



ZANZ Gazette

P.O. Box 251128, Pakuranga, Auckland, New Zealand www.zanz.org.nz

JANUARY—DECEMBER, 2005

“Whatever God’s dream about man may be, it seems certain it cannot come true unless man co-operates”

Parsees of the Bombays

By Fiona Jagose

Just like Freddy Mercury, Zubin Mehta and Rohinton Mistry the Parsees of East Auckland trace their proud lineage to Persia’s Golden Age. Persia was a vast empire which stretched from Mesopotamia, Greece, Libya and the Indus Valley. This Achaemenidian Empire under King Darius Circa 522 BCE to 488 BCE flourished under the ever burning flame of Zarathustrians



Faravahar statue outside a Bombay fire temple

Modern Iranians still refer to the ancient city of Persepolis as Takht-e-Jamshed, literally Jamshed’s throne, in honour of a renowned Zarathustrian king. But the king is dead, the empire vanquished and there no longer lives any Zarathustrian monarchy. The conquest which saw conversion to Islam quashed Zarathustrian practice and to abridge a long story, a branch migrated to the north-west Hindustan (Indian) state of Gujarat. These days one will see the produce of a later migration, many Parsees now live in Bombay. It is mainly the Bombay set that have immigrated to New Zealand.

Any self respecting Parsee will be able to relate to you the story of how their ancestors arrived some thirteen hundred years ago in boats at the shores of Gujarat, requesting to be taken in. King Jadav Rana presented them with a bowl of milk, representing the density of Hindustan’s population. Seeing the brimming bowl the Persians contemplated their situation in the new land and carefully mixed in sweet spices. Not one drop spilled and a promise thereby had been made: to enrich and to assimilate harmoniously



Just over forty five years ago there was one Parsee living in New Zealand, then two. . . now over 150 Parsee families make up part of Auckland life. Just as in India ,the promise to assimilate harmoniously is not forgotten. They are students, engineers, IT specialists, teachers, journalists. They are working, studying, praying, watching rugby... Generally they relish debate and are not shy of expressing their opinions or letting the curious in on protocol and belief. Many have come for the sake of their children’s education or to take part in a society less bureaucratic.

The extensive Zarathustrian Persian

President <i>Rashna Dorab Tata</i>	Vice President <i>Cherag Daruwalla</i>	Treasurer <i>Yasmin Katki</i>	Secretary <i>Tanaz Siganporia</i>	Committee Members <i>Riaz Dadabhoj Jazeel Mistry Merzin Ghadiali</i>	Co-opted Members <i>Minoos Arsiwalla Shernaz Darukhanawalla</i>
--	--	---	---	--	---

Continued from Page 1...

Home is where the hearth is and for Zarathustrians just like the later monotheisms of Judaism and Christianity, fire is a central symbol to religious life. All of the elements are held in respect since, like traditional Maori tikanga, humans are to live a symbiotic life with nature; as caretakers. Some say that a torch lit at a fire temple in Persia was carried over the sea, braving the winds and possible rejection and was finally housed in the Atash Behram fire temple in Gujarat. As impracticably romantic as this would be, this myth and others are dispelled by Rumi Engineer, former ZANZ (Zarathustrian Association of New Zealand) President. He does point out that in fact a *dastoorji* or priest was sent back to Persia: on foot and without disguise he had to walk through enemy territory to consult with other respected elders, if not God himself to see if auspicious preparation for a fire temple in Gujarat could be made. The establishment of a fire temple in Auckland will pose less perilous problems.

But where there is fire, there is smoke. Burning of the body either by smoking or cremation is generally seen as pollution by the Parsees, but since there are no open burial grounds such as Bombay's Towers of Silence and even fewer vultures in New Zealand, traditional funeral practice is an exercise in expense or adaptation.

The estimated number of Parsees world wide sits at approximately less than 100,000. It is anyone's guess whether this proud and ancient culture will be punctuated with renaissance, or extinction. Like other religious or cultural groups the community is divided by orthodox and non orthodox sects. An issue that won't go away is whether Parsees may marry and have families with non Parsees or non-Zarathustrians. Strictly speaking the answer is "no," particularly if it is a woman who marries out.

Darius is a member of Auckland's non-orthodox Parsee community. He was one of the members who early on saw a need for youth prayer classes. A self described moderate he sees his religion as a science by which to understand the elements and to aspire to live in harmony with them. On dogmatism he regrets that the Parsees may force "others to see us as a racist clan." Like so few Parsees before him he got engaged to a Catholic woman while working in the Middle East. Reluctant of returning to India and seeking greener pastures the couple first visited New Zealand as tourists thanks to a cousin's recommendation. An enquiry led to a job offer, he explains while smiling broadly, "so I stayed and never regretted it."

Their child has undergone her *navjote* or initiation into religious life as a Zarathustrian. She goes to an Anglican school and is at home learning about her peers' cultures as well as her own. She runs with the other kids and if her *kusti* slips, to be seen on her outer garments, she simply excuses herself and goes out to pray and ties it up.



Parsee youth at the ZANZ fortnightly prayer class

Continued from Page 2.....

Rashna Dorab Tata, current President of the Zarathustrian Association of New Zealand invites me to a Parsee gathering. In a small community hall in Pakuranga I am amazed to see that the Parsees are well and truly here in great numbers. I knew one Parsee years ago, he was one of the first: my father. There was no Parsee community then . . . Children dash in to the hall with their prayer caps on, parents meet each other and socialise. Shernaz Darukhanawalla a young and innovative teacher urges the late ones in and shows me lesson plans, past and present. “Kem cho?” people ask each other in Gujarati “Fine” others answer.

I ask people why East Auckland of all places to settle and after a while I feel like I’m asking something quaintly stupid. Indeed, why not East Auckland? Most of the Parsees are from Bombay, some miss it, some don’t. Employment, education, housing, a fondness for the country and a growing community are the staples which make East Auckland home.

After prayers there is a hubbub of activity as the young ones fill out their worksheets, colour in and happily explain all about everything. They tell me about their sudrehs, kustis or sacred vestments, about the roj or special days of the month, who or why the bird like man called the faravahar , the elements of an altar and so on and on! Their enthusiasm is inexhaustible. Like their forbearers there is a sea of thick wavy hair and tan, aqua line features, punctuated with brown, blue or green eyes. They chatter in Gujarati and in a kind of English that I have never heard before in a Parsee. What is it I wonder, it displaces me, then I realise - they are first generation New Zealanders.

Navjote: The following children were initiated into the Zoroastrian faith

- 1) Farrah Mistry
- 2) Jehan Balsara
- 3) Firdaus Mehta
- 4) Farshid Daruwalla
- 5) Bezan Mevawalla
- 6) Aafreen Mehta
- 7) Reshad Contractor
- 8) Zeus & Zenaida Dorabjee



Welcome to this world little Zarathustis!

- 1) Farzan to Aspi & Zeenia Ustad
- 2) Zara to Khushru & Kashmiri Umrigar
- 3) Alaiza to Percy & Armin Mehta
- 4) Aryaan to Shahanoor & Khushcheher Contractor
- 5) Karina to Rushad & Farzana Anklesaria

ISN'T IT STRANGE !!! - AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Isn't it strange how \$20 seems like such a large amount when you donate it to a temple, but such a small amount when you go shopping?

Isn't it strange how 2 hours seem so long when you're at a place of worship, and how short they seem when you're watching a good movie?

Isn't it strange that you can't find a word to say when you're praying, but you have no trouble thinking what to talk about with a friend?

Isn't it strange how difficult and boring it is to read one chapter of the Bible/ Quran / Gita, but how easy it is to read 100 pages of a popular novel?

Isn't it strange how everyone wants front-row-tickets to concerts or games, but they do whatever is possible to sit at the last row in a holy place?

Isn't it strange how we need to know about an event for a temple 2-3 weeks before the day so we can include it in our agenda, but we can adjust it for other events at the last minute?

Isn't it strange how difficult it is to learn facts about God and share it with others, but how easy it is to learn, understand, extend and repeat gossip?

Isn't it strange how we believe everything that magazines and newspapers say, but we question the words in the Bible and other holy books?

Isn't it strange how everyone wants a place in heaven, but they don't want to believe, do, or say anything to get there?

Math Magic

$$1 \times 8 + 1 = 9$$

$$12 \times 8 + 2 = 98$$

$$123 \times 8 + 3 = 987$$

$$1234 \times 8 + 4 = 9876$$

$$12345 \times 8 + 5 = 98765$$

$$123456 \times 8 + 6 = 987654$$

$$1234567 \times 8 + 7 = 9876543$$

$$12345678 \times 8 + 8 = 98765432$$

$$123456789 \times 8 + 9 = 987654321$$

THE POWER OF ASHEM VOHU

(Our most simple and common prayer)

The efficacy of Ashem Vohu is explained in Yasna 20. When this mantra is chanted correctly, the sky blue coloured vibratory energies build up a fort type defence system to keep the reciter away from evil onslaughts which endeavour to take possession of the body and mind. As a result the unrighteous thoughts that come out of the mind in the form of negative energies are trapped into this envelope of the Staota of Ashem Vohu, and transmitted into Gav or positive energy.

Zarathushtrian science teaches us that an evil thought, word or deed should be disliked, but not the person.

Piety (asha) is a divine power that conducts Divine order so as to lead the entire Cosmos to its final aim (Farshogard). Asha in its broadest sense we know is righteousness. It is also a divine power in a concrete form. It is a basic foundation of entire cosmos together with all the divinities. Hence Ashem is that divine power. It is therefore Vohu (good).

The person who develops this power of Asha always thinks good of others, and not of himself. Implied in this is humbleness and absence of ego, the bane of evil. So Asha is not merely good, it is (Asti) the best (Vahistem), a power of highest excellence. It implies that a person who possesses Asha is capable of doing immense good to others and gradually starts acquiring Behman, Good Mind, thinking and acting like a Yazad. This type of thinking progresses further towards Ahura, the source from which Bahman emanates.

Such a state can only be achieved by developing Asha. Thus Asha is a beneficial power which every Mazdayasnie Zarathushtri should strive for. Asha brings eternal bliss, Ushtaa. Such a gift is (Asti) bestowed on him/her, who has acquired Asha, for the aid of spiritual progress. This state of Eternal bliss (Ushtaa) which shall lead to the state of immortality is given unto him (Ahmaai) who will endeavour for acquisition of such Asha, which is absolutely necessary for attainment of Farshogard.

Then, (Hyat) only this state (Ashaa-i) shall bring the utmost piety (Vahishtaa- Ashem) to him.

Note that in Ashem Vohu, there is Vohu (man) and Asha (Vahishta). The word Ushta comes from Ush, the light that illumines us from slumber (Usha - dawn, ushi - consciousness). Hence Ushta also connotes spiritual awakening, illumination or self-realisation.

In view of this matter consider Zarathushtra, Zarath (ripe, perfect, bestower of Spiritual light) Ush-tra. (tra is a suffix showing medium or agency)

Recite Ashem Vohu

1. On waking up in the morning.
2. When lighting a Divo.
3. Before meals, an interview or an exam
4. Anytime you start something or come across a hurdle or danger.
5. The next time you see an ambulance or Fire Engine with sirens blaring
6. As evil thoughts tend to enter your mind
7. Remember to pray it with your family.
8. As you fall asleep.
9. Anytime when prayed is an act of virtue
10. After coming in contact with dirt or filth.
11. In pious memory of Holy Farohars.
12. As many times as possible in the ear of a dying person till Sachkar
13. Time of receiving first news of death of a hamdeen.
14. Time of performing “Sezdo” (last respect) to “Baste Kustiyan”
15. Anytime

ZANZ DIARY

FROM JAN 2005 TO DEC 2005

Inaugural Prayer Class Meeting with a lecture and presentation by **Ervad Aspandiar Dadachanji** who was in Auckland to perform the Navjote Ceremony of Navzad Chhor.

Ervad Dadachanji spoke about the significance of the '**Navjote**' and '**Jashan**' ceremonies and also displayed the entire procedure and the meaning behind all the rituals involved. This was followed by an open Question & Answer session and the audience benefited greatly from the wealth of religious information Ervad Dadachanji possesses.

It was a well attended meeting comprising of ZANZ members and other Zarathustrians, both young and old..



February 6, 2005

ZANZ Annual Picnic to Shakespeare Regional Park - Two Stage Coach bus loads carrying over 100 joyous Parsees left from Highland Park. The Pora-Pav packets were ripped open on the bus itself amidst much banter, singing and joyous laughter. It was a fun filled day with a lot more members joining the bus load at the park. Games like "Two's and Three's"; Cricket; 'Kho-Kho' kept everyone in high spirits. The amount of food consumed by the Parsis would have kept a small village for a whole month !!!!!.....

Special thanks to **Yezdi Dastur** and **Hormaz Mogrelia** for arranging the buses and providing their services free of charge.

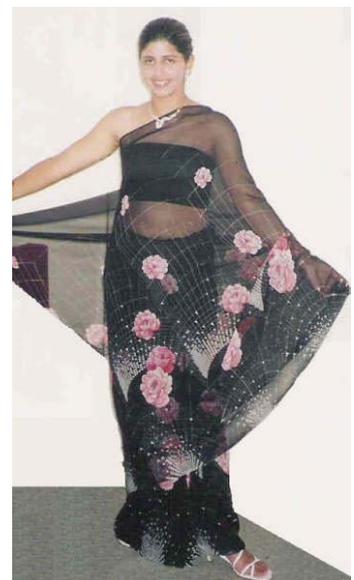
March 21, 2005

Navruz Celebrations at the Pakuranga Rugby Club - A very unusual "open air" Jashan was held in the gardens of the Club. The air resonated with the fervour of the Jashan prayers, performed by the nine Dastur's, both young and old.

ZANZ makes every effort to give an opportunity to the young "Navaryas", who have recently completed their Navar ceremony to take part in our community Jashan and we are indeed proud that we have so many of them.

The jashan was well attended in spite of it being a working day. It was followed by an evening of Dinner & Dance catered by the club. The "Saree Competition" had many enthusiastic young and pretty lasses parading before the **cheering crowd**. The **Sali-Boti** and the **Lasagne** kept the crowd well fed and in great spirits.

Below—Vizina Rao - Winner of the Saree Competition



ZANZ DIARY

May 21, 2005

Housie Evening at Riverina School - Lots of bumper prizes won by some lucky folks.

July 23, 2005

ZANZ Annual Quiz Evening at Riverina School.

63 participants tested their grey cells, amidst much humour and some serious competition. Question-answer rounds were put open to the eight teams based on World Knowledge, New Zealand, Sports, Music and many other general knowledge topics. It was amazing to note how many intelligent '*Bawajis*' exists in Auckland - A whole lot!!

At times the audience proved superior to all the teams put together.

August 20, 2005

1374 Y.Z - Parsi New Year Celebrations

The auspicious day began with the celebratory Jashan ceremony in the morning at the Bucklands Beach Hall. The loud chanting of the prayers, and the fragrance of the sandalwood along with the tables laden with the "Rawa, Sev, and Malida" brought a smile on the faces of all present. The community was there in great numbers dressed in their Gara's and Kor's.

165 people thronged the function hall of the Howick Country Lodge for the evening celebrations. Dinner and Dance combined with an authentic Indian menu, coupled with hilarious party games, exciting prizes and a lot of fun turned the evening into a memorable one.

DJ Jazeel Mistry as usual proved to be a big hit with all ages.

June 19, 2005

Annual General Body Meeting of the Association at Te-Tuhi The Mark - A tame affair with no head bashing or loud voices!!!

The Managing Committee of 2003-2005 was re-elected unopposed, by popular demand.

Numerous persuasive phone calls before the AGM, finally convinced the old committee to come back.

The present Committee comprises of Rashna Dorab Tata, Cherag Daruwalla, Yasmin Katki, Riaz Dadabhoy, Tanaz Siganporia, Merzin Ghadiali and Jazeel Mistry. Shernaz Darukhanawalla came on as a co-opted member. The report for the year, the accounts and all other matters were unanimously accepted.



ZANZ DIARY

November 27th, 2005

Housie Evening at Wakaaranga School

Margi Na Farcha, Mutton Frankie, Batasa and Pista Burfi proved to be a big attraction and brought in a lot of people to the Housie Evening.

Some very happy faces with the jackpot dollars in their pockets!

December 17th, 2005

ZANZ Christmas Party at Wakaaranga School

68 excited children with anxious parents and grand-parents in tow arrived early to meet Santa in person.

Tony Wilson and his amazing magic coupled with a few rabbits and doves kept the children in raptures until it was time for Santa's arrival.

Screams of delight filled the air when Jal Mehta, our annual volunteer Santa, made a much awaited appearance. Matters went a bit out of hand with the flurry of activity, to get the wrapping paper off the presents.

A hoard of happy children and parents went back home after partaking of a feast of cake, chicken nuggets, sandwiches, lollies, icecream and a lot of happy memories.



December 31, 2005

ZANZ DIARY

ZANZ New Year's Eve - "Fantazia Fun-O-Rama"

A fitting end to an eventful year, at the Pakuranga Country Club.

Members participated in the **Red & Black** theme evening in full spirits and went the extra mile to come dressed as per instructions.

Kids and Adults were being judged by secret judges and there were a lot of well deserved prizes. Wasn't hard to guess who would win the **Bedroom Beauty** title?

"Cinderalla's shoes", "Couple Hunt", Spot-prizes and Dance prizes, made it an evening of much *laughter and bonhomie*. The fantastic spread of salads and main meals kept the crowd around the dinner tables and well satiated.

The countdown for the New Year brought the entire excited crowd, young and old, onto the dance floor. The foot tapping music provided by our enthusiastic and talented DJ. Farzan Bilimoria, started 2006 on a high note for all present.



Another very successful year completed at the ZANZ Prayer Class !!

Enrichment of the the soul, nourishment of the mind and lots of community bonding !!!

Our young members at the prayer class, have grown in large numbers and their regular attendance, week after week is indeed very praise worthy.

We are indeed proud of the knowledge, that they have gained over the last year and are thankful to the interest shown by their parents.

The discussions, questions & answers, lectures, projects, slides and qiz competitions have all made this relogious journey a very enlightening one.

All this would not have been possible without the sincere help, guidance and efforts of the following people who have devoted much time, energy and patience to our prayer class and to the betterment of our children.

We sincerely thank Hormuz Patel, Darius Mistry, Tehmus Mistry, Freny Khambatta, Mana Vazifdar and Shernaz Darukhanawala.

We also thank Porus Dumasia and Darius Mistry for their very generous monetary contributions towards the running of the prayer class.

We look forward to another wonderful year .

Warm Regards

Rashna Tata

on behalf of the entire ZANZ MG COMM

Kid’s Corner

1) ***Shawn & Simone Wadia*** have excelled in their respective areas at school—

Shawn has received a medal for “Excellence in Drama” in his Graduation ceremony at Wakaaranga Primary School. **Shawn** has also received “Player of the Day” award in cricket match between his club, Howick & Pakuranga Cricket Club and Parnell Martin (Year 6) Players.

Simone has received an annual Certificate of Commendation for “Excellent Achievement in All Academic Subjects” in Year 4 at Wakaranga Primary School.

(Received from Cyrus & Armine Wadia)

2) ***Sharmeen Medhora*** qualified for a scholarship @ Henderson High School in Year 9 in the Accelerate Class and at end of the term was awarded for standing first in English and French. She's also received a Certificate of Achievement for Mathematics and is one of the recipients of the Waitakere Licensing Trust Diligence Award for 2005.

(Received from Sonal Medhora)

V4U Dhoom Machade Nite

on Sat 10th Sept 2005, at the Dorothy Winstone Theatre in Auckland

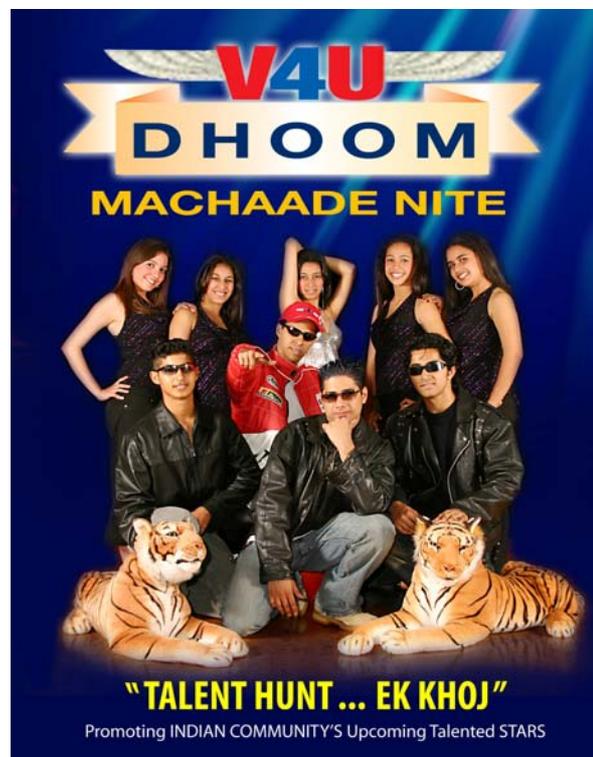
A scintillating performance of dance and music, fashion and beauty, put up by the multitalented Zoroastrian dance group **V4U**, under the baton of their enthusiastic Chief Promoter and Choreographer, Viraf Todywalla.

The show proved to be a platform for over 30 Zoroastrian youth, of various ages to display their awesome talent.

A 1000 enthusiastic fans, were treated to a five hour musical extravaganza and displayed their very obvious appreciation by constantly screaming, “ Once More !!”.

The show had the distinct honour of being sponsored by Apna 990 AM and various other business enterprises. This multi faceted group, comprising of local talent are fast making themselves a household name in Auckland and it was no surprise that they received extensive coverage in the Indian media and Hindi Television programmes.

Way to go guys !! Well done !!



“THE HOUSE OF “TATA’S”, is a name familiar to all Zarathushti’s the world over. This recent article published in Newsweek, takes community pride to a new level PROUD TO BE A ZOROASTRIAN..... A feeling we all exult in!!!!!!”

A New Kind of Company, TATA coddles workers, not managers, keeps its distance from Wall Street, yet thrives in brutal global industries as a uniquely Indian kind of multinational.

Turnaround: Ratan Tata has gone from low to soaring profile

By George Wehrfritz and Ron Moreau, Newsweek International - Issue of July 4, 2005

A new kind of multinational corporation is emerging out of India, the hot newcomer in the global economy. It is the Tata Group, a family conglomerate that has gone professional without losing a distinct set of old-school values. Forged from both India's struggle for independence from Britain and the influence of early-20th-century

Fabian socialists, Tata is a ferocious competitor with a very liberal touch.

Consider: one of the largest of its 32 businesses, Tata Steel, has cut almost half its work force in the last 15 years to become the lowest-cost competitor in this brutal industry, yet has kept its promise to pay all laid-off workers full salary until retirement.

In some ways, Tata could exist only in India, where wages of \$1.20 an hour make cradle-to-grave corporate welfare far more affordable than it would be even in China. But Tata is unique even inside India, where its rigid ethical standards are so well known that corrupt officials typically don't even bother asking Tata executives for bribes. The company has walked away from Indian industries, like Bollywood films, known for shady cash transactions. Though India is a hotbed of labor strife, Tata Steel has gone 75 years without a strike. Tata's car plant at Pune has gone 16 years, and local union rep Sujit Patil says his people work with management daily, a state of labor relations "very different" from that at other Indian companies.

Today India's best-known global competitors are young companies like Infosys, which provide outsourcing services to global companies and govern themselves by unabashedly Western business standards. In contrast, Tata is 131 years old and remains true to its 19th-century mission developing India as an industrial power. Yet it also includes in its stable India's leading outsourcer: Tata Consultancy Services, which is bigger than Infosys.

As a whole, the Tata Group is India's largest company by market cap, with \$17.6 billion in revenues and \$1.9 billion in profits in the 12 months through March, roughly three times its results a decade ago. The conglomerate expects revenues to skyrocket to \$24 billion this year, driven by cars, steel and IT consulting. The story of Tata is thus a window into the rise of India. While the country's vibrancy is attributed to free-market reforms that began in the early '90s, Tata executives emphasize that even now, they grow despite obstacles thrown up by red tape and special interests. Unlike the boom in China, which has been orchestrated by the government, India's rise is primarily the story of an enterprising private sector. Often seen in the United States as an outsourcing economy that threatens to siphon off service jobs, India also has a wider potential that is mirrored in the range of Tata's ambitions, from luxury hotels and jewellery to a planned \$2,000 car. The company's expansion is a symptom of how India's boom is lifting demand across the domestic economy.

In recent years, as Tata began listing shares in some of its affiliates on Wall Street, Americans often compared the company to the model conglomerate they know best: General Electric. But CEO Ratan Tata, 67, is no Jack Welch.

"Certainly not," he says. Tata executives, many armed with Western M.B.A.s, have all read about Welch, and dismiss many of his American tactics, from mass layoffs to hostile takeovers as violations of the Tata way. Ratan Tata says his company is not driven to grow "over everybody's dead bodies." This is a company where 66 percent of the profits of its highly successful investment arm, Tata Sons, go to charity. At Tata "corporate social responsibility" is not just a hot buzzword, as it is in the West, with no real money behind it. That's all very laudable, to be sure, but can Tata remain true to its liberal roots as it goes global? While the conglomerate has put shares of some of its companies up for sale in the West, Ratan Tata makes it clear he is in no rush to submit its real power center, Tata Sons, to the short-term profit motives of Wall Street. Since 2000, Tata has acquired Tetley Tea of Britain, Daewoo Motor of South Korea and NatSteel of Singapore. Yet it's also moved into markets where Western multinationals dare not tread, including Bangladesh and Africa, where Tata has assumed the role of a for-profit development agency. However far those markets, they are near in spirit to the century-old social experiment of Jamshedpur, the company's original steel town.

Welcome to Jamshedpur - The town was the creation of company founder Jamsetji Tata. Born to the Parsi minority (who worship the Persian prophet Zoroaster), Tata joined his father's trading company at 13, and by 35 owned one of India's largest textile mills.

Continued from Page 12....

According to R. M. Lala's official company history, "The Creation of Wealth," he led a generation of young Indian entrepreneurs who viewed industrialization as a means to end British imperialism.

"Jamsetji," Lala writes, "was a nationalist long before this word had any real significance." When Jamsetji began to carve Jamshedpur from the jungle southwest of Calcutta nearly a century ago, the British scoffed. Sir Frederick Upcott, India's railway commissioner, mockingly vowed to "eat every rail pound of steel rail they succeed in making." After Jamsetji's death, banks in London withdrew backing, so his heir, R. D. Tata, turned to Indian financiers in the thriving Swadeshi (Self-Help) movement. The steel mill was the first in Asia when it opened in 1912, just in time for the steel boom triggered by World War I.

R. D. Tata laid out a small city based on progressive principles then fashionable in Europe. The company built schools, churches, parks, a hospital and workers' housing. Fabian socialists Sidney and Beatrice Webb, founders of the London School of Economics, advised on sanitation. Setting standards new to Asia, Tata cut the workday to eight hours, offered free medical aid and stuck to this social contract even in tough times. During a 1923 cash crunch, when critics called his social spending a waste of money, R.D. dismissed them as "sadly lacking in imagination." Today Jamshedpur is Tata's only company town, but the conglomerate still pays full health and education expenses for all employees. It still runs the schools and a 1,000-bed hospital in Jamshedpur (population:800,000).

The city looks frozen in time around 1960, when Tata Steel was controlled by Soviet-inspired central planners: all grimy blast furnaces and smokestacks circled by aging suburbs. Indeed, when Ratan took over in 1991, he says, Western bankers and consultants "little 25-year-old kids" told him to get out of the dying steel business. But Tata could not just walk away, says Ratan, from its commitment to Jamshedpur and to building Indian industry.

Steel Revolution-No matter how gritty Jamshedpur may look, inside the steel mill there has been a revolution in efficiency. Since 1991 Tata has cut the work force from 78,000 to 45,000 in a downsizing so well managed, steel-union president R.B.B. Singh says, "all the employees... have no regrets at all." Tata also spent \$2.5 billion replacing century-old machines, transforming the mill from one of the world's oldest to one of the newest, says Tata Steel managing director B. Murthuraman.

Once dismissed as too shy to make a big impact, Ratan Tata has orchestrated similar strategic turnarounds across the Tata empire. India Hotels sold a stable of three-star properties outside the country to refocus on the luxury sector, and this month bought one of Manhattan's legendary hotels, the Pierre. Tata is shifting out of tea production in India by selling majority stakes in its plantations to its workers, who as owners now pick on average 50 bushels a day, up from 30 before. "Ratan Tata was dismissed as a man with the anti-Midas touch," says parliamentarian Jairam Ramesh. "But in the past 10 years he has made Tata a remarkable success story."

An Asian Family Conglomerate Tata is a trend breaker among Asian family conglomerates, a breed whose incestuous flaws were exposed during the regionwide financial crisis of 1998. Even today, other Indian family business empires are breaking up around Tata (sidebar). One reason Tata has worked, says Ratan, is that it has been professionalizing its management for decades: he insists that, if anything, his status as a Tata landed him the worst assignments at "troubled companies," like textile mills, where he honed skills as a turnaround artist. When he took over in '91, he recalls, Tata had a reputation as a "fuddy-duddy group" based on "an ethical framework that was passe," and he himself "suffered from the reputation of often not exerting himself." Tata came to power just as India was opening to foreign and free-market competition, and soon asserted himself. His immediate predecessor, J.R.D. Tata, had created a "loose confederation" in which the central holding company (Tata Sons) held small minority stakes in each affiliate. This was designed to avoid the wrath of anti-monopolists in New Delhi, but created what Tata Sons director Krishna Kumar calls "powerful chieftains, each pulling in a different direction." To reassert control, Ratan threatened to pull the family name, by then a sterling brand inside India, from those who would not submit to a strict code of conduct and a new performance review.

Ratan Tata would prove tough on white-collar staff. He used growing revenue from TCS, an arm of Tata Sons, to extend the latter's stake in each affiliate to at least 26 percent enough under Indian law to exert management control. Then he pushed out recalcitrant chieftains, including the managing directors at Tata Steel and Indian Hotels. Today, he says, if Tata Sons has a U.S. parallel, it is Berkshire Hathaway, where Warren Buffett has "a say in the direction" of companies he has invested in. A People's Car Ratan's fingerprints are clearest at Tata Motors, once a symbol of India's backwardness.

Continued from Page 13....

After independence, Tata became a state-protected monopoly known for trucks that, as the humorist, P. J. O'Rourke, once wrote, "blunder down the road... brakeless, lampless, on treadless tires, moving dog fashion with the rear wheels headed in a direction the front wheels aren't."

Ratan saw a fix: cars for a rising domestic middle class. Tata bought a used Nissan assembly line in Australia and shipped it to Pune, three hours east of Mumbai. Designers went to work on a four-door car with a large rear seat, modern styling and a price under \$4,000. Skeptics saw it as a vanity project of the kind that had undone Asian family businesses before. "When he came up with the car people said, 'This will be the end'," says Shekhar Gupta, CEO of the Indian Express Newspapers.

It wasn't. Introduced in 1998, Tata's cheap Indica sedan was an instant hit. Now, with 500,000 sold to date in India, and exports going to Europe, South Africa and Russia, Tata plans a second act: a \$2,000 car. Its market is "the family of four sitting on a two-wheeler, driving on slippery roads in the rain," says Ratan, who figures to sell up to 1 million a year in India. The plan is to distribute the car in kit form to small, low-tech assembly plants in the countryside. Ironically, this echoes a hoary socialist scheme that once forced Tata to hire cottage industries to hammer bodies of wood and sheet metal into unfinished chassis. The aim this time, however, is less to develop the "small sector" than to replace expensive automation with cheap labor. "We will do something which everyone thought was not possible, just like the Indica," says Ratan. "History will show whether we've been foolish or courageous."

The India Factor Success could depend on the changing Indian business environment. Ratan says India today is a nation where top officials are writing the right policies, but are often foiled in execution by business lobbies, provincial politicians or leftists in the ruling coalition. "Eminently ridiculous" rules have driven Tata out of such businesses as airlines, and make it all but impossible for India to compete with China. For example, it costs less to import wheel rims from China than to buy the steel alone in India.

Tata worries that India is in "some form of denial" about China's manufacturing lead. The reason China is the big winner from the recent elimination of global textile quotas, he says, is that the Indian government "destroyed" the Indian industry over the years, creating small mills without the capital to expand, and jacking up cotton prices to uncompetitive levels. Tata got out of the textile business, too, years ago.

Tata Goes Global - A decade ago forecasters said globalization would kill old family conglomerates like Tata, but it has not. The purchase of brands like Tetley provided instant name recognition and distribution networks. More intriguing is Tata's move into poor regions with historic ties to India. Tata is in final talks to build energy, steel and fertilizer industries virtually from scratch in Bangladesh. Valued at \$2.5 billion, the deal would represent the largest foreign investment ever in Bangladesh. "It was a chicken-and-egg situation," says Tata. No one was investing in Bangladesh because there was no infrastructure, which couldn't be built without investors. Tata is also moving into South Africa, building on a shared colonial past. R. D. Tata helped finance Mahatma Gandhi's campaign to win greater rights for Asian immigrants to South Africa. Once the country democratized, Tata built schools to train carpenters and electricians. Now the group strategy is to promote "black empowerment" in order to raise the quality of lives, says Tata, and to use the country as a gateway through which to popularize the Tata brand in Africa.

Ratan Tata's departure as CEO could spark as much apprehension as his arrival, but for opposite reasons. He is now seen as vital to Tata's success. Though he has centralized power inside Tata Sons, he has no biological heirs and has professionalized the top ranks so thoroughly that analysts see no risk of a family struggle. Senior executives at Tata Sons say it recently (and quietly) raised the retirement age for board members from 70 to 75?effectively extending Ratan's tenure to 2012, and giving him a little breathing room to find a successor. In the meantime, Ratan expects Tata to keep growing as a different kind of company. For one, he says, Tata has always performed best "when we went beyond the role of just the ordinary corporate citizen." For another, Tata's profit margins rival any multinational's, says Ratan, proving a gentle giant can make it in global competition.

***The ZANZ Managing Committee wishes all our members and their dear ones
A Very Happy 2006!!!***

Wishing you Good Health, Wealth, Happiness & Prosperity

'Ushta-Te'