


publication of the world zoroastrian organisation

# HAMAZOR

1  
issue 2013

A portrait of Cyrus Mistry, a man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a white shirt and a dark tie. The background is a mix of blue and yellow with abstract curved lines. The text 'Cyrus Mistry' is in large yellow font, and 'new Chairman of the Tata Group' is in white font below it.

**Cyrus Mistry**  
new Chairman  
of the Tata Group



P48, 'Telling Tales'

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## COVER

44 year-old Mr Mistry became Chairman of the Tata Group on 29th December 2012 when Mr Ratan Tata stepped down on his 75th birthday. Photo courtesy Bombay House, Mumbai.

## PHOTOGRAPHS

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

## WZO WEBSITE

[www.w-z-o.org](http://www.w-z-o.org)

Dedicated to my loving wife Mehroo Bhote, my life long partner of 58 years

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## Volume LXVI - Issue 1 | 2013

### Printed by:

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

### Funded by:

Keki Bhote  
Chicago, USA

### Cover design by:

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## From the Editor

As we begin 2013, a new year with new beginnings, we wish Mr Cyrus Mistry good fortune in upholding the Tata name and taking his vast 'empire' to greater heights. A first for a non-Tata to head this world famous conglomerate, a respected name, which in itself speaks volumes for Mr Mistry to be selected. No doubt we will be reading about Mr Mistry in the next couple of months in the press, and Hamazor is hopeful to share likewise in our next issue. In the meantime we thought it only fitting to give a very warm welcome to Mr Mistry by having him on the first cover of 2013.



This year will be a busy one for the BPP preparing for the World Congress at the end of the year – an exciting one as Mumbai and its Zoroastrians have so much to offer what with history and culture. For some reason best known to the organisers, the BPP phraseology continues to refer to the community as Parsi / Irani Zoroastrians – a phrase one can probably say is 'politically incorrect'. Surely we are all Zoroastrians, why make a pointed division thereby causing a rift which may not be there. One can only hope it will be an open minded Congress, a forum to learn from each other and possibly more important to listen to each other. No doubt a stimulating year ahead leading to the finale and we wish the Organisers well.

Hamazor as you are aware has been sponsored by individuals since Issue 2 of 2009 as the World Zarathushtrian Trust Fund, London was no longer in a position to finance this publication. To date the sponsorship has been: 11 by Karachiites, one each from Mumbai and Delhi, one from the Isle of Man, and this present issue from USA. Distribution in India only, was through one donor from Delhi, the other from Isle of Man. We have a donor for the following issue from Canada, which brings us to an end of generous pledges.

Whilst it is customary for publications to be available through subscriptions as our own community ones are, namely Parsiana and FEZANA Journal, WZO have continued to offer the Hamazor free to its members even when it became a full-fledged publication in 2002. This is now proving impossible.

WZO can simply stop publishing hard copies of the Hamazor and make it available in full colour on its website, however, we are very mindful of a great many of you who would not be able to access it electronically. Hamazor is now at the crossroads regarding its future. What can you do to help solve this stalemate? Reduce our costs, by agreeing to receive the Hamazor electronically either by downloading from the website or receiving a file copy by email. To do this, just email me at [hamazor@w-z-o.org](mailto:hamazor@w-z-o.org) stating your full name, country of residence, and your email id. WZO can only hope donations will come, small or large, which will assist to offset the expense of printing and postage. To give you an idea, at the moment one issue costs us approximately US\$4,250, for worldwide distribution including postage.

Nowruz greetings to you all!

*Barry Cowgill*

18 January 2013

Dedicated to my loving wife Mehroo Bhote, my life long partner of 58 years

## *Keki Bhote: A shining example of silent philanthropy*

Past Vice-President of WZO (2003-2007) : Past President WZO US Region (1995-2010)

by Sammy Bhiwandiwalla



**M**y first encounter with Keki Bhote took place during the WZO International Board meeting held in London during September 2002.

A quiet affable gentleman, little did I realise then his immense intellectual capacity and his achievements in the field of science and technology. Neither was I aware of his contribution to the foundation of what is today called FEZANA, the Federation of Zoroastrian Organisations of North America.

A life member of WZO for many years, Keki, whenever called upon to do so, was never hesitant to contribute to worthy causes in a personal capacity. In 1993 Keki was elected to the WZO International Board. He soon realised, that as WZO was a registered charity in the UK, donors and well-wishers in the US were at a disadvantage because they lost out on the very useful tax breaks available towards their donations. Keki by his own initiative set about creating the 'World Zoroastrian Organisation - US Region', a godsend for WZO, as this opened the door for the transmission of charitable funds almost anywhere in the world. The Articles of Incorporation were filed with the Secretary of State of Illinois, USA in June 1997.

The entire cost of legal fees and incorporation was borne by Keki and thanks to him, a new chapter consolidating WZO's presence in the USA was able to commence.

Since then WZO US Region has received and donated over US\$1 million to Zoroastrian organizations worldwide and to needy Zoroastrians in three continents. One of its most worthy causes was collecting donations for world catastrophes, including Gujarat flood relief, the earthquake in Bam – Iran, the earthquake in North Pakistan, the tsunami in south-east Asia and the devastating floods in Pakistan.

Little is known that in 2003, WZO entered into collaboration with The Fali Chothia Foundation to add 50% to every scholarship which the Foundation decided to give from its own resources. The Foundation, administered by the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc., assists young Zoroastrian students with scholarships and interest free loans.

Though WZO in London was meant to contribute directly through its own resources, Keki took it upon himself to make these payments personally through the WZO US Region. These increasing payments continued year after year without a word from Keki a shining example of Keki's largesse.

WZO (US Region) has also taken part in Zoroastrian seminars and symposiums in North America, it has sponsored the seminars initiated by the Society for Scholarship on Zoroastrianism, and has funded several organizations devoted to student grants by recognized charitable trusts. Keki is a co-founder of the Society for Scholarship on Zoroastrianism.

An avid reader and contributor over the years to Hamazor with scholarly works on Zoroastrian religion, history and culture, WZO's recent quest for sponsorship due to escalating costs has not gone unheeded and Keki has so graciously stepped in to keep the publication going.

The above is but a brief vignette of an individual who has given a lifetime of service to the Zoroastrian Diaspora and so successfully brought invaluable benefits to WZO, with his wise counsel and immense generosity. We should all take a leaf out of his book.

*[For a detailed profile on Keki please do refer to Hamazor Issue 3/2011 pp 29-31]*



The World Zoroastrian Organisation

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**January 5, 2013**

#### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **Hormazdiar Damkevala Humanitarian Endowment Fund**

With the grace of Ahura Mazda, WZO US Region Ltd. has received a substantial donation in the last week of 2012. In keeping with the donor's wishes, we have established an endowment fund with a charter stating how to use the interest proceeds each year for humanitarian causes worldwide.

The endowment is named **Hormazdiar Damkevala Humanitarian Endowment Fund**.

We have established a brokerage account to receive the securities donated to us. Securities worth an initial value of \$67,962.15 were transferred by the donors to WZO US Region Ltd. account on December 27, 2012.

We remain grateful to the donors William and Yasmin Cumming of Santa Rosa, California. This fund will perpetuate the memory of Late Hormazdiar Damkevala as its proceeds will continue to assist the poor and needy Zoroastrians worldwide for many years to come.

Kayomars P. Mehta  
President

Keki Bhote  
Vice-President

Dedicated to my loving wife Mehroo Bhote, my life long partner of 58 years



The World Zoroastrian Organisation

## WZO celebrates with their Annual Gala Dinner

Di Cutterham, shares her impression of the Gala

This was to be my first experience of the WZO Gala Dinner, and my expectations were high. Jehangir [my partner and Darayus Motivala's cousin, Chairman of WZO] had told me about some of the previous events he had attended and enjoyed and though I was a relative stranger to any WZO event felt it would be an interesting and entertaining evening.

From the moment we arrived there was an air of familiarity. People mingling, family members and friends meeting and greeting each other, in some cases perhaps after quite sometime. We settled in by the bar for a drink and awaited the arrival of Jehangir's relatives. Eventually our clan gathered in all their finery and grouped together for photographs, to record the evening for posterity – jostling for position with Auntie Perrin [Darayus' mother] who was the star of the show.

We were ushered into the ballroom where the chandeliers sparkled, highlighting the silverware and glassware and setting the ambiance for the evening. We took our places at designated tables, to be entertained brilliantly by the Master of Ceremonies, Barry Williams.

As we helped ourselves to the wines, the food was being served. Thank you to the committee, especially the Social Secretary, for taking their role most seriously as apparently all the menu choices had been tested in advance. Well done – I thoroughly enjoyed the food, which was of a very high quality – especially considering the number of guests to be served at the same time. The service was professional and friendly and I think the venue was a great choice.

After the meal Barry returned to centre stage and proved himself to be a seasoned entertainer as well as compere. It was clear



Motiwala clan with 'Auntie Perrin'

that Barry was no stranger to hosting this event as he cruised through a well-rehearsed routine making everybody laugh along the way with a few WZO 'in jokes' thrown in for good measure.

The marvellous magic act by David Jones was such fun, initially low key, visiting each of the tables in turn during the meal, but after dinner we took great pleasure, as he involved two of our group up on centre stage. In between gales of laughter we took the opportunity of more photos and videos.

Following this entertainment, it was time for Barry to take charge of the main event of the evening – fund raising activities and the game of Kings and Queens. The auction was superb and an enjoyable way to raise funds. I was so surprised and delighted by the generosity of some of the charity's supporters as there were several 'off the cuff' offers of villas and holidays – donated in the true spirit of the event, which added large amounts to the total raised.

Sadly as the band tuned up, it was time for us to leave for a long drive home, leaving behind the dancers strutting their stuff. I have no hesitation in saying we would love to be there for the 2013 Gala Ball.

Date : Saturday 24 November 2012  
 Venue : Felbridge Hotel & Spa, East Grinstead, West Sussex, UK  
 Attendance : 100 persons  
 Collection : £4,430 for the WZO Education Fund



## Mark your Calendars

### WZO Events

16 March	Nowruz
	Celebration
09 June	Annual Seminar
14 or 21 July	BBQ
17 August	Shahenshahi
	Navroze
22 September	AGM
23 November	Gala Dinner- Dance

## Mind Walking: A new aerial drama by acclaimed playwright and EastEnders writer, Tanika Gupta.

Performed by BandBazi

What happens when an ageing mind can no longer hide its deepest secrets?

Bobby has seen remarkable times. Leaving India forty years ago as a young man he found love and a new life in the UK with Moira.

Disowned by his family, he eliminates all trace of his religion and culture from his life ... until he develops Alzheimer's.

As secrets and stories tumble out of Bobby's mouth, his family starts to question the truth about their heritage.

Moving, powerful, ethereal; **Mind Walking** celebrates an extraordinary story, the enduring love of a mature couple and a family's discovery of their cultural heritage.

*"Mind Walking is extraordinary, and I'm not just talking about the acting or the script."* The Stage, October 2011.

Mind Walking will be appearing in venues across the UK in spring 2013. Please visit [www.bandbazi.co.uk](http://www.bandbazi.co.uk) for more information.





## *Zoroastrianism's Influence on Buddhism*

Fifth in a series of articles, how Zoroastrianism influenced other religions.

# H

**Historic Ties:** Contacts between Zoroastrianism and Buddhism go back just a couple of centuries after Buddha's time (500 BC) when its missionaries fanned out across the lands of the Zoroastrian Parthian and Sassanian Empires. These ties were further stretched when the syncretistic religion of Manichaeism incorporated the best of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Christianity and spread its roots as far as China and Europe. The fabulous discoveries in the caves of Duanang reveal to the world that Zoroastrianism and Buddhism were the two state religions of China from 700 AD to 900 AD.

*by keki bhote*

Today, Buddhism pervades all of Southeast Asia, much of China and Japan. It still has a following in the land of its birth – India. Its metaphysical aspects have attracted intellectuals in America and Western Europe.

Buddhism has two major branches – Theravada (or Hinayana) and Mahayana. Theravada Buddhism adheres closely to the original simple, meaningful teachings of Buddha himself, with less pomp and circumstance. Mahayana Buddhism attempts to revise, modernize and liberalize Buddha's message. Both, however, have developed elaborate rituals and pompous imagery that would have distressed Buddha. Mahayana Buddhism itself divided into splinter groups – Zen, Shingo, Shinto and Soka Gakai in Japan, Cho Dai and Hoa Hao in Vietnam, and Lamaism in Tibet.

Buddha did not start a new religion that bears his name – similar to Jesus with respect to Christianity. He was a reformer who restored the theological purity of Hinduism that had become ritualized, ossified and corrupted by its Brahmin priests. As a result, Buddha stimulated the rejuvenation of Hinduism – one of the reasons why Buddhism did not spread in

India as it did, like wildfire, in the rest of the East and Southeast Asia.

**The Underpinnings of Buddhist Doctrine**  
Buddha's teachings can be capsulated in the four truths and eight-fold path.

### The Four Truths

1. Suffering is the bane of existence.
2. Suffering is caused by the desire for worldly pleasure and possessions.
3. By destroying this unseemly desire for pleasure and possessions, man is free from sorrow and suffering.
4. Buddhism's eight-fold path leads to the end of suffering by overcoming selfishness and ego.

### The Noble Eight-Fold Path

1. The right knowledge
2. The right aspirations
3. The right speech
4. The right action
5. The right effort
6. The right mindfulness
7. The right living
8. The right composure/meditation

This eight-fold path combines wisdom or understanding, ethical conduct and mental discipline.

**The Middle Way:** Yet Buddha taught that the two extremes of total self-indulgence and total denial were to be avoided. Only the Middle Way could lead to a happy life.

**On Knowledge:** To Buddha, knowledge went far beyond the limits of reason and intellect. It is a special religious knowledge born of self-control, humility generosity and mercy. (It is said that Buddha acquired this knowledge – or more properly, enlightenment – not only through study or holy writings or a revelation, but through his own effort.) “Therefore, some researchers call Buddhism an atheistic religion, with no divine message. Salvation is only through losing worldly desire.”<sup>1</sup>

**On Love:** Buddha preached a message of universal love, which expresses itself in helpfulness, charity and generosity. “The ideal person must harbor no ill-will, hatred does not cease by hatred. It ceases by love.”

**On Monasticism:** But Buddha believed that the moral ideal could only be attained in a monastery in seclusion and meditation, away from the pressures and temptations of this world.

**Karma** is the law of cause and effect which operates both in the physical and human dimensions of life. Man is inexorably bound by the results of his good and evil actions. “By understanding this human imprisonment by karma and by obedience to the right conditions, it is possible to transcend the human situation. This means not abolishing karma but liberation from its grip. A new process is begun by which ‘a good karma’ may be created and its good effects experienced in oneself and in others.”<sup>2</sup>

**Dharma** in Buddhism is a complex concept where physical and human phenomena are not separate entities but interacted together. “Examples of these Dharmas are earth, water, fire and air; colors and sounds; the senses and emotions, impulses of the free will, the power of reason, ignorance, sexuality, sleep, hunger – on and on. Buddhism identifies 170 such Dharmas

where seemingly the human being is an independent unit, but, Buddhism contends this is only an illusion. “The person is actually a flowing stream of Dharmas which continually changes and which, after death rearranges these components to form a new individual.”<sup>3</sup> Here, we see a split between Hindu and Buddhist reincarnations. The Hindu ‘Atman’ or soul remains the same through all cycles of birth and rebirth. Buddhism which does not recognize the Atman, there is a different amalgam of Dharmas after each cycle of birth and rebirth to form a new individual, yet affected by the karma of his previous life.

**Nirvana:** the goal of life in Buddhism – is sometimes described in negative terms. “It has no earth, water or air; it is not the region of infinite space, nor that of infinite consciousness; it is not the region of nothing at all; not this world or the other world. It is not fading away or beginning. It is without foundation, without continuation, without stopping. It is the end of suffering.”<sup>4</sup> This is enlightenment that can be reached with meditation as a first step.

### Zoroastrianism and Buddhism: Common Theologies

While Buddha claimed self-enlightenment without studies, other writings or divine revelation, it is difficult to conceive that Zarathushtra’s teachings, 1,300 years before Buddha, the foundation of three great Zoroastrian empires and Zoroastrianism’s enormous influence on Hinduism – the religion in which Buddha was brought up – would not have shaped Buddha’s thoughts. What were Zarathushtra’s influences on Buddhism?

- Zarathushtra’s ethics, especially his epigrammatic “good thoughts, good words and good deeds,” found a resonance with Buddha’s eight-fold path primarily, the right thoughts, the right speech and the right action.
- Zarathushtra’s advocacy of participation in life for worthy causes is captured in

Buddha's "Middle Way," between hedonism and asceticism.

- Zarathushtra's truth was embodied in the Law of Asha, and with God's guidance, following the ethical path of truth. Buddha's search for the truth is his eight-fold path.

- The two opposing poles of good and evil within man are reflected in the Buddhist karma, the law of cause and effect. But there is also a distinction between the two faiths. Zarathushtra stated that man is free to choose either good or evil, while Buddha said that "man was in bondage to this cycle of the results of good and evil actions.

- Both religions had no place for superstition, sacrifices or miracles.

### **Fundamental Doctrinal Differences between Zoroastrianism and Buddhism Monotheism vs. Atheism:**

Zarathushtra introduced a resplendent monotheism to the world, whereas Buddha rejected a divinity but developed the concept of an indefinable nirvana – an escape from suffering.

### **A Terminal Life vs. Reincarnation:**

Zarathushtra's concept of heaven and hell were concentrated in this life more than an indefinable heaven and hell after death. Later Zoroastrianism got carried away – possibly in competition with Christianity and Islam – painting vivid pictures of the luster of a future life in heaven or in "Dante's Inferno" of hell. Buddha did not visualize a separate heaven or hell but reincarnations – cycles of birth and re-birth, until the Dharmas – the numerous characteristics of the physical and human worlds which interact together – finally result in a total loss of suffering as a condition of nirvana.

**Man's Relation to God:** Zarathushtra's God has both a cosmic as well as a spiritual vector. In the latter vector, God is father, brother and friend to man. There is no such divine grace in Buddhism because there is no divinity to cherish and worship. Man's destiny is his karma – his good deeds vs.

bad deeds until the elimination of the bad ceases reincarnation and leads to nirvana.

**The Purpose of Life:** Zarathushtra elevated the purpose of life as man's role to help God in his noble design to move our world to perfection. Buddha's goal is to end all suffering caused by earthly desires.

**Life's Pursuits:** Zarathushtra depicts a life of joy for man, who is encouraged to be actively engaged in life's pleasures – a work ethic – as long as the result of that labor benefits all mankind economically, socially, politically and environmentally. Buddha stressed the individual over the collective welfare, a monastic life with meditation as its centerpiece and a withdrawal from life's pursuits.

### **The Caste System and Human Rights:**

Zarathushtra and Buddha were social iconoclasts, breaking up the caste system of the Aryans and the even more reprehensible caste system of the Hindus. But, in terms of human rights, Zarathushtra was far more visionary, not only in advancing democracy but in placing women on an equal footing in every walk of life. Buddha predicted a delayed equality for women. Hopefully, he said, 1,000 years after his time!

### **A Summation**

In the millennia-old tradition of nature worship and ancestor worship, dominated by priests, sacrifices and magic, Zarathushtra was the first to break their spell. And, 1,200 years later, the renowned sixth-century BC age witnessed a simultaneous revolt against that entrenched priesthood. Within fifty years of each other, Judaism in Palestine, Buddhism and Jainism in India, and Confucianism and Taoism in China as well as the great philosophers of Greece saw a wave of theological advances which are carried over to this day. Zoroastrians should be justly proud of Zarathushtra's legacy that has shaped these great world religions.



# Why did Nietzsche choose Zarathustra as a Mask?

## 1. Introduction

It is often assumed by Zoroastrians that Nietzsche's book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-5) is at least in part about the Persian prophet. By contrast, most philosophers suppose that Nietzsche has no interest whatsoever in the historical Zaravustra and the religion he gave birth to. Both are mistaken. In what follows I shall examine Nietzsche's complex reasons for naming the protagonist of his most famous work after the Persian prophet. I point to biographical and philosophical resources which suggest that while the German philosopher had a great admiration and respect for Zaravustra, he ultimately conceived of him as his arch nemesis, an opponent of similar power and stature whom he could never fully overcome. An appreciation of the main tenets of Zoroastrianism thus proves to be essential to understanding Nietzsche's most famous work.

by constantine sandis

In May 1882, Nietzsche told Lou Salome that he partly conceived of Zarathustra as a substitute for the son he would never have. A few days later he would tell the Overbecks of the possibility of 'creating a filial figure artistically'.<sup>1</sup> Ida Overbeck recounted that his professed original impulse was to revalue the Persian prophet Zaravustra 'whom he regarded as a representative of the values of good and evil in the oldest stories of humanity'. Ronald Hayman writes:

Zoroaster had raised an old Aryan folk-religion to a higher level with his doctrine of eternal punishment or eternal death according to the balance between a man's good and evil deeds on earth.<sup>2</sup>

In a letter to Peter Gast written the following year, Nietzsche once again calls himself the 'father of Zarathustra'. It is thus tempting to think that Nietzsche strongly identifies with Zarathustra. Yet in a letter written to his sister, Elisabeth Nietzsche, upon the completion of the final part of his book (April 1885), he warns against being identified with his character:

By no means believe that my son Zarathustra voices my opinions. He is one of my presentations and an interlude. – Please forgive me!

The psychologist Carl Jung suggests that Nietzsche's Zarathustra becomes manifest as a second personality, citing the following lines from Nietzsche's poem Sils-Maria (1882-4) as evidence<sup>3</sup>:

I sat there, waiting – not for anything  
Beyond good and evil, fancying...  
...Then suddenly, friend, one became two  
And Zarathustra passed by me

Not unlike John the Baptist, the character prophesises of one greater than he 'who is to come' (viz. the Übermensch or 'higher man'). In such a context it is important to note, however, that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, subtitled 'a book for all and none' is, among other things, a parody of religious texts. In the letter to his sister noted above Nietzsche playfully expresses a wish to send her 'a colourful private Persian edition', so that she may 'set it up as a fetish somewhere in some American

jungle'. More explicitly, in an earlier letter, written to Malwida von Meysenbeg shortly after he had completed the first part of his book, in April 1883, he writes:

I have challenged all religions and produced a new 'holy book!' And in all seriousness it is as serious as any even though it incorporates laughter into religion.

Whatever the intended connection between Nietzsche's Zarathustra and the original prophet, we must clearly take any notion of the former being Nietzsche's mouthpiece with a grain of salt. In light of all this it is perhaps best to view the fictionalised Zarathustra as a mask which Nietzsche wears with the dual aim of using it to both express himself and hide behind.

## 2. Love and Theft

Nietzsche is often thought of as a very original thinker who was not much interested in providing arguments for his novel claims. In truth he is pretty much the opposite. An incredibly keen reader of both classical and contemporary writings who frequently used his source material in a fashion which an uncharitable reader might describe as plagiaristic; he frequently assembles other peoples' words (both known and unknown) into a unique new structure, an aesthetic and cognitive achievement resulting in an array of powerful inferences to the best explanation of various discreet phenomena. In this respect, his body of work is not unlike that of Bob Dylan. Questioned by *Rolling Stone's* Mikal Gilmore about the accusation that he plagiarised Henry Timrod's Civil War poetry, Dylan launched into a counter-attack that is Nietzschean *par excellence*:

There are different rules for me. And as far as Henry Timrod is concerned, have you even heard of him? Who's been reading him lately? And who's pushed him to the forefront? Who's been making you read him? And ask his descendants what they think of the hoopla. And if you think it's so easy to quote him and it can help your work, do it yourself and see how far you can get. Wussies and pussies complain about that stuff.<sup>4</sup>

From Herodotus' *Histories*, for example, Nietzsche takes the line 'Persians educate their boys to ride (horses) well, shoot (the bow) straight, and speak the truth' (1.136.2) and transforms it into the following propositions:

Persians: shoot-well, ride well, do not borrow, and do not lie" & "How the Persians were educated: to shoot with a bow and to tell the truth (unpublished notebook fragments, 1874).

To speak the truth and to handle the bow and arrow well – that seemed both dear and difficult to the people who gave me my name – the name which is both dear and difficult to me (Thus spoke Zarathustra, of the thousand and one goals, 1885).

To shoot straight, for Nietzsche, *is* to tell the truth. Zarathustra accordingly represents the embodiment of truth. A praiseworthy quality indeed, were it not for the fact that Nietzsche, who appears to shoot straight from the hip, uses his book to question the likelihood, honour, and usefulness of having truth as one's motive or goal, mocking those who value it for either its own sake or an instrumental one.

In Book VI of *The Expedition of Cyrus*, Xenophon talks of 'Persian dance'. In an 1884 letter to Erwin Rohde, Nietzsche writes 'My style is a dance, a play of symmetries of various kinds and a mocking of these symmetries. This extends right into the choice of vowels'. A year later, he writes of "Zarathustra the dancer, Zarathustra the light one who waves with his wings" (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Book IV, Of the Higher Man). But is Nietzsche dancing together with the ancient prophet or are they magically dancing around each other?

Diogenes Laertius, in the prologue to his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, speaks of the 'date of the Magicians, beginning with Zoroaster the Persian'. Nietzsche, who defended the existence of both Homer and Zarathustra at a time when these were being seriously questioned, similarly speaks of 'Zarathustra the soothsayer, Zarathustra the soothlaughter', adding 'I myself put on this crown' (Book IV, Of the Higher Man).

Even more overt are Nietzsche's borrowings from his contemporaries. Nietzsche's favourite philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, variously describes 'Zoroaster' throughout his essays as "half-fabulous", "fine genius", "revered", "height of genius", and "wise", usually mentioning him alongside other great historical figures including Thales, Anaxagoras, Jesus, Moses, Zeno, Confucius, Pythagoras, Menu, Homer, B. Franklin, Copernicus, Cadmus, Vulcan, Watts, Socrates, Mohammad, and Siddhartha. According to Emerson, Zoroaster wrote that '*poets are standing transporters... inscribing things unapparent in the apparent fabrication of the world*' ('Poetry and Imagination'). In his essay 'History' Emerson speaks of how 'easily these old worships of Moses, of Zoroaster, of Menu, of Socrates, domesticate themselves in the mind. I cannot find any antiquity in them. They are mine as much as theirs', a sentiment that Nietzsche would later echo with the claim that *his* Zarathustra is 'a voice that speaks across millenia' (*Ecce Homo*, p. 5). Finally, and most importantly, Nietzsche writes 'that's it' in the margin of the following passage in his personal copy of Emerson's essays:

We require that a man should be so large and columnar in the landscape, that it should deserve to be recorded, that he arose, and girded up his loins, and departed to such a place. The most credible pictures are those of majestic men who prevailed at their entrance, and convinced the senses; as happened to the eastern magian who was sent to test the merits of Zertusht or Zoroaster. When the Yunani sage arrived at Balkh, the Persians tell us, Gushtasp appointed a day on which the Mobeds of every country should assemble, and a golden chair was placed for the Yunani sage. Then the beloved of Yezdam, the prophet Zertusht, advanced into the midst of the assembly. The Yunani sage, on seeing that chief, said, "This form and this gait cannot lie, and nothing but truth can proceed from them (essay on 'Character')."

Another inspiration to Nietzsche was Max Muller who oversaw the first English translation of the Zend-Avesta in 3 vols. 1880-1887 as part of his fifty volume series *The Sacred Books of the East*. In his

*Essays on Religion, Mythology, and Ethology*. Muller writes that 'the religion of Zoroaster would have ruled Greece, had Darius not been defeated' (Essays, vol. 1 p.145), a line copied by Nietzsche into notebook in September 1870.

He also refutes the theory that the name 'Zoroaster' meant 'gold star', interpreting it instead as 'courageous camel owner' (p.169), a point alluded to by Friedrich von Hellwald in his 1874 book, *The Story of Culture from its Natural Development to the Present*. Perhaps the greatest of all of Nietzsche's debt to Zoroastrian scholarship is owed to the following passage in von Hellwald's book:

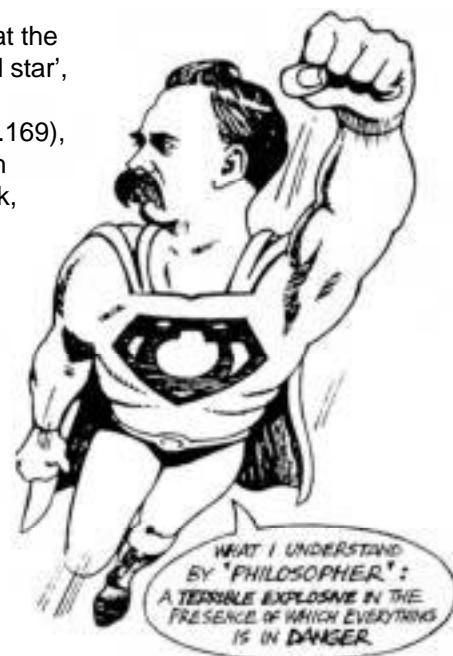
Zarathustra ... was born into the city of Urmia by the same-named lake. In his thirtieth year of life he left the homeland and moved East to the province Aria and occupied himself for ten years in the loneliness of the mountain range, busying himself with the drafting of the Avesta. After this time had passed he wandered away ... (p169).

Between 1881 and 1885 von Hellwald's introduction to the Persian prophet undergoes the following transformations at Nietzsche's hand:

Zarathustra, born at lake Urmi, left his home in his thirtieth year and went into the province of Arya and composed the Zend-Avesta in the ten years of his solitude (unpublished fragment, Sils-Maria, August 26 1881).

When Zarathustra was thirty years old, he left his home and lake Urmi and went into the mountains. There he enjoyed his spirit and his solitude, and for ten years did not tire of that. But at last his heart changed ... thus Zarathustra began to go under (The Joyful Science, Bk IV, 342, 1882).

When Zarathustra was thirty years old, he left his home and the lake of his home and went into the





mountains. There he enjoyed his spirit and his solitude, and for ten years did not tire of that for ten years. But at last his heart changed ... thus Zarathustra began to go under (Thus Spoke Zarathustra, 'Zarathustra's Prologue', 1885).<sup>5</sup>

Notice how Nietzsche holds on to the reference to Urmi in northwestern Iran until the very last version where it is replaced by 'lake of his home', thereby creating a calculated distance between the final incarnation of his protagonist and the historical Zaravustra.

Following Herodotus, von Hellwald would also write that 'It was important for the Iranians to speak the truth about everything' (p171). More importantly, as we shall see, he claimed that 'we find in the ancient Iranians for the first time the delusion of moral world order, an idea which only highly developed peoples reach, and which influence on the development of culture has been of incalculable value. (p170). It is to this contention that I now turn, as it reveals that, while doubtlessly interested in the historical Zaravustra and the religion he created<sup>6</sup>, he was not attempting to either write an imaginary history or to praise Zaravustra's teachings. Nietzsche's use of Zarsathustra is considerably more complex than that.

### 3. Arch Rivals

I have tried to show that there is much that we can learn about Nietzsche's aims by tracing his intellectual steps back to the original source materials from which they originated. It would be foolish, however, to do this at the cost of neglecting what Nietzsche himself has to say about his use of Zarathustra. In his backward-looking autobiographical final work he writes:

I have not been asked, as I should have been asked, what the name Zarathustra means in precisely my mouth, in the mouth of the first immoralist: for what constitutes the tremendous uniqueness of that Persian in history is precisely the opposite of this. Zarathustra was the first to see in the struggle between good and evil the actual wheel in the working of things: the translation of morality into the realm of

metaphysics, as force, cause, end-in-itself, is his work. But this question is itself at bottom its own answer. Zarathustra created this most fateful of errors, morality: consequently he must also be the first to recognize it. Not only has he had longer and greater experience here than any other thinker...what is more important is that Zarathustra is more truthful than any other thinker. His teaching, and his alone, upholds truthfulness as the supreme virtue...To tell the truth and to shoot well with arrows: that is Persian virtue. – Have I been understood? The self-overcoming of morality through truthfulness, the self-overcoming of the moralist into his opposite – into me- that is what the name Zarathustra means in my mouth (*Ecce Homo*, IV, 3, 1888).<sup>7</sup>

In July 1881, during one of his lakeside walks in Switzerland, Nietzsche experienced a vision concerning the nature of inspiration which he describes as follows in the Chapter on Zarathustra in *Ecce Homo*:

Zarathustra himself, as a type...he stole upon me...Has anyone at the end of the nineteenth century a clear idea of what poets of strong eras called inspiration? If not, I will describe it. If we had the slightest residue of superstition remaining in ourselves, we would scarcely be capable of rejecting outright the thought of being no more than a mere incarnation, a mere mouthpiece, a mere medium of overpowering forces. The concept of revelation in the sense that suddenly, with indescribable certainty and subtlety, something becomes visible and audible, something that shakes us to the core and knocks us over...All of this is involuntary unto the extreme but as in a storm of a feeling of freedom, absoluteness, power, divinity... It really does seem to allude to a saying of Zarathustra's, as if the things themselves approached and offered themselves as metaphors ("here all things come caressingly to your discourse and flatter you: for they want to ride upon your back. Upon every image you here ride to every truth. Here, the words and word-chests of all existence spring open to you; all existence here wants to become words, all becoming here wants to learn speech from you"). This is my experience of inspiration; I have no doubt that we would have to go back thousands of years to

find anyone who could say to me 'it is mine too' (*Ecce Homo*, 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra' §§ 1-3).

Zarathustra is also highlighted as a creature of truth and value:

Dante is, compared with Zarathustra, merely a believer and not one who first creates truth, a world-ruling spirit, a destiny – that the prophets of the Veda are priests and not even worthy to unloose the latchet of the shoes of a Zarathustra ... Zarathustra has an eternal right to say: "I form circles and holy boundaries around myself; fewer and fewer climb with me upon higher and higher mountains – I build a mountain range out of holier and holier mountains". Reckon into ... There is no wisdom, no psychology, no art of speech before Zarathustra ... Zarathustra feels himself to be the highest species of all existing things ... the psychological problem in the type of Zarathustra is how he, who to an unheard-of degree says No, does No, to everything to which one has hitherto said yes, can none the less be the opposite of a spirit of denial; how he, a spirit bearing the heaviest of destinies, can none the less be the lightest and most opposite – Zarathustra is a dancer.

The historical Zarathustra valued truth, created a philosophy of moral opposites (Good and Evil), gave birth to monotheism, and established a linear theory of time (against the circular theory of Babylonians). By contrast Nietzsche's Zarathustra is a sceptic about the value of truth and a destroyer of morality who sings of eternal recurrence in his roundelay.

Despite these stark contrasts, the two figures share a range of similar properties or powers: such as the ability to annihilate and create in the light of a re-evaluation of past thought, the disposition to be inspired through visions manifested in poetry, dance, and song, and the courage to act in accordance with all of these. Moreover, the *Three Stages of History* that Zaravustra took to be embodied in the individual (as birth, death, and beyond) are mirrored in Zarathustra's *Three Metamorphoses of the Spirit* in which the weight-bearing spirit becomes a load-carrying camel which in

turn becomes a lion (a strong creator of its own values) and, finally, a child (whose forgetfulness makes possible a new beginning in its own creative world).

Nietzsche believed that one can only become a higher man by *creating* anew. But higher men are ultimately just bridges to the *Übermensch*.<sup>8</sup> In his own words:

Change of values – that is the change of creators. Whoever must be a creator always annihilates (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Bk 1)

Walter Kaufman, in his monumental 1950 volume *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* notes that while Nietzsche himself remarked that his Zarathustra proclaimed a view that was the opposite of the real Zaravustra, and that he chose Zarathustra as his protagonist because he was the first one to commit "the error" and consequently also had to be the first one to repudiate it [*Ecce Homo* IV, 3], it appears to have gone unnoticed 'how close Nietzsche himself had come to the real Zarathustra's view' (p199, fn. 9). Both forces were inspired by visions that led them to acts of intellectual creation and destruction that were years ahead of their time.

According to the Zoroastrian scholar Mary Boyce, Zoroastrianism 'probably had more influence on mankind directly or indirectly than any other faith'<sup>9</sup>. As Jung puts it, then,

'Nietzsche chose a most dignified and worthy model for his wise old man' (p9), yet he was one who Nietzsche also took to be 'the founder of the Christian dogma' that he so vehemently opposed (p8). In sum, Nietzsche saw



Zaravustra as his arch nemesis, an age-old rival with equivalent powers but a completed opposed ideology. *Nemesis* of course, was the Goddess of vengeful fate, who gave people what they were due. In Zarathustra Nietzsche attempts to create an opponent worthy of Zaravustra's greatness.

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## Notes

1 See R. Hayman, *Nietzsche: A Critical Life*, p. 245.

2 Ibid, p. 246. 'Zoroaster' is the Greek version of the Avestan name 'Zarathustra', and was also favoured by German anthropologists in the 19th century.

3 *Nietzsche's Zarathustra*: notes of the seminar given in 1934-9, part 1, pp.9-10.

4 'Bob Dylan: The Rolling Stone Interview' by Mikal Gilmore, *Rolling Stone* Issue 1166, Sep 27 2012, p. 81.

5 In his seminar, Jung (who was unaware of Nietzsche's particular debt to von Hellwald) notes that Zarathustra's recorded age here is the same as 'the legendary age of Christ when he began his teaching career' (p12).

6 Additional 19<sup>th</sup> century sources accessed by Nietzsche include Haug's *Essays on the Sacred Language, Writings and Religion of the Parsis* (1878).

7 The final sentences of this passage were quoted out of context on the cover of *Hamazor* (2009, Issue 1), and misattributed to a letter written to his sister in 1905 (four years after his death!).

8 Nietzsche's mock-religious language is arguably intended to here be reminiscent of the *Chinvat Bridge* of Zoroastrianism.

9 M. Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (1979), p 1.



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## Ohrmazd and others: gods of the Sasanians

by farrokh vajifdar

Using anthropomorphic forms, Zarathushtra's Gathas describe for us the Supreme Deity Mazda. We are prepared for the eyes, hands, mouth and tongue of Mazda with their respective functions to better flesh out our understanding of an otherwise wholly abstract concept. (Hand depictions were later to display more than a passing trait.) The Gathic Mazda remained throughout as an Entity in the abstract, yet intimately involved with the right-living devotee in his thoughts, speech, and actions: therein lay the Sage Zarathushtra's genius as religious and universal social reformer.

We had noted elsewhere the symbolic representation of "Ahuramazda" by the early Achaemenids. Where the great Darius had worshipped only Mazda, yet allowing for *aniyaha bagaha tyaiy hatiy* – "the other gods that are" – he was referring either to the Fire and Water divinities of Mithra and Anahita, or to the unnamed deities favoured by the subject peoples whose religious sensibilities he was careful not to neglect. The former explanation is likelier when noting Artaxerxes II's Susa triad of Ahuramazda, Mithra and Anahita.

Skirting around the feudal Parthian era and its flirtations with Greek deities – pertinently, Zeus-Mazda, Apollo-Mithra, Aphrodite-Anahita, we come to the uncompromising dualism of the Sasanian period (224–652 AD) where Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda) is limited and constantly hindered by his inveterate foe Ahriman: yet *Ahriman is nowhere to be found in the Gathas!* The nearest we get to *anra*, *aka-* and *achishta-*figurations are in the realms of the mind to expressly denote "hostile", "bad" and "worst" temperaments. Ahriman as evil opponent of Mazda is a miscreation from a casual epithet in Ys.45.2 (cp. Ys.44.12) and nought else. Contrasted as *mainyu* or "mode of thought", *aka mainyu* as a demeaning

hostile, evilly-thinking way is irreconcilably dissimilar to the positively furthering, prospering mode of *spenta mainyu*. Evil is clearly a *deprivation*; not a reality.

Exponents from the Mary Boyce school have arbitrarily delineated Zoroastrianism as a dualist religion – a ditheism – rigidly based on trenchant Pahlavi traditions descended from the *Vandidad* and even the non-Gathic Avestan liturgies. Abetting that mischief is an enduring fascination with priest-bloated ritual, however disconnected from the Founder's doctrines: specifically, fire-worship and its paraphernalia over which true Zoroastrianism has been ever derided by Abrahamic agitators. Their chosen doctrinal stance seems stubbornly fixated on Sasanian priest-concocted dualistic forms and the later Pazand prayers. It is bewildering!

Four Achaemenian monarchs' last resting places are within the cruciform tombs on the south cliff-face at Naqsh-e Rostam [NRm], covering demise dates from 486-404 BC. (A fifth should have been prepared for Xerxes II who ruled for only 45 days before being murdered in 424 BC by his half-brother Sogdianus). Nowhere is there depiction of Ahriman / *Anra mainyu*.

military victories extending from the times of its founding dynast Ardashir I (224-241) to Hormazd II (302-309). Of the thirty-eight known Sasanian reliefs, thirty are in Fars province, the heartland of the dynasty. The likenesses of victorious Sasanian hero-kings, whose identities became lost to distant generations, gave the site the name of the legendary Seistanic paladin Rustam. Their investitures which are central to these carefully located reliefs were intended to show themselves as legitimately descended from the Imperial Achaemenians of some 500 years before! Legitimacy and continuity of divine kingship were affirmed by the Pahlavi ascription *ke chihr az yazdan* – "from the race of the divine ones" – to embellish their titles (compare the Avestic *chithra*, Old Persian *chissa*, both qualified with "Aryan"! ). Their Sasanian Majesties, current and late incumbents to the ancient Iranian throne, were referred to as *im bagh* and *oy bagh*: "this (present) god" and "that (departed) god". Kinship with the supreme god Ohrmazd is always accentuated on the reliefs by similarities of dress, although the *earth-bound* god is never shown bearing arms. The Sasanian monarchs plainly and visibly presented themselves as *earthly* representatives of the victorious god Ohrmazd / Ahura Mazda.



Naqsh-e-Rustam Ka'ba Darius II tomb, Bahram II relief (below) (2)

Carved at various places beneath are eight large relief panels from the Sasanian era displaying investitures, equestrian feats and

Previously, "The Ring's the thing" (*Hamazor* 3-2012) had demonstrated that the *khshathra* or divine empowerment of the Aryan monarchs was conferred by an *aerial* Ahura Mazda, with the Ring of Sovereignty signifying the divine right to kingship bestowed upon the favoured earthly ruler who had meritoriously acquired the royal glory or *khwarenah* / *khwarrah* / *khoreh* / *farr* (-i *izadi*). The once favoured Yima of legend had perversely forfeited it.

In the Sasanian investiture scenes the transfer of the Ring is effected face to face with Ohrmazd and, later, even Anahita – where deities and kingly recipients are both depicted – either on horseback or on foot. The westernmost relief at Naqsh-e Rostam shows Ardashir I accepting the Ring from Ohrmazd – the exchange is right-handed. Both, facing each other and identically clad,

are of equal stature; both are on horseback.



Ardashir I. NRm. Investiture

They are distinguished by their headgear: Ardashir wears a crown surmounted by the spherical *korymbos*; Ohrmazd has a crenellated crown with wide, pleated streamers. The deity's left hand

grasps the *barsom* bundle; Ardashir's left is shown with a clenched, bent-finger salutation, soon to become familiar on later sculptures. It is a solemn dynastic investiture. A titillating thought: were the *korymbos* and *barsom* ancestors of Orb-and-Sceptre of the Holy Roman Emperors?

The symmetrical head-to-head horses tell a double victory story. Each equine is shown with raised fore-leg resting upon a prostrate figure: Ohrmazd's mount tramples the ugly form of his adversary Ahriman – his spiritual triumph over evil. Ardashir I's opponent – his father-in-law Ardavan V, the last Parthian, lies low between his charger's hooves.

At Naqsh-e Rajab [NRb], way across the Naqsh-e Rostam cliff-tombs of the Marvdasht plain and a little north of the Parsa (Persepolis) palaces, are reliefs depicting the investitures of Ardashir I and his son

Shahpuhr I (r.241-272). The former scene depicts a standing investiture for the sacral exchange. Behind the king stands the Crown Prince Shahpuhr with the right-handed bent finger gesture of respect, the left



Ardashir I. NRb Investiture

tucked well into his long sleeved tunic. A beardless attendant, left hand likewise concealed, stands by with poised fly-whisk. Ohrmazd, also tunic clad, right-handedly proffers the Ring whilst gripping the *barsom* in his left. Separated by a drape stand two court ladies with their backs to the investiture, one of whom is very probably Ardashir's queen Denagh showing the customary Sasanian gesture of respect for the husband.

Later placed between the central protagonists are two diminutive figures, one of whom is thought to be Ardashir's grandson Hormazd I and, some have suggested, a miniature Ohrmazd betokening the future king's Mazdayasnian adherence. It is likelier, however, with priestly intervention, to be the elder grandson Bahram (I) with his Sasanian namesake *yazad* Bahram / Varhran, the Avestic *Varathraghna* with upraised mace. Ohrmazd customarily holds a sacred *barsom* bundle.

As with all other ancient reliefs and sculptures, the Sasanian series is much weathered. Such is the case with the Firuzabad standing investiture of Ardashir. This city with its striking circular ground plan was founded by Ardashir whose palace ruins bear mute witness to the type of architecture initiated by the preceding Parthian dynasty. Much as the Sasanians detested their lax predecessors for their feudal system of government, they equally realized the vast Parthian contributions to Iranian culture and their military successes against the Roman superpower to the west.

Whereas the early Achaemenians appear to have been Mazda-worshipping monotheists, under Artaxerxes II (r.404-358 BC), surnamed "Mnemon" by the Greeks because of his supposedly stupendous memory, the reintroduction of the anciently worshipped deities Mithra and Anahata (Anahita) is noticed. During his rule the resurgence of priestly power, with its calendar reform, becomes evident from his Susa palace inscriptions. Zarathushtra's name is entirely absent, just as it was from

all Achaemenid inscriptions and would be from Sasanian Pahlavi rock-engravings.

Between Hamadan and Kirmanshah to the west is seen the magnificent Sasanian *paradeisos* at Taq-i Bustan [TiB] or “Arch of the flower-garden” with its lushly carved reliefs on the facades and interior walls of two adjacent grottoes.



Taq-i-Bustan grottoes plus panel. 1 (2)

A little to their right is a rectangular panel (11'H x 15'W) showing three standing figures: the left is clearly the rayed Mithra with feet planted on an opened lotus; the central is a king receiving the Ring of Sovereignty proffered by Ohrmazd standing at the right. Here it is Mithra who holds the *barsom* with both hands; Ohrmazd's left rests on his waist-band. The upper part of a defeated captive lies under Ohrmazd's feet, the lower body is trampled by the king: it is the Roman emperor Julian the Apostate (r.361-363) defeated by Shahpuhr II (r.309-379) at Samarra.

Why is Mithra also depicted on the Taq-i Bustan investiture relief when it is plainly

Ohrmazd who confers the Ring upon the sovereign? Why two deities? Which is the sovereign, if not Shahpuhr II who vanquished the Roman? Why is the Mithra figure strangely familiar?

Mithra was long venerated as the enforcer of the solemnly given word – namely, the compact – as also the primal invigilator of sacred friendship. In an explanation of Mithra's role on the Taq-i Bustan relief, Professor David Bivar suggested that the central figure was in fact the long-lived Shahpuhr II's younger brother, the now elderly Ardashir who ruled as regent for Shahpuhr III (r.383-389) having assumed the kingship from 379-383. Ardashir II was therefore placed in a position of trust – a compact – ratified by the vigilant presence of the solar deity Mithra when receiving the *khshathra* from Ohrmazd. He probably never actually wore that crown. Sasanian monarchs are mostly identified by their crowns – each having a form and motif different to his predecessors. The central figure's token *regency* crown belonged properly to Shahpuhr III upon full accession to his father's throne. Bivar's theory remains as attractive as it is plausible.

Few are aware that it is this Mithra figure that serves as archetype for a thousand-and-one fanciful representations of the Sage Zarathushtra which grace homes and temples. Such likenesses fix worshippers' thoughts on the spiritual aspects of deity and divine, augmenting the devout prayers of popular religious expression, whether addressed to Ohrmazd, Mithra, Anahita or even some other favoured deity.



Lately arrived at the court of the founding dynast Ardashir was a young *herbadh*, Kirdir. He was to rise in clerical stature under Shahpuhr I, “the Great” (r.241-272), victorious over the Roman emperors Gordian III, Valerian and Philip “the Arab”. Along came the strangely-garbed Mani with his curious religious blends and pessimistic ideology. Both religious leaders accompanied Shahpuhr on his campaigns, being permitted to broadcast their



respective ideas. Kirdir had all along vigorously asserted his particular form of Mazdayasna; the proselytizing Mani became his anathema. The latter was allowed throughout the Empire and chose the east and north-east regions. Shahpuhr I's son and legitimate successor Hormazd-Ardashir who ruled as Hormazd I for barely one year in 272 renewed Mani's licence to preach; Kirdir was outraged.

Shahpuhr's youngest son Narseh was then governor of the Iranian East. With the connivance of the Sasanian nobility at court, the prelate Kirdir manipulated the royal succession in favour of Bahram I – Shahpuhr's first-born from a concubine. Bahram (r.273-276) returned the favour by elevating the prelate to "Soul-saviour" of the king. Kirdir, having steadily attained to the highest priestly power, once more intervened in the succession by enthroning the son as Bahram II who would rule from 276-293; he had contrived to keep the uncle, Narseh, at bay. It was under the Bahrams that Kirdir encompassed the death of the preacher Mani in 276, removing his hated rival from the religio-political scene.

When, however, on the death of Bahram II, Kirdir yet again attempted to tamper with the rightful succession to the throne by crowning the young son as Bahram III, the latter's great-uncle Narseh, kept waiting unduly in the wings, asserted his right to the crown as legitimate son and rightful successor of the great Shahpuhr I. Bahram III's rule lasted four months.

Heavy in years by now, Narseh reinforced his legitimacy by gaining his crown through

investiture by the goddess Anahita, recalling that his grandfather, the founding dynast Ardashir, had been superintendent at the great Fire-temple of Anahita the Lady in the Sasanian religious capital at Stakhra / Istakhr. Narseh's standing investiture scene is graven at the eastern end of the Naqsh-e Rostam tomb complex. The goddess, on the right, hands the beribboned Ring to the aged king who accepts it with his right hand, whilst grasping his sword hilt with the left. Anahita's left hand is hidden deep within the long sleeve of her mantel-cloak. Narseh's grandson – the mighty Shahpuhr II – figures in miniature between king and deity.

The legitimacy of the Sasanian kingship line is thereby shown to be fully restored; the Ring of Sovereignty has turned full circle, and the divine triad of Ohrmazd, Mithra, and Anahita have come into their own.



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# Diaspora in Ancient China

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Rong Xinjiang, the formidable Chinese scholar wrote: "The Arab conquest of Persia resulted in large numbers of Zoroastrian followers, numbering in millions, moving eastwards to China, where they were warmly received by the Tang government. As a result, Zoroastrian temples were established in the capital cities of the *Tang-Chang'an* and *Luoyang* as well as in *Qizhou* and *Xizhou*. Zoroastrian Temples were called "*ci*" which is translated in English as "shrines".<sup>1</sup> "No effort was made to translate the scriptures into Chinese." Chen Yuan another Chinese scholar concluded that "Zoroastrianism during its spread in the Tang dynasty initially included few Chinese and its fate during the persecution in the Huichang period (841-846 AD) can be traced to increasing proselytizing activities".<sup>2</sup>

by *pallan ichaporia*

In the caves of Dunhuang, there is a wealth of recorded history of Zoroastrianism in China and it was briefly discussed in 1985 by Liu Minghu.<sup>3</sup>

My research has established that in the Tang dynasty Zoroastrianism was not only popular but had a very large following in China where it was called *Xianjiao*, *Huoxian-jiao*, or *Baihuo-jiao*. This was discussed by many scholars such as, Jiang Boquin, Lin Wushu and Shi Anchang. I recommend Lin Wushu's article "A brief description of the Zoroastrian view of marriage" published in **Persian Zoroastrians and Ancient China**, Taipei, 1995, pp 71-84.

The question of Zoroastrianism in the western region of ancient China was also examined by another Chinese scholar Gong Fanzhen.<sup>4</sup> Lin Micun fully documented the spread of Zoroastrianism in the light of evidences derived from archeological discoveries.<sup>5</sup> A major break in the studies of Zoroastrianism in China appeared, when an article by Jiang Boquin in 1993, established that Zoroastrian rituals (*saishnin* in ancient Chinese) were performed in the Dunhuang region and Zoroastrianism exerted

considerable influence on traditional Chinese ritual offerings and Chinese culture.<sup>6</sup>

## Short History of An Lushan

An Lushan, a Zoroastrian army general and Shi Shiiming, another Zoroastrian military officer were the leaders of rebellion against the Tang dynasty. The Zoroastrian ancestry of An Lushan was established by Lin Wushu.<sup>7</sup> This was confirmed by Rong Xinjiang in a paper delivered at a conference in Taiwan and published later in 1997 ("**The Ethnicity of An Lushan and Religious Belief**".) This irrevocably gave the Zoroastrian beliefs of An Lushan and Shi Shiiming.

An Lushan besides being the formidable Supreme Commanding General in the Tang Dynasty, was also a Zoroastrian priest who personally led his Zoroastrian followers both Persians and Sogdians in religious rituals. He belonged to AN clan. It is to be noted that many Zoroastrian priests were in the state bureaucracy. The newly discovered connection between An Lushan and Zoroastrianism goes a long way in explaining why there were so many Zoroastrians numbering into millions in China.<sup>8</sup>

An Lushan and Shi Simming with other Sogdian-Zoroastrian leaders staged a rebellion in 763 AD against the Tang dynasty. The rebellion did not succeed but ended the prosperity of the Tang dynasty and ushered in the decline of Zoroastrianism. The failed rebellion resulted in the massacre of thousands of the members of the AN clan and Zoroastrians with the name of AN were put to death. 3000 Zoroastrian priests were exiled so they could be controlled and not meddle with Chinese customs. The members of the clan were advised to change their last name of An. Many took the name of Li or Lee.<sup>9</sup> This rebellion resulted in the change in the Tang dynasty policy from openness to persecution of all foreign religions including Zoroastrianism.

### Archeological discoveries and research

The archaeological discoveries of Zoroastrianism in ancient China were conducted by Chinese scholars-archeologists within the context of Zoroastrian history as follows :-

**A History of Zoroastrians** (in Chinese) by Gong Fangzhen and Yan Keja.

The first comprehensive history which provided fresh insight on the spread and influence of Zoroastrianism in China, published by Shanghai Social Science Publishing House, 1998. This has given us the archeological evidences of the spread of Zoroastrianism.

1.The decorations on tomb epitaphs of Ke Jing, a Zoroastrian of Northern Wei period has the names of the Zoroastrian deities identified by scholar Shi Anchang.

2.Unearthed at Anyang in 1920 are the Zoroastrian elements on Qi mortuary, carved on a Sogdian-Zoroastrian ossuary now in the Palace Museum, Peking.

3.Two recently discovered masterpieces of stone carvings. One in 1999 from excavated tomb of Zoroastrian Yu Hong in Taiyun, Shanxi province dated to Sui dynasty. The second major discovery are the stone carvings on the screen surrounding a

mortuary divan found during the excavation in May-July 2000 in the tomb of another Zoroastrian aristocrat *An Qi* in *Xi'an*, in Shaanxi province.

4.The full excavation of Zoroastrian temple in *Jiexiu* county town, was examined by me. The inscriptions record its first construction as *Xuanshen-lou* meaning Zoroastrian Temple. The inscriptions record its construction during the Northern Song dynasty and it was repaired in 1674 during the *Kangxi* period.

5.The partly excavated Zoroastrian Temple at Dunhuang, (see **Dunhuang Research**, Dunhuang Academy, Dunhuang, Gansu, 1999). The excavation will be completed in 2012. This was also examined on my recent field study.

6.In 1955 archeologists unearthed The Tomb Epitaph of Lady *Ma*, the wife of *Su Liang* near the western gate of *Xi'an*. The epitaph was inscribed in two languages – Chinese and Pahlavi. It is the most important bilingual text evidence of the presence of Zoroastrians in ancient China. The Japanese scholar Ito Yoshinori published a study “A linguistic study of the Pahlavi in the bilingual in the Chinese-Pahlavi epitaph unearthed in Xi'an, 1964”, and he concluded that the family travelled beyond Amu Darya (Oxus River) towards east in the wake of the Arab invasion and arrived in China during early Tang dynasty. This inscription was further studied by W Sunderman and T Thilo in 1966, and J Harmata in 1971. Helmut Humbach and Wang Shipping refined the interpretation of the epitaph, see “*Die Pahlavi-Chinesische bilingue von Xi'an*”, *Acta Iranica*, 28, 1988.

### Religious Festivals and the Calendar

Dunhuang manuscript P. 4640, published in **Bibliothèque Nationale**, shows a Zoroastrian calendar covering the three year period from 899 to 901 AD, the *siaxian* days (Zoroastrian festival days) were celebrated annually in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century in Dunhuang. It was called the **Festival of Seven Blessings of Zoroastrianism**. Mary Boyce pointed out that Pahlavi term “Gahanbar” indicates the six great holy days of this festival.

In the Northern Zhou and Northern Qi dynasties the Zoroastrian New Year was celebrated in the 6<sup>th</sup> month of the Chinese lunar calendar and this practice seems to have continued uninterrupted to the present. Mary Boyce pointed out that the calendar of the *KADMISS*, celebrated *No Roz* on 27<sup>th</sup> July from 1980 to 1983 and then celebrated this festival on 26<sup>th</sup> July from 1984 to 1987 exactly as was done by the Zoroastrians in ancient China.

### Funerary Rituals

Exposure of dead: In an article “Medieval Zoroastrian burial evidence” published in **The Persian Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrian Customs in Ancient China**, Lin Wushu described “how the Persian Zoroastrians mostly placed the corpses of the dead on mountain top and after a month, the preparation for burials begins”.

Let me cite a passage from Wei Jie’s “Records of the Western People” in **Tong dian**, which states: “Beyond the walls of the capital there were more than two hundred households who live apart and they are responsible for funerary matters. A courtyard is constructed and in it, they raise dogs. Whenever a Zoroastrian dies, these people go to collect the corps and it is placed in the courtyard for the dogs to devour and, when the flesh is eaten from the bones, they gather the bones and place in coffin”.

A large number of Zoroastrian ossuaries have been discovered in China. Gernet, the French scholar studied a sequence of decorative illustrations on Zoroastrian ossuaries which are known *Amesha Spenta*, the “bounteous immortals.” The female deity holding plant *haoma*, and a mortar, is *Haurwata*, symbolizing Integrity, the other female deity is *Ameretata* symbolizing Immortality. In some ossuaries there were sculptured figures holding a shield and arrows identified as *Verethragna*, a god of war and victory.

Furthermore in 1997 Kaeyama, the Japanese historian discussed in an article, the Zoroastrian ossuaries unearthed at various sites in Xinjiang, which

demonstrated that Zoroastrian sky burials flourished in Xinjiang from 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries contemporary with Northern Qi and Tang dynasties.

The aristocratic Zoroastrians migrating to China dispensed the use of ossuaries and opted for burial. The Zoroastrian mortuary bed from Ayayang is the firm evidence of change to burial custom.

The “Ancient letters” discovered by Aural Stein at the watchtower site in Dunhuang is the great research on the Sogdian-Zoroastrians correspondence. The findings of Henning, Harmatta and Grenet/Sims-Williams agree that the fifth letter seems to have been issued from Guzang-Langzhouand, and Sogdian-Zoroastrians’ scope of activities extended east. The major activities of their funerary rituals were: “Sky burials”. The corpse was placed on ‘the Tower of Silent Extinction’ and after wild animals devoured all the flesh from the bones, the bones were placed in an ossuary.

### Fire Temples

There were several Fire Temples established in China and the majority were in large cities. In earlier period of Zoroastrianism, there was no fixed place of Zoroastrian worship and later on Zoroastrians built permanent shrines. The tradition of Zoroastrian worship is known in Chinese as *Saixian*.

The excavated Zoroastrian Temple at Shanxi which I visited this month\* will be discussed in full details little later. The Zoroastrian Temple at Dunhuang is in the early stage of excavation and will be completed by 2012.

The Gazeteer of Chang’an has kept the records of the Zoroastrian Temples in the south-western corner of the Buzeng-fang, district of Xi’an.

In the Zoroastrian Temples known in Chinese as *Huxian-ci* where *Hushen* (=Ahura Mazda) was worshipped there were no images of Ahura Mazda. He is worshipped as All-Mighty with great spiritual

powers who extends salvation to all suffering ones and He is the only omnipotent God. The worshippers gathered at the fire altars in the temples. The Tang temples of Zoroastrians were under management of the *sabao-fu* which was the hereditary position. This is evident by the letter from the Xuanwu Military Commissioner and Lingu Tao, Director of Dept of State Affairs in the reign of the Tang Dynasty. It is recorded that the Chief Priest *Shishisuang's* family for generations has served as the *Sabao-fu*, (=the chief priest).

### **Excavated Zoroastrian Temple in Jiexiu in Shanxi province.**

Lin Wushu, the Chinese scholar in his article "A study of Zoroastrian Temples" published in **Persian Zoroastrians and Ancient China**, 1995, pp139-150 was a member of our team which accompanied me to Jiexiu, in the Shanxi province. I met Ding Mingyi from the Institute of World Religions, the Chinese Academy of Social Science. He shared with me his research and his publication "**A discussion of god of the Zoroastrians in Gaochang and the Zoroastrian Temple in Dunhuang**". It was Din Mingyi who encouraged me to travel to Shanxi to examine the Zoroastrian Temple in Jiexiu county. Shi Yanling, the former curator told me that he and Din Mingyi had spent several days in 1970 working in the Zoroastrian Temple. These two men are well acquainted with the ancient building.

In 1954 Chen Mingda *et al* published an article in **Wenwu cankao zillao** detailing discoveries of ancient architecture in Shanxi province. It took two years in excavating the Zoroastrian temple located on Shunchengguan-dongje street in Jiexiu county town. It is called Xiannshen-lou "Zoroastrian Temple". According to stele, the inscription records, "the present structure was repaired in 1674 during the Kangxi period of the of the Qing dynasty. And the original Zoroastrian Temple was erected during the Northern Song dynasty by Wen Yanbo".

The unique architectural feature of the Zoroastrian Temple as I examined, is its raised entrance which juts prominently and spans the roadway and it connects with the Yuelo "music tower" where the prayers were sung.

The temple has four tiers of eaves and the lower layer is open to the surrounding area. Connecting the two central tiers of eaves is a colonnade. The top section of the roof consists of peaked structures called in Chinese as *xieshanding* that enclose winged buffaloes in wooden carvings. Below the eaves on the three sides is an enclosed veranda with jutting balconies. The main hall is where fire altars were kept and where Hutian (=Mazda) was worshipped.

Lin Wushu, the Chinese scholar in his article "A study of Zoroastrian Temples" published in **Persian Zoroastrians and Ancient China**, 1995, pp139-150, was a member of our team which accompanied me to Jiexiu. I also met Ding Mingyi from the Institute of World Religions, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. He shared with me his research and his publication "A discussion of God of Zoroastrianism in Gaochang and the Zoroastrian Temple in Dunhuang".

Beside Ding Mingyi an expert on the ancient building of the Zoroastrian Temple, I met Zhang Han and Chae Zejun, scholar-archeologists from Shanxi who gave me fruitful briefings for which I am grateful.

### **Famous Zoroastrians of Ancient China**

- Sasania aristocrat Aluohn (Vahram) 616-710 who arrived in 660.
- Prince Phirooze s/o, the last Sasanian Emperor Yazdegird III, went to the Chinese capital in 675 AD and welcomed by Emperor Gaozong. He died in 678 four years later. His statue was placed in the mausoleum of the third Tang emperor, where it can be seen to this day.
- Prince Narseh s/o of Prince Phirooze. He attempted to recover his Empire from the Arabs but failed.
- Another figure was Julao "Khusro", a descendant of Yazdegird III who in 729 allied with the Turks to recover the kingdom of his family without success.
- An Lushan, General of the Teng Army, who was also a religious leader, 'Sabau' a Zoroastrian priest.
- Mh-anMsh, daughter of the late Farroxzd and wife of the Su-liang, titular general.

- Nine Families: These famous families were from the AN Clan
- Zhai Pantuo, a Zoroastrian high priest performed a miracle in an audience with the emperor Gaochang, by plunging a sword through the abdomen and raised the sword up in a circular motion but remained alive and recovered in seven days. He was conferred by the emperor the title of Mobile Corps Commander, (Dunhuang Manuscript S. 367: from Gazeteer of Shazhou and Rouyuan) 610 AD – the Sui dynasty.

### The priestly positions

- Xianzheng – Zoroastrian Judge Moderator
- Fuzhu – subordinate (like raspi) entrusted with Zoroastrian religious matters
- Sabao fu – Chief ritual priest like Zatar (Zot)
- Xianzhu – Officer of the Zoroastrian Temple

According to Dunhuang manuscripts, ms. S.3067, the terms for Zoroastrian priests in Chinese are 'xianzhu' (high priest), 'fanzhu' or 'maizhu' (Erverd), The Sogdian term for Zoroastrian priest who presided over religious rituals was 'm gupt' (magupat), and Zoroastrian missionary priest was known in Chinese as '*chang fu-muhu*.'<sup>10</sup> "... in the performance of rituals, the god of heaven descended from the sky from where there were six sons," This was the understanding of the seven Amesha Spentas, (who are) Ahura Mazda and six others.

The major causes of the disappearance of the Zoroastrians in Ancient China, were intermarriages, proselytizing and assimilation.

### Intermarriages in the Tang Dynasty

Despite government regulations discouraging intermarriages between Chinese and foreign immigrants, many West Asians and Persian Zoroastrians settled in China, started marrying local women.

"Whenever a race migrates, the men always outnumber the women", says Wu, a Chinese scholar. "They are of course eager to marry local women when they arrive in an alien land."

### Intermarriages in the Song Dynasty

The southern Song government (1127-1279 AD) even made provisions for foreign Zoroastrian merchants to take official posts.

After his family had been living in China for three generations, a 'foreigner' could wed an imperial princess if at least one member of his household had an official title. This was to encourage assimilation.

### Proselytizing

1. An Lushan, the Zoroastrian general and Shi Siming, another Zoroastrian general toppled the Tang dynasty and then later on the Manichean Uighurs toppled and beheaded both. After the failed rebellion, the Tang dynasty massacred all Sogdian-Zoroastrians with the name of An and killed 5000 proselytizing priests.
2. *Sabao-s*, and particularly *sabao-fu-s*, the Zoroastrian priests were actively proselytizing the Chinese.
3. The proselytizing activities resulted in the Emperor Wuzong issuing a decree ordering more than 3,000 Zoroastrian priests to return to the laity and not meddle with Chinese customs. By this decree, all the Daqin Zoroastrian priests were sent to distant places (?exiled) where they could be controlled.<sup>11</sup>
4. The Tang dynasty stopped and banned proselytizing and persecuted severely in the Huichang period (841-846 AD). The Zoroastrians and particularly the Zoroastrian families with the name of AN were put to death. Persecution of Zoroastrians continued and they no longer allowed to join bureaucracy and discriminated. (cf Zhang Guangda, **Persian Fire Worship and Ancient China**, Taipei, 1885).

### Assimilation

Several intermarried Zoroastrians slowly stopped practicing Zoroastrianism. They became either Buddhists or Manicheans or Nestorians or Christians, or Confucians, the religion of their spouses. (op cit Li Washu).

### Conclusion

Several citations are given establishing the presence of a large number of Zoroastrians who built many fire temples and held high positions in the Tang dynasty. The citations from several Chinese scholars' research and organized studies noted their final downfall due to the treacherous acts of An Lushan, the Supreme Commanding General of the Tang army, ensuing the



massacre of thousands of Zoroastrians. Other contributing factors include their proselytizing activities resulting in their persecution from 875 AD onwards and to escape persecution they were encouraged to become Buddhists or Manicheans, and last but not the least is the intermarriages contributing to the slow disappearance of Zoroastrianism and ending in their final assimilation leaving no trace by 1670 AD.



\*Note to the reader: This article was submitted by the author in early August 2012.

#### Notes:

- 1 “Research on Zoroastrianism in China,” Peking University Journal, Dec 2000
- 2 ‘A Study of the introduction of Zoroastrianism to China’, Peking University Journal, Vol 1, 1923.
- 3 “Zoroastrianism As Seen in Dunhuang Manuscripts”, **A Collection of Articles on Dunhuang Studies**, Lanzhou, 1985
- 4 (“Studies in religions in the Western Region,” published in **Zhoughua Wenshi Luncong**, Peking, 1986).
- 5 **A General Discussion of Ancient Ethnic Religions**, Higher Education Publishing House, ed. Gao Yongjiu, 1997.
- 6 ‘The Hutian (mazdeyesnans) of Gaochang and the Zoroastrian temples of Dunhuang’, Zhongguo dianji yu wenhua, ed. Pingqui, 1993:1.
- 7 “The comprehensive history of AN clan of Wuwei, Shanghai, 1996”.
- 8 Chen Yuan, “A Study of the introduction of Zoroastrianism in China” **Chen Yuan xuchu lunwenji**, Zhonghua Shuju, 1980, pp 306-311.
- 9 Hu Sanxing’s annotation of **Zizhi tongjian** which reflected this anti-Zoroastrian psychology after the rebellion.
- 10 Dunhuang Manuscripts published by Nationalities Publishing House 1992, pp 68-69 and 173-174.
- 11 LI Wushu, “Tang Policy Towards Three Persian Religions, Manichaeism, Nestorianism and Zoroastrianism, 2000, pp103- apud).

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Ancient Zoroastrian temple in Jiexiu repaired in 1674



Caves of Dunhuang



Prince Phirooze at the Royal Museum



Zoroastrian piece in the Royal Museum  
[due to lack of space image placed horizontally]

# Zoroastrian Association of Houston Library Seminar

In celebration of 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FEZANA

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The Zoroastrian Association of Houston's (ZAH) Library Committee held its fall seminar on October 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012, in celebration of FEZANA's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This year the Library Committee invited two younger scholars of Zoroastrianism – Dr Touraj Daryaee and Dr Yuhan Vevaina.

On Saturday the 27<sup>th</sup>, each speaker made an approximately one-hour presentation, followed by questions and answers. On Sunday morning, an informal round-table discussion was held where the two answered questions put to them by the attendees. The Sunday session was especially memorable because several of our high school-aged youth participated and most of them asked pointed and poignant questions.

by sarosh manekshaw

## Touraj Daryaee: *Sasanian Empire and the Creation of a Persianate Identity*

Touraj Daryaee is a Professor in the History of Iran and the Persianate World, and the Associate Director of the Dr Samuel M Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture at the University of California, Irvine.

Touraj did his early schooling in Iran, the United States and Greece. He did his PhD in History at the University of California, Los Angeles in 1999. He first taught at California State University, Fullerton from 1999 as a Professor of History and then moved to the University of California, Irvine in 2007.

Dr Daryaee has specialized in the Sasanian Empire. He has published and presented several papers; is a member of numerous organizations; and has received fellowships and honours from various institutions. He presented a wonderfully illustrated talk on the Sasanian Empire. Unfortunately, because of a constraint on space, most of the pictures cannot be attached.

The Sasanian Empire existed from 214 to 651 AD. It spanned the vast areas of what are now Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Central Asia. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of



literature on this Empire. US Academia limits its history from the times of the Ancient Sumerians up to Alexander, and then the history of Iran is almost forgotten up to the time of the Islamic conquest. For example: Over the same period of time, there are approximately 43,000 books on Rome, while only 163 on the Sasanians. What little knowledge we have is from the coins and the textual remains on rock carvings.

It was during this period that the terms: *Iran* and *Iranshahr* were used in a political context. Also, the Sasanians joined church and state together. This is shown on the coins of Ardashir, the first Sasanian Emperor, where one side of the coin shows the fire altar, and the other the Emperor. The wording on the coin states: "Mazda-worshipping Majesty, Ardashir, King of Kings of Iran, who is from the lineage of Gods." (see Figure 1).

Shapur I's wars with Rome – his defeat of Gordian, Philip the Arab and Valerian – are depicted in several



Fig 1

rock carvings, including at the Ka'ba-ye Zardosht, which commemorate his victories.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, Christians moved into Iranshahr, because they felt safe there. Persecution of the Christians started in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Shapur II (307–379 AD) had the Avesta written down. During this period Zoroastrianism came under attack from Christianity and Manichaeism. Amongst the more famous of the Sasanian Emperors were Khusro I (Khusro Anoshiravani - The Just, 531–579 AD), and Khusro II (570–628 AD). Khusro II waged the last great war of antiquity, where Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Anatolia were taken and Constantinople placed under siege. The “True Cross” and the “Holy Grail” were taken by him to Iran. Yazdgerd III (632-651 AD) was the last Sasanian Emperor. He was coronated at Istakhr in the Anahid Fire-Temple.

Another very interesting Emperor was Bahram V (or Bahram Gur, 421-438 AD). The story of Bahram Gur was that he was a Sasanian king with a Jewish mother, and was raised by an Arab King. Several beautiful pieces of art and artefacts from his time remain. (see Figures 2 & 3 below).



Why are the Sasanians important? It was the Sasanians who codified “the Idea of Iran,” with *Eranshahr* – being the Realm of the Iranians, *Eran* – the Iranians, *Erih* –

Iranian traits, and *Ermenshni* – Iranian disposition.

This *Eranshahr* encompassed the territories of Pars, Pahlaw, Khzestan, Susa, Meshan, Asurestan, Nodshiragan, Adurbayagan, Spahan, Ray, Kirman, Sagestan, Gurgan, Marw, Harew Areia, Abarsahr (Khorasan), Tukrestan, Makuran, and the Kushan country up to Peshawar, which would be the present Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkmeinistan.

Anahita (Anahid) was the patron deity of the Sasanians. She was the deity from Fars in the Achaemeind period as well. In the Avestan she is venerated in the Aban Yasht. She is shown in the several rock carvings (see Figure 4 facing page)

The concept of Iranian Identity was documented in the *Khwaday-namag* “Book of Lords” in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD and in the *Shahnameh* “Book of Kings,” written in the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD where the early history of Iran was written down. Many of the later Islamic rulers of Iran tied back their lineage to the Sasanian Emperors or general.

In Sasanian times several religions co-

existed: Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Manicheans and Zoroastrians. The subjects were considered “citizens of the Empire,” and cosmopolitan, as long as they recognized the Emperor. They were regarded as Iranians – and not religion based. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, about 40 bishoprics of the Persian Christian Church existed. In other words, the concept of being Iranian was nationalistic rather than religious.

The Sasanian World View was defined in terms of *Arda* – truth, and *Payman* – moderation. They strongly believed in the middle way.



Fig 4

Islamic Iran inherited several virtues from the Sasanians: Enjoyment of the good things in life – good foods and wines; culture in the form of art and music; education in the form of history and literature; mental skills through chess and backgammon and physical skills in the games of polo and through the hunt. Many of these are depicted on the Sasanian rock carvings. In other words, the Sasanian concept of the perfect citizen was one who was both physically and mentally complete.

Dr Daryaei concluded his remarks by stressing the importance of continuing to gain more knowledge of the link between the Sasanians and the Islamic Iran. There is a dire need for deeper investigation and study into the history of those times.



**Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina: Knowledge from the Teachers of Old Zoroastrian Theology and Religious Practices in Late Antiquity**

Yuhan Vevaina received his MA in 2003 and PhD in

2007 from Harvard University. He served as Postdoctoral Fellow and Lecturer of Old Iranian at Harvard from 2007 to 2009. He is currently a Lecturer at Stanford University. Yuhan's expertise is in Middle Persian Languages and Literature, and he is working on the science of interpreting these texts. He is currently working on a number of articles on Zoroastrianism, and is the co-author, along with Michael Stausberg, of the forthcoming book: *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Zoroastrianism*.

Yuhan's talk centered around the importance of the Pahlavi texts – on how to read and understand them. The Pahlavi texts date mainly from the Sasanian era and most are in a question and answer format. In those times, since only the priests and kings were educated, they were the ones who composed the texts. Lay people and women were unable to do so because they did not know how to write.

In *The Book of Advice of Zarathushtra*, a Middle Persian text, the questions are set out in the following manner.

“Who am I, and to whom do I belong? Where did I come from, and to where will I go back? And of what lineage (paywand) and family (tohmag) am I? And what are my duties in the world of the living, and what is my reward in the World of Thought? And did I come from heaven, or have I always been on earth? Do I belong to Ohrmazd, or do I belong to Ahrimen, to the gods or to the demons, to the good or the bad? Am I a human or a demon? How many are the paths, and which is my Religion (den)? What is good for me, and what is bad? Who is my friend, and who is my enemy? Are the Origins one or two? From whom is goodness and badness? From whom is light and darkness? From whom is fragrance and stench? From whom is right and wrong? From whom is forgiveness and mercilessness? (From *The Book of Advice of Zarathushtra*).

It then follows up with answers to each of the questions. These questions and answers together form the fundamental ethical and theological issues of the religion that every 15-year old Zoroastrian should know.

Probably one of the most important of Pahlavi texts is the Bundahishn “The Story of



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Creation.” It talks of the existence of Ahura Mazda in “Endless Light” as omniscient and all good; and of Ahreman in “Endless Darkness” as backward in knowledge and with the desire to kill.

Zoroastrianism, unlike Christianity, does not have the concept of “original sin.” Since all that is created is done so by Ahura Mazda who is all good, hence, evil (originating from Ahreman) is entirely independent and distinct from Him. The Bundahishn presents Zoroastrianism to be a dualistic religion – with two separate and independent beings: One all good, and the other all evil. Further, the Bundahishn states that Ahura Mazda is not “all powerful.”

Yuhan went on to show that the origin of this dualism lies in the Gathas of Zarathushtra. Yasna 30, complements the Bundahishn, in that it mentions “the two spirits in the beginning” who differed in thought, word and action – one good and the other bad.

Yuhan emphasized that at its beginning, and well into the 12<sup>th</sup> Century AD, Zoroastrianism was always considered a dualistic religion. It was only after this time that it began to present itself as a monotheistic faith, in order to make it more acceptable to Christianity and Islam.

In India, in the 1830s, the Rev John Wilson associated Zoroastrianism with the “worship” two gods. This disparagement of the religion by Rev Wilson – in that he accused Parsis of worshipping an evil god as well – caused the Reform movement to accept the erroneous theory of Martin Haug, another Western scholar, who labelled Zoroastrianism as a monotheism, and even went so far as to state that Ahura Mazda was responsible for the creation of evil – a concept totally untenable to Zoroastrians. However, in their efforts to ingratiate themselves with the British, the Reform movement has now radically changed the very basis of the religion, from being a pure dualism to now transforming itself into a monotheism.

The various Pahlavi texts, Yuhan continued, give us further advice, guidance and understanding of ritual and theological issues. They lay out the rules for how individuals should conduct themselves, what parents should teach their children, and the responsibilities and need for piety such as by daily visiting fire temples.

A Pahlavi text describes in great detail the significance of the kusti. It essentially divides the two parts of the body: the upper part associated with the intellect, brain

and wisdom, from the lower “namely the place for expelling of unwanted things.” It is the very symbol of duality. As the text states: “The kusti makes a boundary in the bodies, which is why it is called “kusti.” For by it, it is shown that the body clearly has two sides (kust).”

The Bundahishn also talks about the resurrection at the end of time: The souls of all, whether good or bad, will be reunited with their bodies.

Then people will recognize other people: souls will recognize other souls, bodies other bodies, thinking: ‘This is my father, this is my brother, this is my wife, this is one of my close relatives.’ ... [18] The Fire and the divine Erman (Airyaman) will melt the metal in the hills and mountains, which will stand on the earth like a river. [19] Then all people pass through that molten metal and become pure. Whoever is good, to him it will seem like he walks through warm milk, but, if it is a bad person, then it will seem to him just like he walks through molten metal. [20] Then all people come together in great love for one another. Fathers, sons, brothers, all men who were friends, ask other men: ‘Where were you all those years, and what judgment did your soul receive? Were you good or bad?’ [21] First the soul will see the body and will ask it. When it answers, they will all shout loudly together and praise Ohrmazd and the Amahrspands.

### Commentary

It is this writer’s opinion that it is extremely important for us Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians to be educated in and aware of our ancient history. For, it is only through a study of our history that we develop a better understanding of the dilemmas, controversies, and many fallacious dogmas that we currently face. It is unfortunate that many talk so authoritatively on religious matters without even the slightest basic understanding of historical and theological facts. While we are certainly entitled to our opinions, our opinions should be based on facts, not on what we simply hear from others or that which justifies our world view. Hence, it is important to attend talks given by and to listen to academicians and scholars, and to go back and read the original Avestan and Pahlavi works in their translations.

The ZAH Library Committee is committed to educating our members, and these seminars, over the course of several years, have greatly increased the religious and historical awareness of the Houston community. For this we are most indebted to Aban Rustomji, our Library Committee Chairwoman, who has pushed us to select top scholars and whose untiring efforts have resulted in seminars of the highest quality. ■■■



# Banoo Batliboi – book sculptor

Hamazor interviews Banoo via Email

Banoo Batliboi, is married and a homemaker who lives in Mumbai. Her passion is to create art from paper. A short while ago she made jewelry, creating beads using old books which was highlighted in Vogue, India. Qualified with a BA in Psychology from St Xavier's College.

*How did you get interested in the field of book sculpture? What were you doing earlier before you discovered your love for book art?*

I am a self taught paper artist who lives and works in Bombay. For the past two years I have been working in the field of 'altered book art'. Before that I was a fitness consultant and instructor for group exercise studios.

*Explain what you do.*

I work with old, abandoned books which have served for many years in their conventional form as a vehicle for narrative ideas. Now, by shifting focus to the tactile and visual qualities of the book, I imagine an alternative interpretation. These old books are reconfigured through a precise series of folds into an intriguing sculpture that celebrates its visual and tactile qualities.

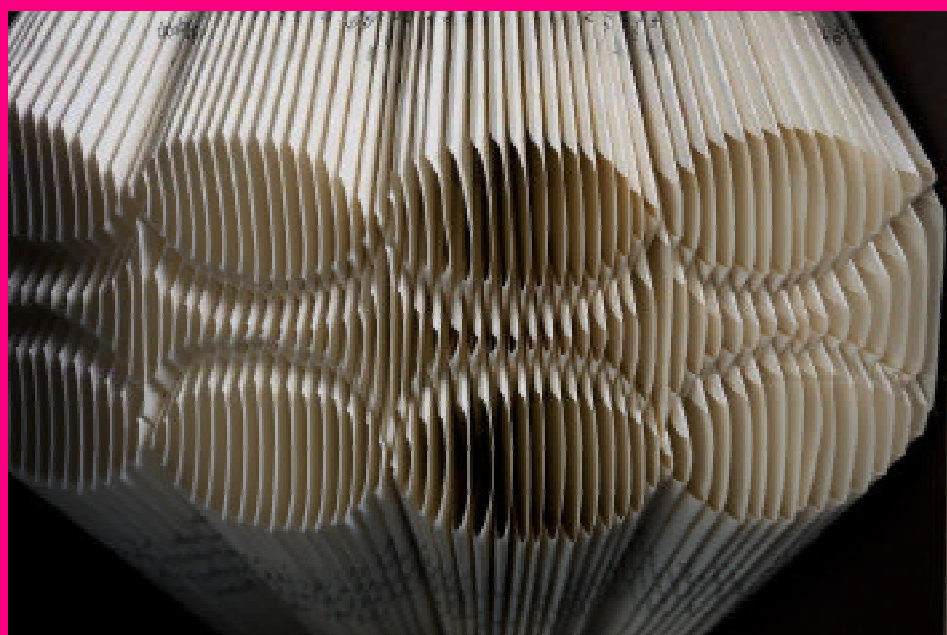
*Why do you do what you do?*

The things that interest me when I'm working are: visual structure, surprise and anything that involves figuring things out. I'm drawn to systems and patterns and I love puzzling over these things. I also like working with common objects and materials in unusual ways. Bringing out its innate properties and also something unexpected. I love creating things that invoke curiosity and joy.

*Why books?*

It's an ubiquitous object that is often discarded when the owner tires of it or the subject matter is outdated. In the recent few years the way people read has changed dramatically which has made books even more redundant. In some parts of the world the disposal of old discarded books is actually a problem and old tomes are sent to landfills. I like to "save" beautiful old books from oblivion and find a new way to honour them in our lives.

*Many of us have grown up with the belief that books are synonymous with knowledge and should be given great respect. Does that affect what you do?*



Folding taken from various angles



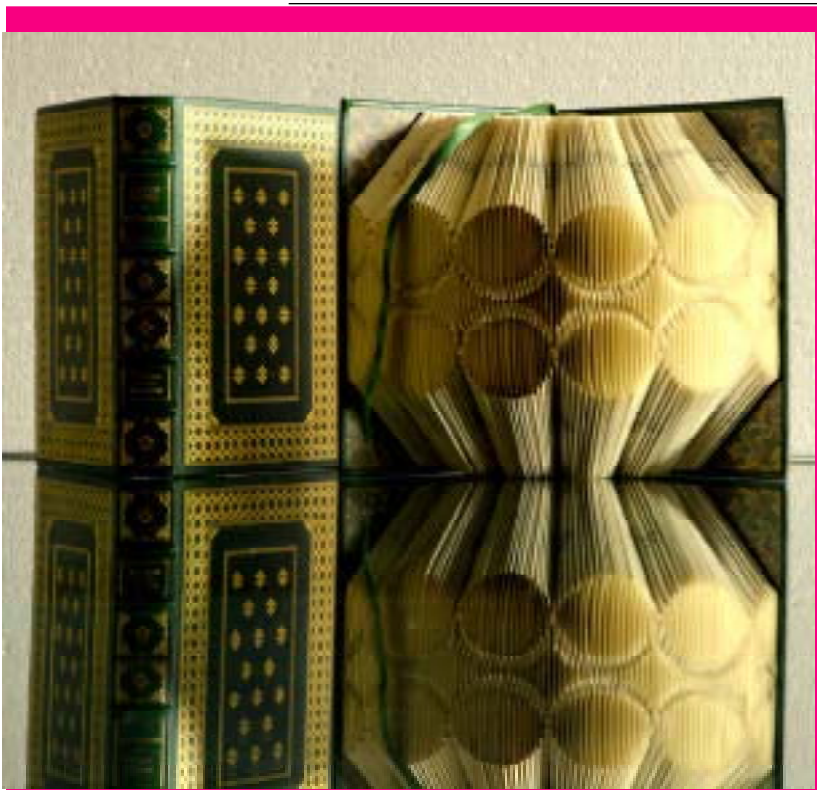








Dedicated to my loving wife Mehroo Bhote, my life long partner of 58 years



While books were our main conduit of knowledge a few decades ago, there has been an enormous change in the ways in which people obtain information in the modern, digital age. I see the book as a physical object – as a functional vessel or container. I know that the information it contains exists in several other repositories – other paper editions or digitally. So by manipulating a particular book itself, I believe I am not diminishing its actual content.

*How do you go about designing a structure of pages? What tools do you use?*

I use no tools at all. I work with just my hands on the book. Through a process of careful folding – and without any cutting or pasting – these books take on a changed form. The original text becomes a texture. This scrambling of the formal arrangement of the book creates a perceptual tug-of-war between what we know the object is and what it has become.

*What kind of books, in terms of hard or soft bound, do you prefer working? Where do you scout for your books?*

I work mostly with hardbound books as the covers provide a natural support to keep the sculpture upright. I have two different series of booksculptures: The basic series are made out of regular hardcover books which are found at the 'raddiwalla' or on the pavement second hand stalls. However for the Plush Series I use vintage volumes of the Franklin Library Series. These books were a serendipitous find. They had been lying forgotten, in a dark corner of a voluminous godown for 30 years. These handsome books are bound in real leather and have a distinctive cover design embossed in 22k gold. The pages are gold gilded to protect against dust and moisture and the paper used is acid neutral to last generations without discoloring. These books are high collectible items and truly exemplify the best of the bookbinder's craft.

*How many books have you sculpted till now?*

Oh, I've totally lost track ... between two and three hundred, maybe.

*Are there any other exhibitions lined up for you in the months to come?*

My Plush booksculptures will be shown by The Apparao Galleries at the Four Seasons Hotel in Mumbai in early 2013.

Banoo can be found on: [banoo.batliboi@gmail.com](mailto:banoo.batliboi@gmail.com)  
View her booksculptures on: [www.booksculptures.in](http://www.booksculptures.in)



# Corpse-bearers (*nasusalars*) in the Zoroastrian Communities of India and Iran: Origins and Transformation

## PART II

### *'Nasusalars' in India as seen by the European travellers*

The earliest documented records of the European travellers in India that mention the Parsis, most probably, date to Fryer Oderic, who visited the territory of the modern Gujarat in the first quarter of the XIV century. Several later (XV-XVI) travellers or authors describing the oral travel accounts of the other Europeans, such as van Linschoten, Samuel Purchas, Tomas Herbert, John Burells, Johan von Mandelslo, Edward Terry, John Fryer and Peter Mundy also mentioned the Parsis or Hebres as they were often referred to, paying particular attention to their original way of body disposal.

by anton zikov

In both Mandelslo's and Mundy's texts straight after the portrayal of the Parsi funeral rituals, that are described in quite a detail (Mundy even claims to have been inside a dakhma) we find the descriptions of the 'halalchors' or 'alchores' a certain class a local population that is responsible for conduction the funerals. In Mundy's account they are described as follows: "Hallalcores (halalkhor, scavenger, sweeper – later comment by R Carnac Temple) are a kind of base, objected and contemned people or caste most commonly put to empty houses of office, which go not with vault as ours, only in some place are certain high steps one by another, on which they set their feet and ease themselves. [The waste] is carried away by the Hallalcores, so that there is seldome any ill savor in their houses of office. They are also put to bring up, carry about and keep great mens dogs (as unclean beasts). They also keep swine and eat of their flesh. They are put to cut of condemned mens heads. They eat all manner of carrion, as hourses, cattle, dogs, cats that die of themselves, sayeing other men are cruel in taking away the lives of the creatures, when as they eat none but those whome God kills. Any man that touches any of them thinks himself polluted, so vilely are they accounted. Yet are they in all great mens houses for the uses aforesaid"<sup>1</sup>.

The very term "halalkhor" (also found in various forms, like "halalchor", "halalchor", "halalhor") must refer to Persian meaning the "eaters of halal food". However, most of the authors as the one we see explain this name as "eaters of all", which was regarded as an offensive description. Contrary to that, earlier, Edward Terry mentions that the Parsis "would not give offence, either to the Mahometants or Banians or to other Hindoos amongst whom they live they abstain from eating beef or swines flesh. It is the usual manner to eat alone, as for every one of them to drink in his own cup, and this is a means (as they think) to keep themselves more pure, for it they should eat with others, they are afraid that they might participate of some uncleanness by them."<sup>2</sup>

So that logically halalkhor class does not belong to the Parsi community itself, although, most probably, being involved in conducting funeral ceremonies (most likely though, as we see it in the same testimonies of, for instance, John Burnell, not exclusively for the Parsis but for other religious communities as well). This hypothesis finds its proof in the later writing of the XVII century. William Sympson in his notes leaves a description of the Parsi

funeral and directly refers to halalkhors as the ones who conduct the nasusalar services. "Their way of disposing their dead is to expose their carcasses to the fowls of the air, carrying them into an open field, near the place where they are to be placed for the ravenous birds to feed on. The corpse being laid on the ground one of the company goes to look out a dog and having found one invited him along with the piece of bread provided for that purpose till he draws him as near the corpse as he can; for the nearer the dog is brought to the body, the nearer the soul is to felicity... When this ceremony is over two of the Daroos [Sympon refers to two types of priests: "the High Priest of these Persies is called Destoor, the common priests, Darooes or Harboods"] standing at small distance, repeat a tedious form of prayer, which lasts about half an hour, and then the Halalkhors convey the corpse to the intended repository, all the company following by two and two with their hands joined"<sup>3</sup>.

To summarize the above said, nasusalars, being members of the halalkhors group, who conducted the dakhma burial rituals in XVII-XVIII centuries were members of this particular untouchable caste and thus did not belong to the Parsi community, ie. were Juddins. We believe that is the very reason why in the Rivayats we find continuous complaints of the Iranian mobeds about the unlawful use of the non-Zoroastrians or Juddins. However, in the earlier studies of Parsi funeral ritual undertaken in the late XIX-XX centuries, we do not find any sources that confirms that halalkhors continued their duty as corpse-bearers.

In the second half of the XIX century corpse-bearers still were represented by a specific group of population distinct from the other Parsis. This is evident from a 1860 collection of letters to the Bombay Times newspaper, republishing material from 1844-45. The Panchayat, having assembled in 1844 passed one of its Bundobusts, or "the rules and regulations for the better government of caste" [meaning Parsis - A.Z.] "concerning the rules for the Parsi women: "Nusa salars shall go round and proclaim that""Nusa salars will be posted at the outside of the Fort Gates and paid"men shall be placed at

different stations with instructions to seize the person of any woman found leaving her house, or going about before sun rise or after sun set, and such shall take her to the Nusa Khana ["a public place where the iron biers, and other funeral paraphernalia are deposited, and in the veranda of this building females found guilty of disgraceful offences were kept in the former days and sometimes with their heads shaved as a mark of infamy"]"... if any woman be found walking in the road (unaccompanied by proper servants and lighted lanthorn) before the sun rise, or after sun set, her person shall be seized by the "Nusasalar"<sup>4</sup>.

Obviously, this employment of nasusalars was chosen as the most severe measure, called upon to scare the women. However, according to Panchayat's order at that point of time nasusalars had already become a distinct group within the Parsi community, who, most probably, were nevertheless regarded as part of it. The Panchayat defines nasusalars as "a cryer – invariably the bearer of the Parsee dead bodies"<sup>5</sup>, ie someone who does it on a permanent basis, as a full-time profession. Thus, it seems likely that nasusalars in the middle of the XIX century, rather than belonging to an untouchable group that conducted the funeral-related services for other communities, as they did in the beginning of the XVIII century, were now themselves regarded as Parsis.

Conclusion: Parsi nasusalars or Parsis and nasusalars?

To sum up, what was said before, we come to the conclusion that a 'nasusalar' term, originally used in Avesta as a definition for a temporary service, that could have been, according to the Rivayats conducted, with minor exceptions, by anyone, with one necessary condition, that this person had to be a Zoroastrian. Contrary to this provision, a low-class group of non-Parsis, known as halalkhors was in charge of conducting funeral ceremonies for the Parsis, according to the accounts of the European travellers that describe Parsi funerals. Gradually, the position of nasusalars seems to have changed and they started being perceived as members of the Parsi community, as we

can see it from the Panchayat records. Thus, the question arises why we see this change in the understanding of the religious identity of the corpse-bearer group, which in the XVIII century was considered to be outside the Parsi community by both Parsis (as we see it is the Rivayats) and non-Parsis (as we see it in the European travellers' accounts).

The answer to the transition in the religious status of the halalkhors possibly lies in the other late Persian Rivayat dated 1778. "The Behdins of Hindustan having purchased mostly sons and daughters of Hindus (Indians) as slaves and female slaves possess them in their own work and home service, having taught Avesta to them, and having invested them with Kushti and Sudre according to the faith of Zaratusht, employ them to prepare Daruns for Gahambar and other holy festival to consecrate those things; and also all Mobeds and Behdins of India take food and drinks from their hands. But when they die, the said priests and laymen do not allow their corpses to be placed into the Tower of Silence. They say that these were born of non-Zoroastrian parents, and, therefore, it would not be well that the bones of Behdins (i.e. born Zoroastrians) should mingle with theirs. Since they allow the performance of all the works of religion by them in their life-time, but after their death prevent them from being consigned to the Tower of Silence, it is requested to know from you whether it is allowable or not to place their corpses into the tower of Silence? Kindly write this subject clearly".<sup>6</sup>

This quotation from the Rivayat demonstrates that there were instances of conversion to Zoroastrianism of certain categories of people who undertook certain duties for the Parsi community at least in the XVIII century. We assume that these could well have been the people of the outcaste groups earlier described as halalkhors. Their social status also might have changed with their acceptance in the Parsi community, but only to a certain extend.

Since the Parsis were suffering the disapproval of the Iranian mobeds for the

use of Juddins, ie. non-Zoroastrians as corpse-bearers, as we saw it in the earlier quoted Rivayat of Nariman Hoshang, they possibly decided to turn the descendants of this class of people, whom they were already employing, into Zoroastrians by "investing them with Kushti and Sudre".

One of the impediments for this theory of conversion of a certain outcaste group in order to employ them as Parsi servants and nasusalars is the tradition of non-conversion to Zoroastrianism. However, contrary to their opinion, some historic documents witness at least the interest of Parsis in converting local Indian populations to Zoroastrianism.

Another Rivayat of Kaus Mahyar (around 1602), which predates the text quoted above, describes the actual conversion of Indians, but was completed at least a century later than the Nariman Hoshang Rivayat that first mentions the practice of using non-Zoroastrians as corpse bearers. It discusses the appropriateness of conversions for people often regarded as unclean: "Question: Can a grave-digger, a corpse-burner and a darvand (one of a foreign faith) become Behdins (ie. converted to Mazdayasnian religion)? Answer: If they observe the rules of the religion steadfastly and (keep) connection with the religion, and if no harm comes on Behdins (thereby), it is proper and allowable".<sup>7</sup> Here we must say that burying dead bodies in graves or, especially, burning them were considered traditionally as most severe sins or crimes, and those committing them were not only regarded as unclean but suffered very strict punishment up to the death penalty. According to Videvdad "those wicked ones... [who] turned to Nasus [i.e. those who brought a corpse into the contact with water or fire – A.Z.]... shall pay for it in this world and in the next; they shall flay his body [body of the one who polluted fire with a dead matter – A.Z.] in the presence of the assembly, they shall tear him limb...and when his soul comes to the other world, he shall suffer from the devs".<sup>8</sup> In the books of Thousand Judgements, considered a Law code of the Sassanid Empire, these actions are also regarded as

punishable crimes:“...he who buries corpses and he who cremates corpses must be arrested (‘bound’)”.<sup>9</sup>

This permission of conversion for grave-diggers and corpse burners which goes contrary to the religious regulations may possibly be a result of the involvement of the non-Parsi untouchable nasusalar group of halalkhor in similar ceremonies for other religious communities in the Western India, which involved ground burials in case of Muslims and burning – in the Hindu case.

Thus, this research demonstrates that the term “nasusalar” understood in Avesta as rather a temporary service conducted by any appropriate member of the Zoroastrian community later altered its meaning and evolved in India, somewhere in XVIII century into a definition of certain group inside the Parsi community that was responsible for conducting the funeral rituals. The origins of this group, as the research endeavours to show, is rooted in the use in X-XVI centuries and later conversion to Zoroastrianism of a certain untouchable group, known as halalkhors.



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# *Exit: the Conscience Keeper of Pakistan - Ardeshir Cowasjee*

## *A mixed bag of tributes*

Compiled by Amina Jilani, who walked alongside her friend



It is difficult for me, even after the passage of some time since his death, to express my own thoughts about a man to whom I have been so close for so many years. So the best I can do is to quote from our local press on how the public at large has reacted to his loss. One day, I may get round to expressing my thoughts on our amazingly rewarding relationship, but until then I think that the following comments will say most of which I would wish to say. I am grateful for the support I have received from his family and friends. It has been a wonderful experience to have been associated with a man such as he, not only did I learn so much from him but I had enormous fun and enjoyment from the times I have spent with Ardeshir. I know he will rest in peace after a life so well spent.

November 25, the day following his death : From **Dawn**, the publication for which he wrote for so many years : "A man of myriad talents, Ardeshir Cowasjee who died in Karachi on Saturday at the age of 86, will be remembered as much for his uncompromising stance on matters of principle as well as for his acerbic wit ... . Much as he disliked the description, [he] can best be described as a committed crusader against corruption and a dedicated campaigner against all sorts of environmental abuse."

**The News** : "Ardeshir Cowasjee was a colourful and larger-than-life personality who always spoke his mind without fear of the consequences. His conversations were laced with profanities but those close to him knew that he was warm, funny and generous in his dealings."

And the best, **The Express Tribune** : "Few people, if any, can make the word 'Saala' acceptable in a serious conversation ... . Known for his outspoken weekly columns in Dawn, one of Pakistan's leading newspapers, he has



documented the nation's history for generations to come though the written word. Known for his Bohemian ways, a trait he was in fact proud of, Cowasjee was famous for always being ready for a debate on any topic with anyone. From colorful robes to fine-tailored suits, Cowasjee's style often gave him an air of aristocracy."

**The Express Tribune** again, November 27, the day of his funeral : "Dozens of people streamed in and out of Ardehir Cowasjee's residence on Sunday evening – the first of the two days of Sarosh prayers ... the lawns were filled to capacity with mourners ... the silence was only broken by the barking of Cowasjee's beloved dogs." **The two prayers were held in the garden at sunset, with the chanting of the priests accompanied by the chatter of birds as they prepared for their night's rest. Something of which Ardeshir would have much approved.**

And under " 'Cowasjee's battle for Karachi will go on,' Champion of the city's environment, Ardeshir Cowasjee was a regular on the court roster ... the pioneer of public interest litigation that now dominates headlines." **There was also an editorial that day, "A monumental man," as there was in Dawn, The News and Daily Times.** "The gloriously eccentric, outspoken and fearless columnist and philanthropist died on Saturday, depriving Pakistan of a combative voice and Karachi of a patron who relentlessly fought for its rights," wrote **The News**.

That same day in the **Tribune**, lawyer Faisal Naqvi ended his column with "a tribute to Ardeshir Cowasjee" : "Many years ago, Ardeshir wrote a column in which he accused judges of being corrupt. The Supreme Court of that era was roused to fury and promptly issued a contempt notice. However, when Ardeshir appeared, he refused to be cowed down and pleaded truth as a defence. The matter was then promptly adjourned.

A few years later, Ardeshir bumped into one of the judges involved at a human rights function. The judge, now forcibly retired by Musharraf, made the mistake of saying, "Cowasjee Sahib, aap humaray say bach gaye." [Mr Cowasjee you were saved from me]. Cowasjee's response was instant and legendary: "Saala, tum jaisa

@#&\$@ bohut dekha hai hum nay." [Saala, people like you @#&\$@, I have seen plenty].

Pakistan has always been short of people willing to speak truth to power. With Ardeshir gone, there is now one less. Saala, tum jaisa bohut kum dekha hai hum nay." [Saala, we have seen very few people like you.

And the funeral, as reported on November 28. **Dawn** quoted so many people with their comments about the man "who was all things to all men," as said one of his close friends. And "Finally, when it was time for his last rites and the great man was departing from his house for the very last time, his dear dogs, the Jack Russell Terriers, Billie, Captain and Lulu, quiet all this while and perhaps sensing it then started crying and barking from the balcony above and the trees, some of which he had saved, replanted in his lawn and nurtured provided cool shade. Mr Cowasjee would be greatly missed." **The normally noisy cockatoo – Ben – was no less. He too was silent till his friend left the gates for the final time.**

**The News**, in similar vein, "As close friends and his daughter silently gathered behind the van carrying Cowasjee, waiting for the way to be cleared for it, his faithful dogs, who often accompanied him wherever he went, started barking from the balcony till the van disappeared from sight."

**And the Tribune** : "Cowasjee had insisted that his funeral would be open to followers of all faiths, and his belief in a pluralistic Pakistan was evident in those mourning his death : if on one chair a woman prayed on a rosary and clutched a bouquet of flowers, on another a woman was clad in a burqa and on a third a man wore the traditional Zoroastrian prayer skull cap ... . From a window, one could spy his chair, now empty for ever."

**Dawn** that day carried a full column dedicated to him by Zubeida Mustafa, "The lion won't roar again." There followed many comments and letters to the editors, from young and old. One young writer, Arsla Jawaid, in the **Tribune** opened up "Pakistan's bravest columnist could also very well be the country's worst diplomat" ... and ended "Cowasjee's words continue to inspire me, and they will continue to inspire me, and hopefully others like me."

**Newsweek** carried an article on him in the December 3 edition – ‘Ardeshir Cowasjee : The Curmudgeon of Karachi - Remembering Pakistan’s most caustic columnist.’ **One quote:** “Never simply an opinionated bystander, Cowasjee also put his energies into preserving tree-lined dividers on Karachi’s roads, as well as taking on developers and venal government officials.” “It’s constant war, all the time for the last 50 years,” **he once said of his efforts to keep the trees around his family home safe from bulldozers.**

**National Public Radio (USA)** commented on his death on December 6. Steve Inskeep spoke. He related how once when he had visited him in 2008 he asked why Ardeshir was still in Pakistan. Well, that did not go down too well. “Who the hell are you to tell me where I should live. Do you want me to end up in an old people’s home in the US?” Inskeep went on to say how for 25 years Ardeshir had written on the basic things in a developing country that should be done properly. He endured after a lifetime of saying what he thought.

The finest column on Ardeshir came from his old friend and fellow columnist, Ayaz Amir, writing in **The News** on November 30, under the title, “An unusual man.” As Masood Hasan wrote in the same paper on December 2, “There have been wonderful editorials about him ... uplifting and have placed in the right perspective the kind of unique man Ardeshir was.” **Ayaz’s offering he termed** “an absolutely brilliant account about the life and times of Ardeshir.”

**Some excerpts :** “Ardeshir Cowasjee was a genuine seth (tycoon) ... But unlike most seths there was a streak of the artist in him. And he had a great sense of fun and was a wonderful raconteur. Some stories I must have heard dozens of times but they never palled in the retelling.

“His considerable private means enabled him to indulge his elegant tastes, even his foibles. In a country where the exercise of power can be arbitrary, seths in business or industry must perforce dance attendance on figures of authority. Not Ardeshir, whom the divine favour of the gods had put above such mean necessity.

“Bhutto’s nationalisation of the shipping industry ... may, in retrospect, have been a

blessing for Ardeshir, for by cutting the ties that bindeth it turned him into the liberated and irreverent soul we remember today. Who knows of other Karachi seths? Who doesn’t know of Ardeshir Cowasjee? ...

“Ardeshir wrote the way he spoke, with wit and a great sense of the ridiculous, no one puncturing pomposity the way he did. Some subjects drove him to anger, such as the vandalisation of Karachi, some to sorrow such as the destruction of what in his mind was Jinnah’s Pakistan. ...

“In the Zia years when I started writing newspaper columns, I got a call from Ardeshir and an invitation to drop in should I happen to be in Karachi. That was how it began.

“Minoo Bhandara, the closest thing to a brewery magnate in this officially dry country – unofficially another story – and now departed to the eternal shades, told me of a more tempestuous beginning. At a party on a yacht in the Karachi harbour he found a supercilious-looking man dressed flamboyantly in a white suit, handkerchief flowing out of his pocket and a hat on his head, blocking the gangway. “May I?”, asked Minoo politely. “No”, to Minoo’s utter amazement, said the cocky young man. Thus began a long-lasting friendship.

“In my far-from-Roman wardrobe I have three or four jacket handkerchiefs, all gifted by Ardeshir. The heavy Oxford dictionary on my side-table was from him ... other books too, inscribed in his hand, his beautiful handwriting almost calligraphic. I would borrow books from him and return them, thus establishing my credibility.

“In the summer of 1995 I was to take up a Reuters fellowship at Green College, Oxford, thanks to my friend Dr Humayun Khan who was then head of the Commonwealth Institute in London. From the Cowasjee Foundation I got a cheque for 500 pounds “with which to buy books...”, as I was sternly told. Some of that money, I regret to say, found its way into the pubs of Oxford. But with the remainder I bought some handsome old editions, which I open now and then and think of those bygone times.

“My first entry into electoral politics I also owe, in some measure, to Ardeshir. This was in Ms

B's second term as prime minister. Illahi Baksh Soomro had invited Nawaz Sharif and other PML-N grandees for lunch at his house in Islamabad. Ardeshir, who happened to be in Islamabad, was invited too and I being with him was asked to come along. Ardeshir made some blunt remarks at the PML-N's expense and Nawaz Sharif laughingly said, "Cowasjee Saab, I have never met anyone like you."...

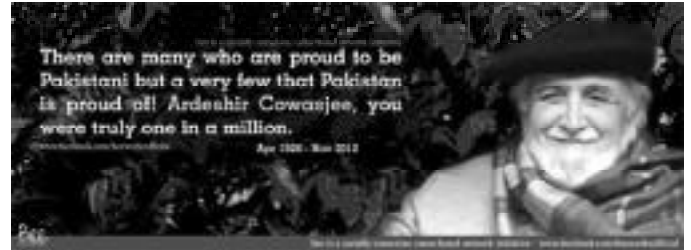
"Matrimony, exciting at the time, sorry in the telling ... light lie the dust on the ashes of its memory. One such adventure taking me to Karachi, Ardeshir was at hand to welcome me but, just think of it, accompanied by a drummer in full regalia. As soon as I came out of arrivals, the drummer, to the astonishment of the crowd started a lively beat. It was all I could do to keep my composure. As we went down Drigh Road in Ardeshir's open Mercedes, a Beethoven march, if I remember correctly, played on the audio.

"This was a slightly old convertible. There later came another, silver in colour with russet seats, the eyes of Karachiites on the roadside popping out as they gazed at the seeming apparition of a stately-looking, French-bearded gentleman at the wheel, in smart suit and hat, a police escort behind, rifles at the ready. It took a good deal of panache to carry off such a scene.

"Twice on contempt charges Ardeshir appeared before the Supreme Court, first before Sajjad Ali Shah and then Saiduzzaman Siddiqui. Ardeshir, in trade-mark Savile Row suit (all his suits from there), cane in hand, the initials AC cut in real diamonds on the top of the cane, would bow slightly and take his seat, relishing the spectacle for all it was worth. Khalid Anwar and Hafeez Pirzada were his counsels. Nothing came of the charges and the files must still be lying around in a forgotten corner.

"We went to a Mongolian restaurant in Karachi once, Ardeshir in a kaftan that he often wore when the mood took him. Sumptuous meal and when it was over and the bill arrived he took the nearest piece of tissue and in his calligraphic hand wrote out an order of payment on his bank. The waiters, to their credit, did not bat an eyelid and we stepped out of the establishment. With like assurance, I am sure, he would already have stepped across the pearly gates, those of

good cheer and good humour among the eternally-blessed hastening to welcome him – Sir John Falstaff and Mrs Gamp, Sir Toby and some of the poets. And in the hallowed spaces to keep him company by and by will come Ben, his cockatoo, and his Jack Russell terriers and, who knows, even the silver Mercedes and the guards and the Savile Row suits."



## *The Nightly India-Pakistan Border Closing Ceremony*

The daily theatrics and entertainment at the 'Wagah-Attari' border crossing.

Notice the British army influence on both sides, over-exaggerated, though. This may be fascinating for some. The pomp and ceremony that accompany this border closing has to be seen and not described. What is astonishing is the ritual and audience participation that apparently occurs for an event that happens 365 days per year.

The 'Wagah-Attari' border is the only road linking India and Pakistan, and every night, the border is ceremonially closed with most unusual theatrics and acrobatic moves by the members of the respective armed forces for the pleasure of the audiences! There is also audience participation to add colour and grandeur to the event. The funny thing is that in order to "close" the border gates, they first have to "open" the gates, which essentially remain closed throughout the day. The soldiers are selected based on their heights and how high they can kick! Only 156 seconds long, it is one of the strangest "drills" the two countries are involved in doing for decades now! Watch this hilarious event on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ0ue-XGI9c> ■■■



*Amina Jilani, studied at the University of Cologne for a short stint, lived and worked at the UK Pak High Commission, London, before returning to Karachi where she joined the Intercontinental Hotel till 1970. In 1971 she joined as a private assistant to Ardeshir Cowasjee till 1973 when she left for Paris working in an American law firm for eight years. Since about 1983 she has been working with Cowasjee running his 'home' office to date. She writes regularly for the local press.*

# An Interview with Professor Stanley Insler

conducted by Shahin Bekhradnia on 22 November 2012 at Oxford, UK, for Hamazor.

**Q:** What drew you into the speciality for which you are renowned among Zoroastrians, namely your sympathetic translation of the Gathas?

**A:** Well, it all goes back to Sanskrit. Once I had mastered Sanskrit, I needed a new challenge.

By chance at Yale, where I was working towards my doctorate on the Sanskrit grammarian Patanjali, there was a famous Professor of Iranian languages named Paul Tedesco who introduced me to the Gathas. I instantly became enchanted, fascinated and challenged.

**Q:** Why is Sanskrit so important to understanding the Gathas?

**A:** No one can really try to interpret the Gathic language without a good grounding in Vedic Sanskrit. In terms of linguistic history and Indo European grammar, Sanskrit is really the only language which gives a pretty full picture. And furthermore, there is the unmistakable fact that the literary devices and stylistic metaphors used throughout the Gathas are so very resonant of what one finds in the Vedas. For anyone who is trying to understand the Gathas and who does not have a familiarity with the Vedas, some of the expressions will completely fool you if you try to give them a literal translation. Instead one should look for parallel expressions and rhetorical turns of phrase in Vedic literature. By doing so, you will then understand the style of expression used by Zarathustra which is typical of the common era shared by the Gathas and the Vedas. Many scholars overlook this important fact.

**Q:** What is your opinion of Zarathustra?

**A:** Well, I have to say that he had a great intellect. The Gathas reveal a deep thought



process in which abstraction and reality are juxtaposed. The physical and the mental realms are constantly being placed in parallel with each other, and the sympathetic understanding of the human condition is evident throughout.

He asks questions to which there are no cut and dry answers – instead he explores and directs our thoughts to some of the possibilities but leave us the freedom to come up with our own understanding. It is above all a philosophy where intelligent reasoning and freedom to choose underpin all other considerations. And the man who managed to put down his thoughts and communicate such important moral values in this way is worthy of endless respect and admiration.

**Q:** What about the poetics – the literary value of the songs of Zarathustra – the Gathas?

**A:** The quality of the poetry is outstanding and for anyone who has any appreciation of this genre of literature, you will find rhythm and metre, rhyming, alliteration, metaphor and synonyms, and every sort of word play. We have to remember that in the past, in a pre-literate society, it was a very common way of packaging a message in the form of poetry. I have always told my students that the ancients used their ears the way we use our eyes.

**Q:** But what could have attracted you, a New York Jewish kid, to Sanskrit in the first place?

**A:** I was fortunate enough to be awarded a Ford Foundation scholarship which gave me a place at the age of 15 (before I had even finished High School) at Columbia University, in New York City. I was already pretty street

wise by then, living in New York. There we had lots of opportunities to take one semester courses in a wide range of subjects. I took two sciences which I enjoyed a great deal (crystallography and botany), Maths, world literature, Greek, and a whole range of contemporary European languages. After the first two years, I had choices that embraced different aspects of linguistics and fortunately Sanskrit was one of the languages I could study. I soon realised that this was an essential tool for what was clearly emerging as a strong interest in languages and literature.

**Q: What sort of education did you have that got you into university at such a young age.**

**A:** I had free state education at primary and secondary levels. I suppose I must have been considered a clever child as I was allowed to skip one year and go into the next grade and this happened two or three times at different stages of schooling. Then the Ford Foundation offered this scholarship programme for which I had to take an exam. It allowed me to enter Columbia College without completing secondary school. I completed the standard USA 4-year degree course and was graduated at the age of 19.

**Q: Was it apparent that you had a propensity for languages at a young age?**

**A:** My father used to send me after school to attend the Hebrew classes that were organised at our neighbourhood synagogue and that aroused my curiosity about language patterning. Then at high school I took Latin for a two years which undoubtedly imparted some of the basic grammatical principles of Indo European languages. So I suppose that once I had a chance to try out some new languages which were on offer at university, I took to them like a duck to water!

**Q: What did you do at the age of 19 once you had a degree?**

**A:** Well, I had managed to save some money during my student years, as I had found a job during that time – it was great: I had a job which basically involved choosing the right

music for trailers and ads. So with the money I had saved up, I came over to Europe – it took eight days on a liner which I really enjoyed – and bummed around for about six months, living as cheaply as I could so that the money would go further. I spent time in many of the capitals of Europe, taking in the art galleries, museums and music scene.

**Q: Is music important to you?**

**A:** Yes, very. I play the piano. I first tried one out at a friend's house in New York when I was about 8 years old, and found that I could just play with two hands and the sounds came out in harmony. So I went home and told my dad that I wanted a piano. He managed to get me one for \$200. I did not take lessons but practised a lot. In fact at one time in my career, I was thinking that I might make my career in music but in the end I decided that there were far too many musicians around but few specialists in Sanskrit. So I realised that I had a greater chance of making a success of an academic career than a musical one!

**Q: So did you do any later travelling in Europe?**

**A:** Yes, by some twist of fate my primary advisor, Paul Thieme who was a great Vedic scholar, decided to return to Germany and I was encouraged to follow him and complete my doctorate there. Under a Fulbright grant I spent two years with him in Tübingen until I finished my dissertation. During my stay in Europe I took full advantage of travelling around as much as possible.

**Q: What happened after Germany?**

**A:** Once again, through a grant from the Ford Foundation, I was able to travel to India for a year to further my Sanskrit studies. I lived in Madras where I found Pundit specialising in the native system of Sanskrit grammar based on Panini, the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC genius who described the Sanskrit he spoke in a few thousand algebraic-like aphorisms. We worked together early every morning and in the course of my stay I learned to speak a highly stylized Sanskrit with him. But it wasn't all study. I

bought a Lambretta and zoomed all over south India, really getting to know the country. I loved it so much that I planned to stay on my own for another year. But while I was there I got a letter from America asking me to come back and teach Sanskrit at Yale. It was a bit of a tussle, but I realised that this sort of chance does not come up every day, so I went back home and began teaching, something I really enjoyed.

**Q: What age were you appointed Professor of Sanskrit at Yale?**

**A:** I was 27 when I was appointed as a lecturer at Yale. Then when the last Professor retired, the position was kept on ice until I had done a few years there and I was offered it. I have always felt that Yale has always been my home. I began my graduate studies there and then taught for 47 years in the Linguistics Department until I retired in July 2011. Some of my students have been spectacular. Two of them have just submitted a complete translation and commentary of the Rigveda to the Oxford University Press, a much needed addition to the world of knowledge.

**Q: Did you meet anyone from the Zoroastrian faith during your time in India?**

**A:** No, not then, and anyway Madras is not a great centre for Zoroastrians. However, obviously after my work on the Gathas got to be known, I met quite a few in Bombay. They were all very kind and generous.

**Q: Talking of Zoroastrians, what opinion of them have you formed?**

**A:** I love them! I have been welcomed and given warm hospitality among them, wherever I have gone. As human beings, they are wonderful. However I have to be frank about something else. it is very disappointing indeed to find that with very few exceptions, hardly any members of your own religion have bothered to read the Gathas. I find that quite staggering. They don't have to try very hard to find a copy somewhere these days – and I don't think that they have to read only my translation, although obviously I think I am the

closest in translation and spirit to what Zoroaster wanted to say. Nevertheless, the other translations would at least give an idea of the contents. As an example, (and this is not by any means unusual), a reasonably intelligent lady I know from the past and saw again in London the other day asked me once what the Gathas have to say about abortion or about being Gay. That is such an uninformed question that it makes me despair that the very adherents of the faith still have not grasped the wonderful qualities within the message of Zarathustra. People have to be reminded that the Gathas were composed around 3500 years ago and Zarathustra did not make dogmatic statements. On the contrary, free choice within a context of rational clear thinking was prescribed as the way forward.

**Q: I hope you don't think we are all as poorly informed as that lady is.**

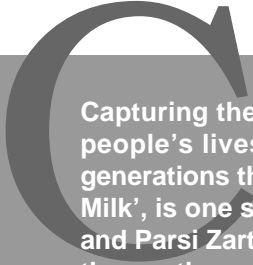
**A:** I fear that, as I just said, a great number of your community seem not to want to take the time to find out for themselves: they appear to want spoon feeding in terms of religious tenets which of course allows the more extreme and misinformed elements to spout whatever they want. And ironically this is precisely the opposite of the enlightened message of the Zoroaster. I don't want to appear ungrateful for the admiration I have had the pleasure of receiving from so many of you, but I sincerely hope that within your own community, members will wake up and realise that they must take responsibility for their own futures and they need to read and become better informed themselves and forge their own opinions based on the Gathas.

On that very thought provoking note, I'd like to thank you very sincerely for sharing some of your life stories with me.



Shahin Bekhradnia, a Zoroastrian of the Iranian tradition, is a teacher of ancient history and classical civilisation, a Justice of the Peace and a legal consultant. She has written and published on Zoroastrianism, including a postgraduate thesis in anthropology on issues of Zoroastrian identity in the 20th century, and is active in inter-faith movements and organisations. She is the Jt Secretary of WZO.

## *Telling Tales – A Zarthoshti Oral History Exhibition in the UK*



Capturing the memories of a generation, preserving significant moments in people's lives, giving voice to their feelings, aspirations and fears for the generations that follow them, is a precious and noble enterprise. 'Sugar in the Milk', is one such venture, a small step towards gathering the stories of Irani and Parsi Zarthushtis who came to the UK in the 1950s and '60s and settled in the south east of England.

This group of 12 individuals has been nominated by the ZTFE, WZO, and the Firdowsi Trust Fund. These organisations were brought together by Philippa Minoo Vafadari, the founder of the arts organisation, BandBazi, to help create ten exhibition totems recording the migration stories of Zarthushti elders. The academic consultant was Dr Jerri Daboo, whose mother, Amy, is one of the contributors. Though the group is not intended to be fully representative of the community, this does not detract from the authenticity of the stories - their appeal being the charm, openness, wit and vivacity of the tellers.

*by soonu engineer*

Stories of migrants are always interesting, at times inspiring and often moving, tinged by loss and redeemed by new beginnings. These tales are just as poignant. They are also unique in their rootedness in the struggle of Parsis and Irani Zarthushtis to define their identity in a world that is blurring communal boundaries; and where the values of equality and inclusion are at odds with the traditions of forced exclusivity which, over a millennium, have been internalised and become akin to tenets of the faith. A thousand years of living within the caste confines of India or under the humiliating and oppressive conditions in Iran, has made a virtue of strict communal allegiance and, perforce, rendered ethnicity synonymous with religion.

The wonder is how anyone has ventured out of this cocoon, broken communal taboos; how Zarthushtis have managed to both survive as a community while striking forth in every direction, across the globe, and turning up in every field of art, culture, politics, business, science and industry. This modest collection of oral testimonies gives us some clues.

The history of post-war migration into Britain, from the colonies of the Empire, records the movement of skilled and unskilled workers to the factories, furnaces, transport networks and hospitals that were in desperate need for labour – cheap labour. However, not one member of the Zarthushti group, interviewed for this project, came here in search of work. They and their families seem to have been well-settled and prosperous whether they were in India, Iran or East Africa and the move to England was in order to study; to join a family that had been in the U.K. for some time; to get private medical care; to take up a post to which they were transferred; to get away from family pressures; or simply to have a great adventure – like the Sarosh family, comprising mum, dad and four siblings, who simply packed their bags and tootled into Hyde Park Corner in a battered Ford V8, all the way from Mumbai!

There were lots of shocks in store: the unpalatable food, made inedible by off-putting names like 'toad-in-the-hole'; the lack of sunshine and a sharing culture; no

baths in ordinary English homes; colour prejudice ... and the bizarre spectacle of the Evening Standard sold at eleven in the morning!

But they all did rather well, got on with the locals, and settled down to raise a family with Parsi or European spouses. Hardships, even racial discrimination, are taken in their stride and no one dwells too much on the negatives. You get a sense of lives fulfilled, children prospering and the folk at peace with themselves and their surroundings. They liked, very much, where they came from and they like it here too.

Most of the group came to England in their early or late teens and a few came as qualified young professionals. What is remarkable is that each still retains a solid sense of being Parsi or Irani and all take great pride in the religion. That makes their anguish deeper when some talk about their children's disillusion with or indifference to the faith. There appears to be no formula for ensuring that the children carry on with the faith or the cultural traditions - even when both parents are Zarthushti. And there seems to be no guarantee that their grandchildren will continue in the faith. Some blame the community but then there is the case of Shahrokh, from Kerman, who married Anne and did not object to his children going to Sunday School, even accompanying them to the church himself. Then, in their late 20s, his three children chose to become Zarthushtis and had their sudreh pooshi done; on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, Shahrokh saw four of his grandchildren go through the sudreh pooshi ceremony.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to passing on a sense of community and religious identity, to the next generation, is the lack of a discernible community in the UK within which children can grow up. Unlike most migrants, Parsis did not settle in particular areas or choose to live close to one another. This is unusual, not only because they come from close-knit communities who live on designated communal estates in major cities in India (or in Zarthushti enclaves in Iran), but also because migrants

tend to settle where they know someone who is already there. However, this departure from the norm may have historical antecedents: the Parsis who came to the UK in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, did not try to live in one place and were scattered across London.

In modern Britain, there are geographical areas where a critical mass of one cultural group – whether Jews, Sikhs, Hindus, Mirpuris, Sylhetis, the list is endless – resides, which gives the child from that group a daily affirmation of its ethnic, religious or communal identity. The Parsis and Iranis do not have that. And the need for close proximity is a universal one and not peculiar to only those communities who come from distant shores. Even the French live close to one another in South Kensington, their children attending the Lycee; the recently arrived Poles live in Acton.

Nor did Parsis or Iranis arrive together on these shores in large – or even small – groups. The West Indians arrived in their shiploads; as did the Jews before them and the East Europeans. Young men from villages in the Punjab were brought en masse by chartered planes and set down, all together, near their place of employment where they worked together in shifts, and lived in shared homes. But the Parsis, barring those families who were expelled from Uganda, usually came as single persons or as young couples, and their objective circumstances meant that they were not destined to live together or even close to one another. There was not, nor is there now, an agyari where they could go whenever they felt a spiritual need. They lacked the opportunity for normal, every-day interaction with fellow Parsis, in environments where their children could imbibe community values, make lasting friendships and forge lifelong loyalties and identities. They met only for seasonal celebrations, a few times a year, in a secular setting. Gathering four times a year over a jashan and dhansak does not make a community.

For those who had been brought up in Parsi colonies and villages in the subcontinent, Iran or East Africa, these occasional



Dedicated to my loving wife Mehroo Bhote, my life long partner of 58 years



The Amrolia's



Tehmina Vajifdar, 1919 (maternal Grandmother of Jehangir Sarosh)



Amy Daboo with her son, Dr Jerri Deboo, as a young child

#### Exhibition Dates:

**20 Nov 2012 :**  
Exclusive press launch was held at SOAS, London in conjunction with the Centre for Iranian Studies.

**10 Jan 2013 :**  
Launch at Jubilee Library, Brighton & Hove.

**4 - 21 Feb 2013 :**  
Lewis Elton Gallery, University of Surrey, Guildford.

**13 - 26 March 2013 :**  
ZTFE, Zoroastrian Centre, Rayners Lane, London.

Hear the tales of each on : <http://www.zoroastrianstories.org/>



Jehangir Sarosh's dad and Sorabji Jaorewala, 1925. Location is crossing on Narbada River in a Fiat



Young and dapper Hormasji Bhiwandiwalla, father of Sammy



Eldest siblings of Sammy Bhiwandiwalla – Dorab who was later known as Les Baron, the famous singer and Lulu

gatherings are an affirmation of community and a chance to meet old friends. For most of their children, who don't share these memories, the association is notional: their own friends, clubs, activities, landmarks, and 'significant others' are elsewhere. In this situation, it is a herculean task to foster a community identity and it is neither the failure of parents nor of the 'community' that the young may feel more comfortable elsewhere. It should therefore surprise no one that the average age, at a typical monthly event at the Zoroastrian Centre, is 60 years and rising.

This major handicap to community formation is exacerbated when custom and practice discriminate against 50% of the community – women – and the Zarthushti community's hall is unavailable for the performance of inter-faith marriages or for the navjotes of children whose mothers have 'married out'. Tehmtan, retired university librarian and ex-Mayor of Brighton, recalls with gratitude a courageous and far-sighted mobed, the late Homi Dordi, who came forward to perform his marriage to Marian.

The Zoroastrian elders featured in this exhibition make a powerful plea to ward off what they consider to be a deathblow to the community: the differential treatment of Zarthushti women who have made mixed-faith marriages and the denial of equal rights of worship to their children. Aspi and Nina warn that, 'the girls are moving away from our community'; and Amy, with sadness in her voice and a gentle turn of phrase laments, 'the girls ... they sort of depart.'

Discrimination against women is not a value that earns respect from the young in this country. What is touching in this exhibition is that men, who are in their 70s and 80s, warn against the self-harm done to the community as a consequence of this discrimination. Shahrokh, Sammy, Darayus, Jehangir, Aspi – all decry this convention, just as much as most of the women. In this respect, the group that makes up this oral history project is generally a liberal and progressive one and we do not know how representative it is of the prevailing opinion on these matters. However, there is some

merit in getting a coherent view of at least one perspective, in this case the liberal one; and the general public, should it visit this exhibition, will hear a clear call to open doors to let the sun shine in.

Another theme that runs through many of the interviews is the need to welcome members of other ethnicities into the faith. As Darayus puts it, 'we can appreciate ethnic differences but recognise that we are following the *same* faith.' Jehangir points out, somehow enigmatically, 'we accept the religion rather than the religion accepts us.' Sammy highlights the irony of overcoming the challenges of living in a foreign cultural environment, while 'the only challenge [left] is *within* the community'. The community is 'no longer under [state] pressure to stick to its own', comments Sharokh. 'If you deprive people of freedom, they will opt out.'

What was forced upon our forebears by oppressive circumstances in Iran and by restrictive asylum conditions in India has become an article of faith. Zarathushtra did not discriminate amongst the ethnic groups of Iran: his teachings are humanitarian and therefore, universal. There is nothing 'orthodox' in the refusal to accept that Zarathushtra's message is for everyone. Today, cultural orthodoxy masquerades as religious orthodoxy.

In case the impression is given that these stories are more about people's views than an entertaining and insightful account of their lives (which they are), listen to Armin's story. Armin comes from a joint family where more than 50 people shared a large house. She rejected all the young men who vied for her hand but in the process notched up a lot of 'little ceremonies' (probably, 'rupiya pehrvanoo'), whereby each suitor tried to lay claim to her. Finally, and on her own initiative, she opted for Jal who had come from Kenya and who had the nerve to make the proposal himself, without the say-so of his parents, and who had no interest in securing a dowry. That convinced her that he must be in love with her and despite her father's objections, got married within 15 days. 'Anything to get to foreign, away from

Dedicated to my loving wife Mehroo Bhote, my life long partner of 58 years

all these pressures,' she explains mischievously. Armin sailed with Jal to Kenya and went to the most isolated areas there and then to London, where there was 'no room at the inn'. Listen – in full – to her feisty contribution on: [www.zoroastrianstories.org/ten-stories/armin-amroli](http://www.zoroastrianstories.org/ten-stories/armin-amroli)

This exhibition aims to attract co-religionists as well as the general public. It will tour the south east of England in the New Year and will also be visited by schools. This is why the simple exposition of the faith, by all the participants, is one of its most important features. Zarthushtis often mock themselves for not knowing enough about their ancient faith; but what the ordinary person knows, as described here, is a good enough guide for living a good and honest life. Particularly heartening is the joy, pride and confidence with which everyone tries to express their understanding. Without being asked to, they affirm the story about 'the sugar in the milk'. ■■■■



Shahrokh Vafadari's family: Kerman, Iran 1920s. Shahrokh's father, Rustam, is sitting in the centre with his wife, Banu on his left. The lady to the right is Banu's sister; both women are wearing traditional Zoroastrian dress. The children in the photograph have not all been identified; many of them died in infancy.



20 Nov 2012 : Exclusive press launch was held at SOAS, London in conjunction with the Centre for Iranian Studies. Photo credit, David Churchill



*Soonu Engineer is a free lance management and training consultant in UK, specialising in diversity management and conflict resolution.*



L to R: Sammy Bhiwandiwalla, Shahrokh Vafadari, Jehangir Sarosh, Dr Jerri Daboo, Philippa Vafadari, Professor Almut Hintze, The Rt Hon the Lord Bilimoria CBE DL, Rusi Dalal, Darayus Motivala

# Pectorals, Patriotism and Pansies

*Murali K Menon explores the fascinating story of the two communities' initiation into physical culture, which involved legendary bodybuilder Eugene Sandow, the stigma of 'effeminacy', superhuman feats, muscular nationalism and serene yogis. Hamazor shares the Parsi side of the bodybuilder. - Ed.*

**W**hen the annual Mr Zoroastrian contest in Mumbai was cancelled due to a lack of entries earlier this year, it signalled the fading out of the Parsi bodybuilder. The Parsis were among the first to take up bodybuilding in India, and, along with the Bengalis, produced some of India's finest strongmen.

About twelve years ago, Hutoxi Doodhwala, vice-president of the Sir Ness Wadia Club at Rustom Baug, in Byculla, Mumbai, landed up at the home of Parsi philanthropist Naryman Dubash. Doodhwala had heard about Dubash's munificence through the grapevine, and she was hopeful of his sponsoring a few of the annual events organised by her club.

*by murali menon*

Dubash was keen to help and willing to donate a considerable amount, but he had a few conditions. A part of the money was to be used to set up a modern gymnasium at the Parsi residential enclave, built in the 1930s by the Wadia family. He also wanted a separate gymnasium for women, since he believed, says Doodhwala, that young Parsi women were fragile and more interested in modelling than in being healthy. The other ideas that were discussed by Dubash and other members of the club, after they had agreed to his conditions, was a fund for former Parsi bodybuilders and weightlifters, and a Mr Zoroastrian contest, to be held every winter at Rustom Baug.

Doodhwala is a chirpy, pleasantly plump woman in her early fifties, with brown tints in her hair, and a Samsung Note phone that never leaves her side. Doodhwala tells me she is "not the gymming type", as she savours her frothy cold coffee at her elegantly appointed ground floor apartment, which is done up entirely in white. But the men and women's gymnasiums, she recalls, did encourage a lot of residents to work out. She wasn't so sure of the Mr Zoroastrian contest, though. "When they got this keeda (crazy idea), I thought it will never

run. People don't come to see men. Only the May Queen Ball works, I thought."

The first Mr Zoroastrian competition, in 2001, was a hit. It had over 23 participants and an audience of over 700 people, and a majority of them were Parsis, some of whom had travelled from far-flung suburbs. Doodhwala says she was "zapped" by the response. "My entire senior citizen group was also there. I asked them, 'Arre girls, what are you doing here?', and they said, 'We toh enjoy this.'"

Dubash himself presented the sash and trophies to the winners for the first five years, and always spoke to the "boys", says Doodhwala, about eating well, and staying away from steroids. The club also honoured former Parsi bodybuilders and weightlifters. "There were no parameters as such. If the community spoke highly of someone, we gave him a cash award. That was the way he (Dubash) wanted it," says Doodhwala.

The Mr Zoroastrian contest was held every February at Rustom Baug for the next ten years. It drew participants, both young and old, not only from around Mumbai, but also from other parts of Maharashtra, and from Surat and Navsari in Gujarat. But this

February [2012], the event was cancelled due to a lack of entries.

I tried to meet Dubash, who lives in Colaba, in south Mumbai, to find out what he thought of it. But the bachelor, who is now about 85, has been ailing for the last couple of years, and is virtually inaccessible, some in his community believe, to the insidious influence of a caretaker who is now alleged to have turned inheritor of his vast fortune. But I think I can see what Dubash, who also sponsored a gymnasium in Malcolm Baug, in north Mumbai some nine years ago had in mind when he helped fund the Mr Zoroastrian contest.

In the 19th century, as Europe glowed with nationalistic fervour, many new gymnastic disciplines and exercise regimens were invented to further the cause of the respective nation-states of the continent.

Strong nations required strong men, and this zeal for physical fitness was economically as well as patriotically motivated, says Mark Singleton. In his book, *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice* (2010), Singleton writes that “to survive and earn a livelihood in the new industrial world, one could not afford a weak constitution.” The British, who, at the time, were building what would soon turn into a colossal territorial empire, put the cultivation of the body in the service of imperialism. By the turn of the century, physical culture, as the various fitness regimens were collectively called, “bound together a cluster of ideological items, including manliness, morality, patriotism, fair play, and faith, and it was a means for moulding the perfect Englishman,” says Singleton.

In India the Parsis who were part of the colonial elite, adopted not just the British way of life, but also their outlook towards physical activity. They drank tea, wore double-breasted suits and monocles, and went to the opera, and, like their rulers, they pumped iron, and were competent cricketers, tennis players, swimmers, and cyclists. As far back as 1884, the Zoroastrian Physical Culture and Health

League, which was located near Dhobi Talao in south Mumbai, started Bombay's first Boxing and Fencing Club. H D Darukhanawala's *Parsis and Sports* (1935), one of the few copies of which is today available at the Parsi Punchayet Library in Mumbai, provides a snapshot of noted Parsi physical culturists of yore. Among them were Mahatma Gandhi's naturopathic physician Dinshaw K Mehta (“a master statue-poser, supreme in grace and perfect in art,” says Darukhanawala); Behramshaw F Mukati (“a perfect specimen of the Body Beautiful — a model of perfect grace — his muscles being symmetrically developed”); Cowas Captain (“From Weakling to Physical Perfection.” (Also a) “Proficient Tap-dancer and Expert Ventriloquist”), and several other broad, ripped, proud men who stand slightly self-consciously before the camera, wearing gladiator sandals and faux leopard skin underwear, flexing their powerful arms, which end in clenched fists, and thrusting their well-defined chests forward.

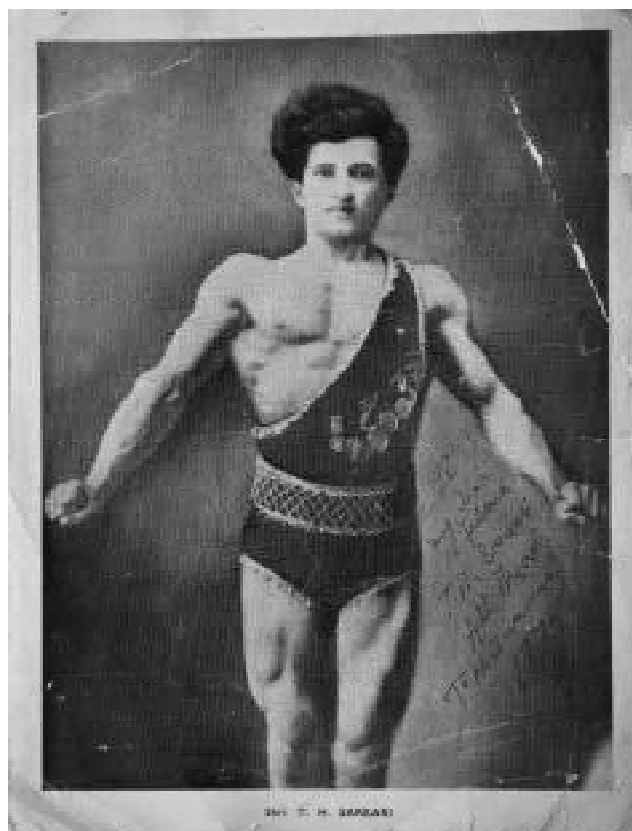
Darukhanawala's book also records many impressive displays of strength by Parsis, such as ‘The Hanging Feat’, which was performed by Dr S N Katrak at the Grant Medical College in 1926 in the presence of Leslie Wilson, the then governor of Bombay. “It is a very difficult feat and requires great neck strength ... the rope was tied round the neck with a loose slip-knot ... the knot was placed round the nape of the neck ... then pulled over the cross rods of hanging pilloo and Dr Katrak was hauled high up in the air, several feet above the ground, hanging only by the rope round his neck and not on his jaw-bones. He was kept in this position for about half a minute and then dropped down. There was a clear rope mark around his neck which was examined by His Excellency who appreciated the feat very much and it was repeated a second time,” writes Darukhanwala.

Numerous gymnasiums or ‘health homes’, either owned by Parsis or funded by them, mushroomed across Bombay, in Mazagaon, Marine Lines, and Dadar at the turn of the century and the largest and most reputed schools in and around the city prided themselves on having Parsi gymnastic instructors. In 1904, a wealthy Parsi

merchant called Dhunjibhoy Bomanji invited the legendary Prussian strongman Eugene Sandow to India. Sandow, who strove for Grecian ideals of physical perfection, was the first modern superstar of physical culture. Bomanji, who divided his time between Bombay and London and owned large estates in both cities, is believed to have trained under Sandow, who drew delirious crowds at his shows worldwide, and who would ultimately be appointed Professor of Physical Culture to King George V. Sandow's visit electrified Bombay, and apart from entering various Indian languages as a synonym for strength, he, in a way, also ensured that nearly every Parsi boy growing up in the ensuing decades idolised a muscular uncle or father or cousin.

Tehemton Gowadia lives in the Sohrabji Byramji Bhabha Sanatorium in Bandra. The massive Victorian building, with its sprawling grounds neighbours film actor Shah Rukh Khan's bungalow and overlooks the Arabian Sea. The 63-year-old priest, who is also the caretaker of the sanatorium, has kind eyes, but is built like a bull. "What does the name Tehemton mean? 'Man of steel. It was in reality a title given to jahan pahalvan Rustom in the Shahnameh (epic poem by Persian poet Ferdowsi, written between 977 and 1010 AD). Rustom was a strong man, the greatest wrestler in the world," says Gowadia, his voice acquiring a mildly dramatic tone. He is sitting on a rocking chair under an old wall clock in his drawing room. A pile of international bodybuilding magazines lies on a table next to the chair. Gowadia doesn't work out any more, but he tells me he still occasionally reads bodybuilding magazines.

Gowadia grew up in Hubli, in Karnataka, and used to watch, along with his brother Rohinton, their father workout everyday. The brothers started working out in their early teens fashioning crude equipment out of car components. Gowadia, who won Mr Mysore in 1967, came to Bombay in 1971 to join the Banaji Limji agiary, in Fort, and the titles he has won include Mr Bombay, Bharatshree, and Mr India (Tall-Men class). Former champion weightlifter Viraf Panthaki,



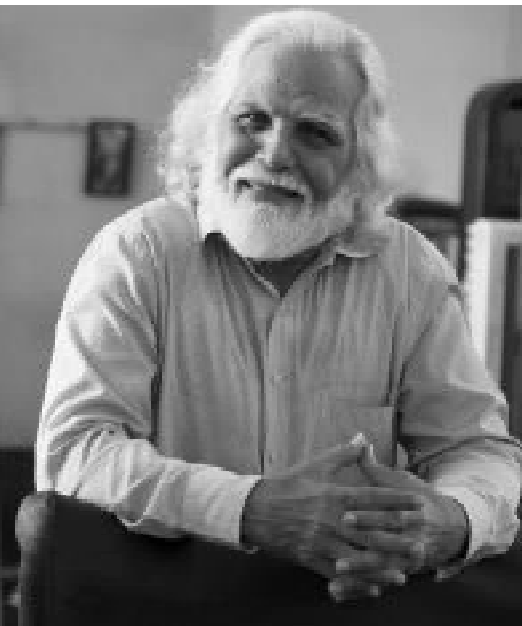
T H Sarkari



Kersi Kasad

Mr. Kersi Kasad

Mr. INDIA, 1st Runner-up 1969, 1972



Adi Irani



Navrose Dapotwalla



*Above right & immediate left: sent by Rustom Jasoomoney. Photo credit Zal Cassinath.*

Late NarYman Dubash who financed setting up of Modern Gyms in Parsi Colonies, awarded prize money to the old timers and sponsored the All Zoroastrian Body Building and Power Lifting Contest for seven years continuously

an acquaintance of Gowadia, lives in Khushrow Baug, in Colaba. Panthaki, a former Union Bank of India staffer, is 69, and stout and jowly, but he still speaks of his uncle Jehangir Khalera with childlike awe. "Elephants would walk over planks placed on his chest, he would pull trucks using just one hand. People used to stop and stare whenever he visited the fire temple. All this in Bombay, in the 1940s. He was areal hero."

As young men, Gowadia and Panthaki, who was born and brought up in Surat, led quiet lives. They worked in the mornings, and worked out in the evenings along with other Parsi men in gymnasiums in the residential colonies closest to their rented homes or workplaces. "I don't think we ever thought, ke bhai what after bodybuilding? We enjoyed it, we did it. That is not possible today. Bodybuilding is an expensive pursuit and it just doesn't pay. There is just too much pressure on youngsters to study and earn. Their parents would rather they pursue cricket, or even badminton. Look at Saina (Nehwal)," says Gowadia. "We might never have been rich or famous, but the community respected us, and that respect made us happy."

The relatively uncomplicated lives they led is not the only thing that differentiates them from the current generation of Parsis. Gowadia, Panthaki and other former Parsi bodybuilders such as Kersi Kasad, the 1969 Mr India Runner-up, always use the word strong when they describe themselves or contemporaries they admired. They were proud to be men of great strength, while Meherzad Chinoy, a 26-year-old national-level weight-lifter with humungous arms and a multiple winner at power lifting at Rustom Baug, says his friends think he is "too big."

Is masculinity viewed differently today, I ask Joseph S Alter, a sociocultural anthropologist, and a professor at the University of Pittsburgh, in Pennsylvania, and the author of several books, including *The Wrestler's Body: Identity and Ideology in North India*, and *Moral Materialism: Sex and Masculinity in Modern India*. "Yes and no," says Alter. "The cult of physique has outstripped the question of strength and power."



Eugene Sandow

The early bodybuilders were strong men and prided themselves on being able to perform superhuman feats. This was much more in the tradition of the pahalwan, who was known for his power and strength rather than for his muscular development and definition. What has happened now is that the shape and cut of muscles unto themselves have become almost all that is important.”

Earlier generations of Parsi bodybuilding enthusiasts didn't just have role models in the community, they also had patrons in the form of businessmen, and physical culturists, who set up gymnasiums and invited youngsters to join them at very nominal rates. Adi Irani (Mr Bombay, 1969), who, at 71, is a regular at the Khushrow Baug gymnasium, and who, with his flowing, silvery beard, bears a distinct resemblance to pictorial depictions of Moses, trained for a nominal fee at the now defunct Pestonji D Marker Physical Culture Home. When he first came to Bombay, Gowadia frequented a gymnasium near Bombay Central, set up by a former bodybuilder called Tehmurasp Sarkari. Sarkari never took money from Parsi youth who exercised at his gymnasium, says Gowadia, whose burgeoning bodybuilding ambitions were later funded for a couple of years by Dinshaw Mehta, a Parsi industrialist.

The likes of Sarkari and Mehta were keeping a very Parsi tradition alive, of encouraging and assisting promising bodybuilders. Over the years, this created an environment, and contributed to an ethos that helped Parsi bodybuilders thrive right up until the 1990s. Dubash's Mr Zoroastrian was an attempt to inculcate in his young Parsi brethren the ideals of an age when his community was known as much for its impressively built men as for its industriousness and charity.

Rustom Jasoomoney, the president of the Sir Ness Wadia Club, smiles when I ask him about Mr Zoroastrian 2013. “We are striving, hoping, and working towards getting entries,” says Jasoomoney. Gowadia isn't so sure. He clucks his tongue and tells me that, despite men like Navroze Dapota, a 46-year-old former Mr Zoroastrian, who

aced his category at last year's Mr India competition, an era could have passed. The fading out of the Parsi bodybuilder mirrors the crisis of the community. In her *The Good Parsi: The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial Society* (1996), Tanya Luhrmann, an American psychological anthropologist, presents an excerpt from ‘Jamasni Jilloo’, a much read Parsi column that appears in the *Jame Jamshed* weekly, to illustrate the predicament of the Parsi community in modern India, and it uncannily speaks for the decline of the Parsi bodybuilder as well:

**Bomanji:** “In those days, our young Parsi men were so well built. Unlike the thin, sickly looking men of today, they did not flit aimlessly wearing t-shirts with meaningless slogans like ‘I love you’ and ‘Kiss me quick’. They used to go to Pestonji Marker and to the Physical Culture Home at Gowalia Tank and did exercises to make their body fit and healthy. Our Parsi musclemen used to perform physical cultural shows as well.”

**Jilloo:** “Well, talking of these old times tales reminds me of what I had read in the newspapers a few days ago. It seems that at the Alalumpur airport, a muscled body builder pulled a 28-ton Boeing with his hair, much to the amazement of his audience.”

**Baimai:** “An entire plane, merely with hair on his head? Did you hear that Bamanu dear? Would you be able to do that?”

**Jamas:** “But how could he pull anything with his hair, when he has none on his head?”

**Bomanji:** “You are talking of these men of modern times. But our Parsi musclemen were no less. In the olden days, our Parsi ‘pahelwan’ Tehmurasp Sarkari would tear a thick telephone directory to pieces with his bare hands.”

**Jilloo and Baimai:** “Truly, those were the days and those were the men.”



*Murali K Menon is the managing editor of Man's World. This article appeared in the October 2012 issue which is being shared with Hamazor as well.*



Dedicated to my loving wife Mehroo Bhote, my life long partner of 58 years

## Zoroastrians in the Armed Forces of North America

Hamazor carried an indepth information on Zoroastrians who served in the armed forces of British India, India and Pakistan in Issues 2/04 : 3/04 : 4/05 : 1/08 & 3/08, and felt that as Mahrukh Cama & Shiroy Ranji presented the new generation now serving their countries – the USA & Canada – at the North American Zoroastrian Congress held in New York in August 2012, it would be an archival record for the community. I am still hoping someone from Iran will do likewise, completing this segment of our history.

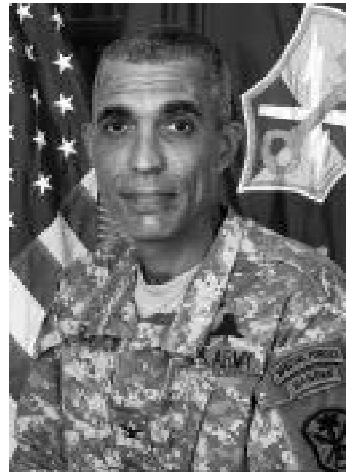
We are indeed thankful to Mahrukh Cama, who has shared her research with Hamazor. A few individuals are not portrayed in deference to their wishes - Ed.



**Lance Corporal Cyrus Bhandari** was born in Connecticut, USA. At age 19, he joined the United States Marine Corps to do something more challenging for himself and thought he would make a difference. Currently deployed and living in Okinawa, Japan.



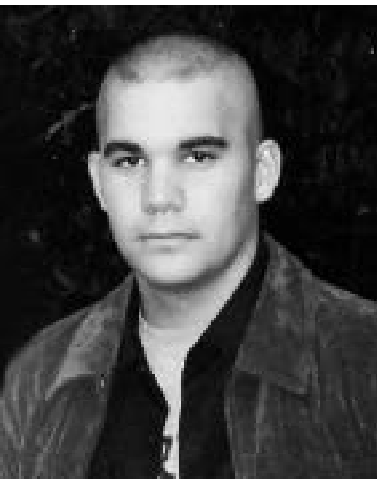
**E4 Specialist Shahveer Bharda**, born in Karachi, Pakistan, served in the United States Army from 1986 to 1990. To him, training and working on multibillion dollar helicopters and gunships seemed a way to pay for technical school. Most of all it was a great way to serve the country. Shahveer currently lives in Delford, New Jersey.



**Colonel (deceased) Kurush F Bharucha-Reid**, born in New York, served in the United States Army from 1974 until May 2010 when he lost his battle with pancreatic cancer. He was deployed in Republic Of Korea, Iraq, twice in Bosnia and Afghanistan and was twice awarded the Bronze Star. His grandfather was a surgeon in the Indian Army during WW II, and awarded the DSO.



**First Lieutenant Keshvar Buhariwalla**, born in India, served in the United States Army Corps of Engineers for 4 Years. When asked why she joined the army, she says "my twin sister, Cainaz Vakharia, had said 'Let us give this a try together.' I so enjoyed Army ROTC that I decided to stay and become an officer after I graduated from College." Keshvar currently lives in Flower Mound, Texas.



**Corporal Percy Canteenwalla**, born in Orlando, Florida, served in the United States Marine from 2003 to 2008. He was stationed in Okinawa, Japan and did one tour of Iraq. Percy says "I joined the military at a time in my life when I needed direction and purpose. I decided that I wanted to serve my country while I found that new direction." Percy currently lives in Sanford, Florida.



**First Lieutenant Eric Chavda**, born in Brooklyn, New York, serves in the United States Army Signal Corps. He was deployed to Iraq three times and is currently serving in Afghanistan. Eric decided to join the Armed Forces after finishing college to repay a debt to the US for giving his family the opportunity to succeed in this country.



**Captain Neville Dastoor**, born in Detroit, Michigan, serves as an attorney in the United States Army, Judge Advocate General Corps. He served in Kuwait and Afghanistan and is currently stationed in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Neville says "I joined to serve our country and to be actively involved in international law and relations."



**Lieutenant Commander Kersas Dastur**, born in Ahmedabad, India, served 20 years in the United States Navy as a Naval Aviator. He served on multiple deployments throughout the Western Pacific, Persian Gulf, Middle East, and Europe. Kersas joined the Armed Forces to fulfill a childhood attraction to the military and his desire to become a pilot. He currently resides in Pensacola, Florida.



**Staff Sergeant Percy Engineer**, born in Winfield, Illinois, served in the United States Army for 10 Years. Percy says he joined the Army out of personal interest straight after completing High School. Percy was deployed to Afghanistan for a year's tour of duty during Operation Desert Shield. He currently resides and works in Midland, Texas and continues to serve in a consultant capacity to various government agencies.



**Staff Sergeant Laura Hodiwala**, born in California, is serving in the United States Army, 1st Aviation Brigade. Laura says she joined "to serve my country with pride and devotion. I was always inspired by the warrior ethos and army values." She currently resides in Enterprise, Alabama.



**Sergeant Mahyar Hodiwala**, born in Mumbai, India, is Active Reserve in United States Army. Mahyar says, "The army always fascinated me and after graduating from college, I was determined to enlist so I could serve my country which to me is an honor & privilege". He served 2 tours in Iraq. Currently living in Enterprise, Alabama.



**Technical Sergeant Gustasp Merwan Irani**, born in Karachi, Pakistan, served in the United States Air Force from 1968 to 1978. He chose the Air Force Reserves so he could continue working and attending college, while serving his obligation in the US military. He currently resides in San Marcos, California.



**Major Jehangir Irani**, born in Mumbai, India, served in the United States Air Force, serving 3 tours each in Iraq and Afghanistan. Jehangir says he joined because "Flying planes looked like the most fun a person could have with their clothes on... and I can confirm, it is!" He currently lives in New York.



**Leading Seaman Yazdan Kelawala**, born in Bombay India, serves in the Royal Canadian Navy as Weapons Engineering Technician. Yazdan says he joined the Royal Canadian Navy because he wanted the challenges, the pride, the great career and travels. Currently he lives in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Dedicated to my loving wife Mehroo Bhote, my life long partner of 58 years



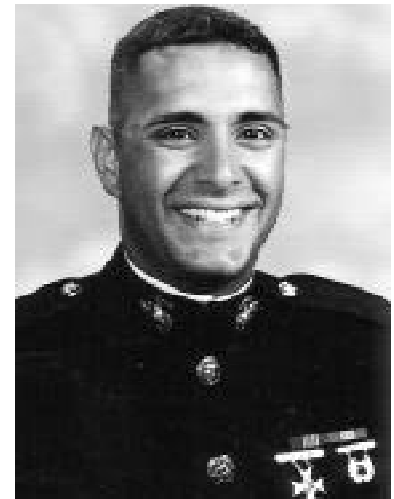
**Lieutenant Commander Rayomand J Kumana**, born in Cincinnati, Ohio, serves in the United States Navy, Submarine Force. He has served deployments in Persian Gulf, Mediterranean Sea and Afghanistan. Rayomand says he joined the Armed Forces "to serve my country and honor my grandfathers who both also served in the military. Rayomand currently resides in Irving, Texas.



**Airman First Class Karl Daraius Mehta**, born in Karachi, Pakistan, is with the United States Air Force, Security Forces (Military Police). Karl says he joined the Air Force to "help protect my country and to establish a better future for myself!" After 4 months of deployment in Qatar, Karl is now stationed in Tampa Florida at Mac Dill Air Force Base.



**Captain Darius Mirza**, born in Mumbai, India, serves in the Royal Canadian Air Force and has flown several missions to Kandahar, Afghanistan. Darius joined the Air force to fulfill his lifelong dream of becoming a pilot, and proudly serving his country. Darius now resides in Winnipeg, Manitoba, flying for Search and Rescue missions in Canada and USA.



**Captain Bezan F Morris**, born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, served in the United States Marine Corps. He was deployed to Okinawa, Japan and served 2 tours in Iraq. Bezan's reason for joining: "Growing up I wanted the confidence and strength the military had given both of my brothers. It was also an excellent opportunity to serve my country, lead some of the finest men and women, and travel the world." Bezan currently resides in Arizona.



**Captain Kurush F Morris**, born in Mumbai, India, serves in the United States Navy. He's the Commanding Officer of the USS Shiloh (CG 67), Yokosuka, Japan.



**Commander Murzban F Morris**, born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is serving the United States Navy. He was deployed to Yokosuka, Japan and thereafter to Iraq. He's currently the Commanding Officer of USS McClusky (FFG-41), San Diego, California.



**Major Neville Rabadi**, born in Nagpur, India, served in the Canadian Army. He has served in Golan Heights and Croatia. Neville says "My desire to join the Canadian Forces came from a very positive experience within the Royal Canadian Air Cadets and a desire to attend the Royal Military College of Canada from where I earned my Engineering Degree and began my career." Neville currently resides in Ottawa, Canada.



**Senior Airman Zubin Sethna**, born in Mumbai, India, served in the United States Air Force from 1980 to 1984. He joined the Air Force because of love of airplanes, wanting to work and possibly fly them and to serve and protect this country he calls home. He currently resides in Stockbridge Georgia.



**Captain Abhay Singh**, born in Silver Spring, Maryland, is serving in the United States Army. He joined to serve the country and continue an army tradition of five generations. He's currently at Duke University serving a medical residency in urology in the Army Medical Corps.



**Lieutenant Colonel Cainaz Vakharia**, born in India, serves in the United States Army. She joined the Army, "to serve, to be challenged, to see the world". She has served in Turkey and India and is currently serving in Pakistan. ■■■■



**Mahrukh Cama** is a Board Member of Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York. Born in Karachi, she currently resides in New Jersey. She changed her career from Administrative to Information Technology, attending night school, and retired as Data Analyst from IEEE where she was the first recipient of the IEEE Joyce E. Farrell Staff Award.

## Kavi Firoz Rustomji Batliwalla

by marzban giara

*Interspersed with information shared by late Virasp Mehta which appear in quotes.*

**K**avi Firoz Rustomji Batliwalla was born at Navsari in 1846 and died on Khordad Sal, the birthday of our prophet asho Zarathushtra, on 17th September 1912.

A hundred years after his death we Parsis still sing with great enthusiasm the anthem Kavi Batliwalla composed - **Chhaiye Hame Jarthosti** to the tune of Good Bye, My Blue Bell.

Late Virasp Mehta had shared with Toxy Cowasjee, the following in early 2000: "It was never composed as our national anthem but was part of a natak where it was sung at the end. It's to the catchy tune "Goodbye! My blue Bells!" The words appealed to the Parsis, which immediately was played at the end of the next natak with the audience standing up and joining in. The song was soon a hit and thereafter the Parsis started singing it after every function. The writer Firoz who like all Parsis of the past, freely used Urdu and Persian words, and merrily we stand to sing his song, not knowing what we sing. Its popularity has not diminished in fact it has now appeared in the Khordeh Avesta published in India." Firoz used to compose poems and devotional hymns from an early age, and "later learnt singing under a classical Hindu singer."

Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha had in 1893 arranged a music competition to compose devotional hymns in Gujarati explaining the meanings of our daily prayers. Kavi Firoz won the first prize. He was conferred honorary life membership by **Gayan Uttejak Mandali**, an association founded in 1868 by Kaikhusru Novroji Kabraji to promote interest in music amongst members of the Parsi community in Bombay. "Kabraji was a reformer, playwright and editor of *Rast Gofar*."

Many of Battliwalla's songs are played by Parsi bands as well as taught / recited in

Parsi schools even today. Some of his popular songs are:

*Saras sauthee kharo rahebar  
Khudavind O Khavind O Parvardegar  
Bhale lidh o janam jag par tame o paak  
paigambar  
Mubarak hojo aaje, navjote bhali je gaaje  
re*

"In 1912, a few months prior to his death, he gifted his entire collection of songs composed by him to the Mandali. A special function was arranged for this purpose, but unfortunately he was unable to attend because of his failing health."

He prepared several music books such as '*Firozi Gayan*', '*Sarode Avestani notation tatha Jarthosti Bandagio*' and '*Sarode Paak Daamani ane Sitame Minar*' – a tragic story of two Parsi ladies who in order to save their honour sacrificed their lives at the Rajabai Tower, Mumbai. *Sarode Avesta* is a collection of devotional hymns in Gujarati giving the meanings of most of our daily prayers, which "was published in 1930 by the Mandali at the request of the heirs of Batliwalla. It contains 43 songs based on the prayers from *Khorday Avesta* with notations, and 58 devotional songs. During his lifetime he tried to render his songs from *Saroday Avesta* at communal functions, but they were abandoned. As usual, there was an uproar by religious fanatics that Batliwalla was trying to remove 'our sacred Zend Avesta prayers by organising such functions'!

"On special occasions Batliwalla used to compose and sing songs, before the Viceroy, Governors and Princely rulers. *Chaiye hame Zarthosti* must have been composed any time before September 1912 when he died." On Monday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2012, Kavi Firoz Rustomji Batliwalla was given a musical salute on the occasion of his death centenary. Zoroastrian hymns, songs in Gujarati, composed by the late poet were rendered. The glittering function was organised jointly by Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha, Youths Own Union

and Bombay Parsee Association at the Sir J J School, Mumbai. The enthusiastic audience was so moved that it gave all the singers a standing ovation. Just as the Hindus sing bhajans, Muslims sing qawali and Christians hymns, so also we have Zoroastrian hymns. Such programmes of devotional hymns deserve to be popularised by holding music festivals in Udvada, Navsari, Surat, Pune, etc. It would also be a fitting tribute to the late poet if his portrait were to be displayed prominently at a venue frequented by members of the Parsi community.

A collection of 13 devotional hymns composed by Kavi Firoz Batliwalla in the 19th century and sung by music maestro Vistasp Balsara and Dhunnawaz Indorewalla a few decades ago is now available on an audio CD titled **Zoroastrian Hymns**. The meanings of all our daily basic prayers such as *Ashem Vohu*, *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*, etc., are rendered in songs in Gujarati and listening to these songs in the comfort of your home is a delightful experience.

**[Zoroastrian Hymns** is available from Marzban Jamshedji Giara, Dhanmai Building, 667, Lady Jehangir Road, Dadar, Mumbai 400014. e-mail: marzbang@gmail.com Ph: 022- 24166204 for Rs100/-.]



Marzban Jamshedji Giara is author, publisher and distributor of books on Zoroastrian religion and Parsi history. He has authored the first-ever illustrated *Global Directory of Zoroastrian Fire Temples*, *The Zoroastrian Pilgrim's Guide*, *Parsi Statues* and a dozen other books. His father ingrained in him the idea, "Son, be a creator and not a spectator in life. We must give back to society more than what we have received from it."

# Adoption Woes



“An adopted child grows in a mother’s heart instead of her womb”.

They say every baby needs a lap and universally ‘adoption’ is a legal mechanism to address this need. However, what’s legal depends on the country (e.g. most Islamic countries do not legally recognize adoption) and community / religious denomination, especially in a country like India.

The Preamble to the Hague Adoption Convention states: “The child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding... Intercountry adoption may offer the advantage of a permanent family to a child for whom a suitable family cannot be found in his or her State of origin.”

*by noshir dadrawala*

Every child benefits from a loving home in deeply profound ways. Intercountry adoption has made this permanently possible for hundreds of thousands of children worldwide. When children cannot remain with a relative, and new parents within their communities cannot be found, intercountry adoption opens another pathway to children to receive the care, security and love that only a permanent family can provide.

The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Inter-Country Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention) is an international agreement to establish safeguards to ensure that intercountry adoptions take place in the best interests of the child.

India is a party to the Hague Adoption Convention and follows Hague adoption procedures.

## Adoption related issues in India

The only codified law available for adoption in India is **The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (HAMA)**. This Act came into force in 1956 and is applicable to:

- any person who is a Hindu by religion in any of its forms or development;

- any person who is a Buddhist, Jain or Sikh;
- **any person who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew;**
- any child legitimate or illegitimate whose parents are Hindus, Buddhists, Jains or Sikhs;
- any child legitimate or illegitimate one of whose parents are Hindus, Buddhists, Jains or Sikhs and has been so brought up;
- any abandoned child, legitimate or illegitimate of unknown parentage brought up as a Hindu, Buddhist, etc.;
- any person who is a convert to the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain or Sikh religion.

**It is clear from the above that HAMA is NOT applicable to Parsis.**

## THE GUARDIAN AND WARD ACT (GWA) 1890

The Personal law of Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Jews does not recognize complete adoption. In India, as non-Hindus do not have an enabling law to adopt a child legally, **those desirous of adopting a child can only take the child in ‘guardianship’ under the provisions of ‘The Guardian and Wards Act, 1890’ (GWA).**

**GWA, however, does not provide to the child the same status as a child born biologically to the family.**

Unlike a child adopted under the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 the child cannot become their own or inherit their property by right.

**The GWA confers only a guardian-ward relationship.** This legal guardian-ward relationship exists until the child completes 21 years of age.

Under the GWA, persons belonging to communities such as Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew and who wish to adopt can take up “guardianship” of the child. In India, under Indian laws, such children do not enjoy the same status as those of a biological child.

In fact, under GWA the term ‘Guardian’ means minor for whose person or property or both, there is a guardian.

The term ‘Ward’ means a minor for whose person or property or both, there is a guardian.

In other words, if a Parsi parent desires to ‘adopt’ a child, the latter would not legally be considered “as if born to” the adoptive individual or couple.

Incidentally, even Islam does not recognize adoption. In *Mohammed Allahdad Khan v. Mohammad Ismail* it was held that there is nothing in the Mohammedan Law similar to adoption as recognized in the Hindu System. The Parsi Zoroastrian community in India also holds the same view.

Efforts over the past several decades by the government of India to pass a comprehensive secular law on adoption has failed on account of stiff opposition from non-Hindu communities, particularly Muslims and Parsis.

### **Historical Backdrop**

The Adoption of Children Bill, 1972 was not approved as the Muslims opposed it. The

Adoption of Children Bill, 1980, aiming to provide for an enabling law of adoption applicable to all communities other than the Muslim community, was opposed by the Bombay Zoroastrian Jashan Committee, which formed a special committee to exempt Parsis from the Bill. The National Adoption Bill, tabled twice in Parliament in the seventies, has yet to enter the statute books.

Article 44 of the Constitution declares that: “The State shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a Uniform Civil Code throughout the territory of India.” However, every attempt to bring in the concept of secular adoption into the Indian system of laws is a saga of inaction and action without conviction on the part of the legislature.

### **Juvenile Justice Act (JJA)**

No doubt, the Juvenile Justice Act 2000 (and its subsequent amendment of 2006) has neatly tucked in a provision for adoption, but, with no reflection on how it is to be implemented or its repercussions. The intentions of this Act are good, but they do not even mention adoption in the statement of object! Thus, the JJA is not precise and clear in its terms and is in reality, in conflict with other pieces of legislation.

**One needs to note that nowhere does the Juvenile Justice Act 2000 (or the amendment of 2006) say that it supersedes existing legislation on adoptions. JJA fails to override the provisions of other personal laws.** For example the Muslim personal law does not permit adoption and the government can’t try and plug loopholes in one Act by amending another.

Merely because the JJA has included adoption within its ambit, this is still not an all-in-all adoption law, but brings in adoption as one of the means by which abandoned, neglected, abused and destitute children could be rehabilitated. The Act recognizes adoption as an important process in the rehabilitation and social re-integration of children who are abandoned, orphaned, neglected or abused in their families or in institutions.



Given its special status within the broader framework of child welfare programme, **adoption demands a class of legislation that must either supersede or made compatible with the existing legislation.**

**The existence of a prior law relating to adoption for Hindu and the non-existence of adoption laws for non-Hindu communities as also, prohibition of adoption in the religious laws of some communities (eg. Muslims) makes the JJA rather ineffective.**

**It is a well-settled principle of Jurisprudence that when there is a 'general law' and a 'specific law' on the same aspect of law, the latter has precedence over the former.**

Consequently, the Juvenile Justice Act is rendered ineffective by the very presence of Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956, in case of Hindus. Regarding the conflict between the Act and the existing legislation, naturally, the multiplicity of laws, each with their own set of operational rules, causes chaos in the field.

With regard to the case of Manuel Theodore, where 'in the absence of legislation', the Bombay High Court recognized the right of a Christian parent to adopt a destitute and orphaned child, Justice Rebello interpreted Article 21 to hold that 'the right of the child to be adopted and consequently to have a home, a name and a nationality has to be considered as part of his right to life.' Interestingly, the Court goes on to recognize a right to adopt on part of the parents flowing from Article 14. The Court here strayed into the area of personal law. Though adoption by itself is a fundamental right of an orphaned, abandoned or destitute child, the legal consequence of being given in adoption entails application of Family Law or what is termed as Personal law.

In the final analysis, it can be said that though the JJA was framed with *bonafide* intent, yet it has paved way to a number of doubts and difficulties in its practical implementation. The Muslims challenge the

constitutionality of the provision (section 41 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children Act, 2000) per se, since the concept of adoption runs contrary to the injunctions of the Holy Koran and their Personal Law.

Even among the Parsis the custom of naming a '*palak*' for undertaking obsequies of a deceased cannot be confused with adoption.

Hence, while it is true that the amendment of 2006 to the JJA 2000 has now defined 'Adoption' under section 2(aa) to mean "the process through which the adopted child is permanently separated from his biological parents and become the legitimate child of his adoptive parents with all the rights, privileges and responsibilities that are attached to the relationship", in view of what has been stated above Parsi parents adopting children in India are advised out of abundant precaution to execute testamentary and other documents to ensure the child's right of inheritance.

Intercountry adoptions are governed by both the laws of the child's home country and the laws of the adopting parent's country. In the case of intercountry adoption, ultimately, the child's legal status will depend on the laws of that country.

[The next issue of Hamazor 2/2013 will carry a follow up on this subject regarding the rules for adoption in the USA]



Noshir H Dadrawala is Chief Executive of the Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy and a Director on the Board of the International Centre for Nonprofit Law. He is also member of the Asian Philanthropy Advisory Network. He is author of several books and teaches at a number of Business Schools in India. He often speaks and writes on community issues.

## Chutney MayRee



Everyone needs something to connect to their ancestors; to know their roots. Food can tell it all - a story of our life, our connections, and our past. Food links one to his/her family tree for generations and an era gone by. It can actually put together many pieces of our life's puzzle for us. And, if we don't know where we are from, we will never know where we are going!

As one visualises the expanse of this world; how, many of us have uprooted ourselves to immigrate for our very own personal reasons, at times for inner fears or experiences that life brought to us, one also yearns to belong much more.

by nilofer mavalvala

We Parsis, as a community, love our food. It is usually with immense fondness and eagerness that we prepare and cook our food and while we are eating we often speak lovingly of our next meal. Sound familiar? The centre of our happy conversations tends to be all about food. The connection to family traditions, histories and culture through food is most apparent in the passing down of family recipes of *achars*, *chutneys*, and *murambas*.

And so, a simple inquiry from a friend set me thinking, trying my hand at making my great grandmother's family recipes of *achars* and *chutneys*. I had heard so much about Hilla fujji's *mango achar* but never tried it myself. And so the thought turned into a process and led to investigations into both the art of making these old style pickles, and learning more about our ancestors' infinite wisdom. In using the natural sun to let ingredients cook and mature, with the most ancient preservatives - natural rock salt and vinegar - we are able to create, like our mothers before us, some fantastic *achars* and *chutneys* without artificial additives.

Preserving foods is an ancient art going back over thousands of years, and every culture has its own favourites. We Parsis with our passion for everything edible, seem

to have mastered this. Using all ingredients abundantly available in our own surroundings and traditionally 'local', our preserves predominantly include mangoes of all varieties and at every stage, from the small raw green ones (*kaachi kerri*) to the large ripened and fleshy yellow ones; lemons, chillies, carrots, *dodhi* and even shrimp and fish roe! The base preservatives include salt, vinegar, water, and sugar or jaggery.

Historically, the actual idea of preserving came from two things: first, the seasonal growth of fruits and vegetables, especially in areas with harsh winters where nothing grew for up to six months; and second, the abundance of a local product as it had to stay with no trading, and little or no forms of transportation, so instead of allowing it to rot, and awaiting to eat the fruit seasonally, preservation provided a solution.

### ***Achar, chutney, or muramba?***

Chutney being an Anglo-Indian word is used more by the British and their Colonies.

Chutneys tend to be mashed up fruit with the end result looking like a darker thick preserve, and can be spicy. Chutney is most commonly made from tomatoes, mangoes, lemons and carrots. The addition of dry fruits like *kismis* (raisins), dates, figs and apricots are all part of our Persian heritage.

On the other hand, murambas are sweet, also made with mango or *dodhi*, [family of gourd] and occasionally with pears, peaches or apples.

The base of our achars is predominantly vinegar and jaggery. A wide variety of vinegar is produced, depending on the geography of where it is fermented. The Navsari Vinegar, in making since 1885 by the Kolah family, reputedly provides the perfect vinegar to make the best of Parsi Achars as the vinegar is distilled from pure sugar cane, making its taste unique. It is also available in a spicy flavour, making it perfect for what many of our taste buds seem to enjoy. In Lucknow, vinegar is famously made from *janboor*, [jamoona] a purple, harsh fruit, that tastes tangy (*wuvroo*). Janboor fruit is known to be medicinally excellent, and good for cleansing our systems, a natural detox. There are also vinegars in India made from dates, toddy, as well as coconuts. The Goanese use the latter two in their famous vindaloo, curries and solpater.

The common vinegar is made from pure apple cider, and this is what we all substitute in the West, as advertisement and bottling as well its easy access has made us aware of just this. But because the subcontinent did not grow apples in abundance, vinegar was not made from this fruit when our great grandmothers made the *gor keri* or *gajar mewa nu achar*.

Interestingly, a typical Indian Achar has little or no sweetness added to it at all. But ours tend to be always sweetened. It is widely believed that our love for the sweet and sour, *khatu mithu*, is from our ancestral Persian roots, while the other flavours of spices and oils are relatively more recently adapted from our Gujarati family after our arrival in Mother India.

Achars, chutneys and murumbas are all eaten in small quantities to add extra spice or sweetness to our food, that extra 'umph'. Traditionally, in every family, there is always an achar, chutney or murumba specifically attached to a particular dish to

complete it. My daughter, who has not grown up in the subcontinent, found this rather strange but understood when I reminded her that it was the same for wines. Some commonly available to try out are the *buffena*, *pani nu achar*, *gor keri*, mango chutney, *ambakalio*, *mathia nu achar*, *keri no murumbo* which are typically eaten with *khichree*, *dhundaar*, *curry-chawul*, *goovaar* and *dhunsaak*.

The traditional Bahman mahino, *bahman roj* [*vegetarian month and the special day in it*] and its special vegetarian food of *Khichri*, *kudhi* and *buffena*, is still a favourite wherever we are located in the world. All *lugun nu bhonu* [wedding feast] is started with the *gajar mewa nu achar*, also known as *lagan nu achar* in Mumbai. The *patra nu bhonu* [food served on banana leaves] whether for a *navjote*, *lagan* or a *ghambar* always includes this flavourful pickle along with the *keri no murumbo*. [*mango preserve*]

The composition of the achar is basically the salt being the preservative and the sun actually cooking the pickle with its constant warm stream and the vinegar and jaggery giving it the sweet and sour also helping to preserve the achar and flavouring it.

All the other added spices are either for healthy eating, purposes like turmeric and garlic, or for the flavours. Most achars will stay fresh for over a year, without any artificial preservative, if bottled and stored properly but most importantly if allowed to remain unopened. Once it is in use it should be eaten within a month or two. Some foods need to be covered in oil to keep it from getting bad. Pickles like fish roe and prawns must be completely covered in oil at the time of bottling. This is the preservative to keep it for long periods of time.

Residing in Canada, we are most fortunate, that we are able to live almost similarly as we did growing up in Karachi in many ways. Here, we are able to purchase all our fresh fruits and vegetables directly brought in freshly from the subcontinent every day. The variety of vinegars, jaggery, sugar, all

Did you know?

Achar is an ancient Hebrew name meaning "troublemaker". It is still popular to name a son in their culture Achar.

or

The French city of Poitou, has a coat of arms specially made for the Achar family. A name of honour and distinction perhaps in that day and age?

Dedicated to my loving wife Mehroo Bhote, my life long partner of 58 years

The word Achar comes from Indo-Aryan languages such as Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Marathi, Punjabi, Sinhalese and Gujarati. Interestingly there is an Achara tribe in Rajasthan.

the ingredients necessary in a great achar, are in abundance and no real substitution is necessary. This brings me to my sudden desire to revive the art of preparing these amazing achars and to pair them with the right foods, to share this limited knowledge with the next generation. I see many who are simply not aware of most of them. Perhaps many of the parents came to the West very young, having married in their early twenties, and since have striven toward working hard to send their kids to universities, leaving no time to make achars to add to their already rushed weeknight dinners. In spite of a hectic lifestyle, it is creditable that many still actually cook Parsi food on a daily basis, and the next generation is aware of what dhansak is. The importance of all these old customs, rituals, traditions is what collectively makes us who we are and makes us a community.

Every culture tries to find and stay within its origins and clings to its roots. We need to encourage this more within our community. There is a lack of pride in far too many of us and not enough is known about who we are and where we came from.

When this current 20 something generation becomes parents, they may find themselves lost, unable to trace all aspects of their roots, groping to find a sense of belonging, and it may be too late. It is not always about religion, or prayers, but the complete package that makes us who we are, food being perhaps the backbone and an integral part in the origins of the human race.

Families for centuries built a reputation of having the best recipes, a silent unspoken competition. Every family had its own specialities which came down from generation to generation. Adapted no doubt along the way! And why not for I truly believe, "Cooking is an art, baking a science". ■■■■

Incredibly diverse, is how her life is best described. Born and raised in Karachi, Niloufer's creativity and enthusiasm to learn has given her every opportunity, from banking to medicine, business to catering gourmet meals, she has found her niche teaching international cuisine. She pursues community work and travelling. Her present endeavor is Property Management and working on a jointly published cookbook. Residing in Mississauga, Ontario with her wonderful and supportive family she continues to be a free spirit.



## Bawas Bonding over Potluck

Farida Master raises her plate to the all pervading potluck culture amongst the bawas of Auckland

“So which potluck group do you belong to?” was one of the first questions asked when I arrived in New Zealand eight years ago. Need I add that you haven't really “arrived” in the City of Sails, till you actually belong to a ubiquitous potluck group?

Getting back to the all important social niceties, when I nonchalantly replied to the lady in question that I didn't really belong to any group, she peered at me through her gold rimmed glasses, sizing me up. Almost instantly her expression changed from surprise to deep concern written over her face. It said, ‘you deserve a hug, you poor little nobody's child.’

Now who would have thought that the simple act of getting a humble pot of left-over food (that was how the idea of potlucks originated where leftovers would be put in a pot and kept warm to feed people who turned up at your door-step on short notice) would have become a rite of passage to bonding with the community in a foreign country?

Though I can safely say that the food served at any *bawa* potluck would be far from stale! On the contrary, it could teach Gordon Ramsay a thing or two about Parsi *bhonu* or any continental fare under the sun. On a personal front, I found myself trying hard to ape Martha Stewart, apart from being glued to every channel that has made food a spectator sport. Then there is my friend Jasmine playing Nigella Lawson to the hilt with her sinful desserts - especially *the lagan nu custard* which is inevitably a show-stopper with a repeat performance at every potluck.

Zubin Mistry recalls the time his potluck group of eight to ten families had decided on an ambitious *lagan nu bhonu* served on

the traditional banana leaf. “We ended up having everything from chicken farcha to patra ni machi, sali boti, palau dar, saria, achar, the works,” he relates. “Now we are planning a novel potluck with drinks at one house and starters at the other; then move on to the third house for mains and the fourth for dessert. We can move from house to house in one evening only because all of us live so close by,” he says.

Pirzad Rustomjee says that his potluck group has been having themes that range from traditional South Indian to Italian cuisine that has more kick than a Sicilian grandmother! “We google the cuisine and then ask each family to make a particular dish and even dress up according to the theme. This to break the monotony of the same food and add interest to the evening,” he shares.

Though everyone is not as lucky to partake in the fancy feast of the taste-buds week after week. There are plenty who have had to suffer in silence with a brave smile. “It’s funny how people who cook well always cook less and those who desperately need a crash course in cooking have copious amount of food on the table,” grins a recent migrant who has been secretly searching for a group of culinary wizards who will accept him in their fold. With some luck, he hopes to find his pot of gold!

Eric Pawvalla who moved to Gold Coast, Australia a year ago misses the weekly potlucks and says that nowhere in the world are there as many bring a dish along get-togethers as they are in Auckland, New Zealand. Other families who have moved away from the land of the long white cloud agree that Auckland could very well have become the potluck capital of sorts. It doesn’t take long to figure out that if you want to be a part of the friendly neighbourhood circle in Auckland, you’d better be a groupie. Mind you, there are no undertones here!

It helps that the concentration of the Zoroastrians in Auckland is mostly in the suburb of Pakuranga that sits cheek-by-jowl with the neighbouring areas of Botany and Dannemora. Hardly surprising then that Pakuranga has been dubbed as Parsiranga

where most Zoroastrians live barely ten minutes away, that is when they are not living two houses away. Why, we even have the Parisanna lodge run by Aspi and Dolly Shahlori in Parsiranga, I mean Pakuranga. There are plenty of reasons why potlucks have become a mainstay of our social fabric in Auckland. One of them being that it is a source of entertainment without burning a hole in your pocket. With most of the denizens being first generation Zoroastrians in New Zealand, they find it easier to take turns in hosting potlucks at their home without having to shell out the dollars at expensive restaurants. The potluck group soon becomes an extended family and a support system. The added advantage is that the kids get to catch up and practically grow up together with the parents meeting up week after week.

“We also get to eat some tasty food when we are tired of our wife’s cooking. After all, variety is the spice of life,” laughs a potluck regular. He goes on to add that potlucks sometimes inspire the slightly competitive spirit amongst the women folk which is a good thing! “That way we benefit out of the one upmanship in the hall of potluck fame,” he reveals in a hushed tone.

“We also get to gossip about all the people who are not there,” adds another in a jocular vein.

“Most of all we get a sense of belonging since our families are so far away. This is how our friends become our family here,” point out a couple who’ve moved from another part of the city just to be closer to the rest of the clan.

With food being a great connector especially with the clan that believes in the adage of eat, drink and be merry, it’s little wonder then that the luck of the pot is what keeps the community together. What is it they say about a community that eats together stays together? Luckily, this way no one has to foot the bill! ■■■■

*Farida Master has been the editor of several publications in India which include ‘Stardust’, ‘Society Fashion’, ‘Citadel’, which are magazines, and the 8-page lifestyle supplement of ‘Pune Times Of India’. She has also authored, ‘The Making Of A Legend’, a biography of Dr K B Grant. In Auckland, Farida has been the Features Editor of ‘The Aucklander’ a magazine. Currently she freelances with a host of publications in New Zealand and India.*



Dedicated to my loving wife Mehroo Bhote, my life long partner of 58 years

**Come  
together**  
with your association,  
family and friends,  
and join us!



*Zoroastrians  
Stepping Forward*  
**Second Annual  
International Day of Service**  
**March 21 - May 5, 2013**

## ShoeDrive

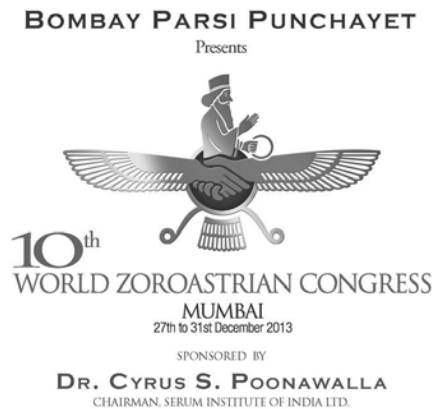
**Zoroastrians Stepping Forward**

Shoes protect our feet and safeguard us against disease and infection. 300 million people live each day without a pair of shoes. Worldwide, walking is the primary mode of transportation. Millions of adults and children suffer from bilharziasis, podocorniosis, staph infections, and other diseases because they do not own a pair of shoes. We invite you to help us change this.



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International Director



## 10th World Zoroastrian Congress Press Release

The 10th World Zoroastrian Congress will be held in Mumbai from 27th December 2013 to 31st December 2012.

The theme of the 10th World Zoroastrian Congress, Mumbai is "Zoroastrianism in the 21st Century: Nurturing Growth and Affirming our Identity". The weblink is [www.wzcmumbai.com](http://www.wzcmumbai.com).

Dr Cyrus S Poonawalla, Chairman, Serum Institute of India Ltd. has graciously sponsored the 10th WZC to a significant extent.

The occasion of the 10th WZC will be utilised to showcase the contribution of the Parsi / Iranian Zoroastrian community to India and the world, and to provide an impetus for future generations to build on this contribution and ensure that the reputation of the community, which is completely disproportionate to its actual physical size, continues to evolve respect.

For this purpose, it is intended to make the 10th World Zoroastrian Congress not only a forum to discuss the community's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities internally but also to ensure that the focus of the country is on the community.

The Congress will not only have prominent Parsi / Iranian Zoroastrians in all fields exchanging their views and preparing a blueprint for the community, but also important dignitaries attending the Congress, imparting it with an importance and acknowledging the past contributions and the future of the community.

Various committees have been formed for a systematic and intense approach towards the success of the 10th WZC. The **Organising Committee** is headed by Chairman of Bombay Parsi Punchayet, Mr Dinshaw Mehta, the six BPP trustees, with the Honorary Secretary, the CEO and the Sr. Executive Welfare, BPP.

**An exhibition of Parsi heritage** has also been conceptualized by Mrs. Pheroza Godrej and Mrs. Firoza Punthakey Mistree, titled "From Canton to Mumbai - The Story of Parsi Textiles", this exhibition to be held at the National Gallery of Modern Art, is intended to showcase Parsi Iranian textiles and costumes. Showcasing Canton of the 19th Century from where Parsi merchants purchased the Garas and brought them to Bombay as well as Iranian Costumes to be displayed. These costumes were worn by immigrant Zoroastrians from Iran (popularly referred to as the Iranians in India) when they came to Bombay in the 19th century.

**Proposed Programme** for the Congress will see a total of approximately 30 sessions and panel discussions addressed by eminent speakers and scholars from India and all over the world. There would be few topics dedicated to breakout sessions with experts speaking on diverse topics.

Based on your experience and insight into community issues in your part of the world, it is requested to give your suggestion about topics / subjects that you believe would have an impact on a global Parsi / Irani Zoroastrian audience, and to recommend names of prospective speakers who would have an in depth knowledge of such topics / subjects, articulating them in an interesting way. Since time is short it will be appreciated if you could provide your inputs at your earliest convenience.

In order to encourage the creative talent in our community, the Organising Committee of the 10th WZC hosted an international competition, open to all Parsi/Iranian Zoroastrians, to design the logo for the Congress. The prize amount for the chosen logo was **IRs 100,000/-**.

**More than 350 entries** were **received from across the world, persons ranging from 13 to 83 years**. 75% of the entries were received from India, the rest from USA, Iran, Canada, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Australia and UK.

**Ashdeen Lilaowala, aged 31, from New Delhi, India is the winner of the 10th WZC International Logo Contest, Mumbai.**

“... I (therefore) wish  
enduring strength to  
come, in order to  
uphold the truth ...”

Yasna 43.1

*Insler translation*



The World Zoroastrian Organisation