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newsletter

House Journal of The Thana Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman

Editor: Khurshed Pastakia ▪ Views expressed herein are not necessarily the views of TPZA



Zarsis D Udhnavala: A tribute to a beacon of Kindness, Leadership & Service

The Thana Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman (TPZA) and the entire Zoroastrian community stand together in profound sorrow as we bid farewell to our beloved President, Zarsis D. Udhnavala, who left us on 25th July 2025 after an extended illness. The condolence meeting held on 3rd August 2025 at the Khan Bahadur Divecha Town Hall, Thane, was a testament to the countless lives he touched. Over a hundred grieving hearts – family, friends, colleagues, and community members – gathered to celebrate his extraordinary life, with prayers and cherished memories.

Zarsis, as he was affectionately known, was not just a leader but the very soul of our community. For decades, he served as the President and Trustee of TPZA, his life being a living embodiment of the Zoroastrian ideals of Húmata, Húkhata, and Húvarshata.

His kindness knew no bounds, his generosity no limits. Whether guiding the community, supporting a friend, or serving as a trusted LIC agent, he did so with a heart full of love and hands ever ready to help.

In the world of insurance, Zarsis was a beacon of integrity. V. J. Paulose, a towering figure in the field, spoke of Zarsis' unparalleled dedication. His motto, "Commission is not my mission," was more than words – it was his creed. He fought tirelessly for his clients, ensuring their claims were honoured, their trust never betrayed.

Sheetal Khandekar, his devoted colleague and friend, broke down as she recalled his boundless compassion. "He didn't just serve clients; he embraced them as family", she sobbed, "even writing personalized birthday cards – a gesture that many cherished deeply. His clients often remarked that their birthdays felt incomplete without his warm wishes."

His words to her echoed his life's philosophy: "Kisika bhalaa karneke liye kisiko puchhneki aur bataaneke zaroorat nahi hai. Bus bhalaa karti jaa... is duniyaa

me aise kaam kar jiskaa shakshidaar sirf bhagwan ho." (To do good deeds, you need no permission or show. Just keep doing good...let God alone be your witness.)

Percy Karani, TPZA Vice President and Zarsis' dear friend, said: "Zarsis wasn't just a friend, he was family... He touched so many lives. His laughter, his wisdom, his unwavering love – they live on in all of us." His voice cracked as he added, "He knew how to win hearts."

Stories of Zarsis' selflessness poured forth – Homai Daruwala, Rumi Kasad, Rohinton Patel, C M Purohit – each voice full of gratitude for a man who gave endlessly. His nephew, Joy Udhnavala, and sister-in-law, Khorshed Gotla, painted a portrait of a man whose love for family was as deep as his devotion to community.

Though Zarsis is no longer with us, his light endures. Udhnavala Insurance Consultancy, now lovingly led by his spouse, Kety Z. Udhnavala and trusted family friend, Vishal Singavi, and his steadfast team: Sheetal, Ketki, and Sandesh, vows to honour his legacy. "We will carry forward his mission," Sheetal pledged, her voice fierce with determination. "His values will never fade."

As the meeting closed, the hall resonated with the solemn chants of Yatha Ahu Vairyo and Ashem Vohu, followed by the LIC Anthem – a poignant farewell to a man who lived for others. Zarsis Udhnavala's absence leaves an ache that words cannot soothe, but his spirit – his kindness, his courage, his boundless love and energy – will forever guide us.

As Percy so ardently said, "You will never be forgotten."

May his radiant soul find eternal happiness in the embrace of Ahura Mazda.



Trustees of TPZA at the AGM



Pouruchisti Meherhomji conducting proceedings



Marzi Pakka from audience, commenting on accounts



A memorable meeting of two stalwarts of Thane's Parsi Community, Homi Talati & Late Zarsis Udhawala



Homi Talati being presented a plaque on behalf of TPZA by Percy Karani & Late Zarsis Udhawala in recognition of his decades of self-less and dedicated service to Thane Zoroastrians



Khurshid Battiwala presents Erv Behramshaw Sidhwa & Monaz Kolah presents Bomi Boyce with shawls



Marzban Bam regales with evergreen songs



Pet bhari ne Jamjo ji



Khodaiji na lakh, lakh shukrana!

TPZA's AGM Blends Tradition & Tribute with Gourmandize

By *TPZA Newsletter Team*

Serving Heritage with Humour, Heart, and a Side of Sali Chicken

Thane's Parsi Zoroastrian community proved once again that they can blend faith, formalities and food with finesse at their 69th Annual General Meeting, held on a vibrant Sunday, June 1st, at the Patell Agiary compound.

The evening began on a serene, spiritual note with the Dae-Mas-nu-Jashan, where four mobeds invoked divine blessings amid wafts of sandalwood and the recitation of sacred chants. The chasni (fruit and melt-in-the-mouth malido) hit the sweet spot, but the real feast was yet to come.

With President Zarsis Udhawala at the helm, the AGM was anything but a typical yawner. His address was a whirlwind tour of TPZA's lively 2024-25 calendar: from biryani-fueled Fun & Games on Republic Day, to the chickoo-charged Bordi-Udvada trip with stops at Udvada Iranshah, Bordi

Agiary, and the Daman aviary! Not to mention a memorial jashan for Ratan Tata – philanthropist, titan, and ever an icon to the community.

In the year gone by TPZA celebrated everything from Khordad Sal and Jamshedi Navroz, to academic stars and cross-cultural camaraderie – like the Thane Zoroastrians' spirited march in the Thane Sanskruti Parade and their joyful participation in the Gudi Padwa Swagat Yatra.

But the highlight of the evening? The standing ovation-worthy tribute to Mr. Homi Talati, the nonagenarian chairman of TAF and TZCF, who stepped down after 35+ years of legendary service. Shawls, plaques, and petals of gratitude were showered on this community stalwart at a joint felicitation by TPZA, TAF and TZCF. Warm tributes were also offered to his successor, Mr. Bomi Boyce, ex-CEO Minoo Vacha

and the venerable Erv Behramshaw Sidhwa.

Not to be forgotten was the TPZA Newsletter which has assumed the role of our community's lifeline of stories, interviews, poems and delightful musings. With six well-loved issues this year, it's clear our newsletter has arrived.

As always, the numbers crunched cleanly: annual accounts and auditors were approved. But let's be honest—the evening's *pièce de résistance* was the grand Gahambar Dinner. Sali-Marghi and Pulav-Dal served on patras, passed around with affection and second servings, bringing 180 happy Bawas to what they crave most: gastronomic fulfilment. No one left hungry—in stomach or spirit.

TPZA now enters its Platinum Jubilee year—70 dazzling years strong.



Dawn

By *Jaloo Mistry*

Each morning's golden light,
Brings joy, and banishes the night.
I wait for dawn and its warm rays,
Grateful for another day's gaze.

The sunrise gives me hopes anew,
A chance to live, to dream, to pursue.
With every dawn, my heart takes flight.
Thankful for life and its precious light.



The Many Paths to Spiritualism

By Khurshed Pastakia

Religion and spirituality both fulfill different but complimentary needs of human life. How a man approaches both of these depends upon the evolution and flexibility of his mind. An open, receptive, unbiased mind that embraces intelligence has vastly more avenues available to it than a closed mind that is imprisoned in fixed beliefs and rituals. When spiritual practices blend with religious guidance, the best results are obtained.

Spirituality is not a one-size-fits-all journey. Just as rivers take different courses to merge into a sea, human beings may follow diverse paths to inner peace, self-discovery, and connection with the Divine, depending upon their personal inclinations, aptitudes and preferences.

One of the most universal paths is **meditation**, a practice that cultivates mindfulness and inner stillness. Whether through silent contemplation, guided visualization, manthra-chanting,

or other methods, meditation allows us to quiet our minds and connect with a higher state of awareness. *I was once counselled by eminent **Erv Dr Ramiyar Karanjia** that our **Zoroastrian prayer** performed in a quiet, clean environment and with a focused, relaxed, contemplative mind is indeed a practice of meditation.*

Another path to spiritualism is **selfless service** or seva, where one finds purpose and fulfillment through acts of benevolence, service and humanity. *Parsis, have been known for their compassion and kindness to those less blessed.*

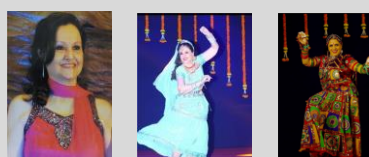
This principle extends to **ethical living**, where integrity, straightforwardness, humility and honesty in all thoughts, words and actions become the core of one's existence. *This, indeed, is the concept of **Asha** which is the fulcrum of our Zoroastrian religion.*

Immersing oneself totally in creative expression like **art,**

music, dance, poetry or other modes of mind-body activity such as **certain individual sports, pranayama, yoga or traditional martial arts** are powerful ways to attain spiritual communion. When the mind, body and spirit unite by getting totally immersed in an activity, it achieves the same outcome as prayer or meditation.

Likewise, identifying and integrating with **nature and its creations**, feeling veneration and gratitude for them, is a spiritual practice that unites us with the Divine. *Our **Khordeh Avesta** is replete with prayers in reverence to the sun, moon, fire, waters, mountains, etc.*

Quest for Spiritualism, therefore, is a deeply personal journey – its beauty lies in discovering the path that resonates the most with each individual, and following it. No path is better or worse than the other. And, one is free, and indeed encouraged, to follow more than one path simultaneously.



(L to R) Rukshana Irani (Vaishali) with daughters, Anaheeta & Namrata

Vaishali Nritya Niketan, Thane, recently celebrated its Golden Jubilee

Celebrating Academic Excellence



BIANCA S KHAMBATAT, a science student from Amber International School, Dhokali, scored 88% in her Class 12 CBSE Board examinations, excelling in Chemistry, Computer Science and English. She is currently busy preparing for stringent tests like JEE Mains, MHT CET and BIT SAT required for entrance to top colleges for pursuing B Tech in Data Science and Machine Learning.



FREYA BACHA, a standout student from New Horizon Scholars School, Vasant Lawns, excelled in her 10th CBSE examinations with an impressive 93% (Best of 5) and 91.8% overall, earning a place in her school's merit list. Freya's disciplined yet flexible approach—studying during quiet nights and balancing academics with memorable experiences—proved fruitful. She is now set to pursue Psychology at Smt. Sulochanadevi Singhania School, embracing her passion for the subject with enthusiasm



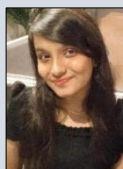
KAIZEEN Z KARANJIA, a dedicated Commerce student from Somaiya, achieved 84% in her 12th Maharashtra State Board examinations. Her hard work and perseverance have laid a strong foundation for her next goal: pursuing a Bachelor of Management Studies (BMS). Kaizeen's journey reflects her determination to excel in the dynamic field of Business Management.



MAHAFREEN Z MISTRY of Jai Hind College shone in her HSC exams with an outstanding 90%. Her academic prowess and passion for law and business have led her to secure admission in the integrated BBA-LLB course at D M Harish School of Law. Mahafreen aspires to merge legal expertise with business acumen, aiming to make a significant impact in both sectors.



PIA MISTRY from Vasant Vihar High School & Junior College, is a firm believer in consistency – and her results validate that. She scored an impressive 89% in the ISCE Class 10 exams, including a standout 94% in Marathi, a subject that many Parsis struggle with. With a sharp, inquisitive mind and a clear ambition to pursue Economics, Pia is well on her way to carving a promising academic path.



SANAYA BACHA, the Humanities topper from Smt Sulochanadevi Singhania School achieved a remarkable 99.25% (Best of 4) and 98.4% overall in her 12th ISC Board exams, topping her prestigious school across all streams. With perfect 100% scores in Psychology and Sociology, Sanaya's self-belief and resilience propelled her success. She is now set to pursue Neuropsychology at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, where she will continue to chase her dreams.



MEHRAN V HODIWALA, a shining example of sincerity, dedication, and hard work, achieved an outstanding 96% in his ICSE 12th Standard examinations, securing straight Grade 1 in all subjects. With a clear vision to pursue a BA in Economics, Mehran believes in maintaining the right balance between academic excellence and engaging in fun activities, proving that success is not just about long hours of study, but also about a well-rounded, disciplined approach to life.



USHTANA N HODIWALA, a bright student from J B Vachha High School for Parsi Girls, secured 89% in her ICSE Class 10 examinations. With a keen interest in the Arts stream, Ushtana is poised to explore her creative and academic passions further, supported by her family's encouragement and her own dedication.



VARSHIN B GILDER, a student of S K Somaiya Vinay Mandir Junior College, achieved 79.33% in his HSC Board examinations. Embracing the philosophy that "percentage is just a number," Varshin is pursuing his passion for music through a Diploma in Advanced Music Production at The Audio Guys (TAG) Institute. His journey underscores the importance of following one's dreams with perseverance and joy.



Parsi Community Down Under – Pestonji Firoz interviewed by Percy Karani at Perth, Australia

Percy: How many Parsis live in Western Australia?

Firoz: There's no exact number, as there are two associations and we don't have a central registry. Based on association memberships, there are around 60–65 families. But about 45% of Parsis here aren't members of any association. So, I'd estimate around 100 to 120 families in total across Western Australia—many just choose to stay away from community associations, which is unfortunate.

Percy: And are the associations in Melbourne and Sydney separate?

Firoz: Completely separate. If you look at Australia and New Zealand—or Oceania, broadly—Sydney has the oldest Zoroastrian association. It's called the Australian Zoroastrian Association (AZA), established over 50 years ago. They managed to build their own community hall back then, with help from donors like the Zarthusti Brothers, Gaive Trust, and others. They had their share of struggles, both internal and external, but now they're the largest group in Australia.

Melbourne has a growing community and has been trying to build its own hall, but the rising cost of land has made it difficult. Adelaide has about 20–22 families, and there are Parsis in Gold Coast and Brisbane, but no associations there. So only Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth have registered associations.

Percy: Are there any agiaries?

Firoz: Unfortunately, none in Australia or New Zealand. The closest thing is in Auckland, New Zealand, where the Salori family have set up a Dadgah. They've since moved to Sydney, but some locals continue to maintain it.

Percy: Do members of associations meet regularly—like on festivals?

Firoz: Yes, usually during big events like Jamshedi Navroz or New Year, and for Muktads. Sydney, for example, has regular Sunday events for both seniors and youth. In Perth, we used to have monthly jashans and even Sunday religious classes. We'd light a fire, hold discussions on religion led by our priest. But that stopped about 20 years ago.

Percy: What are the names of the Perth associations?

Firoz: The Zoroastrian Association of Western Australia (ZAWA), which I founded in 1997. I served as president from 1999 to 2001. We had a rule that no one stays in the committee for more than three years—to keep things fresh. It was a vibrant time. We organized picnics, kids' activities, and senior outings—some of that still continues on a smaller scale.

There's also the Business Association of Western Australia (BAWAS), which organized the only Zoroastrian

Congress in 2018 in the entire Southern Hemisphere. A small team pulled it off, despite some local opposition. We got great support from Sydney, Melbourne, and even Auckland.

We have the AZA in Sydney and then we have the ZAV, Zoroastrian Association of Victoria in Melbourne. Also, there is a group of Zoroastrians who are from Kurdistan and Iraq who have their own association in Melbourne. They took part in the Congress, but we don't interact with them much.

Percy: Do Parsis here follow traditions and rituals?

Firoz: Most try to, especially when the associations organize events. Festivals like Mukhtad, Ava Mahino-Ava Roj, and Adar Mahino-Adar Roj are observed—sometimes on the weekend closest to the actual date, to allow more people to attend.

In Perth, Muktads are held at our local priest's home. In Sydney, they happen at the AZA hall, which can accommodate 350–400 people.

Percy: Who are the priests in Perth?

Firoz: Mainly Aspi Madan and Mahiyar Kerawala. Earlier, we had Darayas Pavri who was quite active. Aspi has taken over a lot of the religious responsibilities now, and he's been hosting the Muktads at his house for the last 18 years.

Percy: How do kids learn about the religion?

Firoz: Earlier, ZAWA ran regular children's classes—we'd get them to color Asha Farohars or Afarganius while teaching the meanings behind them. Nowadays, it's more informal. A community member, Narius, has been hosting monthly Sunday sessions for the last 2–3 years at his home, along with Sanaya. It's not under the association, but it's a great initiative.

Sydney has regular children's and senior citizens' gatherings. Melbourne had some individuals doing similar work independently.

Percy: Any social events?

Firoz: Yes, we organize bingos, parties, bowling, picnics—these are good ways to get people together. Jashans during major events also help bring the community in.

Percy: What kind of professions are Parsis into here?

Firoz: A lot are in IT, shipping, engineering, and medicine—many specialists. Business owners are fewer. Across Australia, I'd say only about 15% of Parsis run their own businesses—mostly in IT and shipping. There is a limousine guy in Sydney.

Percy: What do you do?

Firoz: I'm a mechanical engineer, ex-Godrej like you. My wife and I run a tourism and transport business in Perth—*Aussie Perth Tours* and *Perth Maxi Charters*. We used to cover all of Australia and New Zealand, but since COVID, we've focused just on Perth and Western Australia.

Percy: How is the community doing financially?

Firoz: Quite well now. In the early days, people struggled, but today, most Parsis in Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth are well-settled. In Sydney and Melbourne, people have been around 35–40 years; in Perth, around 20–25. Almost everyone owns a home and is financially stable. But we don't have any ultra-wealthy industrialist-type Parsis like in India—no Tatas or Poonawallas here.

Percy: Is that because of the business climate in Australia?

Firoz: Not really. Australia offers great freedom and opportunity. But the population here is small—just 24 million, roughly Mumbai's size, spread over a massive area. That limits demand and the scope for large-scale businesses.

Also, there's barely any manufacturing here anymore. Most goods come from China, India, or Indonesia. Australia relies heavily on mining, oil, and gas.

We had launched WZCC (World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce) in 2005 in Perth, but it fizzled out after a few years.

Percy: Have any Parsis made significant contributions to Australian society?

Firoz: Yes, though mostly low-key. We have doctors and specialists in the Eastern states and some strong players in IT—some whose products are used by governments worldwide. Perth has had a few leading heart specialists and several former ship captains doing well in oil and gas.

But we don't have national-level visibility yet.

Percy: What challenges does the community face?

Firoz: The biggest issue is unity. There's a noticeable divide between Parsi and Irani Zoroastrians in many cities. We also tend to let petty politics and egos get in the way.

When we formed a national federation and later hosted the global congress, we had both support and opposition—from people who let personal agendas override community goals. Unfortunately, that's a pattern we see across the diaspora.

Percy: If a young Parsi wants to move to Australia, can they expect help?

Firoz: Definitely. Both personally and through associations, we've helped many families settle here—guiding them on jobs, documentation, and integration.

In Perth alone, we've helped 12–15 families get started. Sydney and Melbourne communities are equally helpful, even to newcomers from Iran facing cultural challenges. It's more through word of mouth and personal networks than formal association programs, but the support is there.

Percy: How long have you been in Australia?

Firoz: We came in 1992—so about 32 years now.

Percy: Thanks for the chat, Firoz. Any Parsis in politics?

Firoz: Anytime, Percy. Happy to help. We do have a Parsi MLA in Perth now, in the legislative council. But apart from him, there aren't many Parsis in politics. Still, some progress is happening.



Eye-light

By Jennifer Burjis Gilder

Eyes! Eyes! the beautiful organs of sight
Pretty soulful, full of light
Only ones that do not lie
Like a half-contented sigh

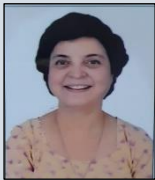
Lovely blue eyes that show emotion
Keen admiration and pure devotion
Pledging promises and vows
Unrequited love, without questioning how

Strong red eyes that faces
Anger and rage, it traces

Cheekbones so high and plain
Everyone else for the fault you blame

Eyelids so uniquely graceful and glaring
Eyes of the colour to match the hairing
Glad to keep open throughout the day
Guiding you through the right way

Eyes impressively large of darker hue
Eager to pay the God's gratitude due
Special grateful light of joy, so shy
At the love seen in the sweetheart's eye



Tribute to a Compassionate Soul

By Dilshad Sidhwa



A pair of caring hands, an ever-smiling face
A cheerful disposition, full of grace
Flowing with positivity and energy
Spreading joy and affection – immensely.
We **miss you dear Zarsis**, dearly

Life is a game of Kicks and Crowns
You've had your share of ups and downs
Bravely you faced the challenging rounds
Victory or Failure does not count
It is your attitude that lasts around

No man is perfect, we all know it
Yet Life, we all have to face it
And you very well lived it,
Leaving your footprints on many a lives' shores,
Whose sweet memories forever will glow.

REST IN PEACE DEAR FRIEND, ZARSIS