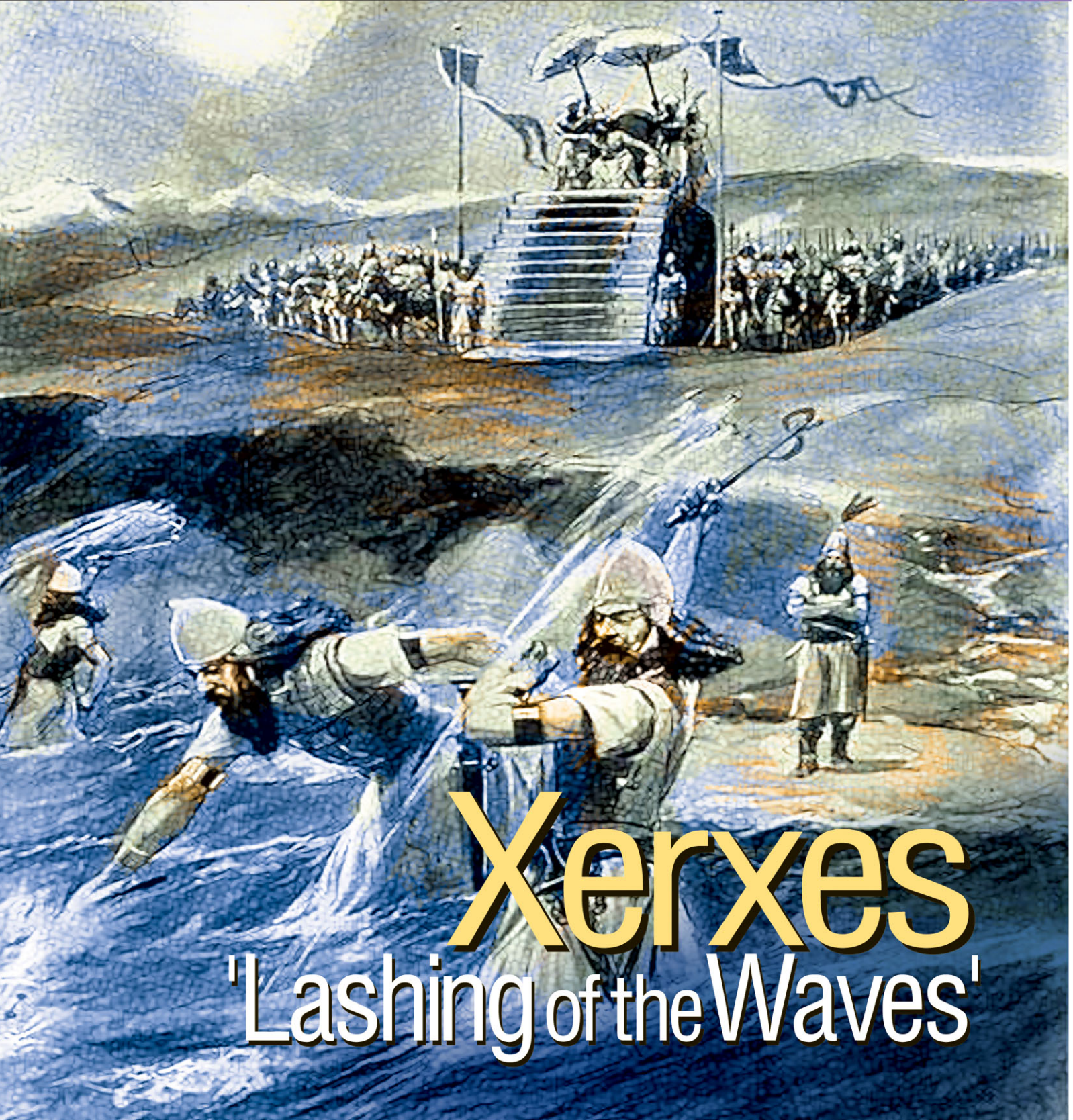


publication of the world zoroastrian organisation

HAMAZOR

2
issue 2007



Xerxes
'Lashing of the Waves'



"If you wish to be happy when living and blessed when dead, have respect for the law established by Ahura Mazda and worship him and truth reverently. The man who has respect for the law established by Ahura Mazda and worships him and the truth reverently, such a man becomes happy while living and blessed when he is dead."

Statement in an inscription of King Xerxes, p31

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Xerxes' famous Greek scene in "Punishing the Sea". Picture from a 1909 print. Artist died more than 100 years ago; public domain images in Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

PHOTOGRAPHS

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

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From the Editor



"TRUTH" is a value that seems to have been overshadowed by other inferior aspects such as greed, envy, intolerance, arrogance and so on. What Zoroastrian leaders were known for, even as far back as in the days of King Darius, today sadly, does not hold priority in the way we behave or think. Even today, the south retaining wall in Persepolis bears Darius' famous

prayer for his people, "Protect this country from foe, famine and falsehood."

Each individual is charged by Zarathushtra to behave according to the dictates of truth, honour and reason, but leaders particularly must abide by a higher standard as they are responsible to a larger body. If persons who hold positions in our associations/anjumans, who are scholars and priests, who are business and community leaders, cannot be relied to be truthful to its body how is it possible for individuals to have any respect for them and uphold them as role models? The point of having position, money, fame, is to use these for the greater good. We seem to be proficient in using words at will to gloss over the truth or use them to demean persons with other viewpoints, believing that the average person will not question them - factual to some extent - but there are many who do think for themselves and are disillusioned by our leaders. Unfortunately, there are not many among the community who are willing to speak out and voice their concerns due to the fear of retaliation or loss of goodwill.

Many of us preach "right and wrong" of our religion, but few are willing to live by the principles. Where have the qualities of truth, honour, integrity and moral courage disappeared? What is the solution to this situation? Conscience? Accountability? Self respect? What? Both the leaders and the community members need to step up and take responsibility. Each one should think with their own best mind to find the right answers.

I leave you with these thoughts.

To the Editor

... I feel the obvious and ethical solution to the Dokhma burial is to have a green burial [see p14, Hamazor Issue 3/06].

Those of us who live outside Mumbai and India have this opportunity to voice our side of the problem. It is true that in ancient times ... it was the custom to dispose of the dead ... to be devoured by birds of prey. No government in the modern world would give us permission to do so or to build dokhma. ... The green burial is to me the ideal solution.

In the UK we should have a place where this can be done. I am willing to put down £1000 in a trust fund for this to be accomplished. At the age of 80 one has to think of how you are going to be disposed of. I am born Zoroastrian and will die a Zoroastrian and urge all Zoroastrians - Parsi, Irani, to join me in forming such a trust fund. There are over 5000 Zoroastrians in UK, let them all come forward and pledge £1000 or more to start such a programme. Even Mr Dadrawala of Mumbai supports this kind of burial as do my children endorse this way of disposing of the body.

Dr Keki Sidhwa, Newark, England.

This is with reference to the article in the Times of India recently stating that the Tehmulji Nursing Home or the Parsi Lying-in Hospital is up for sale. The reason given is that there are just not enough people utilizing it and it is defunct. While this is not surprising, what is very surprising is that the persons concerned are thinking of selling it off instead of putting it to good use for the Zoroastrian community.

Why can't this Nursing Home be converted to an Old People's Home? If a maternity hospital is not the need of the hour for our community, surely an old people's home is? There would be any number of elderly community members who would welcome the chance to live with dignity in a decent home where their needs would be taken care of. There could be separate wings for different economic sections of our community also - a section where married couples could be allowed to stay together instead of the usual segregation into a ladies wing and a gents wing. Also, if the lower floor is rented out to retail outlets, the income from this would be enough to sustain and run the entire Home. Maybe the house of Tatas would show interest in taking up the space for one of their many retail ventures.

We, therefore, appeal to the Bombay Parsi Panchayat to pay heed to this matter and take urgent action to prevent the sale from taking place before it's too late. This kind of property, once gone, can never be brought back. The money obtained from this sale would last only so long and would be over before you know it. It's reasonable to say that the property is priceless in terms of the high value of its property rates as well as the service it can provide to our aging community.

Vizak S Irani, Australia - Email : vizak@theholidaystopy.com.au



The World Zoroastrian Organisation

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When I was asked to write a few words about the Jam-e-Jamshed, once a daily newspaper that has been in continues print for 175 years, curiosity got the better me. Surely this must be one of the oldest newspapers around I thought. My search quickly dampened my spirits on finding that the world's oldest newspaper was Sweden's *Post-och Inrikes Tidningar* founded in 1645 by Sweden's Queen Kristina, to keep her subjects informed of the affairs of state. Pamphlets were carried by courier and posted on note boards in cities and towns throughout the kingdom. On 1st Jan 2007 it became a web only publication, a fate that now awaits the world's most venerable journals.

Well, at least Jame has beaten it into cyber space with its first on line version produced in February 1989. As I recall, in days gone by the Jame was a must read in every Parsi household and endless hours were devoted to it by all the family members.

Today, produced as a weekly, under the sub-section of 'Parsee Matters' or as a web journal it continues to provoke and stir the conscience of the community with assertive and bold editorials on contentious issues, yet never shrinks from providing a balanced view in its columns.

Bravely it has pinpointed consistently those who are engaged in destroying the very fabric of our social, economic and religious order by organised deceit.

In the Jame Jamshed there is something of interest for every reader under its general articles, sports, arts and films categories, together with regular profiles of successful Zoroastrians and up and coming youngsters who are showing great promise in their chosen fields.

The proprietors and the editorial staff are to be commended for their candid and sincere approach in producing this weekly and we should convey a happy and successful 175th birthday to the Jame Jamshed and long may it continue to serve the community.

Sammy H Bhiwandiwalla
Chairman

Jam-e-Jamshed's 175th Anniversary

by noshi r da drawal a

Jam-e-Jamshed is celebrating its 175th anniversary. It is the second oldest surviving newspaper in the country - the oldest being the *Bombay Samachar*. Both newspapers were started and fortunately still owned and managed by Parsis. Something to smile and write home about in these challenging times.

The history of the Parsi press in India is quite fascinating. It traces its roots to the introduction of western educational institutions into Bombay. Before the first Marathi newspaper (*Dig-Dursan*) appeared in 1837 and the first Hindu-Gujarati newspaper (*Vartaman*) in Ahmedabad in 1849, there were already four (in 1837) respectively six (in 1849) Parsi-Gujarati newspapers in circulation.

Mobed Fardoonji Murzban first published *Bombay Samachar* in 1822. It was to a large extent commercially oriented but also carried quite a bit of *Kadmi* propaganda. *Mumbai Vartaman* (1830-43) even in those days was seen as a 'scandal sheet' which exposed Parsi *sethias* of that era. The *Jam-e-Jamshed* (1832), believe it or not, is a product of the Parsi Punchayet with Pestonji Maneckji Motivala as publisher. It was started mainly to counter *Samachar's* *Kadmi* propaganda with the *Shahenshai* response and cut the 'anti establishment' *Vartaman* down to size.

In 1851, Dadabhai Navroji and other Parsi reformers started the '*Rast Goftar*' to oppose orthodox views expressed in the *Jame*. Orthodox Parsis of that era, for whom *Jame* was still too moderate in its traditionalism, started in 1874, an organ for themselves called '*Satya Mitra*', published by Muncherjee Mansukh. All the newspapers and publications that either tilted to the extreme left or the right folded within a few years. The two newspapers

which really stood the test of time were *Bombay Samachar* and *Jam-e-Jamshed* and this was thanks mainly to the middle path of balance and moderation adopted by both.

My association with *Jame* began when I was barely 10 - 11 years old. I still remember my name appearing in print for the first time and my reading it over and over again and showing it off to friends at school. My name was one among four or five others who had won the Sunday weekly puzzle and colour contest. The prize was a gift voucher of five rupees - quite a windfall considering that my weekly pocket allowance in those days was around two rupees and fifty paisa. I won several such prizes and I used to eagerly await the Sunday edition not just for these contests but also for mother to read out the *Jamas ni Jiloo* and other interesting columns. I was also encouraged to read aloud at least half a page of Gujarati text from the newspaper. And today, if I can read Gujarati, it is thanks mainly to *Jame* and my parent's encouragement in this direction. At my Jesuit school we were admonished if we were caught breaking into any vernacular language, except during the Hindi and Marathi class. Those were also the days when television had not yet arrived and family entertainment and bonding meant reading out lively articles and huddling around the radio to catch Adi Murzban's "*Buddhi Dhansak Mandal*".

My relationship with *Jame* became more meaningful when as a teenager I actually started shooting off letters to the editor, late Adi Murzban. These letters painstakingly written in ink with the choicest stationary dealt with subjects ranging from the proper use of the English language to the mysteries of the Bermuda Triangle. Adi was a man of wide and varied interest and my

writings apparently seemed to interest him. Then one day I decided to meet him. I wrote a formal letter seeking his appointment. I promptly received a phone call from him inviting me over tea and *bhakhra*s. I was a bit nervous about meeting the man who was a living legend not just in the field of journalism but also theatre and the radio.

His cabin was a sprawling room in Ballard House, at Ballard Estate, with heaps of voluminous books, magazines, crosswords, ball-pens and a hundred different odds and ends scattered all over the place. The room, in one word was a huge mess. But, as I came to learn later, it was an organized mess and there was a method in this madness. Attired in simple baggy trousers and a white shirt, what I admired most about Adi was his ready wit and humour. We developed a liking for each other and this was the beginning of a long and rewarding friendship, which only his death in 1987 rudely interrupted.

I had no formal training in journalism. But, I always loved writing and *Jame* gave me a ready platform. I began writing on Parsi institutions and later on various social, religious and political issues. Those were the days when *Jame* had its own noisy type-setting printing machines and sometimes a paragraph or two had to be deleted or re-written simply because the printer would run out of metal alphabets which had to be set in those clumsy and heavy printing blocks. The smell of fresh printing ink on virgin newsprint still lingers in my memory. In those days, *Jame* was a broadsheet daily newspaper. Due to financial and other constraints, it was reduced to a weekly in the year 1989.

At *Jame*, I have fond memories of discussing the finer nuances of Parsi history and literature with Late Nanabhoy Jeejeebhoy and those warm and motherly hugs from Jer aunty. Adi was always full of fun and mischief and constantly finding out new ways to what he used to call, "twist the tail of our *Akabars*". And like Napoleon, the *Akabars* knew very well that a hostile

newspaper could be more dangerous than a thousand bayonets.

As a vernacular daily, *Jam-e-Jamshed* was avidly read not just by Parsis but also Gujarati speaking Bohris and Hindus. I remember Adi telling me how he was once summoned by Sri Morarji Desai and admonished by the latter for extolling the virtues of 'ballroom dancing' in an editorial. Not one to buckle under political pressure, Adi went back and wrote an even stronger editorial describing how Morarjibhai tyrannized all visitors by not keeping a single visitor's chair in his room.

Adi Murzban edited *Jame* for nearly a century. However, his association with theatre was even longer. And they all passed under him; Alyque and Pearl Padamsee, Gerson and Sylvestor da Cunha, Alkazi, Farokh Mehta: and on the Gujarati stage, Jimmy Pocha a genius of the impromptu, Dinshaw Daji and Piloo Wadia. In his lifetime he had produced and directed over 50 full-length 3-act plays in English and written and directed over 50 in Gujarati. This apart, he had a hand in over a hundred, one-act plays for schools, colleges and scores of non-stop variety revues in Gujarati and English. His involvement with All India Radio also spanned over half a century. It was truly an honour and privilege working with him.

After Adi's demise, Rusi Dhondy who at that time was already a Director of *Jam-e-Jamshed*, took over the reins. The two of us got along very well. I always held Adi in awe, but Rusi was a friend. Adi was bold but always a bit guarded in his style and approach. Rusi on the other hand was a 'dare devil'. It sometimes got him into trouble. But he always had a way of coming out of it. Jehan Daruwala of *Bombay Samachar* often used to say, "A journalist has no permanent enemies or friends".

In this world, there are all types and shades of journalists. The clever ones have a knack of making even the most innocent statement appear scandalous. I am reminded of the anecdote of a famous Parsi

businessman who went abroad for the first time in his life. He was warned not to give any press interviews. A journalist however managed to corner him just outside the airport. "Welcome to England Sir! Do you have plans to visit any of our famous pubs here?" The businessman pretended to act surprised and innocent and asked, "Are there any pubs in England? I didn't know you had them here." So saying he got into a taxi and complemented himself for handling the journalist with such tact and diplomacy. The next morning's headlines read, "First Question Parsi Businessman Asks On Arrival At Heathrow - 'Are there any pubs in England?'".

I learnt early in life that the pen (now the key board) is a double-edged sword. It can make or break an individual or institution. Nothing gives me greater joy than writing stories of success, achievement and all that is positive in and about our community. And yet there are times when I feel compelled to take the wind out of a few windbags.

Over the years, I have fought for and defended a number of causes and issues. I have received bouquets and brickbats in equal proportion. Sometimes my friends tell me, "is it worth it?" And I always tell them, "A ship is safe in the harbour. But that's not what it has been built for. The joy is in riding the waves of the high seas and finding one's destination despite the storms that threaten to sink your ship."

On *Jame's* 175th birthday I wish to express my thanks to all those who have made my life glow with their warmth, love and affection. But more than anyone else, I want to thank all those who have helped me emerge stronger and wiser with their criticism and brickbats. ■■■■



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.

WZO : US Region

A progress report shared by Keki R Bhote

Background

The genesis of the World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO), US region was the vision of Mr Shahpur F Captain, former Chairman of WZO's parent world-wide body, headquartered in London, UK, to establish several WZO regions around the world to support the worthy and imaginative activities of the parent body.

I undertook the formation of the first such region in the United States ten years ago. My first task was to apply for US tax exemption status for WZO US region as a non-profit, charitable entity with affiliations to WZO headquarters. After lengthy legal negotiations, we were granted this exemption which has continued all these years. However, we must file a yearly report to the Secretary of State to maintain our tax-exempt status.

Objectives of the WZO US Region

1. To fully support the philanthropic work of the WZO headquarters in the UK in its political, economic, social, educational and charitable work to ameliorate the lives of Zoroastrians world-wide.
2. To help raise funds in the US for relief from world-wide natural disasters, such as earthquakes, tsunamis and floods to especially aid our Zoroastrian brethren rendered destitute.
3. To sponsor micro-loans to needy Zoroastrians in the rural and urban areas of India as part of the pioneering work of the World Zoroastrian Trust Funds of India, under the dynamic leadership of Mr Dinshaw Tamboly, and to render management and technical help to them in order to get them on their feet and become contributing members of society.



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

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

Tax Exemption status
'World Zoroastrian Organisation - US Region'.
Add: 493 Woodlawn Avenue, Glencoe, Illinois. IL 60022.
Tax ID no:
36/4236575

4. To transfer funds from US donors (both Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian) to support worthy causes such as educational institutions, hospitals, nursing homes, retirement communities and *agiaries* as a token of US support.

5. To present scholarly papers at US national and international conferences, symposia and congresses, on a wide variety of Zoroastrian topics.

6. To attempt to create a world wide body of Zoroastrians from all over the globe to strengthen the power and influence of Zoroastrianism.

7. To work closely with other US and North American Zoroastrian organizations such as Fezana, the Zoroastrian Assembly, the North American Mobed Council and the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce.

8. To publicise and disseminate knowledge of Zoroastrianism – woefully lacking in the Western world – through lectures, seminars and workshops in universities, churches, synagogues and other non-governmental organizations.

9. To support scholarly research on Zoroastrian theology and archaeology in countries like Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Russia, China and India.

10. To counter the wrong and shallow treatment of Zoroastrianism in references such as the Encyclopedia Britannica, the World Encyclopedia Britannica and to work with search engines such as Google to correct blogger misinformation.

Our Funds

Our funds are derived from WZO yearly and life memberships in the US but come largely from our generous US donors. All of these are US tax exempt.

Board of Directors

Keki R Bhote, President
Adi J Davar, Vice President
Prof Kaikhosrov Irani, Director
Dr Farang Mehr, Director

Accomplishments of WZO US Region to-date

a. With the powerful help of Adi Davar, former Executive of the World Bank, the WZO constitution was revamped to reflect its more universal charter.

b. WZO US region contributed over \$40,000 toward the headquarters' disaster relief in the Gujarat earthquake, the Bam

earthquake in Iran, the tsunami in S E Asia, the Pakistan earthquake and the floods in Surat to help disaster victims – Zoroastrians in particular.

c. Since its inception, WZO region has donated over \$250,000 to recognised institutions and charities. In the last three years alone, we have supported the Punchgani Hospital and Nursing College, the Navsari Nursing and Retirement Home, the Petit School for orphans, the Retired Mobed Fund, and the Lahore and Mhow Agiaris.

d. WZO US Region contributes half the yearly funds for the Fali S Chothia Education Fund which supports five to ten Zoroastrian students each year for higher studies in the US.

e. WZO US Region has presented scholarly papers in various Zoroastrian conferences in the US, Europe and Tajikistan such as the bi-annual Fezana Conferences, the two World Congresses in Houston and London, the Avesta and Yasht Conferences, etc. Among our distinguished WZO members making such presentations are Dr Kaikhosrov Irani, Dr Farang Mehr, Adi Davar, Dina McIntyre, Dr Kersey Antia and Keki Bhote.

f. The above mentioned have contributed numerous highly thought-provoking articles on Zoroastrian theology to magazines such as the Fezana Journal, Parsiana, Hamazor, Humata and the Journal of Scholarly Research.

g. WZO US Region has sponsored 10 micro-loans through the good offices of WZO Trust Funds, India, for the uplift of poor Zoroastrians for their habilitation into society. To-date, all the loan recipients have never defaulted!

h. We have been singularly unsuccessful, despite the efforts of leading figures like Rumi Sethna and Rohinton Rivetna, in launching the Zoroastrian World Body. It was torpedoed by the harmful and negative machinations of the WAPIZ organization. To-date the World Body is a dead issue.

i. WZO US Region has made over 150 presentations to universities, churches, societies and non-governmental agencies to acquaint them with the world's oldest, simplest, most rational religion and its applicability to our 21st century.



FEZANA's 20th anniversary

Sammy Bhiwandiwalla, Chairman WZO, writes:

On the 20th Anniversary Celebrations of FEZANA we offer our sincere congratulations and applaud them for their achievements over these years. Furthermore, we wish the Board of FEZANA success in all their future ventures on behalf of the North American Zoroastrian community.

As a Board Member of WZO for some 15 odd years, I had to reflect on the history of both WZO and FEZANA, which seemed to run almost in tandem with WZO celebrating its first 25 years in 2005. Interestingly, some 40 years since the creation of a North American Federation germinated in the minds of the founding members, one of whom, Keki Bhote serves on our own Board, FEZANA has truly established itself and come of age.

The FEZANA model of creating a Federation of Associations and Anjumans, within North America without seeking to interfere in the practices and beliefs of individuals and associations, complements and strengthens our own position on religious and communal issues. Unlike many other parts of the world where the Zoroastrian population is in decline due to political or social reasons compounded by religious intolerance and misconceptions, there is a bright future in the United States which will give more power to the elbow of FEZANA. You have a creative, vibrant and thriving Zoroastrian population, embracing every walk of life and there are notable successes in the fields of art and music, trade and industry, science and engineering. This golden age of opportunity must be grasped and FEZANA must continue to play a pivotal role in supporting and guiding our young men & women, retaining the core values of our faith, yet being good citizens in a world far removed from the ones from which many of us came.

FEZANA should champion the case for solidarity and unity, to prevent the Parsi/Irani divide of language and culture, which can jeopardise the achievement of a solid foundation for speaking with one voice on crucial international matters. WZO has always recognised this as a major step forward without sacrificing the religious, historical and cultural diversity that exists within the community.

The desire to create another World Body of Associations and Anjumans encompassing the geographic regions of the world that include FEZANA and a World Body of Individuals (WZO) was supported after much soul searching by all sides. In spite of all the goodwill and compromises and the endless hours devoted by many, those who thought it was going to be an easy walkover have succumbed to the pitfalls and dissenting tactics that we ourselves had to endure since the formation of WZO and our own struggle to secure it's long term future. Let us hope that future initiatives may bear fruit.

Past and present members of the International Board of WZO, many of whom are residents of North America and internationally recognised as enlightened leaders in the Zoroastrian world, still play a crucial part in the ongoing evolution and establishment of FEZANA. This speaks volumes for both organisations. Let us therefore, in an act of true solidarity show those who seek to create divisions, that FEZANA and WZO can work together for the common good and perhaps the rest of the world will join us.



FEZANA was registered in the State of Illinois on June 2, 1987 as a non-profit, religious and charitable organization. The first Annual General Meeting was held in Toronto on April 1, 1988, in conjunction with the sixth North American Zoroastrian Congress. The first elected Officers were: Mr Rohinton Rivetna (Chicago), President; Mr Homi B Minocher Homji (Toronto), Vice-President; Mr Framroze Patel (New York), Treasurer; Mrs Dolly Dastoor (Montreal), Secretary; and Mrs Sabar Balsara (Toronto), Assistant Secretary. FEZANA received tax-exempt status in the United States on June 19, 1989, with tax ID No 36-3521343.



Rohinton Rivetna
1987 - 1994



Dolly Dastoor
1994 - 1998



Framroze Patel
1998 - 2002



Firdosh Mehta
2002 - 2006



Rustom Kevala
2006 -

WZO & ZANZ - New Zealand

Report sent by Rashna Dorab Tata, President, The Zarathustrian Association of New Zealand

WZO in collaboration with the Zarathustrian Association of New Zealand (ZANZ), organized a two day Seminar & Lecture series on the 5th & 6th of May in Auckland, New Zealand. Dina McIntyre and Farrokh Vajifdar, both knowledgeable Zoroastrian scholars and reputable speakers, were invited to conduct the lectures on the Zoroastrian Religion, History and Culture.

A diverse range of topics were covered over eight sessions encompassing various aspects of the religion. Topics of general interest such as, "The Significance and meaning of the Yatha

Ahu Vairyo Prayer", "Harmony in Paradox", "The Application of the Gathas in Today's World" and "Zarathushtra's Puzzles" were well balanced with issues of controversy such as "Conversion & Acceptance", "Death & Disposal of the Dead" and "The Future of Zoroastrianism".

Both Dina and Farrokh belong to a rapidly growing group of rational thinkers and educated scholars who are fluent in the scriptures, written texts, ancient languages and their dialects. Their presentations rely on hard evidences, references and quotes from ancient texts, the Gathas, Yasnas, Yashts , Niyaeshes, Rivayats; and various texts spanning a time frame of a 1000 years and also include references from later day research, as opposed to relying on rabid prejudices and misconceived notions based on hearsay which is often mistaken for "tradition".

Dina a retired attorney from Pittsburg, has been a student of the teachings of Zarathustra since the early 1980's and was

the Editor of a 12-lesson course on the Gathas called "An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra". Her writings have appeared in various Zoroastrian Journals and websites. She is a much sought after speaker and has lectured at various seminars and conferences all over the world.

Farrokh Vajifdar converted from Parsiism to Zoroastrianism at the age of 19 and has not ceased studying Indo-Iranian civilizations since. He specializes in the history, languages, literatures and religions of Ancient Iran. He categorizes himself as an independent researcher and has collaborated with noted non-Zoroastrian and aspiring Parsi authors on translations, articles and books. Farrokh is a Fellow (and former Vice-President) and (Fellow-in-Council) of the Royal Asiatic Society and a review contributor to its journal.

The immense wealth of knowledge that these two speakers collectively brought with them, promised the people of Auckland an exhilarating and enriching two days.

What was absolutely remarkable was that the intent and purpose of both the speakers was to put forth information that was derived through long years of diligent and scholarly analyses and it was for the listener to absorb it, weigh it and balance it against existing preconceived fallacies and finally arrive at their own conclusion. They most certainly were not fanatical preachers raving from the pulpits!

Dina in her soft and gentle manner cited chapter and verse, to present and prove that "Zarathushtra's Zoroastrianism" was meant for all mankind.



L to R: Dina McIntyre, Farrokh Vajifdar, Darius Mistry (WZO Rep, NZ), Rashna Tata

Her thorough and detailed study of the Gathas brought to life the *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* prayer. The depth of meaning and significance behind every word of the prayer was unfolded with such simplicity that it left the audience feeling humbled, by the intensity of this basic prayer known to every Zoroastrian of every age. "The *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*, sets you on the path of Truth and Good Thinking. This prayer is a mantra, a nugget of wisdom the purpose of which is to remind us of certain truths as we recite it". "Good thinking is the key to accessing the factual truths of our universe. It is the key to understanding the truths of the mind



ZANZ managing committee with Dina & Farrokh

and spirit, it is the key to accessing the divine and good thinking, which according to Zarathushtra requires that we think for ourselves ... not blindly follow or accept what others tell us to. After all even Zarathushtra when asking for Mazda's guidance, requests that it be given through good thinking".

Zarathushtra says "... instruct through good thinking (the course) of my direction, in order to be the charioteer of my will and my tongue". Y50.6 [Inslar translation].

"When we create light, the darkness ceases to exist. We create light by bringing the divine to life with our choices. Our choices of who and what we worship our choices in thought, word and action stemming form an understanding of Asha".

"Zoroastrianism today ... but what of its future?" was Farrokh's earnest plea to the people of New Zealand. The sincerity and passion with which he spoke was missed by none. "If you do not think of a future you most assuredly will not have one. To forecast the future of our wonderful religion we need to take into account its current circumstances. Each land of our new Zoroastrian Diaspora,

forms for us it's own special circumstances and challenges. The myth of ritual being everything is slowly but surely receding.

"Divisions between the so called reformists and orthodox sections of our diminutive community have led to disillusionment and even desertion. The common perception about us amongst our youth, is one of incessant and pointless quarrel".

How true his words were ... Sadly enough a majority of the community, the world over, see themselves as belonging to two categories " Traditional" or "Modern". There is a thick grey line that separates the two and there is no "in-between". Have we

lost the will to erase this line? Do we really need to classify ourselves as one or the other?

Unfortunately this same scenario also exists in New Zealand today ... and in spite of the best efforts of many to erase this division. Amongst such a small group of people, most of whom are still first generation migrants, we already have irreconcilable differences. Two Zoroastrian associations, who cannot even come together on the basic definition of a "Zarathushti".

Dina very rightly stated, "unless we start teaching Zarathushtra's original teachings we will loose our kids, as we are living in a society today where our kids will question everything". Zarathushtra's teachings are so relevant to life, we won't have any problems keeping our kids. In the Gathas lies the "key to our survival".

"The promise of Frashokereti is only as near as you can make it happen. There is strength in Good and there is strength in Harmony and together we can fulfill our aspirations and destinies", said Farrokh.

The recent bitter controversies surrounding "Death and Disposal of the dead" have torn

the very fabric of our community in India, going so far as to raise a stink in the cosmopolitan media. Yet don't we deal with the disposal of the dead in other parts of the world, where "dokhmenashini" does not prevail, in a sensible and pragmatic manner making use of alternate systems. Where "dokhmenashini" is simply not an option, have we not started new traditions based on the times and circumstances of our new homeland. Do these "Zarathushti souls", not find the peace they deserve simply because they did not die in India?

Farrokh laid bare the fears and ignorance that generations of gullible people have been susceptible to. He did this by presenting factual history, as opposed to so much of the fiction that unfortunately

prevails. Some of our so-called time honoured tradition, were in fact neither of great antiquity nor had they formed part of our "religious traditions". They were simply social phenomena which grew and faded with the passage of time. Change does not mean a break in continuity!

The most fruitful part of this entire

lecture tour, was the special Youth Session

that was organized for the youth of Auckland at my house. Again no efforts had been spared by the orthodox section, to ensure that the youth stayed away. However not only did the youth turn up in large numbers, they stayed talking with Farrokh and Dina till late at night, totally immersed in a most thought provoking and captivating debate, on various topics of interest to them. The energy and interaction that night was simply amazing.

Both Farrokh and Dina had nothing but praise for the high level of awareness and interest and thirst for knowledge, exhibited by our youth in New Zealand. They went so far as to mention, "The future of Zoroastrianism is in safe hands in New Zealand".

My question to all those judgmental individuals, all over the world has always been, why do you have so little faith in our youth, to do the right thing in taking our religion forward? Our youth have an inquisitive, intelligent and enquiring mind. It is in the interest of the community to keep this curiosity in the religion an open, accountable and answerable dialogue. Let them ask the questions and let there be a healthy debate on all issues that concern them.

For the ZANZ managing committee, these lectures were not meant to be an attempt to preach, convert or influence any one, but to provide a forum for our members to have a healthy debate on all matters that concern us as a community. We do not make any assumptions about the right of people to choose and adopt what they think is appropriate for them.

■■■■ Let their choices be made, after hearing from both the traditional and modern lobby.

■■■■ Let us assimilate and understand the information we get.

■■■■ Let each one of us be the judge of what is right and wrong.

■■■■ Let us be in touch with reality and yet never forget the essential core values of our religion.



Dina & Farrokh with the youth of NZ at the special youth session held at Rashna's residence. Below: l to r - Farrokh, Dina, Rashna



|||| Allow each individual to make the right choices, as only then will they have strong convictions in their faith and beliefs.

|||| We are all members of an intelligent community that thrives on knowledge.

|||| We all stand to gain by learning and sharing our knowledge with each other.

|||| Let us make informed decisions and let our choices be based on facts and knowledge and not ones based on hearsay and fear of man-made consequences.

This lecture series and Dina and Farrokh personally, gave this and so much more to the people of Auckland. The feedback from the people who attended the lectures, was brilliantly positive and it made all our efforts worth while. The Q & A sessions after each lecture were intensely thought provoking and enriching. The fire within each one of us who were there has been ignited!

We sincerely appreciate the initiative taken by WZO, and their world wide efforts in creating awareness of our faith, enhancing the understanding between all Zoroastrians and reigniting our pride in our Zoroastrian identity and values.

May the Fire of Ahura Mazda's Truth prevail everywhere in the blessed New Homelands of our Zoroastrian Diaspora!



Rashna Tata with her family immigrated to New Zealand from India in 2001, to give better educational opportunities to their son. She presently lives in Auckland, working with The Aucklander a community newspaper, and also teaches English. Rashna comes from a priestly family, her father having served the community at Bombay for over 65 years. She is the current president of ZANZ having held this position since the last four years.

Zoroastrian Prayer Services offered by Dasturji Framroze Sorabji Mirza

[This advertisement appeared in the Jame of 25.03.07]

Four days and subsequent prayers for the departed, including for those opting for electric cremation or any other mode of disposal, at almost half of the cost incurred for ceremonies of Dokhmenashine of Doongerwadi.

Marriages, including intermarriages and navjotes, including navjotes of children of intermarried couples irrespective of male/female gender, will be carried out at a much less than the cost normally charged.

Prayers will be held at party's residence, halls or any other sites, anywhere in and out of Bombay. Facility of Prayer Hall is available in Bombay.

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Marzban Giara informs:

Government of India has appointed Dr Mehroo D Bengalee as Member, National Minorities Commission in the vacancy caused by the passing away of Lt Gen Adi Sethna. She has assumed charge effective April 11th 2007. She was the former Vice Chancellor of Mumbai University and former trustee of Bombay Parsee Panchayet.

Correction

The 3-part series written by Adi Davar in Hamazor Issues 3 & 4 of 2006 and Issue 1/07 :

World-wide and North American responses to ZAQ's Questionnaire after the Montreal Congress were reported to Los Angeles, not Houston, Congress. References to "FEZANA member associations" were intended as a shortcut to the words "North American associations" who subsequently formed FEZANA. Ed

Lectures by Dina & Farrokh at Auckland, in May 2007

by shahrukh khambatta

- a youth perspective

hearing about lectures on religion, as one can imagine, does not quite invoke the same level of excitement as other aspects of a youngster's life. However I resisted the urge to ignore yet another opportunity to learn about my religion when I heard that two scholars from the US and UK were coming to town to tell us more about Zoroastrianism. Having seen the schedule of lectures, I picked a couple of sessions that looked interesting. At the hall where the lectures were held, I was introduced to the speakers before the lectures started and immediately realised that I might enjoy and learn something from them. Dina and Farrokh came across as very likeable, self-assured and modest people.

The first lecture I heard was about the gathas, delivered by Dina. Although the subject was very intensive and heavy, Dina articulated the key points very well and made it easy for all to understand. As the lectures were delivered it became more obvious that Dina and Farrokh have a supreme understanding of these complex subjects but in their own easy way, they managed to effectively get through to the 'simple Parsi' in us. The delivery of their content was not full of drama and fanfare that typifies some religious lectures. They simply delivered the content from their notes and entertained questions and discussion at the end. Some members of the audience did comment on the lack of animation in Dina and Farrokh's delivery and suggested that they would have had even greater impact had they not referred to their notes as much. My view on this is that this was a religious discussion, not an evening of entertainment. If one wanted a performance, one would surely go to the theatres, not expect entertainment from a session aimed at educating us and shedding more light on this wonderfully

preserved and often misunderstood religion of ours! Having said that, both Dina and Farrokh did make things entertaining with Dina illustrating the topics with stories and anecdotes, while Farrokh's dry sense of humour had us in hysterics of laughter.

Both Dina and Farrokh offered their views throughout the sessions but always qualified them with "these are my views, take them as you deem best". This was the sheer beauty of their lectures. Often religions sermons are mainly about the speaker telling the audience how things ought to be done and how if you deviated from what was preached, you would certainly have a place booked in hell (a nice spot by the beach if you really did not listen). There was none of that dictatorial tone at anytime in these lectures. In fact, both Dina and Farrokh often emphasised that our religion does not have a punitive approach to forcing people adhere to the teachings. This being a key highlighted difference between Zoroastrianism and other religions. According to the speakers, there is nothing in the scriptures of our religion that dictate that 'if you don't pray five times a day, bad things will happen to you'. The emphasis is more on learning from life, educating oneself and being able to make your own decisions between right and wrong. The teachings of our religion are meant to give you the inner strength and ability to stop at life's various crossroads, think and make the right decision. This concept did appeal to a large part of the audience as it deviated from what was handed down from generation to generation and encouraged us to become more aware of and responsible for our own decisions with the help of knowledge and spiritual enlightenment.

The speakers encouraged members of the audience to think and challenge what we have always taken for granted and

the audience who questioned age-old rituals and superstitions, wanting to know their true meaning, their cultural origins and their place in our religion. These traditions were simply passed down from generation to generation, with little understanding of their meaning. Judging from the number of questions it was evident that these traditions had lost their context or meaning and members of the audience were very keen to get a deeper understanding. People wanted to know why these rituals had to be performed and what the religious significance is, as explained in the scriptures. Dina and Farrokh talked about the origins of some of these rituals and emphasised the difference between rituals and religion. They explained the exact reasons why such rituals were born and their significance in ancient society and in our scriptures. The key point raised here was to realise that simply performing rituals without understanding their significance is of little value.

The controversial topics of conversion and inter-marriage were predictably hot topics of debate. From the discussions that ensued, it was evident that there were a variety of opinions and views on these topics. Farrokh and Dina themselves did not agree with each other in these areas and stated clearly their views and reasoning, making us, the audience think more and challenge our own opinions! A fundamental theme that did come out of these topics was the importance of tolerance and understanding. There are many arguments amongst Zoroastrians worldwide about inter-marriage and conversion, with little tolerance and respect for each other's opinions. It was a member of the youth in the audience that pointed out that it is this controversy that drives the youth of today away from the religion and community. As a Zoroastrian youth brought up partly in eastern and western societies, I am very aware that the issues and challenges that youth face today are very different from those faced by previous generations. I myself have been very put off by the acrimony created by these controversial topics as, to me, these ill feelings are a deviation from the very fundamentals of religion, especially

Zoroastrianism! It was also pointed out that a large proportion of today's Zoroastrian youth, whether in India or other countries, have partners of other faiths. The reality for these youth is that they will have to make a choice between their partner and the religion and often their families, when it comes to marriage. This forced decision is something that the youth of today would much rather not have to make and would also save a lot of heartache for many Zoroastrian families.

At the end of two days of talks, questions, debates and knowledge-sharing, I came out with a new-found enthusiasm to learn more about this wonderful, precious and pure religion of ours. Thanks to Dina and Farrokh for igniting this thirst within myself and many others and sharing with us their wealth of knowledge and experience. It truly was an enlightening weekend for which we are very grateful!



29 year-old Shahrugh Khambatta currently lives in Auckland, New Zealand. He was born in Bombay and moved to New Zealand with his family at 14. He works as a management consultant to large corporates in New Zealand and Australia.

Origin of words

In the 1400's a law was set forth in England that a man was allowed to beat his wife with a stick no thicker than his thumb. Hence we have "the rule of thumb".

Many years ago in Scotland, a new game was invented. It was ruled "Gentlemen Only ... Ladies Forbidden" and thus the word GOLF entered into the English language.

In English pubs, ale is ordered by pints and quarts. In old England, when customers got unruly, the bartender would yell at them "Mind your pints and quarts, and settle down." It's where we get the phrase "mind your P's and Q's"

Testing Times For A Taste Of Democracy - The Challenges of Universal Adult Franchise

by noshir h dadrawala

THE BOMBAY HIGH COURT's historic judgment of April 5, 2007, giving every Parsi Zoroastrian over the age of 18 years the right to directly elect trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, has been enthusiastically welcomed from almost every quarter. While most Parsis are beginning to feel a sense of empowerment (to bring about change), there are also quite a few who think differently - and their doubts and anxieties are not entirely misplaced.

But before we analyze the pros and cons of this historic verdict, let us take a closer look at this more than three-and-a-half centuries old institution called Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP).

In about 1530, Portuguese traders took possession of some parts of Mumbai. When King Charles II of England was married to the Princess of Portugal in 1661, Mumbai was given away by way of a dowry. King Charles, in turn, gave it to the trading East India Company on rent of 10 pounds a year in 1668. Governor Gerald Aungier knew it would not be easy to rule over a foreign population with their deep religious and social mores and therefore asked all religious communities in Bombay to form their own social organizations to govern their own people, keeping law and order within bounds of government.

All religious communities (Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Parsi, etc.) formed their own associations or Punchayets. Punchayets, at that time, were led and governed by a council of five elders or five prominent community members. In other words, the BPP started out as a 'local self government' institution to regulate social and, to some extent, even the religious affairs of the community.

Except for the Punchayet formed by the Parsis around 1672, all other Punchayets died out. Probably the main reason why it

has outlived all other Punchayets is due to the vast funds, assets and properties which wealthy donors left in the BPP's charge or trust over the centuries.

Writes noted Parsi historian and former Secretary of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, late S F Desai, "The first fund started in 1826 for funeral expenses. Four months later another fund was started for giving relief to the poor and destitute of the community. Since then various funds have come into existence and the Punchayet today looks after Parsis from the 'womb to the tomb' and beyond." ('History of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet', by S F Desai, page 130).

Apart from a large corpus of funds, the BPP manages about 4,500 community flats in various housing colonies called *baugs*. It is also one of the largest landowners in the city with vast holdings, including the sprawling *doongerwadi* complex at Malabar Hill. It runs schools, fire temples, hospitals, orphanages, old age homes, *dharamshalas*, sanatoriums and over a thousand earmarked funds and endowments called *khatas*.

Almost up to a hundred years ago the BPP trustees were 'appointed' (by surviving trustees) and not elected. *Sethias* like Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy, Sir Dinshaw Petit, Sir Cowasji Jehangir and other wealthy merchants and philanthropists automatically

took over the mantle of community leadership. Their authority remained unquestioned and unchallenged till about the beginning of the twentieth century.

A scheme for electing the trustees of the BPP was framed by the Bombay High Court for the very first time in the historic Parsi Punchayet case over which Justices Dinshaw Davar and Frank Beamon presided. This particular case, however, is more famous for its judgment in the matter concerning the conversion of Mrs Suzanne Ratanji Tata to the Zoroastrian faith and whether as a consequence of her “navjote”, she could be considered a ‘Parsi Zoroastrian’.

The scheme which was framed almost a century ago envisaged an indirect process of electing the trustees through an Electoral College called the ‘Anjuman Committee’ or the ‘*Sau nu mandal*’ (Committee or Electoral College of 100 individuals). Fifty per cent of the Anjuman Committee comprised donors since the court was of the view that those who donate or leave funds, assets and properties in trust to the BPP have a vested right in choosing trustees who will manage these funds, assets and properties.

This ‘*Sau nu Mandal*’ which was controlled by just a handful of individuals was challenged in a big way only in the early 1980s by the Committee of Electoral Rights (CER). In subsequent years, the scheme went through several other changes such as decreasing the term of office from ten to seven years and increasing the minimum limit to entitle a donor to vote (from five thousand rupees to fifteen thousand rupees and later to twenty-five thousand rupees).

At almost every BPP election the community felt cheated. Why should just about 1,500 Parsis (almost half of whom never even exercise their franchise) decide who should lead the community and manage its vast funds and properties? Finally, in April this year, Justice A M Khanwilkar in his landmark judgment laid this grouse to rest. Henceforth, every Parsi over the age of 18 years will have a right to

elect the trustees directly. Donors will be entitled to two votes.

The High Court has laid down various guidelines for elections:

- the elections should be held either on a Saturday or a Sunday within six months of the judgment;
- till fresh trustees are elected, the present six trustees under the chairmanship of Mr Minoo Shroff will continue;
- the trustees will continue for a maximum of three terms each, comprising seven years each or for 21 years, whichever is earlier;
- any Parsi Zoroastrian residing anywhere in the world can become a member of the BPP by paying a certain subscription fee (presently just ten rupees) and will be eligible to vote in person (no proxy vote or postal ballot);
- there is no cap on granting membership in the BPP; however, it has to be done within 60 days after the trustees are elected;
- donor members will have to claim their right to cast two votes within 180 days after they pay their fees.

Parsis are generally happy that democracy has finally arrived at the BPP’s doorsteps. However, there are quite a few Parsis who feel that since the BPP is a public charitable trust, it should be governed and managed in an autonomous way and democracy will only open the doors for persons with vested interests to grab power and misuse the funds and properties.

There are thousands of public charitable trusts - big and small - registered with the office of the Charity Commissioner in Bombay. However, only a handful of trusts have a system for democratically electing trustees. This is so because the Indian Trusts Act 1882, as also the Bombay Public Trusts Act 1950, have left the issue of appointing new trustees to either the Settlers or Founders of the trust or to the surviving trustees.

Another grouse harboured by quite a few Parsis is the right of two votes for donor members.

In the earlier scheme, there was parity between 'Donor Members' and 'General Members'. For example when there were 750 'Donor Members' all those who were on the 'General Register' (i.e. those who had enrolled on the BPP's register by paying a nominal fee of five rupees) elected from amongst themselves 750 members, forming thereby an 'Anjuman Committee' or Electoral College of 1,500 individuals who, in turn, could elect trustees as and when vacancies would be created on the Board of Seven.

Sometime ago, it was proposed that for every 'Donor Member' there should be two 'Elected Members' from the 'General Register'. These were all 'baby steps' towards widening the scope of the 'Anjuman Committee' and inching one's way towards total democracy. However, knowing the conservative nature of courts in India, no one expected Universal Adult Franchise to become a reality. But miracles do happen and this is a classic example.

The Bombay High Court has now given every Parsi Zoroastrian over the age of 18 years the right to directly elect the trustees. However, if such a Parsi Zoroastrian is also a 'donor', he/she would be entitled to an additional vote in order to safeguard his/her legal and vested right to choose trustees who would manage the funds given in charity.

Sceptics consider this to be an indirect method of buying over an extra vote. But if seen in a legal context it has some merit and validity. In any case, as noted solicitor Berjis Desai says, "The number of donors is around 1,500. So even if their votes are doubled, it will still be small compared to the ordinary voters."

Yet another bane of contention is the right of any Parsi Zoroastrian living anywhere in the world to vote. This is certainly unusual. Do Parsis of Bombay have the right to elect trustees of the neighbouring Poona Parsi

Punchayet? Why, then, should a Parsi living in far-off New Zealand or the Netherlands have the right to elect a trustee of a Bombay-based institution?

To begin with, the present scheme does not envisage 'postal ballot' or 'proxy vote'. The individual must personally come to the polling station and vote in person. How many Parsis who are settled abroad will go through the trouble and expense to personally come all the way to Bombay and cast their vote? But this cannot be said with regard to Parsis residing in the rest of India.

Certain groups are already registering voters in Gujarat and other places with plans to bring them by bus loads to Bombay on Election Day with promises of a grand picnic for favour of their precious votes. As one wag put it, "UP and Bihar politics will now enter the portals of the BPP".

There is also the fear that someday the present scheme will be further modified through a court order to allow 'postal ballot' and/or 'proxy vote'.

Many Parsis are of the view that only those who are domiciled in the city should have the right to vote. However, for the past several decades, individual donors residing in the UK, the USA, Hong Kong, etc., have always enjoyed voting rights – a right which will continue under the present scheme. Besides, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet is not just a custodian of funds, assets and properties in Bombay. In fact, BPP owns landed properties and manages funds well beyond the municipal limits of Bombay and the state borders of Maharashtra.

Any change in system is bound to throw up doubt, debate and controversy. As they say, the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. Come October 2007 and the community will put its famed 'intelligence' to the acid test. Will the community elect a Board of 'radical reformists' or a Board of 'bigoted traditionalists'?

Perhaps what the community may choose will be neither extreme. What this

community really needs is a Board that can strike the right balance between the warring factions in the community. The need of the hour is peace, prosperity and productivity. We need men and women of impeccable integrity and known track-record of service to lead the community with vision, foresight and a healing touch.

*Noshir Dadrawala's profile
appears on page 7*

No doubt a new broom will sweep clean the Augean stables at 209, Dr D N Road. The question is, will it sweep clean only the muck and cobwebs or, in its newfound enthusiasm, sweep away everything else that this institution has created and stood for more than three-and-a-half centuries? Time alone will tell.



Ancient Engineering Marvel

Compiled from various internet sources by FMD

Related to article on page 38

One of the biggest engineering operations of ancient time was the canal that Persian King Xerxes ordered his men to build in 480 BC. It was a mile and a quarter long through the Athos peninsula in northern Greece. An earlier invasion by the Persians had come to grief when Xerxes' general Mardonius' fleet was destroyed in a storm while rounding the dangerous Mount Athos headland. Xerxes decided to avoid a similar setback by building the canal through the peninsula.

In the 2,500 years since Herodotus wrote a description of the canal, academics have debated whether the Canal of Xerxes really existed because it was no longer visible, citing the fact that the rocky plateau would have made the construction an impossible task for workers of that day. Recent excavations by archaeologists and scientists from Britain and Greece have used geological information gathered from several yards below the earth's surface to conclusively prove that the canal was a true engineering feat and not a myth. Their findings match the description given by Herodotus. Spanning about 100 feet at the surface, the canal was just wide enough for two war ships to pass. Its sides sloped inward, forming a width of roughly 50 feet at the bottom, about 45 feet below the surface.

Dr Ben Isserlin, an archaeologist at the University of Leeds who started the canal exploration project in the early 90's, called it a "a colossal enterprise." He explained that there were no pulleys so the workers had to shovel earth into baskets and pass them along like a human chain all the way to the top.

Newly discovered from under centuries of silt and alluvium, the canal remains an engineering marvel. It also bears testimony to Xerxes' workforce management skills. It is believed that Xerxes delegated the task to Phoenician engineers and is said to have assigned teams of workers to different sectors of the canal. Unfortunately, it also tells a tale of shortsightedness. The analysis of sediments in the canal reveals that there was no effort made to preserve the canal as a permanent waterway for others to use for trade and travel.

Dr Richard Jones, the lead researcher on the project and an archaeologist at the University of Glasgow, said, "The Persians did not think of it as a monument that would remain for centuries. Once their ships were through, that was the end." Although the canal was instrumental in the Persians' initial victory over Greece's allied forces, they ultimately lost the war. ■■■

A Eulogy - Khorshed Jungalwala

- by Farhang Mehr

"Led by Thy Holy Spirit and Thy Love
Led on by thoughts and words and deeds of Truth,
Perfect Eternal Life shall human attain;
Through Khshatra and through Holy Armaity,
Mazda Ahura shall all these bestow."
(Gathas: Yasna 47-1)

Khorshed Jungalwala born on January 11, 1940, in a devout Zoroastrian family, was raised with Zoroastrian ethical principles instilled in her. She lived sixty-seven dignified and fruitful years to serve for the happiness of others, as preached in Yasna 43-1.

AhuraMazda granted endurance for the effort to uphold Truth. She was blessed with the perfection of a life guided by the Good Mind. Attaining immortality, Khorshed passed away on May 12, 2007 to join the fravashis of Ashavan in eternity with everlasting happiness in the Zone of endless light and song.

"I shall take the soul to the House of Songs, with the help of the Good Mind
Knowing the blissful rewards of Ahura Mazda for righteous deeds,
As long as I have power and strength,
I shall teach all to seek for Truth and Right."
(Gathas: Yasna 28-8)

Khorshed was a well educated and a highly refined person. She graduated from the Law School in India and in 1968 went to England where Firoze was a student. They married and Khorshed pursued her graduate law studies in international law at Cambridge, UK. In 1970 they moved to Boston, USA, and made it their permanent home. Since then, the couple were considered pillars of the Zoroastrian community in Boston.

They helped the Parsis and Irani Zoroastrian immigrants who were stranded in Boston, to find suitable accommodations, medical help they needed and education facilities for their children. Khorshed was a founding member of ZAGBA (Zoroastrian Association of Greater

Boston). She pioneered the first ZAGBA picnic, the first Zoroastrian seminar and the first Avesta Conference in her city. She was president of ZAGBA for two terms (1992-1996). She encouraged the youth to become active in community affairs and take over the management of ZAGBA.

Believing in unity and Hamazoori of Zoroastrians, Khorshed became a founder and a very active member of FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Association of North America). She served as the chairperson of FEZANA Publication Committee for eight years and was responsible for launching FEZANA Journal, formulating its policy and organizing a sound financial set up for the Journal.

Khorshed paid great attention in introducing the noble ethical principles of the Zoroastrian faith to the world communities at large; thus she participated in the interfaith meetings and seminars, and widely lectured on the faith and its social principles.

Towards the end of her life Khorshed was a pillar of the Zoroastrian community worldwide. She was a graceful lady - a great treasure to our community. May AhuraMazda bless her noble soul.

"O ye mortals, mark these commandments —
The commandments which the Wise Lord has given, for happiness and for pain;
Long punishment for the evil-doers, and bliss for the followers of Truth,
The joy of Salvation for the Righteous ever afterwards!"
(Gathas: Yasna 30-11)



Dr Homi Dhalla receives Mother Teresa National Award

by dinshaw tamboly

*t*he South Asia Interfaith Harmony Conclave – 2007 was held in New Delhi on April 21-22. This was held under the auspices of three prestigious organizations, the Temple of Understanding, which is an international interfaith organization, Indian Council for Cultural Relations and Interfaith Harmony Foundation of India based in New Delhi. The theme of the conference was the “Role of Religion and Spirituality in Promoting Universal Human Values”.

The proceedings commenced with prayers from various traditions. Ervad Cawas Bagli recited Zoroastrian prayers with deep devotion. The various religious leaders also blessed the event. The Parsi community was represented by Dastur Dr Kaikhushroo JamaspAsa who in his impressive message outlined the basic concepts of Zoroastrianism. The Inaugural Address was delivered by the Prime Minister of India, Dr Manmohan Singh. Among the various sessions held, Dr Shernaz Cama spoke graphically about “Interfaith and the Environment”, Mr Jehangir Patel on the “Role of Print and Electronic Media” with reference to the Parsi community and Ms Mahrukh Singh on “Interfaith Harmony and the School Curriculum”.

At the valedictory session, Dr Homi Dhalla made a powerpoint presentation of 120 slides on the theme “Dimensions of Peace and Violence”. At one of the sessions, he also spoke on the “Expanding Role of Religious Leaders”. On the final day, awards were given away by Dr Karan Singh, former Foreign Minister of India. Dr Dhalla was given the prestigious Mother Teresa National Award for Interfaith Harmony. This award was in recognition of his contribution to the interfaith movement locally as well as globally over the last two decades. Ever since, he was invited by His Holiness Pope John Paul II in October 1986

to the World Day of Prayer for Peace at Assisi, he has been representing the Parsi community in different parts of the world at interfaith conferences. He has been speaking on human rights, ecological issues, interfaith dialogue, peace etc.

From time to time, he has been actively involved in various interfaith organizations at the global level. These are World Conference of Religion for Peace (New York), United Religions Initiative (San Francisco), International Interfaith Centre (Oxford) and International Association for Religious Freedom (Oxford). He has been invited by the Vatican and His Holiness the Dalai Lama for making presentations at conferences. Since 2004, he was invited to be a Member of the Apex Body of Foundation for the Unity of Religions and Enlightened Citizenship, which is an interfaith organization launched by the President of India, Dr A P J Abdul Kalam.



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



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

'Autism Speaks'

by mehernosh shroff

What is Autism

Autism is a complex brain disorder that inhibits a person's ability to communicate and develop social relationships, and is often accompanied by extreme behavioral challenges. Autism spectrum disorders are diagnosed in one in 166 children, (one in ninety four boys in new heresy) affecting four times as many boys as girls. In New Jersey area one boy out of ninety four is born with autism. The diagnosis of autism has increased tenfold in the last decade. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have called autism a national public health crisis whose cause and cure remain unknown.

Subsequent to my first introduction to, and appeal on behalf of the S P Jain Sidharta School for the developmentally handicapped children, I was delighted with the response of some Zoroastrians who came forward to the rescue of children suffering from autism spectrum disorder. [Hamazor Issue 2/06 pp59-61]

My own daughter, Nicole, is one of the beneficiaries of this generosity. Whereas the school is doing a wonderful job, it needs ongoing funds. This year the school has received 6500 applications all of autistic/ aspergers syndrome children and its heart breaking to know that our school's total capacity is just 150. Children here are lovingly looked after, and nurtured to highlight whatever latent talents they may have. Today, I would appeal to the parents of affected children to make all out efforts to get them enrolled here instead of indulging in the allegedly sad action of abandoning, locking up, or beating the unfortunate angelic souls. While my God, family and friends have seen us through this traumatic experience, I begin to wonder how many parents will ultimately blame themselves and wallow in guilt for the rest of their lives for not opening this window of opportunity to their offspring. Some Zoroastrian parents have never been known to be easy with discussing this problem and openly working as individuals or groups towards alleviating this social disorder.

One afternoon, while watching TV, coincidentally, I found myself looking at Larry King live on CNN, interviewing Bill Cosby who was the spokesperson of 'Autism Speaks' – a non-profit organization dedicated to increasing awareness of autism, and raising funds for research.

As the interview unfolded I saw Bill Cosby chatting with a tearful Toni Braxton as they

revealed that one out of every 94 boys born in New Jersey, USA had autism.

Autism Speaks organized a fundraiser – a night of comedy and music – in the Frederick P Rose Hall, the home of jazz, at the Lincoln Center, on 9th April this year. Some relevant sources, talking for the cause of autism, informs us as under:

"Autism is a disorder that is robbing families of the chance to fulfill their dreams and experience the everyday joys most of us take for granted," said Cosby. "For example, many children with autism are very limited in their ability to develop warm relationships with others, including their parents. We all need to do our part so that, with our help, these families will finally get the answers they so desperately seek."

"When autism became a part of my family's reality, I was determined to join Autism Speaks in its battle against this devastating disorder that is impacting thousands of families," said Braxton, who is currently headlining in a long-term engagement at the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas. The mother of two children, one of whom has autism, went on to say, "So much progress is being made on all fronts – from the laboratory to Capitol Hill — but all of us must continue to fight until we have found the cause and a cure for autism."

"We are incredibly grateful to Bill and Toni for lending their remarkable talents to us for what promises to be a memorable evening," said Suzanne Wright, co-founder of Autism Speaks. "With the recent passage of the Combating Autism Act, the future is far brighter for every individual and family affected by autism. However, the need to raise funds for awareness, treatment and research is as urgent as ever."

I am not in a position to give research based facts and figures related to Mumbai or other places in India, as I think no research has been undertaken here. However, there are support groups, and I have to thank a good many Zoroastrians for their involvement – beginning from my own cousins, and moving on to total strangers – who helped with large donations to the Sadhana school, whose website is www.yougivemewings.org

My intention now is to unite some of our community members to generate help and research activities, and more urgently, to make a renewed plea for donations.

To end on a happy note, I would like to share with you the joy that I experienced in seeing my daughter, now enthusiastically exhibiting her talent on stage: she performed in two fusion dances ably supported by her colleagues. Paradoxically, this newly exposed intelligence makes her play-act in real life too! Her math exam, at one stage, stressed her out so much that she faked her autism by muttering and being at a loss for words, and appearing lost herself, so as to escape sitting for the paper. Of course, a timely reprimand by knowing parents, and a threat to spend six months under the tutelage of a not-so-well-liked teacher, put her right! Being very much aware that she had been in the wrong, she took a U-turn, and later emerged bright and chirpy.



[From the Ed: As this article is about children and education, those of you who are in the field of education may appreciate visiting this site: <http://www.teachermovie.com/>]



Mehernosh P H Shroff is the father of a wonderful talented child Nicole who is his greatest friend and buddy. He comes from the Mani Wadia family of Bombay who are still active in shipbuilding, marine manning, sale of ship spares. He is a Chief Engineer and fellow of the institute of Marine Engineers; Founder and CEO of Sea Worthy, Groomor and MRM Mumbai Marine Manning companies. He is also the founder of Ahimsa warships and Ecosense movement, and has built the world's first teak wood houseboat at sea, M L Darya Mahal Sea King.

A tribute to the Social Worker

by jehangir mehta

In this article I wish to express my admiration and respect for the selfless service demonstrated by many of our Zoroastrian social workers in the field of poor, old, aged, sick and homeless. The list is quite extensive and although I have chosen to highlight the profiles of only a few of our social workers from Dadar, Mumbai, this article is essentially a tribute to many others in India and abroad. It is a celebration and recognition of these silent co-workers of God who march on relentlessly every single day.

The primary mission of the social worker is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people with particular need for people who are vulnerable, oppressed and living in poverty. A social worker's job is a tough one - much harder than the jobs we do for a living. It is almost a journey with a heightened sense of commitment, consistency and dedication in service of others. There is almost a bridge that connects the wisdom of social work and the wisdom of spirituality.

Our community is divided and confronted with how to deal with human corpses, theological correctness for the death rituals, how to honour the dead, and the diasporas of the Dokhmenashini system. In the midst of all this turmoil and negativity and grand standing for power and control, these silent social workers concentrate their energies towards the upliftment of the poor and downtrodden. For them death is a friend of life. Something in you (your *atma* or soul) never dies. Something in you does not decay. To them, social work has no barriers of caste, creed, colour, religion and dogma. Their divinity co-exists with selfless service (*seva*) and love towards all mankind. They fear not what happens to them after death.

The teachings of my spiritual guide mentions that, "the path to reach God or the

ultimate truth is through love, simplicity, SEVA and commitment." God exists in those who treat the sorrows of others as their own. He also mentions that "spirituality is the inner transformation - helps you to realize that you are the tiger. But as long as you are a rat at heart, what you have undergone is external change only." Sathya Sai Baba also often says that "consider social service as service to God. This is the best way to earn God's love. Love all and serve all. When we serve another, we should remember ourselves that we are serving the divinity within that other."

Following profiles are based on interviews held in Mumbai, April 2007:

Mrs Arnavaz Jal Mistry



Arnavaz being greeted by one of her 'friends'

Arnavaz always remembers her humble beginnings when her mother supported the young family through charities from the Stree Zarthosti Mandal. Sympathy for poor and her special affinity towards the poor Parsis is the main driver for her dedication and devotion to her social work. Arnavaz spent most of her youth towards the right up-bringing of her two

daughters who excelled in both academics and extra-curricular activities. Only when her family commitment and responsibility lessened after her daughters grew up, that Arnavaz started to focus her attention to the less fortunate and needy. Having tried a variety of short stints at the National Association for Blind, Lions Club Cuffe Parade, and other social voluntary organizations, she finally took up a voluntary position at Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Hospital Parsi ward (simply called JJ ward) under the mentorship of the late Mrs Silla Kavarana in 1987.

Arnavaz has deep admiration and praise for Late Silla Kavarana. When Silla first met Arnavaz, she saw the fire burning deeply inside her and she knew that Arnavaz would continue her legacy of caring for the old and

infirm at the JJ ward. Arnavaz has not let life's daily grind or materialism stand in her way to fulfill that passion she showed 20 years ago. She has lived up to Silla's dream of someone dedicated beyond explanation. In the early 80's "the ward" as it was infamously called, was a place where poor, old and infirm Parsis were left at the mercy of the government nurses, ward-boys and servants. It was totally neglected and in dilapidated condition. Today JJ Parsi ward has undergone a major transformation in terms of care, cleanliness, number of beds, equipment and the overall management. Arnavaz is the lead social worker and heads the managing committee which acts as a catalyst and a mediating authority between various government agencies of the JJ hospital and the JJ Trust. Not only has this seen a big drop in the bureaucratic inefficiencies, but has also developed a sharp bond and trust with the government staff. JJ ward now boasts 45 surgical beds and currently there is a waiting list of 70 patients for admission.

Arnavaz spends a whole day at the ward three times a week. During my interview and subsequent trip to the ward, I noticed that Arnavaz demanded absolute attention to details and would not hesitate to speak her mind and tell the staff very bluntly if dusting was required or the bed-sheet needed changing or the floors were not cleaned properly. She maintains a good rapport with the Dean of the Hospital which enables her to fast track some of the construction and maintenance issues of the ward. The top floor of the ward which for years was used as a junk storage is now an 8-bed modern wing for the male patients.

Parsi ward has become the main stay in her life and in turn the inmates have nothing but glory, praise, pride and affection for her. With tears in their eyes they pray for her health, so that she continues to look after their needs. To them she is their mother, daughter, father and son. To them she is a *fareshta* - God's angel. Be it personal needs like nail or hair cutting, feeding them, sharing in their joy and sorrows, hospitalization, deaths or funerals, any hour

of the day or night, Arnavaz will be there in their hour of need. She even has a special way of dealing with some of the mentally ill patients - she sees their affliction as a mother sees in her child. Her language of love knows no barriers.

Arnavaz is also on the committee of Young Ratheshtars, Parakh Dharamsala, Stree Zarthoshti Mandal, Dinbai Pattuck Trust and Sir Ratan Tata Institution. Some of her weekly and monthly visits to other institutions include Ackworth Leprosy Home in Wadala where once a Parsi *bawaji* passed thirty long years in self-inflicted solitude, Don Bosco Shelter for street children, Jai Vakil School for children in need of special care, Parsi General hospital and many others.

Arnavaz's late husband Jal Mistry who owned the Fleet Transport business was well known for his philanthropy. Her daughters Yasmin and Mehroo and their family have nothing but admiration and respect for their mother. Their lives are enriched by the grace of their mother's compassion and love for mankind. She has taught them what it really means to live and help others. She has taught them to see God in every human being.

The ghost of her humble past has not left its shadows on her life and she continues even more determined, to serve others to bring about a state of relief from a condition of grief for the physically handicapped, the financially poor, the roadside destitute, interaction with lepers who are treated as social outcasts and to lend inner light to people who have been abandoned in their hour of need. Ahura Mazda in return gives her the strength and the moral courage.

Mrs Mistry humbly requests all the donors to continue their support. She can be contacted in Mumbai on tel: 24147646 or mob: 9821009289 or e-mail arnavaz@rediffmail.com

Aspi Parekh

Aspi Parekh grew up in Dadar Parsi colony. He then went on to bigger and better

pastures in life and was in America for 10 years where he excelled in legal research with a Chicago Title insurance company. He was a gold medalist in law. But life's fate dealt a cruel blow to his personal life and for sometime his life crumbled into sad despair. Today Aspi looks at life in a rather philosophical and spiritual way. *"When fate deals a cruel blow, they leave their old life behind and start on a journey of self discovery. Life is pre-planned by the creator and what happens in your life, happens for your good. We do not seem to understand this. There is nothing bad about life. Life is an experience that helps you get your account or Karma settled and grants you the bliss of contemplating on Him always."*

Aspi strongly believes that Faith in Divine through the medium of seva or service to others helps you to evolve spiritually. Being a social worker at the JJ Parsi ward for last 18 years has helped him to realize just that. Aspi attends to the day to day running of the ward and has to nurture and negotiate the demands and requests of all the patients and the staff. His daily presence maintains a high degree of professionalism, care and cleanliness of the inmates and the ward. He is the eyes and ears and hands of the ward. He works in tandem with Arnavaz Mistry and Mr Rustomjee Jejeebhoy. His hard work, compassion and dedication has helped to achieve the 2007 "Best Kept Ward" award amongst some 70 odd wards in the whole of JJ hospital. This is a big achievement from the bygone days.

Aspi mentioned that although there is an overwhelming exposure and outpouring of generosity through various charities and private donors, there is still a greater need for costs towards medicine, food and maintenance including the servants and sweepers. His own battle with depression has helped him to better understand the needs of old and abandoned patients who suffer from the anguish of loneliness and despair. He is like a beacon of light and



Aspi with a patient

encouragement at the ward which is a home away from home. A home which he strives to make a haven for the less fortunate. In their dying moments, they feel at peace knowing that Aspi will gently caress their souls and pass them over in to the spiritual world and into the hands of God. Every death is a sad loss for Aspi, but he remains resolute in his goal to serve the old and infirm to their very end.

Mrs Zarin Havewala



Zarin Havewala

Zarin is a teacher for children suffering with learning disability. These are the children suffering from dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia. Everyday she volunteers to teach these children with special needs, an honorary role. Ratio of dyslexic children amongst Zoroastrians is surprisingly quite high. Among her dyslexic students, nearly 75% are Parsis. Zarin has to display tremendous patience with these children as their recall capacity is limited and they need to revise and re-revise their studies on continual basis. It is only recently that the Government of Maharashtra has recognized and formalized the learning concessions for dyslexic children.

Once a week Zarin visits the Ashadaan - Mother Teresa Home in Byculla. This home offers shelter to the poor, orphaned, homeless, destitute and street children. Hindustan Lever has kindly donated a large *godown* (warehouse) for the shelter. During breakfast Zarin feeds the handicapped children and makes time to sit and talk, and sometimes sing to them. Zarin proudly narrated the story of a handicapped Zoroastrian girl who resides at Ashadaan, who despite her handicap helps others at the shelter. This young Zoroastrian girl is a pillar of strength for others. She appears most satisfied and happy in the graceful company of sisters and nuns.

Zarin also visits the Parsi ward of JJ Hospital once a week. Zarin's heart and soul lies in being with the old people. Her spirituality is enhanced by serving the old and infirm. Old peoples' most basic need is

someone to share some time and talk to them. Over the years Zarin has heard and shared stories of all the inmates at the ward. One of her favourite ladies was Jaloo Khambatta. She was at the ward for almost 15 years, and recently passed away at the age of 91. Jaloo took a lot of interest in her own personal appearance, always inquiring about her hair, skin getting dry and the availability of creams and perfumes. Zarin spent a lot of happy times with her. Whenever Zarin inquired about her health, she would always reply "very well"- *majeni*. She was always happy and contented. Zarin has many other stories to tell of the inmates. There is Nergish who is blind and who laughs loudly, sings songs and loves eating snacks, always requesting for wine biscuits or chocolates. Then there is Mr Nargolwala - the ex-Chief Engineer with Scindia Steam Navigation Company, who talks about his travels on ships and the pirates in South Africa.

Zarin's children are now grown up and she would like to spend more time towards social service. There is a severe shortage of volunteers and social workers in Mumbai and many of these institutions would literally come to a grinding halt were it not for the social workers and volunteers. Zarin can be contacted in Mumbai on tel: 24125125 or at zarin@vsnl.com

"Happiness to those who give happiness to others"

"Ushta ahmai yah ahmai ushta kahmaichit"

Reference:

All You wanted to know about Shanti Avedna Sadan - Hospice publication



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

Against All Odds : Achievements of Zoroastrian Women in Iran

by mitra mehr

[Paper presented by Mitra Mehr at WZO's 2006 Seminar on Zoroastrian Religion, History and Culture, held in association with the World Zarathushtrian Trust Fund at the International Students House, London on Sunday 25th June 2006]

Approximately 3500 years ago, a father turned to his daughter on the occasion of her marriage and said:

“Do thou persevere, Pouruchista.
To thee shall [Ahura Mazda] grant the firm
foundation of good things
And the alliance of Asha and wisdom.”
Yasna 53.3 (Insler translation)

That Zarathushtra refers to the wisdom of his daughter and chooses her to convey a message in the Gathas should not surprise us. After all, Pouruchista means “full of illuminated thought or intellect.”

Zarathushtra assures his daughter that she is granted with wisdom and Asha. Asha means truth, justice and righteousness as well as the process of seeking the truth. Like men, Pouruchista, a woman, is sparked with the god-like attributes of Ahura Mazda.

In a number of Yasnas, the Gathas appeals to the wisdom of both men and women. For instance in Yasna 46.10 (D J Irani Translation), Zarathushtra advises:

“Whoever, man or women, does what Thou, O
Mazda Ahura, knowest to be the best in Life,
Whoever does right for the sake of Right,
Whoever in authority, governs with the aid of the
Good Mind,
I shall bring all these to join in the song of Thy
praise
Forth, shall I with them cross the Bridge of
Judgment.”

No distinction is made between men and women. They are to be judged, not by their gender but by their actions. And in another Yasna, Zarathushtra says Yasna 30.2 (D J Irani Translation):

“Hearken with your ears to these best counsels,
Reflect upon them with illuminated judgment,

Let each one choose his [her] creed with that
freedom
of choice each must have at great events
O ye, be awake to these, my announcements”

In Yasna 50.4, Zarathushtra reinforces this notion, stating “Those men and women, both do we revere, whose act of worship is alive, is Asha.” Men and women are treated equally in the Gathas. “Ahura” means life-giver and “Mazda” means wisdom. Ahura Mazda, the lord of life and wisdom is described by six attributes or characteristics. They are as following:

- ✧ Vahishta Mana (which means sublime wisdom);
- ✧ Asha Vahishta (which means sublime Asha—that is, sublime righteousness, truth or justice);
- ✧ Khashatra Vaiya (which means sublime power);
- ✧ Spenta Armaiti (which means augmenting peace, tranquility and compassion);
- ✧ Haurvatat (which means perfection); and
- ✧ Ameratat (which means immortality).

God, Ahura Mazda is wise, just, powerful, peaceful, compassionate, perfect and immortal. In the ancient Avestan language, the first three attributes are masculine nouns while the last three attributes are feminine nouns. Thus, women and men are treated equally even in the linguistic reference to Ahura Mazda.

This idea of women as holders of truth, justice and wisdom is reflected in the works of the great poet Ferdowsi, known in Farsi

as the prophet of the Persian language. Ferdowsi lived in the 11th century, thousands of years after Zarathushtra and four centuries after the Arab invasion. In the "Book of Kings" or Shahnameh, Ferdowsi tells in verse the stories of women of courage who are a part of the Iranian Zoroastrian mythology.

Ferdowsi writes of Gordiyeh, the sister of Bahram Choobin, one of Iran's great generals. After the death of her brother, the ruler of China asked Gordiyeh to marry him. Gordiyeh refused. The ruler of China was not pleased and responded to her refusal by ordering his brother, Tobrak and an army to capture Gordiyeh and bring her to him. How did Gordiyeh respond? She put on her brother's Bahram's uniform and armour, and with the aid of only sixteen soldiers, defeated the army of Tobrak and destroyed him.

Then there is Gordafarid, the daughter of a garrison commander, Ghazdaham, who Ferdowsi describes as "well-versed and unrivaled in the arts of warfare." Legend goes, that when Sohrab, her enemy laid siege to her father's garrison, Gordafarid, who had not identified herself, challenged Sohrab to combat, a "lion eager for combat." During their fight, the tip of Sohrab's lance caught Gordafarid's Rumi helmet, causing her long hair to flow down. As Gordafarid rode away on her horse, Sohrab exclaimed "If the women of Iran are so valiant, what must their men be like." But courage was not only demonstrated in warfare. Sohrab could have simply looked to the legend about his own mother, the beautiful Tahmineh, daughter of the King of Samergan.

Tahmineh of Tooran, fell in love with Rostam, the most courageous and just warrior. Rostam was feared as much as he was admired. But there was a minor problem. Rostam was also from Iran, the kingdom that was at war with her father's kingdom. A wise woman, Tahmineh was not easily discouraged. Tahmineh entered the enemy camp and upon seeing Rostam, proposed to him. They were married and so their son Sohrab was born.

Ferdowsi writes of Princess Homai, the daughter of Goshtasb, the first king to accept Zoroastrianism. According to Ferdowsi, when Bijan, one of the great warriors of Iran was held in captivity in Tooran, Rostam, freed him with the aid of seven great warriors. One of those seven warriors was a woman, none other than princess Homai.

Finally, Ferdowsi writes of another Homai, also known as Chehrzad. According to Ferdowsi, Homai, the daughter of King Bahman, ruled Iran with wisdom and justice for thirty years after the passing of her father. On her inauguration, she announced to the world her "justice and generosity." Ferdowsi writes that "her wisdom and justice surpassed her father's, and that the world flourished beneath her righteous reign... Everywhere she pursued justice and righteousness and ruled well. The world became safe under her care, and the people of every country praised her." (D Davis Translation).

While the history and poetry of the ancient world are filled with male protagonists, Ferdowsi heroes include women. These women are not for their beauty, fragility or shyness but for their courage and leadership, their wisdom and sense of justice.

In fact, hundreds of years ago, the Persian Empire was ruled by women kings. Azarmidokht and Pourandokht ruled the Sasanid dynasty as kings, and nothing less. That men of ancient times could trust to have one of the most powerful empires ruled by women says much about how women were regarded in ancient Iran. Hundreds of years ago, women were trusted to decide the fate of thousands of men.

Unfortunately, Zoroastrian women did not fare well in Iran after the Arab invasion in approximately 610 AD. Like Zoroastrian men, they were subject to discrimination based on their religious beliefs. They also found themselves in an Islamic society that did not give men and women equal status. Zoroastrian women were therefore

discriminated against based on their gender, as well as their faith.

The reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi was a turning point in the lives of Zoroastrian women. Committed to building a modern secular nation-state, Reza Shah implemented policies that reduced the power of the clergy and advanced that of women. Inspired by Atatürk in neighbouring Turkey, Reza Shah banned the wearing of the Islamic *hejab* or *chador*. The government allowed Iranian Zoroastrians to enter civil service and become teachers, thus allowing them to seek professions that had previously not been open to them. The government also sharply diminished the power of the clergy in education and the judiciary, creating secular schools and secular courts. During this period, Reza Shah passed a decree stating that religious minorities such as Zoroastrians would be governed in matters of family law by their own religious doctrines and practices. In other words, when it came to issues of divorce, custody and inheritance, Zoroastrians would be governed by their religious practices and not the Sharia.

Before Reza Shah's reign, schools were run by the clergy and taught Sharia or Islamic law. Zoroastrians of Iran, like other religious minorities were not allowed to enroll in these schools. They, therefore, built their own schools which were often small, and attended only by other religious minorities. After Reza Shah's decree, Zoroastrians started allowing Muslims to enroll in their schools. With increased funds, Zoroastrian schools grew and became among Iran's most competitive educational institutions. Interestingly, in Yazd and Kerman, Zoroastrians had more schools per capita than any other religious group, including Muslims.

During this period, Anoushiravan Dadgar, a Zoroastrian girls' school in Tehran became one of Iran's best. Anoushiravan Dadgar was built as a result of donations received from a Parsi woman by the name of Ratan Bai Edeleji Bamji Tata on land that had been purchased by Tehran's Zoroastrian Anjuman or organization. Among its

alumna were the daughters of the political elite of Iran, including Reza Shah's youngest daughter, Fatemeh. Shirin Ebadi, the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 also attended Anoushiravan Dadgar.

Women's rights, including the rights of Zoroastrian women, flourished during the reign of Reza Shah's son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Like his father, the Shah was committed to increasing Iran's consciousness of modern values and ushering Iran into the modern age. During this period, Iranian women gained the right to vote and to participate in the political process, including standing in elections. In fact, a number of women were elected to parliament. Women represented Iran in international associations such as the United Nations and were even appointed as ambassadors. For instance, Iran's ambassador to Denmark was Mehrangise Dowlatshahi, a Muslim woman who was, interestingly, an alumna of the Zoroastrian school, Anoushiravan Dadgar. Women were still not allowed to become judges, but during this period, the government established "equity houses" that were run by justices of peace. These justices of peace, which included women, could preside over immigration matters, domestic matters and traffic violations.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Iranian women, including Zoroastrian women, entered higher education and the labour force, particularly the service sector, at unprecedented levels. During this period, the government built vocational schools and started an aggressive campaign aimed at educating women about family planning. In 1967, the legislature enacted the Family Protection Law of 1967, which secularized marriage and put some limits on men's ability to divorce their wives without going through the judicial process. Although men were allowed to have more than one wife, they had to obtain the consent of the first wife before marrying another. To protect the rights of minors, particularly women from rural areas, the legal age for marriage, was raised to 18.

In a society that was just learning to accept women as professionals, Iranian

Zoroastrian made significant accomplishments. During this period Zoroastrian women took advantage of the educational and professional opportunities that were being presented to them to become lawyers, doctors, nurses, administrators, teachers and artists. Not much has been written about these women. I would, therefore, like to take the opportunity to discuss some of their individual accomplishments. In a society where women did not become involved in politics, Parimarz Firoozgar ran for elections and became the first mayor of a town near Rampour. Tooran Bahrami, a graduate of Tehran University's law school, went on to become a legal advisor, a labour specialist and an arbitrator to the Ministry of Labour on issues related to women and children. After joining the bar in 1963, she went on to become the only Zoroastrian Iranian woman to practice law at the time, and one of the few women lawyers in Iran. Recently, under the Islamic Republic, Mrs Bahrami was appointed to the executive committee of the bar association.

Among Iran's female doctors were Zoroastrians such as Dr Homa Nikfar, Dr Mahsheed Hormozdi, Dr Manijeh Hemati, and Dr Tajvar Hakhamaneshi. That period witnessed a number of Iranian Zoroastrian nurses and midwives such as Banou Mobed, La'al Bekhradnia, Pouran Sourashian, Parichehr Naderi, Ms Jamshidi, Sarvar Vafadari, Ms Varghayee, Nakhosteen

Mehr, Goli Farhangi and Farin Namdaran. To appreciate the accomplishments of these women, it is important to remember that in most cases, their mothers and grandmothers, were not given the opportunity to pursue a high school education.



Tooran Shahriari Bahrami



Parichehr Namdar Freydooni



Manijeh Kermani Shahrokh



Farangis Kaikhosrow Shahrokh

Iranian Zoroastrian women also made headways in the Arts. Parichehr Namdar Freydooni studied painting at the school of Arts in Tehran University and went on to become one of Iran's leading contemporary artists with exhibitions around the world. Among her international awards are the Badge of Cavalier of Art of Italy (received in 1985). During this period, Sarvar Kaboli went on to become one of Iran's well-known ballerinas, performing regularly at the prestigious Roudaki hall before large audiences. After the revolution, Mrs Tooran Bahrami established herself as a well-known poet.

In the area of education, Banou Behzadi, an Iranian Zoroastrian woman, served as a teacher and vice-principal of Anoushiravan Dadgar, the prestigious Zoroastrian girl's school for almost thirty years. Banou Ghobadi, the vice president of Guiv, the Zoroastrian elementary school for girls was another well-known school administrator. Katyoun Jahanbakshzadeh and Kianbanou Jahanian, both taught mathematics in competitive high schools in Tehran and Kerman. Ms Jahanbakshzadeh's daughter went on to become an engineer in Tehran. Keshvar Mazdayasni was another notable Iranian Zoroastrian woman who served as principal of an elementary school and a secondary school in Kerman.

Important female Zoroastrian philanthropists of that period include Monavar Abadian, La'al Jamshidian and Morvareed Guiv. All three women devoted a significant amount of their time to promoting the welfare of Iran's Zoroastrian community. In an untraditional move, Monavar Abadian donated money to build an athletic center for the Zoroastrian Women Association, described below. Concerned about women's issues, La'al Jamshidian donated funds to build a women's center in Tehran's Anjuman building. Finally, after the revolution, Morvareed Guiv and her husband



late La'al Bekhradnia

donated funds in order to build Zoroastrian centers in North America.

In 1940, the Zoroastrian Women Association was formed. Manijeh Shahrokh was active in setting up the organization which was devoted to promoting the welfare of the Iranian community in general and Zoroastrian women in particular. In 1996, the association received special recognition from the United Nations for its mission and accomplishments; the association continues to contribute to Iranian society today.

A woman who has made significant contributions to the welfare of Zoroastrian women and more generally, Iranian women, is Farangis Shahrokh. In the 1930s, Ms Shahrokh established a clinic, a nursery school and an orphanage in the city of Hamadan. Concerned for the welfare of women in prison, Ms Shahrokh also formed a supervisory council to ensure that they were not treated poorly. Mrs Shahrokh went on to serve as director to an organization devoted to assisting Iranian women of smaller towns and villages to become literate and to develop practical skills such as typing and driving. From there, Ms Shahrokh founded the Iranian Handicraft Organization which continues to provide technical training for the 150,000 artisans, who are its members. In recognition of her contributions Iran's handicraft industry, Farangis Shahrokh was awarded several medals. Ms Shahrokh's other passion has been ancient Iran. In the 1960s, with the assistance of Prime Minister Ali Mansoor and Dr Farhang Mehr, Ms Shahrokh established the Ancient Iranian Organization which was devoted to educating people on the ancient Iranian civilization through conferences, publications and the use of media. Upon immigrating to the United States in the mid-seventies, Ms Shahrokh founded the California Zoroastrian Center, including the Center's library. She served as its president for a decade and to this day remains active in the Zoroastrian community.

Now we come to the revolution of 1979.

Iranian women played a role in the 1979 revolution, participating in the mass

demonstrations that resulted in the overthrow of Mohammad Reza Shah and the establishment of the Islamic Republic. Upon assuming power, Ayatollah Khomeini established a theocratic state based on the Sharia and ruled by the clergy. All modern western influences were rejected in favour of localized, Shi'ite traditions and approaches.

Largely apolitical, the Zoroastrian women of Iran were not involved in the overthrow of the regime. Like other Iranian women, however, they were the first to be disadvantaged by the newly established Islamic republic. The new regime regarded women as carriers of local Shi'ite traditions. Women were to be shielded from all foreign influences and protected so that they could ensure the stability of the Muslim family and Islamic way of life.

Soon after coming to power, Aytalloah Khomeini ordered universal female veiling. Thousands of Iranian women, including Zoroastrians, opposed the decree by demonstrating in the several cities including Tehran. Initially the government softened the language of the law, allowing a certain degree of flexibility in the dress code. However, by the summer of 1980 veiling was mandatory for women in all public institutions. Failure to comply with the code could result in loss of employment and loss of educational status for students registered in the educational system. By that time, however, there was little that could be done. The secular courts of Iran had been replaced with religious and revolutionary courts that were not hesitant to enforce the new law. A woman's testimony had been downgraded to half of that of a man's, and Islamic forms of punishment such as stoning of women for adultery had been implemented. Ideas of equal rights were branded as Western and un-Islamic. Books, journals and magazines advocating feminist ideas were either totally banned or partially censored. The fact that Zoroastrian women held different religious beliefs and were subject to different guidelines, for instance with respect to their dress code, was irrelevant. Like other religious minorities, they were subject to Islamic law,

including the Islamic dress code. Some Zoroastrian women, particularly in Kerman and Yazd, responded by wearing the Zoroastrian head-wear and traditional clothes of the previous generations.

Upon coming to power, the Islamic Republic cancelled the Family Protection Law and moved the legal age of marriage from 18 to 14. Women were barred from pursuing disciplines in the universities such as engineering, law and agriculture. Women couldn't sing or dance as performers. Women weren't allowed to participate in sports or watch men play sports in public stadiums. Men and women were separated in higher education classes that were once co-ed, public theatres, and public buses. Association with men outside marriage was forbidden and punishable. For instance, if an unrelated man and woman were found interacting with each other in a secluded environment, they would be subject to police interrogation and forced to provide documents of marital or blood connection. If they failed, both could be taken to the police station and flogged. Male and female students were not allowed to look at each other intimately or even exchange smiles in public places. Consumption of alcohol was also illegal, and the wearing of excessive make-up, including lipstick or nail-polish could result in an involuntary visit to the police station. This was the new world in which Zoroastrian Iranian women found themselves. The government enforced its policies and monitored women's behaviour through a female vigilante group called Dokhtar'an-e Zaynab. This group not only enforced the state codes of female appearance in public, but sometimes even in private arenas. Neighbourhood groups (the Komitehs) kept watch to ensure that all of the Islamic Republic's codes were in effect.

The war with Iraq that started in 1980 and continued until 1988, allowed the regime to impose its control more easily, as resources were diverted towards resisting the invasion. Women were pressured into unifying with the regime's nationalistic cause as opposed to fighting for their own interests. The end of the war, however,

signaled a new era for Iran's women. In the second decade of the revolution, women engaged in a more pronounced form of resistance to laws that affected them. Supported by President Khatami, who won the election largely as a result of the women's vote, Iranian women demanded a wider participation in society and the relaxation of certain laws.

Today, Iranian women, including Zoroastrian women, enjoy greater freedom. The strict dress codes of the first decade of the Islamic Republic have been eased, allowing women to wear different coloured "manteaus" and show some hair from beneath their scarves or veils. Makeup and open-toed shoes can easily be seen on the streets of various cities, symbols of women's fight for autonomy, at least in their appearance. Women are now allowed to enroll in all academic disciplines and may become lawyers, engineers and members of parliament. In fact, according to the latest statistics, there are currently more women enrolled in universities than men. Women may perform as singers, as long as their audience is limited to other women. Women are also allowed to participate in certain sports. Alcohol consumption is still illegal for Muslims; however, other religious minorities, such as Zoroastrians, are allowed to consume alcohol in private settings. Discriminatory laws relating to inheritance and blood money still affects Zoroastrians in general, and Iranian Zoroastrian women in particular. For instance, if a Zoroastrian woman or man marries a Muslim, then the Muslim man may claim the property to be inherited by the Zoroastrian spouse's siblings simply by virtue of being Muslim.

Women continue to fight for more rights and continue to meet challenges in doing so. On June 12, 2006, Iranian women demonstrated in Tehran, in protest of Iran's civil and penal laws. Among their demands was an end of polygamy, equal rights in divorce and custody, the raising of legal age for children, and increasing the weight of a woman's testimony in court. As reported by Western newspapers, however, numerous women were arrested. The effort of these women is worth following closely.

In the context of discouraging news, it is interesting to note that in the past decade, the women of Iran, including Zoroastrian Iranian women, have obtained more rights through their own grass-roots effort. To the extent that scholars believe feminism by governmental decree (like democracy from above or outside) is not effective or long-lasting, the achievements of this generation of women in Iran, is indeed promising.

Like their compatriots, the new generation of Iranian Zoroastrian women living in Diaspora, have also made significant achievements. Fortunately, there are so many young Iranian Zoroastrian women professionals, that naming the individual professionals — the doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects, artists, teachers, nurses, administrators, anthropologists and professors — would be very difficult. In addition, an impressive number of young Iranian Zoroastrian women are fulfilling that important, and sometimes underrated, role of mother, raising their children in the Zoroastrian faith, teaching them about the doctrine and traditions of the Zoroastrian faith. Doing so both inside and outside of Iran is an achievement worth noting. In North America, Europe and Australia, Iranian Zoroastrian women have taken on leadership roles in the Zoroastrian community, heading organizations that are devoted to preserving the Zoroastrian religion and culture.

A few Iranian Zoroastrian women have made significant progress in studying and preserving their Zoroastrian heritage. For instance, Annahita Farudi, a Zoroastrian Iranian-American woman has started a project devoted to studying, documenting and thus preserving, Dari, the ancient

Zoroastrian tongue that is still spoken by the Zoroastrians of Iran. Iranian Zoroastrian women living in Diaspora have also returned to Iran to improve the lives of Iranian Zoroastrian women there. For example, Shahin Bekhradnia, recently set up the Pouruchista Foundation in Yazd to teach skills to

young Zoroastrians so that they can earn a living independently.

If the great poet Ferdowsi were writing today, he would indeed have more heroes to write about. Iranian Zoroastrian women have certainly met the challenges of their times, with intellect, strength, compassion and integrity. Like Pouruchista, Zarathushtra's daughter, Iranian Zoroastrian women continue to strive to live their lives with wisdom and Asha.



Mitra Mehr is an Iranian-Zoroastrian currently residing in Washington DC. Mitra has participated as a speaker in several conferences, including the 2000 World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston. She also served as representative of FEZANA at the United Nations NGO conference in 2002. Ms. Mehr is a graduate of Brown University (BA) and University of Pennsylvania Law School (JD). She worked as a corporate finance attorney in New York prior to joining the United States Securities and Exchange Commission.



The women appearing on page 20 under the banner of 'Daughters of Mashyani' were selected to the Hall of Fame at the 7th World Zoroastrian Congress, Houston, 2000, who were part of the chosen 20. - Ed

Iran's most ancient Standard

Shahdah Standard which dates back to the Iron Age, is the most ancient flag which has ever been discovered in Iran. This flag along with more than 150 prehistoric and historic relics

will go on display for the first time for public visit in Unseen Exhibition in second floor of Iran's National Museum from 28th of May.



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Shahin Bekhradnia
is WZO board member

The Love of Truth in Ancient Iran

by stanley insler

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*h*erodotus, the Greek historian who was a contemporary of the great King Darius of ancient Iran, wrote in his remarkable history that the Persians esteemed the truth above all things. He went on to say, speaking with great respect, that the Persians hold it unlawful to speak of anything which is unlawful to do, and according to their thinking, the most disgraceful thing in the world is to tell a lie. This veneration of the truth among the ancient Iranians was indeed their most noteworthy feature, and throughout the history of the land, there was not a single foreigner who came to visit or to live among them who was not strikingly impressed by the love and respect of truth in that country. Through the passage of centuries, in the works of Greeks, Chinese, Indians and Arabs, this love and respect for the truth is mentioned endless times as perhaps the remarkable trait of all Iranians.

What these foreign visitors wrote was no myth, no embroidery upon hearsay or rumour, no pipe dream of their own arising from the lack of ethic or moral principles in their own countries. Recent evidence has shown us that truth was indeed associated with the spirit and life of the ancient Persians in such an intimate fashion that we ourselves today must take serious note of the honoured and important role it played in their world. I am referring here to the archaeological records unearthed during the past few decades in the excavations at Persepolis in Iran.

These records are naturally of great interest to the economic and political scholar because they represent the accounts of the different sorts of wares and products stored at the treasury and fortress of the Achaemenid kings, those royal rulers who founded and maintained a vast and powerful empire through the Near East that endured from the 6th through the 4th century BC. But, to cultural and religious scholars these records from Persepolis offer equal fascination, chiefly because the tablets containing these economic records are also accompanied by the names of the officials who were in charge of these inventories and their distribution. There are some 1,500 such names contained in the tablets – names not of kings or princes, nor priests and judges: simply names of minor officials and clerks who oversaw the wares in the storehouses. Herein lies their importance: they give us a glimpse into the social constituency of the common people, much as the names contained in the old records of towns and villages allow us to see the composition and character of the society of early communities.

Remarkably, more than 75 of these names contain the word truth. We encounter men called 'Protector of truth' (*artapana*), 'Lover of truth' (*artakama*), 'Truth-minded' (*artamanah*), 'Possessing the splendour of truth' (*artafarnah*), 'Delighting in truth' (*artazusta*), 'Pillar of truth' (*artastuna*), 'Prospering the truth' (*artafrada*), 'Having the nobility of truth' (*artahunara*), in addition to a variety of others of similar composition. When we look further and find other fellows are named 'Strong as a horse' (*aspaugra*), 'Sweet smelling' (*hubaodi*), 'Little hero' (*viraka*), 'Having good fame' (*usavah*), 'Winning a good prize' (*humizda*), and the like, we realize at once how singular are the names containing the word truth.

By this I intend the following. If the majority of other names are built with elements signifying horses, heroes, fame, wealth, prizes, good fortune and all those other desirable things which parents wish for their children when they are born, then the great many truth-names show us that there were many parents who believed it was more important for their children to love the truth, uphold the truth, prosper the truth, delight in the truth, and so forth, rather than to simply seek after material benefits in this world.

The name chosen by parents for their children often expresses a wish, and the predominance of truth-names among the Old Persian Officials reveals how deep-seated was the wish and respect for truth over all things even among families of humble origins.

But it was not only the common man who so dearly esteemed the truth among the ancient Persians. It was also the great Achaemenid kings themselves who expressed their love and admiration for the truth and their thorough despise of lie and deceit, exactly as Herodotus informs us. On the great inscription of Bisotun, the magnificent King Darius incised the following words with imposing solemnity:

“The Lie made these provinces rebellious, so that they deceived the people. But afterwards Ahura Mazda placed them into my hand ... Thou who shalt be king hereafter, protect thyself vigorously from Deceit. Punish well the man who shall lie and deceive, if thou shalt hope to keep the country secure ... Know that I did this by the favour of Ahura Mazda, who bore me assistance because I was not aggressive, because I was not a follower of deceit, because I was not a doer of wrong – neither I nor my family. I conducted myself as befits the truth. Neither to the weaker nor to the powerful did I do wrong ... Thou who shalt be king hereafter, do not be a friend to the follower of deceit nor to the doer of wrong. Punish them well.”

Similarly on another of his inscriptions stand these noble words:

“By the grace of Ahura Mazda I delight in what is right; I do not delight in what is false. It is not my desire that the weak should be mistreated by the mighty, nor that the mighty be treated wrongly by the weak. What is right and truthful is my desire.”

Lastly, let us quote the following statement in an inscription of King Xerxes:

“If you wish to be happy when living and blessed when dead, have respect for the law established by Ahura Mazda and worship him and truth reverently. The man who has respect for the law established by Ahura Mazda and worships him and the truth reverently, such a man becomes happy while living and blessed when he is dead.”

These solemn words of the Old Persian kings are but an echo of the teachings of the more ancient prophet Zarathushtra. In his stirring works called the Gathas, we find the important thought that

“If a man be rich or poor, he should be a friend to the truthful person but an enemy to the follower of deceit and lies.” (Y47.4)

There too we learn that heavenliness and immortality shall be the future possession of those who support the truthful in this world, but that a lifetime of darkness and a woeful existence shall be the final reward of the deceitful person. Further, Zarathushtra tells us, that a man who is good to the truthful person and serves the laws of *Ahura Mazda* shall himself reach the pastures of truth and good thinking, and save his family and his village and his country from destruction. In fact, when we read through the great words of the prophet, we realize that truth lies at the center of his whole moral and ethical system, so it therefore seems necessary to briefly describe the position of truth in Zarathushtra’s teachings.

First and foremost we see in the prophet’s work that there is an intimate relationship between god and truth. Not only does *Ahura Mazda* dwell in the heights of truth and in the paths which follow the straight ways of truth, but he is also of the same temperament as truth, sharing the same likes and dislikes. But the relationship between god and truth is deeper – so Zarathushtra informs us – because – *Ahura Mazda* is both the creator and companion of truth. Further, we are told, that the spirit of god himself, the *spenta mainyu*, became beneficent and virtuous through the effects of truth and that *Ahura Mazda* learned to distinguish between what is just and unjust through the help of truth. Truth, then, according to the prophet’s view, is the most essential component in the world of

god because it motivated him to create what is salutary and good, and it taught him to discern between right and wrong. It is through truth, therefore, that god achieved his nobility and his higher wisdom which characterise his very name *Ahura Mazda*, the Wise Lord.

Similarly, truth plays a dominant role in the life of man. It is truth which prospers the creatures and makes the plants and waters increase. It is through the quest for truth that good understanding arises in the spirit of man, an understanding that teaches him to further the principles of god in good thoughts, in good words and in good actions. It is truth which also teaches man to discern between what is right and wrong. It is man's adherence to truth which gives full meaning to the existence of god and grants strength and enduring life to him as well. Can the ethical principles God created have any life of their own if they find no support in the world of mankind?

Herein lies one of the great contributions of the prophet Zarathushtra. By placing truth at the center of existence of both god and man, he taught us that a meaningful life is not possible without truth, because truth is the ultimate source of all good insight, all good action, all good discernment and all good achievement.

To know is essential to act correctly and justly, and the origin of all correct knowledge derives from the grasp of the truth. This is an astonishing doctrine in terms of the early intellectual history of the world, but it is a doctrine that is so powerful and persuasive, so vigorous and positive, that it became the central idea of all early Iranian thought. It is not possible to think of the history of old Iran without thinking of the veneration of truth among its people, and it is Zarathushtra who first conceived and formulated the central role which truth holds in all existence.

But we may well ask why Zarathushtra was so preoccupied with the position of truth in the life of both god and man. He lived in a very remote age, long before there was a settled society in any modern sense of the term, and certainly long before the development of rich and powerful kingdoms where priests or philosophers could gather in peace and quiet in order to discuss the chief questions of existence and the nature of both god and man.

To find an answer to this question we must once again look into the works of the prophet and search his own words for clues to the problems Zarathushtra himself faced, problems which caused him to meditate upon the nature of human behaviour and its results upon the human condition. Once we do this, we find certain disturbing facts about the times in which he lived.

First, let us note, that Zarathushtra informs us that some of the nobles have been stealing the possessions of the true inheritors, and that in their greed, some of the priests have assisted them in this deceitful and dishonest activity. He informs us as well that even the old gods have ordained and hence permitted their followers to perform actions that result in dismal consequences for the rest of mankind. They have been destroying the pasture lands of the truthful persons, they have threatened them as well, and there has arisen a rift among the peoples, one which has caused strife and destruction in family, clans and provinces. In short, the world seems to be torn in two by conflicting forces, and deceit and destruction seem rampant.

It is exactly under such troubled circumstances, when the world seems to be caught in the upheaval of contrary forces, when the past seems unfortunate and the future ever so dim, that a man of great insight like Zarathushtra wonders about what is right and wrong, what is just and unjust, and how the way to salvation might occur. It is exactly under such vexing conditions that he saw that the way for mankind to survive and create a good kingdom here on earth was to follow the principles which *Ahura Mazda*, in his higher wisdom, had created in harmony with truth.

Although millennia separate us today from the time of the prophet Zarathushtra, the problems of existence still persist. We are torn each day by conflict, sometimes in our family, sometimes in our profession, sometimes in our country and sometimes in the world at large.

We see deception, theft, pointless destruction present all over the face of the globe. Which way should we act? we often ask, looking for the way to resolve the problem, to end the anguish. What should we believe? we also ask, looking for guidance in the face of trouble and woes. Sometimes the answer lies within our power; most often there is no solution available to us on an individual basis. Nonetheless, we should follow the teachings of Zarathushtra and strive after the truth, giving life to it through our good thoughts, our good words and our good actions. Even though immediate solutions may elude us, the force of truth must persist. For one day the truth shall certainly prevail.

Thus in conclusion, I would like to paraphrase the words of Zarathushtra. What the prophet stated some 3,000 years ago is equally appropriate for all of us today.

“Do persevere, for he shall grant to you the firm foundation of good thinking and the alliance of truth and wisdom. Come to terms with your reason, and bring to realization the most virtuous and blessed acts. If you are truthful to the truthful, the Wise Lord shall grant to you the sun-like gain of good thinking for your whole lifetime. I tell these words to you: bear them in mind. Through the correct conception acquire for yourselves and your people an existence of good thinking. Let each of you try to win the other with truth, for this shall be of good gain for each of you.” (Y53.3-5)



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Related box to the article appearing overleaf

Seerse (Xerxes) is an opera by George Frideric Handel first performed in London on April 15, 1738. Although based on a historical character, the story itself is entirely fictional. According to the synopsis on Wikipedia, King Xerxes is determined to wed Romilda; Romilda loves Xerxes' brother, Arsamene; Arsamene loves Romilda; Romilda's sister Atalanta is determined to make Arsamene hers. Xerxes banishes Arsamene, who sends a note to Romilda through his servant Elviro, disguised as a flower vendor, pledging his eternal fidelity, but it is delivered instead to Atalanta, who shows it to her sister claiming that it was



addressed to Atalanta. Arsamene and Romilda fight. Xerxes pursues Romilda, and tells her father Ariodante that Romilda must wed, by the king's command, a member of Xerxes' family, equal in blood to himself. Ariodante mistakenly thinks he is referring to his brother Arsamene rather than himself. Amastre, Xerxes' fiancée, forsaken by him for Romilda, disguises herself as a man and observes Xerxes. After Arsamene and Romilda wed, Amastre reveals herself to Xerxes, who becomes ashamed of his faithlessness. Amastre accepts his apology. ■■■

Imagining Xerxes

by farishta murzban dinshaw

although Achaemenian kings Cyrus and Darius have “the Great” attached to their name, the Achaemenian king who gets the most mileage in Western media is Xerxes I. “Xerxes” is the Greek transliteration of the Persian name Khshayarsha meaning “ruler of heroes”. He has played a lead character in a long line of books and films and there is even an opera named after him, although its plot is farcical rather than historical. [see box page 37] Most of the stories revolve around two aspects of Xerxes’s life – the war with the Greeks, and the Biblical love story from *The Book of Esther*.

WAR WITH THE GREEKS

Most of what we know of the war, and therefore Xerxes, is from the writings of the Greek historian Herodotus, which is undoubtedly biased in favour of the Greeks. The king prepared for the war against the Greek states for several years before embarking on the venture. This included having a channel dug through the peninsula of Mount Athos. [see related story on page 19].

LASHING THE WAVES

Part of the contempt with which Xerxes is regarded in the West is expressed in the following story, in which Xerxes is depicted as a superstitious megalomaniac depicted by the Greek historian Herodotus. Xerxes had a boat-bridge built to cross the Hellespont strait [in modern day Turkey] which separated Asia from Europe. This was a challenging task, for the bridge had to stretch over a mile, it involved stringing together many boats, and success depended on the sea remaining calm. Herodotus reports that after a storm destroyed the bridge and delayed Xerxes from crossing into Greece, he was so

incensed that he ordered the waves to be lashed 300 times and cursed aloud, “You hateful water, our master lays his judgement on you thus, for you have unjustly punished him even though he’s done you no wrong! Xerxes the king will pass over you, whether you wish it or not! It is fitting that no man offer you sacrifices, for you’re a muddy and salty river!”¹

THE BATTLE OF THERMOPYLAE

This is the famous story of how 300 Spartans stalled an enormous Persian army. To inflate the significance of the victory, it is said that the Persian army consisted of a million warriors, but academics have reduced this number to a much more realistic figure. In all fairness though, the Persian army forces did overwhelmingly outnumber the collective Greek forces led by King Leonidas and his 300 Spartans. However, the numbers did not matter once the Spartans blocked a strategic pass because the Persian armies could not advance. After three days of holding off, the Persians won because a disgruntled local betrayed the Greeks by revealing a mountain path that led behind the Greek lines. However, the resistance of Leonidas’s army gave Athens the precious time to prepare for a naval battle that ultimately defeated the Persians. This historical incident was celebrated by the Greeks as symbol of courage against overwhelming odds.

XERXES AND ESTHER

Xerxes is also believed by some scholars to be Ahaseuris the King in the biblical *Book of Esther*, though some Jewish scholars are skeptical about this. The Book recounts



Stamp with Xerxes & Esther

the story of Hadassah, a Jewish orphan and ward of her cousin, Mordecai. When Xerxes's Persian queen Vashti refused the king's summons to appear at a feast where he wanted to show off her beauty to his guests, she is dismissed because of the potentially harmful implications of this act – what if other women, hearing of the queen's disobedience, refused to obey their husbands? Xerxes then ordered an empire-wide search for a beautiful young woman to be his queen. Hadassah was one of the chosen women and to protect her Jewish identity, she was advised by Mordecai to adopt a Babylonian name Esther, which means "hidden". Esther's beauty and intelligence attracted the king's favour and she was chosen to become his queen. One day, while Xerxes' prime minister Haman was out riding his horse all the people bowed to him except Mordecai, who said that he would bow to no one but his God. This enraged Haman, and he plotted to kill all Jews in the Persian empire. He managed to get the king's approval for this plan. Distraught, Esther revealed her Jewish identity to the king and told him of Haman's plan to massacre the Jews. According to Persian law, royal edicts could not be reversed, even by the king. Instead, Xerxes issued a second edict allowing the Jews to bear arms to defend themselves, and after punishing Haman, he made Mordecai his new prime minister. The Jews established an annual feast, the feast of Purim, in memory of Esther's courage and their deliverance.

There have been numerous versions of Xerxes and Esther's story in films and novels because it is a love story rivaling that of Othello and Desdemona or Tristan and Isolde for its secrets, treachery and palace intrigue. In the retelling, many authors and screenwriters add their own slant to make it their own story. For instance, Tommy Tenney's novel *Hadassah: One Night with the King* (2004) claims that Vashti refused to come at the feast because Xerxes wanted her to appear naked. Rebecca Kohn, in *The Gilded Chamber: A Novel of Queen Esther* (2004) focuses on Esther's life in the palace at Susa and describes "the

harem of Xerxes as a place of living death" and shows Mordecai as Esther's unrequited love interest. Ellen Gunderson Traylor's *Esther: The Story of a Woman Who Saved a Nation* (1988) portrays Xerxes as caught between his duties as a king and his love for Vashti, and actually reunites him with his Persian queen at Esther's behest at the end of the story.

The movie *One Night with the King* (2006) portrays Xerxes as a bare-chested, Harlequin romance-like hero blindly besotted with Esther.



One Night with the King (2006)

Similarly, there is no denying that the story of the Battle at Thermopylae has all the hallmarks of a good drama – patriotism, betrayal, sweeping action, individual acts of resistance. It also has some remarkably quotable exchanges, the kind that rousing dramas are made of. Greek accounts state that when Xerxes asked Leonidas to surrender his arms, his reply was, "Come and get them." Another story is that when a Spartan soldier was informed that Persian arrows would be so numerous they would blot out the sun, he is said to have replied, "So much the better, we shall fight in the shade." It is important, therefore, to distinguish that the recent controversy around the movie *300* (2007) is not about the story, but rather the portrayal of the Persians. In the film, they are shown as vicious and warmongering in comparison to the honourable and valiant Greeks. This story has been portrayed before on celluloid in *300 Spartans*



Xerxes & Leonidas in 300 (2007)

(1962) without inflammation, but it is the timing of the movie *300* and the subversive anti-Persian/Iran message that makes it septic. King Xerxes is particularly maligned. He is played by Brazilian actor Rodrigo Santoro as a giant, androgynous egomaniac with outlandish makeup and

multiple piercings, very different from Herodotus description of him as, "Among all this multitude of [Persian] men, there was not one who, for beauty and stature,

deserved more than Xerxes himself to wield so vast a power."² The fact that Xerxes attempted negotiations for surrender with King Leonidas on two separate occasions is not highlighted as admirable, but as arrogance. The screenwriters do not show that Xerxes is said to have wept when he reviewed his large army before starting for Greece and asked, "Of all this multitude, who shall say how many will return?" How could they? It would have meant showing both kings as honourable soldiers and the battle for what it was – as all wars are – for power and control rather than a glorious fight for ideals of freedom and democracy.

So, which one is the real Xerxes – the vainglorious warrior or the infatuated lover? As they say, the past is what actually happened and history is what somebody writes down. Authors, artists and filmmakers are allowed poetic liberties.

Gary Leupp, a Professor of History, and Adjunct Professor of Comparative Religion at Tufts University, suggested in his review of 300³ that the American viewers would be better served to re-imagine a different Xerxes from the one depicted in the movie.

Imagine a Xerxes who addresses the American audience, including the Christian fundamentalist audience, as follows: "I am Xerxes, Emperor of Persia, son of Darius, grandson of Cyrus. My grandfather Cyrus liberated the Jews from their Babylonian exile and let them return to Judea and rebuild their temple. My father Darius urged our people to revere the 'God of Daniel.' I myself married Esther, a Jew.

"I come from a long line of believers in the One God preached by Zarathustra, our

Persian prophet whose teachings have influenced the Jews during their exile among us. I refer specifically to their concepts of Satan, Heaven and the future Messiah which weren't part of their pre-exile belief system and are clearly borrowings from our Persian religion.

"I am now embarking on the conquest of Greece, a backward region populated by primitive polytheists who worship capricious amoral deities and practice absurd religious rites. But my ancestors and I, having already conquered many Ionian Greeks, respect Greek philosophers and indeed have many of them in our employ. We have established a multi-ethnic empire. In that empire, Greeks fill important roles from the Mediterranean to India.

"These Spartans confronting us at Thermopylae are cruel men who annually - for sport! - make war on the defenseless helots that live around them. They have nothing to tell us Persians - or the world in general - about 'freedom'!"



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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".

A Kaleidoscope of Multiple Histories

by amrita gupta singh

- Photojournalist, Homai Vyarawalla

h istorians often regard photographs as a critical form of documentary evidence that hold up a mirror to past events. Public and scholarly faith in the realism of the photographic image is grounded in a belief that a photograph is a mechanical reproduction of reality. Susan Sontag captured the essence of that faith in her monumental reverie *On Photography* when she wrote "Photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it. In teaching us a new visual code, photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have a right to observe. They are a grammar and, even more importantly, an ethics of seeing. Finally, the most grandiose result of the photographic enterprise is to give us the sense that we can hold the whole world in our heads — as an anthology of images. Photographs really are experience captured, and the camera is the ideal arm of consciousness in its acquisitive mood".

The camera is often posited as the most important invention since the printing press. For the "evolution of sensibility", the invention of the camera is perhaps even more important. Pertinent questions of "modernity" and of "modernist" taste and important aesthetic, moral, and political problems have been underscored via the camera, situating the photographer in a certain relationship with the premises of knowledge, power and also history. It is in this context that one can understand the photographs of India's first woman photojournalist, Homai Vyarawalla. A kaleidoscope of the last days of the British empire and the optimism and jubilation of a new nation and also its undelivered promises is evidenced through these photographs. A woman of extraordinary grit and talent, Vyarawalla's life story and professional career is lucidly presented in

the book, "**India in Focus: Camera Chronicles**" written by the independent documentary filmmaker and pedagogue, Sabeena Gadihoke. Poignant and intimate, the narrative is full of the everyday experiences of Vyarawalla that gives an insight into her formidable personality that pursued a dream with great passion and determination, despite the socio-cultural implications of a conservative Parsi background and economic hardships, especially during her early years.

These remarkable photographs were all but lost and Homai Vyarawalla, forgotten by her peers, decided to quit active photojournalism in 1970, at the age of fifty-seven. Homai herself did not gauge the value of these pictures as she saw photography as a mode of earning a living, with no plans for preserving them for future generations, but one can also sense some pain and resignation in her statements at the state of affairs in a country where Mahatma Gandhi is also forgotten, as she raises the question of why would she be remembered for her work in such an apathetic situation. Homai's humility, warmth and fortitude engages the reader, as the tapestry of her life is woven with great care by the author, in both the insightful essays and extraordinary black and white photographs, that are eye-openers to a historical era, that was turbulent in its dimensions of change and buoyant in its notions of freedom and modern progress.

For twenty-three years, these invaluable chronicles of India's history remained locked up in cupboards and boxes, and the worst happened when Homai lost her best negatives while in transit between two cities, and some other prints and photographs were burnt by her as she thought of them to be of no use! Always a person who maintained a low profile,

Homai's retirement further isolated her from the public eye, until a Delhi based photographer discovered her name in the only male list of press photographers in the Press Information Bureau records, and after fifty years of photographing her life experiences, Homai Vyarawalla was finally recognized and lauded by the public for her work. In the largely undocumented history of photography in India, Homai's recognition is long due in the context of visiting foreign photographers to India like Henri Cartier Bresson and Margaret Bourke-White who were enthusiastically commended for their contribution to photography, than their Indian peers.

Born in 1913 in a middle-class Parsi family with a priestly background in Navsari, Gujarat, Homai's father was a romanticist, who initially trained as an artist, but later took up acting as a profession in a traveling Urdu-Parsi theatre company with irregular income, while her mother was a homemaker who was progressive and supportive of Homai's efforts, despite living within the parameters of a conservative male-dominated Parsi society, which frowned upon a woman who traversed established boundaries. But as a Westernised community which adapted to the manners and customs of the British, Homai's parents were keen on an English education for their daughter, which she acquired in a cosmopolitan school in Bombay and was the only girl in her class to acquire a matriculation. Homai can be described to be a quiet rebel and several examples are cited in the book, such as removing the *mathubanu* or head-gear or hiding the *sudreh* when she stepped out of her home, and even circumventing the dogmas around menstruation, which forbade girls to step out of their homes, in innovative ways! This spirit is also evidenced in the fact that she met her fiancé, Maneckshaw, at the age of 13 (a blasphemous thought in those days) and married him after fifteen years, after completing her college education from St. Xaviers (an Economics degree) and a Diploma in Arts Teachers' Course from the JJ School Of Arts respectively, all this

achieved within frugal means and a supportive mother, who provided wings for her daughter to grow independently. Homai's interest in photography was fuelled by Maneckshaw, and both were self taught, learning from popular photography journals that Kodak and Agfa published. The couple photographed and worked together in the darkroom, constantly experimenting with photographic printing processes and developing films. Their first pictures on toddy cultivation were published in the *Orient Illustrated Weekly*, as part of the Prohibition Campaign against drinking initiated by Gandhi, but the Parsi community was rather marginalized in this campaign, as they supported toddy cultivation and also drank it regularly (both men and women). Such controversies regarding the dichotomous relation of the Parsis with the Indian Freedom Struggle as highlighted in this book, via the ironical use of these pictures taken by a Parsi couple, make for great reading. The first pictures Homai took on her own without Maneckshaw's help were published in full page, in the *Bombay Chronicle* in 1939-40. They were pictures of a picnic party of the women's club of the J J School of Art, and engaging portraits of her friends. Painting didn't bring any money, and Homai earned her first pay through the publishing of these photographs. It was something completely novel, not being explored by any other woman.

Maneckshaw was a sort of pioneer in making stories in pictures of all the activities of human beings, the general public, like cottage industries, hospitals, activities of the streets, Parsis, festivals and on their sojourns together, he had only one Rolleiflex with him. Whenever Homai saw something that interested her, she would shoot from the same camera and Maneckshaw would sell them in his name, because the publishers and editors knew his name. It was only later when the Second World War broke out, and documentary footage of civil life became an important tool for the British to mobilize public opinion, that Homai's pictorial essays of the War Effort and images of scientific and social transformation were published in the

Illustrated Weekly in 1941-42 with her own name; also images of Parsi women in various forms of rescue activities also posited various possibilities of women working in public life outside the home. The author again raises here several pertinent questions of the position of Indians who were engaged in the nationalist struggle against colonial rule, while participating for any 'national emergency' with the British in the War Effort against fascism, contradictory in a national politics when Gandhi initiated the Quit India movement in 1942 itself. After a particular assignment on the Blind School at Tardeo, Homai and Maneckshaw's names were recommended to establish the headquarters of the Far Eastern Bureau of the British Information Services in Delhi, and the subjects of her pictures changed from the everyday images in Bombay to chronicling political events and political personalities in Delhi. The British Information Service gave Homai permission to continue with her freelance work after office hours. She also worked for *Onlooker*, a paper about the evening functions of the high society people of Delhi. Maneckshaw set up the studios, and remained in the office, while Homai used to go about taking pictures, covering official functions, embassies, activities of the British, and portraits and efforts of the Freedom Struggle, these images serving as a kind of "nationalist iconography". Homai was not directly involved in the nationalist struggle, but she wanted a photographer's view of things, and moved about Delhi unescorted. A quaint sight in Delhi of the 1940s and 1950s, the sari-clad Homai bicycled around the town and clicked some of history's most unforgettable images of people and events. She carried her cumbersome equipment herself, kept a low profile and discouraged people from focusing on her, and she shared an easy camaraderie with her male colleagues, effortlessly balancing home and work, in a male-dominated profession.

There was a lot of political activity in Delhi and Homai was accredited with the Government of India. There were no restrictions on press photographers in

Rashtrapati Bhavan, which was then Government House. Delhi erupted during the Partition, and given the violence on the streets, Homai laid aside her camera for some time. With the dawn of Independence and the accompanying euphoria, Homai resumed her assignments and rare photographs of Mohammed Ali Jinnah before he left for Pakistan became a part of her portfolio. Of the politicians of that time, Homai photographed Jawaharlal Nehru the most. A heroic and elegant figure, Nehru dominated the early phase of post-independence politics as Prime-Minister for seventeen years, and was also very approachable and accommodative towards photographers. The "iconic space that he occupied in the public imagination" and the promise that his position held for the masses are evocatively captured by Homai. Entering the corridors of power and armed with a camera, Homai shot intimate portraits of her era (including Nehru smoking, which he never did in public or Nehru and Vijayalakshmi Pandit hugging impromptu in a familial moment, Nehru nodding off during a public speech, the arrival of Lord Mountbatten and the formal transfer of national power to Nehru and also the visit of President Ho Chi Minh of Vietnam) and she always waited for that right moment, where the protagonist is not in a staged posture, but engaged in normal activities. Like other photojournalists, Homai employed formalist devices like a low angle shot, daylight flash and backlight flash to isolate the background from the protagonist, in black and white.

Homai vividly captured the dawn of Independence, the euphoric celebrations, Mahatma Gandhi's rallies and his funeral (and the mass hysteria that accompanied his assassination and the private grief of Nehru and Shastri) and also the first Republic Day parade. The Nehruvian era also brought in promises of modern progress and nation building with centralized Five Year Plans, the Green Revolution, steel plants, dams and nuclear reactors and also visits by dignitaries who lauded the vision of Nehru; in the 1950's-60's Homai diligently documented

ceremonial occasions, grand arrivals and departures of international leaders, receptions and banquets, visits to dams, steel plants, memorial sites and national rituals, a repertoire of a fractured modernity where the old contested for space, with the new. Consequent funerals of Nehru and Shastri were eloquently shot, and also Indira Gandhi's forays in national politics, where she sought to carry on the legacy of her father is part of her immense portfolio. Apart from these, there are also intimate shots of Homai with her family, friends and colleagues and humorous accounts of her mishaps with the camera, especially in the presence of dignitaries.

A conscious thinker, Homai's photographs are about personal and collective ideologies and they mirror the social and political conditions under which they were made. By the late 60's, Homai grew increasingly disillusioned with the pitfalls of Indian Socialism and her form of protest and critique was giving up photography altogether, and devoting time to her family. After such a hectic professional life spent with male colleagues, Homai found it rather difficult to make friends, especially female friends, and given the gender equations of her time, she was marked as being different, yet her warmth, dedication and genteelness won her friends from all over the world. A remarkable biography and a remarkable book, Sabeena Gadihoke, with immense sensitivity and clarity, presents to us the life experiences of a monumental personality, whose pictorial essays trace the birth and growth of a new nation, and posits the role of photography vis-a-vis our history and culture. The narrative and photographs gives us an immense amount of experience that is normally not our experience, and aestheticizes the trajectories via which we choose to look at and understand India's past and our contextual identity as its citizens.



Amrita Gupta-Singh is an art historian and writer, with an interest in arts management, and actively contributes articles on art and artists, for various art galleries, journals and web magazines.

Archiving "Camera Chronicles of Homai Vyarawalla"

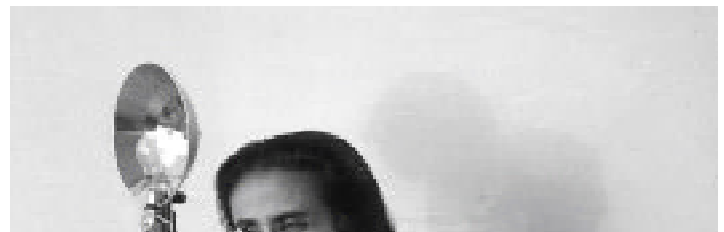
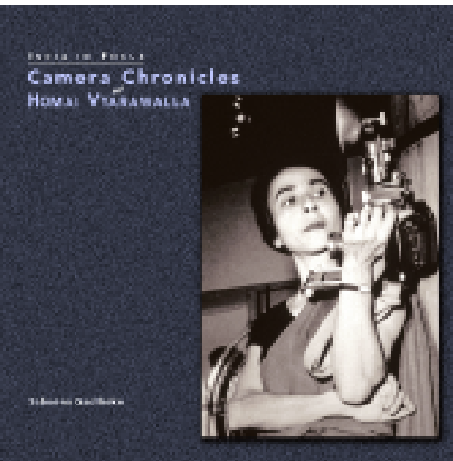
by sabeena gadihoke

*f*ate makes some decisions for you. One of them was a train journey to Baroda in 1997 and the other was a flight two years before that. During the winter of 1995, I found myself in a cold and snowy university town in the US where a wonderful course that I credited called 'Women In Photography' opened up a vast panorama of practices and histories of women, most of who had not received the kind of recognition that they should have. On my return, I traveled to Baroda in 1997 to begin shooting a documentary film called Three Women and a Camera on three photographers. The film was for me the beginning of a similar inquiry into a larger history of early photography in India and for names that had been forgotten in that history. One of the women in my film was an incredible woman called Homai Vyarawalla. She was India's first woman press photographer with an active career from the late 'thirties to 1970. During these three decades, Homai's camera was witness to the major upheavals of the birth of the new nation as well as growing disenchantment with its undelivered promises. Completely anonymous after her self-imposed retirement from photography, Homai had been 're-discovered' in the late 'eighties by photographer Satish Sharma who had found her name among a list of men at the Press Information Bureau (PIB) library in Delhi. In 1998 I began to audio-tape interviews with Homai Vyarawalla as part of a grant for a study on women photographers in India by India Foundation for the Arts, Bangalore. Four years later, it became quite evident that the final journey of this 'work in progress' should culminate in a book. Finding a publisher was daunting not because of a lack of interest in the subject matter but because mounting such a book with black and white photographs would be an expensive proposition. This was when the Parzor Foundation stepped in, in 2002 to raise money for this project and to support us.

Homai Vyarawalla's life spans almost a century and she is a product of several cultural spaces. Urdu-Parsi theatre in the twenties (her father was an actor in a traveling Urdu Parsi theatre company), Parsi Bombay in the thirties (where she grew up), her arts



The Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama walking across the border in 1956



One of Homai's favourite pictures - a private moment of Nehru embracing his sister Vijayalakshmi Pandit. Taken in 1954.

"A very young girl, wearing a practical sari and with a very becoming hairstyle ..." wrote Amita Malik in The Statesman about Homai

school background (she studied at the JJ School of Arts in Bombay), nationalist politics in Delhi, the city she made her home for twenty-seven years, early photo-journalism in India, diplomatic culture in the capital (as she was an employee of the British High Commission) are just a few. It was a rich hybrid and cosmopolitan culture from which Homai emerged, a secular history that the Parsi community in particular can understandably be proud of. It is ironic that she has spent the past two decades of her life in the state of Gujarat that has in recent times seen one of the biggest threats to this secular culture. These were some of the cultural spaces and histories layered my research, an exciting journey, as it brought together three disciplines of interest: media, that I teach at the AJK Mass Communication Centre at Jamia University, history my subject of under graduate study and gender studies which layers a lot of what I do today.

Researching the book has meant delving into several archives, the most significant of which is Homai Vyarawalla's own memory. Razor sharp even at the age of ninety-three Homai is often amused about how public memory can also be 'constructed.' For instance she has often got into arguments with people who hold that her pictures of the first unfurling of the flag at Red Fort in Delhi by Prime Minister Nehru were taken on August 15th, 1947 when in fact the ceremony actually happened the next day! The actual day had a late start because of the midnight ceremony on August 14th/15th. While the book features over five hundred photographs, it also has other narratives from Homai's personal collection of memorabilia: identity cards, family photographs, testimonials, newspaper clippings and casual notes that have helped piece together her history and the history of her times. Homai's friendship with Hugh McInnes, her former Australian boss for instance spanned over sixty years and two continents. This relationship was reconstructed by letters: his, meticulously kept by Homai and hers, found in a box by his daughter a year after he passed away in 2004. While I also depended on official archives, there were other details of cultural life that don't find space in books: Social life in Delhi

of the fifties, early English theatre, marriages and more personal accounts of partition and other events around independence that Homai photographed. For this I relied on personal sources: Homai's contemporaries, colleagues, friends, and others to understand an era before my time that has not yet found its way into official history.

Homai Vyarawalla may have been best known for her political photographs but there were hundreds of others that gave rich insights into social and cultural life in Bombay of the 'thirties and Delhi through the 'forties, 'fifties and 'sixties. These images were sifted through scores of negative jackets and boxes of prints on lazy and hot summer afternoons. She would often identify them for me by while cooking wonderful meals in the kitchen. Homai "Kabadiwalla" as she calls herself, lives alone in Baroda and relies on her own 'handyperson' skills (she is also a carpenter, architect, cobbler, plumber, tailor and barber among others!) to survive, much like "Robinson Crusoe on an island." Our relationship grew in the midst of all of this and through letters written to me by her over nine years in her elegant handwriting. When the manuscript was complete, these letters didn't fit anywhere but somehow it seemed right to have them there, as yet another narrative. They finally found place in the endpapers of the book as they trace the transformation of our relationship; A friendship between two women who have been born exactly half a century apart.



Photographs with the consent of Sabeena Gadihoke and PARZOR



Sabeena with 94-year Homai

Sabeena Gadihoke's book, Camera Chronicles of Homai Vyarawalla was released in 2006 by Mapin and the Parzor Foundation. Gadihoke teaches Video and Television Production at the AJK Mass Communication Research Centre at Jamia University, Delhi. Parts of this article have been published before in Better Photography, May 2006 and this piece was published in the Telegraph, Calcutta in 2006. Sabeena now shares it with Hamazor.

Avesthagen & Dr Villoo Morawala-Patell

a Special Jury of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry selected Dr Villoo Morawala-Patell as the 'Outstanding Woman Entrepreneur for the year 2005-2006', the award ceremony for which was held at the FICCI headquarters in New Delhi. The lady, who is the Founder, Vice Chairperson and Managing Director of *Avesthagen* (Bangalore), the Chairman of *AQUAS* (Hyderabad) and *Avgen Inc.* (USA), was also declared to be the 'Entrepreneur of the Year 2006' at the BioSpectrum awards function in Bangalore.

Through an innovative business model, which combines product development and services, Patell received the awards 'in recognition of her efforts in steering *Avesthagen* into the league of top BioTech companies in India'. She is a first generation scientist who founded her company in 1998, and focused on the novel idea of preventive personalized healthcare. She was declared 'Entrepreneur of the Year' as 'since its inception, *Avesthagen* has grown into one of India's leading healthcare technology groups'. Along with its agri-biotechnologies product pipeline, the company also develops scientifically validated bioactive nutraceuticals from Indian medicinal plants, and is also active in the development of a pipeline of bio-similar drugs'.

Owing to her pioneering work in molecular biology, Dr Patell has built long lasting professional relationships with individuals, institutions and corporates; her work in agri-biotechnology has allowed her to keep such contacts throughout the world.

Patell herself has said, 'This award is in recognition of the unique model of *Avesthagen* pursuing its vision to achieve convergence of food, pharma and population genetics leading to preventive personalized medicine.' A news bureau of Mumbai announced that *Avesthagen* was recently declared a Red Herring Magazine

100 Asia Winner for 2006 for "disruptive innovation", declaring that the award recognized the company as 'an emerging star in Asia', which with stringent evaluation measures, pursues the development of its business model, profitability forecasts, management team and technology. Several patent applications are placed at the credit of Patell and her group, in the field of gene discovery, gene functionality, gene transformation, bioinformatics and biotherapeutics.

K S Jayaraman, in the 'news' of the *Nature Publishing Group* reports that this Bangalore based biotechnological company has launched a project to build a genealogical and medical database of India's Parsi community in a similar way that a national genetic database has been set up in Iceland. 'Fleeing persecution by invading Arabs, the Parsis arrived in India from Persia 1,200 years ago, around the same time that a few hundred Vikings arrived in Iceland'. Having remained relatively inbred the Vikings and Parsis are thought to be particularly genetically homogenous within their respective groups, and researchers hope to use their databases to identify genes involved in diseases to develop new treatments and aids to diagnoses.

Dr Patell has been quoted to have said, "I realized four years ago that I was sitting on a goldmine or a powder keg", and explained that she referred to a powder keg because of the fear that Parsis would soon become extinct due to their inbreeding. Just as in Iceland, the government licensed the genetic information from the national database to *deCODE Genetics* – a biomedical company, Patell hopes to derive the same benefit for the Parsis by having





launched her 1.25-billion-rupee project on 21 March this year. Her database will hold the genetic data and genealogical and medical histories of at least 50,000 Parsis in five years, according to Jayaraman. Eventually, the entire community will become part of the database.

Avesthagen will provide the initial capital, and the rest of the required finances will be raised from 'prosperous sections of the Parsi community and other sources'. Prominent members of the community have been in the picture since four years, and Patell has since been making the case that the information gained would directly benefit the health of the community whose numbers are regrettably dwindling.

Matters, such as who will own the database and who can access the data, will be managed by a council of eminent Parsis. The Indian Council of Medical Research has conceded that the government would have no problem with the commercialization of the community's genetic data as long as their biobanking guidelines (informed consent and data confidentiality amongst other things) are followed. These were some of the 'issues that overshadowed Iceland's plans to establish a database for the health sector'. The deputy chief of ICMR commented that after Iceland, this had become a global issue and that they would have to see what kind of agreement the Parsi community signed with *Avesthagen*.

Dr Patell said that the genome analysis would focus on genetic defects common in the community, such as G6PD deficiency; other likely areas of study might include reduced fertility, ovarian disease, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and breast cancer.

Dr Persis Amrolia - pioneer's gentler transplant in children

*d*r Persis Amrolia, a Great Ormond Street Hospital specialist (London, UK), has pioneered a programme which allows children to have bone marrow transplants without the need for dangerously high doses of chemotherapy.

Dr Amrolia in January of 2007 was made the Fellow of The Royal College of Pathologists and received his Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians of United Kingdom in May 2006. In April of 1997 he obtained his PhD in medicine from the London University.

The Observer and the *Sunday Telegraph* of 4 March 2007, both carry reports on this major breakthrough. The Health Editor of the *Observer* writes "Children who were once too weak to withstand chemotherapy are now being treated with less invasive drugs created by specialists at London's Great Ormond Street Hospital. A study of the first 13 to receive the new therapy has shown that 12 are making a good recovery."

Dr Amrolia informed the *Observer* that the problem with this group of children was that they were very poorly – too sick to withstand the conventional drugs they would normally receive in order to prepare them for a transplant. He added that it had been the case in the past that often patients received a transplant, which cured them of the disease, but the chemotherapy was so powerful that it affected their lungs and livers, and so they would die because of the side effects.

What Dr Amrolia's team have come up with is a new antibody treatment, which kills off the patient's own bone marrow cells, and creates a space in the bone marrow, which can then be filled with the new donor marrow. The antibodies only latch on to the immune bone marrow cells, rather than

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attacking other tissues and organs. They do the same job as the chemotherapy, but without causing the severe lung damage.

An eye-catching, ironical and dramatic headline of the *Sunday Telegraph*, **Terror toxin**

'could save children' reveals that the toxin at the center of the alleged al-Qaeda plot to kill thousands of Londoners in 2003, is the one to be used to help children undergoing dangerous "last resort" bone marrow transplants. Amrolia's study has found that ricin – which was to have been allegedly used in 2003 to poison the London public – can allow children, with leukaemia and other life-threatening illnesses, 'to have "half-matched" transplants, by "killing" cells that would otherwise harm them'.

A half match is a term used to describe a "last resort" transplant when the bone marrow is taken from one of the child's parents. The toxin could help these children because 'in a half-match transplant, immune cells have to be removed from the donor bone marrow to stop them "attacking" the child, and causing an often fatal condition known as "graft versus host disease" (GVHD). Without these immune cells, however, the patient has little ability to fight off infection or the return of leukaemia.'

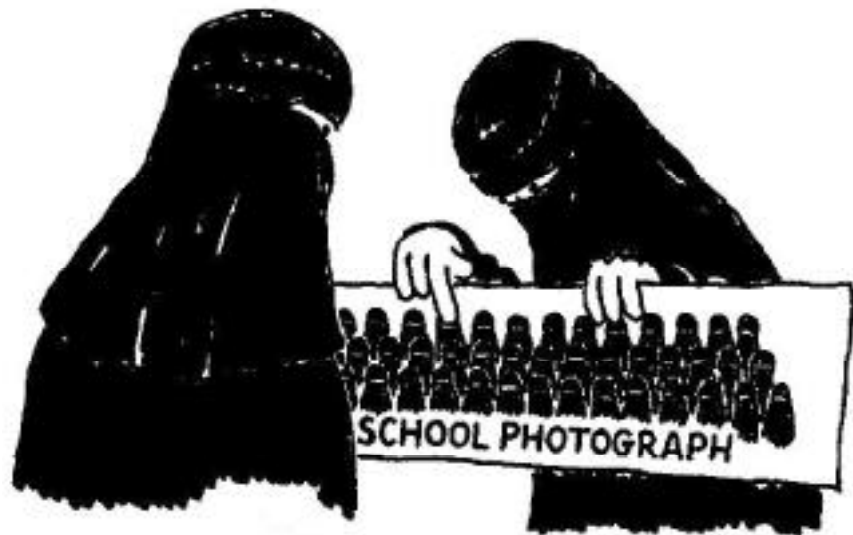
Having found that only 30% of these half match "last-resort" transplants were successful as compared to 70% of matched transplants, further findings revealed that this survival rate increased when scientists managed to separate the "bad cells", which could cause GVHD, while leaving the remaining "good" immune cells to strengthen the defenses. This is done by mixing immune

cells from the donor with cells of the patient and a chemical containing ricin (which selectively kills off the "bad" cells).

Consultant Amrolia said, 'The approach improved immune system responses and that is a major step forward. We still have the problem of relapse, so we are trying to refine our approach to put in more immune cells and hopefully get an anti-leukaemic effect too.'

Good comes from evil

During the raids carried out in 2003 by the police in London, Manchester, Bournemouth and other cities, they recovered recipes for ricin and other poisons. Ricin can be extracted from castor beans and is one of the world's most powerful plant toxins.



"That's me, there"

Some insiders

Who is the person you'd most like to meet?

Chairman Mao. I think there's a side to him no one has accessed or understood.

What food won't you touch?

There's this really terrible Parsi concoction called 'popatji'.

What three words would your friends use to describe you?

What a nut!

What music do you listen to?

Pretty eclectic. I like good music in any genre. I like Romantic-era music, especially Italian opera, I love Cole Porter songs, old Hindi movie songs and I still listen to some rock, like Pink Floyd and Leonard Cohen.

What was the last book you read?

I tend to read 2-3 books at a time and currently reading *The Collapse of Globalization* by John Ralston Saul, *The Prize* by Daniel Yergin and *Being Indian*, by a guy called Pavan something.

What are you passionate about?

Truth, beauty, adventure

What's your guilty pleasure?

Abba

HAMAZOR - ISSUE 2 | 2007

A new benchmark for Indian Journalism

by lylah m alphonse

- Former foreign correspondent Jehangir Pocha sets the pace as the editor of Businessworld

Well known around the world for his work as a foreign correspondent for The Boston Globe, The Chicago Tribune, The Philadelphia Inquirer, and other publications, Jehangir S Pocha has finally settled down - for now - in New Delhi as the editor of Businessworld magazine. The 39-year-old journalist took time out of his busy schedule recently to chat with us about what he's done, what he's doing, and what he'd like to do next.



You spent nearly four years as The Boston Globe's correspondent based in Beijing, China. What were some of the other challenges you faced while you were working there?

Basically, China is not an open society. Sure, it's opening up a lot, but the spectre of the past - when kids used to tell on their parents and things like that - have ruined the social fabric. So, apart from the official constraints, people's self-censorship was a problem as they didn't trust anyone, especially foreign journalists. Also, when I was there it was illegal for foreign journalists to leave Beijing without permission. So we journalists had to sneak around the countryside, staying in dingy hotels that would not report us to the police, and take trains and buses so our names would not show up on airline rosters.

What story did you most enjoy writing, and why?

You know, I love my work, and I truly loved doing 80 percent of the stories I did. But if I have to pick, I'd say I loved covering Mongolia and North Korea. There was a piece I did on how Genghis Khan's place in history is being reassessed that I enjoyed doing and thought was important. [It appeared in the *International Herald Tribune* in May 2005.] Since we live in a Western-centric world, Alexander is often portrayed as a hero, while Genghis Khan is branded a rogue, and King Cyrus is totally overlooked. In reality, Alexander was a marauder whose empire lasted all of 10 or so years. When he died, he famously left his empire "to the strongest," which unleashed decades of war and turmoil. It was only in the 17th or 18th century that Europeans conjured up Alexander's 'greatness' to buttress their new colonial ambitions. In contrast, Genghis Khan and King Cyrus, while cruel (as all conquerors are), created prosperous, stable empires that lasted for centuries.

Is there a story you would have loved to write but never had a chance?

Oh, many, many. So many ideas and so little time! I'd love to write more about labour rights in China, about the cultural resurgence taking place in China, India, and Iran - the three 'old' civilizations - and



investigate how business is increasingly coming to be dominated by monopolies in the name of free trade.

What drove you to become a journalist?

I think I always knew I wanted to be a journalist. I guess I'm very curious and tend to think integratively, which is really all you need to be a journalist. But when I grew up in India you were taught there were four professions – CAs/MBAs, engineers, doctors, and lawyers. I didn't have the brains or strength of character to challenge this then. So I spent 10 years in the corporate world - in Information Technology marketing, actually - making money, but always feeling like I was living a false life. My "inner journalist" kept rearing its head and finally I made the switch. Not easy, let me tell you, but now I feel my life is authentic.

Has being a Zoroastrian ever come into play in your professional life?

Actually it has, in many ways. At its essence, Zoroastrianism is about critical thinking, about developing an unprejudiced good mind. That's at the root of what I try to do. And there's also the idea of trying to make a positive difference in the world.

After earning a Masters degrees from the SP Jain Institute of Management and Research at the University of Bombay, you moved to the USA, where you worked for years before earning a second Masters degree from the John F Kennedy School of Management at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. And later you worked out of China, as a journalist. How did you stay connected to the Zoroastrian community while you were living abroad?

Religion is personal, social and congregational. The challenge is to manage the tensions this brings, not run from them. So I like to hang out with like-minded Parsis and celebrate our own unique brand of ribald humour. I realize now that I don't even know when my *roj nu* birthday comes around, and it's not nice to lose these things. And of course there's the food!

You are an unmarried Parsi man in his 30s. What is your take on the hot-button issues Zoroastrians are facing today: marriage between Zoroastrians and people of other faiths and inclusion of members who are born of only one Zoroastrian parent?

I like saying Parsis today are defined by how small they are in number and how great they are in their own minds. What I mean is our fear of being a small community in a global world has made some Zoroastrians insecure and they cling to old ways like a security blanket. Now, knowing your past is important. I think people live by the myths and stories they tell and are part of, and I spend a fair amount of time exploring what it really means to have inherited this wonderful and antique faith. But I think one should remain open-minded. It's more critical to be true to Zoroaster's teaching than to Zoroastrian community practices, no matter how old. So I'm for mixed marriages and conversion, because I feel Zoroaster would have been for them. Even if some scholar insists he would not have been, Zoroaster said something to the effect of "even I may not always have all the answers, so the important thing is to use your good mind at all times." And my good mind tells me these things are OK.

What impact does being a Zoroastrian have on your personal or day-to-day life?

You know, there have been times, in my personal life and professional, when it would have been easy to do something "wrong," something underhanded or cheap or whatever. I've got to say, it's at times like this when I've asked myself who I am. And the idea of "doing the right thing" has won out. That's something my family and grandmother taught me, so I'm not sure if it's Zoroastrian or not, but I like to think it is. Don't take this to mean I'm pretending to have lived by the book! But I think Zoroastrianism has helped me define what I think is the secret to living life – love and be loved, understand and explore your full potential, and keep your soul clean.

You've gone from roving and writing your way through the Far East to a desk job in New Delhi as the editor at Businessworld. Quite impressive, but quite a change! Tell us a little bit about the publication.

Well, it's India's most sold, most read business magazine - that's what the marketing team keeps telling us to say! But the real thing that attracted me to the magazine was that it – and the Ananda Bazaar Patrika group that owns it - has a real commitment to journalism. Our goal is simple: We want to take a good Indian business magazine and make it world class in two to three years. We're bench-marking ourselves against the best in global media, and I think we're the only publication doing this in India. If India could become world-class in Information Technology, why not in journalism?

How does it feel to be on the editing side of things, instead of writing?

I've never edited before and so it's a challenge. But it's fun! It's great to be able to shape something and bring a focus to the issues I think are important for India – business issues and wider economic and developmental issues.

What is your vision for the future of Businessworld?

I'd like *Businessworld* to accomplish two things: to get to the story behind the story, and to set the agenda on important issues. This is critical as I think India is at a magical moment in its history. The country is not just changing, but going through an entire paradigmic shift. Business is driving a lot of this, and I'd like *Businessworld* to be the magazine that reports on, analyzes, and critiques this period. That doesn't mean just being another cheerleader for "India's resurgence." I want us to ask the big questions, even if it means raising inconvenient truths. For example, we have a great financial correspondents who are great at covering things like Reserve Bank's recent attempts to curb liquidity by raising interest rates. But now, I'm working with them on doing bigger, thought-driven stories - for instance, if Reserve Bank is interested in curbing liquidity, then what is it doing to limit the black economy, which could be almost as large as the official economy? It's grappling with issues that like this will determine India's future.

So, have you hung up your foreign-correspondence hat for good?

No way! I still want to live in Africa, Iran, Latin America, and, later, when I'm old and worn down by all that, I want the quintessential old foreign correspondent's job of covering Western Europe!

What is your favourite thing to do or place to go when you're not at the office?

Unmentionable! But listening to music is a close second.



The Whale

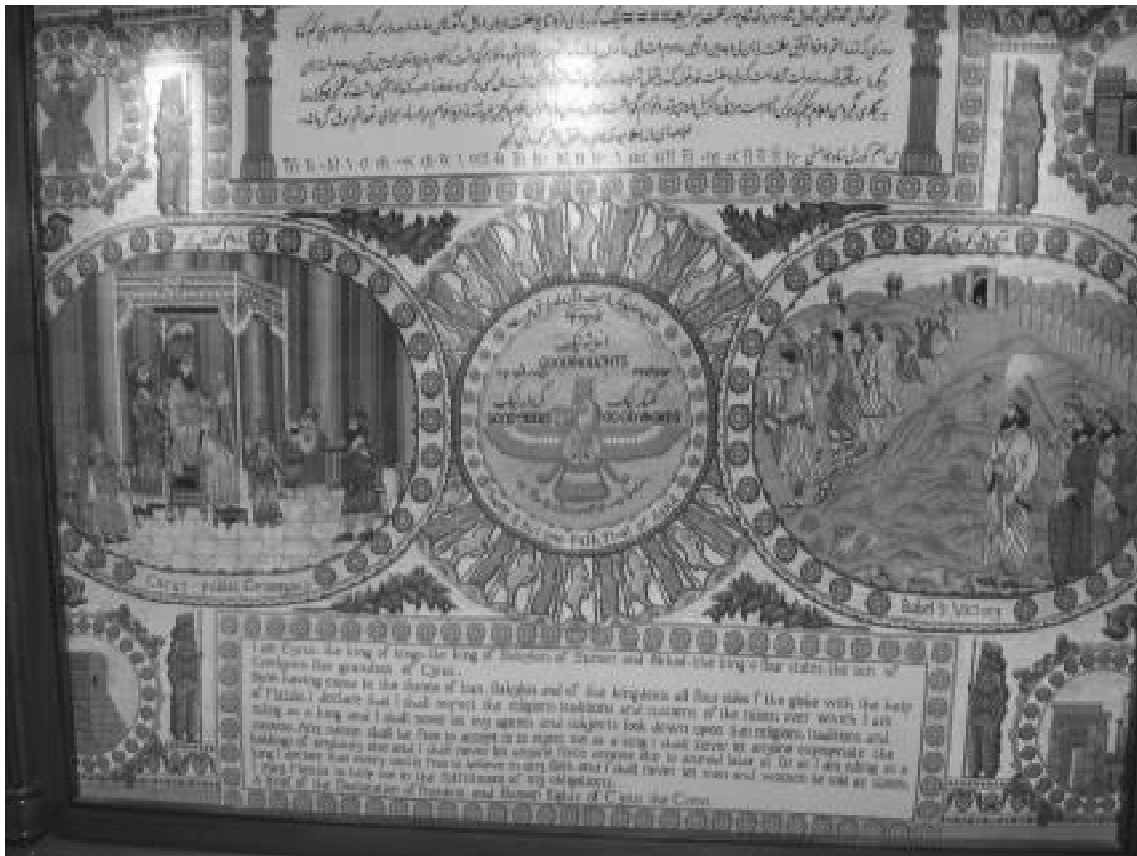
If you read the front page story of the SF Chronicle, you would have read about a female humpback whale who had become entangled in a spider web of crab traps and lines. She was weighted down by hundreds of pounds of traps that caused her to struggle to stay afloat. She also had hundreds of yards of line rope wrapped around her body, her tail, her torso, a line tugging in her mouth. A fisherman spotted her just east of the Farralone Islands (outside the Golden Gate) and radioed an environmental group for help.

Within a few hours, the rescue team arrived and determined that she was so bad off, the only way to save her was to dive in and untangle her. A very dangerous proposition. One slap of the tail could kill a rescuer. They worked for hours with curved knives and eventually freed her. When she was free, the divers say she swam in what seemed like joyous circles. She then came back to each and every diver, one at a time, and nudged them, pushed gently around — she thanked them. [It was not possible to find out if this story is true but could well be - Ed]

در آغاز هزاره سوم دست سرنوشت چنان قلم زده که ما ایرانیان و زرتشتیان برون مرزی، ما مادران و پدران ایرانی گذشته از حربه ورشته و فوق و سابقه مان باید نقش یک آموزگار فداکار را نیز ایفا کنیم. برای همین منظور سالیانی پیش گروه آموزش مرکز زرتشتیان جنوب کانیزنیا تاسیس گردید. چه افتخار آمیز و طرور انگیز است کاری که بدست گروهی داوطلب دلسوز آغاز گردید و به یاری اهیرامزدا و پشتیبانی دیگر بهمدینان برون مرزی ادامه خواهد داشت. به همراه فرهنگ آریایی پیام زرتشت نیز هزاران سال سینه به سینه از نسل به نسل و اکنون از مرز به سرز پا فرا نهاده. آموزش هر دگرایی بنیاد عین بهی است و وظیفه هر فرد زرتشتی است تا آنرا به کودکان و نوجوان که امید و نور چشم جامعه کوچک ما هستند بیاموزد.

در مهر رستم گنجیو در جنوب کانیزنیا معیادگاه این دلپای کوچک بوده و خواهد بود. گروه آموزش این مرکز با برگزاری کلاسهای فارسی و تدریس فلسفه گاتها گامی کوچک را در راه رسیدن به آرمانی بزرگ برداشته و هر ساله میزبان گروهی از کودکان و نوجوانان بوده و هست. این امر فرهنگی و دینی را مزداپرستانی بر عهده گرفته اند که صافخانه باور دارند برگزاری جشنهای ملی، آموزش آداب و رسوم دیرین ما و گرد هم آییهای شادی بخشن در کعبههای گوناگون همه و همه نموداری از تلاش یک نسل است برای برقراری فرهنگ ایرانی و ترویج پیام زرتشت در میان جهان غرب. بیایید و به این جمع کوچک پیوندید و در هر شهر و کشوری که سکنا دلرید از جمله خیراندیشانی باشید که به آینده ای روشن می اندیشید، آینده ای که در آن پیام گاتهای زرتشت بر سر زبانهاست و گودی ترویج ملی در فلها.

||| آیدون هاد آیدون نرج هاد



The fabulous Persian carpet at the Persian Hotel on Kish Island in the Persian Gulf



Dr Mitra Dinyari Behmardian, was born in Tehran, Iran. She came to United States in 1979 and received her Doctorate degree in Pharmacy in 1987 from Mercer Pharmacy School in Atlanta, Georgia. Mitra is an active member of California Zoroastrian Center and has volunteered her time as an integral member of Amoozesh (Educational) Group working with our youth.

دکتر میترا تنیاری بهمنیان

چگونه فرهنگ آریایی را ترویج دهیم

عشق به وطن، به سنتها، به مرزها، این والاترین احساس بشری، جاودانه ترین پایه یک فرهنگ غنی است و اگر این عشق و محبت با خرد نیک آمیخته گشت و بنیانگذار آن فرهنگ شد، آن فرهنگ پایدار و ماندنی است. چه نیکوست که ما ایرانیان چنین فرهنگی را به میراث برده ایم. تمدنهای آمدند و رفتند و دگرگونیهایی تاریخ را به جان خریدند و تسلیم دوران شدند، اما کلمات پر مغز فردوسی جلوسی، دیوان پر عشق و امید حافظ و سعدی، تصاویر عالمگیر خیام و مولوی و اشعار صدها دیگر ایرانی شاعر شایسته این سرز و بزم که پیدانگر احساسات یک قوم پرغله زبان به زبان از نسل به نسل با تمام ناهنجاریهای تاریخ به ما رسیده تا اکنون پاسدار آن باشیم و بدانیم که چه بوده ایم تا دوباره با تلاش آن شرییم.

دیدم چه پند گرفتند ملتی عرب بربر
خونریز تر از چنگیز وحشی تر از اسکندر
آروز چنان آباد امروز چنین ویران
تن زیر به پی شازی دل در گرو همقان

و حال زمان آن رسیده تا باز به هسته خود بازگردیم و در آغاز هزاره سوم به آموزش فرهنگ آریایی به گونه ای که شاعران ما هزاران سال پیش سرودند و نوشتند و بر سر زبانها انداختند بپردازیم. بدانیم و آگاه باشیم که من و شمايي که در برون مرزها دم از ایران و ایرانی بودن میزنیم، در خلوت خانه خود به فارسی سخن میگوییم، به نورچشمندان زبان و خط فارسی می آموزیم، به نوای آهنگهای ۶ و ۸ و اشعار شاعران قدیم و جدید گوش میکنیم، در کنار Hamburger و Pizza آبگوشت و دلمه در سفره شام می چینیم و در پارکهای سرسبز آمریکا و اروپا زیر سایه درخت حکم و نخته شرد بازی میکنیم، غرور ملی و فرهنگ آریایی را در قلبهایمان جای داده ایم. پاسداری از این سنتها و خوی و غمیلتها و طبعها و وجدانی هر ایرانی زاده است و بدانیم که عشق و وزیدن به ایران و ایرانی با دانستن زبان فارسی و آموزش آن به نسل آینده روز بروز پر ارزشتر می گردد.

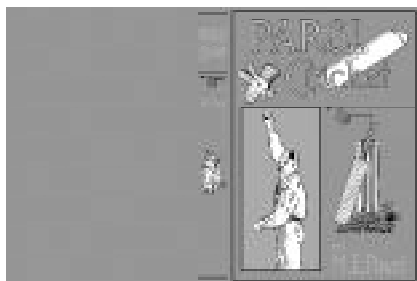
اکنون زمان آن رسیده تا در خانه و کوچه و مرکزهایمان نهال فرهنگ پارسی را بکاریم، آبش دهیم و با ملایمت و پشتکدر میوه آن را به خورد فرزندانمان، نوه هایمان و جگرگوشگانمان دهیم تا با طعم خوش آن خوی بگیرند. اکنون زمان آن رسیده تا به فرزندی فارسی بیاموزیم برای کودکی اشعار فردوسی و مولوی را زمزمه کنیم و به نوجوانی ژرف معنای رباعیات خیام را بازگو کنیم. نسل جوان خاصیت پذیرش و زودبازوری شگرفی دارد و اگر میراث فرهنگی و ادبی نیاکان خود را نیاموزد در برابر تبلیغ دیگران به آسانی تسلیم شده و آجاست که فرهنگ و اسطوره خود را از دست میدهد. به گفته پژوهشگران نسلی را که از غرور ملی و آگاهی از کنجینه فرهنگی نیاکان خود محروم باشد نمیتوان نسلی زنده به حساب آورد. زیرا اساس ملیت و زندگی هر قومی بر آیین و آداب و هنر بومی و ادبیات استوار است و کرده در بسیاری از قوانین همگانی و اجتماعی همه مردم جهان یکسانند.

Rusi Dalal, Trustee, ZTFE informs -

"The Zartoshty Brothers Lectures on Zoroastrian studies, which are well established at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, has been possible by the munificent donations to SOAS by the Zartoshty brothers, Mobeds Mehraban and Faredoon, and quite recently by a substantial bequest from the estates of late Prof Mary Boyce. Several academic scholars have contributed extensively towards the success of Zoroastrianism and related studies, not only at SOAS but also at other Universities and Institutions in the UK, in Europe and elsewhere. These scholars have made positive contributions towards the spread of knowledge, understanding and learning of the great religion that have benefited not only the global Zoroastrian communities but have created its awareness worldwide.

"The Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe salutes these stalwarts of Zoroastrian studies and have resolved to recognise those who have rendered meritorious services to the Zoroastrian Community in the UK and Europe in religious, social, economic or intellectual advancement of the community or whose public services and achievements may have reflected exceptional credit to the community, by conferring the title of "Honoured Friend" of the ZTFE.

"The Trustees and Managing Committee of ZTFE have resolved to bestow the title of "Honoured Friend" of ZTFE to Prof John Hinnells and Prof David Bivar. The ZTFE have also resolved to posthumously award "Honoured Friend" of ZTFE to late Prof Mary Boyce. These titles will be awarded at a special function that has been organised to take place at our Zoroastrian Centre on Sunday 20th May 2007 commencing at 4:30 pm."



Marzban Giara writes -

This beautifully illustrated book was first published in 1901. The reprinted book was launched on 23rd April 2007 and on this very date 121 years ago, [23rd April 1886] the first Parsi cricket team sailed for England. Dr Mehllashah E Pavri was its captain and Ardeshir Patel the secretary.

Parsi Cricket by M E Pavri
27 illustrations
xiv+196 pp. hardbound
Price: Rs.200/-
Reprinted and available from
K R Cama Oriental Institute,
Mumbai.
Tel. 2284 3893

Mr Fredun Devitre, senior advocate and cricket commentator released the book and spoke on "Some aspects of cricket in India."

"Parsis played a major and pioneering role in promoting cricket in India. Match fixing and gambling was prevalent even in 1842. The first Parsi cricket club Oriental Cricket Club was started in 1846. It closed in two years. Zoroastrian Cricket Club started in 1848. The Parsi team defeated the visiting English team in 1890. Presidency cricket matches started between Parsis and the Englishmen. Hindus joined in 1907. Muslims joined in 1912. Later the Jews, Christians joined and the triangular, quadrangular and

pentangular matches were played. Mehllashah Pavri hailed from Navsari. He came to Bombay to study medicine. His captaincy was his strongest feature. He was the first great Indian cricketer. In 1892 M C Patel wrote a book on Parsi cricket. In 1905 J. M. Framji Patel wrote a book Stray thoughts on Parsi Cricket. It became a best seller."

Dr Nawaz B Mody, Jt Hon Secretary of the Institute proposed a vote of thanks and expressed the hope that the younger generation of Parsis would once again take to the game of cricket and produce illustrious Parsi cricketers as in the past. ■■■■



THE YOUTH LEADERSHIP ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

(An initiative of World Zoroastrian Congress - 2009)



Your opportunity to be
'Future Responsible Leaders'

Program gearing up for the
9th World Zoroastrian Congress

28 - 31 December 2009
Dubai, U.A.E.

*An Exciting Event to meet
world renowned personalities
& win awards and prizes at the Congress*

For more information read program outline on opposite page

Send your application & sponsored form at mail address of page 6 (HOMELIFE@worldcon)

For Queries you may contact:

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Youth Leadership Enhancement Program

Empowering the Young Community Leaders of Tomorrow
Encouraging teamwork in leveraging resources for the community

What is the "Youth Leadership Enhancement Program"?
The "Youth Leadership Enhancement Program" is a new initiative which aims at encouraging community leadership among 23 to 34 years old. The program is being launched to gear up for presentation at the 9th World Zoroastrian Congress to be held in Dubai in 2009.

The objective of launching this program is to build a network of enthusiastic young individuals and create a sustainable pool of next generation leaders that will benefit the community in the long run.

The youth will be mentored by eminent industrialists/entrepreneurs and receive valuable inputs/advice from them. They will be encouraged to support several community causes. What's important is that the youth will have an opportunity to explore and experience the qualities of leadership, collaboration, entrepreneurship, creativity and community rootedness.

The application process:

- Youth with commitment to Zoroastrian ideals and ethics, good communication, leadership & team building skills and proven excellence in his/her field of activity will be eligible to apply.
- Acceptable age group is 23 to 34 years.
- Applications will be accompanied by an essay, not exceeding 600 words, on the following topic:

"A Worldwide Youth Leadership Enhancement Program"

Deadline

Entries must be submitted electronically to WZ-CYLEP@gmail.com, by September 2007

Format

Applicants are requested to provide details as per the prescribed format on this page.

Judging

Winners will be judged by a select panel of judges on the following three criteria's:

1. Creativity
2. Recognition of leadership qualities
3. Persuasive writing style

What will be the benefits of the Program?

The benefits will be as follows:

- a. The youth will be a role model for the younger generation
- b. Be an ambassador for the community
- c. Receive inputs, advice from Mentors on projects/services, goal setting, future progress
- d. Network with Business Leaders in the community
- e. Interact with young members in different regions/countries and develop like minded projects/share ideas and develop programs

- f. Develop a sense of support for the community, safety, quality of life, culture awareness, environment, history
- g. Have a handshake with world renowned personalities.

About the Program:

In the year 2008 the selected applicants for the program will learn more about each other, share their future plans, learn how to design life goals and identify possible ways to accomplish those goals with the mentors who will be leading personalities from various fields and impart advice and provide creative inputs.

In the year 2009 - the selected Youth Leaders will be divided into teams and each team will present a program at the congress on 28th December 2009. The Title of the program will be "Young Community Leaders - Sharing with the Community".

Awards:

All members will receive awards and the winning team will receive exciting prizes as "Future Responsible Leaders" at the congress.

APPLICATION FORMAT

Personal Details	
Name (Last, First, Middle)	
Date of Birth	
Mailing Address	
Telephone /Cell phone	
Email Address	
Permanent residency status	
Country of citizenship	
Educational background	
Honors, Awards, Scholarships	
Extra Curricular Activities	
Community Service	

ESSAY TOPIC:

"A Worldwide Youth Leadership Enhancement Program" (600 words)
(Each candidate will give ideas on most important issues affecting the community and the leadership skills necessary to address these issues and a detailed action plan to bring about a positive change in our community)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

I certify that the information provided in this application is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge. I confirm that I have not received any assistance in preparation of this essay and that I am a Zoroastrian between the ages of 23 to 34 years.

I also agree to support the program and work with dedication towards our success.

Name of Applicant: _____

Signature of Applicant: _____

Date: _____

Shayan Italia : More Than a Music Man

An interview with Farishta Murzban Dinshaw

at over six-feet tall, with an athletic build and polished looks, UK-based singer/song writer Shayan Italia could pass for a model in a magazine ad. It is only when you talk with him about his music, his family, his plans for the future that you realize he is more than a pretty face and a melodious voice. He also happens to be the first Zoroastrian to internationally release a mainstream English album since Freddie Mercury did so over 25 years ago. His debut 2-disc CD/DVD *Deliverance* officially releases in the UK this summer in conjunction with his UK tour. The album is featured on iTunes, Napster, eMusic, HMV Digital, Virgin Digital and is available at Amazon.co.uk for delivery around the world.



I understand from the story on your website (www.shayanitalia.com) that initially your music came out of heartache after the loss of you mother, but what is your source of inspiration now?

I don't think my music was borne from heartache at all. It just happened to be so that I wrote my first song after losing my Mum in April 1998. I was fortunate enough to be brought up only remember the great times when one loses someone than be drowned in sorrow.

I don't write my songs for anyone in particular. Songs come to me, I don't go chasing for them. Essentially, I write a song in about five minutes and the song is borne out of what I empathize with in this world; it could be from just seeing a couple laying peacefully in the park or witnessing someone completely heartbroken. Each song I write is very different to the next. I like having diversity in my songwriting. As I write from a third-person point of view, most people who like my music tend to easily empathize with my lyrics.



I read that your ability for music came about suddenly, almost overnight. Do you see that as a random miracle? A supernatural phenomenon?

I don't regard it in any way miraculous or supernatural that I started writing songs soon after my Mum passed away. When it [songwriting] happened, it was sudden and took us all aback a bit. We always had a piano at home and all of us, like many Zoroastrian families, tinkled on it, picking things up by ear ... very simple stuff like "Happy Birthday" and nursery rhymes. I had no formal training as such. I did try to learn the piano properly and failed miserably. One angle of looking at it could be that the songwriting ability was always inside me and incurring a loss of a loved one became the trigger/catalyst to bring to shore what was always buried deep within.

After Mum passed away, there was an indescribable calling from within. I remember coming down the stairs and seeing the piano like I'd never seen it before. More so, I could hear tones I'd never heard even before. In a nutshell, in an instant I understood the piano in a way many qualified classical musicians take a decade to decipher.

I think what makes this project very special to me is the fact that I've always trusted my instinct and am not afraid to take risky steps when required. In fact, I'm not afraid to fall down at all. I constantly

Farishta Dinshaw's profile is on p30.

do so, pick myself up and try again. In a weird way, I love that it happens so. It only means each time I get up, I'm that much stronger.

How did the triquetra symbol that you use as your signature come about?

[The triquetra is a word derived from the Latin tri- ("three") and quetrus ("cornered") which Shayan wears as jewellery and incorporates into his music videos – Ed].

Everything I am today and everything I will be tomorrow is because of the immense support my family has shown me over the years. The amount they have sacrificed and believed in me to get me from where I was to where I am today is unbelievable in my eyes. That is the sort of love and support no amount of money can buy. It is only right that I capture that love as a symbol that stands for that hardship that millions of families around the world undertake to give their loved ones a better life. The triquetra symbol is my family's identity; the three focal points of the symbol representing my brother Dynshaw, my sister-in-law Dolly and myself. The circle that binds the focal points symbolizes our strength in unity, time and space ... sounds like pretty heavy stuff, but very true. It is an ancient symbol with different meanings, but if I succeed in popularizing it, that logo will represent "family" for everyone who wears it.

Does your being a Zoroastrian tie in with your music at all? How do Parsis generally react to your music?

To be honest I haven't extensively tested the music out on many Zoroastrians and to say anything else would be exaggerating. I don't do that!

Tell us about your tour with G4 this summer.

The band I am supporting is called G4. They are a multi-million album selling crossover group in the UK. The tour which occurs from 21 May to 12 June comprises 17 cities within the UK and plays to over 50,000 people. I guess I got lucky with G4 as I believe the audience is perfect for my music. Results through Entertainment

Media Research Ltd show that women over 30 are most likely to listen to my music.

Any plans to tour internationally, like going back to perform in India? Any plans of singing in language/s other than English?

At present, India is not a priority simply because the pop music market in India is not entirely developed and profitable. At the end of the day, this is a business and one needs to think with a sound mind in order to come out with profit. I plan to first crack the UK market, then Europe, Japan, Asia/India, and finally the US before releasing my second album. Having said that, I have a great team behind me and we will certainly look to "lock down" India when the correct opportunity arises in due course ... maybe in the next couple of years or so.

I have no plans of singing in any other language but English. I'm more than happy to attempt singing in different languages should the opportunity arise and make a professional decision thereafter whether to pursue the same.

What other interests do you have outside of music?

As music was left to me, it doesn't run my life and it is far from what I'm all about ... I'm very active and constantly doing different things. I play squash, swim and work out five days a week. I love playing chess. I love the arts, theatre, films, drawing, reading, technology, designing. A passion of mine is to travel the world in one, long three-month trip ... any gorgeous ladies out there willing to join me are welcome!



Humour



Shades of Marilyn Monroe?

Farita – Zoroastrian Music Diva From Down Under

Interview by Jehangir Mehta

australian born Zoroastrian recording artist Farita is the rising talent in the world of music. Not afraid to experiment, Farita creates a totally new vibe in music. Her delicate, feminine voice and a unique fusion of R&B/Pop infused with the spicy, passionate and seductive sounds of the East create a refreshing sound. With the release of her debut CD, "Karma – The EP" and the title of Best Female Solo Artist Australia, in the International Music Aid Awards, already under her belt, this is one Zoroastrian Diva destined for great things.

At what young age did you feel the urge to sing and what and who motivated you in your young age?



Music has always been a part of my life even though the focus in our household was always on studies. I sang in school choirs and played the clarinet which I was awarded on scholarship when I was eleven. During high school I gave up musical pursuits in favour of my studies however in my spare time I began to write and sing. I was an awkward teenager so writing and singing music in the sanctuary of my bedroom made me feel good about myself. I



was in a world of my own and I needed that at the time.

What was the turning point in your life to make singing a career?

When I started university, I also began singing lessons. My singing teacher Lucy encouraged my singing and really believed in me. She told me I had a gift worth pursuing. From there music and singing took on much more meaning to me, and my life. So now here I am pursuing my dream.

Do you believe that academic education has any bearing on your inherent artistic talent towards fuller self development?

Yes of course. My parents wanted me to have a proper education and I totally respect that. academic education teaches you discipline and teaches your mind to focus. Music requires that same discipline as well. You need to be structured and organised in your vocal training, your lyric writing, your performing ability, everything requires discipline if you wish to succeed.

Does your Zoroastrian up-bringing play any role in your professional development?

Zoroastrianism is my calm in the turbulent world of professional music! If you do not have faith what do you have? When I have my lows I turn to my religion to give me strength and hope. When I achieve my successes I have Zoroastrianism to thank for that as well.

What has been the high point in your singing career?

Winning the "Best Female Solo Artist, Australia" title in the IMAA's awards last year. Winning was very rewarding and gave me a sense of accomplishment for all my devotion to my music. The win was even sweeter because the songs were judged anonymously by other music industry peers and for them to think I was worthy of that title is such a wonderful feeling!

Has there been any disappointment, frustration or discrimination in your bid towards winning various competitions?

A competition is just that, a competition and whoever wins, wins. You try your best, you put yourself on the line and hope people will like you, get behind you and support you – that's all you can ask for. We all like to win but if not you just have to brush yourself off and try again. The biggest misconception about famous artists is that they are overnight successes - nothing could be further from the truth. They've had their struggles and disappointments too, the difference is they never gave up. If I'd quit I would never have been around to win the Best Female Solo Artist title, or the host of other things I've achieved and besides, who knows what else I will achieve in the future?

Describe your music.

The theme is East meets West. It's a melange of Pop/R&B with an exotic edge. It's something new, something fresh, something FARITA. Even the tracks that do not have a blatant Indian feel have subtle Indian/eastern characteristics in the music, whether it be a percussion instrument or a riff. It is mainstream music designed for anyone who enjoys good music!

Have you experienced a sense of rejection/disappointment ever and how did you overcome this?

Several years ago I was signed to a label that promised me many things. At first everything was fine but then they began to toy with my self-esteem. They wanted me to compromise my values, which I had no intention of doing and thus they threatened to charge me with breach of contract if I didn't comply. In the end the contract reached its expiration date and I was able to leave. That was a very difficult time for me, I seriously considered giving it all up but I looked deep into my heart and

I knew I wasn't ready to let go of my dream just yet. I began doing some session work (where you sing someone's song for a fee). While working with a producer he suggested I place an advertisement and see if I could find a producer interested in working with me. A production team "Cube" responded and I've been working with Dean Hopkins from Cube ever since.

How hard is the music industry? How hard do you have to work in terms of physical training & the number of hours of work per week to remain competitive?

When you have a passion for something you don't mind going that extra mile and that is how I feel about my music. Make no mistake, to be a professional artist it takes as much work as anything else. Sometimes even more - as you don't have predictability and stability as your normal 9-5 occupation. It's so competitive so you have to always be learning and improving. You have to practice your vocal exercises, which train your pitching, phrasing, vocal strength etc. Then there is the writing component - song structure, melodies, conveying emotion and story through words – it's a very complex task to do well. You have to be familiar with studio recording techniques, as the studio environment is entirely different to performing live, the list goes on. You also have to exercise and take care of yourself as public perception is important and last but not least there is the press, marketing and distribution component - actually promoting your music to the world, making a name for yourself and getting people passionate enough about your music to buy it in a market where illegal downloading/copying is a disturbing problem. There's a lot involved – it's a full time job.

Do you write your own lyrics and do they relate to something close to your heart or have a deeper meaning of some particular experience, happy moment or tragedy in your life?

Yes I do write. Dean usually presents a track idea and we'll discuss the feel of the track and decide on a theme. We then proceed to construct lyrics and consult each other until we come up with something we are both happy with. While the lyrics themselves are not written from a personal angle the theme is often something that most people can relate to and therefore connect with the music.

What other music achievements have you accomplished?

I've been very successful in USA Broadjam.com charts including being placed in the Pop Top Ten, the R&B Contemporary Top Ten, Production Top Ten, Female Vocal Top Ten, the Australian Top Ten and the California Top Ten. All six of my tracks have all been in top ten charts. "Karma" was a finalist in the WAM Song of the Year Awards and was the winner of a competition run by NextBigHit.com, a New York based internet radio station listened to internationally. "Don't Tell Me That You're Sorry" stayed in the Top 20 for over a year in the Mp3.com.au R&B charts! I feel the best of me as a performer and artist is ready to come to the fore now. I just hope I am blessed to achieve all I have set out to.

How much does your culture and your friends play in your motivation and confidence?

The music industry is a popularity contest. Sometimes how much to you like an artist is as important as how much you like their songs. Without friends, fans and support you cannot get ahead in this industry no matter how good you are. You can be the best singer/anything in the world but if no one notices then you'll never get anywhere. As a performer you feed of the energy of your fans and their support. When you hear people telling you that they love your music or that they're a fan it really gives you a sense of achievement - that you are touching peoples lives and making a difference. Needless to say, I am proud of my culture, of its colour and passion and as a result you hear that influence in my music.

Are there unscrupulous personalities in the music industry?

Yes, there are. Earlier in my career I was much more naïve and the music industry can easily take advantage of that. I've learnt from my past mistakes. People can be very selfishly motivated and prepared to hurt you and your career without a second thought. On the other side of the coin you find people who are as genuine about their music as you are and it is wonderful working with people like that.

You're relocating to the USA - will it mean starting from scratch in a world of music different to Australia?

Not at all, there has been a quite a demand for me to perform in the USA but unfortunately I haven't

been able to as yet. I am looking forward to the opportunities that the USA presents. I will still be returning to Australia and I will continue some of my work in Australia as well.

Where do you see your music career leading you? What is the next level?

I see the future as opportunities to come. Ultimately I would like to be successful on an international level and be able to use my profile to support worthy causes and pursuits. One of the reasons I entered the IMAA's was because money from the awards went to needy causes. I will be completing my debut album in the near future and hopefully recording a video soon as well. I'm also collaborating with some overseas producers in the UK which is something I am looking forward to. I'm excited about the future, let's see what happens!

As a young Aussie singer living in Perth - how do you plan to showcase yourself at the 4th World Youth Zoroastrian Congress?

I will be writing the theme song for the event at the request of the Executive Committee for the Congress which is something I am only too happy to do. When someone asks you to represent your community you can only say yes! It will be wonderful to perform to Zoroastrians from all over the world!

What message do you have regarding our Zoroastrian youth and their chances of shining against the odds of the western world?

If you can dream it, you can do it.

Where can we listen & buy your music, find out where you are performing and more?

Just visit www.farita.com or www.myspace.com/artistfarita for more!



Jehangir Mehta's profile is on p16

"Life is a coin. You can spend it anyway you wish, but you can only spend it once." - author unknown



The World Zoroastrian Organisation

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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 _____

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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
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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

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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

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

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Grand Patron	NZ\$1,500	Patron	NZ\$750	Life Member	NZ\$300
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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

“If a man be rich or poor,
he should be a friend to the truthful person but
an enemy to the follower of deceit and lies.”

yasna 49.3

Insler translation

