

publication of the world zoroastrian organisation

HAMAZOR

3
issue 2011

Dance
me out
if you
can



Munchi Cama
wins BPP election

publication of the world zoroastrian organisation

HAMA ZOR



Figure 3.11: M. C. Murzban, Parsi Lying-in Hospital, Esplanade, Bombay, 1895. From Murzban, Leaves from the Life of Khan Bahadur Muncherji Cowasji Murzban, 112. p46

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COVER

Mr Cama during his election campaign having received derogatory remarks had challenged anyone to out dance him!

PHOTOGRAPHS

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

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From the Editor

It has been a hot three months, pun intended. Mumbai's Parsi politics have been at its worst with the press covering the shenanigans, making us quite a shameful community. The individuals who have remained quiet for so long did wake up in time, voicing their concern through the cyber network, Bombay Samachar, advertisements appearing in the Parsiana, as well as their own reliable and unbiased reporting, and the Indian press; keeping us up to date regarding the election for trusteeship of the BPP. WAPIZ has had its own coverage through their WAPIZ Page and supporters, though many of those opted to vote for Manchi Cama realising the underhand 'game' being played, and even resorting to 'goondaism'.

Mr Dinshaw Mehta BPP Chairman, tried his best with his co-trustees to delay the election due to the monsoon thereby saving extra costs and / or suggesting to find a consensus candidate, but there was no reasoning. We have to be thankful that Mr Cama though having enough commitments of his own, decided to stand for election knowing fully well what he was up against. Muncherji Cama, is the managing director of Asia's oldest newspaper 'Bombay Samachar', head of the K R Cama Oriental Institute, besides being a Trustee for many charitable trusts. His motive was simply to improve the running of the BPP and if he lost, it was of no consequence – less of a headache. Fortunately we do have individuals who care regardless of the flak they receive which Manchi has taken during the election with good humour and style.

"Doubtlessly, Muncherji Cama is the right choice for trusteeship, for in him one can find all three – the discretion of an independent mind, the wisdom of a seasoned trustee who has served on several boards and above all else a man of integrity and stature having the highest good of the common man at heart." – Ratan Unwalla.

On a gratifying note, Hamazor with this issue is being redistributed in India, to those who are recorded as members of WZO on the UK register of members. This has been achieved thanks to the generosity of Smita Godrej Crishna and her husband Vijay. We need our friends in India to come forward please and help us print further Hamazors for the Indian readership. It need not be an individual donor, a group of like-minded persons can join together to make up the sum of IndRs100,000 which includes postage.

13 July 2011



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

Celebrating my parents' lives

- smita godrej crishna

*M*y parents, Soonu and Naval Godrej, were married in January 1947, the year India became independent - a time of great change and my Karachi-born mother moved to Bombay.

My brother Jamshyd and I grew up at home constantly surrounded by talk about the new factories, their gardens and the school and welfare centre that were then being set up in a suburb of Bombay named Vikhroli.

My grandfather Pirojsha had bought a large tract of marshy land on 15th April 1943 inhabited by panthers, wolves, monkeys and other wild life - to the amazement of many who thought it a bizarre purchase! Today, it is a huge asset. Containing one of Mumbai's main remaining mangrove forest - so crucial for marine life around our metropolis.



My parents' families, the Dasturs and the Godrejs, were all closely involved – as were many families in those days - in India's freedom movement, and a wonderfully strong feeling of patriotism prevailed. Especially to Gandhiji's growing Swadeshi movement.

My paternal grand-uncle Ardeshir, Godrej's founder, a very original thinker gave three lakhs for Harijan Upliftment to the Tilak Swaraj Fund in 1921. No small amount in those days! Mahatma Gandhi is recorded to have said that this was the highest amount he had ever received, and that too from a Parsi!

His slogan "self respect through self reliance" drove him to meticulously, and way ahead of his time, begin making highly specialised surgical instruments. With such quality that a British firm offered to market it under its own name! Going on to make locks - and then safes, safe deposit vaults, cupboards and soap made from vegetable oil instead of the

unacceptable animal fat that was the normal practise – all as his contributions to the Swadeshi Movement.

Then his brother Pirojsha consolidated all these advances to build a company that would take on the might of the British commercial interests opposed to its growth.

My father and his siblings – Sohrab, Dosa and Burjor - were growing up in this exciting ambience when their mother Soonabai suddenly died at the young age of 30. The children, my father was only three at the time, now deprived of a mother's love, would often be sent to Karachi where their maternal grandmother Veerbaiji lived.

My mother, tall and beautiful, exuded a charm and intelligence that must have attracted my father to her! And my mother, in turn, would have been drawn to my father's warm, winning smile and his adventurous, mischievous nature. To my mind, I think he possessed his uncle's inventive mind and his father's business skills.

My parents truly complimented each other. Both loved the outdoors and our holidays as children were spent in the hills or sailing to our weekend beach house in Mandwa. Times I wouldn't have traded for anything!

My parents set high standards for us – hardworking, fun-loving, highly ethical, and never expecting others to do things they wouldn't. They truly cared for those around them. My father's sense of fair play and being one with the workers and managers endeared him greatly to them all.

And their vision for Pirojshanagar extended beyond the manufacture of products, to creating a community with a high quality of life for employees centered around education, health and culture. My father, at the behest of his father, thought my mother should spearhead this initiative.

She threw herself wholeheartedly into starting the schools, a welfare centre for the wives of the employees and beautifying the environment around the factories and the housing colonies with trees and flowering plants. She was a lover of art and beauty, and involved herself with Bombay's Museum, The Crafts Council and many other organizations - bringing her fine sense of aesthetics to the arts and crafts activities of our school.

They were both genuine, strong people and even today people remember them for their simplicity and being true followers of the precepts of our Zoroastrian religion of Manashni, Gavashni, Kunashni.



Dear members,

We are very pleased to be able to restore the Hamazor to our members in India. It has only been possible through the generous sponsorship of our supporters. We hope others will come forward to sponsor more issues in India and around the world.

Our young committee members, Benafsha Engineer, Monaz Dalal and Parmis Khatibi, are representing WZO at the 5th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in Vancouver. Benafsha will be discussing whether Zoroastrianism is based on Spirituality or on Rituals, whilst Monaz will be presenting Zoroastrianism for the Facebook generation. I hope to update you on the event in my next message.

The elections for a replacement Trustee at the BPP has finally taken place following a bitter struggle between the two leading contenders. We are pleased for the sake of the Parsi community in India that the new Trustee, Muncherji Cama, is a strong person who will stand up for his views and not be swayed by political dogma.

Meanwhile the debate on our traditions and practices goes on. WZO is very clear on its position in this debate. It respects the Parsi community's ethnic rituals and customs which have been brought about by their socio-economic environment in India. At the same time, we must unmistakably distinguish this Parsi ethnicity from the Zoroastrian religion. Therefore, as a global Zoroastrian organisation, we also respect the practises of other Zoroastrians, particularly of those from Iran. WZO does not dictate to anyone on how the religion should be practised and will defend the right of the individual to do so as he/she wishes providing it is on the lines of Zarathushtra's message and teachings. WZO will continue its policy of a more inclusive approach for all Zoroastrians.

WZO is always very proud to hear of significant achievements by Zoroastrians. In May, Shireen Irani, daughter of our Life members, Daryush and Pervin Irani, won the Young Achiever Award at the Asian Women of Achievements Awards ceremony in London. We offer Shireen our heartfelt congratulations and wish her every success in the future.

On behalf of the Managing Committee of the WZO, let me take this opportunity of wishing all our Parsi members and friends, Shahenshahi Navroze Mubarak.

Yours sincerely,

Darayus S Motivala
Chairman
Email: chairman@w-z-o.org



WZO Annual Seminar June 5TH 2011 - at the Nehru Centre, London

- shahin bekhradnia reports



This year we were very fortunate in having two excellent and also contrasting talks. One was a clear concise PowerPoint presentation about our past, and one was a film very much about the present and the future.

Our first speaker was a young academic from Oxford University, Ojand Hadinia, who presented a very lucid account of the history of the Iranians, the Avestan language and the Avesta. Ojand, whose linguistics degree

from Berne University led him to concentrate his recent studies at Berlin University and now in Oxford on Indo-Iranian linguistics and philology, used a series of maps to great effect. He was able to show the result of the different phases of migration of early Aryan peoples with the different languages that emerged as time and space separated these groups. After mentioning the possibility that the Proto-Aryans were associated with the Andronovo culture sites (c 2300 BC) before the Indo-Europeans split up, he considered the question of the location of the legendary AiriianYm Va-jah, the supposed homeland of the early Iranians in the context of a land which experienced 10 months of winter. Using a family tree of Indo-Iranian languages helped to clarify the fact that the Western Iranian group gave rise to languages such as Talyshi, Kurdish, and Persian while the Eastern Iranian group eventually produced Pashto and Ossetic (spoken in the Caucasus today), amongst others.

We also learnt that at some point probably in the first period of Sasanian rule, when the Avestan language had died out, it was decided to create a special phonetic alphabet for recording all Avestan texts. This alphabet ensured that the correct pronunciation was maintained since regional variations in speech plus a lack of understanding would have led to distortions and corruptions. According to Aryan tradition, if the prayers were to be effective they needed to be correctly pronounced and this special alphabet became known as the Avestan alphabet, ensuring a faithful rendering down the years. The oldest surviving manuscript written in this language is held in Copenhagen and dates only from the 13th century AD, any older versions having been lost. Incidentally the excellent WZO/SOAS Kutar lecture in the previous month in London highlighted the Avestan Archive website where a great number of the extant manuscripts are available.

The word *Avesta* as a generic noun is used to denote the collection of all texts written in the Avestan language at different stages in times. In specialist terms, Old Avestan was considered to be the language of the prayers including the Gathas from about 1500-1000 BC, and then there was a still later language of texts, hence the term *Younger Avestan*, in which for example, the Videvdad is composed (sometime between 900-600 BC). At a much later stage when these old languages became incomprehensible to Zoroastrians, the priestly authorities offered translations and explanations in the then spoken Middle Persian, but also Sanskrit and later Modern Persian.

A number of people in the audience asked challenging questions to Ojand which he



Some years after her first degree from Oxford university in MFL, her Iranian priestly background inspired her to do post graduate studies in anthropology again at Oxford university. She writes articles and is regularly invited to speak to academic audiences about Zoroastrianism, but also takes part in Interfaith activities to promote understanding and knowledge about our religion. She speaks on radio and TV channels with passion. As the WZO religious affairs spokesperson she answers email queries on behalf of WZO and organises their annual seminar.

In the last 10 years she has raised funding and set up the Pourchista Foundation in Yazd which runs a skills academy for females, a senior citizens' day centre and is hoping to start a kindergarten for the few Z children who are still left in Yazd. Items such as sedreh and koshti made by the young Z ladies of Yazd are available for sale via Shahin.

responded. At the end of the session, several people commented privately that this was one of the most useful lectures they had heard insofar as it finally offered non-academics a clear understanding of the different phases leading to the emergence of the Iranians as a nation, and also the several different strands that the word *Avesta* and *Avestan* actually mean in a simple, comprehensible language. It is hoped that we may be able to publish Ojand's presentation in full at some future point.

Our second guest speaker was a welcome returning face – Tenaz Dubash – who came to show and discuss her recent film *Crisis in Faith: Zoroastrians Today*. This film followed in the footsteps of her previous film (a visit to Iran) and explored the reasons for the so often discussed decline in the population of the Parsis.

In order to explore several controversies, it used as springboard for this exploration the consequences and inequality of treatment for women who married out of the faith, and the failure to accept their offspring as legitimate compared with offspring from the males marrying out. By interviewing a large number of Zoroastrians both in India and in the wide diaspora, Tenaz allowed her film to speak for itself. During the course of film we heard from the more liberal minded most of whom seem to now be living outside their original birthplace of India or Pakistan, and there were also a couple of Iranian households who were interviewed. The thrust of the argument revolved around the difficulties parents faced when their daughters wanted to marry a non Zoroastrian, and their decisions to either oppose or support them. In one moving case the spouse was prepared to embrace Zoroastrianism and underwent an initiation ceremony, being fully conversant with the beliefs and morality of our faith.

for a liberal interpretation of our religion, namely that nowhere in the texts attributed to Asho Zartosht, (the Gathas) is there any prohibition on any sort of person from joining the community, and he was adamant that it was a universal philosophy certainly not limited to any one racial or ethnic group. The orthodox perspective was also fully covered by interviews with the most vocal of that group, Khojeste Mistree. His arguments against acceptance was the oft repeated one of dilution. However he was not challenged as to the alternative which is total extinction. Other issues such as the relevance and appropriateness of the dakhma was also touched on with some gruesome images of what actually takes place when the conditions required for effective dakhma to operate are absent.

During the question and answer time, Tenaz was congratulated for the breadth of her documentary film but she was also challenged as to why she did not allow more voices within the orthodox-minded to have their say. She countered by saying that she had not found any suitably articulate representatives and that she exercised her right as the editor to make those editorial decisions.

The well attended meeting came to an end towards the end of the afternoon after a stimulating exchange of views between audience and speakers.

Photographs, courtesy
Sammy Bhiwandiwalla



Centre, Shahin Bekhradnia with the two speakers during question/answer session

The respected Mobed Jehan Bagli (a WZO board member) articulated the arguments

1290th Anniversary of Shreeji Pak Iranshah

I

It was a privilege to be present at Udvada on the special occasion of the 1290th salgreh (anniversary) of Shreeji Pak Iranshah on 24th April 2011; also in my capacity as Managing Trustee of Foundation for Development of Udvada, an honour to have been a part of the small group organising the mega event.

Every year on *adar mahino* & *adar roj* a large number of around 1000 / 1500 Parsis congregate upon Udvada to celebrate the salgreh of Shreeji Pak Iranshah. This year there was far greater excitement than usual, and many more Parsis converged upon Udvada. (There was no formal count of the number of people present, but I do know that the seating arrangement provided for 4000 guests was inadequate, as countless number of people were observing the proceeding whilst standing. Taking these numbers into consideration and the total heads catered to at the post event *gambhar*, it would be realistic to peg a figure anywhere just under or over 5000 being present).

by *dinshaw tamboly*

The excitement was palpable and the religious fervour at a high pitch, the reason being that the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Hon'ble Shri Narendra Modi accepting the invitation of Udvada Samast Anjuman agreed to be present at Udvada on the auspicious day.

The day began with the devotees thronging Shreeji Pak Iranshah from the crack of dawn. The usual '*khushali nu jashan*' began at 8:15 am, earlier than usual, as Dasturji Khurshed Kaikobad Dastoor (the fulcrum around which the entire function evolved) had to, as per protocol, be present at Daman airport to receive Shri Narendra Modi, the popular Chief Minister of Gujarat.

With the Chief Minister being the recipient of Z+ security, the members and volunteers of the organising committee planning logistic issues were extremely hard pressed to comply with the unyielding requirements necessitated in terms of security arrangements, with various layers of official security services making their presence felt.

The authorities had made it clear that Shri Narendra Modi would arrive at Daman

airport at 10 am, drive down and reach Udvada by 10:20 am and would leave the function no later than noon. Thus the original programme drawn up to spread over three hours had to be severely curtailed.

Dasturji Khurshed accompanying the Chief Minister and his cavalcade of 18 vehicles, an ambulance, fire tender et al, arrived at the entrance of Shreeji Pak Iranshah, where CM standing at the entrance on the street, bowed, offered sandalwood and said a silent prayer. The throng of devotees inside Shreeji Pak Iranshah anxious to have a glimpse of the dignitary, were held back by the security services by way of rope cordons. On seeing this, Chief Minister immediately informed the security to release the cordon mentioning in Gujarati "this is an educated community and does not require any such holding back". He happily shook hands with many devotees and wished them well.

Thereafter, as per programme, he went to the residence of Dasturji Khurshed where he was welcomed with traditional Parsi 'tilo, ckokha, flowers' by three very charming

ladies, Dasturji's wife Havovi, Rukshana, wife of Iransha boiwala Er Zarir Dastoor, and Mrs Homai Engineer of Industrial Boilers, Vapi, one of the moving spirits of the organising committee.

After a cup of Parsi *foodna & peppermint* tea, the Chief Minister proceeded to the Zoroastrian Information Centre (ZIC) of Foundation for Development of Udvada (FDU) where he was welcomed by FDU Trustees, Jehangir Cama, Dinshaw Tamboly, Homai Modi, Dr Homi Dhalla, Er Pirojsha Sidhwa & Behram Lakdawalla along with Heritage Architects Pankaj Joshi and Jamshed Bhiwandiwalla. Whilst being escorted around the ZIC, Hon Shri Narendra Modi expressed great satisfaction and mentioned that the Centre was a treasure trove of information on Zoroastrian religion, culture and history.

The visit to ZIC by the CM and his appreciation was vindication of the efforts taken to establish the Centre by the Trustees, in the face of misunderstandings and hurdles that were at the time of its inception, intentionally created by vested interests.

From the ZIC the CM proceeded the short distance to the gymkhana grounds, the site of the mammoth public meeting. Sharing the dais with him were four High Priests, Dasturjis Khurshed Dastoor & Peshotan Mirza of Udvada, Dasturji K N Dastoor Meherjirana of Navsari and Dasturji Firoze Kotwal from Mumbai. Also on the dais was Ms Bharti, Acting Collector of Valsad District.

The function began with two welcome songs rendered by girls of Bai Avabai Petit Parsi Girls School of Mumbai, after which cine star, Boman Irani described Shri Modi as the guardian of the sacred Atash Behram and of Udvada, comparing him with King Jadav Rana of Sanjan who gave shelter to Parsis when they landed thirteen centuries earlier.

Thereafter, Dasturji Peshotan Mirza chanted benedictions extolling divinity to shower His

blessings on the Chief Minister, the community, country and all humanity.

Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor welcomed the Chief Minister, mentioned that Iranshah had over the centuries faced adverse and difficult circumstances several times in its history; however, each and every time a miraculous divine power had intervened by motivating and guiding some extraordinary people to ensure that no harm befell our sacred fire. Today, once again, when the sacred fire was facing a different kind of threat, Government of Gujarat at the behest of its unparalleled and dynamic Chief Minister Shri Narendra Modi have risen to the occasion to assure its safety. Centuries ago it was Naresh (King) Jadav Rana who gave us sanctuary and permission to practice our faith. Today it is Hon Shri Narendra Modi who has acted in similar fashion and helped us preserve our faith. For the Zoroastrian community both will be remembered for all time to come as our saviours.

Dasturji Khurshed thereafter informed the Chief Minister that Parsis felt very secure in Gujarat and were prospering along with other citizens residing in the state. He also thanked the Chief Minister for the creation of Foundation for Development of Udvada's Zoroastrian Information Centre which was the result of his affection for the Parsi community, his farsightedness and benevolence. Dasturji Khurshed expressed the fond hope that 10 years hence, when the 1300th year Salgreh of Shreeji Pak Iranshah was being celebrated, Hon Shri Narendra Modi would grace the function in the avatar of Prime Minister of India.

The 5000 strong audience greeted these comments with thunderous applause and thereafter rose to give Chief Minister a standing ovation.

The CM began his address, by mentioning it was a matter of utmost pride for him that the world's smallest of the small, micro minority community had given him a standing ovation, which was an acknowledgement that they were happy residing in Gujarat. He mentioned that he needed no further



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 was a Trustee of BPP; and is of various hospitals, charity trusts and foundations. Till September 2004 he was a Member of the International Board of WZO.



certificate from anyone about the efficacy of his government. He then mentioned that it was his dream that Udvada should be considered "World Capital of Religious Harmony".

He recalled with a display of amazing clarity of memory that at a public function held at Ahmedabad in the year 2000, he had acknowledged the positive role of Parsis in nation building, ever since their arrival from Persia over 1300 years ago. He recalled having mentioned that the most sacred religious place of Parsis was Udvada, where the holy fire – Iranshah – was perpetually maintained and that ever since the Parsis arrived as migrants they had abided by a code of conduct which preserved their identity without offending the sensitivities of any other community.

Whilst making these comments about Parsis, he said he was very touched to observe from the dais that the eyes of two Parsis in the audience, Mehroo & Jehangir Cama, had welled up with tears at this mention of the Parsi community. Such a spontaneous devotion to one's community and religion enthused him to mention that Udvada today showcased the glorious history of the Parsi community of over 1300

years, after which he made a suggestion to Hon Shri Jagmohan, then Minister (Tourism & Culture), Government of India, to project Udvada as a place of harmony, religious tolerance and opportunities provided to a miniscule community to realise their full potential. He appreciated that in an era of religious and sectarian conflicts, Sanjan and Udvada are the biggest global destinations showcasing religious harmony.

Hon Shri Narendra Modi mentioned that he had a strong desire to create two global capitals in Gujarat. One was that Udvada should be considered world capital of religious harmony, and the other of making Gujarat the world capital of producing solar energy. He mentioned he was determined to see these two dreams of his reach fruition.

He repeatedly stressed that Udvada symbolised one of the finest examples of cultural traditions of our country. He advised Parsis to get together, and set aside one day in a year which would be celebrated by them as Iranshah or Udvada Day, when Parsis from all over the world would participate in its celebration. He commented that Shreeji Pak Iranshah was a unifying factor for Parsis residing anywhere on this planet.

He expressed his utmost satisfaction with the Zoroastrian Information Centre of Foundation for Development of Udvada, which his state government along with central government had sponsored. He mentioned that some misunderstandings were sought to be created during its creation and inception, but was very happy after viewing it first hand. He went on to comment that it was a veritable treasure trove of information about the community's religion, culture and history.

He mentioned that he had often wondered what would have happened to Gujarat if Parsis had not arrived here and continued that without Parsis, Gujaratis would not have learnt to laugh or smile. He added we Gujaratis would not have acquired the skill to face and overcome our problems with a

smile and that this is a community that does not want anything from government. Not even an election ticket, establishing that their love is pure and unconditional, without any expectations. This could only be possible because of sound values on which Parsis fashioned themselves, only 'sanskar' can make this a reality, and Gujarat has benefited by it. One finds Parsis at the forefront of every discipline, be it industry, science, armed forces, banking or any other sector.

In the freedom movement too, Parsi stalwarts had played a significant role. He recalled the names of Dadabhai Navroji and the 'swaraj' (independence) movement that he started, Madam Bhikaiji Cama who had the courage to unfurl the flag of free India at a meeting in Germany well before India attained independence. He appealed to Parsis to visit S K Verma monument in Kutch's Mandvi where one section is devoted to Madam Cama. 'Madam Cama's glorious history has been showcased in Mandvi, you will be proud of your heritage after visiting that place. Your hearts will swell with pride', he said.

He said that even though Parsis have not asked for anything there were three things that he asked for, from Parsis and they were 'Humata, Hukhta, Huvarashtra' (good, thoughts, good words, good deeds). Hon Chief Minister Narendra Modi said he came to Iranshah with the motive to get blessings for these three values as he did not want himself or his government to commit mistakes, nor do anything that was harmful to anyone.

He lamented about the falling numbers of Parsis and went on to mention that Parsis have sweetened the fabric of our country and said that if there were more Parsis in numbers, just think how much sweeter our country would be.

Hon Shri Narendra Modi stayed well beyond his scheduled time of departure at 12 noon. He left the meeting at 12:45 pm after which the organisers felicitated a few individuals who had helped the Udvada Samast Anjuman, heard a short discourse by

Dasturji K N Dastoor Meherjirana of Navsari and were thereafter treated to a delightful 25 minute presentation of "Sheer-e-Shireen" (sugar in the milk) depicting the turbulent journey of our ancestors from Iran to India, performed by children of the Dharmagyan class of Mancherji E Joshi Memorial Trust, which was greatly appreciated and was given a standing ovation.

Ms Mahrukh Chichgar of Surat, the mistress of ceremonies, conducted the proceedings brilliantly, interspersing very appropriate multi lingual quotes in both English and Gujarati when required. She indeed raised the bar which will take some doing to match.

Rendering of Chaiye Hame Zarthoshti and the National Anthem were the finale of the highly successful proceedings, after which 5000 odd hungry individuals proceeded to feast on the *gambhar* lunch catered by famed father & son duo Maneck & Eric Tadiwalla who not only looked after the catering arrangements but were very much involved in the organising of the mega event and coordinating with various statutory agencies.



Dadi Mistry, WZO Committee Member, presenting silver frame on behalf of WZO to the Chief Minister

The Parsi Punchayet case: The imperative of inclusiveness

by navroz seervai

The writer is an eminent lawyer and senior counsel in Mumbai. With Mr Seervai's permission his article is reproduced in Hamazor, which appeared on 4th May in the Times of India.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/The-Parsi-Punchayet-case-The-imperative-of-inclusiveness/articleshow/8157134.cms>

the judgement of the Bombay High Court in Jamsheed Kanga versus Parsi Punchayet Funds and Properties, has raised a big controversy within the Parsi community. Much of the controversy is due to uninformed public opinion; it is also created by vested interests. It is unfortunate that so brilliant and lucidly expounded a judgement should become the subject of unnecessary controversy.

Having read the judgement thrice, I believe its message is best summed up in the words of Alexander Pope: "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; The proper study of mankind is man". In contrast, much of the criticism in the Parsi press, recalls Macbeth's lament: "... full of sound and fury, signifying nothing".

The appellants moved the court for determining questions relating to the power of the trustees of the Punchayet; the rights of the beneficiaries under a Deed of Trust of 1884; and for the proper administration of the Trust. The immediate cause for moving the court was a ban imposed by the trustees on two Parsi priests from performing prayers or religious ceremonies at Doongerwadi and two Agiaries, which are vested in the Trust. The ban was imposed because the priests had conducted irreligious ceremonies, according to the trustees. Thus, the trustees exercising powers under the Trust Deed, had sat in judgement over the religious activities of the priests and members of the community. This was objected to by the appellants.

Interpreting the Trust Deed, the court held that the trustees were not entitled to prevent any ordained Parsi Zoroastrian priest from performing religious rites and ceremonies at Doongerwadi and the two Agiaries; the Deed did not empower the trustees to restrain Parsi Zoroastrians in their choice of an ordained Priest to conduct religious prayers and ceremonies at Doongerwadi and the two Agiaries; the ban imposed on the two priests was not within the power and authority of the trustees under the Deed.

The attack on the judgement was predictable in its virulence; what is worse, the Judges have been attacked — much of the criticism being wholly unjustified. This was in keeping with the entirely unjustified attacks in the "Parsi" press, during the course of the litigation, against the appellants, the interveners, and their counsel — attacks of which the bench was constrained to deal in measured terms: "The cohesiveness of a faith is maintained by dialogue, not division. The impassioned plea of the appellants even before this court for a recourse to reason, has only been met with reprisals — reprisals against the appellants, the interveners and their counsel".

As it is not open to Judges to defend themselves, it is left to others to do so. Justice Chandrachud has been accused of being disrespectful of the high priests by referring to them as "certain priests". The judgement however reveals that the only

place where the term “certain priests” is used is when Justice Chandrachud merely reproduces the words used in the pleadings. Justice Chandrachud has used no such words when referring to the high priests. The allegation is therefore totally baseless and unwarranted. I could multiply such instances of unjustified criticism, but refrain from doing so.

What then is the significance of the conclusions arrived at in this landmark judgement? The two most significant are that:

One, it draws a clear distinction between secularity in a country like India and matters of religion, drawing as it does on the fundamental principles laid down in our Constitution – principles which could well be said to reflect the wise counsel of Jesus, when he said: “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (St Matthew).

Two, it cuts through the clutter of specious religious arguments and emphasizes the essential distinction between race and religion — something that is regrettably often lost sight of.

Furthermore, the judgement delivers a message to the community more powerful than the ruling itself — clearly it is a wakeup call for a community that is today suffering from lack of leadership and vision. It is apparent that the Judges were horrified by the schisms being created by the leadership itself, of the minuscule Parsi community; and it contains a plaintive appeal for bodies like the Punchayet to be less divisive and more inclusive in their approach. This would be possible if the Punchayet dealt, as it is empowered to do, with secular issues, leaving it to individuals to conduct their own personal religious affairs. It is not a coincidence that when the matter was carried to the Supreme Court, the Bench expressed similar views, and sent the parties to the mediation of Sriram Panchu.

The appellants and the interveners have done great service to the Parsi community,

and need to be commended. So too do their lawyers, led by the redoubtable Iqbal Chagla. They have braved calumny heaped upon them by the respondents, and those that espouse their cause. I am glad that these personal attacks did not deter the appellants, the interveners, or their lawyers from pursuing their cause. The judgement vindicates them in full measure.



Summarising events after mid March

1. Within a month of the judgment of the Division Bench in Bombay High Court, the BPP moved an appeal before the Supreme Court seeking to have the judgment set aside.
2. Almost concurrently five of the present six High Priests moved an intervention application before the Supreme Court wishing to join the suit and alleging that their religious powers had been curtailed as a consequence of the judgment.
3. Dasturji Khurshed K Dastur of Udvarda, who had spoken up against the ban on the two priests in an interview in FEZANA last year is not a signatory to this application.
4. When the petition came up for hearing before J Katju & J Mishra in April, parties were advised to first explore a settlement of the dispute via mediation if possible. J Katju said that the Parsis are a very respected community and he did not like such disputes within the community being aired in public.
5. J Katju directed the parties to utilize the services of one Mr Sriram Panchu, a Senior Advocate of the Madras High Court, who has specialised in mediations and agreed to keep the admission of the petition and the application pending till 19th July, by which time the mediation should be complete.
6. The Priests’ Matter has now also polarized the Trustees and the High Priests into two distinct camps as is evident from reports of election meetings for the election of a new Trustee to the BPP. The Chairman Mr Dinshaw Mehta who supports the candidature of Mr Munchi Cama has said publicly that he would like to settle the matter. The WAPIZ group, who are fielding Mrs Anahita Desai, wife of sitting trustee Mr Yezdi Desai one of the WAPIZ founder members, have virulently attacked Dinshaw Mehta in the WAPIZ. (The article can be read on their website). Dasturji Khurshed K Dastur has seconded Mr Munchi Cama’s candidature and Dasturji Firoze Kotwal, Dasturji Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa, Dasturji Peshotan Mirza and Dasturji Cyrus Dastur are supporting Mrs Desai. - Ed.

“Promoting Marriage Survey : Summary Report”

Extracts taken from the summary report by sammy bhiwandiwalla

Dinyar Patel a PhD Candidate studying History at Harvard University, USA compiled and wrote a report on promoting marriage within the Zoroastrian community. This informal survey was organized, with the support of the group NextGenNow, between 29 March and 18 April 2011 and was based on the submission of over 200 responses freely provided by the Zoroastrian youth in North America.

The seven questions posed to the respondents were as follows:-

1. If you are actively looking for a Zoroastrian spouse, what are the major hurdles that you have faced?
2. What do you think that FEZANA can do to help promote marriage? Start a matrimonial website or collaborate with an existing site? Start a youth social networking site? Sponsor more frequent and larger youth congresses? Bolster youth attendance, and youth focus, at general congresses?
3. If FEZANA were to sponsor a matrimonial website, what features would you think would be most important? Any suggestions for model websites?
4. What is youth interaction like on a local association level?
5. (If already married / in a relationship) If you have met someone from the community, how did you meet?
6. If you ended up marrying someone outside the community, did you try to find a Zoroastrian spouse initially? If so, what were the difficulties that you faced?
7. Any other comments or suggestions?

In his summation Dinyar concludes that the results of this survey will be unsettling for many. They indicate that, while many Zoroastrian youth and young adults are very keen on finding Zoroastrian spouses, a lot of people are not meeting with success. This is to be expected in the North American diaspora, which is highly geographically dispersed.

It is markedly different from the environment in which most of the youth's parents and grandparents grew up: close-knit neighborhoods or baugs with high concentrations of Zoroastrians in places

such as Bombay, Tehran, Yazd, Karachi, or Gujarat. It is a natural consequence of our community's decision to migrate from the traditional homelands for both socioeconomic and political reasons.

The responses in this survey indicate that much of what FEZANA has done, especially local events and congresses, has been helpful. But a lot more can be done in order to better integrate the youth in the organization and support youth interaction.

There is support for a FEZANA, or FEZANA-supported, matrimonial website and social networking site. Cheaper (or better subsidized) and more frequent congresses for the youth are two more options. Associations can hold frequent regional events with neighboring associations, while also better reaching out to individuals in their 20s and 30s (the most crucial demographic for promoting marriage).

Ultimately, youth and young adults themselves need to take the initiative and get involved in their communities. Whatever the response to this report may be, it should not be one of defensiveness. Nor should it be one of endless “further discussion.” Time is ticking and concrete action is sorely needed. FEZANA can help by concentrating its efforts, funding, and activities on the youth and young adults, its “next generation.” It must also give real responsibility and authority to them over youth/young adult-related issues and programming. But at the same time, more youth and young adults need to seriously step up to the challenge and take on leadership roles.

Extracts taken from “Understanding Parsi Population Decline in India: A Historical Perspective”

Talk presented by Dinyar Patel PhD candidate at the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre, Mumbai on 7 May 2011.

Based on his extensive research Dinyar Patel concludes that a Parsi demographic freefall has been a tangible reality, in terms of actual numbers, since at least the 1960s, and for much, much longer in terms of rates of late-marriage, non-marriage and, consequently, fertility.

In the course of his presentation, Dinyar Patel has been able to thoroughly dismiss two standard Parsi responses to the demographic crisis:

“The Parsi community, dying? Who’s dying? I am here, and so are you.”

“What does the size of the population matter? Quality versus quantity.”

There is not much quality, after all, when your community is aging and dwindling rapidly.

“Now, I have two concluding thoughts. The first thought has to do with the issue of Parsi politics, as odd as that term may sound for a tiny band of 69,000 individuals. Everyone inside the community, and an increasingly large portion of the general public outside of the community, is aware that there is a bitter liberal-conservative divide that has spawned heated exchanges, mudslinging, and the occasional court case. For a community of our miniscule size, it is incredible—and deeply saddening, and even more deeply embarrassing—to see how much rancour and outright hatred this division has spawned. As a historian, I can tell you that Parsis have long been an extremely garrulous community and that the current liberal-conservative divide is only the latest of many arguments that have caused discord amongst the Zoroastrians of India. This history, of course, still doesn’t excuse such shameful behaviour.

While our demographic situation is, by no means, enviable, it does pose an opportunity for conservative-liberal

reconciliation and cooperation. Certainly, promoting more marriage, and encouraging more childbirth, within the community is a noble cause that both conservatives and liberals can support. It is certainly something that is enjoined in our religious tradition.

Consider what the great Parsi scholar Jivanji Jamshedji Modi wrote about marriage and children in the Zoroastrian tradition. Marriage, he pointed out, is favoured by Ahura Mazda and encouraged by Zarathushtra. We find evidence of this in the Gathas and the Vendidad (Videvdad), amongst other texts.

These are essential parts of our religion, a religion that is in danger of disappearing in a few generations because of low rates of marriage and childbirth. I will leave you to ponder the irony of this situation.

And that brings me to my second and final thought. We have one last myth to bust: *“Parsis might die out, but Zoroastrianism will live on. Millions are converting elsewhere.”*

This is an argument that is made over and over in emails of dubious origin that circulate within the community. I have even seen “statistics” in published books claiming resurgent Zoroastrian populations in Central Asian countries where the religion has been extinct for centuries. Unfortunately, no one bothers to properly research and verify such claims and, perhaps even more unfortunately, when we *do* research the matter, we find that there is absolutely no factual basis whatsoever to support the assertion that millions are converting. Yes, there have been some converts in places such as Central Asia, Russia, Europe and even South America. But they are a mere

handful. For example, in Tajikistan, the Central Asian country that can claim some of the strongest cultural ties to Zoroastrianism, one researcher, Shahin Bekhradnia, found precisely 14 such declared converted Zoroastrians. There was a fifteenth but he was killed by fanatics in 2001. Arash Zeini, a PhD candidate studying Zoroastrianism at SOAS, travelled to Dushanbe in Tajikistan in 2005 partly in order to investigate the rumors of Zoroastrian conversions. He could not find a single person who was even familiar with the terms “Zartosht” and “Zartoshty” (email communication with Arash Zeini, 10 December 2010).

I seriously doubt that any Zoroastrian convert faces an easier time in less liberal countries such as Uzbekistan. Similarly, in Russia, the scholar Michael Stausberg has counted only a few dozen individuals who follow Pavel Globa, a Russian who converted himself to Zoroastrianism.

Such converts number, perhaps, a few hundred and, at absolute maximum, a few thousand. They do not constitute a significant number. While there has been much excited talk over the past century of a “return to Zoroastrianism” movement amongst Iranian Muslims, we have seen barely any real conversion, even during the more liberal period under the Shah. And, given the political climate in today’s Iran, where conversion from Islam carries the death penalty, I do not think that we should anticipate any mass return anytime soon.

This leaves us with a stark reality. For the moment, barring some truly spectacular change in fortune, the fate of Zoroastrianism as a living religion hinges entirely upon the existing Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrian communities. If the Parsis die out, then the flame of Zoroastrianism will also be severely, if not fatally, imperilled. Zoroastrianism will live or die depending on the choices that today’s Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians make. By continuing with our current behaviour of late marriage, non-marriage, and limited childbirth, we are killing both a community and a religion. And

that, I believe, is the greatest tragedy that faces the Parsis of today. It is time for change.”

Footnote

Dinyar Patel has presented two worthy reports and done an admirable exercise in placing before the community factual information on the present views of the younger generation coupled with the dismissal of the myths or questionable and unproven data circulated by various vested interests.

Intermarriage has been the sole whipping horse for decades but that does not explain or support the dramatic decline in our numbers. Liaisons outside the Parsi community are not made out of malice, lack of consideration or short-sightedness but because of social conditions. Intermarriage in this day and age is not uncommon in other communities though their greater numbers tend to mask the fact that this is happening frequently, at least in the West. Conversely, our diminishing numbers have made the impact of intermarriage more noticeable and in a way have become self-perpetuating. The case for “Acceptance” is stronger than ever before.

(Sammy Bhiwandiwalla)



Dinyar Patel is a PhD candidate in the Department of History at Harvard University, where he is working on a dissertation on Dadabhai Naoroji. This article draws upon talks he delivered to the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

in London (ZTFE) in April 2010 and the Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston (ZAGBA) in May 2010.

Zarathustra's essential teachings & their transformation over the ages

by adi davar

Article in two parts. Part Two: Their Transformation Over the Ages

Introduction

Zarathustra's real teachings¹ were briefly explained in Part I of this article in Hamazor last issue. They need to be kept in mind, to understand the magnitude of their transformation over the ages and how different our beliefs and practices are today.

Clearly, no religion flourishes over thousands of years in a vacuum of its own. A revealed religion, particularly one as ancient as Zoroastrianism, is no exception. Being revolutionary in its teachings, it transforms individual and societal ways of thinking, defies established religious and political institutions and undercuts traditional bases of wealth and power. It has to withstand and grow in the milieu of deep-rooted traditional beliefs, ideologies and practices it replaces, whose beneficiaries are loath to give them up.

Such forces usually manifest themselves through changes in a religion's rituals, rites, practices, traditions and religious leadership. But basic doctrine and their underlying theology, remain essentially intact. This has been the case with all major religions, except Zoroastrianism. Over the ages, its reformist monotheistic teachings were increasingly blended with pre-Zarathustrian deities and percepts denounced by Zarathustra. Religious practices and religiosity that he castigated, were also reintroduced. Moreover, some modifications made in them in one era, were altered in subsequent ones.

As their sweep is too expansive for a brief article, the transformation² will be explored illustratively through a limited number of topics, over three time periods:

The Gathic Period (GP), from around 1700 up to 1400 BC;

The Younger Avestan Period (YAP), from around 1400 BC up to 250 AD (the advent of the Haptanghaiti Gathas until the end of the Parthian era); and

The Later Avestan Period (LAP), from about 250 to 900 AD (Sasanian / Islamic era) up to the present times.

Topic 1: Ahura Mazda's Attributes & Man's Qualities

In the GP, belief continued in Zarathustra's teachings that Ahura Mazda created everything through His innate Mentalities and abstract Attributes, and He endowed man³ with Qualities akin to His Attributes so that he could help perfect the world by perfecting his urwan. They were: Asha (Absolute Truth / Righteousness), Vohu Mano (Good Mind/ Divine Love); Armaiti (Divine Service/ Devotion); Khshathra (Divine Power/Energy); Haurvatat (Perfection); and Ameratat (Immortality). Such monotheistic teachings made it difficult for the priests of the pre-Zarathustrian faith to generate fear in the laity that it had to perform expensive rites and rituals to assuage various godheads, primordial and supernatural divinities. Faced with the resulting loss of influence and income, they began agitating against the new teachings.

During the YAP, such opposition intensified. Zarathustra's weak successors could not resist the rebelling priests who were determined to revert to pre-Zarathustrian beliefs and practices to regain wealth and power. Ultimately, a "grand compromise" was forged between them. It is reflected in the Haptanghaiti Gathas, and later scriptures. In essence, the syncretism introduced, was to retain the

concept of Ahura Mazda in name, while blending pre-Zarathustrian entities and practices into many of the strictly monotheistic doctrinal underpinnings of the Prophet's teachings.

How was it all done? It began by keeping Ahura Mazda as supreme, but subtly eroding His omnipotence. His six innate Attributes were personified into primordial "Amesha Spentas". He was then only placed at their head, to form Heavenly Council of Seven "Holy Immortals". For the first time in our faith, a divine Zoroastrian pantheon was thus created. Amesha Spentas held first rank like that enjoyed by archangels of subsequent faiths. Each personified Attribute was made responsible for a physical earthly domain: Vohu Manah, for the Cattle Kingdom; Asha, for Fire; Spenta Armaiti, for Mother Earth; Khshathra Vairya, for the Mineral Kingdom; Haurvatat, for the Water Kingdom; and Ameretat, for the Plants Kingdom.

Many of Zarathustra's percepts were abandoned. For instance, that: Ahura Mazda endowed man with Qualities akin to His Attributes, so that he could cope with his responsibility for deciding whether to perfect his urwan and thus the world, and for the fate of his urwan's fate in afterlife; by using the keys of good thought, good words and good deeds, man should live by the faith's basic principles of Good Thinking, Truth and Service and perfect his urwan and the world. Instead, he could now seek the help of Amesha Spentas and Yazats. Rituals and ceremonies denounced by Zarathustra, were grafted into the faith. Under the garb of his teachings, many supernatural elements of the pre-Zarathustrian times were effectively blended into the faith. And almost all rituals and prayers now implored their help along with that of Ahura Mazda.

In the LAP: The seven Amesha Spentas continued as the Heavenly Council. But they were now called "Aspandads". Ahura Mazda was renamed, "Ormazad". New languages used in this period, probably account for the name changes.

The Aspandads are no longer responsible for the different earthly domains. Except for Ormazad, each now represented objects used in ceremonies and rituals:

Arthavahista – Fire, Vohuman – Milk, Spandarmad – fruits and vegetables, Shatravar – Metals, Kurdad –Water, and Amardad –Oil.

Topic 2: Yazats

In the GP, there were no Yazats or any primordial or supernatural force to believe in or worship. They were simply not part of Zarathustra's real teachings.

In the YAP, the Yazats (Adorable Ones) were introduced along with the Amesha Spentas, for the first time into Zoroastrian theology as part of the compromise reflected in the Haptanghaiti Gathas. They were made part of the newly created divine pantheon, but below the Amesha Spentas (at the level of angels in later religions). Unlike them, Yazats were not primordial. They were "ahura dhats", created by Ahura Mazda.

Groups of Yazats helped each Amesha Spenta to take care of the material and spiritual aspects of his/her earthly domain. "Mainyava" (spiritual or celestial) Yazats like Daena, Serosha, Mithra, Rashnu, Verethragna, presided over wisdom, contracts, rectitude, victory, etc; and the "gaethya" (material or terrestrial) Yazats like Atar, Ardvi Sura, Vayu, Tishtrya, over fire, water, wind, rain, etc.. Later in this period when Persian empires expanded, the polytheistic gods of conquered nations began to be absorbed for political reasons into Zoroastrianism as Yazats. Their numbers therefore multiplied.

Elaborate ceremonies, rituals and religiosity reentered the faith, achieving the rebelling priesthood's goal of regaining lost wealth and power. Yashts were composed to honor every major Yazat. Man recited them to seek boons, benedictions and help from the Yazats. Such reliance further eroded man's responsibility for making choices relevant to the perfection of his urwan and the world.



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Zarathustra had taught that Ahura Mazda endowed each man with a Daena, which received His guidance through His Divine Messenger Mentality, Serosha. Their role was now played by the new concept of fravashis. Both were also demoted, as celestial Yazats.

Zarathustra, and Ahura Mazda, are now often called Yazats. Even the juice of the intoxicating ephedra plant, Hoama, whose consumption and use in pre-Zarathustrian rituals was castigated by the Prophet, is personified as a Yazat. A Yasht was composed to honor him and recited while paying homage to him through a ritual.

Zarathustra's taught that Ahura Mazda created the Universe through His Spenta Mainyu Mentality. That credit is taken away. Instead, Amesha Spentas, Yazats and others are credited with helping Ahura Mazda in the creation process.

In the LAP, Yazats, renamed "Izads", multiplied to over 31,000 by the end of the Sasanian era (632 AD). They continued to be worshipped through an increasing number of prayer ceremonies and rituals, which included recitation of Yashts composed to honor the major ones. Power and responsibilities of Izads now outstripped those of Aspandads.

Serosha, Mithra and Rashnu are no longer "celestial" Yazats. All three, are made the Judges at Cinvat Bridge. The Prophet's teaching that Ahura Mazda is the only Judge at the Bridge, was thus modified.

Topic 3: Fravashis

In the GP, there was no belief in fravashis. They had no place in Zarathustra's teachings.

In the YAP, fravashis were introduced into Zoroastrian theology for the first time, as part of the "grand compromise". They are "holy souls" who "existed since "the dawn of time", i.e. before the creation process began. Another primordial force was thus blended into Zarathustra's revolutionary

monotheistic faith. Fravashis joined Ahura Mazda, Amesha Spentas and Yazats in the creation process. Ahura Mazda's omnipotence in the creation process was thus further diluted and His Spenta Mainyu Mentality's role cut out.

Zarathustra's teaching that Ahura Mazda guides every man's Daena through His Serosha Mentality, is discarded altogether. Instead, man receives guidance from his heaven-based fravashi, or guardian spirit. Everyone and everything, even Ahura Mazda and the Amesha Spentas, have fravashis. One of the oldest Zoroastrian prayers written in this period, the Fravardin Yasht, lists about 300 fravashis, some primordial and others of persons who played invaluable roles in spreading Zarathustra's teachings in many lands.

The new prayers, including those composed for socio-religious occasions, invoked not only Ahura Mazda's help, but also that of fravashis, Yazats and Amesha Spentas.

In the LAP, fravashis, renamed "farohars", underwent a transformation from the preceding period. It is Ahura Mazda, renamed Ormazd, who created them before He decided to create the universe.

Yet another major transformation in Zoroastrianism's theology was, that farohars agreed to Ormazd's request not to live with Him in heaven, but on earth within man to serve as his guide in earthly life and return to heaven only when his body dies. Zarathustra's original concepts of Daena and Serosha, as well as the change made in them in the YAP, were thus discarded. As the world today has over 7 billion persons, it now has, by implication, over 7 billion fravashis instead of about 300 in the Fravardin Yasht.

Whatever a man's transgression may be, his fravashi always intercedes on his behalf with Ahura Mazda. It accompanies his urwan across Cinvat Bridge, to plead for him with its three Judges. It also does that in his after-life. The monotheistic teaching that man is responsible for the fate of his urwan in afterlife is thus watered down.

Topic 4: Angre Mainyu or Ahriman

In the GP, there was no belief in Angre Mainyu. It was simply not part of Zarathustra's teachings. As explained in Part I of this article, he mentions Wickedness (called "Evil" in later scriptures) in 3 places, in the context where the word means a "doer of wickedness", "wicked person" or "victim of wickedness". This suggests that Wickedness has no substance, until man gives it life by choosing to think, speak or act wickedly.

In the YAP, wickedness is personified for the first time in Zoroastrianism as "Angre Mainyu", the Evil Spirit. As part of the "grand compromise", it emerges as a primordial spirit that is always in opposition to Ahura Mazda's innate Spenta Mainyu Mentality (His Creative Mentality). That Mentality is thus turned into a personified primordial spirit.

Angre Mainyu's goal is to overthrow Ahura Mazda and lure men into becoming his allies. Although Zarathustra had castigated belief and worship of daevas and divs, they re-enter Zoroastrianism as Angre Mainyu's panoply of the evil forces. They are always engaged in perpetrating evil in the universe and persuading men to commit evil.

Towards the end of YAP, in the Achaemenian era (549-330 BC), the "Zurvanite heresy" gained credence amongst Zoroastrians. Namely, that Zurvan (ie., Time), not Ahura Mazda, was the father of both Spenta Mainyu and Angre Mainyu.

In the LAP, Angre Mainyu was renamed "Ahriman". From his position as the rival of Ormazd's Spenta Mainyu Mentality in the YAP, he is now made Ormazd's co-equal. This was done through the Avesta-Zend compiled in the Sasanian era. In other words, it was only 1,700 years ago that the name as well as co-equality of Ahriman with Ahura Mazda was introduced in our 4,000 year-old faith. Is that duality compatible with Zarathustra's teaching of monotheism?

Ahriman swears vengeance against Ormazd and His creations. He vows to

destroy them. He creates all evil in the universe, including falsehood, disease, pestilence, war and death. With his panoply of daevas and divs, he spreads and deepens evil in all forms everywhere. When any man abandons the worship of Ormazd, Ahriman makes him his partner. He is determined to prevent Frasho-keriti (Ultimate Renovation of the Universe), a concept also grafted into Zoroastrianism in the Sassanian era. All this is a drastic change in Zarathustra's teaching that evil has no substance until man makes it a reality.

A further change occurred in Sasanian times. In place of the Achamanean heresy of Zurvan, Zoroastrians now believed that Zurvan fathered Ormazd and Ahriman as twins. Learned scholars like Mary Boyce have concluded that most Sassanian kings, and presumably many Zoroastrians at the time, were Zurvanite in their belief.

Topic 5: Religious Prayers and Rituals

In the GP, man followed Zarathustra's teaching of venerating Ahura Mazda, His Mentalities and Attributes, by reciting individual prayers with outstretched arms (Ha. 50.8), doing simple rituals to reaffirm devotion and by living life according to the faith's basic principles. This was done before an ever-burning hearth fire, whose light was symbolized by the Prophet as Ahura Mazda's light of Wisdom and Creativity. Since Zarathustra had denounced rites and rituals that led to the loss of the wealth and influence of the pre-Zarathustrian priests, it might be safe to assume that Zoroastrian priests only performed "socio-religious" ceremonies. No one seems to know what prayers they then recited. But presumably, they only invoked Ahura Mazda and drew upon the relevant stanzas of those Gathas that Zarathustra had composed to teach his faith.

The YAP however witnessed a revival of many ceremonies and rituals of the pre-Zarathustrian era, inclusive of animal sacrifices, gift offerings and libations. Since Amesha Spentas, Yazats and fravashis

were now blended into the faith, prayers recited at all rituals and socio-religious prayer ceremonies, invoked their blessings and help besides that of Ahura Mazda.

The Hoama ritual was revived and new ones introduced. For example, certain days of the year were earmarked as “fravardigan days”, when the Fravardin Yasht's 300 fravashis come down to earth. Man had to propitiate them in order to persuade them to look after the urwans of their deceased family members. New expensive ceremonies like the afringan, faroksi and varsi had to be performed throughout the year to help those urwans. Such practices transformed Zarathustra's basic teaching that a man's urwan pays in after life, for living or not living according to the faith's basic principles.

In the LAP, the expensive Nirang and Vendidad ceremonies were added. But animal sacrifices and gift offerings ceased. Fire, milk, fruits, metal objects, water and an oil lamp, the earthly domains that were assigned to the seven Aspandads in this period, were used instead. Religiosity and rites increasingly become man's means of venerating Ormazd, rather than through individual prayers and simple personal rituals.

As in the YAP, eminent priests continued to compose prayers invoking Amesha Spentas, Yazats and Fravashis, besides Ahura Mazda. But phrases from the Gathas were now interwoven into them to give them the authenticity of reflecting Zarathustra's teachings. That was also the purpose of inserting the surviving 17 Gathas composed by Zarathustra, in the middle of the 72 chapters of the Avesta-Zend.

By the Islamic period (around 632 AD), the number of fravashis swelled to 9,999. Yet another change was introduced in fravardigan practice. Fravashis of the deceased relatives accompanied Fravardin Yasht's 300 fravashis. Family members propitiated them to cajole them into taking care of their relatives' urwans. That practice again changed in later centuries. On

favardigan days, only the fravashis of the deceased family members came in the company of their urwans. But since the last 200 years, urwans of the deceased relatives alone came, so that their families could remember them.

Topic 6: Heaven and Hell

In the GP, belief continued in Zarathustra's teaching that a man who had lived according to the faith's principles and perfected his urwan, is rewarded on crossing Cinvat Bridge by being absorbed in Ahura Mazda's emanation, the allegorical Abode of Light and Song. Those who had not, went to the allegorical Abode of Woe and Misery.

In the YAP, a four-fold division for both heaven and hell replaced the GP's two-fold division. Heaven's four divisions were: Anaghra Roaocha (endless light), where Ahura Mazda, Amesha Spentas, Yazats and the fravashis of perfected souls dwell as reward for having perfected themselves on earth; the remaining three lower heavens, in a descending order, awaited those who had led less perfect lives, namely, those of Humata (Good Thought), Hukhata (Good Words) and Huvarshta (Good Deeds). Hell's 4-fold divisions, in a descending order, were those of Dushmata (Evil Thought), Dushukhta (Evil Words), Dushvarashta (Evil Deeds) and Angra Temati (Endless Darkness). In addition, man who lived life with an equal measure of good and wickedness, went to Misvana Getu (place of mixing), a mid-way place between heaven and hell.

In the LAP, these divisions remained. But the urwans for whom no obsequies were done by their relatives, went to a lower level of heaven. Those for whom they were done, ascended to its highest level, Garotman. Locations of heaven are set in different parts of the cosmos. From the lowest to highest, they were between stars to moon, moon to sun, and sun to Garotman and Garotman to endless light where Ahura Mazda resides. The four location of hell are in the middle of the earth, below Cinvat

Bridge. Each is distinguished by increasing gradation of punishment meted by Ahriman and his divs to the urwans. The midway heaven is located between the earth and stars.

Summary & Conclusions

The objective of this article is simply to provide information that is not easily available to most Zoroastrians. Readers might ponder over it and reach their own conclusions as to whether what they practice as their faith, reflects Zarathustra's original strictly monotheistic teachings. Or, whether it is closer to the practice of the Sassanian era, by which time Zarathustra's teachings had regressed through blending pre-Zarathustrian divinities, primordial and supernatural beings into them and rituals to propitiate them.

It seems to the author that the extensive blending initiated through the "grand compromise" reflected in the Haptanhaiti Gathas, was deepened in our later scriptures because by that time, Zarathustra's teachings had become dimmer and dimmer. This was probably due to the inability over those centuries to understand the ancient Gathic language in which Zarathustra had composed them. Together, they succeeded in drastically changing most of his strict monotheistic teachings, not merely the faith's rites, rituals, practices, traditions and religious leadership - as it happened in other major faiths.

The net result was: to preserve the concept of Ahura Mazda, not as the sole omnipotent Creator, but as one who relied on supernatural beings and forces even in the process of creation itself; to personalize His innate Mentalities and abstract Attributes, and turn them into supernatural forces; to create a hierarchial divine pantheon of Amesha Spentas and Yazats, akin to arch angels and angels of later faiths; to revere Ahura Mazda not only through personal prayers, but increasingly through expensive and frequent rituals and ceremonies invoking such divinities and forces; for

man's Daena not to receive Ahura Mazda's guidance through His Serosha Mentality, but instead be guided by a supernatural guardian angel, a man's fravashi, that Zarathustra mentioned nowhere.

Further results were: to continue venerating Ahura Mazda, along with the supernatural Amesha Spentas, Yazats and fravashis who had no place in Zarathustra's teachings; for man to no longer be the one who gives substance to Wickedness, but instead pass the blame to a primordial Evil, Ahriman; to make him equal to Ahura Mazda; for man to rely on supernatural Yazats and fravashis to help him perfect his urwan and the world, rather than choosing to lead life based on the faith's basic principles; to nourish hope of a better fate for his urwan in afterlife through the intercession of his fravashi and obsequies done by relatives, rather than reap the benefit of, or the penalty for, the way he lived on earth.

The reality seems to be, that Zoroastrianism today rests on beliefs and practices that do not reflect Zarathustra's pristinely monotheistic teachings. Should Zoroastrians practice it as it has evolved "by tradition", in the erroneous belief that it is what Zarathustra taught? Or, should they practice the faith only as he taught it? Or, while doing that, should they also respect the traditions that have grown up over the ages, while recognizing that they are merely time-honored traditions that do not reflect the Prophet's real teachings? Each Zoroastrian must confront this dilemma alone, and live with his personal decision.

As followers of a tolerant faith premised on the use of man's Good Mind and Truth, is it possible to consider engaging in a productive discussion about what has happened in Zoroastrianism? In such a dialogue, can we remain firm in our beliefs without demonizing those with just as strongly held different convictions? Can we thus come to some common understandings, which can be passed on as a legacy to future generations? Is it too much to hope for such a mutually beneficial outcome? ■■■■

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1. Zarathustra's teachings mentioned in the article, are drawn from the 17 surviving Gathas ascribed by scholars to him. Each teaching is based on the translations by the pre-eminent Parsi scholar Dr Irach Taraporewala in "The Divine Songs of Zarathustra", Bombay, 1993, and the leading Gatha scholar, Stanley Insler in his "Gathas of Zarathustra", Leiden, 1975.
2. Among the surveys of historical transformation of the faith, the most erudite in the author's view, and on which he has relied, is the one made by scholar-priest Dasturji M N Dhalla in History of Zoroastrianism, 1985, Bombay.
3. "Man" or "men" are the abbreviations used in the both genders.

Heaven and Hell in Zoroastrianism

P

People who believe in God (or gods or other deities) generally believe that some form of afterlife awaits them after they die. Heaven is where God (or the gods) lives, and it is where the good go after death. Hell, on the other hand, is a place regarded as a realm of evil, darkness, chaos and pain, where the wrongdoers suffer after they die. Popularly, it is believed that this underworld lies below the surface of the earth, as opposed to heaven which is traditionally depicted as being above the sky. The length of stay in each of these places depends on the belief system one holds dear. The question of who judges where a person will go also depends on the faith one follows. But where did this idea of heaven and hell originate?

by farishta dinshaw

BORROWED FROM ZOROASTRIANISM?

On the website *debunkingskeptics.com*, the article, "Evolution of heaven and hell in the Bible from Zoroastrianism – Good news for the fearful" quotes various "scholars" who suggest that the concept of a 'milk and honey heaven' and a 'fire and brimstone hell' are borrowed concepts from Zoroastrianism. In one instance, Thomas Sheehan's article "The First Coming: How the Kingdom of God Became Christianity", is cited to back up this belief.

[...] This recasting of Yahweh as apocalyptic destroyer was strongly influenced by the Zoroastrian religion that the Israelites had encountered during the Babylonian Exile. **Zoroaster (ca. 630-550 BC) {1}** had taught that the world was the scene of a dramatic cosmic struggle between the forces of Good and Evil, **led by the gods Ormazd and Ahriman. {2}** But this conflict was not to continue forever because, according to Zoroastrianism, history was not endless but finite and in fact dualistic, divided between the present age of darkness and the coming age of light. Time was devolving through four (or in some accounts seven) progressively worsening periods toward an

eschatological cataclysm when Good would finally annihilate Evil and the just would receive their otherworldly reward in an age of eternal bliss. Zoroastrianism's profound pessimism about present history was thus answered by its eschatological optimism about a future eternity.

In the same article, Robert Price, another Christian authority, is cited as saying:

"[...] Satan seems to be the enemy of God, but this is a later mixture that may well have come from Persian Zoroastrianism, to which the exile Temple hierarchy would have been exposed in the sixth century BC.

Zoroastrianism had an evil anti-god called Ahriman or Angra Mainyu, the co-equalm counterpart to Ahura Mazda. {3}

Ahriman had created snakes, scorpions, etc., while Ahura Mazda created everything else. Judasim (sic) appears to have borrowed this notion, plus the elaborate angelology and demonology, as well as their notion of a virgin-born Savior who would at the end time raise the dead for the final judgment from Zoroastrianism. In fact the Jewish sect closest to Zoroastrian beliefs, the Pharisees, as T W Manson theorized, may originally have received their

name as a sarcastic cat-call. **Pharisee may be a variant on "Parsee," synonym for Zoroastrian. {4}**"

Another website *ReligionFacts*, whose aim is "to provide free, reliable information — "just the facts" — on the various answers that have been given to these questions, as well as the rituals and customs that go along with them" (religionfacts.com: Home), gives descriptions of 40 religions, although the term "religion" should be construed as a loosely defined as the list also contains Chopra Center and Vampirism. On the link delegated to Zoroastrianism, it states:

[...]The Zoroastrian afterlife is determined by the balance of the good and evil deeds, words, and thoughts of the whole life. For those whose good deeds outweigh [sic] the bad, heaven awaits. **Those who did more evil than good go to hell (which has several levels corresponding to degrees of wickedness). There is an intermediate stage for those whose deeds weight out equally. {5}**

ERRORS CORRECTED

The examples given above are just a glimpse of the kinds of ignorant, incorrect, distorted and, sometimes, maliciously misleading information available in cyberspace. This kind of misinformation is sometimes propagated by well meaning, but undiscerning Zoroastrians as well, who accept what Google searches spew out as factual, and use that information as a foundation for their own beliefs.

The misinformation marked by numbers within { } in the above passages is explained below:

ERROR {1}

Many of these websites say that Zarathustra (aka Zoroaster) lived around 600-500 BC. If that were the case, he would have lived in the Achaemenian era and Biblical prophets of the Old Testament like David, Isaiah and Jeremiah lived before Zarathustra and all of them mention the

Messiah, the resurrection and the final judgment in their writings.

ERROR {2}

The authentic source for Zarathustra's own words is the Gathas, and the Gathas make no mention of Ahriman at all. In fact, the term Ahriman is not even an Avestan word. It is Middle Persian or Pahlavi which was prevalent during Sasanid times (224-654 AD). In later Pahlavi texts of the 9th-12th century, Ahriman was frequently written upside down to signify contempt.

ERROR {3}

Ahriman and Angra Manyu are NOT the same. Some scholars refer to Ahriman as the Pahlavi name for Angra Mainyu, the idea being that the concept is the same although different languages have different names (as mothers may be called ammi, ma, mom, maman, madre). However, this is incorrect. Angra Mainyu IS NOT the Avestan term for Ahriman.

In the Gathas, there is one instance where the two words *angra mainyu* appear together, although the two words appear separately in the context of *mainyu* ("mind", "mentality", "spirit" etc.) and *angra* ("destructive", "inhibitive", "regressive", "angry" etc). In fact, the Gathic Avestan term for evil is actually "aka" as in "*aka manah*" or "evil mind/mentality/spirit". The inference is that evil exists in the minds of men and women. In the Ahunavaiti Gatha (Yasna 32:3), Zarathushtra teaches that *daevas* (popularly interpreted as demons, but could represent abstract forms of negativity such as anger, fear, arrogance) arises from *aka manah* (evil mind). A few verses later in the same Gatha (Yasna 32:13), Zarathushtra calls the place where the wicked reside after death *acishtahy, dem,ní mananghŭ* or the house of the worst mind. In other words, Hell.

The concept of an evil "being" rather than an evil mind evolved centuries after Zarathushtra lived and died. The first step was the personification of "*angra mainyu*" as an entity. The various Yashts, written in

Younger Avestan and thought to date to the Achaemenian era (559–330 BC) and the Vendidad written in the Sasanian period (224 BC to 651AD) have several instances where *angra mainyu* is

anthropomorphized. For instance, in the Vendidad, Angra Mainyu tempts Zarathustra to turn from the good religion by promising him the power to rule the world. When Zarathushtra refuses to be tempted, Angra Mainyu sends legions of demons to defeat him, but Zarathushtra deflects them all. In the Vendidad Angra Mainyu is also identified as the one who created illness, poverty, disasters and death. This is contrary to the Gathas in which Zarathushtra refers to Ahura Mazda as the architect of polarities: light and darkness, sleep and waking, rest and work (Ushtavaiti Gatha - Yasna 44.5) inferring that Ahura Mazda was the creator of all things. Essentially, in Zarathushtra's teachings, as succinctly put by Hamlet, "...there is nothing either **good** or **bad**, but **thinking** makes it so" (Shakespeare. Act 2, Scene 2).

Somewhere around 300 BC, during the Sasanian era, a significant shift came about that created the character of Ahriman that we know and hate today – Zurvan or Time was introduced into Zoroastrian theology. Zurvan created twin brothers, Hormuzd (Pahlavi for Ahura Mazda) and Ahriman (Pahlavi for Angra Mainyu) as two equal-but-opposite divinities, thus of Light and of Darkness. Why did this shift happen? Origins are lost, but conjecture is that Zurvan was conveniently created to answer the question: if Ahura Mazda is all good and powerful, then where did Angra Mainyu come from?

Who came up with the idea of Zurvan is not known, but it is an entirely unZoroastrian concept. Again conjecture suggest that it came from the Greeks and Parthians who ruled after Alexander's conquest or from the Chaldeans, Babylonian peoples, who were assimilated into the Persian Empire around that time. Unfortunately, although the notion of Zurvan was shortlived, the idea of the dueling twins, Hormuzd and Ahriman, crept into Zoroastrian theology. The idea was

recorded not only by Sasanian priests, but spread far and wide into the West by the Greeks, including Aristotle.

After the Sasanians were defeated by the Arabs, not only were many books destroyed once again, but the use of the Pahlavi language in public was banned in favour of Arabic. The Bundehishn and Denkard were written during the period spanning the 8th and 9th century. The Bundehishn is a creation tale which not only reignited the story of Zurvan and the twin sons, Hormuzd and Ahriman, but embellished it as well. In this scenario, the Good and Evil twins agree to battle with the help of human beings for 9,000 years to see who will finally prevail. This is how we have currently arrived at the popular idea of Ahriman as the key figure in our fight when we pray "shikesteh, shikesteh shaitan". The word *shaitan* is an Arabic word.

Historical Context

It is important to see the changes in context of the historical settings in which they evolved. In Zarathushtra's time, roughly four thousand years ago, his message was contained in a specific geographical area as travel was difficult because of the terrain and the climate. Under the Achaemenian rulers, the empire spread all over the map. In a popular but historically unauthenticated legend, Alexander destroyed the libraries containing Zoroastrian scriptures. Subsequently, texts were collated from available sources, mainly Greek translations of the lost Avesta texts and their interpretations. The authors of these texts, although scholarly, and perhaps pious, were essentially men with no claims of Divine revelation. It is reasonable to accept that their interaction with diverse faiths, including Platonic Greek ideas, Manicheism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, influenced the gradual change from an abstract concept of evil into a tangible entity.

Another point to keep in mind was that Zarathustra's message of individual responsibility as in "I choose to think good

thoughts, I choose to speak good words, I choose to do good deeds" (Jasa Me Avenge Mazda prayer) is difficult to follow as it required a measure of tolerance, fair-mindedness, integrity and self-discipline. It was easier to shift the blame for failing to walk the path of Asha from one's own choices to an outside source and perpetuate the "it's-not-my fault-Ahriman-made-me-do-it" dogma.



ERROR {4}

Pharisees are DEFINITELY NOT Parsees. This statement is willfully inaccurate. They are totally two different groups of people separated by faith, geography and historic timeline. The Pharisees were one of the "four schools of thought," or "four sects," into which the Jews were divided in the 1st century BC. Parsees (or Parsis), on the other hand, descend from a group of Persian Zoroastrians who immigrated to India after the Arab conquest in the 7th century AD.

ERROR {5}

The different levels of hell are described in the later Pahlavi texts, the Vendidad, and Persian Rivayats written even later. Interestingly, the description of heaven as a place of light and joy and perfection merits a few lines, while the description of hell, as a dark, foul-smelling, fearful place where demonic creatures tear at the souls of the wicked, has several highly descriptive verses devoted to it.

In the Ahunavaiti Gatha (Yasna 31:20), Zarathustra mentions the afterlife in cryptic terms leaving the debate open about allegorical references versus realms, but does not give any detailed description.

Who follows the Righteous Teacher
The Light shall henceforth be his abode:
But to long ages of darkness, to light
 obscure and to words of woe the Wicked
 to such life indeed
Their own Self shall lead, through their
own deeds. (Taraporewala: 258)

The Ushatvaiti Gatha (Yasna 46:11) talks about the *Cinvato Peretum*, or the "bridge of judgement" which is an allegorical or perhaps a mystical bridge that separates the two realms. Whether it separates heaven and hell or heaven and earth is the key in the debate around reincarnation in Zoroastrian theology, and depends whether one sees the Abode of Untruth (or House of Lies) as representing hell or earth.

Through their powers the Priests and
Princes
would yoke mankind to evil acts for
 destroying Life
but their own Soul and their own Inner Self
shall chide them when they come near to
 where the Bridge of Judge
stands such for all time shall be dweller of
 the Abode of Untruth. (Taraporewala:489)

A verse in the Spenta Mainyu Gatha (Yasna 49:11) adds to the controversy about whether the soul "comes back" to earth to strive once more for perfection.

But among evil rulers, evil doers and evil
speakers
Among evil-Egos, evil thinker and followers
of Untruth
Souls do come back by reason of their dim
insight
Truly they are dwellers in this Abode of
Untruth. (Taraporewala: 573)

There is no mention of the purgatory state in the Gathas, although the Bundehishn suggests that at the end of time there will be a Last Judgement at the appearance of the last saoshyant (savior), and the drink of immortality will be offered to those who have fought against Ahriman, and a new creation will be established. Considering that earlier texts do not have any descriptions of the stages of hell or references to Judgment Day and that the Bundehishn was written several centuries after the prophets of the Old Testament mentioned the Resurrection and the advent of Christianity and Islam, it is difficult to give credence to the idea that these ideas were established in Judaism/Christianity/Islam from Zoroastrianism. If at all, it seems that the reverse is true.

However, at the end of this discussion on heaven and hell, the questions one need to “ponder with a reasoning mind” are: Does it really matter to the way we live today what heaven and hell look like in the afterlife or whether we return to earth for multiple lifetimes? The purpose of life is to live it as we promise in the Ashem Vohu prayer - for the sake of best righteousness without the anticipation of any reward here or hereafter. If we are good only out of fear of hell or greed for heaven, what does that say about us as followers of Zarathushtra?

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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”.



Keki Ruttanshaw Bhote: A true Zoroastrian

K

The WZO Committee unanimously passed the following Resolution on 17 April 2011:

"WZO wishes to put on record the thanks of all members of the committee to Mr Keki Bhote for his total commitment to WZO over the past 16 years, for his enthusiasm & support for the work we do, and for his significant input into promoting WZO in North America by founding the WZO, US Region. His sharp insights, understanding, and advice have brought invaluable benefits to the organization and his wise counsel demands this recognition we wish to confer upon him. It should be recognised that Keki Bhote formed the Council of Associations which was the forerunner to FEZANA in North America.

We are extremely pleased that Keki will remain the Vice-president of WZO US Region and we welcome his continued support, knowledge and experience."

by darayus motivala

Keki Bhote has had a distinguished career with the Motorola Corporation and later with his own consulting company. However, this is surpassed by his achievements as Keki Bhote, the family man; the community man; and as a Zoroastrian. Keki and his wife, Mehroo, have been living in the village of Glencoe, Illinois for many years.

He was born in 1925 in the town of Madras in Southern India to Meherbanu and Ruttanshaw Byramjee Bhote. He had one brother, Byram, who was 14 years older. Keki is a Valedictorian from the Engineering College in Gundi in the state of Madras (now Chennai). At the age of 22, he won the coveted Tata Scholarship for a Master's Degree at Harvard University where he majored in Applied Physics. He then secured the Harvard Research Fellowship in the following year.

In 1954, Keki married Mehroo Cursetjee (nee Nagarwalla) in India. They have two daughters, Safeena and Shenaya and two sons, Adi and Xerxes who all live in the Chicago area. Keki and Mehroo have seven grandchildren in all. They are a very

close knit family. Keki is the favourite grandfather for all of his grandchildren, getting down on the floor to play and entertain them. Sunday dinners at the Bhote home are a family tradition with anyone who wishes to join in is welcome. Keki and Mehroo are world class travellers and have been to over 85 countries. They have fostered this love in their children and have taken extended family trips with them all over the world. Keki's love of dogs is legendary. Whenever Keki enters the home of any of his children, the first to greet him is the family dog. His children think this is because he bribes them all with treats in his pocket!

From a very early age, Keki has been very public spirited and has been recognised so by his local community. Before being granted US citizenship in 1960, Keki was selected as one of the 10 Outstanding Young Men by the local Junior Chamber of Commerce. In 1965, he was selected as one of the six



Keki at Harvard, 1949

In loving memory of my parents Naval & Soonu Godrej



Keki & Mehroo with their family

Outstanding Naturalised Citizens of Chicago and in 1967, was elected to the Glencoe School Board where he served as its President for two years. He was also President of the United Nations Association of Illinois and became the Chairman of the Council of Presidents of the United Nations of America. Rumour has it that once he placed a Chicago policeman under citizen's arrest for failing to stop at a stop sign, which we can put down to his sense of fair play as he was himself arrested for the same offence a little earlier. Between 1977 and 1985, Keki was the President of the Board of Trustees of the New Trier Township. Under his leadership, the Township focused on human services for their community at the same time as turning their debt into a \$1 million surplus and lowering the taxes in seven out of the eight years. At present he is on the Board of Trustees in the Village of Glencoe.

Keki has always taken a keen interest in the Zoroastrian religion and the Zoroastrian community. He is the founder member and the past President of the first Zoroastrian Association of America, which is the forerunner to the current FEZANA. He has presented many papers at Zoroastrian related conferences including one of the

earliest World Zoroastrian Congresses held in Bombay, in 1984. He is the co-founder of the Society for Scholarship on Zoroastrianism and was involved with the aborted talks on the formation of the World Body.

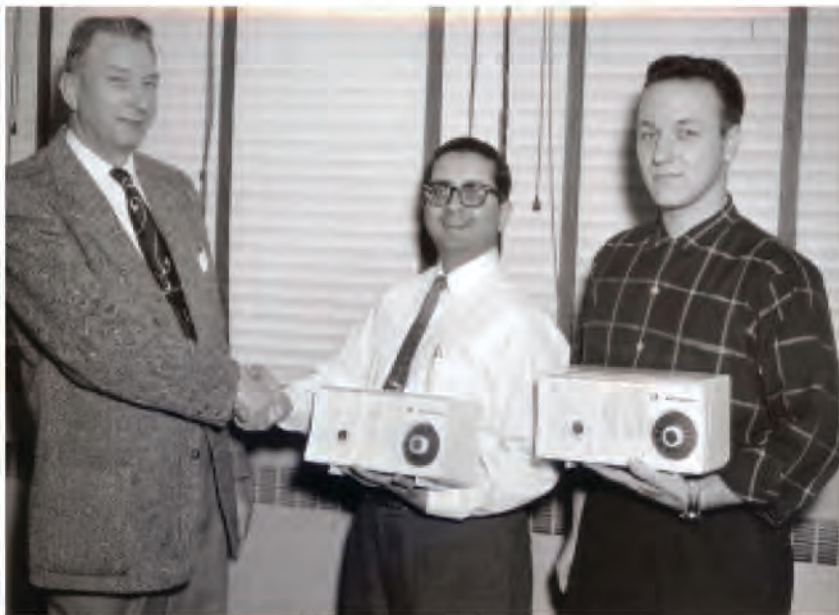
As mentioned earlier, Keki travelled the world extensively. It was on one of his trips to London that he met the WZO's founder member, Shahpur F Captain in 1983. Keki was impressed by the charitable work undertaken by WZO and has been a loyal supporter and a generous donor since that time. He and Mehroo have taken time off from the holidays in India to personally see the rehabilitation work undertaken in Gujarat. He has been a member of the organisation since 1993 and joined its Managing Committee in the mid-nineties. One of his first tasks as a committee member

was to set up the WZO, US Region of which he has been the President until he stepped down earlier this year. It is a recognised charity in the State of Illinois. During his Presidency, WZO, US Region has raised and distributed over a US \$1 million for needy Zoroastrian individuals and organisations throughout the



world. In the true spirit of Zoroastrian philanthropy, the organisation has provided financial support to victims of world calamities, such as the Gujarat floods, the Tsunami in SE Asia, the Earthquake of 2005 in Northern Pakistan and recently, the devastating floods in this country. It has also sponsored Zoroastrian seminars and symposiums and has provided funds to support scholarships for the Zoroastrian youth. Keki continues to be a major donor to WZO, US Region. In 2000, WZO publicly recognised Keki's contribution to the Zoroastrian community and WZO, at a glittering Ball to celebrate its 20th anniversary.

Keki excelled in his career at the Motorola Corporation, which he joined in 1949 as a Development Engineer until he retired in 1992 as a Senior Corporate Consultant for Quality and Productivity Improvement for



Keki, centre, at Motorola

the entire corporation. In 1985, he became Group Director of Quality and Value Assurance for Motorola's Automotive and Industrial Electronics Group. He played a key role in Motorola winning the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, the first company to win this honour as a total corporation and in launching its renowned six sigma process for continuous improvement. During his 42-year career at Motorola, Keki was responsible for 23

quality innovations. He has written several books on his field including two on the six sigma process. After his 'retirement' from Motorola, Keki formed his own consulting company, Keki R Bhote Associates.



Keki & Mehroo, 1998

There is a lot more to Keki Bhote than I have been able to cover in this short article. I have had the pleasure of working with Keki on WZO matters and meeting him and Mehroo on a number of occasions on their trips to London. They will always have a special place in my heart. At the age of 86 with failing eyesight and

ill-health, Keki has recently started to take life a little easier, though he still takes a keen interest in his family, community affairs and the WZO. He has followed the true Zoroastrian path of righteousness by caring for the environment and for all those around him. We are proud to have him as our committee member and hope that he will continue to be one for a long time. We wish him and Mehroo continued joy and happiness for the rest of their long lives.

[The author acknowledges with thanks Keki's daughter, Shenaya Bhote-Siegel, for her invaluable assistance in preparing this article]



L to R: Xerxes (Keki's son), Colin Powell, Keki

Darayus S Motivala, born in Bombay, moved to the UK as a teenager in 1961. He has a BSc (Hons) in Information Technology from the University of Brighton. After starting his career in developing operating systems and compilers with a small British computer manufacturer, he quickly moved to Technical support and then on to Sales and Marketing. After more than 35 years in the industry, he made a career change and went into the hospitality sector. He has been on the WZO committee for over 16 years and is currently their Chairman. He lives in an Oxfordshire village with his wife, Arnavaz, and daughter, Zenobia.



In loving memory of my parents Naval & Soonu Godrej

Parsi Panorama at New Delhi

A photo essay compiled by Meher Marker Noshirwani

“UNESCO Parzor, in collaboration with the Craft Revival Trust and the India International Centre, organised the cultural Programme “Parsi Panorama” in New Delhi in March 2011. The event comprised of an exhibition, a seminar, a three-day workshop on Parsi embroidery, and a gala evening with renowned *ghazal* artiste Penaz Masani. This glimpse of Parsi culture was completed and complimented by its unique cuisine – tea and Parsi snacks were served on all the days and the event ended with an extravagant–*lagan-nu-bhonu* dinner.” (Parsi Panorama”– Kriti Bajaj)



[L] “The exhibition was truly a panorama of everything Parsi. Walls were adorned with photographs of Parsi arts and crafts, and archival pictures from Parzor’s collection. Mannequins draped in majestic *garas* of every colour and motif, were artistically placed across the gallery in groupings, with captions explaining their cultural significance. All of the textiles and crafts on display were borrowed from the personal treasure troves of families across Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Jamshedpur.” (Parsi Panorama - Kriti Bajaj)



[R] “The Zoroastrian love of nature and transmission of its motifs can be seen in all their embroidery, first in simple form with flower, fish and birds. During the Tang and Song dynasties (618-907 AD and 960-1279 AD) as the Zoroastrian Empire crumbled and refugees moved to live in Eastern China, intercultural exchange brought together the skill of Chinese embroidery schools and their symbolism with Persian naturalistic scenes, to create a beautiful cultural amalgam. With the settlement in India, other influences were added, a trellis pattern from nature, peacocks, endless knots from the Buddhist traditions mingle with the auspicious kanku red (vermillion) on this surti gara, a perfect example of fusion and influence.” (Spenta Bountiful Creations - Shernaz Cama)

[R] “Over the next few days, visitors streamed into a colorful exhibit of Parsi *garas*, jewelry, and other embroidery items put together by noted fashion designer Ashdeen Lilaowala. Parzor also simultaneously organized a series of workshops on Parsi textiles that brought together both academic experts and practitioners. Zoroastrians have long been renowned for their skill in weaving and embroidery. Through slides and the display of original fabrics, Parsis literally weaved Zoroastrian motifs into their textile items.” (Parsi Panorama: Exhibition, Seminar, Workshops, Music. - Dinyar Patel)





[L] "When a study of Parsi textiles was initiated by the Parzor Foundation, it was an exploratory venture to research and document the history and story of Parsi textiles - which covered the richly embroidered *garas*, *jhablas*, *kors*, and other accessories found in Parsi homes. It was intended to study the wide repertoire of motifs, use of colors, forms and techniques involved in the art of Parsi embroidery. *Gara* designs extended beyond the usual floral to birds and animals, both real and mythological such as the phoenix, unicorn, birds of paradise etc, to aquatic life, butterflies and even bats, as also scenes of daily life in China with architectural motives of bridges, pagodas etc. And for most of us, our *garas* were just beautiful and precious heirlooms which we proudly wore for festive occasions." (Keeping a rich heritage alive. – A Parzor Initiative. - Ava Khullar)



[L] "The weaving of *tanchoi*, is another Craft brought by Parsis from China. The name originates according to one tradition, in the three (*tan*) Parsi men (*choi*) or Joshi brothers who lived in China. These three brothers learnt the art of Jacquard weaving, which they brought home to Surat. Later, this craft shifted its base to Benares, where unfortunately its origins have been forgotten. It is to be noted that the same patterns, *Gul e bulbul*, intercrossing birds from the old traditions continue to be seen in these first pieces of *tanchoi* in India." (Spenta: Bountiful Creations -"Shernaz Cama)

[R] "A parallel can be drawn with the Chinese embroidered-and-fringed silk shawls exported to Europe and Mexico. Officially recognized as part of Spanish national costume at the end of the nineteenth century, these boldly-patterned 'Spanish' shawls became essential to Spanish identity, conjuring up images of beautiful women and sensuous flamenco dancers.

During the 1880s, Liberty's organized annual exhibitions of embroideries from all over the world to cater to demand. China was scoured for Dragon Robes and other antique embroideries, and contemporary work was commissioned." (Parsi Garas – Souvenirs of the East? "Peonies & Pagodas: Embroidered Parsi Textiles", Edited by Shilpa Shah & Tulsi Vatsal)



In loving memory of my parents Naval & Soonu Godrej



[L] "Since Parsi women were the first to socially interact with their European counterparts, European designs like scallops, bows and baskets were next incorporated, leading to a unique amalgam of four distinct civilizational traditions. While embroidery was a skill which every lady had to learn, it was also an occupation for middle class women at a time when other jobs were unavailable. Women supported themselves through both embroidery and sudreh making right up till the 20th century. Weaving and embroidery techniques are difficult, and simpler crafts were used to enhance daily life. As the Zoroastrian Empire crumbled and refugees moved to live in Eastern China, intercultural exchange brought together the skill of Chinese embroidery schools and their symbolism with Persian naturalistic scenes, to create a beautiful cultural amalgam. With the settlement in India, other influences were added, a trellis pattern from nature, peacocks, endless knots from the Buddhist traditions mingle with the auspicious kanku red (vermillion) on this sarti gara, a perfect example of fusion and influence." (Spenta: Bountiful Creations - Shernaz Cama)



[R] Celebrating over ten years of research and work, "... The event also brought together a diverse array of individuals: academics and authors, kusti weavers from Navsari, NGO representatives, design students, and dignitaries. Over the past decade, Parzor has worked to document several aspects of Parsi heritage, assist in preservation efforts, and even revive some crafts. One of its first major projects was to help renovate the Meherjirana Library in Navsari, which houses a priceless collection of Zoroastrian manuscripts. For the last several years, Parzor has trained several skilled craftspersons and helped them with recreating Parsi textiles and works of embroidery. The organization has displayed some of these textile items at exhibits in Dubai, Bombay, and elsewhere in India, and has also encouraged Parsis to try their own hand at kusti weaving through special workshops held across the country." (Parsi Panorama: Exhibition, Seminar, Workshops, Music - Dinyar Patel)



[L] "Many aspects of this rich heritage, amongst which are the *khakho* or forbidden stitch, and the material which the *garas* were made from, the light floaty *sali gaaj* (water silk) are today lost arts. There were also Spanish shawls adorned with bright, lavish vines and florals, and a modern twist was added by dresses inspired by the unique embroidery. A small area was devoted to the revival work that Parzor has been carrying out in its attempts to create a modern market for the declining art of Parsi embroidery." (Parsi Panorama - Kriti Bajaj)



[L] "The exhibition was truly a panorama of everything Parsi. Walls were adorned with photographs depicting the religious ceremonies: "*Jashan* and *Yasna*, interiors of the Meherjirana Library and its manuscripts, scenes of people and palatial houses from field trips to Gujarat and the Deccan, the unique Tanka system of water harvesting and medical Hadvaid tradition, Parsi arts and crafts, and archival pictures from Parzor's collection. Mannequins draped in majestic *garas* of every colour and motif, were artistically placed across the gallery in groupings, with captions explaining their cultural significance. Also on display were a *kusti* (sacred girdle) weaving loom, a glorious embroidered *toran* or door frame hanging, *tanchoi* work, and Parsi furniture." (Parsi Panorama - Kriti Bajaj)

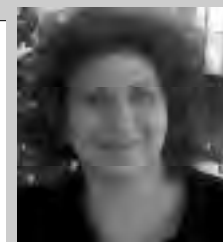
[Below L] "Over the next few days, visitors streamed into a colorful exhibit of Parsi *garas*, jewelry, and other embroidery items put together by noted fashion designer Ashdeen Lilaowala. Parzor also simultaneously organized a series of workshops on Parsi textiles that brought together both academic experts and practitioners. Parsis, who traded opium and cotton for prized Chinese tea, were regular fixtures in major ports such as Canton, where they were known as *baitouren*, Mandarin for "white-hatted people" due to their prominent white turbans. The Parsis' reception to European fashion might explain why Chinese-style *garas* came into vogue amongst Parsi women, while the fashion of other Indian communities which had engaged in commerce with China, such as the Bohras and the Sindhis, reflected no such cultural borrowings." (Parsi Panorama: Exhibition, Seminar, Workshops, Music - Dinyar Patel)



Meher Marker Noshirwani is a Sociologist, and has worked in the field of women, development and environment since 1985. The period 1991-2009 spans a career in women and social development in various positions with Shirkat Gah, a women's NGO established in 1975. She is currently working independently as a consultant on gender and development issues, and is doing social research for the Parzor Foundation on Parsi / Zoroastrian textiles. With an interest in crafts, she also develops hand crafted cane products using local resources made by skilled artisans to preserve a local craft.



[L]"The Parsi craft of chalk decoration is one practiced even today. Outside most Parsi homes there are little designs printed on the ground. Now made out of chalk powder, they originated in Iran where lime was used outside homes to keep away insects. In India, this mingled with the *rangoli* decorations of Gujarat, developing a decorative design vocabulary which distinguishes Parsi homes. Often the same patterns are repeated, roosters, fish, horse shoes for luck and the ses for blessings on an auspicious occasion." (Spenta: Bountiful Creations - Shernaz Cama)



In loving memory of my parents Naval & Soonu Godrej



[L] “In the Zoroastrian Pahlavi text, “*The Bundahishn*, every day is dedicated to an angel, who is symbolized by a flower. Priests still remember how prayer ceremonies had the flowers of the *roj* or day placed in the sacrificial offerings. The thirty *Yazatas* or archangels and angels whose names are applied to the thirty days of the month can be seen across generations of embroidery traditions. The white Jasmine (for Vohu Manah - the good mind) The lily (for Khordad - health) The marigold (for Atar - Angel of fire) The water lily (for Ava - Goddess of water) The red chrysanthemum (for Saroasha - Angel of Prayer) The Hundred Petalled Rose (for Din - Angel of Religion). So while the Parsi Zoroastrians adopted motifs of protection from Chinese embroidery such as the Divine fungus and added it into their repertoire, they kept Zoroastrian symbols of protection, the legendary Iranian *Simurgh* which roosts on the Tree of Seeds, The Tree of Life in the *Avesta* and has healing powers and *Ariz* or fish – emblem of fertility. –The colour red came from the Indian palette while the Chinese multicoloured embroidery was replaced by creams and whites to match the long *sudreh* which every woman wore.” (Spenta: Bountiful Creations - Shernaz Cama)



[L] “It is generally assumed that the adoption of *garas* by Parsi women was the natural outcome of the close connections that the Parsis had with China in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Parsi merchants had been trading in China ever since Hirji Jivanji Readymoney made the journey there in 1756, and by 1800 several enterprising Parsi merchants and their servants had settled in Canton, which was then the only Chinese port open to foreign trade. The locals called them ‘*baitouren*’ (whiteheads) because of their loose ankle-length white coats and distinctive headgear. According to a popular view, Parsi traders, like the merchants from England, France, Holland and America, who frequented the port of Canton, could not have failed to be impressed by the fine quality of Chinese embroidered textiles in the markets; and, like their European counterparts, carried them home as gifts for their womenfolk. Did motifs like the rooster and the phoenix resonate with Parsis, bringing back atavistic memories of an ancient Iranian



past? Or could prevailing Western tastes and fashions have played a role?” (Parsi *Garas* – Souvenirs of the East? “*Peonies & Pagodas: Embroidered Parsi Textiles*”, Edited by Shilpa Shah & Tulsi Vatsal)



[L] "The three day embroidery Workshop, from 14th to 16th March, by skilled Parzor-trained workers were there to aid and teach the participants. On the first day, the embroidery frame or *addas* were set up by stretching the cloth appropriately and stitching it down, and the technique of tracing or obtaining the design on the cloth was shown, with a few participants trying their hand at it. Some chose to try the *ari* style of embroidery, widely proclaimed by the beginners to be extremely difficult, while others tried the *zardosi* to create the design in the simple satin stitch which nonetheless required immense precision for a neat output." (Parsi Panorama - Kriti Bajaj)

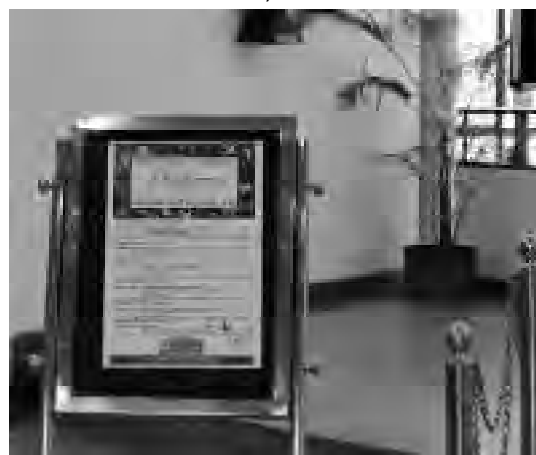


[L] "Kustis are occasionally made of camel's hair in Iran, and in India lamb's wool imported from Australia is utilized. Lilaowala traced the complex process of turning this raw lamb's wool into the consecrated sacred thread. Kusti-weaving is oftentimes a multi-week process, including steps such as *kusti utlavanu*, or turning the partially-woven kusti inside-out, and *kusti dhupvanu*, where the kusti is purified and bleached with a piece of sulfur, which gives the thread its well-known cream-like color. Finally, the kusti thread, which is tubular in shape, is flattened out before given to a Zoroastrian. Lilaowala stressed that Zoroastrians need to understand and appreciate the symbolism of the kusti and the complexity behind its creation. By simply disposing of the sudrah and kusti due to ignorance or the whims of fashion, he stated, Zoroastrians only do themselves a disservice." (Parsi Panorama: Exhibition, Seminar, Workshops, Music - Dinyar Patel)



[L] "Tiny glass beads are painstakingly designed in traditional patterns – the rooster for protection, the fish for plenty, flowers of blessing, Swastik and fire symbols. A few young girls still learn this craft from their grandmothers and weave *torans*. Unfortunately, customers in urban centres where they are sold do not always realize the skill involved and the cost of the beads, of which the finest quality come from Eastern Europe." (Spenta: Bountiful Creations - Shernaz Cama)

"Parzor is a young organization, having completed ten years of its existence. Like a child, we are thrilled to celebrate our anniversary. We feel that we have done some good work towards our objectives but like a person who becomes curious and ambitious at his 10th birthday, we also look forward to the future and wonder what it holds out for Parzor. We feel that though the future is full of challenges, yet with the support of our well wishers, we will try to do better in the next decade." (Tirlochan Singh, President, Parzor Foundation, 12th March 2011)



In loving memory of my parents Naval & Soonu Godrej

'Les Baron'

D

Dorab Bhiwandiwalla, eldest son of Hormusjee and Alice Bhiwandiwalla, was born in Bombay, 1924 and came from a family steeped in musical traditions both western and Indian. Alice possessed a beautiful singing voice and was a virtuoso on the piano and harmonium and all her children played music. Following a family move, he moved to Poona, aged 10, where he continued his studies at St Vincents's School. As a young roller skating champion and budding violinist, Dorab always sensed that he was destined to perform. For a while, he dreamt of becoming a professional violinist, and this desire was partly fuelled by his love of musical recordings and radio.

by sammy bhiwandiwalla



Sammy Bhiwandiwalla since arriving in the UK was in employment and in 1970, formed his own company together with his wife Ursula, trading in chemical products for the foundry and model making industry. After 35 years they hope to call it a day soon, with six grand children to occupy them in the future.

Ursula and Sammy always took an active interest in community matters in the UK and were greatly influenced by the actions and sincere beliefs of individuals such as Noshirwan Cowasjee, Shirinbanoo Kutar, Shahpur Captain and many others, that in a changing world it was necessary to create a more balanced and equitable community within the UK.

In particular, Dorab felt akin with the music of Nelson Eddie. Indeed, his love and adoration for the semi-operatic sounds helped Dorab to take his first professional singing steps as he turned Eddie's songs, such as 'Balalika', 'Seniorita', Rose Marie' and 'Wanting You', into his own.

Now aged 18, Dorab, a popular student, attended Wadia College in Poona, where he won numerous singing and acting competitions. Seeing their eldest son thrive on the amateur stage, his parents encouraged Dorab to move back to Bombay, where he enrolled in a two year photography course; the idea being that this would pave the way into the movie industry.

Whilst studying in Bombay, Dorab continued to enter talent contest after contest, winning first prize every time. As his name became increasingly known in the entertainment industry, good acquaintances, The Bam

Family, introduced Dorab to Sir Cowasji Jehangir, who then introduced him to Mr Sabawala, Director of the renowned Taj Mahal Hotel. This encounter was pivotal to Dorab's early career, sealing the professional direction of his life forever, as he was handed his first opportunity to sing professionally. What started as a two day contract, singing at The Taj's famous Harbour Bar, turned into a permanent position in the prestigious Taj Ballroom, where Dorab met and came to know the Tata family and Russa Mehta.

As he grew in confidence and stature, so his name grew, both on the music circuit and throughout India, thanks to regular appearances on the

All India Radio Station. Soon enough, Dorab was travelling between Delhi, Calcutta and Bombay, where he won a two year contract, singing for the Oberoi Hotel chain. From here, his good name took him to Columbo, where he was introduced to the famous impresario Jack Hylton.



He was requested to join the WZO Board and in 1988 was elected as Community Relations Officer. Later he was elected as the Hon Treasurer, followed as the Jt Hon Secretary and is the immediate past Chairman.

Recognising Dorab's talent, Jack Hylton asked him to perform at the Royal Command Performance at Windsor Castle in 1950. His first appearance was before King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. It was here that Italian producers Giganti and Galderi first heard Dorab's rich bass baritone sound. This encounter took Dorab off to Milan and an Italian tour, where he sang in Italian for some time. In Europe he adopted the stage name 'Les Baron'.

However, feelings of homesickness soon took Dorab back to his roots, where he spent a year touring India. He gave a farewell performance in July 1952 at the Jehangir Art Gallery in Bombay and returned to England where he worked for the BBC, singing some of his most popular hits with Geraldo and his orchestra. For the next 17 years, Dorab travelled extensively throughout Cyprus, Israel, Egypt, Turkey, Holland, Belgium, France, Switzerland and Austria, singing at well known clubs, such as The Moulin Rouge. Yet his most treasured professional moments were spent in Vienna, where he experienced his greatest success, before returning to India for a brief spell where he sang once again at The Taj and on the Oberoi circuit.

However, the year 1970 marked a new chapter in Dorab's life. Dorab took it upon himself to care for his ailing mother Alice and his young daughter Zahra. He carried this duty out for many years with unshakeable devotion, putting their needs before his musical career.

During his time singing, he recorded in excess of 20 songs, in a variety of countries and he was accompanied in India by bands such as, Hal Green, Goody Seervai, Micky Corea, Tony Fallerio, Sonny Lobo and Rudy Cotton.

Today, he is happily retired and living in Richmond, London, where he regularly spends time with his adoring family. Whilst his professional singing days are now behind him, he can occasionally be heard singing his grandchildren's favourite hits, *Hasta Manana*, *Rachel* and *Too Young*, as and when the mood takes him. ■■■

Some of Dorab's recordings are on
<http://www.youtube.com> Search Dorab Bivandi



A doctor on the police board

I “I have had the privilege of studying in India and a lot of what I have achieved today in Toronto can be traced back to a rock-solid education I was exposed to while growing up there.” Dr Dhun Farokh Noria.

With this quote I launch into an hour-long conversation with Dr Dhun Farokh Noria the newly minted member of the Toronto Police Services Board. (The TPSB is a seven-member civilian body that oversees Canada’s largest municipal police service.)

Noria came to Canada as a young bride in the late 1960’s.

by teenaz javat

On graduating from Osmania Medical College in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad, Noria followed her husband Farokh to Toronto. However, to be able to pursue a medical career, she had to write the Education Council for Foreign Medical Graduate exam before departing for Toronto.

Being successful at this exam meant Noria could continue to seamlessly work/study within the medical profession anywhere in Canada.

Immigrating to Canada opened up new opportunities for the newly minted India-trained doctor.

“I knew right from the start that being good was not going

to work. I had to be the best in my field,” says Noria who is chief of laboratory medicine at Scarborough Hospital in Toronto. “Although I did not experience any discrimination at all from my peers, there was no wiggle room for failure.”

Noria and her husband came to Canada with nothing more than \$8.00 in their pocket and this was not due to lack of funds. Back in the sixties the Indian government exercised strict controls on foreign exchange and tourists or migrants were not allowed to leave the country with anything more.

Despite hailing from a background of wealth and



privilege, the young couple decided to bite the bullet. Going back to India was to admit failure. So with strength and determination they persevered.

The past few decades have seen Noria win awards and accolades for her achievements both in and outside of her chosen profession. As her career took off, so did an overriding desire to give back to the community.

"We have now reached a stage in our lives where we have everything we need, so I like to get involved in causes that affect my spirit," says Noria, who in 2002 received the University of Toronto's 25-year service award for her work as a medical instructor. "If I see there is a need in the community that I live in, I will most certainly stretch out and help. I love to get involved in causes that affect my spirit. Whether it is the Salvation Army Hospital or the critical care unit in a Toronto hospital, if I see the need I give."

Noria has several pet projects which she holds close to her heart. She chairs the building capital campaign of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario and is a board member of the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care.

Often described as a 'tireless health care advocate,' Noria feels humbled and honoured to have been appointed as a member to the TPSB, a watchdog body which oversees the largest police force in all of Canada. "The values that I hold dear are quite in sync with the mission of the Toronto Police Service," she says. "The core values of honesty and integrity sit in very well with my own set of values."

On May 12, 2011 Noria, along with six other equally illustrious citizens, was inducted into The Scarborough Walk of Fame (SWOF). The SWOF is a not-for profit organization, dedicated to honouring individuals who not only bring pride to the community but serve to inspire the leaders of tomorrow.

For the Raichur-born physician this was a humbling moment. "I'm truly honoured to be working in this great city of Scarborough,"

she said in her acceptance speech at a glitzy gala held in downtown Scarborough - a borough east of Toronto, which became part of the city in 1997.

Deflecting the praise showered upon her, Noria was gracious in crediting much of her success not only to the city of Scarborough where she has worked for over 25 years, but also her co-worker physicians of The Scarborough Hospital Birchmount Campus who nominated her for the award.

The gala award ceremony (attended by several Toronto-area Zoroastrians) is the culmination of a day-long celebration where the inductees unveil their individual star on the Walk of Fame Pathway of Stars, located at the Scarborough Town Centre.

Incidentally, all has not been smooth sailing for Noria. A mother of two adult children, she has had her share of setbacks, having survived cancer in 1994 and then again in 2003.

"I believe life has to go on. No point in moping, as you have to be your own pillar. In fact, it is these setbacks which have renewed by belief in using every minute of my day to the best possible advantage. I hate wasting time and no matter what your calling is, try to do your best."

Coming to Canada with almost nothing but her education, Noria has broken the glass ceiling several times over and has been an inspiration to several who have crossed her path.

An avid gardener, Noria in her spare time, indulges in big game fishing. This hobby has taken her from the pristine shores of the Arctic Ocean to the wild waters of the Amazon, all in search for the veritable Big Fish. **But** for now, her position as member of the TPSB is perhaps the biggest fish in her net of achievements.



Teenaz Javat is an award winning journalist at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and a part-time instructor at Sheridan College, Oakville. Born in Mumbai, India, Teenaz has had the enviable position of having worked as a journalist in India and Pakistan before moving to Canada in 1997. Her work has appeared in several print and online publications in Canada, India and Pakistan. She lives in Mississauga, Ontario with her husband and two kids.



In loving memory of my parents Naval & Soonu Godrej

For my Grandmother

from Farah Mahrukh Coomi Shroff

My grandmother (now 101) and I have a game that goes like this:

Jaan

Granny: tu mari kaleji chhe (you are my liver)

Me: tu maru bejoo chhe (you are my brain)

Granny: tu mari dihl chhe (you are my heart)

Me: tu mari jaan chhe (you are my soul)



Farah Mahrukh Coomi Shroff, PhD, teaches at the University of British Columbia's Medical School in the field of public health. Her research and writing are focused on social justice approaches to health and holism and health. She is also carrying out a study of elder Zarthusti women's oral herstories. A voracious reader of Zarthusti literature, she is keen to support writing by and about our community.



In Gujarati, expressing love is like saying "you are so important to me that I can't live without you—just like I can't live without my liver". The ultimate form of devotion is to declare that our beloved is the essence of life itself, our soul (jaan).

"Coomi is my grandmother's first name. Mahrukh is my mother's first name and Shroff is my father's last name. When I was quite young I changed my name so as to honour the wonderful women who raised me along with my amazing father." writes Farah. ■■■■

[This poem was published in the Canadian Journal of Women's Studies, Volume 24, number 2, 3 and FEZANA Journal, Summer 2010, p105. Hamazor has once again published it on special request of Farah's so that her Granny in Mumbai can see it.]

The Light of Peace

by Perin Divecha

Stand on the shore of human hopes and endeavour,
And gaze at the distant horizon of pure Light
Which flickers not, nor grows cold, but glows with a steady glow,
Revealing a Path which draws my soul;
A Path which I must travel to reach my final destination.

When in doubt, it clears my vision, to illumine the realm which penetrates
And merges with all that surrounds me:
All that I touch, I hear, see and feel with my heart and mind, and spirit.
It is of the Essence of all that is seen and unseen.

It illumines Creation as O Thou, Supreme Spirit ordained it:
Its foundations, its laws which guide its changes,
Its progress, its beauty,
Its wonders expressed in a myriad ways,
Its peaceful, creative and destructive force.

Of all creation the human soul alone has been given Free Will
To choose whom it worships;
How think, how act and how speak –
With understanding, with wisdom and compassion,
To promote Righteousness, Justice and Truth, towards Perfection –
Or the consequences which lead to perdition, when the choices we
make cause chaos and destruction.

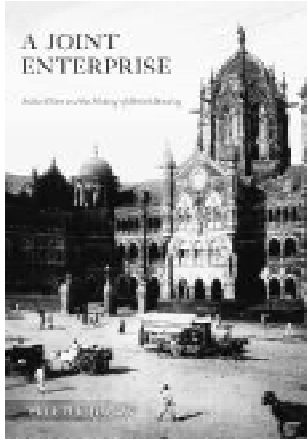
Lord, may I absorb Its resonance of Peace with every fibre of my being
Its sweet fragrance inhale with every breath I take,
For it promises life's abundance in this world and that of Immortality,
A Realm of Pure Light,
The Light of love, of joy, of Peace.



Perin Divecha was born in Saharanpur and educated at a boarding school in Mussoorie, India. Served in the WAC(I) RAF Co. for three and a half years, but her ambition was to teach. She taught children in Pakistan and England, aged 6 – 15 years. Subjects of interest have always been Literature, History and Religion; myths and legends of different cultures; the development of religion; trying to understand how the human mind works; its capacity for physical and spiritual experiences.

A Review

by simin patel



Preeti Chopra, *A Joint Enterprise: Indian Elites and the Making of British Bombay*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

344 pages | 94 b & w photos | 1 table | 7 x 10 | 2011.

US\$27.50 paper

ISBN 978-0-8166-7037-6

US\$82.50 cloth

ISBN 978-0-8166-7036-9

Cover photography by Clifton & Co., circa 1880s. Courtesy Phillips Antiques, Bombay.

Preeti Chopra opens her book on British Bombay with a view from London. In Regent's Park stands a drinking fountain designed in Gothic style. Sculptures of a horned Indian buffalo, a lion and palm trees decorate its façade. Along with the vegetative details are the visages of a European lady and gentlemen and the fountain's donor Sir Cowasji Jehangir Readymoney, described as a "wealthy Parsee gentleman of Bombay". Readymoney was a bold benefactor, leaving his mark at the imperial centre as well as funding 40 fountains and several educational and medical institutions across Bombay. His gifting a fountain surmounted with a cross to the famous St Thomas Cathedral in the Fort locality was much to the annoyance of orthodox Parsis who nicknamed the donor 'Cowasji Cross'. The patronage of inter-religious sites was however, a time-tested approach to consolidating power.



Readymoney is among a host of native philanthropists whose contribution to the built environs of Bombay Chopra traces in her book. She convincingly argues that the physical transformation of the city from the 1860's onwards was a 'joint enterprise' at two levels. Firstly, it was the result of partnerships between native elites and the colonial government in sharing the costs and responsibilities of creating public institutions. Secondly, European and Indian engineers, architects and artists collaborated in the execution of these structures. The destruction of the Fort ramparts in the 1863-4 made way for an open urban public space which would house the Bombay University Library, Rajabai Clock Tower and Convocation Hall, the High Court, all designed in the Gothic Revival style. *A Joint Enterprise: Indian Elites and the Making of British Bombay*, suggests that these imposing structures bore not only the stamp of British supremacy over the city but also native enterprise and authority. The University Convocation Hall was named after Readymoney, his statue still graces the front gardens, while the Clock Tower was dedicated to the donor Premchand Raichand's mother.

How the Gothic Revival style came to dominate the landscape is among Chopra's key focuses. Older public institutions like the Town Hall were built in classical (Greek Revival) design. Yet Sir Bartle Frere, under whose governorship (1862-1867) the Fort was transformed, favoured the use of the Gothic Revival for the new city centre. The style allowed for a secular marrying of Indian and European design as compared to architectural traditions like the Indo-Saracenic, which had distinct religious (in this case, Islamic) affiliations. While British architects hailed the Indo-Saracenic as the



Figure 1.8: Elphinstone Circle Garden, Bombay, 1869-72. In the foreground is the ornamental fountain at the center of the garden. It appears that the temporary shelters have been erected over the statues of Marquis Cornwallis and Marquis Wellesley, probably to protect them against the monsoon rains. In the background to the left and beyond the garden the spire of St. Thomas Cathedral can be seen and, to the right, a part of one of the crescents that make up the circle. The photograph was most likely taken from the steps of the Town Hall. Courtesy Bhau Daji Lad Sangrahalaya, Bombay.

perfect and universal style for India (its high domes ideal for warm and cool climates), Bombay remained a Gothic stronghold. For the city's anglicized cosmopolitan elite the Indo-Saracenic, so prevalent in the architecture of Madras, was hardly attractive. Not that the Gothic, with its spires and towers, was devoid of medieval European Christian influence - however native philanthropists were keen to emulate the aesthetics of their rulers. Their generous funding allowed for significant control over the style of the structures.

With the making of metropolis in the 1860's, older forms of public gifting gave way to western philanthropic trends. Among the most popular early gifts were wells and tanks, a tradition the wealthy continued from their original homelands in Gujarat. Chopra in her first chapter skillfully traces the many wells and tanks that were donated for public use: 'Not merely sources of water supply, these water sources with their platforms, steps, shrines and trees formed part of the cultural landscape of Bombay. They were the foci of daily rituals, spaces of public

interaction, and public spaces that shaped the neighbourhoods around them. She credits Framji Cowasji with redirecting water, via steam machinery, from its original source to areas it was most required. The Nakhoda Tank on the Esplanade was donated by the Konkani magnate Muhammed Ali Roghay. From the early 1860's onwards the municipality provided Bombay's citizenry with water from the Vehar Water Works project. Charitable wells, like the Fort ramparts, came to be seen by officials as blocking prime public space. Several donors protested at the sealing and removal of wells, demanding compensation. The government only offered that the Rampart Removal Committee would preserve the inscriptions on all the wells and find a way to permanently commemorate these acts of charity. Chopra remarks she knows of no such memorial. By 1917, 28.01 acres of open space were created by the sealing.

Assistant to the secretary of the Rampart Removal Committee, engineer Khan Bahadur Muncherji Cowasji Murzban's (1839-1917) career was closely tied to the creation of the new city. A student of the Government School of Engineering in Poona, Murzban was recruited to Bombay by Governor Frere. His luminous career spanned almost half a century, the last eleven spent as the executive engineer of the Municipal Corporation of Bombay. Yet Murzban's accomplishments, as those of the class of native engineers have been largely overlooked. Chopra remarks, "In my estimation there was no architect or engineer in the second half of the

nineteenth century who could rival the length, depth, and diversity of Murzban's almost half-century involvement in the construction of colonial Bombay's public buildings and infrastructure." Murzban's success lay in his technical expertise, an



Figure 3.11: M. C. Murzban, Parsi Lying-in Hospital, Esplanade, Bombay, 1895. From Murzban, *Leaves from the Life of Khan Bahadur Muncherji Cowasji Murzban*, 112.

eye for design despite no formal architectural training (he was made fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1889) and his personal skills. Benefiting from a host of European mentors as well as access to native, particularly Parsi elites, Murzban liaised between both factions. Chopra notes that five of the eight public buildings designed by Murzban, in his official capacity, were funded by Parsi philanthropists, the sixth, founded by a Parsi and fellow Freemason.

These institutions particularly the medical ones like the Pestanji Hormusji Cama Hospital for Women and Children (1886) were striking modern symbols. They offered new spaces where women could be treated

as patients under medical care, rather than inferior and unclean, as often the case in domestic settings. Zoroastrian scriptures and Parsi custom had long isolated the menstruating / post-natal woman. Yet it is difficult to define Murzban's legacy as either modern or cosmopolitan. The hospitals he designed had special provisions for Parsi wards and mortuaries whereas all the other native patients shared a common space. His was the vision of a Parsi Lying-in Hospital (1895), meant specifically to treat Parsi women. This segregation in the cities various hospitals was among the policies that reiterated a sense of community distinctness. The government agreed to accommodate donor Bai Dinbai Nasarvanji Petit's request for two separate wards for male and female paying Parsi patients and a portion of a general ward for poor Parsis, at the proposed Nowpada Lunatic Asylum. The request read, "The lower classes of natives who, as a rule, resort to hospitals are very filthy in their habits, and the Parsis, as a rule, being of more cleanly habits, do not therefore like to associate with them in the same wards. For these reasons arrangements have been specially made by the Parsi community in all the hospitals of Bombay-except in the Gokaldas Hospital-for segregating Parsi patients in separate wards."



Figure 3.9: M. C. Murzban, Alexandra Native Girls' English Institution, Bombay, 1879-81. From Murzban, *Leaves from the Life of Khan Bahadur Muncherji Cowasji Murzban*, 56.



Figure 6.4: Government House, Parel, Bombay, early twentieth century. Originally this was the site of a church and convent belonging to the Jesuits. W. Hornby (1776) was the first governor to establish residence here, and the building was considerably enlarged and refurbished by a subsequent governor, Mountstuart Elphinstone (1819-27). It was converted into a plague hospital after the bubonic plague first struck Bombay in 1896, then later became the Bombay Bacteriological Laboratory. Courtesy Bhau Daji Lad Sangrahalaya, Bombay.

Chopra is finest where she delves into the dichotomies of the urban public arena emerging in Bombay. She explains how Murzban was also the father of community housing for the Parsis. Planned, gated colonies, exclusively for Parsi habitation were further visual reminders of their socio-racial exclusivity. An inscription on a bust of Murzban at Murzban Colony in Gilder Lane describes him as the “originator of the idea of colonization among Parsees and Indians”. Chapter 5, titled ‘An Unforeseen Landscape of Contradictions’, maps how Europeans in the city segregated their physically and mentally ill: white male insane officers were the asylum’s elite—given better clothing, bedding and residence on the upper floor, facing the front. One ends Chopra’s engaging book wondering if the first major dents to colonial Bombay’s famed cosmopolitanism came from these segregating medical and housing policies rather than events like the Hindu-Muslim Riots of 1893.



Photographs courtesy of Anne Klingbell, Advertising & Promotions, University of Minnesota Press, sanctioned by rights and permissions coordinator, Jeff Moen.

Simin Patel is a second year DPhil candidate at Balliol College, University of Oxford. Her research focuses on colonial Bombay. Of particular interest are the social tensions and fissures within the city’s influential Parsi community.



An Indian Portia

by audrey munro

There was standing-room only and latecomers had to be turned away at the Nehru Centre in London when the renowned historian, Dr Kusoom Vadgama, launched her latest book, “An Indian Portia: Selected Writings by Cornelia Sorabji 1866-1954”.

The 250 guests enjoyed a range of expert speakers, who detailed the importance of Cornelia Sorabji to the advancement of women, women’s education and the legal profession, as well as relating what she meant to each of them individually.

The evening was compered by the acclaimed legal journalist and commentator, Joshua Rozenberg and began with Dr Vadgama explaining the background to the book. Dr Vadgama recounted how she had spent nearly fifteen years researching and compiling this, her third book. Vadgama, who specialises in the relationship between India and the UK, discovered her subject when she was researching her first book, and came across Miss Sorabji’s extraordinary collection of writings. On delving further into Miss Sorabji’s life, Dr Vadgama found out that Miss Sorabji had wanted her writings, including her letters and diaries, to be published.

The first of the guest speakers was the human rights campaigner, Zerbano Gifford, who shares a Zoroastrian background with Miss Sorabji, and whom Dr Vadgama has described as “Cornelia’s natural successor, as both had dedicated their lives to the service of others, especially the empowerment of women. They were also both consummate networkers and social reformers.”

Mrs Gifford gave the keynote address and garlanded a bust of Miss Sorabji, sculpted by Sachidanand Unavane and specially commissioned by Dr Vadgama to commemorate the launch of the book. Mrs

Gifford also paid tribute to Dr Vadgama's tireless work in promoting important historical figures, who otherwise risked being forgotten. Zerbanoo joked that not only had she launched her books there, but her biography, "Dadabhai Naoroji: Britain's First Asian MP", had launched the Nehru Centre in 1992, with the renowned jurist and Director of Tata, Nani Palkhivala, as the guest of honour.

This was followed by a reading of extracts from the book by the poet and lecturer in literature, Pauline Drayson, including Miss Sorabji's account of her interview of Gandhi. Miss Sorabji did not approve of Gandhi's stance on Indian independence; they agreed to treat each other as professionals, as both were barristers, and speak their minds without fear of offence being given or taken. However, she was not won round!

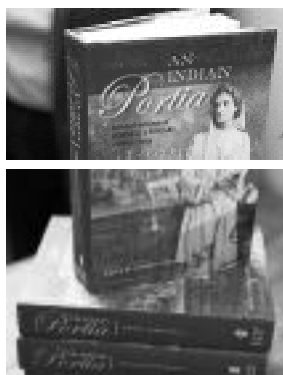
Miss Sorabji's nephew, Professor Richard Sorabji, having spent considerable time with his aunt, gave an amusing personal account of how she tried on many occasions, to persuade him to take up law as a profession. Despite her efforts, taking him along to court and introducing him to eminent legal personalities, he went on to become a teacher.

The book was launched by Jyoti Munsiff, the first Indian woman, and the youngest ever, solicitor in the UK, who was also the first woman legal adviser to Shell. The programme concluded with a speech from the Principal of Somerville College, Oxford, Dr Alice Prochaska, where Cornelia had been a student. Dr Prochaska spoke of the college's pride in having Miss Sorabji among their alumni.

Dr Vadgama also welcomed a special guest – 99 (ninety-nine) year-old Dr Elizabeth Monkhouse, a graduate of Somerville College, whose cousin had married Miss Sorabji's brother. At the other end of the age spectrum, a present-day Somerville student, Anahita Hoose, was thrilled to be invited to garland her Principal, Dr Prochaska. Miss Hoose, who is Mrs Gifford's god-daughter, is herself writing a book; Mrs Gifford says

she is now looking forward to keeping up the tradition and holding that launch at the Nehru Centre too!

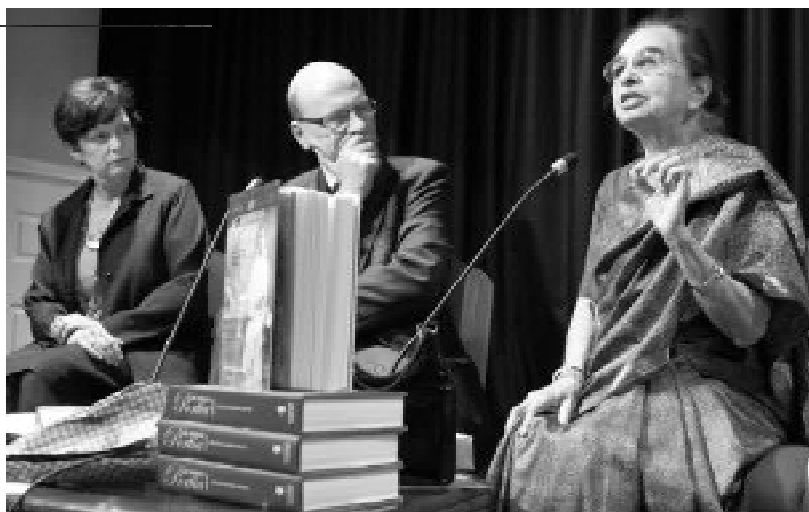
The programme closed with a question and answer session, chaired by Mr Rozenberg, who invited Dr Vadgama to detail how she came to admire Miss Sorabji and why Miss Sorabji should be celebrated in India and the UK.



[Mala Vadgama, MKV Photography]



Zerbanoo Gifford. [Michele Cornish]



L to R: Dr Alice Prochaska, Joshua Rozenberg and Kusoom [Mala Vadgama, MKV Photography]



Prof Richard Sorabji with the bust of his aunt Cornelia Sorabji. [Mala Vadgama, MKV Photography]



Bust of Cornelia Sorabji
[Michele Cornish]

Cornelia Sorabji

Cornelia Sorabji, the social reformer and writer, was the first woman to read law and to sit the examination for the British degree of Bachelor of Civil Law (BCL) at Somerville College, Oxford in 1892. (The first woman to read law in the UK was Janet Wood in 1875 at Cambridge.)

Miss Sorabji was born in 1866 into a Zoroastrian (Parsi) Christian family in Nasik, Western India. She was one of eight children of Reverend Sorabji Karsedji, a Parsi who converted to Christianity, and his wife, Francina Ford, an Indian who had been adopted and brought up by a British couple.

As a child Miss Sorabji was educated both at home, with her missionary parents, and at mission schools. When she was eight years old, she witnessed the anguish of a Gujarati Hindu widow who had been swindled out of her very substantial inheritance by her trustee. Illiterate and only able to deal with the outside world through her sole trustee, she was typical of many widows who lost all their property. Miss Sorabji immediately resolved to become a lawyer, since, as a woman, she would be able to overcome the restrictions of purdah.

Miss Sorabji was the first woman graduate from Bombay University. Her academic success in India would have entitled her to a scholarship to study in the UK if she had been a man. However, her friends in Britain raised a substitute scholarship, which enabled her to go to Oxford. In 1892, she was given special permission by Congregational Decree, due in large part to the petitions of her British friends, to take the Bachelor of Civil Law exam at Oxford University, making history as the first woman to ever do so.

Although she graduated from Oxford in 1892, it would be another thirty-one years before Miss Sorabji became the second Indian woman to be called to the English bar, four months after the first, Mithan Ardeshir Tata.

By the turn of the century, Miss Sorabji was actively involved in social reforms. She worked tirelessly for the rights of purdahnishins (women in purdah) and orphans, and was associated with the Bengal branch of the National Council for

Women in India, the Federation of University Women, and the Bengal League of Social Service for Women. In 1904 the government recognised Miss Sorabji as the lady legal adviser to the Court of Wards. In 1909 she was awarded the Kaiser-i-Hind gold medal for services to the Indian nation. By the time poor eyesight ended her work in India, she had helped many hundreds of wives, widows and orphans.

Miss Sorabji practised in the Calcutta High Court from 1924 to 1929; however, due to male bias and discrimination she was confined to preparing opinions on cases, rather than pleading them before the court. Nor was she allowed to use the male-only library.

Miss Sorabji retired from the High Court in 1929, and settled in London, visiting India during the winters. She died at her London home in 1954.

Until now she has been largely forgotten by the British and Indians alike, possibly due to her anti-Nationalist campaigns for India's independence as well as her anti-Suffragette stance. Dr Vadgama hopes Miss Sorabji can now reclaim her place in the history of India and Britain.



[Mala Vadgama, MKV
Photography]

Dr Kusoom Vadgama

Kusoom Vadgama, Doctor of Optometry, was born in Nairobi, Kenya, and educated at the Government Indian Girls' High School. She studied the glory and history of the British Empire at school but her time outside was spent leading anti-British rallies at the height of the 'Free India' and 'Quit India' movements. In 1953 she came to Britain for further education and later went to Chicago for further

studies. She also lived and worked in New York where she attended the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. In London she studied at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts.

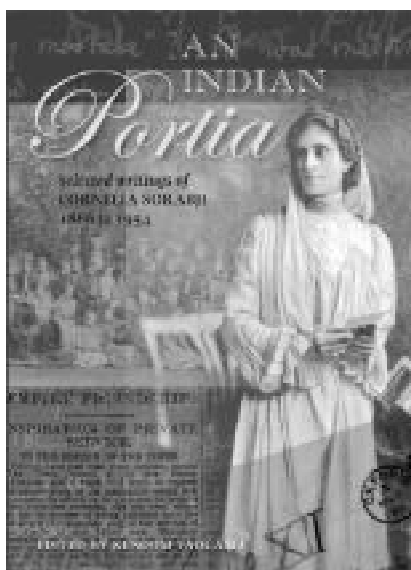
One of her great interests has been the special relationship that exists between India and Britain. While researching her first book 'India

in Britain: the Indian Contribution to the British Way of Life 1852-1947' (the first ever book examining the role played by Indians in Britain during the Raj, published in 1984, with forewords by Indira Gandhi and Prince Charles), she discovered 233 volumes of Cornelia Sorabji's private papers in the British Library. As Dr Vadgama says in the preface to her book, "I read the letters and diaries with great interest and excitement. It is not possible to read them without feeling intense admiration for her natural talent, perseverance and determination to fight for justice."

Dr Vadgama lives and works in London, very much an Indian but totally committed to the British way of life. 'Britain is my home but India is my homeland' is how she describes her loyalty and love for the two countries.

Dr Vadgama was on the editorial board of India Weekly and chaired the committee to set up a Centre for Research in Asian Migration at the University of Warwick. In 1992 she co-chaired with Zerbano Gifford the committee for Dadabhai Naoroji's Centenary Celebrations, marking his election as the first Indian Member of Parliament in the UK.

Dr Vadgama is a trustee of the Noor Inayat Khan Memorial Trust. She is also a trustee of the ASHA Centre - an international centre working with young people from conflict zones for peace and understanding.



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[Mala Vadgama, MKV Photography]

Philanthropy with a Silver Spoon – Award Winning Social Entrepreneur, Shireen Irani

by soonu engineer

this spring, a young member of the Parsi community received public recognition for her vision, enterprise and the promotion of social good. Shireen Irani was awarded the accolade, Young Achiever of the Year, at an annual awards ceremony celebrating 'Asian Women of Achievement'. Shireen has gone on to collect the Law Society's 2011 Junior Lawyer award for outstanding contribution to the community, in the pro-bono category. WZCC invited her as a special guest at their quarterly meeting in London.

Visit: <http://www.awaawards.com>

When I see her at the plush city headquarters of her blue-chip employer, Field Fisher Waterhouse (FFW), the young lawyer carefully explains the Latin meaning of 'pro-bono' – 'for the public good'. There she promotes all activities associated with her firm's 'corporate responsibility', one of which is encouraging others in the company to give of their time and talents for the benefit of local communities. As part of this brief, she runs the organisation, 'i-Probono', a website, **www.i-Probono.com**, dedicated to connecting voluntary organisations or NGOs all over the world with lawyers and law students who wish to provide free legal advice, research, and other kinds of legal assistance for worthy social causes. It is for this work that Shireen has won the awards.

"I never did put much stock in awards but recognition for you is recognition for the work," she points out. She's been interviewed by the BBC, Sky and Channel 4 which, she says, has meant more publicity for the cause. Since receiving the awards, doors have opened that have enabled her to publicise the venture more widely and

In loving memory of my parents Naval & Soonu Godrej



have brought further opportunities for expanding into other areas besides the law. Apart from an invitation to Buckingham Palace in September, there was the 'Big Society' event she got invited to, where the Prime Minister, David Cameron, had to wait in the wings while she spoke to the press about i-Probono. There has been endorsement from Cherie Blair, who is

not only patron of the Asian Awards body but, more significantly, is a partner in a leading Human Rights practice. Her 'Foundation for Women' has brought its 40 affiliated organisations to register with the website.

Interestingly, Shireen is as picky about the organisations i-Probono helps, as in establishing a network of good lawyers. She calls it, 'getting an effective return'. People will feel their efforts have been worthwhile if they are helping 'quality organisations' that value their contribution and are responsible, effective, accountable and transparent. "The last thing we want is for our members to be working with NGOs who are not these things," she says flatly.

It's a 'match-making website' and the idea for it came to her because it had been an immense struggle getting her first legal internship after she completed her Masters in International Economic Law. She was looking for an opportunity to work in an area which would complement the research she had done for her dissertation on corporate accountability in cases of human rights abuses. Eventually, in 2004, she got a year's position at the prestigious, Center for Constitutional Rights, in New York where she was able to find the legal basis for establishing the crime of 'aiding and abetting' in the Law of Nations. The evidence was buried away in the 17th and 18th legal archives at Warwick University and Shireen applied her forensic skills to trace it to the 18th English jurist, William Blackstone's treatment of piracy in law. It was the "most rewarding piece of legal work" she had done but, in the same breath, she dismissed her own contribution as a matter of lucky happenstance that she had studied at Warwick where the papers are kept.

She had had the opportunity to make an important contribution in her field but the placement had been secured with great difficulty and Shireen wanted to make it easier for other students. "There are so many people looking for useful projects and I identified a gap here. In 2004, Facebook had become a global phenomenon and the idea of 'connectivity' was taking hold. I thought: why can't volunteers find opportunities that fit their interests?" And so, i-Probono was born.

But there was more to it, from the start, than facilitating internships. Shireen saw that the voluntary/charity sector was falling behind in the use of technology to advance its cause. She combined her interest in the third sector with her interest in the law, to come up with a project that would bring professional legal skills to the aid of people and organisations who were combating injustice, promoting fair access and empowering people in impoverished circumstances.

Social entrepreneurs, in the popular imagination, are charitable souls labouring



Britain's Home Secretary Theresa May, right, pictured after presenting the Young Achiever Award to Shireen Irani at the Asian Women of Achievement Awards in Central London. 20/05/2011

away in the backrooms of dilapidated warehouses or in city slums, battling against terrific odds, making-do on meagre budgets and living off a pittance for the good of the deprived and disadvantaged. But the i-Probono website is funded by Allen and Overy, another blue-chip partner in this enterprise; Shireen herself was seconded by her employers to get the website going and currently runs the enterprise as part of her corporate job, in unimaginably luxurious surroundings; and legal and technical advice is readily forthcoming from senior partners and other people in this rarefied world of big business. This is philanthropy with a silver spoon.

The results are striking. Within a year, 140 projects have received the support of legal volunteers. 900 organisations have signed up for help, from multi-national charitable giants to small, community groups. The legal partners are also impressive. The Bar Pro-Bono Unit with its 2000 members and over 200 QCs is signed up to provide a link to barristers willing to work for free; as is the Institute of Legal Executives which represents 22,000 trainees and practicing Legal Executives; and Law Works which has around 100 law firms and in-house legal departments offering their services. Shireen has not only had a brilliant idea and a laudable objective, she has persuaded powerful businesses to back her, and delivered her dream.

Her heroes are Gandhi and Mandela – both lawyers. At the age of 18 she decided that “law is a noble profession”. Living and studying in India from the age of 14 (having spent her early years in Dorset), she felt keenly the need to do something about the poverty that was everywhere. Her degree in International Relations with Development Studies, at Sussex University, was the first logical step. After that, came a stint with HSBC, in Mumbai, where she worked on corporate social responsibility.

Her flair for social enterprise was seen at an early stage when she was on holiday in Rajasthan in 2002 and came across a community of wildlife artists. “You see the

talent and you know there is a market for it and you see you are well-placed to make that connection.” So she contacted the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation who exhibited 3 of the artists in the UK. She raised funds for the artists, as well raising awareness and funds for tiger conservation in India.

Shireen’s father, Aderbad Irani, is an ophthalmic surgeon and her mother is a micro-biologist. Her father served as President of the World Zoroastrian Organisation in India for some time. While working in the UK, he travelled regularly to hold eye camps in rural India. She sees her parents and grandparents as her inspiration for initiative, resilience and “giving back to the community”.

Both her maternal and paternal grandfathers were Irani Zarthoshtis, who arrived in Mumbai from Iran in the late 19th century. Her paternal great-grandfather died on the journey and her grandfather went to a Parsi orphanage. He won a scholarship to medical school and became an ophthalmologist. Her maternal grandfather was also at the same orphanage. Both did well for themselves and it’s their spirit of enterprise that Shireen most admires.

She is fond of quoting Mahatma Gandhi’s description of Parsis as being ‘**in numbers, beneath contempt, but in contribution, beyond compare.**’ However, she doesn’t see the ‘good religion’ as the sole source of this trait for benevolence and charity. “I don’t think religion is the answer for being good. If you are not religious, you can still be good.” But she is curious about the faith – at least, “from a theological point of view.” Her next project is to go to Iran and see how other Zarthoshtis live and practice their faith.

That’s not before she has completed the second stage of her i-Probono project: expansion in India, where there are 30,000 lawyers; and launching a branch in the U.S. But that’s not all. “We are planning to take this proven model into other areas such as accountancy and business.” For Shireen, today it’s the UK, USA and India, tomorrow, the world.



Shireen Engineer is a free lance management and training consultant in UK, specialising in diversity management and conflict resolution. She is a member of the WZO committee.

4th July 2011 - a Red-Letter Day for Muncherji Cama

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Never before has the election of a BPP Trustee been as hotly contested as the recent battle between the Muncherji Cama (Munchi to his friends) and Anahita Desai (wife of sitting-trustee, Yezdi Desai). At the start of the campaign a few weeks ago, even Munchi's most loyal supporters gave him very little chance of success against the lady, who was seen by many, to be not just better-known among the rank and file of the Parsis, but someone who, being a social worker, had already had the advantage of having far more touch-points with voters over last few years than Muncherji. The result, which was officially announced a little after 6 pm on the evening of 4th July, therefore astounded both Muncherji Cama's best friends and severest critics alike and left them disbelieving of the final outcome - Muncherji had secured a truly impressive 5,134 votes, against 3,510 votes cast in favour of Anahita Desai – a margin of close to 19%!

from our mumbai correspondent



Muncherji Cama
courtesy Jehangir Patel,
Parsiana. [Sarosh
Daruwalla, Mazda Audio
Video Lab, Mumbai]

The final results also belied the predictions of all the pundits of the community, including the veterans of past elections. Most experts had estimated that the final result would be somewhere between a landslide victory, to a convincing win by a sizeable margin, for the lady. Obviously something went wrong, horribly wrong, in the WAPIZ camp to result in a debacle of this magnitude. This result has been both a 'myth-buster' and an 'eye-opener' in more ways than one.

The most ardent critics of the "adult franchise" system, who earlier shook their heads in dismay at the folly of allowing all and sundry to vote as opposed to the selective intelligentsia of a more enlightened electoral college, have had to admit that, given time and patience, democracies do work. The results of this election are somewhat reminiscent of the debacle Mrs. Indira Gandhi faced in her first election post the emergency and herein lies a lesson – never underestimate the intelligence of the average voter! A negative vote is often far more damaging than all the positive support mustered by a candidate.

Also reassuring was the fact that people did realise that, irrespective of the individual qualities of both the candidates that Anahita Desai was, at the end of the day, the spouse of a sitting-trustee. Although we, as Indians, have grown to fatalistically accept that family dynasties are a natural consequence of the Indian system of democracy, a husband and wife working together in 'Lalu Prasad & Rabri' type coalitions, on the same governing board of an organisation, has obviously caused alarm bells to ring in many minds and deterred them from casting their vote in favour of the lady. Thankfully, this issue has raised legitimate concerns in the minds of voters about standards of governance suffering as a consequence of familial ties that cannot be wished away, no matter how independent the candidate claims to be. One hope that this will be an abject lesson to trustees who aspire to have their own progeny succeeding them when their time to step down approaches.

A myth that has truly blown up in the faces of the WAPIZ leaders is their mistaken view reflected in a much-touted claim that their



Anahita Desai

ideologies and the particular variant of religion that they promote reflect the collective beliefs of the majority of the community. The strong push-back from the liberals (or perhaps, more correctly described as sensible right-thinking people) as evidenced by this vote, is a clear indication that fallacies and untruths, no matter how often repeated, do not a reality create. This election has proved that the dangerous recipe that WAPIZ has adopted over the years of preaching to the converted, publicly denigrating those with views at variance to their own and engaging in the politics of divisiveness do not pay in the longer term. The arrogance that results from a cocktail of this kind, merely serves to create an illusion of strength, where none really exists.

Significantly, the voter turn-out during this election was even lower than at the time of the last election. There are more than 28,000 registered voters today and 8,964 turned up to vote – less than a third. This could indicate voter fatigue caused by the frequent elections seen in the last couple of years. But, perhaps more likely, people are being put off by the conduct of the candidates during the election. This was the first election in history where High Priests entered the election arena and actually put their weight behind one candidate or the other. Many found that shocking. The sound and fury of the campaigning was certainly not matched by voter interest and perhaps yet another mistaken belief that voter interest is a function of the intensity of campaigning was also thankfully debunked. The reality perhaps is that potential voters are more attracted by harmony rather than disharmony and are in fact turned off by discord and bitterness.

Finally, although unpleasant, one cannot blot out the 'conduct-unbecoming' witnessed during polling. The insalubrious happenings on the 3rd week-end of voting at Rustom Baug on 26th June, which was flashed around the world in real-time within minutes of its occurrence, could well have contributed to a swing in voting at the last venue, a week later. It was a sad day for the

community to witness, not just fisticuffs between members of the community, which regrettably has also happened in the past, but the ingress of mercenary goons into the fray. The resultant scenes, which were more akin to the poll-violence witnessed in Bihar and Jharkhand, rather than the camaraderie and fellowship customarily found within the cozy confines of our sheltered Baugs at election venues of the past. There are unfortunately communities today in India who respect an individual by the size of the security force that follows him or her in tow, but generally our community has looked askance, if not down, on that breed of people. To encounter this phenomenon at the helm of what is considered an apex organisation of this enlightened community has been truly traumatic for many within the community. Comparisons are now being drawn with what happened at Sanjan at the Zoroastrian Monastery a couple of years ago and people are beginning to realise that vandalism of this kind is unacceptable, irrespective of the provocation. Had this incident happened pre-polling, perhaps Muncherji's land-slide victory could well have been a tsunami of greater magnitude. While the majority of people in the community may well see the outcome of this election as an "all's well that ends well" story, but it would be imprudent not to capture certain valuable learnings that have emerged from this battle. Public memory unfortunately is short and the normal tendency of most people to put what is unpleasant out of one's mind as quickly as possible. It is important therefore at a time like this to learn from the recent past and to prevent a recurrence of the same mistakes in future.

The acrimony generated by the election campaigns was unprecedented on this occasion. It was a no holds barred, free-for-all barrage of mud-slinging that would make the most avid supporter cringe at the scurrilous allegations traded by the candidates and their supporters about each other.

Muncherji's legendary composure was put to the test fairly early on in the campaign,

when he was likened to a “fat potato” by the opposition. Supporters rallied around to admit that even though he was a little more generously endowed in terms of size and circumference than most other mortals, he was nevertheless a “sweet-potato”. Not to be outdone, Muncherji, at an early election meeting even invited a young lady to join him on the stage for a demonstration of his ball-room dancing prowess to show just how nimble-footed he was, to the great amusement of the gathering.

Sadly thereafter, all humour faded from the scene very rapidly and both the candidates and members of their teams on both sides were subjected to unparalleled invective and abuse. Issues such as the pending appeal in the Supreme Court against the recent Judgment of the Division Bench in the “Renegade Priests Case” also became a matter for open disagreement between the trustees, which was aired at several election meetings in the question and answer sessions. The vituperative exchanges between Mehta and Mistree delved into sordid details of past wrong-doings on both sides, many without substance and some best left forgotten, even if true. To most observers it was a question of the pot calling the kettle black. It made by-standers and spectators wonder how these gentlemen will ever be able to one day sit together at the same table and work cohesively in a constructive manner. Clearly the shenanigans witnessed during these elections will hereafter call for certain safeguards such as an agreed Code of Conduct and perhaps the appointment of an independent “Election Commissioner” or “Returning Officer” to keep things under check. It is sad reflection on the state of our community today that the very same people who proclaim their commitment to orthodoxy and carry their so called religiosity on their sleeves as an outward demonstration of their “faith”, have today lost sight of the core teachings of a great religion. It is truly ironic that practitioners of this faith should require written codes of conduct and disciplines that are externally driven rather than self-imposed disciplines to guide their behaviour during elections.

There was a time when ‘truth’ and ‘Parsi’ were synonymous. Today, regrettably, many see nothing wrong in bending and distorting the fundamental basis of the faith, if it serves a certain purpose.

Muncherji is well known both for his delightful repartee and his sparkling wit. A joke-in-time has often saved acrimonious arguments from becoming a permanent break-down of relations between parties. Muncherji also has the ability to work with people of different views and compulsions and is seen by all to be a ‘people-person’. He is honest both financially and intellectually and these are qualities that will stand him in good stead in the days ahead. He has a huge task ahead of him as he enters the once-hallowed portals of the BPP to sit at the same table where the community’s most respected stalwarts once sat. He will need to bring all his human skills to bear on repairing the fractures within the BPP’s board of trustees and to apply himself to the task of once again trying to create some semblance of cohesiveness in this motley team of seven.



When a male can't stand it any more



Enough is enough! I've had enough of this! Now, just shut your damn mouth!

Has the genteel Mr Taraporewalla turned into a tapori?

T

The Parsis reeled under another dirty (and cyber) election war. Bachi Karkaria reports from the sidelines of the Inbox Insurgency.

[Hamazor had requested coverage from Bachi Karkaria on the election, but being out of the country, she had declined. On returning, Mumbai Mirror (Mumbai Mirror.com 10/July/2011) succeeded in 'persuading' the journalist who obliged within a day, and has shared it with Hamazor just in time before we go to print, being the initial requester. – Ed.]

by bachi karkaria

Munchi Cama is not just the new replacement Trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet. His decisive victory last Monday has tilted the balance of power in the rich and influential BPP. As important, it has showed that this time the community voted on logic not rhetoric. *Apro* Munchi, scion of the Bombay Samachar family and experienced Trust handler, was pitted against *apri* Anahita, social worker, but, more significantly, founder of the pulpit-thumping WAPIZ and wife of sitting BPP trustee Yezdi Desai.

Still, it's premature for the liberals to raise their Parsi pegs. The seven-member BPP was elected on an overwhelming conservative mandate in 2008. Internal power struggles have split it between president Dinshaw Mehta's camp and the trenchantly orthodox World Alliance of Parsi Irani Zarthoshtis (WAPIZ). The lone and isolated member from the rival Adult Fanchise for Progress, Noshir Dadrawala, resigned this April, resulting in this make-or- break election.

It surpassed the name-calling, blatant lies —and dinner-wooing — of 2008. Once again the Net was a ready, willing and shrill accessory. The Mirror diarist may have

recorded Munchi Cama being called an 'immobile potato' and him demonstrating his talents for ballroom dancing to nail the dastardly detraction. But the email war was vicious. It unleashed fire, brimstone — and smokescreens, leaving a global trail of heaving inboxes.

The crescendo was reached on June 26 during the polling at Rustom Baug, home ground of the feisty Anahita. It began with rumours that money was being distributed to voters who had been ferried from Bardoli by Ahmedabad-based industrialist and WAPIZ president, Areez Khambatta. Then Anahita's supporter and BPP Trustee, the builder Jimmy Mistry, arrived with his armed security men. He had allegedly accused Dinshaw Mehta of being a 'chor'. More than hot words were exchanged; Mistry's guards jumped in. A hyperventilating email claimed that one of them threatened to shoot Dinshaw's sons, saying, 'Yeh Viraf ko uda denge!' Upon which his mother, Pansy Mehta, swooned, and had to be admitted to Masina Hospital.

Naturally the Net went viral, aided with the Parsi propensity for histrionics. Dinshaw Mehta found opportunistic support from those who had been his bitter rivals in 2008.

In loving memory of my parents Naval & Soonu Godrej

Take this :

"As election days come to pass WAPIZ hierarchy's desperation is showing. They are shitting bricks and losing their cool, finding it hard to control their base instincts. How else can they explain their street-side hooliganism at Rustom Baug? ... Unless Munchi Cama the gentleman candidate is voted as BPP Trustee this time, the community can bid adieu to the once haloed (*sic*) body of our community."

The counter salvo was instantly fired by one Karl Sahukar:

"The reputation of Yasmin Kersi Sanjana now lies in tatters! Mickie Sorabjee proved herself to be a supporter of untruth once again! The aggressive rants of the Mehta boys have stripped them of their veneer of civility."

"You can take a man out of the ghetto, but you can't take the ghetto out of the man!" Let this be a lesson to all loose cannons amongst our midst! ... Political rivalry, perhaps an axe to grind or plain jealousy ... Every line of these emails is a LIE! ... See where gravity has crashed them – into the abyss from where they will find it increasingly difficult to slither out."

And Dadrawala, the humiliated ex-Trustee, crowed from his iPhone in vindication:

"Seeing the fracas, people may get a fair sense of why I was such a misfit among these gutter-class hooligans. As I have always said, I am a fighter but not a street fighter! My exit has made all 6 come out in their true colours."

Realising that such an open, ugly rift would be damning all round, the two camps issued a

joint statement playing down the incident. But that didn't stop Dinshaw Mehta's son from shooting off another clarification, complete with attachments of the police complaint and his mother's Masina hospital papers.

Earlier, WAPIZ had claimed Mehroo Bengalee's support for Anahita. The former Vice Chancellor of Mumbai University had issued a stout denial, doubly damning because she's a WAPIZ board member.

The real victim in these cynical wars is the community and its enviable legacy. It's clear that behind the lofty rhetoric for communal purity lies a lowly battle for control over the vast, and lucrative Trust assets. As another response to the

Inbox insurgency put it:

"How in heaven's (hell's?) name are they going to cohesively / efficiently / effectively run the wide-ranging affairs of the BPP – when one considers ... the wide impact of their actions, the huge financial ramifications, their important role in the image / behaviour so vital to project the good & great face of the Parsi / Irani Community to India and the World at large!! Have they not conveniently thrown out the simple and pure concepts of "Manashni Gavashni Kunashni" (Good Thoughts Good Words Good Deeds) that our noble & revered Prophet Zarathrushtsa Saheb enjoined his followers to strictly observe?"

The question is valid regardless of the author's motivations. The community did give its overwhelming votes to this camp in 2008 precisely because it projected itself as the saviour of both community and religion.



Bachi Karkaria is among the country's most respected journalists, a popular columnist, a chronicler of urbanity, and a media trainer. She has created and edited some of The Times of India's most successful papers. 'Erratica', her satirical column in the ToI, has had an increasingly devoted following since 1994, as does her more recent, straight-talking 'advice' column in the same group's Mumbai Mirror. She was the first journalist seriously to track AIDS in India, and is now an internationally consulted authority on the subject. She is a regular panelist on TV news networks. Ms Karkaria is the first Indian on the Board of the Paris-based World Editors Forum. Her books include "Dare to Dream", a best-selling biography of the legendary hotelier MS Oberoi, "Mumbai Masti", a richly illustrated book capturing the city's quirky soul, "The Cake That Walked", on Calcutta's iconic tea-room, plus collections of her columns, Erratica, and earlier writing, Your Flip is Showing. She has written the commissioned corporate biographies of the Times of India Group and of Larsen & Toubro, India's global engineering giant and contributed insightful essays to books documenting India's social transformation.

Two Parsis invited for the Royal Wedding, Westminster Abbey -



Malcolm Deboo, President of ZTFE, seen in the second row, representing the Zoroastrians of UK & Europe, in his pheta and dugli.

Shireen Patel Fraser writes:

"As head of the FCO [Foreign & Commonwealth Office], my husband (Simon Fraser) and I were invited to the Royal Wedding, after which he joined the Foreign Secretary in hosting a reception at Lancaster House for the many foreign ambassadors and High Commissioners based in London. It was a very special day and an enormous privilege to have been invited to participate. Our fleet of mini-buses drove along the procession route, so we saw the crowds first hand, which was quite exciting. Westminster Abbey looked spectacular, as did many of the guests and of course the bride and groom. We experienced the combination of witnessing the event 'live' and viewing it on large screens that were well-concealed from the cameras. The organisation that went in to making every detail perfect was incredible.

"This kind of attention to detail is something the royal household and the Foreign Office excel at. We have attended annual receptions for the top diplomats in London and also a couple of state banquets (to mark the visits of President Obama and also the Emir of Qatar), all of which have run seamlessly, with excellent food and wine. And you never know who you will meet or be seated next to!"



[Shireen is the daughter of our life members Tehmi & Noshir Patel - Ed]

2011, 5TH World Zoroastrian Youth Congress

United we stand – Building Bridges across oceans, the theme of the 5th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress, 2011 at the beautiful city of Vancouver, British Columbia truly brought out the message of unity in our community as Zoroastrian youth gathered for the Congress from all corners of the world.

Vancouver has been voted one of the top three cities in the world to live in for a number of years. And what could be a better place for us to gather, energetic and dynamic Zoroastrian youth from all over the world.

by monaz dalal patel

Benafsha Engineer and I were sponsored by WZO for the youth congress. Benafsha is one of the social secretaries and the youngest committee member of WZO. Following last year's decision by the WZO committee to give more emphasis to the Zoroastrian youth, I was selected to be its Youth Co-ordinator. This was the very first congress that we both attended and what was more exciting was that we had got an opportunity to give our respective presentations at the Congress.

Benafsha gave a very interesting presentation "Zoroastrianism is based on Spirituality and not on Rituals". My presentation was about "Zoroastrianism for the facebook generation".

We reached Vancouver on the 30th of June. After registration we started networking with youth who had reached the venue for the Congress.

The opening ceremony on 1st July was at the Chan Centre and saw some 850 Zoroastrians including the local Zoroastrian

Community in Vancouver, BC. For our Iranian friends it was the day of Tirgan and the day had one more significance, that it was also marked as "Canada Day". The ceremony began with Meher Pavri singing "O Canada" in her captivating voice with the

audience joining in. It was followed by the First Nations Musqueam Band, trio of mother and her two daughters, enthraling the audience with their welcome drumming beats.

Mr Homi Italia, President of the ZSBC Chair of Congress welcomed everyone and congratulated the team



Homi Italia welcoming the Youth

of the 5th WZYC for organising this special event. Zain Mavalvalla, Chair – 5th WZYC introduced the Committee Members. This was followed by an interactive Jashan on powerpoint by Ervad Soli Dastur - the first ever jashan of its kind. The mobeds on the stage prayed and then each and every meaning of the prayers in the jashan was translated in English with the audience repeating the English version along with Ervad Soli Dastur. Parva Namiranian, a lady mobedyar from Iran sat in the jashan



Er Soli Dastur with his interactive Jashan via powerpoint



Lady Mobedyar Parva Namiranian, receiving a standing ovation

ceremony, and received a standing ovation from the audience as she stepped on. This was followed by Vista Trethewey and Maneck Mavalvalla performing "I Believe" along with the Zoroastrian Study Class Children.

Fred Sarkari – the keynote speaker in his presentation talked about "What our core

represents: Good Thoughts - Good Words - Good Deeds." His words were inspiring for everyone present at the Chan Centre and I quote a few of his remarks after the opening ceremony without which I believe this report would not be complete:

"Vista Trethewey was singing "I Believe" with a group of adorable Zoroastrian children as her back up singers. It was not only the moment I realized what it meant to be a Zoroastrian, but more so, it was the moment I realized how proud I was to be a Zoroastrian."

"Watching close to a 1000 Zoroastrians from all over the world connecting with one another, made me think for the first time that we are part of a bigger calling than I ever realized."

"Speaking on that stage was by far one of my greatest honours that I had the pleasure of experiencing. We are more than a religion, a community, or simply a group of people. I truly believe that we together can and will impact the lives of all those that cross our path in this world."

"It is the essence of who we are and all we have to do is have the courage to live out our destiny."

"Standing there on stage, I could see and feel the glow of love that radiated in the audience, giving my heart and soul a sense of true belonging."

"Being a Zoroastrian is more than placing the text – good words, good thoughts and good deeds upon our walls and saying our prayers every day."

"Being a Zoroastrian is turning those words into our everyday reality. It is truly finding the courage to live the essence of those words in our daily lives with anyone that crosses our path."

"We have not only survived but thrived through centuries because of our soul connections within each other."



Fred Sarkari, Keynote Speaker

“Experiencing the World Congress made me realize that how we live our individual lives impacts us all as a whole.”

“Thank you to all the people that made the 5th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress possible. It is more than just an event, it truly is an opportunity for us all to build bridges within our lives.

“We can and will ignite true love in this world with Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds”.

These were not merely Fred's words but what each and every Zoroastrian present at the Chan Centre felt and experienced.

It was time for some dance and the Shiamak Davar Dance Troupe made 850 Zarthushtis dance to the tune of a popular Bollywood number “Dil Ainvayi Ainvayi Loot Gaya” along with some other Bollywood songs.

A boat cruise was arranged, and being Canada Day one could not miss the fireworks at midnight. There was more music, DJ and dancing to some wonderful Iranian and English music.

The 2nd day at the Congress started with an Intergenerational Discussion Panel and other panel discussions focusing on Youth Career. But everyone was looking forward to the day trip planned at the Grouse Mountain. We all enjoyed the lumberjack show and other activities on the mountain and after dinner descended the mountain on sky ride.

The 3rd day began with Dr Jenny Rose giving a presentation on “Early Encounters between Bombay Parsis and Massachusetts Merchants”. This was followed by Benafsha's presentation. A synopsis of her presentation follows.

She looked at the two ancient texts that have survived the Gathas and the Vendidad. The Gathas are said to have come directly from Asho Zarathustra and convey a message of the Code of Right



Benafsha Engineer, representing WZO

Living. The Vendidad on the other hand conveys the message of the Code for Physical Well Being, however this has been modified and adapted over the years. These two texts are used in the presentation to illustrate the difference between what Zarathustra wanted us to follow and what we have over the years started following.

The main emphasis of her presentation was to bring out the spiritual side of our religion, but by no way dismissing rituals. It is essential to remember that the rituals we follow today are somewhat done in a mechanical manner without any understanding of the prayer, language or content. However in today's world we as individuals need to follow rituals in order to feel closer to our religion and Asho Zarathustra.

Ava Afshari in her presentation explained the significance and importance of the Zoroastrian holy sites (Piroons) located in Yazd.

Dr Babak Kalantari and Dr Shirin Abadi in their respective presentations emphasised as to how we as Zoroastrians are at a higher risk of cancer, especially breast cancer among Zoroastrian women and how through simple measures we can all dramatically reduce the chances of getting cancer. This fascinating journey of human genetics was truly educational for all of us.

Dr Farah Shroff talked about a long term project she has been involved in about

engaging with elder Zarathusti women, interviewing them, and exploring the many social issues in their lives. She engaged everyone in the audience and mentioned we need to leave aside the differences within our community, strongly tackle the issue of Zoroastrian identity and question ourselves as to "Who are we", and how we as youth, should shape the future of our community. Her session ended with Farah singing Freddy Mercury's "We Will, We Will Rock You" with the audience joining in.

The 4th day began with Dinyar Patel speaking about The Zoroastrian Demographic Crisis and his research on North American Zoroastrians. This was followed by my presentation, which I share with you.

Zoroastrianism for the Facebook Generation

My main objective in this presentation was to explain a universal fact that in life there will be differences in ideologies, beliefs but at the end of the day we need to understand that we are all human beings who share common traits like desire to network, pass on our ideas and do what we feel is right, that is following our Vohumana.

The beauty of Zoroastrianism lies in its ability to let its ability to allow its followers use their Vohumana by deciding whom to become a friend with, whom to network and pass on their ideas. Isn't it interesting that social forums like Facebook function in the same manner?

My presentation focused on young Iranians who are becoming increasingly interested in

their glorious past and are attempting to practice and lead a Zoroastrian way of life. I also spoke about the ongoing debate of Zoroastrian identity which keeps on emerging on various social networking forums.

The exchange of views from Zoroastrians from diverse cultures will strengthen the interest in this great religion and will help "Build Bridges Across Oceans".

This was followed by various youth presenters from Iran, North America, Toronto, Zyng from India and WZO represented by Benafsha and me. Each organisation shared their views and strategies on connecting with the youth in their respective region, based on the following four questions:

1. What is the population of your association/group?
2. How long have you been in existence?
3. What are the three main goals of your group?
4. Name one proud moment in your association's past.

In the afternoon we explored the city of Vancouver on our own. By the end of the 4th day we had connected with quite a number of Zoroastrian youth from all around the world. It was now time for the closing ceremony and handover to the next host country - New Zealand. The Toronto Association gave a short presentation about the Zoroastrian Olympics 2012. Then it was some more dancing to a local famous live band.



Monaz Patel representing WZO



L to R: Mobed Ramin Shahzadi, Mobedyar Parva Namiranian & Monaz

In loving memory of my parents Naval & Soonu Godrej

We returned with loads of beautiful memories, making many new friends with whom we wish to stay connected online. WZO has started an initiative to get the youth of our community here in London and worldwide together, by starting an open WZO facebook page called "World Zoroastrian Organisation". It has 209 members to date. Please do join me in this initiative and spread the word across as you read this report.

Benafsha and I would like to thank the managing committee of WZO for sponsoring us. We would also like to thank Rumi and Hilda Sethna for sponsoring our airfares for the Congress. Kudos to the organising committee of the 5th WZYC. We thoroughly enjoyed our stay at UBC having had an opportunity to network and socially interact with youth from different countries. It was truly inspirational to listen to various speakers and participate in a variety of panel discussions.

This is just the beginning for WZO in its youth initiative it has taken. We hope that more youth will be encouraged to participate in the North American Congress next year and the 6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in New Zealand, 2015.

As Meher Amalsad, Chair – First World Zoroastrian Youth Congress puts it:

"We can strengthen the UNITY that resides in the word COMM-UNITY."



850 Zarathustis dancing to "Dil Ainvayi Ainvayi Loot Gaya"



Born and brought up in Mumbai, Monaz Dalal Patel relocated to UK in January 2009 after marriage. She has done her Masters in Commerce from Mumbai University and holds a Diploma in Human Resource Management from Wellingkar Institute of Management, Mumbai. She worked as an Independent Mortgage and Advisor in a financial services firm in the UK until December 2010. Currently she is pursuing her Certificate in Financial Advisory from The Institute of Financial Services, London. She plans to organise youth events and seminars in the near future for WZO.



“Such is the rule for the Wise One
that one shall increase it for Him
through good thinking”

Yasna 31.6

Insler translation



The World Zoroastrian Organisation