

# ZTFE News



Summer 2009  
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Dicky Rutnagur with Nari Contractor who was honoured by the ZTFE



Donor Board at SOAS unveiled commemorating the generosity of the Zartoshty Brothers



Some of the children, parents and other helpers who presented at the 25th Year Interfaith celebrations at the Zoroastrian Center



The Silver Toran from Zanzibar's Agiary now hangs proudly at the ZTFE Setayash Gah



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# Welcome

One again we place before you a colourful account of our activities over the last few months. A whole host of dignitaries have visited the Zoroastrian Centre over the last 6 months, ranging from cricket legends and government ministers to interfaith delegations from various parts of the country. I am sure you will agree that the level and scope of our activities have not been affected by the current challenging economic climate. That is not to say that we are totally unaffected by the economic down turn. Our year end accounts have not yet been finalised but our investment portfolio will show the effects of cruel financial markets. On the other hand, our astute decision to avoid new investment in what we considered over-valued equities during 2006 and 2007 has shielded us from the worst of the market and safeguarded our finances. We hope to maintain our record of outperforming the FTSE 100 index again as has been the case for over a decade. In these financially trying times we rely even more on our donors. All donations large or small, regular or ad-hoc are very much appreciated. In the next few weeks we shall take in hand the task of acknowledging all the major donations received for the New Premises Project since 1993 in a Donors Gallery. Letters will soon go out to all our donors inviting them to verify and agree the amount donated in accordance with our records and if so inclined, to top up their donations. Your generosity has always helped the Association and I am sure it will continue in this season of goodwill.

The annual Mukhtad season and Shahenshai Navroze is fast approaching so I take this opportunity to wish you and your family Navroze Mubarak.



Paurushasp B. Jila  
President  
Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (Inc)



## Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (Inc.)

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Zartoshty Brothers Hall, Religious and Cultural Centre  
of the Parsee & Irani Zoroastrian Community

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## Dignitaries and ministers at Zartoshty Brothers Hall

For many years the Zoroastrian House as well as more recently the Zoroastrian Centre did not gain visits from cabinet ministers. Our representatives were always received with great courtesy by HMG ministers at official

events and even at 10 Downing Street. However, return invitations to our HQ were usually politely turned down. All this has changed in recent years with our local Harrow MPs Tony McNulty and Gareth Thomas becoming ministers and visiting the Centre from time to time. On Monday 15 September 2008, Lord Mark Malloch Brown became the first cabinet minister in HMG to visit the Zoroastrian Centre. Lord Mark Malloch Brown was at the time cabinet minister at the Foreign Office, having just returned to the UK after a stint in New York as Deputy Secretary General at the United Nations. Lord Malloch Brown was invited to a private function by Mr Gareth Thomas MP but ZTFE officials were on hand to receive him and give the minister a quick tour of the Centre.

On Saturday 19 April 2008, the then London Mayor Mr Ken Livingstone also visited the Zoroastrian Centre and was given a tour of the building and the facilities by ZTFE President Paurushasp Jila and several office bearers. Ken has read several books on Zoroastrianism and had always showed a deep affection for our community and usually invited our representatives to major GLA events. Post the GLA elections, Ken has visited the Zoroastrian Centre in a more informal capacity and spent some time with us.

During the Mayoral Year 2008-09, the Mayor of Harrow was our friend Cllr John Nickolay. His wife Joyce Nickolay is councillor for Rayners Lane ward and also a close friend of the ZTFE. Both Joyce and John have been long standing councillors in Harrow and we are fortunate to count them as our friends and well-wishers. Cllr John Nickolay completed his Mayoral term recently. At the Annual Mayor's Banquet, ZTFE was represented by Dorab Mistry and Malcolm Deboo. Earlier in the year, the Conservative Leader of Harrow Council, Cllr John Mote and his wife Cllr Janet Mote had visited the Centre and admired the renovation undertaken by the ZTFE.

The newly elected GLA member for Harrow & Brent Cllr Navin Shah has also been a regular visitor to the Centre and undertook his first public engagement as a GLA Councillor with a visit to our Centre.

## The Late Rustom Tirandaz – tireless campaigner and common man's stalwart

In the early hours of 27th January 2009, we received the grim news from Mumbai that BPP trustee Rustom Tirandaz had suddenly passed away. After returning from his daily swim, Rustom had complained of chest pain and was rushed to hospital. He passed away shortly thereafter. He was only 63 and in good health. Rustom

had plunged into community life after having been elected as BPP trustee for a second time a few months earlier.

Rustom Sheriyar Tirandaz was raised in the Dadar Parsee Colony in Mumbai and entered public life at a very young age. He was elected to the Bombay Municipal Corporation whilst still in his twenties and served the people of Dadar as their Corporator for 17 years. During this time he endeared himself to all communities by his selfless work, his championing of minorities and his robust stand against corruption in the municipality. He was elected to the Bombay Parsee Panchayat for the first time in 1995. At the time he became the first Zoroastrian Irani to be elected as BPP Trustee. Rustom ran his own business and was active in organisations that promoted the cause of free enterprise and small businesses. Above all he was a champion of common sense and the common man. No cause was too small for him and he worked day and night to help those in need, particularly those from his beloved Zoroastrian community. Amongst many causes that he campaigned for, Rustom will be remembered for campaigning for Universal Adult Franchise in elections to the BPP. With poetic justice, in the first ever elections to be run on the basis of UAF, Rustom was elected trustee for a second term in 2008.

Rustom was a traditionalist in religious and community matters. He also had a keen sense of humour and could see the lighter side of life. He remained humble and approachable at all times. Throughout his life, Rustom was ably supported by his wife Armaity. They had met as teenage sweethearts and remained exceptionally close ever since. It was perhaps most fitting that the voters of Mumbai elected Armaity as trustee in the keenly fought by-election in April this year. Rustom's booming voice, his clear thinking and his straight talk will be much missed but Armaity comes as a worthy successor to fulfil his life's work and vision.

# THE ZARTOSHTY BROTHERS' MARCH INTO THE ANNALS OF ACADEMIC RECOGNITION

At a landmark ceremony held on 23 March 2009, a Donor Board featuring the names of the Zoroastrian philanthropist Zartoshty Brothers – Mehraban and his late brother Faridoon, was unveiled in the foyer of the world renowned School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) – London University.

The Donor Board records the generosity of the Zartoshty Brothers towards the establishment of a Chair in Zoroastrian Studies at SOAS. Amongst those present were the Director and Principal - Professor Paul Webley and other distinguished SOAS faculty including Professor John Hinnells, Prof Almut Hintze and Prof Sarah Stewart. Also present were several senior officers of the



Mr Shahrokh Sharokh unveils the plaque

ZTFE, including Past President Dorab Mistry; our elder statesman, Mr Shahrokh Shahrokh; Past President Rusi Dalal, Counsel Emeritus Noshir Avari, Trustees Ervad Rustom Bhedwar and Adi Bilimoria, ex-Trustee Dr Firoze R Munshi, Vice President Malcolm Deboo, and several ZTFE Managing Committee members. Also present was Dr Jamasp Dastoor, who is currently a student of Zoroastrianism at SOAS and whose father Dasturji Dr Jamasp Asa and great grandfather were associated with Zoroastrian and Iranian Studies in the UK.

Teaching of Zoroastrianism (as opposed to Iranian philology) first began at SOAS in the 1970s with the late Professor Mary Boyce leading the way. Unfortunately, with Professor Boyce's retirement in the 1980s the studies lapsed and the teaching was not restarted until the world renowned scholar, Professor John Hinnells

- Honoured Friend of ZTFE – joined SOAS. With Professor Hinnells, too, now in semi-retirement, this duty is presently admirably carried out by Dr Almut Hintze and Dr Sarah Stewart. Currently, Zoroastrian studies' roll call encompasses three Phd students, with another fifteen pursuing Masters and Bachelors degree courses.

In 1997, an appeal was lodged by Professor Mary Boyce and Professor John Hinnells to raise money for the creation of a permanent post on Zoroastrian Studies at SOAS. The munificent donation given by the Zartoshty Brothers facilitated the continuation of the teaching of Zoroastrian Studies. Recently, a significant bequest left by the late Professor Boyce, has for the first time in the history of the University enabled SOAS to create a permanent post in the teaching of Zoroastrianism at SOAS. More importantly, the present course now includes modern material, whereas in the past it nearly always tended to cover ancient material. We now find a greater awareness regarding Zoroastrians and Zoroastrianism in the British press and media and indeed at the occasion of the opening of the Millennium Dome, where nine major faiths of the UK were depicted, we succeeded in securing a place for Zoroastrianism.

Acknowledging the donation of the Zartoshty Brothers, Professor Webley, in his welcoming speech, chose to quote Mahatma Gandhi:

*"Parsee, thy name is charity; charity, thy name is Parsee."*

Professor Webley told the distinguished gathering: "We very much hope we will be able to create a permanently endowed chair in Zoroastrian studies in due course. And we are sure that in 10 years time, in 50 years time, in 100 years time, Zoroastrian studies will continue to flourish at SOAS. I am proud that SOAS is home to the study of one of the oldest living faiths and one of Iran's great contributions to the history of human thought."

Recognising the Zartoshty brothers' foresight by their willingness to fund academic endeavour for the benefit of future generations, Professor Webley promised: "You have my word that SOAS will work hard to retain its place as world leaders in the study of Zoroastrianism. It is central to our mission. SOAS is the only Higher Education Institution in the world specialising exclusively in the study and research of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Our academic focus on the languages, cultures and



societies of these regions makes SOAS a guardian of specialist knowledge and an indispensable interpreter in a complex world.” The Professor concluded his address by reminding his audience that the event was a fitting recognition of “Good thoughts, good words, and good deeds” of the Zartoshty Brothers.

Acknowledging Professor Webley’s key note address, Dorab Mistry read out the following message on behalf of our munificent donor and senior patron, Mr Mehraban Zartoshty:

*Dear Prof Dr Webley, Prof John Hinnells, Dr Almut Hintze, distinguished members of SOAS and my dear Zoroastrian officers of the ZTFE*

*I send my best wishes and my congratulations to Prof Webley and to everyone at SOAS for hosting since 1997 the first and the only Chair in Zoroastrianism in the world. It has been a privilege for my family to be associated with such a prestigious institution of high learning as SOAS. My family and I appreciate and salute the vision of the Late Professor Mary Boyce and my dear*

*pursuit of excellence. SOAS is a symbol of these great attributes. I am therefore delighted that the name of my family now appears as one of those who admired and assisted this great British institution. May the Chair in Zoroastrianism always flourish and may the vision of Prof Mary Boyce always shine.*

A short prayer of benediction was thereupon recited by Ervad Rustom Bhedwar before the plaque confirming the donation of half a million pounds by the Zartoshty Brothers to SOAS was unveiled by our elder statesman Mr Shahrokh Shahrokh.

In rounding up the events, Mr Dorab Mistry also said that it was very appropriate that Zoroastrian prayers were recited because Mehraban being a fully ordained priest would have liked to have recited blessings for the great institution of SOAS. He also reminded his audience that the Zartoshty Brothers’ Chair in Zoroastrianism had been established since 1997 and during that time, three Presidents had served the ZTFE – Rusi Dalal, Dorab Mistry and now Paurush Jila. During this period, Noshir Avari had served continuously as Trustee, with Ervad



The SOAS Plaque with members of ZTFE and SOAS communities

*friend Professor John Hinnells who have both dedicated their life-long work to our ancient faith. The links between Zoroastrians and the Late Professor Boyce have been further strengthened by Prof Hinnells, Dr Almut Hintze and Dr Sarah Stewart. I am always delighted to read about their work, the papers they publish and the seminars which they conduct at SOAS.*

*From my earliest days in business, I have admired the British for their many splendid qualities of integrity, dedication and the*

Rustom Bhedwar and Shahrokh Shahrokh having always taken a keen interest in SOAS.

The event was rounded off with light refreshments in Professor Webley’s private study.

*Summary of events prepared by  
Noshir J Avari – ZTFE Counsel Emeritus*

# Cricket with Nari Contractor and Dicky Rutnagar

On Sunday, 5 April 2009, ZTFE hosted a function in honour of Nari Contractor, one of the most illustrious among



Cricket legend Nari Contractor playing in the 1959 test between India and Australia

Parsi Zoroastrian cricketers of the last generation. Through the good offices of Zarine and Behram Contractor, it had been a long cherished ambition of the ZTFE to arrange this cricketing felicitation. That famous voice from yester year Dicky Rutnagar was also felicitated.

Former test star Faroukh Engineer was also invited but sent his

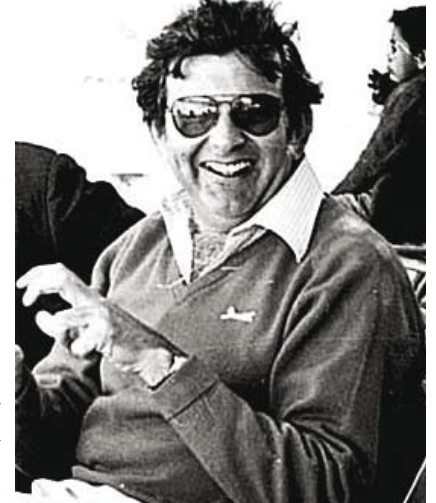
best wishes and regrets due to a prior commitment. Nari was returning to India after having been invited to the West Indies to inaugurate the Sir Frank Worrell Blood Bank, dedicated to one of cricket's most famous captains and Nari's counter-part in that fateful series.

The afternoon kicked off with a simple but deliciously cooked meal of Dhansak, Kebabs and Ice cream which was greatly enjoyed by all present. After a brief welcome by the President of ZTFE, Paurush Jila, he requested Dorab Mistry to the stage.

Dorab, in his address recounted some of the landmarks in Nari's distinguished cricketing career, his outstanding success in domestic cricket, his meteoric rise as a test player and finally, appointment as captain of India which was a fitting recognition of his standing as a batsman of the highest class as well as a leader who commanded respect and admiration in the field of play.

Listening to Dorab, one was left to ponder what heights Nari would have scaled, had his test career not been cut short so cruelly on that fateful day in Barbados when he took a blow on the head from a lifting delivery from the West Indies paceman, Charlie Griffith.

Nari thanked ZTFE for inviting him and said how fortunate he had been to play cricket at the highest level and to have the love and support of his family and friends. He then took questions from the floor and responded with the same assurance he had shown at the crease.



Dicky Rutnagar who many remembered as an excellent squash and cricket radio

Dicky Rutnagar as a younger Cricket commentator

broadcaster and later as cricket correspondent for the Daily Telegraph, took the stage. Although looking somewhat frail, Dicky was nevertheless in fine form and regaled the audience with some mighty humorous anecdotes.

Ervad Jal Karkaria was then invited by Paurush Jila to recite a Tandarosti prayer for the good health and long life of Nari, Dolly and Dicky. The guests were visibly touched by this unique gesture by our senior Ervad Saheb on behalf of the Anjuman.

Nari, his wife Dolly and Dicky were then presented with momentoes and flowers as a token of our appreciation. All those who attended had a pleasant and nostalgic day and Nari and Dolly mingled with the audience answering questions long after the President had called Stumps.



From left to right: Rusi Dalal, Dicky Rutnagar, Nari and Dolly Contractor, President Paurushasp Jila, Dorab Mistry and Ervad Jal Karkaria



## Zanzibar Toran unveiled at ZTFE Setayash Gah

With the dominance of the trade routes between the British outposts in the world, Cowasji Dinshawji Darji (Adenwalla) established a shipping company to trade between Aden, Zanzibar and India. In 1895 Cowasji Dinshawji built an Agiari in Zanzibar and presented it to the Parsee Anjuman. Amongst the early Parsee settlers by 1900s in Zanzibar was Framroze Keeka.

those ex - Zanzibar parsees in the UK and Toronto that it was decided to dispose off the Zanzibar Agiari premises.

Most of the religious silverware including the Afargan has been shifted to Toronto for the establishment of the new prayer hall, but we



The Zanzibar Agiary Toran originally donated by Framroze Keeka and now hanging in the ZTFE Setayash Gah

Maintaining their Zoroastrian religious identity the community provided several gifts for the Agiary. Amongst them was a silver Toran that adorned the entrance of the Zanzibar Agiary. This silver toran was gifted by Framroze Keeka to the Agiary in 1925.

With the retreat of the Parsee Zoroastrians from Zanzibar, the Agiary remained in disuse except for the occasional overseas visitors. It was then that with the backing of

were proud to be able to retrieve the silver Toran for our own Setayesh Gah.- This Toran was unveiled on the 17th May at the Dae Mah Hormuzd Roj Jashan and Ghambar and is now installed over the doorway of the inner sanctum of the Setayesh Gah. With us on the day of the unveiling we had Cyrus Keeka with his wife Aban, Son Daraius and his wife Simonil, and another son Rustom, all descendants of Framroze Keeka. The Toran will help us to perpetuate the memory of those from Zanzibar.

## 9th World Zoroastrian Congress in Dubai

Please remember that in December this year we have the World Zoroastrian Congress in Dubai. This event promises to be a great place to network with fellow Zarthushtis meet and make lifelong friends and renew acquaintances. There is already a pretty detailed agenda of items to be covered and its not just work. There are lots of sessions set aside for sight-seeing trips, dune bashing, night camping in the desert, the grand finale and of course the obligatory shopping trips. We urge you to sign up and join the ZTFE delegation from the 28th-31st December for a memorable 4 days.



## The Zoroastrian Center Green Travel Plan

The Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe are committed to promoting "Green Travel" to and from the Zoroastrian Centre and as such are implementing schemes to encourage all of our members to avoid single occupancy car travel. We are well situated for easy access by public transport, and for those local to Rayners Lane, walking and Cycling offers a very green alternative in addition to the many health benefits. If you must travel by car then please wherever possible share a lift and use the Rayners Lane station car park.

For further information on Green Travel please email the ZTFE Secretariat [secretary@ztfe.com](mailto:secretary@ztfe.com) or telephone 020 8866 0765.

General information on public transport and cycling can be found on [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk)



# Jamsheedi NoRuz 2009

The Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe is the oldest Anjuman in the western world and has been celebrating NoRuz for over a hundred years. So what was different in 2009? Quite simply, a lot.

The BBC were in the process of creating a new 'Let's Celebrate' series, capturing religious and cultural festivals through the eyes of the nation's children for their CBeebies TV channel aimed at the under 6 age group. Through the extensive work of the ZTFE within Interfaith, Zoroastrianism is recognised as one of the nine world faiths in Britain and we were delighted to be asked to contribute to the series. The children had already been working hard at their educational fun club sessions preparing for NoRuz. The difference now was that they were going to have the BBC filming them. Also this year we had the XYZ NoRuz party and then the grand finale where the ZTFE members all got together for a memorable Jashan, evening of dining and entertainment from the XYZ's and the live band. The following articles and accompanying photographs give you a flavour of what we did at these events, and if the Zarthus of old had been there, they would definitely have approved.

## XYZ Party



Dara Uncle weaves his magic for the audience

very, very young to the parents and grandparents that were present. Over a day later some of the children were still talking about the colourful scarf trick that seemed to get longer and longer.

Our little XYZs got together for a joyous celebration on the 14<sup>th</sup> March in anticipation for the big Jamsheedi NoRuz celebrations!!.

Over 100 people turned up to take part in the festivities. The evening kicked off with an amazing magic show given

by our 'Magical Dara Uncle' (Dara Kaka).

The performance amazed, excited and enthralled the audience from the

the parents and

Following the magic show a delicious but simple dinner of dal, chawal, patia and tareli machi was served appealing to the taste buds of all present with some melodious 'Disney ballads' playing through dinner. With appetites appeased, the children were then entertained further by the 'Magical Dara Uncle' who made balloon animals, hats

and swords. Ice cream was then served which proved to be a challenge for many of the children fighting to eat their ice creams and play with their balloons simultaneously.



Shahrokh and Simin Shahrokh with the organiser Fraser Daruwala, President Paurushasp and Marzbeen Jila

The highlight of the evening were the NoRuz presents donated by Mr & Mrs Shahrokh Sharokh to celebrate this auspicious occasion. Gifts were given to all of the children present to celebrate the day. The evening ended with a mini disco packed with little dancers boogieing to Disco classics and Bollywood hits. It was hard to choose the best dancer as all our XYZ dancers were incredible...After a difficult decision, we did award prizes for the best boy and girl.



Sharokh Sharokh with some of the kids with their presents

with a mini disco packed with little dancers boogieing to Disco classics and Bollywood hits. It was hard to choose the best dancer as all our XYZ dancers were incredible...After a difficult decision, we did award prizes for the best boy and girl.

## The night of the 21st March



The Zoroastrians of the UK have for several years been celebrating NoRuz with a lot of passion and a lot of local associations have an annual Navroze get-together for the residents in their area, for example the annual party for the Zoroastrian Association of Harrow and North London, the Zoroastrians of South London, the UK branch of the WZO, etc. in the week ends preceding or following the actual day. However, each year the community gathers on the day itself for the NoRuz Jashan and Dinner party for the ZTFE on the Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March. Well over 600 members and their guests assembled at the



## The BBC films at ZTFE

Hello fellow Zoroastrians. The Extra Young Zoroastrian's (XYZ) would like to share with you their achievements in the lead up to Jamsheedi NoRuz 2009.



Its NoRuz Time being performed



Following a screen test conducted at the Zoroastrian Centre by the CBeebies in which several XYZs volunteered, eight year old Berzin Daruwala together with his five year old younger sister Binaifer were selected to play the leading roles in demonstrating and explaining how Zoroastrian children



BBC filming a group of children at the Educational Fun Club

prepare for and celebrate Jamsheedi NoRuz. On Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March the CBeebies visited the Zoroastrian Centre to film the XYZs at the Children's Educational Fun Club preparing for NoRuz. The children were planting the sabzeh (wheat) and painting eggs ready to be laid on the traditional Haftsheen table. On the morning of Jamsheedi NoRuz, Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March, the CBeebies visited the house of Berzin and Binaifer Daruwala and together with their parents Anahita and Fraser and grand parents Hilloo and Farokh Daruwala filmed them celebrating Jamsheedi NoRuz. From their house, the CBeebies accompanied the Daruwala family to the Zoroastrian Centre, where they filmed them praying in the Setayash Geh and witnessing Ervad Rustom

Bhedwar performing the maachi ceremony. They filmed the Haftsheen table being laid out at the Zoroastrian Centre by Mrs Paridokh Falahati and Mrs Nergish Avari. The CBeebies also filmed the Jamsheedi NoRuz Jashan, later filming "It's NoRuz Time", performed by 25 XYZs, the youngest performing stars being

Sarosh Italia, Kainaz Contractor and Vistasp Jila who are merely 3-4 years old. The performance was choreographed by Mrs Nergish Avari and Mrs Rozy Contractor

with assistance from Anahita Zubin Daruwala and other volunteering parents. From the cheers and claps received from over 650 members of the audience, it seems they were really proud of the XYZs for putting on a fantastic show. Later the CBeebies continued to film the XYZs celebrating Jamsheedi NoRuz, capturing them eating and dancing together.

Overall, these past few months have been an exciting and busy time for the XYZs. Planning for this event has truly been a team effort! We thank all



The Haftsheen Table

the devoted XYZs, the entire Zoroastrian team, and also HIFC and especially CBeebies. Since Jamsheedi NoRuz is an annual festival the CBeebies is planning to broadcast the 2009 celebration in 2010 together with festivals of the other faith communities that make up multi faith – multi cultural Britain today. Look out for it!

Zartoshty Brothers Hall, Zoroastrian Centre to celebrate this event with enthusiasm. As is the ZTFE tradition, a Jashan was performed by our Ervad Sahebs in the Zartoshty Brothers Hall and there was a Maachi in the Setayash Gah.

President Paurushasp B. Jila gave a brief welcome speech and wished all a happy and prosperous NoRuz. There was a banquet style sit-down meal in two parts (with approximately 300 guests in each sitting). Drinks and starters flowed throughout the evening and the highlight was a small show put together by some of the eXtra Young Zoroastrians (XYZs) and a Haftsheen NoRuz table presented by our community members.

A professional band provided entertainment during and after the scrumptious dinner. Following dinner and kulfies, the guests took the opportunity to dance well into the morning of the second new day of the year.



## Fasli Panjeh (Mukhtad) Jashan

Panj means five in Persian, the ceremony starts 10 days before NoRuz or the new year. The first 5 days are known as "Panjeh Koochak" or small Panjeh and the remaining five days are "Panjeh Bozorg" or great Panjeh. The reason the second five days is so called is perhaps because of its nomination as the Gathas days. This is when "Panji Gahambar" or the last Gahambar of the year is celebrated. Zoroastrians in Yazd, Kerman, and other cities and villages still celebrate this ceremony. ZTFE is not an exception in celebrating it and a good number of Zarthusti's were present this year and the function was blessed by the prayers and remembering the name of the deceased.

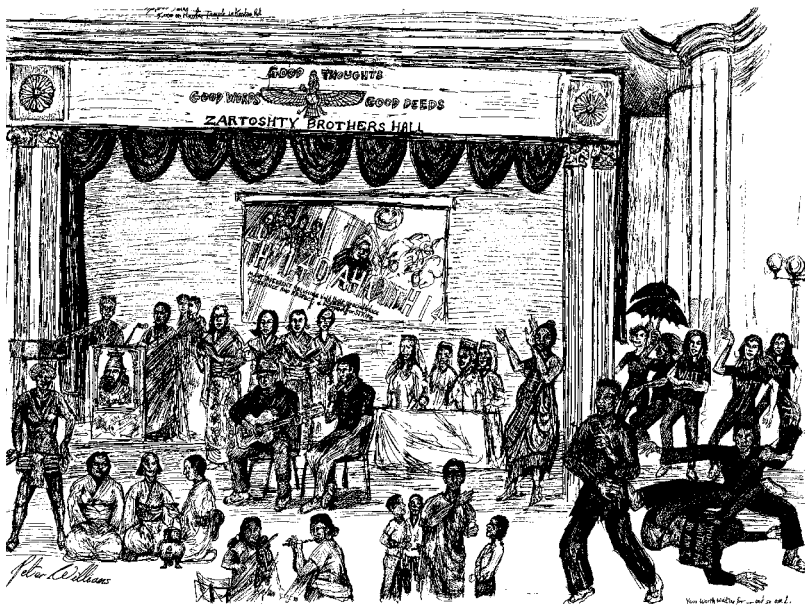
## Atash nu Parabh Jashan

At the Zoroastrian Centre in London, Zoroastrians gathered on Adar Ruz, Adar Mah, 24th April 2009, to celebrate the Feast of Fire - Atash nu Parabh. The evening celebrations commenced with the Azargan Jashan piously performed by the mobed sahebs. Along with the offerings of three beakers containing water, milk and sharab, was an abundance of flowers and fruit blessed and consecrated by the recital of prayers by the priests. The blessed fruit of the chasni was then consumed by the participants. Around 200 fellow Zoroastrians in attendance mingled over drinks and a traditional gahambar dinner of Dar Chaval ne Matchhi no Patio. (Lentils, Rice and Fish patio), sev dahi and dry fruit.

Among the guests attending the celebration was Mr. Minoo Shroff, a leading industrialist and businessman

## Interfaith 25th Anniversary Celebrations

Harrow Interfaith Council celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at the Zoroastrian Centre with a celebratory Interfaith function. The event was opened by a traditional garba dance performed by ladies from the local Hindu community.



Sketch of the celebrations at the Zoroastrian Center

understanding of both the similarities and differences between faiths how the ZTFE participated at local, national and European levels. After speeches from each of the faith representatives there was a long and interesting question and answer session. A vegetarian lunch was served and enjoyed by all. Following lunch was an entertainment programme of songs, dances and skits performed by the different community groups. The ZTFE's XYZ children gave a repeat performance of their skit "It's NoRuz Time" which they performed at the ZTFE's Jamsheedi NoRuz function. The performance was spearheaded by Nergish Avari and she was assisted by many parents of our XYZs. Particular thanks to Anahita Daruwala and Rozy Contractor for their organisational help. The many hours of practice put in by the children paid dividends judging from the response of the audience and we thank the children and all parents for their dedication.

The morning started off with a warm welcome from President Paurushasp Jila. The chief guest was Alderman Keith Toms. Alderman Toms was no stranger to the Zoroastrian Centre. It was Alderman Toms who had the honour of unveiling the "brown plaque" awarded to the Zoroastrian Centre by the Harrow Heritage Trust some two years ago. Harriet Crabtree, Director of the Interfaith Network of the UK also graced the occasion with her presence and a speech. The morning session consisted of a panel discussion with one representative from each of the 9 major recognised faiths in the UK. Paurushasp Jila represented the Zoroastrian community. He elaborated on the importance of Interfaith in the



One of the dance groups at the celebration



from Mumbai and the immediate-past Chairman of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet.

Traditionally, the Adar Parab celebrations began at home a day before on Dae-pa Adar Ruz with the cleaning of the kitchen where the permanently lit hearth of the fire is located. On Adar Ruz the embers from the hearth are placed in an Afarganyu which is kept burning with kathi and sandalwood. The afarganyu is placed in a ses that is filled with the usual items required for the performance of a jashan that is then performed to celebrate the birthday of Fire.

The Zoroastrian Centre continues with the tradition of celebrating all Parab jashans precisely on the day following the Shahenshai calender. The Adar parab jashan and dinner was sponsored by Mrs Banoo Petit, Mr & Mrs Hoshang and Freny Writer and Mr & Mrs Tammy Irani.

## 60 Years of the Commonwealth

The 2009 Commonwealth Day Observance service took place at Westminster Abbey on Monday 9th March 2009. The service was attended by Her Majesty The Queen, His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh and Prime Minister Gordon Brown, as



President Paurushasp Jila in lineup at Westminster Cathedral

well as numerous diplomatic and political dignitaries from around the world. Leaders of each of the UK's 9 recognised faiths were also invited to participate in the service. ZTFE President Paurushasp Jila represented the Zoroastrian community.

The service reflected on the theme "The Commonwealth at 60: Serving a New Generation". Each faith leader was requested to respond to a personal testimony from their faith tradition's perspective. Testimonies were given by a historian, campaigner, entrepreneur, philanthropist and a paralympic athlete. Paurushasp Jila was requested to respond to the testimony of entrepreneur Ravi Gehlot who had made his first million pounds by the age of 18 by answering the question, "How responsible am I for my own success in life?". Paurushasp spoke about how "Zoroastrianism lays great emphasis on individuals using their own Vohu Manah, good mind, to make their own decisions in life". He stated that "this fundamental doctrine very consciously puts us in the driving seat of our lives. Zoroastrianism encourages me to seek knowledge, work hard and follow the path of Asha Vahishta".



President Paurushasp Jila meets the Queen at Marlborough House

The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster, spoke of how the Commonwealth, like the Abbey, is a place where faiths, cultures and traditions meet in a spirit of understanding and friendship. The Queen reflected on the challenges of a Commonwealth where nearly one billion people are under the age of 25, and her gratitude that as the Commonwealth celebrates its 60th Birthday, it is committed to working hard to help young people realise their aspirations. His Excellency Kamallesh Sharma, Commonwealth Secretary-General, spoke of the need to support young people in developing their skills and self-belief, and entrusting and equipping them to help form a new world.

Later that evening the Commonwealth Secretary General held a reception at Marlborough House in Pall Mall, London. President Paurushasp Jila had the

opportunity to meet Her Majesty The Queen. He congratulated her on how the Commonwealth deals with modern day issues and how it successfully represents the large number of different cultures.

# The Late Sheroo Rustomjee

The demise of Mrs Sheroo Rustomjee on 15 April 2009, at age 92, signalled the end of an epoch concerning one of our Association's oldest patrons. She was a lady of great charisma. Right until death, Sheroo Rustomjee was in close touch with a number of you and held fervent and steadfast beliefs in matters of religious rites, rituals and practices.

Sheroo aunty can truly be described as an aunt to our entire community in London and no one who came into contact with her failed to be affected by her sharp, no-nonsense tongue, very warm and loving personality, and a lady who did not mince her words on matters of centuries old religious practices of the Zoroastrian faith. In the circumstances, she either made very strong connections, or very rapid disconnections with whosoever she came into contact. She now rests in her heavenly abode; may her dear departed soul rest in Garothman Behest

Sheroo aunty was a new year's baby. No one could forget her birthday. She was born in Surat on 1 January 1917. On 1 January 2009 she turned 92 – a grand old age. She was the youngest of the 3 daughters of Meherji and Daulatbanoo. Her elder sister Mehroo died in India some time in the 1990s, and her second sister Gulcher still lives in Bandra in Mumbai with whom she was in constant touch.

The young Sheroo grew up in Ajmer, where her dad was a well known and well respected watchmaker in charge of all the railway clocks for all the railway stations situated between Ajmer in Rajasthan and Surat in Gujarat. Unfortunately, her dad passed away at a very young age in 1932 and her mother, Daulatbanoo, took over the running of the business, which she managed for many years until her own demise in the late 1980s.

In Ajmer, Sheroo aunty went to the same Catholic school as where our Behram Kapadia's late mum also studied. Sheroo was the favourite of the nuns who ran the school. She used to stand top in the class and excelled both at sports and academic studies. In 1938, at the young age of 21, Sheroo was married to Hirjee Rustomjee – a chartered accountant practising in Mumbai. A year later, in 1939, the union of Sheroo and Hirjee produced our very own Daraius, who today is the Honorary Site Manager of our Zoroastrian Centre.

In 1958, when Sheroo aunty visited the UK with friends, she decided not to return to India. Very soon thereafter, Daraius came to the UK for further studies and studied

radio communications and radar at Hull University, where, to his great credit, he secured a 1st class degree. Daraius then joined the Merchant Navy working on deep sea trawlers.

In 1959 Sheroo aunty first started working at W H Smith and in her spare time she did voluntary charity work for a hospital. Service to community and charity work were virtues deeply ingrained in her personality. Very early on in her life these qualities were recognised by others and the Hospital Board singled her out for a commendable voluntary work service award.

After leaving W H Smith, Sheroo aunty joined Selfridges in 1961 and served this renowned store for thirty years until 1991. At retirement from active service, she was 74 years old.



Sheroo aunty was deeply committed to her Parsi community and her Zoroastrian religion. Soon upon arrival to the UK in 1958, Dasturjee Dr Sohrabji Kutar spotted in her a woman of great dedication and Daraius remembers as a young lad accompanying his mum to Brookwood cemetery to clean the Bungli at the annual occasion of Farvandan prayers. Both at the Russell Road premises, and even more so after the

Association moved to Compayne Gardens in 1969, Sheroo aunty became more and more committed to our Association's affairs. She served the House Committee for more years than we can even remember. At every annual Mukta prayers she was single handedly responsible for arranging all the flowers and vases, and notices written in her own handwriting are still to be found in the archives of even the present Zoroastrian Centre. Between 1986 and 1996 she became a great fan of our late Mehli and Beroze Mody and stayed with them at their home. Her last visit to the Zoroastrian Centre was at the occasion of the visit in 2004 of His Royal Highness Prince Edward and his wife Sophie, the Countess of Wessex.

Sheroo aunty now rests in peace. May her soul rest in Garothman Behest. The entire Association joins me in conveying our deepest condolences to Daraius. Sheroo aunty was a mum to us all.

*The above address was given by*

*Mr Noshir J Avari - ZTFE Counsel Emeritus - after the Uthamna prayers at the Zoroastrian Centre*



# Zoroastrian Center Certified for solemnising marriages

Our Zoroastrian Centre now not only offers a glorious setting for Navjotes and Marriages with its Dadgah, dining and catering facilities, but is now also certified to solemnise Zoroastrian marriages that take place at the venue. The old Zoroastrian House at Compayne Gardens was certified to solemnise marriages, registered by our beloved late secretary Mrs. Berose Mody. The criteria for certifying Zoroastrian marriages at the Zoroastrian Centre remain the same as before. Our members undergoing the Zoroastrian marriage ritual would no longer need to attend a separate registry office to solemnise their weddings. Our volunteers



specially trained and registered to solemnise marriages are Ervad Rustom Bhedwar, Ervad Jal Karkaria, Mrs. Kerman Munshi and Mrs. Roshan Avari. Anyone of the above can be chosen to officiate the wedding. What a wonderful memory it would be to be wedded by someone dear and known to you! Those interested should contact the secretariat.

With the permission granted for registering marriages, total refurbishment of the Grade 2\* listed



Art Deco building and refitting of the kitchen with state of the art equipment for catering, we look forward to Zoroastrian Centre being a popular venue chosen by you for your special occasions.

# Zarthusti is Special Advisor to the House of Commons

Zoroastrians in the UK should be proud to learn that Bahram Bekhradnia has achieved a position, never achieved in the history of Zoroastrians in the UK. He has been appointed Special Advisor to the Select Committee of the House of Commons for his expertise in Higher Education.

This appointment reflects the respect and reputation which Bahram has established for his knowledge in this field. Although he has worked without drawing attention to the honours that have been bestowed upon him, community members will be interested to know that apart from this most recent appointment, Bahram has also been awarded two professorships and an honorary doctorate for his services to Higher Education.



Bahram Bekhradnia

Bahram is the Director of HEPI (the Higher Education Policy Institute) based in Oxford. He is regularly invited to share his expertise all over the world and in just the past 12 months, he has participated in conferences or consultations in more than 14 countries.

In addition he has been invited by the governments of 12 countries to advise them on the strategic development of their university systems.

He has been regularly profiled in the national newspapers with his most recent report - about the out performance of boys by girls. This has appeared in The Observer and received coverage on national TV and radio reports.

Not only does he undertake this professional work, but also discreetly aids fellow Zoroastrians in difficulties when he feels that his advocacy or other skills may bring about justice. A devoted father of 3 now grown up children, he has taken a keen interest in their development; meanwhile his devotion to his wife Jean is legendary amongst his friends: since her recent retirement he has persuaded her to accompany him to most of the countries that he visits.

Bahram has learnt from his parents that it is no good being a Zoroastrian just in name – it is deeds that actually count.

# Jehangir Sarosh Steps Down

Our very own honorary member Jehangir Sarosh stepped down from his position as President of

Religions for Peace-Europe in December 2008. He held this position from 1999 and has committed countless hours of his own time and personal resources with the support of his wife Irma. Under his leadership, the organisation has flourished and he leaves it in a very healthy state for the future.

# Lord Bilimoria and Celebrity Chef Todiwala at Thames Valley University



Chef Cyrus Todiwala chats with the Queen

Both Lord Bilimoria and Chef Cyrus Todiwala were at the opening by the Queen of Thames Valley University's award winning building, Paragon House. Lord Bilimoria is



Lord Bilimoria looks on whilst the Queen unveils the plaque

the Thames Valley University Chancellor and Chef Cyrus Todiwala a patron of the universities school of Hospitality and Tourism. There

were performances and demonstrations from each of the three faculties and the event ended with the Queen unveiling a special plaque and a short speech by Lord Bilimoria.

# Todiwala - Celeb Chef, MBE and now Deputy Lieutenant of London

Celebrity chef, Cyrus Todiwala (MBE) was made Deputy Lieutenant of Greater London. Cyrus joins Lord Karan Bilimoria as the second

Zoroastrian Deputy Lieutenant for Hounslow.

Cyrus was installed as Deputy Lieutenant at Westminster County Hall by Sir David Brewer, Her Majesty's Lord



Cyrus Todiwala

Lieutenant of Greater London on the 10th December 2008. As a Deputy Lieutenant Cyrus will be a Royal representative at events where the royal family have been invited but cannot attend in person. Where the Royal family attend an event the Deputy Lieutenant is the first to receive them and introduces them to the host.