

publication of the world zoroastrian organisation

HAMAZOR

1
issue 2016



Restored
to its Full
Glory

Edulji Dinshaw Road &
Old Custom House, Karachi



Dr Nergis Mavalvala
Physicist Extraordinaire, p 43

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COVER

Image of the Imperial Custom House & bust of Mr Edulji Dinshaw, CIE. which stands at Lady Dufferin Hospital.

PHOTOGRAPHS

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

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Volume LXXVII - Issue 1 | 2016

Printed by:

A A Graphics

1721/31 LAC No 2

Karachi 75420

Pakistan

Funded by:

World Zoroastrian Trust Funds

London, UK

Cover design by:

Tannaz Minwalla

Karachi, Pakistan

Design & layout by:

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Karachi, Pakistan

From the Editor



As we are at the brink of the new Zoroastrian year on 21st March, a fellow Zarathushtrian has made us all so very proud of her – Nergis Mavalvala – an extraordinary Physicist originally from Karachi. Since the announcement by the team at MIT of their breakthrough of Albert Einstein's hypothesis over a century ago, the press in Pakistan are daily updating information on Nergis and her achievements. Facebook is humming with congratulations to her, though many from India are not so complimentary. The euphoria is nationwide for this 47-year-old, and rightly so. Humbly she inquires in her telephone interview with DAWN, "I am baffled by how much interest there is in this — can you tell me what's behind it?" She is a winner!

Unintentionally this issue of the Hamazor, seems to be predominantly Karachi based, whether it is the authors who are / were from here, or the subject matter. It has become inadvertently, a wonderful opportunity to showcase this very small community of ours.

Moving on, the debacle at the Udvada Utsav during the talk given by Darius Khambata has been omitted with intention within the pages, as it showed the public in such poor taste. Albeit by a very small minority but at times like this, unfortunately those are the ones that are heard. One wonders why organisers of such events do not use their authority to quietly remove such elements from the audience. If it was a debate, then every one would have the right to voice their opinion, but for a talk given by an individual, that too a gentle intellectual, surely he should have the right to voice his opinion without heckling. Where has 'free thinking' gone or 'enlightened people'?

A request to all members of World Zoroastrian Organisation, to please inform the Secretary, Darayus Motivala by email if you wish to receive the annual calendar henceforth. Those who do not take the trouble to inform, automatically next year, that is 2017, you will not be receiving the same. Thank you.

We wish all our readers a happy and healthy NowRuz!

Ray Curjice



The World Zoroastrian Organisation

Calendar of Events

Saturday 19th March 2016

Starts at 7:00 pm

Nowruz Dinner / Dance with a Persian theme

At the Marriott Hotel Marble Arch, London. Fusion of Indian-Persian cuisine. £45 and £35 for 18-25 year olds.

Thursday 21st April 2016

Starts at 6:00 pm

The nineteenth Dasturji Dr Sohrabji H. Kutar Memorial Lecture

by Professor Francois de Blois (University College London)

on "The Concept of Iran in Zoroastrian & other Traditions" at Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS.

Sunday 5th June 2016

Registration at 10.00 am

Seminar on Zoroastrian Religion, History and Culture

Alexandra Buhler : impact of the "Iranian Constitutional Revolution" 1906-1911 on the Zoroastrian community.

Professor Dr Macuch : The Zoroastrian Background of Sasanian Law

Professor Simon James : 'Of Mithras and Magi, Cataphracts and Crowns: the forgotten influence of Sasanian Iran on the Roman World.'

At the Portland Room, International Students House, London

Sunday in July 2016

[Exact date to be confirmed later.]

From 12 noon

Annual BBQ

Staines and Laleham Sports and Leisure, Staines. £18 adult members, £21 adult non-members and £10 for 5-10 year olds.

Saturday 20th August 2016

Starts at 7:00 pm

Shahenshahi Navroze Dinner / Dance

Marriott Hotel Marble Arch, London. £45 & £35 for 18-25 year olds.

Sunday 25th September 2016

From 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Annual General Meeting

(Details will be sent with the Annual Report)

Saturday 12th November 2016

Evening starts at 7:00 pm

Gala Dinner Dance in aid of the WZO Education Fund

(Details to be advised later)



Iranshah Udvada Utsav

a photo essay by vahishta bharucha

In June 2014, Hon'ble Shri Narendra Modi invited Dasturji Khurshed to meet him. He reiterated that Udvada showcases the glorious history of the Parsi community of over 1300 years and repeating what he had told us earlier about his keen desire to project Udvada as a place of harmony, religious tolerance and opportunities. He suggested an event to highlight 'Parsi-panu', our culture. Honouring the wishes of our dynamic Prime Minister, Foundation for Development of Udvada and the Udvada Samast Anjuman along with a group of dedicated volunteers worked hard on bringing this project to fruition. Udvada Utsav soon became reality with Cyrus Poonawalla's sponsorship. The first ever Iranshah Udvada Utsav (IUU) celebrations took place over a three day period of December 25 to December 27, 2015 at Udvada.

Day 1

Viraf Patel hosted the evening and introduced the event which was followed by Vada Dasturji welcoming one and all to Udvada and also detailed out the steps that went into organising the event. The opening of the event was graced by the chief guest Mr. Saurabh Patel, the finance minister of Gujarat.

After the formal inaugurations, entertainment segments included dance performances by Shiamak Davar's troupe and a fantastic Gujarati play - 'Bae Ghadi Mauj' by Yazdi Karanjia & Group from Surat.

Viraf Patel then announced a spot contest - the winners being the youngest and the oldest Parsis. The youngest participant at the IUU was a 3 month old baby boy and the oldest being an 89 year old grandmother.

Vada Dasturji launched the Gatha Calender of Ushta-te Foundation, Ahmedabad. The evening ended with a musical performance by Khurshed Mogrelia and a dinner laid out 'panth' style catered by MEK caterers of Udvada.

Day 2

The day started with activities like The Treasure Hunt and Heritage walks which



Gujarati Play - 'Bae Ghadi Mauj' by Yazdi Karanjia & Group, Surat



Shiamak Davar's troupe twirling to Dean Martin's 1954 hit, 'Sway'.

Day 1



Spot contest - The youngest participant at the IUU, a 3- month baby boy and eldest 89 year-old grandmother.



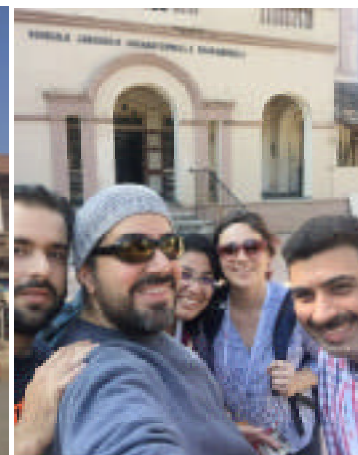
Khurshed Mongrelia performed / sang to the audience with a simple guitar. He was asked to perform longer by the audience.

created a nice buzz in this small town with people walking and running through quaint lanes. The treasure hunt had 38 teams with five people in each. They went around taking selfies with items and landmarks as they unravelled the clues on their to-do list.

Alongside there were audio-visual presentations by Ervad Karanjia on 'Celebrating friendship between India and Iran' and 'Glimpses of Ancient Iran' by



Day 2 : Off for the treasure hunt



A selfie shot

Noshir Daruwala. Dr Shernaz Cama and the Jiyo Parsi team presented a video showcasing their work. Darius Khambata spoke on 'Zoroastrians and Zoroastrianism Today'. He was booed by a few of the uncouth crowd for having a different opinion on several practices over the years. One may not necessarily agree with everything that Darius said, but he has a right to his opinion which he gracefully put forward. The booing and name calling was captured by the media and showed just how divided we are as a community. A series of entertainment breaks were interspersed.



Darius Khambata



Chief Guest, Boman Irani being felicitated by Dastur Khurshed Dastoor.

After the felicitation, Boman Irani spoke about how proud he is of our faith and the trust we have earned as a community. He thereafter entertained the audiences with a couple of beautiful melodies.

Numerous entertainment skits enthralled the crowd. The girls of Bai Avabai Petit High school performed folk garbas followed by a dance performance by Hormuzd Khambatta's troupe. MEJMT performed a truly fabulous play called Tapo Re Iranshah. The evening was brought to an end by an all Parsi band called 'The Big Red Bus Band'.

Day 3

The final day began with a sense of enthusiasm to welcome Ratan Tata, Arun Jaitley and Cyrus Poonawalla. Boman Irani introduced all three dignitaries before they addressed the audience. As Ratan Tata took the stage the crowd went gaga as it cheered and clapped portraying their love, respect and pride. He was totally humbled by the admiration and spoke about the pride he has in being Parsi. Cyrus Poonawalla spoke fondly about the love his late wife Viloo had for Iranshah and in who's memory he had sponsored this Utsav. The Finance Minister Arun Jaitley spoke of his connections with the Parsis from childhood and stressed on how righteous they are as businessmen.

The first ever IUU 2015 was a successful event. The streets of Udvada had been done up beautifully and directions to the



The performers of "Tapo-re-Iranshah" were greeted with a thunderous applause and a standing ovation when the play concluded.



Folk Garbas performed by A F Petit Girls' High School, Bandra

Sponsored by World Zoroastrian Trust Funds



Day 2 : 'The Big Red Bus' Band posing for a photo along with Viraf Sarkari - Director of Wizard International Entertainment & Boman Irani.



Day 3 : Mr Ratan Tata felicitated as 'Icon of Success' by Shri Arun Jaitley and Dastur Khurshed Dastoor. Mr Tata said, "I am truly honoured by so much love and respect showered on me today. Everyone in the community has made me very proud of being a Parsi and I cannot ever forget this honour."



The festive streets of Udvada



venue and all the other main sites were clearly put up which helped avoid any kind of confusion. There was no chaos considering the large number of people attending the event. The event imparted in-depth knowledge about our religion and the greatness of our ancestors and achievers. It is upon us to strive and continue the legacy. The next IUU shall be held from December 23 - 25, 2017. ■■■



Dr Cyrus Poonawalla, who funded the festival in honour of his late wife Villoo, choked up as he remembered her immense interest in developing Udvada. "I am keeping her flame alive through this festival."



L to R : Dastur Dastoor, Ratan Tata, H'ble Chief Guest, Shri Arun Jaitley & Dr Cyrus Poonawalla.

Vahishta recently completed her MA in International Relations from Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge. She started photographing while exploring London along with friends who owned dslr cameras with extensive kits. Eventually she picked up her first camera after a few months of mobile photography. Her pictures are on the social media site, Instagram. At this point of time she cannot commit to a particular category of photography which is why her gallery is anything but consistent. She is now living in Mumbai.

A Statement from Udvada Samast Anjuman on recently concluded Iranshah Udvada Utsav - 2015

Udvada Samast Anjuman was proud to co-host the 'Iranshah Udvada Utsav' (IUU) with Foundation for Development of Udvada (FDU). Going by responses gathered from all over the world, IUU held on 25th to 27th December 2015, was undoubtedly a stupendous success.

Over the past few weeks, post the Iranshah Udvada Utsav, various write ups, comments and views, both positive as also negative, have appeared in various print and social media channels about hosting of the Utsav. Some have been very encouraging, heart warming, providing suggestions for improvement and some downright negative, discouraging and personally attacking and defaming the IUU, Udvada Anjuman and our Dastur Khurshed Dastoor.

It is a well known fact that the IUU has received adulation from most quarters, it has resulted in Udvada being poised for infrastructure development and progress that will be of immense benefit to all those who are fortunate to reside and visit Udvada. We shall provide some information on the benefits that shall accrue to Udvada later in this communiqué. However, before we enumerate these benefits, it is essential that we inform the community at large about negative politics that a few from our community have indulged in, post the conclusion of the IUU.

In all communities and societies, there are some individuals with holier than thou mindsets who perceive their word to be the final word on how others should conduct themselves in all walks of life. Our community too has its fair share of individuals who have narrow visions and revel in fomenting discord. These disgruntled elements see a hidden agenda in everything. Their efforts are always to foist their views on everything under the sun and should their views not be adhered to, they are at their vituperative best in criticising and maligning those who have not complied with their viewpoints.

Over the past many years, we have experienced a few individuals/groups, who have made it their mission to malign our Dastur Khurshed Dastoor in any and every positive initiative that he has taken for Iranshah and Udvada.

This same group of individuals, who have been ventilating their negative views about IUU in the media, both published and social, are well known to have a personal animus against our Dastur Khurshed Dastoor ever since the FDU was established around 2004. **They misguided the community even then as they are doing now. We may add that the FDU has never sought to influence or interfere with the working of our Udvada Anjuman.**

Lest such disgruntled individuals misconstrue our silence to be an acceptance of their misguided and mischievous statements, Udvada Samast Anjuman has decided to issue this one and only statement for the information of the community.

1. Our forefathers, members of the Nine Athornan Families, have over centuries and generations, often at a great sacrifice, have been willingly doing '*khidmat*' of Shreeji Pak Iranshah with all the necessary ritualistic discipline, maintaining the sanctity and purity of the holy fire and the precinct of Iranshah, which has been continued by us of the present generation and we shall ensure the same will be continued by our future generations.

2. We put to rest once and for all the controversy created by the speech given by Mr Darius Khambata. It has already been stated that Mr Khambata was expressing his personal views, with which our Anjuman and Dastur Khurshed Dastoor are not in agreement. Neither our Anjuman nor our Dasturjis, Dastur Khurshed and Dastur Peshotan have ever encouraged conversion or mixed marriages in any form whatsoever.

3. The canard spread by these disgruntled elements that other Dasturjis were not invited for the IUU is absolutely false. Dastur JamaspAsa, Dastur Kotwal and Dastur Mirza were not present at the IUU due to their prior commitments (performing navjote / wedding ceremonies in Mumbai). It may be noted that Dastur Kotwal and Dastur Mirza have, along with Dastur Khurshed Dastoor, willingly contributed learned and informative articles in the souvenir released at IUU. As regards to Dastur Meherjirana of Navsari, keeping in mind his ill health, it was thought best not to inconvenience him with a visit to Udvada. It must also be mentioned that many members of the Nine Athornan Families of the Udvada Anjuman attended and participated on all the three days of the IUU, thus nailing the mischievous and misleading comments of those who were antagonistic to the holding of the IUU.

4. It was amusing to read the frequent comments of Ervad Yazdi Unwalla deriding the IUU and Dastur Khurshed Dastoor. Though being part of the Udvada Anjuman, he has not contributed an iota towards Iranshah nor Udvada and has the audacity and temerity to comment against our Anjuman and our Dastur only displays his prejudice against the Anjuman and our Dastur Khurshed Dastoor.

5. Er Marzban Hathiram, has recently written an article 'Sleepless Nights In Udvada', in which he has mentioned that if a poll by secret ballot was conducted solely of members of the Anjuman, the result would serve as a jolt for both the Dasturjis. All that we can say about Er Hathiram is that, he himself needs to first introspect before endeavouring to make sanctimonious statements about our Shreeji Pak Iranshah and our Anjuman or trying to drive a wedge between our Anjuman and both our Dasturjis **by recalling and remembering what in the first place caused him to leave his Panthak at the Behram Baug Agyari, and come and settle in Udvada for which we do not even need to conduct a poll by secret ballot. Let the healer first heal himself before trying to heal others.**

6. It is unfortunate that Mr Yazdi Desai, the present chairman of Bombay Parsi Punchayet, sought to issue a loose statement to the media without first verifying the details and facts with either the Anjuman or Dastur Khurshed Dastoor. It would have been proper had he done so.

7. Some individuals have commented that rather than organising a mega event such as IUU, the funds should have been more fruitfully utilised for the welfare of underprivileged Zoroastrians at Udvada. Those holding this view point will do well to note that our Anjuman takes good care of the welfare and medical aid of all their practising and retired mobeds, goranis, widows of late mobeds, helpers at the Iranshah and those that carry out duties in other various capacities in the Udvada gaam.

8. We urge the 185 year old publication, Jam-e-Jamshed and our Parsi journalists reporting in the cosmopolitan media, to act more professional and responsible and **to verify the facts either with our Anjuman or our Dasturjis before reporting inflammatory, fabricated and false propaganda just to sensationalise the issue at the cost of the dignity and reputation of our own community.**

By holding the IUU at Udvada, we, the *khidmatgars* of Iranshah, did not find anything that was incorrect, harmful, amiss or detrimental to our Shreeji Pak Iranshah and its precincts.

In all the ridiculous noise and din created post the Utsav, the fact that hosting the Iranshah Udvada Utsav brought about a lot of POSITIVES for the community, in general and Udvada village in particular, has been lost sight of. We wish to take this opportunity to highlight the tangible benefits that have accrued and share them with the community at large.

The fact that around 4000 Parsi/Irani Zoroastrians from all over India and other parts of the world attended the IUU and participated with enthusiasm and vigour is illustrative of its success.

The below mentioned points are illustrative of the positive results achieved by the IUU: -

- It is the formation of FDU and the efforts of our Dastur Khurshed Dastoor that has been instrumental in getting funds allocated and disbursed to carry out infrastructure development in Udvada.

- There are now proper roads across Udvada village, more so around the Iranshah, to avoid congestion near its entrance.
- A parking lot has been assigned specifically for the devotees visiting the Iranshah.
- Regular supply of electricity is now available and CCTVs are being installed for the safety of our residents.
- A local police station is to be established and regular police patrolling to be done in the village.
- Refurbishment of the Zoroastrian Information Centre and Dastur Kayoji Mirza Hall & Library will be undertaken from the funds sanctioned specifically for these purposes, as was announced by Mr Saurabh Patel, Minister, Gujarat State, at the inauguration of the IUU.
- Construction of a Persian Gate, from funds sanctioned by the Government, will shortly be undertaken at the entrance of Udvada village (near Doongerwadi) as was also announced by Mr Saurabh Patel, Minister, Gujarat State, at the inauguration of the IUU.
- Planning for the construction of a concrete wall structure to stop ingress of seawater into our village shores is being done.
- Most importantly, Udvada gaam and our Iranshah was saved from the clutches of some individuals who had planned to build an industrial-cum-residential zone on a large stretch of 160 acres of land close to the vicinity of Iranshah Atash Beheram, due to the timely intervention of Dastur Khurshed Dastoor, who took up this matter with the concerned government officials at Gandhinagar and the then Chief Minister, Shri Narendra Modi.
- **Instructions issued to the local authorities by Mr Arun Jaitley, Union Minister, and Mr Saurabh Patel, Minister, Gujarat State, to halt further construction of high-rise buildings in the vicinity of Iranshah will be invaluable to preserve the sanctity of Iranshah and Udvada.**

We are confident that FDU and our Dastur Khurshed Dastoor shall continue to work with the concerned authorities to follow-up and get the above benefits officially documented and implemented.

Udvada Samast Anjuman takes the opportunity, to once again make it explicitly clear to one and all, that it has never interfered in the affairs of other Anjumans / Associations and in turn shall brook no interference in our affairs. It is the bounden duty of our Anjuman to protect and preserve the sanctity of Iranshah and Udvada, which we have done over the centuries and are perfectly capable and committed to do so, now and in future.

To our detractors, we reiterate that Udvada Samast Anjuman and our Dasturjis are not answerable to any outside agencies or small pressure groups and shall not respond to any further communications with regards to our Anjuman or any of our Dasturjis.

Before concluding, the Udvada Samast Anjuman extends its whole-hearted gratitude to our Dastur Khurshed Dastoor and Team IUU for the hard work put in by them to successfully organise the mega event and assures them of their continued support in future editions of IUU at Udvada that are intended to be held at regular intervals.

We conclude with a prayer and a hope that peace, good sense and serenity may prevail in our community!

Unanimously approved by all the committee members.

For & On Behalf Of Udvada Samast Anjuman,

Sd/- Secretary

Rules Governing Use of the Prayer Hall

issued by chairman, dinshaw tamboly

These Rules must be observed by all Parsi Irani Zoroastrians who use the Hall and avail of the services offered by the Prayer Hall Services & Maintenance Trust (PHS&MT). They apply to priests praying at the Hall, as also families of the deceased. Further clarifications if required will be provided by the Chairman.

General information :

1. The Prayer Hall is the property of the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai and is available for use of **all Communities**.
2. The Hall is to be used **solely** for funerary services (i.e. the customary 4-day prayers of Zoroastrians). No other activities are permitted to be carried out in the Hall.
3. There is **no prior booking system** at any Municipal Crematoria in Mumbai and usage will always be subject to availability, on a **first-come-first-served basis** or as decided with the Coordinator namely **Er Framroze Mirza**.
4. Parsi-Irani Zoroastrians can use the hall for any of the 4-day prayers even if the paidast/cremation have been done elsewhere.
5. Members of the Parsi-Irani Zoroastrian Community will be given **priority for use** of the Prayer Hall during the following hours: 7:00am to 9:00am (for morning paidast ceremonies), 3:00pm to 8:00pm (for afternoon paidast, uthamna and sarosh ceremonies) & 4:00am to 6:00am (for the post-midnight uthamna and jashan).
6. In case a body is brought to the Hall after sundown and the paidast is to be done at the customary time of 7:45am the next day, it is essential that at least one family member remains at the Hall through the night.
7. No provision has been made for cold storage. However names of funeral directors will be provided by the Coordinator, upon request.
8. There is no provision for overnight stay of relatives within the Prayer Hall but there are washrooms available for use and a water cooler.
9. The Prayer Hall consists of two inter-connected halls which can be used separately or together. Seating capacity is 200.
10. There are two electric furnaces, in the adjoining crematorium, one of which is on a stand-by. It takes approximately two hours for a body to be consumed.
11. Bodies are generally transported from the Prayer Hall by friends / relatives using an ambulance trolley which can easily be wheeled down the short path between the Prayer Hall and the Crematorium. There are no nussersallas at the site, but crematorium staff do help when required.
12. The Hall is cleaned daily and there is round the clock security.

The Coordinator, his role, authority & responsibility :

1. **Er Framroze Mirza** is the Coordinator appointed by the PHS&MT. He is also entitled to serve as an officiating priest. While families of the deceased are free to avail of the services of **any priest**, prior

intimation must **always** be given to the Er Mirza on Tel: **+91 8691012488**. He needs to be kept informed of the proposed timing of ceremonies and the name of the officiating priest.

2. **Er Framroze Mirza** will assist, provide guidance and coordinate all arrangements including:

a. Providing telephone numbers for hearse, funeral directors (in case the body is to be stored awaiting the arrival of outstation relatives) and other such facilities.

b. Keeping the security staff / Municipal officials informed about the approximate time of arrival of the body at the Prayer Hall and ensuring the presence of crematorium operators and helpers when required plus making arrangements for the bamboo bier.

c. Assisting with documentation, registration of the death, and guidance for obtaining death certificates.

d. Arranging for 'sandalwood', flowers and making available the equipment used during ceremonies. (There are two sets of afargans, khumcha's etc., kept at the Hall in two locked cupboards, the keys of which are with the Coordinator).

e. Hiring of additional chairs if the attendance is likely to exceed 200 persons

Some of the facilities provided at the crematorium require the payment of gratuities to the local staff. In consultation with the Coordinator it has been decided that an amount of Rs 3,600 will cover this cost and this amount be paid in cash to the Coordinator who will distribute it appropriately.

Irrespective of who the officiating priest is, it is important to keep Er Mirza informed as there could be more than one set of ceremonies at a particular time and the scheduling, ensuring which of the two halls is to be used, etc. are decisions that only he is entitled to make.

Donations :

The PHS&MT incurs a certain cost for daily cleaning, 24-hour security and the Coordinator to assist with all formalities. These are provided entirely free of cost, but users of the facility may make a modest donation after use, if they so wish, entirely of their own free will, as a contribution towards the Corpus of the PHS&MT, so the Hall is well taken care off, in future. Donations may be made by cheque in the name of '**The Prayer Hall Services & Maintenance Trust**' or in cash and can be handed over to the Coordinator or sent to our office. The coordinator shall issue a stamped official receipt of the PHS&M Trust for all donations made by donors.



In the following pages we share with readers, just as a matter of interest, the various methods of disposing the dead, strange, bizarre but the norm for those who practice their beliefs and what is still to come. - Ed.

Tibet, Madagascar & Ghana

What we do with our dead can seem bizarre to outsiders. In a Tibetan tradition called sky burial, the deceased are cut into small pieces by a man known as the *rogyapa*, or "breaker of bodies," and laid on top of mountains to be picked apart by vultures. Later, the bones are collected and pulverized with flour and yak butter and fed to crows and hawks. Feeding your loved ones to the same birds who eat roadkill may seem morbid to those in the West, but in Tibet, it's both sacrosanct (these birds are sacred in Buddhism) and practical.

Tibet isn't the only place with seemingly odd customs. In Madagascar, the bodies of the deceased are exhumed and sprayed with wine and perfume every few years. In Ghana, people are buried in coffins that represent their lives, so a fisherman might spend eternity in a box shaped like a carp and a farmer may spend it in a six-foot cob of corn.

Give my Body to the Birds : The Practice of Sky Burial

by meg van huygen on 11 march 2014

http://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/sky-burial?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=atlas-page

Though permission to reprint this article from Atlas Obscura was requested as far back as November 2015, no reply has been received. Full acknowledgement is given to the writer and site. - Ed.

Sky burial isn't a burial at all, of anything. It's the act of leaving a corpse exposed to the elements, often in an elevated location, and only a few different cultures do it, for different reasons and in different ways.

The concept's been on my radar for a few years thanks to happening upon the Vajryana Buddhist *bya gtor* practice primarily found in Tibet - and less so in China and Mongolia. It can be shocking to see - ex-human beings being dispassionately dragged up a mountain, chopped up, and thrown to a venue of waiting vultures.

But then I started to think (and read) about it. One of the main tenets of Buddhism is compassion, which includes kindness toward all animals. So the idea at work here is that, if your body is just a shell for your spirit, which will be reincarnated anyway, and if your spirit has left it and it could nourish another creature, then it should. *Bya gtor* literally translates to "alms for the birds" in Tibetan. It's considered important to not waste the opportunity to help another living thing.

Once the body is kept in a sitting position for two days and a lama recites the necessary prayers, the corpse's spine is broken so that it can be folded and carried to the sky burial site, which is usually quite a schlep. Family members may accompany the dead on this journey, beating double-sided drums and chanting. Once arrived at the site, the *rogyapa*, or body breakers, first burn juniper to attract vultures. The corpse is placed face-down on the stones, its hair removed, and the *ropyagas* begin to chop up the limbs with axes or sledgehammers, sometimes flaying meat from bones and throwing it to the waiting vultures.

When only bones remain, they're pounded into a pulp, mixed with barley flour, tea, and yak

butter, and given to the crows and hawks, after the vultures have had their fill of meat. It's a bad omen if the vultures won't eat, which can be a problem if the body has been treated with disinfectant or medicine, as it might be at a hospital. Typically, the yak that is used to transport the body is supposed to be set free after the ritual, which is yet another reason that sky burial can be a costly process. Most of the times that it's practiced in Tibet, therefore, it's a commuted version of leaving the corpse on the stones to be ritualized by the birds instead.

Sky burial is currently the preferred practice in Tibet when a loved one dies. Religion aside, a few other factors come into play here: generally, the soil in Tibet is a layer of permafrost only a few centimeters deep, and it covers solid rock, making it hard to dig. Wood is also difficult to come by, as most of Tibet is above the tree line, so cremation is a difficult process.

It was actually only around 40 years ago that a similar death ritual was performed by the Zoroastrians in parts of Iran and India. It differed in that the corpse was not prepared - it was left intact on a short tower with a low parapet around the perimeter (a *dakhma*, or "tower of silence"). On the top of the tower were concentric rings: the outer one for the bodies of men, the middle for women, and the innermost for children. When the sun had bleached the bones, which could take up to a year, they were collected and dissolved in lime in an ossuary pit at the center of the tower, then filtered by charcoal and flushed away by rainwater.

The Zoroastrians' reasons for sky burial differed greatly from the Vajryana Buddhists. Zoroastrianism considers a dead body as unclean and impure, as well as liable to be rife with demons. To bury a body is to risk

defiling the water supply via putrefaction, and cremating one could contaminate the air.

The use of dakhmas was outlawed in Iran in the 1970s, as the country's urban limits spread out and threatened to swallow the rural areas where the towers are built. Many of these towers remain throughout Iran and India, along with the ossuaries where the bones finally rest. Today, in order to keep impurities and demons contained, some Zoroastrians have taken to encasing corpses in cement before they're buried.

In northern Australia, a ritual was practiced mostly in the north by various Aboriginal tribes wherein the bodies of the departed were placed on raised platforms and covered with foliage. After several months, when all of the flesh had been depleted, the bones were retrieved and painted red with ochre. Then they could be carried around by the deceased's relatives, or placed in a cave until they degraded into dust, or stashed inside a hollow log, or just plain abandoned. For a period of time after the death, speaking the deceased's name was forbidden, and his or her property would be destroyed.

The concept was to avoid ghosts. These particular tribes believed that the human soul has two sections, and that one of them - the ego - is what returns as a ghost to haunt the tribe. So by destroying the deceased's property and not acknowledging the person's name, they would basically cold-shoulder the ghost out of town.

The Sioux and Lakota tribes of North America historically buried their dead, but practices varied among tribes and situations and sometimes included air burial, which utilized wooden scaffolds, or even the limbs of trees, in order to offer a corpse to the sky. The scaffolds were approximately eight feet tall and were traditionally constructed by women.

This air burial was typically used for the bodies of warriors who fell in battle, and the favorite horse of the dead would often be killed and tied to the scaffold or tree by its tail. Bodies were wrapped tightly in blankets and with weapons and other valuables, and they could be left aloft for up to two years before being retrieved and

buried, although this didn't happen universally. The motive was not solely to encourage the dead person's spirit to depart into the sky: Sioux and Lakota people feared the dead as well as the diseases they can spread, so it was also an attempt to minimize contact with the body.

Some tribes within Sac and Fox Nation of the midwestern United States would also place bodies in trees, and not necessarily the bodies of warriors, and sometimes there would be several "burials" per tree. Some tribes would often leave a slain warrior at the site of the battle that killed him, to decompose naturally, believing he would rise into the sky on his own (a different kind of sky burial, perhaps).

My research on the practice of deliberately not burying your dead more or less ended around here, although in looking at all the diverse rituals of sky burial, it is hard to contest with the directness of the Tibetan tradition where your human remains are fed right to the birds and taken in flight to the sky.



Aboriginal burial platforms (Gutenberg, via American Indian History)



Funeral scaffolding of a Sioux chief illustrated by Karl Bodmer (via Wikimedia)

The Gift of Death: Understanding Human Composting

One of the issues facing Zarathushtis the world over is finding alternatives to replace dokmanasheni, which is placing the corpse in an open-air Tower to be exposed to sunlight and scavenging birds. The underlying rationale for exposure is to avoid the body's contact with earth or fire, thus avoiding polluting sacred resources, as well as to recognize that death is a part of the natural life cycle. Also, the Zarathushti faith discourages physical locations where the remains are interred to discourage families from becoming tied to a specific place to mourn as the body is considered merely a vessel for the spirit, which survives mortal death. In modern times, with spreading urbanization in traditional home countries where majority of Zarathushtis reside and increasing immigration to Western countries with strict laws related to disposal of bodies, dokhmanasheni is no longer viable.

by farishta dinshaw

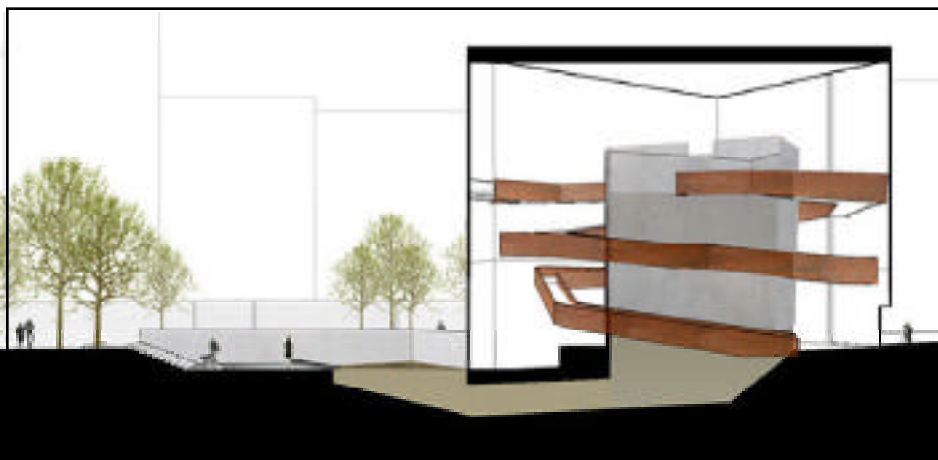
One innovative alternative is the brainchild of Seattle native, Katrina Spade, who is the designer, architect, executive director of the Urban Death Project (UDP). Her idea for another option for disposing bodies is human composting. Instead of being buried or burned when one dies, she feels that the body could go to a "compost-based renewal facility."

The facility is essentially an enclosed building with a three-story "core" filled with organic material and encircled by a sloping walkway as seen on the artist's depiction on the website www.urbandeathproject.org

The process of composting will be in three stages:

1. The deceased may be stored in a refrigerated space for up to ten days before the ceremony takes place. There is no embalming because decomposition is an important part of the design.
2. Those closest to the deceased will meet the body in the shrouding room, where they wrap it in simple linen. Supportive staff will be on hand to assist in this process.
3. Mourners enter the facility and walk up to the top of the core where they say goodbye to the deceased at the laying in.

In an interview with Katie Herzog (March, 2015), Spade said, "Our bodies will be laid into the ground and covered with wood chips. There would also be some other carbon materials that would help the process work a little more efficiently, like sawdust, which is very high-carbon, and possibly something like alfalfa straw." The UDP's website says that within a few weeks of interment, "the body decomposes and turns into a nutrient-rich compost. The process is continuous — new bodies are laid into the system as finished compost is extracted below." The system, based on those used to composting livestock, is



designed to provide the right balance of carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and moisture to optimize natural decomposition. The estimate is that the whole process would take four to six weeks.

This process seems closely linked to dokhmanasheni as natural sources for disposal of the corpse are used. Instead of sunlight and scavenging birds, aerobic decomposition and microbial activity are used, and over the span of a few months, the bodies will decompose fully, leaving a rich compost. Going one further than dokhmanasheni in which the flesh disappears but the bones remain, in this process even the bones will disappear. All that will remain will be artificial parts like titanium hips and gold teeth. Currently, the Project is researching human composting to understand exactly how long it takes, how much aeration it would require, what would be the proper carbon mix. The Anthropology Department's Forensic Osteology Research Station (more commonly known as a "body farm") of Western Carolina University is one of five universities with testing sites in the USA where forensic students use bodies donated to scientific research to study the stages of decomposition.

According to the UDP website, the Project will also provide "a space for the contemplation of our place in the natural world, and a ritual to help us say goodbye to our loved ones by connecting us with the cycles of nature." Like traditional funeral homes in the West, it will be staffed with funeral directors and offer the same kind of services for families – bodies would be prepared and interned at the site, and families could hold memorial services and come back later to visit, just as you would with a traditional graveyard. Like cremated ashes, families could spread the soil in a garden or under a tree planted in their honor. Spade's idea is that even public parks could be fertilized with the soil from the people who lived in the neighbourhood. The UDP does not recommend using the soil to grow food, as there is no research to

confirm that is safe. However, the website notes that temperatures during composting hit 60 degrees Celsius, which should be enough to kill off most pathogens.

Right now, the Urban Death Project exists only as an idea without any facility yet nor does anyone have an idea of what the costs associated with this kind of burial alternative. The UDP is a nonprofit and they are thinking of a sliding scale so that it is affordable to all who would be interested. At the moment, Spade has funding from donors as well as a fellowship paying her salary plus funds raised from a Kickstarter campaign on the Internet to do more research. There has been tremendous interest in this idea from gardeners, environmentalists, people to whom nature is part of their spiritual beliefs and those people who want to give back to the earth even in death.

Of course, there are people who have reservations. There are those who are concerned that the bodies will mix so the soil they may get may not only contain their loved one, but other strangers as well. Some consider the idea disrespectful. Others just find the idea "icky" (Zarathushtis, who have grown up explaining the Towers of Silence and vultures to non-Zarathushtis, may be less squeamish). However, there is no doubt that the current system in most Western countries is extremely toxic for the earth and air. According to the UDP website, burial in the USA pollutes the earth with more than 750,000 gallons of formaldehyde-laden embalming fluid, and cremation in the USA emits approximately 600 million lbs. of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere annually, which is the equivalent of more than 70,000 cars driving the road for a year. Developing a new system that reduces pollution, supports farming and urban green space development, and creates a local, sustainable, and meaningful ritual for the departed will benefit all of us. Spade feels that ecological responsibility and participating in the natural lifecycle is an

important part of her concept, which is what dokhmanasheni has promoted for thousands of years. As such, this concept is intrinsically Zarathushti. ■■■■

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Farishta Dinshaw works as a Community Development Worker with ethnocultural communities in Toronto to raise awareness about problem gambling and family violence. She also teaches at Ryerson University. She is the author of the insightful story of a fictional boy befriended by Zarathushtra called "Discovering Ashavan". Farishta has edited a cookbook "Eat, Live, Pray: A celebration of Zarthusti cuisine and culture" available for free download at <http://www.fezana.org/>

Forget Coffins

a forward shared by shahrukh mehta, usa

Capsula Mundi is an eco-friendly alternative to being buried in a coffin.

These revolutionary "seeds" were developed in the hopes of offering a more practical burial. It seemed highly impractical that a coffin made of wood would typically only be of use for about three days, when it normally takes 30-40 years for a tree to grow.

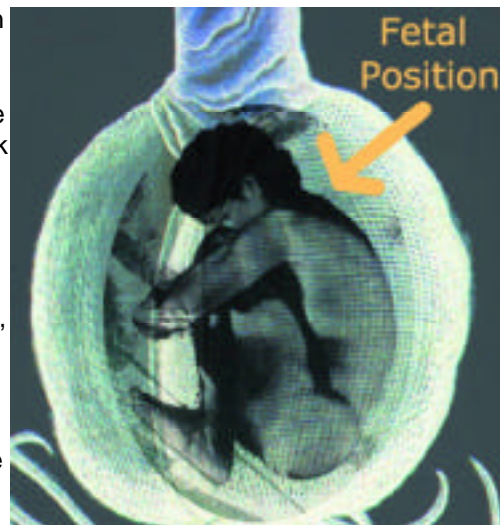
Like a coffin, these egg-shaped pods are designed to each house a deceased human body for burial. The body is seated in the fetal position within the biodegradable pod and buried in the ground. From there, a tree is planted above it, allowing its roots to soak nutrients and grow.

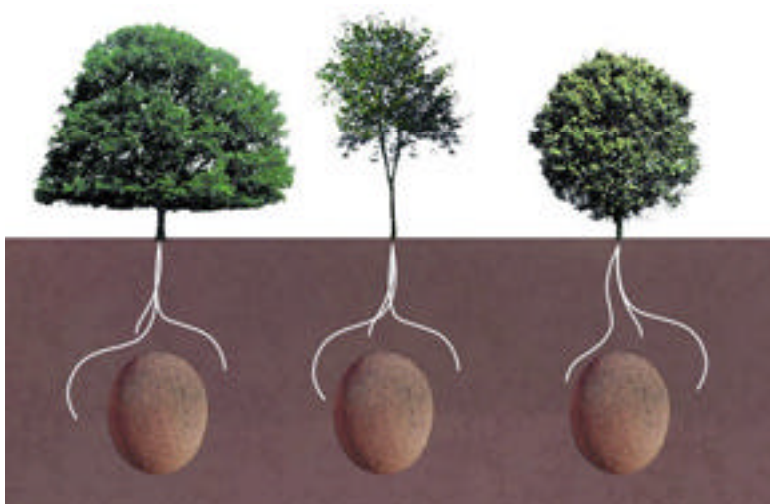
Anna Citelli and Raoul Bretzel, the duo behind *Capsula Mundi*, explain: "The tree is chosen when the person is alive, relatives and friends look after it when death occurs."

Here is the basic outline of the process: The appeal of these burial pods is that the human body can not only serve as a source of life to a tree, but also provide an organic form for living loved ones to visit. Unlike a traditional cemetery filled with cold, hard tombstones, this method of burial offers a forest of growing life.

It provides an organic monument dedicated to each human life, while contributing to the health of the earth.

Though an Italian company introduced this innovative method, the burial procedure is currently banned in Italy. Citelli and Bretzel are working to change burial legislation to allow people to have more alternative options. ■■■■





Ashes To Diamonds

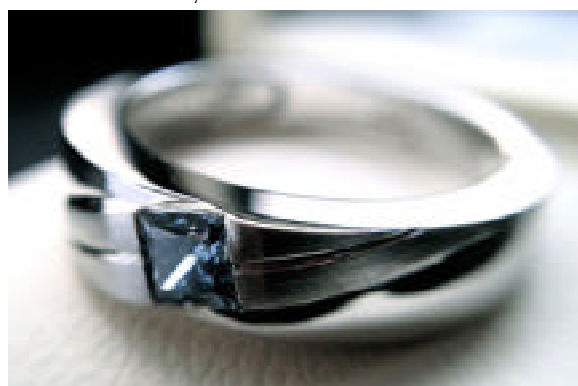
Algordanza, a Swiss company, has taken a fascinating and unexpected approach to memorializing our loved ones who have passed. They will compress and super-heat your loved one's cremated ashes and turn them into a man-made diamond that can be worn and cherished.

It all begins with a chemical process that extracts the carbon from the departed's ashes. This carbon is then heated to convert it into graphite. That graphite is then heated to as many as 2,700 degrees Fahrenheit and subjected to forces as high as 870,000 pounds per square inch. The colour of the finished diamond, which can range from white to dark blue, depends on the ashes of the deceased. The prices begin at 4,259 Swiss Francs (\$4,474 USD) for a small diamond with no additional service.

(The human body is 18% carbon. 2% of this carbon remains after cremation, and it is this carbon that Algordanza uses to make their diamonds). More information on : algordanza.com | Facebook



18% of the human body



Ring with the ashes

December 25 & the Birth of Mithra – Part 2

by k.e.eduljee

Part 1 Summary

In Part 1, we noted that “a trusted harbinger of the festive December season is the perennial discussion about links between Christmas and Roman Mithraism.” We proceeded to examine these purported links and “found nothing in original Latin sources that suggests we can automatically equate the various references about the celebration of (the ancient Roman festival of) Saturnalia and the worship of Sol on December 25 – as well as the appearance of Sol on coins (that feature several local deities of which Sol is but one) – with the worship of Mithra.” We could find nothing to support the assertions that December 25 was previously celebrated as the birth of Mithra. Instead, we found that while “there is a reasonable chance (but not surety) that the ‘Natalis Invicti’ celebration on December 25 more completely meant ‘Natalis Solis Invicti’ meaning ‘nativity or birth of the invincible Sun’ – celebrated in conjunction with Saturnalia. We have not been able to find a statement that makes the equation or that December 25 was celebrated in Rome as the nativity of Mithra.” There is nothing to support the equation that Mithra can be substituted Sol in the context of the December 25 celebration of ‘Natalis Solis Invicti’. The substitution of Mithra in the phrase ‘Natalis Solis Invicti’ is a modern invention. In the rock reliefs Mithra and Sol are shown separately (see the accompanying image of the tauroctony, the bull-slaying scene).



Fig 8. Mithra in ‘Persian’ / Aryan garb & the tauroctony scene. Roman deities Sol, the Sun god and Luna, the Moon goddess are in the top left and right corners respectively. This scene is on the obverse of the 2nd-3rd cent. CE two-sided altar slab shown previously. Greco-Roman deities Sol and the Luna are in the top corners. Image credit : Wikipedia

In Part 2 and 3, we continue the discussion and examine the assignment of December 25 as the day of Christ’s nativity.

1. Roman Mithraic Bull-Slaying, the Tauroctony, & Zoroastrianism

There have been various attempts to connect Roman Mithraism to mainline Zoroastrianism. Franz Cumont (1868-1947), a noted though controversial Belgian researcher on Mithraism sought to draw a connection¹ between the slaying of the bull (the tauroctony) by Mithra and the Middle Persian Zoroastrian *Bundahishns*’ account of the death of the primordial Gav before the onslaught of Ahriman.² Prof. John Hinnells of Liverpool Hope University emphatically refutes the assertion as mere speculation. He also states, “In no known Iranian text [either Zoroastrian or otherwise] does Mithra slay a bull.” Hinnells decries the method of speculative scholars whose work he says is “so weak and ambiguous that this is merely adding theory to theory without any secure evidential basis. ...Indeed, one can go further and say that the portrayal of Cumont is not merely unsupported by Iranian texts but it is actually in serious conflict with known Iranian theology.”³

The most recent attempt to connect Roman Mithraism to mainline Zoroastrianism is via various accounts describing the festival of Yalda on the winter solstice on December 21. Yalda is not and has never been a Zoroastrian festival. We examine that assertion thoroughly in another article titled "Yalda, Mehergan and the Winter Solstice". Indeed, there is no evidence that Yalda was an Iranian Mithraic festival as is claimed.

Unintended as it might be, renaming Yalda as a celebration of the 'birth of Mithra' (Zayesh-e Meher) may infer an association between the festival and Mithraism with its attendant belief in the birth of an anthropomorphic god from a rock – a belief that is antithetical to orthodox Zoroastrianism.

There is no trace of Mithraism or the worship of Mithra in the lands of Iran. What we know of Mithraism comes from its introduction to Europe recorded by classical Greco-Roman authors.

2. First Evidence of Mithraism in Roman Europe

Mithraism and Christianity began to get a foothold in Rome around the same time and Mithraic archeological sites abound throughout the Roman Empire's domains in central and southern Europe. The majority of Mithraic sites date to between the 2nd and 4th centuries CE and the earliest Mithraic artifacts discovered have been at sites that date to between 80 and 100 CE.

Among these artifacts are fragments of an altar found in a Roman legionary site at Novae near Steklen in Bulgaria, then part of the lower Danube Roman province of Moesia. In a manner similar to other Mithraic altars dedicated by Roman officials, this altar had been dedicated by Philopalaestrus, a collector of import duties and public taxes.

About three classical Greco-Roman texts written around 100 CE, hint at how Mithraism came to Europe. One persistent theory is that Mithraism arrived in Europe via Syria.

3. Roman Mithraism's 'Persian'/Aryan Origins

While Roman Mithraism acquired distinct Greco-Roman anthropomorphic characteristics syncretically blended with local beliefs, several classical Greco-Roman authors state that Roman Mithraism originated in 'Persia'. Late third century CE Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry⁴, a Levantian (from what is today Lebanon & W. Syria), went further and ascribed the concept to Zoroaster. Porphyry stated, "The Persians [Mithraists] call the place [the Mithraeum temple] a cave where they introduce the initiate to the mysteries, revealing to him the path by which souls descend [to the earthly body] and go back again [to the spiritual realms of the cosmos]. For Eubulus tells us that Zoroaster was the first to dedicate a natural cave in honour of Mithras, the creator and father of all. Located in the mountains near Persia, it had flowers and springs."⁵

4. Magi & Mithraists

For Greco-Roman writers, the principal sources of information on Zoroastrianism were the Magi. If the Magi were indeed Porphyry's source for the claim that Zoroaster was the first to dedicate a cave to Mithra, it is conceivable that the Mithraists of that era considered themselves affiliated to Zoroastrianism in some manner (as also later stated by medieval Iranian author Biruni). The Porphyry explanation has Mithra taking the place of Ahura Mazda. Zoroastrians know that in mainline Zoroastrianism, Mithra is a Yazata or fereshteh, an angel and guardian of the

Sun's light. Zoroastrians also know that the six primordial existential elements were the creation of Ahura Mazda and not Mithra.



Fig 3. Mithraic altar fragments found at Novae near Steklen, Bulgaria. Note 'Persian' / Aryan clothing on Cautopates & Cautes (Mithraic associates) on the left and right resp. Image credit: D. Detschew in 'Antike Denkmäler aus Bulgarien' at JOAI (1939).

December 25 & the Birth of Jesus – Part 3

1. Earliest Records of Jesus' Birth Date

One of the earliest extant records regarding an enquiry and discussion about the date of Jesus' birth is the 2nd century account of Christian theologian, Clement of Alexandria. In all, Clement wrote that various authors placed Jesus' birthday at March 21⁶, April 15, April 19 or 20, May 20, November 18 and January 6.⁷

December 25 was not among the dates listed by Clement.⁸

2. December 25 Chosen as Jesus' Birth Date

After a debate within the Christian community, the *Catholic Encyclopedia*⁹ informs us that Pope Julius I (who served between 337 and 352 CE), officially chose and established December 25 of the Julian calendar as the birthday of Jesus.

3. Opposition to December 25 as Jesus' Birth Date

About a hundred years later, Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis, Cyprus, continued to campaign against the choice of December 25 as the date of Jesus' birth. He preferred January 6 as the date of Jesus' birth and wrote in his *Panarion*, "Greeks – I mean idolaters – celebrate this day on December 25, which Romans call Saturnalia [December 25, then assigned as the winter solstice, marked the culmination of the Saturnalia celebrations]... . For this division between the signs of the zodiac, which is a solstice, comes on December 25, and the day begins to lengthen because light increases."¹⁰

This is one of the clearest and most emphatic statements that December 25 was the date of a 'heathen' festival and should not be celebrated as the birthday of Jesus. However, the heathen festival mentioned is Saturnalia. There is no mention of Mithra.

What we read in the numerous sources we have perused, is that December 25,

originally celebrated in Rome as Sol's (the Roman Sun god's) nativity or the end of Saturnalia, was later celebrated as Jesus' nativity. In this context, we have not found Mithra's birth mentioned. ■■■■

The complete article is available at http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/reference/December_25-Yalda-Eduljee.pdf

References & Notes:

1. Franz Cumont in *Mysteries of Mithra* tr. by T. J. McCormack (Chicago, 1903) p. 7.
2. *Lesser Bundahishn* at 3.18; *Greater Bundahishn* at 4.20.
3. John Hinnells in 'Reflections on the bull-slaying scene' at *Mithraic Studies* II (Manchester, 1975) p. 291-2.
4. Porphyry lived c.234 to c.305 CE.
5. Porphyry's *De Antro Nympharum* 6 tr. J. M. Duffy in *The Cave of the Nymphs in the Odyssey* (Buffalo, 1969). (q.v. Homer's *Odyssey* at 13.103-12.)
6. For us, the date March 21 (Egyptian Phamenoth 25) stands out, as it is the date of the spring equinox in the Gregorian calendar.
7. Clement of Alexandria in his *Stromota* at 1.3.
8. For a discussion on the internal biblical evidence on when Jesus was born, see 'Rav Sha'ul's Dies Natalis Solis Invicti (Christmas)' at <http://www.sabbathcovenant.com/christianitythegreatdeception/Christmas.htm>
9. *Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1917).
10. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis, in *Panarion, A Refutation of All the Heresies* (late 300s CE) at 4.22.5-6 & 4.24.1.



K E Eduljee lives in West Vancouver, BC, Canada. He is the author of the *Immortal Cypress*, an epic in verse accompanied by an explanatory companion, the Zoroastrian Heritage website at www.zoroastrianheritage.com and the Zoroastrian Heritage blog at <http://zoroastrianheritage.blogspot.com/>. Eduljee is a past director of the Zoroastrian Society of BC and a founding trustee of the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr trust for BC. His efforts in maintaining the Zoroastrian Heritage site are directed towards providing objective information on the Zarathushti religion and its heritage, promoting the good name of the community, and honouring the memory of Zarathushtis who through the ages have performed great sacrifice in order to faithfully preserve Zarathushti heritage and its core values.

It's been a Blast!

by sanaya master, marketing leader, 6th WZYC

Mission accomplished! The smiles on the faces of the 6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress Organising Committee at the Closing Ceremony said it all!

There was a huge sense of relief and satisfaction; emotions were running high as everyone hugged each other with the feeling of when-will-we-meet-again. Friendships were forged, romances bloomed, and a sense of bonhomie prevailed.

The seamless 6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress (WZYC), held under the auspices of Kings College between December 28th 2015 and January 2nd 2016, had not only lived up to its promise but exceeded expectations.

A month on and the delegates are still feeling the hype from what was the most awaited Zoroastrian Youth event on the 2015 calendar.

The 6th WZYC Organising Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank all Donors (cash & fundraising), Legacy Series Donors, Official Partners, Volunteers and in particular Official Congress Sponsors who include:

- Platinum: Dr Cyrus S. Poonawalla (Serum Institute of India Ltd)
- Gold: Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton & Macao
- Silver: The World Zoroastrian Organisation
- Bronze: Jal N. Karbhari & Co., (Solicitors & Notaries Hong Kong) with compliments of Navaz & Jal Karbhari, New Zealand
- Faz Najmi (Raywhite Real Estate), NZ
- Mr Rusy M Shroff, BBS MBE & Mrs Purviz R Shroff, Hong Kong
- Shernaz & Cawas Pardiwalla & fly, NZ

The 6th WZYC was a fruitful event that was full of benchmarks. These included, the first ever Zoroastrian Congress to take place in New Zealand, the first ecologically conscious WZYC, the first to create and introduce the 12 Legacy Series (a series that showcased and honoured the legacy of selected

Zoroastrian individuals, families and organizations who have made a remarkable difference in our community, as well as humanity) and the first to launch two books – one of which is the highly acclaimed “An Uncensored Life”, the biography of Zermanoo Gifford and the second, a special book titled “Gatha” by Dr Irach J S Taraporewala and edited by Behramshaw Jal Kalianwala.

The event, which took four years to plan and organise, had its share of challenges. However, the Organising Committee – made up of the Zoroastrian Youth of New Zealand (ZYNZ), under the guidance of the host association, the Zarathushtrian Association of New Zealand (ZANZ) – were determined to make it a grand success.

Six days of fun, frolic and intellectual stimulation had over 250 delegates from all corners of the world including UK, North America, Canada, India, Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand just to name a few, treated to a plethora of activities ranging from “The City Blitz” Amazing Race around the vibrant city of Auckland that had them make human pyramids - all captured on camera; a laugh-a-minute Hypnotist Show that had everyone in splits and talking in moon language; the highly entertaining Zoro X-Factor where team Canada proved they reigned supreme on Traditional Night; and the fabulous “Glo” (in the dark) New Year’s Eve Celebration where 1500 white balloons magically descended from the ceiling at the stroke of midnight. It was indeed a sight to behold.

The grand Opening Ceremony on Monday 28th December 2015 set the tone for the rest of the Congress. It began with the entire delegation being welcomed onto the land at Kings College by the local Maori Iwi (the native tribe from that region of New Zealand). The spectacular Powhiri (welcome ceremony) by the Kapa Haka group provided a special opportunity for visitors to partake in the unique experience. Women were invited to



participate in the Poi dance, whilst the men were taught how to pull a Pukana (dilating of the eyes) and the whetero (protruding of the tongue) as they performed the New Zealand Haka made famous by the All Blacks team.

Following this was the impressive line-up of special guests at the Opening Ceremony, which included Michael Fisher from Fisher and Paykel, Member of Parliament and the National Party; Alfred Ngaro, Member of the Labour Party; Su'a William Sio, Editor and General Manager of Indian Newslink; Venkat Raman, Special Guest Speaker and Legacy Donor; Zerbanoo Gifford and Keynote Speakers Jimmy Madon (software engineer) and Jimmy Antia (international security and development analyst); all of whom were given the traditional Zoroastrian welcome of the "Aacho Michoo" performed by Navaz Karbhari and Delzin Balsara.

A hearty welcome was given by Tinaz Karbhari, the Congress Chair to all that were present and able to experience the exciting beginning of what four years of planning and preparation looked like. This was followed by an address from the president of the host association, Dilshad Shroff.

Zerbanoo Gifford's biography 'An Uncensored Life' authored by seasoned journalist Farida Master was also launched by social entrepreneur and director of Nirvana Health Group, Ranjana Patel at the Opening Ceremony. All delegates who attended the Congress received a free copy of the inspiring biography in their arrival kit.

A Jashan (traditional Zoroastrian Prayer Ceremony) performed by the young New Zealand mobeds (priests) was an apt end to the action-packed opening day of the Congress, which had around 400 Zoroastrians of all ages enjoy the tasty malido and sagan nu dahi-sev (Zoroastrian sweet dishes) prepared by helpful volunteers of the community.

Day two, started off with the Green Initiative presentation to highlight both the initiatives carried out prior to, and during the event, to make it the first ecologically conscious Youth Congress. Jimmy Madon, one of the Keynote

Speakers, who added humour by arriving on stage in a cloak and stick horse, was an instant hit. He took to the stage to have an unconventional discussion on how to practically implement Zoroastrianism teachings in everyday life. Jimmy spoke about the distinction between religion and culture, race and ethnicity and how important it is to distinguish the two from each other.

The well accomplished second Keynote Speaker, Jimmy Anita, followed with a very thought provoking session, discussing the connection between ecology, the mind and how they are rooted in Zoroastrianism.

After a sumptuous, fit-for-a-king lunch laid out by the management of King's College, Zerbanoo Gifford, acclaimed human rights campaigner, author, political pioneer for British Asians and the founder of the beautiful ASHA centre, captivated the young audience with uncensored stories that had everyone listening with rapt attention. She encouraged the youth to make their world a kinder and more beautiful place as their prophet Zarathustra always hoped they would. The impact she had was tremendous, followed by a standing ovation.

Other young speakers throughout the remaining four days covered various topics that stretched from 'How do today's youth inculcate a sense of pride about being Zoroastrian' to 'Symbolism in Zoroastrianism' and 'What inspires today's youth to see no personal boundaries to achieve their full potential'.

Jazeel Mistry, the Master of Ceremonies kept the tempo going throughout the Congress and made sure there was never a dull moment.

Another houseful session was one conducted by athletics coach, sports massage therapist, yoga instructor and model Ayesha Billimoria on mental health, fitness and well-being. The track and field athlete who has represented Maharashtra for the last 14 years had a lot of questions asked, which she answered with the dexterity of a professional sportswoman.

After the closing ceremony, as the last batch of youth said their goodbyes to board their

flights back home, the memorable four year journey and fun fuelled six day Congress came to an end with the promise of it being hosted by FEZANA and held in USA in the next four years. A destination that is undoubtedly popular and had the youth make a note to start saving. After all, with the resounding success of the 6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress here in New Zealand, it's hard to say no to the next one!

We trust all delegates have been able to truly embrace our treasured culture here in New Zealand, have been able to enhance their knowledge and understanding about our unique Zoroastrian traditions, resulting in us evolving to create a united future. In essence, the Congress motto: Embrace, Enhance, Evolve.

In closing, as the Congress Chair, Tinaz Karbhari mentioned in her final address to all: "The positive thinker sees the invisible, feels the intangible and achieves the impossible (quoted by Winston Churchill). Delegates, take this week long of experiences, knowledge and understanding you have collected and return to your homes not just thinking, but doing and actively making the changes that need to be made to achieve the impossible. We are the heart and soul of the future, so let's continue reflecting just that". ■■■■



New Year's Eve Celebration

Photo credit :
Imajh World
Media Company.



Organising Committee



Delegates at the Congress



Hijinks at the pool party



Tinaz Karbhari, Congress Chair



The Maoris welcome the delegates with the traditional Powhiri

A Perspective of the 6th WZYC

by zarrah birdie

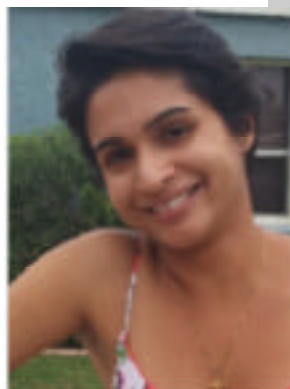
The 6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress commenced in Auckland, New Zealand from December 28th 2015 to January 2nd 2016 on the sprawling campus of the Kings College on the outskirts of the city of Auckland. The campus itself was very beautiful, lush green lawns, ample space to walk around, a full length swimming pool and gym, tennis courts etc. All 250 delegates were assigned rooms in one of the five dorm style houses. Each house came equipped with its own living room with pool tables, ping pong tables and wending machines plus a full length kitchen which would be stocked with bread, peanut butter and snacks. Our meals were to be had in the dining hall every day, all three meals breakfast, lunch and dinner were quite delicious. We even had the chance to eat traditional *"parsee bhonuu"* on the first of January in lieu of the traditional night that was happening that same night.

We had an exciting week together at Kings College! A number of things stood out, the congress itself was very well managed, we had a full agenda with interesting speakers (more on that below) and an array of social activities aimed to boost camaraderie and connection amongst the many different faces at the congress. Some favorites stood out; we had a full day in the city of Auckland where we were divided into teams and given clues all over the city – once each team figured out the clue we had an activity attached to it, such as "take a funny picture" or "sing a song together". The team that came back in time and finished off the largest number of activities together won a prize. We then spent a lovely afternoon at Sir Michael Savage Point, a gorgeous lookout point and garden that overlooks the city of Auckland. Another fun event we had was the Luau Pool Party where all the delegates had a grand time swimming and dancing with a festive Hawaiian backdrop. We also had an enchanting evening with a hypnotist, Dave Upfold, who gave us an explosive performance on the art and science of hypnosis - a memorable show overall!

The New Year's Eve gala was very well put together, we had a whole host of desserts and sweets arranged and the lighting and decor was impeccable – the theme of the night was *"Glo"* and the dress code was white. As if all these treats were not enough, we had a fabulous time at the Traditional Night; where all were dressed in sarees/duglis and irani makhno and shalwar, we also thoroughly enjoyed the "X-FACTOR" show put on that night, where delegates made teams based on country and each of the countries competed against each other with different antics and tricks.

Another really fulfilling part of the congress was the legacy talks that occurred over a span of three days. We had some fabulous speakers coming in from all over the world. Some of the most personally evocative and notable ones were the talk by Zerbano Gifford about the ASHA Center. Zerbano is an acclaimed human rights activist and founder of the ASHA Center which champions the young from around the world in leadership, sustainable living and the arts. We also received a copy of Zerbano's book *"An Uncensored Life"*. Another excellent speaker panel was an open panel on "How do today's youth inculcate a pride about being Zoroastrian?" the panel consisted of Zoroastrian youth from around the world – Danny Master (New Zealand), Diana Vania (Canada), Mithra Dawaliyan (Iran) and Shazneen Munshi (London). We also learned about the Return to Roots program as well as the Zoroastrian Youth for the Next Generation Program, both India based.

All in all, the congress was a grand success, we reunited with old friends and met new ones, rekindling our joint pride of being a part of this unique global community. ■■■



Zarrah Birdie is currently pursuing her MBA at the University of California, Berkeley-Haas School of Business. Prior to this she spent two years living and working in Malawi for the Clinton Foundation, where she served as a technical advisor to the Malawi Ministry of Health enabling the Ministry to roll out public health programs around health systems strengthening, malaria control and maternal and child health. Prior to working at the Foundation, Zarrah spent two years working in investment banking (healthcare M&A) in San Francisco. Zarrah holds a Bachelor of Science in Finance with a minor in public policy from UC Berkeley.

Return to Roots Programme

anushae parakh writes ...

The Zoroastrian Return to Roots is pleased to announce the opening of applications for **Return to Roots 3 Trip** scheduled to take place from **11th to 23rd March 2016**. This will be the third tour after the first two successful tours in 2013-14 and in 2015.

The aim of Zoroastrian Return to Roots is to bring together young Zoroastrians from across the world; to return to their roots, reconnect with their culture, and revive the community. Participants ('Fellows') will explore various significant Zoroastrian historical, religious, cultural, and archaeological sites in India over a trip of 12 days.

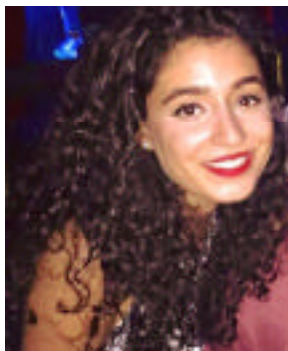
The itinerary will take participants to Mumbai, Gujarat and New Delhi. The tour in 2016 is unique from the previous two since it will overlap with a series of exhibitions and events being organized by PARZOR and the Government of India in New Delhi from the 19th to 23rd of March.

One of the key aims of this program is to foster a sense of community amongst Fellows and the global Zoroastrian community. Current Fellows have contributed to the Zoroastrian institutions they visit, including hospitals and orphanages, as well as continued to support the RTR program even after they have finished their trip. The trip also aims for participants to understand and realize the influence Parsis have had on modern-day India. Fellows also understand and experience first-hand the meaning behind our long-standing religious customs and traditions.

Fellows have returned from India with a deeper understanding and appreciation for our small but powerful community. They are encouraged to become more involved with their local Zoroastrian associations, give back to the community, and encourage

other youth to participate in Return to Roots.

We encourage applicants to approach their local community members and associations for funding and sponsorship. Applications are accepted on a rolling-basis and early applications are encouraged from those seeking sponsorship. ■■■■



Anushae Parakh born and bred in Karachi, spent four years in the UK to pursue higher education and is currently based in Bangkok working for the International Union for Conservation of Nature where her work focuses on gender and environment issues. Her passion is travelling and hopes to see as many countries as possible during her lifetime!



Roots 1 : Group on the banks of Varoli river

Photo credit :
Arzan Wadia, New York



Roots 2 : Group at the Dar e Mehr, Delhi

Princeton's Great Persian Book of Kings

Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ.

Guest curator, Marianna Shreve Simpson

by mahrukh cama

The *Shahnama* or the Book of Kings composed by the great Persian poet Firdausi contains over 50,000 verses and countless tales of ancient Iran, written over a 30-year period. It was completed in 1010 AD. It's the epic poem narrating tales of mythical, legendary and historical monarchs, starting from primordial time to the 7th century AD, when the Sasanian Empire ended upon Arab conquest.

The *Shahnama* has been a source of artistic inspiration for centuries. Around 1300's started the art of illustrating the *Shahnama* in miniature painting, a vibrant tradition of the time. Each deluxe *Shahnama* is a singular work of art and no two volumes contain the same verses or illustrate the same scenes.

Out of hundreds of illustrated copies of the *Shahnama* that survive today in collections worldwide, Princeton University's late 16th century Peck *Shahnama* (named after its donor, Clara S Peck) is one of the finest intact volumes in the United States. Every intricate detail of the manuscript, from the gold-specked paper to the number and content of the illustrated scenes, was conceived in advance by a master book designer. Exploration of its provenance reveals (from the colophon or scribal notes, on the last page of the text) that the manuscript was illustrated in 1589-90 in Shiraz. As per guest curator, Marianna Shreve Simpson's summation, The *Shahnama* may have been a gift to the royal Safavid family upon completion, and subsequently traveled from Iran to India in the seventeenth century and then to England in 18th century where around 1780 it was elaborately rebound by a London bookbinder in a western-style red morocco binding. In 1946 it was sold to Clara S Peck, an avid collector of rare books and manuscripts and horse breeder, from New Jersey. It is no wonder she was attracted to the *Shahnama*, as the manuscript is full of illustrations on



Gushtasp Displays His Prowess at Polo before the Qaisar of Rum. Peck *Shahnama*, 1589-90.

horses represented in the battlefields, hunting scenes and polo games. In 1983 she bequeathed the *Shahnama* to the Princeton University Library in honour of her brother Fremont C Peck, Class of 1920.

Princeton University owns five illustrated versions of the *Shahnama*, but the Peck *Shahnama* ranks among the finest 16th century Persian manuscripts in the United States, due to its impressive size, as well as the quality of its materials and decoration.

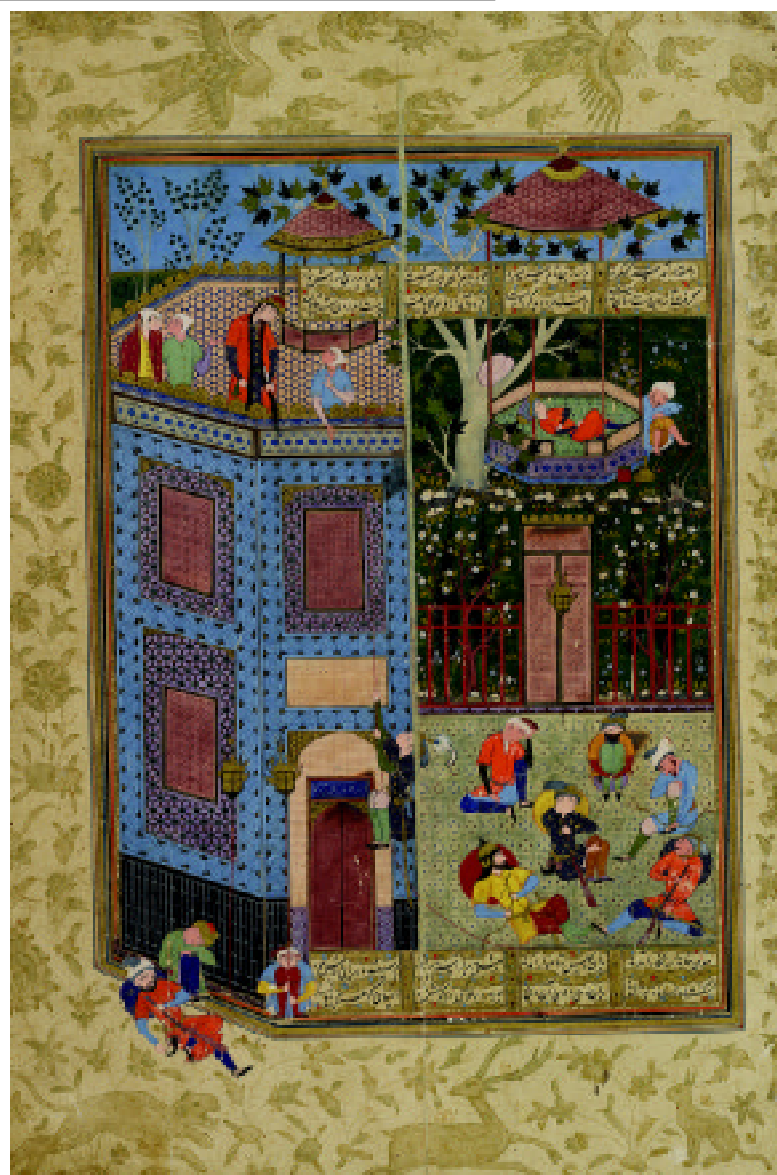
The Peck *Shahnama* has 475 folios, made of large sheets of highly polished paper, 45 full-page miniatures spread throughout the text, as well as double-page miniatures at the beginning, middle, and end of the manuscript. The miniatures are of high quality and substantial size, measuring 47.0 x 32.5 cm. Just imagine, when opened, the book measures three feet wide.

Passage of time has taken a toll on its delicate paper and pigments. Also, due to the turning of manuscript pages in its tight English binding of the 1780s, certain areas of the Peck *Shahnama* experienced a loss of pigment, mostly the orange-red colorant, and smaller amounts of some of the other pigments.

In February, 2015, The Peck *Shahnama* was brought to Princeton University Library's conservation laboratory to address centuries-old binding and conservation problems that had damaged the manuscript. Here, the text and picture folios of the manuscript were disbound for conservation treatment by the Preservation Office at the Princeton University Library, a meticulous process, ensuring the volume's long-term stabilization and preservation. Many clumsy repairs had been made long before it was bequeathed to Princeton. These old repairs were replaced where possible and some were left alone due to fragility. Now that the folios were separated, it seemed an opportune time for the museum to display all of the manuscript's illustrated folios as individual works of art and to introduce one of the University's treasures to a broad audience.

Thus Princeton's "Great Book of Kings" opened for viewing from October 3, 2015 to January 24, 2016 at the Princeton University Art Museum which is Princeton University's gallery of art. Each of the 48 miniature paintings was painstakingly matted and framed and displayed in the Medieval, Byzantine & Islamic Art section of the museum. Founded in 1882, it now houses over 92,000 works of art that range from antiquity to the contemporary period.

The exhibition was organized in three sections structured around the mythical, legendary and



Zal Visits Rudaba in Her Castle, folio 38a from the Peck Shahnama, 1589–90.

historical eras that bring to life tales of Iran's ancient heroes and villains, triumphs and defeats. Magnifying glasses were provided for the visitors to view every intricate detail of the paintings. Visitor's experience was further enhanced by an audio visual of six select paintings narrated by Ms Simpson.¹

A review of each section of the exhibit brought back memories of some of the stories I heard while growing up, with the magnificent illustrations bringing all to life, such as "Zal climbing the palace wall to meet Rudaba", "Rustam stabbing Suhrab", and "Dragon slithering down a mountain devouring poisoned oxen".

Each illustrated folio is a magnificent masterpiece, using watercolor, ink, silver and gold, with verses written in the top and lower part of the painting. Series of coloured rulings enframe every painting as well as the written surface of the title page surrounded by a wide margin. The margins, too, are decorated in gold with flowers, leaves, birds, animals and occasionally slender trees, and sometimes colorful calligraphy borders. In some of the folios we also find marginal notes, added in the 17th century, intended to make the medieval poem comprehensible to the manuscript's reader.

Similar to the illustrated folios, the "Title Page" and the "Beginning of the *Shahnama* Text" are also illuminated with colorful borders. The text page is formatted in four columns, with two pairs per line. What's amazing is that each column is separated by a narrow colored band filled with tiny painted motifs. Text in the folios is enhanced with gold panels, resembling clouds that surround each verse. This applies to text on all pages of the manuscript.

Each painting becomes more vibrant with details when observed through magnifying glass. In one illustration of a battle it was hard to see through the naked eye a lasso that had captured and dismounted the enemy warrior from his elephant. However, through the magnifying glass the rope was apparent and not just a mere painted solid line.

Miniature paintings have so many figures and activities that one must read the label next to the painting describing the scene and characters so as not to miss any details. For instance, in one folio, "Rustom kills Shaghad before dying", you see Rustom trapped in a pit of lethal weapons where his half brother, Shaghad, has lured him. Rustom has a stretched bow in his hand and the arrow has pierced through a tree into Shaghad who was hiding behind the tree." The description label also brings to our attention colour of the leaves in this painting, emphasizing that Rustom has reached the autumn of his very long life while a man standing below smacks his bare head in grief.

Similarly, the illustration of Faridun being enthroned, after overthrowing Zahhak, depicts



Rustam Chooses His Horse, Rakhsh, folio 54a from the Peck Shahnama, 1589–90.

many activities and celebrations with over 30 characters in the painting. One could easily miss observing Zahhak, with two serpents nibbling on his ears, being escorted to the palace, were it not for the label description.

Also, on descriptive labels there would be notes if the illustration slightly differed from the text. One such illustration is of legendary monarch, Kay Khusrau's adventure at sea, when his boat drifts away in strange waters. You see the monarch and sailors huddled in a boat. In the water, besides known creatures such as fish, eels, squid and jelly fish, you see other mythical creatures that are found in Persian art, such as dragons, two winged

beasts, a large bull with curved horns and small legs and intriguingly, four naked female figures with long hair. The label description does mention that the illustration does not precisely match the text on the picture panel, hence, the strange creatures. Artists were known to deviate from text sometimes.

“The Peck menagerie features a noteworthy assortment of other animals, with many, such as camels and elephants, quite recognizable even when represented at a fully improbable scale,” Ms Simpson writes. “The manuscript’s opening composition seems to mix every mammalian and avian species under the sun, with an array of supernatural and mythical beings, including a large Phoenix-like bird, a dragon rising up from the rocky background, and a rogue’s gallery of colorful ‘divs’ or monsters, along the side”.

However, I was a bit surprised to see elephants in the battlefield illustrations as I did not think they were native to Persia. I learned that they were war elephants hired for battles along with the riders from other countries.

The Peck *Shahnama* entails all – battles, royal hunts, enthronement, romance, polo games, marksmanship, musicians, dancers, betrayals, and the list goes on. Everything about this exhibit was majestic, when you see the amazing details, from the exquisite tiling of the terraces and palaces to plumed crowns of monarchs and headdresses worn by people, to the rich colors and decorations of the folios.

This manuscript was truly fit for a royal family, and I consider myself lucky to have seen this exhibit, a once in a lifetime experience, because at the end of the exhibition, the folios are being re-assembled and re-bound to be placed back in the Princeton University Library.



References:

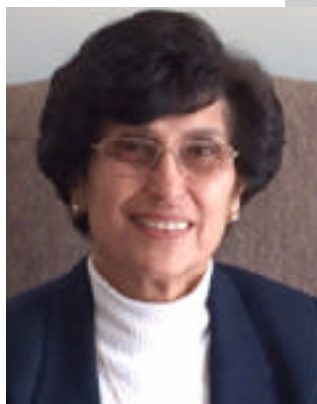
This article is based on visits to the Princeton University Art Museum on January 12 and 21, 2016, along with supportive research by Guest Curator, Marianna Shreve Simpson, specialist in the Islamic arts of the book, who was previously curator of Islamic Near Eastern art at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, and director of curatorial affairs and curator of Islamic art at the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.



Kay Khusrau Crosses the Sea to Gangdizh, folio 212b from the Peck Shahnama, 1589–90.

1. Link for narration of six paintings :

<http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/interactive-projects/peck-shahnama/>



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

Firdawsi's Sikandar : Perception of the childhood of Sikandar in the Shahnameh

After a millennia of Firdawsi's representation of Sikandar (Alexander the Great as he is commonly known in the West,) in his famous Shahnameh and over two millennia of portrayals of Sikandar, especially in the last two decades, it is an undisputed fact that Sikandar in all these depictions has always been presented as a leader. Usually, Sikandar has been viewed from a Western framework where the cultural manifestations and review-ship traditions of writers of Sikandar's history, i.e. the Vulgate tradition which portrays him in a dark/negative shade as a tyrant or worse an Apologetic tradition where Sikandar is depicted in a positive manner as a world leader.

by *naheed malbari*

Thus, the understanding of Sikandar has primarily been in accordance with the times and socio/political scenario of that given period. If Sikandar has been viewed from the Eastern perspective, two traditions have been employed. Western writers viewing an eastern text on Sikandar bring into play numerous characteristics that depict their own historical context and their own Western medieval historiography. Eastern writers feel it important to view such texts from a classical Muslim civilization paradigm which is in no way medieval from the European context. Such a writer according to Omidasalar, (2011) 'thrived during the most vibrant period of scientific and intellectual activity throughout the Muslim world'.

The perception of Sikandar and Firdawsi keeps altering. Sikandar keeps changing not only in different eras but due to the consequences of geo-political scenarios. To give a flavour of his manifold representations, the Greeks depicted him as a conqueror, the Zarathustrian Persians as accursed and the Muslims as a mythical hero, who cemented the way for the spread of Islam.

The term Firdawsi means 'Poet of Paradise', and was regarded as 'the

Persian Bard' and the 'Homer of the east'. Firdawsi's version states that Sikandar was actually the son of the Persian King Darab and that Filicus of Rum (Philip of Macedon) was his maternal grandfather. The story goes on to state that as Filicus and Darab had three ferocious but inconclusive battles Filicus sent emissaries to Darab for peace. King Darab agreed in return for the hand of Filicus's daughter Nahid who 'shineth mid the others like a signet,' and of 'cypress height and spring-like cheek' (Warner and Warner, 1912, pg 24). Apart from this as tribute Filicus should also send a hundred thousand eggs of gold in each of which a royal gem of price should be placed.

The Greek princess was married to Darab but the story takes on a wondrous twist where one night the Queen emitted pungent breath and Darab was disgusted with it and though some physicians pounded some herbs (*Sikandar*) and cured her breath, she was sent home to Rum to her father. Little did Darab realize that the Queen whom he was rejecting was pregnant with his child, his son.

Filicus did not want to reveal that his own daughter had been sent home as it would be termed as an insult, 'Darab hath put away my child' (Warner and Warner, 1912,

p.g, 26) and when the princess returned, he claimed the child as his own by one of his wives, 'There hath appeared a Cesar of my seed' (Warner and Warner, 1912, pg 26). Thus according to this Persian Myth Sikandar and Dara (whom he later fought were actually half-brothers) and the throne Sikandar claimed was legitimately his own. However, no mention at this stage is made whether Sikandar knew of his Persian ancestry. However in the later part of the story Sikandar acknowledges that he knew about his origins.

This in turn has allowed Sikandar to be a part of national epics as a hero and the legitimate heir to the Persian throne. Curtis, (1993) states that to legitimize Sikandar may have been a 'political necessity' as only 'rulers with a genuine right to kingly glory were chosen to rule over Iran' (p.g.57). As a foreigner he would have no right or place in the history of that nation, being the half-brother of the then Iranian King Dara would automatically qualify his right to the throne. For Coyajee (1939), the Zamyad Yasht (a Zarathustrian religious versification) has given a number of concepts which are evident in the Shahnama. One of the most important was the transmission of the Royal Glory (hvareno) from one legitimate king to another and a corresponding Divine Right of Kings as a basis of political obligation. The absolute necessity of a legitimate line of succession, since only by means of an heir can the ruler obtain Farr, "the aureole of divine descent" which is regarded as one of the fundamental concepts of Persian morality made the Persianizing of Sikandar of paramount importance if the concept of the divine right had to be maintained. The separation of myth from history is of paramount importance for a thinker of the 21st century but for a medieval poet such inconsistencies are not of grave importance. Yet, it is important to point out that in Greek texts, Filicus (Philip of Macedon) in one of his drunken stupors has questioned the legitimacy of Sikandar (Alexander). Whether the saga of Sikandar's birth was invented by Firdawsi or the Persians to save face or to give legitimacy to the historical Sikandar's

(Alexander's) rule in Iran so as to soften the blow of a usurper are both plausible.

In a slightly different Persian version called Iskandarnamah (The Book of Alexander) by an anonymous 12th to 14th century writer translated by Southgate (1978) follows Firdausi's version of Alexander's heritage but states that Alexander knew that he was son of Darab but 'kept the truth concealed' (p.g.10). It is interesting to note here that knowing that he had been rejected by his own father and though loved by his grandfather would make anybody embittered.

Thus, when analyzing the childhood of Sikandar an important idea emerges, namely a sense of grandiosity. The concept of grandiosity in children is a very important aspect which may in later years lead to narcissistic tendencies. Firdawsi's Sikandar and the story of his birth is not aspect of this important theme and his birth was regarded as coming on an auspicious occasion. Just when the Princess was giving birth a brown mare in Filicus's stable who was strong and swift gave birth to a foal all white (Warner and Warner, 1912) or grey (Firdausi and Davis, 2006), 'short-shanked and breasted like a lion' (Warner, 1912, pg 26). Cesar was extremely happy and felt that such an incident boarded well for him and Rum, and was a lucky sign. Supernatural forces thus play an important role. Dreams, prophecies, fate and destiny rule in life and in battles. All dreams, all angels and omens are manifestation of the will of a single God called Khoda (Zoroastrian names for God, 14 different ones given in the Shahnama). Thus, for Arynpur, (1973) 'God it is that affects the destiny of man through the stars and other media of divine expressions' (p.g.90). The concept of good (Izad) and evil (Ahriman) and on whose side one stands, with God or the devil. The omens that favour the birth of a King were regarded with high esteem and Firdawsi aptly uses this with regards to Sikandar's birth. It would therefore not be surprising that Sikandar did develop his sense of grandiosity from an early age where he was cherished and feted. Firdawsi goes on to

say that due adornments were giving to Sikandar who in turn was heir apparent to Filicus. The latter treated him more attentively than a son and dressed him in the robes of a champion. He grew up to be wise, 'became adroit, intelligent, grave in his manner and knowledgeable' learned the arts of kingship...' and learned the art of administering the empire and to learn to be a king. (Firdawsi and Davis, 2006, p.g. 455)

It is interesting to note here that Firdawsi, for his stories on Sikandar, used two different sources at least. In the main section where the story of Sikandar (Alexander) is presented the latter is portrayed as an Iranian prince with legitimate claim to Divine Glory. Yet, when writing about the Sasanian period, he scathingly speaks about Sikandar and describes him as an enemy of Iran, as evil as Zahhak and the usurper of the Divine throne and condemns him (Curtis, 1993). This aspect is important to remember when discussing as differing sources or circumstances would give differing images of the same and one needs also to remember that Firdausi wrote the Shahnameh over decades and rereading or reviewing over 50,000 couplets would have been quite impossible. The story of his birth and brief childhood as portrayed by Firdawsi is a tale that is both compelling and phantasmagoric.



Naheed P Malbari living in Karachi, is a researcher and author on leadership and sociology. She completed her PhD in 2015. Working as a consultant instructor in sociology in a number of institutions, she is also currently working on two books and a research paper.

Becoming my Mother's Priest

An on-line story shared by proud mother Teenaz Javat with the readers of Hamazor. Those of you who may not be computer saavy may have to forgo this commentary. For others its a charming story to hear.

This documentary was first aired on January 24, 2016 on Canada's national radio.

13-year-old Zoroastrian priest keeps tradition alive

When Hormuz Javat was eight years old, he faced a pretty serious decision: did he want to begin training as a Zoroastrian priest?

He'd have to begin soon because the training took four years, building up to his ordination at age 12.

Hormuz is a Parsi, a follower of the Zoroastrian faith. His ancestors fled Persia after facing religious persecution and settled in the Indian subcontinent in the late six hundreds.

Today, there are about ten thousand Zoroastrians living in Canada, but there aren't enough Zoroastrian spiritual leaders to sustain the community.

It's a familiar dilemma for faith groups all over the world.

In her 16-minute documentary - Becoming My Mother's Priest, Sujata Berry tells the story of how one family is keeping the tradition alive.

<http://www.cbc.ca/radio/tapestry/children-and-spirituality-part-2-1.3412058/13-year-old-zoroastrian-priest-keeps-tradition-alive-1.3414137>



Photo credit: Mahveer Javat

Mr Edulji Dinshaw, C.I.E. (1842 – 1914)

- Philanthropist Extraordinary -

I

In the year 1860, an 18-year-old Parsi boy in Bombay with very little experience, decided to set sail for and seek his fortune in what was then known as Kurrachee a small fishing town in Sind. Fifty four years later on a voyage to England he died at sea leaving an indelible stamp on the history of Karachi for his entrepreneurship and philanthropy. This is a minor attempt at recording such history.

by cyrus cowasjee

Mr Edulji Dinshaw commenced his business endeavours as a Contractor to the British Army. Later as contractor and camp follower he followed the Army into Afghanistan during the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1881). On his return to Karachi he invested in land extending to almost half of Karachi as it was at that time, as well as in successful business ventures. One such venture was a large establishment in what is now called Mansfield Street where he constructed stables on the ground floor for the Army's pack animals with grain and fodder storage on the first floor. This property was later converted by his son Nadirshah to a "Home" for indigent Parsis. This "Home" still exists.

He was prominently active in civic and public activities of the City of Karachi donating generously his wealth towards its welfare.

Amongst his public charities were the building and funding of three medical dispensaries for the citizens of Karachi largely augmenting the efforts of the Karachi Municipality. These dispensaries were in Saddar – The Edulji Dinshaw Dispensary in 1882 still functioning, in Keamari – The Bachubai Edulji Dinshaw Dispensary in 1887; and on Lawrence Road in 1903 – The Nadirshah Edulji Dinshaw Dispensary, these last two since demolished.



Mr Edulji Dinshaw, portrait hangs in the Karachi Parsi Institute.

Below: The Edulji Dinshaw Dispensary, Saddar.



For the enhancement of the beauty of the Frere Hall Gardens at Karachi in 1890 he constructed and donated to the citizens of Karachi a magnificent fountain. This fountain exists even today in a dilapidated condition awaiting benefactors to restore it.

He was the principal donor for the construction and habilitation of the Lady Dufferin Hospital in 1894. A special ward was reserved for Parsi patients.

His public activities involved him being a Municipal Councilor and the first among the many Parsis to adorn the Board of the Karachi Port Trust.

The greatest benefactor of all time to the Parsi community of Karachi, Edulji donated throughout his life to various funds lasting in perpetuity commencing in 1886 to a Nirashrit fund for destitute ladies and ghambar fund for feeding Parsis on regular days each year. These ghambars continued till mid 1950s. A fund for the maintenance for the Garikhata dar-e-meher was established.

The first billiard table at the Karachi Parsi Institute was donated by him to the Institute on whose board he served for many years.

His charity, during his lifetime, at today's value would exceed \$1.0 billion.

For his civic services he was ennobled C.I.E. (Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire) by the British Government in 1899, the very first in Karachi.

Gentle and courteous in nature to all he came in contact with, he lived with his entire family in a grand house on Magazine Lane called "Preedy Castle" surrounding a large garden with trees and a well in the middle, whose fresh water in those days, sparse, was freely available to all his neighbours.

In a letter to my father in the 1950s his eldest grandson Hoshang described him "Only Sulka¹ silk and Asprey² silver in his household. Oh! He was a beau".

Edulji Dinshaw died on 8th May 1914 whilst on a voyage to England with his daughter



The fountain today



The fountain in its original state, source unknown.



The Edulji Dinshaw Fountain at Frere Hall Gardens. Photo credit: Sohrab Anklesaria.



Lady Dufferin Hospital, with Edulji's marble bust at the entrance alongside Queen Victoria.



Note: There seems to be some discrepancy regarding the spelling for 'Edulji'. The Municipality has always recorded his name as 'Eduljee', which is unfortunately incorrect. - Ed.

Gool. As per his wish to the Captain of the ship he was buried at sea near Egypt.

In recognition of his great contributions to the city of Karachi the Municipality named a prominent commercial road facing the Karachi Port Trust and Custom House after him. During 2015 this road has been totally rehabilitated by public donations.

His statue was placed at the prominent intersection of Karachi's Victoria and Strachan roads in 1933. When unveiling this statue, Sir Frederick Sykes, then Governor of Bombay Presidency, remarked that "It is particularly appropriate that the city of Karachi should choose Mr Edulji Dinshaw as a fitting subject to be honoured by the erection of a statue in one of the most imposing and important sites in the whole town. For he had the vision to recognise fully the possibilities of greatness that the city held and also contributed very largely himself to developing it." After partition, this statue, and that of his illustrious son Nadirshah, being de-capitated and re-capitated several times, have been given refuge by a grateful community on the lawns of Karachi Parsi Institute.

The Charity and business acumen of this great Patriarch lived on through the 20th century and up to date. His son Nadirshah and grandsons Hoshang and Minocher continued the charity and lifestyle traditions of Edulji, including Sulka and Asprey. They lived in large mansions on prominent residential streets sharing their bounties with all. Their large collections of rare clocks and watches needed the services of a clock smith to visit their houses each week to wind them.

Major public charities were the establishment of the NED Engineering College in 1922, the first such in the region, with four scholarships for Parsis, now for all minorities, the Mama Parsi Girls' School on M A Jinnah Road in 1922/1925, the Spencer Eye Hospital in the Lea Market area, 1940.

Specific to the Parsi community are the three low cost housing chawls, the Edulji

Dinshaw and Rustom [which is the first low cost housing in Karachi] on Preedy Street and “The Bai Khurshedbai Nadirshah Edulji Dinshaw Parsi Home” on Mansfield Street, mentioned above. The Parsi citizens continue to reside at these chawls today free or at rents ranging between 10-25% of those prevailing elsewhere.

Throughout their lifetime the eldest grandson Hoshang and his lady Khorshedbanu dedicated their lives to public welfare. Mrs Khorshedbanu until her death at 102. It is reputed that in their early years of marriage Hoshang placed Rs100 each morning under his bride’s pillow for charity which she carried out performing on foot daily. In recognition of his charities, the city of Karachi named Hoshang Road after him. Charity for all deserving causes continues through Hoshang’s daughter-in-law Perin including giving scholarships to students at local universities and those wishing to study abroad, and endowment for constructing a University building. Also through Minocher’s son Russie.

The family’s business extended to Stevedoring, Coal Merchants, Salt Works Owners, Ice Factory, a Cotton and Wool Ginning Mill, Shipowning and as Landlords.



Notes:

1. A. Sulka and Co. was founded in New York City in 1893 by businessman Amos Sulka and tailor Leon Wormser. The shop was originally a shirtmaker’s establishment, and in 1895 was located on Broadway. By the early 1920s, A Sulka had moved to Fifth Avenue and had opened stores in London’s Old Bond Street and in Paris. The stores commenced being closed in late 2001, and the last one was shuttered in 2002.

2. Asprey & Garrard Limited is a United Kingdom-based designer, manufacturer and retailer of jewellery, silverware, home goods, leather goods, timepieces, polo equipment, and a retailer of books. Asprey’s flagship retail store is located on New Bond Street in London since 1847, and have supplied crowns, coronets and sceptres for royal families around the world.



Edulji Dinshaw standing on the lawns of KPI



Cyrus Cowasjee was born in Karachi, educated at four schools to complete his Senior Cambridge from the Karachi Grammar School, being the senior most Old Grammarian today. Spent two years ostensibly at Commerce College mainly enjoying fresh fruits at the adjoining Burns Garden. Joined Family business of stevedore, ship owning in 1946 retiring in 2013. Proud owner of a Patek Philippe gold wrist watch courtesy one of Edulji’s grandsons. Avid lover of Karachi, and it’s history.

Eduljee Dinshaw Road Project Trust

by mohammed rajpar & jameel yusuf



The Imperial Custom House with the Eduljee Dinshaw Road

The Eduljee Dinshaw Road located in the heart of Karachi's old city is a bustling thoroughfare of historical significance as well as a commercially important artery connecting the city's port, financial, commodity trading and warehousing districts. The road houses two of the finest architectural assets dating from colonial times namely the Karachi Port Trust building and the Imperial Custom House.

The Karachi Port Trust building whose structure was completed in 1915 is a wonderful amalgamation of British, Hindu and Gothic cultures. Mr George Wittet, who designed the building, was also the architect of the famous Prince of Wales Museum and the Gateway of India in Mumbai. The other classic aspects of the buildings are its huge doors, windows and arches, whose combination and design constitute an imposing presence and beauty. The building of the Custom House followed

immediately after the construction of the Karachi Port Trust Office and was initially used as a hospital known as the No 1 India General Hospital with 500 beds, being one of the five great hospitals run under General Fowler. This was during the period of February 1916 to May 1919. The Imperial Custom House was designed as a continuation of the Karachi Port Trust Offices.



Karachi Port Trust building

The occasional tourist visitor to Karachi hardly attempts to view these architectural marvels due to the area's commercial hustle and bustle. Moreover, due to neglect and apathy, over time, the area was encroached by transporters; shops were turned into godowns serviced constantly by mobile cranes, trucks, fork-lifts and labour, becoming an eye sore dissuading any touristic proclivities.

Moved by this sorry state of affairs, the enthusiastic Collector Preventive, Pakistan Customs, Karachi, S M Tariq Huda, conceived an idea to bring about a sea change whereby the road could be turned into a fine example of neighbourhood development by streamlining traffic, easing congestion, removing encroachments, creating public friendly pavements, seating spots and turning the street into a fun filled place and a social hub for families to visit in the evening. He contacted a renowned Karachi based architect, Shahid Abdulla who readily embraced the idea and guided another architect Danish Zubay to envision a practical solution. Once that was done, the project so conceived was taken to the Commissioner of Karachi, Shoaib Siddiqui, who lent his full support to the project by placing it before the Governor of Sindh, Dr Isrhat ul Ebad Khan, who lent his patronage to this project.

To enable the project to run smoothly and showcase a unique model by reclaiming public space, it was thought appropriate to finance the project's first phase (costing around Rs70 million) through private donations. In order to assure donors of the efficacy and transparency of the budgeted spending, a Trust populated by civic minded citizens of credibility was formed comprising, Jameel Yusuf, Meraj Zia Zuberi, Shahid Abdulla and Shoaib Siddiqui. A vigorous campaign was then initiated and donors expressed great interest and were forthcoming with their funds. The Governor Sindh performed its ground breaking on 11 November, 2014.

Bearing in mind international standards of architectural conservation, the project entailed relaying of the street with paving stones, introduction of Victorian style lamp posts, trees, benches and water bodies, up till the

Darya Lal Mandir; which was also redone to restore its lost glory, being the only Hindu Jhulelal Mandir of the country. The Mandir is said to be at least 300 years old and was originally built with limestone and the Jung Shahi stone. The restoration involved maintaining the floor patterns and renovating / constructing the doors, windows, locks, etc. The restoration also saved the Mandir from encroachments and the Jhulelal deity was especially imported from India and installed. Special care was taken to illuminate the Mandir's facade for the viewing pleasure of visitors to the area in the evening.

Karachi Port Trust and Custom House, the two imperial buildings were washed from the outside and have been opened to public so as to encourage visits also to the Custom House Museum which resides on the second floor. Even the adjacent apartment buildings were given a fresh coat of paint and the various shops / establishments on the road were given a face lift including uniform signage paid for by the Trust. The Oscar winning Pakistani Director Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy was moved by the project to make a short documentary which can be viewed on www.dawn.com/news/1225256 - titled, A walk to remember: The miracle revamp of Karachi's old customs house walkway.

Apart from facing the inevitable inconvenience of one of the city's main commercial thoroughfares being closed to vehicular access for a year, the project team faced other difficulties such as shifting of utilities and eviction of encroachers all of which were addressed by the Trustees with the support of the district administration as well as by reaching out to all the private and public stakeholders in an inclusive fashion to mobilize support and recognition for the project.

The project was finally inaugurated by the Governor of Sindh in an elaborately organized ceremony on Sunday, 13 December, 2015. The Governor stated, "This project is a stepping stone to restoring Karachi's heritage to its past glory".

One of the unique and successful features of the project has been to create a sustainable financial mechanism to ensure the road's



Mohammed Rajpar was born in Dar es Salam and holds a M.Phil degree from Cambridge University. Currently CEO of General Shipping Agencies (Pvt) Ltd, he has held important positions in the Pakistan ports & shipping sector as Chairman of Pakistan Ship's Agents Association, Trustee of Karachi Port Trust, and Board Member of Port Qasim Authority. He is also a Trustee of the British Overseas School and Board Member of Al Murtaza School. He is an active Social Worker.

All other images courtesy, Mohammed Rajpar; photo credit Yasmin Hyder



Clockwise from top left: Entrance to the KPT & Custom House, water bodies, bench with lamp post (latter two every 100ft or so), Jhulelal Mandir, the Jhulelal diery, view of whole Eduljee Dinshaw Road, portrait of Eduljee hanging in the Custom House Museum, central fountain. Photo credit : Minocher Vakharia

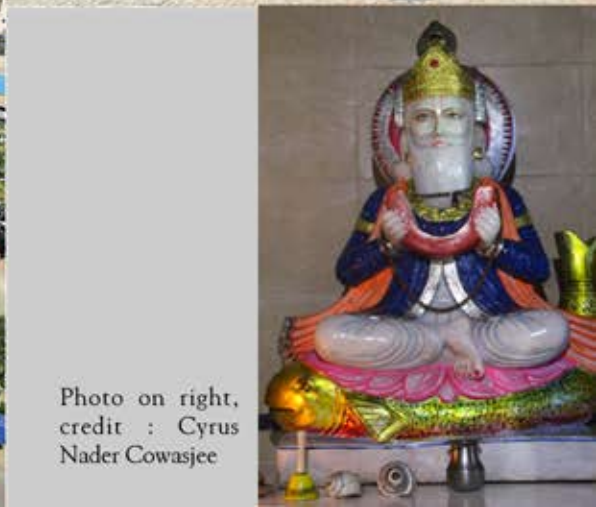


Photo on right, credit : Cyrus Nader Cowasjee

Sponsored by World Zoroastrian Trust Funds



Dr. Ishrat ul Ebad Khan, Governor of Sindh addressing the guests



L to R: Jameel Yusuf, S M Tariq Huda, Vice Admiral Hussainy COMPAK, The Governor of Sindh, offering dua after the opening.



continued maintenance through monthly contributions from relevant stakeholders and philanthropists who have shown their love and passion for this city of lights, Karachi, inhabited by nearly 20 million people.

In its next phase the project is envisaged to extend from the so-called "Charia Chowk" up to the Agha Khan Jamat Khana at an estimated cost of Rs100 million. This will require purging the transporters who are currently using the KPT stadium shops illegitimately as godowns instead of offices as well as the hordes of attendant cranes and fork lifts parked on either side of the road. It is planned to build a dancing fountain, install sculptures of Karachi's heroes led by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, introduce street cuisine, create platforms for local artists, painters and musicians, especially the Qawwals from the old shoe market of Karachi. KPT's critical participation would be the opening up of its sports stadium for pedestrians who would be able to watch sports teams play; setting up of a modern gym for the area's inhabitants and also laying open the walking track. The whole area, if the project is successfully completed, can be turned into one of the most vibrant, beautiful, clean and attractive place in Karachi for the less privileged to freely visit, avail and relax in its serene environment.

In conclusion, one can proudly say that the project's first phase has not only honoured the memory of Mr Eduljee Dinshaw (whose bust will soon adorn the road alongside a plaque displaying all the donors' names) but also proves that the public and private sectors can collaborate with commitment and passion to restore Karachi's lost heritage. ■■■

Jameel Yusuf is a businessman, currently the Chairman of TPL Holdings (Pvt.) Ltd. He was the Founder Chief, Citizens Police Liaison Committee, at Sindh Governor's Secretariat, a statutory institution assisting Victims of Crime (1989 - 2003), Trustee of Karachi Port Trust (2008 - 11), Member, Board of Governors, Indus Valley School of Arts and Architecture (2011 - 14), and Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars (2004 - 15). He has been awarded the coveted Presidential Award "Sitara-e-Shujaat" for Gallantry Services on 14 August 1992 for action against Kidnappers for Ransom. He is the active Trustee of the Edulji Dinshaw Road Project for rehabilitation of this road with public participation.



The Custom House & Eduljee Dinshaw Road lit each night for pedestrians of the area to enjoy. Photo credit : Cyrus Nader Cowasjee

Dr Nergis Mavalvala with her Team makes World Headlines

47-year-old Nergis Mavalvala, born in Karachi, Pakistan, daughter of Meher & Minoo Mavalvala, living in the US since the past 30 years has created a name for herself, her community in Karachi and for her country. The Zoroastrians of Karachi are overjoyed with this news and feel very proud of “their lady”.

Nergis’ schooling was at the Convent of Jesus & Mary, Karachi and then proceeded for higher studies to Wellesley College, USA where she did her BA in Physics and Astronomy in 1990; followed by a PhD in Physics in 1997 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

She is at present the Associate Department Head of Physics at MIT and a member of the team of scientists who announced on Thursday, 11 February 2016, the scientific milestone of detecting gravitational waves; ripples in space and time, hypothesised by physicist Albert Einstein a century ago.

Nergis’ career spans over 20 years and has been with MIT since 2002. She writes, “I am truly humbled to be part of this scientific discovery — it’s been 25 years in the making for me, and much longer for the founding fathers.”

On 15th February, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif felicitated Nergis for being part of the team of scientists who have detected

gravitational waves in space. The PM also said ‘she is a source of inspiration for Pakistani scientists and students aspiring to become future scientists.’

As this breakthrough in science has come just prior to the printing of Hamazor, there has been no time for us to approach Nergis, but we hope to carry in the next

issue more about her work. Today, we send her warm wishes and congratulations for her outstanding success in the field of science from the World Zoroastrian Organisation, the Zoroastrian community and Pakistan.

Some of the links that shared this breakthrough, which the reader may wish to check:

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1239270>
Pakistan-born scientist played part in discovery of gravitational waves in [Pakistan, World](#)
<http://tribune.com.pk/>

<http://news.mit.edu/2016/ligo-first-detection-gravitational-waves-0211>
<http://propakistani.pk/2016/02/12/this-pakistani-born-is-part-of-ligo-team-that-discovered-gravitational-waves/>
<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1047451/pm-congratulates-pakistani-who-played-part-in-discovery-of-gravitational-waves/>
Parsi Khabar - 02/13/2016 edition



Dr Marlene Kanga, AM - engineers a better world

kersi meher-homji interviews the president elect of world federation of engineering organisations (WFEO)

The Kyoto Convention Centre in Japan is famous as it was here that the Kyoto Protocol on climate change was signed in 1995. Twenty years later at the same venue another landmark event took place for the Zoroastrian community around the world.

In Kyoto, the World Federation of Engineering Organisations (WFEO) elected Australia's Dr Marlene Kanga to the position of President Elect at their General Assembly in December 2015. This is a huge achievement as the proportion of women who are engineers remains very low and the number of women who lead the profession, even lower.

WFEO is the peak body for all national engineering institutions around the world and operates as a non-government organisation by UNESCO. Its membership includes some 90 national engineering institutions and 10 regional and international engineering institutions which represent approximately 20 million engineers around the world.

Dr Kanga had proposed an agenda to increase the visibility of the advocacy that WFEO can provide to UNESCO and other international bodies to address the important issues that the world is facing and which require engineers to provide solutions. These issues include climate change, water

shortages, energy and sustainable development of infrastructure and cities. She won a global mandate by winning the election with more than a two-thirds majority. She will be the second woman and first India-born president of WFEO in its 48-year history.

A chemical engineer from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Bombay, Marlene also obtained degrees from Imperial College, London and Macquarie University, Sydney.



Dr Marlene & Rustom Kanga at Kyoto, December 2015

Marlene was president of Engineers Australia in 2013, Australia's national engineering institution. She was the second woman to be elected to this position and the first Asian-born president to lead the organisation. She is a Board member of

Sydney Water Corporation, Australia's largest water utility with revenues of more than \$2.7 billion and Director of iOmniscient Pty Ltd which has patented software technology for intelligent video analytics systems.

She is also a Board member of Innovation Australia which has oversight over the Australian government's innovation, research and development (R&D), venture capital and other programmes to support innovation, and is Chair of its R&D Incentives Committee, the largest support programme for innovation in Australian industry, valued at nearly \$3 billion per year.

IIT Bombay awarded her with a Distinguished Alumni Award for her achievements in the engineering profession, the first time this award was given to a woman engineer.

Marlene was also made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the Queen's Birthday Honours in June 2014 for her "leadership of engineering institutions and as a role model". A resident of Sydney for over 30 years and belonging to the Australian Zoroastrian Association it was a pleasure interviewing Marlene, a vibrantly vivacious personality. The many international honours bestowed on her have not changed her. She remains unspoilt by success – oozing energy and friendliness.

KMH - *What is the role of WFEO?*

MK - "The World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO) is an international, non-governmental organization representing the engineering profession worldwide.

"Founded in 1968 by a group of regional engineering organizations, under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) in Paris, the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO) brings together over 90 national engineering institutions and 10 regional and international engineering institutions. It represents some 20 million engineers from around the world.

"WFEO is the internationally recognized and chosen leader of the engineering profession and cooperates with national and other international professional institutions in being the lead profession in developing and applying engineering to constructively resolve international and national issues for the benefit of humanity.

"WFEO was established in 1968 and is a recognised non-governmental organisation (NGO) of UNESCO. It has headquarters based in Paris within UNESCO and operates through various modes of engagement including its own regional and international conferences. It holds a General Assembly every two years and hosts the World Engineers Convention every four years.

"WFEO engages with various United Nations organisations such as UNESCO, UNISDR, UNFCCC to discuss international issues relating to climate change, sustainable infrastructure development, international data standards for the internet, strategies for mitigating natural disasters using engineering solutions, ethical engineering practice and the eradication of corruption and standards of engineering education.

"WFEO has ten Standing Technical Committees to address these issues including Committees for capacity building, engineering education, environment, energy, innovative technologies, information and communication technologies, natural disaster risk management, anti-corruption and the facilitation of young engineers and women in the engineering profession.

"WFEO will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2018 with a special General Assembly to be hosted by the Institution of Civil Engineers, UK (ICE) as part of its bicentennial celebrations in London. Both UNESCO and WFEO were established at the ICE in London, so it's a fitting place to return to celebrate this milestone which will be during my term as WFEO President."

Have cities from Australia, UK, India and Pakistan hosted a WFEO general Assembly?

"As a peak body of engineering institutions, only national engineering institutions can be members. There are no individual members.

"The Institution of Engineers India and the Pakistan Engineering Council are members of WFEO. India has hosted the Committee for innovative technologies and is currently hosting the committee for information and communication technologies.

"As far as I am aware, India and Pakistan have not hosted a WFEO General Assembly or had a WFEO President representing their national institution. I am a Fellow of the Institution of Engineers India (IEI). However IEI has its own delegation at the WFEO General Assembly and meetings.

Australians have had prominent leadership roles in WFEO. I have been a member of the WFEO Executive Council from 2013, representing the national member institutions and the only woman to be elected to the Council. Mr Barry Grear of Adelaide (Australia) was WFEO President in 2007-2009.

“The importance of 2019 - 2019 will be an important year for engineering in Australia. The Institution of Engineers Australia (Engineers Australia) was established by Royal Charter in 1919.

“At the 2019 National President of Engineers Australia, I will be the President of WFEO and will host the General Assembly to be held in Melbourne. Australia will be hosting the World Engineering



Dr Kanga WEC 2019

Convention and the WFEO General Assembly in Melbourne in 2019. I led the bid to host the Convention and am Chair of WEC 2019. The Convention will be an important part of the centenary celebrations of Engineers Australia.”

When did you start representing Australia at WFEO meetings?

“I have been attending the WFEO General Assemblies and annual meetings since 2007. I advocated for the General Assembly voted to establish the Committee for Women in Engineering. I am Deputy Chair of the Committee for Natural Disaster Risk management. I have also established a web based resource to share knowledge on strategies to mitigate the risk of natural disaster to build capacity among engineers, especially in developing countries, which is expected to have huge humanitarian benefits (see www.wfeo.net/ndrm). I was elected to the WFEO Executive Council in 2013.”

You are the second woman to be elected as President in 50 years of WFEO. Who was the first one and when was she elected?

“Maria Laffargue, a telecommunications engineer from Spain was the first woman to be elected President of WFEO. She served as President from 2009-2011.”

How did you feel when you won the Presidency?

“I felt honoured that the world’s engineers

h a v e entrusted me with the responsibility of leading them for the next few years. I decided to stand for election as President because I felt I could make a contribution that would make a difference to

the organisation and the engineering profession. I am a values based leader and believe that service to the profession is of paramount importance.

“In my ancestral home in Goa, I first learned about leadership through my family’s leadership style in caring for the community, many of whom had little education and came to my parents for guidance and counsel. My father, as an engineer, made significant contributions to India’s early infrastructure development; he was passionate about serving the community through engineering, building roads and bringing electricity and water supplies to rural communities.

“WFEO has a vital role to be the global voice for engineering. No other engineering institution has this role. The members of the national engineering institutions can only have their say about the many international issues

facing the world today through WFEO. Engineers will provide the solutions to climate change, sustainable development, the building of new cities, transport, and infrastructure and communication technologies. Technology and engineering underpin our economies and are essential to sustainable development.

“2015 has been an important year for the world with the historic Conference of Parties (COP) 21 Agreement on Climate Change and the adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by the United Nations. Both these agreements require science, engineering and technology solutions to implement. As engineers at WFEO, we will be engaging with our global partners in developing appropriate practices, building capacity and tracking implementation using scientific measures.”

Your plan of action for the next year?

“I am President Elect for 2015-2017 and will step up to the role of president in December 2017 at the General Assembly to be held in Rome. My plan of action when I become President is to activate the mission of WFEO and to represent the engineers of the world with a strong voice. It is also important to communicate the important role of engineers and engineering in implementing these changes to the broader community.”

You have received many Awards including AM. How does the recent honour bestowed on you compare with previous awards?

“It is an honour to be elected and to be entrusted with this leadership role. However this is where the work begins and there is a lot to be done. Put simply, at WFEO we are engineering a better, sustainable and, I hope, a more peaceful world.”

Anything else you would like to share with the readers of Hamazor?

“Many of the world’s problems require scientific, engineering and technological solutions. The world needs more scientists and engineers. I encourage all girls and boys

to consider engineering as a career. It provides lifelong challenges and opportunities and most importantly, to make a difference. If you want to change the world, become an engineer.”

Apart from her engineering excellence, Dr Marlene and her husband Rustom (a PhD) are proud parents of Zubin, a pianist of international fame (also a PhD in music) and Jehan who conducts Madrigal concerts and is completing a PhD in materials chemistry. Marlene is the daughter-in-law of the architect of Navi Mumbai Adi Kanga.



The illustrious Kanga family



Kersi Meher-Homji is a retired research Virologist having worked for his post-graduate degree on poliomyelitis in India and on hepatitis and AIDS viruses in Sydney. He has published many research papers on Virology in India, Australia and the USA. He is also a prolific cricket author having published 14 cricket books in Australia including *The Waugh Twins*, *Nervous Nineties*, *Six Appeal* and his latest *Cricket Conflicts and Controversies*. He writes sports and humour pieces for *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Inside Cricket*, *Indian Down Under*, *Parsiana* and *Mid-Day*.

Chatting with Ami Shroff

by beyniaz edulji

When Ami Shroff started bartending, no one, not even her, could have realised that she would very soon be at the very top of her profession.

Some of the competitions that Ami Shroff has won:

First Flair¹ competition (national) was in Delhi by Sandys Bartending School, in the year 2005 where she stood 3rd.

1st place Bacardi legacy 2007.

Stood 3rd in Skyy in 2010.

Won MTV Captain Shack in 2012.

Felicitated by a women's achievement award by Zindagi Live show - IBN7 in 2012.

Felicitated by Audi - 2016.

When asked how exactly she decided to take up her unusual profession, Ami tells "I never made a decision as such. It came my way, I thought bartending was fun and this exposed me to a different kind of interaction which I grew fond of and so stuck on to it. Flair fascinated me and that's what attracted me towards the profession. The opportunities followed well and I decided to keep going. My dad was always protective about both his daughters and there was concern for my safety. Plus he wasn't convinced about bartending being a career option for me. So I did not initially reveal that I tended the bar, but at some point they figured it out. Since I'd already been doing it and all was going well they accepted my work. Also think my parents found it very tough to make me listen. I was quite a stubborn child always, so making me change my mind was tough for them."

Ami comes from a family of teachers. Her mother is a retired professor in sociology and managed all the house matters as well as work. Ami says, "It was her awesome food that gave me an understanding about mixing in order to create taste and balance." Her father was a lawyer, teacher of law and an entrepreneur. "I remember seeing my dad on stage when I was very young. He was very good on the mike and would host their college

annual events etc. I realise more and more as time goes by, how much I have been inspired by my parents." Her sister Nikita is a teacher in French and English and is an intrepid globetrotter.

Ami says, "I made life tough for my parents and my sister too since I was very young. I got bad grades, I was almost always distracted in class, and my parents received unlimited complaints from school. I really hated the control imposed by our education system and even the vibe that society carried and I had my own unique way in responding to it. Although to be fair I must say that I did love school and my childhood.

"But the overprotected vibe I never liked. I could feel the always fearful, over cautious, controlling and disconcerted vibe of society. So I became a strange kind of a rebel. I loved all the sports. I was totally into karate. My first props I juggled / spun and used were called chaku and the stick (staff). That perhaps started my interest in sports and juggling.†I remember showing people how I could do the full split or any trick I could do without them asking and ended up being called show-off instead of Shroff."

Ami has reached the pinnacle of her profession without ever having taken any professional courses. Ami clarifies, "I didn't officially take a course. But my friend Delnaaz and I learnt from some excellent bartenders from the industry, casually on the job. Shawn D Souza was our first teacher and there were many others from the industry."

Ami tells us that there can be many challenges and rewards that differ from place, event and moment. But the challenge of the bar on a common level would be, not to have any wastage of resources and alcohol abuse by the guests and to educate them about the dangers of drinking and driving. The rewards could be in the form of being paid well. She says that the stage rewards you with applause that could give anyone a high.

The job entails a lot of travelling. Ami revels in going to different places but in order to see a place, sometimes if she has time she stays back a little longer and explores. She says, "I love going somewhere less concrete (non-city places) and places I haven't been before. I love Kerala and Goa." She has not bartended in the Himalayas but she loves it there especially. She says "I like Bangalore too."

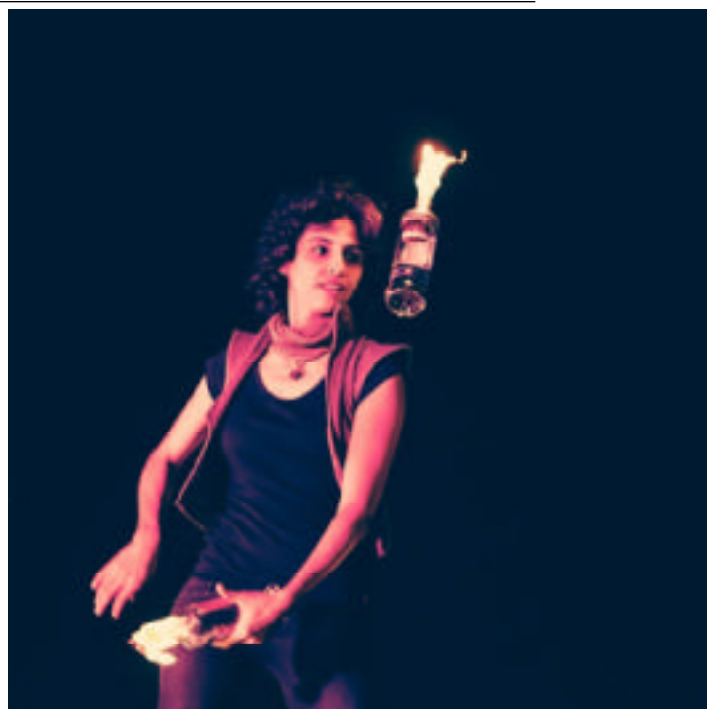
Some of the stunts are quite dangerous and asked how she copes with fear, Ami says, "I only perform the moves I'm very confident with and so it's not dangerous. Accidents could happen, but they have so far been a tiny slight burn or a small bump somewhere. While practicing new moves, one should be completely focused as that's when we could hurt ourselves. But generally, I like fear too. I need it. It makes me cautious and makes me alert. This could be in the form of slight stage fright or a fear of the unknown."

Every bartender has to motivate him or herself. Ami tells us, "I do sometimes get demotivated or lose interest. Flair and the stage make me stick around. But I receive inspiration from various sources. Mostly it is nature and some amazing people that I'm lucky to have as friends and family."

I ask, "what are you planning to do next and what are your future plans?" Ami says, "I never know my plans. I make too many and in the end I just go with the flow. So I make no plans. But there are a few dreams. I think I'm more a live in the moment kind of person." ■■■■

Note:

1. "Flair" is a bartending term to express finesse in the job with a visual treat.

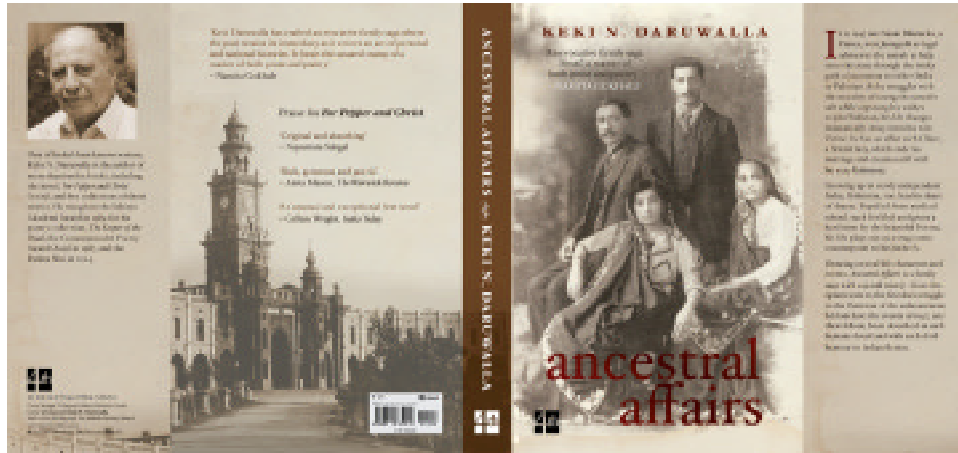


Beyniaz Edulji lives in Secunderabad, India. A Law Graduate from Mumbai, she also has Master's Degrees in Economics and Politics from Mumbai University. She has written many political commentaries, sports articles (especially on cricket) and features on various personalities, travel, food and Geospatial Technology for magazines and newspapers in India and abroad. Her interests include adventure sports, cooking and travelling.



Capturing Histories - the personal and the political

a review by freny manecksha



Ancestral Affairs
By Keki N Daruwalla
Publisher: HarperCollins India
Hardcover: 256 pages
Price: IRs 499
Available at Kitabkhana at Fountain, Mumbai

Also available on amazon.com.
Kindle \$19.86
Hardcover \$26.99

"History is pirouetting like a ballet dancer at the moment. If we have to do something, we must do it now. History is fluid this moment and fast moving. After a few months, it will get calcified again." So proclaims Suleyman Yelmaz, the Turkish Pasha, given to poetry and the *nasha* of religion. An anti-Ataturkist, he is just one among several others fishing in Junagadh's troubled waters during Sam Bharucha's tenure here. It is 1947 – a time when the dream world of Princes is set to go into "the maw of reality." Britain has announced it will leave the sub-continent and two nations are poised to come into being. This means convulsive changes – for the country, the princes, for commoners, for Bharucha's law firm and for Bharucha, himself, who will become emotionally entangled with Claire, wife of a British businessman or boxwallah in Junagadh. The romantic dalliance will end his marriage to Zarine.

And thus Keki Daruwalla plunges us with elegant prose and drama into the turbulent events of 1947 with his *Ancestral Affairs*. One would like to extend Daruwalla's simile to his own writing and illustrate how he balances both the personal and the political, national and global histories with a ballerina's consummate ease in his saga. The novel flows with considerable fluidity, moving back and forth from the lives of its two protagonists – Sam and his son Rohinton.

A noted poet and writer, Daruwalla, who was born in Lahore and spent four years of his childhood in Junagadh, has in an interview to a newspaper pointed out how reminiscences of things that had been said and anecdotal bits were subsequently fleshed out with huge research. He spent hours in the Nehru Memorial researching papers of 1947 and in his acknowledgment in the book, he thanks M N Buch for handing over the papers of his father who was commissioner of Rajkot in 1947. It is this painstaking attention to details that makes for a richly textured novel.

A number of characters – historical figures and fictitious – are brought in by Daruwalla. Many stay only for a few pages but they are remembered either, because of rich and pithy language employed in describing them or the way they embellish the story, like Yelmaz.

One interesting vignette is that of Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto of Larkhana, the new dewan to the nawab of Junagadh. Daruwalla with economy of effort sketches in Bhutto's political acumen even as he describes him as being "with the fungus moustache and diehard views". Someone who drips gentility and class even though the classic coat he wears is perhaps a little too warm for Junagadh!

Bharucha, whose brief as legal adviser has been to steer the nawab towards accession,

finds it is a tricky time as Sir Shah Nawaz wants the nawab to accede to Pakistan. When Bharucha refuses to acquiesce to Shah Nawaz's request for drafting such an accession declaration, because he believes in geographical contiguity and feels such a move would be politically and economically disastrous, he sees "disappointment and respect in his (Bhutto's) eyes." How much of the incident and events around Bhutto are based on historical veracity and how much is artistic liberty is difficult to gauge but it makes for an interesting and action-packed read as it is set in "a Junagadh claustrophobic with tension rumour, gossip – and infinitely worse, silence from people you know." The last is a reference to the maelstrom that is building up in Bharucha's own domestic life as he has confessed his love affair to Zarine. Zarine, herself, is busy making frequent trips to a godman and getting talismans. It is a fine example of the taut juxtaposing of the political with personal that Daruwalla excels in.

Rohinton, their son's life story, is also recounted in the first person and spans his early years in school in Murree before partition and then to Lucknow in post-independent India, where he studied medicine before being thrown out by the medical college. His story is marked more by personal drama rather than the political. But, the palpable presence and raucous cries of a chaotic new nation is very much evident in the background. The narrative has observations on socialism and Birla's Ambassador cars, class consciousness with the special stairs meant for the sweepers, the burgeoning *jhoparis* where the working class like Bina the cook are condemned to live, the *la waris* corpses the medical students get to dissect, the innumerable accidents where trains hit buses at unmanned level crossings and so on. It is also an India where women like Bina the cook and Firoza, the young Parsi woman who is studying with Rohinton, are marching defiantly ahead.

Rohinton's travails whether at the Lucknow college or later when he faces a lawsuit whilst working for a racy tabloid in Calcutta and his rather turbulent love life with Firoza are recounted with a slightly tragi-comic air. Sometimes it seems as if events and incidents

are occurring at galloping speed and Rohinton is hurtling towards certain doom but then suddenly, in a quieter vein, love and normality returns with Firoza coming back home.

For Sam there are more calamitous events before the denouement. It may seem that there are too many coincidences, events stage-managed a mite too tidily but Daruwalla employs a poetic metaphor – "the concentrics of a mandala" – to pull it off with aplomb and wit.

His story-telling and the flair of raconteuring are marked with humour – wry, ironic, sometimes satiric, occasionally rambunctious and wicked. Much of it will certainly appeal to his Parsi readers.

Also of particular interest to Parsis are the histories of the community, the migration from Gujarat's villages to Bombay or sometimes the retreat back to the hinterlands like Medhora. The entrepreneurial zeal that saw them venturing into ship building and opium trade. This chequered history is recounted in various strands of storytelling.

There is a fine account of Mazgaon in Bombay where Rohinton's grandmother and Mamai, his grand aunt live. The fisherwomen come in with their baskets of pomfret, boomla and mullets, municipal water is scarce and the house is lit up antique gas lights. It is Mamai who recounts the disjointed tales of Parsis from Bulsar, Surat, Bharuch and Bardoli who flocked to the seven islands that eventually became Bombay.

Mamai tells Rohinton how they left behind the tribal women and half-breeds ("dubras", we called them). Thus with exquisite humour Daruwalla injects topicality. As we all know the community today is deeply divided over conversion with sections of the orthodoxy insisting on pure genealogies. There's another sly dig over the controversy that is currently raging among Indian Parsis over whether cremation is to be allowed or the traditional form of disposal of the dead. So there is Mamai saying, "After a few years of living in this marsh, what do you think we Parsees asked for? A dakhmo, a Tower of Silence. We could have asked for parks, some flats as in

Rustam Baugh, but all we could think of was a place where the vultures could devour us in peace! ...”

There’s another long anecdote by a Kavarana kaka (uncle) on the Bharuchas and a particular ancestor Ardeshir whose fortunes were linked with the Wadias and who later participated in the trade with China – tea, porcelain and Chinese vases. Disaster strikes when his gomusta or second in- command begins dabbling in the opium trade.

There are also some more racy yarns of scandal and bitter feuding in the Billimoria clan (Zarine’s side of the family) and an account of the village of Medhar, eight miles from Billimoria, approachable only during low tide. Is it the bleak landscape, the stifling small world of Medhar, that sends Navroze into depression? Is that why he pens lurid and fanciful letters to the Jam-e-Jamshed?

Clearly dipping into a well of popular stories of eccentrics (not restricted to the Parsi community) and comic events of the decades, Daruwalla serves up some wickedly enjoyable yarns particularly the escapades of the Three Dimensional Swami.

The story-telling though is secondary. It is Daruwalla’s exquisite prose, his mastery control over the language and his ability to blend the colloquial – bits of Parsi Gujarati with Persian phrases or Hindustani – that makes it such an enjoyable book.



Freny Manecksha is an independent journalist from Mumbai interested in covering issues on development, human rights and culture.

An Uncensored Life – a biography written by Farida Master

reviewed by zehra bharucha

An Uncensored Life is the biography of Zerbano Gifford, author, human rights campaigner, tireless advocate of women’s rights and founder of the ASHA Foundation. Author Farida Master spent months in the company of Gifford, an experience that left her feeling, in her own words, “like an out-of-body experience that had me spinning into a heady vortex of raw emotions, inner thoughts and feelings. At times it was like being on a carousel at full speed where every pore and fibre of my being was possessed by the powerful dynamics of an uncensored life.”

Small wonder that the author felt as she did; Zerbano Gifford’s life is the stuff of legend! Born in Pune, India Zerbano is the eldest child of Bailey Irani, who was the founder President of the World Zoroastrian Organisation. He was one of the first to see that a worldwide body of Zoroastrians would unite the vast diaspora scattered across the globe and protect their precious heritage. Zerbano’s mother was Kitty Mazda who had studied under the eminent educationist Madame Montessori. Zerbano spent the first four years of her life in the care of her paternal grandmother while her parents made a new life for themselves in England. As soon as they had established themselves they were joined by their headstrong four year old who soon settled into the hotel they had established, her first query being why the building was not red like the one in the Monopoly game she had played in India!

While most children her age were playing and blissfully oblivious to much of the world around them, a seven year old Zerbano found herself moved by the plight of the children she had seen begging on the streets of Pune before her departure from India. The fact that she was now in England was dismissed by her as immaterial. Working on a plan, Zerbano managed to collect scraps of cloth and pins and soon managed to craft herself a whole collection of little flags. She then sold

these outside her family home, Heritage Hotel, to passers-by for a penny each. Soon she had raised £10 which she placed in an envelope and posted to the official residence of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India. She received a thank you letter from Nehru, which said, "If every girl in England was like you, there would be fewer poor children in Poona". It is fitting then, that Zerbanoo would one day go on to receive the Nehru Centenary Award for her work in championing the rights of women, children and minorities.

It is perhaps not surprising that Zerbanoo chose to enter politics as a young woman. She made political history in 1982 when she was elected in Harrow, Middlesex, as the first non-white woman councillor for the Liberal Party. Encouraged by this success, she went on to become the first Asian woman to stand for Parliament. These facts are well known. What is not so well known is the prejudice and racism she encountered along the way, including death threats to herself and her young family. Undaunted by racism and threats, she worked tirelessly to improve the lives of her constituents and indeed anyone she came across. Her experiences at the time served as a catalyst for the national press, politicians and the police to examine the issue of racial violence in Britain.

Even though Zerbanoo did not win a Parliamentary seat this was by no means an end to her political involvement. She was elected to the Federal Executive of the Liberal Party, the first non-white to be elected to a governing body of a major UK political party. She chaired the commission 'Looking into Ethnic Minority Involvement in British Life' and was a member of the advisory group on race relations to the then British Home Secretary, Jack Straw. She will always be regarded as a pioneer for the Asian community in national politics.

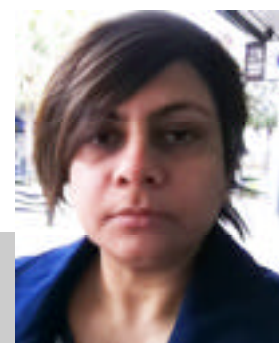
In addition to politics another cause that benefitted from Zerbanoo's immense energy was the plight of the homeless. In her own words: "I had spent the previous year on a postgraduate course qualifying in advertising and marketing, and then landed this fabulous job. One afternoon, I was asked to deliver a letter to a client's office at the Strand in central

London. Going up in the lift, I got off on the wrong floor but knocked on the right door. It opened up a new vista for me. It was the office of the newly formed national charity Shelter. I started a casual conversation with the lady at the reception and was so impressed by the work they did for the homeless that I immediately signed up as a volunteer." The young Zerbanoo organised volunteer groups all over London and was responsible for setting up one of the first Shelter charity shops near the Edgware Road Station.

Another significant achievement in a life positively littered with them is the foundation of the ASHA Foundation, a charity which encourages and supports philanthropy worldwide and works for interfaith and intercultural understanding. The core of the Foundation's work is the ASHA Centre in west Gloucestershire, England, which promotes peace and understanding amongst diverse groups especially the young. Its emphasis is on interfaith and intercultural understanding and young people from many parts of the world come together and gain a deeper understanding not only of themselves but what it is to be human.

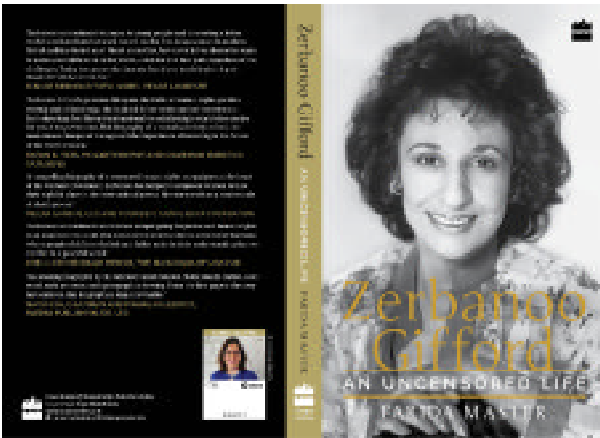
Zerbanoo has also been a prolific and well regarded writer on historical, social and political themes. In addition to her numerous publications she has written the influential *'Confessions to a Serial Womaniser: Secrets of the World's Inspirational Women'* – featuring interviews with 300 exceptional women from sixty countries. *Confessions to a Serial Womaniser* was conceived out of the NESTA fellowship (the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) that Zerbanoo was awarded. The book inspired a website and then an international mentoring project which is now being developed as a multi-media resource for schools and universities.

Zerbanoo's remarkable life and story illustrate the triumphs and challenges that women face as they navigate their way through life. Her remarkable energy and passion shine through and her ability to rise above adversity and setbacks should be an inspiration to all. In the words of Bishop Desmond Tutu, *"Zerbanoo's commitment to peace, to young people and to creating a better world is evident from her*



Originally from Karachi, Zehra Bharucha has lived in Sydney, Australia for the last 15 years. When not working as an editor in the legal publishing business she can usually be found reading or cooking elaborate banquet style feasts for family and friends.

track record. As the first Asian woman in modern British politics elected as a Liberal councillor, her vision led to alternative ways to make a real difference in the world – and she trod that path, regardless of the challenges. Today we can see that journey has borne much fruit and give thanks for all she stands for". ■■■■



Published by
HarperCollins India
Pages: 227
Paperback: available
on Amazon US\$21
Amazon.in &
bookshops in India
IRs399



Launch of her book Asian Presence in Europe at the offices of Anti Slavery International

Some of the images appearing in the book



Zerbanoo with her father Bailey outside their London hotel



Receiving the Nehru Centenary Award from HE Krishna Rasgotra



Campaigning for better nursery facilities



With the youth at ASHA

A Whirlwind Book Tour

by farida master

There are a few and far between times in your life when the stars and planets are in perfect alignment.

The launch of a labour of love 'An Uncensored Life –biography of Zerbano Gifford' was one such incredible moment in time. If I had to make a thank you speech, I would thank Zerbano's personal astrologers.

How else could you explain the biography getting the spotlight at the much acclaimed Times LitFest in Mumbai where literary gods walk the firmament at the Mehboob Studio; and where the much respected Justice Leila Seth, author and mother of internationally recognised Vikram Seth introduced our session?

Dinner parties at posh venues, rubbing shoulders with the likes of William Dalrymple, winner of several awards including the 'Sunday Times Young British Writer of the Year' award, and exchanging notes with Clifford Levy, assistant masthead editor of New York Times — did I mention how I wanted to bottle the top-of-the-world feeling forever.

Taking the whirlwind book tour to another dizzy high was the party hosted by the gracious Pheroza and Jamshyd Godrej to celebrate 'An Uncensored Life'. The movers and shakers of the art, music, media and corporate world made an effort to be there at the elegant soiree perched on the landscaped rooftop of Godrej Bhawan in Fort, Mumbai. Farrokh Kavarana, Director Tata Sons, Khushroo Suntook, Chairman National Centre for Performing Arts, Sam Balsara, chairman and managing director Madison World, Maneck Davar founder and chairman Spenta Multimedia, were amongst the many who raised a toast to the book.

Just when everyone thought that the shindig hosted by the first lady of the Parsi community was one of the most delightful book events in Mumbai, Chairman of Poonawalla group, Dr

Cyrus Poonawalla opened up his hearth and home to give the special guest list at the launch party in Pune, an extraordinary experience to remember. Known for his generosity of spirit, this is one time Dr Poonawalla who hadn't hosted a social gathering at his grand mansion ever since his wife Viloo passed away, opened up his doors to an exclusive guest list.

Most of the invitees were left open mouthed at the sheer grandeur of his home. The vaccine King of the world who hobnobs with the likes of Prince Charles, Bill Gates and Sharon Stone launched the book in the presence of the who's who of Pune city.

However, what was particularly heart warming was that Dr Poonawalla took special interest in planning an elaborate party menu himself and making all the party arrangements for the launch of the biography, which was quite humbling. His attention to the minutest detail spoke volumes of how he's built his empire. Apart from the much talked about parties in Mumbai and Pune, the impressive talk by the straight talking Zerbano Gifford at the Symbiosis International University had the Chancellor of the University, Dr S B Mujumdar keen to have a long term tie-up with the ASHA Centre.

Another interesting presentation for the Federation of Indian Industries and Commerce, women's chapter at the Maratha Chamber of Commerce had the likes of Meher Pudumjee, Chairperson Thermax and other high profile women from the corporate world buying autographed copies of the biography published by HarperCollins India.

A nonstop line-up of talks that included addressing the Lila fellows, the academically brilliant, under privileged girls of India whose studies are sponsored by the former CEO of Alfa Laval, Lila Poonawalla – brought back fond memories. Some of the Lila fellows had earlier visited the ASHA Centre in the Forest

of Dean, UK, were thrilled to see Zerbanoo who had impacted their lives.

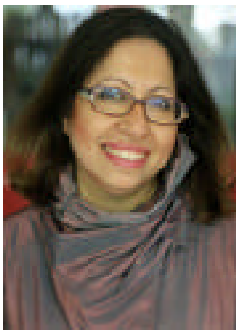
The icing on the dream-like India book tour was an evening to cherish hosted by Jam-e-Jamshed at the heritage Ripon Club, Mumbai. Jame editor, Shernaaz Engineer did a sterling job as she hosted a public event that involved a book reading followed by a talk and a question / answer session for the readers. Theatre personality Mahabanoo Kotwal, as well as a group of prominent Parsis from UK holidaying in India at the time, like Dorab Mistry OBE, Dr Roshan and Rusi Dalal, Nozer and Zarine Dastoor, Nergis Jambuserwala turned up for the event making it a memorable one.

Just as the exhilarating but exhausting India trip rolled to a happy end, the book tour in New Zealand took off to a flying start. It began with a standing ovation at the 6th World Zoroastrian Congress held for the first time in New Zealand. Zerbanoo in her inimitable style had the youth listening to her talk with rapt attention. Zoroastrian youth from all over the world were gifted a copy each of the biography in their welcome kit. Once Zerbanoo started talking straight from the heart, and asked the torch bearers to write down what they would like to be remembered by, the young ones refused to leave her side.

There were questions that needed to be answered. Guidance to be given. And lifelong relationships to be nurtured.

As the curtains went down on the Congress, other opportunities to address the Kiwis at the Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland Library, Botany Library and the Swaminarayan Temple arose.

As I mentioned in the beginning, it was one of those rare times when all the stars were aligned enough to reach out to such a vast audience in a short time! Talk about living the pages of the biography – an uncensored life, without any boundaries. ■■■■



Farida Master has been the editor of several publications in India which include 'Stardust', 'Society Fashion', 'Citadel', which are magazines, and the 8-page lifestyle supplement of 'Pune Times Of India'. She has also authored, 'The Making Of A Legend', a biography of Dr K B Grant. In Auckland, Farida has been the Features Editor of 'The Auckland' a magazine. Currently, News Editor 'Botany and Ormiston Times', a community newspaper in Auckland.



With two times winner of Pulitzer prize, and assistant masthead editor at New York Times, Clifford Levy and his wife (left) at the Times Lifest after party hosted at Taj Lands End.



Sam Balsara, chairman and managing director Madison World and his wife Homai with Phero Godrej and Zerbanoo at Godrej Bhawan.



Dr Cyrus Poonawalla launching the book at his palatial home in Pune

Dolly Dastoor is among Fifty Indo-Canadians Honoured

Dolly Dastoor, editor-in-chief of FEZANA Journal, past president of FEZANA, a mover and shaker of the community, has been honoured by "The A-List" as one of the 50 prominent Indo-Canadians on 4 February, 2016, at a glittering function in Ottawa.

And no wonder! Her achievements and involvement both for the community and with a myriad of establishments, is impressive. Dolly chairs the Academic Scholarship committee of FEZANA, Education committee of McGill University Research Centre in Aging, and Zonta International Foundation Development. She is the Assistant Professor, Psychiatry, McGill University and the Consultant, Clinical Research Trials in Dementia at the Douglas University Institute in Mental Health. Till she retired in 2013, Dolly was the Clinical Administrative Director of the Programme in Dementia with Psychiatric Comorbidity at Douglas University Institute for Mental Health.

The A-List features Canadians of Indian origin who through their various fields and community service have helped in promoting relations between Canada and India. It was created to honour Indo-Canadians who continue to inspire others in the diaspora.

According to The A-List between 1946 and 1955 there were a total of 1,100 Indians, then referred to as persons of East Indian origin in Canada. Today there are more than one million Indo-Canadians in Canada. ■■■



Image courtesy :
Parsi Khabar

An Award for Dinshaw Tamboly

Dinshaw Tamboly, the man who leads the World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust team in India, has improved the lives of countless Zoroastrians who lived in poverty in Gujarat but today are living a better life. He has also been instrumental in building / running the Senior Citizens Centre at Navsari, a sanatorium at Sanjan; providing medical and educational financial aid to the elderly, infirmed and physically challenged – the list is endless.

The Trust assists the Athornan Mandal Mumbai, by giving financial support to young fulltime mobeds, and recently Dinshaw succeeded in opening the Prayer Hall for any Zoroastrian wishing to be cremated.

A few years ago Dinshaw gave his time by being a Trustee of the BPP for a period of time, stepping down before his term ended, enabling him to give full attention to all the multifarious charities he is connected with.

He has received various awards for his service not only in India but abroad as well and in 2013 the United Nation Committee for Eradication of Global Poverty appointed Dinshaw for a three-year period as their honorary advisor.

On 7th November 2015, the committee of the Nowroze Baug Play Centre bestowed Dinshaw with the "Award of 'ANMOL RATAN' of the Zoroastrian community in appreciation of his yeoman services as 'Karmayogi' of WZOT". ■■■



L to R: Nariman Mehta, President Emeritus of Nowroze Baug Play Centre, Dinshaw & Bachi Tamboly

Delhi Parsis at the turn of the 19th century

by shernaz italia

The author wishes to acknowledge the research and writing of Rusi Sorabji.

"Avoji, aavo, aavo! Welcome to Delhi! Let me show you my beautiful city." The booming voice of Nowrosji Kapadia could be heard across the length and breadth of the platform. It was Nowrosji's favourite pastime: a walk to the Old Delhi railway station to greet the Frontier Mail as it chugged into Delhi from Mumbai to Peshawar. With this refrain, an eager Nowrosji would cajole Parsi visitors off the train and take them home for a meal and often persuade some to stay overnight or for a few days. He would use this opportunity to tell them about the advantages of shifting to Delhi. Though his wife Jerbai would occasionally object to unknown visitors, she was always overruled. This was the beginning of the community of Parsis in Delhi.

Nowrosji Kapadia was one of the oldest Parsi residents of Delhi. He was born in Bharuch, a small town in Gujarat. He opted out of his family's failing cloth business and got a job as an agent with the European firm Ralli Brothers. They sent him to Delhi in 1880. Why did he not want to return to Bharuch, or Bombay, where our community still resides in large numbers? Was it business sense, apt foresight of Delhi's growing importance, or was he just different? A few other Parsi families moved northwards to Delhi and beyond in the 1870s–80s. My mother's grandfather, Nusserwanji Mehta, moved here at that time. Rusi Sorabji, has amazing memories of the Delhi of his youth. Whatever the reasons for shifting, the Parsis who came to Delhi developed a liking for the city and decided to settle here.

Memory is a strange thing. You think it is yours and then you realise it is not; it is actually dependent on other people. Writing about Parsis in the Delhi of old is not easy. There are memories of my grandparents and parents — a collective memory of generations past and people long gone, yet here in spirit.

My earliest memory of trains and stations is associated with the same Frontier Mail that Nowrosji accosted years ago. It brought young, scared Parsis from their cocoon in familiar Parsi *baugs* (residential "Parsi only" colonies) of Bombay and Gujarat to the unfamiliar city of Delhi. My grandparents' home, which became my parents' home after they passed on, was an open house for family, friends and travellers passing through. It was full of hustle-bustle, and much food and laughter. I have never known my home — K-45 Connaught Place, or CP, as it is called — to be empty and it has never been locked. At any given time there were at least 10–15 people living with us. Generosity comes naturally to Parsis, as it did to my family — sometimes at a cost to themselves. My maternal grandparents and mother moved into the flat in 1936 while it was still being built. There was no electricity and water was hauled up three flights of stairs by a *bhishti* (water carrier).

I have since seen CP through its many avatars. Built like a central plaza, its Georgian architecture is modelled after the Royal Crescent in Bath, England. Its two concentric circles are lined with broad white colonnades and there's a garden in the centre. As a young child, when I looked down our road, the domes and minarets of Jama Masjid were visible and even the walled city; since old Delhi is due north, thankfully I can still see the domes and the minarets. From our rooftop, before the hideous high-rises came up, we had a clear view of the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Diagonally opposite us is Odeon Cinema. In 1964 I saw Raj Kapoor arrive at the theatre from our balcony before I went there to watch *Sangam*—my first movie ever.

Across the Outer Circle of CP is Minto Bridge, the last signal before New Delhi railway station. The day a lodger was expected, my grandfather and I would sit on the balcony.

The minute we heard the whistle of the Frontier Mail — one long toot as it approached Minto Bridge, two short ones as it crossed the bridge and another long one while it crawled towards the platform — we would rush to the waiting *tonga* (a horse-drawn carriage) and head to the station.

Early Days :

During the early years of the twentieth century, Delhi was still confined within the walls of Shahjahanabad, which included Jama Masjid, Chandni Chowk and Kashmere Gate. Most Parsis worked at offices and shops in Chandni Chowk. The Ghanta Ghar, with the statue of Queen Victoria keeping an eye on the clock, was a central meeting point. People travelled by electric trams that ran on either side of the clock tower with no schedule whatsoever! People got around Delhi on *tongas*, bicycles, bullock and camel carts, on horseback or afoot. One could cycle through the entire city in less than an hour. Parsi men were intrepid cyclists, pedalling furiously with *solar topis* on their heads and crisp white trousers neatly clipped above their ankles to protect them from getting caught in the bicycle chain.

The best non-vegetarian food was to be had near the Jama Masjid; *poori saag* and parathas in Chandni Chowk; and *mithai* around Ghanta Ghar. There were hardly any restaurants until the 1930s. For the Parsis, however, the most important shops were the two famous liquor stores in Kashmere Gate: Carlton and Spencer & Co — both rivals, each claiming their beer was more chilled. A bottle of good Scotch cost 5 rupees, and a bottle of Stout or Solan two and a half *annas*. At that time, the rupee had 16 *annas*; an *anna* was equal to 4 *paise* or 12 *pies*; and one *pie* was equal to 12 *cowries* (monetary seashells). Rusi told us that salaries were delivered on the heads of coolies in basket loads of *cowries*!

When Delhi was declared the new capital in 1911, Kashmere Gate assumed magnified importance; it was the commercial and social hub. In fact, Kashmere Gate and Alipore Road came to be known as the “West-End” of Delhi because the British officials resided nearby in Civil Lines. By the early 20s, Nowrosji’s family and many other Parsis moved to

sprawling bungalows in Chabigunj and spacious flats on Nicholson Road in Kashmere Gate. It retained this aura until the construction of CP. In some ways, the construction of New Delhi — the city planned by Edward Lutyens and Herbert Baker around Raisina Hill with its imperial sand-stone domed monuments, wide axial roads and landscaped roundabouts — coincided with the establishment of the Parsi community; they grew together. The Delhi Parsis were for some reason reluctant to buy property. Maybe somewhere at the back of their minds they felt their stay was transitory. So they invested in stocks and shares instead.

My mother and almost all Parsis born in Delhi from 1905 onwards were born at the Victoria Zangana Hospital near Jama Masjid (now called Kasturba Gandhi Hospital). If they were not sent off to boarding schools, Parsi boys and girls went to Queen Mary’s School. In 1924, Presentation Convent started in Delhi. At least three generations of Parsis studied there. Later, three new educational institutions were built: the all-girls Convent of Jesus & Mary (CJM), the all-boys St Columba’s School and the co-ed Modern School.

Time was also measured differently then, and true to Parsi eccentricity, the Parsis of Delhi studiously stuck to Wellington Time, introduced by Lord Wellington when he was the viceroy. Whereas Bombay Parsis followed Bombay Time, and the rest of India followed Indian Standard Time. I honestly cannot imagine how it all worked with the limited forms of communication.

In 1930, Connaught Place had just one block under construction; it touched Queensway, now called Janpath. Construction of the New Delhi railway station also began around this time. The Delhi Parsis made their mark professionally and in business. For them, a job in the Indian Railways was even better than getting into the civil services. The Delhi power station, where my grandfather worked, was the largest employer of Parsis, after which came the Railways, followed by the Singer Sewing Machine Company and the textile mills. Dr S P Shroff was “the” ophthalmologist. The fourth generation of the family still

practices in Delhi and their old home in Daryaganj is now a charitable hospital. Dinabai Jal Irani, owner of Empress Aerated Water Factory, was the first Parsi lady entrepreneur in Delhi. Munchersha Polishwalla was the manager of Elphinston Cinema. Devitreji owned the Apollo Hotel — the first Parsi hotel in Delhi. Faramroze Patel — fondly called *Chasmawalla* Patel — had a shop in Chandni Chowk, where most of the community went for their prescription eyeglasses.

However much they identified with the British, the Delhi Parsis were far more in tune with the cultural traits of northern India than the Bombay Parsis. Most of them conversed in fluent Punjabi, Gujarati and Hindustani, a mix of Urdu and Hindi that was spoken in Delhi. Whenever women of my mother's generation travelled to Bombay, they were happiest when their taxi driver was a *sardar* or a *bhaiya*; they spoke the same language and felt safe.

Kashmere Gate to Connaught Place :

The Parsis were given land outside the crowded Walled City just beyond Delhi Gate around 1890. It was a barren wilderness with hyenas and wolves loitering in the distant monuments. The first Parsi cemetery was made here and the community congregated for prayer meetings just beyond the graves. Neem and peepul trees provided natural shade and the sound of rustling leaves accompanied the prayers. Rusi remembers seeing prisoners in the adjacent Delhi jail chained to tub-shaped iron trolleys full of bricks and mortar— construction material for the new city.

There were many places where the Parsis met for picnics and social occasions. In my childhood days, Okhla — a barrage built in 1874 as the starting point of the Agra Canal — was a favourite picnic site. The river was sparkling clean; the men and women swam while we children floated paper boats on the water. Occasionally, they met at the steps of the Qudsia Ghat, just outside Kashmere Gate behind the garden built by Qudsia Begum, the dowager queen. Qudsia Garden was partly destroyed during the 1857 First War of Independence. Later, what was left of it became the cricket grounds and tennis courts

for St Stephen's College and Hindu College. More than half of this green lung was again destroyed when the Inter State Bus Terminus was built in the late 60s.

Many religious ceremonies — navjots and weddings — were performed at Hormuzji Sethna's house at 19 Alipore Road until we were given additional land at Delhi Gate in 1947. Rudyard Kipling lived in the adjoining house for some time and possibly would have eaten there on at least one occasion. During festive gatherings, the women went to town with the food; outside catering was unheard of. The poorer members of the community never knew who had paid for what. This tradition continued in the northern cities of Lucknow, Kanpur and Allahabad well into the 70s. Sadly, that kind of life has almost gone forever.

Food preparations began two days in advance. *Dar ni pori* (rich pastry stuffed with sweetened lentils) and *malido* (*halwa*) were carried in big *vatus* (pots) and served with *puris*. Anyone who has made *malido* can vouch for the fact that you need strong biceps; it is an exhausting exercise. The first time I made it under my grandmother's supervision was also the last. I could hardly move my arms for the next two days! Since then, I gained a healthy respect for my dainty grandmother.

The menu was extensive. Breakfast would start with either *sev* — brown vermicelli cooked in milk and served with fresh cream — or *ravo*, semolina pudding. *Mithu dahi* or sweetened curd made with full cream milk was an absolute must. This was followed by *bafella eeda*, hard-boiled eggs, and *kheemo kaleji*, mutton mince with liver. For lunch, there was almost always *mori dal chawal* and *macchi no patio* — white boiled rice with yellow dal offset by a tart and tangy fish curry.

Teatime was special at our home. My grandmother made it a point to dress for tea; I was made to do the same. Once we were ready, out came the treats: Parsi biscuits — *batasa*, *nankhatai* and flaky *khari*; *patrel*, rolled, steamed *arbi* leaves stuffed with *besan masala*; *kumas*, rich Parsi cake; and my favourite, *bhakra*, sweet deep fried doughnuts. That tradition has stayed with me.

I certainly don't dress up, but I still need a snack with at least three cups of tea! When movies came to town in the early 1920s, Parsis owned most theatres and distribution companies. Renting a theatre for a marriage ceremony was common. When the theatres in CP — Regal, Rivoli, and Odeon — first opened, they mainly held concerts, plays and ballet performances. Each had its own distinctive architecture. In 1933, Minerva Movietone, founded by Keki and Sohrab Modi, opened the Plaza Cinema. The Modi brothers offered the cinema hall free of charge to the Anjuman (our association) twice a year to celebrate Jameshedji Navroz (Parsi New Year) and Khordad Sal, the Prophet Zoroaster's birthday. Another popular Saturday night ritual was a visit to the Singer Sewing Machine bandstand in CP to hear the tommies (British soldiers) play popular tunes while the *bawas* ate homemade snacks: *channa jor garam*, and fresh cream rolls from the famous Wenger's bakery in A block. The evening always ended with the band playing "Rule Britannia", followed by "God Save the King".

Post-Independence Life :

On 9 September 1947, the Khordad Sal celebration was interrupted suddenly and everyone was asked to leave as Delhi was under a curfew order. Hindu-Muslim riots erupted that day. Next morning there was a shootout while Rusi and some children were waiting for the school bus. The terrified children ran home, only to be locked inside for three horrific weeks with the stench of death outside. Provisions ran out and communication was almost non-existent. My mother often spoke of those days. She was a volunteer at Lady Harding Hospital, helping traumatised families at the railway station. It was her responsibility to get them to the hospital or to relief camps, where they were housed in large numbers. Parsis did what they could to house people whom they knew from Pakistan. Those were terrible days for all. It was a time of transition. As the country transformed and came into its own, so did the fabric of Delhi. The population in the city changed, giving it a Punjabi character very different from the earlier mix of Baniyas, Rajputs and Muslims. New colonies were created to accommodate the influx of refugees.


The struggle to eke out a livelihood brought out a spirit of enterprise. Street markets started selling goods at throw-away prices. The now legendary *tandoori chicken* was born in Delhi when a refugee from Pakistan, Kundan Lal Gu-jral, put a spiced chicken in the *tandoori* oven, which until then was only used for making *rotis*; it became a Delhi speciality.

Republic Day was a big event on our calendar. When the parade went past our home, the veranda and rooftop turned into a theatre balcony. The parade was an interactive event with us cheering from the balcony and each bandmaster throwing up the baton; in acknowledgement we sang and danced. Security threats were unheard of. The route changed and became shorter around ten years ago, bypassing Connaught Place; since then, 26 January has lost its meaning for me. I still miss those times. Nowadays, watching the parade on TV is far too lonely.

The changing seasons were always celebrated in Delhi — something a Bombay Parsi would not understand. Summer brought with it days of melons, peaches, plums and *phalsa* juice as well as *Safeda*, *Dussehri* and *Langda* mangoes. With the rains came *jamuns* and *bhuttas*; in winter the roasted sweet potato, *bhakras*, peanuts and dry fruits, and my grandmother's and mother's unforgettable *gorpapri* and gooseberry jam. Spring and Navroz was a time for *dar ni pori* and spring-cleaning.

With the passage of time, as Delhi grew, the community dispersed, living further and further away. Until the late 70s, many still met weekly to play badminton, table tennis or billiards. Slowly, the meetings dwindled down to festivals or ceremonies. Now, more than half the Parsi population lives in Gurgaon and Noida. Though the population is still transient, many have bought homes and put down roots.

I often ask myself: are we different from the Parsis of Mumbai and Gujarat? I think we are probably more liberal in our outlook. We are comfortable speaking Gujarati and Hindustani. We mingle with greater ease and many of our non-Parsi friends are like family.

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Ministry of Minority Affairs
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



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Human Heritage

present

THE EVERLASTING FLAME

International Programme



Schedule of Events: The Everlasting Flame Programme, New Delhi 19th MARCH to 29th MAY 2016

Date	Event	Venue	Time
19 th March	Inauguration of the International Everlasting Flame Programme 2016 ▲	Vigyan Bhawan	11.30 am – 12.30 pm
19 th March	Inauguration of the Exhibition <i>Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination</i> ●	National Museum	4.00 pm
20 th March	Inauguration of the Exhibition <i>Painted Encounters: Parsi Traders and the Community</i> and <i>No Parsi is an Island</i> ●	National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA)	4.00 pm
21 st March	Inauguration of the Exhibition <i>Threads of Continuity: Zoroastrian Life and Culture</i> ● Felicitation of Platinum Sponsor – Dr. Cyrus Poonawalla Dance Performance by Astad Deboo and Troupe	Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) 1 C.V. Mess, Janpath	6.30 pm – 7.15 pm
21 st March	<i>Jamshed-i-Navroze Feast</i> <i>Parsi Lagan-nu-Bhonu</i> ■	IGNCA Lawns	Seating at: 7.30 pm 8.30 pm, 9.30 pm & 10.30 pm
22 nd March	Conference: <i>Zoroastrianism in the New Millennium (ZITNM) 2016</i> ■	National Museum	10.00 am – 4.00 pm
22 nd March	Launch of the <i>Parzor Film Festival</i> with the Screening of <i>Alexander's Lost World</i> (45 minutes) Followed by a Session with the Director, David Adams ●	National Museum	4.00 pm – 6.00 pm
23 rd March	ZITNM 2016 Day 2 ■ ●	National Museum	9.30 am – 4.00 pm
26 th March	Puppet Theatre Performance by Dadi Pudumjee & The Ishara Puppet Theatre Trust ● <i>Spenta – Magical Manifestations</i> Fashion Show by Ashdeen Lilaowala & Wendell Rodricks	IGNCA	7.00 pm – 9.00 pm
29 th March to 4 th April	<i>Ferdowsi's Shahnameh</i> , an exhibition curated by Silloo Mehta ●	IGNCA	
1 st April	Film Festival – Screening of <i>Ferrari Ki Sawari</i> Interaction with Boman Irani (TBC) ●	C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, IIC	6.30 pm onwards
2 nd April	Iranian Choir with traditional instruments from Tehran ●	Fountain Lawns	5.30 pm onwards
3 rd April onwards	Stained Glass Workshop by Katayun Saklat ■	IGNCA	TBC
8 th April	Parzor Film Festival Screening: Talk by Justice Rohinton F. Nariman on Outlines of <i>Persian History – The Achaemenian and Sassanian Empires</i> ●	Multi-Purpose Hall, IIC	6.00 pm onwards
14 th & 15 th April	Kusti Weaving, Toran Making Demonstrations Parsi Embroidery Workshops ●	IGNCA	10.30 am – 4.00 pm

Programme subject to change

▲ Entry by Invitation Only

■ Visit unescoparzor.com for updates & registration details

● Open Entry

THE EVERLASTING FLAME INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME

National Museum | National Gallery of Modern Art | Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts; New Delhi

The EF-International Programme, sponsored by the Ministry of Minority Affairs under their Scheme *Hamari Dharohar*, commemorates and celebrates the contribution of Zoroastrians and Parsis to world culture, philosophy and art.

A set of three Exhibitions at National Museum, National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) that will show for 2 months (19th March to 29th May 2016), narrate the story of the beginning of Zoroastrian culture, its spread across the world and the continuity of traditions among communities through historic, artistic and civilizational objects from India, UK, Iran, Russia, Uzbekistan and other institutional and private donors.

The Exhibitions will be accompanied by a celebration of Navroze (the Zoroastrian New Year), an international conference on *Zoroastrianism in the New Millennium*, cultural and educational programmes, and publications.

All Parzor cultural events sponsored by Dr. Cyrus Poonawalla in memory of his late wife Mrs. Viloo Poonawalla

Schedule of Events: The Everlasting Flame Programme, New Delhi

19th MARCH to 29th MAY 2016

Date	Event		Venue	Time
14 th to 20 th April	Udvada – A Photographic Exhibition by Shantanu Das	●	IIC Annexe: Lecture Room II & Art Gallery	11.00 am – 7.00 pm
15 th April	Parzor Film Festival Screening: Pir-e-Chak Chak (43 minutes) from Parzor Archives Glimpes from the Bahrot Caves (7 minutes) Interactive Talk by Dr. Homi Dhalla on Zoroastrianism & Ecology	●	Multi-Purpose Hall, IIC	6.00 pm onwards
16 th April	Parzor Film Festival Screening and Interactive Talk on Zoroastrian Motifs in Parsi Embroidery by Dr. Shernaz Cama and Ashdeen Lilaowala	●	IGNCA	6.00 pm onwards
Mid-April	Iron Gall Ink Conservation Workshop with Experts from The British Library	■	National Museum	TBC
23 rd April	Panel Discussion with the curators of the 3 exhibitions Moderated by Prof. Rustom Bharucha, Jawaharlal Nehru University	●	Multi-Purpose Hall, IIC	6.00 pm onwards
26 th April	Talk by Lord Karan Billimoria, Baron Bilimoria of Chelsea, CBE, DL (TBC)	●	Multi-Purpose Hall, IIC	6.00 pm onwards
28 th April	Parzor Film Festival Screening: Cafe Irani Chai (90 minutes), directed by Dr. Mansoor Showghi Yezdi Speaker: Anahita Dhondy, Chef, Sodabottleopenerwala Restaurant	●	Multi-Purpose Hall, IIC	6.00 pm onwards
29 th April to 8 th May	My Family and Other Parsis Photographic Exhibition by Sooni Taraporevala	●	IIC New Art Gallery, Kamla Devi Complex	11.00 am – 7.00 pm
30 th April	Behram-ni-Sasu (Behram's Mother in Law): Gujarati Parsi Natak by Yazdi Karanjia troupe of Surat	✱	India Habitat Centre	6.00 pm onwards
6 th May	The Zoroastrian Diaspora Speaker: Prof. Jesse Palsetia, Associate Professor, University of Guelph	●	IGNCA	11.00 am
6 th May	Lec-Dem on the Teke Ceremony and Puppets from Azerbaijan by Poupak Azimpour Tabrizi, Scholar in Iranian Puppetry and Rituals	●	Multi-Purpose Hall, IIC	6.00 pm onwards
13 th May	The Art Collections at TIFR Talk by Dr. Oindrila Raychaudhuri, Chief Archivist, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Mumbai	●	Multi-Purpose Hall, IIC	6.00 pm onwards
20 th May	Parzor Film Festival Screening and Interactive Talk on Homi Bhabha by Professor Spenta Wadia, International Centre for Theoretical Sciences, TIFR	●	Multi-Purpose Hall, IIC	5.00 pm onwards
27 th May	Valedictory Address by Amitav Ghosh	●	Multi-Purpose Hall, IIC	6.00 pm onwards



✱ Tickets will be available for sale at the IHC Desk

Please Note: Parsi Food Stalls everyday and *Muskil-e-Asan* Participative Prayer Rituals every Friday at IGNCA

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India is a country of unity in diversity; Parsis are a microcosm of its multi-cultural ethos.

My mother passed away three years ago. During her last few years, she refused to visit relatives in Bombay or Hyderabad because she disliked the thought of being put in the Towers of Silence if she died there. She wanted to be cremated. I followed her wishes and all the prayers were said as per the Parsi faith.

Life goes on . . . there are longer silences where voices used to be; gone are the clip-clop of the horses' hooves, the *ektara* sound of the cotton *dhunaiwalla*, the call of the *kabariwalla* and the whistle of the trains; but our doors are still open. There is always a spare bed and food on the table. I can never replace my grandparents and parents, but I am doing my best to see that the energy and essence of the Parsis in Delhi still remain.



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<http://indianquarterly.com/navroz-in-new-delhi/>



My mother and grandparents



My parents, 1952



Parsi girls in Kashmere Gate House



Perfect poise



Attire at the turn of the 19C

“... I lament to Thee.

Take notice of it, Lord, offering the support which a friend should grant to a friend. Let me see the power of good thinking allied with truth!”

Yasna 46.2

Insler translation



The World Zoroastrian Organisation