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COVER

Fereydun passing through the Arvand River from Chapter one, *Shahnameh: the epic of the Persian kings*.

A colourful new vision of the old Iranian Epic, illustrated by Hamid Rahmanian ©

PHOTOGRAPHS

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

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From the Editor



Though a month has already whizzed by of 2015, we the Management of WZO wish all our readers and their families a joyous, healthy and productive year.

As you will read within the pages of this issue we have much to be thankful for, two successful congresses, and another forthcoming at the end of the year which our youth are totally focussed on making a success, wisely keeping it only for their age group.

Though the cry for more children are being voiced, what we do have are high achieving, diverse in field, community members. As issue after issue is published, one cannot fail but realise what a wealth of individuals we have making up our small community. Some readers may question why is Hamazor now carrying articles on what is currently happening in the larger world. My reply would be, how much can one keep churning out articles on religiosity and community events? Instead, these vibrant writers are sharing their knowledge with the work they do in various countries, hopefully keeping the interest of the reader.

The Indian press is prolific on writing about the Parsis whether it is gastronomic or the BPP's shenanigans, but in the last quarter it has been about the sensational ads taken out to promote 'Jiyo Parsi' – a job well done; since all are talking about the project, whether in a positive tone or detrimental. Awareness has been achieved. Unfortunately, it is in our nature to run down an initiative taken, rather than to give it full support giving a fair chance to work. At least something is being done, if nothing else, bringing children into homes where previously there were none. A sizeable difference will not be made for increasing numbers through this scheme, only because today the child bearing age group both in India and Pakistan, a very small percentage remains. The younger generations we have to look to, are those, who live in the western hemisphere, but at this point of time due to economic pressures and higher standard of living, no one desires a large family. It has become a no win situation, but try we must.

Therefore one needs to value and respect the individuals we have, nurture them, so that they wish to remain Zoroastrians and welcome their children regardless of whom the other parent may be. This is my personal view of course. A wake up call is the hour of the day, before the Parsis are no more. Zoroastrians hopefully will always be there.

So much talk, and even more written – besides hoping and speculating - destiny seems to be in the hands of the chosen few!

Levy Curajee



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Charity No 1023334

January 2015

Dear Members and Friends,

Firstly, allow me to wish you, your family members and the Community a very Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year.

As you know, WZO has been operating from a very small office covering all the multifarious activities of the organisation. In fact, most of this work has been done by the Officials from their own homes. With the workload increasing enormously, it became necessary to find suitable premises, as was the intention of WZO at the outset.

Darayus Motivala was assigned the task of finding suitable venues and these were inspected by Sammy Bhiwandiwalla, Dinyar Mody and myself initially, and then subsequently by the other members of the Committee. Our long search finally ended in the early part of last year and I am happy to inform you that WZO has bought a property at the tail end of the year in a very good location. It is situated at Bridge House, Crendon Court, Feltham, TW13 5DD, UK, which is a spur off Hanworth Road. It has ample free parking spaces and public parking nearby as well. Feltham BR is within walking distance as well as having numerous bus routes to Feltham.

WZO is grateful to Mr & Mrs Abtin Sassanfar and the Trustees of the Firuz Madon Foundation for their generous donations which made it possible for us to acquire the property. In addition, we have been appealing to our members locally and overseas for their donations and many of you have responded generously. We shall continue this drive for funds, as these will be required for necessary changes to the property. Once occupied, we hope to hold all our functions at the new premises.

May we through this New Year's message, appeal to you, your friends and relatives, to donate generously as WZO is the ONLY WORLD body of the Community. It has done sterling work for helping displaced Zoroastrians from all parts of the world to settle in the West. It was one of the first Zoroastrian organisations to expound the belief of religious tolerance and acceptance.

At the same time WZO has played a significant part in the alleviation of poverty, upliftment of poor Zoroastrian farmers of Gujarat, helping small scale enterprises, assisting the priestly class, the sick, and aspiring students etc.

It would help the community if all Zoroastrians were to join WZO and become part of a truly world community. Please consider by going to www.w-z-o.org and enrolling as a Life member.

Atha Zamyat, Yatha Afrinami.

Shahpur F Captain
Chairman



Calendar of Events

Saturday 14th March 2015

at 7:00 pm at The Hythe Centre,
Staines.

Nowruz Dinner / Dance with a

Persian theme. Cuisine will be a fusion
of Indian & Persian with entertainment &
dancing.

Thursday 30th April 2015

at 6:00 pm at Khalili Lecture Theatre,
SOAS Brunei Gallery.

The 18th Dasturji Dr Sohrabji H

Kutar Memorial Lecture by
Dr Leon Goldman, British Academy
Postdoctoral Fellow at SOAS

Sunday 7th June 2015

Registration at 10:00 am

Seminar on Zoroastrian Religion,

History and Culture with
Mobedyar Mahshad Khosraviani, Canada; Kersi B
Shroff, USA; Dr Leon Goldman, UK.

A Sunday in July 2015

From 12 noon

Annual BBQ

Details to follow

Saturday 15th August 2015

at 7:00 pm at The Hythe Centre,
Staines.

Shahenshahi Navroze Dinner / Dance

Details to follow

Sunday 27th September 2015

From 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Annual General Meeting

(Details will be sent with the Annual Report)

Saturday 14th November 2015

at 7:00 pm

Gala Dinner Dance in aid of the WZO

Education Fund

Details to follow



WZO Headquarters

Sponsored by The World Zarathushtrian Trust Fund

WZO's Dinner-Dance at the Marriott Hotel Marble Arch – 15 November 2014



shahin bekhradnia reports

The tickets had sold out weeks before the event – a very telling indication of the quality of the entertainment and of the hospitality at the well reputed venue which was as central as you could get in London.

To welcome guests, canapes were circulated in the elegant downstairs lounge where some enjoyed the virtuososo performance on the Sitar specially provided for WZO by Jonathan Mayer. Others chose to mingle and find old friends while taking advantage of the downstairs bar. When most of the 130 guests had arrived, they were ushered upstairs to the dining room where 13 tables were tastefully arranged around the room providing comfortable seating and a souvenir brochure for each guest.

The Chairman, Shahpur F Captain welcomed and thanked everyone for attending or for helping with the arrangements for the evening, and then the food was served as a buffet so that each table could help itself in turn. In between the main course and dessert, guests were treated to a performance of a Bollywood style dance routine by the Shri Academy of Dance, which was high intensity entertainment.

The outstanding event of the evening was however, without doubt, the highly talented magician, Etienne Pradier who has performed for royalty, prime ministers and film stars. His show of over 40 minutes was dazzling, spectacular and jaw dropping – how did he do those things with onlookers right next to him?

After the magic, the fun started with dancing to the music of the Mustang who are favourites of WZO as they never fail to provide the sort of music that simply forces people up onto their feet. Within a few



minutes the centre of the room where the dance floor was positioned was overflowing with enthusiastic revellers.

To give everyone a chance to get their breath back and rest their feet, the Bollywood entertainers returned for a second performance and then the winners of the raffle tickets and silent auction were announced. After this, back onto the dance floor came the guests who danced until midnight at which point a very successful and happy evening was drawn to a conclusion.

When you can get the venue, the entertainment and the price right as WZO did this particular evening, it is not that surprising that tickets sold out as they did. There could not have been anyone who did not have a thoroughly enjoyable evening and one of the nicest things was that there was an almost exact balance between Iranians, Parsis and Europeans visibly having fun and helping to raise a very creditable £6,865 towards the many good causes supported by WZO.



Photo credit: Sammy Bhiwandiwalla



The team behind the scenes, who made it happen



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

inter-faith movements and organisations. She is the Jt Secretary of WZO.



From living in a Mumbai brothel to seeing the World

an appeal sent to WZO on 23 december 2014

Zaneeta E Daver is a young Zoroastrian living in Washington DC. Last year she did for a second time, something we all dream of – sailing around the world. And now she is trying to give the same opportunity to two young girls, for what makes an unbelievable story. She brings about the true Zarathushti spirit in trying to help others. Here is her story and her mission.

Zaneeta writes ...

“In the spring of 1994 I was given the greatest gift possible by my parents – the opportunity to sail around the world for a semester in college. **Semester at Sea** changed my life in so many ways and helped develop me into the person I am today. It was my dream to sail again as a staff member, and this past spring that dream was realized when I sailed as the Assistant Executive Dean. Now I want to help make the same dreams come true for two very special women. Their story not only touched me, but amazed me. And it is near to my heart because they are from Mumbai, India – the city my family is from.

From Living in a Mumbai Brothel to Seeing the World

Shweta Katti and Kavita Hosmani were both born in Kamathipura, the red-light district of Mumbai, India, and grew up in a brothel. Their father passed away from AIDS when they were just four years old. As best friends (before they knew they had the same father) at age 15, they started planning their lives. They would live together, go to university together, and move to America together. In just a few years with the help of the Indian NGO Kranti so much has changed for both of these young women.

Shweta is now a college student at Bard College in NY and Kavita is studying in preparation for applying to college. Shweta has truly excelled and was one of the six awardees at the 2014 United Nations Youth Courage Awards ceremony on September 22. She was honored for her contribution as an agent of change in their support for girl’s education and women’s rights. Both, Shweta and Kavita were accepted to sail on Semester at Sea, but they still need funding to complete program fees, shipboard expenses, participate in field programs, and travel while in port. Both of these women were told they would never amount to anything and would never get out of the red-light district, and despite the odds and hardships they have excelled. Both women have worked intensively to make up for their lost years of education and I want to reward them and help them chase their dreams of studying together. Please help me, help them be able to participate fully! I am trying to raise \$10,000 by the end of the year. To date, almost \$2,500 has been raised. [Her email of 24 December’14, says she has collected \$6,000].

As Robin at Kranti wrote me, I write to you ... ‘Thank you so very, very much for your time, energy and support. They say it takes a village to raise a child, but I think it takes the whole world to make Kranti’s work successful. Thank you so much for taking on this role to help Kavita and Shweta fulfill their dreams!’” ■■■

Shweta Katti & Kavita Hosmani



Enterprise Dubai 2014 : Zarathushti Glitter in the Desert Kingdom

by arzan sam wadia

Enterprise Dubai 2014 was a two-day event planned by the Zarathushtis of Dubai to highlight the entrepreneurial opportunities in the region, and specifically the city of Dubai. The overarching hope was to embolden entrepreneurs, businesses and professionals to consider Dubai and the UAE as viable and lucrative destination for business and trade. Over two days, leaders of industry and business were gathered to discuss and debate their journeys into running their own businesses. It also provided those in the audience with opportunities to learn about setting up their own businesses in Dubai and the UAE.

The Global AGM :

The Global Annual General Meeting and Gala Dinner of the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce preceded the actual event the day before.

The Gala Dinner at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Dubai began with a warm welcome by WZCC Secretary Behroze Daruwalla. Minocher Patel, a public motivational speaker then gave an inspiring talk about what 'Happiness' means to all of us, though many spend their lives striving to achieve it, without realizing that it is in the now and here. Fitness guru Mickey Mehta spoke about how living healthy was a holistic process, both of body and mind.

The Chief Guest of the evening Lord Karan Bilimoria, spoke of his journey as an entrepreneur and used his journey with Cobra beer to emphasize some of the finer points of entrepreneurship and running businesses.

The Awardees :

Edul Daver of New Jersey, USA, was awarded the 2014 Entrepreneur of the Year Award. Over an illustrious career spanning

a few decades, he started with and then finally became the owner of

a metal coating company, one of the largest in the US. In his response to the award, Edul spoke of the unflinching support of his wife Niloufer as the backbone of a successful entrepreneurial journey.

Nina Godiwalla who lives in Texas received the 2014 Professional of the Year Award. Nina is a thought leader in leadership and diversity who is currently the US Director of Diversity for Norton Rose Fulbright, one of the largest law firms in the world. She is also the bestselling author of *Suits: A Woman on Wall Street*. The New York Times describes the internationally acclaimed book as the "Devil Wears Prada" of investment banking.

Shirin Kumaana-Wadia lives in New York was the recipient of the Young Professional/ Entrepreneur Award for 2014. As a young professional Shirin has been involved in design projects all over the world focusing in hospitality design. She also started her own design firm Mazda Design that pursues unique design projects in the USA and India. She is into Salsa and other Latin dances and is a photographer with recent exhibitions in India and upcoming ones in 2015. Shirin spoke about how design in all walks of life can help everyone from individuals at the single scale to cities,



nations and mankind itself at the collective level. She is the co-founder of *Parsi Khabar*.

Enterprise Dubai 2014 :

On Friday December 19th at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Dubai, over 500 attendees, sponsors, and invited guests from industry and government witnessed a great opening ceremony. Films about Dubai and its superlatives, opportunities and possibilities, introduced the city to the audience. The ceremonial lighting of the lamp was done in the presences of H E Mirza representing the local government, and other dignitaries namely, Lord Karan Bilimoria, Air Chief Marshal of India Fali Major (retd), and Vada Dasturji Khurshed of the Iranshah.

An operatic rendering of the Ashem Vohu and Yatha Ahu Vairyo by Farah Ghadijally accompanied by Jamshed Turel on the piano provided the musical element of the opening.

Meher Bhesania who headed the organizing committee welcomed the delegates and promised a fun filled two days.

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi sent in a congratulatory message acknowledging the millennial alliance and cohesiveness of Parsis within the Indian fabric.

A few events really stood out in the first day's programme. The first was a fantastic presentation by one of the most eminent legal luminaries of India, Fali Nariman. He spoke about ethics in business and in life. He said that this is the age of distraction where all of us are bombarded with extraneous diversions of the digital kind. Mr Nariman narrated an example of how ethics is a necessity in a leader. It is said of JRD Tata ... when told that a certain business practice was not illegal to pursue ...

quipped back ... but is it right? The organizers hopefully will put up the video recording of the speech, as an inspiration to the youth around the world.

Lord Karan Bilimoria spoke of various virtues that have helped him in his

enterprise journey. One of the most important was integrity which he said is the cornerstone of Zoroastrian Parsis



over the centuries. He also emphasized that it is not only necessary to universalize human rights but also to universalize the respect of them. There was a very interesting mix of well-known Parsis at Enterprise Dubai 2014.

Besides the dignitaries mentioned, there were folks from all over the world including Dinshaw Tamboly, Bachi Karkaria, Katayun Kapadia, Nadir Godrej, and many others. And the Parsi press was out in full force with Parinaz and Jasmin from Parsiana, Shernaaz Engineer from Jame and Freyaan Bhatena of the Parsi Times.



Katayun Kapadia, Legendary Service Award



Nadir Godrej, Zoroastrian Ratna Award

The afternoon session had a power packed panel on Corporate Social Responsibility. Nozer Buchia moderated the panel that had Lord Karan Bilimoria, Minoo Shroff, Jamshed Jeejeebhoy, Homa Petit, Neville Shroff and Dinshaw Tamboly.

Later in the day Yazdi Tantra chaired a session where the six finalists of the Business Plan



Fali Nariman



Minoo Shroff, Legendary Service Award



Jamshed Jeejeebhoy, Zoroastrian Ratna Award



Homa Petit, Legendary Service Award



Neville Shroff, Legendary Service Award

made their presentations to the judges and answered their questions. The results of the competition were announced later in the evening and Darius Aga of Ahmedabad won the first prize with the runner-up being Rashne Pardiwalla.

A lively entertainment programme post-dinner regaled the crowd.

Day Two of Enterprise

Dubai started with the lighting of the lamp by two more Parsi stalwarts who joined the event. Nadir Godrej and Ronnie Screwala lit the lamp along with Fali Nariman to begin the day's proceedings.

Minoo Shroff, Corporate Counselor and International

President, World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce spoke of staying ahead of economic currents and building enterprises during uncertainties.

Nadir Godrej took the stage and blew away the audience with another fantastic poem, which was his address. He is a man of

many talents, and the poet in him goes underrated. He ran through Godrej's history from the founder Ardeshir Godrej to today, and how the business house navigated the challenges of the time and worked through the license raj years.

Ronnie Screwala took the stage thereafter and talked about his journey over the last 20 years and what he plans to do over the next twenty. He spoke about the initial struggles in setting up the media giant, and how at every point they would disrupt the "norm" and bring about change socially. He gave an example of how a candlelight march in a movie in the early 90's was the first time such a thing was shown. And a month later when tragedy struck, the public embarked on a candlelight march for the very first time, which has now become the norm. He also spoke about his current involvement with the Swades Foundation that he set up with his wife Zarina. The foundation aims to go into rural areas and look at the various problems that affect them holistically and offer aid and solutions, such that when they exit the area, the problems are gone and the people are empowered permanently. The foundation's aim is to serve a million people every five years.

The speech by the Indian Consul General was a big letdown, after the two morning speakers. He reiterated the same tired briefing points with no acknowledgement of the unique subset in the audience. And of course came extremely late and delayed the entire proceedings of Day Two.

The talk on Dubai Tourism was very well presented by the CEO of Dubai Corporation of Tourism. He elicited on the steps taken towards Dubai 2020 World Expo and other advances in infrastructure etc, to service the tourism industry.

An award ceremony was held where business families were presented with the Zoroastrian Ratna Awards, and nine individuals from all spheres of Zoroastrian life were presented with awards for their services to the community. They included amongst others, Air Chief Marshal of India Fali Major (retd), FEZANA President



Fali Major, Legendary Service Award



Roshan Rivetna, Legendary Service Award



Dr Keki Turel, Legendary Service Award



Burjor Antia, Legendary Service Award

Katayun Kapadia and FEZANA stalwart Roshan Rivetna.

The panel on Parsi doctors was put together extremely well. The doctors included Dr Cyrus Mehta – Ophthalmologist, Dr Keki Turel – Neurologist, Dr Rustom Soonawala – Gynecologist, Dr Sabrena Noria – Gastro Intestinal Surgeon and Dr Zubin Nalladaru – Cardiac Surgeon. They each ran us through their areas of medical expertise and also spoke of tips that would help keep individuals healthy in ageing life.

'Is women power just a pie in the sky' was discussed by another illustrious panel, this one chaired by Bachi Karkaria, and featured Zarina Screwala, Meenal Baghel, Meera Sanyal and Bikram Vohra.

Later in the evening there was a cricket quiz, followed by a Master Home Chef Cook, where four teams of three participants each prepared some tasty dishes. The winning team was awarded a prize of Rs50,000.

The evening dinner and Gala began with a series of 'Thank You's' to the various members of the organizing team who did a

fantastic job. A coffee table book titled *Fathers and Sons, Mothers and Daughters* authored by Meher Bhesania was launched at the function by Nadir Godrej.

After dinner, the amazing Parsi Theater Group led by Sam Ker Danesh *Ni Film Utri*.

That brought about the end of the formal proceedings of Enterprise Dubai 2014.

Day Three was devoted to sightseeing and taking in the sounds and sights of Dubai City and its surroundings.

Personal Observations :

The success of any event depends on many factors, and running things on time is one of



Dadi Mistry, Legendary Service Award. In his absence accepted by his son.



Rustom Jokhi, Zoroastrian Ratna Award



Shahvir Sidhwa, Zoroastrian Ratna Award

the most important ones. It becomes a disservice to those who actually show up on time, to find out that the entire schedule is running very late. The first day saw a lot of it, the second day was no better. While some of the talks and panels were fantastic, there were a few that did not serve any purpose besides being infomercials for Dubai Tourism and Dubai as a business attraction. I don't think anyone attending the event ever had a doubt of that, as Dubai's potential. However, in such a tightly packed event, it took away from what was otherwise a great programme layout. The fact remains though that Dubai's biggest draw is tourism. In the early 2000's it did position itself as a global financial center, and we all know how that went. What would have been really interesting is to know the specifics of actually starting a business, and not just a sales pitch on starting one in Dubai.

A few people in conversation observed what was apparent in the lack of visiting youth. Even though it was a business oriented event, a better participation from visiting youth would have served well.

The hosts were fantastic to a fault :) – every question was immediately answered or resolved.

As much as bringing in government dignitaries and politicians can sometimes become a compulsion, it is not necessarily the best idea. Not one has been known to show up on time. This was the case with the Consul General of India too. The day's proceedings were supposed to start at 9:00am but did not begin till 10:30 because the dignitary was not on time. And this affected the entire programme. The amazing natak, surely a highlight of the event started at 11pm with at least 1/3rd of the attendees having left.

Two days' events land up being pretty packed, and therefore the programme needs to be given enough thought. On Day Two after Mr Shroff, Mr Godrej and Mr Screwala spoke, the audience was on a high with the intellectual, thought provoking

talks; and then the Indian Consul General let the momentum go with a banal talk. Organizers of events also need to be realistic on how much is packed into a programme. The daily shopping trips to Dubai Mall seemed unnecessary and maybe a distraction especially since it was a two-day event, and nothing was running on time.

The food at the event got better as the meals went by. It was great to see *sev* and *dahi* at breakfast and *chicken farcha* and *patra ni macchi* for lunch and dinner. Nice touch.

All in all, a great event, and one I am glad I went to. Initially because of the proximity to the North American Congress in Los Angeles which was held the next week, we were going to give this a miss.

Meher Bhesania is truly a powerhouse and her dedication and never say never spirit, was written and evident all over. Every speaker spoke of her tenacity and steadfast determination in getting an impressive speaker list to the event. Her team of mostly young dedicated volunteers went out of their way to make the event a success. We take this opportunity to thank Meher personally and her entire team in general for a job well done.



Arzan Sam Wadia is an architect and urban designer, currently living in New York City with his wife Shirrin. He also runs a technology consultancy business catered to the CAD and BIM industry. He is the Chair of the Information Technology Committee of FEZANA

and is a Board Member of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York. Arzan is the co-founder of Parsi Khabar (www.parsikhabar.net) an online news portal about Parsis: The Zoroastrians of India. He is an active Rover Scout of India's oldest Scout Group the Sethna's 18th West Bombay.

Photos with captions are courtesy of Meher Bhesania

Sponsored by The World Zarathushtrian Trust Fund

XVII North American Zoroastrian Congress, 29-31 December 2014, Los Angeles, California

behroze clubwalla reports -

"Kem Cheh Soli."

"Apreh New York ma malelah last Congress mah."

"Areh Silloo, tuh kem cheh."

The meet and greet in a rather colder than normal Los Angeles was plenty as the 760 (yes, a record!) Zoroastrians who registered for the XVII Congress collected their wristbands (a first), bags emblazoned with the NAZC 2014 beautiful logo, a very well done voluminous Programme book, *chevra* and gifts which included a unique car license plate frame reading - Good thoughts, Good words, Good Deeds.

The Agenda's theme of "Faith and Unity" was too full and varied for only three days, but the Congress was enjoyed by all. The programme included esteemed speakers like Daniel Sheffield – PhD in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, delivering the Khorshed Jungalwala Lecture; Yuhan Vevaina – Scholar for Zoroastrian Studies, Stanford University; Jenny Rose, Professor, Zoroastrian Studies, Department of Religions, Claremont Graduate University. Many speakers made tremendous contributions and shared very valuable insights, but I can cover only some highlights.



Yuhan Vevaina



The opening Jashan performed by 20+ mobeds chanted "*Banameh Khuda, Banameh Yazad*" was led by Zarrir Bhandara. The atash, symbol of our faith, was magnificent. The echo of our "Faith" resonated with Avesta prayers, heads bowed as we heard: "*Hama Anjuman Beresad.*" The different "headdress" of the Iranian Mobeds was noticeable but what was amazing was that everyone in the room was united in our Avesta prayers. I am sure most reflected, like me, that Zarathustra's messages should "unite" us and that we should not let petty interpretations of customs, traditions and habits create disharmony and fragmentation among us. Unity is the order of the day and the call for our future.

The flag ceremony was led by Eagle Scouts; the US and Canadian national anthems were sung by Zoroastrian Sopranos; the CZC Choir beautifully sang Khan Ashem Vohu among other songs and the ZAC Choir gave great performances. The loudest applause went to the youngest talent, 5+ years, for their rendition of "It's a small world after all."

Katayun Kapadia, FEZANA President welcomed the gathering with her engaging smile

The headdress and positioning of hands differ, but nothing else.



The opening Jashan



and demeanor. She was joined by Bomi Patel, Congress Chair, FEZANA, Tehmi Damania, President, ZAC and Shida Anoshirawani, President, CZC.

The three co-chairs, gracious and charming Dhunmai Dalal, energetic Khushroo Lakdawala and the always smiling Darayus Mistry did a fantastic job.

The Keynote Welcome was poetically delivered by *apro* Nadir Godrej, Managing Director, Godrej. His smile endeared everyone, his warmth and wit was outstanding. He impressed everyone by attending all three days of the Congress with his family. Some interesting lines of his poetry are quoted below, while the full text, worth a read, is available at www.fezana.org. "Some fear Zoroastrians may not last, And yet they had a glorious past.

The Achaemenians come to mind, More noble rulers are hard to find."

"Should religion guide our way, Or deal with ritual minutiae?"

"In India we are in a mess, You've done better, I must confess.

That faith which may well cause a rift, Has not done so and that's a gift."

"Your Mobed Council gave to you, Much credit is therefore due

To Ervad Dastur and Ervad Bagli, For things could get very ugly."

"And faith which is ideally a link, Can often cause unity to sink.

"Our beliefs indeed should be strong, But we shouldn't assume others are wrong.

Some benefit we should give, And learn to live and let live."

"Respecting the other's right to think, Makes religion a stronger link."

The Keynote Address -

Follow your Dreams and Passions by Parisa Khosravi, Senior VP, Global Relations, CNN Worldwide. Parisa inspirationally described her three decades at CNN. Nicknamed "Mother Parisa" she managed her staff on the front lines in Kabul, the first Gulf War, live broadcasts from Egypt & many dangerous situations. In 2011 she led the network's Peabody and Emmy Award winning coverage in the

Middle East and North Africa, including the revolutions in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt. In describing her journey with CNN, she encouraged the young in the audience to do internships early to determine where their passion lay. "Don't accept the first highest paying job" she advised, "go for what you really want to do." Three principles she successfully has applied were (i) Select a day each month to give back/do some charity work, (ii) Review if your calling back then is your calling now; and (iii) Follow your passion – "remember", she said, "it will not be easy, but by putting in your time & paying your dues you build your own ground and then you can stand tall and succeed."



Nadir Godrej

A curriculum for religious education – FINALLY!! was the sigh among the many that attended this session. Daraius Bharucha,

from Toronto, 2012 recipient of the Governor General of Canada's Award for Excellence in Teaching and many other awards said, "Teaching religion to a 21st century learner requires us to take a professional approach, to reinforce Zoroastrian identity, develop critical thinking/problem solving skills, while providing students the choice to be able to come to their own cognizant awareness." The curriculum, designed by Daraius and edited by Lovji Cama, addresses a programme of religious learning for ages 6 to 16. Developed as a continuum of learning; it can be adapted to local needs and demographics; allows you to build a programme rather than promoting learning

in silos and has greater scope for engagement of the student. He said: "Teachers must create a journey of inquiry and not be a sage on a stage." He encouraged teachers in the room to create an "exit card" for their students asking them three things after each class: (i) Three things that you learnt today; (ii) Two things that you want to learn more about and (iii) One thing that you will use immediately from today's learning. The presentation was exceptional. If we want to build true knowledge of our faith, we need to begin here. The curriculum is on www.fezana.com. This will be the most lasting contribution of this Congress.

The youth representation at this Congress was unsurpassed. The Pre-Congress events for the 160 youth – ages 18-35 rocked the Los Angeles scene. They partied to the max, debated, listened to the presentations and tweeted - the triumph of this programme is credited to Khush Italia and her team - a programme worth replicating in future Congresses. They are our hope for unity.



Entertainment was plentiful; a Persian Night; a Zoroastrian Symphony Orchestra with 22 year old Neville Bharucha – a child prodigy, whose performance was extraordinary. He is surely headed for Carnegie Hall in New York! Soprano Meher Pavri was super with many other young and really talented Zoroastrian musicians.

Zoroastrian stalwarts of global fame were felicitated as special Honorees: Ambassador Jamsheed Marker, Dr Farhang Mehr, Professor Kaikhosrov D Irani, Maestro Zubin Mehta and apro Ratan Tata. Their

accomplishments were an inspiration to all. The Teen Track for 13-18 year olds, brain-child of Shazneen Gandhi was a resounding

accomplishment. From excellent interactive sessions by Shirrin Kumana-Wadia on Zoroastrian Connection and Creativity; to others on Growing up Zoro; Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds by Autusa Behroozi, Dinsha Mistree, Afshin Sepehri and Arzan Sam Wadia; Shahnameh recital by Afshin Sepehri and Nusha Sepehri; Reflections: If only I knew by Khush Italia and many more interesting sessions. The plea was for such sessions to be included in the future. Bravo to Shazneen for pioneering this.

The Return to Roots Program – an excellent new initiative which takes youth members to Mumbai, Sanjan, Navsari, etc. was highlighted with an open invitation to those who wished to participate in their next trip in March 2015. Go to www.zororoots.org. Applications close on January 15, 2015.

Some of the far too many new sessions were on Holistic Health, Inter-Faith, Entrepreneurship, Reiki Healing with on-site healing sessions, Genetics of Metabolic Diseases in Parsi families and so on. Apru Internet – The state of the Zoroastrians online was presented by Arzan Sam Wadia. An Art Fundraiser, Old Garas, borders and our "kors" were on sale together with the Farohar pins, cufflinks, etc. A relaxation room added to the scenario.

The Shahnameh exhibition was a very interesting pictorial journey into the many stories of the Shahnameh, lucidly illustrated with models and scenes which helped to bring alive the stories.

Zoroastrianism and the next Generation by Zane Dalal. The audience was engaged, his delivery was compelling, his analysis detailed and his message loud and clear. He drew parallels with the Virginia Statue of Religious Liberties by Thomas Jefferson, and the message of the Gathas, both ancient documents which referenced the importance of religious freedoms. He stressed



Zane Dalal

the importance for each of us to choose our own path with Vohu Mano. He pushed the audience to explore for real meaning in the Gathas and older Zoroastrian texts. It is true that the Trustees in Mumbai must confine themselves to just guarding the funds of the Trusts. One can hear him on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sO53B98moR4>

Wisdom of the Ancients in the Age of the Moderns was addressed by Yuhan Vevaina who walked the audience through a very academic and scholarly series of scenarios to help us understand facets of our ancient religion.

Zoroastrian Footprints on the Chinese Silk Road by Jenny Rose was a compelling story on her research and travels in that part of the world and the links to our Zoroastrian faith.

Zoroastrianism 101 – at least 20 basic things we should know but may not presented by Mobed Fariborz Shahzadi was a popular session among the young and the not so young. With an engaging style, good humor and in an easily understandable manner he addressed the principle of *Asha*, the meaning of *Ashem Vohu*, *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* referring to it as the “foundation” of our religion. He also covered the *Sudreh*, *Kusti*, the *Jas Meh Havangeh Mazda* and the first *Gatha*, among other topics. What a pity this session was not mandatory for all who had registered followed by an examination!

Ervads Bahrom Firozgary, Zerkxis Bhandara, Burzin Balsara, Rayomand Ravji and Rayomand Katrak were the glue that will hold together our future faith and unity. They were well spoken, precise and addressed the significant challenges of young mobeds in NA, the keys to managing these challenges, the achievements of their peers and how they could add value to our community. The moderators Mobed Soli Dastur and Hutoxi Contractor are to be congratulated.

The torch was passed to the Zoroastrian Association of British Columbia, Vancouver for the next NAZC, July 2017.

NAZC 2014 will be remembered as bringing together the largest group of Zarathustis in North America. At times, it was impossible to persuade them to be silent when needed! It pushed the agenda on being grounded in our true “faith”. It launched a Curriculum for religious education for the young. It challenged us that in order to build “unity” we must refine our religious knowledge and delete bias and traditions not found in the religious texts. Zoroastrianism must be practiced in North America in the context in which we live so that it can survive in North America for the next 1000 years – as indicated by Nadir Godrej. The earth shook – there was a minor earthquake, felt by none of us as we continued to focus on faith and unity.

Ushta te to the Zoroastrian *Koohm* in 2015 in North America.



Behroze Astad Clubwala, is a ZAGNY member for 37 years and has dedicated much time and effort to support ZAGNY. She is currently the Human Resources Advisor, in the Bureau for Development Policy in the United Nations Development Programme in New York.

Photographs, credit Astad Clubwala



The Achievements and Challenges of Young Mobeds in North America was an impressive session. The young mobeds –



Kids performing “Its a small world after all”

FEZANA Awards at NAZC 2014

The Awardees were:



Sam Vesuna
Rohinton Rivetna
Outstanding
Zarathushti Award



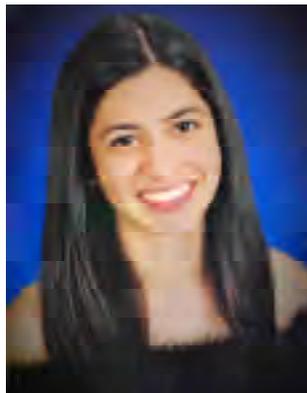
Arzan Gonda
Dinshaw Framroze Joshi
Excellence in Performing
Arts, Painting or
Literature Award



Dinshaw J Patel
Jamshed and Shirin
Guzder Excellence in
Business or Profession
Award



Nazneen Spliedt
Jamshed K Pavri
Humanitarian Service
Award



Persis Bhadha
Shirin Nariman Dastoor
Outstanding Young
Zarathushti Student
Award



Ervad Poruz Khambatta
Shirin Nariman Dastoor
Outstanding Young
Zarathushti Award



Ervad Rayomand Ravji
North American Mobeds
Council Community
Services Award

6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress is now open for registration

tinaz karbhari, congress chair writes -

The Zoroastrian Youth of New Zealand (ZYNZ) are thrilled to announce that registration for the 6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress (6th WZYC) is now officially open.

The idea behind the World Zoroastrian Youth Congress held every four years across the globe is to unite the young Zoroastrians from all over the world and allow them to connect with their roots. The stunning destination of the 6th WZYC taking place between 28th December 2015 & 2nd January 2016 is the spectacular city of Auckland, New Zealand. This invitation is extended to all Zoroastrians between the ages of 15 and 35.

ZYNZ, the Organising Committee of the 6th WZYC has confirmed Kings College as the venue, which will be home to all delegates attending the Congress. Kings College offers top class facilities including a number of boarding houses, large dining rooms, world class sports grounds, lecture theatres, halls and fitness facilities (including gyms and a heated swimming pool). The venue will also have round-the-clock security to ensure top safety of all those who attend.

The Congress will host world-class speakers that will empower and encourage the youth to add to the great Zoroastrian legacy. It will be packed with exciting activities that will allow the participants to explore the vibrant city of Auckland and connect with each other whilst networking.

The delegates will be taken on a journey that will engage and motivate them to embrace New Zealand's treasured culture, enhance their unique traditions, whilst simultaneously forging a united Zoroastrian future. The Congress is designed to educate the participants about the rich Zoroastrian culture and take pride in who we are and where we come from.

We look forward to Zoroastrian youth from all over the world attending in large numbers to have an experience of a lifetime.

Save the date and some money and get in quick before time runs out!

Pricing are as follows:

Earlybird registration fee: NZD\$1049.00
(valid from 1st December 2014 - 12th April 2015)

Casual registration fee: NZD \$1199.00
(valid from 13th April 2015 - 16th August 2015)

Late registration fee: NZD\$1349.00
(valid from 17th August 2015 - 13th December 2015)

To register and for more information please visit:
<http://www.6wzyc.co.nz/>

Check out snippets of what delegates will be in-store for: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-43mgafcv8&list=UUf0uhw0ygc3dqqO7IC41okw>



Beautiful East coast beach



Geothermal wonders in Rotorua



Auckland's skyline at night



Code of Conduct for BPP Trustee Elections

Letter sent to the Editor on 5 January 2015 for inclusion in the Hamazor

With a view to provide a level playing field to all individuals contesting future BPP Trustee elections, former Trustees of BPP along with some prominent community members had been discussing with the present Trustees, since early 2014, the necessity to introduce a 'Code of Conduct' that would govern future elections for BPP Trusteeship.

This communication is being released as many - individuals as well as community media - have been enquiring about the progress made in introducing the proposed 'Code of Conduct' under which future elections for trusteeship of BPP would be conducted.

After much deliberations and holding of several meetings a final draft of the 'Code of Conduct' has been evolved and forwarded to the present BPP Trustees for consideration.

As elections to BPP Trusteeship are conducted under a 'Scheme of Elections' framed by the Hon. Bombay High Court, a revised Scheme of Elections has been framed into which the 'Code of Conduct' has been incorporated, that would before implementation, first need to be approved by present Trustees and thereafter sanction sought from the Hon. Bombay High Court.

The salient features of the Code of Conduct that has been forwarded to present BPP Trustees in November 2014 are reproduced hereunder for the information of all those who have been enquiring about the same.

1. The Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet shall constitute an Election Commission (EC) having an Election Commissioner and four other Additional Commissioners, being individuals having impeccable integrity.
2. The Additional Election Commissioners ("AEC") shall work under the directions and supervisions of the Election Commissioner.
3. Trustees may nominate 2 "reserve members" of the EC who shall be called upon to officiate as Additional Commissioners if one or more Additional Commissioner cannot officiate as such, for any reason whatsoever. In addition the Trustees may co-opt members as required to assist in the conduct of elections and supervising/manning of EVMs.
4. The Election Commissioner and his Associates shall oversee the electoral procedure carried out by the Administrative staff of the BPP, and shall endeavour to ensure that the elections are conducted in a transparent, free and fair manner.
5. The EC shall oversee the Election Process at all times - from the announcement of the elections until their completion with sufficient administrative help and staff of the BPP to conduct the election.
6. While the Trustees of BPP shall have the general superintendence and control of the EC & the elections, all the BPP sitting trustees will remain outside the election fray at all times unless a trustee is offering himself for re-election.
7. The EC will oversee all matters pertaining to the Election process. All complaints relating to the election and/or breach of any of the conditions of this Code shall be specifically dealt by the EC.

8. Full co-operation shall be extended by the Trustees and BPP staff to the EC and the team appointed by them at all times to ensure peaceful and orderly polling.

9. Three months prior to the election date, the Election Commission will invite applications from prospective candidates, depending on the number of vacancies, for Trusteeship of the Parsi Panchayat of Bombay. Prospective candidates would file their nomination with the Election Commission and lodge a deposit of Rs50,000/-. A candidate not procuring at least 5% of the total votes cast shall forfeit the deposit. The deposit amount shall be pegged at the prevailing cost of living index for future elections. After the Election of 2015, the BPP Trustees shall for such future elections declare in advance, the amount of such deposit.

10. The candidate would submit personal details as per a standard format devised by the Election Commission. The candidate would also submit a short bio-data with an Election Manifesto and Vision Statement of not more than 2000 words. Failure to comply with the requirements of the Election Commission would result in the candidature being rejected by the EC.

11. All the candidates will maintain an account of all the election expenses that they have personally incurred and will submit the same to the Election Commission one day prior to the last polling date, as all campaigning activities would have come to an end 48 hours prior to the date of election. Each candidate will be permitted to spend no more than Rs300,000/- (Rupees three hundred thousand) for their entire election campaign.

12. The Election Commission, shall consider all written complaints by the voters/candidates about irregularities committed by any candidate and/or by his/her supporters. All the EC appointees shall consider the complaint and then give their decision, by way of a simple majority. In case of a tie, the Election Commissioner shall have a casting vote.

13. Posters will be displayed as per the guidance of BPP and all efforts will be made by EC to see that these are not destroyed, removed or defaced.

14. The Candidate will hold meetings after seeking prior permission of EC on 1st come 1st serve basis & statutory authorities including Police.

15. No incentives or inducements of any kind (including food boxes, lunches/dinners, gifts etc) will be provided to the voters who attend such election meetings, at the venue or outside or sent at home in order to maintain a level playing field for all the prospective candidates.

16. Negative criticism of the other candidates shall be restricted to their policies, programme, past record and work, only. No personal defamatory attacks or character assassination will be allowed against any candidate.

17. Candidates can campaign outside Greater Mumbai City limits if they choose to do so but the expenses incurred will be within the permissible ceiling of Rs300,000/-.

18. No moneys for any transportation (including hiring of buses) or food will be permitted or arranged directly or indirectly to be given to any voter be it from Mumbai or out of station who comes to participate in the voting.

19. None of the Fire Temples of the community or the Towers of Silence complex or any other place of worship shall be used as places for election propoganda, including speeches, posters, music etc.

20. Whilst candidates are permitted to undertake house-to-house campaigning the timings are left to the 'good sense' of each candidate. It will be the responsibility of each candidate to ensure that no nuisance is caused to residents by them or their representatives and supporters whilst house to house campaigning is under way.

21. All campaigning, including house-to-house shall end 48 hours before the scheduled day for holding of the election in the geographical area in which polling is to be done.

22. All activities which are corrupt practices or electoral offences such as bribery, undue influence, intimidation of voters, impersonation, are prohibited and shall be dealt with severely.

23. Any type of Demonstration, gherao or picketing before the homes or places of work

of candidates by any one protesting against the candidates opinions or activities is barred and if resorted to shall be dealt strictly and appropriately by the EC.

24. All efforts should be made by the candidates and their supporters not to create disturbances of any kind, like hooting, booing, interrupting, sloganeering at public meetings and/or processions organized by rival contesting candidates.

25. Entry into the Polling Stations shall be restricted to EC Staff, those authorised by the EC, in writing which would includes paramedics, if any, and voters when they are operating an EVM to cast their vote.

26. The Polling Precinct shall be the general area outside the Polling Station and will vary from venue to venue. For each venue this area shall be suitably marked by the EC and promulgated to all concerned. Entry into the Polling Precinct is restricted to EC Staff, those by the EC for manning of Registration and Authentication (manned by candidates representatives) Desk, candidates with two of their authorised representatives and voters standing in a queue to cast their votes.

27. Posters, flags, symbols or any other propaganda material shall not be displayed in the place/s being used on the day/s of polling for any purpose by the candidate.

28. No candidate shall be permitted to provide transport to the voters. The EC shall organize a sufficient number of mini buses/vans that would ply on a pre-determined and publicized route with timings, for the voters. No remuneration of any kind shall be given to voters nor should any moneys be paid to the voters for transportation to the Polling Precinct and back.

29. Each voter shall bring his / her Voters ID Certificate at the time of voting, without which the voter will not be allowed to cast his / her vote under any circumstances.

30. On the day of polling, no Parsi who perceives himself to be under a security threat and has therefore employed security guards, armed or otherwise, shall enter the vicinity of a polling station precinct with security personnel after obtaining permission in writing from the EC. If the Parsi who has employed security guards also happens to be

a voter, then he or she shall strictly restrict movement of his/her security personnel in the election precincts. Such a voter, accompanied by security personnel shall be permitted to vote only after previous intimation to the EC in that behalf.

31. Candidates and their accredited representatives (not exceeding 2 for each candidate), shall be permitted to enter the Polling Precinct but not the Polling Station under any circumstances.

32. Only Parsis with a specific valid authority letter from the EC can enter the Polling Station. No exceptions will be made on this issue.

33. No sitting Trustee or any other Parsis shall enter the Polling Precincts except when coming to cast his/her vote. Admission to the Polling Station will be open only to members of the Election Commission and BPP administrative staff authorised in writing by the EC. if any, as provided in the Scheme.

34. The EC shall have the power to investigate the issue of a breach of the Code of Conduct or any irregularity/ illegality relating to the election process by a contesting candidate / his or her party workers, suomoto or on a complaint received by the EC, in writing. No Parsi shall be entitled to raise any objection to the election of any Parsi as Trustee unless the Parsi raising such objection shall have been entitled to vote at such election and no objection shall have any validity nor be entertained unless the grounds of such objection shall be stated in writing together with a statement of particulars on which such objection is based and such writing shall have been lodged at the office of the EC not later than 14 days on the date of which the result of such election is published by display upon the notice board. If the office of the EC is closed on the last day for lodging such writing it may be lodged on the first working day thereafter and amongst the particulars required to be stated may be such as (1) the name of the voter in personated (if it is alleged that someone else voted for him,) (2) the name of the voter prevented by force from voting (if it is alleged that there was such

prevention and particulars as to how and when such force was used).

35. If any objection to an election of any Parsi to be Trustee shall be lodged at the office of the EC in accordance with the terms of the last preceding rule the EC shall have full power and authority to determine the same in such manner as they deem just and right after hearing the parties or their legal advisors, and their decision shall be final and binding on all Parsees concerned.

36. The EC shall be guided by the following among other principles in deciding such objections :-

a) If the election of a candidate whose election has been published is set aside, the candidate who has obtained the largest number of votes out of those who have not been elected and against whose election there is no valid objection shall be declared to be elected. If there are several such candidates who have obtained the same number of votes the question will be decided by drawing lots. The setting aside of the election of any candidate shall not affect the election of any other elected candidate.

b) No objection shall be entertained on the ground that a candidate who has not been elected was disqualified.

c) If any voter is proved to have been prevented from voting by force or owing to omission by mistake or otherwise of his name from a register or List of Voters or the error of an election officer and raises his/her objection within 48 hrs of the counting of votes, such voter may be given an opportunity of recording his/her vote or votes and the votes recounted thereafter and the result declared accordingly. Votes under this sub rule may be recorded in any manner the EC deems just and fit not necessarily in accordance with the foregoing rules.

d) No election shall be set aside for any irregularity in procedure unless the irregularity is proved to have materially affected the final result.

e) If the decision involves the setting aside of the election of any Parsi or the declaration of the election of any other, the result of such decision shall be published in the same way as the result of an election.

f) The fact that the election of a candidate is set aside shall not affect the validity of any act of the Trustees in which such Parsee may have taken part, if such act would have been valid without his taking part in it.

37. The Election Commission shall, within 15 days of the receipt of the complaint and hearing the complainant, within this period and considering oral or written evidence and / or submissions that may be made by either party either disqualify the candidate from contesting the election or if the election is complete, disqualify the said candidate from assuming the office of Trustee or should the candidate have assumed the office of Trustee to disqualify him / her from continuing as a Trustee.

38. In order to hold free and fair elections, the Election Commissioner will be entitled to adopt any other additional measures as he / she may deem fit.

It is now for the present Trustees of BPP to consider implementing the Revised Scheme into which the Code of Conduct has been incorporated and move the Hon. Bombay High Court for its sanction.

from:

Jamsheed G Kanga : Minoo R Shroff : Dadi B Engineer : Burjor H Antia : Dinshaw K Tamboly Maneck H Engineer : Noshir H Dadrawala Homi R S Khushrokhani : Farokh K Kavarana Fali P Sarkari : Comm (Retd) Aspi Marker. Former Trustees & other concerned Zoroastrians.



We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust our sails. - unknown

Jivta Raho! Jivo Parsi!

T

The numerical decline of the Parsi community in India is not a recent phenomenon. The Total Fertility Rate plunged from 4.1 in 1881 to 2.93 in the 1920s to 0.88 today. The Parsi population has been in rapid, inexorable decline since 1941. This decline, if left unimpeded, will see fewer than 20,000 Parsis remaining by 2050 and possibly, eventual extinction by the end of this century.

by soonu engineer

Alarm bells were sounded in 1948 and, in 1995 a plant geneticist, Ardeshir Damania, wrote a nine point programme to put the revival of the community 'on a war footing'. Under the rallying cry of 'We are not dead - yet!' he proposed a radical programme which ranged from converting 'redundant' fire-temples and towers of silence into accommodation for young couples, to acceptance of children of mixed marriages; subsidised fertility treatment for couples who needed it, the donation of eggs by fertile Parsi women, including those married to non-Parsis, and, possibly in the future, cloning! Very little notice was taken of this or of similar proposals put forward by others.

A Modest Start

A comprehensive programme for social and demographic rejuvenation is beyond the capability of a community entrenched in endogamy and petrified in a patriarchy that is at odds with its proud record of universal education and female emancipation. Within these constraints, the 'Jivo Parsi' project seeks to wake up the community from its century of reproductive slumber. By offering free or subsidised medical assistance to those facing the prospect of infertility but unable to afford the

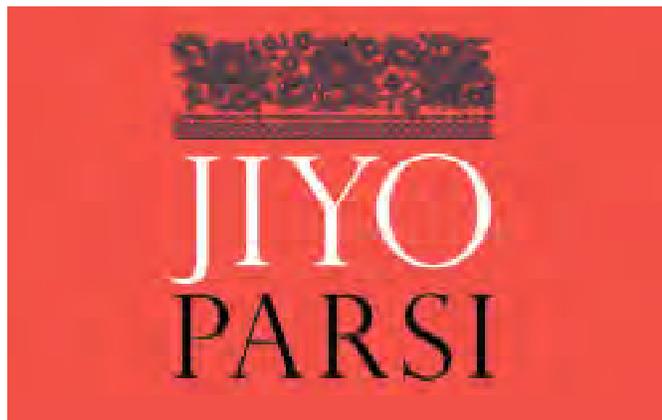
treatment, '*Jivo Parsi*' is a compassionate response to the plight of many Parsi couples facing a childless future.

The pioneer is Dr Anahita Pandole, who in 2004 started a clinic in Mumbai in response to the 2001 Census data showing a drastic fall in fertility. There was already a scheme to financially support families with a second and third child. But it was in 2009, when the results of a demographic study commissioned by the UNESCO-funded Parzor was presented at the World Zoroastrian Conference in Dubai, that four women, Dr Shernaz Cama, Dr Piloos Hakim, Dr Zinobia Madan and Dr Anahita Pandole (not all medical doctors) resolved to tackle the problem through medical assistance to treat infertility and advocacy to deal with social factors that have led to the 39% decline in Parsi numbers since 1941.

Parsis are not infertile

"Parsis are not infertile", says Dr Pandole, which may come as a surprise to those who associate *Jivo Parsi* with infertility

treatments. It is socio-cultural factors that have put a break on Parsi rates of reproduction. Though there are some unique factors peculiar to



Parsis, such as endogamy (marriage within the group) and the exclusion of children of women who marry outside the community, it is not unknown for fertility to decline with economic prosperity and female emancipation. According to research carried out by Zubin Shroff and Marcia Castro*, the falling birth and death rate over a 30 year period resulted in an age structure of the community, in 1948, that was 'very similar to that observed in England and Wales'. Higher education, high economic status, female economic independence and emancipation, modernity and a liberal, cosmopolitan outlook are some of the characteristics that have won Parsis universal admiration. Ironically, these same attributes have also contributed to their declining numbers. There are now 200 births to 800 deaths per annum. For half a century the average age at marriage for Parsi women has remained at a high of 27 years and for men, 32.



Parsis and Dodos?

David Cross

Cost of Modernity

Take economic status and well-being: maintaining a high, western-style, standard of living in the face of post-independence competition

has meant that both men and women have delayed marriage in order to further their careers; and a very high proportion of women (75%) have opted to work full-time and therefore delay or restrict their families. A 1991 study of never-married Parsis found that despite the community being highly educated and therefore relatively well-off, 'low income' was given as a reason for remaining single by 40% of male respondents. 'Low income', presumably, is relative to their memories of affluence.

A western notion of the nuclear family has resulted in 90% of Parsis, in a recent survey, considering it a priority for couples to have a home of their own rather than live within the extended family. 'No house; no spouse' is a familiar slogan. This in turn has meant delaying marriage until independent accommodation could be found. It has also increased the pressure and costs of child care because grandparents are not around to help out.

Liberal values of individualism and conservative notions of ethnic exclusivity have dealt a lethal blow to the community. A high proportion of Parsis remain single. The social and religious pressure to marry only within the community, combined with the unpopularity of arranged marriages yet the difficulty in encountering suitable partners on one's own have rendered marriage unattainable for many who would have wished for a lifelong partner and children. For women, there is the added deterrence of exclusion from the community should they find a partner outside it. A sense of loyalty to parents and the internalisation of socio-cultural values have condemned Parsi men and women into self-imposed singlehood. This has resulted in both a collective and personal tragedy on a grand scale.

No pressure to wed

Unlike in other Indian communities, there is no pressure on Parsi men and women to get married. A genuine respect for individual preferences means that there is no social stigma against women who choose not to marry. (Nor are gay and lesbian Parsis forced to wed, as is the case in other Indian communities.) "In a twisted way, this has worked against us", was the rueful comment from Dr Pervin Dadachandji, a psychiatrist on the programme. A 1991 survey found that 30% of Parsi women remained unmarried throughout their lives – possibly the highest rate in the world.

Some have, of course, decided to look elsewhere and now nearly 40% of marriages, by men and women, are with partners outside the community. Add to this the substantial emigration to western

countries and the story of Parsis is complete: a veritable Qissa-e-Anjaam! Memories of an affluent past, inflated economic aspirations, women's independence and high achievement, westernisation, liberal individualism and the ideal of ethnic exclusivity have all combined to deter or delay marriages and consequently restrict the size of the Parsi family or to forego it altogether.

Jiyo Parsi

In this complex drama of cause and effect, *Jiyo Parsi* is a well-planned, well-structured intervention to increase the number of Parsi



births by 200 over a five year period, as well as to address the socio-cultural factors that have caused the birth rate to fall since 1881. The Parsi Panchayat Fertility Project has been transformed into a more ambitious government-funded scheme involving diagnosis and infertility treatment with counselling for Parsi married couples plus awareness-raising and advocacy,

aimed at young people, to steer them towards early marriage and parenthood. The scheme is funded by the government, managed by the Parzor Foundation and supported by the Bombay Parsi Panchayat and monitored by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences.



The project started in September 2013 and did not attract much comment until a year later when it burst upon an unsuspecting Indian public through an orchestrated publicity campaign by advertising mogul, Sam Balsara. A matter as personal and sensitive as sexual health was

splashed across the nation's screens and print media, and the community's low fecundity, its many 'elderly primagravidas' and obstinate 'nulligravidas' (childless) were exposed to a bemused public. "Suddenly ... people have woken up that, along with the Great Indian Bustard, the tiger and the one-horned rhino, the Parsi is also dwindling," quipped the comedian, Cyrus Broacha.



Naturally, many Parsis took exception to being branded in public as social deviants within a national culture that celebrates marriage and large families. The older folk, especially, looked askance at the

sometimes naughty, pointed but always humorous advertisements cajoling the young to go forth and multiply. They winced

as the nation's cartoonists got to work. Here is my favourite:



JIYO PANDA – JIYO PARSİ

Surely, one would expect that such an intimate matter would be kept within the

family?

But Sam Balsara is unrepentant. "No campaign has been as extensively and intensively written up ... as the Jiyo Parsi campaign," he crows. While the aim is to address some entrenched beliefs and to elicit specific responses within a tiny group, this could not be done, he explains, without "creating a wave, or a *hava*," an illusion that the changes were sweeping over masses of people. Hence, the mass coverage and mass exposure.

And it has worked, according to Shernaz Cama, who heads the scheme. There are many Parsis, especially in rural areas who do not speak English and who don't possess a computer or have internet access. "It is the Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati TV discussion programmes that have reached them Parsis from small villages, after reading the ads in Jam-e-Jamshed and Parsi Times, call us up and request enrolment forms. We have realised how many people from our community, in remote villages, need both medical attention and counselling. We are bringing together

people from several tiny villages to one location from which we can address their problems.”

The reaction of the Indian public has been generally sympathetic. “There has been deep concern expressed by people, across India, who have come forward to ‘help in any way’ to save Parsis,” claims Shernaz. TV hosts have been respectful and genuinely curious. No one has objected to Rs10 crores (£1m) being given to a relatively affluent community. Well, no one except Parsi critics who see this as a waste of money and an affront to both Parsis and to the values of equality and inclusion.

Critics

Some Parsi critics have seized upon the fact that it is a government-funded project and questioned the wisdom of encouraging births in a country that is trying to limit population growth. They have pounced on the advertisements which urge younger marriages, having the first child at a younger age, and larger families – the converse of the usual family planning mantras – and accused the campaign of making oppressive demands of Parsi women, of ‘genetic engineering’ and even racism.

The decision of the Ministry of Minority Affairs (MOMA) to take up the cause is not surprising. It has a mandate to address legitimate demographic concerns of all minorities and the existential threat to the Parsi religio-ethnic group has been thoroughly researched since 1948 by both Indian and international academic institutions. The prognosis is depressing. UNESCO has warned since 1999 against the disappearance of this culture and the Indian government is a signatory to the UNESCO Convention. Therefore, it is not out of some misplaced sentimentality, or a special fondness for Parsis (though that is there and many would like to think so) that the project was sponsored - it would have

amounted to unfair discrimination had MOMA refused to help.

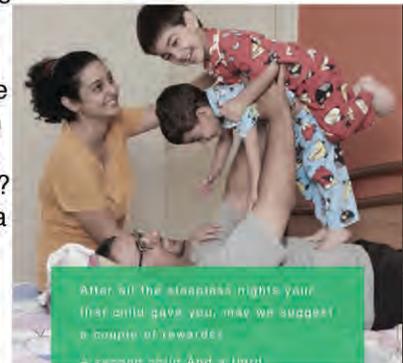
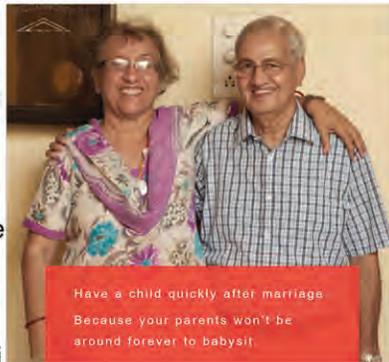
What irks is that Parsis went cap-in-hand for a subsidy, a paltry one at that, from the government – however entitled they might be. That a well-off community, which has been a model of self-help, should request a hand-out has caused indignation and bewilderment amongst many Parsis, including this writer.

“There was a time”, thunders Noshir H Dadrawala, CEO of the Centre for Advancement in Philanthropy, “when our proud forefathers only gave, and politely refused any favours from the government.” True. And, if Mr Balsara could donate his considerable contribution, why has the rest of the funding not come from within the community? Perhaps it’s a symptom of its

social malaise, as well as numerical decline, that external financial help has been sought. As Mr Dadrawala caustically pointed out, “for the Parsi community it is [the government’s grant] probably worth the value of just two flats at Cusrow Baug or perhaps three at other colonies. So why are we getting so carried away?”

Why, indeed? It seems that Mr Dadrawala has provided the answer himself when he says, “Every Parsi is fully aware that the numbers are dwindling and they require neither a reminder nor ratification!” True only in part: Parsis know they are ‘dwindling’ but even a dying man often refuses to acknowledge his imminent demise. Parsi complacency in the face of impending doom goes something like this, ‘we survived defeat, persecution and exile some 1300 years ago and so we will survive now.’ How, exactly? Well ... somehow! But the pioneers, a millennium ago, didn’t just muddle through: they had a plan and they had passion.

So an external hand was needed, it seems. The awareness was there but ‘ratification’ from an objective third party, in



the form of real concern backed by a programme of action, is what was needed to shake Parsis out of their lethargy and complacency. The value, the true value of MOMA's money is not in the 10 crores that many so despise but in the very *act of giving* and the *humility of the taking*. There is deep symbolism in this exchange.

Valuing ourselves

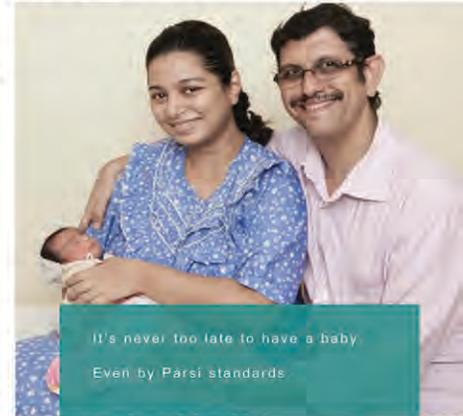
Parsis have always expressed gratitude to their adopted homeland for giving them refuge – it is now time to accept, again, that helping hand. Having savoured for centuries the accolade of being the 'sugar in the milk', we must now take cognisance, as one of the campaign ads puts it, that 'the milk ... is running out of sugar.' This is not simply about numbers. Shernaz Cama touched on this when she said that *Jiyo Parsi* is about "valuing ourselves".

It is this 'valuing' that has been dismissed as 'racism' by a few Parsi critics of the scheme. They have questioned the audacity to want to preserve one's community or cultural group. The *Jiyo Parsi* objective of preventing and treating infertility, a legitimate and compassionate aim by any standard, has been sensationalised as "a state-sponsored system of breeding [sic] racially pure children". The attempt, however wanting, to normalise the demographic structure of the community,

has been dismissed as "genetic engineering", as though there is something sinister in using modern medical technologies to assist infertile couples or using counselling to bolster family formation, which is the bedrock of a healthy society. The timely reminder, that delaying the family may have adverse implications for reproductive health, has been interpreted as turning women into "baby-producing machines".

This posturing to some western ideal of 'modernity' is totally misconceived. Countries such as France, Russia and Sweden have experienced a decline in

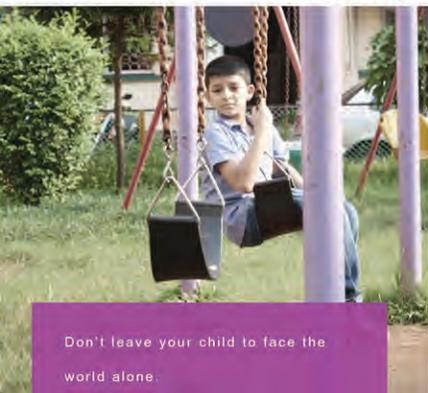
population growth rates at some time during the past 50 years and have put in place a comprehensive programme for increasing births, including the encouragement of early marriage, larger families and a healthier work-life balance. Sweden experienced a dramatic rise in fertility from 1.6 to 2.02 in the 1980s, as a response to its many family-friendly policies, including financial incentives and subsidies. It would be absurd to accuse the Swedes of racism just because they wanted to increase their birth rate; or of sexism in a society where women have achieved more equality than anywhere else and demanded policies that made their lives easier.



Canker

What the critics are right to object to is that the *Jiyo Parsi* scheme is not open to Parsi women with non-Parsi spouses. Had they focused on that instead of lashing out indiscriminately, they would have been more effective. However, attacking *Jiyo Parsi* is the soft option. Creating and leading a movement for ending discrimination against women who marry out is much more difficult and requires involvement with and participation in community activities. An effective challenge to the *Jiyo Parsi* scheme, on this issue, would be to gather a number of women who would like to be included, but are currently barred, and publicly, vociferously demand assistance for them. Since the infrastructure is already there, all that would be needed to get around any legalistic bar would be to find private sponsors to foot the bill.

However, it is unlikely that *Jiyo Parsi* will make a major difference to the demographic outcome unless it is able to achieve a three-fold increase in the birth rate, according to



the Shroff/Castro study already referred to. This study was particularly interested in ‘the potential impact of intermarriage on the population decline of Parsis of Mumbai’.

One of its conclusions is that the inclusion of children of mixed marriages, where the woman is a Parsi, is not going to have much impact on the total number of Parsis in 2050, unless the general birth rate triples. Hence, it recommends that, ‘instead of focusing the discussion around intermarriage, the community should consider other strategies that could impact fertility levels.’

Whether the inclusion of these children makes a significant impact on numbers or not, their exclusion is a definite detriment to the community. Mothers are the most intimate link in the transfer of values, norms and customs to the next generation, and the loss of Parsi women and their children leaves a gaping hole in the psyche of the community, a self-inflicted wound arising out of ignorance of Zoroastrian tenets and a misguided preoccupation with ethnicity.

What next?

The well-being of Parsi youth requires a holistic approach. Housing schemes for the young, more subsidised day care and old age centres for aging members of the family, reduction in school fees and an increase in scholarships, subsidised and easily accessible health care for all, young and old, should be implemented if a sustained growth in Parsi numbers is the long-term objective. The well-being of Parsi women, and indeed of the community, also requires that they are not ostracised for exercising the same freedom to choose their partners as do Parsi men.

Jiyo Parsi is a first step towards treating the demographic malady that has befallen the Parsi community. For that, it should be commended – and supported. It has identified the root of the malaise: the ethos within the community that has led to a downward spiral of late marriages, falling birth rates and disproportionate singlehood. It has wisely chosen to steer a course within

the constraints of the current social norms; otherwise there would be no ‘first step’. But without a comprehensive programme for change, the first step may never get to the second.

Jiyo Parsi has addressed entrenched attitudes that are an obstacle to raising fecundity in a way that is humorous (tasteless to some) and close to the bone. By using the public media, it has left no Parsi untouched but it has, perhaps, risked them becoming the butt of jokes. It has already attracted couples desperately wanting children. It is possible that it will achieve 200 extra births over the next five years. And that’s as far as it goes.

Jiyo Parsi was never meant to be the vehicle for fundamental social, cultural and institutional reform that its critics demand of it. To foist this responsibility on it is to shirk the responsibility oneself.

Jivta raho dikra, ne fikr na karo!

Source:

*Zubin C. Shroff and Marcia C. Castro: ‘The potential impact of intermarriage on the population decline of the Parsis of Mumbai, India. *Demographic Research*, Vol. 25 p 545 -564.



Jiyo Parsi images shared by Shernaz Cama, PARZOR



Soonu Engineer manages a charity that raises funds for free eye care for the poor in Pakistan. She is a Trustee of a leading UK charity that provides advice and support to families. Soonu is a volunteer for a parenting Help Line and is on the West London Committee to stop the creeping privatisation of the National Health Service.

Lebanon's Zoroastrians want a civil state

Shared by Fariborz Rahnmoon with Hamazor

Zoroastrians' integration into local communities has not meant that they feel secure in this supposed country of diversity.

In Lebanon, diversity is not limited to customs, traditions and the sharing of power. It exceeds the 18 constitutionally recognized sects, which have shared governance of the country, and even taken equal part in internecine conflict. Despite this, while the known 'other' remains a concern for some, the unknown 'other' is the focus of myths and legends, and even social exclusion.

by mohamed chebaro

Lebanon's remaining Jewish community is not the only minority trying to reaffirm its presence, secure its rights, and win recognition as being Lebanese. There is more than one minority in the 10,450-square-meter country that makes defining its identity or the dominance of one sect over the others impossible. Despite this, mutual acceptance is still a long way off for the conflicting sects.

Some people may think the idea of meeting a Magian or Zoroastrian in the streets of Beirut is a fanciful notion. They may find the idea fanciful because they think the religion has become extinct. Others, while they know the religion exists in other countries, don't realize it exists in Lebanon. Zoroastrianism is, however, practiced in Lebanon, and by Lebanese nationals who arrived over 200 years ago — before the formation of Greater Lebanon — not refugees or recent arrivals.

In general, the most infuriating thing for Lebanon's Zoroastrian community is their portrayal as fire worshippers. One of them told me that although Lebanese citizens of all sects might be prepared to accept the country's three familiar religious denominations, accepting coexistence with a *Majusi* or *Sikhi* remains an unacceptable shock.

Lebanon's Zoroastrians live in all the country's sectarian 'cantons,' side by side with Shiites, Sunnis and Christians. One Zoroastrian told me that problems between other confessions have made the way society sees his sect a major concern — due to prevalent sectarian tensions the Arabic word for Zoroastrian has become a pejorative Sunnis use to deride Shiites without knowing the real meaning. "I'm a *Majusi*," he laughs.

According to Interior Ministry statistics, around 30 Zoroastrians are registered to vote. This figure is close to representative, as the total number of Zoroastrians in Lebanon is just over 100, 60 of whom still practice their faith. The rest have integrated into their local communities and changed religion. Even so, this latter group still retains some customs and traditions, like celebrating the Persian New Year.

Lebanon's Zoroastrians have lived a life of secrecy. They came to Lebanon as fugitives more than 200 years ago with no women among them. They faced additional difficulties establishing new families due to the stereotypical image they had long been branded with. When they did succeed in intermarrying and increasing in number, they were accepted by some and rejected

by others. Finally, they decided to live away from the clamor of the masses in safety, security and silence.

Zoroastrians' integration into local communities has not meant that they feel secure in this supposed country of diversity. The use of names from the areas where they live is clear evidence of a persistent fear that they will be exposed. This fear seems justified "in view of sectarian tensions, and the myths and legends" surrounding the sect, one member told me. "Especially as some people in Lebanon still believe we are devil worshipers."

Fear has driven Lebanon's Zoroastrians to practice their rituals behind closed doors. They try as much as possible to keep the religion alive, and despite the difficulties posed by secrecy and small numbers, since they came to Lebanon they have continued to practice, both as individuals and communally.

They have decided to forgo certain rituals voluntarily. This choice was made because the rituals in question were difficult to practice in Lebanon. The move also prevented attention being drawn to the sect in a way that would have threatened the safety of its members. These rituals included the sect's funeral traditions, which stipulate that the human body cannot be mixed with fire, water, air or soil. Bodies are hung on tall towers to be eaten by birds of prey. As this is not possible in Lebanon, Zoroastrian funerals follow the local tradition of burial.

But why the secrecy? Why are Zoroastrians afraid to live out in the open like other sects? "Lebanese people hardly manage to accept the known 'other,' let alone the 'other' who is surrounded by myths and fictitious stories that have absolutely no relation to the truth," one member of the sect said.

Lebanon's Zoroastrians see themselves as Lebanese citizens. They seem more attached to the idea of a secular state than others. They are not interested in proposals

of separation. They realize that in view of their number, only a secular civil state can preserve their continued existence in Lebanon, by giving them the same rights and obligations as other citizens — a truism Lebanese



Zoroastrian children in Lebanon

Zoroastrians came to understand before many others who are still prisoners of the axes of regional power, minority concerns and holders of excess military or numerical force.

When Zoroastrians discuss their religion with someone, they try to emphasize that they are not a myth but a religion like any other — people who believe in humanity and believe, like other monotheistic religions, in one god. "Ahura Mazda in our language is Allah in Arabic. We also say: 'My lord Ahura Mazda, verily I do realize that you alone are God and that you are the one and only,' just like Muslims say: 'there is not god but God,'" I was told. Islam and Zoroastrianism have more than monotheism in common; like Muslims, Zoroastrians pray five times a day. They also perform ritual ablution and go on pilgrimages.

Whenever you talk to a Zoroastrian, they repeatedly tell you that they are Lebanese. Today their greatest ambition is to stop their name being used as a pejorative and to live in safety, whether secretly or openly. Their dreams, however, seem remote in a state that claims to be democratic and to protect diversity. All they want is equality and a civil system that protects them in their own country, so they won't be forced to leave just because they are "*Majus*" or some unfamiliar "other." Many Lebanese, though, seem content to treat the religion with suspicion, and won't even go to the trouble of familiarizing themselves with it or the beliefs of its practitioners. [*This article was originally published in Arabic in Almodon on 18.11.2014*]

A peep into the Genealogy and History of the Sett and Sethna Family

Genealogical research and family histories can throw light on amazing facts and interesting interconnections, as well as bring to light long-forgotten personalities who made pioneering contributions to society. One such prominent family is the Sethia among the Parsis, being the family of Rustom Maneck, the doyen and founder of the Sett family. The members of this family have generally been regarded as the first Sethias amongst the Parsis. The history of the Sett/Seth/Settna/Sethna family over the last four centuries, right from its founder Rustom Maneck (1635–1721) has been well documented in great detail.

by louiza rodrigues



Dr Louiza Rodrigues

The family itself has produced two books in Gujarati. The first book, *Seth Khandanni Vanshavali Tatha Tuk Aheval*, which gives a fairly detailed history of the Sethna family; of their scope and the depth of their knowledge. In addition, the history of the family has been recorded in other sources like the *Parsee Prakashand* archival records. Along with the history of the family penned by S K Hodivala, two family trees were also prepared in English and Gujarati. The family tree in English was prepared by Seth Jalbhoy Ardeshir Sett around 1900 with a basic lithograph which was prepared in Germany. A family tree in Gujarati, which is an updated version, was prepared by Shiavux Sethna in the 1970s. While the family tree in English was distributed/sold along with his book to family members and is available in the two agiaries founded by the Sett family, a few libraries, and with various members of the Sett and Sethna family; the family tree in Gujarati is available only at the M B Saith Agiary (aka Sethna Agiary), Tardeo, Mumbai. It was published by Jalbhoy Ardeshir Sett as early as 1900. In 1931, the reputed scholar Shapurji Kavasji Hodivala who was the personal secretary of Kavasji Jalbhoy Sett wrote another book, *Seth Khandanni Tavarikh*, which not only updated the family history but presented in copious detail the history of

the family by referring to many additional sources. This book also contained a family tree for each of Rustom Maneck's sons, and facsimiles of many important English, Persian and Gujarati documents related to the family. These books combined written history, oral accounts, and contemporary narratives – an endeavour that had never been undertaken before for this family. Thus, when these books first appeared, they created a landmark both in the breadth of their scope and the depth of their knowledge.

Dr Louiza Rodrigues, Associate Professor, Department of History, Ramnarain Ruia College, Mumbai, and her team, undertook the mammoth task of updating the family tree and history of the illustrious Setts and Sethnas under the auspices of the K R Cama Oriental Institute, Mumbai and F H B Settna Trust, Mumbai, the sponsor of this project.

An updated tome effectively extending the saga of the Sett and Sethna family from 1931 to 2014 has also been prepared, as part of the project throws light on the contributions of the Sett/Sethna family to society in the last nearly three-and-a-half centuries, giving a historical account of the family and its descendants spread throughout India and in the diaspora. By

accessing wider historical sources and oral techniques like personal interviews, it has been possible to obtain information about their lives and their place in the social, educational, religious, cultural and economic milieu. As the quantum of data increased while updating the original tree, approximately more than a thousand additional names besides other information like birth and death dates/years etc., as far as possible, is provided in the present volume. This exploration of the genealogy and family history of the Sett/Sethna family reveals patterns over the course of generations that ultimately provide insights into people and communities who often left little historical documentation that could assist researchers.

The Sethnas have a long history of social, philanthropic and economic contribution to the society. They have set up many charitable institutions, two of the well-known are the Agyaries (Parsi Fire Temple) in Mumbai – M N Sett Agyari at Bazaar Gate, Fort, and Muncherji Bomanji Saith's Agiary at Tardeo. Dakhmas [Tower of Silence] as well were established all over India, besides many other institutions which is covered in the second volume, *Institutional Philanthropy of the Sethna family, 18th to 21st Century*.

Over time the family has produced many prominent personalities in the modern period as a paradigm shift occurred from business or trade to professionalism. Some of the prominent personalities were – **Sir Phiroze Sethna** (1866-1938), a prominent Liberal Politician, Insurance man and Banker. He along with Himanshu Rai and Devika Rani founded The Bombay Talkies Limited (commonly known as Bombay Talkies), in 1934; **Sam Bomansha Sethna** (1895-1969), pioneer in developing the fishing industry in Bombay. The Taraporewala Aquarium (1951) is his creation; Lady Navajbai Tata, Li Gotami, Zenobia Vakil and among others were all from the Sethna family.

The project has crystallized in the publication of four volumes, two being

translations from Gujarati to English, *The Genealogy of the Sett Family* with a short narration, a translation of *Seth Khandan ni Tawarique* by Jalbhoy Ardeshir Sett and *A History of the Sett Family*. A translation of *Seth Khandan ni Vanshawali*, by Shapurji Kavasji Hodivala's from Gujarati to English and the other two volumes include *The Sett and Sethna Family of Rustom Maneck (17th to 21st century)*, Volume I: *Genealogy and History*, *The Sett and Sethna Family of Rustom Maneck (18th to 21st century)* Volume II: *Institutional Philanthropy*.

These books will be released by Lady Navajbai Tata's grandson and former Chairman of Tata Sons Limited, Sir Ratan Tata on the 14th January 2015 at K R Cama Oriental Institute, Mumbai at 6:00 pm.



The old Sethna Family Tree

Agiary complex at New Mumbai -

an appeal sent by sharukh mahiar doctor

Greetings from New Bombay, India!

We are about 250 to 300 middle class Parsi Irani Zoroastrians who are members of New Bombay Zoroastrian Association. We have procured a 1000 sq.mts. plot from CIDCO Ltd. costing Rs65 lakhs which we have arranged mostly from our own funds.

We are building an Atash Adaran on this plot and it is being financed by Shirinbai K Doongaji Trust who is also shifting the fire from their Agiary in Bharuch. This has been arranged by courtesy of Vada Dasturji Shri Khurshed Dastoor of Pak Iranshah in Udwarda. Apart from this we are building a stilt plus four storeyed building consisting of :

First floor - AC Dining Hall of 2600 sqft costing Rs80 lakhs

Second floor - AC Hall for Navjote / wedding of 2600 sqft costing Rs80 lakhs

In the above premises the Trust will conduct at various intervals prayer meetings and spiritual discourses, jashans, get-togethers, matrimonial meets, seasonal gahanbars, weddings and navjotes, and any other activity for the benefit of the Zoroastrian Community of New Bombay.

Third floor - Old Age Home of 2600 sqft costing Rs75 lakhs

Fourth floor - Old Age Home of 2600 sqft costing Rs75 lakhs

One can also contribute towards the cost of one room of the Old Age Home costing Rs20 lakhs or one bed costing Rs10 lakhs.

We had approached the BPP but Mr Dinshaw Mehta turned us down for reasons best known to him. We are therefore approaching High Net Worth Parsis/Iranis through the pages of Hamazor, who may be inclined to help our community for which act of kindness the Zoroastrians of New Bombay would be eternally grateful. May Ahura Mazda be with all the donors.

Needless to say that the donor will have the right to name the floors as per his/her wishes. Apart from that if one individual builds the whole building, then we can also name the baug and the building after him/her.

It would be pertinent to point out that Mr Dara Hansotia has promised to build the second floor Hall in memory of his dear departed wife Dr Mehroo Hansotia. He has also informed us that if we get a donor for the whole building, then he can step out of the project and also let us keep the advance payment made so far as a corpus for the Agiary maintenance. We also appeal to the "Aam Admi" to make whatever contribution they can for this very worthy cause. **No amount of donation is too small for us.**

The agiary construction has already started and we hope to commission by September 2015.

May we request readers of Hamazor to give wide publicity about our project to Zoroastrians all over the world with a view to garner some funds.

If you have any queries please feel free to call or write to - New Bombay Zoroastrian Association Charitable Trust, Sharukh Mahiar Doctor, President/Managing Trustee, Plot-179, Sector-8, Vashi, Navi Mumbai 400703. Mobile: +91 98690 16730. Email: smdoctor47@yahoo.co.in

“Parsis like western classical music,,

On January 1, 2015, the Vienna Philharmonic New Year's Concert in the Golden Hall of the Musikverein in Vienna was broadcast in over 90 countries around the world and was seen by 50 million television viewers. The concert was conducted by Zubin Mehta. He has enjoyed an artistic partnership with the Vienna Philharmonic for over 50 years and this is the fifth time he has served as the Philharmonic's Honorary Conductor for the New Year's Concert.

by farishta dinshaw

Zubin Mehta is undoubtedly the most famous Parsi associated with western classical music. He was born in 1936 in Mumbai. Given that his father, Mehli Mehta, a noted concert violinist, was the founder of the Bombay Symphony Orchestra, it was almost inevitable that Zubin would give up his pre-medical studies and move to Vienna where he eventually entered the conducting programme under Hans Swarowsky at the Akademie für Musik in 1954. Zubin Mehta made his debut as an opera conductor with “Tosca” in Montreal in 1963. Since then he has conducted orchestras all over the world, including the USA, the UK, Austria, Italy, Germany, Spain, India, and Israel.

The Indian Parsis' love of western classical music is so well known that it is almost stereotypical. It evolved out of their association with the British in Colonial India, allowing them to distance themselves from the middle class families of other local communities. In 1884, Dosabhai Framji Karaka wrote two volumes about the history of Parsis for the education of “the great English reading public” in which he often mentioned how the Parsis' growing “good taste” makes them different from the other local communities, such as Parsi women having given up the practice of wearing nose rings or Parsis having given up the practice of men and women eating separately. On the subject of music, he wrote, “As an indication of increasing intellectual taste among the Parsis, it may



At Musikverein, Vienna. Photo credit Terry Linke

be noted that of late English music has formed one of the amusements of their evening parties, instead of the ugly and absurd “natches” of native dancing girls, accompanied by musicians who were far from being grand masters of their profession ... The natch, however, is not entirely superseded.” (Vol 1, pg 132).

Karaka would have been gratified to know that in the years that followed the dancing girls would eventually be superseded by western music. In the “The Good Parsi: The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial

Society" (1996), Tanya M. Luhrmann wrote about Parsis' assimilation of Raj traditions like having tea and cheese sandwiches at clubs, and classical music. "Parsis also flock to the evenings of classical western music offered by the Bombay Madrigal Singers Organization and the British Women's Council. "The audience was always at least 99 per cent Parsi and foreign," an admirer explained over tea at the CCI club (Cricket Club of India); "Parsis like western music." She was of course, exaggerating, claiming for Parsis a greater musical sophistication than that of middle class Hindus. And the community has contributed many excellent musicians of western classical music." (pg 42).

This was echoed over a decade later by another writer. On July 17, 2009, in a post on Live Mint, an online news website associated with The Hindustan Times, Aakar Patel wrote, "In the men's room at the Tata-built National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA) midway through a concert a couple of years ago, I stood between two Parsi men. Remarking on the enthusiastic sawing of a string quartet's cellist, one said to the other: "*Brahms ketlu majha nu utu, ne!* (What a delight the Brahms was!)"

Nowhere else in India would you hear that other than at the NCPA, where the Symphony Orchestra of India (SOI) is based. Its patron will observe two things

about the SOI: Its audience is Parsi, and its exponent is Catholic. For an annual fee of Rs10,000, one may become a Friend of the SOI. Friends get two free tickets to only one concert in the year, but they get to talk to the performers after each show. And they get to attend music appreciation talks through the year. There are 151 Friends of the SOI, and 94 of them are Parsi. At

Western classical concerts, half the audience is Parsi." Not surprisingly, Zane Dalal, SOI's current Associate Music Director, is a Parsi.

The latest Parsi to spring onto the international music scene and continue the tradition of Parsis love for western classical music is pianist, Neville Bharucha. Now 22, Neville exhibited an inclination for western classical music and started piano lessons when he was four. By age seven, he was composing original short pieces and at age of nine, Neville gave his first public piano recital at the Alliance Francaise de Bangalore, which included ten of his own compositions.



Neville Bharucha, photo courtesy FEZANA

His outstanding performance in the Trinity College 8th Grade Piano exam won him the Capt. Alvares Trophy for Excellence at the age of 14 in 2006. He has won several prizes including the prestigious Peter Coelho Memorial Award for Music in 2002, 2004 and 2008. His talent is not limited to classical music and he is also part of the live music support for Liela Alvares' much acclaimed Broadway musicals.

He has had the opportunity to play for a visiting delegation from the Royal School of Music, Stockholm, and their director Mr. Anders Oman described Neville as "exceptionally gifted". Concert pianists Christina Zulauf from Switzerland, Schmidt Christian from Austria, Andreas Kern from Germany, Paul Stewart and Mathieu Gaudet from Canada, Adriano Jordao from Portugal, Christopher Ungerer & Joseph Benowitz from the USA have all commended his playing. Neville recently obtained his Masters in Music Performance from the University of Southampton and is currently pursuing an MA in Composing from the City University, London.

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Zane Dalal www.zanedalal.com

Zubin Mehta www.zubinmehta.net

Queen of Bollywood Remixes

Although many Parsis in India continue to hold on to their Colonial past with their appreciation of western classical music, many youth are gravitating towards the music genre that pervades throughout Indian society regardless of faith, class or ethnicity – Bollywood music. As India's No 1 Female DJ, Ashrafi Oshidar mixes recorded music for club events. Bollywood remixes are her forte, nevertheless she has her hands on other genres as well, such as hip hop, club, house, retro, lounge etc.

Ashrafi was born in Kolkata and says of her roots, "Being a Zoroastrian in India, with its diverse religions, taught me not to be judgmental of others on the basis of their beliefs or faiths. Mingling with others helped me to broaden my world view, as I was accepted by everyone, even though I was from a minority community."

As a teenager she became intrigued by the sound of mixing music when she heard another DJ loop the song, "Chaiya Chaiya" from the movie, "Dil Se" (1998). She says, "I have been interested in music since my childhood and since it was an integral part of my life, as the years went by, I came to the realization that I had been born to be a DJ!"

She started her career as a sound engineer and worked for MTV, but eventually became a professional DJ in 2005. She is the first female DJ to create a worldwide name for herself in the Bollywood genre. She is

popularly known as the "Queen of Bollywood Remixes" and shot to fame after winning a special award for outstanding performance at the Times Music War of The DJ's in 2005.

Since then, she has not only performed in all the top clubs in India, but also in Dubai, the UK, Germany, Switzerland, and Canada. "I do not have any fixed projects or schedules and work mainly on the weekends. The workload doubles during the festive season from November to January." In 2009, Ashrafi deejayed the official after party for the Indian entry to the Toronto International Film Festival, "Road, Movie" directed by Dev Benegal. During an interview leading up to the event, she told Pooja Narang of the South Asian Outlook, "Bollywood films incorporating club remixes into films has been the best thing for the club culture internationally, as its reached out to many people who would not normally hear Bollywood film music, plus it's given a foundation to have many Bollywood events, which was not the case a few years back."

She is passionate about music all the time from listening to it while in the bath to using her days off to upgrade her music portfolio. As she says, "My job is to make people happy and dance to the music I play for them and nothing else matters!" ■■■■

By FMD with additional information from www.djashrafi.com



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



Reimagining the Epic of Kings : The Shahnameh of Ancient Iran

interview by james wiener

For hundreds of years, the Shahnameh has been revered in the Near and Middle East as the epic of the Persian-speaking peoples. Written over a thousand years ago by the famed poet Ferdowsi of Tous, the Shahnameh shares tales of adventure, romance, conflict, and betrayal. Although its stories and characters have inspired generations of artists and poets, it is still relatively unknown in the West.

In this exclusive interview, James Blake Wiener of the Ancient History Encyclopedia speaks with Mr Hamid Rahmanian about Shahnameh: The Epic of the Persian Kings, and the process of creating a new edition of this timeless classic.

James Wiener : Mr Hamid Rahmanian, welcome to the Ancient History Encyclopedia and thank you for speaking to us about an exquisite new publication: Shahnameh: The Epic of the Persian Kings.

Persians, Central Asians, and various Near Eastern peoples have treasured and retold the tales of the Shahnameh for centuries. Blending fable, romance, and history, along with a strong dose of traditional Persian values, the Shahnameh is the great epic of Persian speaking peoples.

What gave you the inspiration to illustrate Shahnameh: The Epic of the Persian Kings? Had you been very interested in this classic of Persian literature before then?

Hamid Rahmanian : When you grow up in a culture where, from an early age, you are exposed to impassioned, indigenous poetry and folklore, it is hard not to be interested in literature. In family, school, and everyday interaction, there are often so many poetic undertones. Literature and poetry are among the great achievements of the Iranian people. So I would say I am inherently designed to love my own literature.

JW : In 1010 CE, the famed Persian poet, Ferdowsi of Tous (940-1020 CE), finished his epic poem of nearly 60,000 verses: the Shahnameh. It was a project that took Ferdowsi over thirty years to complete. A thousand years

later, the Shahnameh is still revered and celebrated in Iran and across the Persian-speaking world. Indeed, it is difficult to underscore Iranian identity without discussing this literary gem.

What can explain the enduring popularity of Ferdowsi's masterpiece in your opinion? Is it because the Shahnameh confronts eternal questions of fate, existence, and desire?

HR: The Shahnameh single-handedly saved the Persian language as well as the mythology and epic traditions of the ancient Iranian plateau. The endeavor that Ferdowsi made over a thousand years ago explains, in part, the reason why the Persian language is alive and in use among Iranians, Tajiks, and Afghans today. The stories in the book come from the human consciousness; it is the immortal quest for truth and justice. The Shahnameh is far from a nationalistic creed; it has universal stories that have resonated throughout history and that is what makes it relevant even in today's political environment. For instance, when the new president of Iran, Hassan Rouhani, addressed the UN in 2013, he opened his speech with a passage from the Shahnameh: "Be Relentless in the cause of Good. Bring the spring, you must, Banish the winter, you should!"

JW: As a graphic artist, which aspect(s) did you find particularly daunting as you began to

illustrate the Shahnameh? Part of what makes this publication so beautiful is the melange of styles and imagery, collectively taken from works of art completed in Iran, the Ottoman Empire, and Mughal India (dating from the 15th to mid-19th centuries CE).

HR: The idea of illustrating an epic story is not a unique idea; there are a number of examples in many cultures. However, in this instance, I wanted to make something truly dependent on the visual culture of the geography of the epic stories in the Shahnameh. In the various stories, you have locations ranging from India to the Mediterranean Sea. Coincidentally, this region was also heavily influenced by different Iranian schools of painting until the mid-19th century CE. I wanted these silent characters from the past to become the modern actors of my paintings, as if I am breathing into the soul of these dusty old figures in order to make them come alive.

So the challenge was to reimagine the plots in the Shahnameh from this wealth of centuries old paintings and lithographs. You could say history was my paint bucket!

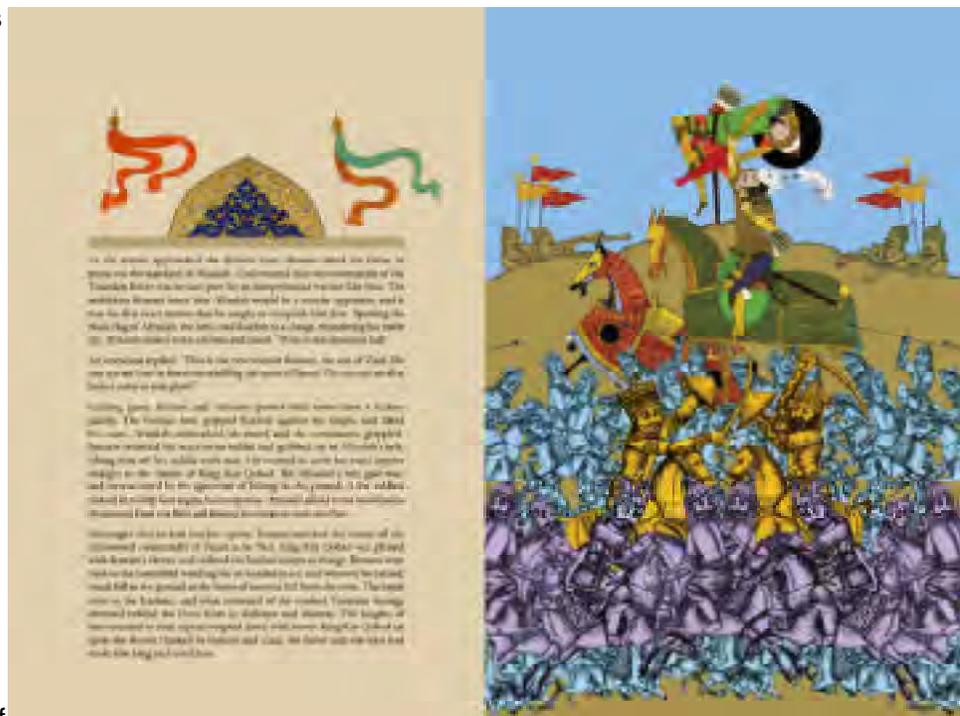
I set some strict self-imposed boundaries in creating these illustrations: one of them was not to draw a single element. This is something that has never been done before in the context of illustrating the story. Although each page is heavily retouched, no element has been drawn from scratch.

There are over 500 pages of illustrations in the book, which are culled from over 8,000 pieces digitally cut from different sources, and then recomposed or manipulated (being totally deconstructed and reconstructed in tandem). This was an utterly intense process. Mistakenly, people assume these folios existed before, but there is not a single element in the book that existed in the way I put them together.

Since the Shahnameh is not a well-known book among Westerners, I had in mind to create a project where each page would be a surprise and where Western readers could not only learn about the epic stories of

the Persian peoples but also be exposed to the visual culture of those lands.

In sum, this process combined pain with pleasure.



JW : Creating a new version of the Shahnameh required a ‘dialogue’ between illustration and translation. Mr Rahmanain, could you offer a comment or two on the collaboration between you and your translator, Dr Ahmad Sadri, Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Lake Forest College? Furthermore, how did this ambitious project commence?

HR : This is another unique attribute to this edition of the Shahnameh — the harmony between the storyteller, here as the translator, and the artist. When my creative partner, Ms Melissa Hibbard, and I started this project, we had in mind to create an edition of the text that would be easy to navigate and be accessible. Other editions on the market are either too complicated or even overwhelming for the average reader unfamiliar with this geographical region.

We searched for a person who had a poetic sensibility in both Persian and English, and also the command of both languages. Most of all, we wanted someone who was inspiring and a pleasure to work with, and who could take some solid direction from people who had a strong vision for the publication. After all, we were going to be working closely and intensely for two years. So it was a blessing to find Professor Sadri! There was a perfect harmony between us, and that harmony shines in the book as a whole.

One of the significant layers Sadri added to the text was to incorporate the narrator and poet, Ferdowsi, into the story. From time to time the reader gets a peek into Ferdowsi’s personal life, his struggles in creating the Shahnameh, as an artist, and an occasional moral lesson for the reader to heed.

Together, we also had the idea — or fantasy perhaps — of being like famed classicist Edith Hamilton (1867-1963), bringing these stories to a non-Iranian audience much like she introduced Greek mythology to the US in the early-20th century. That is still one of our main goals of the book. The power and beauty of the stories found in the Shahnameh can easily compete with their Greek and Roman counterparts.



Also, it is important to mention that the length of the text and the illustrations were the subject of many back and forth collaborations to find the balance between the volume of text on one page and the negative space of the layout. This is so closely and perfectly done that some of our critics by mistake assumed that the text was translated for the illustrations, which is not true and the opposite is true, in fact. We find it amusing that people have commented that the translation is a slave to the paintings!

JW : Could you tell us a bit more about how you created the illustrations found in Shahnameh: The Epic of the Persian Kings? As I understand it, this version of the Shahnameh also includes several stories and themes that have not been traditionally illustrated.

HR : There has been a tradition of illustrating these epic stories for over a millennium, the late-16th century CE being the climax. This tradition almost died out over a century ago. Throughout the years, some of the plots got more attention than others from master painters and kings who commissioned the project. In this edition, I made an earnest effort to depict plots that have rarely if ever been illustrated before, such as dreams and nightmares or the inner thoughts of a character or even plots where the protagonist lies or fantasizes.

JW : May I ask you if you had a favorite character or scene that you particularly enjoyed illustrating and bringing to life? If so, who and why?

HR : I guess the compositions that become very minimalistic are my favorites ones and also the most difficult ones to create. Then, when I discovered that I could incorporate silhouettes of the characters into the work to create a more cinematic visualization of a plot, it was like opening a whole realm of new possibilities, which was very inspiring.

JW : The Shahnameh seems to have something for everyone: epic battles on par with the Illiad and Mahabharata; torrid, romantic stories involving powerful women; tales of pure knights and exalted heroes like Rostam; and royal rivalries which threaten to destabilize powerful empires.

Why else should readers — particularly those in the West — read the Shahnameh in your opinion?

HR : In general, I think we humans by nature are drawn to good stories. We love to become engaged and identify with compelling characters and events. The Shahnameh is no exception. Good stories do not differentiate between the West and the East.

In the Shahnameh, there are four heart-wrenching tragedies, four beautiful love

stories, and endless battles where sometimes Iranians are the “bad guys” and the enemy is the “good guy,” and other times vise versa. The plots are engaging to anyone who is looking for a few moments to escape from daily life and sink into a sophisticated story. Who can resist a good story?

JW : Mr Hamid Rahmanian, congratulations to you, Professor Sadri, and Ms. Melissa Hibbard on having created such a stunningly beautiful book. We look forward to following your work in the near future!

HR: Thank you James!

Mr Hamid Rahmanian was approached by Hamazor to give an insight of his book, who in turn felt the interview he held with James Wiener of the Ancient History Encyclopedia would be an ideal read. We thank Mr Wiener and the Ancient History Encyclopedia for granting permission to Hamazor for sharing the interview with our readers.

<http://etc.ancient.eu/2014/03/16/the-epic-of-kings-the-shahnameh-of-ancient-iran/>

All images illustrated here are through the courtesy of Hamid Rahmanian appearing in the Shahnameh: The Epic of the Persian Kings © Hamid Rahmanian, Fictionville Studio, 2013.



James Blake Wiener is the Communications Director at Ancient History Encyclopedia. Trained as a historian and researcher, and previously a professor, James is chiefly interested in cross-cultural exchange, world history, and international relations. Aside from his work at AHE, James is an avid Arabist, devotee of romance languages (French, Portuguese, and Spanish), reggaetonero, and fan of ice hockey.



Hamid Rahmanian is a 2014 John Simon Guggenheim Fellow. He is an award-winning filmmaker and graphic artist whose work has been exhibited in international competitions and publications. His narrative and documentary films have premiered at Venice, Sundance, Toronto, Tribeca, and IDFA film festivals. He has won numerous international awards and his works have been televised on international networks, including PBS, Sundance Channel, IFC, Channel 4, BBC, DR2, and Al Jazeera. He lives in Brooklyn, New York in the USA. He is in the process of making a shadow play theater based on the love story of Zaul and Rudabeh.

Details of the book -



The Book

The Shahnameh: Epic of the Persian Kings

Published by Hamid Rahmanian with Quantuck Press

Translated by Dr Ahmad Sadri

596 pages with over 500 illustrations

Regular edition US\$100

Signed copy by the artist available on: <http://theepicofthepersiankings.com/order.html> - as well as from Amazon for US\$67

Website

<http://theepicofthepersiankings.com/>

To flip through the book visit: <http://theepicofthepersiankings.com/book.php>

Facebook users: like the book on

<https://www.facebook.com/shahnamehepcofthepersiankings?ref=hl>

The Team

Hamid Rahmanian – Project Creator, Illustrator, Designer

Dr Ahmad Sadri – Translation and Adaptation

Melissa Hibbard – Editorial Director

www.theepicofthepersiankings.com

Another project undertaken by Hamid based on The Shahnameh, is a pop up book edition of the Shahnameh. This is the very first Iranian story that turns into a children's pop up book. It is 10 pages with 15 pop up folds. Visit <http://www.fictionvillestudio.com/shahnamehpopup/>

Ferdowsi: A Critical Biography - by A. Shapur Shahbazi : 1942 - 2006

This book was first published in 1991 by Mazda Publishers in a hardcover edition. The present study offers the first critical biography of Ferdowsi who, ten centuries ago, gathered historical traditions of various Iranians and recast them in epic poetry into a coherent "National History" which the great Orientalist, Theodor Noldeke, described as a monument "unrivaled among other nations."

Chapter One evaluates the sources, and reveals the inadequacies of studies since 1800, thereby demonstrating the need for a balanced biography of Ferdowsi primarily based on his own testimonies scattered throughout The Shah-Nama.

In Chapter Two, various dates adduced from Ferdowsi's history are examined and the exact date of his birth is discovered. Also, his family background and the effort of his precursors in preserving Iranian traditions are elucidated.

Chapter Three draws on The Shah-Nama references to show that Ferdowsi lived in Tos the life of a country squire (dehqan), received a sound literary education without the need to learn Pahlavi or Arabic, and spent much time riding, feasting and studying. While he admired ancient Iranians and their ideologies, he adhered to Shi'ism and advocated reason and tolerance.

Chapter Four sheds light on Ferdowsi's early compositions, his search for written sources on which to base an epic history of Iran, and shows that the first version of The Shah-Nama, composed long before Soltan

Mahmud's accession, was a concise work which omitted the Sasanian history and several epical episodes, such as the story of Siavush.



Chapter Five examines the problematic relationship of Ferdowsi and Soltan Mahmud of Ghazna. Posing as a defender of Iran and resurrector of her ancient glory, Mahmud was hailed by Ferdowsi as a "New Fredon" worthy of receiving a memorial such as The Shah-Nama. Later, the Soltan's pro-Abbasid policy, his wars against Shi'ite princes (the Buyids) and his Indian holy wars gave

him the stature of an "Islamic hero king," interested in propagating the "True Faith." It becomes clear that Ferdowsi never met Mahmud, did not satirize him, and as he continued completing or revising The Shah-Nama, he remained a faithful subject of the king. Ferdowsi's last days and the history of

his burial place are also described in this chapter.

Chapter Six explains the contents of The Shah-Nama, and argues that through it Ferdowsi intended to preserve ancient Iranian history in flowing epic form, to vindicate Iranians of old and their ideologies, to build an undying memorial to himself, to revitalize Iranian national feelings, to gain personal glory and to illustrate lessons of history.

The Shah-Nama is thus characterized as the history of the Iranian nation, based on written sources and faithful to them without advocating their religious tendencies, and as a work of enormous poetic embellishment.

Who was A. Shapur Shahbazi?

The late professor, Ali Reza Shapur Shahbazi was born in Shiraz, Iran. In 1960, as Iran's highest-ranking Geography student, he was awarded an academic scholarship at the University of London, where

he earned a Master's degree and doctorate in archeology. He later completed his post-doctorate in Iranian historiography from Georg August University in Goettingen, Germany.

Dr Shahbazi founded the Institute of

Achemenid Research at Persepolis, Persia's ancient ceremonial capital, and served as its director from 1973 until the Islamic Revolution of 1979. As one of Iran's most prominent intellectuals, he lived in exile in Germany and

the United States after the upheaval of the revolution. It brought him great pride and joy to eventually reopen the Institute and resume his scholarly and professional career in Iran, in which he remained very active until his death. He taught at the universities of Shiraz, Tehran, Goettingen, Harvard, Columbia and Eastern Oregon, and was one of the world's foremost authorities in several areas of pre-Islamic Iranian history, language and culture.

He was the author of 16 books and 180 articles and publications, and received numerous international honours for his scholarly contributions. He won the national Book of the Year Award for his first major work, a biography of Cyrus the Great, when he was still in his 20's. He was the first recipient of the North American Middle East Studies Association Houshang Pourshariati Award in Iranian Studies, "for his role as one of the few Iranians who have single-handedly rewritten Iranian history." He was admired and loved by his students, and he received EOU's Distinguished Teaching Faculty Award in 2005.

He shed light on many complex historical questions, including the dates of Persia's epic poet Ferdowsi, and of Zoroaster, the founder of the world's first monotheistic religion and was cherished by the Zoroastrian community throughout the world for his contributions and dedication to the study of their religion. He was also an esteemed writer and editor for Encyclopedia Iranica for three decades. His historical studies and discoveries ranged from the fourth century BC to the 10th century CE.

However, his knowledge was not limited to Iran and the Middle East. He was an expert in history, archeology, geography, religion, art, politics and literature. Dr Shahbazi was tireless in sharing his knowledge and helping the world understand different angles and perspectives of history, culture and current events. He was highly respected by the international community in numerous fields, and was sought out and consulted regularly by scholars, as well as such organizations as the United Nations, UNESCO, National Geographic, BBC and the Discovery Channel. He gave selflessly and devoted all his energies to the three greatest loves of his life—his family, his country and his scholarly work.



The source is unknown, as kept in my archives since a number of years, very possibly 2006, to be used at an opportune time. Apologies are in order, to the kind individual who must have sent it to me. - Ed.



Creating the face of 21st Century India

Architect Hafeez Contractor: A Profile

As India emerged into Independence, it embraced modernism in all walks of life. And that included how our cities and towns would look. The first generation of early practitioners of the art and science of the built environment struggled to define a modernist paradigm for Indian architecture. The likes of Charles Correa, B V Doshi, Achyut Kanvinde, Raj Rewal and many others grappled with preserving traditions of 2000 years and more, and the need of a new nation racing to take its place in the world in the second half of the 20th century. However it inadvertently fell upon the shoulders of the next generation to make this new image omnipresent across the country. And no one did it better than Hafeez Contractor, a Parsi architect from Mumbai, India.

by shirin kumaana-wadia

Hafeez was born in Mumbai and did his schooling from Boy's Town Boarding School, Nasik. After completing his architectural studies from the Academy of Architecture in Mumbai he continued on to complete his graduate studies at the world renowned Columbia University located in New York, architecturally the greatest city of the 20th century. Contractor has mentioned that some of his formative ideas about high-rise density, urban form and overlapping styles have come from his years in New York.

Returning to India in 1977 he started teaching and in 1982 set up a small practice on his own. Contractor's dedication to design excellence, efficient delivery and sophistication in building technology have continued to be hallmarks of his practice over the subsequent three decades and counting. Constantly eager to create structures that exemplify functional and aesthetic qualities. Contractor has shaped and changed urban built landscape of the country through his sometimes purposefully provocative and unpredictable ideas and is seen executed in a wide range of architectural projects like bungalows;

residential developments; hospitals; hotels; corporate offices; banking and financial institutions; commercial complexes; shopping malls; educational institutions; recreational and sports facilities; townships; airports; railway stations, urban planning and civic redevelopment and infrastructure projects; and low cost housing.

Today Contractor heads the largest Architectural firm in the country with over 550 employees, comprising of architects, town planners, interior designers, landscape artists, civil engineers, CAD operators and graphic designers. The firm has to its credit over 2500 satisfied clients, with 72 crores square feet of ongoing projects in 100 cities and five countries. The offices of Hafeez Contractor are located on Bank Street, in the same vicinity as the Mumbai Stock Exchange. Bursting at its seams, this is where hundreds of his employees churn out drawings that are changing the face of urban India in myriad towns and cities. Contractor's rise coincided with a growing nation's aspirations and everything else that comes along with an opening economy and slowly rising middle class with aspirations to embrace the West. Contractor provided building developers a "nouveau" look for the

city which in reality was an amalgamation of ancient Western classical styles, totally alien to Indian cities till then.

Dr Vikramaditya Prakash a professor of architecture writes¹ “There is always something of a gap between the un conveyed aspirations and desires of the client, the secret inspirations and fascinations of the architect, and the distracted yet judgmental perceptions of the users. As such, an architectural construction is a multinucleated field, a complex mesh of signs, a creative document that simultaneously has an internal logic of its own and is created by and understood in the context in which it is situated.”

In the multi-nuclear field of contemporary Indian architecture, it goes without saying that Hafeez Contractor is India’s most prolific-and famous- practitioner of the profession. According to Prathima Manohar, Hafeez Contractor’s biographer; he stood apart from his peers and fellow designers. “Contractor created buildings that looked like spaceships, other buildings sported round windows and crescent balconies. His style had unorthodox qualities filled with domes, pitched roofs, arches, triangular canopies, sprites and gates that looked like entrances to fortresses. Sweeping shapes, whimsical forms and playful colours provided Mumbai with glimpses of a place and time outside its experience.”²

In a 2014 article in The New York Times Magazine³, Daniel Brook wrote that Hafeez Contractor, India’s most commercially successful architect, “is helping to create the face of 21st-century India,” through developments like Hiranandani Gardens, the posh residential development in Mumbai that is briefly featured in the 2008 film, “Slumdog Millionaire.” “The neighborhood, named for the billionaire real-estate-developing Hiranandani brothers, certainly bears its architect’s signature flamboyance. But what defines a Contractor project is the feeling that you are in a world apart. It houses more than 15,000 people and includes offices for more than 150 companies; it has its own

school, its own hospital and its own recreational amenities, like Nirvana Park. All of this is supported by a vast system of backup power generators and sewage-treatment facilities that free the community from India’s notoriously dysfunctional infrastructure. At Hiranandani Gardens, you can almost forget you’re in a nation where 300 million people lack electricity. You certainly don’t have to worry about bathroom lines. Inside Hiranandani Gardens — taking a meeting at Colgate-Palmolive, lunching at Pizza Hut — there is little, save the auto-rickshaws buzzing down Technology Street, to remind you that you’re even in India. And that is precisely the point.”

On the community forefront, Contractor is part of a Bombay Parsi Panchayat Housing Vision Think Tank put together in 2009 to address the redevelopment issues of BPP Properties in Mumbai. Contractor’s most recent proposal in 2013 was for the redevelopment of Nowroz Baug in Mumbai; India. The 105 year old Nowroz Baug is situated on a 22,000 sq-m land close to ITC hotel in Parel. The colony has about a dozen low rise buildings, which houses 358 tenements that range from 150 sq-ft rooms to over 800 sq ft flats, and a playground. The plan proposes the pulling down of the buildings, to be replaced with four skyscrapers, each 40-storey high. Existing residents will be given new apartments with a minimum carpet area of 400 sq ft to a maximum of 1,250 sq ft free of cost.

At a community townhall meeting in March 2013 where the BPP Trustees and Contractor put forth the entire scheme, they were met with opposition on various fronts. The BPP has since then been working on addressing the various issues at hand. The BPP’s aim is that this proposal would be the pilot project and later replicated at various other Baugs in Mumbai city. Nauzar K. Bharucha reports in the Times of India “According to the plan of the project, which will be initiated and funded by the BPP, existing residents will be provided with new apartments with a minimum area of 400 sq ft (carpet) to a maximum of 1,250 sq ft in

Copyright of both images, Architect Hafeez Contractor



Navroz Baug - Front Panorama



Navroz Baug - Aerial View

the towers free of cost. BPP chairman Dinshaw Mehta said the plan, estimated to cost over Rs 400 crore, will entail one million sq ft of construction. "We may receive around 500 additional flats, part of which will be allotted to community priests and young couples. The rest could be sold at market rates to recover the construction cost," he said."⁴

Over a professional career spanning 33 years and counting, Contractor is the winner of over 75 National and International Awards for excellence in contribution to architecture including CWAB Architect of the year 2006 to 2013, A+D Hall of fame for the decade Award, twice has been included in Most Powerful Indians List by India Today in last decade, numerous times won awards for best residential, commercial, educational and hospitality projects across India amongst many others.

Contractor has designed the tallest buildings in the subcontinent, The Imperial Towers, Mumbai; one of the tallest residential buildings in the world, 23 Marina in Dubai; modernizing the two busiest airports in the country, Mumbai and New Delhi; and designing one of the best cricket stadiums of the world, DY Patil Stadium. His proposal of 'The Western Waterfront Development' a scheme that attempts to rejuvenate the urban environment by creating large green open spaces of Mumbai and streamline the city's transport needs is finally being realized as West line Freeway Project.

For the last four decades Contractor has advocated for vertical growth of cities, higher FSI, judicious land use and the need for sustainable compact cities to maintain a perfect harmony between increasing population and limited land resources. Contractor also brings sharp focus and a special emphasis on social housing and his dream is to provide a house for every Indian.



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Shirin Kumaana-Wadia is a New York based architect and interior designer managing her design studio MAZDA Designs. Her designs in the residential and hospitality design industry are located in North America, Europe, the Middle East and India. Her photography has been exhibited in solo shows in India and she is a professional Latin Dancer. Shirin is the current 2014 Young Entrepreneur/Professional Award Winner from the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce. Shirin runs a very

popular facebook page "Shirin: Love and Miracles" and is an active member of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York.

SEVEN BRILLIANT QUOTES

- Shakespeare.....**
"Never part with the tongue of others. For as soon as you speak you put the seal of God on what you say."
- Napoleon.....**
"The only army who has conquered is the army of good people."
- Einstein.....**
"I am thankful to all those who said NO to me. It's because of them I did it myself."
- Abraham Lincoln.....**
"If friendship is your greatest quest, then you are the strongest person in the world."
- Martin Luther King.....**
"We need jump to live together as brothers or we will perish together as fools."
- Mahatma Gandhi.....**
"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."
- Dr Abdul Kalam.....**
"It is very easy to defeat someone, but it is very hard to win someone."

How an accidentally distorted drawing led to a riot in 19th-century Bombay

Article by Mridula Chari, which appeared on 16 January 2015, on <http://scroll.in/article/700501/How-an-accidentally-distorted-drawing-of-the-Prophet-led-to-a-riot-in-19th-century-Mumbai>



Bombay 1851, Wikimedia Commons

On a Friday towards the end of 1851, an unidentified person pasted a copy of a Gujarati article on the wall of the Jama Masjid in southern Bombay. People leaving the mosque after namaz, saw it and were enraged. That day, Bombay's second major riot began. (The first, by Parsis, was a protest in 1832 against dogs being killed by city officials.)

The article in question came from the September 23 edition of a Gujarati magazine called *Chitra Dynana Darpan*. The magazine, edited by Byramji Cursetji, a Parsi, ran a profile of Prophet Mohammed as one of its regular accounts of eminent personalities of the world, who included people such as Plato, Confucius, George Washington and Jamshetji Jeejeebhoy. The profile itself was an unobjectionable retelling of the events of his life, apart from one sniping line at the beginning. [omitted]

Primitive technology

Nothing might have come of this had the magazine not also published an image of

the prophet with a blemish over one of his eyes making him look disfigured. The magazine editor would later claim that errors such as this frequently happened with their primitive lithographic printer and that they meant no offence.

Three weeks later, on October 17, the article with the image was pasted on the Jama Masjid, leading to riots that lasted for a month. Parsis driving horse carriages were beaten up as they passed through Muslim areas in the city. Even their passengers, who were often of different religions, did not pass unscathed. Muslim mobs wandered the streets with clubs in their hands, liquor shops were looted, Zoroastrian fire temples sacked, jewellery stolen and at least one Parsi died in this violence. As the situation deteriorated, the government called in the army, increased police patrols across the city and posted notices asking right minded people to help maintain civil calm, but to not much effect.

In the reported reasons for the riot, Muslims

did not take offence as much at the printing of the image as at its allegedly willful distortion. Over that month, the original cause for offence got obscured and people who had not read the article claimed it was entirely denigrating to the Prophet.

One group of Muslims did not participate in the riots: the Moguls, as immigrants to the city from the Persian Empire were called. The Persian consulate in Bombay issued a stern warning to them not to join the rioters, under threat of expulsion from the city.

Peace deal brokered

Peace was finally restored a month later. In a meeting between members of both communities on November 24 that year, Cursetji issued a clarification.

“We stated several times that the likeness of Huzrut Mohammed [...] were not intended by us to hurt the feelings of the Mahomedans; but still we find that they consider we published the likeness and account to offend their feelings,” he wrote. “We therefore beg to state again for the satisfaction of all, that we considered, and do still consider, Huzrut Mahomed to be one of the most remarkable persons that ever lived [...] and the likeness we published was copied from the work of Simon Ockley.”

The Kazi of Bombay and the merchant Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, accompanied by other Parsis and Muslims sharing carriages then drove through Muslim mohallas in the city together to demonstrate for good that the two communities could be at peace again.

But proving that Mumbaikars have always been concerned about the bottom line, an annoyed witness during the riot wrote to a local paper saying, “This is the boasted *order and quiet* of Bombay, the inhabitants of which pay, goodness knows, how many thousand rupees a year for their Police.”

[Reproduced as written, except changed ‘Mumbai’ to Bombay, as it was known then.]

Ignorance

*One doesn't like
To live in
Utter ignorance
I pretty sure
Then why not
Spread the Message
Amongst the ignorant
And the poor
So they can make
The Choice by
Listening very carefully
Whilst keeping an open mind
Why keep them in
Total darkness
Ignorant & poor
He wished everyone
To heed His Divine Message
To be a good Zoroastrian*

courtesy, Farida Bamji © 2015

Resilience and Grace - a lesson by the beautiful women of Tanzania

“When I sat with my friends I was always unhappy because urine was leaking, so instead I used to stay at home alone.”

These words were spoken by Saphia, a 36 year old woman living in rural Tanzania, who suffered from urinary leakage for three months after her eighth childbirth. Hidden behind the global estimate of three million women suffering from obstetric fistula, are women like Saphia who are silently suffering from leakage, social exclusion and extreme poverty as a consequence. In 2011, my master’s thesis research took me to Tanzania for the first time, where my task was to document the experiences of women who had lived with obstetric fistula, acquired treatment and had returned to their communities, to see how life was for them after treatment.

by julia irani

For those of you who do not know about obstetric fistula, it is a hole between a woman’s vagina and bladder, or vagina and rectum or both, which causes the woman to leak urine and/or faeces through her vagina constantly. It is most commonly a birthing injury due to neglected obstructed labour – simply put, in the situation where a woman in labour needs a cesarean section, she did not receive one at all, or soon enough to prevent the damage. Obstructed labour is when the baby is stuck and cannot pass through the birth canal for several reasons and the foetal skull presses the soft tissue of the vagina and bladder and/or rectum against the pelvic bone. If the woman remains in this state for a long time, the blood supply to the tissues is restricted, causing the tissue to disintegrate (ischemic necrosis). This necrosis leaves behind a hole (fistula) between the woman’s vagina and bladder, or vagina and rectum, or both. If the woman survives this traumatic childbirth, most of the time, the baby dies before it is delivered and she is left incontinent. A proportion of fistulas can be caused by trauma during sexual abuse like in the Democratic Republic of Congo, coital injury in child brides, infections, traditional practices like female genital cutting or other

forms of unnecessary surgery, most of the time it is a birthing injury.

Imagine being a poor woman in a tropical village, without access to running water, or a hospital with skilled personnel. She has not only survived a traumatic childbirth, but now she has to live with the leakage, the smell, the embarrassment that comes with it, inability to work on the farm on which she is dependent for food, and if she still tries to work, the heat and the leakage combined can cause skin abrasions and discomfort. Obstetric fistula can be treated clinically, and women can be cured. However, depending on the kind of damage, the skill of the clinician and the time lapse between getting a fistula and treating it affects the success of the treatment. About 33% of treated individuals may still experience incontinence, even after treatment and some undergo multiple treatments. Prevention would be an easy and simple solution, however many living in poverty would not have access to it. Quality emergency obstetric care during childbirth, ie. a timely caesarean section during obstructed labour can prevent this injury - a human right that I believe everyone reading this article has access to, but many in

Tanzania and most low-income countries still do not. Obstetric fistula is a poor woman's problem.

So here I was, my first time in Tanzania, and I had a big task at hand. I had to interview a very special group of women - very poor women, both young and old. Women who survived childbirth. Women who, more often than not, bore the loss of a child. Women who suffered from incontinence and were likely stigmatized in their communities. Women who heard about treatment and made it to a hospital that could repair fistulae. Women who had returned home, after treatment. In some ways, you can think of them as the fortunate ones, yet their experiences in life were dramatically more difficult than anything I had ever experienced in mine.



Julia astride a village scooter

I went out with a research team to several villages, driving for hours on dirt roads, trying to locate these women. Tanzania is a large country and very diverse. There are 120 tribes and each tribe speaks their own language but lucky for us, most Tanzanians will also speak Swahili. Rural Tanzania is particularly rich in traditions and culture, which makes it a fascinating country to work in. Norms vary from tribe to tribe; familial hierarchies, gender roles and expectations are different across the country and so how things are understood and perceived also vary. Traditionally, most Tanzanian tribes will allow men to have multiple wives as long as

they have the financial means to pay the bride price (dowry). In Tanzania, the concept of dowry is a bit different from dowry in India and Pakistan. Here, the man has to pay the bride's father an agreed upon amount in things, cattle, etc, before the father allows him to marry his daughter. At one of the Gogo villages in Dodoma, one of the men there offered 15 cows to marry me. I was quite flattered - 15 cows seemed like a very respectable number of cows to be worth. I was also given the choice to pick one of two men, a privilege not many Tanzanian women get! The relationship between wives can sometimes be bitter, but in my experience, most of the time, it was very positive. They view it as a norm and become a support for each other. For example, the older first wife will happily welcome a new younger wife who is able bodied and can help by working on the farm. Livelihood in the villages was mainly through farming and wealth was measured in the number of animals one possessed. There was a way of managing things in the village - a way different from anything I had known.

One of the first women we interviewed was Grace, an elderly lady who was treated 10 months before we saw her. We estimated her to be 75 years old, as she herself did not know her age. Grace got married when she was 16 years old. She got pregnant but miscarried because her husband came home drunk one day and started beating her. She lost her daughter. Not long afterwards, she conceived again and went to her mother's house for delivery. 'When labour pain started, I was afraid they would think I was lying, so I did not tell anyone ... on the second day, I told my mother' and that was when she was taken to the hospital. She delivered her second daughter, but she had died as well and she had got fistula. When she returned home with a fistula, her husband left her. She moved in with her mother. She did not know there was a cure or treatment for it, so she suffered silently. Some years later, her parents died. We asked her who she lived with now, and she said 'I live alone and my God is the second one'. She explained that she did not go to church because of fear of



Grace breaking rocks

leaking. We asked her if she ever considered remarrying and she said 'aah aah (no) who wants to marry a woman leaking urine?' More than 55 years passed before she finally heard about treatment through her sister's pastor and got treated for the fistula. When we asked her how she felt after treatment, she said 'I felt ok ... I rested for one day only ... but on the second and third day I saw urine leaking again'. She did not want to get treated again; she said it was not as bad as before, she now only leaks slightly when she is asleep. To make ends meet, Grace collects rocks, carries them home and breaks them into smaller pebbles, fills these into a sack, and sells it to construction workers for approximately 30 pence/sack whenever there is a demand for it. Mostly, she is dependent on her sister's grandchildren to provide her with food.

Eva had a different story. We interviewed Eva 14 months after she was treated for a fistula. She suffered a fistula after her first pregnancy at the age of 18. She started labour in the dispensary and on the third day she was taken to the hospital, where she delivered a dead baby. She noticed she was leaking, and she was treated shortly after. She was completely cured. She said she was happy with her husband and hoped to have ten children. We could already see that early treatment with a high success rate could transform a woman's quality of life. If Grace

had only known about treatment earlier, she would not have spent her life in isolation.

In Tanzania, bearing children is one of the most important things a woman will do in her lifetime. A woman's worth in society is closely linked to her ability to bear children. The more children she has, the more status she gets in society. In fact, after the birth of her first child, the woman is referred to as "mama <name of her first born>" instead of her own name. If she has a daughter named Maria, she would now be called Mama Maria. Similarly, a man's prestige grows when he has many wives and many children. So you can imagine the inadequacies felt by a woman who has seemingly 'failed' at childbirth. Not only that, but fistula is not perceived to be a 'normal disease', because when women compare themselves to other women in the village, they said "*other women give birth at home and nothing happens to them, why did I get fistula?*" and when they can't explain it, they blame it on witchcraft or the supernatural in some way. For this reason, many believe it is untreatable or they seek treatment from traditional healers and witchdoctors. The inability to work, and the perception of the cause of the disease, scars them psychologically and also pushes them deeper into poverty.

Flora was so traumatized that she did not want to be with a man again. When she returned home after treatment, her mother-in-law put pressure on her to sleep with her husband. She refused and returned to her mother. When we asked her about remarrying, she said 'if a man approaches me, I will refuse. I will tell him that I don't want to be destroyed any more'. Flora's mother helped her through the process of acquiring treatment, because of which they are now left poorer than before. She said 'the cultivation season passed (while my mother was caring for me at the hospital), my mother did not cultivate, so currently we do not have food, we are buying food'. She added 'I dream to have money then my mind can settle'. Stella, who is now cured and has a supportive husband, talked about their plans before her fistula. '... After selling

this harvest, we planned that some money would be for food and with the remaining we wanted to buy iron sheets (for the roof of their house) ... but when I got the problem, that money was used to send me to witchdoctor's ... that witchdoctor required a lot of money ... one goat and 20 000 shillings (£8)'. They were now struggling to recover the assets lost in acquiring care.

In the face of all the hardship, these women showed me incredible strength and resilience. They smiled, they worked hard, they wanted to educate their children and many became ambassadors in their communities educating men and women about fistula and where to get treatment. Fistulae can completely debilitate a woman's life, and while the solution is simple, so many women, living at the fringes of society still do not have access to this basic level of healthcare. Let's change this reality for so many who are suffering silently.



Julia Irani from Karachi, Pakistan has been working in public health research since 2007. She is currently a PhD candidate at the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Belgium, researching the cause of Nodding disease, a kind of epilepsy, in Uganda and Tanzania.

The above photograph shows how stark and barren the land is where Julia worked. - Ed



Refer to facing page:

Ancient remains from Byzantine times. The structure was used by the Byzantine people as a place of worship and then by Muslims as a mosque, also used by Saladin.

The Samaritans : An Ancient People in Modern Times

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KIRYAT LUZA, WEST BANK — Zoroastrians are just one of the few remaining ancient ethnic and religious minorities of the world that are dwindling in population. From the foreign media's perspective, there are two groups of people in Israel and the Palestinian Territories: the Jews and the Arabs. But the region is filled with several religious and ethnic minorities, encompassing the mosaic of Israel and the Palestinian Territories. Among them is the ethno religious group, the Samaritans, which means "Guardians of the Torah (law)" in Ancient Hebrew.

by *zenobia rawji*

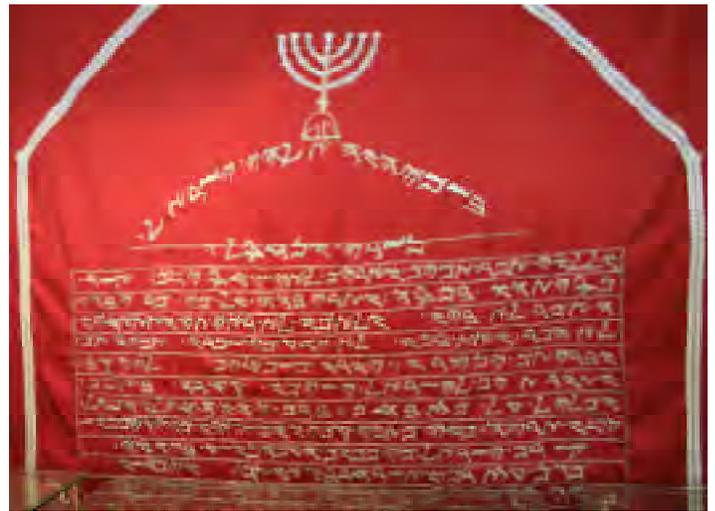
The Samaritans are known to be the smallest ethnic group in the whole world at 770 people. They also claim to have the oldest Torah in the world at 3,640 years old and still speak ancient Hebrew, and believe it is the mother language of all the languages in the world, as each letter symbolizes a specific body part.

The phrase, "a good Samaritan," often used today to describe a charitable person, comes from a parable told by Jesus, according to the gospels of the New Testament. The parable states that a traveller (supposedly Jewish) is left almost dead at the side of the road, ignored by passersby, only to be helped by a Samaritan. The story is told to spread Jesus' message to "love thy neighbour."

The Samaritan population is split in two major communities: one in Holon, a city inside Israel next to Tel Aviv, and one in Kiryat Luza, which is located in the West Bank. Due to its geographic location, the community in Kiryat Luza is under Israeli and Palestinian control and situated on Mount Gerizim.

The Samaritans once numbered up to almost two million persons. The community then sank to several thousands during the conquests of Byzantine Christians and the Arab invasion, when there was a mass

conversion to Islam. Virtually all Ancient Samaritan monuments have been replaced by Byzantine structures, which were then used by Muslim invaders.



Inscription on cloth of prayer in ancient Hebrew

According to Husni Al Kahen, Samaritan priest and General Manager of the Samaritan Museum, the Samaritans worship the true religion of the ancient Israelites (since they remained in the land of Israel during the exile of Jews by Babylonians) as opposed to Judaism, which has been altered by those who returned to the land after the Babylonian Exile.

The community faces a few challenges today. Among them is not having enough



View of Samaritan Community: are of the West Bank from the top of Mt. Gerizim

women in the community. There are more males than females, thus, they have imported brides from Russia and Ukraine to increase the population. This also helps with biological challenges related to intermarriage. About three and a half percent of the children are born with birth defects.

According to High Priest of The Samaritans and Brother of Husni, Abdallah Wasef Tawfiq Al Kahen, women, who were not born Samaritan, must go through an extensive conversion process in order to be part of the community. Converting includes a six-month trial period under the supervision of the high priest. In addition to the conversion laws, women of the community must also follow strict purification laws. For instance, they have to be isolated during their period and purify themselves in the Mikveh (holy bath) after the period. Additionally, after a woman gives birth to a boy she must be isolated for 40 days and 80 days if it's a girl.

Samaritans hold three passports: Israeli, Jordanian, and Palestinian. They speak Arabic, Modern Hebrew and learn Ancient Hebrew from an early age. In regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Samaritans do not take any sides.

According to Abdallah Wasef, "The more delayed peace is, the more trouble we have in the world."

Husni said, "I always tell the Muslims and the Jews that we must learn from the Samaritans. What is there to learn from the smallest group in the world? The war is not good for Palestinians and the war is not good for Jews. There must be two countries here."

In the framework of the Palestinian and Israeli societies, the Samaritan people are not discriminated against, because of their tolerance to both sides.

"We want to see peace all over the world," said Husni.

The Samaritan population continues to hold on to its ancient traditions in hopes that their children will carry them into the future.

"We are not afraid of losing our sons to go out and convert and leave because we teach our kids at an early age and expose them to our culture and traditions at an early age. We are traditional and modern. Our religion is not against modernity," said Husni. ■■■■



Husni Al Kahen in traditional Samaritan priestly attire



Husni Al Kahen (left) with his older brother and high priest, Abdallah Wasef Tawfiq Al Kahen (right).



Husni Al Kahen is reading in Arabic from a historical text book



Inside the Samaritan Synagogue



Zenobia Ravji is a three time Alumna from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign: BA in economics and Spanish language, MA in Political Science and MS in Journalism. She was born in Mombasa, Kenya and moved to Chicago with her family as a child. She is a Jerusalem based journalist.

Reflexology

T

The single most important thing in one's life is good health — both mental and physical. In today's fast paced society we put our health at risk by doing the things that we do without paying attention to ensuing consequences, thereby magnifying the minor health concerns that we may have.

We all are subject to stress, whether it is positive or negative. Positive stress is when we try to overachieve our self-imposed or externally demanded targets and goals; whereas negative stress is the result of a variety of tension promoting situations and circumstances, anxiety, physical disorders and similar harmful causes. Therefore, the end result is that no one is ever completely stress free.

by *fehmidah khory*

Stress, whether positive or negative, can affect a person physiologically, thereby undermining the immune system and general health. This leads to mental depression and anxiety, which in turn give rise to other issues such as hypertension which is one of the leading causes of cardiac disorders, malfunctioning of the kidneys and digestive problems including IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome) which is practically incurable because IBS, which is also known as 'a nervous stomach', is the product of an agitated mind.

With regards to what has been mentioned above it has been noticed that people with physical, or in some cases even certain mental disorders, are progressively inclined towards other forms of treatment that differ from only ingesting oral medication of any kind. This is where Reflexology makes its impact. This science is a holistic approach which supports healing and is appealing to people who are increasingly considering a more natural way of easing a health problem other than only depending upon different forms of treatment which may have negative side effects.

Reflexology, or Reflex Zone Therapy, has a place in ancient history. Paintings

discovered in a physician's tomb (as old as that of the Pharaohs) in Saqqara, Egypt, show reflexology in progress on a king of those times. The Chinese are also known to have used Reflexology in conjunction with Acupuncture. Besides needles, which are essential instruments of Acupuncture, nerve points in the feet, the palms of the hands and the ears in particular, were treated by applying physical pressure rather than other invasive methods (inserting needles).

Over the years Reflexology emerged as the frontrunner in holistic medicine because it is a completely safe form of therapy as well as being a very relaxing and pleasant experience. The purpose of this treatment is to normalise body functions, to help break down tensions and alleviate stress. It also improves the performance of the nervous system and blood supply throughout the body.

Reflexology embodies massaging and manipulating pressure points (referred to earlier in this text) and nerve ends to improve blood circulation and assist the body in accelerating the elimination of waste products so that toxins do not have the chance to build up to harmful levels in the liver, the kidneys or the bowels. The

therapy also removes toxins from the body and controls the perception of pain by stimulating the release into the bloodstream of endorphins, which are natural pain killers produced by the pituitary gland which is located at the base of the human brain.

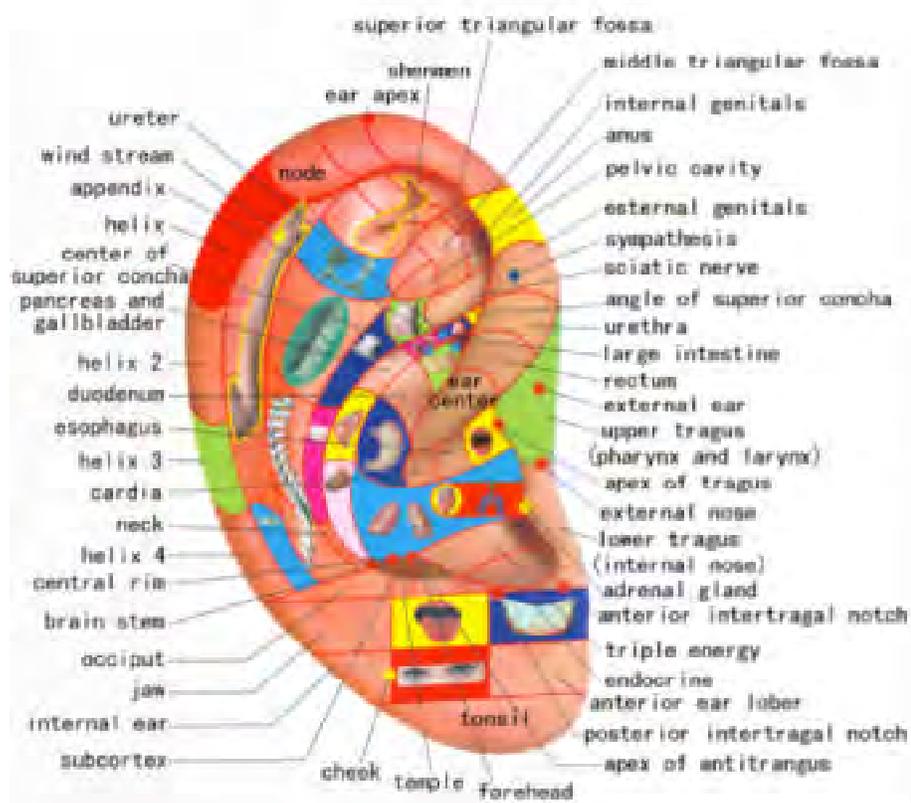
The treatment as mentioned above is all-encompassing since it works on the whole body rather than focusing on a specific portion. This broad spectrum therapy improves all body functions and encourages its natural healing process to work more efficiently.

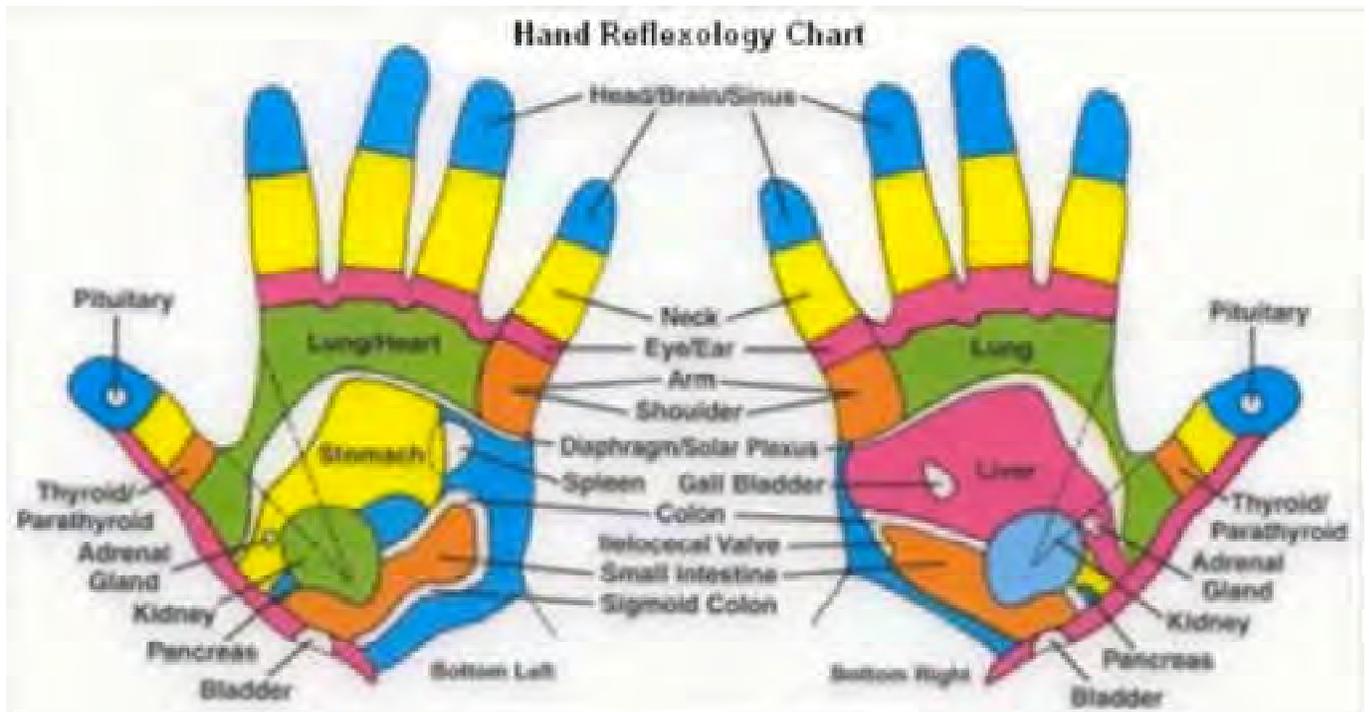
Having come this far, it would be of interest to understand what exactly are reflex zones and why they give rise to the name 'Reflexology'. This is because reflex zones are nerve points; each of which is in communication with each other, distant parts of the body, and internal organs. These zones are wide spread but are mainly concentrated in the hands and the feet. The feet take precedence since they are considerably neglected parts of the human anatomy to the extent that people often use inappropriate footwear which chokes proper blood circulation. Resultantly, blood does not reach the reflex zones and they can no longer perform satisfactorily. When this happens, the organ(s) corresponding to the effected zone(s) malfunction.

Reflexology applied with the correct amount of pressure, manipulation and massage to the affected zone, at an appropriate angle and with the required repetition of sessions (each consisting of approximately one hour) has been found to have a curative effect. This is adequately demonstrated by physically experiencing this form of therapy and its positive results.

Reflex Zone Therapy is evidently successful in treating almost all the functioning body systems, such as:

- ↳Respiratory
- ↳Digestive
- ↳Circulatory
- ↳Lymphatic





- ↘ Endocrine
- ↘ Skeletal
- ↘ Muscular
- ↘ Urinary and
- ↘ Reproductive.

When I look back at all the people that I have treated over the years I know without a shadow of a doubt, that the built-in healing powers of each individual person's body can be activated through Reflexology to supplement and support various forms of prescription drugs, and in some cases this therapy has been instrumental in even taking patients off medication.

In conclusion I would like to voice a note of caution. Please DO NOT try to attempt therapeutic manipulation to pressure points on your own. This might do more harm than good. Also ensure that you go to a trained and experienced practitioner. This is vital information to keep in mind and I am well aware of the consequences of ignoring this warning since I come from a medical background with four years of training in a medical college and thereafter eight years with the Pakistan Army in the Armed Forces Nursing Service (AFNS), taking early retirement with the rank of Captain.

Health is a state of complete harmony of the body, mind and spirit. When one is free from physical disabilities and mental distractions, the gates of the soul open. ~ B K S Iyengar ~



Fehmida Adil Khory was eight years with the Armed Forces Nursing Service. Thereafter twenty three years in the world of fitness. Established and ran the Pearl-Continental Health Club for twelve years in Karachi, Pakistan. After which upgraded, refurbished and managed the then Sheraton Hotel health club for eleven years. She is a qualified Reflexologist.

The Buzzabout

Parsiana had conducted a series of online polls on the much-debated topics amongst the Paris, since 2013.

The survey revealed that 76 per cent of the participants were in favour of women becoming mobeds or priests, and 71 per cent wanted a new prayer hall for Parsis who opt for cremation instead of the traditional Towers of Silence. In another poll 77 per cent voters were in favour of the Doongerwadi bunglis being used for ceremonies by those opting for alternate means of disposing the dead. The community's shift from following age-old rituals reflected in a poll conducted in September 2014 asking whether they observed Fravardin Parab (a day of prayers for the deceased), in which 61 per cent voted in the negative while 33 per cent said they continue to observe the day. 53 per cent were against allowing non-Parsis to see the face of the deceased in Doongerwadi after the geh sarana ceremony and 60 per cent were against allowing non-Parsis to use baugs for functions and ceremonies.

Indo-Canadian soprano, Meher Pavri, born and raised in Canada, is proud of her Indian heritage. In 2007, she was crowned Miss India-Canada and wowed the crowd with her classically trained voice during the talent portion. She is the only contestant to receive a standing ovation in the pageant's history! No stranger to the limelight, she recently performed at a Toronto Raptor's NBA game,

where she sang for an audience of 17,000 people. Besides her musical pursuits, she also works as an actor and model, and is establishing herself in the film/television industry in Canada. Meher gives back to her community by organizing and performing in many charity concerts and her humanitarian work is focused not only toward her own country, but also India and Africa. She currently resides in Toronto, Canada.

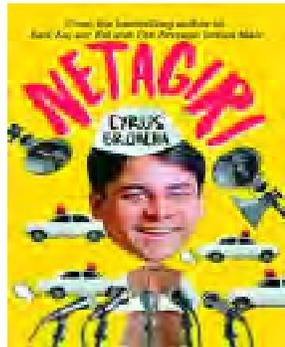
Bombay high court has upheld Bombay Parsi Panchayat's criteria to identify a "poor, needy and

deserving Parsi" as one who does not earn more than Rs 90,000 a month or has assets exceeding Rs25 lakh. Such a person is not entitled to a flat meant to house the poor, the court said. The HC recently dismissed Dahanu resident Rohinton Taraporewala's plea against the non-allotment of a flat in a community housing scheme at Panthaki Baug, Andheri. The Panchayat said he was "adequately housed" in a two-storey, 2,000-square-foot bungalow, was not a resident of Mumbai and "on his own showing lived at Dahanu, close to the Gujarat border". Further, that Taraporewala's son and daughter were settled in the UK and the US with their families.



Ervad Yazad Tehmuras Bhadha arrived in London on 2nd November 2014, to take up the position of 'ZTFE Resident Mobed at the Zoroastrian Centre', London. Ervad Yazad is 23 years old and is the nephew of our Vada Dasturji Khurshed Kaikobad Dastur of Udvada. He was a student at the Dadar Athornan Institute from 2000 - 2006, graduated BCom in 2012 and achieved post graduate MCom in 2014. Ervad Yazad has served at the Boyce Agiary at Tardeo as well as the Jokhi Agiary at Godrej Baug, Mumbai. He has also performed Boi at Iranshah Udvada at a very young age.

Cyrus Broacha, the eternal prankster, bumbling funnyman, a modern-day Bertram Wooster, who really is a person who plans each day and follows the schedule rigourously. He has written a new book, "a satirical take on a power-obsessed society", which some reports say, was written against the backdrop of the recent general elections. "I was talking to my publishers last year, about a new book, and we talked about cricket being the subject of it. But cricket is the one thing I do take seriously... So we were thinking about what else could be topical and lend itself to satire and the general elections were around the corner, so that's how the book came about," says Cyrus.



At the heart of *Netagiri* is Paul Huskee, who must rescue the people of Gyaandostaan from an oppressive regime by confronting his greatest fears — which includes talking to women. Cyrus describes Paul as a “comedy of errors kind of guy”, and since every tale of triumph needs a villain as much as it does a hero, *Netagiri* has a bad guy too.

A new book published, that is a brief history of the Tatas. How did Tata transform itself from a family-owned venture to the position it is today in an array of unrelated businesses? What is the ‘Tata Way’, which has earned it much admiration and respect? These are among several aspects that the book *“The Greatest Company in the World?: The Story of Tata”* by Peter Casey, looks into. It charts the contribution of every Tata chairman - from Jamsetji Tata, to Ratan Tata and Cyrus Mistry in transforming the company into one of the most professionally-managed enterprises in the world. According to the writer, while other successful capitalists and captains of industry started companies to create profit and, thereby, wealth, Jamsetji Tata planted the seeds of philanthropic trusts, which now own 66 per cent of the Tata Group. “What he began has changed the lives of billions, as the company he founded continues to work for the betterment of society,” Peter Casey says.

Andheri’s Salsette Parsis Association Colony, six-storey residential structures form a tight arc around a defunct dokhma. Children swing and slide just a few feet away and plans are underway to create a grassy patch alongside the tower’s wall where the colony’s youngsters can play football or an impromptu game of cricket. Residents explain that their nonchalance about living alongside this structure — which is meticulously cleaned by a band of young Parsi men every few years - stems from the fact that the 83-year-old dokhma has remained unused for well over half a century.

Congress 2000 Legacy, an award programme of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston announced its two winners for 2014. This award recognizes their youth who are leaving for college, in their excellence in the academic arena and their contribution to the ZAH centre through community service both within the ZAH community and mainstream America. Natalya Haveliwala is the recipient for the

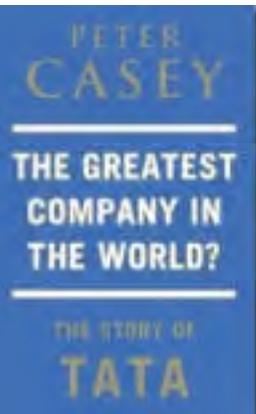
2014, 2000 Congress Legacy Award, and Farzad Sunavala is the recipient for the Cyrus Rohinton Desai award, set up by the Desai family in memory of their son, who lost his battle with cancer. It was Cyrus’ ardent desire to go even for a day to college but sadly this was not meant to be. This is the reason this award is given exclusively to the person going off to college for the first time.

The Geneva-based International Coalition for the Advancement of Religious and Spirituality (ICARUS) has bestowed “The Best Religion In the World” award this year on the Buddhist Community. This special award was voted on by an international round table of more than 200 religious leaders from every part of the spiritual spectrum. However, there was one snag - ICARUS couldn’t find anyone to give the award to. All the Buddhists they called kept saying they didn’t want the award!

Senior advocate Fali S Nariman appearing in cases before the Supreme Court where his son is a judge has revived an old debate regarding the appropriateness of such appearances. While some criticism was aired regarding this in public, Mr Nariman dismissed complaints maintaining that there is no legal bar for such appearance and said that everyone is equal before the law.

One of the oldest continuously run scout groups in the city completed 100 years on November 8, 2014. Sethna’s 18th West Bombay, whose members are mostly Zoroastrians, was founded in 1914. Started by Rustomji Edulji Sethna, the group was initially open for membership only to Parsi boys. Post independence however, Sethna truly embraced the underlying ideals of Scout Law and allowed boys of other faiths to enroll. Presently, the troop has 28 Cubs (6 -10 years) 18 Scouts (11-17 years) 18 Sea Scouts (11-17 years) 40 Rovers (18-35 years) 16 Scouters (Adult Leaders) and over 250 Old Scouts.

With Internet and easy access to any information on line, Mumbaikars may forget how fortunate they are to have a haven such as J N Petit Library and that too, housed in a beautiful old building. A formidable Parsi mercantile family with hearts of gold, they were exemplars of Parsi charity, sharing their profits at animal welfare charities, orphanages,





widows' homes, in fr a str uctu ral projects and of course, libraries. "The J N Petit Library had originally been instituted in 1856 as the 'Fort Improvement Library' by Parsi students of Elphinstone College. Since the premises at Churchgate were considered too small, Bai Dinbaijee

Nusserwanji Petit took the decision to provide the library with a suitable structure," write Sharada Dwivedi and Rahul Mehrotra in their seminal book, *Fort Walks*. Within its biscuit-coloured walls are rooms packed with rare books, including an exceedingly precious copy of Ferdowsi's *Shahnama*, with high, arched stained glass windows throwing sunlight onto long wooden reading tables while old-fashioned fans stir the hot air. The antique wooden cupboards and wicker-backed chairs don't seem to have changed since the library opened more than 100 years ago.

A Parsi Dharamshala and Fire Temple in Delhi, serves authentic and delicious Parsi food. The dharamshala (Guest House) has a huge building. They have varied types of rooms totalling to approximately 50. This includes basic, value added, and air conditioned rooms. The eatery is a canteen for people staying there, so its decor is basic and utilitarian. There is a fire temple on the grounds and also a banquet hall in the same premises that is given out on rent for family functions. Food needs to be ordered a day in advance which can be done on the phone.

The Bombay Flying Club was established at Juhu in 1928 by JRD Tata and others, being the oldest flying school in India.

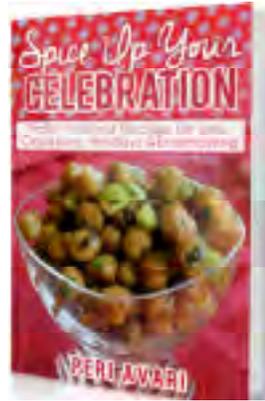
Spice up your Celebration – a cookbook written by Peri Avari. Using today's modern approach to food from a global perspective, this cookbook offers an easy to prepare collection of mouthwatering recipes that can be used for any occasion from intimate family and friends' dinners, to hosting larger celebrations. Also

included are a large choice of naturally gluten-free, dairy-free and vegetarian dishes. An ebook for US\$3.99, 109 pages, available from Amazon.

The Western Railway has accepted the request from the community, of halting two trains for two minutes at Sanjan station in Gujarat when Parsis visit the place every year to observe the historic annual Sanjan Day celebrations which is held November 17. Two trains that will be halting are 19011/19012 Gujarat Express (Mumbai Central to Ahmedabad) and 12921/12922 Flying Rane Express (Mumbai Central to Surat), only on that day. "This was actually started by Homi Talyekhan, a Parsi and former governor. It was for the first time on his request that the government halted the train. It is something that the government should now do without a yearly request from the community," said Viraf Kapadia, one of the members of the community.

Mintz Levin Attorney, Narges M Kakalia received Human Rights First's Pro Bono Star Award on 23rd October 2014 at New York. Human Rights First is a nonprofit, nonpartisan international human rights organization based in New York, Houston, and Washington DC. The organization presents its Pro Bono Star award annually to lawyers who show extraordinary commitment in their pro bono representation of clients in asylum and other immigration cases.

Ms Kakalia is being recognized for her representation of a gay Jamaican man, who had been the victim of several brutal homophobic attacks in Jamaica, including most recently in 2012-2013, after his deportation from the United States. The client engaged Ms Kakalia and a team of other Mintz Levin attorneys to represent him in a series of appeals from the denial of his asylum claim, which he initially had handled without the benefit of counsel. Ms Kakalia and her team advocated successfully for their client. Once the case was re-opened by the Immigration Court and scheduled for a hearing on Asylum and Withholding of Removal, Ms Kakalia then sought significant public benefit parole, an extraordinary and rarely-granted remedy that returns deported individuals to the United States in only a handful of very compelling cases. The client's parole was approved, and he returned to the safety of the United States in 2013. Ms Kakalia and her



team then successfully advocated for him at the Immigration Court, where he ultimately was granted asylum in August 2013. Ms Kakalia is committed to promoting social justice and human rights on behalf of unrepresented and marginalized individuals. She has won asylum for victims of persecution and torture from Pakistan, Cameroon, Burma, Jamaica and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and has worked on behalf of victims of domestic violence to obtain Orders of Protection. Ms Kakalia is a member of the firm's Diversity Committee and Pro Bono Committee. She also manages the pro bono practice of the New York office.

The Fire Temple at Ezra Street, though one of the earliest symbols of pluralistic and cosmopolitan culture of 'Calcutta', has long been taken over by trading units that have turned it into an electrical storehouse of sorts. But with the Archeological Survey of India taking an interest in the monument, things have started looking up for the 175-year-old building. And if things go as planned, it may soon become a monument of national importance. But as of things stand now, the building — popularly known as Rustomjee Cowasjee Banajee Agiary — is in a sorry state. Plasters are peeling off from each wall, the marbles on the floor have been scooped out and growth of vegetation has weakened the entire structure. Every inch of the building, including the temple basement, has been encroached upon by business units. Even the gate can hardly be seen from the road.

Ahmedabad's Parsi Panchayat is offering homes to young men and women as an "incentive" to get married and have kids to boost the numbers of the fast-shrinking community. "We will provide a decent flat to young couples. The only thing we want is that young Parsi men and women shouldn't delay their marriage because of financial or accommodation constraints," said J P Anklesaria, a retired brigadier and president of the Panchayat. All that the men and women need to do is decide to get married and approach the Panchayat, which would provide them with a flat. It will be theirs for the next 20 years.

ZTFE shares this information. An invitation to take part in "Summerschool RELIGIONS IN THE GLOBAL WORLD" which will take place in the

last week of August, 2015, in Fiera di Primiero/Dolomiti – region of Trent, Italy. Organized by Summerschool of the Istituto Universitario Sophia of the Focolare-Mouvement. There are 50 places for students above 18 years old, who are interested in the interference of politics, economy and sociology – with the great religions of the world. There will be teachers of different religions, coming from all over the world, to lead the classes. The Summerschool is free of charge for these 50 students – the fees are paid by the Region of Trentino. The students have only to provide for the journey. For further information please contact: Dr Paolo Frizzi, who is coordinating the Summerschool 2015. His email address is: pfrizzi@gmail.com

Keki Daruwalla, the famous Zoroastrian Author, Poet and Policeman, Former Zoroastrian Representative on the National Minorities Commission of India, made a rare appearance in the UK for a Poetry Reading from his Zoroastrian themed new book, *Fire Altar: Poems on the Persians and the Greeks*. *Fire Altar* contains poems on Cyrus, Cambyses, Jamshed, Cyrus meeting the Jews, "Euphrates Sonnets", and many more historically interesting interpretations of a time long past, which resonates in our world today. The reading was at Nehru Centre, London on 28th November. Daruwalla also read from his novel *For Pepper and Christ* (Penguin), which was short-listed for the Commonwealth fiction prize (UK and Asia) in 2010.

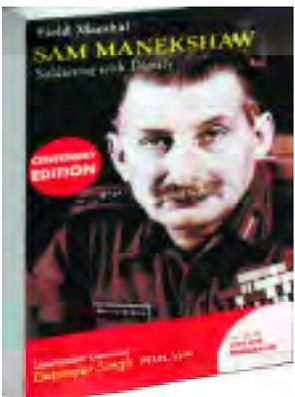


Brothers Kersi and Kayo Kadva's impatience at waiting for papadums to cook in oil one at a time

sparked an idea to quickly satisfy their cravings. The Papadum Express was born — a specially designed and crafted microwave tray which can cook up to 10 papadums in a minute. "We sat down one day and said, 'there's got to be an easier way to cook papadums faster'. The brothers who live in Liverpool, took out two mortgages, sold a car,

cached in holiday pay and took out personal loans to secure patents world wide. Now it seems to be paying off as more and more of their trays are being mailed out to fill online orders. The pair has been recognised with a Sydney Design Award for the tray's versatility and convenience.

With the goal of providing sound knowledge of the fundamentals of Zarathushti Religion, the Zarathushti Learning Center of North America will offer an E-Course on Zarathushti Religion starting in January 2015. This e-course will be emailed free of cost to all interested individuals, one lesson each month. The lessons are based on the teachings of Dastur Navroze Minocher Homji and were developed by Kayomars Mehta in Chicago over the last 30 years. They continue to be in use in the Religion Education Programmes at several locations worldwide. The lessons concentrate on understanding the fundamental concepts of our religion, as expressed in our daily Avesta Prayers. If you are interested in receiving these lessons of the *E-Course on Zarathushti Religion*, please send an email to kayomehta@aol.com expressing your desire to register for the course.



Another book on a pro Sam. *Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw: Soldiering with Dignity*, by Lt Gen Depinder Singh, PVSM, VSM, Natraj. Pages 271. Rs525. This book is a revised and updated edition of Sam Bahadur's approved biography, written by his trusted military assistant. Many biographies tend to be anecdotal and chronological, and this one is no exception.

In November, Dastur Khurshed Dastoor, High Priest of Udvada Fire Temple, openly asked the members of the community to adopt a positive approach to organ donation. As expected another controversy provoked this bold statement of the Dastur, as some orthodox members of the community have inhibitions on religious grounds. They believe that the body belongs to god, and must be offered back to him in its entirety. Another belief holds that if a Parsi donates his eyes, he will not be able to walk the bridge to heaven and may fall to hell due

to his blindness. "I simply made an appeal on humanitarian grounds. No religion talks about organ donation but it is a need today," said Dastoor who first spoke openly about organ donation two years ago when he performed the Navjote ceremony of a blind Parsi boy. After his recent appeal whilst addressing the community on Sanjan Day, as a rebuttal, Ervad Marzban Hathiram wrote in his blog that charity is possible only with that which is ours, not that which belongs to someone else. Noshir Dadrawalla wrote, "If you feel like donating blood to save a life go right ahead and donate. If you wish to donate your cornea, kidney, liver or heart after death, go ahead. You could also donate your skin and bring relief to a person who is badly burnt and in agony. But, if you do not wish to do so, that also would be all right. After all, whose body is it anyway?"

Ratan Tata has invested in online furniture company Urban Ladder, making it his second personal investment in an e-commerce firm after Snapdeal. Launched in July 2012, Urban Ladder was co-founded by Ashish Goel and Rajiv Srivatsa. It offers over 1,000 products across 25 categories in furniture such as wardrobes, beds, sofas, dining tables and coffee tables. The firm aims to be the biggest furniture seller in India in the next 18 months.

The Parsi Bazaar, a one of its kind, happened right outside SodaBottleOpenerWala, Gurgaon on the 12th and the 13th of December. A market with Parsi food and Parsi craft stalls.

The Asha Centre, UK, with Zerbanoo Gifford and her team, continue to promote peace through the youth of the world. A training programme has been set up for this year for mainstreaming outdoor education in youth work with promotion of healthy lifestyles and life in harmony with natural environment. They will also lead a two-year-project on Peace Education with four European gainers in Germany, Turkey, Latvia and the Netherlands. Besides these two new programmes, they continue their volunteering programme with young people from many different countries, working and living together at the Centre for 10-11 months.

Maestro Zubin Mehta conducted the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra for the fifth time on

New Year's Day, 2015. One can hear it on:
Vienna Philharmonic New Year's Concert 2015

Part 1 HD 720p (38:32)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVP28ns5L98&feature=youtube_gdata_player

Vienna Philharmonic New Year's Concert 2015

Part 2 HD 720p (1:23:17)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-P46Gr4VvY&feature=youtube_gdata_player



The Travelling Parsi an ebook written by Kamal Sunavala and available from Amazon or Smashwords for \$2.99. She writes that the reason for writing this book was “I got fed up of hearing HUH? when I said I was born a Zoroastrian Parsi. This is just a funny read about understanding the nuances of this tiny global community, in the modern context, with all the influences of the Persian empire, England, migration to India and nurturing the twin legacies of Freddie Mercury and Zubin Mehta.

Bapsi Sidhwa, story-teller par excellence, sadly is now more or less housebound, but her home in Houston is open for tea, stories, and laughter, always laughter.

In the Houston Chronicle, Sebha Sarwar reminisces how she initially met Bapsi in Houston in 1994 and shares various quotes from notables. Two of these sum up Bapsi.

“Bapsi is a major figure in Pakistan, as she should be, after her years of hard work and struggle as a female writer writing in English in a country where, at the time, this was practically unheard of,” says Rich Levy, a poet and executive director of Inprint. “... She has taught creative writing at top universities, including Brandeis, Mount Holyoke, and the University of Houston, and received many prizes and accolades, all richly deserved.”

And from Karachi, Oxford University Press editor Ameena Saiyad says: “At a Karachi reading in her honour, Bapsi became overwhelmed with emotion and could not continue. She handed her book to me and asked me to begin reading from where she had stopped. I was touched by her sensitivity and close attachment to the theme and characters of her novels. She writes from her heart and puts her soul in her writings.”

Poet and critic Adil Jussawalla's “Trying to Say Goodbye” is among

eight books of poetry conferred the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award 2014, as was announced in New Delhi end December 2014. The award in the form of a casket containing an engraved copper-plaque, a shawl and a cheque of Rs100,000 will be presented to the authors at a special during the Festival of Letters - the annual function of the Akademi - March 9, 2015.

To observe the 175th birth anniversary of Jamsetji Tata, popularly known as the father of modern Indian industry, Prime Minister Modi released commemorative coins. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman of Tata Sons, Cyrus Mistry said Jamsetji's focus was two-pronged, each equally important and interconnected.

“The first was industrialisation of the country and building the requisite human capital. The second was conducting business in a fashion that positively impacted the quality of lives of the people it touched,” he said.

The government had earlier honoured Jamsetji by releasing postal stamps, one in 1958 and another in 1965.



The Centre for Iranian Studies at London Middle East Institute and the Brunei Gallery, SOAS present an exhibition featuring a selection of Maps – urban plans, topographic maps, and sea charts – taken from the ‘*Dr Cyrus Ala'i's Map Collection of Persia*’ of over 250 maps that was gifted to SOAS, University of London in 2013. The collection includes important printed general maps of Persia and more specialist items from the early editions of Ptolemy, at the end of the 15th century, up until the end of the Qajar dynasty in 1925. The exhibition will run from 23rd January – 21st March 2015 at the Brunei Gallery, SOAS, London.



Run by a group called the Xtremely Young Zoroastrians (XYZ), events will be organised



every alternate Sunday and, through fun activities Parsi children will be taught about Zoroastrianism, community literature, folklore, contemporary iconic personalities and even Parsi cuisine and language.

“Through skits and plays, children will learn about Zoroastrianism’s creator Ahura Mazda, his message and our prayers. They will also be introduced to our great epic poem Shahnameh, and stories of famous kings such as Tahmuras, Jamshid, Homai and Rustom,” said 29 year old, Hoshang Gotla. He said more than 400 children between five and 15 years have already enrolled for the programme, which has a fee of Rs1,000 per year. Sessions will be held at seven centres in the city — Colaba, Tardeo, Parel, Dadar, Andheri, Santacruz, and Byculla.

ZAGNY held a concert of western classical music on 13 December at Our Lady of Peach Church, North Brunswick, NJ, with child prodigy Neville Bharucha of UK, who is now 22 years old. Accompanying the piano virtuoso Neville, were Piroozi Cooper-Wittlin – oboe / English horn, Tara Jamsidian – soprano, Cyrus Mehta – violin and Liley Mehta on the cello.



Tower, first book written by Avani Jesia, an attractive 40 year-old English teacher. She lives in her 100-year-old family home in Dadar Parsi Colony, Mumbai. *Tower*, a gripping, eloquent narrative sees it unravel over the course of a century, its many inter-connected tales and characters indelibly and eternally linked to a house built in 1920s Bombay. In fact, the very house she lives in.

Chef Cyrus Todiwala opens The River Restaurant at the Acron Waterfront Resort, Goa. Long before Cyrus went to UK and became a celebratory chef, he worked as an executive chef in Goa. Now after 25 years, he returns to India to give his gastronomic signature on Goa’s newest deluxe resort’s restaurant. The opening coincided with Taste of Goa Food Festival which was organized

by the charity Goa for Giving, culminating in a gala charity dinner cooked by



the British chefs John Feeney, Colin Busse, Sarah Hartnett, Paul Cunningham and Cyrus & Pervin Todiwala, with all proceeds going to the charity.

Shayan Italia, musician and singer who lived in UK, has moved to Mumbai to start a new venture – Biryani 360 – which materialized by chance. Biryani 360 is based on the concept where Shayan plans to service 60 biryanis per hourly slot and have six slots per day which makes the total to 360 biryanis a day max. So by limiting quantity he is planning to optimize on quality.

Behram Mehelli Dinshaw, Senior Vice President, Product Management, Personal Insurance, has made Insurance Business America magazine’s “Hot 100” list of insurance professionals. He is a Fellow of Casualty Actuaries Society. Travelers, where Behram works, is one of the largest Insurance companies in the USA. The list recognizes insurance professionals who have played a major role in advancing the industry and delivering innovative solutions. Behram was lauded for his role in launching Quantum Auto 2.0.



TRAVELERST

Rustom Khushro Shapoorjee Gandhi, ‘India’s Nelson’ as Lord Mountbaten called him, passed away in January 2015. Admiral Gandhi was one of the Indian Navy’s most decorated, colourful, gregarious, and courageous officers who rose to the rank of a Vice Admiral and commanded the Eastern Fleet and the Western Naval Command with aplomb and professionalism.

J A Motorsport in Coimbatore has produced what they call the Super Nano, a souped-up version of the world’s cheapest car, with the acceleration of a sports coupe. Instead of the low buzz produced by the standard Nano’s pint-sized 37-hp engine, the Super Nano emits a banshee-like wail from a 230-hp engine more commonly found on racing motorcycles.

As a result, the Super Nano goes from 0-100 kilometers an hour in six-and-a-half seconds and its top speed is around 190 kph, said Joseph Chandy, who oversees the Super Nano project. That



means the speedier Nano could possibly surprise a few German-made cars in a drag race.

The car is undergoing final tests that will be completed at the end of February, at which point the company will offer its services to existing Nano owners. The Clark-Kent-to-Superman transformation will set one back 2.5 million rupees (\$39,497).

Tata Sons Chairman Emeritus Ratan Tata has been appointed to the board of Interpol Foundation to contribute to its two new global initiatives aimed at combating



organised crime and terrorist activities by the international police organisation.

Mehernosh Pastakia, owner of the Taj Pavilion, Beijing, is now an old time resident having come to China from Mumbai in 1991. His first Taj opened in 1998 and is a favourite for diners, amongst the 20 Indian restaurants in Beijing. Pastakia is married to Zheng Xiaowen, whom he met soon after he arrived in Beijing. She plays a pivotal role in his success, who handles all the “back office stuff while I take care of business at the front of the house,” says Mehernosh. They have a 14-year-old son, Kershasp, who benefits from both his cultures.

Despite their booming business, Mehernosh is cautious in expanding their business. “If you see the history of our restaurants, we wait at least five years before opening a new restaurant,” he said. “The difficult part is not opening it but running it. It takes time for a restaurant to settle down.”



Mr Fereidoon Demehri, the founder of the Zoroastrian News Agency (ZNA) and O’shihan Cultural Organization, passed away on Sunday January 18, 2015 at in Vancouver, Canada as a result of an unfortunate and untimely car accident. Mr Demehri was an icon in the Zoroastrian and Iranian communities and will always be remembered for his enthusiasm in culture, the arts, music, sports, films, ancient history, and charity. May his spirit continue to inspire us and strengthen our

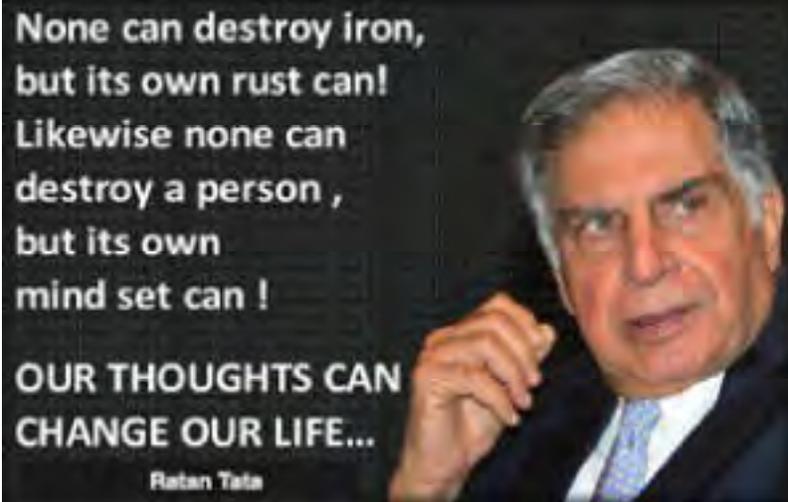
community as he did so tirelessly when he walked amongst us. Ravaanash Shaad, Behesht-e Barin Jaaye Gaahash Baad!

Information appearing in Buzzabout is during the frame time of, end October 2014 - end January 2015.

The header of this section – Buzzabout – has been designed by Rovina Sethna, of Karachi, Pakistan. - Ed.

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The World Zoroastrian Organisation

