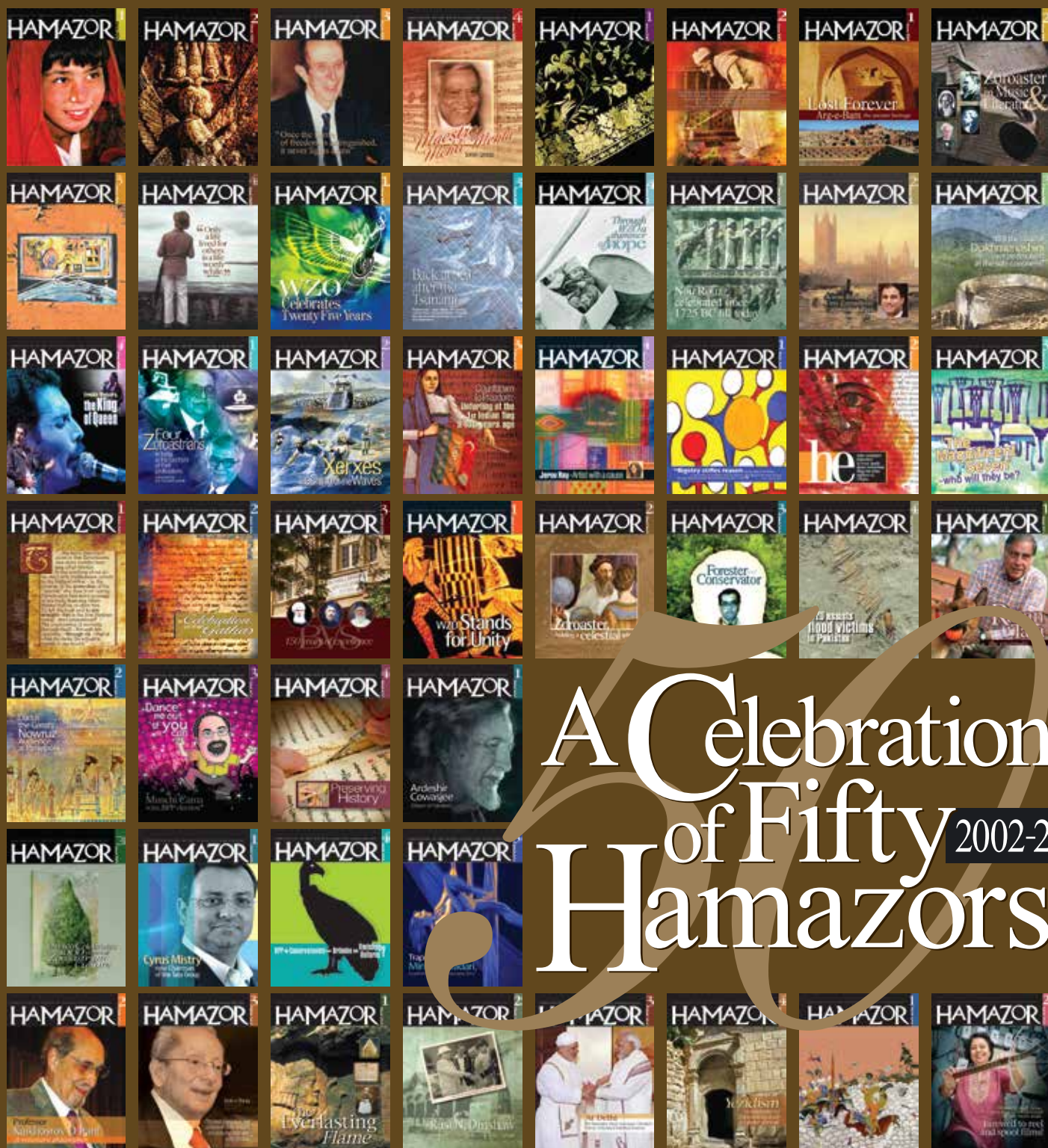


publication of the world zoroastrian organisation

HAMAZOR

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The Bridge House, p 68

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COVER

Depicts 49 covers of
past Hamazors.

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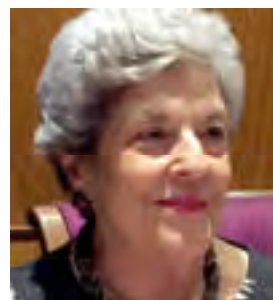
Toxy Cowasjee

Karachi, Pakistan

From the Editor

With this current issue we decide to reflect and celebrate the completion of 50 issues of Hamazor, since it became a full publication in January 2002, by presenting articles across a range of themes that have figured in previous issues. These articles embrace areas that have been and continue to be important social issues of recent decades.

Choosing a few from scores of excellent articles published over the past twelve years was a challenging task, but there was some method to the madness. Selections were made according to three categories: Timeless Zoroastrianism, Our Culture & Community and Into the Future. Time-bound reports dealing such as awards, disasters, or congresses, as well as book reviews were not considered. Hamazor has also printed many biographies celebrating the achievements of past and present Zoroastrians, but we decided to reprint only one because there is one Zoroastrian that is both a community and a global icon – the one and only, Freddie Mercury.



For these stimulating articles we thank the authors who themselves come from a range of nationalities and backgrounds, including renowned scholars.

Hamazor has never set out to establish publishing traditions or to compete with other journals. The goal of this journal is to contribute information, to stimulate interest in and extend knowledge of our great religion by presenting alternative viewpoints, communicating good values, and to educate on diverse subjects. Oftentimes, there have been financial and other difficulties in just getting issues of Hamazor prepared and published, yet, in the process it has built up a valued reputation and a longevity that was possibly never imagined by its founders in 1980. My enthusiasm for the publication, from concept and theme to the mail-out, has been a rewarding activity, and, at this point in time dare one say, successful in terms of quality and reputation. But this is thanks only to the ready support of a huge and varied number of writers who have willingly shared their knowledge across the forum. Hamazor acknowledges each and every one of you.

Hamazor also thanks Tannaz Minwalla for designing each of our covers, making it a visual joy even before opening the pages, as well as Dina McIntyre for

selecting and sharing Professor Stanley Insler's translations of Yasnas from the Gathas, which appear on the back cover.

With this issue we also celebrate WZO's thirty-fifth anniversary, a momentous occasion as now the World Zoroastrian Organisation at last has its own premises, the Bridge House, Feltham, which is in outer London. We are a long way from actually using the building as funds are sorely required for refurbishing and modifying the premises. Any donation will be gladly accepted.

Another proud and very happy announcement to be shared with our world-wide community is the honour bestowed on 64-year-old Ms Zarine Kharas on June 12, 2015, when Zarine was made Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. Each year on the occasion of Her Majesty, the Queen's official birthday, a select few are honoured for their outstanding contribution to the United Kingdom. To be dubbed a Dame or a Knight is one of the highest awards of the realm given to an individual, and we could not be more proud that Zarine Kharas was honoured for embodying the spirit of charity so inherent in Zoroastrianism.

I would be remiss if I did not thank our readers and subscribers for supporting Hamazor. Our valued subscribers include WZO members, libraries in universities, libraries of repute, and individuals around the world. Please keep up your subscriptions and bring your colleagues, friends and communities on board to help contribute to the great conversation and debates facing Zoroastrians in the decades ahead. Hamazor wishes our readers well and hopes that you will journey with us for many more years, though I will not be along for the ride.

And onward we go ...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony Curajee", with a horizontal line underneath.

Timeless Zoroastrianism



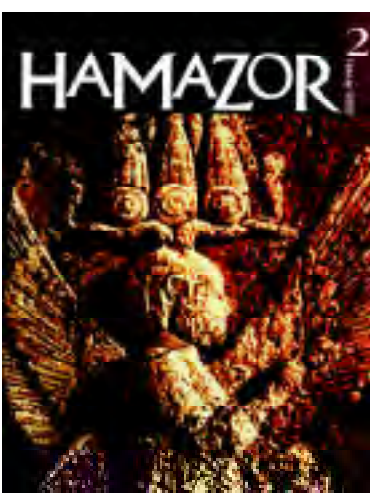
Zoroaster,
holding a **celestial** sphere

Hamazor cover Issue 2/2010, Tannaz Minwalla. From the Vatican fresco, The School of Athens by Raffaello Sanzio / Raphael.

Hamzoor

by farhang mehr

“Hamazoor Bim. Hamazoor Hama Ashu Bim, Hamazoore Vish Kerfah Bim,
Hamran Bim; Dir Adj Venah-o-Venah Karan Bim; Ham Kerfahe Bastah Koshtian-
o Nikan-o Vahane Haft Keshvar Zamin Bim”



This, in Pazand, is the last paragraph in Avesta-e *Kushti*, recited by Irani Zarathushtis, in their daily prayers, after tying the *Kushti*. It is beautiful and meaningful. It conveys three ideas, essential to the Zarathushti faith. These are righteousness, liberality and unity. Its English translation reads:

Let us unite with all righteous people,
with all good-doers, with all virtuous
individuals; may we keep away from
sin and sinful; may we join all the
righteous and good people of the
entire world.

This reminds the person saying the prayer,
of the importance of unity and “*Hamazoor*”
for both, survival and progress of
Zarathushtis and spread of the good
religion.

O ye all, working with one will
Let Truth, Good Thought and Right-
mindedness,
Through which you progress to perfection,
Bring to you the wished-for happiness!
(Yasna 51-20) D J Irani trans.

The recommended unity applies to Good
persons (Ashavan), who must keep away
from choosing the path of evil.

According to Thy Faith, O Mazda, the choice of
Righteousness is its own vindication,
The choice of evil, its own undoing:
Hence do I seek and strive for the fellowship of
Good Thought,
And renounce all association with the follower
of Evil.
(Yasna 49-3) D J Irani trans.

However, a follower of Truth, upon
encountering an evil doer, should reveal to
him/her the noble life of rectitude and
protect him/her from destruction.

But he who will not help to transform Evil,
Shall be with those in the Abode of the Lie,
For he who looks upon evil with tolerance is
No other than evil.
(Yasna 46-6) D J Irani trans.

Finally Zarathushti (*Kushti Bastegan*,
namely those who have been initiated into
the faith by wearing Sudreh and Kushti)
should unite themselves with righteous
people from other creeds or nations.

Righteous is he who supports other
righteous ones. (Yasna 46-6). This is in
accord with Freedom of Choice pronounced
in (Yasna 30-2) and the Culture or
Civilization of Righteousness referred to in
(Yasna 31-1). Culture of Truth is described
in Yasna 33-2, 3):

He/She who opposes Evil by his/her thought or
Word,
Or by the work of his/her two hands,
He/She who instructs people to their good,
Makes a worthy offering of faith to Thy
Purpose,
O Ahura Mazda!

He/She who is most good to the righteous,
Be he a noble, or a peasant, or a dependent,
He/She who zealously makes the good living
Creation flourish,
He/She shall come to dwell with Truth in the
Realm of the Good Mind.

All righteous people, irrespective of the faith
to which they belong, enjoy the bliss of
Heaven.

This then is the true meaning underlying the word *Hamazoor* in our religion. That is why WZO which stands for Zarathushti unity worldwide, selected it, as the name of it's publication.

Let us all join WZO, subscribe to the principle of *Hamazoor* and unite in treading the path of Asha.

Published in Hamazor Issue 2/2002 pp 4 - 5



Farhang Mehr is Professor Emeritus of International Relations at Boston University. A dedicated Zarathushti he has spent all his life serving the cause of Zarathushti-din and Zarathushti community including 16 years in Tehran Zartushty Anjuman, 12 years as its President. As an

educator, lawyer and economist, he held high position in the Government, including Vice-Prime Minister, acting Minister of Finance, Governor for Iran in OPEC Board of Governors,

President of Iran National Insurance Company, and President of Pahlavi (Shiraz) University. He has authored many books and articles, given interviews to several world and local radio and televisions. He is the co-editor of Bilingual Humata Journal published in USA. He is married to Parichehr and they have three children, Mehrdad, Mehran and Mitra.

A note to the reader:

All through the pages of this publication, the image and brief bio of the author was relevant when the article was written.

Zarathustra

by stanley insler

We live in troubled times today, when danger, uncertainty, deception and ignorance seem to be rampant. Terrorist acts occur with alarming frequency and outbreak of war in different parts of the world appears to be imminent. Disclosure of financial frauds and scams occurs often and even the highest courts of the lands try to subvert the established decisions of the past. The stability of our lives seems threatened, and our expectations for a peaceful and prosperous future appear to be undermined and thwarted by these malicious actions. Frustration, despair and disillusionment are commonplace, and the search for positive changes among these depressing situations seems to lead nowhere. At every turn we encounter disappointment; anxiety gnaws at our brains and emotions.

We feel all these disturbing things strongly because we are part of these vexing times, and they impinge upon every aspect of our lives. Our pain is a living pain, and there seems to be no remedy at hand that can quiet it. But these unfortunate and often disastrous situations have occurred throughout history, and in many cases they have been documented in detail. This was especially true in the 20 th century, when literacy and communication had developed on a global scale, matching only the development of the means of mass destruction. But if we reach back further into history, we also find ample evidence and testimony of such malicious acts and depressing conditions that were recorded for future generations. Remarkably, nowhere have these matters been noted with such clarity and such passion as in a small collection of poetic hymns that stand at the beginning of Iranian literary and religious history.

Here I am referring to the *Songs of Zarathustra*, an extraordinary collection of



some 250 poetic verses composed by a remarkable philosopher and religious innovator whose name is the basis of the world religion known as Zoroastrianism. Zarathustra lived sometime in the very early centuries of the 1st millennium before our era, and he taught and preached most probably in the northern reaches of Iran. All that survives from his fertile and penetrating mind is a small set of sacrificial hymns chiefly dedicated to Ahura Mazda, The Wise Lord, who was his supreme god. Despite the scantiness of this collection of hymns, known as *gathas* in his language, Zarathustra left an indelible imprint on the subsequent history of Iran.

Zarathustra's times were as troubled as ours today. He informs us in his work that evil rulers attack just and innocent people, that the rich rob the poor, that the judges produce false decisions in order aid their benefactors.

Zarathustra goes on to say that fury and violence assault the people and that everywhere deceit and deception hold the upper hand. Like us, Zarathustra often expresses his despair and frustration to Ahura Mazda, and although he longs for change, he sometimes wonders whether such positive change will ever take place.

However, driven by anguish and yet moved by what he called the disease of his world, like a physician Zarathustra sought to find a remedy to heal and cure it. He began his quest by searching for those things which were unchanging and immutable, things

that resisted the perfidy and upheavals in the world that surrounded him. These he found in the elements of nature, such as the sun, moon, stars, wind, waters, plants and the like. Moreover, Zarathustra noted that these elements reappeared with both reliability and regularity. The sun rose and set each day, the moon cycled each month, the stars reappeared every night, the flow of

rivers was constant, plants and crops grew anew every year. All these elements clearly obeyed an overarching principle of nature that both maintained them in an unchanging manner and also imparted order to their existence. Like his IndoIranian forefathers, Zarathustra called this principle *truth*.

But who created these immutable elements of nature and who formulated the principle of *truth* that controlled the order of these things in the world?

Furthermore, what was the purpose in doing so? Surely only

a being of great power and wisdom was capable of fashioning these elements and creating the principle of *truth* that gave rise to their eternal design and rhythm. This divine and superior being Zarathustra named Ahura Mazda~, the Wise Lord, for the Ahura Mazda~ was the only true and valid god. Furthermore, Zarathustra understood why the Wise Lord had fashioned these things. Ahura Mazda had also created all living beings, and through his *good thinking* the Wise Lord realized that there had to be means to sustain and nourish these creatures. This was the purpose of the harmonious and unchanging



An early interpretation of Zarathushtra from Germany.
Courtesy of Sarosh Petiagara, ahuramazda.com

design of nature. It was created for the good of the living world. Through these reflections, Zarathustra conceived of a totally new religious system in which *wisdom, truth, and good thinking* were its highest principles, a system intended to produce *well-being and continuing life* in the world of mankind.

However, if it had been Ahura Mazda's intention to create a good life on earth, why was the world of man beset by unsettling, dangerous and menacing conditions? Zarathustra easily saw the answer. It was because evil also existed in the world. In fact, everywhere Zarathustra looked, he found an evil counterpart to every good condition. Besides peace and friendship, abundant food and water there were war and enmity, starvation and drought; besides knowledge and understanding, loyalty and respect there were ignorance and prejudice, opposition and disrespect. In all his reflections on the human condition, Zarathustra realized that for every bright aspect of life there was also a dark side, and consequently he was able to systematize all of human existence and human endeavor into two camps: the side of good and the side of evil.

What, then, was the cause of evil? If *truth* was the principle that organized the good and beneficial aspects of life, then its counterpart must be responsible for what is evil and destructive in the world. In Zarathustra's conception, that counterpart was *deceit*. *Deceit* was the corrosive principle of existence that viciously strove to undermine the principles of the good life. Consequently, for the founder of this new and innovation religious and philosophical system, there was no middle ground, no centrist position. There existed only two opposing forces in the world, and these were *truth* and *deceit*. Furthermore, every man was free to choose to ally himself either with the side of *truth* or the side of *deceit*. There was no predestination in Zarathustra's religion. There was only free will, and every responsible person was obliged to choose sides in the continuing conflict between good and evil.

Out of these profound reflections Zarathustra envisioned a different world order that he called the *good vision*. It was the vision of the world of mankind governed by the same harmonious and reliable principle of *truth* that controlled the order of the immutable elements of nature, and it could be promoted among men through *understanding and good thinking*. Whether as individuals or as ruling authorities, Zarathustra believed that this *rule of truth and good thinking* could be enacted on earth through *good thoughts, good words and good deeds*. These were the only means to achieve *well-being and continuing life* on earth.

Zarathustra's life was not easy. His ideas were too radical for the traditional community in which he was raised. He tells us in his poetry that he was driven from his family and land, and that he wandered under great hardship until he was accepted by the nobleman Vishtaspa, whose tribe or clan became the first adherents of Zarathustra's teaching. This was a modest beginning assuredly, but Zarathustra's ideas were so persuasive that they were subsequently adopted by the great empires that arose in Iran. Throughout history the Iranians were famed for their great respect for truth, an enduring testimonial to the majestic teachings of Zarathustra. Today Zarathustra's ideas seem in no way radical, but offer in many respects the paradigm for building a good life for all mankind. Organizations like the United Nations strive to bring peace and prosperity to the world by condemning war, terrorism and aggression, by eliminating disease, hunger, and poverty, by encouraging understanding and discussion among disputing countries. Other public-minded organizations attempt to control the globalization of greed and deception. All these beneficial activities mirror ideas that are prominent in the teachings of Zarathustra.

As individuals we must also take a firm and unswerving stand for promoting *truth* in the world. Although our personal efforts may seem useless in the broader picture of

things, they can be effective in our dealings and relations with other individuals. Indeed Zarathustra enjoins us in his *Songs* to win each other through *truth* because it will be of great benefit to us. The method is simple. Through *good thoughts, good words and good deeds* each of us can promote the good life on earth in our family, among our friends and in our communities. The battle against *deceit* can be won in a cumulative campaign, but it demands perseverance and loyalty.

Published in Hamazor Issue 3/2003 pp 36 - 38



Stanley Insler is Salisbury Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology at Yale University, where he served several terms as chairman of the Linguistics Department. He has written extensively about the literature and languages of both ancient India and Iran. Professor Insler is best known for his 1975 translation and commentary of the *Songs of Zarathustra*, which he is currently revising. Between his many academic commitments, he has often lectured on Zarathustra in India, Britain and The States. He is a member of many learned societies, including The American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

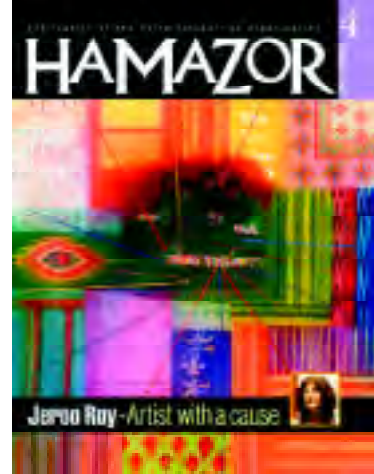
The Yatha Ahu Vairyo Prayer

by dina mcintyre

Before we discuss the *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* prayer, I would like to give a brief explanation of Mazda and His attributes, the amesha spenta, because their meanings are relevant to the *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*.

In referring to the “God” he worships, Zarathushtra does not use the generic word for “god” in the language of his day. According to the late Professor Thieme, Zarathushtra’s notion of “God” is Wisdom personified.¹ Specifically, he calls “God” most often “Mazda” which means “Wisdom”, and also “Ahura” which means “Lord”. And he sometimes combines these two nouns into the compound noun Mazda Ahura, which, centuries later, became the compound name Ahura Mazda. In the Gathas, Mazda has certain attributes which were later called the amesha spenta. These attributes of Mazda also appear in man.

The first is **asha**, which literally means “what fits”. It has been translated as “truth”, “order”, and “righteousness”. You well may wonder: How can one word mean so many different things? Well, Zarathushtra sees reality in terms of what he calls the existences of matter and mind (Y28.2). In the existence of matter, “what fits” is what is correct, factually accurate, hence factual truth. It includes the true order of things in our physical universe, the laws that underlie the way our physical universe functions. In the existence of mind, “what fits” is also what is correct, what’s right - not a puritanical, judgmental rectitude, but one which, in the Gathas, includes such qualities as goodness, love, beneficence, solicitude, friendship, compassion, justice - all of the values that we consider to be “true” “good” and “right”. So in essence,



“asha” means the truth of things, or the true order of things, in the existences of both matter and mind. So when you hear the word “truth” for “asha” please remember that it means not only factual truth, but also the truths of mind and spirit - all that is good and right.

The next amesha spenta is **vohu mano** the meaning of which, according to Professor Insler includes, a good mind (the instrument), good thinking (the process), and good thought (the product)². Needing to select one, for translation, he translates vohu mano as “good thinking”. Vohu mano is the means by which we search for, and comprehend, the truth - factual truths, and also the truths of mind and spirit (asha).

The next amesha spenta is **spenta aramaiti**. Scholars who are linguists are in substantial disagreement as to the meaning of aramaiti, which they variously translate as rightmindedness;³ divine wisdom;⁴ piety or respect;⁵ faith and devotion;⁶ satisfying intention;⁷ fittingness, submission and humility;⁸ and serenity, stability, tranquility.⁹ It is clear that linguistics alone has not provided an answer for the meaning of aramaiti, although each linguist passionately believes in his translation. But a contextual analysis is helpful. The way Zarathushtra uses the word in the Gathas suggests that aramaiti means the realization (or making real) of truth (asha) with our thoughts, words and actions of truth – the proverbial good thoughts, good words and good actions which are a fundament of Zarathushtra’s thought. For example, he says: “But to this world He came with the rule of good thinking and of truth, and (our) enduring [aramaiti] gave body and breath (to it)...” Y30.7.¹⁰ How do we give “body and breath” to the rule of truth and good thinking? We cannot do so with rightmindedness, or piety, or respect, or devotion or serenity alone. We can only give the rule of truth and good thinking “body and breath” - give it life - with our thoughts, words and actions. Similarly, in Y44.6 Zarathushtra says: “...Through its actions, [aramaiti] gives substance to the truth...”, indicating that actions are included

within the concept of aramaiti. And he describes a person of aramaiti as follows: “[Spenta] is a man of [aramaiti]. He is so by reason of his understanding, his words, his actions, his conception [daena]...” Y51.21, indicating that the concept of aramaiti includes all these things - understanding, words, action, vision. ¹¹ There is no one English word that adequately translates aramaiti, so I leave it untranslated.

The fourth amesha spenta is **vohu xshathra**, which means good rule. In the Gathas it is often called the rule of truth and good thinking¹², and on one occasion, the rule of aramaiti.¹³ Good rule is the use of power, not for self-aggrandizement or control, but to advance the truth, and the resulting good society.

The fifth and sixth amesha spenta – often found together in the Gathas – are **haurvatat** which means completeness or perfection, and **amereetat** which literally means “non-deathness”, although it is universally translated as “immortality”. I do not think “immortality” bears the weight of a contextual analysis, but I will not get into that here.

The seventh concept, **spenta mainyu** is a benevolent spirit or way of being – a way of being that is in accord with truth (asha) - that chooses the truth¹⁴, and that derives its “spenta” quality from truth¹⁵. Insler, translates “spenta” as virtuous, more recently as benevolent, and he translates “mainyu” as spirit. Jafarey translates “mainyu” as mentality, and many Zoroastrians have come to prefer “mentality” as the correct translation for “mainyu”. But with due respect, this does not accord with the way in which Zarathushtra uses the word in the Gathas. For example: In Y30.3 Zarathushtra says: “Yes, there are two fundamental [mainyu], twins which are renowned to be in conflict. In thought and in word, in action, they are two ...” Y30.3. If the two mainyu manifest themselves in thought, word and action, then all three activities would have to be included within the concept of mainyu, not just mentality. Similarly, in Y45.2,

Zarathushtra describes a hypothetical conversation in which the spenta mainyu says to its opposite: "... Neither our thoughts nor teachings nor intentions, neither our preferences nor words, neither our actions nor conceptions [daena] nor our souls are in accord ..." Y45.2, indicating that the concept of mainyu includes all those things - ie. the full spectrum of a way of being, of which mentality or thought is only a part. I therefore take mainyu to mean "spirit" as in a "way-of-being", like the spirit of liberty, the spirit of independence, the spirit of friendship, et cetera.

There is some dispute as to whether spenta mainyu is, historically, an amesha spenta, but the debate is not relevant for our purposes, and I include spenta mainyu within my use of the term amesha spenta. Let us turn to the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer.

yatha ahu vairyo
atha ratush ashat chit hacha
vangheush dazda manangho
shyaothananam angheush mazdai
xshathremcha ahurai.a
yim dregubyo dadat vastarem

This prayer appears in Yasna 27 verse 13. It is called the Ahuna Vairya (or the Ahunavar) in ancient Zoroastrian texts. It is in Gathic Avestan, and in the same poetic metre as the Ahunavaiti Gatha. Many scholars believe that it was composed by Zarathushtra himself. Unfortunately, translations of this prayer vary widely. The translation I use is from that of Professor Insler of Yale University.¹⁶ The words in square brackets have been inserted by me, by way of explanation, or to show you the applicable Gathic word (but without its grammatical inflections and variations). Here is the translation.

Just as the Lord [ahu] must be chosen
So also the judgment [ratush] in accord with
truth [asha]
In consequence of (this) good thinking
[vohu mano, the comprehension and
choosing of asha]
establish the rule [xshathra]
of actions stemming from an existence of good
thinking

for the Wise One [mazda],
and for the lord [ahura] whom they
established as pastor for the needy-dependents.

As you can see, the Ahuna Vairya prayer is not addressed to Mazda, as prayer normally is. Nor is it a hymn of praise. It is a manthra, a nugget of wisdom, the purpose of which is to remind us of certain truths, as we recite it and meditate over it. So what does this manthra, this nugget of wisdom, teach us. It teaches us some very powerful and beautiful things. Let us consider them.

In the long history of Zoroastrianism, this prayer, the **Ahuna Vairya**, has been regarded as something of a talisman, a very potent charm, capable of producing extraordinary effects. In a Younger Avestan text, Yasna 19 verse 10 (which is not a part of the Gathas), we are told that Ahura Mazda said that:

"... this utterance is a thing of such a nature, that if all the corporeal and living world should learn it, and learning hold fast to it, they would be redeemed from their mortality!"¹⁷

And a later Pahlavi text, the Bundahishn, (written some time after the Arab invasion) describes it as a formula for defeating evil, stating:

"... even so as is declared in revelation, that when one of its [the Ahunavar's] three parts was uttered, the evil spirit contracted his body through fear, and when two parts of it were uttered, he fell upon his knees, and when all of it was uttered he became confounded and impotent as to the harm he caused the creatures of Ahuramazd ..." ¹⁸

It is significant, that even after the devastation wrought by Alexander and by the later Arab invasion, the idea survived in what remained of the Zoroastrian community, that the Ahuna Vairya is so powerful, that it not only enables us to transcend our mortality, as stated in Yasna 19, but also enables the defeat of evil, as the Bundahishn states. A potent talisman indeed.

Naturally, one wonders: How? how does the Ahuna Vairya defeat evil? How does it help us to transcend our mortality?

To answer the first question (how does it defeat evil) we have to remember Zarathushtra's idea of evil. In the Gathas, every descriptive reference to evil, is the product of wrongful choices. Zarathushtra describes evil as a primordial way of being [mainyu]. He does not specify its origins. But he suggests that in our existence, we bring it to life, we give it substance, we make it real, when we choose it with our thoughts, words and actions. Therefore a key to the destruction of evil and the suffering it causes, is making the right choices, which brings us back to the Ahuna Vairya prayer - the prayer of choices.

This prayer specifies three things that are to be chosen: the lord [ahu], the judgment [ratush], and the rule [xshathra].

A word of explanation. The verb "vairyo" which means "must be chosen" and which appears in the first segment, also applies to the second segment. Similarly, the phrase "ashat chit hacha" which means "in accord with truth" which appears in the second segment, also applies to the first. This kind of ellipsis is typical of Zarathushtra's poetic style, and appears frequently in the Gathas.¹⁹

First choice: yatha ahu vairyo
Just as the lord [ahu] must be chosen
[vairyo] [in accord with truth, asha]

Second choice: atha ratush ashat chit hacha
so also the judgment [ratush] in accord with
truth [asha] [must be chosen]

Third choice: vangheush dazda manangho
shyaothananam angheush mazdai xshathremcha
ahurai.a yim dregubyo dadat vastarem.
As a result of this good thinking establish the
rule [xshathra] of actions stemming from an
existence of good thinking, for (the sake of)
the Wise One, and for the lord whom they
established as pastor for the needy-
dependents.

The First Choice

What does Zarathushtra mean by choosing the Lord (ahu) in accord with truth? To understand the significance of this choice,

we have to think back to Zarathushtra's time period. Today, we are used to thinking in terms of a benevolent monotheism. But the situation was very different for Zarathushtra. We know from the Gathas that the society in which he lived was violent, corrupt and cruel. He complains of greedy princes, a thieving aristocracy, and pleasure loving priests who, seduced by power and wealth, "... chose the rule of tyrants and deceit rather than truth [asha]." Y32.12.

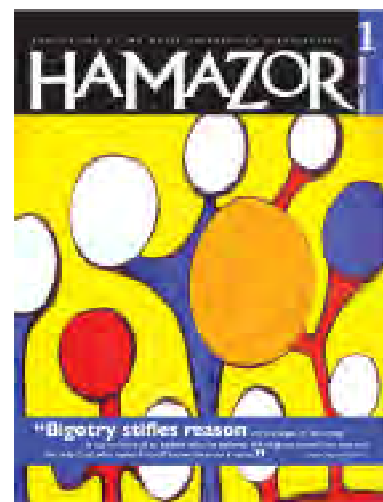
These tyrants used fear to promote the worship of many gods, some of whom Zarathushtra describes as "fierce"²⁰ and their actions as "hateful"²¹. And Zarathushtra made a choice. He concluded that deities who were cruel and tyrannical were not worthy of worship. He not only spoke out against them, he demoted them from godhood. Imagine the guts that took!

Having rejected the "godhood", of these violent and cruel local gods, Zarathushtra found himself re-thinking the whole notion of divinity. If the divine could not be evil, neither could it, logically, be a mixture of good and evil. It could only be all good, the spenta way of being (spenta mainyu), a way of being that is in accord with truth [asha].

He therefore concluded that only pure goodness, pure wisdom, could lay claim to divinity, could be worthy of worship. He described the attributes of divinity (later called the amesha spenta) as:

Truth (asha)

- Its comprehension through good thinking (vohu mano)
- Its realization in thought, word and action (aramaiti)
- Its good rule (vohu xshathra), the rule of truth and good thinking, the rule of aramaiti
- Its complete and undying personification (haurvatat, ameretat)
- All of which comprise the benevolent way of being (spenta mainyu)
- And all of which comprise Wisdom personified (Mazda).



In other words, the first choice of the Ahuna Vairya requires that we choose the object of our worship (the lord — ahu), in accordance with truth, asha. Zarathushtra's conception of the Divine moved away from one that was fear-based, (requiring the worshipper to accept whatever cruelty or violence was dished out by a deity who had to be appeased with bribes and sacrifices) to one that is pure goodness, Wisdom personified, and therefore worthy of worship.

A significant step in man's quest for the Divine.

Although the pantheon of local gods with whom Zarathushtra had to contend, are not around today, the first choice of the Ahuna Vairya is still relevant to us. Like our ancient ancestors, we too tend to worship many gods, just different ones — wealth, power, prestige, appearances, position. By Zarathushtra's standards, such gods are not worthy of worship. We need to choose what we worship "in accordance with truth [asha]." It is sobering to think how many people in the world live under dictatorships — without choice, without basic human rights. According to the Ahuna Vairya prayer, if even the object of our worship is to be chosen in accord with asha, logically then, we should also choose our temporal rulers in accordance with asha. If this idea of Zarathushtra were to be believed and held, worldwide, it would solve not only the problems of dictatorship, but also those of democracy.

The Second Choice of the Ahuna Vairya prayer, is "the judgment in accord with truth". What is "the judgment in accord with truth"? It is vohu mano — good thinking, understanding asha, and making our choices in accordance with that understanding. Good thinking is the key to accessing the factual truths of our universe. It is the key to understanding the truths of mind and spirit. It is the key to accessing asha — the key to accessing the divine.²² And good thinking, according to Zarathushtra, requires that we think for ourselves — not blindly accept what others may tell us.²³ Indeed, even when asking for

Mazda's guidance, Zarathushtra asks that it be given through good thinking, not by fact-specific rules that must be blindly obeyed.

He says: "... instruct through good thinking (the course) of my direction, in order to be the charioteer of my will and my tongue." Y50.6.

The Third Choice of the Ahuna Vairya prayer is choosing to establish, or bring to life, "the rule [xshathra] of actions stemming from an existence of good thinking" which, in my view, is the concept of aramaiti, although not mentioned by name ("... Grant thou, [aramaiti], your rule [xshathra] of good thinking ..." Y51.2).

The importance of this third choice — actions stemming from an existence of good thinking — is reflected in Zarathushtra's view of what it takes to be a saoshyant — a savior. In the later texts, the concept of a saoshyant became greatly embroidered and exaggerated to the point of elevating saoshyant to the status of a miraculous messiah of great power who will be victorious over evil, and make everything all right. We are not much different today. Whether it is Superman, or Yoda, or other omniscient aliens with miraculous powers from another star system, we too hunger for a leader with magical powers who will make everything turn out all right.

This view of the saoshyant you will not find in the Gathas. There is no one saviour (or two or three) with magical powers who will come to fix things for us. We have to fix things for ourselves, with Mazda's help, and with the help of each other. According to Zarathushtra, each individual is a potential saoshyant — a potential savior. In the Gathas he says:

"... which men shall stop the cruelty (caused) by the violent deceitful persons? To which man shall come the understanding stemming from good thinking?" Y48.11

And he concludes:

"Yes, those men shall be the saviors [saoshyanto] of the lands, namely, those who shall follow their knowledge of Thy teaching

with actions in harmony with good thinking and with truth [asha], Wise One. These indeed have been fated to be the expellers of fury.” Y48.12.

The “actions in harmony with good thinking and with truth [asha],” of this Gathic verse, Y48.12, is the same thought as the “actions stemming from an existence of good thinking” of the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer — actions which bring the divine to life, not only in our spirits, but also in our world and so establish good rule (vohu xshathra). To Zarathushtra, the material and the spiritual are inextricably linked — each necessary to bring about the desired end. Thoughts, words and actions of asha (the material embodying the spiritual) are the means by which we achieve the desired end (the best asha, the best thinking — a spiritual state of being), as well as a good society, a better world. Thus the purpose of life — to realize, or make real, the divine — is achieved in both existences, in the existence of mind and spirit, as well as in the existence of matter, our material world. If we follow this formula, this world would indeed be heaven on earth, and the suffering caused by wrongful choices would cease to exist.

We can summarize the talismanic virtues of the Ahuna Vairya as a formula for defeating evil and the suffering it causes, quite simply: When we create light, the darkness ceases to exist. We create light by bringing the divine to life with our choices — our choices of who and what we worship, our choices in thought, word and action stemming from an understanding of asha. When we stop choosing evil, we deprive it of substance. It becomes impotent, unable to cause harm and suffering, as the Bundahishn tells us.

But what of the promise of Yasna 19, that if we learn the Ahuna Vairya, and learning, hold fast to it, we will transcend our mortality.

In Zoroastrian lore, which is highly metaphoric, we are told that the Chinvat Bridge (the Bridge of the Separator, or the Bridge of the Judge), stretches from the material to the spiritual. I take the imagery of the bridge to represent (metaphorically) a transition from the material to the spiritual.

In the Gathas, Zarathushtra tells Ahura Mazda that he will cross over this bridge, in the company of the divine attributes (“... in the glory of your kind ...”) with each man and woman who gives him “... truth for the truth, and the rule of good thinking ...” Y46.10.

This Gathic verse echoes the Ahuna Vairya formula that we must choose the divine in our understanding, in our words and actions. When we do so, it becomes a part of us (or we become a part of it), and we make the transition (we cross over the bridge) from mortality to the good spiritual state where the reason for mortality no longer exists (non-deathness *ameretat*), or as the author of the later Yasna 19 puts it, we are redeemed from our mortality.

This brings us to the last part of the Ahuna Vairya, which says that we establish the rule of actions stemming from an existence of good thinking, “... for the Wise One [mazda] and for the lord [ahura] whom they established as pastor for the needy-dependents.”

In the last verse of the last Gatha, Mazda is described as the one who grants what is very good to his needy dependent who lives honestly. In the second Gatha, Yasna 29 verse 2, “ahura” refers to a person, a human being,²⁴ who would nurture Mazda’s good vision (the vision of a world governed by truth and good thinking) and Zarathushtra is chosen by Mazda and his divine aspects, to bring Mazda’s teachings to mortals, and be a pastor or nurturer to them and to Mazda’s good vision.

The last line of the Ahuna Vairya seems to combine these two thoughts when it says “... for (the sake of) the Wise One [mazda] and for the lord [ahura] whom they [the divine aspects] established as pastor for the needydependents”. At one level, mazda may refer to God, and ahura to Zarathushtra, the enlightened man who has attained, or acquired lordship over, the attributes of divinity, truth, good thinking, et cetera. At another level, mazda and ahura may refer to two parts of the same Whole.

So the last line of the Ahuna Vairya says that we establish the rule of the divine (i.e.

actions stemming from an existence of good thinking) for the sake of the divine (mazda and ahura) who in turn nurture (are the pastor for) those who have not yet made it — the needydependents. That is how we defeat evil. That is how we (individually and collectively) transcend our mortality.

One last thought. The last part of the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer exquisitely complements the last part of the Ashem Vohu prayer.

In the Ashem Vohu, we desire the divine (asha) for the sake of the divine as concept — the best asha (vahishtai ashem).

In the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer, by our choices, we realize or make real, the divine (through actions stemming from a comprehension of asha), for the sake of the divine as being —mazda and ahura.

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Notes:

1. Thieme, *Reflections on the Vocabulary of Zarathushtra's Gathas, in the Proceedings of the First Gatha Colloquium*, (WZO 1993, published in 1998), p 201.
 2. See Insler, *The Gathas of Zarathushtra*, (Brill 1975) page 118. For a more detailed discussion of the definition of vohu mano see *Harmony in Paradox: The Paradox of the Material and the Spiritual*, on www.vohuman.org, initially published in Hamazor Issue 1/2005, p81.
 3. Humbach translates aramaiti as “rightmindedness”, See Humbach, *The Gathas of Zarathushtra and Other Old Avestan Texts*, (Heidelberg, 1991), p 13.
 4. Sethna translates aramaiti as divine wisdom, Sethna, *The Teachings of Zarathushtra*, (1978), p 17 et seq.
 5. **Insler** translated aramaiti as “piety”, in *The Gathas of Zarathushtra*, (Brill 1975), but more recently, he has expressed a preference for “respect”. See Insler, *Zarathushtra's Genetic System*, which may be viewed on www.vohuman.org and initially published in Hamazor Issue 4/2004, p43.
- Hanns-Peter Schmidt** states: “For aramaiti and tareamaiti I have substituted ‘respect’ and ‘disrespect’ for the awkward ‘proper thought’ and ‘perverse thought’ I used previously (1974). ‘Respect’ is less specialized than ‘devotion’ and ‘humility’ and lacks the overtones of the present day usage of ‘piety’ (Insler) and the negative

connotations of ‘conformity’ ...” Hanns-Peter Schmidt, *The Form and Meaning of Yasna* 33, (American Oriental Society, 1986), p 4.

Moulton translates aramaiti as “Piety” or “Devotion”, Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism*, Lectures delivered at Oxford, 1912, AMS Press reprint, p 344.

6. Taraporewala translates aramaiti as “Faith and Devotion”. Taraporewala, *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra*, (Hukhta Foundation, reprint, 1993), p 100.

7. Thieme, rejecting such translations as ‘fittingness’, ‘submission’ and ‘humility’, suggests that aramaiti means an attitude “characterized by satisfying intention” and that as an attribute of Mazda, it is characterized by care/solicitude, and as an attribute of man, by loyalty/devotion. Thieme, *Reflections on the Vocabulary of Zarathushtra's Gathas, in Proceedings of the First Gatha Colloquium*, (WZO 1993, published in 1998), pp 206 - 208.

8. See Thieme's discussion, *ibid*.

9. Jafarey translates the word as “serenity, stability, tranquility”, Jafarey, *The Gathas, Our Guide*, (Ushta Publications, 1989), p 116.

10. All quotations from the Gathas in this paper are from the translation of Professor Insler in **The Gathas of Zarathushtra**, (Brill 1975), unless otherwise indicated, although Professor Insler may or may not agree with the inferences I draw from his translation. Round brackets () appearing in a quotation are in the original and indicate an insertion by Professor Insler, usually to aid understanding. Square brackets [] indicate an insertion by me. Such insertions by me are provided to show you applicable Gathic words (although not with their grammatical variations) or by way of explanation. A string of dots in a quotation indicates a deletion from the original. Often a verse contains many strands of thought. Deleting from a quotation those strands of thought that are not relevant to the discussion at hand enables us to focus on the strand of thought under discussion.

11. For a detailed contextual analysis of the meaning of aramaiti, see *Harmony in Paradox: The Paradox of Service and Rule*, on www.vohuman.org

12. “... the rule of truth [asha] and of good thinking [vohu mano]...” Y29.10 and Y50.3; “... the rule of good thinking and of truth...” Y30.7 and Y33.10.

13. “... Grant thou [aramaiti] your rule of good thinking ...” Y51.2.

14. “... the very virtuous spirit [mainyush spenishto] ... chose the truth ... Y30.5.

15. “... the spirit [mainyu] virtuous [spenta] through truth ...” Y28.1, see also: “... For such a person, virtuous [spento] through truth ... is ... Thy ally in spirit [mainyu] Wise One.” Y44.2.

16. See Insler, *The Ahuna Vairya Prayer*, as it appears in *Hommages et Opera Minora Monumentum H.S.Nyberg*, Acta Iranica, (Brill, 1975), p 409 et seq., 419 - 420.

17. Y19.10, as translated by Mills, in *Sacred Books of the East*, (Motilal Banarsidas reprint) (“SBE” hereinafter), Volume 31, p 262 — 263.

18. *The Bundahishn*, as translated by E. W. West, in SBE Volume 5, Chapter 1, verse 22, p 8 - 9.

19. See the examples collected in Humbach, *The Gathas of Zarathushtra and Other Old Avestan Texts*, (Heidelberg, 1991), p 105 - 106.

20. “... fierce gods ...” Y34.5.

21. "But ye gods are of the offspring stemming from evil thinking, deceit and disrespect. Hateful too are your actions ..." 32.3.

22. Which is the message of Y29, and also of a story from a later text, Selections from Zadsparam, see Buried Treasure, which appears on www.vohuman.org.

23. "Listen with your ears to the best things. Reflect with a clear mind — man by man for himself " Y30.2;

"... as long as I shall be able and be strong, so long shall I look in quest of truth. Truth, shall I see thee as I continue to acquire both good thinking and the way to the Lord? ..." Y28.4 — 5.

24. The word "cow" in Yasna 29 and elsewhere in the Gathas, has been interpreted by some as an allegory or metaphor for the "world". Professor Insler (and later, others) have interpreted it as an allegory or metaphor for Mazda's good vision. I think that Zarathushtra, with double entendre, uses "cow" as a metaphor for the good vision on earth — the vision of a world governed by truth and good thinking. In Yasna 29, a complaint is made to Mazda and his attributes (who also are treated allegorically in this Yasna) — truth, good thinking and his benevolent spirit (identified as the "fashioner of the cow"). This complaint is made to them by the allegorical cow (the good vision on earth) as follows:

"... For whom did ye fashion me? Who fashioned me? (For) the cruelty of fury and violence, of bondage and might, holds me in captivity. I have no pastor other than you. Therefore appear to me with good pasturage." Y29.1.

The benevolent spirit of the Wise Lord — *spenta mainyu* — is troubled by this state of affairs, and referring to the allegorical good vision on earth (the cow) asks the Wise Lord and His other attributes:

"... Whom do ye wish to be her master [ahurem] , one who might destroy the fury (caused) by the deceitful?" Y29.2.

Mazda turns to good thinking for the solution, and good thinking replies that it has found Zarathushtra (a man of understanding) who has given ear to Mazda's teachings, who will give Mazda's teachings to mortals, and who will be a pastor, i.e. nurture them, and Mazda's good vision on earth. Y29.7 and 8. Thus we see that "ahura" in Y29.2 refers to an enlightened human being — Zarathushtra.



Mazda: Zarathushtra's Designer God

by farrokh vajifdar

As an attribute, wisdom was highly regarded and respected throughout the ages, in every civilized society, wherever established. Among the ancient Indo-Iranians the concept existed and its expression was valued and venerated as a desirable ideal. There is, however, no trace in ancient India of a deity with a reconstructed name *Medhas*, nor any religion based on the abstract concept *medha*.

It is generally recognized that the two main branches of the last wave of Aryan expansion, the Indian and the Iranian, divided in about 1500 BC. The Indian branch took with them the extant pantheon which included their creator gods, the *asuras*, and the *devas* — the shining ones. Whereas in India the former were considered to have performed their creative functions and retired into a lofty indifference, the *devas* rose in the esteem of their worshippers: they were deemed closer to human needs and aspirations. The *asuras* were duly demonised and fell from favour. The situation became reversed in Iran with the advent of Zarathushtra.

The religious situation in 7th/6th century BC Iran reflected the tripartite division of its societies into priests, warrior-nobles, and pastoralists. Their leaders from the second category were the *kavis* or prince-seers with priesthoods comprise of *karapans* or mumblers-priests who oversaw worship to the various gods and goddesses with whom they claimed to have communion. As in all religiously illiterate societies, their hold over the compliant pastoralist-agriculturist class was inescapable. Zarathushtra, himself a priest thoroughly trained in the lore and ritual of his times, could not agree the impositions and demands which so weakened the fabric of his society. Social injustice and inequality



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were rife, and the settled pastoral communities were further threatened by nomadic cattle-thieving raiders.

Among the Old Indic pantheon figured the great gods Varuna and Mitra. In the Rig-Vedic hymns the two were often associated. The first, in origin a sky god, was the custodian of sacred law and moral order whose primary role was watching over the deeds of man. He was the creator god *par excellence* – an *asura* who had fixed the sun in its travels, propped apart the sky and earth, and set the heavenly bodies on their respective paths. He is also the god of the waters. In the Rig-Veda he is king over all kings – a supreme self-ruling sovereign deity. Varuna is the master of spiritual wisdom which, as truth, he confers upon mankind who receive it as worldly wisdom. He dwells in a high palace – his house with a thousand eyes.

Mitra, the god of intimate friendship, is the worldly counterpart of Varuna and closely allied to him: we have the occasional compound Mitra-Varuna. Mitra is also the thousand-eyed enforcer of the contract or the solemnly-given word. In Iran such contract is underlined as equally binding both among friends as well as in dealings with outsiders. There he was the ancient solar deity Mithra.

It is important to have some idea of chronological development in discussions bearing on Indo-Iranian matters. Whilst some nationalistic viewpoints would tend to push events to a remote antiquity, either to evolve a series of firsts for their Aryan cultures, or to deny any primacy to non-Aryan religions, serious investigators appear to have arrived at a consensus on these datings. The second half of the second millennium BC onwards is the likely period when the Aryan invaders first entered north-western India, and the composition of the earliest Vedas – the ten mandalas of the Rig – extend from 1200-800 BC. The Indians have hotly disputed this.

Enter Zarathushtra, whose dating of the 7th/6th century BC is thought by some to be too

late, and in its place is offered the turn of the first millennium BC. The recent fashion for pushing the date of his ministry further back, even to the extent of providing a quite fictitious “exact” figure of 3740 AZ to correspond with 2003 AD, has to be quietly abandoned since it raises strong objections and unnecessary problems for which solutions devised will be yet more ridiculous. The producers of *Hamazor* are therefore to be felicitated for having eschewed fantasy in favour of sound sense and for installing the more equable 1000 BC which would meaningfully account for Zarathushtra’s great religious reform of some 3000 years before.

We do not forget that Zarathushtra of the Spitama clan lived among his tripartite pastoral society and chanted the Revelation – his Gathic message – as a solution for his own troubled times and for entire humanity for all its foreseeable future. The existing religion could be termed henotheistic – one having its pantheon whose members were individually worshipped, with equal fervour being showered on the rest. For Zarathushtra to present and propagate a reformed system, one basing itself on a strict monotheism overseeing an ethical dualism, it was both reasonable and necessary for him to expound new ideas through extant terminology. We see the Avestic counterpart of Old Indic terms and expressions, but now with the major difference that these new concepts shared between them a differently directed purpose – that of an appeal to the better and higher nature in man aimed towards his perfection, the perfection of his society and the eradication of evil, whether in thought, word and deed. It was firmly a *this-worldly* message for all mankind.

From gods who were supernatural entities, but with all-too-human characteristics, Zarathushtra took the best of their qualities. Mitra and Varuna became assimilated to *mazda* to become Mazda the sole *ahura* (Indic *asura*) who gained both transcendence and immanence. It was now the deity who *gave* thought and *established* thought for each individual to make the

correct choice for moral right-living based on ethical principles. For the first time ever in the long history of religions, Zarathushtra had produced a universal deity who worked through ethical standards, quite unlike some alien "God" who by turns could be tribalist, a terrorist, or even a trickster. Here was a new Being who was not vindictive or wayward, nor one who dispensed weal or woe according to caprice. Fully apart from Mazda and beneath him were the two contending vectors of dynamisms, one *Spenta* or Salutory, the other *Aka* whose hostility and total irreconcilability is the unambiguous import of the Prophet's Yasna 45.2. The name Mazda, Wisdom, here far exceeds the qualities of *baga* and *yazata* (the common words for "god" and "worshipful being" which are deliberately absent from the Gathas) and as *Ahura*, "Sovereign", "Lord", or perhaps even "Master of", Wisdom. This definition remains limited but as wide intellectual ramifications.

Mitra, the Indic solar deity whose qualities of Friendship and Compact were paramount, was indeed well known to Zarathushtra. It is highly probably that before the Revelation, he was a devotee of Mithra (the Iranian spelling). He took in these dual aspects thus: when he addresses Mazda, it is as *friend to Friend*; the Compact became the Gathic *maga*, "Covenant", "Gift Exchange", even "Vow". Mitra's/Mithra's solar aspect too is clear in some Gathic verses. In the later "Prose Gatha", the Yasna *Haptanhaiti*, the culmination of worship is to the Sun (Yasna 36.6). It is indeed with reluctance that Zarathushtra released Mithra from his affections in his concentrated drive for recognition of his monotheistic creation of Mazda as the (sole) Ahura. Mithra as *baga* is unnamed in the Gathas; his functional aspect appears just once (Yasna 46.5).

With Varuna, similar assimilations are discernible in our Iranian Preceptor's Gathas. As Supreme Judge, Mazda too knows and sees everything, and apportions rewards precisely according to the rules of Truth and Justice. It is the Gathic Law of Just Recompense for which none may

deceive Mazda. Elsewhere it is made clear that Mazda created everything – a creation through Thought! – that he is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. He is also the



An original late 19c painting of Zarathushtra with his disciples.
Courtesy of Mucca Kandawalla, Karachi

author solely of Good. Like Varuna, Mazda is self-ruling, and the spiritual wisdom that he imparts is through Truth. In Yasna 44 we see Mazda as the "father" of Truth, as indeed he is of Good Mind and Rightmindedness. Verses 3 – 6 echo the Indic god's creative talents. Unlike Varuna, however, Mazda does not exercise any avenging wrath. Out of character is the Ahura of the later Yasna *Haptanhaiti*, where unlike the Gathic Mazda, he has taken to himself "wives: - *ahuranis*! That is something characteristic of the Vedic Varuna who, as god of the waters, has wedded himself to Varunanis.

There are two distinct features of Zarathushtra's teaching which are the

Founder's own formulations:

Vohu Manah, Good Mind, and *Spenta Mainyu*, the Salutory Cosmic Principle. We cannot trace these back to the Vedas, and it becomes crucial importance to us to know through the Gathas that Mazda the Ahura reaches Zarathushtra through Good Mind: Yasna 43 provides good proof of the spiritual and intellectual components of our Prophet's sacred poetry. It is a sacrality which unites the mind and the body, the spiritual and material in Man, leaving no room for inappropriate speculation on "Zoroastrian devil". Not for nothing has Zarathushtra's wonderful system been described as "a veritable emancipation for devil-ridden souls"! It also was a liberation from the impositions of opportunistic priests who multiplied gods and rituals at a purely physical level, and who at every turn saw their intervention as essential for the "turning away of evil"! Mazda through his Prophet has enabled us to clearly see man's crucial role, through the exercise of his ethical triad of Right Thinking, Good Speech, and Beneficent Activity, of leading family, clan, tribe, and nation towards the Renovation of *this* world. We are reminded that each true Mazdayasnian is a *saoshyant* ("saviour").

A final Varunic touch: just as the Indic god dwells in his "house" to which his worshippers seek entry, so too do we pray that all those who accept Mazda through Zarathushtra as his True Preceptor may in his/her reformed life here enter the House of Song, *garo demana*, where Wisdom dwells as Lord. *Mazdayasno ahmi, mazdayasno zarathushtrish*. May it ever be so!

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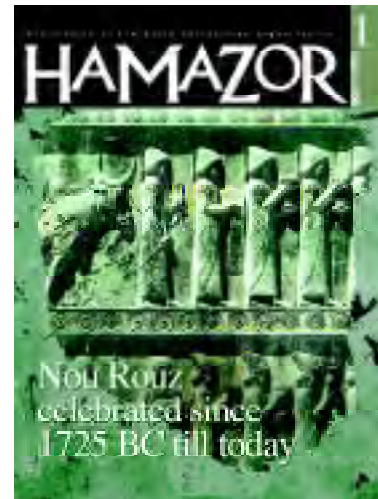


Zarathushtra's seminal contribution to mankind beyond Theology

by keki bhote

Zarathushtra's theology, as the mother of all monotheistic religions is well known. This article seeks to shed light on the genius of his little-known secular achievements.

Zarathushtra's pristine Theology: A capsule summary



- God as architect of the universe
- His Law of Asha governing order in the physical world and ethics in the spiritual world.
- Man's freedom to follow the ethical path or choose evil.
- The consequence of the ethical path is happiness. Following the evil path brings suffering.
- Gods' gift of the Good Mind, heart and conscience to guide man along the ethical path.
- Man's active duty to fight the ills of society.
- Man at center stage in moving mother earth to perfection¹.

We now move to Zarathushtra's outstanding secular contributions.

Creation vs Evolution: Zarathushtra's Unification

There is a raging debate between creationists, led by Christian fundamentalists and evolutionists about the start of life². The creationists start with Adam and Eve (or with "Intelligent Design" as a code word for God). The evolutionists

say that the universe started with “the big bang” followed by the formation of stars and planets: molecules, DNA, biological organisms; neurological complexities and eventually to marine life, vegetation, animals; and finally man.

Zarathushtra brilliantly ties creation and evolution together in his Law of Asha. Even evolution must have a creation, which he calls God. The law of Asha, while favouring order allows random order, even disorders to exist – in short, evolution, both in the physical and spiritual worlds. The miracle is that despite the many opportunities for disorder (e.g. earthquakes, wars), our world is evolving more orderly to God’s goal of perfection.

Zarathushtra’s impact on the Greek Philosophers

Westerners assume that philosophy started with the Greeks. The leading Greek philosophers, however, were deeply moved by Zarathushtra’s philosophies.

- Pythagoras, stimulated by Zarathushtra’s logic revised pagan Greek mythology.
- Socrates, moved by Zarathushtra’s ethics, reformed the failing Greek material world with spiritual and cultural values.
- Plato was fascinated by Zarathushtra’s precepts of God and creation, the Law of Asha: man endowed with reason, and the worlds slow but sure march to perfection.

Zarathushtra – the Eternal Poet

The Gathas are the quintessence of Zarathushtra’s theology, but they also represent poetry at its finest; and sung as hymns they have a hypnotic effect of deep religiosity, as it undoubtedly captivated Zarathushtra’s own audiences.

Further, poetry is easy to memorize, yet difficult to alter, so, as poetry, the Gathas were an ancient tape recorder, passed on from generation to generation without tampering. Without the poetic format, Zarathushtra’s own words and the sublimity of his message would have been lost for eternity.

Zarathushtra’s innovations in the Secular World

The enormity of Zarathushtra’s many “firsts” in secular matters, can best be appreciated when we realize that he lived at the very dawn of history – around 1700 BC according to Zoroastrian scholars or even further back around 5500 BC, based on the latest archeological research.

With the tools of the modern archeologist – satellite photography, atomic clocks, DNA sampling etc., all more accurate than the old carbon 14 dating – Historical milestones of the Neolithic period have been moved back in time by 3000 to 4000 years, placing Zarathushtra around 5500 BC.³

Zarathushtra – Champion of Agriculture

Of the three major revolutions of history – The agricultural revolution of Zarathushtra’s age, the 19th century industrial revolution and the late 20th century digital revolution, the first was more fundamental and profound than the other two. It moved entire societies from the nomadic/hunter age to the agricultural age.

While Zarathushtra did not invent agriculture, he was a leader in its institutionalization. In the schism between the nomadic Aryans who wanted a nomadic life (and eventually wandered off to India) and the Aryans who opted for a settled agricultural life, Zarathushtra championed the farmer. He says:

“the earth is most joyous when the faithful sow the most grain, water the soil that is most dry or drain the ground that is most wet”.⁴

He championed three great innovations – the domestication of cattle; improving cereals by mutation and hybridization (ages before genetic engineering); and the beginning of irrigation.⁵ On this last point, he paved the way for Iran’s world- famous underground canals to carry water from the snows of mountains to parched fields, without evaporation, hundreds of miles away – the great feat of emperor Darius.

Zarathushtra turns swords into plowshares⁶

Zarathushtra's people had been oppressed and cowed by rapacious warriors and domineering priests. The patron saint of the warriors had been Mithra, the Aryan God of war. Zarathushtra not only undefiled Mithra, but also eliminated him completely in his Gathas. Instead he weaned the warrior away from senseless fighting on to useful help for the farmer.

Similarly, priests who had enjoyed the highest status in the old Aryan caste system, had been exploiting the poor. Zarathushtra put the tiller of the soil at the center of his religious system, ahead of both warrior and priests; he opposed the meaningless rituals of the priests and animal sacrifices. He lamented the mindless destruction of mother earth, symbolized by the innocent cow. He urged the clergy to pay less attention to temples and cleanse their souls by becoming rural social engineers!

Zarathushtra – The Economist

By championing agronomy Zarathushtra transformed the economic landscape. In the nomadic hunter age, people spent all their waking hours scrounging for food. In the new settled life they had more time for leisure. Arts and crafts flourished. Garments went from animal skins to woven cloth. Pottery – that metric of archeological dating – advanced to high furnace temperature glazes of excellent quality.

By dint of his personality, officials were persuaded to lower crushing taxes on the people. Prosperity became the new crop!

Zarathushtra – The Man of Science and Medicine

Zarathushtra freed the mind from dogma and superstition with God's gift of "Vohu Manah" – Good Mind. Zarathushtra stressed that the answers to life's mysteries lay not in others' opinions but in each person's scientific independent inquiry.

The study of astronomy started with the prototype Aryans during the long winter

nights in the Arctic Circle before the ice age. Zarathushtra channeled these studies so that the later Magi priests acquired world fame in astronomy. The Zoroastrian era spawned a whole body of knowledge in health and medicine. In those ancient days, the science of herbs cured a whole range of illnesses – from arthritis to cardiovascular diseases. Today, doctors roam the under developed world to search for herbal remedies! Unfortunately, Greek armies and Arab fanaticism destroyed whole volumes of Zoroastrian medical literature.

Zarathushtra – The Champion of Women's Rights and Human Rights

Zarathushtra taught that women should have equal rights with men – at home, in commerce, in temples and for inheritance. No other religion has elevated the fair sex to this level of parity.

His crusade extended to the larger issue of all human rights and justice – individual rights over state rights; the rights of the agriculturists over the warrior or priest; and of the oppressed over the tyrant. His was not the later Hammurabi Law code of 1750 BC but the higher law of Asha.

The Master Eco-Theologist

Of all of Zarathushtra's many-splendored contributions, none sparkled as much, or endures for eternity, as his eco-theology – the interdependence and unity of all the elements of mother earth – plant, mineral, animal, human – and its march to perfection.

- In today's world, still choking with air pollution and contaminated water, Zarathushtra was the original environmentalist long before the Kyoto treaty! He preached that it was man's duty to preserve air and water purity as God had designed.

- In today's world recklessly wasting the earth's mineral resources Zarathushtra was the earliest conservationist. Even in that early Bronze Age, he decried the over-mining of metals like copper and not allowing land to lie fallow to replenish its nutrients.



Courtesy Rustam Maneckji, Karachi. Hamazor Issue 3/2003 p 59

- In today's world where there is still mindless cutting down of trees and disappearance of wooded lands and thousands of species of plant life, Zarathushtra was the premier botanist. He bemoaned the massive cutting down of trees that turned forests into deserts. He introduced and sanctified the use of fruits, flowers, grain and plants through religious ceremonies rich with their symbolic value to humans.

- In a world where there was wanton cruelty to animals and their slaughter in ridiculous religious sacrifices, Zarathushtra was the first animal rightist, evoking, in his Gathas, the tableau of a weeping earth witnessing such callous slaughter.

Zarathushtra charged that man alone with the gift of Vohu Manah, was the shepherd of

God's flock. This was Ahura Mazda's grand design to move our world, however troubled it may be, slowly but surely toward perfection.

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Our Culture & Community



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The Shahnameh - 1000 years old



The United Nation's cultural body (UNESCO) has named the year 2010 as 1000th anniversary of the composition of The Shahnameh, the renowned national epic of the Persian-speaking world which has been traditionally a source of honour and a manifestation of ancestral identity to the Iranian people and nations such as Tajikistan and Afghanistan who have loyally stuck to their lingual and cultural background after separation from Iran.

by kourosh ziabari

The Shahnameh is the result of 30 years of unyielding and steadfast endeavor by the master of Persian literature, Hakim Abulqasim Ferdowsi who is known to the Iranian people and the Persian speaking nations as the reviver of Persian language. Iranians owe to Ferdowsi the survival and fortification of their language and that is why Ferdowsi is considered to be the most prominent Persian poet of all times, even though there are disputes between the scholars who believe that Ferdowsi's work, in a literary and formational context, cannot be compared to those of Hafiz, Sa'di, Rumi and Rudaki as the nature of Ferdowsi's work is essentially different from what other notable Persian poets have brought into existence; however, to the majority of scholars, researchers and literary experts, *The Shahnameh*, regardless of its format and content, features because of its remarkable contribution to the culture of Iran and the historical identity of Iranian people.

It is widely believed that Ferdowsi started the composition of *The Shahnameh* when he was 30 years old. According to his own poetry, Ferdowsi invested more than 30 years on the foundation of *The Shahnameh* to preserve the heritage of Persian language.

The Shahnameh is a mythical, 30,000-distich poetic opus which is dedicated to the history of ancient Iran. The content of *The Shahnameh* can be divided into three main

sections: the mythical age, the heroic age and the historical age. In the mythical age, Ferdowsi demonstrates his adherence to the moral and ethical values by praising and eulogizing the Almighty God whom he considers, thanks to his Muslim background and monotheistic mindset, the sole creator of the universe and only initiator of the life. He starts his poetic oration in the name of God:

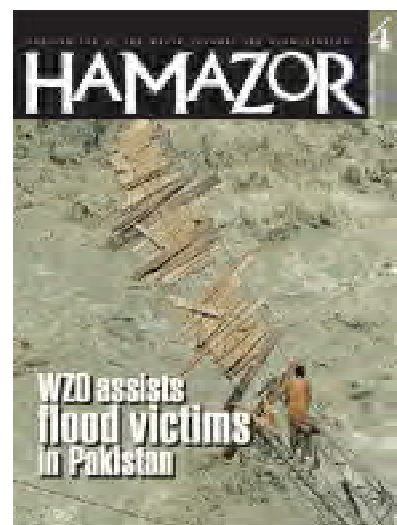
In the name of the Lord of both
wisdom and mind,
To nothing sublimer can thought be
applied

Then he comes to admire the Almighty God and his extensive, endless power:

The first thing needful for thee is to know
The sum of primal elements which He,
Who maketh all things, made from naught to show
The greatness of His own supremacy

Ferdowsi then continues by telling the story of Kayumars who is legendarily believed to be the first human being descended on Earth, having been endowed with the celestial grace of the Almighty God, which he calls "Farr".

In the mythical division, Ferdowsi describes the accounts of two legendary kingdoms in



Iran which the holy texts of Zoroastrians, including Avesta, include some references to: Pishdadian Dynasty in which 11 emperors ruled, and the Kayanian Dynasty. The heroic age of *The Shahnameh* comprises the greater part of the work, including the account of Manuchehr until the conquest of Iran by Alexander the Great. The famous story of Seven Labours of Rostam and the death of Siavash fall under the heroic category of *The Shahnameh*.

The stories of Arsacids and Sasanid dynasties which are retold briefly belong to the historical age of *The Shahnameh* where Ferdowsi demonstrates his power of artistic historiography dexterously.

The Shahnameh has been translated in more than 40 languages and exists in the world's largest libraries in miscellaneous, luxurious versions. The Bayasanghori Shahnameh which is an illuminated manuscript of the work being kept in the Tehran's Golestan Palace has been listed in the UNESCO's Memory of the World Register of cultural heritage items.

As a literary masterpiece, *The Shahnameh* has played a vital role in recording the antiquity of Iranian culture, preserving the heritage of Persian poetry, purifying the Persian language and ensuring its independence from the other languages. Ferdowsi inspired several poets who attempted to surmount his unparalleled rhetoric several years after his demise; however, the history of Persian poetry hasn't proved any poet to be of greater eminence, competence and reputation than Ferdowsi up to now.

The British orientalist, surgeon and artist James Atkinson was the first to introduce an English translation of *The Shahnameh* in 1832. Atkinson was a multilingual surgeon who served many years as the Assistant Surgeon in the Bengal service of Honorable East India Company. He was completely fluent in Persian and that would give him the precious opportunity to make an acquaintance with the most noteworthy masterpieces of Persian literature. He first

made an abridged translation of Rostam and Sohrab story of *The Shahnameh* in 1814 and then completed his free translation in 1829 which was published in 1832 and won him an Oriental Translation Fund gold medal the same year.

Oriental Translation Fund was established in 1828 as a part of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland's efforts to further "the investigation of subjects

connected with and for the encouragement of science, literature and the arts in relation to Asia."

A British poet named Matthew Arnold who was a cultural critic and school inspector and at the same time, a close friend of William Wordsworth, published another abridged

translation of Rostam and Sohrab tragedy in 1853. [our own Renu Sethna, UK actor, had performed this soliloquy admirably, for the community of Karachi in November 1999. - Ed.]

In 1925, the brothers Arthur & Edmond Warner published a complete, 9-volume translation which paved the ground for the further acquaintance of the English readers with *The Shahnameh*.

Germans were also among the pioneers of translating *The Shahnameh* into European languages. In a speech dated September 27, 1934, the renowned German Iranologist and orientalist Hans Heinrich Schaeder elaborately explained the efforts made by



the Germans to introduce Ferdowsi and *The Shahnameh* to the international community.

In his speech titled "Firdosi und die Deutschen", Schaeder called the year 1819 a pivotal juncture in the course of Germans' familiarity with the oriental culture. Along with the publication of new Deutsch translations of Hafiz and Rumi, the renowned German writer Johann Joseph von Gorres completed his translation of *The Shahnameh* in this year which received great welcome with the German readers.

According to Schaeder, *The Shahnameh* had a great impact on the German orientalists and inspired many scholars to conduct exploratory researches about Ferdowsi. The other credible translation of *The Shahnameh* belonged to the German poet and historian of literature, Adolf Friedrich von Schack whose version was published in 1851. Friedrich Ruckert's translation was also published after his death in 1866.

However, the French also played a fundamental role in bringing into the light the exquisiteness of Ferdowsi's masterpiece. They contributed to the familiarization of Europeans with *The Shahnameh* predominantly and translated the epic opus of Ferdowsi several times. The volume of researches done by the French orientalists about *The Shahnameh* and Ferdowsi is indispensably noteworthy.

In 1826, the French government assigned the mission of translating *The Shahnameh* to Jules Mohl, the renowned French orientalist and philosopher. He astonishingly dedicated 40 years of his life to the translation of *The Shahnameh* and accomplished the mission up to his death in 1876. He reviewed several partly-translated versions and even sought the help of Iranian scholars in interpreting the oratory of Ferdowsi. The first volume of his translation came out in 1838 with a well-researched preamble he had written on it. This preamble is said to be one of the most reliable introductions on Ferdowsi and his works in French language.

One millennium has passed since the composition of *The Shahnameh* by Hakim Ferdowsi and every Persian-speaking citizen knows well that the magnificence and majesty of this Muslim, Iranian poet cannot be erased from the pages of world's cultural memory. Millions of words and sentences do not suffice to introduce and interpret Ferdowsi. He passed away physically, but he rejuvenated the Iranian identity and perpetuated his name until the subsistence of the world:

*I am deathless, I am the eternal lord
For I have spread the seed of the Word.*

Courtesy of: <http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=127973§ionid=3510304>

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Ferdowsi's Tomb. Photo credit, Wikipedia Commons

[15th May of each year is the nominated National day to honour Ferdowsi. The 1000th year was in 2010. - Ed]

Three Ancient Atas-e Verahrams of Iran

by farzane goshtasp

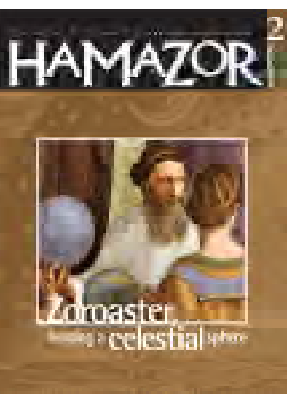
ĀT AŠKADA, literally meaning “House of Fire” (*Kada* means house). *Ātaškada* is a consecrated building in which the Sacred Fire is kept burning. For the Zoroastrians, fire and the light emanating from it, is regarded as a Symbol of Ahuramazdā, and the closest resemblance that one could imagine when trying to communicate with the Creator.

The Sassanians evolved three grades of *ātaškada*. The *Ātaš-e Verahram* (Parsis : *Ātaš Behram*), highest in the category, was consecrated with highly elaborated ceremonies for uniting fire samples from 16 sources and was to be maintained by Priests of, specifically, high caliber and experience. A *dar-e mehr* (Parsis: *Agiaiy*) is of a second grade, consecrated with somewhat simpler formalities, and involving fires from 8 sources, could be maintained by, relatively, less qualified Priests. The Fire of an *ātaškada* of the Dadgah category could be maintained by the lay class in the absence of a Priest.

Perhaps, the oldest identified remains of a fire-temple in Iran , is a stone fire altar situated over the *Kūh-e Xvāja* in *Sīstān*. It belongs to the Seleucid or early Parthian eras. A relatively larger number of fire-temple ruins, mostly, in south western Iran (Fārs, Kermān , and ‘Irāq-e ‘Ajamī), are attributed to the Parthians.

The characteristic features of any Sasanian *ātaškada* was a domed sanctuary or *gombad* in which the fire was established and maintained. This had a square ground-plan and four corner-pillars which supported the dome on squinches. A small room or rooms for storing fire wood, incense and ceremonial utensils as well as a *yazišn-gāh* (place of worship) formed the other parts of an *ātaškada*. At some sites the remains of a large hall are found; no doubt a place where a congregation would gather to celebrate the *gāhāmbār*s and other ceremonial feasts.

With the advent of Islam the fire-temples of Iran were, almost all, either demolished, or replaced by mosques. At places, the “*Gombad*” of an old *ātaškada*



can still be discerned within a Muslim place of worship¹. As a result the sacred fires of the *ātaškada* were preserved in low mud-brick buildings, indistinguishable from humble dwelling-houses. Such fire chambers were, always, paved and, as a further precaution, were often hidden away within the recesses of thick walls.

The Zoroastrians of Iran began rebuilding their *dar-e mehrs* in the late nineteenth century, when the Muslim oppression started slowly to lessen. For building these new *ātaškadas*, they used the general concepts of Iranian architecture² and ground plans as their Parsi counterparts.

What follows are brief accounts of three ancient *Ātaš-e Verahrams* of Iran and of such great reverence that they are still invoked within ceremonial prayers.

1 - ĀDUR GUŠNASP, an *Ātaš-e Verahram*, which belonged to the Kings and their warriors. *Gušnasp*, means “Stallion ears”. We can read the legend of this *ātaškada* in Great Bundahišn. *Ādur Gušnasp*, like the other great fires, were moved about freely, for giving its protection to the world. When Kay khosrow the Kayanian was “destroying the idol-shrine of Lake Čēčast”, this Fire settled on the mane of his horse, dispelling darkness and shadow, and shedding light, until he had destroyed the image-shrine. In that same place, upon Mt. *Asnavand*, he established fire-altars. For this reason it is called “*Gušnasp*”, because it settled upon the mane of his horse (*asp*).³

Lake Čēčast (Av. Čaēčasta-) is identified with Lake Ormīa⁴ and Mt. *Asnavand* (Av. *Asnavant*-) too was said to be in Azerbaijan⁵.

The *Šāh-nāma* includes verses about the establishment of this *ātaškada*

1 For examples see: M. Siroux, *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 44, 1947, pp. 105-66; M. Shokoohy, “Two Fire Temples Converted to Mosques in Central Iran,” in *Papers in Honour of Professor Mary Boyce II*, Acta Iranica 25, Leiden, 1985, pp. 545-72.

2 For example the larger fire-temple at the village of Šarīfābād has been tentatively assigned by M. Siroux, on stylistic grounds, to the Safavid period, see: *Āthār-e Īrān* III, 1938, pp. 83-87.

3 Cf. *Bundahišn*, 18/12.

4 Cf. *Bundahišn*, 12/3.

5 Cf. *Bundahišn*, 9/29.

یکی گنبدی تا به ابر سیاه	بفرمود خسرو بدان جایگاه
به گرد اندرش طاقهای بلند	درازا و بهای او ده کند
بر آورد و بنهاد آذرگنبد	ز بیرون چونیم از تنگ تازی اسب
سواره شناسان و هم بدردان	نشست گرد اندرش هویدان
که نقشه گشت با بوی و رنگ	در آن شارسن کرد چندان درنگ

The place where the Fire of *Ādur Gušnasp* was first installed is uncertain. It seems, however, that it was around 400 A.D. when it was transferred to its present location in Azerbaijan, over a site of exceptional beauty and grandeur, known in Islamic times as *Taxt-e Solaymān*, but presumably named by the Median priests *Mt. Asnavand*. This is a hill formed by mineral deposits from a spring which wells up within it, so that its flat top holds a lovely lake high above the level of the surrounding countryside.

In several references, especially the *Šāh-nāma*, mentions are made about kings like Bahrām V, Xosrow Anōšīravān and Xosrow Parvēz who visited *Ādur Gošnasp*, prayed for success in battles and bestowed riches over the fire-temple.

The sanctuary is enclosed by two walls, a mud-brick wall and a stone wall which is 50 feet high and 10 feet thick, with thirty-eight towers strung out along it.

The building materials were dressed stone and baked brick, and there are traces of rich adomment, paneling of thin leaves of marble, and, in the *gombad* itself, frescoes of white stucco, with more than life-size figures.

The sanctuary of *Ādur Gušnasp* is placed at the northernmost end of the temple precinct and at the east side of that we can find a small *yazšn-gāh*. The great temple complex held numerous other rooms, including lesser shrines and the temple treasury, which must have housed many priceless gifts.

No clearly datable objects have been found in the ruins earlier than the reign of Pērōz (A.D. 457-84); but a room by the main entrance yielded a store of over 200 clay sealing, among which were eighteen that bore the words "high-priest of the house of the fire of *Gušnasp*" (*mowbed ī xānag ī Ādur ī Gušnasp*).

Once enthroned again in its temple on the hill, *Ādur Gušnasp* continued to burn there for many generations after the coming of Islam; but harassment grew, and the great fire had probably been extinguished by the end of the 10th or, at the latest, the early 11th century A.D. The ruins of its temple were subsequently quarried to build a palace on the hilltop for a local Muslim ruler.

Since the last 10 years, or so, the Iranian Ministry of Culture and that of the Tourism have been encouraging tourists to visit the *Ādur Gušnasp* complexes and we, Zoroastrians of Iran, have used these opportunities to celebrate annual Jašans, within the ruined walls of the ancient *Ātaš-e Verahram*. (See photos)

ĀDUR FARNBĀG, an *Ātaš-e Verahram*, which belonged to the Priestly Class. The Middle Iranian name Farnbāg, means “Having a share (*bāg*) through Fortune” (Old Persian *farnah-* and Avestan *xvaranah-* means “fortune, glory”). The legend of this *ātaškada* is written in Great Bundahišn. In the remotest past Jam (Yima) installed the fire on Xwarrahomand (“Fortune-possessing”) Mountain; and that “when they hacked the Jam to death, *Ādur Farnbāg* saved his *xwarrah* from the grasp of Dahāk.” Thereafter, “in the reign of Vištāsp through a revelation from the faith, they (took) it from Chorasmia, and installed it on Mt. *Rōšn* in the region of *Kārfān*, where even now it remains”⁶. *Kārfān* is a place in Fārs, where, according to the Muslim geographers, *Ādur Farnbāg* was installed at the time of the Arab conquest. No ruins of a fire-temple have yet been identified at this site.

When the Arabs conquered Iran, the priests divided the “fire of Jamšīd, that is, *Ādaxxorā*” into two, keeping one fire at *Kārfān*, but carrying the other to Fasā (also in Fārs) to reduce the danger of its being extinguished. Eventually, when the *dastūr dastūrān* of the Zoroastrians withdrew with his priests to the village of Torkābād in the north of the Yazd plain, two great *Ātaš-e Verahram* were brought for safety to the neighboring village of Šārīfābād. One of these is known to this day as *Ādōr xarā*, and it is presumably the fire of *Kārfān* of Fasā.

The cost of maintaining the two fires forced the villagers to unite them in the temple of the other *Ātaš-e Verahram* (most probably in origin the ancient fire of Estaxr). So the temple of *Ādōr xarā* now stands empty, but it is still deeply revered and is used for certain communal observances, while the conjoined fire in the other temple is tended with the greatest devotion.

ĀDUR BURZĒN-MIHR, an *Ātaš-e Verahram*, which belongs to the husbandman estate. *Burzēn-Mihr* means “Exalted is Mihr”. It is said that its abode

⁶ Cf. *Bundahišn*, 18/10-11.

(*mān*) was on Mt. *Rēvand* (Av. *Raēvant*) in Nišabur (north-east of Iran). *Ādur Burzēn-Mihr*, like the two other fires, was created by Ohrmazd himself “for the protection of the world”⁷. This fire moved about freely in the world till the reign of Vištāsp. Then, “it revealed many things visibly, in order to propagate the faith and to establish certainty, and to bring Vištāsp and his descendants to the faith of God,” and it was after his conversion through its help, it is said, that Vištāsp made a permanent abode for the fire on Mt. *Rēvand*.⁸

In *Šāh-nāma* and the Pahlavi text, *Zātspram* is recorded other traditions. In one of the *revāyats*⁹, it is said that the three *Ātaš-e Verahrams* “burn without fuel and they have no fear of water,” that is, they were held to be volcanic or naphtha fires. In this same passage *Burzēn-Mihr* is wrongly identified with the fire of Karkōy.

It may be safely assumed that the fire was a great center of pilgrimage, even after the fall of the Arsacids; but how long its priests were able to preserve it in the Islamic period is not recorded.

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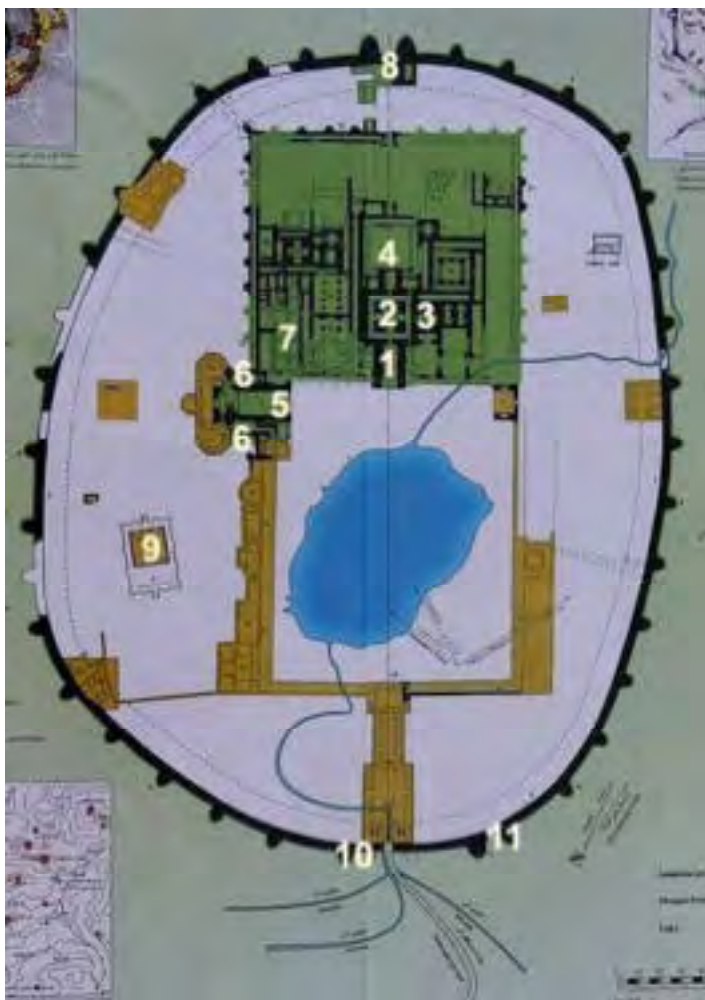


Farzane Goshtasp, 36 year old, married to Mobed Pedram Sorooshpour. She is a graduate in Physiotherapy, Postgraduate and PhD in Ancient Iranian Languages and Culture from the Tehran University. Farzane is researching and teaching at the Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, Tehran and has been elected as “Inspector” for the Tehran Mobedan Council (Anjoman e Moobedan).

⁷ Cf. *Bundahišn*, 18/8.

⁸ Cf. *Bundahišn*, 18/14.

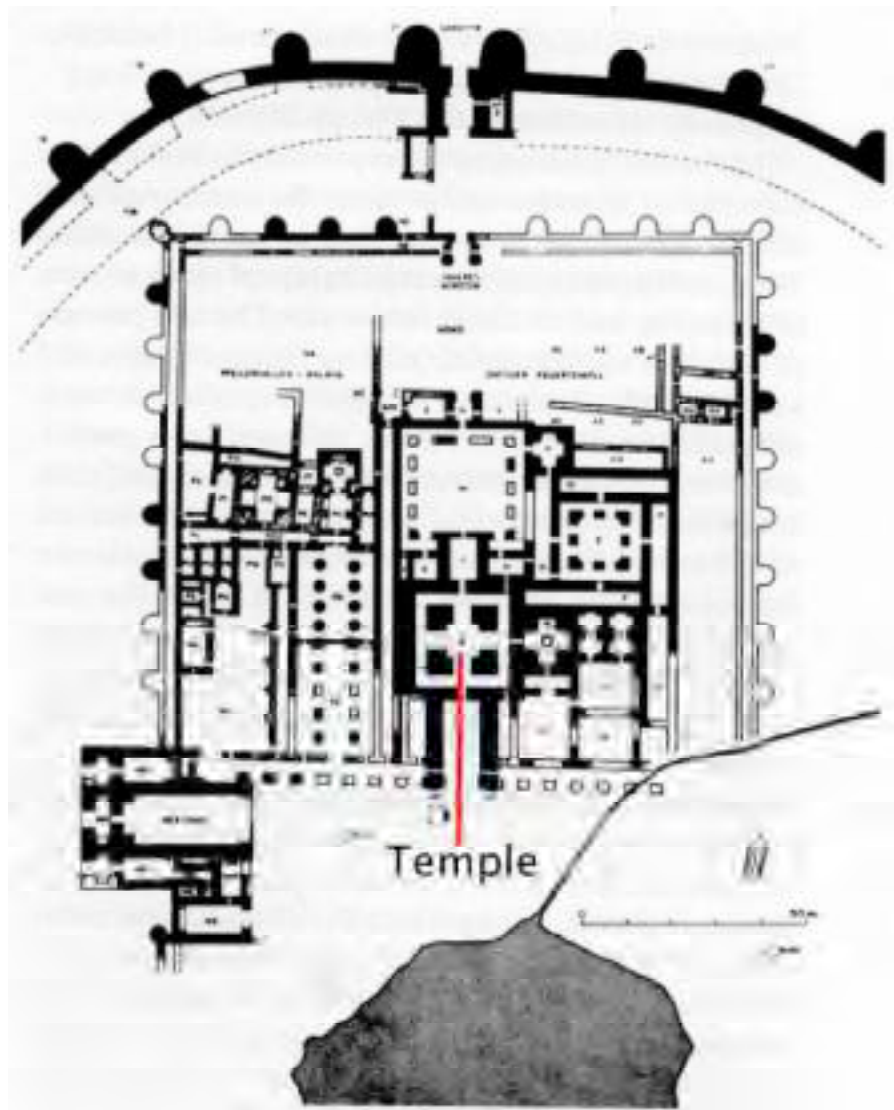
⁹ Dhabhar, *Rivayats*, p. 60.



Site map

1. The northern veranda, 2. Azar Goshnasp Temple, 3. Place of Eternal Fire, 4. Presumed Anahita temple, 5. The western veranda, 6. presumed Mithraic altar (Mehrab), 7. Dining Hall, 8. northern entrance gate, 9. Gallery, 10. Reconstruction southern fortification project, 11. Royal south-eastern entrance gate

<http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/urmia/index.htm#shiz>



Aerial view of fortification and lake in centre. Centre-left: Village of Nosratabad (behind ruins and in front of the volcano) Left: Highway 23. Image credit: Behnam at Virtual Tourist



Gate of Azargoshasb fire temple



Gahanbar ceremony in Azargoshash Fire Temple



Gahanbar ceremony in Azargoshash Fire Temple. A mirror with the picture of Zarathushtra etched on it.



Mobeds entering the gate of Azargoshash fire temple. This gate possibly was not used by the Sasanians.



Photographs at Azargoshash were taken by Sima Mehrazar and sent in September 2009. Since six years the celebration is being held at this site. - Ed.

Migration and Diaspora in Zoroastrian History : Some Thoughts

Since the liberalization of immigration policies in Western countries in the 1960s and 1970s, Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians have established thriving new communities in countries such as Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. It is commonly believed that this Western diaspora represents a major rupture with the past: after centuries of mostly sedentary settlement in rural Gujarat and Iran, as well as regional movement to centers such as Bombay and Tehran, Zoroastrians have unshackled their bonds to the old countries and scattered around the globe. Nothing, however, could be farther from the truth. Zoroastrians have been a highly mobile group and we can better understand our history by recognizing that migration has hardly been a new phenomenon. The fact that we have long been a community of merchants has definitely been an important factor in explaining this mobility.

by dinyar patel

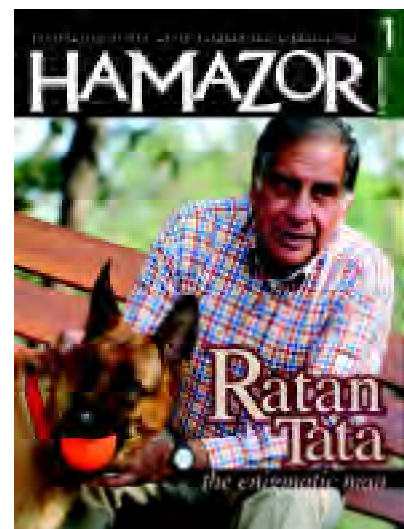
Ancient Iran and India: Rethinking the Qisse

The Parsis have, at the core of their identity, the story of migration etched into them: the familiar tale of a boatload of persecuted Zoroastrians who forsook Iran and found refuge at Sanjan in Gujarat. This story is recounted in the Qisse-i Sanjan, a Persian text composed by a Navsari *dastur* in the year 1599 AD, some five to seven centuries after the migration it claims to describe. However, as scholarship both new and old has told us, the story of the Zoroastrian migration to India is much more complex than what is alluded to in the Qisse.

Iran and India have shared a long history of economic and cultural relations. In the Sasanian era, we hear of Iranian domination of trade with India and Ceylon — something which greatly vexed the Byzantines by the sixth century AD — and the absorption of Indian high culture and scientific knowledge into Iranian culture. The Sasanian king Bahram V Gur supposedly imported Indian minstrels to his court in the fifth century.¹ It is quite likely that Zoroastrians were part of Iranian merchant settlements in the great ports that lined the Indian seaboard. Within the

borders of modern India, the earliest document showing the existence of an Indian Zoroastrian community is a copper plate dating from the 9th century — a grant with two Zoroastrian names listed on it. This copper plate comes not from Gujarat but from Quilon, now known as Kollam, in modern-day Kerala in the south of India.² It is extremely likely that Zoroastrian merchants either lived in, or traded with, major port cities in Gujarat, such as Bharuch, by the end of the Sasanian Empire in the seventh century.

This brings us full circle to the traditional story of the Parsi migration to Sanjan. Recently, a team of archaeologists, supported by Homi Dhalla's World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation, has been sifting through the mud and sand of Sanjan in order to find any evidence about the Zoroastrian migration documented in the Qisse. What they have found here is amazing: coins, pottery, and other wares from the Middle East and East Asia that show that Sanjan was, at one time, a major



international port.³ Was it possible, therefore, that a Zoroastrian merchant community was already established in Sanjan at the time of the supposed Parsi migration to India? If the Parsis did, in fact, land at Sanjan, did they deliberately choose their port of entry based on knowledge of an already existing Zoroastrian community? Dhalla and Rukshana Nanji (Deccan College) argue that:

The idea that a ship-load of migrants buffeted by the winds was tossed ashore at Sanjan by sheer chance needs to be recognized as a myth. From the tenth century onwards Bharuch, Khambhat and Chaul were known to have similar communities of Arab and Persian Zoroastrian traders. Communities of these traders had settled on foreign shores as far as China and often their numbers were not negligible.⁴

I do not suggest, as some historians like Andre Wink (*Al Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*) have done, that commerce rather than religion triggered the Parsi migration. Rather, I think it likely that the two worked hand-in-hand, with prosperous Iranian merchant communities in India attracting Zoroastrians once conditions for them in Iran steadily deteriorated.

Gujarat and Bombay: Springboards for International Trade

Makrand Mehta (Gujarat University), one of the leading historians of Gujarat, has in a recent conference paper attempted to trace Gujarat's centuries-long influence in Indian Ocean trade networks. Along with Jains, urban Hindu *baniyas*, and Muslims, Parsis play an important role in this story. It is commonly believed that Parsis were primarily agriculturalists in the several decades before European colonial powers came to India. This view needs to be modified. Indeed, Dhalla and Nanji point out that the several locations of Parsi settlement mentioned in the Qisse — locations such as Bharuch, Khambhat, and Variav (or rather nearby Surat) — were all

coastal cities and ports. If the Parsis were agriculturalists, they would have moved further inland to more fertile farmland. Instead, the location of their settlements, and scattered archaeological evidence, suggests that they were actively involved in Indian Ocean trade well before the Portuguese, Dutch, or English first called at western Indian ports during the Mughal era.⁵

Historians such as Ashin Das Gupta (*Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat*) have documented the role of Parsi merchants and agents in late Mughal-era Surat. Once political instability and river siltation damaged trade in Surat and other ports, Parsis were quick to move to the up-and-coming new commercial settlement of Bombay. In both Surat and Bombay, European trade and helped the Parsis to expand their commercial horizons. The first Parsi to visit England — and one of the first recorded Indians to come to that country — was Nowroji Rustamji, who sailed to London in 1723 in order to lobby the East India Company against his family's commercial rivals in Surat.⁶ A few decades later, in 1756, the first Parsi trader visited China, kicking off a long line of merchants who entered the opium trade and established a commercial base in that country. Two Indian historians, Madhavi Thampi and Shalini Saksena, have recently authored a good book entitled *China and the Making of Bombay* which sheds significant light on the dominance of Parsis in the early China trade in Indian cotton and opium. By the time that the British formally annexed Hong Kong in 1841, four Parsi merchants were already in residence in what was then a small port settlement.⁷ Larger merchant settlements were to be found in Macao and Canton, where locals started referring to Parsis as “white hats” or even, strangely enough, “white hat Arabs.” These so-called “white hat Arabs”, by the way, play a small but pivotal role in Amitav Ghosh's latest historical novel, *Sea of Poppies*.

Parsi merchants also increasingly turned their attention to a new power in the West, America. In the late 1700s and early 1800s,



Dinyar Patel is a PhD candidate in the Department of History at Harvard University, where he is working on a dissertation on Dadabhai Naoroji. This article draws upon talks he delivered to the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe in London (ZTFE) in April 2010 and the Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston (ZAGBA) in May 2010.

Bombay and the port of Salem in Massachusetts conducted a thriving trade in various items, including ice, which was cut out in massive blocks from frozen New England ponds — such as Walden Pond, made famous by the transcendentalist writer Henry David Thoreau — loaded onto ships, and then sailed across the oceans to India. Parsis were some of the first to corner this ice trade (in another interesting twist, the K R Cama Oriental Institute today stands on the site of Bombay's ice house). In fact, it was Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy who first introduced ice cream to Bombay: one hot, tropical evening he served it at a dinner party, after which, apparently, everyone fell sick.⁸

Anyway, by the mid-1800s, Parsis were traveling to the United States in order to conduct trade, both ice- and non-ice related. One such Parsi trader apparently left such a strong impression on an American merchant from Salem that he adopted the Parsis' name as his own middle name, becoming George Merwanjee White. In 1803, another Parsi, Noshirvanji Maneckji, became one of the first foreign donors to what is now the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem.⁹ Today you can still see many Parsi relics on display at the Peabody Essex Museum and one of its publications, a book called *Yankee India* by Susan Bean, contains a wealth of stories on the interactions between *bawas* and New Englanders. Probably the first Parsi to visit America was Ardaseer Cursetji Wadia, member of the famous shipbuilding family, in 1851. He stopped over in Salem where he was entertained by a local family. A daughter in this family recalled their meeting as such: "I remember that we all screamed at him and spoke very distinctly, as if we were talking to a child, and that he answered us in a very low cultivated refined voice, using much better English than we did."¹⁰

It is around this time that we begin to hear of Parsis actually going to North America to settle. In the 1860s, for example, one Parsi packed up his belongings and moved to California, and then British Columbia, in order to prospect for gold.¹¹ In 1885, Eduljee Sorabjee, who had lived in Manchester for eight years, found the weather in England

too gloomy for his liking and decided to move to Los Angeles, which he heard had the most perfect climate in the world. He soon decided to settle there permanently and became a US citizen, remarking that he "liked America too well," especially its republican form of government.¹² We also have an interesting story coming out of Baroda. In 1876, a group of Baroda Parsis composed a lengthy letter to the US diplomatic consul in Bombay informing him that they were very interested in migrating, en masse, to America. Nothing, however, seems to have come out of this.¹³

Conclusion

By the early twentieth century, enterprising Parsi merchants and professionals were fanning out and establishing relatively sizable settlements in places such as Rangoon, Shanghai, Kobe, Singapore, Aden, Durban, Zanzibar, London, and elsewhere. At the same time, numerous Iranian Zoroastrians flocked to India for education, economic opportunity, and in order to escape discrimination; and both rural and urban Parsis poured into Bombay from Gujarat. Both the beginning and end of the twentieth century witnessed great mobility within the Zoroastrian community. As this short essay has tried to demonstrate, however, migration and movement for trade and business have been quite constant themes in our history.

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The Eight Lady Mobedyars of Iran

From the report sent by the Tehran Anjoman e Mobedan through courtesy of Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary.

Tehran Anjoman e Mobedan at the Khosravi Community Hall, in Tehran, had arranged an awe-inspiring celebration which coincided with Jashn e Esfandgan (Rooz Spedarmazd - Mah Spendarmazd, considered to be Mother's / Women's day, an occasion meant for paying tributes to the spiritual aspects of Spenta Armaity), and a unique ceremony with a view to glorify the position of women within our Society – the initiation of eight lady mobedyars.

Eight out of fifteen candidates who had undergone stringent and extensive training in the entire Avesta recitations required for carrying out our common religious rites, and who had acquired high levels of religious knowledge enabling them to teach our religious principles and general knowledge to the laity; and committed to serve the Anjoman e Mobedan in the latter's quest for the upkeep these values, were bestowed upon with titles as Mobedyars.

They were, Mrs Mitra nee Moradpour, Mrs Mehrzad nee

Kaviani, Mrs Fariba nee Mali, Mrs Parva nee Namiranian, Mrs Sarvar nee Tarapouvala, Mrs Rashin nee Jahangiri, Miss Paria Mavandi and Miss Behnaz Naeemabadi.

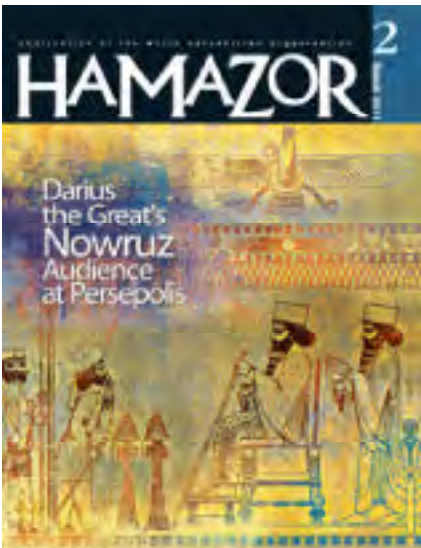
The ceremony consisted of two parts. A variety of lectures and a group recitation of a ceremonial Jashan with Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary as the Zaoatar (Zoot). A summary of the event is shared with our readers.

Beginning with the recitation of some verses from the Gathas, Mobed Pedram Soroushpour who conducted the ceremony shed an insight into some aspects of the songs and the belief that Asho Zarathushtra

named his daughter PaorooChista meaning equipped with much knowledge) to indicate His belief and desire that women ought to seek knowledge, especially religion.

Prof Katayoun Mazdapour, a Zartoshti researcher and university professor, was invited to speak. She spoke about Asho Zarathushtra's stress upon the equality of men and women as human beings, and the cultural heritage that He left behind leading into acts of Human Rights with justice and peaceful attitudes all along. She then identified extracts from Hirbadestan (Aerepatestan) dating back to early Achaemenian Dynasty, indicating that women acquired and imparted religious knowledge in the same capacity as men for religious practices, including the job of tending to the Holy Fire without any restrictions. In spite of all the above, outside influences and the victory of force over reason left the female subdued over by the male gender until about a some decades ago when the emancipation of women came about. Saviours such as Gulestan Banoo Izadyar's revelations to the Parsis of India, regarding the restrictions in Iran, which culminated in the activities of Manekji Limji Hataria, followed by several others and of recent past, namely, Farangis Shahrokh who brought about sweeping changes for the benefit of our community, especially for our womenfolk. She said that wisdom is the only instrument to choose the truth.

Dr Esfandiar Ekhtiari – Zartoshtis' representative in Parliament – called this



day as a very great and historic one. He marvelled at the insight and foresight of Asho Zarathushtra who put forward the very idea that it is the humanity of human beings that count and not genders, race, or material power. He counted this occasion as a demonstration of the advanced thinking of our community and praised the Anjoman e Mubedan for not stooping to oppositions. He also praised the lady Mobedyars for their bravery and religious feeling, in spite of the fact that each one of them were highly educated and came from affluent families. Dr Ekhtiary presented each of the candidates with a gift as a token of his appreciation for their courageous endeavor.

Mehrangiz Shahzadi – the representative of the Zartoshti Women's Organisation – spoke of Frashkart. She said that the religious principles are strict but subsidiary laws should be changed along with time and considered this event a good Frashkart.

Dr Rostam Khosraviani – the Tehran Zartoshti Anjoman president – was the next speaker. He praised the role women have played in the fields of education and social work. He considered this occasion as a solid proof that our community is progressive and praised the Anjoman e Moobedan for all the hard work and determination they had rendered, to achieve such a goal in spite of fierce oppositions from different quarters.

Mehrangiz Shahzadi, a board director of the Zartoshti Women's Organisation cited the limitations that existed for women in holding public posts till only a few decades back. The Tehran Zartoshti Anjoman had held a community referendum in order to decide if women could be elected to the Anjuman's Board of Directors. The votes were overwhelmingly in favour. As a result two ladies were elected then and that trend has continued ever since. Soon after, Farangis Shahrokh founded the Iranian Association of Zartoshti Women in Tehran, exactly 60 years ago.

Mobed Dr Khorshidian, the current President of the Anjoman e Mobedan began

with praises for the high rate of literacy amongst our community, both male and female. He had prepared a three page written account of the set of rules listing the expectations and limitations of the lady Mobedyars. To begin with they were expected to be primarily active in the fields of teaching and in helping the Anjuman spread our religious knowledge and culture. As Mobedyars they were welcome to perform Sedre Pushi, Jashans and other limited ceremonies permitted to their male counterparts, however, only in case of emergencies or for occasions and places where it was required. To begin with and until formally announced the ladies would not enter any Atash Behram or Darbe Mehr Adorans to tend the Holy Fire, nor would they opt to pray at the burial ceremony in any Aramgah.

Mobed Ardeshir Khorshidian, also listed the basic principles of Zartoshti religion, amongst them principles that uphold the equal rights of men and women as well as the one which states that the duty of human beings is to make the world progressive (Frasho kereti) by supporting this move. At this part of the ceremony the candidates received their Mobedyar Certificates and each one read out a statement expressing their thanks for being selected to such a holy post and their commitments to serve the community.

Mobed Pedram Soroushpour, who had played a very active role in the management and success of the Mobedyar programme, conducted the Initiation Ceremony and spoke in detail about the duration of the training and how these eight out of fifteen candidates had passed the strictest tests. Both he and Dr Khorshidian announced the Anjoman e Moobedan's commitment to continue their efforts in maintaining discipline amongst the priestly class and their Yars (assistants) and promised other ladies who were interested for further training and graduation to Women Mobed Yars, this would be given.

The ceremony was continued by Avesta reciting – rejoicing Jashan – which each of

the eight mobedyars recited a part under the supervision of Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary.

As you may note, from the above, the candidates have been promoted with the aim, besides meeting their enthusiasm for fulfilling their religious duties, they would in no way be competing with the full time practicing Mobeds / Mobedyars. On the one hand they are highly qualified academically, postgraduates and MDs and have no material needs to earn through providing prayers etc. Moreover to begin with, they are restricted from tending to any Atash Behram / Agiary fires, as well as the "Geh Sarna" ritual for dead dispositions.

During Jashan recitals in Iran, there are portions where the priest holds up one and then two branches of myrtle and the congregation follow. In doing this, everyone present prays that the benefit of the ceremony may reach Ahura Mazda, with the first branch and to every human being who is a follower of Good Thoughts ... Deeds.

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Lady mobedyar holding a stem of myrtle

Mahshad Khosraviani - 1st Lady Mobedyar of North America

Mahshad Khosraviani of Toronto, Canada is the first lady to be a Mobedyar in North America and holds the distinction of being recognised not only by the NAMC of North America but by the Iranian Anjuman as well, after spending time in Iran and taking their relevant tests.



20-year-old Mahshad has been practising as a mobedyar since she was ordained in 2012 but prior to this, actively conducted Avesta classes and trained children for their navjote ceremony. This thought and process of her mobedyar training commenced more than four years ago when Ervad Jehan Bagli was convinced Mahshad was more than sincere to serve the religion of Asho Zarathosht, thereafter helping her to achieve her dream.

She says "Aside from wanting the same rights and freedoms as men in my religion and opening a path for others in future ... I think the greatest part ... is being a real part of people's lives and some of their important moments."

On May 17, 2013, Mahshad together with Ervads Jal Panthaky and Jehan Bagli, performed the Sedreh Pooshi (navjote) ceremony in Toronto of three young Zarathushti girls.

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Postscript : Mobedyar Mahshad was invited to speak at WZO's Seminar on Zoroastrian Religion, History & Culture on 7th June 2015 at London. She not only enlightened the audience but kept them totally bewitched! Please wait for Issue 4 of this year to read all about it. – Ed.



Mahshad talking to the girls prior to their navjote



Ervad Jal Panthaky & Mahshad with the girls



Mobedyar Mahshad Khosraviani



Ervads Panthaky, Bagli & Mobedyar Mahshad performing the navjote ceremony

Is it memory loss or Alzheimer's disease?

It is a well known fact that the world population is aging, we are all living longer, and by UN estimates by 2050, 25% of the population will be over the age of 65, with women outnumbering men 2:1. It is necessary therefore that we know what changes we should expect in our mental and physical health with the aging process.

by dolly dastoor



The net effect of aging in varying degrees, is an accumulation of physical and psychological losses. There is a progressive decline in physical integrity through normal wear and tear, the acquisition of chronic degenerative diseases and often an increased susceptibility to acute illness.

The psychological losses may be brought about by geographical separation from and deaths of relatives and friends, by changes in social roles, loss of social esteem.

However in spite of all the wear and tear, our brain the most important organ which defines us as humans, maintains its potency and is far more resilient than previously thought. Language skills, abstract thinking, verbal expression, all get better except when the brain is attacked by diseases like Parkinson's and Alzheimer. And Wisdom is an attribute associated with aging – generally. Brain grows and changes all the time. It feeds on stimulation and it is never too late to feed it. Learning a new skill every year keeps the brain healthy and active.

But in spite of all the positive advances that have been made in our knowledge of the aging brain, the most common problem which people are afraid of, as they age, are losing their memory and subsequently developing Alzheimer's disease.

Our lives are largely made up of memories (our past) and hopes (our future) with “now” a grammatical convenience. There is no wonder then that we treasure our memories and our capacity to remember. While healthy and active elderly people may complain of forgetting names and dates, take longer to recall a name, find a word, this form of forgetfulness is typically benign in nature and is common after age 40. We cannot absorb and quickly recall a flood of brand new information as easily as we could when young. Taking longer to memorize new data is a normal part of growing up to and through—maturity. Also tip-of-the tongue lapses are common after age 64.

Many older people with perfectly normal cognitive skills also occasionally forget why they walked into a room and must retrace their steps to remember their intentions. And although these phenomena are sometimes frustrating or inconvenient, they have no real impact on daily life.

Less than 2% of people who experience such lapses develop dementia. In contrast people with mild cognitive impairments (MCI) are characterized by persistent recurrent short-term memory loss, forgetting important social and business matters and some moments of confusion. They also do poorly on learning and retaining of new information. These tendencies interfere with

daily life, even though people are still able to carry on caring for themselves.

Between 10% to 20 % of people with mild cognitive impairments eventually develop Alzheimer's Dementia which is characterized by progressive deterioration of memory, language, reason and other vital cognitive functions. Red flags to alert friends and families that all is not well are: Difficulty completing familiar tasks, such as preparing a meal but forgetting to serve it, becoming lost on your own street, not knowing how to get back home, inappropriate choices such as putting on a bathrobe to go outdoors, difficulty performing simple arithmetic, misplacing items, usually putting them in inappropriate places e.g. the iron in the freezer, rapid mood or personality changes, lack of interest in usual activities, loss of initiative.

The brain with approximately 100 billion neurons or nerve cells has an enormous reserve capacity such that many cells may be lost, and indeed they are lost daily, without noticeable impairment. However if there is a concentration of neuronal loss in one part of the brain or the loss of too many neurons in highly visible brain function viz memory or language, the consequent impairment may be substantial with the development of dementia.

Dementia is a syndrome or a group of symptoms resulting from the structural loss or death of nerve cells in the brain. There are over 60 different varieties of dementia but the most common and dreaded is Alzheimer's disease, (named after the neurologist who identified it in 1903) accounting for more than 60% of all cases. It has an insidious onset, with a progressive decline, slowly destroying all cognitive and functional abilities which distinguish us as human beings. It is also accompanied with behavioural complications e.g. aggression, wandering, disinhibition. Up to 4 million Americans – one in 10 people over the age of 65 or nearly half of everyone over the age of 85 develop Alzheimer's disease (AD).

The disease results from different causes in different people, but no matter what the

cause, it is the same disease once you get it. Some families are more likely to get the disease because of genetic risk factors. People with a positive family history with two or more relatives experiencing the disease over two generations, are likely to get the disease at an early age usually younger than 50 or 60 years of age. Great advances are being made in developing a genetic profile through a simple blood test which could be done in a doctor's office. This would help in prescribing appropriate anticholinergic medication to slow the disease process. At present there are three on the market.

There are also non-genetic risk factors e.g. age, lifestyle and environment. These can be reduced by effectively controlling and treating vascular risk factors, eg. hypertension, head trauma, diabetes, smoking and atrial fibrillation. Education on the other hand may be a protective factor. Alzheimer's disease has a dramatic impact for the patient and the family. A better understanding of this illness could be of great value for the society. With longevity on its side, the incidence of developing Alzheimer's disease is high for the Zarathushti community. The emotional, physical and financial cost for providing care to our loved ones is very high. The community has to make a concerted plan to provide care and support for different levels of the illness to both the patient and the family care-giver.

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Dolly Dastoor PhD, is a clinical Psychologist specializing in the assessment of Dementia. She is currently the Clinical Administrator of the Program for Dementia at Douglas Hospital, Montreal and Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, and Centre for Studies in Aging, McGill University. Past President of Alzheimer Society of Montreal and Vice-president of Alzheimer Society of Canada.



The quality of life and social safety net for the Zoroastrian senior

Ageing is an evitable process of human development. We age from the day we are born. Some of us age well and some not so well. And what is the cause of this difference in ageing styles? Can science explain this? How can a woman closing in on her second century be as robust, almost defiantly, healthy while men and women decades younger are languishing feebly in nursing homes plagued with failing bodies and failing minds and wishing they had not been so unlucky as to live so long.

by dolly dastoor

For most of human history, a long and healthy life has been shrugged off as a gift from the gods – or maybe the undeserved reward for a lifetime of plain cussedness. But to gerontologists the vagaries of ageing have become the focus of intense scientific research.

It is obvious even to non scientists that how you get to age well depends partly on the genes you are born with and partly on the life style, what and how much you eat, the alcohol you consume, the exercise habits you have, where you live and what type of trauma and

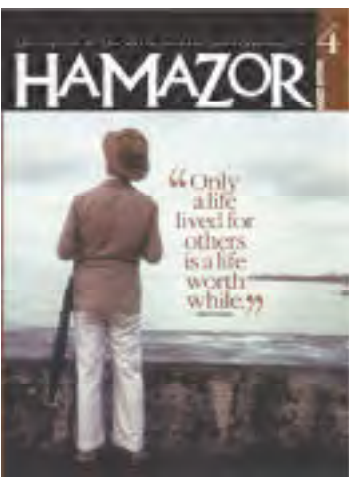
stress, social, emotional or financial you experience, your psychological traits, the presence and absence of support from family and friends, the general role you play in society. The extent to which longevity depends on each of these factors was unknown until Swedish scientists tackled the problem in 1998. By looking at identical twins separated at birth and reared apart, they were able to determine that only 20% to 30% of how long we live is genetically determined, and the rest is attributed to lifestyle.

How does this information translate into the Zoroastrian reality. What is the lifestyle of

the Zoroastrian old? We are an ageing community with 33% of Zoroastrians in India over the age of 60. This percentage has increased from 17.9% in 1961 to 33% in 1999. (BPP Review, Summer 2004 pg 30) In North America, 10% of the Zoroastrian population are over age 65 (FEZANA Journal Winter 1999), in Pakistan, 36 % of the Z population is over 60 (Zarathushtrian Census of Pakistan 1995). (We have no figures for Iran). Of course this alarming rate of growth is the trend globally, causing much concern to social and economic planners. (India 7%, USA 12.7% and UK 15.7%) Providing services for this fastest growing segment of the population is a real challenge.

The problem in India is confounded by the factors of changing family structures, rapid urbanization and international migration. Added to this is the fact that in the over 60 age group 22.6% are males and 25.6% females, and of these 51% of the males and 37% of females are single. So where is the social safety net for this segment of the population? Who looks after this segment of the Zoroastrian population in India?

This touches many of us living in the diaspora, who have aged and older parents still living in the home countries, looked



after by the goodwill of friends and distant relatives or at the mercy of paid help. But in most cases of Zoroastrians with no children or with no living relative, there is no one to provide support and help. The elderly live in neglected housing conditions, with limited financial resources, poor health, poor diet, social isolation, vulnerable and easy target for financial exploitation and abuse. Some also suffer from cognitive and memory loss, which go undetected and undiagnosed making the older person the butt of ridicule and jokes.

Lifestyle is very strongly influenced by outside factors such as the people we associate with, where we live and the services that are provided to enable seniors to age well. Local communities, the voluntary sector and the government have roles to play in creating conditions that make successful ageing possible for seniors.

So what is the responsibility of every Zoroastrian in finding creative solutions of helping this vulnerable segment of our community. At the 7th World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston, 2000, Soonamai Dessai had presented a very well thought out action plan, "Development of a support system of care for our elders based on values cherished by the Zarathushti community". (FEZANA Journal, Fall 2003, pgs 48-52). We can go even further taking the example of other communities and Non-Governmental Agencies (NGOs) like World Vision with their "Adopt a Gran" programme. It is generally agreed that giving a monthly stipend or a "dole" however "good" it may make the giver feel for the moment is not the right answer. It takes more than money to improve the quality of life and lifestyle of the elderly. A change in the mind-set that communal living in a supervised residence is not the ultimate fulfillment of the concept "abandoning your parents".



The "MANCHERJI EDALJI JOSHI MEMORIAL TRUST" currently operates a food scheme in the Dadar Parsi Colony area, Mumbai *[it still does, as we speak - Ed]* which feeds 24 old and infirm for a cost of Rs40 per day or Rs1,200 per month or Rs14,400 per year. ie. US\$360 per year or US\$30 per month.

(Appeal on page 19)

This information was obtained from the Trust Fund and also has been circulated on the Zoroastrian Women's International Network (ZWIN) and elsewhere. This food scheme has been organized by Mithu Jesia. Contact numbers and email are: Tel: +91 22 2414

9571; Mobile: 09820982623 email: mithojimi@rediffmail.com or mejmt@mail.com.

But we need to go beyond feeding 24 people and broaden this food scheme to cover different aspects of care

ACTION PLAN

1. Develop a registry of people over the age of 65 in the community, their areas of concentration and their needs.
2. Assessing the type of need
 - a. financial help and budgeting their limited resources
 - b. social/emotional
 - c. practical assistance for home repairs, paying bills,
 - d. health and medications
 - e. ???
3. Check on resources available in the community at large.
4. Develop a group of volunteers, preferably from the coterie of recently retired who like to keep busy.
5. Each volunteer to be responsible for a group of seniors (needing assistance) in their geographical area to respond to the needs.
6. To involve seniors in productive activities. People who remain engaged in life and

socially connected to those around them are happier and in better physical and mental health.

7. A world wide appeal for a monthly contribution of US\$30 to sponsor/adopt an elderly Zoroastrian person. The sponsor to keep in touch directly or through their own local personal contacts. Annual report on the status of the sponsored individual to be sent.

8. To appoint a co-ordinator of the project.

9. Form a committee with expertise and interest in ageing issues to whom the co-ordinator is responsible.

10. The project could be centralized through a central body like the BPP or WZO or through another NGO specially set up.

The time has come to organize ourselves and develop infrastructures for our community, to spread our individual wealth and good fortune around and to share our organizational expertise so that we are able to protect the needy and the vulnerable.

The aim is to create a local community where all older citizens can enjoy inclusion, safety, integration, engagement and choice. When the conditions are favorable, people have the resources and incentives to stay healthy and engaged and to cope successfully with limitations and change. Communities have an important role to play in fostering socialization and promoting engagement.

This is a preliminary skeletal plan. People interested in developing this further should contact the author at:
dollydastoor@sympatico.ca

Published in Hamazor Issue 4/2004 pp 20 - 22

AND 11 YEARS LATER, THIS SUPPORT STILL NEEDS IMPLEMENTATION - Ed.

Dolly Dastoor PhD, President of FEZANA 1994-1998, and co-chair of the 7th World Zoroastrian Congress. She has attended and presented papers at the World Zoroastrian Congress in India and Iran and in North American conferences; at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago and in Capetown; Governor, 2002-2004, District 2, ZONTA International, a service organization promoting the status of women. Clinical psychologist by profession, Dolly is the Co-Director of Programme in Dementia, Douglas Hospital, McGill University and lives in Montreal, Canada.



Freddie Mercury - the King of Queen

by sohrab anklesaria

The lights go off ... its twenty one hundred and the crowds cannot control themselves any further. Chants roar for miles, "FREDDIE! FREDDIE! Freddie we love you!" And then one man steps into the azure hue spotlight. As the man can be heard taking his breath, like an eagle leaping from its ledge, ready to soar, the crowd goes ballistic with the four words "I WANT IT ALL" and then

"AND I WANT IT NOW!" Fire works erupt from the stage and the band *Queen* begins one of its many epic concerts. "QUEEN", the classic British rock band formed by Freddie Mercury, Brian May, and Roger Taylor in London, England, in 1970 from the remains of *Smile*, with John Deacon completing the lineup the following year, was also Britain's most successful band of the past three decades. *Queen* became popular during the mid-to-late 1970s and to this day retain an extremely large international fan base. But why you may ask, that I go on about this larger-than life group? It is because this band was also fronted by one of the most powerful and spectacular vocalists of this era, none other then Farrokh Bulsara better known as Freddie Mercury.



Mercury was born Farrokh Bulsara in the city of Stone Town on the African island of Zanzibar (at the time a British colony, now part of Tanzania). His parents, Bomi and Jer Bulsara, were Parsi-Zoroastrians from India. The family had emigrated to Zanzibar in order for Bomi to continue his job as a middle-ranking cashier at the British Colonial Office. Mercury had one younger sister, Kashmira. Mercury was sent back to

India to attend St Peter's boarding school near Bombay (now Mumbai). It was at St Peter's where he learned to play the piano and joined his first band, *The Hectics*. He stayed in India for most of his childhood, living with his grandmother and aunt; and completed his education at St Mary's High School in Mazagon before returning to Zanzibar. He was 17 when he and his family finally fled to England, as a result of the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution. In England, he earned a Diploma in Art and Graphic Design at Ealing Art College, following in the footsteps of Pete Townsend. He later used these skills in order to design the *Queen* crest.

Widely considered as one of the greatest vocalists in popular music, Freddie Mercury possessed a very distinctive voice. Although his speaking voice naturally fell in the baritone range, his singing voice was that of a tenor. His recorded vocal range spanned nearly four octaves (falsetto included), with his lowest recorded note being the F below the bass clef and his highest recorded note being the D that lies nearly four octaves above. In addition to vocal range, Mercury often delivered technically difficult songs in a powerful manner. However, due in part to the fact that he suffered from vocal nodules (for which he declined surgery), he would often lower the highest notes during many concerts. Mercury also claimed that he never had any formal vocal training. Although he had a very close girlfriend named Mary Austin for many years, Freddie Mercury had always been fairly open about his sexuality. In a March 12, 1974 interview for *New Musical Express*, he told the interviewer: *'I am as gay as a daffodil, my dear!'* Beginning in the late 1970s, Mercury began a series of affairs with men, which ultimately resulted in the end of his relationship with Austin. However, the two remained close friends through the years, and Mercury often referred to Austin as his only true friend. In a 1985 interview, Mercury said of Austin, *"All my lovers asked me why they couldn't replace Mary (Austin), but it's simply impossible. The only friend I've got is Mary, and I don't want anybody else. To me, she was my common-law wife.*

To me, it was a marriage. We believe in each other, that's enough for me. I couldn't fall in love with a man the same way as I have with Mary."



Young Freddie, from the Queen's website

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

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

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

Mercury kept his Indian descent a secret from most of his fans, rarely mentioning his



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

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

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

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

A little over 24 hours after issuing the statement, Freddie Mercury died at home in the presence of close friends, at the age of 45. Although he had not attended religious

services in years, Mercury's funeral was conducted by a Zoroastrian priest. He was cremated at Kensal Green Cemetery, and the whereabouts of his ashes are unknown, although some believe them to have been dispersed into Lake Geneva, or are in his family's possession. The remaining members of *Queen* founded The Mercury Phoenix Trust, and organised The Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert. He left £500,000 to his chef, £500,000 to his personal assistant, £100,000 to his driver, and £500,000 to his partner, Jim Hutton. Mary Austin, his life-long friend, inherited the estate and now lives there with her family.

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

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

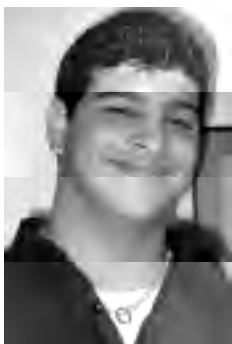
Parties in London and Cologne were thrown by EMI and *Queen* which revolved around a performance of *We Will Rock You* one of Freddie's greatest performances. The Swiss erected his statue in Montreux and in Britain a stamp was issued in his honour.

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

As a fellow vocalist playing in a small local Karachi band it is my honour and privilege

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

Published in Hamazor Issue 4/2006 pp 25 – 27



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

Tamara Barshak of ITV contacted WZO London for assistance re the TV programme to be broadcasted to time with the birth anniversary in September .

Farrokh Vajifdar was interviewed [in London] and Dinshaw Tamboly assisted in Mumbai but neither were shown on the programme. But at least in the credits, both Vajifdar & WZO were acknowledged.

Farrokh V writes in a personal exchange: *"I think he should be regarded as the greatest Parsi ever. No one – not even Dadabhai Naoroji, nor Pheroza Shah Mehta, etc. – has ever enjoyed such recognition on a world-wide scale as FM! (And I never even knew the fellow!)"* - Ed.

The Real Story of Freddy Mercury

by Mariam Ahundova

In Russian, now available in English

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

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

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

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

Chhaiye Hame Jarthosti - Origins and Associations

As a child in Karachi I often wondered what the origins of *Chhaiye Hame Jarthosti* were and the circumstances which had given birth to it, so palpable was the communal pride radiating from lusty renditions of the song at community events. Marzban Giara's article in *Hamazor* January 2013 (commemorating Firoz Rustomji Batliwalla and admirably interspersed with information provided by the late Virasp Mehta to Toxy Cowasjee) provided the answer I'd sought many years ago. Batliwalla's arrangement of *Chhaiye Hame Jarthosti* was originally performed as part of a *natak*, instantly taken to heart by the community and quickly became the *de facto* anthem of the Parsi community of India. A century later it continues to enthuse Parsis, providing the miniscule community now scattered across the globe with a sense of shared identity.

by jubin mama

Shortly after the *Hamazor* article was published in Issue 1/2013 pp 59-60, reports emerged of an email circulating amongst the community which alleged that *Chhaiye Hame Jarthosti* was directly derived from a Nazi propaganda song *Deutschland du Land der Treue* – to the consternation to some within our community.

"Did you know the origins of our Chhaiye Hame Jarthosti? No? Then open the link below and be prepared to be shocked!"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qtr4lXzNtN4&feature=share&list=PLEEAD35D4B63858E>

The genesis of this article lies in the scenario above. There was never any doubt that the central allegation of the email could have any basis in truth – the facts speak for themselves. The *Hamazor* article of January explicitly states that Batliwalla was the author of *Chhaiye* and set his arrangement to the music of an American Theodore Morse, the *Blue Bell March* which Morse had composed in 1904. Further, since Batliwalla died in 1912, selfevidently *Chhaiye* would have had to have been

completed before then and was in all probability firmly entrenched in the collective Parsi consciousness by then.

The National Socialists (the Nazis) on the other hand came to prominence significantly later, in the hubris which engulfed Germany after its defeat in the First World War, during the short-lived and ill-fated Weimar Republic. (Whilst the Republic encompassed a particularly turbulent period of German politics, social progressiveness and tolerance were achieved during the same period as well as cultural creativity and innovation. Poignantly, given its later tragic fate, German Jewry was in the vanguard of many of these progressive movements).

It wasn't until 1933 (nearly 30 years after the composition of the original *Blue Bell March* – as well as *Chhaiye* which derives from it) that the Nazis engineered their rise to power in Germany and consolidated their stranglehold on it. It was during the period that followed, when militant National Socialism led inexorably to the conflagration of World War II that military marches like *Deutschland du Land der Treue* emerged. The Nazis borrowed the music of the *Blue Bell March* (and by extension, of *Chhaiye*)

and set it to lyrics which promoted their own agenda.

Zane Dalal, Resident Conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of India, and well-placed to comment on the matter offers this perspective on the issue: "Hitler's Reich adopted this and many other songs from the 1920s onwards right up to the establishment of German National Socialism in 1933. Unfortunately for us and our Chhaiye Hame, Morse's March got a heavy rewrite, not in music, but in words and usage. Germans described Morse's March as the Krieger Abschied, the exit march of the soldiers. Deutschland du Land der Treue, known as Heil Deutschland refers to the Germany of Hitler's dream ... is about total allegiance to him and was much used at Nuremberg".

(The Nuremberg Rallies were gatherings of hundreds of thousands of Nazi supporters, and their primary purpose was to strengthen the personality cult of Hitler, portraying him as Germany's saviour chosen by providence. The gathered masses listened to his speeches, swore loyalty and marched before him).

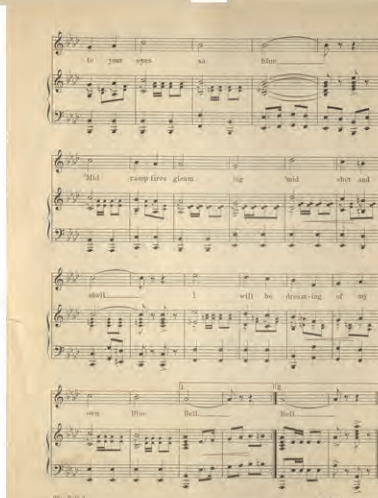
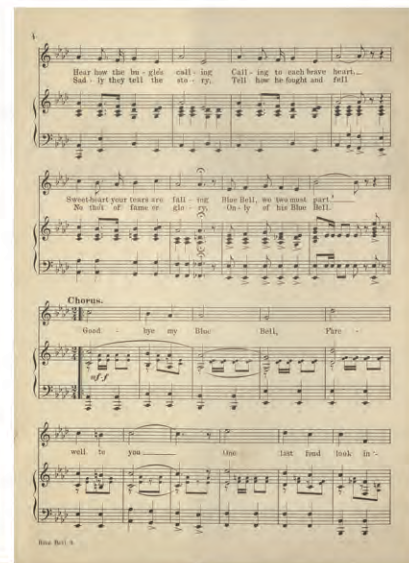
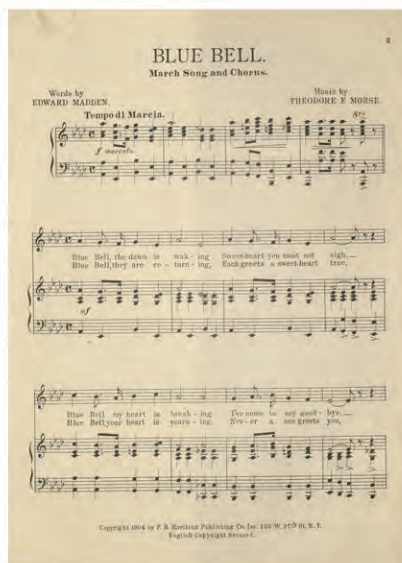
Dalal goes on to say "If a tune is good enough it will be used again and again by any who want to. Bach and Vivaldi shared tunes; Mozart's end up in Beethoven". There was therefore an established precedent and the Nazis' adoption of Morse's *March* for their purposes was not in itself distinctive or unknown; indeed, Batiwalla had done the same when using the melody for *Chhaiye Hame Jarthosti*.

The original sheet music for the *Blue Bell March Song and Chorus* (the template for *Chhaiye Hame Jarthosti*) is located in the *Historic American Sheet Music Archive* of Duke University in North Carolina, USA. The *Blue Bell March Song and Chorus* was composed by Theodore F Morse with lyrics by Edward Madden and was published in 1904 by the F B Haviland Company, New York City. The instrumentation is for voice and piano and the piece was first performed by Irene Jermon.

The *Blue Bell March Song and Chorus* is of the *Tin Pan Alley* genre. The *Tin Pan Alley*



Permission given to reproduce the cover and music score of Blue Bell March song and chorus by Edward Madden and Theodore F Morse, Historic American Sheet Music Project, David M Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.





was a collection of New York City songwriters and music publishers who dominated popular American music in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Morse and Madden were amongst the leading lights of the *Tin Pan Alley* which also included luminaries like Irving Berlin, Ira and George Gershwin, Scott Joplin and Cole Porter.

Born and brought up in Karachi in a sensibly liberal family environment Jubin Mama has lived in London for several years. He has great regard for the Zoroastrian community's contribution to Karachi and Pakistan through enlightened philanthropy, public service, within the professions and as entrepreneurs and captains of commerce. He is proud of this heritage and maintains close ties with Karachi. He greatly appreciates London life and believes his Parsi Zoroastrian background has served him well in integrating and making a life for himself here.

The cover sheet of the *Blue Bell March* which accompanies this article is evocative of the American Civil War period, depicting as it does a Civil War soldier taking leave of his sweetheart (possibly his Southern belle?). It was around this time that the *Tin Pan Alley* musicians and lyricists began to capitalise on Northerners' fascination with this mythological South. The *Blue Bell March* tied into the American public's ongoing interest in and romanticizing of the Civil War and the process of reconciliation between the North and South, particularly as the 50th anniversary of the War approached. (Madden and Morse also collaborated on another song with a Civil War theme, *Two Little Boys*). The *March* is therefore about the American Civil War from the perspective of someone looking back on it 40 years later.

The song appeared again in 1946 in the Columbia Pictures film *The Jolson Story*, proving its enduring appeal.

In light of the information presented above, the email claiming that *Chhaiye Hame Jarthosti* is derived from Nazi propaganda is patently untrue – the facts speak for themselves.

Note: The input to the article of Zane Dalal, Resident Conductor, Symphony Orchestra of India, and of Kate Collins, Research Services Librarian, David Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University, North Carolina is acknowledged with appreciation.

Published in Hamazor Issue 2/2013 pp 18 - 19



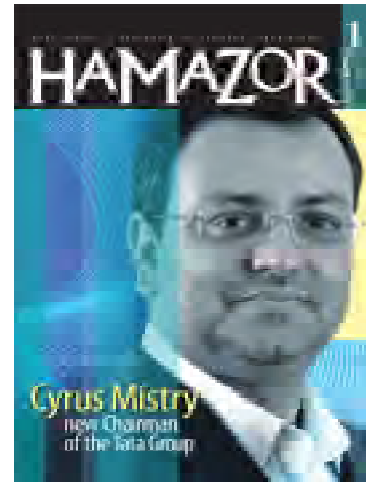
Kavi Firoz Rustomji Batliwalla

by marzban giara

Interspersed with information shared by late Virasp Mehta which appear in quotes. This article is being reproduced so there is some understanding and continuity for the reader, why the previous one was written.

Kavi 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



Firoz Rustomji Batliwalla

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*."

...

"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."

...

"On special occasions Batliwalla used to compose and sing songs, before the Viceroy, Governors and Princely rulers. *Chaiye hame Zarhosti* must have been composed any time before September 1912 when he died."

...

Appeared in Hamazor Issue 1/2013 pp 59 - 60



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."

Into the Future



Beach in Sanjan, where it is believed to be one of the first landing places of Zarathushtis fleeing from Iran in the 8th C.
Photo credit : Zoroastrian Return to Roots Program

Building Strong Families: Aids to Family Solidarity

Magdalena Rustomji writes a monthly column for Creating Awareness, known as The Family Forum. She has very kindly condensed issues, No8 & No9, 2004, appearing on Creating Awareness, for Hamazor readers, as we feel what she has to share will benefit us all. [This was written in 2004, today unfortunately Creating Awareness does not exist – Ed]

We would like to focus on what we can do to build family solidarity within our Zoroastrian families. We will set forth some ideas, some strategies with the hope that you will add your recommendations for what you have done in your families to build family solidarity. The idea is that we share strategies as to what we can do to build stronger families. For the young parents, we hope that this column will be of some help. For those parents whose children are now young adults, please think of ideas from your very own experiences of parenting, what is it that we wish we had known or that we wish someone had shared with us when we were young parents.

by magdalena rustomji

The following strategies are adapted from a list in one of Dr Benjamin Spock's articles. I have adapted the list, keeping in mind our Zoroastrian values, as well as my own experiences as a counsellor.

Aids to Family Solidarity

Meals together

Make a concerted effort to have at least some meals together during the week.

Given the type of schedules that we have with work, household and school requirements, perhaps it cannot be a daily activity but certainly a weekly one. Use the time to share information and update each other on activities. Do not use this time to scold or criticize.

Family Meetings

Periodically have family

meetings where all family members must be present. Use this time to update each other on what is going on, discuss issues, clarify guidelines, rules, etc. Share good news, ask for help.

Family Recreation/Outings/Vacations

Occasionally, take walks, hikes together. Visit museums, zoos, go to concerts, plays. Give equal time to the varying interests of the different family members.

Limit TV & Video Games

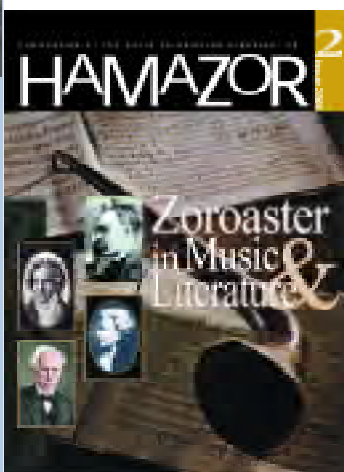
Limit and monitor the television watching and the video game playing. Also, encourage the viewing of a variety of shows to include entertainment, education, fine arts and world events. Keep in mind that excessive viewing and/or playing of video games limits the interaction among family members.

Make or Build Things

Some of us have extended families. This presents an excellent opportunity, especially in the case of grandparents living with the family, to teach cooking, sewing,

Jimmy Dholoo, of Metropolitan Washington, DC, suggested a valuable read for parents would be, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting; to which came the prompt response from our most able Librarian, Aban Rustomji, with the full information.

Parenting Young Children: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (Step) of children Under Six by Don Dinkmeyer Sr, Gary D McKay, James S Dinkmeyer, Don Dinkmeyer Jr, Joyce L McKay. Available at amazon.com for US\$11.19.



embroidery, building things, and to teach practical things such as oil change in autos, changing of tires and many other useful things. Working and building together is a very worthwhile bonding activity that lends itself to teach values and family philosophy while working together.

Involvement in School Activities

Involvement in school activities provides the opportunity for parents to know what is going on in the school life of children. At the same time, it sends the message to the children that education is of great importance.

Family Discussions

Make a concerted effort to take advantage of opportunities to discuss national and international issues. State your opinion on these but allow all family members to voice their opinions. This is a great opportunity to teach children the process by which one arrives at an opinion on current affairs.

Develop Hobbies

If you observe that your child/children have a particular interest, help them to develop it into a hobby. Also share your own particular interests and/or hobbies with the children.

Family Traditions

Most families have some kind of tradition which has been passed down from generation to generation. It is nice to continue traditions and also to discuss with children, their meanings and how they were begun.

Community Service

Community service is a wonderful concept to teach our children, and of course, it is very much a Zoroastrian value. The best way for children to learn this concept is for the entire family to become involved in a project which serves the community and/or a particular cause.

Quiet Time

We live in a technical world which abounds with noise; radios, television, CD players, cellular phones, etc. It is a good idea to periodically experience a quiet time as a family. The quiet time might be SSR (sustained silent reading), meditation,

prayer, yoga, etc., but whatever the activity, children will greatly benefit from experiencing some quiet in their lives.

Storytelling

Storytelling is a wonderful activity for building strength and solidarity within the family. This is one of the ways that family history is shared. Telling stories about grandparents, aunts, uncles keeps family history alive and provides opportunities for children to know their background. It is also very healthy for children to hear stories about when they were infants and when their parents were children. Stories provide children a connection to their past and help them in their sense of identity.

Prayer

It is within the family that children learn the value and the importance of daily prayer and the best way to teach this is through "modeling". If our children see us in prayer at the beginning of the day, at the end of the day, in times of difficulties, in times of joy, they will also pray on their own. Communal family prayer is also of great spiritual value and it is a great aid to solidarity in the family.

Zoroastrian Values

- Family Togetherness
- Appreciation of nature and of diverse talents
- Appreciation and respect for family and family members
- Service to the community
- Act of Prayer

Published in Hamazor Issue 2/2004 pp 51 - 53



Reference:

Dr Benjamin M. Spock, A Better World for Our Children. Dr Spock was a world respected pediatrician and author of seventeen books. His careers included medicine, politics, writing and he was also a professor. He died in 1998.



Magdalena Rustomji was born in San Luis Potosi, Mexico and immigrated to Texas as a young child. For the past 20 years she has been a licensed professional counselor (psychotherapist) working with "recent arrival" immigrant high school students, in group and individual sessions. Magdalena's other interests include gardening, poetry and the cinema. She is the coordinator of an annual Writing Festival for immigrant high school students that celebrates Poetry Month and has also written a poetry module for use in Group work with adolescents. Magdalena's occasion poem was selected as the Conference Poem for the Twelfth North American Zoroastrian Congress in Chicago in July of 2002.

Ethnicity, Religiosity and Spirituality :

A Zarathushtrian Perspective

Ask any Parsi /Irani Zarathushti what is your religion? The answer is simple and straightforward – Zarathushti. Ask them about their ethnic identity? The obvious answer would be a Parsi or a Persian or an Iranian ancestry. If now we ask the individual how does their ethnic identity influence or determine their religious identity the response could be diverse depending on the extent to which the person has pondered along this line of thinking.

by jehan bagli

Both ethnicity and religion are associated with beliefs of a group of people. An ethnic group is like a “tribe” in that its members believe themselves to be related and evolve customs to express their beliefs. They owe their loyalty to history and symbols of the larger group.

Ethnicity

What is ethnicity? The term ethnicity arises out of the Greek word *ethnos* normally translated as a ‘nation’. The modern usage of the term ‘ethnic group’ varies with the encounter one has with external groups. For example a country dealing with external group refers to outsiders as ‘immigrants’ versus the ‘indigenous’ population of the location. Ethnicity thus have come to refer to people with distinct cultural identities who, through migration had become the subject to a state with a different cultural mainstream. Parsi/Iranis in India

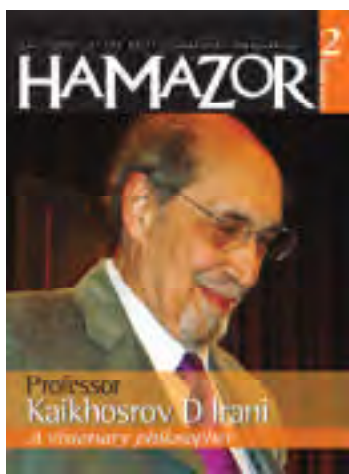
unequivocally fit the definition of an ethnic group.

Culture is a cluster of customs and practices to which a particular group is attached. These practices vary depending on the

circumstances the group is immersed in. People sometimes tend to associate some of these practices to the Divine through their limited comprehension. One can easily adjust and adapt to another culture however that in no way affects or alters one’s ethnicity. While some sort of blood relationship through DNA and chromosomal markers is a presupposition for ethnicity such a biological link is not a prerequisite to belong to a culture.

While an ethnic group is conventionally made up of a tribe, historically a tribe is viewed to consist of an under developed social group of people. It generally reflects a way of life that predates modernity and is more synchronous with nature. In its habitat they are found in geographically isolated places such as in deserts, hill and forest region or on an island rather than in urban well developed cities. There are tribal groups of Native Indian in North America who live on secluded reservation. Socially members of a tribe belong to low-income group of unskilled workers with poor literacy level and are beset with issues of alcohol and drug abuse.

Parsi/Iranis of 21st century community that has produced Chief Justice of supreme court, Attorney General of India, doctors, professors, scientists and entrepreneurs of



international caliber and other professionals in the fields of arts and sciences, would hardly fit the conventional character of a tribe. Nevertheless one has to concede that, exceptional as our community is, in the classical sense, it is still an ethnic group.

Religiocity

What is a religion? A religion is a belief system in the Divine and devotion to God, or a set of beliefs concerning the origin and purpose of the universe and life. All religions have at their core the worship of a Divinity, which may differ in name and comprehension, but the Ultimate Reality remains the same. Most major religions can be classed as Universal in their character, and are trans-cultural, trans-national, and most importantly trans-ethnic. In contrast we have the Ethnic faiths that are largely tribal in nature and one belongs to them by virtue of the fact that an individual is born into it. Ethnicity and religion are inextricably linked in all the tribal faiths. Often the tribal customs and practices become a part of their religious beliefs and activities.



Earliest known portrait of Zarathushtra

With this as background, what is the fitting position for the religion of Zarathushtra? There is ample scriptural evidence to support the fact that religion of Asho Zarathusht is a Universal Faith. For he not only directs his message to man and woman but also to entire humanity. Furthermore the Universality of Zarathustrian faith is traditionally accepted and is an important element of Zarathushtrian history. Literary research of Sir J Coyaji and Iranian scholar Foroughy¹ describe Zoroastrian writings in Chinese books that span from 571 BC to 1000 AD. This is largely supported by the close connection of Peroz the son of Yazdegard III with China after the demise of the

Sasanians. However, it is not inconceivable that over time, due to limited understanding of the adherents, even a revealed universal

religion can assume localized character and in a sense will revert to an ethnic religion.

This is precisely what has happened to the faith of Zarathushtra as it was disseminated across the Iranian plateau from East to West over the vast Achaemenian empire. According to the late Professor Boyce² (pg47) we have no record of "How and when the religion reached western Iran, where it first enters recorded history ... by the time it did so, Zoroaster's **great vision of a world religion** has been largely lost, and his religion had come to be regarded as specifically that of the Iranian people."

She further elaborates that "these considerations must have been reinforced by inherent pride of race which was naturally strengthened in the case of a conquering people. To Iranians (of that era) in general the non-Iranian, - the 'anarya' - was as much a creature to be despised and disregarded as was barbarians to the Greeks As the Iranian people were brought to accept Zoroaster's teachings, they came to regard these as part of their own racial heritage, to be treasured accordingly, rather than the **Universal message of salvation for all mankind**".

In the above quote the late professor clearly reflects the vision of Asho Zarathusht as one, to bring the entire humanity under a single banner of spiritual union. It is important to acknowledge that not only the religious teachings of Zarathushtra were universal, but directly or indirectly they are responsible for inseminating a fresh breath of Monotheism into Judaism, another Major faith.

It is a well known historical fact that Cyrus was the instrument that set the Israelites free from Babylon. However, it was the writings of prophets Ezekiel³ and the prophecies for the post-exilic era in the book of Second Isaiah⁴ that brought home for the Jews the concept of monotheism and later the universality of the faith in that era of liberation. Furthermore it was through Judaism that religion of Zarathushtra impacted other major faiths. This clearly resonates in the words of the late professor Boyce⁵ who says, "So it was

out of a Judaism enriched by five centuries of contact with Zoroastrianism that Christianity arose ... a new religion with roots thus in two ancient faith, one Semitic and the other Iranian."

Based on the above, it is incumbent upon all Zarathushtis to make an extra-ordinary effort to revert the faith of Zarathushtra back to its rightful place as the first revealed Universal religion in the history of mankind – a vision of our beloved Prophet. Attempt by anyone – be it a community leader or a lay Zarathushti – to reduce Zoroastrianism to an ethnic faith would tantamount to a criminal assault on a way of life so profound and so sublime that it would border on blasphemy. Such an act of degradation of a religion that has so richly impinged on the history of other major faiths that followed can only be regarded as irreligious and far from honest.

It is important to understand that in antiquity, religion was a defining factor of ethnicity, languages, customs, and the Zarathushtrian faith may have been no exception. However, it is common knowledge today, that tribal/ethnic religions are characterized as having no religious message for all of humanity, they do not offer any means of individual or universal salvation and have no unique insight into the Will of God. Taking into consideration the established fact that the major faiths such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam has significantly imbibed some of these basic concepts of Zoroastrianism, to marginalize the religion of Zarathushtra as an ethnic faith would be height of mockery and ludicrous.

It is however well recognized that ethnicity of belonging deeply to 'group' is often constructed and manipulated by a variety of political and economic forces to satisfy an agenda. Thus an ethnic consciousness emerges among a group of people who may or may not be uniquely related. Despite the claim of primordial social nature of a group, it can only be a construction of a particular time and place.

There is no question about the fact that the Parsi/Irani ethnic group has the inalienable

right to the practice of Zarathushtrian faith and have been the guardians of the faith since migration for over nearly 1300 years. However, to inextricably intertwine ethnicity of the Parsi/Irani tribe with Zoroastrianism is a clear distortion, to embezzle the profound teachings of Asho Zarathusht off its True status of a major universal faith.

No matter how long the attachment of customs and practices of an ethnic group, and no matter how strong the ethnic bond, to monopolize a Sublime Universal Faith by any group, is a direct breach of the Prophetic message itself and a violation Zarathushtrian ethical code. Such actions are an infringement of the basic Human Rights to the Free practice of Spiritual fulfillment through the concept of Asha. That is offensive not only to those who wish to practice the Faith of their own Freewill, but also to the religion of Zarathushtra to deny such sincere practice.

Spirituality

All religions are based on the concept that a Divine Force sustains an ordered existence. Religions despite being pathways to fulfill the Divine needs of people are burdened with borders and limitations that separate groups of people. Spirituality in contrast is without borders. To be spiritual is to be conscious of the Spirit that is responsible for Creation of the universe and which pervades through it. This Divine 'Substance of God' permeates the entire human race and through all the religious traditions including Zoroastrianism⁶. To worship Ahura Mazda is to be a religious Zoroastrian, but to worship God is to be spiritual.

God is addressed using diverse epithet in various religions such as Ahura Mazda for Zarathushtrians, Krishna for Hindus, Allah for Islam, and Yahweh for Jews. Even though religions compartmentalize humanity, and address God by different appellations the creating 'Ultimate Reality' uniquely singular in its unity. This we acknowledge in several of our Zarathushti liturgies⁷ when we pray 'Ahura Mazda, benefactor of mankind and of all races of mankind ...'. Ahura Mazda did not

just create the Zarathushtis, neither did Krishna create the Hindus or Yahweh create the Jews. It is the people who in the isolation of antiquity, generated diverse designations for One and only God – the same Ultimate Reality.

Hindu scriptures of Bhagvad Gita asserts to the concept of “*Vasudeva Kutambam*” implying humanity as a family within its Oneness. Spirituality is the recognition that the Spirit or Energy of the Divine in all the members of human brotherhood, establishing an intimate relationship among humanity. Spirituality is an expression that reflects each person as a part of the Whole Brotherhood as well as the Creation. In other words, there is part of us that owes its allegiance to creation as a whole. We are thus a part of all that we encounter, and all that we encounter is a part of us. Spirituality is therefore, the way we are with ourselves, the way we are with others around us, and this attribute is a consequence of the way we are with our God within.

The Golden Rule of treatment of others, as we expect others to treat us, is a basic Human Right and a Spiritual axiom enshrined in social justice and entrenched in all religious traditions including Zarathushtrian faith^{8,9,10}. You are what you think, you are what you speak and you are what you do. If human beings irrespective of their allegiance to religious tradition can pursue the practice of the Golden Rule, we can evolve a *Better* human race. By following the practice of this principle Zarathushtis can actualize the concept of *Asha* in their actions, to infuse the relationship of Oneness among humanity and to attain the same with the Divine. Spirituality therefore, is the fountain of the strength and courage that permits us, to share the joy of happiness of others, and the pain and grief of sadness, of those who are victimized by unfortunate events.

As the famous Iranian poet Sa’adi Shiasi writes in one of his poems:

*“Human beings are members whole
In creation one essence & soul*

*If one member is afflicted with pain
Other members uneasy remain
If you have no sympathy for human pain
The name of human you cannot retain”*

In conclusion the spirituality vested in the Universal teachings of Asho Zarathosht demands that humanity strive to transform all injustice, disharmony and suffering in this world to bring it in consonance with Righteous order – *Asha* – through Truth and Good thinking. This can only happen by permitting the teachings of Zarathushtra to bloom as a Universal Faith as per the vision of the revered *Manthran*. This implies that a human being can follow any religious tradition of their choice as long as they spiritually adhere to the Righteous path (*Asha*) and thinking through Good Mind (*Vohu Manah*). Associating our Noble Faith with ethnic identity to limit it to a tribe would truly be un-Zoroastrian and a violation of the vision of the founder. Degrading the Glorious faith of Asho Zarathusht to ethnic level is to deprive the humanity off its Divine Oneness and to target the decline and decadence of a most profound way of life.

Published in Hamazor Issue 2/2013 pp 7-10



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9. Dadistan-e-Dinik Ch.94.5
10. Sad Dar 65.12

Ervad Dr Jehan Bagli retired as Distinguished Research Fellow from Wyeth Research. Presently he is chairperson of Research and Preservation committee of FEZANA, immediate past president of North American Mobed Council, Director on International Board of WZO and President of the Canadian WZO Chapter. Jehan is actively involved in Interfaith work, with Ontario Multifaith Council, Toronto Area Interfaith Council, and Mosaic. He was the invited speaker at the World Interfaith Harmony Week in Toronto, representing Zoroastrianism. He is author/coauthor of five books: Understanding and Practice of - Jashan Ceremony, - Obsequies, - Navjote and Wedding, Congregational prayers, and Religion of Asho Zarathusht and Influence through the Ages.



Zoroastrianism: A vision of the future

Would the first followers of Zarathushtra, if they were to see our world today, understand our lifestyle, our technology and the ensuing moral dilemmas any more than we can imagine what issues our descendants will be facing in the centuries to come? A heritage going back several millennia has its merits, but it also has its drawbacks. The comfort and security in the repetition of familiar beliefs and rituals sometimes shared with ancestors across time lines are therapeutic and, as such, are fundamental to the human need for identity, for belonging, for continuity. However, when these rituals and their accompanying beliefs stand in the way of progress, they need to be debated and discussed, openly, reasonably and without descending into personal attacks. The truly unfortunate thing is that when our community engages in debate, either at congresses or over the Internet, it is generally over peripheral issues that do not deal with the growth of the soul. We need to reclaim our “faith” – not as a blind and uncritical acceptance of doctrine perpetuated by a handful of priests and scholars, but as a joyful celebration of life, as a testament to the uniqueness of the human ability to think, as a resolve to work towards the ideals of a *daena vanghuhi* or a well-informed conscience, first revealed by a man way ahead of his time.

by farishta dinshaw

Zarathushtra Spitama lived four thousand years ago, long before the possibility of using technology to procreate life in a lab or replacing one person's heart with that of another was even a gleam in the eye of a science-fiction writer. He lived at a time when the concept of travelling amongst the stars was as much a tale of sorcery and magic as the notion of buying sliced bread from an all-night convenient store around the corner. So one would not expect the words he preached then to have significance to our lifestyle choices today, or for that matter, those made in the unknown future. And yet they do.

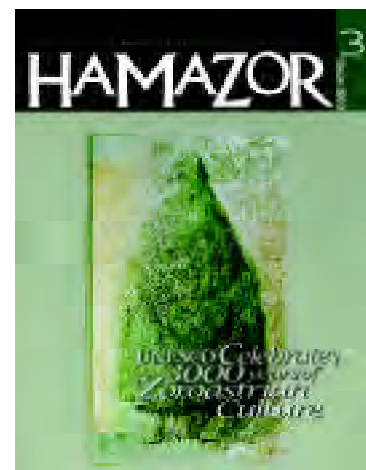
The first prayer I learned as a child was the *Ashem Vohu*. It is in Avesta, an extinct language for all practical purposes. When I was seven, I liked it because it was short, just twelve words, which helps when you're reciting in a language you don't understand. Today, when I read it with meaning, I am awestruck by its beauty. It says that *Asha* –

purity, integrity, righteousness – is the best choice, and that happiness comes to the person who is righteous for its intrinsic value, and not for any reward or praise, here or hereafter.

A devil's advocate wouldn't need a tripledigit IQ to trot out the example of a freedom fighter versus traitor and ask, “Righteous by whose definition?” This is where the tricky part comes into play; the part that makes me so incredibly proud to be a Zoroastrian.

The definition is left up to each individual.

In the *Gathas*, the hymns he composed, Zarathushtra says, “Hear the best with your ears and ponder with a bright mind. Then each man and woman, for his or herself, select either of the two [choices].” No authoritarian being from high above telling



us what to do at the penalty of eternal damnation. No edicts, no commandments. However, because of the immutable laws of the Universe, this freedom comes with accountability. We are responsible for our choices and must face the consequences. Laws of physics follow predictable patterns. For every action, there is a reaction; you reap what you sow; what goes around comes around. We have to understand that the same is true in the moral world.

This is why Zarathushtra expects us to “make wide the vision of our minds” before making a decision. The idea is to consider facts and circumstances, to make *informed* decisions, and not ones based on selfinterest or greed or convenience or the predictions of telephone psychics. He is also very clear that our responsibility does not end with the betterment and growth of just ourselves. Each person has a collective responsibility. We are responsible for the promotion and maintenance of an equitable and progressive social order, in our communities and in the world. According to Zarathushtra, the purpose of our existence is to be among those who renew and invigorate the world, to be among those who help the world progress towards perfection. But a perfect world depends on more than individuals making responsible decisions. It depends on creating a climate of respect and acceptance when individual choices differ. And in that lies the true challenge of living a life according to *Asha* – today, and any day in the future.



From the Russian Zoroastrian Journal, Mitra, No.4, St Petersburg 1999. “Zarathoshthra” by Ilya Glazonov - 1987.

Published in Hamazor Issue 3/2003 pp 34 - 35



Farishta Murzban Dinshaw was born in Karachi, Pakistan, and has “teaching in her genes”. Currently, she works as a Research Assistant at Ryerson University, Toronto. She began to volunteer at the Friday School for Little Zarathushtis (later the Sunday School) at the age of fifteen, and continued to write stories and organize activities for children till she left for Toronto, Canada in 2001. She has presented papers on various topics relevant to the Zoroastrian religion and community at three international congresses. Farishta is also the author of the insightful story of a fictional boy befriended by Zarathushtra called “Discovering Ashavan”.



The Prayer Hall - A simplistic view

A prayer hall? Really? Yes, a prayer hall! Long overdue, for hapless me, in Mumbai. I lost a loved one several years ago. Even then, there were no vultures, and I thought forever about her just lying there – whatever happened to dignity in death? There was no option, my family just blindly went with the established norms. We were afraid to even think what else could be done, so like meek cattle followed the herd. We did what we thought we just had to do.

by a zarathushti

It was then that I knew I needed a practical alternative, an option. I do not have any strong views on our religion, either ways. Make no mistake, I am a true Zoroastrian with full faith in good thoughts, good words and good deeds! However, life is too busy and too complex to dwell on rituals, practices, customs, which in 2015 really do not have great bearing on my day-to-day existence. But that's just me! I do however wish and want that the age old basic obsequies be performed for me.

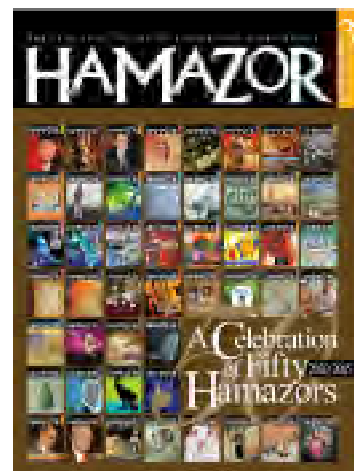
Anyway, on the third of August, I went to attend the jashan at the new Prayer Hall at Worli, and to 'check out the place', so to speak. Bang in the middle of noisy, polluted, bustling Mumbai, twenty seconds from a busy main road in the middle of Worli, was a quiet, small shady plot of land, adjoining a crematorium, on which a large hall with the attending facilities such as washrooms has been constructed. The hall can be partitioned into two sections which together can hold up to maybe 200 people. It is a very simple structure, white washed walls, large windows, lots of air and light. It is clean and bright and quiet, ideal for having prayers, or even holding condolence meetings. Right next door is a wonderful Japanese stupa in its own tiny compound! Till then, I did not know there existed one in Mumbai.

The entire area is quiet, quaint and has a really comfortable calm peaceful vibe about

it – suited for the purpose it exists. I was informed that the compound would soon be done up with some landscaping lending the place a greener prettier air!

As I sat through the jashan with my father beside me, and looked around, I knew I could find dignity in my death. In the next five minutes, my father leaned over and whispered to me – “bring me here for sure!”. This, from my father who is otherwise as I call him, old-fashioned, so much so, that left-over fruit from a jashan could not ever be given to a 'non-Zoroastrian', and had to be fed to a cow! I knew then that many people, seeking a more practical way to dispose off their departed loved ones, (and themselves) would seek out the option offered by the Prayer Hall. The hall can be used by anybody, not just Zoroastrians for having obsequies. I am pretty sure, many Zoroastrians such as I would have heaved a sigh of relief!

The Prayer hall was a need of our times and was really required as with the collapse of the traditional method of disposal, more and more Zoroastrians are now looking out for alternate modes, and with facilities at Doongerwadi not being available to them, it was very difficult for them to search for a hall where the prayers could be performed.



The Prayer Hall has now relieved family members from the additional stress they had to endure during their bereavement to hunt for facilities to conduct religious ceremonies. The Prayer Hall has been a fantastic development for the community. The Prayer hall will also be a great boon for those from other communities that have married into Zoroastrian families, their friends and colleagues who will all be made most welcome to attend all the ceremonies, not made to sit far away from their dearly departed and being denied a last look at their loved one during the funeral and prohibited from attending the other four day ceremonies.

Yes indeed, the Prayer Hall is a big boon for our community.

Some will create an unnecessary

brouhaha over the issue, but their esoteric jingoism cuts no ice in this day and age. It may be a rather naive, simplistic view, but as I see it, this is just a practical option available for alternate means of disposal of our dead, and does not in any way impact our faith!



The Prayer Hall



Looking into the Prayer Hall



On the right. L to R: Er Framroze Mirza, Er Khushroo Madon, Er Fali Madon, Er Jal Balsara.
Below. L to R: L to R: Homi Khusrookhan, Jehangir Wadia, Adil Wadia, Dinshaw Tamboly



✧ The Prayer Hall at the Municipal Cemetery & Crematorium on E. Moses Rd, opposite the Four Seasons Hotel, Worli, Mumbai, is now available as of 26th August, 2015, for funeral and 4-day prayers for Parsi-Irani Zoroastrians. They will be given priority at the times at which these prayers are customarily performed at this hall.

✧ The Parsi-Irani Zoroastrian community have been given in perpetuity the use of the Prayer Hall for the purpose of prayers etc., and when available the use of the hall during certain times of the day.

✧ Come into being thanks to :

- Donation of Rs1.5 crores from the A.H. Wadia Trust
- The Bombay Municipal Corporation's allocation of 3,700 sq yd of land with over 10-acres given for the cemetery complex of wood funeral pyres, electric crematoria and burial.
- Jamsheed Kanga, Homi Khusrookhan and Dinshaw Tamboly, the trio who brought to fruition this facility for the Mumbaikers.
- Landscaping to be carried out through the in-house gardening department of Godrej.

✧ Families may use mobeds of their choice though both mobeds Framroze Mirza and Khushroo Madon are on call.
Er Mirza's contacts : +91 98 21421593 / +91 22 23636524 / +91 98 21736948.

Er Madon's contacts : +91 98 20170794 / +91 22 23698207 / +91 22 22151909.

Mobed Mirza, the co-ordinator and may be contacted on +91 86 91012488.



L to R: Rustom Dadabhoy, Jamsheed Kanga, Dinshaw Tamboly, Homi Khusrookhan

✧ The use of the crematoria and prayer halls are free. The Municipal Corporation will collect a small booking fee of Rs250 for the crematorium.

✧ Prayers are open for all to attend, enabling non Zoroastrians married to Zoroastrians as well as their friends are at last permitted and made welcome. [information courtesy of Dinshaw Tamboly]

Sponsored by Hilda & Rumi Sethna



The World Zoroastrian Organisation

The World Zoroastrian Organisation's New Premises

The search for new premises started in 2013 when Mr and Mrs Abtin Sassanfar promised to donate £500,000 to WZO. Many properties were seen but were found to be unsuitable. Then October of last year another donor, Firuz Madon Foundation, whose aims and objects are similar to those of WZO, promised £1million. From then on the search for a suitable property was intensified and through our persistence WZO found a property in Feltham at a price of £1.8 million. Despite many problems, we were able to complete the purchase of the property on 16th December, 2014.

*from sammy bhiwandiwalla
president*

The property presently named Bridge House is a three-storey office building, roughly L-shaped in plan and constructed around 1980 with a stated floor area of almost 11,000 sq ft. It is situated in Feltham, Middx barely 2.5 miles from London Heathrow with buses and Feltham BR on our doorstep and Hatton Cross Tube station about a mile away. M25, M4 and M3 links are within a short motoring distance. Feltham sits in the middle of the somewhat posh areas of Richmond and Hampton and is often overlooked as a suitable residential area. Bridge House has served multiple uses and is presently occupied by a school till August 2016 when WZO will have full occupation.

While set in the heart of Feltham the location is away from the commercial centre in a park like setting with a public green in the front and a small pond surrounded with shrubs and benches. To the side of the property is a public play area exclusively for young children and accompanying parents. Bridge house has its own parking facilities for 22 cars, but to the rear of the property there is a prepayment public car park with ample parking space.

WZO has struggled these thirty-five years without suitable premises and for the most part committee members have worked from their homes to keep WZO operational. Now WZO

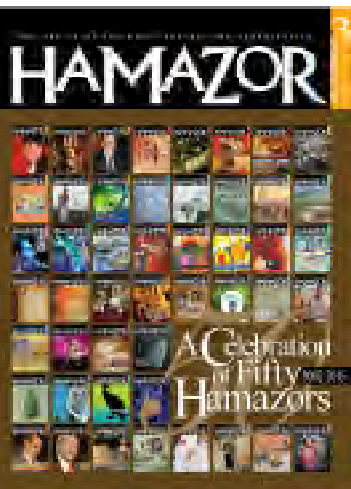
has at last a proper place from which to operate.

We owe this to the conviction, faith and resilience of many of our founding fathers many of whom have left an indelible mark on the worldwide community in progress and moral rectitude. Today WZO operates successfully in India, Pakistan, USA, Canada, New Zealand and the UK and has never ceased doing its charitable work, spreading the knowledge on Zoroastrianism and supporting the rights of all Zoroastrians.

This we will continue to do no matter what, but WZO simply does not have adequate funds of its own to bring this property to full use. Renovation/ refurbishment needs to be undertaken and proper heating and cooling systems installed. In addition, we will have to furnish the place etc. We hope that in all probability a lift will be installed. We expect all this to cost around £750,000 and therefore, through this article, we appeal to the readers and others to donate generously towards the refurbishment costs.

WZO will occupy the ground floor and probably half of the first floor for itself and, if possible, rent out the rest to generate the income to cover the running expenses.

We need to create a community hall on the ground floor which will be used for seminars, lectures by visiting scholars, religious



functions like navjotes, weddings etc. We hope to have religious classes and of course have our own social functions and functions designed to raise funds for the WZO' multifarious charities.

The first floor will provide us with the long needed office, storage space, and committee meeting room. We will establish an Atash Dadgah/Setayash Gah with an afringan and a permanent natural gas light burning, where all Zoroastrians and their families will be able to worship. In addition, there will be a library (for reference only) and request our readers to donate books on Zoroastrian religion, culture and history whether in Gujarati, Persian or English. The library will also house all copies of Hamazor for reading at the premises.

We will also have a resident house-keeper to look after the property. At present, a sub-committee is drawing up plans so that they can be implemented from August 2016. With the grace of Ahura Mazda, we hope to officially open the premises in early 2017.

With the refurbishment estimated to cost £750,000, we are appealing to you to support this worthwhile Zoroastrian initiative for the worldwide community. WZO has done much in its short history to safeguard Zoroastrians fleeing from oppressive regimes, to enhance, rejuvenate and bring prosperity within the community and it has only been possible through your support that this has been achieved. Please help us to continue with the good work.

You may donate to WZO by visiting the website, www.w-z-o.org, and selecting the 'Property Fund'. Alternatively, you can send your cheque to your local WZO representative.

UK and ROW - Mr Dinyar J Modi, Hon. Treasurer, WZO. 135, Tennyson Road, South Norwood, London SE25 5NF. Please make your cheques payable to **"W.Z.O."** If you are a UK tax payer, please ask for a Gift Aid Form.

USA - President of WZO, US Region, Mr Kayomارش Mehta, 6943 Fieldstone Drive,

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Canada – Due to Canadian Government regulations **WZO Canada Inc.** cannot be a donation point. We encourage Canadian membership to donate to the : 'Property Fund' by using WZO

Website www.w-z-o.org

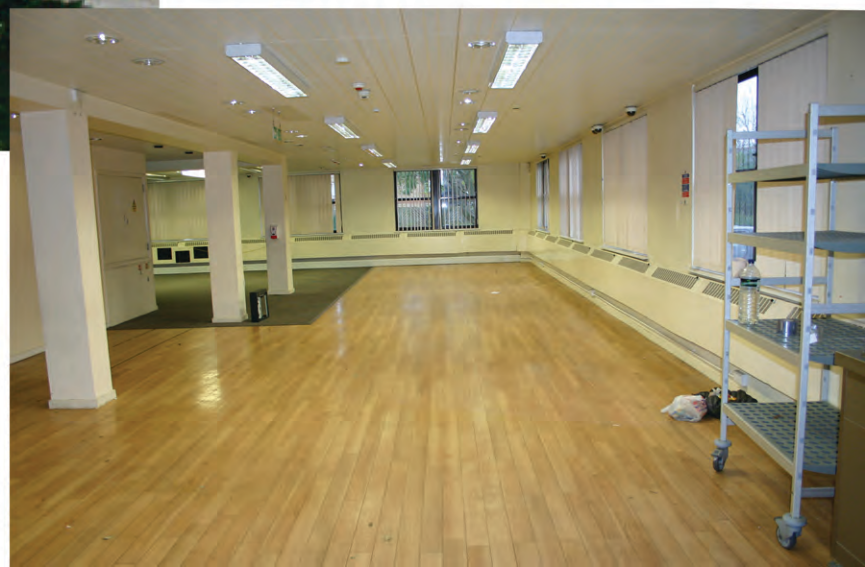


Ground floor plan

Sponsored by Hilda & Rumi Sethna



Clockwise from the top left:
Bridge House, existing kitchen, ground
floor front wing, public children's
playground adjoining Bridge House,
Bridge House showing the approach
from the spur.



“...Virtuous is truth and
the rule of good thinking.
The Wise Lord created
this, (and) I shall entreat
Him for this good reward.”

Yasna 51.21

Insler translation



The World Zoroastrian Organisation