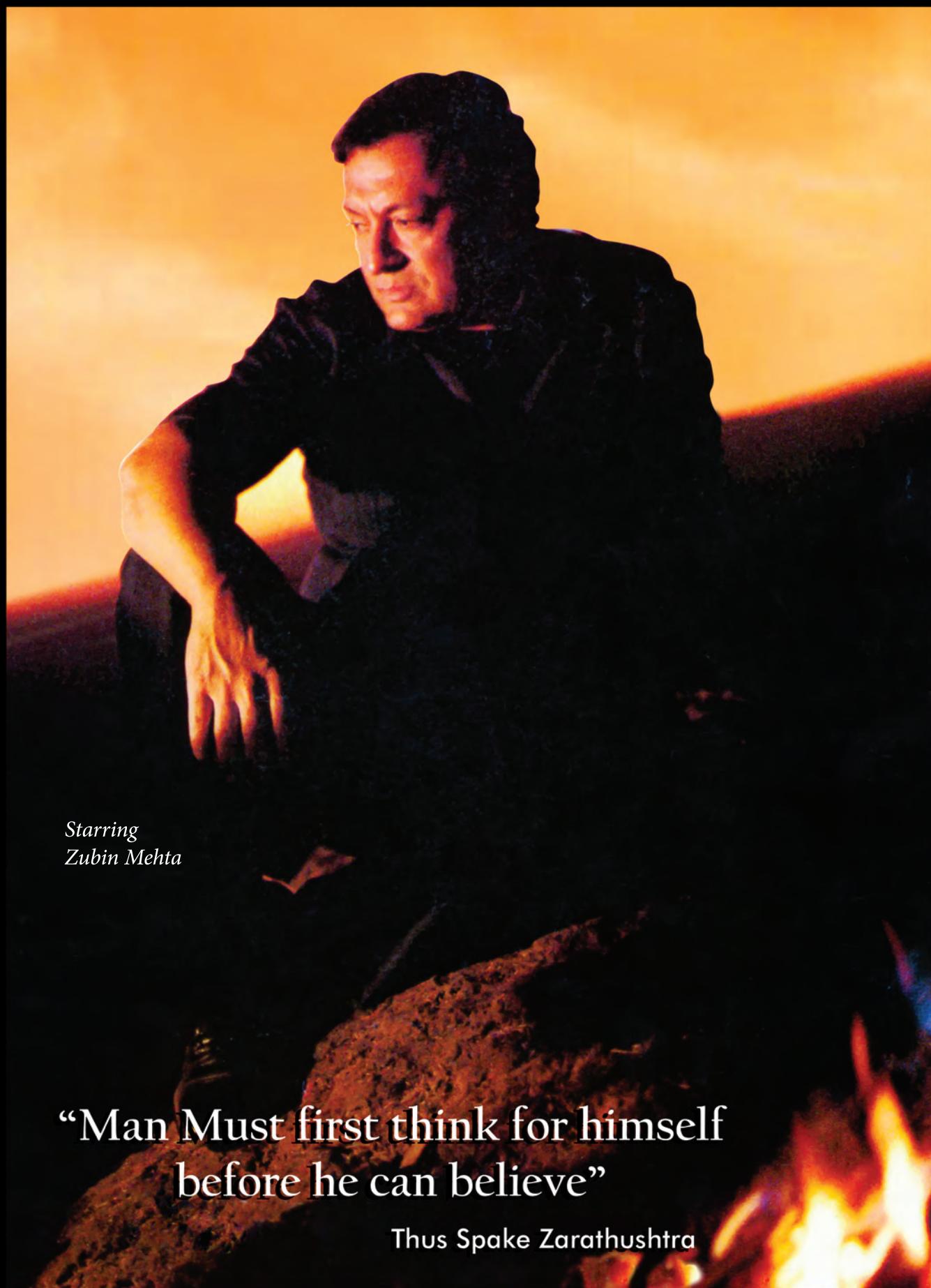


# ON WINGS OF FIRE



*Starring*  
Zubin Mehta

“Man Must first think for himself  
before he can believe”

Thus Spake Zarathushtia

# Zubin Mehta's search for his God and his people – a film odyssey across 3,500 years !

**F**or the first time ever, the awe inspiring film, *On Wings of Fire*, by international talent brings to life Zarathushtra, the world's first great prophet, his teachings even more relevant after 3,500 years... and a way of life touching the splendour of history, culture and much of life today.

Watch history's great figures, Cyrus and Darius. Discover why Alexander the Great became Alexander the Accursed. And see Darius III's dynasty end in the embers of Persepolis. Only to rise anew like the Phoenix centuries later as the Sasanian Empire. One of the longest dynasties in the world, lasting the time-equivalent of King Henry VIII's reign up to today!

Meet the generous Hindu King Jadav Rana who gave sanctuary to the Zoroastrians landing on Indian soil, to shine anew as Parsis. Later, in a 19th century renaissance, they empowered the rise of their adopted motherland, leading an inspired way of life... from the grand old man of India, Dadabhoj Naoroji, to the internationally known industrial Houses of Tata and Godrej

Marvel at all this. Presented to you by the renowned Zoroastrian Maestro Zubin Mehta, in his acting debut as a man in search of his roots.

*"Zarathushtra's message is so powerful yet so simple, so complete and all-encompassing. I very much wish to share with you this moving, enlightening experience I've had, whilst this film was being made. . ."*

*Zubin Mehta*



# OWOF SUMMARY

## Background & Concept

In 1982, Persepolis Productions (PPI) in Washington DC comprising of Cyrus Bharucha, Meherji Madan and Jamshed Madan (the producers) came up with the idea of making a film on the Parsis and their religion Zoroastrianism. They were then supported by Nani Palkhivala and Sorab Godrej who created the Oriental Heritage Trust (OHT) in Bombay in 1983 to raise money for this film.

The producers had also approached Zubin Mehta who agreed to be in the film as the host in search of his roots and to gain a deeper understanding of his heritage and culture.

The financing was accomplished by the OHT in India, and achieved governance under PPI in the USA.

## Film Synopsis

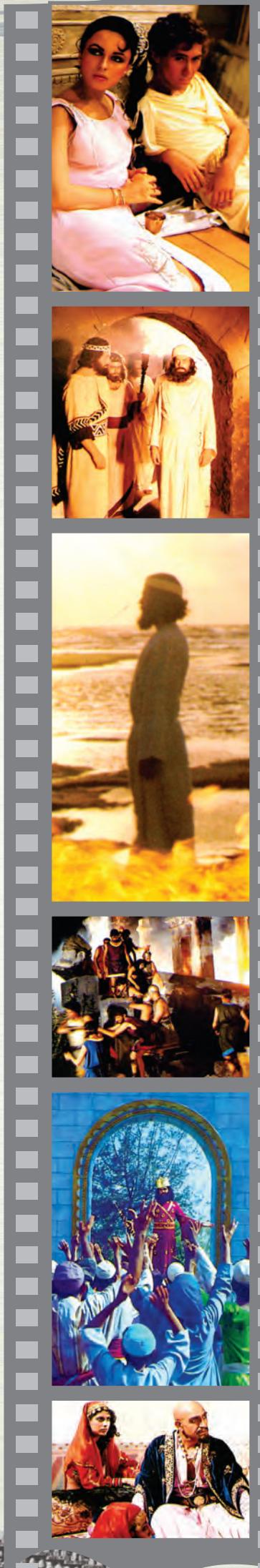


On Wings of Fire covers the history of the Zoroastrians over a period of 3,500 years. It traces the time period of the pre-Zarathustra era to the modern day Parsis. The film shows King Vishtaspa, who first accepted the religion, to Cyrus the Great, Alexander's burning of the palace at Persepolis, the Renaissance by the Sasanians and their defeat by the Arabs.

Zubin Mehta traces the footsteps of his people with the help of a scholarly priest who takes him on a journey to his hometown of Navsari where he discovers his ancestral home. During this time he discovers the Christian influence on the Parsis and the great achievements of many eminent Parsis.



*King Jadav Rana (Saeed Jaffrey) and Chief Courtier (Dinyar Contractor)*



*Alexander (Oengus MacNamara) and the courtesan Thais (Soni Razdan) -330 B.C.*

*King Vishtaspa (Paul Shelly) and Zarathustra*

*Zarathustra receiving his enlightenment*

*The Burning of Persepolis*

*Cyrus the great, freeing the jews- 6th century B.C. (Achaemen dynasty)*

*The Emir (Amrish Puri)*

## In the Beginning

What was life really like, 3,500 years ago? For over a thousand years (560 B.C. - 650 A.C.) Zoroastrianism was the state religion of three mighty Iranian empires, before Islam changed the ethos!

See the wonder of the great Achaemenian dynasty - that great melting pot of culture. Walk through the splendour of the reign of Cyrus who declared the first bill of human rights. Its counterpart, 2,500 years later, hangs at the United Nations in New York today. Meet Darius the Great - amongst his many efforts, the first king to start a postal service! Witness Alexander, and the burning of Persepolis - the greatest palace built in history.

The Parthians were the city builders who decentralized religion. . . Then came the Sasanians who resurrected the religion to what it is today. And set it midst the glory when everything beautiful came alive - canals, caravanserais (rest houses) and culture. In architecture, the world's first dome crowned a fire temple. Literature flowered. Poetry was born, inspiring much later, Firdausi's Shahnameh - the Book of Kings. It was an age of pomp and pageantry... and sublime inspirations helped create exquisite artefacts and jewels.

## A Historic Cameo

Zoroastrianism had immense influence on the three pillars of western civilization: the Judaic, the Greek and the Christian traditions, thus enriching the world's religious thought.

- You will witness the rescuing of the Jews at Babylon. On their return to Jerusalem to build their temple, Isaiah avowed, "I alone have roused this man (Cyrus) in righteousness and I will smooth his path before him, he shall build my city and let my exiles go free." (Isaiah 45.13).
- "Zarathushtra's philosophy was the first to be adopted by the West. His doctrine reached Greece five centuries before Christ." Prof. J. Duchesne-Guillemin.

· In the Vatican hangs a Raphael painting of Zarathushtra in discourse with Aristotle, Socrates and Plato. A number of other Greek philosophers, notably Heraclitus, were inspired by Zarathushtra.

· According to tradition, the three wise men or Magi who followed the star of Bethlehem to the birthplace of Jesus were Zoroastrians. And it was out of Judaism, enriched by 500 years of Zoroastrian contact, that Christianity arose.

## Enter the Parsis

The oldest living faith has the smallest number of conscious adherents - the Parsis. Yet their presence is felt in their adopted homeland, India, and around the globe. As far back as the 19th century, the only 3 non-English Members of Parliament in Britain were Parsis, and Parsi men and women were at the forefront in the struggle for Indian independence.

Their achievement in nearly every field of human endeavour is quite incredible. The illustrious among them are too numerous to mention. In India, they pioneered shipbuilding, hydroelectricity, nuclear sciences, textiles, iron and steel, civil engineering and dairying.



There have been Parsi firsts in the professions too. Their brilliance continues, whether it be in aviation, medicine, law, literature, music...



Mr. J. R. D. Tata. Head of the House of Tatas and founder of Air India

Maestro Zubin Mehta is one of the most internationally known Parsis today. He is now music director of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and previously of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. A Zoroastrian, he is a central figure in the film.



*Zubin Mehta and the priest (Khojeste Mistree)*

### **Meanwhile, in Iran...**

Despite hardship, the Zoroastrians of Iran have continued to contribute significantly to the fields of banking, industry and education.

### **Life is a Celebration**

- As with Jews, family ties and traditions are strong, work is virtue, happiness is right and good. In brief, they need no excuse for celebration - for life itself is a celebration.

And yet...

### **An Endangered Race...**

There are probably less than 150,000 Zoroastrians left in the world... of whom about 90,000 are Parsis and the remaining, Iranian Zoroastrians. Like many of the world's endangered peoples, they need to be preserved: else there will be yet one more great tradition and heritage lost to mankind!

Why should we care to preserve the legacy? Because it is entralling.

Now even more so than ever... the world is seeking something and there is a move towards an ethical resurgence.

## **It's Time to Hear the First Prophet Speak Again...**

Imagine being alive when Man revealed vibrant teachings thousands of years ago. Teachings that held sway over much of the world for centuries. Teachings that are so important and relevant today. Who was this man? What kind of being left us this treasure?

### **The Prophet Zarathushtra**

He lived in remote antiquity. Searched for the truth for over a decade. He was a priest and a teacher. When he left this earth, he left behind his teachings of Truth; and of Good Thoughts, Words and Deeds, to be discovered through a joyous way of life.

He revealed a message that still reverberates in the minds and hearts of a handful of the human race, 35 centuries later.

### **What was the Revealed Message?**

- ♦ There is the One, Perfect, All-knowing God of Wisdom - Ahura Mazda.
- ♦ The good creative spirit of God is life enhancing and the promoter of only the good, whilst the evil spirit, devoid of God, is responsible for all the destruction and imperfection in the world.
- ♦ Man, God's finest creation, has the free will to make his own destiny and to fight evil through good thoughts, words and deeds.
- ♦ God's Goodness, the Good Mind, Truth, Power, Devotion, Perfection and Immortality enable Man to make the right choice. These principles are also personified as seven divinities, who are the guardians of the seven creations - the sky, water, earth, plants, cattle, man and fire.
- ♦ Happiness and an awareness of the world can only be achieved through knowledge and truth.

- ◆ An after-life exists, where the soul is judged according to the life it has led - rewarded if righteous, and punished if wicked.
- ◆ A time will come when the rejuvenation of the world will take place through the efforts of a series of righteous beings (messiahs).
- ◆ There will then be the Final Judgement, followed by the Resurrection, when all the souls will be resurrected after purification to reunite with their original bodies.
- ◆ Time will cease to exist when good will triumph over evil, and the world will be restored to a state of perfection. One's individuality will remain in harmony with the now truly omnipotent Wise Lord.

## **The Treasured Fires of Antiquity Still Burn...**

Incredible as it sounds, the sacred fires have been kept burning continuously through the millennia. Because God is Wisdom, fire and the sun are venerated as the living symbols of the truth and light of God.

## **The Oldest Faith is so Modern!**

Zarathushtra was the first prophet to declare, "Man must think for himself before he can believe...". In fact, Zarathushtra seems to have the key to contemporary life: technology, industry, even nuclear energy are for our betterment as long as they are used for good purposes. It is not necessary to renounce the world to be spiritual.

Zarathushtra's teachings are most relevant today:

- ◆ There is a rationale - a logic in the doctrine. A freedom of will and choice which, later, in Greek thought, flowered as Democracy.

- ◆ A Zoroastrian is expected to lead an active, industrious, honest and above all, a charitable life. To this end, the generation of wealth is part of the ethos, provided it is achieved honestly.
- ◆ Zarathushtra recommends the "golden mean" too much or too little of anything is evil.
- ◆ Rituals are created to experience the doctrine emotionally to bring about inner harmony.
- ◆ Veneration of the elements (creations) and therefore the laws of purity are an extension of what is known as ecology today. Looking after the planet and encouraging a mutually beneficial existence of these elements has always been central to Zoroastrian thought.
- ◆ Zoroastrianism affirms life and the present. The world is not an obstacle but a means to goodness and spirituality.

The 3,500 year-old religion will always remain ahead of its time! For its fountainhead is Truth and Knowledge - both born of Wisdom.

## **Why the Restoration?**

The film is the only the only dramatic film of its kind on this subject to date. It is scholarly, comprehensive in its scope and both educational and entertaining.

The film is over 30 years old and was in need of restoration and upgrade - just like films such as Lawrence of Arabia and My Fair Lady, which were both restored after 30 years. It needed colour and sound restoration, which was done by India's premier studio, Shemaroo Entertainment. This has greatly enhanced the quality of the picture and sound.

Recently Cyrus Bharucha, the film's director, used the Shemaroo resources to restore and upgrade the extensive footage from Tata Central Archives in the production of the film about Nani Palkhivala - Nani the Crusader. The restoration transformed the poor quality of the old VHS tapes to a professional level that could be used for public distribution.

We will encourage distribution of the film in the

1. Give it to organizations, which will provide free DVD copies to young people as Navjote gifts, and to couples on their wedding day.
2. Set up a dynamic website and appropriate resources for cost effective dissemination to schools, colleges and universities, as well as the general public.
3. Harness the power of social networks like YouTube, Facebook and other media.
4. Show it at special exhibitions and conferences.
5. In North America, Europe and Australia enable strong interface with national Zoroastrian associations, especially FEZANA in the USA.
6. By storing the Master copy at the Tata Central Archives the film will be available to the public on request.

## The Project Professionals

Persepolis Productions Inc. is a non-profit company formed for this unique project. Directors include Producer/Director Cyrus H. Bharucha, Producer / Music Consultant Meherji Madan and Jamshed Madan - Executive Producer

For several years Cyrus - whose brainchild the film is - had been Executive Producer of 30 shows for PBS in the U.S.A.: drama, ballet, symphony, rock concerts, the historical variety show "From China to U.S." and the award-winning film "A Day to Remember" on Dr. Martin Luther King Jnr.

His awards include:

- ♦ Robert Flaherty Award Hugo Award at the Chicago International Film Festival
- ♦ Humanitarian Award from the Conference of Christians and Jews
- ♦ Double Emmy Nomination for Best Variety Show and Documentary
- ♦ BAFTA (British Oscar) for the Best Comedy and Children's Programme

- ♦ Golden Rose of Montreux for David Frost in "Frost over Britain"
- ♦ In 1982, Cyrus produced PBS' most expensive documentary series "Crisis to Crisis", and films for a children's science programme "3-2-1 Contact".

Earlier, Cyrus had been producer/film cameraman for BBC TV, London - the popular "Z Cars", "Forsyte Saga"; Documentaries - on Gandhi, Debussy, Sibelius, W.B. Yeats, "Survival in the Sahel" (1973 West Africa Famine), "You Made Me Love You"

Meherji Madan was former Vice-President of Sallie Mae, the Student Loan Marketing Association, now part of a \$100 billion corporation based in Washington D.C. He had held senior management positions with the World Bank Group, and Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC), London, and Ernst & Young (E&Y), Washington D.C. He was also an Associate of the Royal College of Music, London (ARCM) and a Licentiate of the Trinity College of Music, London (LTCL). He attended the London School of Economics & Political Science

Jamshed is the President of the Georgetown Consulting Group (GCG), specializing in Ratings and Utilities projects. Prior to this he served with Touche Ross, now a part of Deloitte, Touche. He completed his undergraduate and post graduate degrees at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), USA.



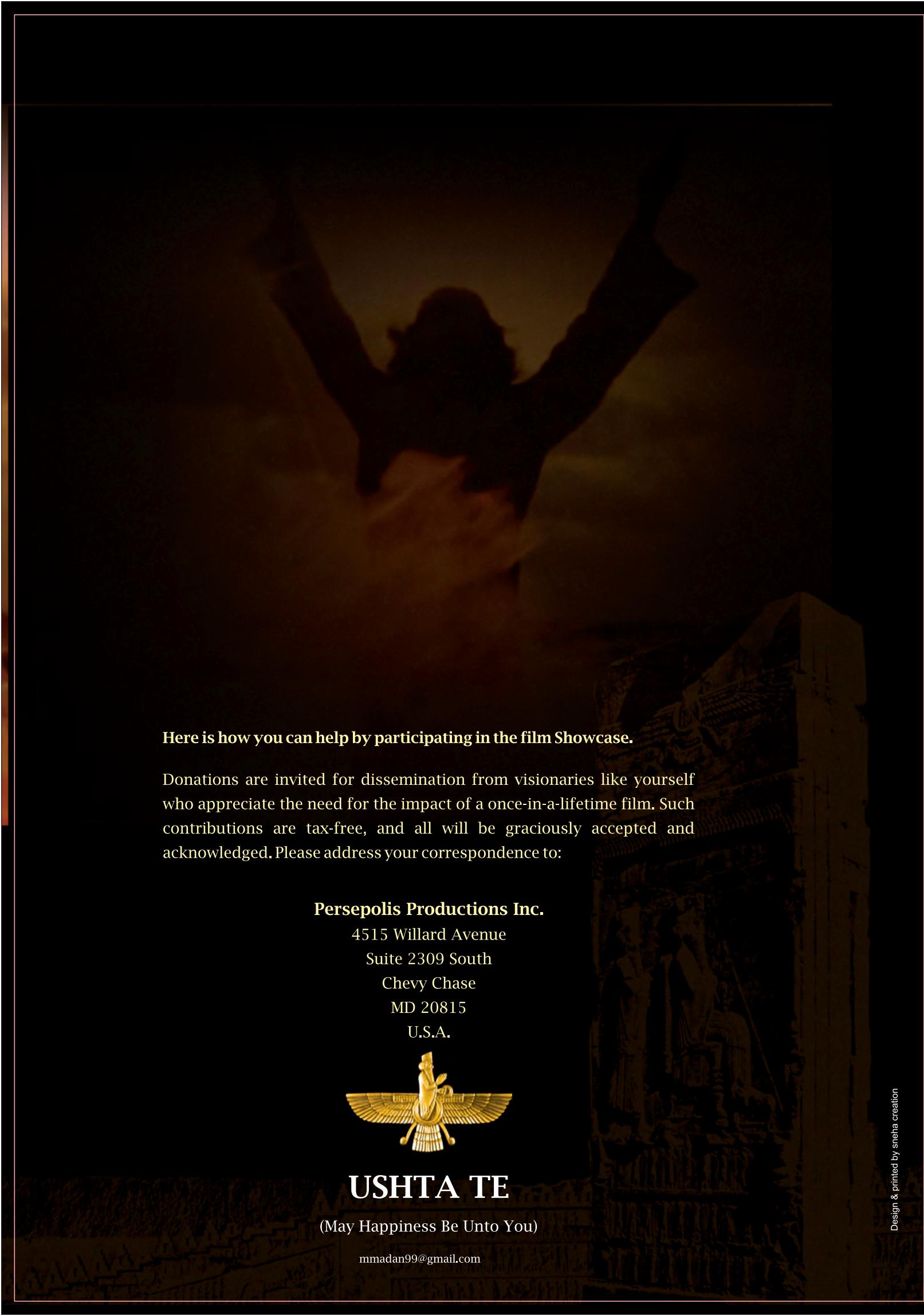
Cyrus H. Barucha  
Director / Executive Producer



Meherji Madan  
Producer / Music Consultant



Jamshed Madan  
Executive Producer



**Here is how you can help by participating in the film Showcase.**

Donations are invited for dissemination from visionaries like yourself who appreciate the need for the impact of a once-in-a-lifetime film. Such contributions are tax-free, and all will be graciously accepted and acknowledged. Please address your correspondence to:

**Persepolis Productions Inc.**

4515 Willard Avenue  
Suite 2309 South  
Chevy Chase  
MD 20815  
U.S.A.



**USHTA TE**

(May Happiness Be Unto You)

[mmadan99@gmail.com](mailto:mmadan99@gmail.com)