this trip abruptly. Thankfully no one was hurt. On the following day we visited the Vandsa district and over the two days some twelve homesteads were covered.

WZO Trust Funds apart from its many projects in the rural regions of Gujarat has taken on the task of replacing the mud and cow dung huts with brick built cottages of two rooms in the front, two at the rear with an attached toilet/bath abutting to the rear. Each currently costs approximately Rs215,000 (£2500). The poverty of these Zoroastrian farmers even



ERSF beneficiary, Dali Jivasa, Vandsa district, with his family. Below his new home being built - Dinshaw Tamboly with



Rohinton Irani, Ursula, Dinshaw & Bachi Tamboly & Alex Burns at the senior citizens



Existing home of Minoo Jivasa, Vaghai district and overleaf



where they have made progress through support on other fronts is severe. Many of them are subsistence farmers with many family members seeking employment in nearby towns like Navsari. Those employed sustain themselves on monthly salaries of Rs5 to 6,000.

Over a five year period the target was set at 150 replacement homes. Due to the generosity of many individuals and other charitable institutions some 20 are more or less complete but more help is needed to reach and extend the target.

Almost all of the Zoroastrian farmers invited us into their homes and offered food and refreshments which were graciously accepted in spite of the fear of suffering the consequences. Of course the evenings ended with sumptuous kaleji ma gosh (meat with liver), tareli macchi (fried fish), fried fresh boomla (fried Bombay Duck [fish]) and masala prawns (spicy prawns), a favourite with Alex and Rohinton and many more delicacies cooked the traditional Parsi way.

There is very little more to say as the pictures say it all, except to thank our hosts Bachi and Dinshaw Tamboly and Farrokh Kased for striving so hard to bring some order and happiness in peoples lives and also to thank Alex Burns and Rohinton Irani who accompanied us to get an unfettered appreciation of the charitable activities of WZO.

Please support WZO by donating towards its replacement homes projects. Even small donations can be combined to replace a hut. For these communities it is a big step towards a decent life.



ERSF beneficiary Firoze Jivasa, Vaghai district. On the right is his present home



ERSF beneficiary, Jal Avari, Vansda. Below is his present home



Home of Surti family which was left incomplete by another charity organisation (Wapiz) completed by WZO Trust funds



A young man with his own stationery shop through self employment scheme



Sugar cane plantation





**XIV North American Zoroastrian Congress  
IMPACT- Unleash the Spark Within!  
June 29 - July 2, 2007**

Sheraton Parkway Toronto North Hotel and Conference Center  
Early Bird Deadline: 31 March, 2007  
[www.zoro-impact.com](http://www.zoro-impact.com)

**MEET THE TITANS**

Enjoy an interactive session with the titans of our community  
Mr Byram Avari - Lord Karan Bilimoria - Mr Nadir Godrej - Mr Fali Nariman - Mr Ratan Tata

**The Vision of Zarathushtra**

Inaugural lecture of the Khorshed Junglawalla lecture series, sponsored by FEZANA.

**OTHER PROGRAMS**

NOT an easy target! (self defense training)  
World Wide Mentoring  
True Confessions (Singles 25+)  
Zoroastrians in Arts/Theatre  
Zoroastrians in Iran as a visible Minority (7CE - Present)  
Zoroastrian Philosophy and Culture (session is partially in Farsi)  
and MUCH MORE  
(Please visit our website for more information on all IMPACT programs)

Are you a musician? The World Zoroastrian Symphony Orchestra is looking for musicians to participate in their performance on the Gala night.

If interested, please visit our website.

To advertise in our congress brochure please visit our website

**Early Bird Deadline: March 31, 2007**

For more information and registration please visit:  
[www.zoro-impact.com](http://www.zoro-impact.com)

*Back to the Future*



*The Fourth  
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The World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce's next AGM will be held at Karachi, Pakistan, in January 2008.

**9th World Zoroastrian Congress  
"Unity Through the Sands of Time"  
December 28 - 31 2009  
Dubai - UAE**

Meher Bhesania, Chair, Congress 2009 says "The Committee seeks your valuable inputs to make the Congress a purposeful and meaningful event. Please submit names of persons from your area to serve on the extended Congress team. We are also seeking individual and corporate sponsors to keep the fee structure low. Dubai being the centre of commerce and trade, sponsoring companies will receive tremendous benefits.

"We, the Zarathushtis of Dubai welcome you all, our Mobeds, heads of various anjumans, community visionaries and Zarathushtis around the world to congress 2009".



## Nominations for WZCC

In order that excellence in business and profession is encouraged and recognized, the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce annually recognises individuals in three categories:

Outstanding Zarathushti Entrepreneur  
Outstanding Zarathushti Professional  
Outstanding Young Zarathushti Professional/Entrepreneur

At this time nominations are invited and all nominations received shall be judged by a panel of three judges. The selected candidates will be honoured at the WZCC Annual General Meeting to be held early next year in Karachi.

Nomination forms are available on the WZCC website <wzcc.net> or can be requested from Filli Madon, Director WZCC-Australia, pars09@yahoo.com

**Nominations must be received by July 31, 2007**

### Message from WZCC president Rohinton Rivetna

- WZCC-India

Six years ago, this organization was just a dream in the hearts of its Founding Directors. Today it is a toddler, full of life, vigour and energy, yearning to set forth for wider horizons. It has been a long journey, the climb has been steep, the shining city on the top of the hill is still distant. But it beckons ...

Our community is blessed with a glorious business Tradition. We have a Vision – which is “to be the engine that drives the economic prosperity and wellbeing of our global community” through our Mission, which is “to energize the Zarathushti spirit of enterprise, through a networking of businesses and professionals.” All we need now is Action. And for that, we must remember the ten little words: “IF IT IS TO BE, IT IS UP TO ME.”

WZCC is a “chaordic” (order within chaos) organization, built around a single purpose. It has no hierarchy and thrives on complete freedom of operation. It is unlike any other Chamber of Commerce; rather, I would look upon it as a Fraternity. Let us avail of the strong ties, the instant bonding that we share, and heave together, shoulder to shoulder, to make that ascent to the top. The global economy demands it. That is the way of the future.

When we become members of WZCC, we become members: not to receive value, but to give value; not to be served, but to serve; and not to get rich overnight, but to spread richness, growth and prosperity all around. Our membership obligation, then, is to inspire and be inspired so that we may indeed “Energize the Zarathushti Entrepreneurial spirit” and reach that shining city on the top of the hill.

### New WZCC Office Bearers and Board of Directors

- by Zarine Commissariat

The new WZCC Office Bearers and Board of Directors, elected at the AGM on January 7, in Mumbai, were:

President: Bomi Boyce (Canada)  
Vice-Pres: Kersi Limathwalla (India)  
Treasurer: Framroze Patel (USA)  
Corp. Secy: Zarine Commissariat (India)  
Tech. Director: Yazdi Tantra (India)  
Directors: Zareen Karani Araoz (USA), Rustom Engineer (USA), Shernaz Engineer (UK), Rusi Gandhi (USA) and Firdosh Mehta (USA).

They will join continuing Directors: Khodayar Attai (Iran), Meher Bhesania (Middle East), Nowsherwan Irani (Pakistan), Hoshang Karani (USA) and Filli Madon (Australia).

The outstanding contributions made by the outgoing Founding Directors Rohinton Rivetna, Homi Davier, Dadi Mistry, Sarosh Collector, Edul Daver, Kobad Zarolia, Dorab Mistry, Ness Lakdawala Meherwan Boyce and Fali Shroff – were recognized.

We congratulate the next Board and wish them a successful tenure with the leadership of Bomi Boyce, a Consultant in International Business, with a focus on Viability Studies, Joint Ventures and Collaborations, Marketing, Financial and Legal, and formerly (1969 - 1980) a manager at IBM Canada. As he said at the Board Meeting, “It will be very difficult to follow in Rohinton Rivetna’s footsteps, but we will all try our best.”



# WZCC : celebrating six years of growth

by roshan rivetna

**W**ith professional flair, WZCC-India hosted the sixth AGM of the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce, January 4 - 8, 2007. Delegates from Australia, Canada, Iran, Middle East, Pakistan, Singapore, UK and USA joined Indian entrepreneurs, businesses and professionals to share their experiences, recognize their successes and energize the Zarathushti entre-preneurial spirit.

Some, like international hotelier Byram Avari, theatre businessman Alayar Dabestani, construction magnate Pallonji Mistry and corporate counselor Minoo Shroff – all members of the WZCC Honorary Members Guild, and at the zenith of their life careers – came to lend their guidance and inspiration.

Many, however, were taking their first fledgling steps in their chosen enterprises, and came to learn, and draw strength and support from their fellow Zoroastrians. Some came to showcase their ideas, their products and services, and to avail of the opportunity to network and grow. It paid off for at least one young entrepreneur, Zinobia Shroff who was pleasantly challenged with a large order of customized paper bags for the Avari chain of hotels.

**Founding directors retire** This AGM was a watershed in the history of WZCC, as the Founding Directors, who had the vision and the passion to nurture the Chamber through its conception at the FEZANA Business Conference in Las Vegas ten years ago, through its birth at the World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston in 2000, and its growth internationally today, would now hand over the reins. Each was recognized with a commemorative plaque: president Rohinton Rivetna, VP Homi Davier, VP International Dadi Mistry, Treasurer Sarosh Collector, Corporate Secretary Edul Daver, directors Ness Lakdawala, Dorab Mistry, Kobad Zarolia and Meherwan Boyce and Fali Shroff, both of whom had retired earlier.

**2006 Honorary Membership** At the gala evening, at the West End hotel on January 6, Byram Dinshaw Avari was inducted as the 2006 Honorary Member for outstanding business achievements and humanitarian service. In his impassioned response, Mr Avari, of the Avari Group with companies in the hotel, real estate, travel, brewery and pharmaceutical industries, and a passionate yachtsman to boot, recounted the story of his family's purchase of their first hotel 60 years ago, from their life savings of Rs1 lakh, and their growth "through hard work, persistence and determination." "We are here to stand by you," he pledged, and offered the facilities of his hotels in Karachi, for the next WZCC AGM.

**Recognitions** Three outstanding Zoroastrians with exceptional achievements, as judged by a panel of international judges, were recognized at the gala. The annual recognitions programme is administered by WZCC-Australia (Filli Madon, pars09@yahoo.com).

**Outstanding Zarathushti Entrepreneur** Viraf Savak Kapadia, CEO of Star Navigation, Canada, is the inventor of a real-time flight data recorder that alerts operators to potential aircraft problems. This is a jointly patented product which will revolutionize the airlines industry, setting new standards in passenger safety.

**Outstanding Zarathushti Professional** Dr Sam Kerr, Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, is a pioneer in innovative surgery and teaching practices. He has developed a unique drainage tube for the ear, Tympanic membrane healing, pioneered head and neck cancer surgery and voice rehabilitation.

**Outstanding Young Zarathushti Professional/Entrepreneur** Nawaz Kotwal works with the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative in India. Her contributions towards



Minoo Shroff felicitating Rohinton Rivetna, visionary and out-going President



Pallonji Mistry (Hon Member 2004) presenting the WZCC Hon Member trophy to 2006 Hon Member Byram Avari



Awardwinner, Dr Sam Kerr of Australia



Awardwinner, Viraf Kapadia of Canada



Awardwinner, Nawaz Kotwal of India

preservation of civil liberties include working with relief camps, rehabilitation of the displaced, documenting crime and securing access to justice.

The gala evening continued with a viewing of the film "The Merchant Princes of Bombay"; a multi-media presentation by Meher Bhesania (WZCC-Middle East) on the next World Zoroastrian Congress, in Dubai, in 2009; hilarious Parsi skits and songs, including a hearty version of the ubiquitous *Chaiyye Hame Zarathushti*, by the talented Pervez and Marzban Mehta, of the erstwhile "Darling Orchestra"; cocktails, networking and buffet on the terrace.

**Business Panel and Success Stories** The programme on January 7, again at the West End, provided ample opportunities to meet, mingle, discuss and be inspired. It included a panel discussion on "Doing Business with India". Panelists: Adi Engineer (former Managing Director, Tata Power Co.) related how India was poised for a great growth story; Dr Zareen Karani Araoz (President, Managing Across Cultures) touched upon the human factor in global business; legal luminary Nadir Modi saw the value in this global economy, for Zoroastrians "on both sides of the waters" to interact more; Real Estate agent and developer Rusi Gandhi saw unparalleled opportunities in the real estate industry in India; Farokh Balsara, head of Ernst and Young India's Media and Entertainment, noted that global outsourcing was changing the face of corporate India.

Edul Daver, CEO of ACuPowder International, New Jersey, dominant producer of metal powders globally, with over \$75 million annual sales revenue, presented the story of his "leveraged buy-out" of that

company, using asset-based financing, giving true meaning to his definition of entrepreneurship as "the pursuit of opportunities beyond the resources currently available."



Speakers table at the Gala on Jan 6 with officers and hon. members, before the new Board. Minoo Shroff WZCC-India President, Zarine Commissariat (MC), Edul Daver (out-going Corp. Secy), Pallonji Mistry (2004 Hon. Mem), Behram Avari (2006 Hon. Member), Rohinton (outgoing Pres), Alayar Dabestani (2001 Hon Mem) and Kersi Limathwalla (Dir-India).

Tehmasp Printer, Managing Director (India) of IGI, the International Gemological Institute, the world's leading diamond and jewelry certification institute, spoke of India's growing diamond industry. Cyrus Driver presented his "work in progress" story. Switching from a job at JPMorgan, he founded Calorie Care, delivering customized, calorie conscious meals, cooked from scratch in a health kitchen, to a customer base of over 200.

**Directors Meetings and Field Trips** The WZCC programmes started on January 4th, with a gathering hosted by Zareen Araoz at the Karani family estate in Lonavla, and a visit to the Tata Power Company's environmental research station in an idyllic setting at Valvan Dam. January 5th started with a visit to the facilities in Pune, of Forbes Marshall, a leader in Process Efficiency and Energy Conservation, where the venerable founder Darius Forbes and son Naushad underlined the company's commitment to social responsibility towards employees and the community. Lively discussion ensued at the Tea at the Turf Club with WZCC-Pune (chair-Adi Engineer), which boasts a surprisingly large number of enterprises, from the famed Kayani Bakery with its legendary Shrewsbury biscuits to Anu Aga's Thermax, Dr Keki Grant's Ruby Hall Hospital and numerous other established and upcoming enterprises.



WZCC directors met with Managing Directors Keki Mistry of HDFC Bank, Farokh Banatwalla of Zoroastrian Co-Op Bank, Hosi Sinor, Chief Executive, Indian Banks Association, and others, to explore venture capital funds.

WZCC-Delhi hosted an excellent programme "Lessons in Entrepreneurship" with telecommunications consultant Dr Percy Batlivala, and distributor of computer supplies, young entrepreneur Adil Nargolwala, most proficiently organized by Dadi and Nergish Mistry, Secretary Veera Mavalwala and President Rustom Daroga.

**Meeting with Ratan Tata** Possibly the most significant of the Directors' meetings was with business icon Ratan Tata, chair of the Tata Group, at his office in Bombay House. "I am very, very deeply touched by your words ... Over time, one has lost touch with the community. To be recognized by them is a great and special honour," he said, referring to the "Entrepreneur of the Century" award presented to him by WZCC, at the Congress in London in 2005. He expressed his wish that "Zoroastrians stand out in business as they did in past years," and added "I would love to re-engage ... be associated with your organization to make that happen." "If there are young Zoroastrians that have a good idea," he said, "I will be happy to contribute." He said he "would be very happy" to make himself available for a video conference address at the Toronto Congress in July 2007.



Front- L to R : Bomi Boyce (new president), Ratan Tata, Minoo Shroff, Rohinton Rivetna  
Back - L to R : Farokh Rustomji, Yazdi Tantra, Zarine Commissariat (new Corp. Secy), WZCC Hon. Member Alayar Dabestani, and Kersi Limathwala (new VP)

**Conclusion** Kudos to WZCC-India for the magnificent orchestration of this AGM, notably to Kersi and Zarine Commissariat and Yazdi Tantra, for covering all the logistics with such professional flair, Shernaz Engineer for the excellent Souvenir Book, and many others behind the scenes.

By any standard this AGM was a great success. But – as Kersi Limathwalla observed: "At the end of the day, the only true measure of our success will be in counting the number of enterprises we help to set up and grow." Website: [www.wzcc.net](http://www.wzcc.net)



The name, FEZANA Journal is synonymous to Roshan Rivetna. She was the prime architect behind the rise of the quarterly Journal from a fledgling publication in 1991 to the professional journal widely read, when she retired as its Editor in Chief at the end of 2005. She shared the Outstanding Zoroastrian Award at the 7<sup>th</sup> North American Congress, Houston with her husband Rohinton, in 1990, having tirelessly working for the betterment of the community in North America; was awarded a plaque at the 9<sup>th</sup> NAZC in 1994, "... in recognition for her significant contribution to the establishment of FEZANA infrastructure by the Zarathushtis of Canada and the United States of America." In 2000 Roshan was selected as one of the 20 ladies inducted to the Hall of Fame – Daughters of Mashyani – at the 7<sup>th</sup> WZC, Houston. Roshan has a Master's in Nuclear Physics from the University of Pittsburgh and at the time of retirement she was the Software Engineer of Lucent Technologies, for designing and testing telephone switching system software for international markets.

VISION for the community developed at the London Roundtable, 2005 -

"To nurture a caring, compassionate, harmonious, observant, esteemed and prosperous community"

HAMAZOR - ISSUE 1 2007

## Coming together in hamazori

- A report by Roshan Rivetna

**Z**oroastrians from India, Iran and the diaspora, gathered at the one-day "Coming Together Roundtable" in Mumbai for discourse and dialogue on projects and issues of import to the global Zoroastrian community.

Following up on the first "Coming Together Roundtable" held at the World Congress in London in June 2005 [see Hamazor Issue 3/05], and availing of the opportunity when a number of Zoroastrians from the diaspora would be in Mumbai for the preceding WZCC meet, Rohinton Rivetna, Founding President of FEZANA and WZCC, convened this second Roundtable, at the Mancherji Joshi Hall of the Athornan Madressa in Dadar, Mumbai, on January 8, 2007. All participants of the previous Roundtable and any other interested Zoroastrians were invited.

Ervad Dr Ramiyar Karanjia, principal of the Athornan Madressa, set the tone of the meeting with a beautiful talk on the traditional **concept of "Hamazor"**. After a round of self-introductions by the sixty or more participants, from India, Pakistan, Iran, USA, Canada, Australia, UK and Singapore, Rohinton Rivetna stressed the urgency for our global "Community Without Borders" to "**come together and work together**" on global challenges and projects. "We must foster connections between the diaspora and homeland communities, focusing on social togetherness, harmony and cooperation, with respect for religious diversity. Our actions must be deliberate to strengthen, not fragment, the remarkable bonding we share, and to enhance our social capital. This is an action-oriented, working meeting towards our vision" he said, and proposed a list of twenty-plus discussion items for the day, culled from the long list of projects and challenges, generated at the London meet.

Zareen Karani Araoz (ZWIN International network, [zwinzisin@yahoo.com](mailto:zwinzisin@yahoo.com)) made an impassioned plea for the community to harmonize their efforts and stay away from political and religious divisiveness.

### Discussion Points/Action Items

**Supplies and services for overseas Zoroastrians and a web-based Zoroastrian directory** Yazdi Tantra ([yazdi@on-lyne.com](mailto:yazdi@on-lyne.com)) is developing **TheParsiMail.com**, with an online payment gateway, to include ordering liturgical items (sudrehs, kushtis, sukhad, ses, diva, prayer books), sending flowers/mithai to loved ones, and financial/accounting/legal services. With Ader Gandhi, he has also created **ZoroastrianDirectory.com**, a worldwide listing of Zoroastrians, **TheParsiMatch.com** (for matrimonials) and **TheParsiChronicle.com** (for news).

**Coordinated welfare programmes** Prompted by a suggestion, in absentia, by Porus Dadabhoy of Chicago for overseas Zoroastrians to participate in BPP's 3rd Child Assistance programme. Firdosh Mehta explained the procedure for sending donations from overseas for welfare, critical assistance or natural calamities, and tax implications in USA and Canada. Alayar Dabestani addressed aspects of sending donations to Iran. Jimmy Mistry, founder-trustee of the **Parsi Resource Group** ([info@ParsiResourceGroup.com](mailto:info@ParsiResourceGroup.com)) mentioned shortage of funds to sponsor PRG's programmes for the Youth, Mobeds and Agiaries, such as children's educational sponsorships, and Mediclaim assistance for Mobeds. He will follow up with Houtoxi Contractor, chair, FEZANA Welfare Committee ([HFM31@aol.com](mailto:HFM31@aol.com)) about "**Adopt-a-Child**" and "**Adopt-an-Agiary**" programmes.

While some, like Oorvaksh Medora of Ahmedabad and Parsiana's Jehangir Patel, questioned whether excessive doles "would really help the community to grow?" or "Are we creating a class of professional

beggars?" most agreed on the **need for coordinating welfare efforts**. BPP chair Minoo Shroff suggested that the welfare trusts review their archaic systems, be accountable, and share a coordinated application review process to avoid duplication. Homai Modi, trustee and Hon Secy of the K R Cama Oriental Institute (krcamaoi@vsnl.com), offered to facilitate **reviving the Liaison Committee**, and ensure that the various trusts support this Committee.

Armaity Desai, formerly director of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, and a member of the PARZOR board (armaity@vsnl.net) presented funding needs for projects undertaken by the **PARZOR** organization with assistance from UNESCO (www.unescoparzor.com): a **genetics and fertility research** centre at Masina Hospital; publication of a **children's book** on Zoroastrianism by Shernaz Cama; **language studies** and several other projects.

**Other projects** Minoo Shroff saw the need for a **study on aging and elder issues** among Zoroastrians. Mention was made of a **"Doctors Without Borders"** network spearheaded by Porus Dadabhoy (porusdad@yahoo.com) and Dr Mehroo Patel of Chicago. Such a cadre of medical professionals could be an invaluable resource for our Zoroastrian and global communities. Behram Pastakia (bpastakia@aol.com), former President of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, presented follow up on **Operation Eyesight**, which offers eye care and glasses to the needy; opportunities for a **Zarathushti Peace Corps**, encouraging individual acts of charity on a world wide basis; supporting a **Genealogy Archives** project by Dr Rubina Patel to help Zoroastrians understand our common heritage; and his vision of a safe, efficient, state-of-the-art environment for patient care at **Parsi General Hospital**. At a subsequent meeting, Hector Mehta, Hon Secy of PGH, was apprised of these opportunities.

**Preservation of manuscripts and documents** Dr Homi Dhalla founder of WZCF, the World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation, urged that **precious books and manuscripts** at the Meherji Rana Library in Navsari and elsewhere must not only be preserved, but also made readily accessible, and distributed – to safeguard against a calamity. He has placed 45 **out-of-print books on a CDROM**, and offered a **collection of 400 old books** to any worthy Zoroastrian library. Natalie Vania mentioned **Google's project to digitize** the world's great literary works and make them searchable over the Web. Homai Modi described **restoration efforts** at the K R Cama Oriental Institute. Notable work has also been done for the **Navsari manuscripts** by Shernaz Cama of PARZOR. At a subsequent meeting, Dasturji Kotwal lamented on the dilapidated condition of the storage building at the **Navsari library**, and the critical need to rebuild that structure. Russi Ghadialy suggested donating rare and valuable items to museums and libraries to be restored and showcased to the world. Dhalla touched upon other WCZF projects: **excavations in Sanjan** and an **archeological museum** for the excavated artifacts; a forthcoming **book on Navsari**; reviving **Gujarati language and monajats**; conservation work at **Bahrot Caves**; a traveling **textiles exhibit**, which could also evolve into an opportunity for sales/export. Mention was made of the **Persepolis tablets** excavated at the Oriental Institute, that are currently under contention with the Iranian government. Shirin Mistry requested help in collecting artifacts for a **Zarathushti Expo** at the World Youth Congress.

#### **Participation in Interfaith and UN programmes**

Behram Pastakia urged organizations to seek **UN-NGO status**, as FEZANA has, and participate in their numerous humanitarian and peace programmes, and offered help in that process. Zoroastrians in the diaspora are very active in **Interfaith work** and in humanitarian projects such as **Habitat for Humanity**. He suggested developing a **travelling Zarathushti exhibit** that could be loaned for events around the world, eg. at UN Headquarters in New York. Homi Dhalla is working on



Mr Salamati (Iran), Alayar Dabestani (Seattle) & Yazdi Tantra (Mumbai)



Armaity Desai & Prof Feredoon Kapadia of Aatash Consultants



Dr Behram Pastakia



Homi Dhalla



Nawaz Mody, Homai Modi, Kersi & Coomi Mehta (Mumbai), Soli Dastur (Florida), Sam Billimoria (California)

this exhibit, through WZCF. Behram is also working on placing the **Zarathushti logo in the UN chapel**. Maneck Bhujwala (maneck\_bhujwala@mindspring.com) made a plea, in absentia, for Zoroastrians to take the lead in forming **Interfaith organizations in India**, and organizing events with government and industry leaders. An All-India Interfaith gathering was suggested, on the model of the **Parliament of World's Religions**.

**Public Relations** Bomi Boyce and Sam Billimoria pointed out the need to give a **coordinated response to misinformation** in the press, on the internet, and in books. A FEZANA Committee has been formed to address this need. Numerous efforts are underway to bring awareness at the international level, eg. UNESCO has been approached to commemorate **Nouruz as a world heritage day**.



Firdosh Mehta (Dallas) & Rustom Engineer (Houston)

**Selection of World Congress Venue** Firdosh Mehta, Behram Pastakia and Rohinton Rivetna will establish a formal process for allocating world congresses, to be effective for Congresses after the 2009 Congress in Dubai, and the 2007 Youth Congress in Melbourne.

**World Zoroastrian Council** Alayar Dabestani reported that a "**World Zoroastrian Council**" has been established in Paris, with a donation of 2 million Euros from Dr and Mrs Sassanfar, that will cater to the purported large numbers who wish to claim Zoroastrian heritage; and suggested forming a Think Tank to address this development. "When we open our doors indiscriminately, when we stop using our Parsi-Irani identity, we are asking for trouble," said Khojeste Mistree, "This should be a lesson to all of us, especially in America."

Alayar also pointed out the need to form an **Iranian Ad-Hoc Committee** to aid Zoroastrians in the event of a political emergency in Iran.



Jimmy Mistry (Mumbai), Russi Ghadiali (Singapore) & Ness Lakdawala (Montreal)

Alayar mentioned that work is in progress by Homer Abramian of Australia to place **Cyrus the Great monuments** in a hundred locations around the world, including India. There was some sentiment that it might be more impacting to put replicas of the Cyrus cylinder – which has been generally acknowledged as the world's first "Bill of Human Rights."

**Proposal for a World Zoroastrian General Assembly** Kayzad Namdarian of Australia submitted a proposal in absentia: "**United Towards Frashokereti**," for a World Zoroastrian General Assembly (WZGA) to serve "as an evolutionary step forward from the Coming Together Roundtable." The proposal is to "create an open structure forum of Zoroastrian entities around the world for the following objective: To ensure that Zarathushtra's message survives future millennia, by solving common problems for Zoroastrians, across the world, in a non-binding, voluntary way." WZGA is conceived to be "simply a formalized gathering forum" and not a body-of-bodies. "It is completely non-binding, and serves to address common issues in a professional, formal way through dialogue, action and results." For the full proposal, contact kayzadnamdarian@hotmail.com.

**Network of Anjumans in Mumbai** Marzban Giara and Jimmy Jesia indicated interest in facilitating the formation of a network of local mandals in Mumbai, to facilitate communication and dialogue.

**Passing the Torch to the Next Generation** Chair of the Indian Federation of Zoroastrian Youth (FOZYA), Nauzer Kasad, painted a bleak picture: "Youth is frustrated by all that is happening ... they are ready to give up, they are drifting away. No trustee, no organization is interested in helping" he said, "We have to literally go around begging."

Jimmy Mistry mentioned PRG's **Youth Empowerment (YES)** and **Making a Difference (MAD)** programmes have been successful in attracting the youth. Freyaz Shroff mentioned ZYNA's (Zoroastrian Youth of North America) efforts to compile a **world youth directory** and an **online youth network**,

zspeakerbox, and its active participation in projects at the local community and national level. Minoo Bhujwalla of New Orleans (mbhujwa@cox.net) has submitted a proposal, in absentia, for a “**Save the Zarathushti Youth**” programme and youth camp with a team of psychiatrists and statisticians, and would like to discuss this further with any interested persons. Shirin Mistry (shirinjmistry@yahoo.com.au) mentioned the “**Friends Forever**” programme at the **World Youth Congress** in Melbourne in 2007, and hoped that a legacy of that event would be closer bonding between Zoroastrian youth.

**Next Steps** The day was short, and many important items, such as concerns about interfaith marriages and demography, could not be covered. From the level of interest, though, and the breadth of topics covered, it was evident that this was an effective forum. Notes, with action items and ownership will be sent to all participants and other interested persons. Contact rivetna@aol.com for a copy. This will be a living document, to be updated until the next opportunity for a Roundtable.



left, Adi Engineer (Pune), Kersi Commissariat & Minoo Shroff (Mumbai), Bomy Boyce (Toronto), Jehangir Patel, Veera Patel, Arnavaz Mama & Marzban Giara (Mumbai)



Perin Cooper (Pakistan), Rusi Gandhi (USA), Sam Kerr (Australia), Oorvaksh Medora (Ahmedabad), Rustom Chami (Mumbai), Khodayar Attaie (Iran)

### **MISSION for the community:**

*“To come together and work together in hamazori for the Zarathushti and global communities.”*



# The Titans



On 26 January 2007, India's 58<sup>th</sup> Republic Day, the President of India has conferred the honour of Padma Vibhushan on Fali Sam Nariman for outstanding performance in Public Affairs, the Padma Bhushan on Dr Jamshed Irani for Trade & Industry and Padma Shri conferred on Astad Aderbad Deboo for Art.

This year, 121 Padma awards were announced, including 10 Padma Vibhushan, 32 Padma Bhushan and 79 Padma Shri awards.

Air Marshal Fali Homi Major has been selected as the next Indian Air Chief Marshal who takes over from 1 April. The Air Marshal will be the second Zoroastrian to head the Indian Air Force since Independence, the first being Aspi Engineer.

## Mr Fali Sam Nariman



Mr Fali Sam Nariman was born on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1929, in Rangoon and is a Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court of India. Enrolled as an advocate of the Bombay High Court in November 1950, he has practised law for fifty five years, initially in the High Court of Bombay and then, since 1972, in the Supreme Court of India at New Delhi.

He was appointed Additional Solicitor-General of India in May 1972 which office he held till 26<sup>th</sup> June 1975 – he resigned this office a day after the Internal Emergency of 26th June 1975.

He has been – The President of the Bar Association of India, since 1991; Vice-Chairman of the International Court of Arbitration of the ICC (International Chamber of Commerce) Paris, from 1989 till December 2005; a member of the Court of the London Court of International Arbitration (LCIA), London, since 1988; and Honorary Chairman of the International Council for Commercial Arbitration (ICCA) (from May 2002), having been ICCA President from October 1994 to May 2002.

He was co-chair of the Human Rights Institute of the International Bar Association from July 2001, till December 2004; and he was Chairman of the Executive Committee

of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), Geneva, from 1995 to 1997. Since 1998 he is an Honorary Member of the ICJ Geneva.

He is a Member, Advisory Council of Jurists of the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human rights Institutions since 1999; and a Member, Advisory Board of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), since November 1999.

Fali Nariman was awarded the Padma Bhushan in January 1991, by the President of India in recognition of distinguished service in the field of jurisprudence.

On 22 November, 1999, he was nominated by the President of India as a Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha (Upper House) and served a full term of six years. He has been a visiting Professor of the National Law School of India University, Bangalore – India's premier Law College – for over fifteen years.

In 2003 the National Academy of Legal Studies and Research University, Hyderabad (NALSAR) awarded him the (honorary) degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) (honoris causa) and recently been appointed Honorary Adjunct Professor of the National Judicial Academy, Bhopal, being on the Academic Council of this Academy.

In 1995 he was named by the International Bar Association headquarters in London as "Living Legend of the Law".

He has been awarded the - Global Media Laurel at the International Conference of World Association of Press Councils, in Istanbul, Turkey, on 21st September 1998. In 2002 he was awarded the Justice Prize by the Peter Gruber Foundation, which consists of a gold medal and a cash prize of US \$150,000, the citation reading – *"He has over many years given exceptional leadership in a legal community whose thinkers and doers have inspired the development of a creative jurisprudence that facilitates the binding together of a diverse nation, helps control the exercise of public power and seeks to enable the poor, minorities and the marginalized to claim their basic rights to human dignity."* The award was presented on September 22, 2002 in Richmond, Virginia (USA) at the ancestral home of John Marshall the Great Chief Justice of the US (1803-1835). [WZO feted Mr Nariman in London for this honour, as reported in Hamazor Issue 4/02 p9]

On 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2005 the Dr Naresh Chandra Sengupta Gold Medal for the year 2004 was awarded by the Asiatic Society of India (established on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1784), for outstanding contribution in the field of Society and Law in Ancient and Medieval India.

On June 12<sup>th</sup> 2006 he was awarded the degree of DLit (honoris causa) at the Convocation of the Kumaun University, Nainital, Uttaranchal.

[Fali Nariman wrote about his Memories of Nani Palkhivala in Hamazor Issue 1/2003 pp 27-28]

### **Dr Jamshed J Irani**

Jamshed Irani obtained a BSc from Science College, Nagpur in 1956 with a Gold Medal in Geology and a first class first in MSc (Geology) from the Nagpur University (1958), MMet and PhD from the University of Sheffield, UK, in 1960 and

1963 respectively, with a gold medal for his PhD thesis.

Dr Irani began his career in 1963 as a senior scientific officer at the BISRA, Sheffield, where he rose to head the Physical Metallurgy division. On return to India in 1968 he joined The Tata Iron and Steel Company Ltd. (TISCO) as assistant to Director, Research & Development. He was appointed General Superintendent in 1978, General Manager in 1979, President in 1985 and Managing Director in 1992. After holding the CEO's office for almost a decade, he retired as the Managing Director of Tata Steel in July 2001. He continues as a Director on the board of Tata Steel.

Recipient of the Metallurgist of the Year Award in 1974 from the Ministry of Steel and Mines, he was awarded the prestigious "Platinum Medal" in November, 1988 by the Indian Institute of Metals. (this medal is the highest award given by the IIM for outstanding contributions made to the metallurgical profession and industry). He was awarded the "Steel Man of the Year 1990"; recipient of Asian Productivity Medal for 1993-94. The Ministry of Steel and Mines, Government of India has conferred on Dr Irani the inaugural National Metallurgist Award on 14th November 1997 for his extraordinary achievements in the field of metallurgical industry. He has also been awarded the Michael John Memorial Gold Medal for the year 1998 for fostering harmonious employee-management relations in industry. He has been awarded the Qimpro Platinum Standard in November 2000 and was selected to receive the

Indian Merchants' Chamber's Juran Quality Medal for the year 2001, for his role as a statesman for quality. Dr Irani has been conferred with the World Zarathushti Award for Excellence in Business at the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress at Houston, USA in



December 2000. He received the Ernst & Young's Lifetime Achievement Award, 2001 for entrepreneurial success and is the recipient of the Twelfth Willy Korf Steel Vision Award instituted by The World Steel Dynamics and American Metal Market. The Indian National Academy of Engineering has conferred the Life Time Contribution Award in Engineering 2002 on him. He is the recipient of the eighth JRD Tata Corporate Leadership Award instituted by All India Management Association (2003). The Banaras Hindu University (BHU) conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Science, Honoris Causa in January 2004. He was awarded the ICSI Life Time Achievement Award for Translating Excellence in Corporate Governance into Reality in 2006 by The Institute of Company Secretaries of India.

He is a Fellow of the Institute of Metals, Institution of Engineers, All India Management Association, Institute of Standards Engineers, Indian Academy of Sciences and Institution of Industrial Managers.

In December 1993, the University of Sheffield conferred upon him the honorary degree of "Doctor of Metallurgy". At its Annual General Body Meeting held on 10th July 1996, the Royal Academy of Engineering, London, elected Dr Irani as a Foreign Member and he is amongst the five Indians who have been bestowed with this honour.

On 14th October 1997 in Delhi, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II conferred on Dr Irani an honorary knighthood (KBE), for his contributions to Indo-British Trade and Co-operation.

In 2007 he was honoured by the President of India who conferred on him the award of "Padma Bhushan" for his services to Trade and Industry in the country.

Dr Irani is an avid stamp collector, cricket enthusiast, and been a great promoter of sports and education in the city of Jamshedpur, as well as a committed environmentalist.

### *Astad Deboo*

Astad Deboo, who graduated from Loyola, Jamshedpur in the 60s, has been awarded the Padma Shri by Government of India.

Born in 1947 in Navsari, Gujarat, Astad Deboo initially received training in Kathak under Guru Prahlad Das in Calcutta and in Kathakali under Guru E K Panicker. Later, he attended the London School of Contemporary Dance learning Martha Graham's modern dance technique and learnt Jose Limon's technique in New York. He also trained with Pina Bausch in the Wuppertal Dance Company, Germany and with Alison Chase of the Pilobolus Dance Company. Along with these and other experiences with dance companies in Japan and Indonesia, he has created a dance theatre style of his own which successfully assimilates Indian and western techniques. He has experimented with a variety of forms, themes, concepts and performance spaces and has collaborated with other dancers, composers and designers to create innovative works of aesthetic value.

Recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Creative Dance in 1995, Astad Deboo pioneered modern dance in India. He works regularly with the Action Players, a group of deaf actors in Calcutta. He has performed at the Great Wall of China, with Pink Floyd in London and at the 50th anniversary of the American Dance Festival. Deboo was commissioned by Pierre Cardin to choreograph a dance for Maia Plisetskaya-prima ballerina of the Bolshoi Ballet and has given command performances for the royal families of Japan and Thailand. He was the first contemporary dancer to perform at the Elephanta and Khajuraho festivals. He has conducted workshops at the London School of Contemporary Dance and the China Academy of Arts, Beijing.



Astad's most recent performances have been in the Kala Ghoda Festival in February, Festival of Lighting in dance for the Festival of Germany in Delhi on March 11, 2000. He had been commissioned by the Hong Kong curator of Theatre Danny Young, for the Festival Journey 2000 in Hong Kong. He worked with Chinese actor Cedric Chan. Astad's work got selected for the Festival of Vision in Berlin in 2000. He has performed in the Festival of Berlin in Hong Kong with musicians Amelia Cuni and Werner Durrand in the Festival of Macau. He works with deaf theatre companies in Mexico and Hong Kong. Always on the move, Astad personally coordinates his programmes, which stretch across five continents.

[Hamazor commissioned Ramu Ramanathan to interview Astad Deboo, which appeared in Issue 3/2002, pp 50-52: Wah Ustad, wah!]

### ***Air Marshal Fali H Major, PVSM AVSM SC VM ADC***

Air Marshal Major was born on 29 May 1947 in Secunderabad; a graduate of the National Defence College and Army War College, Mhow and was commissioned in the Indian Air Force in 1967.

He commanded the first MI-17 Squadron of the Indian Air Force as a Wg Cdr and commenced Operations with this helicopter in the world's highest battlefield - the Siachin Glacier. On promotion to the rank of Group Captain, he commanded yet another MI-17 Squadron and led this Squadron into battle during our IPKF operations in Srilanka. For his leadership and courage, he was awarded the Vayu Sena Medal (gallantry) during this tenure. Later, in the same rank and as Station Commander of Air Force Station Sarsawa, he was instrumental in carrying out a daring rescue operation in which 11 people were saved from a stranded cable car in the middle of a valley at the "Timber Trail" resort at Parwanoo, HP. For this act of gallantry, he was awarded the "Shaurya Chakra" by the President of India.

He has held a number of important staff and field appointments – Joint Director (Helicopter Operations) and Director Operations (Transport & Helicopter). In 1999, he took over as the Air Officer Commanding Leh (Ladakh) in the aftermath of the Kargil conflict. For his leadership, successful accomplishment of his tasks and distinguished service of a very high order, he was awarded the "Ati Vishist Seva Medal" by the President of India on 26 Jan 2002. He was promoted to the rank of Air Vice Marshal on 04 Feb 2002 and appointed as Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Personnel Airmen & Civilians) at Air Headquarters. On promotion to the rank of Air Marshal on 02 Jan 04 he moved to HQ integrated Defence Staff as the Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (Operations). As the Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (Operations) he directed and coordinated the relief, rescue and rehabilitation operations of the Indian Armed Forces, in India and abroad during the Tsunami disaster. On 05 Sep 05, he



was promoted and appointed as the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Air Command. For his continued professionalism and distinguished service, he was awarded the "Param Vishist Seva Medal" by the President of India on 26 Jan 2006.

Air Marshal Fali Homi Major has been selected as the next Indian Air Chief Marshal who takes over from 1 April 2007.

The Air Marshal is an avid golfer and a cricket fan.



***A Press Trust of India report published in India Journal, March 2, 2007, under the headline 'Look After Great Son of India, Kalam Tells Manekshaw's Doctors', says: "In a rare gesture, President A P J Abdul Kalam, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, visited the local military hospital Feb 24 to look up an ailing Field Marshal S H F J Manekshaw. ... Shaking hands with one of the most brilliant field commanders the Indian Army has produced, President exchanged pleasantries ..."***

# Update on the Church of Cognizance Case

by rustom kevala

**Defendants' Motion to Dismiss denied. Judge rules that the Church of Cognizance is NOT a religion.**

**M**ost of you have heard about the recent case in which a group called the "Church of Cognizance," based in Pima, Arizona, claimed that they were following "neo-Zoroastrian practices" by smoking marijuana in their homes, which they call "individual orthodox member monasteries." FEZANA and the North American Mobeds Council (NAMC) cooperated with the US Attorney's office to testify against the defendants in a hearing on August 22, 2006.

***On December 22, 2006, the honorable judge ruled that not only is the Church of Cognizance NOT a religion, but also that, even if it was a religion, the way that it is practiced by the defendants is not sincere.*** Hence the Church of Cognizance's claim that the government is unduly interfering in the practice of their religion is not valid.

## Background

Danuel and Mary Quaintance, founders of the Church of Cognizance, were arrested in New Mexico in February 2006 for having 172 pounds of marijuana in their possession. The Quaintances, who live in Pima, Arizona, filed a motion through their lawyer to dismiss the charges, basing their defense on the 1993 *Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA)*, which says that the government needs to justify any action that would substantially burden people from practicing their faith. The Quaintances claim that marijuana is central to their religious beliefs and hence they should be allowed to use it. Further, the church claimed that marijuana is the same as haoma, which has been used by Zoroastrians for centuries.

## FEZANA's Position

FEZANA immediately offered to provide an expert witness to the US Attorney's office to testify that haoma is not marijuana and explain the significance of the actual Haom Yasht liturgy. The attorney's office wanted a witness with credentials to speak for North American Zoroastrians. After reviewing our options, the NAMC and FEZANA arranged for Ervad Dr Jehan Bagli, President of NAMC, [as well as WZO's Board Member] to appear as an expert witness at the hearing held on August 22-23, 2006 in Albuquerque, NM.

## The Hearing



Er Bagli prepared and made a statement of the correct Zoroastrian liturgical practices and ritual use of *Haoma*. He testified that *haoma* as used in the present day ritual is not cannabis.

Zarathushtra rejected the use of intoxicants or hallucinogens in Zoroastrian rituals. Bagli testified that Zoroastrians believe that Mind is a priceless Divine gift to mankind; and any mind-altering substances that abuse that gift are not acceptable. *Haoma* was worshipped as a deity and used as a plant in religious practices in the pre-Zoroastrian Indo-Iranian era. Archaeological evidence shows that different plants were used at different times based on availability. That *haoma* was a plant with hallucinogenic properties remains a speculation rather than fact.



The defense produced Deborah Pruitt, a cultural anthropologist and college professor in Oakland, Ca, who testified that mainstream religions typically view new religious forms as cults or charlatans, but the new religious forms (like the Church of Cognizance) should be recognized as genuine. The defense cross-examined Er Bagli about the Pundolites and Ilm-e-Kshnum among Zoroastrians. Er Bagli showed that they are not cults since they do not have separate "churches" for their members. All Zoroastrians practice the same religion, but some may interpret it differently.

When the defendants took to the witness stand, they did not claim that they were Zoroastrians or neo-Zoroastrians, but said that they just wanted to show that the use of marijuana is prevalent in other religions. Their motion to dismiss the case against them was justified in that the government was unduly interfering in the practice of their belief that marijuana provides them with "inner knowledge and spiritual fulfillment."

### The Ruling

The United States District Court for the District of New Mexico, in a written Memorandum Opinion handed down on December 22, 2006, denied the Church of Cognizance's Motion to Dismiss the Indictment and Incorporated Memorandum. The Memorandum Opinion considered the evidence presented at the hearing on August 21, 2006, which included the arguments of the counsel, written briefs, and applicable law.

The 38 page Memorandum Opinion includes a discussion of many factors that can be considered to determine if a belief system is or is not a religion with deeply observed philosophical, metaphysical, moral and ethical underpinnings. By precedent, a religion should provide the believer with answers to many, if not most, of the problems and concerns that confront humans. The judge noted that the Church of Cognizance did not have an established place of worship; no clergy or priests or

"keepers of knowledge"; no established liturgy, ceremonies, rituals or sacraments; no structure or organization; no holy days, holidays, or special clothing requirements for clergy or lay persons; and does not conduct any mission work.

The Honorable Judge found not only that the Church of Cognizance is NOT a religion, but also that, even if it was a religion, the way that it is practiced by the defendants is not sincere. Hence the defendants' Motion to Dismiss was denied.

### The Future

By denying the Motion to Dismiss, the judge has opened the door to a full trial for violations of the Controlled Substances Act. It is important to understand that this case has no bearing on the laws and conditions in any country except the United States, and it is no longer a RFRA case.

Nevertheless, FEZANA is reviewing the legal ramifications of the matter. We want to ensure that no teachings, rituals or beliefs of our religion are used by anyone for illegal or self-serving purposes. FEZANA and NAMC seek everyone's cooperation, vigilance and above all, patience. The Internet is full of misinformation and is open to mischief by anyone. The only way to win is to adhere to our religious principles and continually seek the guidance of Ahura Mazda in all we do.

Any comments or suggestions should be directed to the FEZANA President, Dr Rustom Kevala, at [rjkevala@aol.com](mailto:rjkevala@aol.com)



*Rustom Kevala is the president of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America. Today, like many of us, he is intrigued by the questions: "Why is our religion so little known or understood throughout the world? Why do we seem so powerless to resolve the issues facing us?" He firmly believes that the answers can be found by taking a dispassionate look at our history. Rustom lives near Tampa, Florida, with his wife, Yasmin.*

## Art of Sasanian Iran

An excerpt from the New York Times, February 16, 2007, article written by Holland Cotter.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/16/arts/>

"Glass, Gilding and Grand Design: Art of Sasanian Iran (224-642 AD)," is a radical reduction of a much larger exhibition from the Musee Cernuschi in Paris that included loans from Iranian museums impossible to bring to the United States. But with about 70 pieces, the New York version is still substantial.

It is one of the only major exhibitions of Sasanian art in this part of the world in more than 30 years. During those 30 years scholars have learned a lot about the Sasanians, though we still don't know very much. For about four centuries they ruled a territory that covered present-day Iran, Iraq, parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan and stretched to North Africa. Their historical role models were the Achaemenid Iranians, who had built Persepolis a millennium earlier. Their rivals were Rome, then Byzantium and, at the very end, early Islamic dynasties.

The Sasanians were lucky with time and place. They came to power when the Silk Road between China and the Mediterranean was in full flow, and they absorbed influences from the many cultures that travelled it. One of the first things you see in the galleries is a silver-and-gilt bowl decorated with a male royal portrait head clearly based on Greco-Roman prototypes, while a wine vessel nearby, in the shape of an antelope's head, has stylistic roots in the remote borderlands of Central Asia.

In art, the Sasanians gave as good as they got, generating widespread and long-lasting influences of their own. Exquisite textiles of Sasanian design have been found in Egypt. And a gorgeous little glass cup in the show — it is purplish-brown, with protruding sensorlike knobs that make it resemble Sputnik — compares to others that ended up in Chinese tombs, Japanese temples and the treasury of San Marco in Venice.

Sasanian art made the rounds. And its wide distribution, combined with uncontrolled excavation, has made it almost impossible to date precisely, or to assign an exact place of origin. Archaeologists and art historians frequently have trouble determining whether something is actually Sasanian or in-the-style-of. (Glass is particularly elusive in this respect.)

Nonetheless, certain types of images seem specific to its imperial culture, namely those that refer to the state religion of Zoroastrianism. But even here cross-cultural sampling prevails.

The religion's principal female deity, Anahita, the goddess of fertility, assumes various guises. In a stucco relief she is a formidable Mesopotamian matron with dangly earrings. But she is also a Hellenistic bacchante scintillating over the surface of a chunky silver vase, now owned by the Louvre. By the time this luxury item emerged from an imperial atelier in the fifth or sixth century, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism and Manichaeism were all practiced within the empire, contributing to its visual eclecticism.

One image occurs more often than any other: the king. Among the exhibition's largest pieces is a royal "portrait" bust in stucco found at the royal site of Kish in Iraq. Traditionally each sovereign distinguished himself visually with a custom-designed crown. And the subject of this bust, even with half his crown missing, is sometimes identified as Shapur II,

**"Glass, Gilding and Grand Design: Art of Sasanian Iran (224-642 A.D.)" remains at Asia Society, 725 Park Avenue (at 70th Street), through May 20.**

as is the face in a Sasanian silver bust at the Met, which has its bulbous, stand-out-in-a-crowd headgear intact.

Yet the bust at Asia Society is probably generic and symbolic. It is a monumental image of the king as the incarnation of absolute power: civic, moral and supernatural; and as the cosmic stabilizer, the anchor of the empire.

More commonly, though, rulers are depicted in action, specifically in the act of hunting. On one silver plate, King Yazdegerd I, haloed and beribboned, impales a stag with his spear. On another, Hormizd II (or III), mounted on a galloping horse, aims an arrow at a lion. In the seventh century a third king, probably Khosrow II, commissioned a mural-size rock carving of a royal boar hunt, with the king standing, weapons at the ready, at its centre, as attendants drive hundreds of panicked animals into a pen for the slaughter.

In Zoroastrian understanding, boars embodied the warrior virtue of aggressive courage; for a ruler to kill one was to demonstrate matching courage. Lions, once an auspicious solar symbol, were associated with evil and chaos, and as such were the natural enemy of the righteous king. In dispatching them, he fulfilled his role as preserver of the empire and universal master.

So, in cosmic terms, which are always basically earthly terms with spin, these images of domination through combat are political art, or more precisely, political advertising. What is the difference, after all, between a carved relief of an ancient king-of-



The Sasanian portrait head on this bowl suggests Greco-Roman influences



king's victory in a hunt and a press photograph of a modern leader declaring victory in a war?

Aesthetics is one difference, a big one. Most of the objects in the show — organized by Francoise Demange, chief curator of Asian antiquities at the Louvre, with Prudence O Harper, curator emerita of ancient Near Eastern art at the Met, and Michael Chagnon, a curatorial consultant — are superbly beautiful in formal terms, beautiful enough to smooth over the reality that control through violence is a primary theme.

When we see comparable violence played out on television news, we are appalled; some people have ethical qualms about its omnipresence, in fictional form, in films. But in high art, we tend to put our scruples on hold and give it a pass, because of beauty, or rarity, or distance in time, or because we don't know what we're seeing, or because we just don't want to acknowledge what is really there.

A large part of art's allure is its ambiguity; you can take it as you wish, make of it what you will. This exhibition, with its luminous cruelties, is a reminder of that. But the ancient Sasanians were surely clear about what they were seeing in their imperial art. And in some sense the viewers who understand art as political advertising most directly today are iconoclasts, the suppressors and destroyers of art. They may be the only people for whom art actually does speak for itself, but for whom beauty truly is not enough.

So by all means see the rare and fabulous work at Asia Society, for the intense pleasure it gives and for the windows it opens onto history, present and past. But also see it for the hard questions it poses about the profoundly uninnocent nature of art — in particular imperial art, wherever it comes from — and the moral responsibility we should ask of it.



A wine vessel in the form of an antelope head

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

by adi j davar

**Part II was published in the previous Hamazor, Issue 4/06**

## **Synopsis of Part II**

Supported by ample historical evidence, Part II examined the following issues: Do religious writings and scriptures after Zarathustra's Gathas, including Haptanhaiti Gathas, support the ethnocentric view? Is that at all evident from practices followed by Zarathustra and his disciples? What practices were subsequently followed by royalty and laymen in countries north and east of Sistan up to Central Asia, north-east China and the Far East, to its west up to Greece and Libya and to its south up to Arabia and Ethiopia? Do they confirm that people of many ethnicities and nationalities practiced Zoroastrianism? What were the anthropological antecedents of people from the Central Asian and Iranian plateaus who came to listen to Zarathustra and embraced his teachings? Was Zoroastrianism not widely practiced by diverse nationalities from its birth up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century AD? The examined evidence left little room for doubt that the faith's "tradition" until then, was to accept any who chose it.

## **Part III**

### **Closing of Doors to Non-Zoroastrians**

Let us recognize from the outset, that the closing of the faith's doors to non-Zoroastrians is exclusively a Parsi "tradition" developed on the "Indian subcontinent" (hereafter called "India"). It did not arise in Iran. Iranian Zoroastrians do not believe in a closed ethnocentric faith. Hence, a significant part of the worldwide Zoroastrian community did not hold the ethnocentric "tradition". Yet, the world continues to think of Zoroastrianism as an ethnocentric faith.

So when discussing it, let us understand that we are only talking about the tradition of many Parsis who live in India and of some who have emigrated abroad. But it is not the tradition of the entire Zoroastrian community.

Let us now explore what impelled its birth and its tenacious hold on them.

The explanation given by modern authorities such as Dr E Kulke, a German sociologist who spent years in India studying its Parsi Zoroastrian community, makes much sense. He and other scholars conclude<sup>20</sup>, that the tradition arose in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century AD as an act of self-

preservation on part of a tiny minority in India that felt ringed by increasingly militant Moslem and Hindu political forces. Dogged by memories of conversions to Islam after the Arab conquest of the Sasanian Empire, its leaders developed a great fear that if the open door of acceptance continued to be left ajar, the same history would be repeated in India. So they decided to build a protective wall around the community to save it from that fate. They did so, by repeatedly stressing that one had to be born into the faith of Parsi parentage, to be a Parsi.

In an attempt to preserve itself, the tiny community thereafter began to practice marital exclusiveness<sup>21</sup>, not unlike the tiny Judaist communities elsewhere. Growing inbreeding led to a fixation of an ethnic distinction from the surrounding communities practicing other faiths. Inevitably, issues got mixed. The socio-political motivation of protecting the tiny community began to get confused with religion, through baseless contrived arguments such as: persons from other religions could not be accepted into the faith, because the original settlers promised Jadiv Rana not to proselytize; or those seeking entry into it, were doing so to enjoy

the socio-economic benefits of being considered as Parsis and not because they believed in Zoroastrianism; or Parsi “panu” (culture) would be adulterated, if non-Zoroastrians are admitted into its faith. No wonder that the Parsis in India became convinced of the ethnocentric view, live as they did in an environment where religion was mixed up with race and culture and the closed view of the faith was constantly reiterated.

These developments occurred only 200 years back. They coincided with the increasingly dominant influence of the hereditary priesthood in India. As it became the self-appointed oracle on religious beliefs and practices for the laity, Zarathustra’s spiritual messages got dimmer. As one of them, Dasturji Dhalla, writes, while his name was invoked with growing vehemence to support religiosity, his message of a universal faith was increasingly forgotten. When the laity constantly heard its respected clergy saying that Zoroastrianism was only for those born Zoroastrian, it was believed.

Under the priesthood’s influence, Parsi leaders persuaded the British to establish the first Parsi Panchayat in Bombay, to settle the community’s religious and social disputes. In 1778, the Governor of Bombay even granted it limited power to enforce its decisions. But a court decision took away its law-making and enforcing powers in 1838. Although it wielded great financial power as custodian of Parsi property, it fruitlessly also tried to exercise power over religious matters through edicts and regulations. But they had no legal validity even over Parsis in India, much less those living in other countries.

As regards acceptance, the Panchayat was caught between two influential groups: Parsis who saw nothing wrong in marrying or living with those of other faiths and doing navjotes of children of such unions or of other non-Zoroastrians, as in Iran and the Far East; and, Parsis who strongly felt that this was contrary to the faith. The Panchayat’s edicts therefore seesawed for

decades between regularizing such navjotes and issuing edicts that priests performing them would be excommunicated.

In an attempt to find a solution to this dilemma, it appointed a prestigious Committee of leading priests and scholars in early 1900, to study and advice on the issue. Those giving scholarly evidence and opinions were not only renowned western non-Zoroastrian scholars of the faith like Professors A V Jackson of Columbia University and L Mills of Oxford University, but the creme-de-la-creme of Zoroastrian priesthood, scholars and laity at that time. They included High Priests like Dasturjis Kaikushru Jamaspji, Dorabji Meherji, Khurshed Behram, Framji Suratwala, Darab Pesotanji Sanjana, as well as learned Ervads like Edalji Antia, Shehriarji Bharucha, Temurasp Anklesaria and Sir Jeevanji Mody, and lay persons like K R Cama<sup>22</sup>.

Providing convincing evidence, the Report of this Committee unanimously concluded in 1903 that Zoroastrianism was an open, not a closed ethnocentric, faith and allowed adherence by non-Zoroastrians. Given community sentiment to the contrary, its analysis and conclusions were courageous. They negated the ethnocentric view developed just a century before that, albeit, to protect the community against feared absorption by other militant faiths. Perhaps deterred by ongoing agitation in the community, the Panchayat suppressed this authoritative and balanced Report and regulated it to its archives. The future might have taken a different turn and we might not be discussing the issue some 80 years later in Montreal in 1982, if the Report had been made public.

The community furor ultimately found an outlet by going to the law courts in the 1909 landmark case of Petit vs. Jeejeebhoy and of Saklat vs. Bela in 1925. Interestingly, the issue was not one of acceptance of non-Zoroastrians. Rather, it revolved on the right of those born of mixed marriages or accepted into the faith, to avail of facilities



like fire temples endowed for the exclusive use of Parsis.

The substance of the 1909 ruling revolved on the ethnic concept of who was a "Parsi" and therefore, who could use such endowed facilities. As *obiter dicta*, the Justices stated that Parsis were those "... descended from original Persian immigrants born of both Zoroastrian parents and who profess the Zoroastrian religion, the Iranis from Persia professing the Zoroastrian religion who came to India either temporarily or permanently, and children of Parsi fathers by alien mothers. On the other hand, the word Zoroastrian simply denotes the religion of the individual. The word Parsi denotes his community and has no religious significance attached to it. A Zoroastrian need not be a Parsi. Anyone who professes the religion of Zoroaster, of whatever nationality, becomes a Zoroastrian the moment he is converted to the faith".

Yet to this day, many Parsis in India and some living in western countries, do not appreciate this distinction between race and religion. They still believe that only a Parsi can be a Zoroastrian and to be a Zoroastrian, one must be born of both Zoroastrian parents. Hence their conclusion, that acceptance is prohibited by our faith and is its "tradition". Never mind, that it is only about 200 years old and contradicts a preceding 3,000 years old tradition of an open faith! Never mind, that it is not the tradition of a significant portion of the Zoroastrian community, the Iranians, who have not shared it or believed in it!

### Is the Indian Experience Applicable in North America?

All that the 1909 case legally did, was to rule that to enjoy the benefits of trusts endowed for Parsis, one has to be born a Parsi. In an article in the December 1973 issue of the *Parsiana*, the eminent Parsi Zoroastrian Indian lawyer, Shiavaux Vakil, therefore wonders if the ruling is of relevance to Parsis living abroad, as they probably have no intention of availing of the benefits of such trusts. Indeed, they should

ask themselves a question: "How many of us, especially our children and theirs - none of whom may even visit India - will care or be able to use such benefits?" Even if their answer is: "yes, we may use them", they should still be clear in their minds that being a "Zoroastrian" is a religious concept, and being a "Parsi" is a racial one.

Let us also remember that: (i) the restrictions on the navjotes of the children of Zoroastrian women married to non-Zoroastrians; and (ii) the excommunication of such women from the faith, were actions taken through legally-invalid Panchayat edicts aimed at sustaining a relatively young Indian tradition developed for socio-political reasons to protect Parsis living there. Hence, North America Zoroastrians, including Parsis, must ask: "What relevance or applicability do such edicts have for us, living as we do outside India?"

Besides, Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrians living in North America are governed only by the constitutions and laws of either Canada or USA. Laws and edicts issued in India, even if legally valid there, do not apply to them. Religious practices or traditions should apply. But they should be based on Zarathustra's teachings or Zoroastrian scriptures or history. They should also be based on: the principle of identical rights given by the Prophet to men and women to choose and practice the faith; and, on the long tradition of many centuries, under which royalty, nobility and subjects who married non-Zoroastrians, continued to practice the faith and raise their children in it.

If North American Zoroastrians choose to remain prisoners of the said much younger 200 years old Indian tradition, which is not shared by Iranian Zoroastrians, that is their choice. But slowly and surely, they will find their children switching-off from the practice of the faith and eventually, drifting to other ones. Because these children are growing in North America's powerful melting pot influences which are totally unlike the live-let-live attitudes that their Parsi forefathers faced in India.

### Proposals for Consideration

It is perhaps time to propose a few modest proposals that could help preserve our faith on this continent for our children and ourselves. At least carefully consider them without bias, for their and your own sake:

Allow a child of a marriage where only one parent is Zoroastrian, to be initiated into the faith if the child and both its parents desire that.

If a non-Zoroastrian who wishes to marry you or your child, or to whom you are already married, wishes to be initiated into Zoroastrianism out of conviction in its percepts, than let that person join the faith.

If a non-Zoroastrian wishes to marry you or your child under a Zoroastrian wedding rites, agree to it. Its impact on keeping your child as well as the children of such marriages in the faith, will be immeasurably positive. If mobeds refuse to perform the ceremony, then let each Association arrange for some of its laity to become Justices of Peace with powers to perform legal marriages under relevant local or national laws. They can then legally marry such couples, by reciting some Zoroastrian marriage prayers.

If Zoroastrian parents, or where only one parent is Zoroastrian, want to perform the navjote of a child of another race or creed whom they have adopted, allow that if the parents and the child so desire. Historical practice also supports this.

If a non-Zoroastrian knows the percepts of our faith and is committed to following them, than test the genuineness of his/her commitment. If satisfied, then allow that person to join the Zoroastrian fold.

Let each Association appoint a representative to a scholarly task force, to evolve a common policy, resting on Zarathustra's teachings and vision, that can ensure the perpetuation of Zoroastrianism on this continent.

Please do not take offence because of these proposals, or misinterpret their purpose. The intention is not to offend anyone's sentiments. Nor is there an implication that the masses should be proselytized. The purpose is simply to stimulate balanced and objective thinking on the matter among North American Zoroastrians and hopefully, spark their positive reaction.

### Epilogue to the Montreal Presentation

A. What happened in North America after that, and why?

The Montreal Congress was in an uproar after the presentation. No Zoroastrian gathering anywhere, had been offered such new evidence or proposals on the topic. Persons insisting on asking questions or articulating their views, formed such long queues that the organizers, the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec (ZAQ) had little alternative but to extend the Congress by a day.

When the questioning ended the next day, the Congress felt that the issue raised and proposals made were too important to be simply forgotten. It therefore mandated ZAQ to send the presentation, and a Questionnaire based on it, to leading scholars, priests and community leaders around the world to test its validity and rationality. It also mandated it compile a detailed report on the responses, send that to FEZANA associations for eliciting the views of their bodies politic, and then present the outcome at the next North American Zoroastrian Congress in Houston.

So mandated, ZAQ sent the presentation and the Questionnaire to the High Priests in Bombay and Tehran, community leaders on all continents – including the Bombay Parsi Panchayat, influential Zoroastrian laity, and Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian authorities on the faith – including Professor Stanley Insler of Yale University.

Soon after the Congress, the Peterson navjote was performed in the US. The "blame" for it was laid on the Montreal

presentation. One would have anticipated, considering the gravity of the issue, that an intelligent community like ours would engage in a reasoned discussion in the media. Instead, the next several months elicited only heat and heaping of personal invectives on the author, sadly even from the senior priesthood in India.

On the positive side, the organizers received well-considered responses from those they had approached. True to their convictions, the respected Bombay High Priests were unanimous in their view that non-Zoroastrians had no place in the religion's percepts. But everyone else, including Tehran's equally respected High Priest, Dastur Azargoshasp, endorsed the presentation's analyses and proposals.

Replying on behalf of the Tehran Anjuman of Mobeds, he emphasized that since Zarathustra kept the faith open for all, "we must persevere to propagate it. Ö We must accept persons who want to embrace the Zoroastrian religion. In fact, we should follow those who set us an example".<sup>23</sup> In a letter to the author, Nani Palkhiwala, an eminent Indian community leader, endorsed the analyses and proposals as "thoughtful, and a distinct service to the community". This was the trend of most responses.

Professor Insler perhaps best synthesized their essence: "Restrictions concerning initiation into your religion arose at a time when other religion threatened its existence. In the free world, such trials do not exist today; and since it is a religion which stresses freedom among its most important principles, the freedom to join the faith should be an option left for every person not born into the faith. ... The fundamental tenet of your religion hinges upon individual and personal choice of each human being to be on the side of good or evil in the world. Since choice is a primary concept in the religion, it must be extended in an equally effective manner to the questions of acceptance into the faith of people not born as Zoroastrians. If a person sees the benefits of the religion and chooses of his own free will to enter it, it is a demonstration

in itself of that person's decision to support the forces of good in the world. It was exactly that way when Zarathustra first founded the faith, because we see in his great hymns how he urges people to follow the path of righteousness, by choosing to follow the principles of Ahura Mazda. Why should it be any different today?"<sup>24</sup>

ZAC compiled the Report in late 1983 and forwarded it to all FEZANA associations, urging its dissemination and discussion with their bodies politic. Each of them did so. The proposals understandably met with vociferous opposition from some, in every association. But a large or slender majority in each, accepted them. This outcome was presented to the Zarathustis attending the subsequent National Congress.

Until then, mixed marriages under Zoroastrian rites, acceptance into the faith of non-Zoroastrians or non-Zoroastrian spouses, and even navjotes of children of mixed marriages had met with a hue and cry throughout North America. Except for a handful, mobeds refused to perform them. Some still do, to this day. But slowly, and quietly, a changed outlook began to emerge in North America.

Why? Possibly, the majority within its community, silent about its real feelings on this subject, found the new evidence given in Montreal to be more persuasive than the traditional one it had heard for decades. When an overwhelming majority of respected persons and scholars around the world endorsed that evidence and proposals as rational, it quietly acquiesced.

Outcries against such ceremonies became muted, and then infrequent. More mobeds began performing them, especially navjots of children of mixed marriages and mixed marriages under Zoroastrian rites.

Gradually, these have become generally accepted community practices. Of course, debates on acceptance occasionally flare up. Opposition still remains entrenched in certain parts of North America. But by and large, the wellspring of the silent majority

tapped by the Montreal presentation, seems to be sustaining the changed outlook.

## B. Lessons that can be drawn

Those believing in a closed faith, always predict dire consequences from a change anywhere in this "tradition" which is exclusive to the Parsis of India. But none of those feared outcomes came to pass in North America, after its community followed the modest proposals made in the Montreal presentation.

Realizing the change in their community's outlook, an increasing number of its young ones began to participate once again in community meetings, prayers and functions. Some have since begun to become involved in community affairs. Those who were united through mixed marriages under Zoroastrian rites, particularly women, have been devout in practicing the faith, teaching it to their children, initiating them into it with their non-Zoroastrian spouses' support, persuading those spouses to appreciate its principles and even consider joining it of their free will.

Most families have embraced the non-Zoroastrian spouses of their children into their fold, so has the community. Initiated non-Zoroastrians are contributing as much of themselves to the community, as born Zoroastrians. Children of mixed marriages are as keen to learn about the essence of the faith and its history, as those born into the faith. Both think of each other as Zoroastrians, and manifest close communal bonds. Accepted non-Zoroastrians have not sought to tap the community's many funds and trusts. All the "panus", Parsi, Iranian or Zoroastrian, remain vibrant. Community solidarity is strong.

In short, it seems that the community had nothing "to fear, but fear itself", when it embarked on the modest path of acceptance put forward for its consideration at the Montreal Congress, some 25 years ago.

Can communities elsewhere, tap wellsprings of rationality within their silent

majorities and initiate modest steps similar to those taken in North America? They will never know, unless such majorities garner courage to stand up to the vocal "traditional" forces within their communities, and develop enough conviction to take steps they think to be right.



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

20. Kulke E., The Parsis of India, A Minority as Agent of Change, 1978. Also, von Zemensky K., Evolutionary Actuality of Zarathustra's Message, 5<sup>th</sup> North American Zoroastrian Congress Records, 1985, p. 25
21. Desai S. F., Community at the Crossroads, 1948, pp. 163, 164
22. The June 23, 1903 letter soliciting their opinions and their replies, some in English and some in Gujarati (of which authoritative translations were made), are appended under Appendix V of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec's Sept. 1983 "Report on Non-Zoroastrians in Zoroastrian Percepts: Do They Have A Place". The Report was mandated by the 1982 4<sup>th</sup> North American Zoroastrian Congress in Montreal
23. *ibid*, Appendix VI, to see his reply
24. *ibid*, Appendix VI for the full text

**(This is the final part of the article, which initiated a major change in the late 80s in the North American Zoroastrian community's outlook towards acceptance)**



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## Humour

The meaning of politics?  
poli = many  
tics = blood sucking parasites

courtesy - 13-year old Nina Anklesaria

## *Pherozeshah Mehta Bhavan and Research Centre - a jewel in the Mumbai University's crown*

by noshir dadrawala



The spanking new, state-of-the-art "Pherozeshah Mehta Bhavan and Research Centre" was inaugurated on 27th December 2006 by H E Shri S M Krishna the Governor of Maharashtra and Chancellor of the University of Mumbai.

Parsis have always been in the forefront of academic excellence and the history of the Bombay University is replete with examples of outstanding students and faculty.

'Pherozeshah Mehta Bhavan & Research Centre', however, is a unique and lasting imprint that this miniscule community has left as a legacy in trust for the University. This tastefully designed and beautifully landscaped structure not only stands out and sparkles like a rare jewel at the sprawling Kalina campus but is also a living testimony of what a micro-minority community can do for the nation and the cause of secular education. It is a true saga of Zoroastrian enterprise and philanthropy in modern India.

The inauguration witnessed the creme of the community, including those who had come from abroad to pay tribute to all those individuals who had toiled for more than a decade. It was also an opportunity to express gratitude to all those who had willingly and generously donated, to create this marvelous edifice dedicated to the memory of Sir Pherozeshaw Mehta who was not only one of the founders of the Indian National Congress in 1885, but was also a maker of the city of Bombay and its municipal governance. More importantly, Sir Pherozeshah was closely associated with the University of Bombay and became its Vice Chancellor in 1915. This *Bhavan* is truly a crowning glory dedicated to the man who was once known as the 'Uncrowned King of Bombay'. Incidentally, this beautiful

complex is the only edifice in the country dedicated to Sir Pherozeshah Mehta.

Sir Pherozeshah was the first Parsi to pass the MA degree of the Bombay University and during his career in the Senate; he vehemently resisted government interference and fought for the autonomy of the University.

Sitting majestically in the sylvan surroundings of what is now called '*Vidyanagri*', Pherozeshah Mehta Bhavan & Research Centre houses both, the Chair and the Department of Civics & Politics of the University. The Bhavan will soon be abuzz with multifarious activities including



Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, courtesy Jehangir Patel, Parsiana



The Pheroza Shah Mehta Bhavan and Research Centre, courtesy Jehangir Patel, Parsiana. Below: a view through the arch, courtesy Noshir Dadrawala



research centres, such as a 'Centre for Good Governance', for 'Human Rights and Citizenship' and a 'Centre for the study of Mumbai'. These three centres will focus on emerging multidisciplinary areas like political economy, human rights, urban history and problems of the city, new trends of governance and the emergent role of civil society.

The Bhavan has a well-equipped auditorium, a seminar room, a library cum research centre, students' common rooms and classrooms. As architect of this edifice, I M Kadri, former Sheriff of Mumbai, has not only excelled himself but added value by offering his professional services totally free of charge.

The total cost of building this complex has come to about Rs60 million. The entire amount to complete the

construction and equipping of specialized facilities in the Bhavan has been a first time ever effort launched by the University of Mumbai, wherein the members of the Sir Pheroza Shah Mehta 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary Celebrations Committee have not only collected the entire funds from private citizens, trusts and companies, but have been permitted to construct the Bhavan privately through specialized agencies and hand over the same to the University of Mumbai on completion.

This edifice would not have been possible but for the generosity of Jamshed N Guzder who has donated Rs12.5 million for



courtesy Jehangir Patel, Parsiana

The International Board of The World Zoroastrian Organisation, London UK is happy to announce that the Trustees of the Dennis William Richards Will Trust have decided to allocate their Trust amount of £400,000 through WZO, as a charity donation to alleviate the dire needs of the poor of India. It is indeed very creditable for the UK based Trustees, Mr Alex Burns and Mrs Jill Ruhomutally to allocate such a munificent sum for the Charity Institutions in India, through the good offices of Mr Rohinton Irani of London UK, one of the many supporters of WZO.

The decision to entrust WZO came after Mr Alex Burns and Mr Rohinton Irani visited India to see the extent of the varying needs, the various Charitable Organizations coping with such realities of life and the extent of the work being undertaken by WZO. The Chairman of WZO, Mr Sammy Bhiwandiwalla and his wife Ursula, accompanied Messrs Burns and Irani to Gujarat, where they were personally shown the results of the WZO charity projects by Mr Dinshaw K Tamboly, Trustee of the WZO Trust Funds of India, and his wife Bachi. Burns and Irani were very impressed by the proficient manner that WZO managed the various charity projects, and in particular, by Bachi and Dinshaw. The pair, radiating humble dignity, were able to convince Burns and Irani that WZO has the relevant

other charities in India as stipulated by the Trustees. A full list of the 20 institutionalised projects coping to help infants, children, adults and even a hospital in India is shown. The first cheque for £200,000 was received on 12th March 2007.

The World Zoroastrian Organisation UK wishes to express its sincere thanks and gratitude to the Trustees of the Dennis William Richards Will Trust for their munificence and for their confidence in WZO's management of their projects. The International Board of WZO UK also acknowledges the invaluable role played by Mr Rohinton Irani in bringing about this generous donation. The WZO which has been in the forefront of relieving poverty in India for over 25 years feels honoured and humbled that the Trustees have decided to entrust WZO with this task, which it will fulfil through its WZO Trust Funds of India.

Sammy Bhiwandiwalla  
Chairman

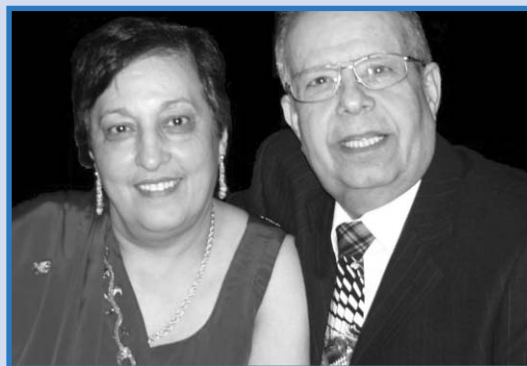
# WZO

*entrusted with £400,000  
for twenty Institutionalised  
Charity Projects in India*

procedures and expertise to handle major charity projects and, more importantly, to be fully accountable to the donors for their money. The Trustees were so impressed by WZO that, in addition to contributing a share of the Trust towards the WZO projects, they decided to entrust them with the distribution of all the donations to their other selected Charity Institutions in India. The WZO London, UK will receive £400,000 in two equal instalments and will distribute the funds of the Dennis William Richards Will Trust to seven WZO charity projects and to 13

*On the right, above L to R:  
Ursula & Sam Bhiwandiwalla,  
Alex & Valerie Burns.*

*On the right, L to R:  
Pervize & Rohinton Irani*





Late Dennis William Richards was born on 27th July 1929 in Banbury, UK and as a child lived in Bury St Edmunds where his father was employed as a butler. The family moved to Egham, Surrey when he was in his teens and he lived there for the rest of his life.

## Profile of late *Dennis William Richards*

Dennis William Richards never married; he devoted his life to his parents and particularly his brother Raymond who was mentally challenged. He studied mental health in great depth so that he could help his brother. During the latter part of his life he obtained a university degree in mathematics in 1999. He worked for most of his life with British Telecom and at the time of his retirement he was a senior executive with BT in London. Dennis William Richards served in the RAF during the war. He died aged 71 in May 2001.

### List of benefiting charities

*The World  
Zoroastrian  
Organisation,  
London, UK will  
distribute the funds  
of the Dennis  
William Richards  
Will Trust to the  
beneficiaries -  
those  
institutionalised  
projects coping to  
help infants,  
children, adults  
and a hospital in  
India.*

#### FOR CHILDREN

##### Upkeep of keeping children off the streets:

Sneha Sagar Society	Mumbai.
Snehasadan	Mumbai.
Vatsalya Foundation	Mumbai.
Adharashram	Nashik.

##### Upkeep of mentally challenged children:

Jai Vakeel Day School & Residential	Mumbai.
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##### Education of mentally challenged children:

Shree Sadguru Education Society	Mumbai.
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##### Education of underprivileged children:

Akanksha Foundation	Mumbai.
Secular Education Trust	Raigad.
World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust	Mumbai & South Gujarat.

#### FOR ADULTS

##### Upkeep of the physically challenged:

Cheshire Home	Mumbai.
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##### Homes for the aged:

WZO Trust Funds Senior Citizens Centre	Navsari.
The Society of the Home for the Aged	Mumbai.
F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla	Mumbai.
Dr. Dossibai & J.R.D. Charity Trust	Mumbai.

##### Encouragement of self-employment:

WZO Trust Funds	Mumbai & South Gujarat.
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##### Housing in towns for poor & needy:

WZO Trust Funds	Navsari & South Gujarat.
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##### Housing in villages for poor & needy:

WZO Trust Funds	Navsari & South Gujarat.
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##### Rehabilitation of poor farmers:

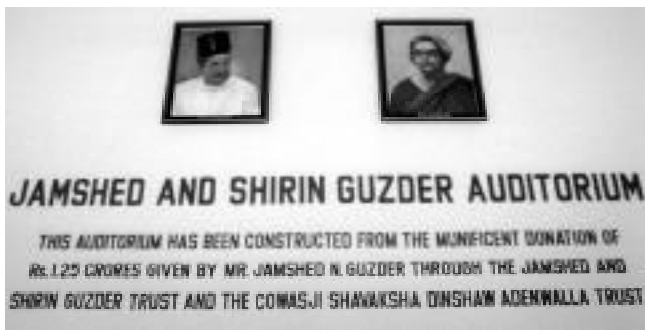
World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust	Navsari & South Gujarat.
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##### Relief from poverty:

World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust	Mumbai & Navsari.
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#### FOR HOSPITAL

Masina Hospital	Mumbai.
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The ground floor and below the mezzanine of the library



L to R: Dr A D Sawant, Cyrus Guzder, Homai Modi, Jamshed Guzder & Nawaz Mody. All the above photos & opposite page, courtesy Nawaz Mody

constructing and equipping of the Auditorium, and the Zartoshty Brothers of Iran (Mehraban and Late Faridoon) who donated Rs9 million for the construction and equipping of the Library. Both the Library and the Auditorium have been named after the donors. Various Tata companies, ACC, L&T and the Bombay Community Public Trust have also contributed for this project.

It was truly a proud moment in the modern history of the community when philanthropist Jamshed Guzder formally handed over the Bhavan to Dr Vijay

Khole, the Vice Chancellor of the University. Heartwarming messages were received from the President of India and Mrs Sonia Gandhi.

Mr Mehraban Jamshid Zartoshty who was the very first to contribute for this project, wrote in a message dated 22nd December 2006 from San Diego:



Late Faridoon Zartoshty, both photos courtesy J Patel, Parsiana

"Today, India is at the centre of the world. India is known here in the United States on account of its software industry and its brain power. I am delighted that the Inauguration of this Bhavan is at the hands of Mr. S M Krishna who as Chief Minister of Karnataka did more than anyone else to put India and Bangalore on the world map.



Mehraban Zartoshty

"I pay tribute to all our fellow donors and in particular to my friend Jamshedji Guzder and to my dear friend Homai Modi and Professor Nawaz Mody. These two ladies have worked amazingly hard to raise funds and bring this project to fruition.

"I am also very proud that all the funds were raised voluntarily and a major portion came from the Zoroastrian community. This cements the close bonds between

Zoroastrians and Mumbai and Zoroastrians

and India. As someone who lived, studied and did business in Mumbai for 16 years, I am very proud of my Indian connection. India has attained its rightful place in the world today. I wish Mumbai University all success and thank the University for facilitating this Bhavan in memory of the great and noble Sir Pheroze Shah Mehta."

Dr Vijay Khole paid a glowing tribute to the contribution of the Parsi community particularly in

the field of education and singled out Sir Pherozechah Mehta as *"a great humanitarian who believed in the humanization of knowledge"*.

Mr Jamshed Guzder after whom the auditorium has been named was so thrilled with the designing of the Bhavan and the acoustics of the auditorium that he said, *"I never imagined that it would be so beautiful"*.

The Bhavan has been handed over to the University under a solemn agreement that for all times to come it will be called "Pherozechah Mehta Bhavan & Research Centre" and used only for the department of Civics and Politics. It has also been agreed that the auditorium and library will continue to be named in perpetuity after the donors and no other building or structure will be put up in the plot of 1.9 acres earmarked for the Bhavan.

His Excellency, S M Krishna referred to Sir Pherozechah as *"the tallest nationalist and conscience keeper of Indian society"*. He felt that this magnificent edifice will *"help repay the insurmountable debt that the University owes to this great man after a long gap of 91 years"*.

Dr Nawaz B Mody who holds the Sir Pherozechah Mehta Chair at the Bombay University gave the vote of thanks. Homai Modi anchored the entire event with meticulous precision and aplomb. In fact speaker after speaker that evening paid glowing tribute to the sincerity, dedication and hard work put in by both these ladies for the successful completion of this landmark project in the history of the Bombay University.



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

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



Dr Nawaz Mody presenting bouquet to Mr S M Krishna



Lighting the lamp from the left: Dr Vijay Khole, Homai Modi, S M Krishna, Nawaz Mody and Jamshed Guzder

Dr Nawaz Mody is the Sir Pherozechah Mehta Professor of Civics & Politics and was the head of the said department, University of Mumbai. She is a guest lecturer at many of the national training institutions; has published numerous research papers in national and international journals of repute as well as authored a number of books. In 2005 the "Enduring Legacy – Parsis of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century" in four volumes was edited by Nawaz. She has held/holds prestigious positions in various academic institutions and is the joint Honorary Secretary of K R Cama Oriental Institute. Very recently Nawaz was appointed as Director of the J N Tata Endowment for the Higher Education of Indians, which was established by the founder of the House of Tatas, Mr Jamsetji Tata in 1892.





Mobed Dr. Ardeshir Khorshidian was born in Yazd where he did his schooling. He graduated as an ophthalmologist in 1975 from the Isfahan University & Medical College. He qualified as an eye surgeon and specialist & has been practicing in Tehran. He is known for his expert cataract operations using the "Topical Cold Phaco" eye drops technology and the carving of the needed lens range on the retina (p.r.k.Lasek) which allows the patient to, literally, walk home an hour after the operation.

He is an ardent teacher and has been teaching the "Philosophy of the Religion of Zarathushtra" at weekly classes conducted by the Anjuman e Moobedan, of which he is currently the President. He gives fiery speeches at almost every community gathering or Inter Religious Conferences.

His first publication "A New Light Over The Persepolis", first in Farsi and later translated to English, covers extensive research on the subject. Besides numerous articles and interviews, in Farsi, that are published in the mass media, in Iran, his second publication "The Universality of the messages of Zarathushtra" is a very detailed layout of the teachings of our Prophet.

این همه امکانات را در اختیار بشر قرار داده است. خانواده جز این که بشر از این همه امکانات خدادادی رست و درت استفاده نماید، انتظاری ندارد و می‌خواهد که انسان در راه پیشرفت جهان و رستی و درستی (همافکنی با قانون انا) کوتاهی ننماید.

بنابر باور زرتشتیان، خدا در همه جا حاضر و در همه چیز در تجلی است. از این رو طبق فرهنگ زرتشتی و بخش‌های مختلف اوستا، چهار ماده حیاتی یا به زبان اوستا چهار اشیع (آب، باد، خاک و آتش) گرمی داشته می‌شود و پرهیزان سرودهای ستایش (یشتها) سروده شده و مورد ستایش قرار می‌گیرد و پاک نگاه داشته می‌شود. نباید پیش از پختن سال نبست که جهان غرب به حفظ محیط زیست توجه کرده و سازمان ملل در پی گسترش این فرهنگ است.

از دید انوسوزنت، زن و مرد باهم برابر بوده اند و از این رو در طول تاریخ ایران باستان زنان زیادی به مقام سرانگیزی و حتی پادشاهی رسیده اند و طلاق امری بسیار نگوینده بوده و به ندرت و با دلایل سخت اتفاق می‌افتاد.

پرهیزی و پرهیزی همه مردم و آزادی گزینش راه، سرلوحه پیامهای انوسوزنت است. پیروی از رستی و درستی و مهارزه با درگوندان (دروغ پرستان) و بد منان جزء اصول این کیش است و بسیاری پاورهای دیگرگانه‌ای که جای آن در این مقاله نیست ...

در ایران یابیندی به این پاورها، سن و ادب و رسوم بعد از اسلام نیز محفوظ و گرمی داشته شده و کم و بیش به فرم قدیمی خود باقی مانده است. به طوری که همه قبول دارند که ایرانیاں مسلمان شده اند اما عرب نشده اند، درحالی که کشورهای زیادی در جهان هستند که پس از پذیرفتن دین اسلام، عرب هم شده اند و اکثر سن و آداب قدیمی خود را فراموش کرده اند و زبان خود را کنار گذاشته و به زبان عربی صحبت می‌کنند.

سنت‌های قوی و یرنگومی چون چهارشنبه سوری، چنغ سفره هفت سین نوروزی و سرودهای مهرگان و سده، احترام به مهر و آتش، سنت اسفند دود کردن، روشن کردن چراغ سر قبر عزیزان در گذشته در شب جمعه، سلوات فرستادن موقع روشن شدن چراغ، حتی دعائایی چون اجاکتن گرم و با اجاکتن روشن باد، روشن نگهداشتن چراغ بالای درب منزل، و حتی پختن آتش خبراتی به نام و باد امامان در بین مسلمانان ایران کاملاً ناپدید شده است. پختن ما زرتشتیان در مراسم گاهانگار و خیرات است و ... دقیقاً همان مراسم، پاسداری شده و نامد این مدعا می‌باشد که هر کدام مشخصه اصالت پاورهای ایرانیاں است.

زبان و سن مشترک موجب جمع شدن اعضای اجتماع، انبانی و همفکری کردن و در نهایت تسودیک شدن دل‌ها و آرمائها به یکدیگر می‌گردد و موجب دوام و بقای هر ملتی را فراهم می‌آورد که بای‌بندی به آنها جهان را بر از گلهای مختلف زیبا می‌نماید، هنگامی که هر ملتی و پیروان هر مذهبی به سنتهای درست و انسانی خود پای‌بند باشند، هر کدام مانند گالی می‌شوند که پوی و رنگ و زیبایی مخصوص به خود را دارند. این است که می‌پوشیم، بعد از انجام مراسم هر رستی، احساسی نادیده مخصوص و زیبایی خاص به افراد آن اجتماع دست می‌دهد که با هیچ احساسی دیگری قابل مقایسه نیست.

ایدون پاد ایدون نرج باد - موبد دکتر اردشیر خورشیدیان

زمستان ۱۳۸۵ - زمستان ۱۳۸۶

انجمن موبدان تهران

به نام امورامزدا ( هستی بخش پروری دانا )

## سنت‌های زرتشتی و لزوم پاسداری از آنها

انسان موجودی است اجتماعی که دوست دارد در گروه زندگی کند و از موهبت‌های زندگی اجتماعی لذت‌پره گیرد. در درازای تاریخ، بزرگان و پیش‌کسوتان بر اساس باورهای خود، سنت‌هایی را بنیان نهاده‌اند که آلهایی که به‌مرور دلیلی مورد پذیرش جامعه قرار گرفته، باقی مانده است.

پدین ترتیب در هر جامعه قوانینی نوشته شده و با نا نوشت به وجود آمده است که مورد پذیرش مردم قرار گرفته و به‌صورت عادت و به‌طور روزمره توسط آنان به اجرا درمی‌آید که به مجموعه آنها «فرهنگ» گفته می‌شود. بخش مهمی از فرهنگ هر اجتماعی را زبان و سنت (آیین) تشکیل می‌دهد که جهان بینی آن ملت، در ایجاد و پایداری به این اصول همبسته و وابسته است. بر این اساس است که می‌توان فرهنگ دینی را از فرهنگ ملی و قومی با اثرگذاری بازتاب داد.

در همه چوامع، از دست و رو بستن و حمام رفتن گرفته تا چگونگی لباس پوشیدن و آرایش مو و راه رفتن و حتی خندیدن و گریه کردن در جمع و حتی طریقه دُخ کردن در گلخانه، اجرای مراسم سال و روزه و ... همه برحسب سنت یعنی قوانین نوشته شده و نا نوشته دینی، عرفی و اجتماعی می‌باشد که در طول تاریخ وضع شده و اکثریت آنها را پذیرفته‌اند و تسل به تسل منتقل شده است.

هر مذهب و ملتی با زبان و سنت‌های خود شناخته می‌شود. در مقابل از روی مشاهده و بررسی سنت‌های مختلف است که می‌توانیم به باورها و خواسته‌ها و آرمان‌های جمعی آن جامعه پی ببریم. حال اگر سنت زرتشتی و باور و فلسفه پشت آن‌ها شناخته نشوند، به فرهنگی‌های مغایر با دین زرتشت آلوده گردند و با باخراشات همراه شوند، به زودی فراموش خواهند شد و جامعه را رو به نیامی خواهند کشانید. در طول زمان و با پیشرفت اقتصادی و اجتماعی هر جامعه، تنها بخش‌هایی از این سنت و آداب و رسوم می‌تواند باقی بماند که منطقی و بویا باشد و بتواند خود را با شرایط زمان و مکان تطبیق دهد. در فرهنگ زرتشتی این امر مهم به آنچه می‌باشد وقت سپرده شده است. انجمنی که توانسته در طول تاریخ بسته به زمان و مکان، مواردی را از آنها کاسته یا افزوده و به‌درستی در این به‌دینان رواج دهد. به گونه‌ای که در کون و بی هر زرتشتی جای گرفته و به دقت تاکنون از آنها پاسداری شده است. سنت‌هایی دل‌انگیز که با برکت آسمانی سازگار بوده و بسیاری از ایرانیان با وجودی که دین خود را تغییر داده‌اند اما باورهای نیاکانی، زبان، سنت و آداب و رسومات و به‌طور کلی فرهنگ زیبای خود را پاسداری کرده و هرگز از دست نداده، کنار نگذاشته و کنار نخواهند گذارد.

دیدگاه انورزشت این است که خدا بگنا است و آن امورامزدا ( هستی بخش پر دانا ) خدایی که هر چه آفریده است بی‌گناست و بر تمام هستی هنجاری دقیق به نام قانون دانا برقرار کرده است و با بخشش خرد (منو) و وجدان (دئو) به انسان او را به راستی انرف مخلوقات گردانیده و در انتخاب راه، آزاد گذاشته است. او باید قانون انا با هنجار هستی را بشناسد و بتواند دنیا را تغییر دهد و حتی به امورامزدا نیز یاری رساند. انسان خدا را دوستی همانند پدر و برادر می‌داند که بدون هیچ گونه چشم دانی

# Zoroastrianism: A Universal Religion

A talk given by Dina McIntyre on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2007 at Mumbai and organised by ARZ & AIMZ

**Z**oroastrianism is certainly a universal religion - a docile, erudite and learned Gathic Zoroastrian scholar, Dina McIntyre, reasoned her way into the hearts of true Parsis, Iranis and other Zoroastrians, on Saturday, 10th February, 2007. She effectively dismantled 'the racist Parsi theory of Zoroastrianism' by presenting before the audience innumerable quotes from our holy books. Speaking to a packed hall at the Taleyarkhan Hall, Red Cross Society, Town Hall Compound in Mumbai, Ms McIntyre exploded the many myths that have been force-fed to us Parsis for so many years. In the process she also showed how the really interested and well-behaved Parsi crowd could respond to facts, crystal clear quotes, "chapter and verse" as she put it.

The mentally and spiritually stimulating meeting was organised by the ARZ and the AIMZ. In the audience one could see Jamshed Kanga, Homi Khushrookhan, Homai Modi, Thrity Taleyarkhan, Farokh Kavarana, Phiroze Amroliwala, Rustom Tirandaz, Parways Bhumgara, Jehangir Patel, Dhun Baria, Berjis Desai, Kersi Randelia, Percy Patel, Adil Rangoonwala, Keki Cooper and Parvez Aibara amongst others. Out of the numerous mobeds who attended at least 18 were in their priestly dress. The continuous soft chanting of *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*, *Ashem Vohu* and *Yenghe Hatam* prayers on the public address system created a wonderful spiritual atmosphere in the hall.

On the dais were seated Dina McIntyre, the Guest of Honour, Chief Justice (Retd) of Supreme Court - Justice Shri Krishna, along with the ARZ and AIMZ trustees. The compering was very professionally done by Meher Rafat of the AIMZ, and by Darayus Malegam of the ARZ.

Two mobedsahebs, Ervad Khushroo Madon and Ervad Framroz Mirza were felicitated

for their relentless and fearless efforts, in spite of difficult odds, ridicule and abuse, in spreading Lord Zarathustra's message all over the world, the latest being their trip to Tajikistan to perform navjotes of the descendants of Zoroastrians. The two mobed sahebs led the gathering through a *Hum Bandagi*. The hall was packed to capacity with over 300 persons in the audience with ladies mostly in Parsi style saris, and men in white daglies and paghdies; stood and prayed in unison. It is rightly said, "those who pray together, stay together".

The audience also included inter-married Parsis with their spouses and children who have had their navjotes done and are followers of Zoroastrianism. One could see their happy faces, with tears rolling down the cheeks of some, now being able to practice Zoroastrianism without any discrimination.

It was pleasant to note that every seat was taken without the practice of hall-filling by chartered buses and free "bhonu" [food] that has become common these days. After a pre-meeting cup of tea with the volunteers and a couple of biscuits, it was down to serious business. More pleasant was the sophistication and tenor of the gathered Parsis, a far cry from a day earlier when some WAPIZ supporters, instead of accepting defeat gracefully at a Bombay Court, resorted to crude remarks about Her Ladyship's marital status.

Dina is a living example of the growth of educative endeavours that result as a backlash from the politics of exclusion that some supposedly instructed Parsis indulge in. Ostracised at 18 years for marrying an American, Dina awoke to a new mission. She decided to get to the root of the matter. The trained lawyer in her asked the right questions and found the right answers. Rabid prejudices had no part in

Zarathustra's teachings. The religion was for everybody who saw the light, no matter what some bigots in Bombay said.

Fluent in the scriptures, the ancient languages and their dialects, Dina was unafraid to confess that certain facts could not be answered, as the texts did not refer to them. This was very unlike our Mumbai based "scholars" who can twist and turn any fact, any way to suit their whims, fancies and convenience - often of the moment and rechange them when necessary.

This lady can take our so-called scholars and wise men head on. No wonder we have been kept away from listening to such fine, decent, educated and rational thinkers for so long.

Rustom Tirandaz, whose presence and queries added a bit of colour to the otherwise serious discussions, had mentioned to a Parsi banker a couple of years back of "... what we have been told all these years." We now realise that what we were told all these years was not the truth but a corrupted version of our holy books. THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE and it is unfolding before us.

The gist of Dina's talk was her exposition of the fundamentals of Zarathustra's teachings with the emphasis on His all-embracing credo of an open religion, inclusive in its entirety, for all mankind. Zoroastrianism has no room for a "Parsis only" theology. The Prophet's arms extended to protect all humankind. To deny this right to salvation in the Prophet's footsteps is to deny the religion itself.

A thunderous applause greeted the announcement made by Kerssie N Wadia of the ARZ, that a very generous Parsi gentleman had made available 14,000 sq ft of land in the Malad-Goregaon region of Mumbai for the construction of an universal agiary.

Justice Sri Krishna, a Vedic scholar, seized the moment and the Prophet's message. Addressing the gathering after Dina's talk,

he declared that if Zarathustra was so compassionate and his teachings so encompassing, then *"I too am a Zoroastrian"*. He welcomed ARZ's step and said, *"It takes time for people to break free from traditions, but it's better late than never"*. In those few words lay the essence of the religion. Not just the sudreh-kusti, not the lavish and intricate rituals, not the paraphernalia of external pomp and circumstance, but the purity of thought, the divine simplicity, the gentle touch of Ahura Mazda Himself. As one of ARZ's weekly insertions in the Jame rightly states - *"Our Holy Prophet Zarathushtra was certainly NOT a racist"*.

Various newspapers, Afternoon, DNA, Mumbai Mirror (Times of India), gave elaborate coverage to the event/news. Zee News covered and telecast the event as a major news event throughout the next day on their news channel.

**[The above report has been sent by the organisers]**



### NOT ALL HEROES ARE PEOPLE

James Crane worked on the 101st floor of Tower 1 of the World Trade Center. He is blind so he has a golden retriever named Daisy. After the plane hit 20 stories below, James knew that he was doomed, so he let Daisy go, out of an act of love. She darted away into the darkened hallway. Choking on the fumes of the jet fuel and the smoke, James was just waiting to die. 30 minutes later, Daisy comes back along with James' boss, who Daisy just happened to pick up on floor 112.

On her first run of the building, she leads James, James' boss, and about 300 more people out of the doomed building. But she wasn't through yet, she knew there were others who were trapped. So, highly against James' wishes she ran back in the building. On her second run, she saved 392 lives. Again she went back in. During this run, the building collapses, James hears about this and falls on his knees in tears. Against all known odds, Daisy makes it out alive, but this time she is carried by a firefighter. "She led us right to the people, before she got injured" the fireman explained. Her final run saved

another 273 lives. She suffered acute smoke inhalation, severe burns on all four paws, and a broken leg, but she saved 967 lives. Daisy is the first civilian Canine to win the Medal of Honor of New York City.





## *Behind the scenes of The Parsi Panchayat Case (1908)*

Reported by Ferzeen Bhadha

**T**he Parsis of Karachi were very recently fortunate to have amongst them Dr Mitra Sharafi, a law graduate from the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, and a PhD from Princeton. They had the benefit of hearing in Dr Sharafi's own words a description of the events that took place in the courtroom as the celebrated Bombay High Court case developed. It involved at its centre none other than the illustrious Tata family. Dr Sharafi's insights into the case were based upon her study of previously unexamined records at the Bombay High Court.

The story unfolds in 1903, when a young lady of French origin, Suzanne Briere, met and married R D Tata (Ratan Dadabhai Tata). At the same time she also had her "navjote" performed and therefore officially embraced the Zoroastrian faith. Shortly thereafter in 1906, a case was filed in the Bombay High Court not by Mrs Tata, but by a group of Zoroastrians opposing the Bombay Parsi Panchayat. They were led by Mrs Tata's husband. One of the two issues that were raised was whether a non-Parsi Zoroastrian "converted" to Zoroastrianism was entitled to the benefit of the religious institutions and funds. What followed took the community of the sub-continent through a whirlwind of opinions, suggestions and most of all, opened the doors for one of the most controversial topics of yesteryear and the present - should conversion of non-Parsis to Zoroastrianism be allowed, accepted and encouraged?

protagonists. The judges were Justice Dinshaw D Davar and Justice F C O Beaman, two men blessed with sharp intellect and judicial temperament but driven in two different

directions because of their strong personal opinions about culture, creed and religion. Justice Davar, the senior judge on the bench was a celebrated barrister who had made his mark in judicial circles, with a knack for conducting cross-examination which generally struck terror in the hearts of his witnesses! As a judge he had the opportunity of rendering decisions in many cases which revolved around the Zoroastrian community and it was this history that made Justice Davar the most obvious choice for hearing this case. Justice Beaman, the junior judge, was a rarity of his time, a man, who at the time of this case, had lost his eyesight, but who however was an active judge and proficient in typing his notes on a typewriter. As Dr Sharafi said "his notes were neatly typed out, thus making them easy to read as compared to the scrawls that were Justice Davar's notes".

As the case progressed well into the first month, it began to appear that both the judges were leaning heavily in favour of conversion, but in limited circumstances. However this situation did not last for long. Enter Mr Jivanjee Jamshedjee Modi (the



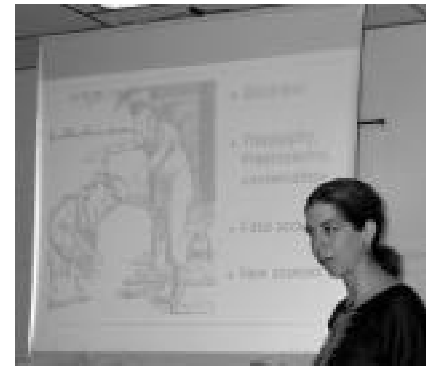
Suzanne Briere who changed her name to Soonoo and Ratan D Tata. From the cover of Judgments, published by Parsiana



Justices Dinshaw D Davar & Frank C O Beaman

As Dr Sharafi elucidated, the proceedings in the case before the Bombay High Court soon became one about "principles versus personalities". As the case progressed, the bench of two judges before whom the matter

was placed, turned out to be the leading



Dr Sharafi

hearings took place before he was knighted), a highly respected priestly scholar and also the Secretary of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet, in by far the most influential of roles; that of the expert witness. Mr Modi's deposition drew mixed reactions from the bench. He expounded his theory about how conversion could not possibly be allowed as it would "open the flood gates" to all and sundry. He gave weight to the "Parsi versus Zoroastrian theory," an argument Davar would subsequently adopt. Soon it was apparent that the tide of events was turning full circle and that the members of the bench were no longer in agreement in their views and that things had indeed changed. Mr Modi's earlier writings seemed to favour limited conversion, but in the courtroom, he adopted an anti-conversion stance. Justice Beaman was disillusioned by the contradiction, and felt that Mr Modi was not a credible witness. Often Beaman stopped taking notes during Mr Modi's testimony.

Another protagonist in this case was J J Vimadalal, a solicitor and a theosophist who had authored many works on racial mixing and was completely opposed to conversion. He too had the opportunity to air his views. Although he was not a witness in the case, it appears that the shift in the thinking of the members of the bench could be attributed to him too. We know that the judges met with Vimadalal at least once during proceedings.



Ahaaaaa!  
Justices Davar & Beaman yawning a yawn of relief after the close of the P P Fund and Juddin case, heard before them from 8<sup>th</sup> February to 14<sup>th</sup> April 1908. [Hindi Punch 19 April, 1908]

The concurring judgments were delivered in November 1908 by Justices Davar and Beaman, with Davar's being the leading judgment. They span over 100 pages and are considered a "treatise on the legal and religious rights and customs and the social fabric of the community". The judgments concluded that a mere Navjote could not permit a non-Parsi to benefit from Parsi trust funds and properties. At the time the



Sifting!  
(Davar sitting – Beaman standing, with Sir J J flying. The single word as the caption, says it all. - Ed)  
[Hindi Punch 29 November, 1908]



Mr Punch's fancy portraits  
Mr Jivanjee Jamshedjee Modi the Secretary of the Parsee Anjuman Funds trotting on his old hobby! [horse] [Hindi Punch 13 September, 1906]

decisions were written, Justice Beaman was away from India and acknowledged that Davar had shouldered the burden of the work in

deciding the case. Justice Davar's concluding remarks in the judgment were:

*"The Parsi community consists of Parsis who are descended from the original Persian emigrants, and who are born of both Zoroastrian parents, and who profess the Zoroastrian religion, the Iranis from Persia professing the Zoroastrian religion, who came to India, whether temporarily or permanently, and the children of Parsi fathers by alien mothers, who have been duly and properly admitted into the religion".*

In fact, these judgments spanned 70-odd pages on the issue of conversion which was *obiter dicta* for the purposes of the case being considered.

And thus as Dr Sharafi concluded, the people who were at the centre of it all were not the plaintiffs and neither the defendants. But instead were the two judges, the witnesses and most of the all the deciding factor were the personalities and ethnic backgrounds of each of these people which came to the forefront during the proceedings of the case.

Unfortunately, the passage of time has not given us an answer about the right or the wrong nor has there been any guidance in the matter. That was 1908 and we stand today in 2007, none the wiser about where things are headed. Will this issue need another century to go by or will the Zoroastrians of this era finally lay to rest this burning issue?

*"We might declare that the Zoroastrian religion permits conversions, but that the community (in a manner to be settled, if necessary, after further discussion) should regulate conversion by framing rules to safeguard it against abuse."*

*- Davar & Beaman after first month of hearings*

The three cartoons appearing on p43, with permission of the British Library, as appearing in Mitra Sharafi, "Judging Conversion to Zoroastrianism: Behind the Scenes of the Parsi Panchayat Case (1908)," in John R Hinnells and Alan Williams, ed. Parsis in India and the Diaspora (London: Routledge Curzon, 2007) (forthcoming).



*Ferzeen, born and bred in Karachi, Pakistan is a corporate lawyer by profession and has been practising since the last 8 years. She is a member of various associations of the Parsi community in Pakistan.*



Humour

#### Why Indians cannot be terrorists

- ✓ We are always late; we would have missed all 4 flights
  - ✓ Pretty girls on the plane would distract us
  - ✓ We would talk loudly and bring attention to ourselves.
  - ✓ With food and drinks on the plane, we would forget why we're there
  - ✓ We talk with our hands; therefore we would have to put our weapons down
  - ✓ We would all want to fly the plane
  - ✓ We would argue and start a fight in the plane
  - ✓ We can't keep a secret; we would have told everyone a week before doing it
  - ✓ We would have put our country's flag on the windshield due to our excessive patriotism
  - ✓ We would all have fallen over each other to be in the photograph being taken by one of the stupid hostages.
- so Indians can't ever be terrorists!

## *From Parsi priests to profits: say hello to Tata*

The Independent

<http://news.independent.co.uk/world/asia/article2204107.ece>

Published: 01 February 2007

Justin Huggler reports

**L**ike his devout Zoroastrian ancestors, Ratan Tata avoids conspicuous consumption. Yet he has guided his company through India's economic boom to revenues of more than £10bn a year and his takeover of Corus will make it the fifth largest steel manufacturer in the world.

The chances are most Britons have never heard of the Tata Group, the Indian company which yesterday won its bid to take over Britain's Corus steelmaker. But though you may not have heard of it, you've almost certainly drunk Tata tea. Few in Britain might realise it, but Tata has owned Tetley tea since 2000.

You have probably been on a Tata bus or seen a Tata lorry as well: in 2004, the Tata Group bought out the commercial vehicles division of Daewoo. And it is possible even that you may have stayed in a Tata hotel without realising it: it manages several famous hotels around the world, including the Pierre in New York.

Tata is the quiet man of Indian big business. While rivals such as Lakshmi Mittal or Kingfisher Beer's Vijay Mallya flaunt their wealth and acquisitions, the family-run Tata Group prefers to stay out of the gossip columns. Yet, without attracting much attention in the West, Tata has been quietly buying up an impressive portfolio of companies around the world, transforming a family firm into a multinational group.

Where there is an existing brand, it doesn't rename it, it just keeps running it as if nothing had happened. Consumers would never know their favourite brands have been bought up by an Indian company.

Yet in India Tata is a household name. The likes of Mr Mittal and Mr Mallya are very

recent arrivals compared to the Tatas, who were millionaire businessmen when Queen Victoria was Empress of India.

The company's founder, Jamsetji Tata, was descended from a family of Zoroastrian priests, refugees from persecution in Iran. He gave India its first steel mill, its first shipping line and its first textile factory. He founded his own city which still bears his name today and which is still dominated by Tata Steel: Jamshedpur. He also founded the most famous hotel in India, the Taj Mahal in Bombay, now Mumbai. Among his successors were JRD Tata, who was India's first pilot and founded its first airline, piloting the maiden flight himself. His Tata Airlines was nationalised and still exists today as Air India. The Tatas also gave India its first bank and its first motor company.



Yet when Ratan Tata took over as chairman in 1991, the grand old firm of Indian industry was in serious decline. Its fortunes had fallen with the nationalisation and "license Raj" that followed Indian

independence. It was Mr Tata who guided the family firm through the years of economic liberalisation that have enabled India's economic emergence - to the point where it has revenues of more than £10bn a year. Tata is the company that stands on its head all the Western assumptions about Indian big business.

Where most people in Britain think big Indian companies are a new phenomenon, Tata has

been around since the 1860s. And where the stereotypical image of the Indian tycoon is Mr Mittal, who spent more than £30m on his daughter's wedding, and more than £57m on his house, Mr Tata is the model of understatement. His only luxury is his private car collection. But when Tata Steel had to shed 32,000 workers to remain competitive over the past decade, it offered a voluntary redundancy package that can rarely have been equalled anywhere in the corporate world. It promised to continue to pay workers who took redundancy a frozen salary for the rest of their lives, until retirement age - even if they found another job.

The story of Tata begins with Jamsetji Tata, born into a family of Parsee priests in Gujarat in 1839. The Parsees are one of India's most distinct communities. Descended from refugees who fled persecution in Iran, they have retained their Zoroastrian religion and culture. To avoid polluting earth, fire or water, they still dispose of their dead by leaving them on Towers of Silence to be devoured by vultures - though India's fast-dwindling vulture population has them looking for an alternative method.

Jamsetji was born in British-ruled India. His father was the first male member of his family for generations not to join the priesthood, instead setting up his own private company in Bombay, which Jamsetji joined in 1858, hardly an auspicious year. The Indian Mutiny against British rule - or Uprising as it is known in India - had just been put down with brutal force the previous year. But Jamsetji was to spend the following years building his own business empire. He initially made his fortune on the back of the opium trade to China, a detail that is airbrushed out of the company history today, although the opium trade was legal at the time. He set up his own cotton mills to export to China. It opened on the same day Victoria was crowned Empress of India.

But it is the story of how Jamsetji, an Indian nationalist, came to own the finest hotel in

India that is most revealing of his character. At the time, the best hotels in Bombay were run by the British - and did not accept Indian guests. Legend has it that Jamsetji decided to build a hotel when, already a seriously wealthy man, he was refused entry to a local hotel where whites far less rich were lording it over him because of the colour of his skin. Jamsetji decided he would own the best hotel in India - and it would be open to Indians.

The hotel he built, the Taj Mahal, dwarfed the British hotels in grandeur and elegance. It is still standing today, long after the hotels that denied its founder entrance have gone - and it is still considered the finest hotel in India. When Gordon Brown visited Mumbai last month, it was the Taj Mahal he chose for dinner. But it was Jamsetji's vision of becoming a steel manufacturer, though, that really made the Tata family fortune. He heard the Scottish historian and sociological writer Thomas Carlyle predicting that the country which controlled steel would control gold, and decided to become an Indian steel magnate. After finding iron ore in modern-day Jharkhand state, he laid plans for a steel plant and a city for his workers. He never succeeded in his lifetime but the plans came to fruition after his death, in the form of Jamshedpur, the steel city that is named after him.

Yesterday's takeover of Corus, which will make Tata Steel the world's fifth largest steel manufacturer, is a step further in Jamsetji's vision of Indian dominance through steel. Jamsetji also stipulated workers' rights that were then unheard of in the West: an eight-hour working day, properly ventilates workplace, and a provident fund. It was a model which has worked well for Tata Steel: it hasn't had an industrial dispute for 75 years.

British Corus workers, nervous at yesterday's news their employer had been taken over by an Indian company, need look no further than Jamshedpur. All the steel workers there enjoy subsidised housing. They receive free treatment at the local hospital, built and funded by Tata, and their children can go to Tata-run schools.

Electricity is subsidised. Water is free - and Jamshedpur is one of very few cities in India where the tap water is drinkable, because it has been purified by Tata. The company even runs a snake hotline in case a snake gets inside workers' houses. Jamsetji's other great dream was a science college, which came to fruition after his death as the Indian Institute of Sciences in Bangalore, one of the country's foremost centres of learning. His philanthropic principles still inform the Tata Group today: it is 66 per cent owned by charitable trusts, which spent \$379m (£193m) on social causes in 2003-4. Tata even claims to have saved a rare breed of Ganges fish, the mahseer, from extinction with a breeding programme it funded.

But if its founder was a nationalist, the Tata Group went through dark days in the years after Indian independence. Tata Airlines was nationalised and taken away from the company, as was its insurance business, as India plunged into years of socialism that turned it into an economic basket-case.

Ratan Tata took over the chairman's role at a moment of great opportunity, as India finally liberalised its economy, but he decided the company needed to be modernised. He cut work forces and set performance targets. He may have made the company less patriarchal - although the redundancy packages were hardly brutal - but he made it competitive as well.

When Mr Tata bought Tetley Tea for \$435m in 2000, it was the biggest deal in Indian history. That's a record he has easily demolished with yesterday's £5.75bn takeover deal for Corus. The group he has set about building is still heavily influenced by the industries that captivated Jamsetji. As well as steel, Tata runs the Taj group of hotels, as well as managing some famous hotels such as the Pierre under their original names. But Mr Tata has also pursued his own interests, in particular his dream of building a car that would be affordable to millions of Indians who cannot buy new cars at today's prices: the 100,000 rupee-car (£1,150), which he has designed himself.

For all its much-vaunted charitable work and worker relations, Tata has not been free of controversy. Last year, 12 people were killed when police opened fire on a tribal group protesting against plans for a Tata Steel plant on their land in the eastern state of Orissa. The indigenous tribal people said the state government was selling off their land and keeping the profits for itself. And a similar dispute erupted this year in West Bengal, where Tata is trying to build a car factory at Singur. Local villagers are objecting to the government's compulsory purchase of their land. They have won the support of local political parties and activists from all over India, and protests have turned violent with police firing tear gas and baton-charging protestors.

The company's future seems secure, but the same cannot necessarily be said of the Tata family. In a twist that curiously mirrors the fate of the Parsee people, Mr Tata, who has never married, has no direct heir.

The Parsees are dying out. They may be one of the richest and most powerful communities in India, but the Parsees may have little time left. Forbidden by their priests from marrying outside the community, their numbers are dwindling fast. The children of Parsees who marry outsiders are not recognised as Parsees, and it is predicted the community could soon be extinct.

There are other Tata family members who could take over from Mr Tata, who has hinted he may step down soon. But he has also said his successor need not necessarily bear the Tata family name. Either way, Jamsetji's vision appears to be coming to fruition, even if it was delayed by post-independence socialism. India is emerging as a global power, and steel is at the heart of its emergence.



**Reproduced as a whole to pay tribute to the House of Tata who have achieved so much and given back to their country - Ed.**

## Finding Parsis in Burma

by mitra sharafi



ince writing a PhD on the Rangoon *navjote* case of 1914-25, I have been intrigued by the history of the Parsis of Burma (now Myanmar). [see *Hamazor Issue 3/06 pp 48-52*] This obscure thread of Parsi history has generally escaped the scrutiny of historians of the Parsi community. I call it obscure because at its peak, the community was never more than 300 people in Rangoon with another 100 dotted around the country. In February 2007, I visited the country with the hope of pursuing leads on the history and current situation of the Parsis of Burma. I was not disappointed.

The earliest Parsis seem to have arrived during the reign of King Thibaw (1878-85).

The Burjorji brothers of Calicut were put in charge of the postal system by Thibaw, the last king of Burma. With the British annexation in 1885-6, others joined them as rice brokers, bankers, insurance men, and employees of the Singer Manufacturing Company, not to mention doctors, lawyers, and investors in the teak and early oil industries of Burma. Burma was a place where one could move from rags to riches overnight. Those who eked out a living in Bombay and Gujarat considered seeking their fortune in Burma, then an undeveloped frontier land that the British were eager to develop. "Parsi Burma" was a flash lasting less than a century. Most evacuated for good during the Japanese invasion of Burma in the Second World War. I had met with a handful of surviving Parsis from Burma, most of whom settled in Bombay, to learn more about the "forgotten long march" of the winter of 1941-2. Those who missed the last boats had to travel on foot through the jungles of Burma

into India, effectively abandoned by the British administration. Between 10,000 and 50,000 South Asians died during that march from Burma. Parsi survivors communicated the horror of their experiences in the clearest of terms.

There is a practical reason why the history of the Burma Parsis has slipped through our fingers. Most Parsis fled Burma, as did British and Indian populations, during the Japanese invasion. A small number returned after the Second World War, Fali Nariman's family among them. Most of these families abandoned their property and possessions a second time, fleeing with the rise to power of the current military regime. By the time a full military coup in 1962

dashed all hope of a return to stability, most Parsis who had once been in Burma had left. Some of the handful who stayed had no remaining family ties to India or beyond. Others (generally men) had taken Burmese



Rangoon Parsee Fire Temple - 1960

spouses. Some of these had also converted to Christianity, and no longer considered themselves Zoroastrian.

Enter Jamshed Jee Bhoj. In 2007, he is the sole trustee of the "Parsee Fire Temple and Burial Ground Trusts." The trusts still exist and so do the Parsis—but just barely. Jamshed and his mother are the last two Parsi Zoroastrians left in Yangon and Myanmar. Since becoming trustee several years ago, Jamshed had been trying to make contact with Parsis outside of



Myanmar. The founding articles of the WZO (1981) appeared among the trust papers he inherited. Jamshed sent registered letters to every name and address appearing there, although two and a half decades later, many of these addresses were invalid and his letters, returned undeliverable. However, Sammy Bhiwandiwalla's address in London was still good. It was by hearing about Jamshed's letter from Sammy that I learned of Jamshed's existence. I wrote to Jamshed from Bombay, where I was doing research, and told him I was coming.

non-Burmese communities to adopt Burmese names, Jamshed has not done so, although his family name Jee Jee Bhoy has been cut into three separate words, following Burmese naming conventions somewhat. Full Burmese names normally consist of three single syllabic words, as in Mrs Jee Jee Bhoy's Burmese name, Than Than May.

Jamshed's grandmother, Mrs P K Jee Jee Bhoy, taught him most about what it means to be a Parsi and Zoroastrian. He follows Zoroastrian religious practices according to what she taught him. Jamshed usually has to explain Zoroastrianism to Burmese people. A common reaction is that he should convert, given that he has no religious community around him. His response is adamant: "till my dying day, I will not convert." When I visited the home of Jamshed and his mother, I saw that they had framed pictures of Zarathustra hanging above two doorways. Jamshed also told me he breaks *loban* and offers it before the fire when he prays. As there has not been a Zoroastrian priest in Myanmar since before his own birth, neither Jamshed nor his mother has undergone their *navjote*. Jamshed thought his father and grandmother had theirs, but he was not completely sure.

Jamshed, his mother and father spoke Burmese at home. His grandmother spoke Gujarati, and taught Jamshed's father some. With Jamshed, though, she always spoke English. In his conversational style, Jamshed has an assertiveness that is rare in Burmese company. The Burmese people I met over eleven days generally expressed themselves in a very mild, nonconfrontational way. I took Jamshed's more forceful manner to reflect his general tenacity.

Jamshed's mother is of mixed Burmese-Parsi ancestry, and was a cousin of his father. Jamshed's father, Framroze Jee Jee Bhoy, was of entirely Parsi stock. Framroze was a Jee Jee Bhoy through his father's

When I arrived in Yangon, a tall young man was waiting for me at the airport. I had expected an older gentleman, weathered by the trials that usually accompany the title of trustee. But Yangon's trustee is an energetic 25 years old. Jamshed is an only child and the sole breadwinner for his widowed mother and (until 2006) his elderly grandmother. With the same persistence that he showed in contacting Parsis abroad, he appeared at my hotel every morning for my 4.5 days in Yangon. He took me to the new Parsi burial ground. We visited the property upon which the

Rangoon agiary once stood. I also met his mother at their modest 2-room apartment in central Yangon.

Jamshed does odd jobs for a construction company in Yangon. His father, who died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of 48 in 1995, was a radio repairman and did not have savings to leave to the family. Jamshed was 15 at the time of his father's death, and left school to get a job to support his mother and grandmother. He dresses in Parsi fashion, wearing trousers rather than the *lungyi* worn by most men in Myanmar. In a country where it is usual for members of



Framed religious pictures over two doorways



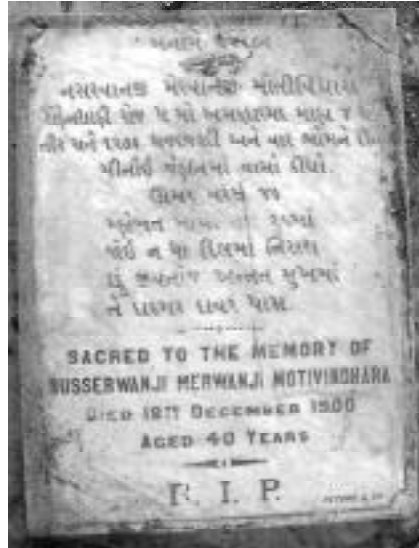
Jamshed's grandmother, P K Jee Jee Bhoy, a few years prior to her death in 2006

side. Through his mother (Jamshed's grandmother), he was a Cowasjee. As we drove from the airport to my hotel, Yangon of 2007 merged into Rangoon of 1914. Jamshed told me he was the great grandson of N M Cowasjee, a famous lawyer and public figure in the 1930s whom I knew well from my research. N M's father and two paternal uncles fought *Saklat v Bella* largely against each other. N M's father, Merwanjee Cowasjee "Captain," was popularly dubbed "the Grand Old Man of Burma" for his many achievements. He was an unofficial member of the Burma Provincial Council, a delegate to the Parsi Matrimonial Court in Rangoon, a first-class magistrate, a Municipal Commissioner, and the only Parsi from Burma selected to do homage to the King of England at the Durbar of 1911. He also led the lawsuit against the admission of Bella, an allegedly Indian girl adopted by his younger brother, Shapurji Cowasjee. There was also a third brother, the youngest of the three: Bomanjee Cowasjee. Bomanjee was a lawyer and the sole trustee of Rangoon's fire temple. He and Shapurji supported Bella's right to have her *navjote* and to benefit from Parsi trust funds and properties. They ultimately lost in London in 1925. By that time Bomanjee was the only brother still alive.

Jamshed's grandmother used to tell him stories about the case that ripped the generation of his great-great-grandfather apart. But most of the details were lost on Jamshed. What interested him more is the job of saving the Parsi heritage of Myanmar in the present. The fire temple was declared a damaged building in 1960 and was destroyed some time between then and 1984. Jamshed saved the *afringan*, and keeps it safely locked up now. The fire temple land occupies prime real estate in downtown Yangon along what used to be Mughal Street. There is now a large four-storey apartment block of flats and shops

occupying half of the space. Jamshed would like to build another smaller one on the remaining land, should he be able to raise the funds. Although the trusts own the land upon which this building sits, most of the flats and shop space within have been sold. The trusts pay property tax on the lots, but have an income of just US \$40 per year from rent. This represents the entire income of the trusts.

The old Parsi cemetery used to also sit at the heart of Yangon. It was nationalized in 1995. With only two weeks' notice, Jamshed and his father saved 150-200 of over 300 tombstones. These now sit in storage at the new Parsi burial ground, a space of one acre obtained by the Jee Jee Bhoys post-nationalization. There are Burjorjees, who were some of the earliest Parsi arrivals in Burma. Saklat, Unwala, Chinoy, Cowasjee and Jeejeebhoy are other recurring names. There are also Sukhias, Patels, Mehtas, Hormusjis, Masters, Masanis and



A tombstone Jamshed recovered from the old burial ground before it was nationalized (this is the oldest/best text)



Fragments of tombstones recovered & stored

Ghadiasis among the pile of headstones. Most of their original owners died in the first three decades of the twentieth century. A very few bear death dates from after the Second World War. Jamshed would like to have these properly cleaned and restored as best as is possible, and then to have them affixed to the land in the new cemetery. This would serve the dual

purpose of making the space look cared for, and of making it accessible to visitors. He estimates that the job would cost US \$150-200. Mandalay used to have a Parsi burial ground, but it too was nationalized on very short notice in 1994-5. Jamshed, his father and mother made the 500-km trip north as soon as they heard. Unfortunately, they reached Mandalay after the bulldozers did.

Jamshed has erected a building on the new Yangon burial ground land. It consists of two small rooms and an open-air platform. He saves what he can from his own earnings to fund the maintenance of this site. He would like to repair the building and wall around the compound, most of all to show that there is still a Parsi presence and that the land is being maintained. At present, only Jamshed's father and his mother are buried in the new cemetery. Jamshed is saving to provide a tombstone for his grandmother, whose grave is at the moment unmarked. He estimates that a raised stone grave like his father's will cost \$100.

Jamshed is eager to have contact with Parsis and wellwishers of the community outside of Myanmar, and to obtain reading material on Parsi and Zoroastrian topics. His e-mail address is [thingaha@myanmar.com.mm](mailto:thingaha@myanmar.com.mm), although his internet access is not always regular. He can also be reached via registered post: Jamshed Jee Jee Bhoy, Managing Trustee, Parsee Fire Temple & Burial Ground Trusts, No. 44, 36<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 17/18, 12/Katata (P) 000867, Kyauktada Township, Yangon, Myanmar. Interested parties are also invited to e-mail the author, Mitra Sharafi, with any questions or comments about Jamshed, his mother, and the precious but fragile Parsi heritage of Burma: [mitrasharafi@yahoo.com](mailto:mitrasharafi@yahoo.com)



Mitra Sharafi is a Junior Research Fellow at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge University. She holds degrees in law from Cambridge (BA 1998) and Oxford (BCL 1999), and in history from McGill (BA 1996) and Princeton (PhD 2006). In June 2007, she will take up an appointment as Assistant Professor in Law and History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA.



## Our North American entertainers make news

ZARAAWAR

SOONI

**Rahnuma Panthaky**

BAPSI

MICHELLE

**Michelle Mama**

ZAVERE

RAHNUMA

ZARAAWAR

**Bapsi Sidhwa**

MICHELLE

RAHNUMA

**Sooni Taraporewala**

ZAVERE

ZARAAWAR

**Zavere Tengra**

ZAVERE

BAPSI

RAHNUMA

MICHELLE

**Zaraawar Mistry**

SOONI

BAPSI

SOONI

## Michelle Mama - Producer : Director

**M**ichelle Mama is a Toronto-based Producer/Director/Writer who inhabits the feature film world as easily as documentary and television. She spent the early part of her career as an in-house Distribution Manager for Breakthrough Films and Television, attending foreign markets like MIP-COM and managing industry contacts, as well as coordinating documentary series such as *Streets of the World* for Discovery Channel and *Class Act* for Life Network.

She continued in the documentary vein as Associate Producer of *Loving Spoonfuls* for WTN, Production Manager of *Dove Days* for TVO, and Associate Producer of the groundbreaking series *KINK* (Toronto Season) for Showcase Television.

A lengthy gig as Talent Manager, on *The Toronto Show* (126 x one-hour variety show for Toronto 1) parlayed into a brief stint as Music Booker on *The Mike Bullard Show*.

Michelle was Production Manager on many short films, and Line Producer of the BravoFACT film *Cross Talk*. She then moved into the feature world as Production Manager of the Genie-Nominated hustler film *Sugar*. She has since produced a short film for Sudz Sutherland at the On The Fly Festival (*Koffee and Kreme*) as well as the VideoFACT video *Listen* for Ron Sexsmith and Don Kerr.

In 2006 she produced her first feature, *You Beautiful Cul De Sac Home*, directed by Cameron Kirkwood, which is currently in post-production.

Michelle has produced, directed and written *Bump!*, a travel show for Out TV, as well as field directing Life Network's lifestyle programme, *Renovate My Wardrobe*.

She runs a theatre company called Tecumseth Massive, who do seasonal works for the Toronto Fringe and Summerworks festivals.



She is also a freelance contributor to *glow*, Canada's Health and Beauty Magazine, and a committee member of the Friends of South Asia, an initiative to promote the South Asian Civilization collection at the Royal Ontario Museum.

She can currently be seen hosting the CBC reality series *Fashion File Host Hunt* (Thursday nights at 7:30pm), guiding ten contestants who are vying to be the host of *Fashion File*, the most popular fashion programme in the world, now seen in over 140 countries. [[www.cbc.ca/hosthunt/](http://www.cbc.ca/hosthunt/)]

My best moments are:

CUTTING  
LOOSE WITH  
FRIENDS

Person I'd most  
like to meet:

MAYA  
ANGELOU,  
SALMAN  
RUSHDIE

A food I won't  
touch:

BRAINS

My family says  
I'm:

STRONG  
WILLED

Music I listen to:

INDIE ROCK,  
EARLY '90s,  
SHOEGAZER

Last book I read  
for fun:

BERLIN  
STORIES



## A New Breed of Cowboy

by aban rustomji

**A**claimed actor-director-playwright Zarawaar Mistry's new play *Indian Cowboy* comes to Houston March 30 - April 1.

*Indian Cowboy* chronicles the misadventures of a young man who always seems to be a stranger-in-a strange land. Mistry's compelling tale traces the often humorous steps and missteps of the young man from India to America and then back to India to the new place of awakening. The central focus of the play is Gayomar Katrak, who was found as an infant by three brothers who gave him to their childless sister, in a set-up with plenty of mythic overtones. The story unfolds in Hyderabad, India and moves on to the US where Gayomar is bitten by the acting bug rather than the *techno-geek* world of America.

The 80-minute candle lit performance has no set or props, and Mistry is the sole cast-member. Accompanied by collaborators Keith Lee for music and Kathleen Sullivan as script collaborator, Mistry plays eleven characters. They include Gaomar Katrak, Mejli Katrak, Soli Katrak, Fali Katrak, Nergish Katrak, Babu Nath, Behram Baria, Wendy Williams, Sam Reese, Tina Cama, Altam Ansari, an engineer and an official. During the performance, Zarawaar appears on a bare stage lit by candles with low-key musical accompaniment. The story is not autobiographical but it is based on Zarawaar's observations as an immigrant.

To watch Zarawaar Mistry perform is to feel a sense of the ecstatic - not just as a state of pleasure or excitement, but the ecstasy of being lifted out of one's own familiar setting. The characters are grand and finely wrought, leaping and loping onto the stage as if celebrating themselves and their maker. With incredible energy and versatility Zarawaar Mistry electrifies audiences and

beautifully portrays the multiple characters in his solo performances.

Mistry won the *10 Best Plays of 2002 by City Pages* for his play *Sohrab and Rustum*. The play was a nostalgic remembrance of a familiar childhood story for all of us. Interwoven with the classic *Shahname* tale of warrior Rustum and son Sohrab was another story of a Bombay

Parsi gentleman named Rustomji, a father embittered by being abandoned by his immigrant son Sohrab. As the inverse titled intimates, the meaning of the play was not limited to the *Shahname* tale where the father vanquishes his son without knowledge. Instead in Mistry's play, it is the son who survives and mourns the father. The staging of Sohrab's battle with Rustum was brilliant - a simple German silver *thali* and a spear and a voice that spoke volumes. With a dose of down home humour, the piece tied the mythic past and the realities of the present. It allowed the audience to reflect on the emotional ties



*Indian Cowboy*, Mistry's fourth project, was selected by the Star Tribune as Outstanding Experimental Theater in its Best of 2006 list. Proceeds from his performances of the "Indian Cowboy" will benefit the Flourish Summer Art Camp, held in August at DreamAcres Farm; to expose students ages 12 to 18 to the experience of living on a farm and using the farm as a basis for creative expression.



My best moments are:  
UNEXPECTED

Person I'd most like to meet:  
HMMM...?

A food I won't touch:  
BRUSSEL  
SPROUTS

My family says I'm:  
NUTS

Music I listen to:  
MY DAUGHTER'S  
CD's

Last book I read for fun:  
AMAR CHITRA  
KATHA COMICS

and painful struggle families experience when one member decides to immigrate.

Born in 1963 in India, Mistry dabbled in theatre at the Dramatic Center of Hyderabad as a child. He studied computer science

after graduating from high school, but came to the US to study theatre and become a professional actor. Somewhere along the way he discovered he was more interested in being a creative artist, writing and performing original works, rather than only an interpretive one. He then became interested in Asian-American theatre and was driven by more socio economic issues of providing access to resources and opportunities so that independent artists could work at the grassroots' levels. He got a job with the Children's Theater Company in Minneapolis. He and his wife Leslye Orr established a non-profit arts organization called Center for Independent Artists and was selected by *City Pages* in 2003 as the *Best Theater for New Work*. Presently he is off on a new adventure - establishing a performing arts studio in St Paul called Dreamland Arts ([www.dreamlandsarts.com](http://www.dreamlandsarts.com)) named after the old Dreamland cinema in Secunderabad, India.

Mistry's family and early life are ingrained in his psyche. His father was from Dadar Parsi Colony in Bombay and his mother a Kalyaniwalla was from Secunderabad. He reveals, "*My fathers' family was better educated, but my mother's family knew, and still knows, how to eat well and have lots of fun.*" Early in life he lost his father, a fighter pilot who went missing in action during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war. "*I am still trying to understand who my father was, what his presence in my life was like and what his absence has meant.*" Now that he is a father, having a daughter, Naaja has been the defining moment in his life. Zarawaar also has a brother and sister in Virginia and Connecticut.

Mistry's mission is to educate us about various people and cultures living together in the same country or state. Being an immigrant to the United States allows him to highlight and revel in diversity. He is passionate about what happens to us, as Parsis and Zoroastrians, and the things that have shaped us. He writes "*... My work is an expression of my soul. It comes from deep within. My work is not intended to be didactic, but open ended, not descriptive but evocative. I seek to reach my audiences in unexpected ways, through the back door, tackling serious subjects through humor. But I am also inviting them to consider the aspects of social commentary within the work.*"

Mistry's generation is the post-baby boom, post-independence generation of India. If the first major migration for Parsis was from Iran to India, then it is Mistry's generation that stands at the cusp of the second major migration - from India to the America, Canada, and Europe. There was a huge exodus in the late 60's, not just of Parsis, from the Indian subcontinent to the US, the UK and elsewhere. Mistry is concerned with what happens to a person and a community during these migrations: "*So what happened between the generations, between the generation of my parents and my own? This is the story I want to explore.*" Part of his exploration is also a way to reconnect and relive Zoroastrian and Parsi traditions. Tradition can be kept alive in many ways, and performances are Mistry's way.

In *Indian Cowboy* he wanted to explore the effects of cultural displacement, the occurrences that happen to immigrants in America, and people's perceptions of what composes a culture. At the heart of his reflection is not just leaving a country through the complicated process of immigration, but also embracing another country which is understood through the mythic image of the American dream.

In Mistry's universe drama becomes ritual, it aims for ecstasy, and the product undertaken by the creator for the audience is a triumph. ■■■

Aban Rustomji, a high school media specialist, lives in Houston where she is the recipient of several educational awards. An advocate for education and libraries, Aban is currently involved in establishing a library at the Zoroastrian Association of Houston whose mission is "to serve as a leading repository of knowledge that fosters the awareness and study of Zoroastrian religion, history and culture". An avid reader and traveller, Aban's educational visits to the Middle East have resulted in successfully conducting teacher training workshops in Pakistan, and fostering cultural connections with educators in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



## Rahnuma Panthaky - actor, narrator, producer & activist

**A**s an actor, Rahnuma has been seen all over the film/TV and theatre circuit. At the moment she is on stage at Houston, performing in *An American Brat*.

She recently returned from India shooting an indie-feature in the deserts of Rajasthan as well as seen in the six-part BBC mini series, *The State Within* playing British Press Secretary Nasreen Qureshi opposite Jason Isaacs, British Ambassador. Prior to leaving for India, Rahnuma worked with Oscar nominated director, Deepa Mehta on the staged/radio adaptation of *Funny Boy*. Other recent credits include: Lifetime's hit series *Missing*, playing opposite Vivica A Fox, TV movie, *addicted.com*, opposite Kelly Lynch, the supporting role in the CTV movie *Plague City: SARS In Toronto*, playing chief medical officer Dr Laura Neston (loosely based on real life CMO, Dr Sheila Basrur), UPN series *Kevin Hill* playing Defense Attorney, Rita Macias.

Prior to that, she played Ginny Falls, (best friend to Melrose Place star Josie Bisset) on the Disney/ABC Family Channel movie, *I Do, They Don't* and was seen in the remake of *KOJAK* playing Detective Sharon Tucker opposite Ving Rhames. Other selected credits include: guest star spots on *The Eleventh Hour*, *Blue Murder*; has played opposite Jon Voigt and Lou Gossett Jr in *Jasper, Texas*; *DaVinci's Inquest*, recurring role on the Showtime hit, *Street Time*; USA Network's *MONK* and the Disney movie, *Tru Confessions*. She's performed on stage with Margot Kidder, Erin Brokovich, Luba Goy and others in the Canadian run of *The Vagina Monologues* at the New Yorker Theatre. Other stage credits include: the 2002 Fringe hit, *Escher's Hands* (which she also produced), *The Matka King* at Factory Theatre, two summers doing Shakespeare in the park and many others. Rahnuma is a frequent voice on CBC Radio. She played the role of Dinah Aunty for Rohinton Mistry's, *A Fine Balance* (from which she was asked to emcee an afternoon of readings with the author), recently recorded *The Raj Kumari's Lullaby*, narrated award winning novelist Jhumpa Lahiri's book, *The Namesake*, wrapped Jason Sherman's radio series *Graf* playing feisty newspaper journalist, Farzad, and was the narrator of Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*.



Rahnuma is also co-founder of the indie film company Brown Sugar Entertainment ([www.brownsugarentertainment.com](http://www.brownsugarentertainment.com)) currently producing the feature "*Little India*" starring Bollywood legend, Jackie Shroff. She is also co-founder of two Toronto based theatre companies, BANG! Productions, (a company dedicated to telling stories of women who have been marginalized and re-visioning their stories to come from the woman's perspective) & MAYA Theatre, a company dedicated to showcasing the talents of South Asian artists in Canada. She recently produced the World Premiere of *Four Chapters* by Nobel Laureate, Rabindranath Tagore, and along with MAYA Theatre, has run Toronto's South Asian Theatre Festival at the Harbourfront, for three consecutive years and organized annual summer drama camps for South Asian youth. She is currently in development as creator and producer of a new TV pilot.

Outside of acting, Rahnuma has been actively involved in the Stop Racism Campaign for the Department of Canadian Heritage and was a facilitator and Team Leader at the International Youth Conference Against Racism in Hanover, Germany. Last fall she was honoured with the FEMINASIA Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Arts.





# An American Brat brings laughter & tears

by ellen goldberg

**A**n *American Brat*, based on Bapsi Sidhwa's novel by the same name, premiered as a play in Houston, Texas, March 9, 2007.

Although an earlier version was performed on the London stage in 2003, and several readings were presented in Houston under a different name, the play has been transformed to reveal serious issues in a humorous way.

The main character is Feroza (Arzan Gonda), a Pakistani Parsi girl. Her liberal parents, Cyrus (Sundy Srinivasan) and Zareen (Rahnuma Panthaky), are concerned that she is adopting Muslim fundamentalist behavior and send her to college in America.

The play opens with the news Feroza has set a date for marriage to David (Luke Eddy), a fellow student she's met at her university in Texas. Not only is he an American and a "Non," he's Jewish! The grandmother's reaction is extreme. She and Cyrus convince Zareen to fly to Houston right away, to break up the relationship—if necessary, paying David to get out of Feroza's life.

Living in the same apartment with David and Feroza is a friend named Jo. Zareen becomes a second mother to her, unaware that Jo is a lesbian. Although at first Zareen is hostile to David, they become quite close during her extended stay. Buying sexy clothes and enjoying her new-found freedom, a phone call from her mother and Cyrus brings Zareen back to reality.

She becomes arrogant and says cruel things to David, telling him that if Feroza marries out of the religion, she will no longer be allowed to be a Zoroastrian, which has only about 140,000 members worldwide. Zareen paints a dark picture of what Feroza's life would be like — shunned by

the community, not allowed to attend her grandmother's funeral when the time comes. She offers David money to break off the relationship. He storms out of the apartment. Feroza is horrified by her mother's behavior, and a terrible argument ensues.

Another phone call from Pakistan reminds Zareen that she can get better results by being sweet like honey. She apologizes to Feroza and invites David and his grandmother for dinner. David's Bubbe (Jewish grandmother) is as vocal about her religion as Feroza is about hers. While on different continents, both are "over the top" characters who bring humour to the play.

Zareen invites David to bring his family and rabbi to Pakistan for the wedding, then begins to describe what the festivities would entail. She exaggerates to get a reaction, and it works. David becomes furious and says that his religion is also old, equally important, and he'd be giving up a lot to marry out of his faith, too.



My best moments are:  
SPENDING TIME  
WITH FAMILY

Person I'd most like to  
meet:  
NELSON MANDELA

A food I won't touch:  
LOVE  
ADVENTUROUS  
EATING, BUT NOT  
MONKEY-BRAIN  
OR DOG!

My family says I'm:  
FORGETFUL

Music I listen to:  
GHAZALS, INDIAN/  
WESTERN  
CLASSICAL, SOFT  
ROCK

Last book I read for fun:  
IN THE LINE OF FIRE

Performance at  
Stages Repertory  
Theatre, Houston  
Preview : Thursday 8  
March  
Opens on : Friday 9 -  
25<sup>th</sup> March



Zareen (Rahnuma Panthaky)  
placing a tilla on David

David and his Bubbe leave in a fit of anger. To get even, Feroza tells her mother that Jo has a female lover, and Zareen is revolted by everything that has occurred. She sees that this is a different world—one she'll never fully understand.

As Zareen prepares to return to Pakistan, she reflects on the opportunities Feroza has in America. The conflict is unresolved, and audience members must come to their own conclusion.

The dialogue is sharp and comical throughout the play, even during some of the tense moments. Slowly the drama comes to the forefront, with tension rising.

Without preaching, the characters reveal the dilemma of intermarriage. Zoroastrianism and Judaism each have challenges because of dwindling numbers. Love often obscures the bigger picture of problems the couple is bound to encounter.

Once again Bapsi was able to create memorable characters and thought-provoking situations. Just as she's done with *Cracking India* which became the film *Earth*, and *Water* which is a novelized back-story of the film by the same title, Bapsi has shown that her efforts are multi-dimensional.

Based on the audience reaction at the preview, *An American Brat* will be a huge success.

Ellen Goldberg is an entrepreneur and freelance photojournalist living in Texas. She is involved in international projects and serves as President of Sister Cities of Houston, the umbrella organization for sixteen associations partnered with municipalities around the world. In addition, she is the lyricist for Indian singer Sonu Nigam's first English language CD, *Spirit Unfolding*.



STARS REPORT BY THEATRE PRESENTS

## an American Brat

By Bapsi Sidhwa



U.S. Premiere  
March 9 - 25, 2007  
Houston, Texas



Anosh Irani's new novel *The Song of Kahunsha* is a compelling story of poverty, violence, love, dreams and the fragility of childhood innocence. It's also a stark and beautifully-told tale of a brutal and bewitching city. The hero is ten-year-old Chamdi, a sensitive and precocious orphan who runs away into the chaos of Mumbai. There he befriends Summi and Guddi, street siblings, who are trying to provide for their sick mother. Through all the horrors he experiences, Chamdi's imagination remains pure and unsullied.

Anosh Irani was born and brought up in Bombay, India and moved to Vancouver in 1998. His first full-length play, *The Matka King*, premiered at the Arts Club Theatre Company in October 2003. His debut novel, *The Cripple and His Talismans*, was published in the spring of 2004. His new play, *Bombay Black*, is being produced in Toronto in 2006 by Cahoots Theatre.



## Shameless in Toronto

Interview with Farishta Dinshaw

**Z**avare Tengra is a dynamic newcomer on the South Asian entertainment scene in Toronto, but is no stranger to the Karachi Parsi community. He became involved in acting while still in college, and went on to act in and direct numerous *nataks* [Parsi comedies], produce song and dance revues, and choreograph fashion shows. Many of these events were fundraisers, illustrating his penchant for combining fun with a good cause. In Toronto, he has ventured outside the Parsi scene and is part of the trio that puts together Besharam ([bay.shur.um](http://bay.shur.um)), one of Toronto's hottest monthly events. Recently, he sat down with Farishta Murzban Dinshaw to tell Hamazor readers more about Besharam, which means shameless in Urdu/Hindi.

**Q. Describe Besharam for people who have not heard about it.**

It's a monthly club event held on the first Friday of every month at a hot downtown club called the Fly and features awesome music, a mixture of Bollywood hits, bhangra, some R&B.

**Q. How did you get the idea to start Besharam?**

The three of us who started it - Amita who is our DJ, Mohammed Khan and myself - knew one another because we worked at ASAAP [Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention]. We were at an ASAAP fundraiser one night and Mohammed said that there was a dearth of South Asian club events and that we should do something regularly. So we pooled our ideas and talents and started it.

**Q. But why call it Besharam?**

The word besharam is used to describe someone who breaks the rules of so called respectability. For instance, a person is called shameless for openly discussing sexuality or dressing in a way that is seen



as provocative. We wanted to push the envelope on what is shameful. There's so much that we find offensive like poverty, war, environmental destruction, religious extremism, unequal treatment of women, racism, homophobia which gets little or no recognition as truly shameful. Hence, our idea of mixing hot music, sensuality and politics of creative resistance.

**Q. So, in your mind, is Besharam more of an activist activity rather than an entertainment event?**

Let's say, it's entertainment with an activist twist. We have people coming in from ASAAP to promote safer sex and hand out free condoms, free lube [lubricant]. It's a progressive event in that way. We flash anti-racism and anti-violence messages on a large screen. The name Besharam is certainly from an activist perspective and part proceeds from every monthly event go to helping South Asians living with HIV/AIDS through the ASAAP, but the focus of the event is music and just having a great time.

**Q. You used to host this party as Hajra Bibi? Why the alter ego?**

Hajra Bibi was an extension of our ideology. We were just challenging another so called norm the West stereotypes a woman wearing a burqa as oppressed and without

voice. I used to do the announcements as Hajra Bibi [wearing a burqa], but I don't anymore. The event has evolved a lot since the initial days. Now I usually dress up in different costumes, whatever strikes my fancy. It's all about keeping things fresh and not stagnating.

**Q. You promote Besharam as queer, positive and heterosexual friendly. Who comes to Besharam?**

It's odd, but the gay community thinks of Besharam as a straight event and the straight community calls it a gay event. We encourage drag queens to come just as we encourage gay, straight and all ranges in-between. I would say the event is about fun, it transcends sexuality. However, the reality of our demographics makes it 95 per cent a heterosexual crowd. We're very clear that we do not want homophobes. We promote the slogan "haters stay home!". We have zero tolerance for any kind of disrespect whether it is a man or a woman being harassed. We call security and the troublemakers are instantly kicked out. We've built up a crowd of regulars because of that. The crowd goes from 19-year olds to those in their fifties but mainly it's college kids. Once they come they realize the energy of the place - the music is superb, it's six hours of pure glam.

**Q. What makes Besharam unique? Why do you think it's been such a success?**

Many reasons. We offer great value for money for one thing. The music is awesome, and then add in the club. The Fly has an impressive light and sound system. If you ever watched the TV series *Queer as Folk*, the Fly was the original Babylon club in that. Plus, every month we have a theme. We've done Valentine's specials, New Years Eve events. We have performers every month and dance competitions. We try and do different things every time. When we did "Madhuri Madness" we had posters of her couriered from Bombay [Mumbai] and hung them up all over the club. When we had "Holi Hungama", we covered one of the rooms in the club completely with plastic and played holi with coloured powder.

**Q. What part does Toronto play in Besharam's success? Would it have worked as well anywhere else?**

It's bound to work wherever there is a large South Asian population. Other North American cities have similar events. I was in New York recently and went to DJ Rekha's event. I had a ball, but I have to say we definitely have an edge. I suppose you could say Toronto plays a part in that we've received a lot of positive coverage in the ethnic and mainstream media. Many television channels like ATN, BBC Urdu, OMNI have covered our events. The Toronto Star wrote about us.

**Q. Besharam links to your identity as a South Asian in Toronto. Do you in any way associate it with yourself being a Parsi?**

My Parsi friends know about it, and the buzz has got around by word of mouth in the community at large, but you have to realize that we essentially play Bollywood music and Parsis on the whole have more Western tastes. Besharam appeals to an "ethnic" and Parsis aren't part of it.

**Q. What part of Besharam do you enjoy the most?**

The performances. We have a guest performer at around 1 am; mainly drag queens, but sometimes small Bollywood companies send their dancers. We've had a BollyBelly performance, which is a new trend of belly dancing to Bollywood music.

**Q. What are some of the challenges of organizing Besharam every month?**

Crowd control is a big challenge, mainly because a lot of guys can't handle their drinks. We're trying to educate the



Zavere in costume

My best moments are:  
MSN-ING FRIENDS ALL OVER THE WORLD

Person I'd most like to meet:  
BARAK OBAMA

A food I won't touch:  
KARELA (BITTER GOURD)

My friends say I'm:  
INTERESTING & FUN TO BE WITH

Music I listen to:  
R & B, SOUL

Last book I read for fun:  
A FEAST OF ROSES

I'm passionate about:  
SOCIAL JUSTICE

My guilty pleasure:  
CHOCOLATES

community to drink responsibly because you can enjoy an event without getting puking drunk.

#### Q Any major future plans?

We're thinking of trying it out for twice a month, but I don't know whether it will work because all three of us have full time jobs and Besharam takes up a lot of time to co-ordinate every month. It's been a learning experience. Initially, we had a great mix of music from chutney and reggae to Tamil music but eventually we realized that Bollywood and bhangra works best. We keep it a people's event. We listen to what the public want and give it to them. That's why the regulars keep coming back.



#### Photo credit:

Nari Mavalwalla - Besharam's official photographer.



*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"*

#### Write a short story

A college class was told they had to write a short story in as few words as possible. The instructions were, the short story had to contain the following three things:

1. Religion
2. Sexuality
3. Mystery

Below is the only A+ short story in the entire class.

"Good God, I'm pregnant; I wonder who did it."

Humour

## The Namesake - Sooni T

**T**amina Daver writes "I was lucky enough to attend the NYC invite-only premiere (6 March) of *The Namesake*, as the special guest of its screenwriter, Sooni Taraporevala. (I got to walk quickly on the red carpet while security hurried me along; and I think I ate dinner next to Willem Dafoe). At the screening, director Mira Nair, after talking about the novel it was based on, by Pulitzer Prize winner Jhumpa Lahiri, gave a special lengthy thanks to Sooni, who could not make it because she is about to direct her first film in Bombay. I was honoured to be there.

The film, about a Bengali Indian family's journey of identity and home, stars Kal Penn (of 'Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle' fame) and Tabu (Bollywood star). It opens today (10 March) in NYC, LA, SF, Toronto; and next Friday in DC, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Seattle, Vancouver, etc)."

The Harvard Magazine's article – "Godmothers of *The Namesake*" mentions Nair met Sooni Taraporevala in 1976, both Indians who became friends and nine years later worked together in *Salaam Bombay!* — Nair as director, Taraporevala as screenwriter. Later they collaborated on *Mississippi Masala* (1991) and *My Own Country* (1998). "But none of their movies so directly mirrors their own life experiences as this year's *The Namesake*, based on Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jhumpa Lahiri's first novel. Having read the book en route, Nair arrived in Taraporevala's hometown of Mumbai (formerly Bombay) in March 2004 and bluntly told the screenwriter, 'Sooni, we were born to make this film.'

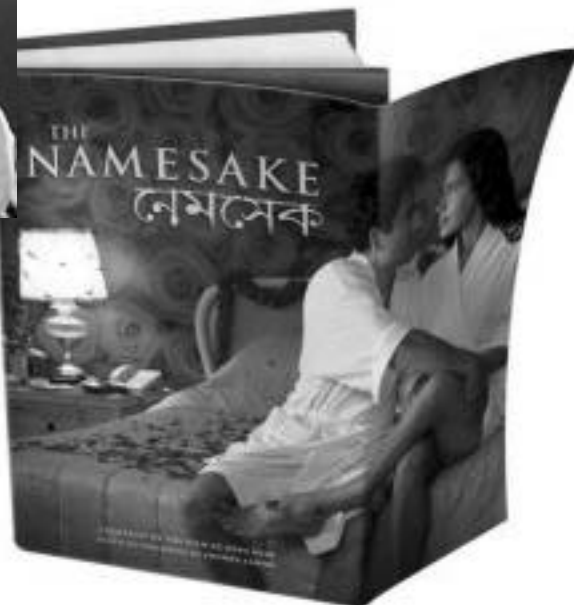
"Taraporevala has been a screenwriter for 20 years, completing 20 commissioned screenplays for various directors, producers, and studios. ... her four movies with Nair each happened in a year or two. "I call it Mira magic," Taraporevala says.



Sooni Taraporevala (left) and Mira Nair in Kolkata in 2005, on the rooftop where the final scene of *The Namesake* takes place. Courtesy of Mira Nair



Ronnie Screwvala - executive producer



**March 09, 2007:** In SAJA's roundup of reviews it says "The movie is, as of, 9 am today, the **third most-searched-for film on NYTimes.com** and

*"A glory on a huge, colorful canvas. Strikingly original, heartfelt, superbly acted and profoundly satisfying."*

**Joe Morgenstern, The Wall Street Journal.**

ads are running in major newspapers and there are even some TV spots."

Ronnie Screwvala executive producer of the film says in the rediff news "The angels were surely on Mira's side when she was thinking of having all-Indian cast for *The Namesake*."

Nair and Screwvala had discussed several movie projects but when the producer read the book, he found it irresistible and moving. "Less than three months of Mira talking to me about the project," he says with a hearty chuckle, "we were ready to go ahead with it."



### Credits for Sooni Taraporevala:

In 1986 she wrote her first screenplay, *Salaam Bombay!* for director/producer Mira Nair. *Salaam Bombay!* was nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign film and earned Taraporevala the Lillian Gish Award from Women in Film. Her second screenplay, *Mississippi Masala*, also for Mira Nair, won the Osella award for Best Screenplay at the 1991 Venice Film Festival. She has also written *Such a Long Journey*, based on the novel by Rohinton Mistry, directed by Sturla Gunnarson, which earned her a Genie nomination from the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television; she received co-credit for *My Own Country*, based on the book by Abraham Verghese, directed by Mira Nair for Showtime television, as well as the epic bio-pic, *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar* directed by Jabbar Patel for the Government of India and the National Film Development Corporation of India.



## Cyrus R Todiwala MBE - Chef Extraordinaire

Interviewed by Shernaz H Engineer



**SHE:** Cyrus, what made you decide you wanted to be a chef despite, your parent's misgivings?

**CRT:** I was not academically inclined. My dyslexic side connected well with a catering course as it is more practically orientated and I was better at using my hands. It wasn't all that easy, as we had to cover 28 subjects. Half way through my course, I decided I wanted to be a chef. I found being in the kitchen more exciting. My parents felt that there was no future in being in the kitchen as head chefs stayed where they were until retirement and there would be no advancement for me.

**SHE:** To want to become a chef, I am sure, was out of the ordinary for a Parsi boy as a career option?

**CRT:** Absolutely! Parsi men have always done well in hotels but not in the kitchen. To become a 'Ramo', a 'Domestic Hand', was unthinkable. My parents put up with a lot of ribbing but my Dad always backed me up. Even when I joined the Taj group and salaries were pathetic, I was always able to sponge off my parents.

**SHE:** You joined the Taj Hotel Group and become their Corporate Executive Chef for all the hotels in the Goa region. Why did you not pursue a career in a corporate environment.

**CRT:** I always wanted to do something on my own. Even whilst at college, I used to cater for dinner parties and made loads of cakes and sold wines for Catholic weddings. I made the wines myself.

I was asked by the Taj group to transfer to Calcutta to take over the Eastern region but my wife Pervin did not want to go. I could have easily moved to another corporate group. The one motivating factor was that, we were poorly paid by the Taj Group. If the Taj had paid well, who knows, I may have stayed.

**SHE:** You then went to Pune and reopened 'The Place' restaurant with a partner but stayed only two years. Why was that?

**CRT:** I was the junior partner and it didn't work out. He wasn't a chef, I did restructure the menu but due to differences of opinion, I decided to move out.

**SHE:** At this time you decided to emigrate to Australia, but why did you come to Britain?

**CRT:** I knew the restaurant partnership would not work out. The Taj Group desperately wanted me back on my terms but we had an option to go to Australia. We did go there just to get our resident permit and now it seems that we had a good holiday, blew all our savings and then moved to London!

**SHE: Did you again go into partnership with someone else?**

**CRT:** We came to run the restaurant. It was the height of the recession in Britain. The cash management by the owners wasn't good enough and the restaurant went in to liquidation twice! This caused problems about my work permit and I had to provide for Pervin and the boys. That, was when we decided to take over the restaurant from the owners.

**SHE: Was it at this time, that you decided to do fusion cooking by mixing Indian spices with western ingredients?**

**CRT:** All this started at 'Namaste'. I felt that I was in another country with its fabulous produce. It would be an insult not to use the best of British within our cuisine. I now work even closer with farmers and local fishermen.

**SHE: You obviously had a struggle establishing yourself in Britain. What problems did you encounter and how did you overcome them?**

**CRT:** Saying we had a struggle is an understatement! We landed from the Pune frying pan into the London fire! The most severe difficulties were with the Home Office and my work permit. At that time, the Home Office listed me as semi-skilled, unreliable individual who did not deserve to remain in the UK. This dragged on for 10 years. We had a big financial strain paying lawyer's fees. I also had to service all the previous owner's debts and creditors.

**SHE: Do you now feel that it was a wise decision to come to Britain and would you have achieved the accolades and recognition if you had stayed in India?**

**CRT:** Coming to Britain on a professional level was a wise decision. Britain has allowed me to do what I want. On the business front, we can achieve more here than in India. On personal achievements, I was already voted 'Best Executive Chef' in India. So, I had received recognition.

**SHE: Cyrus, you have an exhaustive list of accolades, and awards not only for yourself but for your restaurants. Which of them gave you the greatest pleasure?**

**CRT:** To receive the 'CATY' award, which is the Hospitality Oscar. This gave me the greatest pleasure. Most people get it at the end of their career. I am a foreigner in Britain and it is a high achievement to be recognised by your own industry.

**SHE: I am surprised you did not mention your MBE (Member of the British Empire) award as this is one of the highest awards that a country can bestow on you?**

**CRT:** I don't feel proud to have received my MBE as the Queen did not pin it on me as I was an Indian Citizen at the time. The Culture Sport and Arts Minister was too busy to do it and after one year of not receiving it, I wrote to the Palace and told them I wanted to give it back. They swiftly sent it to me by courier! It was a mockery. I use my title as the college of heraldry insists I do so.

**SHE: You are committed to life-long learning and have invested your time in setting up an oriental cookery school. Has that been worthwhile? What has the school brought to the young trainees and in the poor area where it is established?**

**CRT:** Starting up the school was very worthwhile. The school is now going to be a part of a larger body. The greatest achievement for the school in its 5 year history, is that it has put 800 under



privileged youngsters into employment. This has never been achieved before and recently got the highest accolade from the School Inspectors.

**SHE: Has your upbringing and your religion played a part in your success?**

CRT: Very much so. When you say religion and upbringing, someone told me one day, "I know you are not a millionaire but why do so much philanthropy" I said "I guess it is inherent in our Zoroastrian culture". Honesty, which is also the heart of our religion, also plays a big part and the values you put into everything.

**SHE: What sacrifice have you made to achieve this level of success. Has it impinged on your family?**

CRT: It was a big sacrifice to leave my aged parents and move abroad. Something I have always regretted.

**SHE: What have you learnt from running a business and from your undeniable success as a foremost Indian Chef in Britain?**

CRT: Success comes at a price, so no one can tell you running a business is easy. You learn how tough it is when you get into it. Running a business gives you immense pleasure. I always had a nagging feeling that people are watching me and I am terrified of professional failure. Business failure is such that you can overcome it and move on but professional failure is something else.

**SHE: What will you be doing in five years time?**

CRT: I like the excitement that running a business generates. There is still a great amount out there to achieve. I want to do the two things that I love most. Which is cooking and being thoroughly involved in a wider spanning 'Caf  Spice' network. I want to write another cookery book, do a whole television series. Teach more people and raise the profile of Indian Cuisine above all else!



*Shernaz Engineer is Managing Director of the Verity Group. Born in Karachi, Pakistan, came to the UK in 1966 and began her career in the recruitment industry at 19. Rising as a director, in 1993 she established her own legal recruitment consultancy. While networking with fellow professionals, she identified a means of diversification in the education sector. Verity Education began to supply teachers to schools in and around London in 1995, growing larger in 2004 when another agency was absorbed.*

*Her latest venture is a legal transcription service, based in India, to serve her UK clients. Her entrepreneurial skills were recognised when she was a finalist for the 'Asian Women of Achievements Award' and was awarded the 'London Day Business Award' by Ken Livingstone for making a difference to life in London.*

*Shernaz is active in the Zoroastrian community in the UK, and is Chair of the Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce-UK Chapter. She is a trustee of 'Learning for Life', a charity, promoting primary education for girls in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, and is board member for a number of organisations.*

**What's Cooking Down Under :** At Half Moon Bay Restaurant and Function Centre, new owners Faranak and Sohrab Irani have brought their own special touch to this lovely venue overlooking the water. Retaining a predominantly modern Kiwi menu with just a hint of Indian cuisine, the restaurant rests in good hands — Faranak is a well known guest chef on Triangle Television and some people may be familiar with her special knowledge of Parsi cooking which has its roots in Persia. The restaurant is open for dinner Tuesday to Sunday nights.

[http://www.times.co.nz/cms/lifestyle/out\\_and\\_about/2006/11/art100013892.php](http://www.times.co.nz/cms/lifestyle/out_and_about/2006/11/art100013892.php)

# The bas relief of Cyrus

by sam kerr

There were apparently two winged figures 'guarding' the Main Gate leading to the newly built city of Parsagard (Greek: Pasargadae) recorded among the ruins by early travellers. Among them, in 1818, in his travels to the East, was Sir Robert Ker Porter traveller/explorer, writer and painter. He did a water colour painting of the remaining bas-relief of Cyrus adorning the left side of the columnised Gate House at the entrance of Parsagard as seen in the photo. He reported that on the opposite side of the Gate House entrance the right identical bas relief (facing the left) had been decapitated and destroyed into several pieces. In the distance are the ruins of Cyrus's Audience Hall (as seen from behind the ruins of the Audience Hall) the lone left 'Faravashi' and ruins of the Gate House.

As recorded and painted by Sir Robert the inscriptions were in three scripts - Old Persian (Avestan, as spoken in the conquered territories in the west), Babylonian and Aramaic etched above the bas-relief. The statement was plain and simple - 'Adam Kourash Khshayathiya Hakhamanishya' [I am Cyrus, King of Hakhamani descent]. It was (as also on his simple tomb) a statement of serene dignity commensurate with the monumental humility in which the Great King lived in real life. This section of the inscriptions was also vandalised and knocked off later. They were fondly referred to as the 'Fravashis of the Great King' by the local Zoroastrians.

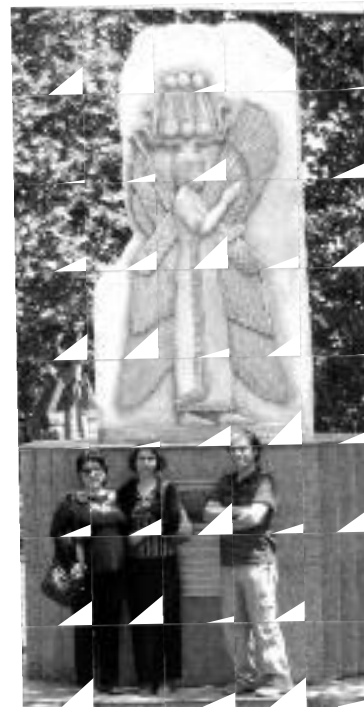
It would seem quite unlikely that Cyrus would have himself commissioned the rock carvings of a four-winged bearded person, looking like some Assyrian divinity. The two horns of the crown are mentioned in the Bible in the dream of Daniel; the headgear represents the Egyptian Crowns of Osiris and the encircling long, fringed robe is Elamite. It is also unusual that his bare feet were allowed to touch the earth.

This, the oldest intact Achaemenian bas relief detected, in one way certainly reflects

Water colour of bas relief of Cyrus

dedication to the Great King's philosophy of multiculturalism. It is quite possible that his son, Khambujia or his advisers conjured up the images following Khambujia's return, after his conquest of Egypt.

An exact replica of the 'Fravashi' was unveiled in the Olympic Park in Sydney in October 1994. It is the creation of Lewis Batros, a Sydney Artist. Apparently, it was due to a combined effort of the Australian Iranian community with donations from all over the world and contributions from the NSW Local Government. Along with the inscriptions on the 'Cylinder' of Cyrus it symbolises the first documentation of multiculturalism - a harmonious coexistence and peaceful cohabitation of peoples from different background and culture in one land.



Bas relief in Sydney

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



## *WZO's calendar for 2007*

### **Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2007**

7:00 for 7:45 dinner

### **Jamshedi Navroze Dinner / Dance / Magic Show**

New Venue, New Menu, New Entertainment  
Shalimar Hotel, 215-223 Staines Rd, Hounslow, TW3 3JJ.

### **Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2007**

Starts at 6:00 pm

### **The Tenth Dasturji Dr Kutar Memorial Lecture**

Prof Werner Sundermann, (Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin) lectures on "Zoroastrian tales in non-Zoroastrian transmission and transformation" in the Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS Main Bldg, Russell Square, London.

Registration at 10:00 am

### **Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2007**

### **Seminar on Zoroastrian History, Religion and Culture**

We will have three eminent speakers on interesting Zoroastrian related topics. So far, we have confirmation from Dr Elizabeth Tucker speaking about our Avesta. Further details will follow in due course.

### **Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> August 2007**

7:00 for 7:45 dinner

### **Shahenshahi Navroze Dinner / Dance**

(Details to be advised at a later date)

### **Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2007**

From 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm

### **Annual General Meeting**

(Details will be sent with the Annual Report)

### **Friday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2007**

Prayers will start at 6:00 pm

### **Mehraban Farhangi's Death Anniversary**

(This year, it will be held at the ATC Hall at 192 Merton Road, South Wimbledon, London SW19 1EG.).

**Open to all**

### **Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2007**

### **Gala Dinner Dance in aid of the WZO Gujarat Fund**

(Great Evening Entertainment at the Copthorne Effingham Park)





# 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

The Joint Honorary Secretaries  
The World Zoroastrian Organisation

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

Dear Sirs,

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

I am born of Zoroastrian parents / Non-Zoroastrian spouse of a Zoroastrian (delete as appropriate), I agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles and Rules and Regulations so long as I remain a member of The World Zoroastrian Organisation.

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

Yours truly,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Block Capitals please** FULL NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PROFESSION/OCCUPATION \_\_\_\_\_

IF STUDENT DATE OF BIRTH \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS IN COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

TEL RES \_\_\_\_\_ OFF \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

**Proposed by** \_\_\_\_\_ **Seconded by** \_\_\_\_\_

**Note: The Proposer and 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

“However, it has been fated for this world,

Wise One, that the truth is to be saved for its (good) preference,  
that deceit is to be destroyed for its (false) profession ...”

yasna 49.3

*Insler translation*

