



# JOURNAL

Mah Mehr-Avan-Adar 1377 (Fasli)

Mah Ardebehest-Khordad-Tir 1378 AY (Shenshai)

Mah Khordad-Tir-Amardad 1378 AY (Kadmi)

## “Apru” Karachi

**KATRAK BANDSTAND, CLIFTON**  
PHOTO BY KHUDABUX ABRO



### Also Inside:



2008 FEZANA AGM  
in Westminster, CA



NextGenNow 2008  
Conference



10th Anniversary  
Celebrations in Houston



A Tribute to  
Gen. Sam Manekshaw



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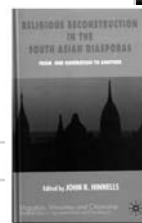
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## A word from the Editor

### Dolly Dastoor



August 31st was a banner day for FEZANA. On this day FEZANA achieved maturity and established its roots firmly in the soil of the city and the state where it was born and nurtured, Chicago, Illinois . The first office of the Federation was inaugurated, in less than 25 years of the establishment of FEZANA .

In contrast the Bombay Parsi Panchayat which was established in 1681 had a long and checkered history of finding a permanent office. Though there are no written records, Mehli Colah, CEO, BPP mentions that "in 1700's Trustees used to meet on the lands where our present Doongerwadi is situated. It is also said that BPP office was in Wadiaji Atash Behram. But I could find no written records of the same in any of my archives". In 1733 the office was situated in the Maneckji Seth Agiary located in the Fort but was forced to move out because of dispute between the Panchayat and the Seth family, ("Bombay Place Names and Street Names" by Samuel T. Sheppard 1917 on p.119) It was only in 1849, nearly 200 years after its establishment that the Panchayat found its home at the present premises at 209., Dr. D N Road,

The history of FEZANA and the history of the Zarathushtis in Chicago has been interlinked. Chicago has been a bedrock for FEZANA and all around N America we think of Chicago, as being a parent city that produces visionary institutions which helps us grow and progress, institutions like FEZANA, World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce,(WZCC) the Zarathushti presence and participation in the World Parliament of Religions, the first Dare Mehr built from ground up through sweat and toil of the community. Chicago, is the home of the father of ALL visionaries Rohinton Rivetna, ably supported by Roshan Rivetna his wife, his daughter Zenobia and sons Jamshed and Cyrus together with their families. And as Adurbad I Maraspandan said in the 4th Century CE "for as long as a man's father and mother live, he is like a lion in the jungle that has no fear of anyone at all". And we are roaring in the jungle and achieving heights and providing a role model to other Zarathushti communities in the diaspora because of you Chicago.

On August 31st we also gave tribute to each FEZANA president who has taken the Federation a step higher on the ladder to establish the identity of the North American Zarathushti. Rivetna sowed the seed and nurtured the Federation from 1987 to 1994,

Dastoor from 1994 -1998 gave the Federation the first 10 year Strategic Plan laying the foundation for planned directional growth, and brought the World Congress to the North American shores, Patel Framroze presided over the Federation from 1998-2002 during the turbulent times of the 7th World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston, and appointed the "World Body Working Group". Mehta, 2002-2006 saw the demise of the open-minded IZO/ WZOI/ WZOF world body and the creation and consolidation of Multitude of Funds to help Zarathushtis for education, religious preservation and research, medical emergencies, and general welfare. Establishing the office at 8615 Meadowbrook Drive is the step President Kevala, 2006-2008, helped us to take in strengthening our North American identity. And we thank him for this vision and perseverance to make that vision a reality. Patel Bomi 2008- will now lead us to spread our roots further and deeper.

However we must not lose sight that this Federation has been built on the hard work and sweat of many many volunteers who believed in a dream of building a Zarathushti community without borders across this continent. And we must continue to harness that volunteer human spirit resource to continue building our community. A "brick and mortar office" is a defining point in our collective history on this continent but it is not a substitute for that resource. It will however enhance and strengthen that priceless resource. We must not let the office define the direction for the volunteers but the volunteers must define the office.

My hope and prayer is that from this single room FEZANA office will grow branches in each of our member associations to support them and help them grow. Atha jamyat yatha afrinami

# A Message from FEZANA President

I am truly honored by the trust you have placed in me by electing me as the sixth President of FEZANA. I appreciate the support and the overwhelming good wishes that I have received from you and from the world Zarathushti leaders. Your support and good wishes enhance my strength to serve as the President and I will do my best to live up to your expectations.

As president of FEZANA from 2005 to 2007, Dr. Rustom Kevala has rendered selfless service to the FEZANA cause and I take this opportunity to thank him for his leadership and guidance.

I congratulate the President and members of ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN (ZAOM) for joining FEZANA and becoming the 27th Member Association.

As this is my first message as President, I would like to briefly present to you my vision/mission as to what I would like FEZANA to be doing in the next few years, I will mention the three most important targets that we shall be aiming at:

- Build a Unified North American Zarathushti Community
- Empower the Youth – “Our Youth is our Future”
- Revisit the Strategic Plan – Goals and Achievements

To build a unified community, it is necessary for member associations to voice their opinions, thoughts or concerns to FEZANA Executive so that we can work collectively on mutually supportive objectives. Your President and the Executive will always listen, understand, accommodate and address the needs and issues of every member.

For now, I am requesting all member associations, and corresponding members to contribute at least one thought or opinion that they would like to see as part of the FEZANA agenda.

I have appointed committee Chairs and Co-chairs with a mix of Zarathustis from all over North America. I am confident all committees are chaired by experienced individuals from different walks of life. Be assured that all committees will be working independently, with least interference from the Executive. At the same time all Chairs will be responsible for performing as per their TOR (Terms of Reference). It is expected that all chairs will provide (every 3-4 months) regular feedback to the Executive and the community of their activities and progress.

In this age of internet, it has become crucial and easier for worldwide federations to communicate and join forces to become a united community.

To maintain contact and a harmonious relationship with all communities, an adhoc committee for External Affairs has been formed. This committee will work with the FEZANA Executive and other global Zarathushti organizations to spread greater awareness about our North American community by participating and contributing towards community building issues.

FEZANA has been working with NAMC and WZCC since their inception. I look forward to continue working closely with WZO, ZTFE, FPZAI NAMC, WZCC and other federations.

I strongly believe that our youth hold the key to our future. Knowing this, it is imperative that we take action to make sure that our youth are ready when the opportunity arises. How we treat, guide and embrace our youth in the present time, will determine how they lead us into the future. It is time to involve the younger generation with FEZANA activities and induct them into the Executive and other committees. I urge the chairs of all committees to encourage our youth to co-chair with them, so that they can be mentored and become the successful leaders of tomorrow.

I have been successful in appointing Ava Afshari, Carl Irani, Ferzeen Chhappgar, and Dr. Susan Kaboly-Zadeh, four excellent youth co-chairs from USA and Canada. I am sure they will spare no effort to lead our youth to unity and progress and into a new dimension. Being born and/or brought up in North America, they have the capability to lead in a unified way as the cultural differences amongst them would be minimal as compared to what has been observed or felt by their elders.

I am in the process of reappointing a committee to revisit the five and ten year strategic plan to review what has been achieved, what needs to be modified and map the next five / ten years plan, based on past successes and future necessities.

I look forward to receiving your cooperation and will welcome your ideas for a better FEZANA.

Best Wishes,

*Bomi Patel*







**Behram Pastakia, Chair,  
Information Receiving and Dissemination  
(Publications) Committee.**

## THE YIN AND YANG OF MOTIVATION



What is it that motivates us humans to behave the way we do? A complex question, without simple answers, but worth pondering over, for it holds the key to each of us being able to fulfill our mission on earth in this short sojourn of life.

At a very basic level, there are two forces which drive human beings to act. The first is to take care of the individual's own needs for survival: food, shelter, and clothing. Once these needs are provided for, (and we shall desist for the moment in articulating the differences between needs and wants) what elevates man is to care for "the other".

How we choose to define "the other" formulates our world view. If we consider ourselves as part of one human family, there are no restricting boundaries that hem us in the actions we take to care for the common weal. However the reality is that in addition to our identity as human beings, we have multiple additional identities. Ethnicities, nationalities, religious affiliations all come into play and it is for each one of us to find a comfort zone where we can participate voluntarily in

actions which take care of something larger than ourselves, in working together to fulfill our mission on earth.

So what motivates me to write this piece? It is the privilege to serve our Zarathushti community, and through it the wider world. I am humbled by the opportunity offered by our newly elected executive and FEZANA president, Bomi Patel, to chair the committee which oversees the gathering and dissemination of information which can fulfill the Federation's mission of creating an enlightened, educated, compassionate, respectful, prosperous and charitable cadre of Zarathushtis in North America. Should you find this formulation a comfort zone of your liking, please respond with your ideas, your talents, your opinions. We seek your help.

There is an old adage which says that change is the only constant in life, and while true, we should still strive to keep what is valuable from the old. There are always balancing acts in life. We shall have to balance off the first motivating force, which Ayn Rand called the virtue of selfishness, with the second and that is to care selflessly for the needy as enshrined in our Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer. For how can we look after others if we cannot look after ourselves first? We shall strive to seek the middle path, and to work together with all as Ahura Mazda pleases.

### **Acknowledgement:**

*I am indebted to insights provided by Mehrdad Aidun at the NexGenNow conference held on 3rd August 2008 at the George Mason University, Virginia and to the web-cast by Bill Gates from the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland in January 2008 in putting these thoughts on paper.*

**"ALL GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS REQUIRE TIME"**

**MAYA ANGELOU**



# FEZANA UPDATE

21st FEZANA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - MAY 10-11 2008

## 21 YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENT

big and small was awesome. The weather was the promised California best!!

(See Religious Teachers Workshop, Lovji Cama, page 16 )

**Friday evening** opened with an innovative and interactive presentation by **Meher Amalsad** on *Matrimony of Parsi Money and Irani Money* followed by a poignant presentation by **Shahriar Shahriari** on *Perspective*.

Meher's presentation outlined the perspectives of the two halves of the Zarathushti community, in which he highlighted that even when we each have similar goals and face the same issues, we have different expectations from each other which hampers the integrity of their relationship towards each other. Though both the communities have reached out to each other there has not been a real handshake...a hamazori. This has caused an *INFUSION OF CONFUSION* among our children. We need to concentrate on our children, because if the communal view is not appetizing, they will go somewhere else to satisfy the landscape of their emotional and spiritual needs. Our children are not just going into circles but are entering the wrong circles. We need to share our time with each other for "time is money". It doesn't matter whether we are Parsis or Iranis, we are all Zarathushtis. We will have a matrimony when there is unity for what we believe in.

Shahriar's presentation focused on the global issues of hunger, poverty, war, calamities with a strong message on how we, as Zarathushtis, can reach out to humanity when we are still worrying about merging the Parsis and Iranis. It was truly an enlightening perspective for our community.

During this presentation, *Farita Khambatta's* song "The Light" was played and the chorus was displayed for the audience to sing together in the spirit of unity within diversity in our community.

President Kevala presented two items for discussion preparatory to the proposed resolutions during the AGM

**1. SECULAR CALENDAR** President Kevala presented the need of FEZANA adopting a secular calendar which would neither replace a religious calendar nor encroach on the autonomy of the associations, but rather allow us to celebrate our major festivals like Nourooz, Tirgan, Mehragan, Yalda and show



The 21st Annual General meeting of FEZANA was held on May 10th and 11th at the California Zoroastrian Centre (CZC) in Westminster, California. The CZS under the leadership of *Mr. Sohrab Shahpour Salamatipour* and his Board of Trustees, and *Mr. Ardeshir Baghkhani* and his Board of Directors joining forces with the Zoroastrian Association of California under the leadership of *Mrs. Vira Santoke* and her committee of executives, hosted this three day event very successfully. Special thanks to *Themis Damania* and her team of volunteers for flawlessly organizing the transportation. No stones were left unturned from a welcome pick up at the airport to delicious dinners and lunches. The entertainment by the community members



Meher Amalsad (left), Shahriar Shahriari (right)  
Photo Dolly Dastoor





our connectedness with the natural cycles with communal ghambars. The date on which we would anchor the Zarathushti calendar was also discussed, whether it should be AZ (ano Zarathushtra); AK (ano Kurush/ Cyrus) or AY (ano Yazdegard III) It was mentioned that the guidance of the mobeds' council (NAMC) would be sought. A letter from Jimmy Dholoo, member of ZAMWI was read by his son Cyrus, wherein he passionately proposed the anchor point to be the birth of Zarathushtra. A lively discussion followed, a consensus remained elusive, and it was left to individual member associations and small groups to discuss the pros and cons of a seasonal calendar in their own local jurisdictions.

## 2. NORTH AMERICAN CONGRESS GUIDELINES

President Kevala presented guidelines for his vision for North American Congresses. Since 1975, 14 congresses have been held at two year intervals with the purposes of meeting fellow Zarathushtis. Since then various other events have also been taking place which serve the same purpose. Hence there was a need to relook at the function of the congress.

In his vision, the mission of a North American congress should be

1. Review and discuss issues related to the community, religion, public relations and outreach to the wider North American Community and to build a viable infrastructure to sustain and manage all our activities and religious institutions
2. Provide opportunities for mentoring, nurturing and cultivating leaders with vision and ability to ensure the perpetuity of our religion and communal values in North America.
3. Recognize individuals who have contributed most to the betterment of our community and the greater North American community.
4. Meet and make new friends, family members scattered across the world, and to enjoy communal meals and entertainment in a spirit of togetherness (hamazori).

All congresses to be a shared partnership between the host association and FEZANA with the President of FEZANA to be the co-chair of the Congress. Representatives of member associations felt that these guidelines could be incorporated into the present **TORS**

of the Congress, especially as the committee charged with reworking the **TORS** felt that these guidelines were



different from the ones the committee had developed.

## SATURDAY MORNING

After a warm welcome by *Mr. Sohrab Shahpour Salamatipour* (CZC Board of Trustees), *Mr Ardeshir Baghkhani* (CZC Board of Directors), and *Vera Suntoke* (ZAC board) and a benediction by *Ervad Soli Dastur, Ervad Zarir Bhandara and Mobed Behram Shahzadi*, (photo above) the meeting opened with the establishment of the quorum and approval of the agenda.

The AGM had 17 of 23 associations attending with a voting power of 54, and with all the past FEZANA



Zenobia Damania, Administrator FEZANA



# FEZANA UPDATE

presidents: Rohinton Rivetna, Dolly Dastoor, Framroze Patel and Firdosh Mehta attending. The newly elected officers, Bomi Patel, President, Katayun Kapadia, Treasurer and Nahid Dashtaki Asst Secretary from CZC, were introduced. The post of Vice president will be vacant. It will be filled after a call for nominations is sent and elections held electronically. (It was subsequently filled by the nomination of Mr Rashid



From left past presidents Dastoor, Mehta and out-going President Kevala Photo Ervad Soli Dastur

Mehin of CZC). Ms Zenobia Damania, the first administrator of FEZANA was introduced.

## STATE OF FEZANA

**President Kevala** outlined FEZANA's progress since its founding 20 years ago. (see President's Message, FJ Summer 2008 p 3). He outlined the three areas where FEZANA has been making progress:

- a. building a united Zarathushti community
- b. making Zarathushti presence an integral part of the North American landscape
- c. Developing viable infrastructures.

We have made a start in celebrating Naurooz together in a meaningful way. Mehrgan, Tirgan, Pateti and Yalda are other celebrations of profound meaning to Zarathushtis and need to be celebrated together and a seasonal calendar needs to be developed as well. The foundation of our future rests with children's religious education. And we owe a great debt of gratitude to the religious education teachers and mobeds for their time and knowledge. The FEZANA office is now set up and running in Chicago and the FEZANA Resource Centre will provide the fuel for

developing the knowledge base and disseminating religious information.

President Kevala ended by saying "FEZANA has served as a unifying force to channel our energies in North America. We are the product of the environment we create for ourselves. Where we go from here depends on our ability to continually define and redefine our vision, by including clear voices of the next generation, by paying attention to our changing demographics and culture and by harnessing the increasing confidence we feel in managing our future" He thanked the "countless individuals" who make up the FEZANA community. A plaque was presented to President Kevala in recognition of his services by past presidents Dastoor and Mehta. (photo left)

Treasurer **Katayun Kapadia** presented the balance sheet of income and expenses for the period January 1, 2007 through December 31, 2007 prepared on a cash basis, showing a healthy increase in net assets. She also gave a detailed outline of Investments, managed by Integrity Investment Advisors Inc.

## INFRASTRUCTURE WORKING GROUP (IWG)

**Shahrokh Mehta**, chair of the Infrastructure Working Group had presented a report on behalf of the group (Shahrokh Mehta, Bella Tata) the findings and recommendations on 1: FEZANA office –space, needs, location and staffing and 2: explore the feasibility of a FEZANA Resource Centre (FRC). (Report previously circulated.)

The FEZANA office is now established with a staff member (Ms Zenobia Damania) located on the premises of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago

Nine associations responded to the call for housing the Resource Centre, and based on the responses received the IWG team recommended the ZAH library located at the Heritage and Cultural Centre in Houston be given the first opportunity to host the FEZANA Resource Centre. The library had the necessary infrastructure already in place. The IWG recommended a budget of \$10,000, as initial start-up costs for the creation of the FRC.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

(Chair Dolly Dastoor Ph.D)

28 applications had been received and Fiona Petigara (BC) was named the FEZANA scholar





# FEZANA UPDATE

receiving The Mehraban and Morvorid Kheradi Endowment Scholarship of \$5000, Katayoun Salamati received the FEZANA 20th Anniversary Endowment Scholarship of \$3000 and Farhad Jamshidi received the Banoobai and Maneckshaw Endowment Scholarship of \$1000. 3 graduate and 3 undergraduate students received scholarships of \$2000 each. A budget of \$22,000 was approved for 2008-09. with the 20th anniversary scholarship to be increased to \$4000 and the six FEZANA scholarships to be increased to \$3000 each.

## **PERFORMING AND CREATIVE ARTS SCHOLARSHIP ( Co-Chair, Sherazade Mehta)**

Five scholarships were awarded to Navaz Jasavala, Danny Setna, Khushnum Sadry, Zarina Kotwal and Meher Pavri. A budget of \$5000 was approved for 2008-09

## **EDUCATION, SCHOLARSHIP AND CONFERENCE (ESC) (Chair, Lovji Cama, Ph.D)**

In 2007-08 Rastin Mehri the only candidate was awarded the scholarship with an annual amount of \$1,500 for three years. Rastin will be working with Dr Almut Hintze for his Ph.D at the School of Oriental and African Studies.

Two Khorshed Jungalwala lectures were delivered in 2007 (Prof Irani) and 2008 (Dr Almut Hintze). Two religious Education Teachers Workshops were conducted in April and June 2007. ( see report on page 16 for the workshop at the AGM 08)

A new website [www.Zoreled.org](http://www.Zoreled.org) has been created for teachers to share their teaching materials. Age appropriate materials are contributed by ZAGNY, the KZBM Sunday School for Little Zarathuhstis, Karachi, and ZAC teacher Annahita Jasavala. A google group [Zoroastrian-Teachers@googlegroups.com](mailto:Zoroastrian-Teachers@googlegroups.com) has been created to facilitate communication between teachers and the ESC Committee. At present there are 51 members.

## **AWARDS (Chair, Framroz Patel)**

**Life Time Achievement Award.** The Awards Committee recommended that this award be part of the Awards Committee portfolio. And the members asked them to prepare the Terms of Reference.

**Naming of Trophies that accompany the Awards.** The names of the trophy donors will be announced

during the awards ceremony and written information will also be provided in the awards brochure. The awards and trophies are not necessarily donated by the same people.

**Call for nominations** –Publicity and Advertising. An electronic filing mechanism needs to be developed together with a web site section where past award winners be featured and the award process available to the general public. Each association to have a “FEZANA AWARD” Representative to promote the awards in their own local community.

## **CENSUS AND SURVEY/DIRECTORY (Chair, Aban Bhot)**

The directory is in access database, with information on 8000 families viz name, address, tel #, e.mail address etc). who have given the information voluntarily. Updates are done when received. Information is needed from more individuals to make the directory useful. All information should be sent to [abanbhot1@msn.com](mailto:abanbhot1@msn.com)

## **FUNDS AND FINANCE (Chair, Jerry Kheradi, MD)**

FEZANA accounts did very well thanks to the astute management of Mr Kawasji Dadachanji and Mr Zubin Bomanshaw of Integrity Investment Advisors. (They made a Lunch presentation to member associations on Sunday) The 20th Anniversary Infrastructure Fund received a donation of \$50,000 as a down payment for a matching campaign for the Infrastructure fund from Yasmin and William Cumming. \$61,000 was received in response to hundreds of letters sent out. \$20,000 was also received from Farangis, Homayon, and Iran Zardoshty towards the Infrastructure fund in memory of their sister Paridokht Zardoshty and their parents

Mehrbanoo and Faridoon Zardoshty, In addition \$10,000 was also received from them for the Religious Education Fund. The Beach Cigar Group Inc of Miami were also thanked for the generous donation of \$20,800 towards the Welfare Fund.

## **INTERFAITH ACTIVITIES**

### **(Chairs Homi Gandhi and Behram Pastakia, MD)**

The role of this committee is to facilitate local associations, groups and families and individuals to



# FEZANA UPDATE

participate in interfaith activities which are on-going throughout the year.

**Highlights** The Naurooz celebrations were coordinated throughout North America, with more associations participating. New avenues were opened with San Jose joining in organizing the Naurooz Persian Parade, (see photomontage in FJ summer 2008).

**Maneck Bhujwala** attended the Interfaith Academy held at St Paul's School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri, June 13-27 2007

On June 26, 2007, five adolescents from ZAGNY attended "**Teenage Interfaith Diversity Education (TIDE) wave of Change Conference**" in Cambridge, MA.. It was an eye-opening experience.

**Rumy Mohta**, of Virginia participated in the 2007 Interfaith Conference of NA Interfaith Network (NAIN) on July 12-16 2007 It was a conference of 65 interfaith organization of US, Canada and Mexico.

At the invitation of the Vice-Chancellor, of Vidyapeth, the University founded by Mahatma Gandhi, **Behram Pastakia** attended the lecture and interactive presentation by Dalai Lama in January 2008 in India.

**Ervad Behram and Zenobia Panthaki** represented the Zoroastrian community during the visit of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the US in April 2008

**Fereydoon Keshavarz and Farzad Aidun** taught a class of World Religions and Ethics at the Wesley Seminary in Washington DC in April 2008 with leaders of Bahai, Jain and Christian faiths.

## UN/NGO COMMITTEE

**(Co-Chairs, Behram Pastakia and Homi Gandhi)**

**Highlights** September 6, 2007 the Annual DPI/NGO conference "Faith Responses to Climate Change" attended by 5 representatives (FJ Winter 2007, pages 66-68)

**Behram Pastakia** participated in High Level Dialogue at UN Headquarters where NGOs were invited to meet with representatives of member states to foster intercultural and inter-religious understanding (FJ Winter 2007 pages 71-72)

Panel discussion on "**Technology and the Private Sector Bridging Solutions in Financing to Impoverished communities**" at the CSW meeting at the UN in March 2008. (FJ Summer 2008 )

Press Releases were translated into Farsi, French, Urdu, Gujarati, and Spanish

**Behram Pastakia** represented FEZANA at the Breakthrough Summit to end Global Poverty, Washington, DC. sponsored by Women, Faith and Development Alliance.

An advertisement from FEZANA was placed in the United Nations Brochure given to participants at various conferences.

The prolific activities of the committee outlined are anchored between the two annual conferences at the UN: the Commission on the Status of Women in late February/early March and the Department of Public Information /Non-Governmental organization DPI/NGO Conference first 2 weeks of September.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS (Chair, Jim Engineer).

Public relations activities were centered on Naurooz, Congress, Standardizing Media Inaccuracies, and revising the Zoroastrian Brochure. Moving forward with the website needs to be the priority for the coming year.

## RESAERCH AND PRESERVATION

**(Chair, Jehan Bagli, Ph.D)**

Activities of the committee were outlined in a written report divided into religious activities, interfaith activities, Books, Articles and other Publications. Activities of its members Jehan Bagli, Dolly Dastoor, Maneck Bhujwala, Firdosh Mehta, Jamshid Varza and Rumy Mohta were outlined.

## MANUSCRIPT PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

**(Chair, Pallan Ichaporia Ph.D)**

This committee collects manuscripts from various European universities and digitalizes them. To date the most extant MSS known, is J2 from Bodlein Library (The Bodlein MS J2) ancient text.

This MSS of Yasna was written in 1323 ACE at Cambay by Ervad Mehrban Kai Khusrow

The Manuscript of Vendidad Sade has already been digitalized.

J2 consists of 700 folios (pages) and will be printed by FEZANA with an approved budget of \$2000.





## ZYNA (Chair, Nikan Khatibi)

### Highlights

*NextGenNow Conference in Chicago, 2007*  
*Youth Open House at the World Bank, Washington DC.*  
*Habitat for Humanity with Jimmy Carter.*  
*Zarathushti Youth without Borders (Medical Mission trip)*  
*Partnership with the 4th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress*  
*Partnership with the 14th North American Congress-Toronto*

Next year it will be important to continue the inspirational movement that has been started by having personalized encounters and maintaining close dialogue with youth presidents of member associations in North America and around the world.

## WELFARE (Unity and Critical assistance)

**(Co-Chairs, Houtoxi Contractor, Hosi Mehta and Freyaz Shroff).**

In a written report all the work done by the committee was outlined including the successful co-ordination for the Baby Ushta's burn treatment. They outlined the procedure as to how the welfare committee processes requests. The welfare committee works with the local associations to set up contacts and assistance. This helps build strong bonds within the community

## SPORTS ( Chair, Niaz Kasravi).

Benaz Dianat made a verbal report of the Sports Committee, promoted the San Diego Games and reported on the 11th Zarathushti Games of 2008. The committee is currently accepting host candidates for the 12th Zarathushti games in 2010 to be held the July 4th weekend. Applications need to be made before January 1, 2009

**THE JOURNAL** . 4 issues, were published in 2007 with the 20th anniversary summer 2007 issue distributed to all the participants of the North American Congress in Toronto. The number of subscribers still remains low



Benaz Dianat

and the speed of mail delivery (due to bulk mail rate) has not improved. From July 2008 the subscription rate for the Journal will be increased (they have remained the same for the past 20 years inspite of increases in printing and mailing costs), and due to the parity of US and Canadian \$, there will be no difference in the rates for Canadian and US subscribers. There will be no sea-mail rate for overseas subscribers, all mail goes by air.

## YOUTH WITHOUT BORDERS (ZYWB)

**(Convenor Behram Pastakia)** The terms of reference which had been previously circulated were approved by the members of the Board. This program is established to promote Humanitarian Internships by giving financial support to Zarathushti youth interested in helping the underprivileged from a ZYWB fund. The internship is intended to encourage acts of charity.

**LUNCH** was sponsored by Zoroastrian Association of California with **Nikan Khatibi** as the keynote speaker for NextGenNow. In his absence **Parmis Khatibi Ph.D** read his presentation.

## SUNDAY APRIL 8

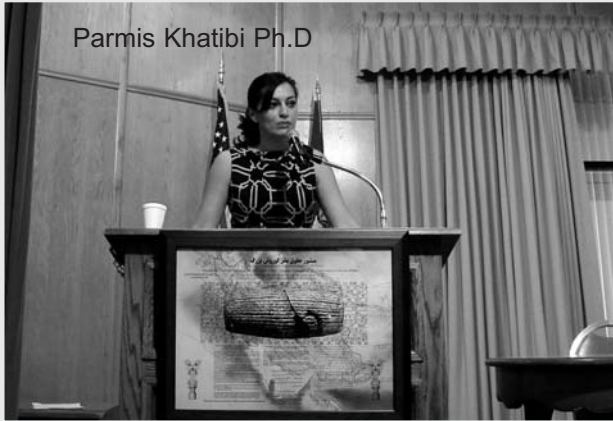
**NAMC (President Ervad Jehan Bagli):** Jehan Bagli informed the Board of the various activities undertaken by the members of NAMC The "Congregational Prayers for Jashan Ceremony " has been printed and



# FEZANA UPDATE

distributed free of charge to all associations across North America. There are now 6 fully ordained Mobedyars in North America. ZTFE (England) is also

participants from all over the world oncluding from USA and from Canada.



*Coming Together Roundtable in Mumbai.* was presented by **Rohinton Rivetna and Firdosh Mehta**, (see report page 16)

### **SUNDAY LUNCH sponsored by WZCC**

A community potluck by CZC and ZAC with a keynote address given by **Kavasji Dadachanji and Zubin Bomansha** of Integrity Investment Advisors Inc (Photos below)

*Reported by Dolly Dastoor*

*Photos courtesy Ervad Soli Dastur and Dolly Dastoor*

interested in the Mobedyar program as they too are experiencing a shortage of mobeds. Both athornans and behdins can be trained as Mobedyars. There will be a training session for young mobedyars in Toronto. \$7,500 were collected for destitute mobeds and distributed though the PRG scheme. The Journal now has a special section on NAMC where mobeds are contributing articles. Each association is requested to prepare and have available a list of mobeds who would be available to perform ceremonies in an emergency.

### **CONGRSSES: (Bomi Patel and Firdosh Mehta)**

*XV North American Congress, Toronto.* There were generally very positive comments on the innovative features with the introduction of , videoconferencing for the Titans

*IV World Youth Congress.* The proceedings of the congress, the CD of *"The Light"* and the special *Cook Book* for the congress are all distributed to the FEZANA member associations.by the organizers The busing of the youth from Melbourne Airport to Ballarat was sponsored by FEZANA.

*V World Youth Congress in Vancouver July 2011*

*World Congress in Dubai Dec 2009.* A video of the WZC Dubai was shown which also highlighted past conferences. The YELP (Youth Enhancement Leadership Program) program is complete with 50





# FEZANA UPDATE

## Banquet and Entertainment Saturday Evening



*From left Vera Suntoke, President ZAC, Yasmin Gundevia, Gool Jesung, Dogdoe Arjani*



*From Left to Right:*

Mehrdad Banki for his father Moobed Dr. Shahriar Banki (2 Terms); -Rashid Mehin (2Terms) -Mrs. Mahin Banoo Shahzadi (1Term), Mrs. Shida Anoshiravani (2 Terms) Mrs. Mahin Sassani (1 Term) Dr. Khodayar Dinyari (1 Term) Cameron Mahdad for his father Dr.Mehrdad Mahdad (2 Terms) Arasto Kasravi (2 Terms)

An award was forwarded to Mr. Iraj Mavandadi (2 Terms) who was not present.





# FEZANA UPDATE

## Groups at Saturday night banquet





# FEZANA UPDATE

## NEWLY ELECTED OFFICERS OF FEZANA

### PRESIDENT, FEZANA 2008-2010

#### Bomi V Patel



Born in Mumbai, India, Bomi immigrated to California USA and joined the Silicon Electronic in July 1991. He studied computer science and obtained several diplomas. Bomi works for the University of California since 1999 in ITS and is the Divisional Liaison for the Chancellor's office.

Bomi Patel brings many years of dedicated community service and experience to the office of the President, having been the President of the Zarthosti Anjuman of California, (1997-2004)

and was the Chair of the 13th North American Zoroastrian Congress held in San Jose in 2004. He has served as the Vice-president of FEZANA from 2005-2007 and reelected in 2007.

As Vice President he represented FEZANA as one of the delegates at the United Nations DFPI/NGO conference in September 2005.

Bomi has always enjoyed being actively involved in social activities and in leadership roles. In India he was the Assistant Secretary of the Maharashtra State Cycling Association and Secretary of the Bombay Cycling Association organizing several national and international events. He is a qualified judge for all National and International games and was appointed Assistant Commissioner (Assistant judge) for the 1982 Asian Games and the Asian Cycling Championship in 1983 and was Technical Official at the II Maharashtra State Olympics in 1987.

Bomi is a President Scout and Rover Scout with the Zoroastrian Boy Scout Group in Bombay.

During his tenure of office Bomi hopes to

- 1 Build a Unified North American Zarathushti Community
- 2 Empowering the Youth –“Our Youth is our Future”
- 3 Revisit the Strategic Plan –Goals and Achievements

### VICE-PRESIDENT, FEZANA 2008-2009

#### Rashid Mehin

Born and raised in Kerman- Iran, Rashid attended Iranshahr, a Zarathushti school till high school. He then graduated in Accountancy and Finance from



Tehran and gained Fellowship of Chartered Institute of Management Accountants in England.

In 1980 he immigrated to Canada and then to U.S.A. In San Diego he obtained his CPA and in 1989 he went into business for himself till 2005.

Since childhood Rashid has always been involved with the Zarathushti community.

He is a Life Member of WZO, CZC (California Zoroastrian Centre) and ZAC. (Zoroastrian Association of California)

He served two, five year terms as trustee/ treasurer of CZC and represented CZC on the FEZANA board.

He was the Treasurer of FEZANA 2002-2006. (two terms)

He strongly believes in unity and harmony, respects all different points of view and sees great values in diversities and a bright future for our Zarathushti communities all around the world.

Rashid lives in San Diego, Ca with his wife Afsaneh and his son Mehraban Rashid.

### ASSISTANT SECRETARY, FEZANA 2008-2010

#### Nahid Dashtaki

I was born in Tehran, Iran and grew up in Southern California, along with my parents and older sister. I graduated from the University of California, Irvine and received a Bachelor of Arts in Comparative Literature and International Relations with a Minor in Conflict Resolutions. I plan on continuing with Graduate school in the Fall, in a Master's Degree program for Conflict Resolutions and Negotiations.



# FEZANA UPDATE



Ever since I was able to say my Avesta, I have been involved in the ZARATHUSHTI community. I started out with prayer recitals and dances in youth shows and moved on to becoming a member of the Youth of the California Center (YCZC). After almost 6 years as a member I became the president of the YCZC for two years, coordinating social

events, celebrations, dinners, youth shows and open forums.

In the summers, I assist with camps for young ZARATHUSHTIS, by coordinating all counselors and the organization of the events for the ever popular, Young Z Camp (pre-teen and younger) held in the mountains around Southern California for the past 7 summers. For the older children (teenagers and younger) I support the organizers of the San Jose

Camp, as a counselor and event coordinator/supervisor.

At present my focus is primarily on working with the editor of the Chehrenama Journal in getting more youth writers who have opinions to share with the international Zarathushti community. I submit articles to the FEZANA Journal as well. My articles reflect my experiences of being a dedicated Zarathushti. I have written about my attendance at the 4th World Zoroastrian Congress, at Ballarat, Australia for which I was awarded a FEZANA subsidy, for which I am ever thankful to FEZANA.

Outside of the community, I have volunteered at charitable international organizations in Pune, India and Tehran, Iran where I worked closely with local communities to assist with health care and technological advances becoming available to the public. I enjoy giving back to my own community as well as the community I live in.

**WE WISH THE NEWLY ELECTED OFFICERS OF FEZANA ALL THE BEST IN THEIR TERM OF OFFICE**



Handing over the gavel from outgoing President Kevala to incoming President Bomi Patel



**FEZANA 2008-2010 TEAM**

*From left Nahid Dashtaki, Asst Secretary, Out-going President Rustom Kevala; Katayun Kapadia, Treasurer, Bomi Patel, in-coming President, Firuzi Poonevalla, Secretary.*

*Not in Picture Rashid Mehin, Vice-President (elected subsequently).*

*Photo Dolly Dastoor*





## FEZANA Southern California Teachers' Workshop, May 11, 2008

**Organized by the Education, Scholarship and Conference Committee of FEZANA**

**Hosted by the CZC at the California Zoroastrian Center, 9025 Hazard Avenue, Westminster, CA 92683**

The workshop was attended by teachers from CZC and the ZAC (California). In all there were 14 attendees, eight from CZC and six from ZAC.

The two associations reviewed their teaching programs which included frequency of classes, age range of students, number of students in each class, number of teachers and subjects taught.

The topics that should be considered for teaching under the broad categories of Religion, History and Present Day Issues were discussed. Each association was encouraged to write out a document which would serve as a blueprint for the classes. It should define overall goals for the classes, the age group levels and the topics that should be covered at each

age. The blue print used for ZAGNY was presented as a model, but each association needs to have their own developed by their teachers so that there is ownership of the plan.

The new website [www.zoreled.org](http://www.zoreled.org) was introduced to the teachers. It is supposed to serve as an online resource for teachers. It has age appropriate teaching material used by various teachers. Teachers were encouraged to place their material on the website so that the website becomes a place for teachers to exchange material. It also serves as an on-line resource for families who are not close to associations that hold classes and have to teach religion to their children on their own.

Finally the way to encourage young persons to take up teaching was discussed. Graduates of the religion classes should be encouraged to work as teacher's assistants and some of them would go on to become religion class teachers.

**LOVJI CAMA Ph.D**

**Chair, Education, Scholarship and Conference committee**

## COMING TOGETHER ROUNDTABLE

**COMMEMORATING TOGETHERNESS WORKING TOGETHER IN THE SPIRIT OF HAMAZORI**

*Dialogue brings minds together and action brings hearts together.*

**Rohinton Rivetna and Firdosh Mehta**

**Rohinton Rivetna** (in photo right) and **Firdosh Mehta** (in photo left) presented the **Third Coming Together Roundtable** held at Mancherji Joshi Hall of the Athornan Madressa Dadar, January 15, 2008.

Rohinton mentioned that our community is blessed with instant bonds of kinship wherever we reside in the world, and our actions must be deliberate to strengthen not fragment this remarkable bonding. Tradition teaches us and history confirms that there is *Strength in Togetherness*.

**The Barsom**—In togetherness lies our strength

**The Payvand**- Importance of staying connected



**Hamazori** *Hamazor baad, Hamazor Hama Asho Baad*

***"May we be united in strength, May we be united in strength with all righteous people"***



# FEZANA UPDATE

We are world wide “community without borders”. 50 years ago we were oceans away, 25 years ago we were continents away, today we live in a global village, barely a click of a mouse away. It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to preserve and protect our worldwide “community without borders”.

After the failed dialogue of two decades to form a world body, we have learnt that our conventional organizational structures will not work. So it is imperative “to come together and work together” which was the genesis of these “Coming together Roundtables”. So bringing order out of chaos is the “Zarathushti Chaordica”.

The first “*Coming Together Roundtable*” was in 2005 at the Eighth World Zoroastrian Congress, London. A list of issues, challenges and projects was developed. A vision was presented.

***Vision: “To nurture a caring, compassionate, altruistic, harmonious, observant, esteemed and prosperous worldwide community”.***

***Mission: “To come together and work together in hamazori for the Zarathushti and global communities”.***

The second “*Coming Together Roundtable*” was in Mumbai on January 5, 2007. It developed a list of Actionable Items with owners responsible for follow up. (see FJ Spring 2007)

The third “*Coming Together Roundtable*” was on January 15, 2008, in Mumbai. Actionable items developed further, pledges collected to support a staff person, internet presence established. (see FJ Summer/June 2008)

The fourth “*Coming Together Roundtable*” will be on December 30, 2008 in Houston, together with the WZCC AGM.

During his visit to India to attend the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, sponsored by the Government of India in New Delhi for NRIs and PIOs, Firdosh visited several community organizations

***Community Projects where we need to come together for financial and manpower assistance.***

**ParZor Foundation** --Navsari

**Heritage Protection, Udvarda Town Development,** Children and other community topics

sponsored books, heritage materials in manuscripts, textiles, artifacts, art, poetry, drama, music etc. preservation.

**Gene Study Project--** Genetic Evaluation and research of community members for the understanding of common medical conditions.

**Dastur Meherji Rana Library,** Navsari -- Manuscript Restoration, additional library materials, guest housing for visiting scholars

**K. R. Cama Oriental Institute** -- Manuscript Restoration, building maintenance, additional library materials

**World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation** -- Archeology, Bone Carbon Dating, Kushti weaving, religious songs and calligraphy.

**Gujarat Literature Preservation** -- preservation of Gujarati Language Heritage,

**Zoroastrian Directory.Com, Parsiana Yellow Pages** -- web based world wide directory of Individuals and Businesses.

**Parsi Resource Group** --- Mobed Medical Insurance, Education Support

**Persepolis Fortification Tablets** -- Seminar by ZANT

**Religious Infrastructure** -- Restoration Of Establishments, Agiyaris, Atash Behrams, Dokhmas, Aramghas.

**Appeal from Delhi Parsi Anjuman,** Patel Agiyari Mazagon Mumbai.

**Sadhana School For Autistic Students** -- Need donations for teachers' compensation as it is a high turn around job.

**Farohar Foundation** - Production of Zarathushti Heritage films for TV and CDs

**PROJECTS IN IRAN--** School Support

**"Amordad" -- the only government approved community News Letter-- subscribe**

**OTHER COMMUNITY PROJECTS,** Food Distribution, Hospitals, Schools, children's play grounds, sports centers, science centers Etc.



## RAISING FUNDS FOR COMMUNITY PROJECTS AROUND THE WORLD

Since 2007 FEZANA has embarked on many community development and enhancement projects as an activity of the "**COMING TOGETHER ROUND TABLE**" informal group, to network and get resources to confront needs, from every angle and geography of the Zarathushti world.

FEZANA receives appeals for financial assistance from various institutions for community infrastructure enhancements and for on-going support. Over the past years the North American Community has supported many such initiatives and institutions. Once again we are presenting to you a list of institutions for your generous support

Your donation can be sent for any of the institutions mentioned. Contact Firdosh Mehta at fdjmehta@charter.net for details.

### DELHI PARSİ ANJUMAN ARAMGAH FUND.

The Aramgah ( Parsi Zarathushti Burial Grounds) is looking at an increased level of capacity. The land adjacent to currently used property has been acquired and needs construction, compound wall etc. enhancements.

Firdosh Mehta visited this facility in January 2008, and strongly recommends that we support this appeal.

### "NOWROZE BAUG SPORT CENTRE CENTENARY FUND"

The NOWROZE BAUG, (Mumbai) centenary celebration committee is looking at an increased level of activity for children play and youth sports centers.

Firdosh Mehta visited Nowroze Baug in January 2008, and the appeal is genuine. As in the past for other such institutions, FEZANA will collect the funds for a limited period and then forward them to Nowroze Baug

### S.P.J. SADHANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY CHALLENGED

S.P J.Sadhana School known as The Tinker Bell Special School, before it was taken over in 1978 by the Society for the Higher Education of Women in India and renamed. From its inception it catered to the severely handicapped and autistic children.

→Situating on the Sophia Campus, Mumbai, it is a vibrant educational community in a nurturing

environment where they integrate the intellectually challenged students with students from other sister institutions, like Sophia College, Sophia B.K. Somani Polytechnic, Sophia Nursery and Balwadi.

The school provides much needed service to children of all communities in general and the PARSI community in particular. The school needs donations to compensate teachers for this very stressful and highly exacting work assignment. Firdosh Mehta visited the school and met the Principal and staff and was very impressed by the facilities.

Please give generously and publicize these appeals to family and friends and in your community newsletters. **Abstracted from the report on Community Enhancement Projects presented by Firdosh Mehta at the FEZANA AGM at LA in May 2008**



## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS - for World Zoroastrian Congresses

At the "*Coming Together Roundtables*" held each year since the 8th World Zoroastrian Congress in London, United Kingdom in 2005, matters pertaining to our worldwide Zarathushti 'Community without Borders' are discussed and actions proposed.

The topic of establishing a transparent and equitable process for the selection of a capable host and suitable venue for holding World Zoroastrian Congresses, at appropriate intervals has been on the agenda of the Roundtable for some years. With inputs from Zarathushtis around the globe, the Request for Proposals [RFP] is now ready.

**VISION:** To nurture a caring, compassionate, harmonious, altruistic, observant, esteemed and prosperous community, with respect for diversity in belief and practice.

**MISSION:** To come together and work together in hamazori for the Zarathushti and global communities, celebrating its diversity.

**WORLD CONGRESS GUIDELINES**, criteria for selection, and an explanation of the process adopted are available from Rohinton Rivetna, rivetna@aol.com *Completed RFP's for hosting the Tenth World Zoroastrian Congress should be sent by November 30th 2008 to Rivetna.*





# FEZANA UPDATE

## *Zarathushti Youth Without Borders*

FEZANA would like to support Zarathushti youth from North America who volunteer their time in different parts of the globe in working for the underprivileged sections of civil society. Toward this end, Terms of Reference for Zarathushti Youth Without Borders were approved at the 20th AGM in Dallas, Texas. Those interested in availing of support for this activity should send their curriculum vitae, a short write-up about the planned project and details of the organization they would be partnering with and send it to [bpastakia@aol.com](mailto:bpastakia@aol.com)

## FEZANA Updates

### FINANCIAL PROGRESS REPORT

The 21st Annual General Meeting for FEZANA was held May 9, 10, 11, 2008 at the California Zoroastrian Center. Many important subjects were discussed and I would like to focus on a few important issues that need to be brought to your attention and need your financial support and backing.

#### ZARATHUSHTIS COMING TOGETHER WORLDWIDE

This topic was presented by Rohinton Rivetna and Firdosh Mehta at the AGM. In the last half century Zarathushtis have settled in the far corners of the world. It is imperative that Zarathushtis remain connected with one another and with Iran and India wherever they may reside. Our history reminds us and our teachings require us to be connected. In that spirit, Zarathushtis worldwide have "Come Together to Work Together." We are a worldwide "Community Without Borders." Overcoming many vicissitudes over the centuries, our community has grown and prospered, and has become the hallmark of integrity, industry, goodness and charity, wherever we have settled. The stature and prestige that our community has achieved, was built with wisdom and foresight by generations before us.



It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to preserve and protect our worldwide "Community without Borders." Some of the projects include Global Networking, Interfaith and UN programs, Coordination of Welfare Programs Worldwide, Worldwide Service Programs, Network of Mobeds, Education for Irani Zarathushti youth in India and many many more. Your generous contributions would go toward developing and strengthening this initiative. Kindly send your donation to *FEZANA Treasurer*. For more background material visit [www.zoroastrians.net](http://www.zoroastrians.net) under the heading "Round Table" or contact Rohinton Rivetna or Behram Pastakia, MD.

#### SOCIETY OF SCHOLARS OF ZOROASTRIANISM – SSZ

SSZ is an initiative spearheaded by Dr. Pallan Ichaporia and Rohinton Rivetna. First SSZ roundtable was held in 2005 at the Eighth World Zoroastrian Congress in London. First North American SSZ conference was held at the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr in Chicago, July 1-2, 2006. This was sponsored by SSZ, ZAC and FEZANA. The second SSZ conference was again held at the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr in Chicago, November 17-18, 2007. This was also sponsored by SSZ,



# FEZANA UPDATE

ZAC and FEZANA. The aim of the Conference is to encourage interest in Zoroastrian studies by offering researchers a forum to present their research to the community. SSZ's mission is "to promote interaction among academicians, theologians, educationists and practitioners of Zoroastrianism, through roundtable discussions, conferences and publications." Once again your generous donation towards this cause is greatly appreciated. We need to improve and encourage our youth to take up Zoroastrian Studies and become our future Zoroastrian Scholars since most of our present scholars are getting older. If you are an individual or know of an individual who falls in this category of Zoroastrian Scholar, kindly contact Rohinton Rivetna or Pallan Ichaporla.Ph.D

## FEZANA RESOURCE CENTER

At the Annual General Meeting in May 2008, the FEZANA member associations approved the creation of the *FEZANA Resource Center (FRC)* at the ZAH Library located at the Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Center (ZHCC) in Houston, Texas. Houston has a vibrant local community which continually organizes a variety of educational and cultural activities. ZHCC has the necessary library-related infrastructure already in place, the required professional resources (library media specialist), a dedicated and working library committee with the willingness to provide leadership and organization in running the FRC.

The FRC is expected to be much more than just a collection of books and magazines stored in one physical location. The ZAH Library will act as the focal point for administering all our community resources. The FRC will be a central resource for papers, books, CDs, videos and memorabilia, donated by individuals or subscribed by FEZANA, and located at several major

centers in the USA and Canada. In time, much of the material can be made accessible to anyone via the Internet. Eventually, it is envisioned that the FRC will become a major facility for research and learning about Zarathushti religion, culture and history.

ZAH is currently developing a Memorandum of Understanding between ZAH and FEZANA. Several individuals have come forward to donate their collections to the FRC in the future. Zarathushtis, in their fine tradition of charity, integrity and fellowship, will donate generously, if they are assured that their personal and in some instances their prized possessions, will be safe and secure, for generations of Zarathushtis to enjoy, study and appreciate. As with everything worth doing, funds will be needed to ensure that the FRC will have the needed equipment, physical space and staff to make it a really useful asset to the community. For more information kindly contact Dr. Rustom Kevala.

FEZANA seeks your support and donations to continue the good work for the community. You can make your contribution to any of the above projects or to any of the existing FEZANA Funds and mail to Katayun Kapadia, FEZANA Treasurer, 33 Preamble Drive, Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054. You can also make secure online donations at FEZANA.org. Thank you for your continuous support.

**Jerry Kheradi, MD, FACG, Chairperson, FEZANA Funds and Finance**

**Committee: Katayun Kapadia, Treasurer, Morvarid Behziz, M.Ed., Sassan Nadjmi, DMD, FACP and Celeste Kheradi**

### TRADITIONAL PARSISNACKS

Dar-ni-pori, Khajoor-ni-ghari, Bhakhra  
Batasa, Khatai, Agharni Ladoo, Vasanu  
Contact, Dilnavaz Meer (281) 491-8436  
[dilnavazmeer@comcast.net](mailto:dilnavazmeer@comcast.net)

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\$18 per pound Plus S/H anywhere in the  
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Customers for Life!**



# DONATIONS

## List of Donations received March 1, 2008 through June 30, 2008

<b>FEZANA General Fund</b>	
M & S Mizanian, Bellevue, WA	\$ 255.00
Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation (OZCF)	\$ 103.00
Yezdi Dordi, Palo Alto, CA	\$ 100.00
Ardeshir Sidhwa, Scottsdale, AZ	\$ 100.00
Cyrus Daboo, Ormond Beach, FL	\$ 60.00
Iranian Zoroastrian Association (IZA)	\$ 42.00
Anita & Russy Sumariwalla, Medford, OR	\$ 35.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 695.00</b>
<b>FEZANA Welfare Fund</b>	
Beach Cigar Group Inc., Miami, FL	\$ 2,500.00
Dogdoe & Tehmtan Arjani, Glendale, CA	\$ 1,001.00
Cyrus Austin, Chandler, AZ	\$ 1,000.00
Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington DC (ZAMWI)	\$ 250.00
Taruna & Tehmtan Tehsildar, Hillsborough, NJ	\$ 101.00
Meher Mistry, Bryn Mawr, PA	\$ 100.00
Zenobia & Behram Panthaki, Falla Church, VA	\$ 100.00
Persis & Adi Kasad, Downingtown, PA	\$ 25.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 5,077.00</b>
<b>FEZANA Critical Assistance Fund</b>	
Beach Cigar Group Inc., Miami, FL	\$ 3,500.00
Yasmin & S.E. Pavri, Houston, TX	\$ 500.00
Tehmtan Mistry, St. Louis, MO	\$ 25.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 4,025.00</b>
<b>FEZANA Academic Scholarship Fund</b>	
Dogdoe & Tehmtan Arjani, Glendale, CA	\$ 501.00
Yasmin & S.E. Pavri, Houston, TX	\$ 500.00
Sorab Panday, Herndon, VA	\$ 400.00
Simin & Parviz Ardeshirpour, Raleigh, NC	\$ 101.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 1,502.00</b>
<b>FEZANA Journal Fund</b>	
Dinyar Karai, Mumbai, India	\$ 2,000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 2,000.00</b>
<b>FEZANA Creative &amp; Performing Arts Scholarship Fund</b>	
Sorab Panday, Herndon, VA	\$ 400.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 400.00</b>
<b>Jungalwala Lecture Series</b>	
Janet Allen & Farrokh Mistree, Atlanta, GA	\$ 1,001.00
Beroz & Kavas Mody, Newton Center, MA	\$ 50.00
Dilnavaz & Hoshang Shroff, Belmont, MA	\$ 50.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 1,101.00</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 14,800.00</b>

## COMING EVENTS

### MAMA PARSİ GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL 90TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION IN HOUSTON

The North American Alumni of the school will be celebrating the 90th birthday by holding a reunion on the weekend of October 10-12 in Houston, Texas.

The event is open to all those who attended the school at any time in their lives, regardless of where they are living now. It is not limited to only those living in North America.

If you are an alumni of the school, please send your name, maiden name and graduating year to Nancy Yazdani, at [msalumni\\_na@sbcglobal.net](mailto:msalumni_na@sbcglobal.net). We will then be able to register you as an alumni and also send you further details regarding the reunion. Please register even if you are not planning on attending as we will be making a directory of all North American alumni.

We are also putting together a cookbook as a memento of the reunion. If you have any recipes you'd like to share, please email them to Zeenia Fernandes ([zfernandes@cds.ca](mailto:zfernandes@cds.ca)) and they will be included in the recipe book.

Also share your old school pictures with us. You can send them to Vahishta Canteenwalla ([vahishtac@hotmail.com](mailto:vahishtac@hotmail.com)) or they can be mailed to 3 Cedarwood Court, Kirkland, Qc H9J 2Z5.





## COMING EVENTS

### SEPTEMBER 2008

60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will be celebrated September 3-5, 2008 at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France. For the first time the 61st DPI/NGO conference will be held outside New York.

### SEPTEMBER 14, 2008 UNITY

WALK , New York and Washington Unity Walk on Sunday, September 14th 2008 Building Bridges for Peace In Washington D.C. on Embassy Row To hold a Unity Walk in your own city, a tool kit has been prepared by the Unity Walk Global Group. [www.911unitywalk.org](http://www.911unitywalk.org)



### SEPTEMBER 21, 2008 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER & PEACE VIGIL

The International Day of Peace will be observed as a day of prayer to foster peace worldwide. To plan your event for 2008 please visit <http://www.idpvigil.com/> and register your commitment.

### OCTOBER 2, 2008 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF NON-VIOLENCE

September 21 to October 2 2008 is the Season of Peace

### OCTOBER 12, 2008 ZOROASTRIAN FORUM

Zoroastrian Forum: Living in Harmony with the Earth, 8615 Meadowbrook Drive, Burr Ridge, Illinois 80527

### OCTOBER 2008 MAMA SCHOOL

First ever re-union in North America, October 10, 11, 12, 2008 in Houston of the 90th anniversary of Mama School of Karachi.

### NOVEMBER 2008 SOCIETY OF SCHOLARS OF ZOROASTRIANISM

3rd annual conference of the Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism, November 21-23 2008 in Chicago. Contact [kerfegar@aol.com](mailto:kerfegar@aol.com)

### NOVEMBER 2008. OPERATION EYESIGHT

Team flying to Colombia, South America, Thanksgiving week, November 2008. Contact: Khushroo Bodhan [kbodhan@gemsedi.com](mailto:kbodhan@gemsedi.com), [See FEZANA Journal Vol 21 No. 1 Spring 2007]

### DECEMBER 2008 COMING TOGETHER ROUNDTABLE

A Roundtable scheduled in Houston on December 31, 2008 from 10 a.m. to 4.p.m. in conjunction with WZCC 2008 AGM (see box) Contact [rivetna@aol.com](mailto:rivetna@aol.com) for Roundtable program

### MAY 2009 FEZANA AGM ORLANDO

The Annual General meeting will be held May 22,23, 24 2009 hosted by Central Florida Group. Co-ordinator Dinyar Mehta [dinyarmehta@aol.com](mailto:dinyarmehta@aol.com)

### JUNE 2009 NAIN CONNECT 2009

North American Interfaith Network - June 25-28, 2009 in Kansas City (Unity Village), Missouri Experiencing the Spirit in Education: NAIN Connect 2009 <http://www.nain.org/>



### DECEMBER 2009, WORLD CONGRESS, DUBAI.

9th World Zoroastrian Congress "Unity Through the Sands of Time" to be held in Dubai, December 28-31, 2009. Contact [meher\\_bhesania@hotmail.com](mailto:meher_bhesania@hotmail.com)



### DECEMBER 2009 PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

#### MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

The 2009 Parliament Embracing Difference, Transforming the world. will be an international inter religious gathering spanning seven nights and six days – from December 3rd to 9th - bringing together an estimated 8,000 to 12,000 persons. Visit: <http://www.cpwr.org/index.html>

### WORLD ZARATHUSHTI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2008 AGM HOUSTON. TX

DECEMBER 28 2008 - JANUARY 1, 2009

Dec 28 WZCC Global Meeting

Dec 29 Full Day Trip to San Antonio

Dec 30 Visit Star Oil Rig in Galverston

Awards/Entertainment Dinner

Dec 31 COMING TOGETHER ROUNDTABLE hosted by ZAH

New Year Eve Diner/Dance

JAN 01 4 day Western Caribbean Cruise from Galveston, TX

All Events at *Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Centre* 8787 Airport Blvd, Houston Contact Houston Chapter Chair [behrozepersonal@yahoo.com](mailto:behrozepersonal@yahoo.com)



# Calendar of Festivals

Calendar of Festivities September 2008 to March 2009

Fravardian Jashan <i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Fravardin</i>	Thurs, Aug 7 Sat, Sep 6	(K) (S)
Maidyozarem Gahambar <i>Mah Ardibehesht, Roz Khorshed-Daepmeher</i>	Friday, Aug 29 - Tues Sept 2 Sun, Sep 28 - Thur, Oct 02	(K) (S)
Paitishem Gahambar <i>Mah Sheherevar, Roz Ashtad Aneran</i>	Frid, Sep 12- Tues, Sep 16	(F)
Jashne-Mehergan <i>Mah Meher, Roz Meher</i>	Thur, Oct 02	(F)
Ayathrem Gahambar <i>Mah Meher, Roz Ashtad-Aneran</i>	Sun, Oct 12-Thur, Oct 16	(F)
Jashne-Avangan(Avan Ardivisur Parab) <i>Mah Avan, Roz Avan</i>	Sun, Oct 26	(F)
Maidyoshem Gahambar <i>Mah Tir, Roz Khorshed-Daepmeher</i>	Tues, Oct 28 - Sat, Nov. 01 Thurs, Nov 27- Mon, Dec 01	(K) (S)
Jashne-Adargan <i>Mah Adar, Roz Adar</i>	Mon, Nov 24	(F)
Death Anniversary of Zarathushtra <i>Mah Dae, Roz Khorshed</i>	Fri, Dec 26	(F)
Maidhyarem Gahambar <i>Mah Dae, Roz Meher-Bahram</i>	Wed, Dec 31-Sun, Jan 04	(F)
Jashne Daegan <i>Mah Dae, Roz Daepdin</i>	Wed, Jan 07	(F)
Jashne Bahmangan <i>Mah Bahman, Roz Bahman</i>	Fri, Jan 16	(F)
Paitishem Gahambar <i>Mah Sheherevar, Roz Ashtad-Aneran</i>	Sun, Jan 11 - Thur, Jan 15 Tue, Feb 10 - Sat, Feb 14	(K) (S)
Jashne Sadeh <i>Mah Bahman, Roz Meher</i>	Fri, Jan 30	(F)
Ayatherem Gahambar <i>Mah Meher, Roz Ashtad-Aneran</i>	Tue, Feb 10-Sat, Feb 14 Thu, Mar 12 - Mon, Mar 16	(K) (S)
Fravardegan/Panjeh/Hamaspathmedayem Gahambar <i>Five Gatha days</i>	Mon, Mar 16-Fri, Mar 20	(F)
Char-Shanbe-Soori (Heralding the New Year) <i>Tuesday Prior to NauRooz</i>	Tues, Mar 17	(F)
NauRooz or Jamshedi NauRooz (New Year) <i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Hormazd</i>	Sat, Mar 21	(F)

F=(Fasli), S=(Shenshai), K=(Kadmi)

## FEZANA COMMITTEES 2008-2009

### **Coordination & Planning**

Rashid Mehin - San Diego

### **Unity & Welfare (Critical/Medical Assistance)**

Houtoxi Contractor - Pittsburgh

Hosi Mehta - Chicago

Freyaz Shroff - Mumbai (Overseas representative)

### **Information Receiving & Dissemination (Publications/Journal)**

Behram Pastakia M.D Washington

### **FEZANA Journal Editor-in-Chief:**

Dolly Dastoor Ph.D - Montreal

### **Funds & Finance**

Dr. Jerry Kheradi, MD - Boston

### **Youth (ZYNA):**

Susan Kaboly -Zadeh Ph.D- Vancouver, BC Ava Afshari - Los Angeles Ferzeen Chappgar - San Jose Carl Irani - Florida

### **Scholarships :**

#### **Religion Ed & Conference**

Lovji Cama Ph.D- New York

#### **Academic Ed Scholarship**

Dolly Dastoor Ph.D- Montreal

#### **Creative & Performing Arts**

Sherazade Mehta - Dallas

#### **Excellence in Sports**

#### **Scholarship:**

Khushcheher Italia,-Los Angeles

#### **North American Zoroastrian Congress :**

Darius Bharucha- Toronto

#### **Small Groups of NA Zarathushtris**

Ervad Soli Dastur, Tampa Bay

#### **Zoroastrian Sports (ZSC):**

Niaz Kasravi Ph.D - Washington, DC

#### **Manuscript Preservation**

Pallan Ichaporria Ph.D-Pennsylvania

### **AD-HOC COMMITTEES:**

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**Heritage Preservation & Historical Research** Ervad Jehan Bagli, Toronto, **External Affairs** Firdosh Mehta - Weatherford, TX **North American Awards** Shehernaz Joshi Verahami Washington-DC **UN/NGO** Homi Gandhi - New York Behram Pastakia , Washington DC Afreed Mistry - Toronto, **NA Directory** Aban Bhot, LA



# FEZANA UPDATE



## The 11th Zarathushti Games: A Huge Success!



### Anahita Dianat

As fireworks lit the sky during Independence Day weekend, Zarathushtis from all around the world united at the University of San Diego to light the fire of their passions, strengths, and drives at the **2008 Zarathushti Games**. Attracting roughly 600 athletes from states sharing the Atlantic Ocean such as New York and North Carolina to participants from countries half way across

the globe such as Germany and France, the 11th Zarathushti Games held competitions for both adults and youth in the sports of basketball, volleyball, tennis, ping pong, track, and swimming.

The **Zarathushti Games**, organized by the Zoroastrian Sports Committee (ZSC), has been taking place every even year since 1988, achieving its highest, boast-worthy number of participants this year at 1,200 athletes and fans. Although the age of athletes ranged from seven to sixty-two and although their homes were in seven countries and seventeen states, all participants came together to watch and compete in a fun game of sports based on one common factor, the religion of Zarathushtra.

With much satisfaction, the games have been growing exponentially every time, reaching more supporters around the world. For instance, while Americans, Canadians, Australians, and Germans have been regulars at the games for some time now, Zarathushtis from France, England, and Tajikistan have recently become involved as well. With side conversations in French and German taking place alongside Farsi and English, and with a child double knotting her shoe strings before her run, and an elder finishing his last lap, the union of such diverse Zarathushtis is remarkable.

Signaling the start of Zarathushti Games – organized this year in collaboration with a Host Committee in San Diego - an opening ceremony inspired and excited the participants before competitions. This year's ceremony had spectators praying, dancing, and cheering as the respectable Mobed Banki recited the holy Avesta text, as Beshkan Dance Academy presented an outstanding performance, and as Jahangir Mehrkhodavandi ran triumphantly carrying a torch. With that and other

performances, the games officially began, initiating the start of an incredible experience. For the next four days, athletes worked up a sweat to win, volunteers ensured utmost comfort for participants, and others cheered at risk of losing their voices for loved ones.

Basketball and volleyball specifically drew large crowds, and the athletes did everything but disappoint. In the close game of hoops of East versus West, the ecstatic group hug shared by Team LA immediately after the buzzer announced their close win against Virginia's Vesta, had cheers roaring from the bleachers.

On the other side of the court, the youth basketball team Brady Brunch Jr., with players coming together from all across America, scurried and free-threw their way to the top against Atash. Meanwhile, the members of Meigu were titled champions across the volleyball net, breaking the anticipation surrounding the final



Jahangir Mehrkhodavandi

competitive match versus Mehr San Diego. And, as always, Ms. Khushnoor Patel of New York – who has become the beloved masseuse of the Z Games – provided complimentary massages to re-energize the athletes throughout the Games.

Whether a volleyball team strived to achieve a great group dynamic or a track runner practiced sprinting laps before a meet, all participants in all sports hoped to step onto the highest pedestal during the



Beshkan Dance Academy

Photo Dariush Jamasb





# FEZANA UPDATE

Volleyball team Meigu the champions from LA (left) shake hands with team Mehr San Diego (right) Photo F. Demehri



Khushnoor Patel of New York giving a massage to the athlete. Photo Cyrus Dholoo

closing ceremony as winners. Along with California's Meigu and Team LA, athletes from Texas, Massachusetts, Arizona, Virginia, Canada, Australia, and England experienced the glory of attaining medals first-hand.

Fortunately, after each day of intense competitions, participants had the chance to unwind and let loose at social events. On the first night, beach night was hosted at Mariner's Point on Mission Bay Park where everyone conversed with old friends and made new ones while allowing the cool, tranquil setting of the ocean to relax them after a day of heated games. In celebration of 4th of July, Zarathushtis came in their semi-formal attire at night to shake their tail feathers to music provided by DJ AI, and watch the fireworks display at the Jenny Craig Pavilion Patio.

For the final bang, the last night was one of glamour, humor, and enthusiasm as participants came in their finest, formal outfits, as the hilarious comedian K-Von had the audience slapping their knees, and as the infamous Persian band Sandy had every inch of the dance floor covered, at the exquisite Hyatt Regency

Mission Bay. Every night of the Zarathushti Games, released the tension built through competition, allowing individuals to show off their dance moves, enjoy the crackle of laughter, and create everlasting bonds of friendship.

On the final day, medals of gold, silver, and bronze were awarded to high achieving athletes at the closing ceremony. Children smiling as though they had clothes hangers stuck in their mouths held their medals high in the air while proud adults stood tall upon the pedestals with friends, families, and fans applauding away. Looking back at the moments of victory felt by several, the countless friendships formed through an organization of faith, and the union of hundreds of Zarathushtis from all over the world, the 11th



Zarathushti Games of 2008 was to say the least, a success.

For a listing of the winning teams and individuals please visit the ZSC website at: [www.zathletics.com](http://www.zathletics.com). If your local Zoroastrian Center is interested in hosting the 2010 Zarathushti Games please contact ZSC at [zsc@fezana.org](mailto:zsc@fezana.org) for further details.



**Anahita Dianat** of Iranian heritage, was born in 1990 in Los Angeles, California. She attended high school at the California Academy of Mathematics and Sciences where she was editor in chief for the Journalism Production Club and vice president of the Future Health Professions of America Club.

She will attend the University of California, San Diego this fall for the class of 2012 as a human biology major. Anahita has been an active volunteer with ZSC for the past 6 years.



## Brain Child Of The Foundation For The Development of Udvada Becomes A Reality On April 24, 2008

The Zoroastrian Information Centre (ZIC) was inaugurated in Udvada on April 24th 2008 on Adar mah and Adar Roz, the 1,287th anniversary of the establishment of the Iranshah fire according to the Zarathushti calendar. This centre is the brainchild of the Foundation for the Development of Udvada (FDU), a body constituted of Gujarat Government nominees and Parsi social activists and set up with government funds.

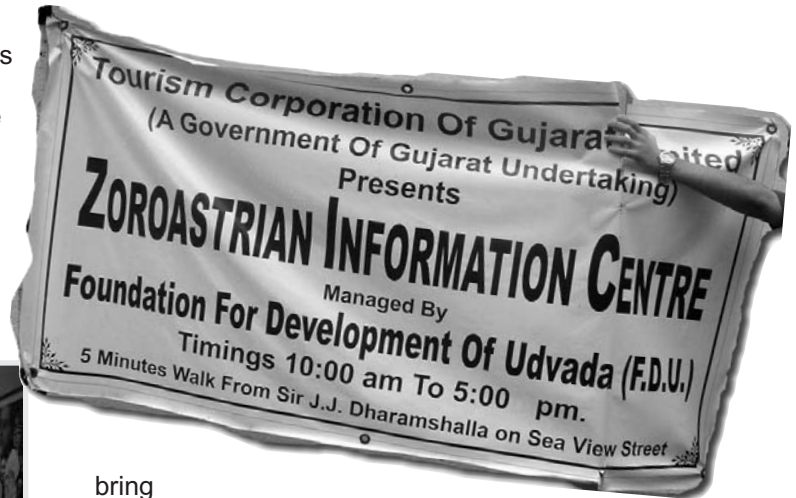


The concept of FDU-ZIC was born in 2002 at the behest of the Chief Minister of Gujarat Mr Narendra Modi, to showcase the Parsi community as a beacon of peaceful co-existence and commitment to the nation. He had said "kharekhar doodh maa bhelai gayaa Chee (they have truly mixed with the milk). They have never asked for anything from the government they have always given. For the first time the government has given a donation of its own accord".

Dr Mehroo Bengalee, Zarathushti member of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) and one of the chief guests mentioned that the Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi had conveyed to her that whatever "we, as Parsi Zarathushtis desire, he is willing to grant."

Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy, the 8th baronet, who cut the ceremonial ribbon of the ZIC mentioned that the best asset of ZIC is that it is located in Udvada with a combination of the community's ancient and modern past, under one roof, for its members to draw inspiration from our countless achievements."

The High Priest of Udvada, Dastur Khurshed Dastoor and chairman of the Foundation for the Development of Udvada talked of the opposition and mudslinging that he and managing trustee Dinshaw Tamboly had to face for the past 6 years. People went to the Chief Minister to stay the project claiming this will



bring in "Neo-Zarathushtis", and members of WAPIZ carried out a baseless and dogged propaganda against the establishment of this Centre.

Opposition was also voiced, for declaring Udvada with a Heritage Status as it was feared this would bring tourists and neo-Zarathushtis to Iranshah. Dastur Dastoor explained that "the main purpose of a heritage status is to prevent growth, not to have nude women parading on the beach or to provide entry for neo-Zarathushtis". The area around the Iranshah has already been declared as a no-parking, no honking, no hawking zone.

The Trustees of the Foundation for Development of Udvada (FDU) purchased an old charming bungalow consisting of a few small rooms which have been converted into an Information Centre. This proved a challenge, to architects, Mr. Pankaj Joshi and Mr. Jamshid Bhiwandiwalla who identified the heritage structure and assisted, with its restoration and curation. (They in fact surveyed the whole Udvada village and stated it needed heritage status) They gave the bungalow a brand new look without compromising on its quaint charm. After much thought five rooms were allocated to hold the exhibits (see detailed report of Homai Modi).

**In Udvada over 20 parsi properties have been sold to non-parsis and high rise buildings have been built.**

**In 2008 the total population of Udvada is 7,000, of which there are only 120 parsis left with 100 of them being over the age of 65!!!**



Displays in the Zoroastrian Information Centre. Photos Sarosh Daruwalla , Mazda Audio Lab.

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## A COMMUNITY HERITAGE

**Mrs. Homai N. Modi**

**Trustee, Foundation for Development of Udvada**

In 1991 as part of the year long Platinum Jubilee Celebrations of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, a two week exhibition called "Parasika" was held with the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Mumbai, on their premises. The exhibition was visited not only by crowds of Bombayites but those from other cities and countries as well, it portrayed the beginning of creation, different dynasties of Persia, Zarathushtra's teachings, our coming to India, our "reet rivajes" (customs and rituals) and outstanding contribution of Zarathushtis in the national and international arena. There were at that time several requests from Parsis and non-Parsis to make the exhibition into a permanent one or even a traveling one. However, the loaning of most artifacts from individuals, fire temples, Institutions and libraries, made this impossible for security and other reasons.

Therefore, when I was requested to work on a permanent Information Centre at Udvada, even though on a very much smaller scale, I was delighted and tried in some ways to replicate the earlier exhibition. However, the Trustees of the Foundation for Development of Udvada (FDU) having purchased an old dilapidated bungalow consisting of just a few small rooms which was to be converted into an Information Centre, proved challenging. We were greatly assisted by architects, Mr. Pankaj Joshi and Mr. Jamshid Bhiwandiwalla who identified the heritage structure and assisted with its restoration and curation. After much thought we allocated five rooms to include the following:-

**Room – 1** : Portrayal of ancient dynasties – The Pishadian and Kayanian, Achaemenian, Parthian and Sassanian. Aptly, this room also contains the life of Firdausi and his monumental work – the Shahname.

**Room – 2** : Zarathushtra's life and teachings. The tenets of our religion, emergence of various customs and portrayal of ceremonies such as the navjote, wedding and death.

**Room – 3** : This room replicates the Iransha. (All rooms also hold varied exhibits such as the Jantar for kusti weaving, Parsi dress wear of men, women and children etc).

**Room – 4** : As 'Parasika' had exhibited many old coins and other memorabilia, this room showcases instead the present excavations of the Bahrot caves, Sanjan,

the journey of the Holy Iransha and the origin and growth of Udvada.

**Room –5:** This room showcases how a miniscule Parsi community which took refuge in India over 1300 years ago, contributed immensely to nation building in various fields. The contributions of a few such personalities who were even acclaimed internationally, find their home in this room though many of importance have been unfortunately left out due to constraints of space. On an upper floor, a library has been set up to give more information through books and audio/visual presentations. In the garden, a quaint little cafeteria exists for Udvadaites and others to sample Parsi delights while mingling with each other and educating themselves, for there is no active meeting place or club in Udvada for its residents.

It has been my experience when I ran the Young Collegians' Zoroastrian Association, that a meeting ground for the young – and even not so young, often turns into a 'marital bureau'.

This Information Centre, I hope and pray, therefore will bring not only more people to Udvada to have a glimpse of it, but also develop Udvada by bringing back Parsis to dwell here and give them opportunities of earning and making a living, thus making it throb and thrive once again. How can the Holiest of Holiest-the Sacred Iransha dwell where its followers do not? This was what motivated me to work for the Centre and this is the miracle I hope to see in the years ahead. May it be so even as I pray. **Atha Jamyat Yatha Afrinami.**



**Mrs. Homai N. Modi** is the Trustee & Joint Honorary Secretary, K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, Co-President, Council of World Religions for Peace, Honorary Secretary, Indian Red Cross Society, Maharashtra State Branch and Bombay City Branch and elected Member, National Managing Body, New Delhi. In January 2007 she was awarded by the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, New Delhi for valuable contribution in expanding and strengthening existing relations between India and Iran.



## THE ZOROASTRIAN INFORMATION CENTRE IN UDVADA

### Noshir H. Dadrawala

The Zoroastrian Information Center (ZIC) which was inaugurated on April 24th 2008 fulfills a long felt need in the community to showcase the history, culture, religion as also some of the unique custom and traditions of this miniscule community. The life-size replica of the sanctum sanctorum of Holy Iranshah will be of particular interest to non-Zarathushtis.

Critics have often questioned the wisdom of establishing ZIC in Udvada instead of Mumbai or some other city. In my humble view Udvada is the right place to have such a Centre. Who has the time to visit a museum



in Mumbai? On the other hand, in Udvada, once Parsi families have paid homage to Iranshah they can spend a relaxing evening or even the day at the ZIC's library or at the cafeteria in a sylvan and culturally rich atmosphere. Besides, more Parsis from all over India and abroad visit Udvada than any other place.

The building (left) where ZIC is housed, is a beautiful old-fashioned bungalow situated amid swaying palm and other trees. Architect Jamshid Bhiwandiwalla deserves full credit for giving this structure a brand new look without compromising its original charm.

The historical, cultural and religious information on display is reliable and validated by leading scholars. It is not yet all too comprehensive. However, one hopes that over time the data, information and items on display will continue to be augmented and updated.

My hearty congratulations to the trustees of the FDU for this initiative. Full credit should also be given to the Government of Gujarat and particularly Chief Minister Mr. Narendra Modi for suggesting the idea of a Zoroastrian Information Centre and backing it up with financial support.

*Photos of the building and banner courtesy Rukshana Dastoor*



**Mr. Noshir H. Dadrawala** is CEO of the 'Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy'. He has authored several books on management and governance of nonprofits in India. He has also contributed research papers for the Johns Hopkins and Harvard Universities. He is regional contributing editor of the 'International Journal on Non-profit Law' and writes for several other journals and publications. He also teaches at various Business Schools and Social Science Institutes in India.



## Ancient India and Iran Trust Conference

### 'Zoroastrians Past and Present'

By Jesse S. Palsetia, Assoc Prof, History,  
University of Guelph



Group photo above from left to right:

**Row 1:** Mitra Sharafi (Univ. of Wisconsin), Maria Macuch (Berlin), Simin Patel (SOAS), Dorab Mistry (ZTFE), Heide Elfenbein (Cambridge).

**Row 2:** Almut Hintze (SOAS), Leon Goldman (SOAS), Bahman Moradian (SOAS), Bi Bo (SOAS), Charlotte de Blois (Royal Asiatic Society, London)

**Row 3:** Shirin Dastur (Mumbai), Jamasp Dastur (SOAS), Nicholas Sims-Williams (SOAS), Ursula Sims-Williams (British Library)

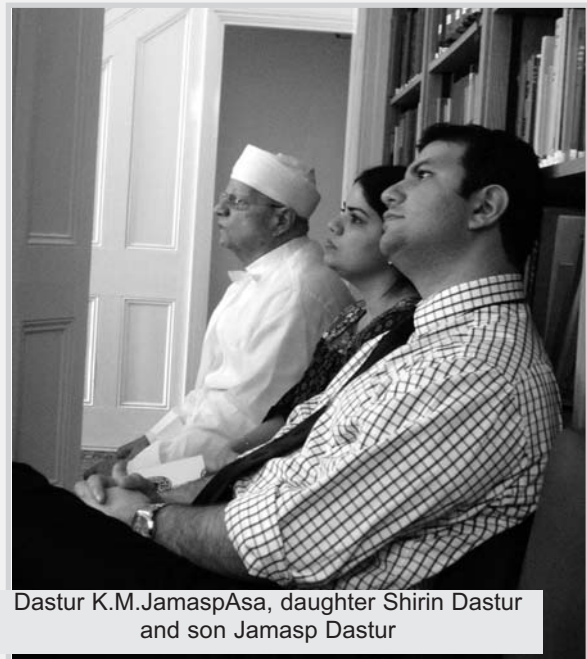
**Row 4:** Dastur Kaikhusroo M. JamaspAsa (Mumbai), Helmut Humbach (Mainz), Bridget Allchin (Cambridge), Jesse Palsetia (Guelph University)

**Row 5:** Francois de Blois (SOAS), Prods Oktor Skjaervoe (Harvard), Jean Kellens (Paris), Raymond Allchin (Cambridge), David Bivar (SOAS), Sir Nicholas Barrington (Cambridge)

**Row 6:** Dan Sheffield (Harvard), the remaining participants cannot be recognized on the picture

On June 7 to 8, 2008 an academic conference was held at Cambridge, UK organized by the Ancient India and Iran Trust (AIIT) and its secretary, *Dr Almut Hintze of the School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS)*, the University of London. The conference brought together academics, scholars, notable Zoroastrian community leaders and members of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, and graduate students from Britain, Europe, North America and India with interest in Zoroastrian and Parsi studies. (see legend below for photo on left)

The conference was to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the AIIT, and took place in the intimate Victorian quarters of the AIIT building at 23 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge, formerly the home of *Sir Harold Bailey*. *Sir Harold Bailey, Professor Joan van Lohuizen, and Drs. Bridget and Raymond Allchin* started the AIIT as an independent educational charity to encourage the study of the early civilizations and languages of the Indian subcontinent, Iran, and Central Asia. The AIIT is a jewel of Cambridge that houses a library of 28,000 scholarly works, many very rare, and provides a place for conferences, public lectures, and study and contemplation to scholars from around the world. The conference provided the opportunity for a financial appeal of £3.5 million for the long-term plan of the AIIT



Dastur K.M. JamaspAsa, daughter Shirin Dastur and son Jamasp Dastur

towards building an extension to the existing premises that would provide for a much-needed larger lecture room and space for the extensive manuscript and photo archive of the trust. The AIIT's broader connections to





Zoroastrian studies and the Zarathushti community were highlighted with the ZTFE providing a donation of £25,000 made possible by the Zartoshty brothers.

The conference was entitled '**Zoroastrians Past and Present**' and the lectures included topics on Zoroastrianism, Iranian philology, and Parsi history. Six sessions were held over the two days, and introduced by *Sir Nicholas Barrington, the former British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Malcolm Deboo of the ZTFE, Ursula Sims-Williams of the British Library, Dr. Bi Bo, François de Blois, and Professor Nicholas Sims-Williams, respectively.*

**DAY ONE** *Dorab Mistry*, former President of the ZTFE, eloquently noted the illustrious history of Parsis in leadership capacities in various areas of endeavor in the past, and made an appeal to Parsis to strive for greater leadership roles in present-day politics. *Professor John Hinnells* noted the considerable accomplishments of *Dadabhai Naoroji* in Britain between 1885 and 1905, and graduate student *Dinyar Patel* provided a detailed account of M.K. Gandhi's complicated relationship with the Parsis of India.

In **session 2**, *Dastur K.M. JamaspAsa* noted the state of Zoroastrian religious study in the past and the present. *Dasturji's* appeal for continuing scholarship in Zoroastrian studies was aptly answered by the scholarship of *Professor Maria Macuch*, who provided new insights into property and law in the Pahlavi marriage contract. *Professor Mitra Sharafi* brought her legal and historical analysis to understanding the Parsi Chief Matrimonial Court of Bombay between 1893 to 1929, and detailed patterns of Parsi use of the courts.

In **session 3**, *Professor Jesse Palsetia* elaborated on the role of the Parsi businessman and philanthropist *Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy* in the public culture of nineteenth century Bombay. *Khojeste Mistree* provided a passionate defense of the Zarathushti identity against the acculturative influences Zarathushtis are adopting in India and the diaspora. Graduate student *Dan Sheffield* closed the first day's presentations with a well-researched analysis of the Parsi priest *Mulla Firuz* and his place in Zarathushti history.

**DAY TWO** highlighted research on Zoroastrian religious studies and Iranian philology.

In **session 4**, *Professor Prods Oktor Skjærvø* noted the challenges faced in translating and understanding concepts from the ancient Zoroastrian literature. Graduate student *Bahman Moradian* provided an informative account of the state of the Iranian Zarathushtis and the *daxme* of Iran. *Professor Jean Kellens* provided new analysis of the *yasna* ceremony.

**Session 5** began with *Dr. Yuhan Vevaina* providing a masterful analysis of the Zoroastrian eschatology. Graduate student *Leon Goldman* elaborated on the role and function of females in religious life discernible from the religious literature. *Professor Helmut Humbach*, renowned for his translation of the Gathas of Zarathushtra, provided an analysis of the Rabatak inscription, a rock inscription written in the Bactrian language and the Greek script, discovered in 1993 in



*From left:* Rusi Dalal, Paurushasp Jila, Dorab Mistry, Nicholas Barrington, Bridget Alschin, Noshir Avari, and Almut Hintze

Afghanistan, and which highlights the rule of the Kushana king *Kanishka* and his use of regional religious and royal symbolism. *Dr. Elizabeth Tucker* provided an analysis of the Avestan phrase *fraspaiaoxra*, while *Dr Almut Hintze* provided an analysis of the Avestan 'ghost' word *auuah* or 'water'.

The AIIT conference presentations highlighted the tremendous on-going scholarship and commitment to Zoroastrianism, Zoroastrian literature, and the history of the Parsis of India and the diaspora, and the involvement of the Zarathushti community and organizations such as the AIIT augur well for Zoroastrian academic studies in the decades to come.

**Donation of £25,000 presented by ZTFE on behalf of Zartoshty Brothers to AIIT.**

*Photos courtesy Dr Almut Hintze*



## A Weekend with Khojeste

### Afreed Mistry

Zarathushtis of the Greater Toronto Area had the pleasure of spending three eventful days with Khojeste Mistree from May 24 to 26, 2008. On the first evening, Khojeste talked on **“Zoroastrianism, A Living Faith”** and followed it up with a slide-show on **“A Pilgrimage to Zoroastrian Iran,”** at the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM) campus. About 250 people attended the lecture, including local Parsi and Irani Zarathushtis, Religious Studies Professor Raffaelli from University of Toronto Mississauga, and even some Zarathushtis from as far as British Columbia. There was a very large representation from the youth, who found Khojeste to be a very captivating and informative speaker.

The theme of Khojeste’s talk stressed on daily practices in Zoroastrianism, which enable us to live a good Zarathushti life. The highlight of his talk was when he pulled out a kushti and proceeded to demonstrate to the audience, the correct way of tying and untying the kushti. He mentioned that the kushti is actually tubular (hollow) and serves as protection from evil. The act of untying and re-tying the kushti signifies re-affirming one’s faith and devotion to the Zarathushti religion. Many in the audience were very thankful for being shown the correct procedure, and committed themselves to do the kushti thenceforth in the right manner.

The slide-show was very detailed and extremely interesting. Khojeste explained every slide in great depth and captivated the audience with numerous anecdotes associated with his travels to Iran. There were slides of the major religious and historic places in Iran including the Persepolis ruins, Cyrus’ tomb, and Naksh-e-Rustom. He regaled the audience with many stories from the various trips he has made to Iran. Some stories had very spiritual themes which sounded very intriguing and gave “goose bumps” to many in the audience. Khojeste has been organizing trips to Iran from Mumbai twice a year, for many years, and there was a great deal of interest and zeal shown by many Zarathushtis, especially the youth, in visiting Iran and India.

Following the slide-show, there was ample opportunity for asking questions but as always, there were more questions than there were hours left in the evening. Despite Khojeste’s reiteration that it was not his intention to create any controversy, there were several questions asked on some controversial issues, which were very pragmatically answered by Khojeste. He mentioned that (Parsi/Irani) ethnicity is very important and an integral part of the Zarathushti religion, and efforts should be made to improve the



quality, rather than quantity, of Zarathushtis. He observed that traditional Zarathushtis and the neo-Zarathushtis could both exist in their own parallel tracks of practising the religion, without one infringing on the other, and it would be interesting to see which group would stand the test of time. Khojeste’s talk has been recorded and the DVD will soon be available for purchase.

Khojeste further shared his insights and knowledge on the Zoroastrian religion with a smaller group of Zarathushtis on the second evening, over dinner at a local Greek restaurant in Toronto. Various topics were discussed, many with vocal enthusiasm, leaving those present with an insatiable thirst for more information. In addition to getting further questions answered, the third evening offered a very inspiring and spiritual experience to those who attended a demonstration by Khojeste on Zoroastrian meditation.

Here is what some of the attendees had to say –

\* I wish to express my sincere thanks to...all the people who helped in organising last night’s event! Indeed, the power point presentation (Iran slide-show) given by Khojeste was very inspiring! It is my wish and desire that someday I will be able to go on a pilgrimage of Zoroastrian Iran, led by Khojeste. ....last evening was a real treat!

Best wishes, Niloufer Irani

\* Thank you so much!! Please let’s have this more often as we can all benefit from such wisdom, especially from someone who is so down to earth and well-spoken.

Love and blessings, Khushnam, Freyana and Shahnaz.



**Khojeste Mistree, M.A. (Oxon.), F.C.A.,** is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales, and also holds an Honours degree in Oriental Studies from the University of Oxford. In 1979, he co-founded Zoroastrian Studies – a registered, not-for-profit, public charitable Trust in Mumbai, with the primary objective of disseminating religious knowledge to adults and children. He is also co-founder of the World Alliance of Parsi and Irani Zarhoshtis (WAPIZ) – an organization that was formed in 2005 to uphold the voice of tradition in religious and cultural matters.

Khojeste is married with two children. He is the author of “Zoroastrianism - An Ethnic Perspective” a popular book on the Zarathushti religion and a handbook for educating adults and children. He also co-edited “Zoroastrian Tapestry – Art, Religion & Culture”, with his wife, Firoza, who is an enthusiastic partner in all of Khojeste’s religious works and activities.



**Afreed B. Mistry** has been an active member of FEZANA since 1999. She was the ZYNA Co-Chair from 2003-2006 and Co-Chair of the very successful neXus 2003 Youth Congress held in Toronto and with over 400 youth attending the congress, it was the largest attended youth congress in North America.

Afreed enjoys studying about the Zarathushti religion in her spare time and has attended numerous lectures and congresses over the years. She has been a religion class teacher for 15 years in Ontario and in 2007 she was the recipient of the Shehnaz Munshi “Award for outstanding teacher”



## ZSO Religion Class Retreat 2008

Reported by Karina Tarapore

Although much concern is expressed in the Zarathushti community over the possible extinction of the faith, the young people of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario banded together on the weekend of May 17th 2008 to prove that the Zoroastrian community is alive now more than ever. Maybe it’s time that Zoroastrians around the world ask themselves whether they are more concerned about the quantity rather than the quality of the individuals within their faith. A few weeks ago, the ZSO Religious Class team, spearheaded by its chair, Mr. Daraius M. Bharucha, organized their second overnight retreat at the Meherban Guiv Darbe Meher (MGDM) for the graduating class of 2008. The retreat and leadership camp is the brainchild of Mr. Bharucha, giving youth a space to feel secure in expressing their

thoughts about their faith, exercising their leadership skills as well as spending time with other young members of their community. The demographics of the group ranged from encompassing graduates as young as 14 to volunteer leaders aged 23. In total there were 40 participants at the retreat.



Team Leaders engaged in pyramid building activity

On the agenda were activities involving team problem solving, group discussions regarding world poverty and information sessions on Zarathushti rituals and Persian history.

The group also participated in various games, sports and evening bonfires. Although there was a difference in ages amongst the attendees and the volunteers, the entire group found common ground, to bond and learn together, creating an extremely inspirational vision for the future of

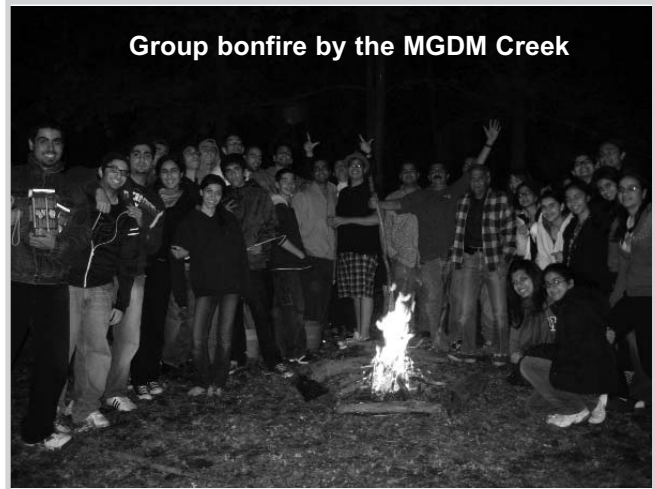
this community.





One of the primary goals of the retreat was not only to educate the younger members of the community on aspects of our faith, but to mould this generation into leaders of the highest caliber, that the Zarathushti community as a whole can be proud of. Graduates of the ZSO religious class team may be the younger members of the Parsi/Irani Zarathushti community today but are also the leaders of tomorrow.

The tremendous response and feedback received from the participants was encouraging for the organizers and a definite motivation for the arrangement of future events. Participants gained profound insight from Mr. Daraius M. Bharucha on an array of Zarathushti rituals and were exposed to the magnificent history surrounding the once phenomenal Persian Empire. Aside from the religious



**Group bonfire by the MGDM Creek**



**Group of participants**

aspect of the retreat, organizers also felt it important to present the youth with the chance to develop leadership skills, which they will take away with them and use in every facet of their life. However, the most overwhelmingly moving event was the gathering of young minds, to discuss and brainstorm causes and solutions to the devastating poverty that exists around the world, and the realization by all individuals present, that united, young or old, a small contribution can bring about change in a big way.

The relationships made during the retreat, not only between participants, but between facilitators as well as volunteers, exemplified the tremendous vibrancy and vitality of the Zarathushti faith. If one were to witness the collection of youth that entered the Darbe Meher and the young adults who left the following day, the fears of the diminishment of the Zarathushti faith would quickly be replaced by a sense

of pride in viewing a future group of strong, capable and intellectually sound leaders. If the youth arming themselves with knowledge and resources about their faith and different aspects and learning to use that knowledge in a wise and harmonious manner for the future benefit of the community at large, is not truly Zarathushti, then I submit to you, what is?



**Karina Tarapore**, age 21, recently graduated with a degree in Business Administration and is currently completing a second degree in Political Science, both from York University. Karina aspires to one day pursue a career in law, and is currently working for Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto. She is involved in several aspects of the Zarathushti community in Ontario, including the ZSO religious classes, as well as in coordinating other youth and social events. Karina resides in Toronto, with her parents Khushro and Gulshan Tarapore, and her younger sister Zenia.



**Group prayers before every meal**



## Farishta Murzban Dinshaw

One's identity is a mishmash of history and geography, biology and literature, language and religion. The same can be said for any city. It too breathes and changes and grows, influenced by the people who live in it, who love it, and sometimes despair over it. This edition of FEZANA explores how a community, the Parsis, and a city, Karachi, exist together in a symbiotic relationship.

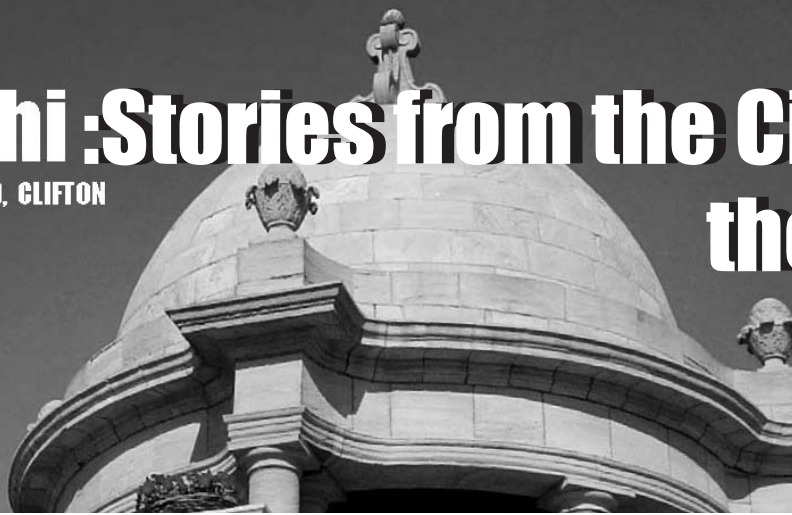
I am a proud Zarathushti, and a bred-in-the-bones Karachiite so it has been a pleasure to collate stories by different people highlighting the best of the community and the city. As far as possible, I have left the pieces

have been reserved for another time. I am also conscious of the few Irani Zarathushti voices, but the overwhelming presence in Karachi was, and is, that of those who trace their roots to India and is, therefore, reflected in these pages. Although a significant number of Parsis settled in Karachi, other cities like Lahore, Multan and Quetta also had Parsi communities. Their stories need to be told as well.

I would like to dedicate this issue in memory of Virasp Mehta (1925 – 2008), a teacher and a friend, and a treasured member of our community in Karachi.

# “Apru” Karachi : Stories from the City by the Sea

KATRAK BANDSTAND, CLIFTON  
PHOTO BY KHUDABUK ABRU



unedited to showcase the individuality of the writers' voices, quirks, colloquialisms and all. There are several history books that feature Parsi contribution to Karachi, such as *Karachi during the British Era: Two Histories of a Modern City* (Oxford University Press, 2007), and *The Karachi Zoroastrian Calendar: A Record of Important Events in the Growth of the Parsi Community in Karachi* (Punthakey, 1989) so it seemed redundant to regurgitate the facts. Historic information has been included only to establish context. The other stories have been organized using a spatial-social lens, using individual memories to illustrate Parsi presence in public, private, and personal spaces in Karachi. Interestingly, many social experiences and references to places run through as a thread in the different stories testifying to the close-knit lifestyle of the community. There is also a feature from the perspective of “outsiders” looking in at the community.

There are many stories still left to tell – the building of the dokhma; the establishment of the Parsi Panchayat; the contribution of the Ankleserias, the Cowasjees, the Minwallas, the Rajkotwalas and other illustrious families; and more contemporary stories about the Zoroastrian Youth Association; Shalimar café's batasas and wine biscuits; the band Rockstock 75 who were the staple of navjotes and weddings in the 70s and 80s – but they

### Farishta Murzban

**Dinshaw** was born in Karachi, Pakistan. At fifteen, she began volunteering at the Friday School for Little Zarathushtis, and continued to organize activities for children till she left for Toronto, Canada, in 2001. *Discovering Ashavan*, her novel about a young boy befriended by Asho Zarathushtra, was published in 2000, and all proceeds from its sale were donated to the Karachi Zarthosti Banu Mandal for education projects. She is a frequent contributor to FEZANA Journal and Hamazor, and has presented papers on Zarathushti heritage and religion at several international congresses, including the World's Religions after September 11 Congress held in Montreal in 2006.

Farishta works with immigrant and ethno cultural communities in southern Ontario to educate them about family violence prevention, and trains mainstream service providers to respond to violence survivors with culturally-appropriate services. She is also affiliated with the MA in Immigration and Settlement Studies program at Ryerson University.





## A TALE OF TWO CITIES IN ONE

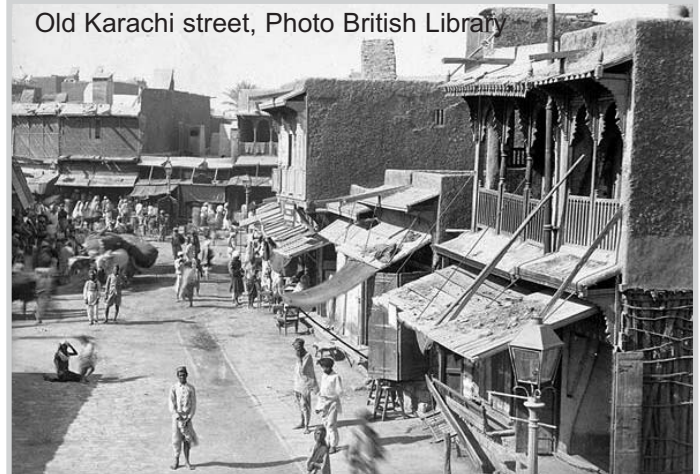
Farishta Murzban Dinshaw

As a multicultural trading post, Karachi had evolved around bazaars [markets], mosques, and temples, with commercial and residential areas intersecting each other. After the British took over Karachi in 1839, they established a military cantonment, and native residents were not allowed free access to the 'white' areas. The British segregated themselves from the indigenous population in order to maintain the distance between the ruler and the ruled. This divide significantly affected the spatial character of Karachi, giving rise to a "dual city" (Lari & Lari, 1996).

The Parsis were able to cross this divide because they adapted their language and lifestyle to British norms. Lührman, (1996) writes of this era: "Parsis had power and success at the height of the Raj, and both the means to achieve that power and the consequence of it, they identified themselves as like the British and unlike their Hindu countrymen." (p99). Unfortunately, in the post-colonial setting in Pakistan, this served to disaffect them. Although Mohammad Ali Jinnah declared in his speech to the Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947, "You may belong to any religion or caste or creed, there is no discrimination between one community and another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are citizens of one state." (www.pakistani.org), the reality that succeeded him was that in 1956, Pakistan became an Islamic republic.

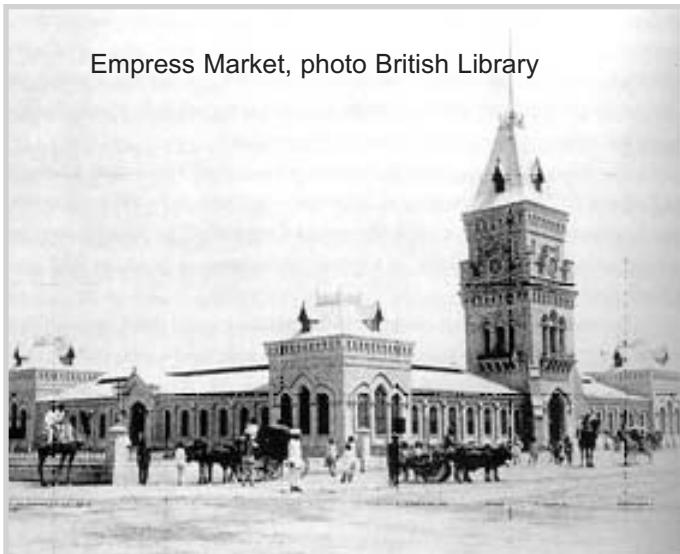
For Parsis of Karachi, the concept of the "dual city" took on new meaning as they sought a new space for themselves. In the face of increasing Islamic fervor, their small numbers fuelled the need to carve out a safe, private space for themselves, living in walled colonies, and promoting exclusive socializing. This self-imposed insularity has its advantages and disadvantages. It has

Old Karachi street, Photo British Library



kept the community identity strong and unified, and safeguarded them by keeping them under the radar of extremists, but it has also hindered integration. Furthermore, a remnant of British-influenced superiority has kept them apart from the local lifestyle, intensifying the community's own perception of themselves as different from mainstream society. External influences have exacerbated the situation. The momentum acquired by fundamentalism has served to confirm their feeling of 'Otherness'. For instance, franchise rights are limited for non-Muslims who can only elect a representative to the Parliament. Parsis also find themselves excluded in less overt ways; by an Islam-slanted school curriculum, at times of promotion, in having their patriotism viewed with suspicion. A cumulative effect of this has led to an exodus of Parsis to secular and politically-stable countries in the West. The present community largely comprises seniors, giving rise to the prediction that the community will soon disappear. Fortunately, Parsi contributions to the city, which once made Karachi the "Pearl of the East", will survive as a legacy of their philanthropy and vision.

Empress Market, photo British Library



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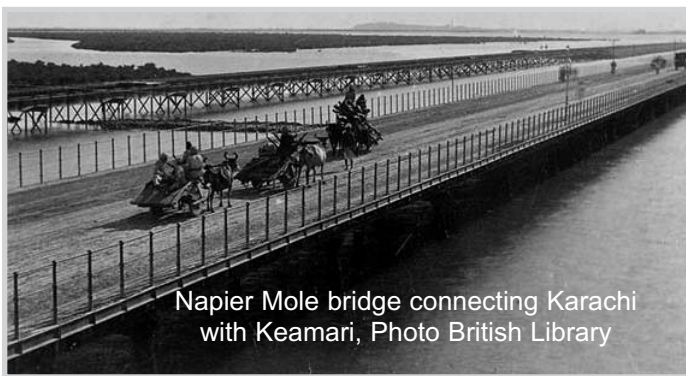
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## COMING TO KARACHI

In 1843, the province of Sindh was annexed into the British Empire, and Charles Napier, the first governor of Sindh, transferred the regional capital from Hyderabad to Karachi. The British established military cantonments outside the town limits. Napier recognized the potential of the harbor to make Karachi a free port. He built a lighthouse at Manora Point, and widened the entrance to the harbor, constructed docks, and connected the island of Keamari to Karachi with a bridge that was named after him. After the British takeover, many Parsis took the opportunity for trade in the new army cantonment to settle in this part of the world.



Napier Mole bridge connecting Karachi with Keamari, Photo British Library



Many of the current Parsi families living in Karachi can trace their roots to the first settlers. Several Parsi surnames – Contractor, Commissariat, Cooper – evolved from association with the British army during the Afghan War, others because of their professions. Hormasji Pestonji Shroff, who migrated in 1852, started a dubash [interpreter] business in Karachi. (Dubash is derived from two words, ‘du’ meaning two, and ‘bhasha’ meaning language). Jamshedji Rustamji Ghadyali came as the first Parsi watchmaker. Afterwards he changed his vocation and opened a liquor shop, probably because there were more drinkers than watch owners, but the surname

remained. Byramji Edulji began his career as a purchase officer in the police force and then became a Police Collector, and adopted the surname ‘Collector’ which is still carried on by his family.

Until 1844, the Parsis in Karachi were migrants who had left their homes in other parts of India to try their luck in the new boomtown. Horumusji Dadabhai Ghadiyali foresaw future prospects and built his own house in Saddar and, with it the foundations of a permanent Parsi community in Karachi.

## A BRITISHER’S ACCOUNT

In 1890, Alexander Baillie wrote in his book *Kurrachee; Past, Present and Future* (Pakistan Herald Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2005): “The number of Parsis residing in the town by no means represents their importance as factors of trade and commerce of the port. The community is not large throughout the country, and is said not to exceed a quarter of a million, but that body is compact and entirely self-supporting. There are no Parsi beggars, and there are no Parsi women of bad character. They are extremely charitable; they not only look after their own poor, but they raise a fund for paying the capitation tax levied on their co-religionists in Persia. They are clever at languages, and have a wondrous power of collecting information from all parts of the world. A Parsi in his office at Bombay probably knows more about the current opinions of Muhammadans and Hindus in India and its neighbor countries, than all our commissioners and collectors, put together, and could forecast what is likely to occur with much greater nicety, than our combined intelligence departments...Endowed with great quickness of perception, and animated with an insatiable desire to acquire wealth, which, however, they dispense freely, it is charged against them that they strike extremely hard bargains. Their commercial success is certainly well deserved, for they display an amount of energy and activity, which is seldom exceeded by Europeans...The number of Parsis in Karachi does not exceed 1000 but among them are to be found many cultivated gentlemen of great wealth and keen intellect, exceedingly charitable and patriotic, in the sense that they are always ready and anxious to develop, and benefit the town in which they reside, and in which their interest are concentrated.”

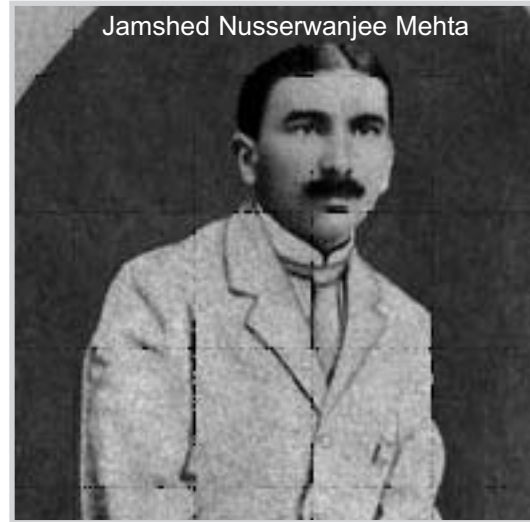
## CHARITY AND SERVICE

The charitable nature of the Parsi mentioned by Baillie was amply illustrated in their community service. As the population of Karachi grew, one of the severest problems that came with the growth was water shortage. People who could afford it, had wells dug on their property; others had to walk long distances to fill water in pitchers from community troughs. On 1 January 1861, Navajbai, widow of Dadabhai Shapurji Kothari had a well dug at Rattan Tallao for the exclusive use of the Parsi community. Later,



in 1869, public spirited Shapurji Soparivala had another well dug near Rattan Tallao for public use and handed it over to the municipality. In 1865, when Karachi suffered floods, with 20 inches of rain falling in six hours, a cholera epidemic spread through the town. Parsis once again rose to the occasion distributing clothes, food and medicine to the people of Karachi. One Parsi who stands out for philanthropy bordering on eccentricity was Hormusji Sohrabji Kothari, a prosperous contractor for the army. He supplied free sherry and champagne to cholera victims. It is not entirely surprising that the incentive was sufficient for some to fake the sickness!

Parsi presence in Karachi continued to grow in the twentieth century. The community gave rise to one of Karachi's most distinguished leaders, Jamshed Nusserwanjee Mehta, who has the unique distinction of being elected the Mayor of Karachi for twelve consecutive years, and is fondly remembered as the "Maker of Modern Karachi".



*Information in this article is extracted from "Beyond Compare -- Parsi Pioneers of Karachi" previously posted in 2005 by Farishta Murzban Dinshaw on www.vohuman.org.*



## SECTION I: PUBLIC SPACE

*This section highlights the stamp Parsis have left on Karachi's cityscape. Schools, hospitals, hotels bearing Parsi names are common in the older parts of the city where they reside. These articles describe important landmarks, and the stories and memories behind them.*

### TRIBUTES IN STONE

This feature depicts some of the major landmarks in Karachi testifying to Parsi presence in the city over a span of more than a hundred years, and which transcend Parsi identity to be symbolic of every Karachiite's identity.

#### 1882 - EDULJEE DINSHAW DISPENSARY

One of the leading names in nineteenth century Karachi was that of Edulji Dinshaw. He began as a



trader; subsequently he invested in real estate and became a major land owner. His family is noted for many charitable foundations, but particularly in health care, with dispensaries established in 1882, 1887 and 1903, at a time when epidemics were common. The Edulji

Dinshaw Dispensary, which opened in 1882, still stands in the heart of the city. He was also by far the largest donor of the Lady Dufferin Hospital founded in 1894, and still a major hospital in the city.

#### 1924 - NADIRSHAW EDULJI DINSHAW (NED) UNIVERSITY OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY

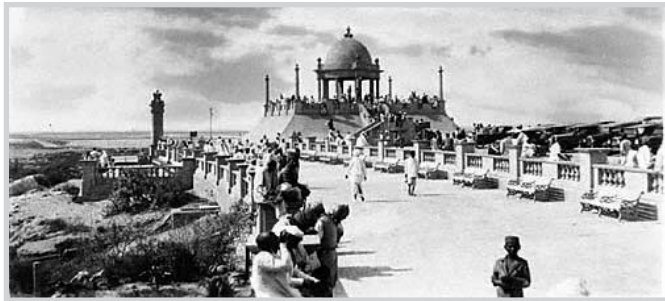
In 1921, to commemorate a visit to Karachi by the Prince of Wales an engineering college was founded in his name, but was renamed NED Engineering College in 1924 in honour of the substantial donations gifted by philanthropist Nadirshaw Edulji Dinshaw. In 1977, it was granted university status, and it currently offers graduate and post-graduate degrees in eighteen engineering disciplines as well as non-engineering disciplines like architecture, computer science, and mathematics. The campus is spread over 95 acres and its facilities include a central library with more than 95,000 books, a 600-seat auditorium, student hostels, a medical centre, mosque, cafeterias, gymnasium and a cricket/football ground.



#### 1926 - BANDSTAND AND KOTHARI PARADE

The Bandstand, with its elliptical dome and housing an octagonal seat, is one of the most recognizable landmarks in Karachi. It was built by Sir Kavasji Hormusji Katrak in 1926 and donated to the city of Karachi. It is built of pink Jodhpur sandstone, and is part of the Jehangir Kothari Parade at Clifton beach so called because the land on which the gardens and pier were





built was gifted by Jehangir Kothari. The foundation stone was laid by the Governor of Bombay, Sir George Lloyd on 10 February, 1919, and formally opened by Lady Lloyd on 5 January, 1920. The terraced Parade flanked by green lawns leads down to the Arabian Sea, and is a popular place for families to spend their summer evenings. In 2007, the Parade was incorporated as part of the newly developed 130-acre Bagh-e-Qasim [Qasim Gardens] by the Clifton Beach Development Project. (see page 49 for Houston Connection)

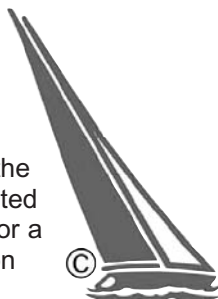


## 1970s - TEEN TALWAR MONUMENT

The Teen Talwar [Three Swords] is one of Karachi's most well known landmarks. It was commissioned by Pakistan's former President and Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to depict Pakistan Peoples Party's electoral symbol, the sword. In an interesting paradox, the three, white, marble swords are inscribed with Mohammad Ali Jinnah's slogan promoting peace and democracy - Unity, Faith and Discipline. Designed by Minoo Pirojshah 'Dada' Mistri it was chosen out of over 400 entries. Minoo Mistri's work includes Capitol Cinema, Rio Cinema, Paradise Cinema, the police headquarters on I. I. Chundrigar Road, and the Theosophical Hall.

## 1985 - AVARI TOWERS

At one time the tallest building in Karachi, this 22-storey hotel is one of the two hotels in the city owned and operated by the Avari family. [Turn to page xxx for a story on Beach Luxury Hotel]. The neon



yacht on the side of the building commemorates the gold medals won by Goshpi and Byram Avari for yachting at the

1978 Asian Games in Bangkok, and again at the 1982 Asian Games in New Delhi.



## NUSSERWANJEE BUILDING, INDUS VALLEY SCHOOL OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE

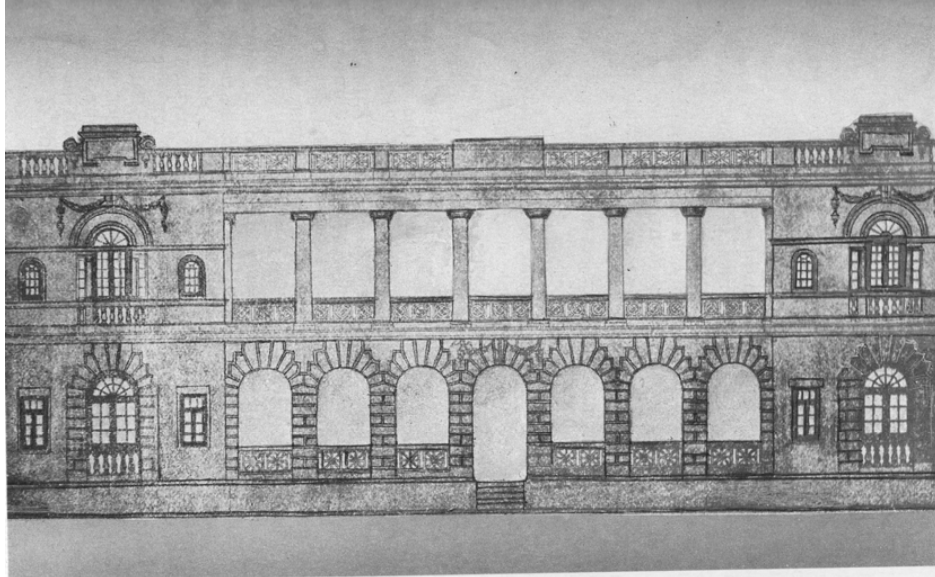
The Nusserwanjee Building was first constructed in 1903 by Nusserwanjee Rustomji Mehta, whose son Jamshed went on to become the first Mayor of Karachi. "First constructed" because a hundred years later, it was relocated and reconstructed at a new site as part of the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture campus. When built originally, it was a prosperous trading and manufacturing enterprise, but after years of neglect it was destined to be demolished. In 1991 a group of professional designers and architects decided to undertake a unique project of relocating it to their campus in Clifton and reconstructing it stone-by-stone. The reasons behind this project were to provide an innovative, hands-on, once-in-a-lifetime experience to the faculty and students in the area of architectural conservation, and to pay homage to Jamshed Nussewanjee Mehta for his role in making Karachi "Pearl of the East". This was a monumental undertaking when you imagine the logistics of breaking down a building,



cataloguing each brick, transporting the stones, and exactly rebuilding it according to the original plans. Incredibly, only 50 stones were damaged in the move.

*Information and photographs from various electronic sources. Avari Towers and logo courtesy Dinshaw Avari*





The Bai Gulbai Nusserwanji Mehta Parsi Maternity Home, Garden Road, Karachi.

*A city we will always love for all that it has  
given us*

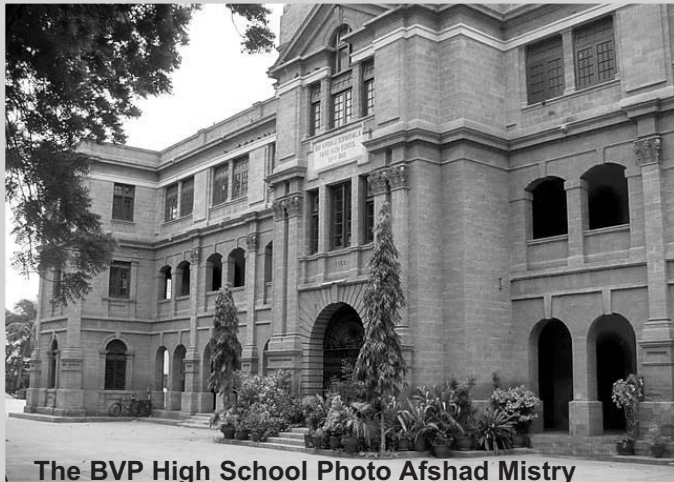
*Sillie & Jehanbux Mehta*

*We wish you good luck and look forward to  
reading the forthcoming issue*



## THE BEST YEARS OF MY LIFE

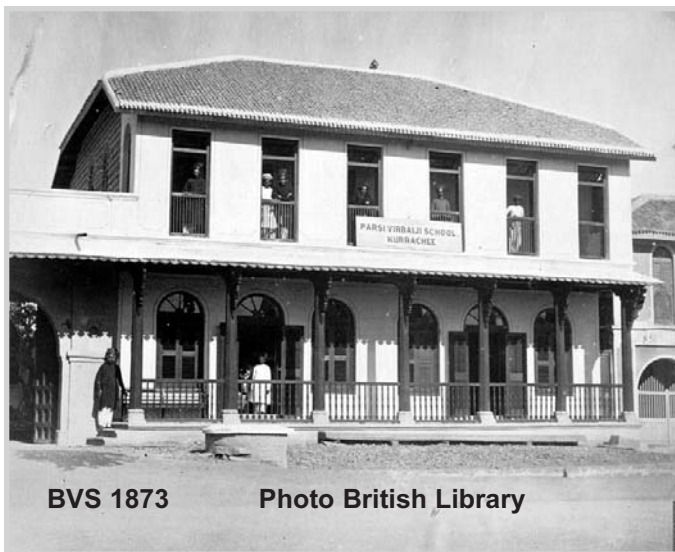
**Bai Virbaijee Soparivala Parsi High School**, popularly referred to as BVS, is a prestigious school



The BVP High School Photo Afshad Mistry

The best part of growing up in Karachi was spending thirteen years of my youth at Bai Virbaijee Soparivala Parsi High School. I have a very special relationship with the school as I am the great- great-grandson of Seth Shapurji Soparivala, who founded the first Parsi school in Karachi in 1859. During my school years I had the added privilege of being the son of the Principal, Deena Mistri (1). As one can imagine, this came with the added pressure of constantly having to do my best.

My early memories of BVS started in Montessori class where we typically spent three years of our pre-school years. Throughout the school years, the Parsi teachers that we had were gentle, loving and disciplined educators. Mehershi [Dubash] aunty was fond of playing her piano and singing songs, Ms. [Daulat] Mullah lovingly taught religious classes, and Mr. [Mehrwanji] Irani was thoroughly committed to teaching us technical drawing. These, and many other brilliant teachers, have made me who I am today. I truly feel that the traditional manner in which we were



BVS 1873 Photo British Library



BVS 1873 classroom Photo British Library

boasting alumni in all walks of life. A centenary volume (1859-1959) of "The Virbaijeeite", the school magazine, states that it started in 1859 as an elementary school for both boys and girls. In 1870, Shapurji H. Soparivala offered his spacious house, to accommodate the school. It was renamed Parsi Virbaiji School in memory of his beloved wife, who had died a year earlier. The opening ceremony was performed by Sir William Mereweather, the Commissioner of Sindh. In 1904, Virbaiji and Shapurji's eldest son Seth Khurshedji laid the foundation stone of the present school building, which was completed in 1906. **Afshad Minoo Mistry, a descendant of Virbaiji and Shapurji, reminisces about his school days.**

brought up at the BVS could not have taken place at any other school in Pakistan.

Being Parsi at BVS meant more than studying academic subjects. We were taught how to read and write Gujarati from Grades 1 to 5 by Mrs. [Meetha] Boatwalla, so we grew up learning three languages: English, which was the medium of instruction; Urdu, which is our national language and was taught as a second language; and Gujarati. Annual Gujarati elocution competitions held at Katrak Hall were always invigorating and fun, with students from our sister school, Mama Parsi Girls' Secondary School, also participating. We also learned our Zarathushti prayers in school and had regular Hamkara prayers in the assembly hall with the scent of sukhar and loban [sandalwood and incense] filling the morning air.

(1) Deena Mistri is the great-granddaughter of the school's founder and recipient of the President's Pride of Performance Award, 2001 for her services in the field of education.



Navroze was the best time of the year for Parsi boys who participated in the school band. The day would start at 4 a.m. at school where we would pick up our equipment and we would hit the first bagh for our yearly performance by 5 a.m. Many of the Parsi boys who grew up in Karachi will never forget those days; the popular BVS band tunes, celebrating daybreak on Navroze morning with friends, eating treats - sev, ravo, dahi, falooda - offered to us by the residents of the baghs and houses we visited. These memories will stay with me forever.



**Afshad Mistri** moved to the USA in 1982, and graduated with a B.S. degree in Computer Science from the University of Houston. Currently, he is employed at Apple Inc. in Cupertino. He resides in the Bay Area with his wife Meher and two

children, Tasha and Jamsheed. Afshad created the school alumni site [www.bvsvirbaijeeites.com](http://www.bvsvirbaijeeites.com)

## AND SO WE MARCHED ON TO KNOWLEDGE

*The Mama Parsi Girls' Secondary School officially separated from Bai Virbaijee Soparivala Parsi High School in 1918 as more and more girls were enrolled in school, and many Parsi families expressed a need for a separate girls' school. Till 1943, the school was open only to Parsi girls, catering to approximately 200 pupils. After Partition, at the request of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the doors were opened to students from other communities. **Maheen A. Rashdi** was a student at the school from 1977 to 1982. A renowned journalist in Pakistan, she shares her memories of going to a "Parsi" school.*

**Mama Parsi Girls' Secondary School 1925**



In school, I belonged to Dinshaw House (1), whose motto said, 'Faith' [Per fidem]. And that is one lesson learnt in school that I have desperately held on to in all tribulations that life has put in my way. While it might be

clichéd to say that my school taught me a lot, I cannot help it when my voice rises on a note of pride even now when I tell people that I studied at Mama School. Why it is so, I really cannot say. It is not that I was an ace student – far from it! But I knew that I was looked upon with a bit of awe amongst my cousins just because I was enrolled in a "Parsi" school. Mama School's edifice to this day seems palatial to me, and in those days it was actually visible from the road, not hidden behind the traffic and smog that dominates the downtown landscape now. The building, which in my mind's eye conjures up a vision of hallowed space, became a school in April of 1925 when the first cohort of young Mamaians sat for their first academic lessons in the present building. The school's documented history notes that the Zarathushti residents of Karachi, through donations and subscriptions, opened a balak shala [house of children] on 23 May 1859. Managed and cherished by Seth Shapurji Hormusji Soparivala and Seth Pestonji Byramji Kotwal, this institution went on to become Bai Virbaijee Soparivala Parsi High School. Parsi girls continued receiving elementary education at BVS, but when the requirement for a separate school for Parsi girls became a matter of great importance to the community, the founding fathers of the school, Khan Bahadur Ardeshir Hormusji Mama, Nowroji Nusserwanji Pochaji, and Seth Edulji Dinshaw pooled their efforts and resources to construct a school building for Parsi girls. At first the new Parsi girls' school was shifted to Mama Mansion. The construction of the present school building was started in 1920 and completed in 1925.

The magnificent Mama School building, however, did not just add to the scenic landscape of Karachi. The principles and standards taught within the walls created a

(1) The School Houses were named after Khan Bahadur Ardeshir Hormusji Mama, Nowroji Nusserwanji Pochaji, Seth Edulji Dinshaw, and Khan Bahadur Sheriarji Dadabhoy Contractor





Mama School 2008



nightmare that I would one day be beaten up by those who do not share my ideals! I give complete credit to my early education at Mama School for all my triumphs. Most of all, I cherish Ms. Zarin Mavalvala's instruction of the English language, which still serves me in good stead when working as an editor.

And no matter how many good friends I have collected during my adult years, anticipation of our bi-annual lunch meeting with my group of school friends still excites me. We still meet on the same level – no one

breed of women who, to this day, stand apart from the crass social strata which weighs a person's worth in dollars and cents. When I was in school, the Mamaians were above social disparity. Girls from affluent families mingled and bonded with life-long friendships with fellow Mamaians from less privileged families. No one discussed their father's luxury cars or bragged about where they lived. We were taught that boasting was a tacky trait. The messages of humility, faith, charity, and discipline were so thoroughly ingrained in us that my adult decisions became shaped on those principles.

boasts of rich husbands, new houses, or flashes diamonds the size of rocks. Most of the conversation is nostalgic and we inevitably end up remembering the dread of "minus marks" which, like Damocles' sword, would be ever present to make note of our lapses in school protocol as when I defiantly put mehendi [henna] on my hands at my aunt's wedding. Or when the one day I had sneaked in with a nail polish on my toes, I ended up having to take off my shoes and socks during a surprise cleanliness check! What are the chances of that happening in another school? Now when we reminisce about our school days, there is a hint of sadness in the nostalgia. Those times seem abundantly joyous, a world so carefree and safe that it is impossible to recreate in this day and age. Not only in terms of our having moved on in age and experience, but also in the context of wholesome school environments where emphasis was on manners and morals, not materialism and pretensions. It is my hope that the Parsi gentlemen who established Mama School realized what a great service they were doing to so many generations of young girls, who hopefully have gone on to teach their children the same values.

## LIFE AFTER SCHOOL

Most of my group went on to pursue professions and made a mark as doctors, teachers, and bankers. I ended up becoming a journalist. While there have been times in my professional capacity when I was covertly asked by the powers that be to circumvent the truth, steeped in the ideals of integrity and justice from my school days I have never opted to stand down from my moral high ground, despite my mother's



**Maheen A. Rashdi** is a journalist with DAWN, Pakistan's largest circulating English daily. She has worked with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) on conflict and gender

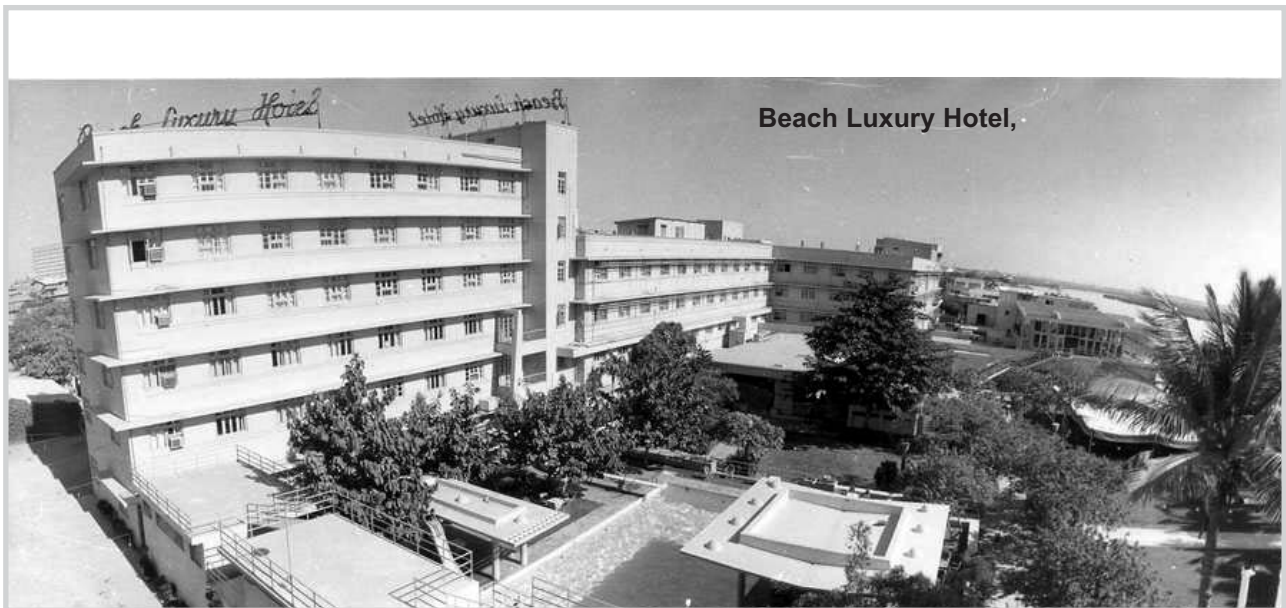
sensitive reporting. She compiled and edited the South Asia Press Freedom Report, 2007. She currently resides in Toronto where she freelances for the Toronto Sun and continues to write for DAWN.



## THE GOLDEN SPOON

*Dinshaw Byram Avari represents the third generation of hoteliers that have contributed to Karachi's landscape in a significant way. Their hotels, Beach Luxury Hotel and Avari Towers, have provided a backdrop for weddings, conferences, and concerts for more than half a century.*

I remember growing up during a time when we did not need gates or security guards. This was till the early '90s, but after our house was attacked a couple of times, we had to raise the walls around our house, and put up security fences. But in the '70s, we had carefree days of running



My late grandfather, Dinshaw B. Avari, after whom I am named, grew up as an orphan, but went on to build a successful hotel business, which now spans three countries. Whatever we are today is because he made something of himself. He would often remind his son, my father Byram, that he was born with a 'silver spoon' in his mouth and we, his grandchildren, with a 'golden spoon', but that our roots have humble beginning and that we should never forget this. My family's outlook of life, work, and relationships is framed around my grandfather's background and guiding principles of diligence, honesty, and looking after the needs of others, accompanied with an unflinching and unqualified faith in Ahura Mazda.

across the lawns of the hotel, and trying to sneak a peek into the Christmas and New Years Eve Balls and cabaret shows – unsuccessfully! We even used to sail in Chinna Creek, which was cleaner then it is now. We never misused our privilege. Some people think that just because we own

The family business started in 1944 with Bristol Hotel, followed in 1948 by Beach Luxury Hotel, which was to become the flagship hotel. At that time, the Beach Luxury Hotel was located far outside the city centre. My family has seen the area around Beach Luxury develop from a place where even the dogs would not venture to one of the most expensive real estate areas of Karachi. Khorshed Villa, our family home named after my grandmother, is adjacent to Beach Luxury. Daddy learnt to swim in Chinna Creek, which Beach Luxury overlooks. I, as well as my younger brother Xerxes and sister Zeena, were born here; played here, had our navjotes and weddings here, and continue to live here. This is where it all started, this is where are roots are grounded.



the hotel, we daily order food from there. From time to time, we do have dinner at the hotel restaurants, but mostly we eat at home. As children, I remember, we once decided to stay at the hotel over a weekend, but it was a weekend treat as if we were on a holiday.

*(Photos courtesy Dinshaw Avari )*





# Apru Karachi



## SURVIVING TURBULENT TIMES

The Beach Luxury Hotel has seen several momentous eras - martial law, prohibition, wars. During the war with India in 1971, Beach Luxury was affected because foreigners were evacuated from Pakistan. Our family was also advised to move because we lived so close to the port. However, our family preferred to stay because we were responsible for more than just our home, we had to take care of the hotel. I remember cowering under the stairs for protection during those days, and even our mattresses were moved down. I remember the loud noise of the bombing because the oil tankers being bombed were docked at Keamari only five kilometres away. Later, in 1977, when Prohibition was imposed and night clubs were closed down, hotels suffered from a loss of business, but we did not retrench any staff. Subsequently, during the Martial Law imposed by Yahya Khan the same year, Prohibition was waived for foreigners and non-Muslims, and they were issued permits for purchases of liquor by the Excise Department.

Our family has always had towering ambitions and now that I have joined the family business, I better understand the challenges of running a business which is ALL about human relations – whether it is dealing with staff, peers, managers, or guests. No two instances are ever the same so when faced with ‘relation’ issues, you have to go by gut-feeling, by what is right, by what is humane, and by what makes economic sense. Everything needs to be factored into it. One of our other challenges is finding qualified workers for renovations and construction. The lobby renovations at our Lahore hotel was held up for a considerable time until my brother, Xerxes, personally supervised the renovations. The same is true for the lobby of Avari Towers, Karachi, which is finally ready to open to the public after two years. Our business is to run hotels, not supervise construction, but the local conditions force us to get involved in things that are not in our sphere. But there are many rewarding moments that compensate; to know we treat our staff and guests well and that we help scores of families to have memories of their navjotes, parties, and



weddings with us. We have hosted many distinguished guests, but one rewarding experience for me would be if Halle Berry were to stay at one our hotels!

Our family has come a long way from Bristol Hotel in 1944 to our first international hotel Avari Dubai in 1998 to our latest addition Avari Islamabad in 2009, and, with the grace of Ahura Mazda, we will go on to further expansions in the Middle East and the rest of Pakistan.

### Photographs courtesy Dinshaw Avari



**Dinshaw Avari** holds LLB and MBA degrees, and has held top management positions at Spencer Pharma, Avari Travel Agencies, and Avari International Hotels. Dinshaw's passion is sailing. He won two major events in 1979, and participated in six international events from 1981 to 2008. His other interests are water skiing, swimming, scuba diving, reading and movies.

## KOTHARI PARADE AND A HOUSTON CONNECTION

The Houston connection? In August 2006 this beautiful silver scroll on a wooden stand given to Kothari, in 1927 from the Anjuman of Banglore was gifted to Nergish Setna by the Kothari family. The scroll is presently on display in the ZAH Library.. *Aban Rustomji, Houston, TX*







## MEMORIES OF A STORYTELLERS' DAUGHTER

*Karachi is a teeming metropolis of 18 million people (City District Government Karachi, 2007). In their midst, the number of Parsis is miniscule, but that has not stopped them from attaining the highest accolades the nation had to offer. Recipients of civil awards for service to Pakistan and contribution to social service, education, art and sports include Gool Minwalla (Tamgha-i-Quaid-i-Azam, 1958), Sohrab Katrak (Sitara-i-Khidmat, 1963), Byram and Goshpi Avari (Pride of Performance, 1982), Bapsi Sidhwa (Sitara-Imtiaz, 1991), and Jimmy Engineer (Sitara-e-Imtiaz, 2005), all Karachiites by either birth or residence. They represent the public face of Parsis nationally and internationally. No one exemplifies this better than Bapsi Sidhwa whose books have been translated into many languages, and made into international movies and plays. Although her identity is twined with Lahore where she grew up, by birth she is a Karachiite so we unashamedly appropriate her as "aapri"[ours]. In this portrait of her mother, Mohur Sidhwa recalls some of her childhood memories of her.*



I cannot separate the threads that are my Lahori Mother and those that are the Author. Being a writer is such an integral part of my mother's self-definition that I feel she parented me in both capacities. I feel very thankful for this.

My first memories of my mother are that of a storyteller. I have snippets of other early childhood events, but her stories stand out. I must have been around three- or four-years old when she created stories, it seemed, just for me. They were long and detailed in a way that would grab my young imagination. One I recall vividly was set inside the world of a sewing machine, about elves that got lost in the mechanisms and gears of a sewing machine and their adventures. My next memories, probably when I was around five, are that of her reading out children's stories to me. They were not as much fun as the ones she made up. That's when I realized that other people's mothers did not create stories the way mine did. When I was around six she was writing a long story. Lying on her bed on her stomach she would write in a notebook. I recall her typing them up and editing it, showing them to a few people. That was to later become *The Bride*. Her first novel written, second published.

My memories of her next book, when I was eight or nine are clearer. I still recall and can quote verbatim the opening paragraphs from her book, *The Crow Eaters*. The working title was *The Junglewallas*. It was a book I enjoyed hearing her read aloud as it was being written. The characters were so real I recognized them. They were my own grandparents, my own uncles and aunts and cousins. These were family stories I had heard, or heard pieces of, all my life. I could not wait for more pages to be written. Forty some years later, I feel this is her best work. I still laugh as I re-read passages from it. My mother's mischievous sense of humor, her natural empathy, and her very real understanding of human nature are on full display in *The Crow Eaters*. I also recall the grief and criticism bestowed on her upon publication of the book, especially for her choice of the title. I still recall the various

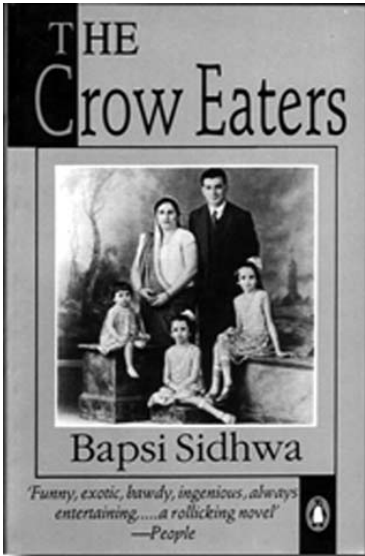
pompous and pious Parsi 'uncles' who took issue with the whole thing. The 'aunties' did not.

When I was about twelve, she began writing *Ice-candy Man* [also published as *Cracking India*, and *Earth*]. I did not enjoy the process of her writing this book as much. It was too real on some levels, too depressing, and I too young to handle it. I recall her interviewing survivors of the Partition to get first hand accounts of the events. I recall her relating events that had occurred, of which she had sharp memories, and placing them in the book. I knew her books were fiction with very real events and people woven into them. I recognized my grandparents and herself as a child. I knew my grandmother's house described in *Ice Candy-Man*. When I was a child some of the 'fallen' women were still in the house next door. I cannot re-read this book as I do the previous two.

Her next book was *An American Brat*. I was studying in the US at the time it was written. It is partly my own biography woven in with a bit of fiction. I had been immortalized! Once the initial shock of seeing my story in a book faded, I loved it. I enjoy re-reading this one too. She later wrote a play based on it. It debuted in London [under the title *Sock 'Em with Honey* in 2003, and was later performed in Houston [as *An American Brat* in 2007]. Though a bit self-conscious, I saw and enjoyed both. I was so proud of her. I knew it was a labor of love.



The next book I felt connected to was her adaptation of Deepa Mehta's film, *Water*. Deepa had asked Mum to write the back-story to flesh out the characters and give the movie context. I was in Houston and Tucson while she was working on the project. I helped edit it so I had to read it twice. It was very difficult because it was a poignant story embedded in the past and, perhaps, even in current realities.



My mother's love of Lahore is self-evident in her books. She weaves the city into almost all her work, both fiction and non-fiction. Her love for the ancient dust of Lahore, its people, and its deeply textured culture shows through clearly. She has traveled the globe to do readings, receive awards,

and speak at conferences, yet I suspect she will always carry Lahore with her wherever she goes. It is home. It is part of her self-definition.

My memories of my mother, Bapsi Sidhwa, are always those of a storyteller, a storyteller whose love of people is not restricted to family and friends, a storyteller who has always cared deeply about justice - justice within the family, justice within the political systems. As a woman, a wife, a mother, she told stories that showed women and children struggling against sexism and religious prejudice. As a Parsi in Lahore, her stories of family are told in a setting of local customs, some admirable, some not. As an author now internationally recognized, she is a source of pride, not only to her family, but to Lahore, and to Pakistan.



After completing her Bachelor's degree from Lahore, Mohur Sidhwa moved to the US and received a Masters in Anthropology. Self-employed in Tucson, Arizona for 22 years, she is also heavily involved in politics in the US and holds a number of positions, both elected as well as appointed. She currently serves as Vice Chair of the Pima County Democratic Party.

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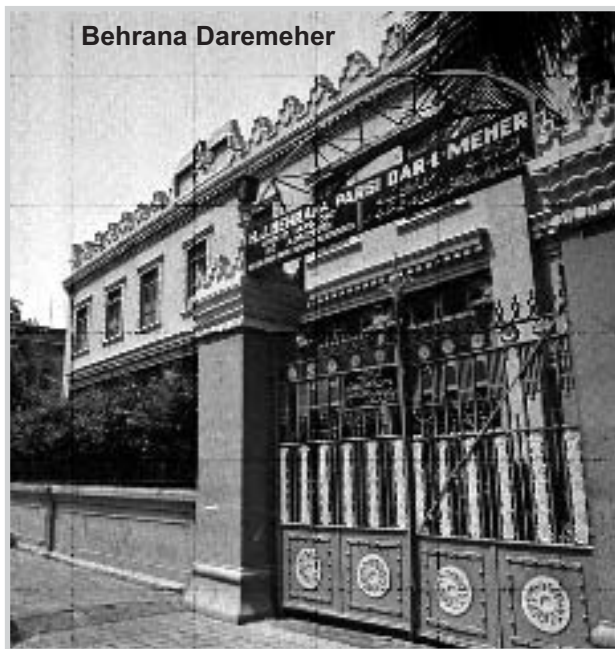


## SECTION II: PRIVATE SPACE

*Parsis in Karachi carved out a private space for themselves to pray and play as a community whilst living in a city crowded with millions of Muslims. This section focuses on the institutions that are the lifeblood of the Parsi community – the dar-e-meher [popularly referred to as agiary in Karachi], Karachi Parsi Institute (KPI), and Karachi Zarthosti Banu Mandal (KZBM).*

### NAUROOZ MUBARAK AND TO ALL A GOOD DAY

*Karachi has two Zarathushti places of worship. In 1849, Hirjibhai Jamshedji Behrana established a dar-e-meher in his own residence. In 1875, his widow Meherbai donated thirteen thousand rupees to construct the present building in his name. Later, Ardeshir Hormusji Mama donated twenty-thousand rupees to build a second-storey hall in memory of his father. An Atash Dadgah was established at Ghadikhata in 1869 by Seth Sohrabji Dhunjibhai Wadia, alongside a school for Parsi children that he had constructed earlier. In 1904, Khan Bahadur Kavasji Katrak contributed a large sum to have it consecrated as an Atash Adaran. In this article **Daleara Jamasji Hirjikaka** recreates the simple joys of a community celebrating and praying together.*



Behrana Daremeher

It is early morning in August. The sun is about to rise and by the noon hour it will be hot and humid, but it is pleasant in the early hours of the morning as congregants arrive at the Darb-e-Mehr in Karachi's busy downtown Saddar area. They come by cab, rickshaw and cars—not too long ago they would also come by the once abundant horse-drawn Victorias. It is Pateti and the final day of the ten day mukhtad period in remembrance of those who are no longer with us. The smell of roses and lilies is redolent in the air as we enter

the agiary built in the late nineteenth century. The stylised stone ghodaas [horses] stand guard, benevolently watching the faithful come in with their offering of sandalwood and garlands. We make the ritual trek; first, we head to the well for the morning ablutions and kusti prayers, and then upstairs to the large community hall. The mukhtad prayers are well underway. The priests chant the prayers as beautiful flowers adorn the silver vases placed on individual round tables. They have been placed there by the family members of those who passed away the year before. Rows of vases line longer tables in memory of those who have passed away eons ago. Their family members — many of whom are now old as well — continue to pay homage to the memories of their loved ones.

The hambandagi prayers begin and the voices of the faithful rise in unison as they chant the sacred verses of the Gathas; then comes the sermon by Ervad Godrej Sidhwa, who has been preaching to generations of Zarathushtis of Karachi. After the various admonitions to the faithful set around the theme of the last Gatha he ends with his favourite maxim: "As you sow, so shall you reap." Sermon over, some people return to where the mobeds are reciting the mukhtad prayers, most others go down the carved wooden staircase to the prayer room on the main floor.

Outside the prayer room, people are milling around in reverent shoelessness. Friends greet one another warmly while acquaintances wish each other a polite Pateti and Navroze Mubarak. In a small community everyone knows the other person, or they know their parents or uncles or aunts. Elderly ladies in saris and younger women in dresses or shalwar kameez chat comfortably with one another as only those who have grown up in close-knit communities can. Some firm up plans for get-togethers, others discuss their finery for the upcoming festival, yet others look under the benches trying to locate missing sandals and shoes.

Children run back and forth in the huge hall off the prayer-room; their favourite past-time is to try and catch a glimpse of themselves in either of the two huge six-foot mirrors mounted on either side of the hall. The children know each other by name because many of them go to the same Parsi schools or live in the same colony. There is a distinct air of festivity in the air, and on this day the scent of incense and sandalwood serves to heighten the sense of gaiety rather than emphasize the sense of sombre religiosity.

Some of the men are in a smaller room, standing behind a tall partition, the segregated area meant for those who do not remove their shoes, to gaze at the atash in the kebla. The older gentlemen still prefer the trademark Parsi crisp white shirt and trousers made of cotton duck fabric. After offering their prayers, they shake hands and exchange navroze greetings before streaming out in search of their wives and children.





The divas are lit today and plenty of petitions and wishes are being made. Somebody comes in with a new rug for the agiary. He explains to the priest sitting outside by the sandalwood stall that he has the trustees' permission to spread it in the main prayer hall. A gentleman comes in with garlands for the huge frame of Asho Zarathushtra, yet another brings a new wall clock for the hall. People are in the mood to make offerings. The charity boxes and the huge Godrej safe in the main prayer room are filled to the brim with coins and banknotes, as is the smaller box in the vestibule where contributions are made to the nasesalar (pall-bearers) fund. Ahura Mazda has been kind to the Zarathushtis of Karachi — work and business have been good, and the small minority community is well-regarded by their countrymen — what better way to thank Him than by making offerings on Navroze day?



**Anjuman Daremeher**

children and happy families making plans for the holiday.

The two agiarys are the focal point of all Parsi festivities in Karachi — a visit to the agiary is mandatory on auspicious occasions. In many ways they are the glue that holds the

community together. People come to worship, meditate, socialize, and occasionally to mourn the death of a loved one or celebrate the initiation of a young one into the faith. The agiarys may be quieter now because of the large exodus of Parsis from Karachi, but they still serve the community as sentinels of the faith and as networking junctions for Zarathushtis.

This scene repeats itself across town at the Anjuman agiary also referred to as the Gadikhata agiary because of the area in which it is located. The agiary is in a Parsi compound with buildings on either side. This much smaller agiary also has a smaller congregant size, mostly made up of the residents of the compound and Parsis settled near the port area. However, size of the congregation is no indication of religious fervour and the agiary is packed on this auspicious day. The outdoor courtyard is full of people lighting divas by the well; inside it's busy as the faithful kneel before the Atash. This agiary too is full of rambunctious



**Daleara Jamasji-Hirjika** lives in Toronto with her family. She delights in the cultural landscape of Toronto and loves to plan fun family activities and brief jaunts to destinations in Ontario. Daleara is a developmental editor with the higher education division of John

Wiley and Sons Canada, Ltd.

## Apru Karachi Cont'd on Page 61. . . . .

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# FEZANA UPDATE

## World Zoroastrian Congress Awards - 2009

### Call for Nominations

#### AWARD CATEGORIES

-  Outstanding Zarathushti Award
-  Excellence in Performing Arts, Painting or Literature Award
-  Community Service Award
-  Excellence in Technology and Engineering Award
-  Excellence in Medicine Award

The World Zoroastrian Congress Awards are the most sought-after, prestigious and recognized awards. They have been instituted to encourage, acknowledge and reward valuable contributions and outstanding achievements made by Zarathushti men and women in various fields.

Submit your nominations in English or Farsi via email to:  
[wzcawards@gmail.com](mailto:wzcawards@gmail.com)

Closing date: 31st March 2009



9th World Zoroastrian Congress  
**DUBAI** 28th - 31st Dec, 2009  
Unity through the sands of time

For details and bookings, please visit us on [www.wzcongress.org](http://www.wzcongress.org)



# FEZANA UPDATE

## Zoroastrians from all over the world are coming to Dubai. Are you?

### World Zoroastrian Congress, Dubai 2009

The Zoroastrians of Dubai are pleased to host the 9th World Zoroastrian Congress from 28th December to 31st December 2009. The Theme of the Congress is "Unity through the sands of time". The objective is to promote solidarity, welfare and progress. The who's who from the corporate world will participate in the program. The four days Congress will focus on different topics. The evenings will be filled with excitement and entertainment.



#### Event Highlights (28th – 31st Dec 2009)

- Trade Show focusing on entrepreneurial opportunities for small, medium and large businesses.
- Daily Programs covering socio-economic, technology, medicine, science, arts, culture, heritage, youth, education and other interesting topics.
- Leading regional & international companies will display their innovative technologies, products and services.
- World renowned guest speakers from leading regional and global organizations will participate.
- Young Leaders of Youth Leadership Enhancement Program will share their thoughts with the community.
- Grand cultural events showcasing the rich Zoroastrian tapestry.
- Not to be missed: glittering Persian night and the fabulous New Year's Eve Party.
- Special Placement Bureau for those seeking international career opportunities.
- Sightseeing and Shopping Tours of Dubai.
- Investment opportunities in prime properties in Dubai and other countries.
- Gala Awards Night and Desert Safari with dinner and dance.

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For details and bookings, please visit us on [www.wzcongress.org](http://www.wzcongress.org)





## World Zoroastrian Congress in Dubai in December 2009

The World Zoroastrian Congress, one of the largest community events for Zarathushtis around the world, will be held in Dubai from December 28 to 31, 2009, under the signature theme –“*Unity through the sands of time*”.

The choice of Dubai as the venue is highly significant, as Dubai is one of the world's most talked-about destinations, a vibrant business hub and a melting pot of cultures. It is also one of the most progressive and cosmopolitan cities in the world. The selection of Dubai as the venue for the World Zoroastrian Congress is a salute to Zarathushtis as a community which, like the city, has shown tremendous progressiveness and innovation, while retaining old charm and cultural values. Selecting Dubai also sends a message to the Zarathushti entrepreneurs to explore the possibilities of doing business in the UAE. And, most importantly, Dubai is home to over 1,500 Zarathushtis!

The congress will promote solidarity, welfare and progress, by looking beyond the present to herald a glorious future, in the true Zarathushti tradition. Historically, Zarathushtis have shown exceptional zeal in serving humanity worldwide. More significantly, wherever Zarathushtis have emigrated they have promoted commerce and professional services.

### THE VENUE

The official venue of the Congress is *Holiday Crowne Plaza Hotel in Dubai*. The hotel is conveniently located, with in-house facilities like a large shopping arcade, quality food outlets and a night club.

The venue will be divided into five zones: *Cultural/Heritage,*

*Exhibition, Party, Function and Meeting zone*. The main hallway will be decorated to exude an ambience of an indoor festival. The elaborately adorned venue, with attention to every detail, will have four majestic doors, break-out rooms and conference facilities. Ample floor space will be available for exhibitors to display their products and services.

The Congress will open with a spectacular opening ceremony, followed by invocations of blessings from priests and several community leaders.

The theme for the first day will be “*Proud to be a Zoroastrian*”. A veritable Who's Who from various industries, leaders of different community organizations and delegates from across the globe will attend the Congress.

*Lord Karan Billimoria* will address the community at the opening ceremony. Participants will then share the objectives and expectations of the Congress. This will be followed by brief presentations and a spectacular cultural show created around an ancient story of Zarathushtis.

Delegates will get a chance to acquaint themselves with the charms and attractions of Dubai through a film that will be screened, highlighting key attractions and unique features of the city, and the liberal business environment it provides to businessmen and entrepreneurs from around the globe. The delegates will then enjoy a sumptuous lunch.

### BUSINESS SESSIONS

The post-lunch session will begin with ‘*Future responsible leaders*’ from the Youth Leadership Program (YLP) sharing their experiences with the community. The Youth Leadership Program, which was launched last year, was successfully closed on 30th April 2008. Over 52 participants have enlisted and expressed commitment to this program. All participants will do different projects in their respective regions. The teams will then present their projects to the Committee. The first three winning teams will receive cash prize of US\$ 3000/-, US\$ 2000 and US\$ 1000/- respectively. Further they will have the opportunity to interact with top luminaries at the Congress and their names will be

forwarded to leading Zarathushti business houses. Parallel sessions shall take place after the youth program. At 5.00 p.m. the buses will take the delegates for short shopping trips and bring them back at 7.30 p.m.

Following the dinner at 8 pm, the

ballroom will undergo a dramatic transformation, suffused with colorful hues and lights, creating an atmosphere of electric excitement. As delegates enter, red carpet interviews will be conducted, with projections on giant screens inside the ballroom. *A member from the Dubai Royal family will grace the occasion as the Chief Guest*. This will offer the delegates an opportunity of a handshake with the royal member. A fusion of dance and talent show will keep the audience enthralled. A number of people will be pleasantly surprised when their names are called out as winners of fabulous prizes.

Each morning will commence with a breakfast show “*Good Morning Delegates*”. Media persons will interview leading businessmen, professionals and youth. This year's congress will have a new feature: the *Congress Daily*, which will contain a compelling mix of reading,





## World Zoroastrian Congress in Dubai in December 2009

including reports of success stories and interviews with delegates and speakers.

### TRADE SHOW

The Trade show will be held on the second day (December 29), a true tribute to Dubai as the City of Merchants. *Nadir Godrej*, Managing Director of Godrej Industries, will address representatives from the business and professional community. His address will be followed by speeches from a UAE Cabinet Minister, Indian Ambassador to the UAE and an internationally renowned speaker. Government officials, Ambassadors, Consuls- General and regional businessmen will attend the show as VIP guests. The Trade show will offer excellent business opportunities to small, medium and large businesses.

The WZCC will give away 3 awards to the Outstanding Businessman, the Professional and the Young entrepreneur/professional at this prestigious show. Lunch will then be served. Networking of small, medium and large businessmen will continue in line with WZCC Program. Parallel sessions will be held alongside in various breakout rooms.

### DAILY PROGRAMS

Apart from the opening day show and the Trade Program, daily programs will be based on interesting topics relating to science, technology, medicine, advertising, arts, culture, heritage, archeology, education, etc. Announcements of the different activities for the day will be made at regular intervals to generate greater interest and participation. *The Roundtable Conference* program will also be held.

There will be cultural shows every evening after dinner, put together and performed by professionals and youth from the community from various parts of the world. All performances will be outstanding, guaranteed to be remembered by the audience for a long time to come. Among the not-to-be-missed events will be *The Celebrity Show, the Gala Awards function, the Persian Night, the hand-over of the torch, the Zoroastrian Symphony Orchestra, the Closing Ceremony and the New Year's Eve party.*

There will be a *culture/heritage zone* which will allow exhibitors to display their works of paintings, photography, carpets, exquisite jewellery, artifacts, souvenirs and much more.

Special bureaus will be set up for those seeking career opportunities. Kiosks will be erected to allow delegates to explore investment opportunities in property in Dubai and the UAE. A special desk will be available for handling trade enquiries from entrepreneurs and businessmen interested in setting up small to medium businesses in the UAE.

True to the spirit of charity that is close to the Zoroastrian community, there will be the *Operation Eye-Sight program*. Those attending the Congress are requested to look through their desks, drawers and closets for used and usable spectacles (not sunglasses) and bring them to the congress.

Papers received for presentation will be reviewed by the Congress team in advance. With the Congress being still 18 months away, many more programs are being developed and added. Final details shall be uploaded on the Congress website ([www.wzcongress.org](http://www.wzcongress.org)) closer to the event.



### PARTY ZONE AND BEVERAGE

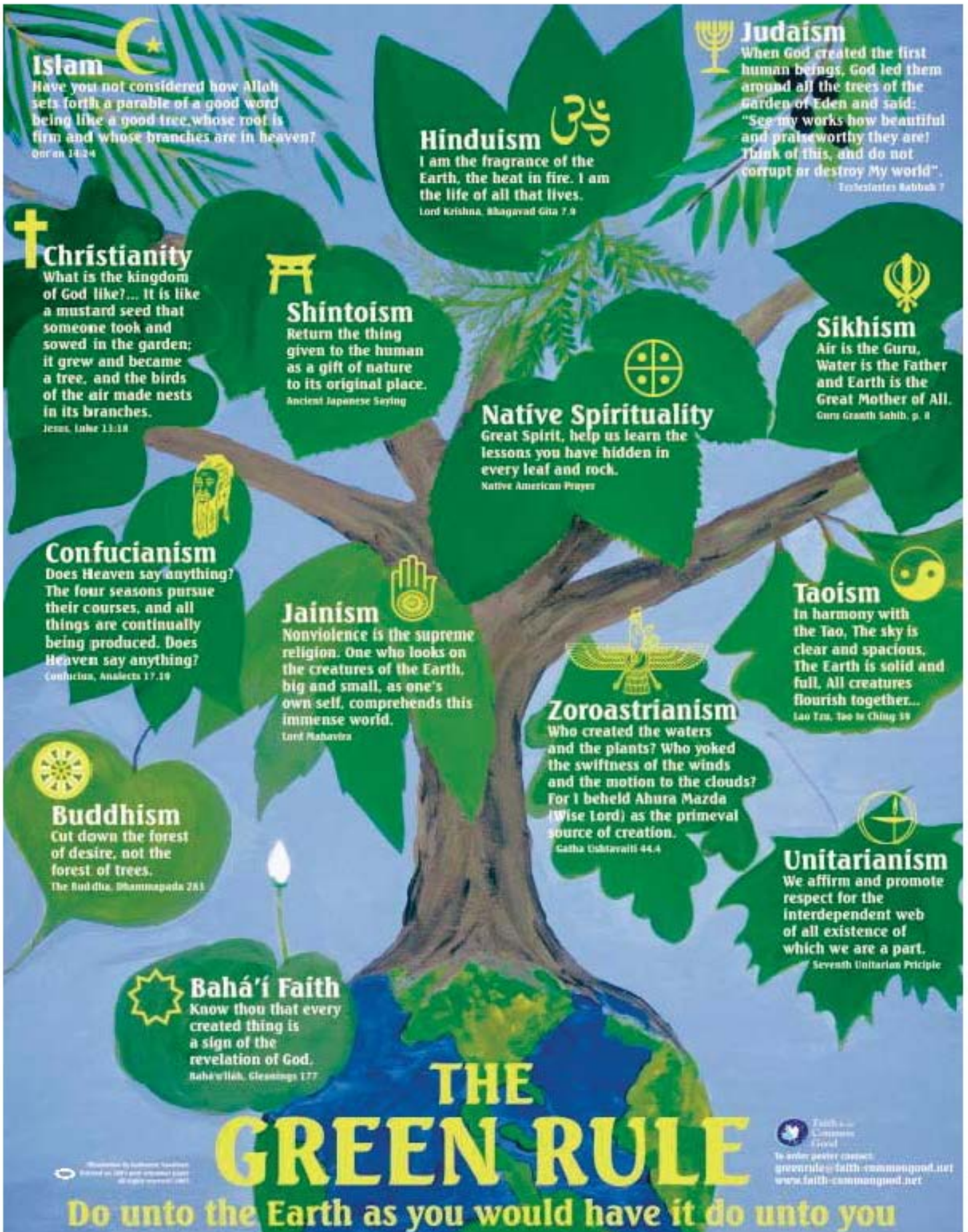
The party zone will be a fixed food and beverage area. Tea and coffee stations will provide tea and coffee the whole day. Lunch and dinner will be served in the afternoons and evenings. The registration fee will cover the cost of food and cultural events on all four days. Registration will open from the end of August 2008 at the lowest rate possible.

The Congress organizing team is working hard to raise sponsorships to keep the registration fee as low as possible. Accommodation rates for hotels and apartments are also under negotiation and details will be uploaded soon on the website.

The Congress organizing team is grateful to various sponsors who have supported the Congress. Details of the sponsors are available on the website. Some programs finalized for the Congress, such as the Youth Leadership Program, the Awards Program and Eye glass operation program are progressing well, thanks to the support and active participation of Regional Directors from around the world

As the Congress dates have been fixed keeping in mind the Christmas and New Year holidays, start preparing for a memorable Congress .which will bring the community closer. Surprise yourself with interesting opportunities, connections, knowledge and new ideas and get ready to leave your footprints in the sands of time.





### Islam

Have you not considered how Allah sets forth a parable of a good word being like a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches are in heaven?  
Qur'an 14:24

### Christianity

What is the kingdom of God like?... It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.  
Jesus, Luke 13:18



### Shintoism

Return the thing given to the human as a gift of nature to its original place.  
Ancient Japanese Saying

### Hinduism

I am the fragrance of the Earth, the heat in fire. I am the life of all that lives.  
Lord Krishna, Bhagavad Gita 7.9



### Judaism

When God created the first human beings, God led them around all the trees of the garden of Eden and said: "See my works how beautiful and praiseworthy they are! Think of this, and do not corrupt or destroy My world".  
Testament of Job 7



### Sikhism

Air is the Guro, Water is the Father and Earth is the Great Mother of All.  
Guru Granth Sahib, p. 8



### Native Spirituality

Great Spirit, help us learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock.  
Native American Prayer



### Confucianism

Does Heaven say anything? The four seasons pursue their courses, and all things are continually being produced. Does Heaven say anything?  
Confucius, Analects 17.19



### Jainism

Nonviolence is the supreme religion. One who looks on the creatures of the Earth, big and small, as one's own self, comprehends this immense world.  
Lord Mahavira



### Taoism

In harmony with the Tao, The sky is clear and spacious, The Earth is solid and full. All creatures flourish together...  
Lao Tzu, Tao te Ching 39



### Zoroastrianism

Who created the waters and the plants? Who yoked the swiftness of the winds and the motion to the clouds? For I beheld Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord) as the primeval source of creation.  
Gatha Ushtavaiti 44.4



### Unitarianism

We affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.  
Seventh Unitarian Principle



### Buddhism

Cut down the forest of desire, not the forest of trees.  
The Buddha, Dhammapadam 283



### Bahá'í Faith

Know thou that every created thing is a sign of the revelation of God.  
Bahá'í Báb, Cleanings 177

# THE GREEN RULE

Do unto the Earth as you would have it do unto you

Illustration by Faith and Common Good  
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## PRESERVATION AND RENOVATIONS OF COMMUNITY PLACES OF WORSHIP

Have you ever thought about our Parsi Calendar of 12 Mahs (months) and 30 Rojs (Days)? Do you also know that only Adar Mah and Adar Roj are both 9th in the group of Mahs and Rojs respectively? This is quite an honored position for Adar Yazad, the angel in charge of the Ahura Mazda's most important creations, **fire!** This is the most important day in the Zarathushti calendar as on this day many holy fires have been consecrated including that of Iranshah in



Udvada. Devotees throng to Udvada to pay homage (see photo above of the line up in 2004)



And to celebrate this anniversary further, the Petit family each year on this day sponsors a *Hama Anjuman Jashan* and in 2004 fed over 2000 people for lunch (photo above)!

There are about 8 other Agiaries and Adarians in India and Pakistan who also have their anniversaries (Salgrehs) on Mah Adar and Roj Adar

### Ervad Soli P. Dastur and Dolly Dastoor

THEY ARE:

- **SETH BANAJI LIMJI DAREMEHER ( ADARIAN)**, Fort, Mumbai celebrated its 300th salgreh. Fire Consecrated 1709
- **SETH MANEKJI NAVROJI SETT AGIARY (ADARIAN)**, Fort, Mumbai – celebrated its 275th salgreh! Fire Consecrated 1733
- **SETH DOSSABHOY MERWANJI WADIA DAREMEHER (ADARIAN)**, Karachi, Pakistan - celebrated its 139th salgreh!
- **SETH JIVANJI JAMASPJI MISTRI ADARIAN (ADARIAN)**, Sayyadpura, Surat - celebrated its 111th salgreh!
- **SETH DADABHAI DHANJIBHAI AND SORABJI SHAPURJI GABBA DAREMEHER (ADARIAN)** Billimora - celebrated its 109th salgreh
- **SETH PIROJSHA ARDESHIR PATEL DAREMEHER (Patel Agiary) (Adarian)**, Andheri (West), Mumbai - celebrated its 100th salgreh! (see photo page 55)
- **MOBED DORABJI EDULJI JAMSINA OR MITHAIWALLA AGIARY (ADARIAN)**, Grant Road, Mumbai ,celebrated its 97th salgreh!!
- **SETH NANABHOY BEZONJI CHOKSI DAREMEHER (DADGAH)**, Panchgani - celebrated its 77th salgreh!

On Thursday 24th April 2008, the city's oldest Zarathushti fire temple-the *Banaji Limji Agiary*-celebrated its 300th year. Tucked away in a side lane called Banaji Lane opposite the Akbarallys showroom, the ancient fire was consecrated in 1709 by Seth Banaji Limji, a prosperous Parsi businessman. "It is the oldest surviving Agiary in Mumbai," said Parsi historian Marzban Giara.. The second oldest Agiary Manekji Sett Agiary- is located less than a kilometer away in Perin Nariman street near CST. In the western suburb of Andheri (west), the Seth Pirojsha Ardeshir Patel Agiary also celebrated its centenary on the same day (Roz Adar-Mah Adar), an auspicious day for Parsi Zarathushtis.

According to the **Highlights of Parsi History** written by **P. P. Balsara** in 1963, there were Parsis in Mumbai in 1538 and a Tower of Silence was consecrated at Malabar Hill in 1672. In 1780, the Parsi population in Mumbai which was 3,000, rose to 10,000 in 1810. As their numbers grew in the city, so did the fire temples. Today -there are over 48 fire temples in Greater Mumbai and most of them were



## PRESERVATION AND RENOVATIONS OF COMMUNITY PLACES OF WORSHIP



consecrated in the 18th and 19th centuries.

In 1803, a fire caused considerable damage to the structure and the holy fire was then temporarily shifted to the Soonaji Agiary at Gowalia Tank. According to Giara, who is the author of the global directory of fire temples, wealthy Parsi merchants donated huge sums for the reconstruction of the



### RENOVATIONS OF PLACES OF WORSHIP

Agiaries, Atashbehrams and places of worship need to be structurally maintained. After years of usage, with the constant smoke from burning sandal wood and other wood, there comes a time when the whole structure needs to be renovated. The Iranshah Atash Behram building in Udvada is going through a massive renovation as can be seen from photos above. At this time, it is not known when exactly these renovations for the Iranshah Atash Behram will be completed



damaged fire temple and the poorer sections of the community contributed eggs and hundreds of toddy mugs.

The fire was rethroned in 1845

**The ANDERI PATEL AGIARY** was in the need of serious renovation. The Patel family under the leadership of Mr. Ardeshir Patel, undertook a massive renovation with a target date of inaugurating the renovated Agiary on its 100th anniversary, once again on Adar Mahino and Adar Roj, 24th April 2008. The following narration with photos describe this magnificent renovation. Seth Ardeshir Bikaji Patel (great grandfather of Nash Ardeshir Patel of ZAF, Miami ) had built this Dar-e-Meher on Adar Mah and





## PRESERVATION AND RENOVATIONS OF COMMUNITY PLACES OF WORSHIP

Adar Roj in 1908 in memory of his younger son Pirojsha who died at age 8. Hence this Agyari is named as Seth Pirojsha Ardeshir Patel Dar-e-Mehr.

The Patel Agyari in Andheri was opened for devotees in 1908 at a cost of Rs 52,500. The building has characteristics of classical Roman architecture with its round arches and pilasters bearing Corinthian capitals.

In 1909 Ardeshir built "the Patel building" by the side of the Dar-e-Meher, for housing low income Zarathushti families and is named after Ardeshir's wife Ratanbai, who also unfortunately died young. This building has about 14 rooms and



was given a complete face lift, together with the Dar-e-Meher. It looks serene surrounded by beautiful big trees..

In 1924 Ardeshir had built a Dokhma "tower of silence" in Salsette, Andheri east for facilitating the Parsees living in and around Andheri. However, due to its under utilization, it unfortunately fell into a dilapidated state and the areas around it were encroached upon. After several years of negotiations, petty law suits, etc these areas are now developed, and today a colony of seven buildings is erected housing three hundred flats and accommodating more than five hundred Zarathushtis. The trustees under the chairmanship of *Ardeshir Patel* erected a fire temple at the site and named it after his grandfather as "*Seth Ardeshir Bikaji Patel Dadgah*". This Dadgah was inaugurated in January 2000. Today it is visited regularly by Zarathushti brethren living in and around Salsette.



In 1998 the lands behind the Patel Agyari at Andheri were also developed and the trustees named the society comprising of fifty-three flats as "*The Maneckshaw Ardeshir Patel Housing society*" named after Ardeshir Patel's father who had died at a young age of 28 years. This society is for housing Zarathushtis only.



Clockwise: Renovated façade of the agairy, the interior of the Agyari, mobeds performing the jashan, the Patel family, Mrs Patel, Mr Adi Patel, Khushmeed and Maneck Patel of Mumbai

The Trustees of the Agyari are : *Mr. Ardeshir Maneckshaw Patel, Chairman, Mr. Sharoukh Dinshaw Irani, Mr. Hoshang Mirza, Mr. Sam Patel, Mr. Viraf Dinshaw Irani and Mr. Maneck Ardeshir Patel.*

With the renovations completed on time the renovated Agyari was inaugurated on Thursday April 24th 2008 the 100th anniversary on Mah Adar and Roj Adar. (see photo page 55) About 200 Parsees attended the Jashan and along with Jalabees a gold coin was given to commemorate the event (photo left).



Mr. Adi Patel would like to build a small "baug" on one side of the Agyari where weddings and Navjotes can be celebrated, which would be of benefit to Zarathushtis living in the suburbs.

"When I was a student at the MF Cama Athornan Institute, from 1945 to 1954. we used to go to this Agyari at least once a month, all 75 students in a 2 by 2 line walking. When I was in my last year in SSC, I went there for 5 Gatha days to pray as a priest and got Rs. 100/- a huge sum for a 18 year old priest and bought my first big purchase of my life, a wrist watch with radium dial so it can glow in the night!" says Ervad Soli Dastur



## PRESERVATION AND RENOVATIONS OF COMMUNITY PLACES OF WORSHIP

**THOOTHY AGIARY, WALKESHWAR** (abstracted from *Thoothi Agiary: Resplendent and Renovated*, by Shernaaz Engineer in *Souvenirs*)



The 149-year-old Thoothi Agiary, was refurbished and redone by the efforts of a committed Zarathushti family - the *Bapuna siblings* - *Niloofer, Neville, Filly and Keki* - who voluntarily came forward to take on the task of renovating the Agiary, obtaining funding and getting the Fire Temple fully renovated under their personal supervision. It was, indeed, a labor of their love and commitment toward preserving the sanctity of our faith. For over ten months, devoting their time and finances and co-coordinating with like-minded persons who came on board to help to the extent they could, the Bapunas pulled out all stops to ensure that the glory of the Agiary was not compromised upon, by ensuring the execution of every detail to high standards. This enormous task was undertaken in the memory of their late grandparents, *Ratanbai and Faramroze D. Bapuna*, with remarkable success. Bapuna siblings are hopeful that this act will encourage more like-minded people to come forward and join them in their ongoing endeavor to renovate more such Agiaries that are in dire need of urgent attention. They were assisted by many including *Shahnaz Mahimtura* and *Jamshed Guzder* with *Percy Master* contributing for the painting.

The Bapuna siblings appeal to all Zarathushtis who would like to be part of the renovation process to contact them, outlining the quantum of the support they can offer so that they could consolidate such help and start with the immediate restoration work of other fire temples. *Keki Bapuna* can be contacted on 0091-98335-39222.



The Trustees of the Sorabji Thoothi Agiary mention that the Agiary and its sacred well, at Walkeshwar, have been restored to their original beautiful condition. *Ervad Kersi Gonda, the Panthaki of the Agiary*, a devout and devoted keeper of the faith, firmly affirms that: "no righteous wish made at the Thoothi Agiary ever goes unfulfilled. Amen!"

In the future more and more of our Agiaries and Atash Behrams will be needing massive renovations. It is hoped that charitable Parsi trustees and behdins would come forward to preserve these community icons



## PRESERVATION AND RENOVATIONS OF COMMUNITY PLACES OF WORSHIP

### RENOVATIONS IN IRAN

The situation in Iran is different. The fire temples in Iran are between 30 to 80 years old, two in Tehran, one each, in Yazd, Kerman, Shiraz and Isfahan but are neglected. With the result all of them have been reduced to "Atash Dadgahs". No proper rituals of "Bouy" offerings or even the minimum needed cleanliness is maintained. All of them are in charge of the local Anjumans, whose Board of Directors get re elected once in 4 to 5 years. There have not been any major renovations in recent years. The two instances which might be, rather, termed replacements are those of the **Yazd (Kuche Byok) Dare Mehr** which had got immersed in water due to a burst water pipe, and was noticed days after resulting into the deterioration of the foundation of the whole building. It has been renovated and reinaugrated some ten years ago, however, in doing so no basic requirements of an Agiari building has been adhered to and the Holy Fire is replaced with a gas burning stove housed inside an Afrin Ganyue. In Kerman a similar gas burning stove replaces the older Agyari, which is, now, closed to the public as a place of worship and only it's surroundings are used to form a museum.

*(Personal communications Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary, Tehran, Iran)*

### Parsi Fire Temples Given Heritage Status.

#### The Four Atash Behrams get grade 2 status

In July 2008 the BMC published a list of 47 Agiaries to which it intends to offer heritage status. If no objection is received from the public in 30 days a formal notification will be issued. A four-year campaign by Parsis of Mumbai to get Agiaries and Atash Behrams protected under the heritage laws has finally succeeded.

A majority of them will be under the grade 2A tag which will give them complete protection from any kind of major changes in their facade. The four fire temples are listed in the higher grade 2. "These are iconic structures and now we will be able to preserve them as part of our heritage" said *Khojeste Mistree* who had led a delegation with political activist *Dr Khurush Zorabi* to Mumbai's guardian Minister Jayant Patil to protect these structures.

Between June and December 2000 all the fire temples had been mapped, photographed and evaluated on basis of value classification by the conservation architect *Pankaj Joshi*

**Soli Dastur** the last of 11 children was born in a small village, Tarapur, India, to a priestly family from Udwada, He completed his priestly studies as well as his high school and S.S.C. examination from the M F Cama Athornan Institute boarding school, Soli completed all the requirements for becoming Navar and Martab and was initiated as a priest in the Holy Iranshah Atash Behram in Udwada. He also passed the final examination of Saamel required by all initiated priests from Udwada to be able to perform all inner and outer liturgies.

*Soli is fully retired and lives with his wife of 42 years, Jo Ann, in University Park, Florida. He has been performing religious ceremonies all over Florida and the USA when requested. He is an avid tennis player and dabbles with the computer in his free time.*

**Dolly Dastoor** is a clinical psychologist and Asst Prof, Psychiatry, McGill University and McGill Centre for Aging.





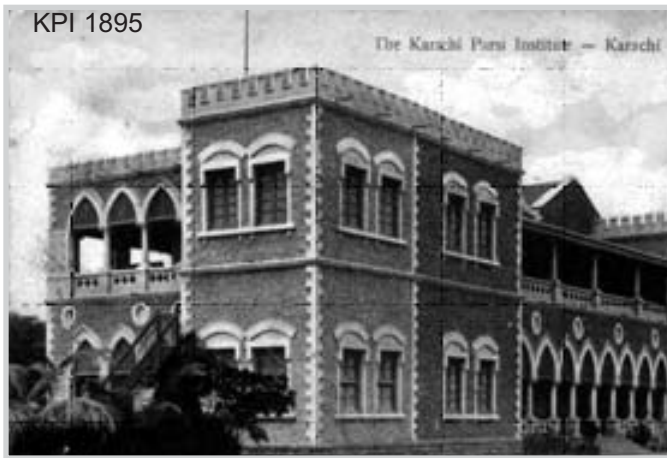
### A RITE OF PASSAGE

Shahrokh Mehta

*The Karachi Parsi Institute (KPI), originally called The Parsi Gymkhana, was established in 1893 to encourage cricket, billiards, and other sports in the community. Initially, the club was only for men, but in 1899 women were given permission to dine there. In 1909, women were permitted to join KPI to play tennis, but later they were allowed to participate in all games except billiards. KPI has been the learning ground for many sports luminaries, including Rusi Nadirshah Dinshaw who became the first non-Muslim and only Zarathushti to play cricket for Pakistan on its first test team, which toured India in 1952-53. In this article Shahrokh Mehta recalls the glory days of KPI in the Fifties and Sixties.*

becoming a member of the Institute. It was an almost ritualistic part of the transformation process from a student to a responsible member of the community — now accountable for all your deeds and misdeeds, able to join college, get a job, or become a member of this amazing institution. When I joined, the one-time joining fee was 15 rupees with monthly subscription dues of five rupees, a total of twenty-five cents in today's US dollars.

For many diehard members of the club, KPI continues to provide a congenial environment where community members meet daily and play recreational sports or a game of cards, celebrate events, socialize, gossip, and repeatedly attempt to solve the world's problems. It has been said that most Parsi jokes originate at KPI, the best Parsi cuisine is catered at KPI's special functions and ghambars, the finest Parsi sports heroes get their breaks on KPI's grounds, and finally, sportsmanship is created and fostered at KPI.



### SPORTS AT KPI

As a young boy of eight or nine, I remember visiting KPI's annual Jamshedi Navroze sports function and participating in events like lemon and spoon race, gunny sack race, three-legged race, pillow fights. As a teenager at these functions, I participated in track and cycling events. The cheering from family and community members was tremendous. I have fond memories of the annual children's Christmas parties, and Treasure Hunts.

Like many Parsi and Zarathushti Irani boys growing up in Karachi during 1950s the upon completion of my matriculation examination at the age of sixteen; I became a member of KPI, obtained a passport, and applied for a telephone line – in that order! (The telephone line at that time had a waiting period of about 10 years). Attending community functions at KPI as a young boy and a teenager was not the same as

During the mid-Fifties when I joined KPI, the Parsi community population in Karachi was approximately 5,000 strong. Mine was but a short period of membership (between the mid 1950s and mid 1960s) in the long, rich, and historical life of KPI. Although I played cricket and tennis, my real love for going to KPI was for table tennis, competitive swimming, and playing bridge and billiards. Today, some 40 years later and living on



# Apru Karachi



the other side of the world, I still regularly play and participate in the first three of the four sports.

I was among the few young bridge players who were reluctantly accepted at the table of veterans. Over eighty percent of the bridge players were either retired or close to retirement. I played with some players who had played together for more than 40 years. I learned my fundamentals from these legendary players, and today I am a Life Master (American Contract Bridge League) and a Bridge Director. Twice a week, we got a brand new deck of cards at the bridge table. New tennis balls and badminton shuttlecocks, a sheer luxury back then, were also issued twice a week.

To generate extra revenue for the Institute, the grounds of KPI as well as the lawns were rented out to non-Parsi for special events and functions. At one such event on January 11, 1959, I was privileged to watch cricket history unfold when the great Pakistani test cricketer, Hanif Mohammad, known as the Little Master, scored 499 runs in a first-class cricket match. Hanif broke the legendary Don Bradman's record of 452 runs, and the record held until 1994 when it was broken by West Indian cricketer Brian Lara who scored 501.

## ENTERTAINING TIMES

I recall entertaining times at KPI when the Annual General Body Meetings (AGM) took place. Every active and non-active member with an LLB degree showed up to test and practice their parliamentary procedure with motions, seconds, objections, point-of orders, quorums, out of order, and votes. At one of the AGMs, a motion for "smoking only in the designated areas of the main building" was successfully passed. Looking back, I wonder if the motion was brought to vote due to concerns for the health of non-smokers, the majority of members, or on the religious grounds that smoking desecrated fire.

The regular members came to KPI straight from work, though the Parsi "bankers" came earlier in the afternoon. The thriving cafeteria served KPI's special tea with milk and lots of sugar (for a bargain price of five annas), fresh triangle-shaped meat or chutney sandwiches, delicious and straight from-the-oven chicken and mutton patties, and different sodas including the famous Nusserwanji's gingerale and, my personal favourite, green-colored ice-cream soda. Members signed "credit slips" for food they ate and the various games they played. At the end of the month, members paid their bills in full. This was a precursor of today's credit cards.

KPI provided an excellent place for young adults to meet, participate in outdoor and indoor sports, attend community dinner-dances, and socialize in general. Many members had their engagement receptions and marriage ceremonies performed on the Institute's lavish lawn surrounded by coconut trees. The Papeti and New Year's Eve dances were well-attended with a few gold medalists in dancing leading the way. The ghambars held at KPI were a gourmet's delight.

Of course, due to major reductions in the population of Parsis in Karachi, the hustle and bustle of KPI has now diminished. On my visits to Karachi over the past four decades, I always look forward to visiting KPI and it remains a priority on my schedule. Interestingly, while visiting KPI the faces of most young members are not immediately recognizable, but after brief conversations and some informal introductions, something magical happens. The physical resemblances and similarity in mannerisms to that of their parents, uncles, or aunts, and in some instances even grandparents, are astonishing as well as gratifying to me. It is heartening to know that KPI continues to serve and support the community's young men and women in creating excellence in sports and community leadership.

## Photographs

1. KPI Old Main Building - CIRCA 1895  
(Photograph - Courtesy of Toxy Cowasjee)
2. KPI Remodeled Main Building - 1954  
(Photograph taken by Sammy Bhiwandiwalla - 2007)
3. KPI Cycling event at Navroze Sports - 1958.

From L to R: Shahrokh Mehta; Cawas Vatcha, Tim Kamdin, Pesi Malbari.



**Shahrokh Mehta** was born in Karachi and was member of KPI from 1956 to 1965. He won trophies in table tennis, billiards, and swimming. From 2003 to 2006, Shahrokh won 24 medals (eight gold) at the Empire State Senior Olympic Games in swimming, table tennis, and bridge. He is a Life-Master (American Contract Bridge League) and a Bridge Director.





## PARSI THY NAME IS CHARITY

**Sunnu Farrokh Golwalla** traced the history of the Karachi Zarthosti Banu Mandal (KZBM) in "Sands of Time" (KZBM, 2003) from its inception in 1911 to its present role as the most dynamic and globally interactive Zarathushti organization in Karachi. She did the painstaking research as a labour of love, pouring over Minute Books, Annual Reports, brochures and correspondence to demonstrate the association's involvement in national and international events, and illustrate its mission of "seva" and "sakhavat" [service and charity]. For instance, during World War I, the Mandal donated 6,000 garments for soldiers. In this article, Sunnu goes on a more personal journey, chronicling her own relationship with the Mandal.

As a child, I had heard of the Karachi Zarthosti Banu Mandal, referred to in conversation as Banu Mandal, but thought of it merely as some ladies who sold sadras and loose fitting, cotton nightgowns. That was the extent of my attention to them. Then, in 1989, Cyra Noshirwani staged Dreams, a fashion show, as a fund-raiser for Banu Mandal. I was fascinated by the show that I sent a write-up about it to Parsiana hoping that they would print a line or two. I was thrilled when they printed the whole write-up. Sari Extravaganza followed, and again I wrote about it for Parsiana. By then, the Mandal wanted to know who this person was who was writing about them. Well, they found me! I received a call from Hilla Kotwal, the Chairlady of the Education subcommittee ,

asking whether I would like to join them. The work sounded interesting so I agreed.

## BECOMING A COMMITTEE MEMBER

As an eager beaver I arrived at the Mandal early for my first meeting and Jairam, their resourceful patawalla [caretaker], gave me copy of their Annual Report to while away the time. It was then that I learnt that nearly 50 women volunteered on six separate subcommittees. When the meeting started I enjoyed the concern and care with which these women, most of them educationists, discussed each student's progress. I went

home pleased that I had agreed to join the committee. That was in March 1994. Eight months down the line, I got another call, this time from Toxy Cowasjee, the Secretary of the Mandal's Managing Committee. She told me that she was intending to stand for the post of President in the upcoming elections, and asked if I would consider taking her place as the Secretary of the Mandal. I was stumped. What did I know about the responsibilities of being the Mandal's secretary? Also, my demanding boss would never approve of my involvement in work outside the office. She assured me that I would only be required to write some letters and attend fortnightly meetings. I hesitantly agreed, but told her emphatically, "I will not continue to be there for years and years. Two terms is the maximum."



In December 1994, the new Managing Committee took office under Toxy's leadership







and my life completely turned around. As it happened, I did not write many letters, but was involved with a profusion of projects and activities with a 1000-megawatt President who wanted to spark every department of the Mandal, into reaching heights considered unthinkable by the quiet bunch of homely ladies. During her tenure as president, Toxy made Banu Mandal known to Zarathushti associations around the world by constantly interacting with them and localising their projects at the Mandal. Toxy followed a long line of dynamic women such as Founder President Gulbai Nusserwanjee Mehta who set up Karachi Zarthosti Banu Mandal in 1912, Aloo Minocher Dinshaw, President from 1955 to 1978, and Alan Rutton Bilimoria, Mandal's Honorary Treasurer from 1946 to 1994. Pictures speak louder than words, so take a look at a sample of the Mandal's activities over the years.

In 2001, my two terms were up, and as I had to contend with a disgruntled boss at work, I accepted a less demanding position as vice president on the Committee. However, before the end of my second term I realized that a new person would bring vigour to the position, and gave up my place on the committee in 2007.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

I learnt a lot during my association with the Mandal, for which I am grateful. I also became aware of the largess of the donors over the years, which has made it possible for the Mandal to touch every facet of a beneficiary's life. Record of individual contributions is not publicly disclosed, but it is evident that the dedication and kindness of hundreds of volunteers over 96 years have made Banu Mandal the premier Zarathushti institution in Karachi. As we look to completing a hundred years, it is good to look at ways to become even better. Sakhavat [charity] is the Mandal's avowed mission, but it would be wiser and more beneficial in the long term if they make it their policy that whenever they

extend help, a small portion of the expense is shared by the beneficiary. This could be a token amount, contributed in instalments if necessary as this would make the beneficiaries value the assistance and retain their self-respect. Of course, the Mandal should use their discretion to continue helping those who, in spite of assistance and attention may not be able to contribute due to limitation of capability and life-skills. Based on my close association with the Mandal's work, this is my modest suggestion for an institution that has provided so much leadership in the past.

## Photographs

1. Founder President Gulbai Nusserwanjee Mehta who along with eleven wise men and women set up Karachi Zarthosti Banu Mandal on 11th November 1912;
2. KZBM members in 1916 at H J Rustomjee House, the first home of Banu Mandal;
3. Mandal's Work Class sewing in 1915



**Sunnu Golwalla** was closely associated with KZBM from 1994 to 2007, and authored the history of KZBM in "Sands of Time." She was a senior executive assistant for many years, but has been a Human Resource professional for past three years. She has many diverse interests such as travelling, training professionals, and writing.



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## THE SUN NEVER SETS

### The Wisdom of Shams-ul-Ulema Dastur Dr. Maneckji Nusserwanji Dhalla

By Farishta Murzban Dinshaw

Maneckji Nusserwanji Dhalla was born on September 22, 1875 in Surat, India, but at age three his father relocated to Karachi. As was common in those times, at the age of eight Maneckji was married to Cooverbai, a five-year old girl from Navsari. His great-granddaughter Vahishta Canteenwalla recalls, "Dr. Dhalla and his wife, Cooverbai, were a love story unto themselves. They were married as children and he went back to get her when she came of age. When he was in her village, family legend has it that he saw a beautiful girl in the garden and he fell in love on the spot. He went to tell his uncle about that girl and how he did not want to be married to Cooverbai any more. But before he could do it in walked Cooverbai with her parents, and it was that very same girl. They stayed madly in love until the day she died in 1942."

At fifteen, he began his training for the priesthood, going on to become renowned for his lectures on Zarathushti religion. With financial support from the community, in May 1905, Dhalla left to continue his studies at Columbia University, New York. His years at Columbia gave him a broader and a deeper perspective on Zarathushtra's message. In 1909, at the age of 35-years, Dr. Dhalla was nominated as the High Priest of Karachi, and served in this office until his death in 1956.

*"The British government bestowed the title of Shams-ul-Ulema [Sun of the Scholars] on him in 1935 to acknowledge his wisdom and intellectual acumen, and the Foreword he wrote in his Atma Katha [autobiography in Gujarati] testifies to his deserving this title. The words written in 1946 are eerily apt even today. "Forty-two years ago, while studying at Columbia University, I learned the lesson of tolerance from the world-renowned philosopher, Santayana. He declared that "matters of religion should never be matters of controversy". A very large majority of mankind is still incapable of putting into practice this invaluable advice, our community least of all....In March 1944, the eminent Chinese author and philosopher, Dr. Lin-yo-Tung said: "India was suffering*

*from an overdose of spirituality. India had too much of religion and could well afford to do with less of it." These golden words apply not to the inhabitants of India alone but, to a certain degree, to all nations following any religion in the world. After the prophets depart their disciples turn everyone into blind followers of the faith. Religiosity replaces religion. The intoxication of religion makes a man delirious. Socio-religious customs take the place of pure, ethical, and devotional faith and turn it into tradition-ridden religion as a result of which men quibble and quarrel constantly...The Modern Age dawned in the West and its glow is spreading gradually over India,*



*Turkey, Egypt, Iran, Japan, China, and other countries of the East. The tussle between old and new ideas and ideals is going on everywhere. The masses living in the New Age are so accustomed to the conventions and customs of the Olden Age that although the seasons have changed, conditions have changed, everything has changed, they are unable to read and understand the message of the New Age and to get reconciled to it or to accept it. God made man a part of society, but He wished and willed that, living in society and serving it, man may develop his individuality — his personality which reveals man in his completeness. That a human being may enjoy freedom of thought and freedom of conscience in this world and build up his character and, after death, as a result of that fine character and his own good deeds, win the liberation of his soul. Just as despotism imprisoned individuality in its claws for thousands of years all over the world, tyrannical religious dogmas bound it with chains. "Truth never stales with repetition." It will therefore be expedient to reiterate that Herodotus, the father of history, wrote of our two thousand five hundred year old ancestors — the Hakaemenians [Achaemenians] — that they were valiant and courageous in envisaging changing times and circumstances and in conditioning their lives according to the country and the age in which they lived. Then let us, as their rightful heirs, follow in their footsteps and learn from their leadership that there is grace, dignity, and wisdom in fashioning our lives according to the demands of this twentieth century."*

*(Excerpt from the English translation by Gool and Behram Rustomjee published as **The Saga of a Soul**, Karachi, 1975, pages v-viii)*



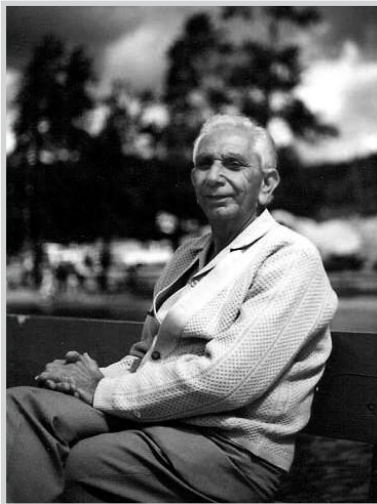


## SECTION III: PERSONAL SPACE

*A city is a large urban place where a large number of people live in close proximity to each other, and it has specific legal, political and administrative functions. However, each resident within that space experiences the city differently, building a special relationship with it that influences their personality, their relationships, their fears and dreams. In this section, contributors share their personal experiences of family life, school days, and their unique relationship with Karachi, as well as the universality of living in a Parsi bagh.*

### THE WONDER YEARS

**Three Karachiites from different generations reminisce about growing up in Karachi, giving us an insight into the city they experienced.**



**1. Virasp Pirozshaw Mehta** passed away on June 2, 2008 after a brief illness. Extracts from interviews with him recorded ten years earlier when I was doing a project on oral histories describe his childhood growing up in Katrak Parsi Colony when life was simpler and the world was safer. **Farishta M. Dinshaw**

I was born on 6 January 1925 at Dr. Kanga's compound, which used to be in what is now the Tibet Centre area. I had four, fine, loving brothers of whom I was the youngest. We were a loving family and there were no restrictions on us. We could discuss on a number of subjects with our parents [Gulbanu and Pirozshaw]. At the dining table, for hours on end, we would be sitting there discussing problems like how the body should be taken to the doongerwadi [tower of silence], whether it should be carried on the shoulders or pushed in a cart. Although religious, they were also Theosophists, and as such their viewpoints were rather



Tramway in old Karachi-Photo

different from other Parsis' normal thinking.

We, as children, walked down from here [house in Katrak Parsi Colony] to BVS School. Only those who were affluent could ride in trams. There were very few cars that I can recollect. The ghorah gari [horse carriage] ride from Parsi Colony to Saddar was about four annas, but as I said, most of the people walked. They would walk down to ghambars at Jehangir Bagh or events at YMZA Hall. Only for weddings and navjotes when women wore their finery were ghorah gari provided for them, but the menfolk would definitely walk down.

Every morning, school used to start somewhere around 10 a.m. until 4.30 p.m. I recollect that there used to be an annual feature of a cricket match between teachers and boys on the first day back from vacation. Of course, the teachers couldn't play for nuts so there used to be a lot of shouting and laughing. On the last day of class everyone decorated their class with bunting and even the Principal came down to the classroom to partake in the feasting. Another thing I remember was that we used to have assembly before the classes started. On the first bell you came to attention, on the second bell you turned, and on the third bell you marched to class. It used to be quite a drill, and they used to play some march on an old churning gramophone. Every Thursday afternoon was Circle Day; Dramatic Circle, Art Circle, this Circle and all that. There was also a funny incident when Pithawalla [Dr. Maneck Pithawalla, the Principal] introduced the school badge with "BVS towards the Best Light" and Behli uncle [Behram Rustomjee, a teacher] said it should be sewn on a Parsi cap. Pithawalla said, "What are you people doing? Have you all joined the East India Tramway Company?" because their drivers used to have badges on their caps. So eventually the badge came on the pocket.

After school, we would go to play cricket in the [Katrak Parsi] Colony. I remember the first time when the sewerage lines were laid down in Parsi Colony. We used to play chor police [cops and robbers], running up and





down in the dug up trenches. The garden you see was not actually built then. It was constructed in front of us while we were kids. They had put up the hall [Bhedwar Library and Reading Room] in 1927, and the first thing they said was if we are going to have a garden, what about the water? So they dug a well and put up a windmill, which was a unique landmark of this area for years together till it stopped functioning and they dismantled it. We played our cricket over here, and rounders, and many children and grownups too used to be here till dark. It used to be quite fun till people started shouting from the houses, "Chalo ghairah avo." [Come home]. We used to go home and then sneak back!

The Bhedwar hall was used for navjotes, marriages, but not for funerals. It started being used for funerals many, many years later. During the Second World War, the Bhedwar hall was used by some Pasi members of the Masonic Lodges. I distinctly remember a Parsi gentleman guarding the door with his Parsi coat and fenta [traditional hat worn by Parsi men] and a sword. We also had our stock of retired old fogies who would come and sit on huge easy chairs and read the paper, and you dared not make a noise during the time they were reading! I don't know why people stopped using it as a reading room even though the name continues.

In those days, the rich Hindus used to have water troughs for horses in memory of their elders, and some generous ones would dish out channa [grams] for the people. We used to go down over there after playing when we had nothing else to do. Cycling was another thing that was a great Parsi activity, and cycling to Drigh Road or Malir was quite common. I remember some adventurous ones cycling from Karachi to Hyderabad. We also used to go to the Capitol or Palace Cinema. Paradise and Regal were not built at that time. The ticket was four annas, but it was a lot of money and you had to ask your parents for the money to go to the matinee on Sundays. Movies in those days used to change every Friday, hardly lasting a week. The only movie which was a big hit and ran for innumerable weeks was "Bathing Beauty" (1944) and there was another one with the South American actress Carmen Miranda singing a song. I remember that some of the brave boys used to play hookey from school and go for the matinee shows. The saddest part of Sunday afternoons was when the church bells used to chime and it brought a sad feeling that the next day you had to go to school. That used to be the life then, very carefree.

**Virasp Pirozshaw Mehta (1925 – 2008)** was associated with *The Young Men's Zoroastrian Association* and *Dastur Dr. Dhalla Memorial Institute* for 25 years. He was actively involved with the *Informal Religious Meetings Trust Fund* from its inception in 1975 till his death this year. He also edited its journal "USHAO".

## 2. In his forties now, Rayomand Sam Dubash remembers the glory days of growing up in Jamshed Bagh during the Seventies and Eighties.

When reminiscing about my days of growing up in Karachi, Bryan Adam's voice singing "Those were the best days of my life" echoes in my ear. Unlike a few of my friends who lived in bungalows, I was fortunate to live



in Jamshed Bagh (JB), a walled colony of four-storey apartments buildings. A group of friends who also lived in JB, and whom I had known since I was born, faithfully congregated on the bankras [benches] after finishing our homework. We laughed and chatted till our parents would shout out

from the windows in true bagh style that it was time to come home.

We had a lot of fun during our childhood, some of it innocent masti [mischief], some not so innocent. To give an example of our teenage villainy, we had a ritual that on Friday nights we would go to a nearby market to have chai and paratha [tea and pan-fried flatbread]. There was an old aunty who had a car given to her by her office. It was a small Suzuki Matchbox, which we could jiggle open. We would all pile into the car and sneak it out for a night-time ride, hence it was nick named the "Tea Car". Somehow, her chauffeur realized that the car was being used behind his back, and bought a Krook Lock that locked the steering, and so our weekly jaunts in our "Tea Car" ended.

Kala Shariff, our chawkidar [watchman], was one of the central figures in our lives growing up in JB. He had been initially responsible for guarding the cement and steel, which eventually became Jamshed Bagh, and had stayed on as a watchman for the bagh. He was also the unfortunate recipient of our practical jokes, like the time we put glue in the lock to the water tank so he couldn't open it. At times, he would take the pranks in his stride, but on other occasions he used to come charging with his long baton. For some reason, those occasions are the ones we still talk about when JB friends get together.

I, along with most of the Parsi boys in Karachi, went to Bai Virbaijee Soparivala Parsi High School (BVS). The BVS School was famous for its school band, which would go to every Parsi baghs and homes in Karachi to play on Naurooz day. I joined the band in Grade Six as a cymbalist, then rose to the rank of a drummer, and at the



time of graduating from school, I had the distinction of being the Base Drummer. The Cowasjee-Variawa family donated funds for the purchase and maintenance of the musical instruments, and in hindsight I recognize what a

Hospital and the infirmary [Bomanshaw Minocher Homji Medical Association].

Many of the “JB gang”, as we were called, went abroad for study or work, and are scattered all over the world. As the saying goes, “All good things eventually come to an end” but the memories we share will last a lifetime.



**Car Rally in 1983 photo Rayomand Dubash**

### **3. Havovi Zubin Cooper has lived and worked in Dubai and different parts of the United States since she was 18, but she calls Karachi home.**

My high school defined my past, it carried me to my present and it continues to write my future. For eleven years I attended Mama Parsi Girls Secondary School. In Karachi, if anyone asked me which school I went to I would proudly and loudly sing out its name.



Even though it was a mouthful, I would never encounter strange glances because it was such a reputable institution. Everyone in Karachi knew that “Mama” was the last name of a famous Parsi who founded the school and not just Gujarati or English word for mother. We were about ten Parsi and 30 Muslim students in one grade. The only dividing line between us was our religion classes and the Morning Prayer session. The Parsi girls with their colorful vatkas and shalwarless uniforms would file into the hall and sing a hymn to Ahura Mazda while the Muslim girls would recite a dua to Allah. Within 15 minutes this division would end, and we would run off to the same classes, where science and math took over spirituality.

valuable opportunity they provided the students as I have many fond memories of playing in the band.

As we grew older and started college, we joined youth associations that organized whist drives, car rallies, Naurooz and Papeti dinner and dance, picnics, camel cart rides, and how could we forget their crabbing parties, famous for water fights between the boats. First there was the PPCA (Pakistan Parsi Collegiate Association). This association, had been formed in the 1930 under the name Parsi Collegiate Association Union, but the word Union was replaced with Association due to political policies in the 1970s when the then Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto banned all unions. A second association, the Zoroastrian Youth Association (ZYA) was

**Rayomand Dubash** completed his studies in Karachi and joined his family business, Neon Signs Pakistan (Pvt) Ltd. In 2001, he immigrated to Canada with his wife, Anaita, and children, Sam and Alysia His interests include music from the Golden Era, cars, and immigration related topics. He currently works for Toronto Transit Commission.

formed in the late 70's. Over the years, I had the distinction of serving as the Vice President, and then the Secretary of ZYA. Like the PPCA, this association was also responsible for organizing social events for the youth, but members of the ZYA were also actively involved in a “Tin & Bottle Collection Drive”. Groups of youth would get together on a weekend and go from door to door in baghs to collect bottles, newspapers, tins and other scrap, which was then sold to scrap dealers. Money raised was then used to buy treats for the patients and infirm residents of the Parsi General

The best thing about attending a Parsi school in a Muslim country was that we got many days off from school. The Muslims had their two Eids, and their Prophet's birthday, Ashura and many other holidays, and the Parsi's had their two Nauroozs, and Khordad Saal. The Naurooz in August was my favourite festival. A mela [fair] took place at the Beach Luxury Hotel, where kids could buy goodies while the oldies played Tambola and families wished each other “Naurooz Mubarak” while nostalgic songs like “Oh Carol” blared in the background.

As I grew older my Parsi friends became sparse. My friend Avan and I were the only Parsi girls in my class. Avan and



I also lived in the same colony next to the Ghadikhata Agiary, with a quaint kunwaa [well] overlooked by breezy coconut trees. A chalk-board outside the main door clearly said that non-Parsis could not enter the premises. The “agiary nu compound” was a bunch of greying buildings, where old Parsi aunties kept a watch by sticking their heads through the window bars. The silence, the traffic noise, and the azaan [call to prayer for Muslims] were interrupted by the jingling of seven bells each time the geh changed. Later, we moved to a house in Avari Colony, named after the famous hotel tycoon Dinshaw B Avari. Our hang-out there was the colony’s Cyrus Minwalla Hall, but simply referred to as “the hall”. In the evenings, the Parsi guys and girls ages 12 and up, donning the most fashionable and often skimpy attire (permitted only within the boundaries of the walled colony) would congregate, flirt, socialize and often pick on a chosen few before calling it a day. The colony is built around the two dokmas. They were on the top of what was considered a steep hill in a flat Karachi, but is more of a mound. The houses were built a little distance around them, but in plain in sight of them.

In the evenings, the Parsi aunties in their shorts, shalwar kameez or ‘frocks’, would walk purposefully around the two mile radius for their daily exercise. As one old, male resident put it, “Ketla ghela chey, dokhma na feraa khaich.” [“How silly they are going round and round the dokhma”]. But where else could these women go? Karachi is a modern city, but its modernity is restricted to the in-doors. There are very few places where people can take their children for an ‘outing’ and feel safe. You can only go ten times to Funland, an amusement park, before you get bored or the rides become too expensive. The parks in Karachi are not safe, and once upon a time Karachi was a mall-free city. At that time there weren’t too many places to hang out. I remember my parents piling us in our old blue Suzuki van, fondly referred to as “the dabbo” [box] because of its shape and taking us on a ‘long drive’ to Clifton. Old Clifton was a parking lot on a cliff overlooking the sea where my parents could relax in the car while my brother and I played around and made up stories about a moon stone. My family was not singular in their love for “Chalo Clifton farva jayay.” [“Let’s go to Clifton for an outing”]. I chanced upon my “bestest” Parsi friend Zavera while playing with pebbles at Clifton. We discovered our Parsiness and bonded over it for a lifetime.

At times I would withdraw from being with Parsis because of their vibe of superiority, their sense of exclusiveness. People of my parent’s age would often grumble about the Muslims having ruined the country. Even if there was any truth to that statement, the mere fact that they held an entire community accountable for some members ruining the country was beyond my comprehension. I tried to find reason for the prejudice,

thinking that because Parsis were one of the minorities that had excelled at every level and were widely respected in Pakistan, they felt real grief over the undoing of their beloved nation. However, this is one aspect of our community in Karachi that makes me appreciate multicultural togetherness when I look at the world around me.

*Havovi Cooper is a recent graduate of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. Being a journalist is her passion. She is still waiting for her big break, but believes she has Ahura Mazda and her parents to thank for whatever she has achieved till now. Currently, she resides in New York.*

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## TALES FROM MANY BAGHS

The first block of community flats in Karachi were built in 1911 on land owned by the Parsi Panchayat in Ranchore Lines. The first building was constructed by Khan Bahadur Kavasji Hormusji Katrak in memory of his wife Khurshedbai. Later, several other buildings were constructed through donations by other Parsi philanthropists and the cluster of buildings came to be known as Panchayat Wadi. Now, there are over ten areas where Parsis reside, ranging from colonies with bungalows to walled compounds with apartment buildings, each one usually named after a member of the philanthropic family who had them built. Unfortunately, as the population of Zarathushtis in Karachi dwindles, more and more apartment doors boast locks. Rohinton Mistri's book "Tales from Firozsha Baag" (Penguin, 1987) is a fictional account of life in a Parsi bagh, but in this feature, residents and former residents give snapshots of real life in a Parsi compound, with all the eccentricities, the camaraderie, and the little joys and irritations that come with the territory.

### ANJUMAN BAGH

(formerly known as Panchayat Wadi)

"Narius! Kaiwan's on the phone."

"Haun Kaiwan, kem chey?" [Yes, Kaiwan. How are you?]"

"Hey, you won't believe it, a courier van just backed into one of our electric poles...bringing it down."

"You're kidding me!"

"No, fella. Be down in five minutes. We've got some raw entertainment on our hands."

Any activity, be it small or big, is an opportunity for a get-together. It's an opportunity to discuss, criticize, analyze or even to catch up on the recent gossip. We also have interesting characters. Let me introduce you to Dhunju. Like any typical Parsi veteran, he adores his car, a 1965 Chevrolet Corvette. In fact, his commitment to his car is so strong that rain or shine one can see him daily between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. buffing away his 'bride in red'. This daily routine starts with him putting a garland of fresh orange flowers on his side view mirror followed by him staring at the sun and mumbling a few incomprehensible words. As soon as he is done with this ritual of his, he checks all the door locks to see if they have been tampered with. Next, out of nowhere appears his custom-made checked buffing cloth. After applying a generous amount of car polish on to his already sparkling car he gets on with polishing feverishly as if his life depends on it. This rubbing and scrubbing goes on for almost 30 minutes. Next up are the car tires, which have hardly ever seen what the roads of Karachi look like.

Subsequently, he checks the air in his tires, the engine oil, the brake oil, the radiator water...the list is endless. Last thing on his list is another thorough check of all the car doors locks. Finally, he covers his car and disappears into his flat, only to return exactly 23 hours later.

- **Narius Arsheesh Irani**



**Anjuman Bagh** is as lively as it used to be. In fact, it is considered one of the most vibrant of all the Parsi localities in Karachi. The compound is abuzz with children of all ages playing, cycling and running around all evening. Sports vary from season to season, but there is always some activity or the other going on. For example, during Ramzan [the Islamic month of fasting] all the

boys and girls in the compound are fully focussed on volleyball and throwball respectively, due to the inter colony volleyball and throwball tournaments that take place during this month time as offices and schools shut down by mid-day. Apart from that, most of the boys and girls in the compound meet in the evening, play table tennis, sit on the benches and chat, or play football or cricket. Sometimes, friends make a plan to go out for tea, coffee, or dinner and get back home by midnight. However, on weekends all of us have extended time limits so we play table tennis, or whichever sport is going on, till midnight or even later, and then go out for dinner. Sometimes we go out for a movie. On some Sundays, we go to the beach (sometimes cycling and sometimes by car), or we go for fishing and then stop at a dhabba [similar to a truck-stop restaurant] to have breakfast. In the evenings, some of us gather on the terrace and fly kites. The activity in the compound also keeps the elderly who can't leave their homes entertained through the evening before their Star Plus [television channel] dramas start. In short, there is never a dull moment at Anjuman Bagh.

- **Rustom Homi Irani**

### JAMSHED BAGH

I lived in a bagh all my life in Karachi till I moved to Toronto. Living in a bagh is a completely different experience from living in a house or even in mixed-community apartment building. Our Jamshed Bagh was



divided into three sections with blocks of small flats, medium flats and large flats around an open centre playground. The people living in the bagh were like a big family, and there was always something going on. There was the hustling and bustling of kids going to school and tuitions, there were parents who went to work from morning till evening, and then there were seniors who stayed at home. There would be people coming and going in the bagh from morning till evening. There would be vendors like the pavwala [bread seller], machiwala [fishmonger], sabziwala [vegetable seller], knife sharpener. Then we had the servants and cooks, sweepers and bhona-walas [meal delivery men] knocking at the doors. In the evenings, you could see all the little kids come down to play together in the centre of the bagh. Teenagers would collect with other teenagers from other Parsi baghs and colonies on one of the ootlas [stoops] of a ground floor flat, or on the benches. Many of the parents and other ladies would come to sit on the benches and gossip amongst themselves about what was going on in whose flat. During inter-bagh competitions there would be teams from other baghs coming to play throw ball or volley ball, or we would go to their place for a match. Boy, were those matches fiery! There was never a dull moment in the bagh. I would love to live in a bagh again.

**- Nilufer Rohinton Vadiwalla**

## JEHANGIR BAGH

(Now replaced by a commercial building)

Everybody who remembers Jehangir Bagh mostly does so for the food of Nariman Karanjia served at lagans and navjots. We used to have Parsi sit-down dinner of patra ni matchi, fried eggs, chappatis, and how we used to long for the sweet paan at the end of dinner. If you took a seat early, you were in the first sitting, otherwise you had to take your seat standing behind one that was occupied, and wait for them to finish. I suppose it taught you patience. In those days we ate with our fingers, so at the end of dinner a server came right to the table with a bowl, a pitcher of hot water and soap to wash our hands. Throughout the navjote / lagan, a local band would play. The decoration in the hall was simple, which we used to enjoy pulling down at the end of the day! Boys enjoyed bursting as many balloons as they could, and the girls tried to collect the crepe ribbons and balloons to take home. Ghambars in Jehangir Bagh for school children was another excitement, once again with Nariman's excellent food.

Jehangir Bagh was used for other events too. There used to be Hambandagi prayers during mukhtad days. We used to go early in the morning at 7 a.m. before school and after the prayers there were lectures by Dr. Dhalla. At school, we would be asked, "Kaun nahee gailoo? Kai nahee gailoo?" ["Who didn't go? Why didn't you go?"] so we all ended up attending, like it or not. In the evening during

mukhtad Mummy used to go for prayers to Jehangir Bagh, and while she prayed my sister and I used to play in the large compound with other children.

On one occasion someone had come from India for Shahnameh recital and this went on till late in the night and lots of coffee was served so everyone stayed awake! I also remember a maan pattar for BVS (Boys' School) ex-Principal Dr. Maneck Pithawalla when we boys were asked to come in school uniform to form a guard of honour. Jehangir Bagh also had housing for travellers and my mama, (mother's brother) Faram Romer, stayed there whenever he visited from Quetta. No one place can claim such a variety of activities, but I miss Jehangir Bagh mostly for its simplicity and best Parsi food.

**- Farrokh Jehangir Golwalla**

## KATRAK HALL

Whenever I hear stories from my Dad about the things



they use to do, I can't stop smiling and realize that we youngsters have become so different. I laugh at the fact that they

used to cycle all the way to Malir and Hawkes Bay. We can't even think of it now, thanks to our parents who have given us comfortable air-conditioned cars to drive around in. Forget going to beaches on cycles, even if I have to talk to a friend only two buildings away, I'd rather just pick up my cell phone and dial her number than walk over. Who plays cricket or football in this heat these days? No way! We would rather relax in our rooms and watch the latest DVD or play computer games. My dad says that every day in evenings they used to gather in the compound and chit-chat or plan stuff. Nowadays, if I see my friends on weekends it's a treat because life has become so busy. Most of us do not come home from work before 8 p.m., and we are so stressed out that we just don't have the stamina for other activities.

**- Ratasha Darius Tampal**

## KATRAK PARSİ COLONY

1970 my mother, brother and I moved to an apartment in Katrak Blocks in Katrak Parsi Colony.

The Colony was built sometime during the late 1920s and comprises large, individual beautiful houses, most of which are double storied with balconies, porches, and



gardens full of fruit trees, bougainvillea creepers, jasmine vines and mogra shrubs. Katrak Blocks was a compound which had five blocks of apartments, and we lived on the ground floor in one of the blocks.

In the middle of the colony is the Sohrab Katrak Park, fondly called the baghicha [garden]. The park built by Sir Kawasji Hormasji Katrak, and one end of the park houses the Manijeh Mehta Building built for the Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal, and at the other end is the Bhedwar Library. The Bhedwar Library's main hall has also served as a communal hall for events such as meetings, plays, jashans and even funerals. The hall was also our club where we hung out, played table tennis tables, carom, and board games donated by generous residents of the colony.

Life in the colony during the Sixties and the Seventies was simple and a lot of fun. A familiar sight in the evenings would be children playing in the park, biking on the roads, and seniors sitting on their oatlas [porches] watching the traffic go by. We still reminisce about the carefree days of playing baseball and volley ball in the baghicha, running across M. A. Jinnah Road to get ice cream and eating Nazir Bhai's famous bun kebab. Growing up in the colony surrounded by family (grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins) I always felt very safe and never lonely.

**- Kemul Darayus Divecha**

## MEHRABAD

My family moved to Mehrabad in March 1983, and have been living here ever since. Mehrabad is a Zarthushti apartment complex with five buildings, which has been around for almost 40 years. I have lived here with my parents, Fram and Perviz, and my sister, Nilofer, for just over twenty-five years but it seems like a lifetime with loads of memories, some happy and some sad. I still remember the first day when we came here to check out the new apartment. For some odd reason, I was intimidated by the



place and people, but now would have it no other way. I can still recall the centre of our happiness being the Mehrabad Recreation Hall which used to (and still does) house a table tennis table, a carom board, and a small

library which used to open once or twice a week where we used to borrow books. Evening time used to be the highlight of the day when we would run down to the Hall and fight over who would play table tennis or carom first, who would get a turn that day, and who would be left out for another day. Cricket also used to be a popular game both amongst the girls and the boys. Matches used to be organised by the Mehrabad Recreation Hall Committee for tenants. The [bagh] committee would organise sports mornings and at least one function per month to keep the tenants entertained. Under the supervision of one of our active tenants, Nancy Yazdani, we also hosted two very successful natakas [Gujarati comedies] which were attended in a large number by people from different Parsi localities. Sadly, there are not as many youngsters in Mehrabad anymore as there were before, and the entertainment events have decreased. However, one function, which is held every year without fail and attended by quite a number of people, is the annual ghambar held in summer. Yes, some people have moved on to other countries, some have passed away, and some married and gone to different localities, but for me Mehrabad is my home and I love living here.

**-Arnaz Fram Framji**

## RUSTOM CHAWL

I have been associated with Rustom Chawl since I was born so I have an attachment to it. During my youth my friends from the compound and I would cycle to KPI nearly every evening and have a gala time. We used to go crabbing or fishing at least once a month. On Sundays, we used to go to Frere Hall or Kothari Parade where old and young Parsis used to meet. On weekends, our dear Soli uncle (*Soli Khudamurad Irani*) used to show Laurel and Hardy films on the big screen, which was considered a novelty in those days. Our dear (late) Najoo aunty [Najoo Maneckji Rustomji] used to hold ghambars twice a year for the compound youth which was truly enjoyed by all of us. Behli uncle's [Behram Rustomjee] daughters Armaiti and Soonamai used to hold Christmas parties for old and young. They also used to arrange pawa [rice puffs in milk] parties at Clifton, which we used to go to on camel carts. On holidays, they even used to arrange ghora gari [horse carriage] rides and give cholas [savory snack] and foreign chocolates to all. Foreign chocolates were a rare item in those days and a real treat. There was one thing about my compound friends that if anyone needed help or if someone fell sick and had to be rushed to a hospital, we never hesitated to help be it day or night time, even if we usually used to tease or do masti [mischief] with that person. My youth days were the real memorable days of my life.

**-Dinshaw Phiroze Daruwalla**





## SECTION IV: THROUGH ANOTHER LENS

### A NEW COUNTRY, A NEW COMMUNITY

*Teenaz Javat, a journalist with Mumbai's Dalal Street Journal, left Mumbai in 1994 to settle in Karachi as a young bride. Currently living in Toronto, Canada, she recalls her impressions of the city.*

The early 1990s evoke memories of the fall of the Soviet empire, the uniting of Germany, the end of apartheid, and the presidency of Bill Clinton heralding a



new international world order. The Indian sub-continent, which I have always said is a journalist's dream region, was undergoing its own upheaval. The Taliban were making inroads into power in Afghanistan; the Babri Masjid was torn down in Ayodhya, sparking communal riots never seen since 1947; and Mumbai was devastated when 13 bombs exploded in a single day. I was a journalist who was on the cusp of establishing my toehold in the dynamic world of Indian current affairs. In the midst of this a Pakistani Zarathushti proposed marriage to me.

Before I knew it, I was married and on my way to a new country, and in many ways, a new community. The Zarathushtis of Karachi, except for a few, lived insulated lives away from what was happening in their city or in their country. By and large, intermingling with the mainstream population was not looked upon favourably, and the "us versus them" dynamic was never far from the surface. Parsi friends were invited home, but non-Parsi friends were taken to clubs or gymkhanas for dinner. After the secular, cosmopolitan life in Mumbai, this kind of

restrictive mentality was stifling.

I found my salvation in the familiar environment of a newsroom when I joined DAWN, Pakistan's most widely circulated English language daily. I was welcomed by my colleagues as the "girl from India" and quickly I was on the road to becoming a respected columnist. However, the single biggest hurdle I faced was the lack of dependable public transport. Having grown up in Mumbai where going from place to place in search of stories was never an issue, now the seemingly simple act of going on an assignment became a logistical nightmare. Making arrangements for the family car and chauffeur to take me to an assignment without disrupting other family members' routines took over my life. Merely having a blossoming career and wonderful colleagues was not enough to sustain me. I missed the freedom to do the things I had done in Mumbai without a thought - loafing at Fashion Street, hiking, biking, swimming, travelling across India by train. What I missed the most was just being on my own in the city without needing an escort for protection. Slowly, but surely, I realised that this was not the place I could see myself living in for long time, nor did I want to bring up my daughter in such a homogenous, restrictive culture.

We applied for immigration to Canada, and within forty months of my arriving in Karachi, two adults, a child, and five suitcases left Karachi for Toronto. I still remember my time in Karachi, particularly the days I spent at DAWN, but my home and hearth are now deeply rooted in Canada.



**Teenaz Javat** is a freelance writer from Mississauga, Ontario. This summer, she completed her Ontario Graduate Certificate Diploma in Journalism from Sheridan College, Oakville, Canada, graduating at the top of her class and was awarded the President's Medal. Toronto's Mille Femme Exhibit featured her as one of 1000 creative women in Canada.

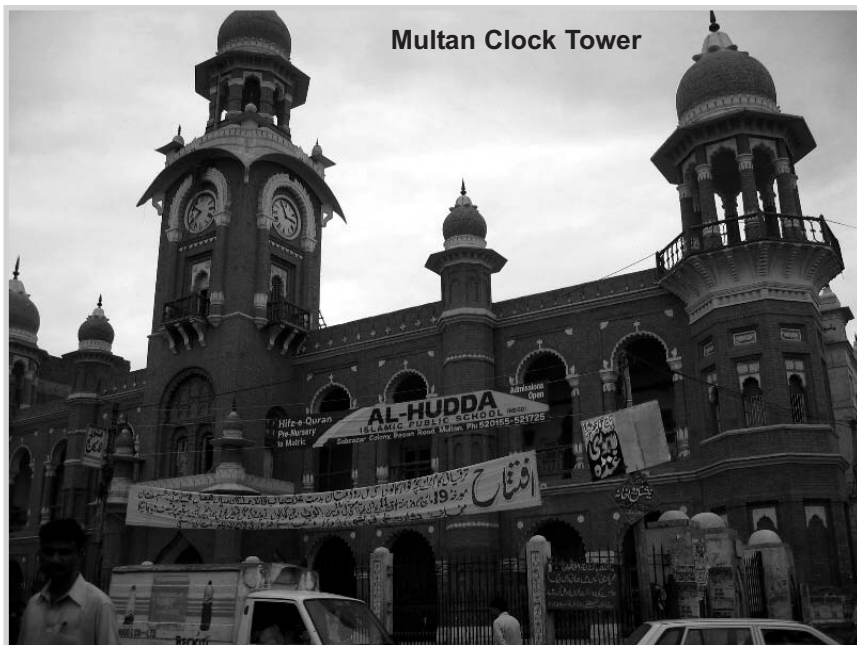


## HAPPY HOLIDAYS

**Mehernosh Bomanji** grew up in Multan, a small town in southern Punjab, about 1000 kilometers from Karachi. It is one of the oldest cities in the Asian subcontinent, and is known as the “City of Saints” because of the large number of historic mosques and shrines. There were only three Parsi families in Multan when Mehernosh was

but it is dry heat. In Karachi no matter how many times you showered you still felt sticky and icky. People talked with a funny accent, and rarely in Urdu. In fact, many Parsis could not speak a single line without making a mistake. I had an interest in Urdu poetry and would read Urdu newspapers, but Karachi Parsis found this amusing and confusing, which in turn

found Karachi Parsis to be clique-ish who thought that just because I was from a small town I did not know anything. Some who were in their teens and twenties at that time made fun of my accent and called me “Multani”. They also had age-old biases about Muslims and stuck to themselves, which was strange to me having grown up surrounded by Muslims.



Multan Clock Tower

growing up, and he was the only Parsi student in his school. He shares his memories of his childhood visits to Karachi.

My first trip to Karachi was for my cousin’s wedding in 1980 when I was seven-years old. Karachi seemed so different from conservative Multan, with women in jeans and skirts or in shalwar kameez [native dress] but without a dupatta [scarf]. It was so big with such tall buildings and such confusing streets. As compared to Multan, which you could drive through in 15 minutes, Karachi never seemed to end, and went on and on and on. Plus, it was humid. Multan is hotter, the temperatures reaching the mid-fifties at times [around 120° F],

confused me. I couldn’t figure out why they couldn’t speak or read their national language.

After that, we came quite often. Sometimes for holidays, sometimes for family weddings or navjotes, sometimes if Mum and Dad were travelling abroad we would come with them to see them off at the airport, stay a few days, and then go back to Multan. We always stayed with my kaka [father’s brother] in Cyrus Minwalla Colony. Going to the hall in the colony was the highlight of the day. Every evening from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., I would be there with my cousins and friends, and we would play volleyball, table tennis and carom. I made some friends who remain good friends, but generally I

My opinion of Karachi did change as probably I changed, and things which had seemed out of the ordinary become a part of day-to-day life, but that was only after I moved there permanently in 1993. Before that Karachi always left me in awe as I only saw the good parts like any tourist on holiday does in any city in the world.

### **Mehernosh Hoshang**

*Bomanji is a Chartered Accountant specializing in Audit and Assurance. His interests include reading, watching films, and cycling. His ambition is to become a successful entrepreneur. He currently lives in Toronto.*







## Of Raags and Riches

**Zaheer Alam Kidvai** gives commentary on the mundane and the profound in his own inimitable style on his blog "Windmills of My Mind" (<http://kidvai.com/windmills/>).

*Exclusively for FEZANA Journal, he recalls his interactions with Parsis of Karachi.*

While a teenager I was often mistaken for a Parsi. Even more amusingly, for a few years, I was mistaken for a particular Parsi, a Pervez Sethna. Common friends, when speaking to one of us, referred to the other as "your twin". While neither of us ever comprehended the resemblance others saw, there must have been something that led to the occasional hilarious mix-up. My favourite episode was the one when Yusuf Kamal (an established star on TV where he goes by the name of Shakeel), who knew both of us, met me in a bookshop and carried on a long conversation thinking I was Pervez until I told him I wasn't. A few days later, his car passed a spot where I was waiting for a bus, and he offered to give me a ride home. Among the first sentences he spoke to me was, "Yaar, Pervez, just last week I met Zaheer and chatted with him thinking it was you."

I'd met Pervez during one of our daily gatherings at Karachi's Soparivala Blocks, located on Clark Street just before the gate of the exquisite St. Patrick's Cathedral, which was home to Parsis, Goans, Anglo-Indians, Hindus, and Muslims. The centre-point of those gatherings was the Mobed family, fondly called Uncle Dinshaw and Aunt Silla. A classmate of ours, their nephew Munchershaw "Munchi" Sorabji, was their ward because his parents lived in Mumbai. The Mobeds had some indirect connection with the Capitol and Paradise cinemas where, among other great films, MGM's musicals were a regular fare. It was Uncle Dinshaw who often got me the movie posters that I used to collect. Uncle Dinshaw was also involved with the Airport Rotunda, a popular spot in the days before Homeland Insecurity struck terror in our hearts. It was where we always ended up on New Year's Eve with our Parsi friends for a spin on the crowded floor that made

it easier to steal a quick kiss or two and a few drinks from tables of couples enjoying their dances. The ringleader of this drink-grabbing ring was another Parsi (nick-named Mufti Sahab, a pun on his leadership position and the free-loading), but I guess it would be impolite to name him.

Growing up in Karachi, in the Soldier Bazaar area not far from the [Katrak] Parsi Colony, I had known many Parsis, some of whom through the various schools I went to. But it was through Munchi, the Mobeds (and the Sidhwas, who lived with them) that I met most other Parsis and got to know, love and respect their culture. The majority of this hundred percent literate community was composed of a peaceful, hard-working, and dedicated middle-class. I cannot recall any instance when they came into conflict with any other group. To me the most wonderful part of their living style was their easy integration with all the communities around them. Christmas, Eid, and Holi celebrations seemed as natural an occasion of joy and partying among them as did their own events. Parsis were also great patrons and fans of classical music, both Western and Eastern. They hosted and made possible many concerts. For some reason, the raag Maru Bihag was so popular among them that we used to call it the "Parsi raag". As a community they were singularly honest, a fact that must have been well-known, because my father, soon after migration in 1947, opened an account in a particular bank only because a couple of tellers he saw there were Parsis! The doctors my family dealt with over the years were all Parsi - Nariman K Shroff, Khushroo Mody, and Eruch Nariman. They were all gentle and courteous, oozing old-world reassurance that helped one cope with the illness almost as much as the 'mixtures' and concoctions they dispensed. Our current doctor, too, is a Parsi, a tradition I hope to never have to give up so I am glad Dr. Cyasp Nowshirwani is younger than I am.

Primarily, however, they were a business community. Many are not aware that it was the Parsis, Rustom Fakirjee Cowasjee to

be specific, who helped set up the shipping industry in Pakistan. His firm was later run by his sons; the gentleman's gentleman, Cyrus, with input from his other son, Ardeshir, one of Karachi's icons. A large portion of the first half of my twenty-five years as a seafarer was spent working with the Cowasjees, and the Dinshaws who, along with other private ship owners ran our merchant shipping well, until Bhutto's nationalization, the formation of the National Shipping Corporation, the Navy, and Zia's advisors ran it aground.

The richest among the Parsis have done more for Karachi than most. Sadly, like many minority greats, little or nothing has been done to honour them. An NED [Nadirshah Eduljee Dinshaw] Engineering University professor was not even able to recall the name of the man whose initials the institution he works for is known by, and who is said to have owned almost half of Karachi at one time. The philanthropist's son-in-law, Dr. Kaikhushrow Spencer, set up the famous eye hospital for the poor that bears his name. Jehangir Kothari and the Katrak Bandstand and the Katrak Hall, once famed for theatrical performances now lying in sad obscurity, were also gifts to Karachi's citizens. Two of the city's best schools, Mama Parsi and BVS, were set up by Parsis and welcome all communities. The slow emigration of our minorities, of which the Parsis were an important group, was precipitated by a mixture of a growing oppression, almost too subtle to be noticed even by the intelligentsia. It has left our country poorer in many ways, but I hope they continue the tradition of enriching the lands they settle in.



**Zaheer Kidvai** ran away to sea without obtaining any degrees and sailed around the world on merchant ships for 25 years, 15 of them in command as a Master Mariner. Later, he changed his focus to Education Technology and the New Media, and now acts as a consultant in both fields.





*GREETINGS AND HAPPY MEMORIES TO ALL  
KARACHIITES*

*from the grandchildren of Tehmina and Sohrab H.J.Rustomji*

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Khushru, Meher, Tehmi Pestonjee  
Roshni, Armaiti, Soonamai Rustomji  
Nazneen, Sarfaraz, Anahita Thanawalla  
Sohrab, Burjor, Manizeh Rustomji*



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# In The News

**Noshir A. Langrana, Ph.D.** awarded the 2008 H.R. Lissner Medal for significant contributions to the growth of bioengineering and to the mission of American Society of Mechanical Engineering's (ASME) Bioengineering Division; and for his work on spinal biomechanics, particularly the design and development of an artificial disc.

**Noshir** received his BE degree from the University of Bombay in 1968, MS and PhD degrees in mechanical engineering from Cornell University in 1971 and 1975, respectively. Noshir Langrana then became a faculty member in the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at the Rutgers University in 1976. In 2005 he was appointed the chair of the Department of Biomedical Engineering and has also held an adjunct appointment in the Department of Orthopaedics, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

Professor Langrana's research activities have been focused on the lumbar spine with the goal of quantifying the mechanical factors related to lower back pain. Under his direction, many projects have been successfully completed, including spinal fusion mechanics, spinal implants, vertebral bone modeling and the exploration of facet joints in load sharing.

As a result of his research contributions, he was elected Fellow of American Society of Mechanical Engineers in 1992 and Fellow of American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering in 1999. He has served as Associate Editor of SPINE, The Spine Journal and the Journal of Biomechanical Engineering. He has been active in the Bioengineering Division of ASME in various positions of leadership for over 20 years and served as Chair in 2000 and will be the conference chair of the Summer Bioengineering Conference in 2009. Professor Langrana also was honored as an educator when he received the first Mary W. Raisler Distinguished Teaching Chair Professor in 2000.



**The H.R. Lissner Medal** recognizes accomplishments in the area of bioengineering in the form of: significant research contributions; development of new methods of measuring; design of new equipment and instrumentation; educational impact in the training of bioengineers; or service to the bioengineering community and/or the ASME Bioengineering Division. The award was established by the Bioengineering Division in 1977 and operated as a division award until 1987 when it was elevated to a Society award.

*Noshir Langrana is a proud and active member of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY). FEZANA JOURNAL congratulates Noshir on his outstanding achievements.*





# In The News

## The DABUs Of SYRACUSE – Excel

### NAVROZ, BINAIFER, BEHZAD & NAVZAD DABU ~ ALL IN THE FAMILY!



**NAVROZ** : Nominated for SALT (Syracuse Area Live Theatre) Non Performing Person of the Year Award, for his set design in a play. He has also designed a set and furniture of the 1950s for the Play, 'Laughter on the 23rd Floor' for a New Theatre Company..(photo left)

**BINAIFER** : Nominated for & won the SALT Award for the 'Best Supporting Actress' for the play, "Things You Shouldn't Say Past Midnight" She had been nominated for various SALT Awards for many plays and has acted with famous actors. Her latest play "The Plaza Suite" opened on June 20, 2008



**BEHZAD** : Has acted in many plays in Syracuse & in Chicago. He was nominated for the SALT "Best Actor Award for a play "ASSASSINS-the musical". He graduated from Columbia College, with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) and is officially declared an ACTOR. He completed a 4 Year Course in 3 Years, standing in the top 15.

**NAVZAD** : Winning the 'Best Actor' SALT Award in 2007 and 2008 . He has been on the cover of the magazine – 'Family Times'. In addition he received an Academic Achievement Award for Social Studies in the Ninth Grade and was selected as an Inductee into the National Honor Society.



See:<http://www.saltawards.net/nominations.html>,  
<http://www.saltawards.net/awards.html>,  
<http://saltyawards.org/saltysshows.htm>

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# In The News

## *Nazneen Contractor*

### **a cop who knows no boundaries: both in reel and real life**

BY TEENAZ JAVAT

'Canada has not defined me as an actor, instead if anything the Canadian media sees my ethnicity as malleable, which has allowed me to represent a host of nationalities in my work.'

With this quote *Nazneen Contractor* shares with FEZANA JOURNAL the trials and tribulation she has overcome in her rather short career as a stage and TV actor.

Just 20 something, petit and extremely fit with an infectious laugh, Mumbai born Contractor's face lights up as we share coffee on a bright spring day in the awesome atrium of the Canadian Broadcasting centre in Toronto.

The daughter of a certified fraud examiner and a homemaker mother, Contractor had already travelled half the world by the time she came to Canada at the age of six.

The younger of two siblings, she was indulged, but not spoilt.

"My parents supported us in most things we did, whether it was ballet, figure skating, dance, drama or music. In fact, I felt so guilty when after seven years of taking ballet lessons and thousands upon thousands of dollars spent on classes, I announced to my parents that I wanted to change perspectives from dance to drama.

"So in grade ten I changed majors from dance to drama. Before I knew it I was taking drama lessons instead of ballet. However, ballet develops core strength and grace which was not lost out on me as I auditioned for challenging roles in theatre and TV," she states.



At present she is taking a theatre programme at the University of Toronto and hopes to continue taking acting lessons for as long as she can.

A graduate of the Etobicoke School of Arts, Contractor knew at the outset that it was her physicality that opened many doors instead of closing them.

So when Contractor landed the role of Layla Hourani for the TV serial *Border*, she was

ecstatic. Hourani is a Canadian-born Muslim cop who knows the Koran, is a devout Muslim who refuses to cover her head, speaks seven languages and is the lead female character in the serial, which is a cross over of CSI and 24.

Contractor, seemed the perfect match for the role of kick-ass cop as not only did she look ethnic she did not speak with an accent which was what the

directors were looking for.

*Border* explores issues of human rights and social justice in a post 9/11 world beset with fear and retribution.

Contractor performed her own stunts for the serial and for her, the character of Hourani seemed to have embraced the tomboy in her.

"Playing the cop, handling an AK 47 semi-automatic gun was such a fantastic learning experience that it definitely launched my career in Canada," she adds.

*Border* was shot across the Greater Toronto Area and has been shown in 15 countries so far.

Among her other laurels, Contractor also has several theatre productions under her belt.



# In The News

She was cast as leading role in the Stratford Theatre production Pericles where the director was looking for a female lead with cross cast ethnicity.

However, getting a breakthrough as an actor had its pitfalls. Contractor underwent a full year of underemployment as the only jobs she could get between auditions were waiting tables.

“In fact this was a cathartic moment as only when I stopped working did I realise that I had to work. I was happy doing restaurant jobs but not fulfilled at all. It was then that I realised that I am one who burns the candles at both ends and needs to be engaged at a physical and mental level at all times,” she says.

She has worked in off beat cinema as the lead role in Thursday Market an independent film by

Zoroastrian-Iranian filmmaker Azadeh Raisdanaie.

“I play the lead as a female suicide bomber. Though it was a 12- minute film, the role was very heavy and draining. I was so intrigued by the script that I chose to do the work pro bono.”

That said, Contractor has big plans for the future. She has been granted an artist visa to work in the United States for up to three years. She plans to move to Los Angeles by the end of the year, as Hollywood is her ultimate destination.

“ I am trying my luck for if I didn’t try, I will feel like a failure. On the other hand if I did fail, at least I will know I tried my best.”

*Teenaz Javat is a Freelance Journalist*

## **N** AZNEEN SPLIEDT

### **ELECTED PRESIDENT OF SOCIETY FOR ASIAN ART IN SAN FRANCISCO**



Karachi born Nazneen Spliedt , the President of the Zarthoshti Anjuman of Northern California joined the Society for Asian Art (SAA) in 1998, became a member of the board in 2000 and was elected President of the Society in 2006 . Her interest in Asian art began when she and her husband Ehler lived in Hong Kong, and inspired by the Chinese ceramics she collected there she started taking pottery classes and discovered the difficult and time consuming process of creating such pieces. She became involved with the Friends of the Art Museum in Hong Kong, serving on their board for 6 years, the last 3 as President. On immigrating to the United States in the San Francisco Bay Area to retire she discovered the SAA.

Incorporated in 1958, the Society for Asian Art (SAA) is a support organization for the San Francisco Asian Art Museum, one of Western World’s largest Museum devoted exclusively to Asian Art . The Society recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. The SAA has an on-going “Arts of Asia “ lecture series, it sponsors special exhibitions at the museum

and operates on membership revenues and endowments

(Abstracted from Sunita Sohrabji, India-West, May 23.2008)

Photo courtesy Ehler Spliedt

The website for the Society for Asian Art is [www.societyforasianart.org](http://www.societyforasianart.org).

The website for the Asian Art Museum is [www.asianart.org](http://www.asianart.org)



# In The News

## *Cyrus Hira*

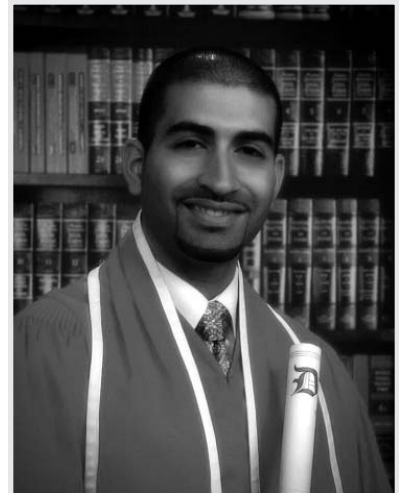
### WINS DIGITAL MEDIA DISTRIBUTION AWARD OF DIGITAL MEDIA DISTRIBUTION SERVICES (DMDS)

Cyrus Hira is a Graduate of Fanshawe College, London, ON, where he completed 3 years in the MIA Program (Music Industry Arts), being on the **President's Honour Roll**, for the first year. He then completed another year of APP (Audio Post Production) and was awarded the Digital Media Distribution award which spans both MIA and APP.

He won an award for one of the songs he composed for his CD for which he wrote the lyrics and sang it as well. The same song also won the award for Production and Engineering. Cyrus was nominated for the "Best Audio in a Video" for a serious and intense movie 'EQUILIBRIUM'.

Cyrus got this award because some of his songs, made at College were frequently played on the Fanshawe College Radio Station and other local stations.

Getting this Award, exempts him of any fees payable to DMDS for submitting any of his future songs to Radio stations across Canada. So, when Cyrus is ready with his album, his songs will be submitted FREE OF CHARGE to the various radio stations for being a recipient of this Award. Good luck Cyrus.



## Aysha Ghadiali

Aysha Ghadiali is part of a research and production team at PBS's Wide Angle, a weekly international affairs documentary show featuring stories on Indonesia's climate change and deforestation problem, health care for mothers in Mozambique, and the pressures of the college entrance exam in China.

For BIRTH OF A SURGEON, which was aired on Tuesday, July 15, 2008, at 9:00 pm the documentary travels to Mozambique where, for the first time, midwives are being trained in advanced life-saving surgery. Suffering from an acute shortage of doctors, Mozambique has launched bold grassroots initiatives that have cut the maternal death rate in half. The film concludes with an interview with Dr. Margaret Chan, Director General of the World Health Organization by Wide Angle host Aaron Brown

Aysha recently graduated from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), with a masters in energy and environment policy. Previously, she

worked as an international energy analyst at the U.S. Department of Energy, the Council on Foreign Relations, a non-partisan foreign policy think tank, and as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. She earned her B.A. in history and political science from Boston University in 2001.



# In The News

## The Zoroastrian News Agency: Bringing News of All Things Zoroastrian to a PC near You

How would you like to get news about all things Zoroastrian from around the world? What if I told you that the source was reliable and unbiased, the coverage was global and the medium as convenient as email? Ah! Perhaps the thought of receiving yet another email, in your already cluttered inbox, might give you pause. But rest assured: the Zoroastrian News Agency (ZNA, for short) is acutely aware that this can be a turn off. Indeed, ZNA takes pains to ensure that its subscribers do not receive more than one email a day and, on average, only two or three times a week. What's more? The news is well categorized with links at the top of the email, so the subscriber can click on articles of interest and read only what is relevant to him/her..



Founded in 2006, ZNA already has over 5,000 worldwide subscribers. Membership is not limited to Zarathushtis, but a subscriber may lose access if he uses

the forum to post commercials or for some other such improper purpose. The content of the emails consists of links to published articles about matters related to Zoroastrianism, and more local/ personal news, such as upcoming community events, weddings, births, deaths, etc. Subscribers are invited to submit newsworthy articles as well, which ZNA will disseminate if the source is known and the articles do not involve commercials or personal attacks.

Most of the news, however, is researched and compiled for dissemination by the founders and moderators: Fereidoon Demehri, Bijan Khosraviani and Ardeshir Behi. Fereidoon, (photo above) who holds a masters degree from Imperial College, London, was born in Bombay, but grew up in Yazd. He now lives in Vancouver with his wife and two daughters and works as a project management professional.

Bijan, with a doctorate in Engineering Management lives with his wife and daughter in Boston, where he

consults in the power and energy industry. A new addition to the family is expected in October 2008.

Ardeshir, who is currently working on a doctoral thesis in biomaterial science in Manchester, England, grew up in Iran before moving to Canada and then to England. His friends call him a "professional student". All three men are active members of the Zarathushti community.

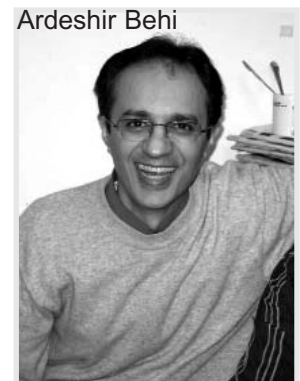
Admittedly, researching and compiling articles for ZNA is time consuming for the moderators, all of whom have "day jobs", families that need their attention and other commitments to the community as well. "Time can be found on lunch breaks, evenings.... I shall thank my family and particularly my wife, Parvaneh, who is letting me take family time and use it for ZNA" says Fereidoon. "I am sure Bijan and Ardeshir will have their stories too. Why are we doing it? *We love our religion and our community. We want to give back something good to both of them.*"

The goal is for ZNA to be much more than an email news service. Fereidoon says he is "dreaming and planning of establishing a World Zoroastrian Radio program." For now though, the focus remains on enhancing ZNA itself in light of what its subscribers want.

To that end, ZNA surveyed its subscribers recently to assess their satisfaction with the service and their preferences. While there was great satisfaction with the service, members



Bijan Khosraviani with daughter



Ardeshir Behi

# In The News

indicated a desire for a website that hosted current news and ZNA archives as well. Fereidoon explains that while ZNA has always intended to have such a website – and it would be bilingual (Persian and English) – constraints of time and finances have prevented the moderators from establishing it as yet. With foresight, ZNA has been established under the auspices of the O'Shihan Cultural Organization, a Canadian not-for-profit entity. As such, donations for the purpose of setting up the website would be tax deductible.

Assistance in kind would also be appreciated: “We need people to volunteer to be moderators and web developers,” says Fereidoon. “We also need more news from Pakistan, Africa, Central & South Asia and South America. We need more news on Sedreh Pushi/ Navjote ceremonies, Weddings and Births. Unfortunately, we get more of the death news!” In addition, ZNA is also looking for local Zoroastrian associations to inform them when their websites are updated or when newsletters are sent so that they can incorporate local news and disseminate it through ZNA as well. The founders are keen to make their slogan - **“In Zarathushti Community, Every Local News is a Global News!”** - a reality.

Bijan, charged with marketing and managing the technical aspects of the service, envisions more than a million members some day: “As some say there are 2.5 million Zoroastrians in China,” Bijan jokes. “Who knows? We need to reach them some how.” Bijan’s enthusiasm exists even though he manually has to change settings for each new member to ensure that he will get only one email per day in the digest format. “If anyone out there knows how to change the default of preferences to “Daily Digest” for new members, it would be a great help for us. Any ideas, please?!” says the beleaguered moderator.

It is clear that this is a labor of love for the founders. And it is a laudable venture considering that they want to simply provide news without editorializing, stirring up controversy, or promoting political agendas. Zarathushtis everywhere should assist in making ZNA a credible news service “run by Z’s for Z’s”, as Ardeshir puts it. They can start by checking out ZNA at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ZNA> or writing to [ZNAnews@gmail.com](mailto:ZNAnews@gmail.com) to subscribe to the service.

**Contributed by Shazneen Rabadi Gandhi, Marina Del Rey, CA**

## Keeping the Community Connected

**Ushtatebook.com** is a social networking website similar to My Space or Orkut, but different because it is only for those who identify as Zarathushtis. Started in January 2008, there are over 1,700 members from around the world who debate topics of interests, post photos and videos, and keep in touch with friends, both old and new. It is an innovative forum to keep our dispersed community connected across geographical distances. Membership is through invitation only to maintain a secure site, and to avoid spamming, solicitations, and fake identities. The brain child of Leena Lakdawala and Aurelio Useche, Farishta Murzban Dinshaw caught up with the two of them to find out more about Ushtatebook.

### Please tell FEZANA Journal readers a little about yourself.

**Leena:** I was born in Montreal, Canada and I grew up in St-Lambert on the South Shore of Greater Montreal. I work with my family business; we are manufacturers of Indoor Air Security products. I have a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and a Masters in Business Administration.

**Aurelio:** I was born in Caracas, Venezuela. At the age of 15, my parents sent me to Stanstead College, a boarding school south of Montreal where I met Leena. I have a degree in Economics, a Masters in Business Administration and I am also a Certified Management Accountant (CMA).

We live in Nun’s Island, Montreal, Quebec with our three children: Zachary (9), Vanessa (8) and Sebastian-Ness (7).

### How did you get the idea for Ushtatebook website? And what made you choose this name?

The idea to start a social network for the Zarathushti community came from our experience in using the popular Facebook site. Aurelio and I noticed how much our local community had changed since several of our friends decided to make their lives elsewhere in the world. We felt that a focused and



# In The News

private network would allow our community to remain close regardless of the distance.

The name Ushtatebook came about from several brainstorming sessions to find a name that represented the Zarathushti community without making a direct link to Zarathustra. Several years ago we attended a local conference presented by Khojeste Mistree where he explained the meaning of our prayers as well as the correct pronunciation. During this conference he also explained the meaning of the word Ushta and of the phrase Ushta-te, which is an expression of kindness and well wishing. We felt this was a perfect fit to the purpose of the site: wishing unity and happiness to the community around the world.

## What has been the highlight of the whole experience so far for you?

Without a doubt, the best part of creating this site has been the positive response from all the members. We receive positive feedback almost on a weekly basis and this makes it all the worth while. Also, another high point was realizing the viral affect the site had; watching the membership number growing everyday! Also, one of the most rewarding aspects of the site is to see friends and family find themselves in the site after having spent a long time without seeing or speaking to each other.

## And the challenges?

The biggest challenge so far has been to maintain a level of friendliness and closeness within some of the discussions posted in the forums. Even though everyone in the site is bound by their Zarathushti identity, whether by creed or by belief, people have different thoughts and opinions about the future of the

community and of the religion. Expressing one's passions and beliefs in written words is not always easy and, in many cases, they end up misunderstood by others.

That said, one thing is for sure...the spirit of community and union is ever present in the site.

Zarathushtis are a strong and passionate group!



*Photo left  
Leena  
Lakdawala and  
Aurelio Usche with  
son Zachary*

## Where do you see Ushatebook.com in five years?

At this point in time, we are allowing the site to develop its own flavor. We continue to encourage everyone to invite family and friends to the site in the hopes of seeing a leap in membership numbers. The site has over 12,000 invitations issued by the members.

It is just a matter of time till we have a majority of Zarathushtis from around the world online at Ushtatebook.com. Our objective is to see Ushtatebook to continue to grow. We would like to reach Zarathushtis in remote areas and in all parts of the world. That said, the future of the site is really in the hands of the community. The beauty about social networks is the fact that users are always in charge. The site was created in North America and the first users came from Canada and the United States. Today, the majority of the users are from India. We would like to be able to connect the members in India, Pakistan, and Iran with everyone in the West.

*Note: Zarathushtis interested in joining Ushatebook can write to Leena and Aurelio at [info@zvsinvestments.com](mailto:info@zvsinvestments.com) to request an invitation.*

*(Photo credits Binaifer Dolasa)*

# In The News

## HOUSTON CELEBRATES 10TH ANNIVERSARY WITH A GALA EVENT



Ten ervads performed the jashan that marked the 10th anniversary of the Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Centre in Houston on Saturday May 24th 2008. The jashan was co-ordinated by Ervad Khushrav Nariman.

The highlight of this gala event was the "The Treasures" an exhibit, amazing in enormity and elegance that was artfully arranged by Behroze Daruwalla and Meher Rustomji with their team. The exhibits traced the history of the exodus of Zarathushtis from Iran to Gujarat, highlighting the Indian barons of yester years to present day giants like Tatas and Godrej. The panels of pictures and write-up were sent by Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York. Artifacts on display were religious objects, silver and copper

antiques from Iran and India, saris with Chinese embroidery patterns, dagla-fenta and paghri. It was a beautiful display of Zarathushti grandeur. (see photos on page 88)

The Gala evening was attended by over 420 people from all over the country, from as near as Dallas and coast to coast from New Jersey to California with Michigan, Chicago, Indiana, Georgia and Arizona in between. There were guests from Canada and all the way from India. After the National Anthem and *Chhaiye Hame Zarthoshti*, compères Darius Byramji, Mitra Khumbatta, Andia Yazdani and Neville Medhora gave a brief history of the Center, interspersed with entertainment of music and dancing by Arzan Gonda and her talented group and our ZAH troupe of singers. The hall and atrium were festively decorated with banners of "*Rejoice in Our Heritage*" and the table settings were beautifully decorated in chocolate brown and tiffany blue with candles as center pieces that were admired by guests. It was truly a wonderful gathering of Zarathushtis and a clear need for the Center to have an expansion phase to accommodate everybody comfortably.

Feroze and Shernaz Bhandara, Meheraban & Fareedoon Zartoshty, Katie Dinshaw Irani and Yazdi and Shahnaz Sidhwa were recognized and thanked as well as our Visionaries. Kersi Engineer as President of the Zarathushti Group, instrumental in getting the land for the building, was recognized



Darius Byramji and Zarina Pundole Congress Legacy 2008 Scholarship winners

The youth who had achieved their Eagle Scout badge: Eddy Shroff, Rayomond Collector, Dinsha Mistree, Neville Medhora, Behram Mistree, Ashdin Medhora, Zaine Karanjia, Bahrom Firozgary and Khubyar Behramsha were honoured. Eagle Scouts in the making : Kayaan Collector and Zal Bhathena were also recognized. For a small Zarathushti community of Houston it is remarkable that it is able to produce such fine young men as Eagle scouts.

Gala participants were pleased to welcome four of the six FEZANA Presidents. All of them were recognized and awarded trophies for their vital role

# In The News

in shaping our FEZANA history in North America. They are: Rohinton Rivetna, Dolly Dastoor, Framroze Patel, Firdosh Mehta, Rustom Kevala and Bomi Patel.

The winners of the Congress Legacy Scholarship 2008, Darius Byramji and Zarina Pundole were announced, Each was awarded \$3000 and commended for their dedication, achievement and community contributions.

Darioush Vafadari was recognized as a Bridge–Builder between the Iranian and Parsi community. His award was accepted by his mother Homayoon. A Life-Time Achievement award was given to Purvez Rustomji..who accepted his award with a standing ovation. Purvez continues to spend countless hours at the Center for its upkeep and maintenance.

Events like this do not happen overnight, it took the volunteers countless number of hours to plan and prepare. Chair of the 10th Anniversary Committee, Kaemerz Dotiwalla, thanked every one who helped in bringing this dream to fruition.

With the song “*celebration*”, the program ended and everyone went for dinner. After dinner, DJ Farrokh Firozgary started the music, which got all feet a-dancing.

The celebration continued with a comedy play performed by Houstonian talent. “LAY ALL YOUR LOVE ON ME” written by Kamalrukh Gandhi, who acted as well as directed the play. All the actors did justice to their roles and received a standing ovation.

Robert Smith was having a good time with two airhostesses – Lilly and Maria, till one day when Lilly’s flight was cancelled and coincided with his time with Maria. The fun began when the overbearing mother, Suzanna introduced Angela to Robert as a potential wife, and Maria’s father Miguel and sister Esmerelda showed up at his house to congratulate Robert as the future son-in-law. When the three girls realized that Robert was not serious with any one of them, they planned to teach him a lesson. They let him stew in his own maneuvering and in the end they all left him.

Standing from left Percy Katrak, Nazanin Sarkari, Rohinton Sarkari, Noozar Boomla, Mitra Khumbatta, Aafraz Boomla Percy Master; Sitting from left Shernaz Boomla, Kamal rukh Gandhi, Lyla Daroga and Jasmine Katrak.



Ronnie Sarkari played Robert Smith. Kamalrukh Gandhi as Lily. Lyla Daroga as Maria, Noozar Boomla as Greg, Percy Master as Harry, Shernaz Boomla as Suzanna Smith, Jasmine Mistry as Angela, Percy Katrak as Miguel Lopez, Mitra Khumbatta as Esmerelda and Nazneen Sarkari as Lola. Stage and set were managed by Aspi Colah and Aafraz Boomla. Lights by Aderbad Tamboli

Reported by Arnava Sethna and Aban Rustomji  
Photographs courtesy Meheryar Rivetna and Dolly Dastoor



# In The News



Behroze Daruwalla , Meher Rustomji  
and their dedicated artistic team

## "The Treasures" Exhibit, Houston



# In The News

## Prof Vistasp M Karbhari to Head Alabama University's Academic Affairs Wing



Dr Vistasp M Karbhari, a professor of material science and structural engineering at University of Southern California, was chosen Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs in the University of Alabama in Huntsville. He will join the Alabama University in September 2008.

Dr. Karbhari was named by Alabama University's president David Williams, who called his performance "masterful". "I am extraordinarily impressed by his energy and his academic prowess," Williams said.

"The University of Alabama in Huntsville has already had a tremendous impact and each of the five colleges has, in a short span of time, risen to a high level of excellence," said the distinguished professor Karbhari.

Karbhari who comes from Pune, earned his master's and bachelor degrees at the University of Pune and his doctorate at the University of Delaware in 1991.



## **TRITA PARSI awarded the silver medal and a prize for his book Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United States (Yale University Press).**

Council of Foreign Relations Arthur Ross Book Award is the most significant award for a book on international affairs. This award was endowed by the late Arthur Ross in 2001 to honor nonfiction works, in English or translation, that merit special attention for: bringing forth new information that changes our understanding of events or problems; developing analytical approaches that allow new and different insights into critical issues; or providing new ideas that help resolve foreign policy problems.

Trita is a member of FEZANA UN-NGO team

{See review of the book in FEZANA JOURNAL Summer/June 2008 Vol22, No 2 by Prof Jesse Palsetia }

## **BLOOD DRIVE A SUCCESS**

North Shore resident Farhad Mehrkhodavandi participated in a blood drive held in Vancouver April 6, 2008 organized by a West Vancouver resident Houman Abtin, a Ladner dentist, who moved to Canada from Iran in 1988. He was interested in giving back to a country that's given him so much. A group of grateful North Shore residents opted to say thank you to the country they've come to call home by making a donation of blood.



# In The News

## ARMENE MODI FOUNDER OF ASHITA NO KAI HONoured AS...

### “REAL HEROES OF INDIA IN 2007”

It is a great pleasure to inform the community that Armene Modi of Pune was honored on April 14, 2008 as one of 24 Real Heroes selected from all over India.

To commemorate 60 years of Indian independence, CNN-IBN and IBN-7 launched a unique initiative called Real Heroes in 2007. The initiative was an effort to recognize, acknowledge and celebrate ordinary Indians who made a difference to people's lives. These 24 individuals represent India's unsung heroes who showed great courage and perseverance in silently and selflessly contributing to the betterment of society. They are ordinary people with extraordinary endeavors who dared to stand up and swim against the tide, simply because they believed in the power of will, hard work and faith.

Armene Modi, founder-chairperson of Ashita no Kai (Association for Better Tomorrow), realized that in the fight for literacy, sometimes small and unlikely things can become tools of empowerment. For Armene, it was the bi-cycle. She is responsible for more than 450 girls getting an education, all because she cared enough to give them a ride.

In a ceremony attended by the country's *who's who*, the triumph of human spirit was celebrated and the Real Heroes were awarded.

“This is truly a very special day for us. For much too long, Indian media has been criticized for being celebrity chasers and for being negative about everything,” said CNN-IBN Editor-in-Chief Rajdeep Sardesai. Spread across eight categories including, education, environment and wildlife conservation, 24 Real Heroes, handpicked by the CNN-IBN's editorial team were honored for their selfless efforts.

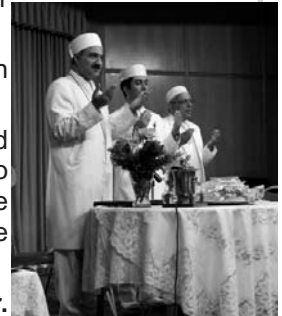
Armene's daughter, Minoie Modi, participated in FEZANA UN-NGO team at the United Nations in 2004. She represented FEZANA youth at the VIIIth World Assembly of Religions for Peace, in Kyoto, Japan, in August 2006.

**Submitted by Homi D. Gandhi, Main Representative, FEZANA UN-NGO Committee**

On August 10, 1928 at 11a.m. Mobed Dr Rostam Vahidi, Mobed Ashkan Bastani and Mobedyar Behram Deboo performed the Tuji Gahanbar at the California Zoroastrian Centre. This gahanbar is performed to give thanks to Ahura Mazda by those whose wishes have been fulfilled. Afringan was prayed followed by Hama zur and

berasaad congregation prayers.

Ladies collect money and come the night before to do the cooking and sleep at the Dare-Mehr to be ready in the morning.



**Left to Right Mobed Dr. Rostam Vahidi, Mobed Ashkan Bastani and Mobedyar Behram Deboo**



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# In The News

## Hassan Khomaini visits Fire Temple in Tehran

Grandson of Ayatollah Khomaini visited the Tehran Fire Temple, Tehran Zoroastrian Anjoman and Yeganegi Library on Thursday, July 10th 2008. He and his team were welcomed by Head of Tehran Mobeds' Council Dr. Mobed Ardeshir Khorshidian, Head of Tehran Zoroastrian Anjoman Mr. Allayar Daneshmand, Zarathushti Rep in Iran Parliament (Dr. Esfandiar Ekhtiari), Mrs. Tooran Bahrami a prominent Zarathushti poet and others.

Zarathushti representatives demanded revision of certain rules which causes discrimination against the minorities in Iran like the Zarathushtis.

## Zarthushti Youth- 2008 Presidential Scholar

The United States Presidential Scholars Program was established in 1964 by Executive Order of the President of the United States to recognize and honor some of the nation's most distinguished graduating high school seniors. It is one of the nation's highest honors for high school students and only 141 students are honored each year.

In June 2008, Cyrus who graduated senior from Little Rock Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas was named a 2008 Presidential Scholar from Arkansas. He attended National Recognition Week in Washington DC, which included a ceremony at the White House.

In addition to his exceptional academic career and participation in extracurricular activities, Cyrus represented the Central High School student body by eloquently speaking at the 50th anniversary of the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Cyrus is the proud son of Doctors Feraydoon Bahrassa and Persis Shroff and brother to Farhad and Nazneen.



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# INTERFAITH INTERALLA

## FEZANA STATUS RENEWED WITH ECOSOC AT THE UNITED NATIONS

Dear Mr Homi D Gandhi,

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your organization's report about your information programme related to the United Nations during the last four years. After the NGO Section reviewed the submitted report and information materials, we would like to advise you that your organization is in good standing. Your next quadrennial review is required in 2012.

In this regard I would like to inform you that association with DPI constitutes a commitment on the part of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to disseminate information and raise public awareness about the purposes and activities of the United Nations. Therefore, NGOs are expected to have substantial information programmes, which could accommodate dissemination of information about the UN. Evidence of a public information capability forms the basis for association and is closely monitored during the review process.

Thank you for your interest in the work of the United Nations. We are looking forward to hearing from you again.

Regards,

Isolda S. Oca  
Public Information Officer  
NGO Section  
United Nations, NY

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### **“Zarathushtis to participate in the year long celebrations promoting the vision and mission of the United Nations for Human Rights”**

#### **60th ANNIVERSARY OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

Dear members of the Zarathushti community,

It gives us great pleasure in informing you that the United Nations has renewed FEZANA's standing as a Non-Governmental Organization [NGO] in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council [ECOSOC]. The next quadrennial review will be in the year 2012 . This recognition is owed to the contribution and dedication of our UN NGO Committee Team members, now numbering over 60 individuals. Delegates have traveled to the meetings, found lodging, and made arrangements for their visas all on their own time and expense. We have learned to write press releases, organize workshops and interact with the media. We are grateful for the contribution of each and every individual who has brought us this far, and trust this has provided participants an opportunity to grow as world citizens.

What the United Nations is looking for from us to continue this collaboration is to share its vision and mission with civil society. In this regard we seek your help. It is not enough for us to attend meetings and represent the Zoroastrian community at world fora; though that is certainly an integral and important part of our mandate. To take our activities to the next level we seek participation at the local level.

This year the United Nations marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The year long celebration provides us an opportunity as local associations, as small groups, or even as individuals to ask the question, "What is it in our own faith tradition that impels us to support human rights?" We look forward to your feedback with ideas, and suggestions so that we can work together in fulfilling the mission of our Federation in partnership with the United Nations. Ushta te!

**Behram Pastakia and Homi D. Gandhi**  
**Co-Chairs, FEZANA UN NGO Committee**

# INTERFAITH INTERALLA



Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America  
<http://www.fezana.org>  
*Representing 26 Zoroastrian Associations in the United States and  
Canada*

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#### Contacts

On-site: Parmis Khatibi, UN NGO Committee, [parmis99@aol.com](mailto:parmis99@aol.com) Mobile: 949.295.0414 (Sept. 1-6, 2008)  
FEZANA: Behram Pastakia, UN NGO Committee media relations: [bpastakia@aol.com](mailto:bpastakia@aol.com) Phone: 301.493.9131

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#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*"In small places close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world, yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends, the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world". ---- Eleanor Roosevelt.*

**61<sup>st</sup> Annual DPI/NGO Conference  
Reaffirming Human Rights for All: The Universal Declaration at 60  
UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France  
September 3-5, 2008**

Washington D.C. 7.31.2008 – More than 2000 international Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) representatives and other civil society partners will gather during the 61st annual DPI/NGO meeting from September 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> 2008 at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France. The event will celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [www.unhchr.ch/udhr/](http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/)

The Zoroastrian (FEZANA) delegation will include Diana Katgara (Toronto, Canada), Armene Modi (Pune, India), Homi D. Gandhi (Glen Rock, NJ, USA), Parmis Khatibi (Laguna Niguel, CA, USA) and Naheed Vatcha (Chicago, IL, USA).

#### **ABOUT FEZANA**

Founded in 1987, FEZANA maintains consultative status with the Economic and Social Council [ECOSOC] of the United Nations. FEZANA promotes the study, understanding and practice of the Zoroastrian faith. Zoroastrianism, founded circa 1500 BCE, is credited to be the oldest prophetic monotheistic religion and has its belief systems reflected in major religions of the world of both the orient and the occident. The core values of its members are to uphold the truth, to respect "the other" and to care for the needy and for creation. The North American Zoroastrian community includes those who arrived from the Indian subcontinent, known as Parsis, and those who came directly from Iran seeking religious freedom.

For more information visit: [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org)

#### **ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS**

The United Nations is central to global efforts to solve problems that challenge humanity. Cooperating in this effort are more than 30 affiliated organizations, known together as the UN system. For more information visit: [www.un.org](http://www.un.org) .



# INTERFAITH INTERALLA

## Lessons in Parenting

Dr. Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and founder of the M.K.Gandhi Institute for Non-violence, in his June 9 2003, lecture at the University of Puerto Rico, shared the following story:

I was 16 years old and living with my parents at the institute my grandfather had founded 18 miles outside of Durban, South Africa, in the middle of the sugar plantations.

We were deep in the country and had no neighbours, so my two sisters and I would always look forward to going to town to visit friends or go to the movies.

One day, my father asked me to drive him to town for an all-day conference, and I jumped at the chance. Since I was going to town, my mother gave me a list of groceries she needed and, since I had all day in town my father asked me to take care of several pending chores, such as getting the car serviced.

When I dropped my father off that morning, he said, "I will meet you here at 5:00 p.m., and we will go home together."

After hurriedly completing my chores, I went straight to the nearest movie theatre. I got so engrossed in a John Wayne double-feature that I forgot the time. It was 5:30 before I remembered. By the time I ran to the garage and got the car and hurried to where my father was waiting for me, it was almost 6:00.

He anxiously asked me, "Why were you late?"

I was so ashamed of telling him I was watching a John Wayne western movie that I said, "The car wasn't

ready, so I had to wait," not realizing that he had already called the garage.

When he caught me in the lie, he said: "There's something wrong in the way I brought you up that didn't give you the confidence to tell me the truth. In order to figure out where I went wrong with you, I'm going to walk home 18 miles and think about it."

So, dressed in his suit and dress shoes, he began to walk home in the dark on mostly unpaved, unlit roads.

I couldn't leave him, so for five-and-a-half hours I drove behind him, watching my father go through this agony for a stupid lie that I uttered. I decided then and there that I was never going to lie again. I often think about that episode and wonder, if he had punished me the way we punish our children, whether I would have learned a lesson at all. I don't think so.

I would have suffered the punishment and gone on doing the same thing.

But this single non-violent action was so powerful that it is still as if it happened yesterday. **That is the power of non-violence.**

[Article forwarded by Firdosh Mehta, Dallas/Weatherford, Texas, Past President of FEZANA]

The 100th anniversary of the launch of the Satyagrah movement [Satya - truth; Agraha - force] in the Transvaal, South Africa -- on 9/11/1906 was celebrated in Washington DC with a walk on Embassy Row on Sunday 10th September 2006. The Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad, India, the university founded by M.K. Gandhi, donated 350 copies of his autobiography "The story of my experiments with truth" to FEZANA, through the good offices of the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Sudarshan Iyengar. These books were distributed to the participants at the walk, by Zarathushti volunteers, and were shared at the 21st FEZANA AGM in Los Angeles, California in the spring of 2008. Links to world wide media coverage of this event, including a film in Urdu and English can be seen at [www.911unitywalk.org](http://www.911unitywalk.org). The emphasis on truth and social justice espoused in the satyagrah movement resonates with Zarathushti values and beliefs.



Pictured at the Gandhi Memorial in front of the Embassy of India, Massachusetts Ave, NW Washington DC.

Left to Right: Dinyar Patel, Behram Pastakia, Dr. Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, Shara Godiwalla and Zal Damkevala

# INTERFAITH INTERALLA

## ZARATHUSHTIS AT INTERFAITH PRAYER SERVICE FOR HIGH LEVEL MEETING ON AIDS AT UNITED NATIONS

On Monday, June 9, 2008, Ervad Pervez Patel and Homi Gandhi represented the Zarathushti community at the interfaith prayer service at St. Peter's Church in New York City, prior to the 2008 United Nations High Level Meeting on AIDS. This meeting was to evaluate the time-bound targets agreed on in 2001 and to move towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010. All citizens of the world demand accountability of the member states to their agreed promises.

Ms. Thoraiya Ahmed Obaid, Undersecretary General of the UN, delivered "A Vision of Hope" and Ms. Deborah Landey, Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS, read out a message from the Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-Moon. I would like to thank Ervad Soli Dastur for recommending the appropriate prayer from Ahunavaiti Gatha with translation as it was very much appreciated by the assembled congregation.

*Homi D. Gandhi, Main Representative,  
FEZANA NGO at the United Nations*

\*\*\*\*\*



### Commission on the Status of Women

The 53rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women will be held at the United Nations headquarters in New York from March 2 to 13, 2009. The themes that will be considered are:

*Priority theme: "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS"*

*Review theme: "Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels"*

Details are updated on:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw>

Zarathushtis interested in participating are requested to send a letter of interest, their bio-data and a statement as to how the individual sees himself or herself promoting the mission of the United Nations through the Non Governmental Organization framework to the undersigned.

*Afreed Mistry [afreed.mistry@gmail.com](mailto:afreed.mistry@gmail.com),  
Homi D Gandhi [homidgandhi@gmail.com](mailto:homidgandhi@gmail.com),*

*Behram Pastakia [bpastakia@aol.com](mailto:bpastakia@aol.com),*

*Co-Chairs*

*FEZANA UN-NGO Committee*

# INTERFAITH INTERALIA

Religions Working for Peace and Justice

## Vignette of Inter-Religious Dialogue



Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in South Africa (1909)

High resolution photo:

[www.bbc.co.uk/.../people/images/gandhi5.jpg](http://www.bbc.co.uk/.../people/images/gandhi5.jpg)

**Editorial Note:** The following dialogue is the third in a series of "Vignettes" which appear at irregular intervals in **FEZANA Journal**.

*It is a record of a dialogue between an Indian worker {Reader} and M.K. Gandhi {Editor} in South Africa, published in the columns of the "Indian Opinion" and later released in a booklet entitled "Hind Swaraj". It was written first in Gujarati in 1908 and subsequently translated by the author himself into English.*

Reader: It seems to me that you simply want to put me off by talking round and round. Those whom you consider to be well-wishers of India are not such in my estimation. Why, then, should I listen to your discourse on such people?

What has he whom you consider to be the Father of the Nation done for it? He says that the English Governors will do justice and that we should co-operate with them.

**Editor:** I must tell you, with all gentleness, that it must be a matter of shame for us that you should speak about that great man in terms of disrespect. Just look at his work. He has dedicated his life to the service of India. We have learned what we know from him. It was the respected Dadabhai who taught us that the English had sucked our life-blood. What does it matter that, today, his trust is still in the English nation? Is Dadabhai less to be honored because in the exuberance of youth, we are prepared to go a step further? Are we, on that account, wiser than he?

It is a mark of wisdom not to kick away the very step from which we have risen higher. The removal of a step from the staircase brings down the whole of it. When, out of infancy, we grow into youth, we do not despise infancy, but, on the contrary, we recall with affection the days of our childhood. If after many years of study, a teacher were to teach me something, and if I were to build a little more on the foundation laid by that teacher, I would not, on that account, be considered wiser than the teacher. He would always command my respect. Such is the case with the Grand Old Man of India.

*We must admit that he is the father of nationalism.*

**Reader:** You have spoken well. I can now understand that we must look upon Mr. Dadabhai with respect. Without him and men like him, we should probably not have the spirit that fires us.

**Acknowledgement:** We are grateful to Dr Sudarshan Iyengar, Vice-Chancellor, Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad - 380-014, India, for bringing this booklet to our attention.

Dadabhai Naoroji  
High Resolution  
photo:  
[parsikhabar.net/wp-content/parsi%20lor ds.jpg](http://parsikhabar.net/wp-content/parsi%20lor ds.jpg)



**Source:** "Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule" by M.K. Gandhi (ISBN 81-7229-070-5). Available from Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad - 380-014, Gujarat, India



# LIVING THE MEANING OF THE YATHA AHU VAIRYO

## Zarathushti Youth of Michigan at the Gleaners Food Bank

*Religions Working for Peace and Justice*



The Willing Volunteers: Zarine & Armaity Minwalla, Rashna Soonavala, Sabrina Bilimoria, Avvan & Darayus Sanjana, Xerxes & Zarvan Chinoy, Simonne Kapadia, Karl & Darin Tavadia, Sarosh Gandhi, Cyra Kharas, Sanaya & Sarosh Irani, accompanied by their parents and friends

On Saturday, Feb 9, 15 children from the Zarathushti Youth Group Of Michigan (ZYGOM) accompanied by their parents visited Gleaners Food Bank in Pontiac, Michigan, to participate in community service as part of their monthly religion classes. The children wanted to translate what they have learned in their religion classes into righteous action, which prompted the visit.

During an introductory presentation, they learned how the 3rd oldest food bank in the country operated and how it turned surplus food that would go to waste into

millions of delicious meals for the hungry in SE Michigan. Gleaners has been distributing nearly 25 million pounds of food annually, equivalent to 65,000 meals per day. In little over 2 hours, the Zarathushti volunteers packaged 270 food boxes or nearly 9,000 lbs of food. In addition each family also donated food products to the food bank.



This visit proved to be a rewarding and fulfilling experience for all those who attended. The children learned first hand how by helping the poor and needy, they can be Ahura Mazda's hamkars and help spread joy and happiness in this world. They hope to continue this event on an annual basis and to translate the Yatha Ahu Vairyo Prayer into righteous action.

Many thanks to Bepsi Sanjana for organizing this event, and to Shireen Gandhi and Shernaz Minwalla for making it all happen.

***Contributed By Ardeshir Irani***

# INTERFAITH INTERALIA

*Religions Working for Peace and Justice*

On July 18th 2008, Hutokshi Hira, (president) Ervad Peshotan Katrak and 22 year old Mobed Karl Desai of the Australian Zoroastrian Association (AZA) were invited by Cardinal George Pell to meet his Holiness Pope Benedict XVI at an interfaith meeting at the St. Mary's Cathedral in Sydney, Australia. They represented the Zarathushti Community at this interfaith meeting where religious leaders and heads of different religions viz, the Bahai, Buddhist, Christian, Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were invited. To commemorate the occasion a gold coin was given to all as a memento of the Pope's visit to Australia. The Pope met with all religious representatives individually and on meeting the Zarathushtis he smiled and said softly "the Zoroastrian religion was an ancient religion"



All who attended expressed their delight at being invited to participate in such a unique multi-faith event in the midst of the Catholic oriented WORLD YOUTH DAY.

**Source: Manashni, The newsletter of the Australian Zoroastrian Association**

The religious attire of "jamo" and the "dagli" aroused much interest from the media and other religious leaders. The Zarathushti representatives were in demand for interviews from the media and TV. Though small in numbers the Zarathushti religion is well recognized as one of the great religions of the world.

## MOBED KARL DESAI AND NOSHIR SACHINWALLA JOINED SYDNEY MULTI-FAITH LEADERS IN PRAYERS FOR PEACE WITH WORLD YOUTH DAY PILGRIMS

At the conclusion of the prayers offered by the multi-faith representatives, the whole gathering read in unison, an affirmation which ended with the words ..."may we work for the day when all of humanity may praise creation in their own way united in love and respect for each other.

***"No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion.***

***If people can learn to hate they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."***

***Nelson Mandela  
Former President of South Africa***



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### ERVAD KOBAD ZAROLIA, PRESIDENT NAMC, 2008-2010

Ervad Kobad Zarolia was elected president of the North American Mobeds' Council (NAMC) at the Annual General Meeting in Mississauga on May 24th and 25th 2008.



He is no stranger to this office as he was the founding president of NAMC (1990-94). He initiated the concept of NAMC in 1983 and was chair of this body till 1990. Once NAMC was registered he was elected the first president. In addition he has held several leadership positions in the community, was elected president of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) 1987-1989 and again 1996-1998 and the founding president of Ontario Community Foundation (OZCF) in 2002.

Ervad Zarolia who was ordained as a priest in the Nargol agiary. came to Canada in 1969, joined Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in 1971 and in 1974 started his own, *K. Zarolia Insurance Brokers Ltd.* for general and life insurance. In 1982 he started *H K Insurance Brokers*. At present he owns *Oakridge Insurance Brokers*. Kobad has been in the insurance

business for 34 years, specializing in all types of insurances.

Being interested in sports and an avid cricketer, he founded the Etobicoke Cricket league and the Zoroastrian Club. He is a member of the Board of the Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce, a member of the Community Board to raise funds for the Trillium Hospital in Mississauga, and on the board of the United Way South Asian Committee.

During his term as president, he would like to achieve

1. Increase in membership and participation of mobeds at the AGM.
2. Organize an educational Seminar in Houston in 2009.
3. Send a few young mobeds to India for 15 days learning session at Andheri Madressa and to make this into an annual event.
4. Create contacts with Zarathushtis in other parts of the world besides India and Iran. Offer help in developing Zoroastrianism in those parts of the world.
5. Create a regular newsletter via E-Mail for all Mobeds of North America.
6. Encourage mobeds to hold mini education seminars in their own city.

***FEZANA Journal wishes Ervad Zarolia much success during his term of office.***

## Did You know?

The North American Mobeds Council was incorporated as a religious organization, under the laws of the Province of Ontario, Canada on September 24th 1992 and was granted a tax exempt status by the Government of Canada, in 1993.

The newly launched web-site <http://www.namcweb.org/home.htm> carries contact information of office holders, a list of mobeds in North America, summaries of past presentations at Seminars organized by the NAMC and more items of interest to the priests and laity of our worldwide Zarathushti community.

We thank NAMC correspondent, Ervad Soli Dastur of Sarasota, Florida, [dastur@comcast.net](mailto:dastur@comcast.net), for sharing this resource.





REVIVAL OF ZOROASTRIAN FAITH  
IN SASANIAN ERA (226-651 CE)

ERVAD BRIGADIER BEHRAM M. PANTHAKI

Excerpt of a paper presented at the NAMC SEMINAR  
MAY 19, 2007

INTRODUCTION

The Sasanian dynasty founded by Ardeshir I (226-241CE), began in 224 CE after the defeat of the last Parthian (Arsacid) king, Artabanus IV and ended after four centuries of rule in 641 CE when the last Sassanian ruler Yazdegard III (632–651CE) lost the struggle to quell the Arab incursion. The Sasanian Empire's territory encompassed all of today's Iran, Iraq, Armenia, Afghanistan, eastern parts of Turkey, and parts of Syria, Pakistan, India, Central Asia, Caucasia, and Arabian Peninsula. During the latter part of the dynasty, Khosrau II (590–628 CE) Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon were also annexed to the Empire.

The Sasanian rulers consciously sought to resuscitate Iranian traditions and obliterate Greek cultural influence. The early rulers of the Dynasty worked tirelessly to make the Zarathushti religion the chief symbol of national and cultural unity.

Ardeshir established a full-fledged theocracy in Iran which took firm roots as the Sasanian rule progressed. The Achaemenians had ruled over an empire much more extensive than that of the Sasanians, but their religious policy had been one of tolerance towards other faiths of their subjects. The Sasanians, on the other hand, sought to achieve unity of faith through means fair and foul, and assigned grand importance to Zoroastrianism and its religious practices. One of the later Sasanian kings (Yazdegard II: 438-457 CE) resorted to persuasion, bribe and force in his attempt to win over Armenian Christians to Zoroastrianism.

**It may not be out of place here to mention that the Dinkard sanctions the use of force for the conversion of the aliens. A Pahlavi treatise devoted to the Zarathushti rituals attests the practice of admitting outsiders into the Zarathushti fold. Another Pahlavi tractate on the social and legal practices of the Sasanians lays down that if a Christian slave embraces the faith of his Zarathushti master, he should be given freedom.**

The favored position granted to the religion of Zarathushtra by the monarchs led the Zarathushti clergy to think themselves as "chosen people" of God and become intolerant for all other beliefs. The position and power that the clergy held was clearly evident on the coins minted throughout the Sasanian period. On the obverse of many coins we see a fire-altar flanked on either side by a human figure fully armed. One of these represented royalty, the secular power; the other represented the Mobedan-Mobed (the High-Priest of the Empire), representing spiritual might.

During the Sasanian regime the spread of Christianity and Judaism throughout Iran was a constant and growing menace to the newly revived Zarathushti religion. Just as the Romans were promoting Christianity the Sasanians were determined to establish the religion of Zarathushtra throughout their empire. The zeal of

1. Drachma of Ardeshir I Reverse Fire Alter



2. Drachma of Shapur I Reverse Fire Alter with ceremonial figures



3. Drachma of Bahram II Reverse Fire Alter with ceremonial figures



4. Drachma of Khosrow I Reverse Fire Alter with ceremonial figures



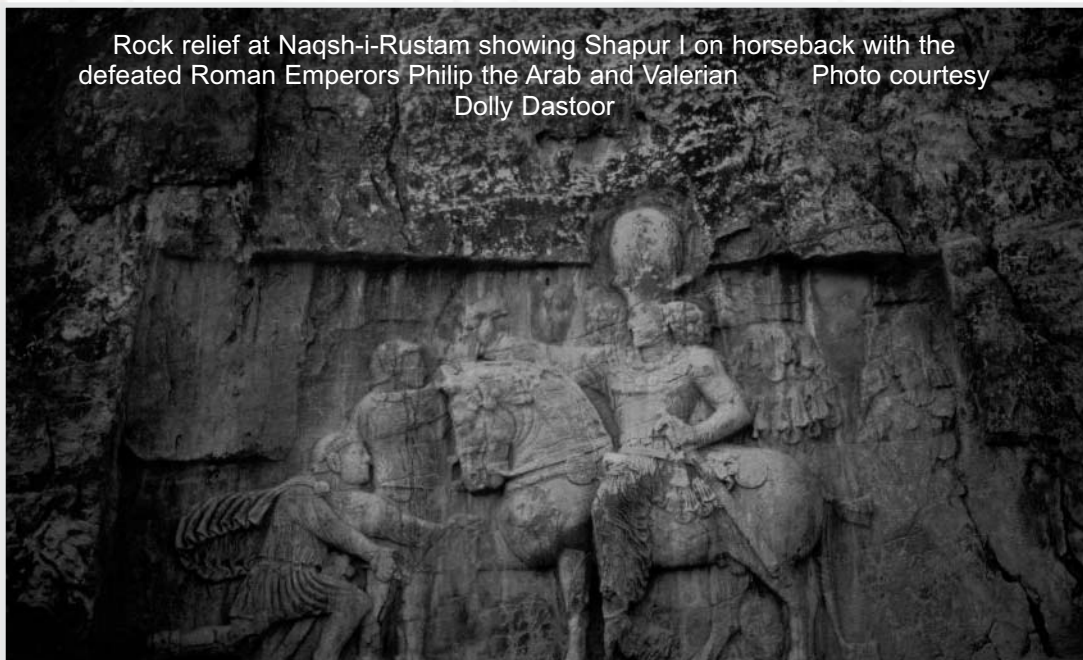
Photo courtesy Ancient Persia by Josef Wiesehöfer



the priests on both sides fomented communal strife, which often resulted in the destruction of Zarathushti fire-temples and Christian churches.

All through the four centuries (39 rulers) of the Sasanian rule, the religion continued to be the "official state religion", but there were a couple of "heretical sects" that found considerable following among the masses. However, these were ruthlessly suppressed, with their perpetrators meeting violent ends. One such heresy at the very beginning of the Sasanian Era was promulgated by Mani and came to be known as Manichaeism and another was preached by Mazdak called Mazdakism during the mid point of the Sasanian rule.

#### HOW ARDESHIR CAME TO BE THE FOUNDER (224-241 CE)



Rock relief at Naqsh-i-Rustam showing Shapur I on horseback with the defeated Roman Emperors Philip the Arab and Valerian  
Dolly Dastoor Photo courtesy

Papak was the governor of Pars during the reign of Artabanus IV, the last Parthian monarch. A man named Sasan was in the employment of Papak. It is believed that Sasan had lineage to King Vishtasp of the Kayanian Dynasty. Papak raised him to a high position in his court and married his daughter to him. Ardeshir was the outcome of this union. Since Papak did not have a male progeny, he

adopted Ardeshir as his heir. **This is how he came to be known as Ardeshir Papakan and in namgaran we take his name with that of his maternal grandfather – Ardeshir Papakan. Can it be said that the concept of adoption started from there?**

Ardeshir defeated Artabanus in the battle of Hormuz in 226 CE and established the new dynasty of the Sasanians, named after Sassan. He made Istakhr, near Persipolis, his capital. Ardeshir married Artabanus IV's daughter, Gohar Afrid.

On the political side, Ardeshir brought the old Achaemenid system of Satrapis back and divided his empire into provinces. He abolished feudal rule and introduced the appointment of the governors and local officials. One of his famous sayings, as per Firdousi, was "*There can be no power without an army, no army without money, no money without agriculture, and no agriculture without justice.*"

On the religious side, Ardeshir established the religion of Zarathuhstra as the official religion of the empire and gave senior clergy enormous authority and power by appointing them as representatives of the court. The head priest, i.e. the mobedan mobed, became one of the three most important political entities of his administration; the other two being the commander-in-chief (Iran Sepahabed), and the head of the bureaucracy (Dabirbed). The high priests were official representatives of the king to the satrapies of his empire.





Ardeshir I introduced a major change in the calendar that was inherited from the Achaemenian times. Five additional Gatha days were added at the end of the 12th month.

It was during Ardeshir's rule that his high priest *Tansar* got the scattered portions of the ancient Avesta literature collected, compiled, translated and commented upon in Pahlavi.

**Shapur I** (241-272 CE). He continued the task of the resurgence of the religion in that he loyally carried out his father's admonition, regarding Faith and Monarchy: as per Firdosi, "*Never forget that as the King you are the defender of the Faith and the Nation. Consider the Fire Altar and the throne as inseparable; they must always sustain one another. A sovereign without religion is a tyrant.*"

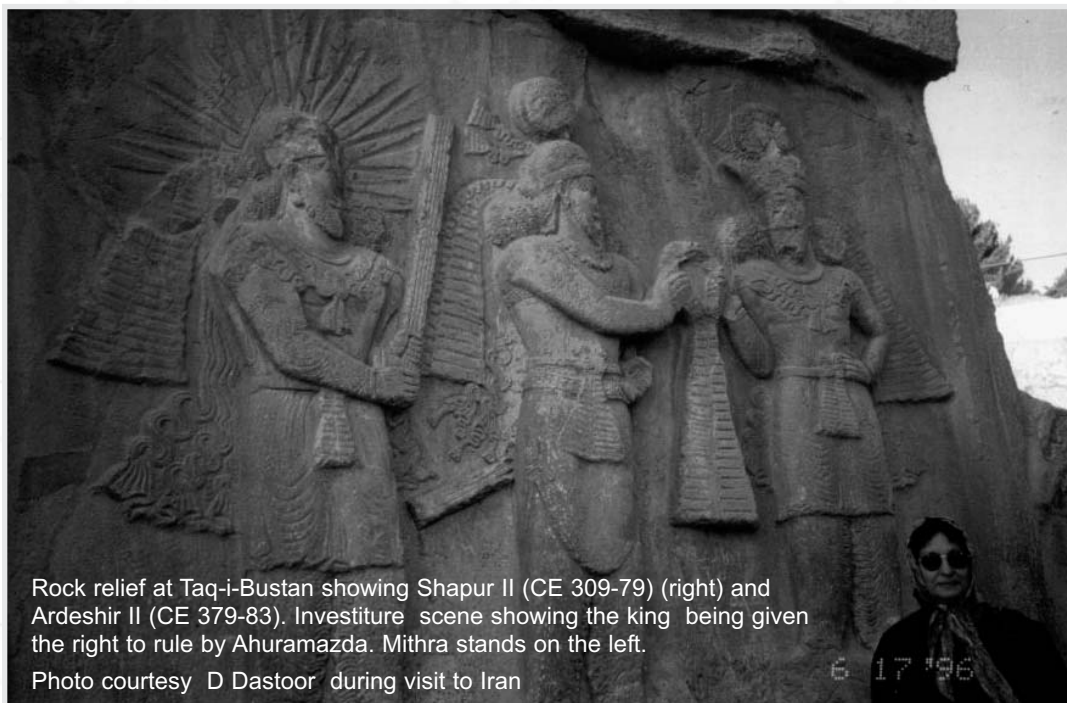
A strong willed and volatile priest who helped Shapur in his mission was *Kirdar*..who called for the persecution of adherents of other religions. He attacked Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Manichaeans and Christians alike during the five successive regimes, from Shapur I to Narseh. He destroyed pagan monuments and established fire-temples in their places. He was granted the royal privilege of rock carvings of his own at Naqsh-e Rujab for his contribution in cleansing of the Zarathushti faith.

It is said that Shapur I enlarged the re-edited Avesta by collecting and incorporating with it the non-religious treatises on medicine, astronomy, geography and philosophy. Surprisingly, there is no mention in any of the literatures that Kirdar was responsible for this.

#### MANICHAISM

It was during Shapur's regime that Manichaeism took roots in Iran. Mani was born at Acbatana (Hamadan) in southern Babylonia (now in Iraq) on 14th April 216 CE (during the reign of Artabanus IV, the last of the

Parthian kings.) He was Persian by birth and was probably also brought up as a Zarathushti. It is interesting to note that *The Shahburgan*, Mani's only treatise in the Middle Persian language, is dedicated to Shapur, who was favourably inclined to Manichaeism.



Rock relief at Taq-i-Bustan showing Shapur II (CE 309-79) (right) and Ardeshir II (CE 379-83). Investiture scene showing the king being given the right to rule by Ahuramazda. Mithra stands on the left.

Photo courtesy D Dastoor during visit to Iran

Manichaeism extolled celibacy as the greatest virtue. It forbade sexual intercourse and considered it the worst type of uncleanness and placed virginity as

life's highest state. All these contradicted the teachings of Zarathushtra. In no period of the history of the religion, was celibacy ever held to be a virtue. Both the Church and the State encouraged married life in Iran. Mani advocated abstinence from food as a means of expiation for sin, but fasting did not form part of the religion of ancient Iran.





These new teachings were not well received by the Zarathushti clergy. Opposition to Mani's views grew stronger as time went on and Mani was made to leave Iran.

Mani remained in exile till the death of Shapur I in 272 CE. He returned to Iran and was well-received by Shapur's son *Hormazd I*. But when Hormazd I died after a very short reign (272-273 CE.) of one year his successor, his brother, *Bahram I*, showed strong dislike for Mani and put him to a horrible death. One very notable Manichaean was St. Augustine, who was brought up in this faith in his youth before he took up active work for the Church of Christ.

After the dynamic regimes of *Ardeshir I* and *Shapur I* of almost 50 years, a succession of weaker men ruled the empire for next 40 years (from 272 to 309 CE., six rulers in a span of 39 years).

*Shapur II* (309-379 CE), (great grandson of Shapur I) the 9th king was a unique figure in the Iranian history. He succeeded to the empire before he was born. When his father, *Hormuzd II* (302-309), sought refuge in Roman court, the Persian nobles killed his eldest son, blinded the second, and imprisoned the third (Hormazd, who afterwards escaped to the Roman Empire).

At that time, the Queen consort of Hormazd II, who was Jewish, was expecting a child. The nobles decided that the throne should be given to the child when it was born. It may be said that *Shapur II* may have been the only king in history to be crowned in utero: the crown was placed on his mother's belly. Shapur II was therefore born king.

He pursued a harsh religious policy. As per Dinkard, Shapur II zealously worked for the restoration and promulgation of the faith among the unbelievers. It is very surprising that though he was born out of interfaith marriage he took active interest in proselytizing the Mazdayasnian Faith. It was also during his time *Dastur Adarbad Mahraspand*, brought the compilation of the Avesta to its definitive conclusion.

*Shapur II* founded the town of Neyshapur (Nishapur) in Khorasan (eastern Parthia). If you recollect, there is a direct reference to Neyshapur in the introductory passage of the extant Ashirwad prayers. There is a question put to the witness of the groom: "*Ba paimane do hazar dirum seeme sapeed vijeh do dinar jarre sorkh sare Nishapuri, padirafteh budi ?*" "*In consideration of this match, have you therefore agreed to give two thousand Nishapur dirhams and two gold dinars?*" This reference raises a question. Is there a possibility that during Shapur II's rule the capital of Persia had shifted to Neyshapur?

Another interesting fact is that the great poet *Omar Khayyam* was born in Neyshapur (in 1048) and died there and is buried a few miles outside the town.

As we have seen that it was during the reign of *Shapur II* and at his instance the Avesta in most part was put together by *Adarbad Mahraspand*. Yet we do not remember him in our prayers. His name does not appear in the list of Namgarans. Is it intentional? Did Dastur Adarbad Mahraspand not want to give credit to Shapur? Or for that matter there is no mention of Dastur Tansar either who was the torch bearer of this effort during Ardeshir Papakan's regime.

After Shapur II, again came a long succession of very ordinary kings. 9 rulers during the next hundred years (379-487 CE.).

There is one king who deserves a mention and that is Bahram V (Bahramgore, the Hunter of the Wild Ass), the 14th king. Bahram V was the product of an interfaith marriage. His mother was of Jewish origin named Sashoondokht. He had any number of wives (as per Firdowsi in 1097 he married four daughters of a miller, he married a village chief's daughter, he married a jeweler's daughter and he married an Indian king's daughter).

*Yazdegerd II* (438-457CE), son of Behram V, again a product of interfaith marriage, practiced a harsh policy towards minority religions, particularly Christianity. To displace Christianity with Zoroastrianism in Armenia, he sent his prime minister and commander-in-chief Meher-Narses with instructions to attract the Armenian nobles to the Mazdayesnian Faith. The nobles were promised high positions, court distinctions, royal favours, and the remission of taxes, if they accepted the national faith of Iran.



But when they refused to give up their religion they were apprehended and under threat of life were compelled to accept Zoroastrianism. These nobles, in turn were sent to the interior with instructions to convert their subjects. This proselytizing movement was not confined to Armenia, but extended further to Georgia, Albania and other neighbouring countries. ***Then can it not be said that during the Sasanian rule the Zoroastrians had launched a 'jihad' with tacit approval of their religious heads and political masters?***

During the next 50 years the conditions in the empire deteriorated rapidly. The population was exploited relentlessly by vested interests and had sunk to the deepest depths of poverty and misery. The decades of oppression were visible in the revolutionary preaching of Mazdak, who began his work around 488 CE.

### MAZDAKISM

I would term Mazdak the first Bolshevik in history. He preached communistic doctrines as the main principles of his religion. With equality, austerity and abstinence, he inculcated joint holding of property including women, as the only solution to all ills of mankind. It is very rightly said that poverty and misery are the fertile breeding grounds for communism. It was a famine in Iran at the end of the 5th Century which gave Mazdak the opportunity to give expression to his socialistic views.

More significant was the extreme rapidity with which Mazdak's teachings were accepted by the masses. Within the course of a few months his followers grew by the thousands: and they were drawn from every strata of society from the king downwards. The king at that time was *Kobad I* (488-531 CE., except for two years in 496 & 497 CE) who openly declared his sympathies with the new preaching.

However, Mazdak's ideology was considered to be a menace both to society and the state religion. It threatened the very existence of the Zoroastrian priesthood. The well entrenched clergy was seriously perturbed and they forced the king to leave his throne.

When *Kobad I* was restored to the throne in 498 CE he became wiser by experience and withdrew his open support to the Mazdakites. But he was not strong enough to remove the root causes of Mazdakism. That was reserved for a more illustrious man than *Kobad I*.

It was his son *Khusro II*, (531 - 579 CE), known to us by his title *Noshiravan*, who freed Iran from the Mazdak frenzy. He clearly saw the imminent danger from Mazdak's teaching and the first thing he did was to suppress the movement with an iron hand. Mazdak was treacherously murdered followed by a systematic repression of all Mazdakites often with much bloodshed.

The reign of *Khusro II Parviz* (591-628 CE), grandson *Khusro I (Noshirwan)*, was the last stable rule of the Sasanian Dynasty. Intrigue, deception and lust for power became rampant following his death. The beginning of the end of the Sasanian Dynasty had commenced.

The princes instigated and actively supported by their mothers of foreign extraction and foreign faith played havoc in the royal family, in aristocracy and in state affairs. Kings and queens were proclaimed and most of them were deposed or murdered in quick succession.

Over a period of next four years there were 14 successive kings, including two daughters of *Khusro II*. Out of these except for one all others were murdered.

In such deplorable conditions and disastrous circumstances *Yazdegerd III*, grandson of *Khusro II*, ascended the throne in the spring of 632 CE as the last Sasanian emperor. *Yazdegerd* was incapable of uniting a vast country crumbling into small feudal kingdoms, left the throne in 641 CE and was assassinated by a miller in Merv in 651 CE.

The mighty Persian Empire, with its military command structure non-existent, its army decimated, its financial resources effectively destroyed, was now utterly helpless in the face of the invaders. The question arises did the local population willingly accept Islam, thus escaping from various restrictions imposed on non-Muslims, including the requirement of paying a special poll tax (*jizya*) or were they forced to convert by the invading Arabs?.

***To be continued in Winter/December 2008 – SOCIETY IN THE SASANIAN ERA***

# To the Editor

## FEZANA JOURNAL

Dear Mrs Dastoor,

Congratulations on a splendid job with the Summer 2008 issue of the FEZANA JOURNAL. The pictorial section showcasing the NauRooz celebrations from around the world was a masterpiece and the write-ups from the diverse associations were well represented.

Also kudos on bringing up a kids section in the Fezana Journal. I am sure it will be well appreciated by the younger audience. I hope we can make it a regular feature with puzzles, creative ideas and projects our kids can do related to our faith and culture.

Keep up the great work!! Warmest regards

*Dr. Ardeshir N Irani.*

*Zoroastrian Association of Michigan.*

Dear Dolly,

I wish to thank you for sending me the FEZANA JOURNAL vol #2, Summer/June 2008.

I enjoyed reading it. In my view this is your best issue. Your articles are interesting and well chosen. They are more Spiritual in content which I prefer, rather than just Religious.

Your colored photos definitely add to the enjoyment.

Keep up the good work!!

Best wishes.

*Dinshaw Gharda., Florida*

Dear Dolly

I would sincerely like to say thank you, to the entire FEZANA JOURNAL team from the Editor-in-Chief, the graphic artist, all the way to the mailing crew who make the production of each issue of the Journal possible. I await it eagerly every time till it appears in my mail box! I appreciate your time, dedication as well as devotion to make every issue of the JOURNAL a joy to read!

Thanks once again & keep it up.

*Farida Bamji, Canada*

Office of the Trustees of the  
Parsi Punchayet Funds and Properties

August 6, 2008

Dear Dr Dastoor

I was delighted to receive your superbly brought out issue of the summer 2008 FEZANA JOURNAL. It is a gold mine of information about our community.

Your extensive write-up entitled NAUROOZ AROUND THE WORLD really made very interesting reading. But unfortunately there was one glaring lacuna - not a word has been mentioned about the Jamshedi Navroze programmes in your motherland, India except for a passing reference of the J.J. Hospital Parsi Ward meet.

As you may be well aware the largest concentration of Parsis anywhere in the world happens to be in Mumbai. A very spectacular function to mark JASHAN-E-NAVROZE was held by the Bombay Parsi Punchayat. Among the eminent personages who attended were the Iranian Consul General and the Director of the Iran Culture House. I had covered the colorful event in our summer 2008 issue of the BPP REVIEW which was sent to you over a month ago and it would have been in the fitness of things if you had made a suitable mention in this article of yours

With warmest regards

Sincerely Yours

Godrej N. Dotivala, Public Relations Officer &  
Editor of the BPP REVIEW

Ed replies "I agree with your comments about the lacuna in the article and I am sorry the Journal did not have any news or photos of the Jashan -E-Navroze organized by BPP. But I had no information about it., in spite of an e.mail. By the time the BPP Review was received the Journal had already gone to press. There was no other reason.



# YOUTHFULLY SPEAKING.....

## **NEXTGENNOW: SHEDDING THE LIGHT, PAVING THE WAY**

by The NextGenNow Leadership Team

**What is NextGenNow?** What is NextGenNow's mission and vision? What came of the first conference? Is NextGenNow a part of FEZANA? If not, why not?

These are just a few of the questions posed to us this year. Some questions fair, some premature, some out of a fear of the unknown, and some simply asked for the sake of asking.

Since the five of us came together on the heels of the first NextGenNow conference held October 2007 in Chicago, the NextGenNow leadership team has done nothing but run uphill, often against the wind, to meet objectives and mandates.



The purpose of NextGenNow is to unite, engage and inspire a new generation of Zarathushti leadership to tackle some of our community's most pressing challenges, and leave the next next generation with a rich legacy through stronger North American Zarathushti communities.

In August, our feverish pace reached a crescendo, as the 2nd NextGenNow conference kicked off on the campus of George Mason University in the foothills of the beautiful Washington DC suburbs. Attracting a highly-motivated group of 50 attendees, a median age range of 25-45 from Montreal to SoCal, NextGenNow 2008: Your Future in Your Hands, was a screaming success.

Your Future in Your Hands comprised five sessions, each featuring dynamic speakers and audience participation in a small, intimate university setting that truly broadened the scope of discussion, enriched perspective, and represented a true microcosm of the North American Zarathushti demographic.

Headlining the conference were panel presentations from Shahriar Shahriari, well-known Zarathushti entrepreneur, filmmaker and author of *Thus Spake The Real Zarathushtra*, *The Void*, and *The Z Factor*; Dr. Rustom Kevala, immediate past president, FEZANA; and Dr. Niaz Kasravi, president of the Zoroastrian Sports Committee, the largest Zoroastrian committee dedicated to promoting sports and sportsmanship among Zarathushti youth worldwide.

# YOUTHFULLY SPEAKING.....

Unique to this year's conference was *Look at Me*, a series of short presentations peppered through the program featuring ongoing initiatives both in North America and overseas. Presentations were delivered by *Shaun Mirza* of the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce, New York Chapter on the importance of professional networking and getting involved, the Parsi Resource Group's work to raise much-needed funds for youth education in rural Gujarat, and a profile of Tenaz Dubash's film, *Crisis in Faith: Zoroastrians Today*, profiling some of the more controversial and challenging issues of our time.

**SESSION ONE**, Leading a Shared Vision for the Future, was moderated by NextGenNow attendee Cyrus Cama of Pittsburgh, and featured remarks from *Shahriar Shariari* and *Dr. Rustom Kevala* who talked on the importance introducing a seasonal calendar..

**SESSION TWO**, Rediscovering Zarathushti Spirituality, was moderated by ZAMWI board member *Zubin Mistry*, and featured a presentation by FEZANA's Education, Scholarship and Conference Committee Chair *Dr. Lovji Cama* (ZAGNY). He presented terrific insights into Zarathushti history and religion.

**SESSION THREE**: Transcending Boundaries was moderated by NextGenNow conference co-chair *Farah Minwalla*, featured *Dr. Niaz Kasravi*, chair of FEZANA Sports' committee and ZAMWI member *Mehrdad Aidun*. The session focused on overcoming Zarathushti challenges, nuances and schisms, and discussed how we can work toward a more united, harmonious Zarathushti way of life. Success stories of bringing Irani and Parsi components of N. American diaspora were related.

**SESSION FOUR** Community Building 101 was moderated by NextGenNow Co-Chair *Jim Engineer*, featured presentations from *Mehrdad Aidun*, a board member of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington (ZAMWI), *Dr. Ardeshir Irani* a founder of the newest FEZANA member association, the Zoroastrian Association of Michigan (ZAOM); and Lily Kotwal, a board member of the Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation . Each speaker shared outstanding testimonial on the challenges, hurdles and dynamics of community evolution – from small group family clusters to structured Zarathushti communities. Ardeshir emphasized his point with a very innovative use of nursery rhymes.

**THE FINAL SESSION**: The Future of NextGenNow, was moderated by NextGenNow Co-Chair Nikan Khatibi, featuring panelists *Kasravi* and *Kevala*, and NextGenNow's *Jim Engineer*. The open and interactive session covered the origins, direction, as well more background on the mission and purpose of NextGenNow. Based on her experience of chairing a very successful FEZANA Committee Niaz advised the group on how to make their dream a reality

**THE END RESULT OF ALL THE DISCUSSION AND INSIGHT?** SMART Targets, led by NextGenNow Co-Chair *Armaity Homavazir* with support and guidance from *Shahriari* *Shahriari*. Setting *SMART* (*Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely*) Targets helped



From left *Jim Engineer, Dr Niaz Kasravi, Dr Rustom Kevala.*  
Photo *Armaity Homavazir*



From left, *Farah Minwalla, Dr Niaz Kasravi, Mehrdad Aidun* Photo *Armaity Homavazir.*

# YOUTHFULLY SPEAKING.....

attendees keep perspective on how to proactively define and launch local initiatives now underway in the home towns of many NextGenNow attendees.

A separate report, to be released within the next month, will detail each SMART target, progress to date and the NextGenNow leader responsible, so the broader North American Zarathushti community can be aware and in touch with NextGenNow initiatives underway in their community.

*Your Future in Your Hands* would not have been possible without the energy, passion and motivation of our leadership team, and the talent of two individuals behind the scenes whom we wish to personally thank – Zareen Austin, owner of Z Creations of Montreal, for her logo and program book cover design; and Ash Moobed, Operating Manager, at Toronto-based WebnGrafix, for creation of the [www.nextgennow.org](http://www.nextgennow.org) web site. Both Ash and Zareen exemplify the next generation Zarathushti mindset and commitment to service.

**NextGenNow is a collaborative, non-confrontational movement towards a united future in ideology and action. NextGenNow is agnostic to traditional geographic boundaries, cultural schisms, and issues that divide rather than unite. NextGenNow will succeed because its cause is greater than the**

**self-interest of those leading. Keep an eye out for NextGenNow initiatives underway in your home town. If you want to start one, contact us since there is no better time to act than the present!**

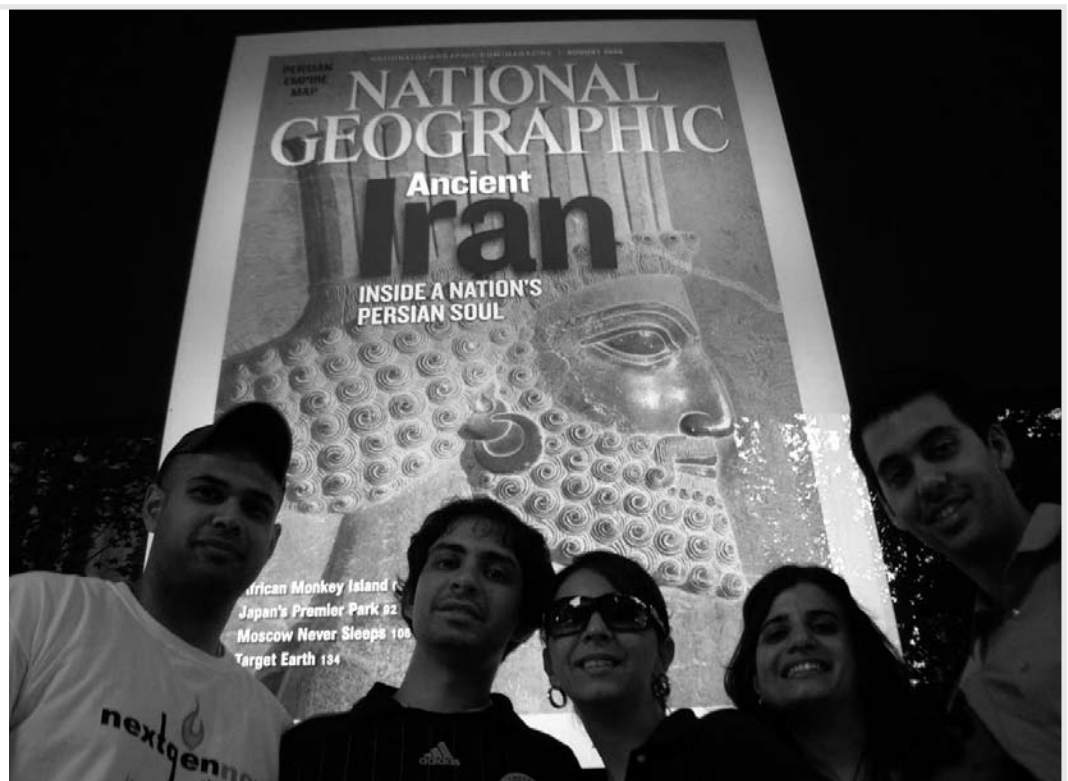
**. Visit [www.nextgennow.org](http://www.nextgennow.org) for more information**



*From left Armaity Homavazir, Jim Engineer, Mantreh Atashband, Farah Minwalla, Nikan Khatibi They serve as founding directors of NextGenNow.*

*From left : Zubin Mistry, Cyrus Cama, Mantreh Atashband, Armaity Homavazir, and Nikan Khatibi, in front of an exhibit of August 08 cover Ancient Iran Inside A Nation's Persian Soul . of National Geographic*

*Photo courtesy Armaity Homavazir*





# Who Created These Magnificent Things?

Prepared by Avan Antia aged 14 years

Unscramble each of the clue words.

Copy the letters in the numbered cells to other cells at the bottom with the same number.

KYS

REWTA   
1

TEARH   
7 2

NALTPS   
5

MILSANA   
6 8

MAHNU   
3

FIER   
4

Answer Key on page 110

1 2 3 4 5

Z D  !  
6 7 8

Cartoon supplied by Jamshed Udvadia





اند. ایرانیان با زحمت و مشقت فراوان ایین های خود را حفظ نمودند و همین ایین ها باعث ماندگاری فرهنگ ما شد. ما ایرانیان باید بخود ببالیم که قبل از ورود اعراب به ایران ما از تمدن و فرهنگی بسیار قوی برخوردار بوده ایم. ایران در دوران هخامنشیان از صدها ایالت تشکیل میشد تعداد زیادی از کشورها بودند که درخواست مینمودند که زیر مدیریت و فرهنگ و دموکراسی ایران قرار گیرند تا از یک زندگی آرام بهره گیرند. هخامنشیان اولین حکومتی در دنیا هستند که مدیریت و استاندار های حکومتی به وجود آوردند. در آن زمان ها همه جا زور حکمفرما بود و مشورت وجود نداشت. ما ایرانیان در زمان کوروش کبیر پست داشته ایم. اعراب میخواستند کتابهای ما را از بین ببرند تا بتوانند فرهنگ خودشان را بما تحمیل نمایند. ما قدیمی ترین و شاید اولین قوم یکتا پرست بودیم و اعراب تلاش بر آن داشتند تا هویت ما را از بین ببرند و هویتی جعلی بما تحمیل نمایند. در دوران تاریخ اعراب به ما حمله نمودند و کتابهای ما را سوزاندند و دختران زیبای ما را به کنیزی و پسران دلاور ما را به بردگی بردند. اعراب با خود بدبختی و جهالت و تعصب و مرد سالاری و بی خردی به ارمغان می اورند. ایرانیان اریایی نژاد میباشند. ما ایرانیان حماسه تاریخی داریم در گیتی فقط دو حماسه تاریخی وجود دارد حماسه شاهنامه فردوسی بهترین در دنیا میباشد. به عقیده من غفلت و نقصان دانش سیاسی ملت ما موجب شد که اساس کاخ ارزوهایمان ویران شود و اندیشمندان کشور فرار را بر قرار ترجیح

دهند.

Fereshteh Yazdani-Khatibi

Bano33@aol.com, (949) 349-9492

### Answer Key

- |   |         |   |        |
|---|---------|---|--------|
| 1 | Sky     | 2 | Water  |
| 3 | Earth   | 4 | Plants |
| 5 | Animals | 6 | Human  |
| 7 | Fire    |   |        |

Final Answer: Ahura Mazda!



ما زرتشتیان از قدیمی ترین و شاید اولین قوم یکتا پرست در جهان هستیم. نژاد اریایی از حاشیه رود گنگ و دره سند در هندوستان برآمده و در انجا ما از هم نژادهایمان جدا شده و به سمت غرب حرکت کرده ایم و در هزاران سال با سختی از کوههای هندوکش گذشته و خود را به کرانه های دریای کاسپین که همان دریای خزر میباشند رساندیم و از انجا به چند شاخه تقسیم شده و یک شاخه به اروپا و شاخه دیگر به فلات ایران میبایند و نام اریایی به خود میگیرند. اریایی ها در ایران حکومت و حاکمیت های ابتدایی تشکیل میدهند و در خود ایران به چندین دسته تقسیم میشوند. کیش و این اریایی ها در ابتدا میترایسم بوده است. فرهنگ میترایسم بسیار قوی است که بعدها بودایسم و بسیاری از مذاهب دارای پیامبر تحت تاثیر میترایسم برای نور اهمیت قابل شدند. بهمین دلیل در این های باستانی ما مانند چهارشنبه سوری برای نور و آتش احترام قابل بوده و هستند. بعد از گذشت زمان ما به تک خدایی میرسیم و اریایی ها اولین قومی هستند که تک خدایی را وارد فرهنگ خود نمودند. ما قبل از اسلام تک خدایی را داشته ایم. زرتشتی اهورامزدا را داشته. این های باستانی ما همیشه دو گانه بوده اند. در مقابل تاریکی روشنایی داشته ایم در مقابل نیکی زشتی و در مقابل زایش مرگ و در حقیقت اگر این تضادها وجود نداشت اساس هستی از هم می پاشید. فرهنگ و این ما با عقلانیت بیشتر سازگار است. کورش کبیر وقتی می آید و بابل را میگیرد اولین کاری که انجام میدهد اینست که قوم بنی اسرائیل را آزاد مینماید و میگوید بروید معابد خود را بسازید و خدایان خود را بپرستید. هرگز شما در فرهنگ ایرانی نمی بینید که پس از کشورگشایی قتل عام نمایند. اگر توجه نمائید پادشاهانی که قتل عام نمودند ریشه اریایی نداشته اند. ایرانیان اریایی هرگز خون خوار و فرهنگ ستیز نبوده



# Personal Profiles

## HOMAI ARDESHIR DARUWALLA

In a interview with Dolly Dastoor

### Chairperson and Managing Director of Central Bank of India

The charming, dynamic and tough Chairperson and Managing Director of the Central Bank of India was the keynote speaker on May 25, 2008 at the WZCC , Houston Chapter Seminar "The Global Business Connection".

I had heard about her appointment from the media but had not met her or known anything about her. Then on May 25th I heard her deliver her vibrant keynote address, a speech simple, lucid, and yet full of in-depth knowledge of the Indian and International banking system, fielding questions with ease and authority that only comes from self-confidence.

I wanted to find out the person behind this powerful position in Indian banking. I requested an interview. She readily agreed and over lunch in the beautiful atrium of the Zarathushti Cultural Centre in Houston, this elegant lady very graciously discussed her journey as a woman to the top in a male dominated profession.

Born in Mumbai, as the oldest of three children in a middle class family Homai started off as the average girl-next-door. Her conservative Parsi upbringing ensured that the importance of good thoughts, words and deeds were drilled into her young and impressionable mind. Her schooling at the J. B. Vatcha School, Dadar only reinforced this upbringing with an all-girls environment, religious classes and an ambience that educated her in Zarathushti values. She passed her SSC examination in 1965, and wanted to join the J.J. School to become a secretary and "wear high heels and make-up". Knowing of her potential she was dissuaded from going that route by her family and friends. She then opted for commerce, graduating with honors from R.A. Podar College and then training at Kalyaniwala and Mistry , a well known firm of chartered accountants to become a Chartered Account. "I tasted failure for the first time when I flunked my CA exams. But I told myself, a CA stands for 'Come Again' and so that's what I shall do. And I passed the next time around."

Nurturing an ambition to be in the Corporate world she applied to many corporations, was called for many interviews, was one of the finalist for some but would be told "Thank you very much, you are very good, but we would prefer a male candidate to a female"

Homai began her professional life in the South East Asian Secretariat of the Lions International. Ironically this



office was situated on the first floor of the prestigious Sterling Apartments at Peddar Road in Mumbai, the same building where she now resides on the 13th floor as the Chairperson of the Central Bank of India.

"I started my career with the Union Bank of India on June 13, 1975. on a gross salary of Rs 1,450 pm. Every time I was due for a promotion I was told you are qualified for the post but a male would be much preferable. And that 'but' continued. Even for the post of the Executive Director, it was the same thing." Thus began her journey meticulous step by step up the complex hierarchy of the public sector banking scenario in India. During her 13 years at the audit department of the Union Bank she had access to every parameter that was relevant in the banking industry. She was promoted to Executive Director of the Oriental Bank of Commerce in 2004. And finally she was appointed as the head of the Central Bank of India with about 39,055 staff members in 3,233 branches of her bank, for a five year term.

Ms Daruwalla has obviously come up the hard way, and she has managed to make a difference all along the way. She admits that it has been a tough climb due to her gender and not a smooth ride to the top. "I have had my ups and downs", she says frankly. "It hasn't been roses all the way." But she draws satisfaction from the fact that she has done her job with passion. She believes in aiming for the moon and falling on a star. And having arrived at the top she recalls what her father always said: "As you climb don't forget to look down and lend a helping hand."

Homai Daruwalla believes in team work. No "I, me or myself". It is "We, Us and Ourselves" She believes that a positive attitude will ensure that others will work along with you. She stresses the importance of every single person in her organization and relies on their wholehearted cooperation. She tells her staff "I will protect you from outside criticism, but I will not protect your inefficiency". She cannot tolerate and has no patience for inefficiency at all levels. She is well-known for her short temper. The Central Bank of India had a very militant union, four of the nine All India union leaders were working at the bank. The government gave her full support in curtailing the power of the union at the bank.

# Personal Profiles

It is no small feat to stay in touch with her extended team of managers. She sends regular newsletter "Centralites" written by herself, printed on exclusive blue paper and makes sure she meets customers and staff whenever she travels to the branches, listens to suggestions and either ensures they are implemented or immediately explains why they cannot be implemented. She holds weekly Management Committee Meetings and her quarterly business reviews are marathon sessions that last for three days. She works hard often till midnight

Does Homai ever relax? Well, the inexhaustible worker loves movies, late night soap operas, enjoys creating chowk designs (the Parsi rangoli designs on the floor) everyday, loves cooking. Then there are parties, shopping expeditions, traveling in and out of India, "I do make a call to the office once in a while," she admits, her eyes twinkling. She lives with her sister and brother "and all of us along with mother live a happy life. My life is not about just work. "

Heading one of the largest public sector bank in a completely male dominated world, in a highly challenging position is quite remarkable which requires one to maintain a very delicate balance with the various stake holders like government, a strong employee group, customers and regulators. She oversees entire operations and is involved in the development of overall business for the bank, strengthening of the internal controls and finalization of policy related issues.

To me, it was remarkable to see a completely self-made professional who has literally pulled herself up by dint of sheer crushingly hard work, grit and determination to this position of pre-eminence. The community is proud of Homai Daruwalla and we wish her good luck for the remaining of her term as Chairperson and MD of the Central Bank of India



## Parsi Zoroastrian Association of South East Asia (PZAS) Gara Fashion Show

Sixteen members of the PZAS participated in the Colorful Heritage event at the Fort Canning Park in Singapore. This event is part of the Arts Unlimited Series and is hosted by the National Parks Board. The fashion show started off with a synopsis of the Zarathushti religion, its advent into India and assimilation into its culture. Following this, the women donned their beautifully hand-crafted gara and kor saris as they sashayed and swayed around the stage to the beat of *Freddy Mercury's* (our very own bawa rocker) music. The crowd truly enjoyed the showcasing of these heirlooms, and enthusiastically cheered on the participants. The finale of the event was a glimpse into the Parsi wedding, and the singing of our "communal" song," Chhaye Hame Zarthoshti". A booth featuring traditional parsi food such as bhakras, ravo and sev was also available for all to sample.

It was truly an event that left everyone present with a sense of pride in Zarthushti heritage, religion and culture.  
*Submitted by Jasmine Cooper Dastoor*

## 18. Bizhan

### & Manizheh

Once upon a time, in Iran, there lived a young warrior called Bizhan. This is his story.

Bizhan was a favorite at the court of Kay Khosrow. The King and all his noblemen agreed that for a young man, Bizhan was wise and courageous. He always volunteered to go on the hardest missions for the King and, so far, he had always returned victorious.



#### BIZHAN'S SECRET

One time, when he was on a mission in Turan, Bizhan had met Manizheh, who was the daughter of King Afrasyab of Turan. Manizheh was very beautiful and he fell in love with her the first time he saw her. When he learned that she loved him too, they secretly got married and promised to remain loving and loyal to each other forever. Then Bizhan returned to Iran. He promised Manizheh that he would come back to see her soon.



But when Bizhan returned, a Turanian spy saw him enter Manizheh's palace and followed him. Soon, Bizhan and Manizheh's secret was revealed to King Afrasyab, who was enraged to learn of his daughter's secret marriage to a Persian. The King ordered his men to put heavy chains on Bizhan's limbs and cage him in a pit deep in the forests of Turan. A large stone was placed over the entrance of the pit so there was no escape for Bizhan. The King also banished Manizheh from his palace. He took her to Bizhan's pit and said, "Here is your lord and household; you're to be this prisoner's jailer forever."

Without any wealth of her own, Manizheh had to beg for food. Whatever food the kind people of Turan gave her, she would share with Bizhan. Their devotion to each other continued, but these were sad days for the young lovers.

#### THE WORLD- REVEALING CUP

When Bizhan did not return to Iran as expected, his father, Giv, began to worry about him. Giv went to Kay Khosrow and said: "I have made inquiries, my

## SUNDAY STORIES FROM THE Shahnameh

Lord, and it seems that although your mission is accomplished, Bizhan has simply disappeared. He is my only son and I miss him. Please help me find him. I fear some harm has come to him."

Kay Khosrow also became concerned. He sent his emissaries to all corners of Iran to search for Bizhan, but they all came back with no news. There was no sign of Bizhan anywhere. Giv was beside himself with grief. But Kay Khosrow reassured him: "Fear not, Giv, my old friend. We shall find out what fate has befallen him. And if he is still alive, we shall bring him back home."

*"But how, my Lord?" Giv asked hopelessly. "There is no sign of him anywhere."*

"Be patient and have faith, Giv," replied the King. "Wait until spring brings in the New Year and the sun renews the world; then, when the flowers reappear and the earth is green again, I shall pray to Hormoz. I shall have the world-revealing cup that shows the seven continents brought to me, and I shall invoke God's blessings on our noble ancestors. Then I will tell you where Bizhan is, for I know the cup will answer my prayers."

Giv felt hopeful again. On the first day of spring, Kay Khosrow kept his word. He prayed to God for a long time. Then, he took the world-revealing cup in his hands and stared into it to see the seven continents. The cup revealed to the King the turnings of the heavens, all that happened there, and how and why things came to pass. And then it showed him Bizhan bound with chains in a pit, and besides him he saw Manizheh standing, ready to serve him.

"Rejoice, Bizhan is alive!" the King told Giv. "He is imprisoned, but this is small cause for grief for he is alive and a noble woman is attending him. He suffers terribly, however, and it hurts me to see him in pain. Go to Rustom at once and tell him that Kay Khosrow counts on him to free Bizhan."

#### RUSTOM TO THE RESCUE

When Rustom learned what had happened to Bizhan, he immediately set out with a few of his friends for Turan. Disguised as Iranian merchants,



they took a caravan filled with jewels, precious stones, silks and other fine things into Turan. Piran welcomed them and asked them to set up shop in the middle of the city. Here they engaged in trade and tried to find out where Bizhan may have been imprisoned.

Manizheh learned of the arrival of the Iranian merchants when she was out begging for food one day. She hurried to them. She did not recognize Rustom, but when she came before him she said,

*I wish you life and long prosperity,  
May God protect you from adversity!  
May wisdom be your guide, may fortune bless  
Iran with prosperous days and happiness  
What news have you? What tidings can you bring  
Of Persia's champions, or of their King?  
Haven't they heard Bizhan is here, don't they  
Desire to help their friend in any way?*

Hearing her, Rustom grew worried that he had been discovered. He was afraid that a customer would hear her and his identity and mission would be revealed. He wondered if this was some sort of trap. So he pretended to get angry and throw her out of the shop, "Get away from me! I don't know any kings, I know nothing of Giv or that family, your words mean nothing to me!" Taking her by the elbow, he dragged Manizheh into the streets.

Manizheh was shocked. "Is this how Persians treat their own?" she cried in despair. "Do you not care to free Bizhan? Why has no one from Iran come to save him?"

"Calm down, woman!" Rustom said to her urgently, hoping no one could hear them. "Come with me."

Rustom took Manizheh into the back of the shop where no one would see or hear them. Then he gave her food and asked her to tell him the full story. Between sobs, the young princess explained everything to the noble warrior. Rustom felt pity for her, but he was still not sure whether this was a trick of some sort.

He called his cook and had him bake a special loaf of bread, in which he hid a ring with his name on it in Persian. Then he gave the bread to Manizheh and told her, "Tell your master to eat this. And have faith: if you are true, all will be well again soon."



*Shazneen Rabadi Gandhi lives in Marina Del Rey, CA. She writes as a hobby*



Photo 1 and 2 "Bizhan Receives Invitation from Manizheh's Nurse", attributed to Abdul Vahab, c. 1520-30 / folio 300v, with details appearing in Dick Davis (Trans.), *Fathers and Sons: Stories from the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi, Volume II* (Washington DC: Mage Publishers, 2000), p. 142 and 145.

Photo 3 "Ruston Rescues Bijan", painted by unknown artist in the Shiraz style 1630-40, with details appearing in Dick Davis (Trans.), *Fathers and Sons: Stories from the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi, Volume II* (Washington DC: Mage Publishers, 2000), p. 171.

*Dick Davis (Trans.), Fathers and Sons: Stories from the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi Volume II* (Washington DC: Mage Publishers, 2000), p. 165.

### THE YOUNG LOVERS ARE REUNITED

The young princess thanked the great warrior and hurried back to the cave. She passed the bread to Bizhan through the small hole in the wall and told him of the caravan of merchants from Iran.

"Good God! Could it be?" Bizhan suddenly exclaimed. He had come upon the ring hidden in the bread and recognized that Iran had sent Rustom to save him. "Go to the merchant, Manizheh, and ask him if he is the master of Rakhsh, for if he is, I have found hope again."

When Manizheh delivered this message to Rustom, he knew that Bizhan had trusted her with their secret. "Tell Bizhan, but let no one else know of this; in the darkest night listen for the least sound. Spend the next day gathering firewood in the forest and when night comes, light a huge bonfire." Manizheh hurried back to Bizhan and explained the plan to him.

At nightfall, Rustom and his friends found the fire glowing in the forest. Rustom lifted the huge stone that covered the pit where Bizhan was imprisoned and flung it in to the forest. The ground shuddered as the stone landed. Then he lowered his lariat into the pit and brought Bizhan out of its depths, still shackled in his chains and weak from his ordeal. Rustom broke the chains that bound him.

Then with the young lovers reunited, they quickly made their escape to Iran.

# M I L E S T O N E S as of August 15, 2008

## BIRTHS

Arya Javanmardi, a boy, to Armaity and Parviz Javanmardi in Burnaby, B.C on March 25, 2008.

Kiana Percy Mistry, a girl, to Percy and Teenaz Mistry, granddaughter to Pervin and Jimmy Mistry and Jasmin D. Gadiwalla in Mississauga, ONT on April 9, 2008.

Avaeya Gazdar, a girl, to Sheila and Yohann Gazdar (Toronto, ONT), granddaughter to Niloufer and Nauzer Gazdar (Toronto, ONT) and Mahrukh and Aspy Bapooji (Limehouse, ONT) on April 22, 2008.

Sam Ashwyn Madon, a boy, to Eddie and Ronda Madon, grandson to Perviz Madon (North Vancouver) and nephew to Natasha Madon (North Vancouver) in Sydney, Australia on May 14, 2008.

Josephine Natasha Adel Irani, a girl, to Natasha and Adel Irani, sister to Roxanna, Isabelle and Dinshaw and granddaughter to Katie and late Dinshaw Irani and Phiroze and Dolly Dastoor (Montreal, QUE) on May 22, 2008.

Zubin Bharucha, a boy, to Viloo and Sahavir Bharucha grandson to Mithoo and Homi Mullan (Mumbai, India) and Sheru and Sarosh Bharucha (Ahmedabad, India) in Mississauga, ONT on May 29, 2008.

Rayhan Carl Rogers, a boy, to Khurshid and Jeff Rogers, brother to Zehan, grandson to Putli and Noshir (Shelbourne, ONT) and Janet and John Rogers (Detroit, MI) in Woodland Park, CO on June 5, 2008.

Natasha Gazdar, a girl, to Diana and Roy Gazdar, granddaughter to Bachi and Bomi Damkevala (Chicago, IL) and Dhun and Sam Gazdar (Mississauga, ONT), great granddaughter to Noshir Jamsetjee, and niece to Zarina and Persis Damkevala in Mississauga, ONT on June 7, 2008.

Parisa Ladak, a girl to Zara (nee khory) and Dimaz Ladak of Richmond Hill

Granddaughter to Dilnavaz and Rustom Khory and great granddaughter to Homayun Irani

Isabella Hazel, a girl, to Shanaz and Alexander hazel, sister to Natasha and Sabrina, granddaughter to Maruk Khambatta in Davis, CA on June 21, 2008.

Zerxes Dabhoiwala-Marolia, a boy, to Dilshad Marolia and Zal Dabhoiwala, grandson to Sonoo and Rohinton Marolia (Montreal, QUE) and Nurgez and Noshir Dabhoiwala (Amsterdam) in New York, on July 3, 2008.

Kiya Lord, to Natasha and Shiavax Lord, sister to Freyana. grand-daughter to Roshan and Rusi Dalal of London, UK. on July 6, 2008.

Maya Kasad, a girl, to Darius and Suzy Kasad, sister to Kian and granddaughter to Homai and Arvand Kasad, niece to Anaita and Zarenn in San Ramon, CA on July 16, 2008.

Jasmine Engineer, a girl, to Zinaida and Adil Engineer, granddaughter to Goshpi and Rayomand Golwalla (Maryland) and Aban and Noshir Engineer (Mumbai) in Santa Clara, CA on July 18, 2008.

Zubin Daruwalla, a boy, to Ruzbeh and Anahita Daruwalla in Southern California.



Zara Jamshed Engineer, (photo above) a girl to Kiku and Jim Engineer of Aurora, Illinois, granddaughter to proud grandparents Firoza and Adel Engineer (Naperville, Illinois), and Mehroo & Pervez Mistry

(Mumbai), niece to uncle Sohrab Engineer (Munich), Kamal and Cyrus Mehta (Dubai), and great aunt Meher Mehta (Mumbai), born in West suburban Chicago, on July 29, 2008.

## NAVJOTES

Naadir Mehta, son of Behramji and Ouvnere Mehta, grandson of Sam and Gooloo Polad in Houston, TX on March 30, 2008.

Ayesha Medhora, daughter of Zarir and Claudine Medhora in Oakville, ONT on April 6, 2008.

Shirin and Ava Homiar, daughters of Maneck and Jamshed Homiar, granddaughters of late Pirojamai and Darabshah Homiar and late Dhunmai and Jamshedji Akhuna, nieces of late Hoshang Akhuna in Brampton, ONT on April 12, 2008.



Courtney and Cory Kaiser, daughter and son of Jerfeshan and Donald Kaiser, grand children of Darayes and Roshni Bharda, in New Jersey, on June 14, 2008. (photo above)

Alisha and Darius, daughter and son of Persis and Cyrus Banker of Mississauga, in Ontario, June 29th, 2008.

Hormuz, son of Teenaz and Mahaveer Javat of Mississauga, in Ontario, July 11, 2008.

Jake, son of Meher and Ronnie Langadana, of Brampton, Ontario, on July 13, 2008.

Rashid, Farishte and Suroosh Goshtabi, children of Mila and

Shahmardan Goshtabi in Pleasant Hill, CA on July 20, 2008.

Negeen Aidun, daughter of Gita and Rashid Aidun, in Beaconsfield, Quebec on August 9th 2008.

Sohrab, Rustom and Sarosh Kazak, children of Veera and Rohinton Kazak in Fremont, CA on August 10, 2008.

## WEDDINGS

Eddie Parakh, son of Jehangir and Rita Parakh (Richmond, B.C) to Nazneen Antia, daughter of Sam and Homai Antia in Mumbai, India on February 8, 2008.

Neville Parakh, son of Jehangir and Rita Parakh (Richmond, B.C) to Mehernaz Hirananeck, daughter of Minoo and Roshan Hirananeck in Mumbai, India on March 2, 2008.

Christa Shahrokh, daughter of Rostam and Mahnaz Shahrokh (West Vancouver, B.C) to Klaus Kjeldsen, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ole Baedker Kjeldsen in Vancouver on March 22, 2008.

Anahita Daryushnejad, daughter of Aban and Keki Daryushnejad of Thornhill, Ontario to Ferozshaw Ogra, son of Farida and Nusserwanji Ogra, of Karachi in Woodbridge, Ontario on July 4, 2008.

Sharon Batliwalla, daughter of Kety and Dinshaw Batliwalla of Ottawa to Paakzaad Chothia, son of Ketayun



and Rustom Chothia of Malaysia, in Ottawa, Ontario, on July 5, 2008. (photo above)

Zeena Batliwalla, daughter of Zarine and Neville Batliwalla to Arjun Varma, son of Rama and Ravi Varma in Hillsborough, CA on July 12, 2008.

Coomi and Vispi Sorabji celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in Ontario, on July 11, 2008.

Ervad Dr Zubin Panthaki (Miami, Fl) son of Nergish and Ervad Jal Panthaki of Montreal to Dimple Hirji (New York) daughter of Hofrish Hirji and Satish Thakersey Hirji in New York on August 26th 2008

## DEATHS

Banoo Rutton Tata, wife of late Rutton Pirojshaw Tata, mother of Manek Khushrav Nariman (Houston, TX), Khorshed Khushroo Bulsara, and Dhun Rutton Tata; grandmother of Viraf and Rayhan Nariman, and Veera, Vahbiz and Behraam Bulsara in Mumbai, India on March 13, 2008.

Rostam Azarshahri, 92, father of Doulatbanoo Azarshahri (North Vancouver, B.C) in Tehran, Iran on March 12, 2008.

Naju Billimoria, 84, mother of Farrokh Billimoria and Pervin Motiwalla, grandmother of Freyan and Sherri in Mumbai, India on April 1, 2008.

Dali Dadabhoy Mama, 86, husband of Soonu Mama, brother of Dosi Sethna (Vancouver), father of Danny (Niloufer) (Toronto, ONT) and Adil (Margaret) Mama, grandfather of Michelle, Darius and Sophia in Karachi, Pakistan on April 15, 2008.

Nahni Kapadia, husband of Maki Kapadia, father of Rashid Kapadia (Houston, TX) in India on April 19, 2008.

Behram Sheriar Irani, father of Dilshad Bomi Hormazdi (Houston, TX) on April 28, 2008.

Lydia Santiago, mother of Elvia Patel (Houston, TX) in Puerto Rico on April 29, 2008.

Banou Gohar Bordbar (Behziz), mother of Pouran, Gity, Homa,

Ardeshir, Kamyar in Los Angeles, Porseh, May 4, 2008

Hosie Khursigara, husband of Khorshed (Mississauga, ONT), father of Gus, Jennie, and Irene (USA) in Mississauga, ONT on May 8, 2008.

Kersi Cambata, 88, founder of Cambata Aviation of Bombay. Husband of Phoebe, father of Fali and Darius (with ex-wife Mary) and Elbert, Jacqueline, Nelson, and Bruce plus 9 grandchildren, in Milboro, VA, May 10, 2008.

Gool Dinshaw Karbhary, 87, mother of Villy Sorabji, Daisy Bapuna and late Maneck Karbhary; grandmother of Daraius Sorabji and Shermin de Biase (Campbell, CA); great grandmother of Shiraz and Bijan in Gwalior, India on May 11, 2008.

Jamshid Kaboly-Zadeh 66, brother of Iraj, Khosrow, Parviz Kaboly-Zadeh, and Mehri Kaboly-Zadeh Parsi in North Vancouver on May 14, 2008.

Homai Sorabji Engineer, wife of late Sorabji Shapurji Engineer, mother of Katy and Kersi Bhatena (Chicago, IL) Ruby and Homi Bhatena (Secunderabad, India), Dorabji and Katie Engineer (Pune, India); grandmother of Yasmin, Reji, Rustom, Parvarish, Farrokh, Kashmira, Dilzaar, Kerman, Petraas, Tannas, Yezdi, Zubin, Nui; great grandmother of Cyrus, Lila, Sorab, Naomi, Kamran, Lia and Porus in Secunderabad, India, Asman Roz – Dae Mahino (Month) on June 11, 2008.

Minoo Bhandara, brother of Bapsi Sidhwa (Houston, TX) and Feroze Bhandara (Houston, TX) in Rawalpindi, on June 15, 2008.

Mehera Khujesta Batliwala, 92, mother of Dhun Batliwala and Daulat Engineer (Glen Ellyn, IL), sister of Jamshed (Jim) Modi (Arlington Heights, IL) and Khorshed Wadia (Kolkota, India) in Chicago, IL on June 30, 2008.

Roshan Jahangir Mehta, 78, mother of Sooni (Karachi, Pakistan),



Behramji (Houston, TX) and Daraius (Brentwood, CA), grandmother of Karl, Zane and Marina in Karachi, Pakistan on July 7, 2008.

Faredoon (Freddy) Amrolia, 79, husband of Piroj, father of Armin (Michael Kale), Zubin (Nancy-Lee Gould), and Sharon (Desmond Fyffe), sisters Nargis Karkaria and Homai Mehta (in Mumbai), and grandchildren Nauvmé and Aidan Amrolia, Amon and Salice Kale, in Burnaby, BC. on July 7, 2008.

Persees Divecha Goebel, 66, wife of John Goebel, mother of Shenaya Swartz-Goebel in Foster City, CA on July 14, 2008.

Ravanshad Mr. Khosrow Azarkyvan, husband of Mrs. ZARIN TAJ, father of Nooshin, Parisima, Pariboosh, Afshin brother of Mrs. Gohar Behdadnia in California.

***Each Day We Have  
The Opportunity For  
A New Beginning***

***Embrace Each  
Sunrise, Gather Its  
Beauty And Warmth  
And Place It Within  
You.***

***Trust Your Inner Self-  
Look To The Sunrise For The  
Strength You Need***

## Matrimonials

**FEZANA Journal will coordinate initial contacts between interested parties. We do not assume any responsibility for verifying credentials. Contact Roshan Rivetna [rrivetna@aol.com](mailto:rrivetna@aol.com).**

Male, 30, Ph.D. in Business and Marketing, tenured professor at a university in Pennsylvania. Enjoys sports, music, movies. Interested in meeting a good-natured, educated, very good life partner. Must be "non-Manglik". Contact 561-843 6678. [M08-21].

Male, 47, Financial Analyst for a national corporation. Outgoing, enjoys traveling, reading, sports. Contact 972-402 0104, [new\\_obc@yahoo.com](mailto:new_obc@yahoo.com). [M08-22].

Female, 56, working in Edmonton, good cook. Two grown sons are both well-settled. Interested in honest, sincere gentleman as life-partner for companionship. Contact 780-469 4001. [F08-23].

Male, 30, B.Sc. worked as sales manager for construction company, and recently started his own residential building construction company near Pune, India. Father invites correspondence, contact [d\\_bobinmaker@hotmail.com](mailto:d_bobinmaker@hotmail.com) [M08-24].

Male, 39, BA, in customer service position with airlines in California. Outgoing, sincere, enjoys sight-seeing, bicycling, physical exercise, culinary arts. Contact 949-380 0617. [M08-25].

### Looking for a Soul Mate?

Try these matrimonial sites and services:

<http://matrimonial.zoroastrianism.com>

[www.TheParsiMatch.com](http://www.TheParsiMatch.com)

[www.shaadi.com](http://www.shaadi.com)

Mrs. Gool Banaji, Parel, Mumbai,

[goolpesi@gmail.com](mailto:goolpesi@gmail.com)

Mrs. Serah Kotval, Dadar, Mumbai

Tel: 91 22 2142 3570.

Please send all submissions for "Milestones" to Mahrukh Motafram, 2390 Chanticleer Drive, Brookfield, WI 53045, [mmotafram@msn.com](mailto:mmotafram@msn.com), Tel: 262-821-5296. NOTE: If no year is specified, it implies "within the past 12 months."

# Obituary

## Minoo Bhandara, the true bridge-builder (1938- 2008)

By Khushwant Singh

IT was a grievous blow to those who strove to build bridges between Pakistan and India to hear that Minoo Bhandara, ex-member of the Pakistan National Assembly, had died.

Apparently, while on a visit to China, he met with a car accident and was seriously injured. He was flown back to Islamabad. Amongst those to call on him in hospital were President Musharraf and his wife, Sehba. He seemed to be recovering but on June 15, he gave up the battle. He was barely 70.

I don't recall when and where I first met Minoo. We had a common friend and role-model in Manzur Qadir. He shared my opinion that Manzur was the paradigm of goodness and rectitude. It was this admiration for Manzur that created a bond between us. I do remember at our first meeting I asked him, "Are you a Bawaji?" He was nonplussed as he did not know what the word meant. I had to tell him that in India, behind their back, we refer to Parsis as Bawajis.

"And what are you doing in Pakistan?" was my next question. He explained he ran the Murree Brewery and was also a member of the National Assembly. We became friends and whenever he was in Delhi, which was often, he spent a couple of evenings with me. He was proud of his products, notably the Single Malt Whisky which he brought for me. He was invariably accompanied by a pretty Pakistani girl, usually a painter, poet or a novelist.

I also discovered that Pakistan's leading novelist in English, Bapsi Sidhwa, was his sister. Bapsi stayed with me when she was in Delhi. When I visited Pakistan, I stayed with Minoo in his beautifully laid out bungalow in Rawalpindi. It was next door to his distillery. He had built a mosque alongside for his Muslim employees. I asked him how Pakistanis took to his brewing liquor — forbidden as haraam. He smiled and replied, "You know how things are in our countries: say one thing, do another. My products are only meant for export. But behind closed doors, the elite of Pakistan, when they can't get imported stuff, they make do with the indigenous."

Needless to say that in Pakistan among the richest who made his fortune legally was Minoo Bhandara who had the monopoly of brewing beer and distilling whisky.



Minoo's main interest was not politics but literature. He would patiently answer all the questions about political affairs in Pakistan that I fired at him and then to turn to books, novels, anthologies of poetry — and whatever. In Delhi, he usually stayed at the India International Centre and spent his afternoons doing the rounds of bookstores in Khan Market. Invariably, our evening sessions would end by his asking what I was working on.

Every time Minoo came to India, it was to attend a conference or seminar on Indo-Pakistan relations. He put the Pakistani point of view to Indian audiences. Back in Pakistan, he put the Indian reactions in articles he wrote for Pakistani journals. He was a true bridge-builder between the two nations. With his going that bridge has fallen.

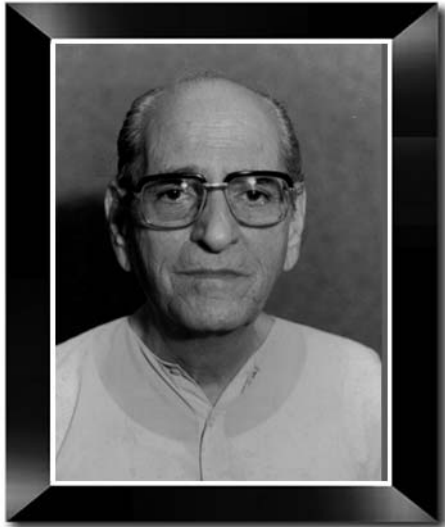
For me, Minoo's death has been a personal loss. With all my Pakistani friends from my Lahore days now resting in their graves, he was my last remaining link with a country I call my watan — my homeland. That link has been snapped.

Minoo Bhandara is survived by his wife Goshi, sons Jamshed & Isphanyar, daughter Munizah, brother Feroze, (Houston) sister, Bapsi Sidhwa (Houston)

**Khushwant Singh** who is 93 years old was born and brought up in what is now Pakistan. One of India's leading journalists, he is the former editor of the *Illustrated Weekly of India* and author of the award-winning *Train to Pakistan* and the three-volume *History of the Sikhs*, among other books.

# Noted Vocalist Pandit Firoz Dastur dies at 88

(1919-2008)



Firoz Dastur, born on September 30, 1919, the youngest son of Gool and Bejonji Dastur, was named Faredoon but his family fondly called him Fredi.

His father was fond of music and drama and as a young child, Firoz was taught little songs by his father which generated his interest in music. His father encouraged him to sing for members at his Billard Club. It is here that his talent was noticed by J.B.H. Wadia of Wadia Movietone who cast him in his first film "Lal-e-Yaman" in 1933 at the age of 13. The film and his songs became a hit at the time and he ended up working in 15 films. However, his real love was classical music and so he gave up his acting career/movie songs and pursued his career as a classical vocalist, after rigorous training from great gurus.

The 88 year old music maestro, was one of the greatest exponents of the Kirana Gharana and disciple of Sawai Gandharva. In a singing career that spanned almost six decades, Pandit Dastur enthralled audiences both in India and abroad with his performances. In his youth, he started his career with the Wadia Movietone as an actor and singer. He accomplished an intense classical music education from Kirana Gharana's Pandit Jaokar. It was the tutelage of his guru Sawai Gandharva, one of the greatest exponents of Kirana Gharana, that imparted to Pandit Firoz Dastur the unmistakable stamp of this Gharana. He performed at prestigious conferences like the All India Music Conference, Sadarang Sarba Bharatiya Surdas Sangeet Sammelan, Sur Shingar Sansad and Tansen Music Festival. This intellectual vocalist's incredible prowess does not share a divided opinion in the world of Hindustani classical music.

*Pandit Dastur was a professor of Hindustani classical music at the Mumbai University since the inception of the department of music in 1969. The honors he received include the national award given by Sangeet Natak Academy (1986), Tansen Puraskar from Madhya Pradesh (1988) Maharashtra State Gaurav Puraskar (1990), the ITC Award (1996) and Jimmy & Shirin Guzder Trust Award given by the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India.*

*Pandit Dastur was a bachelor and chess and watch repairing were his favorite hobbies.*

*He is survived by his niece Roshan Bharucha and nephew Russi Dastur, both of Philadelphia.*

*Contributed by Roshan Jimmy Bharucha*



# Virasp Mehta – A Gentle Guiding Light

(1925- 2008)

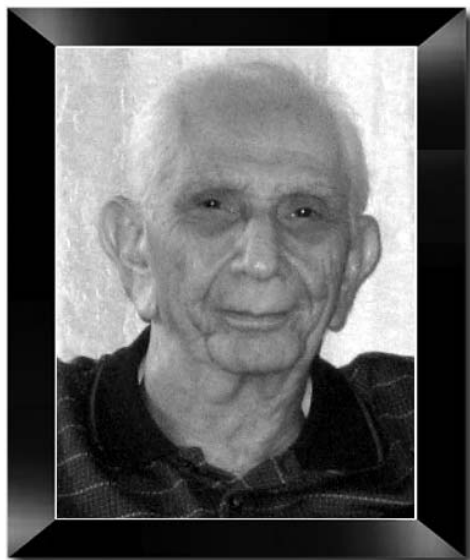
Virasp Mehta, a very dear friend and a unique Zarathushti, departed for his spiritual domain on June 2, 2008.

Virasp Mehta was born in Karachi on January 6, 1925, where he undertook his studies at Bai Virbaiji Soparivala Parsi High School. He was interested in our religion and self-taught himself by reading, discussing issues with other likeminded individuals in Karachi like Tehmurasp Rustomji Sethna and Ervad Pestanji Maneckji Magol, and going to lectures. Virasp was associated with several major institutions and organizations promoting religious knowledge. For over 25 years he acted as the honorary secretary of The Young Men's Zoroastrian Association and Dastur Dr. Dhalla Memorial Institute. Virasp was also one of the co-founders of Informal Religious Meetings and one of the Managing Trustees of its Trust Fund from its inception in 1975 till his death. He was also the editor of the monthly IRM Newsletter, later renamed "USHAO" and circulated via email. He was also one of the dedicated teachers at Friday School for Little Zarathushtis, inspiring many young children with his smile and melodious voice. Virasp worked in business management in Karachi, Pakistan for 42 years until his retirement. In 2001, he moved with his wife, Allan, to the United States to live with his son Jamsheed and family, first in Wichita, Kansas, subsequently moving in 2005 to Phoenix, Arizona. He passed away in Karachi after a brief illness.

Virasp was a one-of-a-kind individual, totally devoid of the weaknesses of ego and self-interest common among human beings. To be free of self-aggrandizement and yet be completely dedicated to the cause of the Religion of Asho Zarathusht was a trait he demonstrated so skillfully in his life. He was indeed a role model of true Zarathushti lifestyle.

I met Virasp in 1992 on my maiden visit to Karachi. Since then a bond was set up between us through the newsletter of Informal Religious Meeting that he so diligently pursued and to which I contributed articles occasionally. We met once again in person in 2003 in Chicago at the North American Zoroastrian Congress. At that time, in his soft spoken way, he proposed to me that he would like to have a collection of my articles and talks on the religion Zarathushtra published in a book form. I

was surprised and touched. As that involved a significant amount of work, poignantly I replied I would 'think' about it.



Virasp personified a character of sincerity and commitment. Least expectedly, a few days after I returned I received an e-mail asking me, in his typical gentle fashion if I had thought over his proposal. Noting the dedicated seriousness in his action, I decided to work with him on the project. He encouraged me, and worked with me on the project, and in a few months, before he was to visit Karachi, the manuscript for the book "Religion of Asho Zarathusht and Influence Through the Ages" was ready for printing.

He took the manuscript with him to Karachi, had it printed in the book form (300 copies) through the Informal Religious Meeting Trust Funds. He helped to bring those copies to North America with the aid of connections and contacts to distribute and sell them across the continent. While I worked with him through all that, it was indeed mystifying for me to have a book published under my name, with absolutely no effort on my part to look for someone to finance it. We set a price for the book, and the revenue was split equally between IRM Trust funds and North American Mobeds Council. It was like a miracle that happened in my life through the divine intervention of Virasp Mehta. I shall always remember his gentle, but persuasive manner and attempt to portray the teachings of our faith.

May Ahura Mazda nurture the deserving soul to eternal Peace and Light.

***Beauty of a Life Well Spent Is Never Lost***

***Those who we love, don't go away***

***They walk besides us everyday***

***Unseen, unheard, but very near***

***Loved, remembered, and very dear.***

***(From a dedication to him by Meher Amalsad)***

***Prepared by Ervad Jehan Bagli, Ph.D immediate past president, NAMC***

# REQUIEM FOR FIELD MARSHAL SAM MANEKSHAW

(1914-2008)

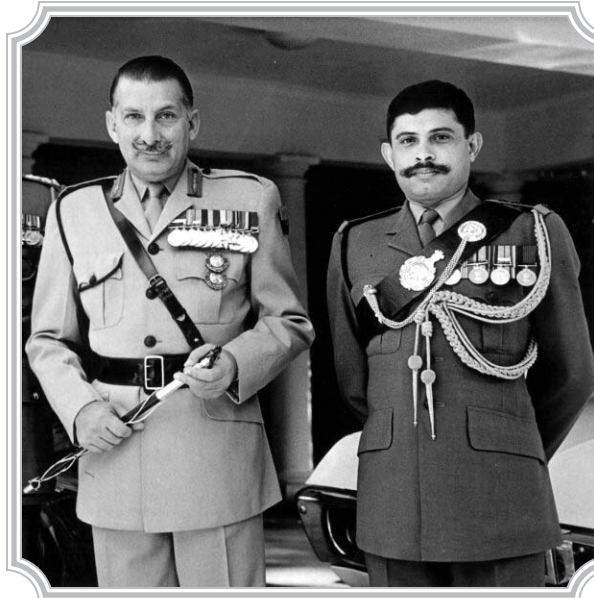
The passing of Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw on Thursday, 26 June 2008 marks the end of an epoch. The grand old man of the army lived a full life and died as he lived, with last words to his doctor to say that all was well with him. It was not the bullets in his stomach that almost took his life as a young captain during WWII on the Burma front fending off a Japanese assault, but broncho pneumonia and associated complications at the ripe old age of 94. It is not for nothing that they say that cowards die every day, the brave die but once.

Manekshaw was born on 3 April 1914 in Amritsar to Hormusji, a doctor by profession, and his wife Heerabai who immigrated to the Punjab from the small town of Valsad on the Gujarat coast. After completing his schooling in Amritsar and Sherwood College, Nainital, he asked his father to send him to college abroad to study medicine. When his father refused, in an act of rebellion, Sam joined the Indian Military Academy (IMA), Dehradun on 1 October 1932 and graduated in December 1934.

I had joined him initially in Calcutta in 1965 as his ADC when he was Eastern Army Commander. It was a challenging command with vigilance required along the Chinese border in the north, the Pakistani border to the east and insurgency to contain in Nagaland and Mizoram. We often visited troops in forward areas and the Eastern Army Commander never went empty-handed. After finishing the day's business, the General would call for his staff car, an Austin Sherline, and we would drive to Park Street, stop by Rhythm House and purchase the latest LPs of western music to gift to the Officers' Mess. Needless to say, he always paid for these gifts from his own pocket. For all official tours, he would ask us to place an order with Flurry's for the best chicken patties and snacks which would be his treat to the crew and staff on board the Air Force plane.

Sam Hormusji Framji Jamshedji Manekshaw became Chief of Army staff on 7 June 1969. General Manekshaw brought to the office of the Chief a unique combination of strict military discipline, tempered with

compassion and understanding. We as his staff had to deal with a non-ending stream of serving and retired officers, wives and even parents who petitioned him on humanitarian grounds and never found him wanting.



When he became Army Chief, one of the first persons to visit him was the wife of his Sikh orderly, Sher Singh to whom he owed his life during the Burma campaign. The 6-foot Sikh had caught an Australian doctor by the scruff of his neck and insisted he attend to the young captain who'd been by-passed as too fatally wounded to survive. The orderly had passed away but wife was there outside Army House to do what her husband would have done. She

had undertaken the journey to Delhi from her village in the Punjab to bless the new Jangi Lat (Army Chief). Stepping out of the car the Chief rebuked her for standing outside the house, made her sit next to him and drove her to his office in South Block. After seeing him in his 'gaddi' (Chair) and blessing him, she left, saying she could now die in peace.

The highlight of Sam's illustrious career was his resounding victory over the armed forces of Pakistan, an operation so well planned and executed, so efficient and precise that within a short span of 13 days the erstwhile Eastern Command of the Pakistan Army surrendered en masse with 93,000 soldiers laying down their arms and Bangladesh was created. The Indian Army did not get bogged down either in a prolonged conflict or in matters of governance but handed over charge of the fledgling nation to civilian authorities. The prestige of the armed forces was at its highest after independence, its confidence restored and its reputation at an all time high. The government bestowed on him the rank of Field Marshal, a first for independent India.

But regardless of these honours, Manekshaw was Sam Bahadur to his men and officers; a compassionate and caring general. He lived his life by the motto of the IMA always putting welfare of his troops, his officers before his own. His military achievements have been

amply chronicled, so I will dwell on some of his more endearing and abiding qualities of the heart.

The Manekshaws hosted a party each month for office and household staff and their families. The pride of place as longest-serving staff went to his personal cook, Swami, a Tamilian from the Nilgiris, who had been with the family since the time he was Commandant of the Defence Services Staff College in 1960. Swamy and the Chief loved to shadow box. Each morning the General would give Swami orders for the day and each evening on return from work he would swing by the kitchen and irritate the cook by opening up his pots and pans and criticizing his cooking. On one occasion, Mrs. Manekshaw was returning after a month in England. The General ribbed Swamy by saying, "Memsahib coming back tonight and I telling her you lousy cook, not feeding me well." Swamy, with a gleam in his eye promptly retorted, "I also telling Memsahib, you not eating at home, going out every night and coming back after midnight!" The General stomped out with mock annoyance calling him a bloody no-good cook!

His legendary sense of humour endeared him to officers and their wives alike although it did not wash well with the powers that be. While addressing a gathering of army wives at AWWA (Army Wives Welfare Association) he tickled them pink by referring to them all as 'his wives'. When I was a student at the Staff College in Wellington, my wife and I had hosted an open-house, bottle and dish party. When he got to know about this, he asked if he could join us. He brought with him a young lady which was the topic of much gossip round the College. What most people never knew was that the young lady was the daughter of a tea-planter who had just come by an enormous inheritance and had been seeking his advice on matters financial and legal. This was his gesture to bring some cheer to her life during a difficult period. He knew very well that this would add a lot of grist to the gossip mill and with his penchant for causing a stir he enjoyed it immensely and never bothered to clarify. It was part of the mystery and enigma that he cultivated and enjoyed.

I would be remiss if I did not mention Silloo, his wife, a lady who complemented his style and character qualities. She stood by her husband through the rough and tumble of army life and during his brushes with bureaucracy. Egalitarian to the core, she was never conscious of her husband's rank or position but always supportive and proud of his achievements. During the 1971 war she worked silently to secure large donations from the corporate sector for army widows and wounded soldiers. She visited Army Hospital each day without fail to meet the wounded and the sick, doling out cigarettes, magazines, financial assistance, succor and comfort. Pakistani prisoners, officers and jawans, got the same attention without discrimination. A graduate from Elphinstone College and JJ School of Art, she was the

brain behind the design and construction of their beautiful home, Stavka, in Upper Coonor. The Field Marshal was never the same after her passing in 2001.

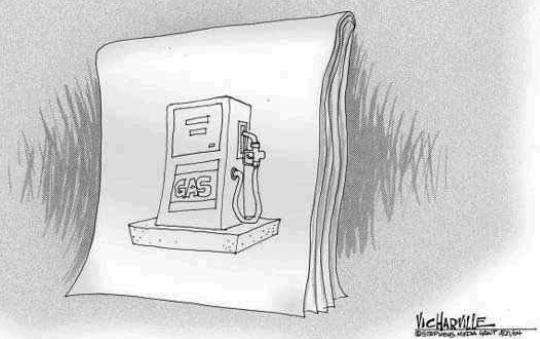
I was fortunate to have served with this great man from 1965 to 1967 when he was Eastern Army Commander in Calcutta and then again when he was Chief and later Field Marshal from 1969 to 1972 with a brief interlude during the war when I was with my Battalion. His was no ordinary life and to reflect on it would take volumes.

Today he is no more, but we hope that he will stand as a beacon to the young and the impassioned. He was the ultimate patriot who did his country proud. The nation, the army and all those who were touched by his life mourn his passing and are convinced that his life is a golden chapter in our history.

**Prepared by Brigadiar Ervad Behram Panthaki, Washington, DC**

**A condolence meeting was organized on behalf of the Indian community by Woodlands management to pay tribute to Field Marshal Sam Maneckshaw on Sunday, July 27, 2008 at Woodlands Banquet hall 11845 Artesia Blvd, Artesia, CA. 90701 at 11.30 am. Woodlands management Zarrir Bhandara**

### POLICE ARTIST SKETCH OF ROBBERY SUSPECT



Cartoon supplied by Jamshed Udvadia



## BETWEEN THE COVERS

**“Gustadji no Ghotoalo” (Gustadji’s Mischief/Confusion)**  
**Produced and directed by the dream-team of “Janu and Janu”,**  
**(a.k.a. Meher and Jal Panthaky).**  
**Presented by "Toronto Parsi Drama Group"**  
**Raises \$28,000 for the OZCF Agiary Fund**

BOOKS  
 ARTS &

**Hasi hasi ne maru to pait dukhi aayu**  
**(my tummy hurts from laughing so much!)**

Many in the sell-out crowd of 600 experienced this pleasant ailment on the night of May 31 at Michael Power St. Joseph Auditorium in Etobicoke. They came to view the

Toronto Parsi Drama Group’s 3rd full length proud presentation of “Gustadji no Ghotoalo” (Gustadji’s Mischief/Confusion), their latest Natak (a comical, Gujarati play) in a series of classics.

Hilarious! Zany! Slapstick! A real tear-jerker from laughter! These were just some of the headlines bandied about.

The event started promptly with the thrilling, hair-raising sounds of “2001 Space Odyssey” music with a floral garland ceremony as benediction to prophet Zarathushtra, then honoring Canada with the national anthem.

Every detail of the evening was organized well and was conducted by the very young, talented, vibrant and efficient Masters of Ceremonies: *Khush Panthaky*-a favorite personality on OMNI News-South Asian Edition and *Sarishta Katrak*-a gold medalist for Public Speaking in English and French who humoured the audience and whet their appetites with their own jokes to kick off the evening.



The story centered on Jimmy Khurshedji (*Zarir Cooper*) and his sidekick Dinshaw (*Burjis Mehta*) trying to lure their girlfriends Dinoo (*Katy Mulla*) and Silloo (*Shirin Chaturvedi*) to their place. Being typically well-mannered Parsi girls, they would only pay a visit to their boyfriends’ place in the presence of an elderly woman.

With only their college friend Gustadji (*Kerman Katrak*) and no elderly woman around, the boys came up with the cock-a-maney suggestion that Gustadji dress up as the imposter elderly woman - his own Goola masi (aunty). Hesitant at first, Gustadji agreed to play along. What he didn’t bargain for was the arrival of Jimmy’s Father, Khansaheb Khurshedji Khasukhanji, a mouthful in any language (played by *Sam Gazdar*), and Dinoo and Silloo’s Uncle, Dastur Darabdaru (played by *Jal Panthaky*). With their mojo still motoring, these two could not help but being enamored by the “lovely” Gustadji.

The series of mix-ups that followed from this cocktail of

confusion were hilarious. If that weren’t enough, the arrival of Silloo and Dinoo’s cousin, the gun-slingin’ Kau Kakri (a “cu-cumbersome” name, played by *Noshir Mulla*) and the petulant Jiloobai (Darabdaru’s hot-tempered sister and Dinoo and Silloo’s Mother, played by *Jasmine Wadia*) provided comedy that had the audience in stitches. And of course the final surprise arrival of real Goola Masi (played by *Meher Panthaky*) created more confusion (as if there was not enough) with audience literally falling off their chairs.

“Gustadji” lived up to every one’s expectations of a rip-roaring Parsi comedy

Fine performances were given by the supporting cast which included *Nozer Kotwal*, *Baji Langdana*, *Porus Pastakia* and *Aban Vazir*. And of course the “veterans” of the group were at their comical best. Jal Panthaky was regal, Sam Gazdar was at his ear-shattering, boom-box best and of course, the showstopper, the cross-dressing king of comedy, Kerman Katrak had

the audience shedding tears of laughter.

In addition to the cast, *Dhun Gazdar* assisted backstage as the prompter and Sam Bharda with the sound. All of these highly talented and dedicated members met weekly for six months and twice weekly in the last month prior to the performance. The professional props were constructed by *Noshir and Sarosh Dastoor* and their team.

This wonderful evening ended with our Zarathushti anthem "*Chaiye Hume Zarthoshti*"

Much of the show's success is due to the producer/director dream-team of "Janu and Janu", (a.k.a. Meher and Jal Panthaky). very talented Producer-Meher Panthaky and Director-Jal Panthaky who also wrote the lyrics to match the theme of the plot with the music from popular movie songs. They did the groundwork, putting in countless hours constructing props and designing sets writing scripts in English for those who cannot read Gujarati and organizing a laundry list of events that inevitably arise when producing a show of this calibre. The show was a sold-out event in a packed crowd of over 600 Gujarati speaking community. The entire group's efforts helped raise a whopping \$28,000 for the OZCF.

The professionalism and the effort of the cast, stage crew and the supporting volunteers made the entire evening, full of fun and laughter for audience of all ages, as there was a continuous roaring laughter.

Our organization salutes your dedication thanks you for all

your efforts in putting together a memorable and highly entertaining evening. Pictures of this natak can be seen by clicking the following site.

<http://www.billimoriadesign.com/gustadji/index.html>

**BOOKS**  
**ARTS** &

**"Toronto Parsi Drama Group" will gladly help other Gujarati speaking association in their fund raising effort by performing this natak for a donation to our Agiyari fund of OZCF. They can contact Meher Panthaky at [meherpanthaky@yahoo.ca](mailto:meherpanthaky@yahoo.ca)**

**Reported by Roshan Davar and Cyrus Gazdar**  
**Photograph – courtesy of Daraious Billimoria**



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# Religious Reconstruction in the South Asian Diasporas: From One Generation to Another,

edited by John R. Hinnells, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. v-335.

BOOKS  
ARTS &

Reviewed by Jesse S. Palsetia  
Associate Professor, University of Guelph, Canada

**Religious Reconstruction in the South Asian Diasporas** is a collection of articles by scholars of various disciplines that examines the

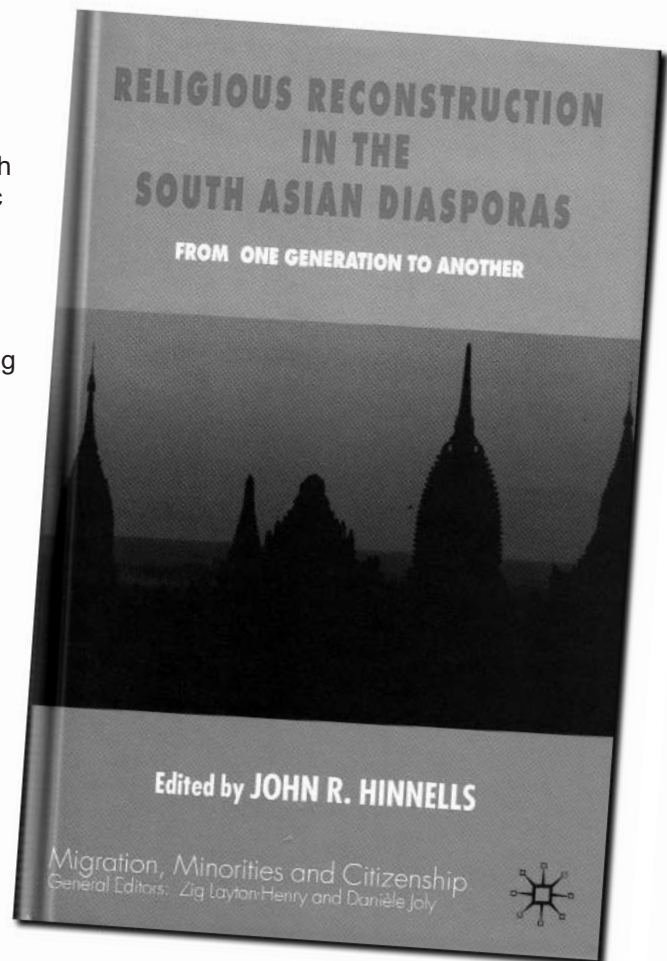
reconstruction of religious identities among South Asians in the diaspora settings of Australia, Britain, Canada, and the United States. The editor *John R. Hinnells* notes that it is difficult to speak of a single or 'the diaspora experience'; however, the articles touch on themes shared among diaspora histories. The book is subdivided into three parts.

In **Part I**, six chapters examine the 'quest' for identity. Both Ron Greaves and Philip Lewis in their respective articles note how British South Asian Muslims find themselves as minorities in countries whose public life, culture and institutions owe little or nothing to Islam. For Greaves, both the travails and opportunities of living in the diaspora have intensified the psychological isolation of Muslims from other communities, and reinforced the pre-existing search for identity. Greaves highlights how various Islamic religious influences pervade the community from the embrace of Sufism to Islamism, while Lewis highlights the initiatives by British Muslims in Bradford to reconnect with the Islamic heritage. The future of British Muslim identity remains tentative, as the responses

include isolation from the wider society, engagement with it, or the rhetoric of resistance.

*Eleanor Nesbitt* uses a case study of twenty-two young Hindu youths in various sampradaya or guru-led religious movements in Britain interviewed at childhood and as young adults of twenty, to assess how religion had affected their perceptions in life. Nesbitt notes that the sense of Hindu religious identification is strong, and translates into a desire to maintain Hindu social and cultural practices and norms including caste, social functions, and dietary practices. Overall, involvement in religious movements appears one facet of a desire to evaluate identity. *Rohit Barot* examines the relationship of religion to sexuality, through an examination of Hindu celibacy within the Swaminarayan movement. Barot notes an important aim of Hindu religious life is to

achieve self-understanding and transcend desire, and examines the variety of responses to do so from the segregation of men and women to forms of sexual restraint. The topic addresses the larger theme of the commitment to religious values and norms within a culture of sexuality. *Shirley Firth* examines the responses to death and bereavement among Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and Zoroastrian South





## BETWEEN THE COVERS

Reviewed by Jesse S. Palsetia  
Associate Professor, University of Guelph, Canada

Asians in the diaspora setting. All religious traditions Firth notes have means to cope with the seminal event of death; though South Asian religious traditions have had to adapt to the diaphora setting, which is only slowly addressing the process of bereavement among immigrants. The larger question remains how new generations of South Asians in the diaspora will change death practices and bereavement in future.

*John R. Hinnells* examines the Parsi Zoroastrian diaspora in Britain, the USA, Canada and Australia. The Zoroastrians constitute the smallest of the South Asian communities examined, and the smallest of world religions, numbering some 110,000 globally, of which half live outside India and Iran. Hinnells notes commonalities between all the Parsi Zarathushti communities, including a strong sense of religious identity and community pride. At the same time, he notes the history and evolution of the communities in the different settings, internal changes, and the diasporas' relationship to the older world. Britain as the oldest diaspora in the Western world maintains a conservative quality, whereas the other communities are experiencing more rapid change and responses. Issues relative to the education of children, intermarriage and community identification, and the impact of modernity are shaping the 'new world' diasporas along different trajectories to the old world and Britain. Hinnells confirms patterns of response others have also noted among the modern Zarathushtis, as the new world diasporas are offering unique solutions to challenges that face Zarathushtis worldwide.

Changes in the Zoroastrian diaspora in the West augur for either a break with the old world or potentially new models for the old world, as the latter copes with and travails of modernity.

**In Part II**, four chapters examine topics relative to religious and political issues. *Raymond Brady Williams* examines how migration has transformed ethnicity into something new and 'made in America' (or the diaspora setting), as the historical and psychological baggage of the old world is to some degree left behind. For example, Hindu religion shorn of its ethnic, linguistic, and sectarian divisions assumes a larger profile as Hinduism. *Harold Coward*, *Gary D. Bouma* and *Robert Jackson* examine government policy and multiculturalism in Canada, Australia, and England and Wales in their respective articles. The articles note that various government attempts to support multiculturalism in the interests of integration can have adverse effects. The commitment to the separation of religion and state in a liberal democracy can undermine religious values systems that make little distinction between religious, social and political life.

**In Part III**, *Raymond Williams*, *Werner Menski* and *Roger Ballard* in their respective articles all note the impact of government policy, Muslim opinion, and societal attitudes on religious identities following the events of 9/11 and 7/7. Williams notes examples of how 9/11 encouraged Muslims and non-Muslims in the USA to re-examine Islam and increased converts to Islam. *Menski* and *Ballard* examine the law and politics and the limits of ethnic pluralism and tolerance in Britain, given the calls for greater social cohesion and cultural homogeneity in the aftermath of 7/7 in Britain. Ultimately, 9/11 and 7/7 while seminal events, have only re-emphasized the examination of older issues relative to both religious identities and government policies on multiculturalism in the diasporas. All the articles present interesting, informative and diverse topics on the South Asian religious and social experience in the diasporas, brought together in a coherent volume by the editor. The volume provides insight into individual diaspora communities and, indeed, segments of communities, while also raising seminal issues relative to the accommodation of any group or peoples in a democratic society.



## The Romance Of Tata Steel

By RUSSI LALA, The Penguin Group, pp 170, Rs 495

## The Creation Of Wealth –The Tata Story From 1887 - 2004

By RUSSI LALA, The Penguin Group, pp 290, Rs 295

BOOKS  
ARTS &

Books reviewed by Hoshang Shroff

### THE TATAS

### INTRODUCTION

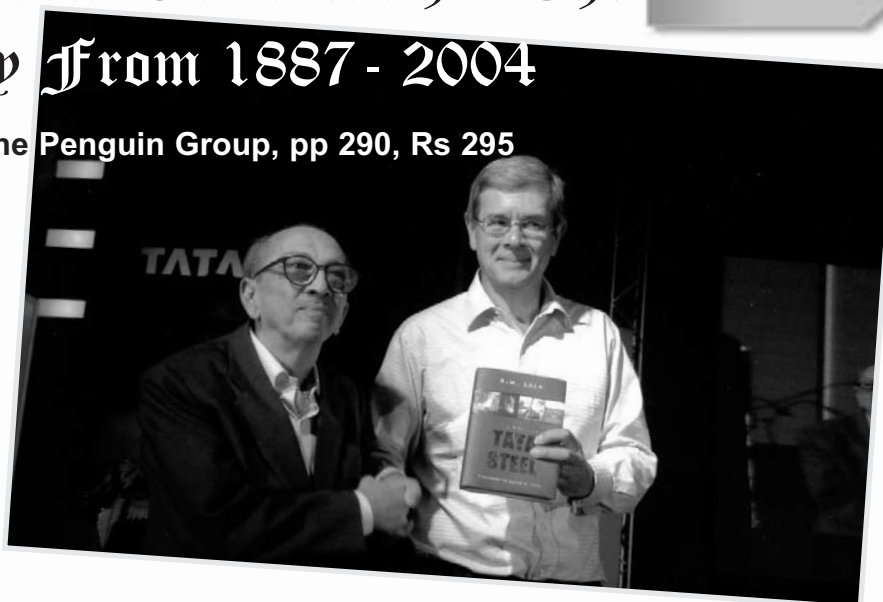
The Tatas are a household name to most of us. I wonder, though, how many of us know in some detail the colossal amount of beneficial work that this family has done for over a century. I consider myself therefore fortunate that I was recently asked to review a couple of books on them by Russi Lala who has written several books on the Tatas. The reading of these books enabled me to view them in a historic perspective.

The photo above shows *Russi Lala (above) with Phillipe Varin, Chairman, CORUS* releasing “The Romance of Tata Steel “ on the Centenary of the founding of the company August 26, 2007.

The title of the two books are:

- 1) **The Romance of Tata Steel and**
- 2) **The Creation of Wealth**

This article however is not confined to a mere review of these two books. It is written with a view both to familiarize and refresh the readers’ memory with some of the outstanding achievements of the Tata corporations.



In addition to relying on the above two books for factual background I have also read a number of articles on the Tatas which appeared as a result of the huge foreign acquisitions and the production of the Nano car at an incredibly low price of \$2500.

The Tata group started barely 130 years ago in India during a time when India was under the grip of the hostile colonial rule by the British.

### JAMSETJI TATA – THE FOUNDER (1839-1904)

Jamsetji Tata (*photo left*) was born in 1839 in a family of Parsi priests in Navsari. He came to Bombay at the age of fourteen, joined Elphinstone College and at seventeen became a “Green Scholar”, the then equivalent of a graduate. At the age of 29 he started a small trading firm and acquired a contract to furnish supplies required by the expeditionary force of General Napier in Abyssinia. From its profits he launched a career in textiles. He had earlier visited Manchester, England and became interested in manufacture of cotton goods, bought an old oil mill in Bombay in partnership with a few friends, converted it into a textile mill and made substantial profits. One of the



above articles, without giving any details, suggested that Jamsetji made his initial fortune in the opium trade with China.

Many people thought that once Jamsetji was successful in the cotton mills, he would simply multiply his wealth by creating more textile mills for which his companies had acquired a lot of expertise. Jamsetji however deliberately chose the unknown path to introduce industrialization to India by creating steel mills, and later hydroelectric power development and technical education of a high order.

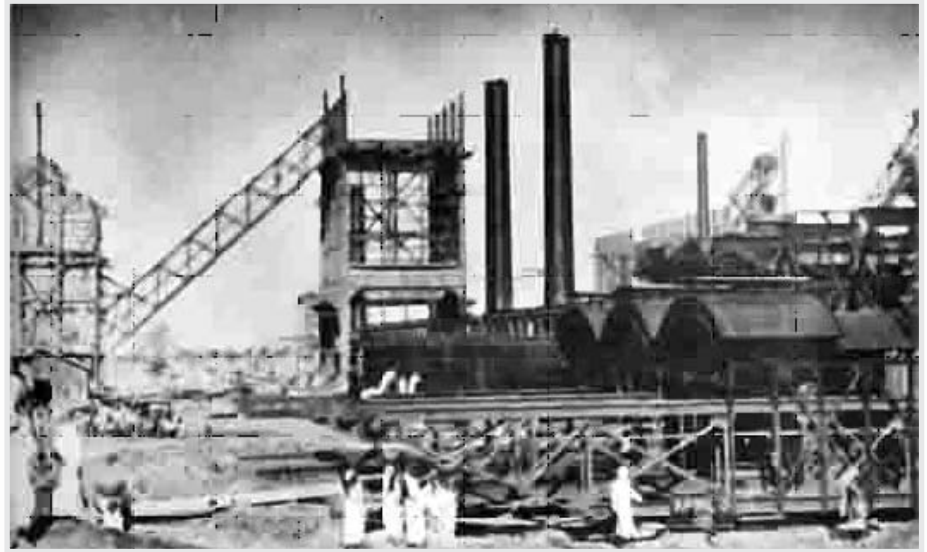
## STEEL

When one of the top civic servants of India of those days, one *Sir Frederick Upcott* heard that Jamsetji wished to build a steel mill said:

*"Do you mean to say that Tatas propose to make steel rails to British specifications? Why, I will undertake to eat every pound of steel rail they succeed in making."*

Contrary to the gloomy prediction of Upcott, on 16 February 1912 the first ingot of steel rolled on the lines of the *Sakchi* plant. It was so successful that during World War 1, the Tatas exported 1500 miles of steel rails to Mesopotamia.

The British must have been so grateful that at the end of the First World War they wished to rename the city of Sakchi where the steel mill existed and name it *Jamsedpur*. No



less a dignitary than the Viceroy of India *Lord Chelmsford* arrived at Sakchi to rename the city *Jamsedpur*. In the dedication speech he said:

*"I can hardly imagine what we should have done during these four years of war if the Tata Company had not been able to give us steel rail which have been provided for us, not only for Mesopotamia but for Egypt, Palestine and East Africa, and I have come to express my thanks ... It is hard to imagine that 10 years ago, this place was scrub and jungle and here, we have now, this place set up with all its foundries and its workshops and its population of 40,000 to 50,000 people. This great enterprise has been due to the prescience, imagination and genius of the late Mr. Jamsetji Tata ... This place will see a change in its name and will no longer be known as Sakchi, but will be identified with the name of its founder, bearing down through the ages the name of the late Mr. Jamsetji Tata. Hereafter, this place will be known by the name of Jamshedpur."*

Quite a change between the lack of foresight on the part of Upcott and the gratitude displayed by the viceroy Lord Chelmsford!

The Times of India in 1912 wrote about Jamsetji as follows:

*"He was above all a patriot who made no public speeches. To his mind, wealth, and the industry which led to wealth, were not ends in themselves, but means to an end, the stimulation of the latent resources of the country and its elevation in the scale of nations."*

One of the great founders of independent India was its first Prime Minister *Jawaharlal Nehru* who said:

*"When you have to give the lead in action, in ideas – a lead which does not fit in with the very climate of opinion, that is true courage, physical or mental or spiritual, call it what you like, and it is this type of courage and vision that Jamsetji Tata showed."*

A great tribute coming from the mouth of Nehru.

## EDUCATION

The Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore (photo page 132) has occupied a pre-eminent position in national life. Jamsetji did not want to give his name to the institute. In his letter to *Lord Reay* in 1896 he said:



“... the national movement should bear a national name and every separate benefactor might be at ease ...”

Jamsetji and all the other succeeding chairpersons of the Tata Corporation have invested heavily in educational institutions. Jamsetji bequeathed half of his fortune to start a university of research, which finally became the Indian Institute of Science, the fountainhead of technology for India for decades to come.

In 1892 Jamsetji endowed a fund for higher education abroad for deserving students. Some of India's early engineers, surgeons, physicians, benefited from the endowment. In 1898 Jamsetji made an announcement, which astonished many people. He decided to set aside 14 of his buildings and 4 landed properties in Bombay for an endowment to establish a university of science.

In 1912, the London School of Economics established the *Ratan Tata Department*. The following year it advertised for a position of a lecturer in that department for which two people applied. One was a young man called *Clement Atlee*, who after careful consideration was selected for this position. About 32 years later Atlee became the Prime Minister of Britain. Interesting enough that it was under his government that India was granted independence in 1947.

**UNFORTUNATE OBJECTIONS BY SOME PARSIS**

Spending money on educational institutions did not sit well with many of his Parsi fellowmen who regretted that the wealth of the community was being diverted to a scheme from which few Parsis would benefit. I find it difficult to understand why it was thought that the Parsis would not benefit from high quality education institutions in India. Regrettably some of the objecting Parsis thought that such wealth could have been used for the welfare of the community in the shape of giving clothes, food, and medical facilities to Parsis in need. The controversy must have been acute enough that Jamsetji was compelled to spell out his views in an interview on philosophy as follows:

*“There is one kind of charity common enough among us, and which is certainly a good thing, though I do not think it the best thing we can have. It is that patchwork philanthropy which clothes the ragged, feeds the poor, and heals the sick ... I am far from decrying the noble spirit, which seeks to help a poor or suffering fellow being. But charities of the hospital and poor asylum kind are comparatively more common and fashionable among us Parsis. What advances a nation or community is not so much to prop up its weakest*



*and most helpless members as to lift up the best and most gifted so as to make them of the greatest service to the country. I prefer this constructive philanthropy which seeks to educate and develop the faculties of the best of our young men.”*



**MEDICINE**

The Tatas poured large funds into medical institutions in India. At the *Tata Memorial Hospital* (photo above) opening in 1941, *Sir Roger Lumley*, Governor of Bombay said, “Of all of the philanthropic projects connected with the name of Tata, none would attain a greater importance, or reflect greater credit on its founders, than the *Tata Memorial Hospital for cancer*. This

hospital is the first large contribution of India to the international fight against cancer.

**POLITICS**

Jamsetji also took keen interest in local politics and was present at the founding of the Indian National Congress in Bombay in 1885 and gave generously to its funds.

The Tatas gave financial help to Gandhiji when he was in South Africa struggling against the apartheid rule in South Africa. Gandhiji sent a telegram to the Indian

leader Gokhale in the following words:

*“Pray thank Mr. Tata for munificent timely help. Distress great. Prisoners lot hard. Religious scruples disregarded. Rations short. Prisoners carry slop pails for refusing, put on spare diet. Solitary confinement. Prominent Moslems, Hindus, Parsis in jail.”*

**J.R.D. (1904-1993)**

Jehangir Ratanji Dadabhai Tata (J.R.D. Tata) (photo right) was one of the great chairman of the Tata Corporations. Young J.R.D. was born in France. My friend Barrister K.B.N. Lam writing critically about him said that J.R.D.:

*“... has claims to be regarded as one of the greatest Indians of the twentieth century, particularly outside the political arena, as Indians of almost every class and category benefited from his numerous and diverse activities. His achievements, lack of personal acquisitiveness, public-spiritedness and width of interests are well known and*

*documented. Hardly any other industrial leader matched his sensitivity to the smallest of details and towards victims of tragic circumstances. His quest for perfection drove him to visit the cloak-rooms of the economy section of Air India’s aircrafts to ensure that all was in order and plan improvements and on the rare occasions that Air India’s planes disintegrated, his compassion impelled him to rush to the residences of the perished crew members to console their relatives. In the industrial world and beyond, he was regarded in almost saintly terms and attracted neither envy nor feelings of rivalry. In one of its hoardings in Mumbai around the first anniversary of Mr. Tata’s death, Air India expressed the sentiments of*



*the entire nation in the following words: “... A year ago you flew away and we miss you even more.”*

In 1992 because of his selfless humanitarian endeavors, J.R.D. was awarded India’s highest civilian honor, the *Bharat Ratna*, one of the rarest instances in which this award was granted during a person’s lifetime. In the same year J.R.D. was bestowed with the *United Nations Population Award* for his crusading

endeavors towards initiating and successfully implementing the family planning movement in

India, much before it became an official government policy.

**BENEFICIAL LABOUR SCHEMES**

The Tata companies were way ahead of government legislation securing labor welfare. The Tatas introduced 8-hour working days as early as 1912, and which became part of Indian law only after independence in 1948. *Leave with pay* was introduced in 1920 and it became law of the land also in 1948. There were many other such ideas like *maternity benefits, workers provident fund schemes, compensation schemes*, long before they were enshrined in Indian law.

- 1912 Eight hour working day
- 1913 Schooling facilities for children
- 1915 Free medical aid
- 1928 Leave with pay
- 1929 Maternity benefits







**SPORTS**

In 2008 all over the world we take these benefits for granted; surely they must have been radical concepts in the first quarter of the 20th century.

**HOTELS**

The legend goes that Jamsetji was denied entrance to well established hotels in India which during the British Raj were reserved for Europeans only. Jamsetji taught them a lesson by building the

Jamsetji also actively supported sports. Even before the steel mill was constructed, Jamsetji wrote a letter to his son *Dorab* instructing him to “reserve large areas for football, hockey, and parks.” Sir Dorabji Tata as early as 1893 encouraged the formation of athletic associations in Bombay’s high schools. When he died, *Sir Nowroji Saklatvala*, the person who succeeded Jamshetji as the chairman of the Tata group of companies was instrumental along with others in bringing into existence the



magnificent and world famous Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay.(photopage 131) The Tata hotels are now all over the world.

well-known *Cricket Club of India* in Bombay where the Tatas financed the main J.N. Tata pavilion.

**BOOKS & ARTS**

The government of India appointed one of the Tatas as the first president of the *All India Council of Sports*. The tradition still continues and a *Tata Football Academy* has been setup in Jamshedpur where selected young people undergo vigorous training for a four-year period in sports.

**AVIATION**

J.R.D. became the first Indian on February 10, 1929 to pass a pilots examination, resulting in the No. 1 endorsed on his flying license. With this distinct honor being India’s first pilot, he was instrumental in starting Tata airlines, which ultimately became Air India. He launched a civil aviation at a time when flying was a rich man’s sport. By 1948 the time of independence of India, J.R.D. launched *Air India International* as India’s first international airline. For its astounding achievements in aviation, J.R.D. received the title of Honorary Air Commodore of India.

*Kalpna Chawla*, the Indian born astronaut who perished in the recent Columbia space shuttle disaster, cited J.R.D. and his pioneering airmail flights as her inspiration for taking up aeronautics.

J.R.D. Tata's on October 15, 1932 took the first historic flight of the subcontinent from Karachi and landed at Juhu airstrip The plane was piloted by J.R.D. Tata.

**INSURANCE**

The Tatas, to get away from foreign domination of the insurance business, had started the *New India Assurance Company*, which ran successfully until it was nationalized by the government.



**ARCHEOLOGY**

In the early part of the twentieth century, the Tatas were also instrumental in financing archeological exploration of important historic sites in India. The then director general of the archeological survey of India, wrote to the education department that the financial offer of the Tatas, "will make it possible to carry out excavations on a scale hitherto impossible with the limited resources available."



**RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

In 1992 J.R.D. wrote:

*"I believe that the social responsibilities of our industrial enterprises should now extend, even beyond serving people, to the environment. This need is now fairly well recognized but there is still considerable scope for most industrial ventures to extend their support not only to human beings but also to the land, to the forests, to the waters and to the creatures that inhabit them."*

**RATAN TATA - THE CURRENT CHAIRMAN**

Books reviewed by Hoshang Shroff

Under the leadership of *Ratan*, the Tata group broke new grounds in product development. When asked how he expected the group to shape in the future, he replied: *"We will be a group that probably has an equal division of businesses within India and overseas. With a large multinational workforce, our outlook as a group will hopefully be truly international, so that whatever we may establish operations in overseas markets, we would come to be regarded as a local enterprise that merely happens to be owned by an Indian corporation."*

When Ratan Tata became the chairman of the Tata group in 1991 the group was in some trouble. It had been stripped of many of its assets

due to the nationalistic policy of the government of India and was battered by high taxation and over regulation.

Rata Tata rose steadily without fan fare through the Tata hierarchy finally becoming a chairman just at the moment that India shifted from State controlled economy to free market economy. This change of approach by the government of India enabled Ratan Tata to slim down the Tata group of companies from more than 250 to about 80.

**INTERNATIONAL**

The Tatas have not just been in India, but have their presence internationally. *Lee Kuan Yew*, the prime minister of Singapore in 1971 started a Precisions Engineering industry plus a training institution in Singapore. In South Africa the Tata groups set up a ferro-chrome plant, an essential alloy for both stainless and carbon steel in the world. The Tatas have established themselves

in over 10



countries in Africa. Of course under the current chairman, Ratan, the international presence has vastly increased.

There is one problem looming ahead. Ratan Tata is a bachelor and so there is no obvious successor in sight coming from the Tata family. (Photo above, Ratan Tata receiving the award from the President of India )

The Telegraph of UK on its article on him said:

*" The £1 billion acquisition of two of the UK motor industry's most illustrious marquees follows the £250 million purchase of Tetley tea in 2000, and last year's £6.75 billion takeover of Corus, the Anglo-Dutch*



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Photograph of Empress Market in Karachi,  
taken by an unknown photographer,  
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# BUSINESS

## IRAs - Ignorance can be hazardous to your Wealth

**Farokh Billimoria, MBA, CPA/PFS, CFP®**

Third in a series of three articles

In the previous two issues we covered the ten most common mistakes people make in the handling of their IRAs, and the proper handling of IRAs inherited from a decedent. In this final article I will address an investment vehicle that has the potential of being your biggest wealth builder, leaving a legacy for your children and grandchildren that is unsurpassed – the *Roth IRA* (hereafter referred to as “Roth”). This article will also address an opportunity that has been presented to us by Congress for 2010 – an opportunity that, if handled properly, can be one of the best ways to leave a legacy that can last for a lifetime for your beneficiaries.

Thanks to some misconceptions, the Roth is not as popular as it should be. Moreover, thanks to some rigid constraints, qualifying for a Roth is not that easy, either. And then, of course, converting a traditional IRA to a Roth is even more difficult than contributing to a Roth. That’s a shame because there is some real benefit to be gained for people who do take the time and trouble to analyze their situation and go through the trouble of contributing or converting.

**Two Examples of the Power of the Roth IRA:** Let’s say you are 26 years old, in the 20% tax bracket and you contributed \$5,000 to a traditional IRA. If you qualify, you can get a tax saving of \$1,000. However, if you put that contribution into a Roth, you lose the tax deduction. BUT look what you gain. Assuming an annual rate of return of 8% (i.e. money doubling every 9 years) that \$5,000 will have doubled six times to \$320,000 at age 80 – none of which will either be taxable or subject to forced withdrawal after 70½. In essence, you wound up paying a tax of \$1,000 (the lost tax savings) on a gain of \$315,000 in your account. And this is based on just one contribution of \$5,000! Imagine what would happen if you contributed to the Roth for multiple years. The amount can be truly staggering. I fully realize that some of the Roth funds could be utilized to meet your living expenses but think of the money that does not get spent and just keeps compounding inside the Roth. After 59 ½, you can withdraw as much or as little as you want, with no tax ramifications at all! To take it even further, let’s say this person dies at 80 with \$320,000 in that Roth and his 50 year old son inherits the Roth. The son has to start taking the Required Minimum Distributions from the inherited Roth over his life expectancy of 34.2 years. At the same annual return of 8%, the inherited Roth would have given off \$1,545,684 over the son’s life expectancy. All from putting \$5,000 into a Roth IRA and not taking the tax deduction of \$1,000!! If all this can be achieved with just one contribution, can you imagine what would happen if you made such contributions for an extended period of time? Of course, I fully realize that you may need to withdraw part of the Roth for your own living expenses but even if some of it can get saved, the power of compounding can really work wonders.

Usually people convert their traditional IRA to a Roth later on in life. Let’s say you convert at age 53. Instead of being able to double six times, as in the above example,



**Farokh Billimoria** has over 25 years of experience in financial/investment advisory services. In 2001, Farokh merged his practice with Summit Wealth Management, Inc., a fee-only advisory firm with ten offices nationwide and over \$1.25 billion of assets under management. He currently serves as Summit’s Chief Investment Officer. He has an MBA in Finance from the University of Chicago, and is certified in public accounting (CPA) and financial planning (CFP®). He obtained the Personal Finance Specialist (PFS) designation awarded by the American Inst. of CPAs. In September 2007 Farokh published a book, *On Golden Pond...or Up the Creek? Making the Right Choices for Your Retirement Security*. The book was a finalist for the Best Books of 2007 in the Business – Personal Finance category. Farokh and his wife Huty reside in Palatine, IL and have two grown sons. Farokh can be reached through the book’s website [GoldenPondRetirement.com](http://GoldenPondRetirement.com)

# BUSINESS

you would have been able to double only three times. So, if you converted \$100,000 (tax of \$20,000 from non-IRA funds) to a Roth, it would have grown to \$800,000 by the time you died at, say, age 80. That means you paid tax of \$20,000 on \$800,000 or just 5%. The compounding would then do its magic as in the example in the previous paragraph. In addition, suppose you left \$50,000 of that money to your grandson, who is aged 10. At an annual rate of 8%, that \$50,000 Roth bequest will generate \$2,352,206 of income over the grandchild's life expectancy of 78.2 years. The funds could be utilized for college, a new house, etc. What a legacy to leave behind!

**Qualifying for Roth:** Powerful as the Roth is, unfortunately not everyone qualifies. To make contributions, if you are Married Filing Jointly, your Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) should be less than \$159,000 and the contribution gets phased out completely at \$169,000. For singles, the limits are \$101,000 and \$116,000 respectively. If you were thinking of converting to a Roth, your Modified (i.e. not taking into account the amount converted) AGI has to be under \$100,000. You also do not qualify if you file "Married, filing separately"

**Five-Year Rules:** There are two "Five Year Rules" governing Roths. There are penalties associated with holding the Roth for less than five years. The first rule applies to contributions to Roth accounts – the five year period starts from the first day of the year for which the first contribution is made, and does not get re-set with each contribution. If you do not hold this account for at least five years, then even if you are 59½, dead, disabled or first time home buyer, your Roth distribution would still be subject to tax. The second rule applies to conversions to Roths. Here, the five year period is re-set for each conversion made. The five year rule only applies in case you are under 59½ and you withdrew money from the converted Roth before the five year holding period was up. However, the 10% early withdrawal penalty does not apply in this case.



**Paying Taxes on Conversion:** Generally, it is not a good idea to pay the taxes due on converting from a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA from the IRA account. Instead, to the extent possible, you should pay the taxes from non-IRA funds. Let's say, you owe taxes of \$10,000 on converting \$50,000 from a traditional IRA. Now there is only \$40,000 in the Roth after paying taxes. Assuming an annual return of 8% (i.e. doubling every 9 years), your \$40,000 would grow to \$160,000 after 18 years. Assuming you had the funds to pay the tax of \$10,000 from non-IRA funds, your \$50,000 would grow to \$200,000 – a substantial difference. Granted some of the difference would be made up by the \$10,000 that you would still get to invest, but the returns on an after-tax basis would not really compensate you for the tax-free compounding of the Roth.

**Roth Opportunity of a Lifetime:** In addition to the rigid qualifying requirements for a Roth, the biggest roadblock to a Roth conversion has been the fact that income taxes are due on the conversion before the next tax filing deadline. Sometime it may even be earlier due to the necessity for filing estimated taxes. There is some good news on the horizon. Starting in 2010, there will be no qualifying requirements for Roth conversion – anyone who wants to convert will be permitted to do so. But wait, that's not all. For anyone converting in 2010, the IRS has got some added incentive for you. For that year, and that year alone, people who convert to a Roth can spread that conversion amount equally over the following two years. If you converted, say, \$100,000 from a traditional IRA to a Roth, \$50,000 would be considered as income for 2011 and the other \$50,000 for 2012. The deadlines for paying the taxes on the conversion would thus be 4/15/2012 and 4/15/2013. Assuming you converted in January of 2010, the IRS will thus be giving you 2 years and 3 months in which to pay the taxes. In the past, the full amount of taxes in those circumstances, assuming you qualified, would have been 4/15/2011 – an extension of 2 years, or more. Assuming the market cooperates, you may even be able to re-coup the taxes you owe by the increase in the value of your Roth account.

There are a lot more nuances to the Roth. However, what you have read above should help you navigate your way through most of the complexities that have been set up by Congress. If you have a question on the proper handling of your IRA or Roth IRA, you can contact me by e-mail at [bill@GoldenPondRetirement.com](mailto:bill@GoldenPondRetirement.com). Remember, ignorance of the rules could indeed be hazardous to your wealth.

## “The Global Business Connection” World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce, Houston Chapter Holds All- Day Session

By Dr. Homee F. Shroff, Esq.



The World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC), Houston Chapter held an all-day session on Sunday, May 25, 2008, as part of the 10th anniversary celebration of their fabulous Center which was celebrated with great splendor. The all-day session was titled “*The Global Business Connection*,” and indeed it did exactly that and much more. The all-day session ran right on schedule with distinguished speakers and an enthusiastic audience. After a benediction by the young Ervards of Houston, a welcome message was presented by Zarathushti Executive Committee, *Mr. Kaemerz Dotiwalla*, and Houston Chapter Chair, *Ms. Behroze Daruwalla*.

This was followed by a welcome by WZCC board member, *Mr. Rustom Engineer*, who read a message from the Global President, *Mr. Bomy Boyce*. The keynote speaker was *Ms. Homai Daruwalla*, Chairperson and Managing Director of

the Central Bank of India. (photo above) She painted India’s economic picture in a very positive and bright light with prospects of much investment and physical infrastructure in India’s future. Ms. Daruwalla was an eloquent orator and answered all questions with confidence and zeal.

She was followed by Consul General of India in Houston,



Consul General of India Hon. S.M. Gavai (right) Mr Jagdip Ahluwalia, founding secretary of Indo-American Chamber of Commerce



# BUSINESS

Honorary *S. M. Gavai*, who continued to discuss India in a similar light, but with an international perspective, particularly with India's relationship and ties to the U.S., which was described as being at its most strongest. He also described "Parsis of India" as continuing to be a community of integrity and trust.

Just before lunch, *Mr. Firdosh Mehta* presented the WZCC Outstanding Professional of the Year Award to *Dr. Roshan Boman Bhappu* of Tucson, Arizona. *Dr. Bhappu* in his acceptance speech celebrated the lives of his mentors, *Dr. Manek Pithawalla* and *Dastur Dhalla*. His son, *Dr. Homee F. Shroff, Esq.*, describes *Dr. Bhappu's* legacy in his profession as: "He is the mining profession!"

From left *Dr. Roshan Bhappu*, wife *Perin* and son *Dr. Homee F. Shroff* (author)



The afternoon panel discussion comprised of *Dr. Atul Varadhachary*, *President and Chief Operation Officer of Agennix Inc* *Mr. Rick Pal*, *founder and Managing Partner of Emprise Group*, *Mr. Jagdip Ahluwalia* *founding secretary of the Indo American Chamber of Commerce* and *Mr. Minoo Mehta* *Managing Executive with Specialty Medical Supplies*. who gave explicit and thorough descriptions of doing business with countries such as China, global medical research, and building and maintaining ties with several other commerce institutes and organizations in the U.S. and abroad. Open forum was chaired by our most esteemed, *Mr.*

*Rohinton Rivetna*, and the session was closed by *Dr. Darius Wania*. The WZCC, the Houston Chapter and the Zarathushti Association of Houston need to be commended on a job well done!!!

WZCC Houston Chapter Committee members with "The Global Business Connection" Seminar Speakers







# World Zoroastrian Congress Dubai 2009

“Unity through the sands of time”

21st September, 2008

Respected Community Members,

Since the holding of the 8th World Zoroastrian Congress in London, in the year 2005, the 9th World Zoroastrian Congress, is now just 16 months away from its scheduled date of 28th to 31st December 2009 in Dubai.

Dedicated efforts put in by the Congress Organizing team are steadily coming to fruition. We are pleased to announce that the Congress registration facility will be open effective 25th September 2008, through the website [www.wzcongress.org](http://www.wzcongress.org)

The Special Rate is as follows:

	Individual (Born on or before 31 Dec 1997)	Child (Born on or after 1st Jan 2007-Free) Child (Born between 1st Jan 98 & 31st Dec 2006)
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The rate is inclusive of Coffee/Tea breaks, lunches, dinners, cultural events in the evenings and the Desert Safari.

The “Special Rate” will be applicable to first *300 persons only who register themselves for the Congress or upto 31.12.08 whichever is earlier*. The rate will change thereafter. The Spot Rate for registration on 28th December 2009 will be Aed.2500/- (US\$ 685 approx) and shall be offered subject to availability of space.

The Official Venue for the Congress is “The Crowne Plaza Hotel”, a luxurious hotel located in the heart of the city.

The Congress Team is currently working towards negotiating accommodation rates with 5, 4 and 3 star hotels and some good properties comprising of apartments and large villas where families and friends can stay together as a group. Rates will appear from October 2008 onwards. Shuttle service will be available from identified hotels to the Congress Venue at designated hours. As of now the accommodation facility is in place at “The Crowne Plaza Hotel”. Please click on “Accommodation” icon available on the [www.wzcongress.org](http://www.wzcongress.org) website for more details and book your accommodation at the hotel.

The World Zoroastrian Congress will be a mega event. Don't miss this event.

The Congress Organizing Team looks forward to meeting you along with your family and friends at the Congress.

Sincere Regards,  
Meher Bhesania  
Congress Chair – WZC 2009  
Email: [wzcongress2009@gmail.com](mailto:wzcongress2009@gmail.com)





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