

# USHAO

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## THE KINGDOM OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The festival of Sharivargān is celebrated on the fourth day of the sixth month Shahrevar in the Fasli calendar (21 August according to the Gregorian calendar). Shahrevar, the modern Persian word, which we currently use in the calendar, is derived from a combination of two Avestan words: (1) *Khshatra*, meaning 'power, authority, dominance and kingdom' and (2) *Vairyā*, meaning 'desirable or divine choice'. The two words together represent the meaning of Shahrevar as 'Divine kingdom or dominion'.



This is not an abstract reference to an afterlife heaven or Ahura Mazda's mythical residence. It is about making our world a divine place, a heaven on earth so to speak. Not by force, but by modelling righteous behavior that persuades people to change. In "Homage Unto Ahura Mazda", Dr. Maneckji Dhalla wrote, "On force, have the mighty kingdoms of the world, ancient and modern, been built. Zarathushtra has laid the foundation of a kingdom that is to be built on the bedrock of righteousness...Those who fight wickedness in their own persons and around them in the world, prepare the way for the coming of the Kingdom of Righteousness." Dr. Dhalla underlines the core characteristic of Zarathushtra's message in achieving this – freedom of choice. "It is in [individual's] hands to accomplish it now or keep it long in the coming. Zarathushtra is in earnest and eager to hasten its advent. With repeated emphasis does he assert that the Kingdom of Righteousness is near at hand, if only mankind sets about zealously and strenuously to inaugurate it."

The Achaemenian king, Cyrus, aimed at creating his empire according to this concept. Unlike other powerful kings, he saw himself as a liberator rather than a conqueror, and set up guidelines of his rule in the now famous Cyrus Cylinder that serves as the first known Charter of Human Rights. Of course, everyone does not have the authority or resources to influence nations' policies, but Zarathushtra's message is about our individual responsibility to fight against injustice and intolerance, ignorance and prejudice in every little way we can. Zarathushtra says in his *Vohu Khshatra Gatha* (Yasna 51:2) that it all starts with a Good Mind, therefore, educating ourselves is imperative. We have to first know about injustices before we can take a stand against them in an effort to create an inclusive, equitable world. \*\*



Colors of Summer – Sally Swatland

**There is nothing like summer  
at the beach,  
where sky and water meet  
and nobody minds wet feet.**

From *Summer at the Beach*  
By Elke Nigro

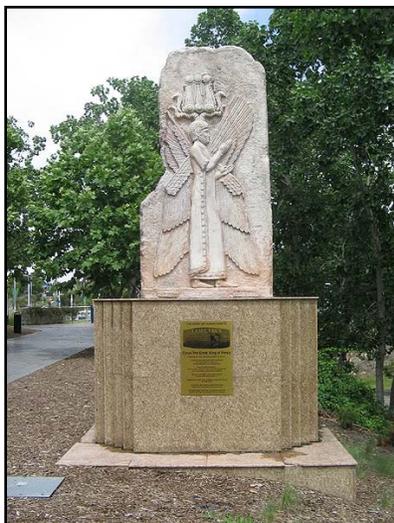
## SOCIAL JUSTICE

Zarathushtra's doctrine of *Khshatra Vairya* or Divine Dominion influenced many rulers of ancient Persia to rule according to core values of his message – honesty, justice, fairness, avoiding harm to others, taking responsibility for one's actions, putting the greater good ahead of one's own interests, encouraging people to achieve their best by using reason instead of force. Three significant examples are the reigns of Cyrus the Great, Khushro I, and Empress Pouran Dokht.

### Cyrus the Great

Cyrus the Great (Kurush in Persian, Kouros in Greek) was born about 580 BCE in Persis, Iran. About 558 BCE, Cyrus succeeded his father Cambyses I as King of the Persia. Cyrus overthrew three great empires, Babylonians, Medes, and Lydians and united most of the ancient Middle East into one state, extending from India to the Mediterranean Sea. He became the first Achaemenian Emperor of Persia, and had the title of "King of Babylon-King of the Land." His greatest contribution as a ruler was that he did not change the institution of the kingdoms he incorporated into the Persian empire, and allowed all the people to live in peace and harmony. Cyrus issued a decree citing his policies and aims, which became known as the Charter of the Rights of Nations. This charter was the first declaration of Human Rights and is displayed at the British Museum. A replica of the charter is on display at the United Nations in New York. In portions of the charter, Cyrus wrote: "When my soldiers in great numbers peacefully entered Babylon, I did not allow anyone to terrorize the people. I kept in view the needs of people and all its sanctuaries to promote their well-being...Freed all the slaves. I put an end to their misfortune and slavery."

Cyrus was killed in a battle with the Massagetae tribes in Central Asia, east of the Caspian Sea. Cyrus' son, Cambyses II, succeeded him. Cambyses defeated the Massagetae, recovered his



father's body and buried it at Pasargadae, the old Persian capital. The Achemenian empire thrived in peace and prosperity for two hundred years until its conquest by Alexander the Great.

As homage to the man who first initiated the concept of peoples of multiple cultures and faiths co-existing peacefully, this bas-relief of Cyrus the Great was erected in 1994 in Bicentennial Park, Sydney as a testament to Australia's multiculturalism. It is a replica of a bas-relief found in Pasargade where Cyrus' tomb is located. The reverse side of the monument features a map of Australia, and various migration periods in the history of Australia over the last two centuries.

## Khushro I

Khushro I, the most famous and celebrated of the Sassanian kings, was born in 501 CE. He was the 22<sup>nd</sup> Sassanian king. He reigned from 531–579 CE and because of his famed attitude of promoting equity and justice in his kingdom, he was known as Anushirawan the Just (later Noshirwan in Gujrati).

His significant contribution towards creating a Divine Dominion was amalgamating the best of different societies including literature, games, philosophy. A synthesis of Greek, Persian, Indian, and Armenian learning traditions took place during his time. His famous quote about using the Good Mind to choose the truth rather than following traditions blindly embodies the concept of *Khshatra Vairya*. “We examined the customs of our forebears, but, concerned with the discovery of the truth, we [also] studied the customs and conducts of the Romans and Indians and accepted those among them which seemed reasonable and praiseworthy, not merely likeable. We have not rejected anyone because they belonged to a different religion or people. And having examined “the good customs and laws of our ancestors as well as those of the foreigners, we have not declined to adopt anything which was good nor to avoid anything which was bad. Affection for our forebears did not lead us to accept customs which were not good.” As a result of Greek pharmacology fused with Iranian and Indian medical traditions, the “bimaristan” was created, the first hospital that introduced a concept of segregating wards according to pathology.

To this day, Iran recognizes him as a symbol of justice. This relief of Khushro I (see right) is featured in the Kakh Dadgostari Tehran, which houses the High Council of the Judiciary.



## Puran Dokht

Empress Puran Dokht was the twenty-sixth Sassanian ruler, reigning from 629 to 631. In 628 AD, her father Khushro II (known as Khushro Parvez) and her eighteen brothers were assassinated by Kavas II, another of her brothers, who then took the throne. After only a few months, he was also killed and a period of civil war broke out. Kavas' son, Ardashir, then took the throne at age seven, but was soon murdered by a General from Khushro II's army, General Sharvaraz. He was the first king to take the throne that was not from the royal family but forty days later he was then murdered by Sassanian loyalists. They brought Khushro's elder daughter, Puran Dokht, to the throne in the absence of a male heir. By the time Puran Dokht

became the empress, Sassanian Persia was in a decline because of the prolonged wars with the Byzantine Empire and turmoil within the court.

Despite all opposing views against the female monarch of the empire, Puran Dokht exercised some reforms to better the situation. She worked on many levels to bring stability to the fractured empire. On a political level, she signed a peace treaty with the Byzantine Empire. On an economic level, she ordered a public tax exemption for one year, and minted coins to revitalize the failing economy (see left). She ordered reconstruction of the infrastructure, including the building of interim bridges made of boats. To build back the trust of her subjects, she focused on ensuring justice. She also returned the sacred cross of Jesus Christ



to Jerusalem which followed splendid festivities around the city in appreciation. But after 16 months, when preparing for the deployment of her troops to confront the Arab armies, Puran Dokht got sick and passed away in Ctesiphon, the only monarch in the last chaotic days of Sassanian reign to die naturally.

Puran Dokht significant legacy is that she is now ranked as a leader in gender egalitarianism. In her letter to her troops she wrote, "A monarch, regardless of being a queen or a king, must defend his or her land and treat the people with justice."

Mohammad Bagher Vosughi, a professor of Ancient History at Tehran University, puts her achievements into historical context. "Unlike Achaemenid era, during which sexuality was not considered so important, Sassanids believed in male dominance. In Achaemenid era, women, just like men, headed the workshops in charge of Persepolis construction and even some of them earned salaries twice as men's. These women were either engineers or designers who created the finest patterns and designs in the Achaemenid palace complex. Women in that era were even entitled an extra maternity ration....However, Sassanid era was totally different," added Vosughi, "in Sassanid Empire women were not considered as independent individuals and were completely under the custody of "Katak Khowatai" or the patriarch of their family." \*\*

### Sources:

- Biography of Cyrus, the great founder of the Persian Empire. <http://www.majzooban.org>
- Khosrau, the Philosopher King: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khosrau\\_I#Philosopher\\_King](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khosrau_I#Philosopher_King)
- Puran Dokht, the Queen Who Preached Egalitarianism <http://www.chn.ir/en/news/?id=5507&section=2>

## ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

One of the layered meanings of *Khshatra Vairya* is making powerful or Divine choices. This aspect of *Khshatra Vairya* has a place in interactions in our daily lives, but nowhere more so than in our workplace. It means doing the right thing even when the right thing isn't popular or easy. Decisions based on core values preached by Zarathushtra allow us to lead teams by example, which is another characteristic of *Khshatra Vairya*. Leaders are role models. If you want your organization or initiative, and those who work in it, to behave ethically, then it's up to you to model ethical behavior. A leader, and an organization, that has a reputation for ethical behavior can provide a model for other organizations and the community, as well.

Ethical leadership takes courage and conviction. Often, it takes significant moral courage to do the right thing. Kim Strom- Gottfried, Smith P. Theimann Jr. Distinguished Professor of Ethics and Professional Practice at University of North Carolina's School of Social Work, encourages speaking up against even small instances of wrongdoing as that can make a difference. "Few of us would find it easy to say, 'I'm uncomfortable with that' after one

colleague treats another disrespectfully or a board member makes a racially offensive joke," says Strom-Gottfried. "Yet these daily acts of courage help us train for the big event, the time when acquiescence is not an option. Ethical action is not easy but it can be practiced, it can be taught and it can be reinforced when we see it in others."



Mind Tools ([mindtools.com](http://mindtools.com)) in their write up about ethical leadership in a corporate environment suggests strategies of recognizing and resolving ethical dilemmas.

Here's the scenario:

*You're in a meeting with other top executives, and you realize that one of your colleagues has changed the numbers in his report. As you listen, you realize that he's exaggerating how well his team is doing on a major project. Instead of saying that his team will finish in eight weeks, which he previously told you, he's promising to be done in only five weeks. And instead of saying that the project will help increase company earnings by 4 percent, which he also told you earlier, he's promising a 12 percent increase.*

What do you do? He's a close colleague and a personal friend. On the other hand, he's overstating how well his team is doing. Do you support him, or do you tell the truth to the other executives?

We're often faced with tough choices like this in the workplace. Most of the time, however, ethical dilemmas aren't this obvious, and they can be hidden in ways that are hard to uncover. So, how do you recognize these dilemmas?

### Identify "trigger" situations

Certain situations seem to attract ethical dilemmas. Some of these are areas like purchasing, hiring, firing, promoting, and calculating bonuses. There can also be other unexpected situations. You could make a mistake – will you admit it to your boss, or try to cover it up? Or you could discover that a colleague is acting unethically – do you protect the person or tell someone? By recognizing when these situations might occur, you can make the right decisions when and if something actually happens.

### Prepare in advance

Imagine yourself in the situations we just mentioned. What would you do if you knew one of your colleagues was about to be fired, but you weren't legally allowed to tell her? Putting yourself in these imaginary situations can help you work through your feelings and decide what you would do if the situation occurred. In real life, you may have only seconds to reach a decision. Of course, you won't be able to imagine every possible ethical dilemma you might face, but this exercise *will* help you get to know your values, and it can prepare you for the decisions you may have to make.

### Listen to your "inner voice"

Your conscience [or Saraosha] often tells you that something isn't right, even if this is just a feeling of uneasiness with something. If you face a situation that makes you uncomfortable, or goes against one of your core values or beliefs, then make sure that you stop and think things through rationally.

### Reevaluate your decision before you act

If you're in a difficult situation and you aren't sure what to do, make a decision. But, before you act on that decision, Patricia Pinnell and Shirley Eagan at West Virginia University Extension, in a course for volunteer leaders, suggest asking yourself four questions:

1. Would you do it if your kids were watching?
2. Would you like to see it published on page one of your local newspaper?
3. Would you be happy being on the receiving end of the decision or action?
4. Would it be okay if everyone else did the same?

If you can honestly answer “yes” to all or most of these questions, then it’s likely that your decision or action is truly ethical. If not, then reconsider your decision. \*\*

#### Sources:

- Ethical Leadership. The Community Tool Box, University of Kansas. <http://ctb.ku.edu/en>
- Moral Courage <http://iah.unc.edu/news/newsarchive/2008/iah-leadership-director-speaks-on-moral-courage> Ethical Leadership, Doing the Right Thing.
- Mind Tools [http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR\\_58.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_58.htm)

## FACE ON A STAMP

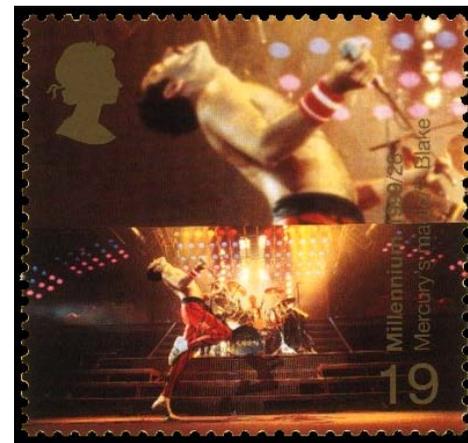
Zarathushtis have been honored by nations issuing stamps in tribute to their contribution to the country, including stalwarts like JRD Tata or Dadabhoj Naoroji in India and Jamshed Nusserwanjee Mehta in Pakistan, but only one Zarathushti has been recognized in several countries – Farrokh Bulsara, or rather his alter ego, Freddie Mercury. He was born in Zanzibar, moved to Britain to flee a revolution, and became a British national treasure. Britain put him on the Millennium stamp to herald in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (see side bar), and in 2002, Mercury was placed at number 58 in the BBC's poll of the 100 Greatest Britons.

Although renowned for his flamboyant personality and on-stage shenanigans as lead singer for his band, *Queen*, his face has graced stamps in countries around the world, particularly in Africa, because of his status as an icon in the fight against AIDS. Mercury died of AIDS-related bronchial pneumonia on November 24, 1991, at age 45.

Offstage, Mercury was open about his bisexuality, but he kept his relationships private. By 1989, Mercury largely retreated from public life. He did not promote or tour for *Queen's* album, "Innuendo" (1991), and rumors about possible health problems began to circulate.

On November 23, 1991, Mercury released a statement: "I wish to confirm that I have been tested HIV-positive and have AIDS. I felt it correct to keep this information private to date to protect the privacy of those around me. However, the time has come now for my friends and fans around the world to know the truth and I hope that everyone will join with my doctors and all those worldwide in the fight against this terrible disease." The next day, he died from AIDS-related bronchial pneumonia at his London mansion.

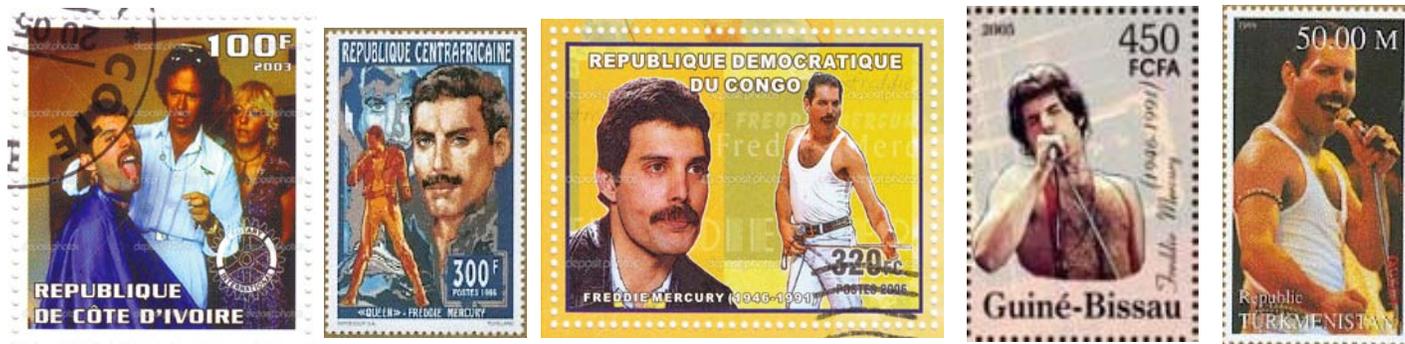
Longtime friend and band-mate Roger Taylor provided some insight to Mercury's decision to keep his battle with AIDS private. "He didn't want to be looked at as an object of pity and curiosity, and he didn't want circling vultures over his head," Taylor said, according to a report in *Entertainment Weekly* (issue #513, Nov 19, 1999).



A Millennium stamp is a postage stamp issued to commemorate a millennium associated with that country's history, but several countries issued stamps for the beginning of the 3rd millennium.

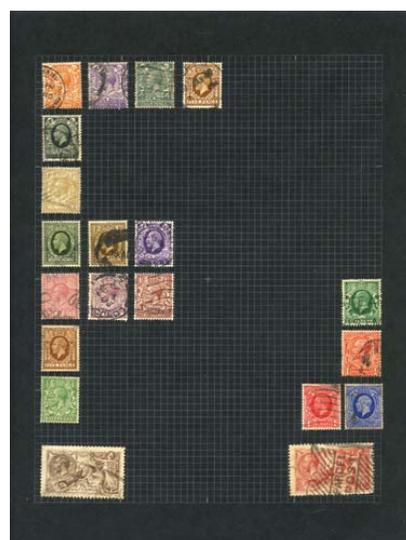
In 1999, Britain's Royal Mail issued a series of stamps that were classified into 12 groups (known as "tales") including Entertainment, Science & Technology and Sport, with one group released in each month during the year. One of the most notable postage stamps in the collection was one commemorating the life of *Queen* frontman Freddie Mercury. It created a controversy stemming from the fact that *Queen's* drummer, Roger Taylor, can be seen in the background of the stamp. This is an unprecedented occurrence, since the only living people the Royal Mail is supposed to depict are members of the Royal Family.

The Royal Mail admitted it was a rare breach of the rule, but called for "common sense to prevail" . \*\*



To honor his memory, the Freddie Mercury Tribute: Concert for AIDS Awareness was held in April 1992 at Wembley Stadium. A diverse range of rock acts, from Def Leppard to Elton John, performed to celebrate Mercury and advance the fight against the disease that took his life.

Considering the number of stamps that he has graced, it is a little known fact that Freddie Mercury was a stamp collector when he was young. It's believed that Freddie built up his collection between the ages of nine and twelve. The collection includes stamps from a wide range of countries across the world. Many are from the British Empire and those of particular philatelic interest are the ones from Zanzibar where he grew up. One of the most interesting aspects of the collection is the manner in which the stamps are arranged. On some of the album pages the stamps are ordered by color, size or type. On other pages balanced patterns are created, or letters from the alphabet formed. After his death, his father, Bomi Bulsara, auctioned the collections and the British Postal Museum and Archive, then the National Postal Museum, purchased the album on 17 December 1993.



The amount paid was donated to the Mercury Phoenix Trust, an AIDS charity founded by Brian May, Roger Taylor and *Queen* manager Jim Beach. "The Freddie For A Day" initiative, launched in 2010, is held every 5<sup>th</sup> September, Freddie's birthday, to raise awareness and much needed funds to fight AIDS. Some fans decide to support the cause by wearing something yellow or putting on a moustache, others organize *Queen* inspired events. In the last 21 years, the Trust has given away over 15 million dollars in his name and funded over 700 projects in the global battle against HIV/AIDS.\*\*

Source:

- AIDS on Stamps Retrieved from <http://www.aidonstamps.com/pwa.htm>
- British Postal Museum and Archive <http://postalheritage.wordpress.com/2012/09/05/freddie-mercury-stamp-collector/>
- Freddie Mercury Retrieved from <http://www.biography.com/people/freddie-mercury-9406228#aids&>
- Mercury Phoenix Trust <http://www.mercuryphoenixtrust.com>