

THE Z FACTOR

The Z Factor Exhibition celebrates some amazing Zoroastrians. They are the followers of Zoroaster, the first prophet to teach the path of Asha, the Way of Righteousness, that there is One God, and that Good would eventually triumph over Evil.

Zoroastrianism is the ancient faith of Iran, and one of the great religions of the classical world. It links eastern and western faiths. Sharing common origins with Hinduism, it had a formative influence on Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Today there are 100,000 Zoroastrians worldwide and their numbers are declining. Like the panda, they are an endangered species!
A preservation order should be placed on them, if only to protect their originality, generosity and eccentric lifestyles.

Zoroastrians have impacted on our lives and have left extraordinary legacies, not just for their own community but for everyone.

The Persian King, Cyrus the Great, the Father of Human Rights
Jamshetji Jeejeebhoy, the first Indian baronet, and legendary philanthropist
The Tatas, global leaders in industry, science and social welfare
Dadabhai Naoroji, the first non-white MP in the British Parliament
Madame Cama, the revolutionary who first unfurled the Indian flag in Europe
The Adenwallas, who developed the port of Aden
Rati Petit, who married Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan
Homi Bhabha, the Father of Indian nuclear power
Feroze Gandhi, who married Indira and fathered India's political dynasty
Meher Baba, mystic, spiritual master and avatar
The Poonawalla Brothers, whose vaccines inoculate half the world's children
Frene Ginwala, veteran of the African National Congress
Sohrab Godrej, industrialist and President of World Wildlife Fund Asia
Zubin Mehta, maestro

But the most famous, whom we remember every Christmas, are the **Three Wise Men**, Zoroastrian Magi priests, who studied the stars and foretold the birth of Jesus.

The Z Factor also celebrates **Zerbanoo Gifford**, who symbolises her Zoroastrian community. The exhibition portrays Zerbanoo's life and achievements as both extraordinary and yet typical of her heritage. Her life has combined the Zoroastrian tradition of public service, philanthropy and fighting for others' human rights with the modern imperatives of sustainable living, women's empowerment and interfaith action.

Another incredible Zoroastrian, the rock star, Freddie Mercury, needs special thanks for his memorable songs which complement this exhibition. During the millennium celebrations, his song *We are the Champions* was voted the most popular song of all time.

It's a kind of magic

*A kind of magic
One dream, one soul, one prize
One goal, one golden glance of what should be
It's a kind of magic
One shaft of light that shows the way
No mortal man can win this day
It's a kind of magic.*

THE Z FACTOR

Zoroaster and his teachings

Legend has it that when Zoroaster was born, he laughed. His date and place of birth are uncertain, but it is thought he was born in Central Asia around the Aral Sea and lived in the Iranian Bronze Age 1800–1100BC, receiving his revelation at the age of 30. His first disciple was his cousin, and then royalty, King Vishtaspa of Bactria, and his Queen, Hutoxshi, whose lame horse he miraculously cured.

Zoroaster was the first prophet to preach a monotheistic religion, based on a loving God. His sacred texts were written in the ancient Avestan language.

Zoroaster's view of the world was according to the law of Asha, signifying truth, order, eternal justice and the righteous way. He advocated the protection of all creation. He was the first religious leader to teach that there was a Heaven and Hell, angels and demons, the coming of a Messiah, a Day of Judgement, the Resurrection and Life Everlasting.

Zoroaster was a 'New Man'. He stressed equal rights and responsibilities for women and men. They had to use their conscience to decide whether they would be co-warriors with Ahura Mazda, the god of light and wisdom, against Ahriman (Satan), and the force of darkness and evil. Ultimately Good would triumph over Evil.

Zoroaster was the genius who stressed that life should be cherished, and that there was no escape from being judged for our thoughts, words and deeds. His revolutionary ideas have had the most extraordinary impact on the world's faiths and on modern civilisation.



Representation of the prophet, Zoroaster.

Places of worship

Zoroastrians worship in Fire Temples. They do not worship fire as their religion rejects worship of any idols. The Sacred Fire is revered as a visible symbol of the inner light, the divine spark that burns in every heart and the ultimate purifier. All rituals and prayers are performed in the presence of a fire, tended with sandalwood and frankincense in a silver urn. Non-Zoroastrians are not permitted to enter Fire Temples. The religion does not accept converts.



The Navjote ceremony of Zerbanoo's brother, Naswan.

Navjote

The Zoroastrian Navjote is the Initiation Ceremony, like the Jewish Bar Mitzvah. Boys and girls are confirmed in the faith with the recital of the sacred prayers. They are presented with a Sudra, a white muslin vest with a symbolic pocket in the front to remind the wearer to fill it up every day with good deeds. The young Zoroastrian is also given the Kusti, a fine wool cord made up of 72 strands symbolising the 72 chapters of Yasna, the Book of Worship. The Kusti is tied around the waist during morning and evening prayers, with three reef knots as a reminder to fight evil and to follow the teachings of Zoroaster.



The Sacred Fire burning in the Fire Temple, Yazd, Iran.

World Zoroastrian Organisation

The World Zoroastrian Organisation is the global body for Zoroastrians. It brings together a community that is now dispersed all over the world. It was set up to give Zoroastrians a unified voice on the international stage. Their work centres around charity; whether it is poverty alleviation, disaster relief, medical aid, housing, or educational scholarships, it is done with a belief that it is a Zoroastrian's duty to act with compassion and generosity.

Right: Bailey Irani, Founder-President of the World Zoroastrian Organisation, Zerbanoo's father, at the Organisation's inauguration in Teheran, which was hosted by the Shah of Iran in the 1960s.

A young Zoroastrian caring for the old and infirm.



The Faravahar carved in the rocks in Iran.

Faravahar

The Faravahar is the symbol of Zoroastrianism, thought to represent a guardian angel. For thousands of years Zoroastrianism was the main religion of the Persian Empire during the Achaemenid Empire (558–330 BC), the Parthian Empire (247 BC–AD 224) and the Sassanid Empire (AD 224–651), until the Arab invasion in the middle of the 7th century AD when the region was converted to Islam.

Today Zoroastrians are known as Zarthoshti or Vehdin, the followers of the good religion. The term Parsi describes Zoroastrians who migrated to India in the 10th century AD and simply means people from Persia. Zoroastrians who emigrated from Iran in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to seek the religious freedom which was guaranteed in British India, were known as Iranis.

Cyrus the Great

Cyrus (558–530 BC), founder of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, was the first ruler to be called Great. Today he is known as the Father of Human Rights. He was immortalised in the Bible by the Jewish prophets, Ezra and Isaiah, the only Gentile to be glorified as King of Kings and the Anointed of the Lord. Cyrus's greatness lay in uniting the Medes and the Persian tribes, creating the largest empire the ancient world had seen, and liberating the enslaved peoples. He helped the Jewish captives in Babylon return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. He respected the customs and religions of all the lands of the ancient world that he conquered – the first Interfaith champion.



Cyrus the Great's Cylinder of Rights, now in the British Museum.



One vision

One man one goal one mission
One heart one soul just one solution
One flash of light yeah one god one vision.

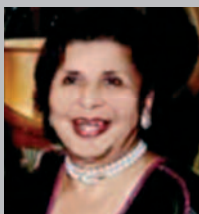
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Pheroza Godrej (b1948)
Art historian, environmentalist and author



Mithan Tata (1895–1981)
First Indian woman barrister and women's rights campaigner



Roshan Sadri (1927–2003)
Philanthropist



Bhikiji Cama (1861–1936)
Revolutionary, Mother of Indian Independence



Coomi Kapoor (b1946)
Editor of *Indian Express*, President of the Indian Women's Press Corps



Avabai Wadia (1913–2005)
Barrister, founder of the International Planned Parenthood Federation



Sooni Taraporevala (b1957)
Photographer, Oscar-nominated screenwriter



Zenobia Nadirshaw (b1950)
Professor of Clinical Psychology and governor of London Metropolitan University



Maja Daruwala (b1945)
Founder of People's Watch and Head of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative



Homai Vyarawalla (1913–2012)
India's first woman photojournalist



Frene Ginwala (b1932)
Veteran ANC activist and first woman Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa



Tanya Dubash (b1968) and **Nisaba Godrej** (b1978)
Sisters who head Strategic Marketing and Human Capital and Innovation at Godrej Industries



Dhun Adenwalla (b1927)
Founder of the Oral School for Deaf Children



Bachi Karkaria (b1945)
First Indian on the Board of the World Editors Forum, resident editor of *The Times of India*



Aban Marker Kabraji (b1953)
Asia Director, International Union for Conservation of Nature, McCluskey Fellow at Yale University



Shernaaz Engineer (b1967)
Journalist, editor



Zerbanoo Gifford (b1950)
Human rights campaigner, pioneer for Asian women in British politics, author, founder of the ASHA Centre



Bapsi Sidhwa (b1938)
Award-winning novelist, screenwriter and lecturer



Nelly Sethna (1932–1992)
Artist and internationally acclaimed weaver



Mahabanoo Mody-Kotwal (b1944)
Actress, director and campaigner for abused women



Rashna Writer (b1949)
Political analyst, academic specialising in Zoroastrianism



Farangis Shahrokh (1916–2010)
Founder of the Iranian Handicraft Organisation, campaigner for Iranian women's rights



Toxy Cowasjee (b1939)
Editor, author and crusader for victims of natural disasters and oppression



Anu Aga (b1942)
Former Chair of Thermax Industries, with her daughter, the current Chair, Meher Pudumjee



Dina Vakil (b1946)
First woman editor of *The Times of India*



Rati Jinnah (1900–1929)
Campaigner, wife of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan



Katy Mirza (1948–2017)
First Asian bunny-girl, actress and award-winning interior designer



Meher Master Moos (b1943)
Professor of Law, author and founder of the Zoroastrian College



Roshan Rivetna (b1939)
Nuclear physicist, co-founder of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America



Meher Banaji (b1943)
Principal of the Happy Home and School for the Blind



Cornelia Sorabji (1866–1954)
First woman to read law at Oxford, legal representative for women in purdah



Benafsha Shroff (b1944)
Actress, director and communication strategist



Shahin Bekhradnia
Educationalist and lecturer in Zoroastrianism and the environment



Shernaz Engineer (b1952)
Award-winning businesswoman, founder of the Verity Group



Bapsybanoo Pavry (1902–1985)
Marchioness of Winchester and peace campaigner



Amy Rustomjee (1896–unknown)
One of the earliest Cambridge women graduates, educationalist, member of the All India Radio 'brains trust'



Smita Crishna (b1950)
Educationalist, with President Jimmy Carter



Kyra Shroff (b1992)
Multi-discipline sportswoman



Thrity Engineer (b1942)
Creator of Supercoherence Programme – the technology of superconsciousness



Homai Daruwalla (b1951)
Chair and Managing Director of the Central Bank of India



Jeroo Roy (b1941)
Artist, anti-violence campaigner



Meher Moos (b1944)
Explorer, international travel consultant and food critic



Indian Suffragette (1911)
Unnamed Parsi Suffragette, first on the left, campaigning for women's right to vote



Gool (dates unknown)
Zerbanoo's great-grandmother, who lived in Yazd, Iran; mother of seven sons and one daughter



Gover Irani (1892–1984)
Zerbanoo's paternal grandmother, mother of twelve children, loved for her generosity of spirit



Kitty Irani (1914–2018)
Zerbanoo's mother, holding baby Zerbanoo, was a student of educationalist, Mme Montessori



Katayun Kapadia
International accounting and auditing expert and former president of FEZANA



Dolly Dastoor (b1939)
Professor of Clinical Psychology, Founder President of the Alzheimer Society, Montreal

Killer Queen

she's a Killer Queen,
Gunpowder, gelatine
Dynamite with a laser beam
Guaranteed to blow your mind
Anytime.

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Zoroastrian women...

Zoroastrian women are spirited and plucky, an old-fashioned word for courageous and determined, which sums them up perfectly. Their achievements have been the breaking of new boundaries for all of us. They campaigned with the Suffragettes and were at the heart of independence movements, like the fiery Indian revolutionary, Madame Bhikiji Cama, and Frene Ginwala, the courageous veteran of the African National Congress, who became the first woman Speaker of the post-apartheid South African National Assembly.

Zoroastrian women were among the first to be admitted to higher education and the professions. Avabai Wadia founded the International Planned Parenthood Federation and used her legal skills to lead the campaign for the right to birth control. Today Maja Daruwala heads the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and Shireen Irani has founded the i-ProBono legal website.

Professor Zenobia Nadirshaw, the clinical psychologist, is one of many outstanding women academics recognised as leaders in their fields. Others champion the cause of the oppressed and those with disabilities, women like Dhun Adenwalla who has devoted her life to those with hearing impediments.

They have also been media pioneers. Homai Vyrawalla was India's first woman photojournalist. Coomi Kapoor edited *Indian Express* and was president of the Indian Women's Press Corps. Dina Vakil became the first woman editor of *The Times of India*, the largest circulating English language paper in the world. Bachi Karkaria was the first Indian on the Board of the World Editors Forum and is renowned for her fearless writing and AIDS campaigns. Meher Moos, the food and society columnist, has explored from the Poles to the Equator, lived with pygmies and eaten crocodile!

Zoroastrian women have taken their place in every sphere of life with dignity and style. Their pioneering spirit and relentless striving after excellence have guaranteed our freedoms.

Zerbanoo's paternal grandmother, Gover Irani, left Iran with her family as a child refugee. Married at fourteen, she had twelve children and was widowed in her thirties. She taught Zerbanoo her Zoroastrian prayers and the need to live a good life, all while touring on a Greyhound bus in America in the early 1950s. She instilled in her granddaughter a revulsion for racial prejudice as they witnessed the harsh realities of segregation in the southern states. She also told Zerbanoo how fortunate she was to be alive in our modern times. Now, as a woman, Zerbanoo could educate herself and create a fulfilling life. It was strong, kind women like Gover who made this possible for the new generation. We need to honour and remember them.

Zoroastrian men...

Zoroastrian men have character and are clever and charismatic. Whether they have been in politics like Dadabhai Naoroji, Britain's first Asian MP in 1892, or Shapurji Saklatvala, the sole Communist in the House of Commons in the 1920s; held the highest position in the Indian armed forces like Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw; helped build metropolitan cities such as Mumbai, Karachi, Aden and Hong Kong; inspired us with their art, music and writing; taken care of our health and our bank balances; they have done it with imagination, integrity and industry.

Freddie Mercury, born Farrokh Bulsara in Zanzibar, the rock legend and lead singer of the band, Queen, continues to be voted one of the greatest singers in the history of popular music. *Queen's Greatest Hits* is the highest selling album of all time in the UK, with headlines proclaiming 'The Kings of Rock are Queen'. A larger than life Zoroastrian, Mercury was ranked 58 in the BBC list of *100 Greatest Britons*.

The conductor of the Three Tenors during the 1990 Football World Cup, Zubin Mehta is the Music Director for Life for the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra. Despite being Indian, he was voted the 117th greatest Israeli of all time.

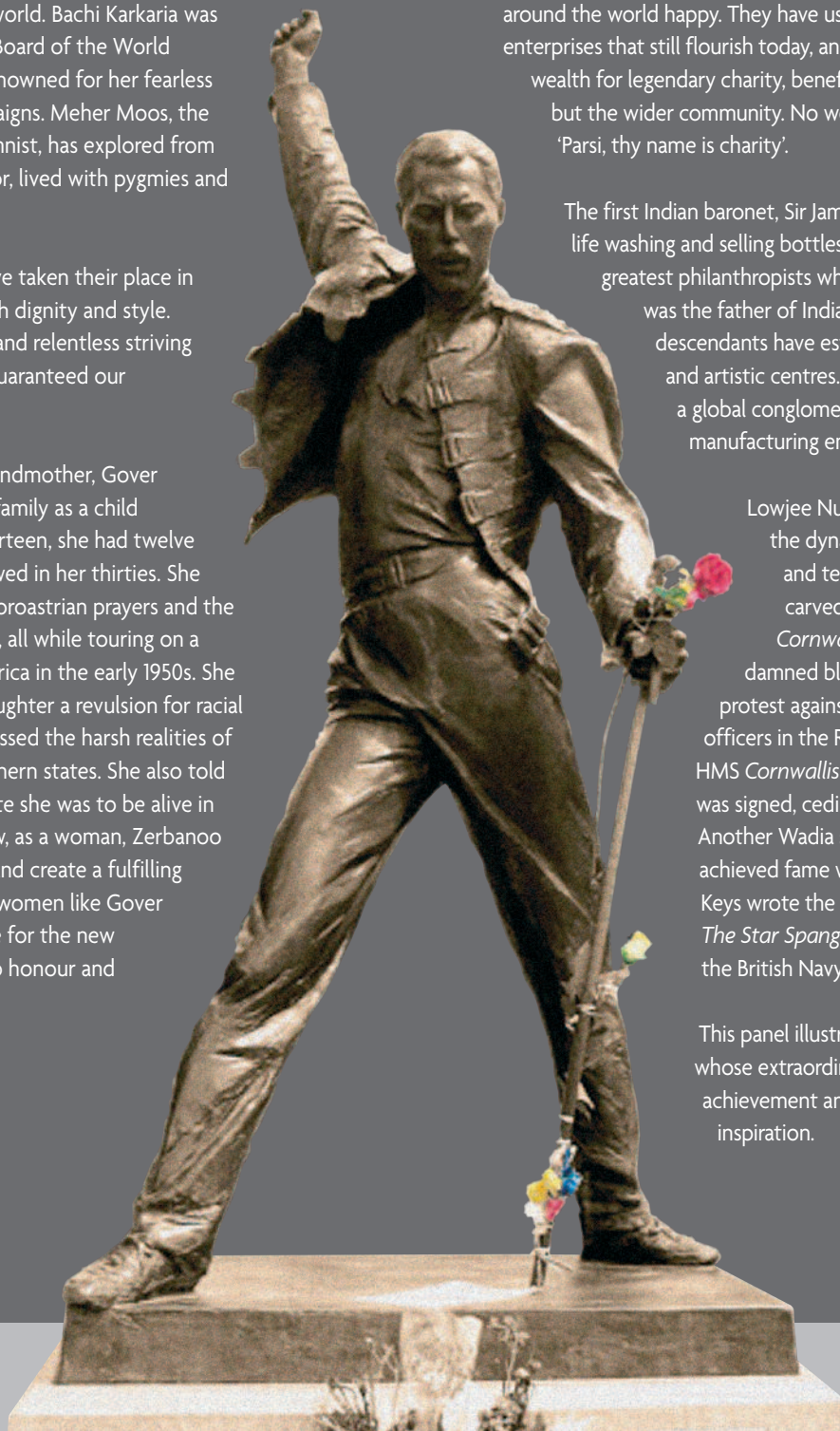
Meher Baba, born Merwan Sheriar Irani, was a mystic, spiritual master and avatar. Pete Townshend of The Who dedicated the rock-opera *Tommy* to him, and he was the inspiration for the award-winning song *Don't Worry, Be Happy*.

Zoroastrian men have worried but have also made many people around the world happy. They have used their talent to create enterprises that still flourish today, and had the vision to use their wealth for legendary charity, benefiting not only Zoroastrians but the wider community. No wonder there is a saying, 'Parsi, thy name is charity'.

The first Indian baronet, Sir Jamshetji Jeejeebhoy, started life washing and selling bottles, and ended it as one of the greatest philanthropists who ever lived. Jamshedji Tata was the father of India's industrialisation and his descendants have established social, scientific and artistic centres. Today the House of Tata is a global conglomerate, and the leading manufacturing employer in India and Britain.

Lowjee Nusserwanjee Wadia founded the dynasty of master shipbuilders and textile magnates. He defiantly carved on the frigate, HMS *Cornwallis*, 'This ship was built by a damned black fellow. AD1800'; as a protest against the racism of some officers in the Royal Navy. It was on the HMS *Cornwallis* that the Treaty of Nanking was signed, ceding Hong Kong to Britain. Another Wadia ship, the HMS *Minden*, achieved fame when in 1812, Francis Scott Keys wrote the American national anthem, *The Star Spangled Banner*, while on board the British Navy warship.

This panel illustrates just a few of the giants whose extraordinary legacies of achievement and goodness are an inspiration.



Don't stop me now

*Tonight i'm gonna have myself a real good time
I feel alive and the world it's turning inside out Yeah!
i'm floating around in ecstasy
So don't stop me now, don't stop me
'Cause i'm having a good time having a good time.*

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Adi Godrej (b1942)
Industrialist, Chairman of Confederation of Indian Industries



Mancherjee Bhownagree
(1851–1933) British Conservative MP, knighted for his contribution to the Commonwealth Institute



Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917)
Britain's first non-white MP, The Grand Old Man of India



Jamshedji Tata (1839–1904)
Founder of Tata Industries and the Taj Mahal Hotel in Mumbai



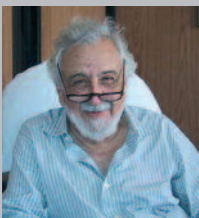
Jamshetji Jeejeebhoy (1783–1859)
First Indian Baronet, prince merchant, philanthropist



Soli Sorabjee (b1930)
Former Attorney-General of India



Cricketers
Legendary Indian test cricketers, Rusi Surti (b1936), Polly Umrigar (1926–2006), Nari Contractor (b1934)



Ardeshir Cowasjee (b1926)
Investigative journalist, shipping magnate and holder of Pakistan's Jinnah Award



Sohrab Godrej (1912–2000)
Industrialist, philanthropist and President, World Wildlife Fund Asia



Cyrus Mistry (b1968)
Chairman designate of Tata Industries, conglomerate comprising 114 companies



Bailey Irani (1924–2004)
Zerbanoo's father, Founder President World Zoroastrian Organisation, hotelier



Zubin Mehta (b1936)
Maestro



The Engineer Brothers
Minoo (1921–1992), Aspy (1912–2002), and Ronnie Engineer (dates unknown) were all awarded the DFC. Minoo received more awards than any other pilot. Aspy became Chief of the Indian Air Force and ambassador to Iran



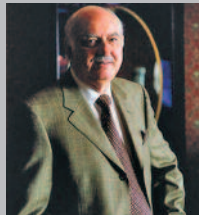
Edujji Dinshaw (d1914)
Property tycoon, legendary developer and benefactor of Karachi



Edul Dhatigara (1923–2010)
Air Marshal, Vice-Chief of the Indian Air Force



Farhang Mehr (b1923)
Former Deputy Prime Minister of Iran and President of Pahlavi University



Pallonji Mistry (b1929)
Irish construction tycoon and richest living Zoroastrian



Meher Baba (1894–1969)
Mystic, Spiritual Master and Avatar



Jamsheed Marker (b1922)
World's longest-serving ambassador, former Chair of UN Security Council, UN Special Envoy to East Timor



J.R.D Tata (1904–1993)
Founder of Air India and former Chairman of Tata Industries



Shapoor Mazda (d1969)
Zerbanoo's grandfather, tycoon and champion of women's education, awarded the title Khan Bahadur



Mehraban Zartoshty
(d.o.b. unknown) Benefactor who endowed the Chair of Zoroastrian Studies at SOAS, London University



Boman Desai (b1950)
American author and lecturer



Homi Bhabha (1909–1966)
Father of India's nuclear power



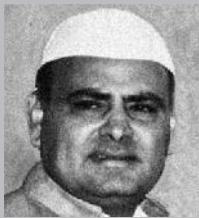
Sam Manekshaw (1914–2008)
Sam Bahadur, literally Sam the Great, India's first Field Marshal



Nadir Godrej (b1951)
Industrialist, poet and President of the Alliance Française de Bombay



Jehangir Sarosh (b1938)
Co-moderator, European Council of Religious Leaders, Interfaith champion



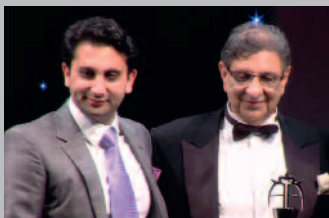
Feroze Gandhi (1912–1960)
Journalist, publisher, politician, married to Indira, and father of Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Ministers of India



Kaikhosrov Irani (b1922)
Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, City College of New York, Zoroastrian scholar, taught by Einstein



Ratan Tata (b1937)
Chairman of the Tata Group



Cyrus Poonawalla with his son Adar
Founders of the Serum Institute of India and owners of the Poonawalla Stud Farm



Ardashir Vakil (b1962)
Author and lecturer



Arzan Wadia
President of FEZANA, architect and urban designer



Cyrus Bharucha (b1941)
Professor of Communications, TV and film veteran



Zane Dalal (b1964)
Resident conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of India



Shapurji Saklatvala (1874–1936)
British Communist MP



Rohinton Mistry (b1952)
Award-winning Canadian author



Ardeshir Irani (1886–1969)
The Cecil B deMille of India, film director and producer



Matthew Amroliwala (b1962)
BBC journalist and newsreader



Cyrus Todivala (b1956)
Award-winning chef and restaurateur, writer, Deputy Lieutenant of Greater London



Homi Sethna (1923–2010)
Scientist, Chair, Indian Atomic Energy Commission



Jamshyd Godrej (b1949)
International industrialist and conservationist



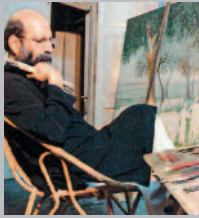
Karan Bilimoria (b1961)
First Zoroastrian life peer, Chair of Cobra Beer



Zarir Cama (b1947)
International banker and conservationist



Asted Deboo (b1947)
Pioneer of modern dance in India



Jimmy Engineer (b1954)
Artist, stamp designer, philanthropist



Jehangir Ruttonjee (1880–1960)
Hong Kong philanthropist



Nani Palkhivala (1920–2002)
Tagore Professor of Law, Indian ambassador to the US, author, economist and President of the Forum of Free Enterprise

We are the champions

*i've taken my bows
And my curtain calls
You brought me fame and fortune
And everything that goes with it
I thank you all
But it's been no bed of roses no pleasure cruise
I consider it a challenge before the whole human race
And I ain't gonna lose
We are the champions - my friend.*

THE Z FACTOR

Campaigning

Every night over a billion people go to bed starving. Women and children are abused and denied self-worth and over two hundred million people are still in abject slavery. Freddie Mercury was right to ask, *Is this the world we created?*

Zoroastrians are unable to let injustice rest. Fighting evil in its many ugly forms is in their nature. This heritage of noble action and universal charity was the spur for Zerbanoo to stand for public office in 1982, ninety years after her hero, Dadabhai Naoroji, had been elected as a Liberal MP. In her election campaign Zerbanoo faced the full force of the British National Party, who were determined that no non-white woman like Zerbanoo should hold political power in Britain.

Zerbanoo's election victory gave her another platform for her courage and determination to take on injustice and intolerance. She has dedicated herself to women's empowerment, the Interfaith movement and the eradication of modern-day slavery, especially child labour and the trafficking of women.

Zerbanoo has supported her lawyer husband, Richard, in the fight against the illegal expulsion of the Chagossians from their Indian Ocean homeland.

All Zerbanoo's campaigns are interlinked, and involve working with other individuals and organisations aiming to end human indignities.

The **Z** Factor highlights just some of Zerbanoo's social and political campaigns; the anti-apartheid struggle; fronting documentaries on the appalling lives of street children; writing, giving talks and fundraising to highlight our unequal world; setting up an Inspirational Women's website with an international mentoring scheme; to founding the unique ASHA Centre.



Zerbanoo and Bishop Trevor Huddleston presenting a petition to 10 Downing Street calling for the release of Nelson Mandela.



Thousands of people in Trafalgar Square supporting the anti-apartheid movement.



Cosmic networker

Zerbanoo first confronted the issue of child poverty when she was a little girl. She made and sold flags for a penny to passers-by outside her family hotel in London. She collected five pounds and sent it to the Prime Minister of India, asking for action. Today, Zerbanoo is known as someone who makes things happen. She is a cosmic networker. Her ability to connect people, whose magnificent causes she always supports, has proved invaluable.



Zerbanoo's campaign leaflets.

At the Liberal Party conference in Eastbourne, holding her British passport aloft to expose discrimination against British citizens born outside the UK. Her speech was featured on BBC News and led directly to change.

Child labour

Today the number of children in bonded labour is higher than it was before the so-called abolition of slavery. Millions worldwide are subjected to violent sexual attacks and forced to work in mines, farms, factories and even brothels in the most terrible conditions. They are denied a childhood because of the greed of their owners and those who wish to buy goods at an unrealistically cheap price. Every child should be entitled to an education, healthcare, food and a loving home. Anything else is an indictment on us all.



Zerbanoo with rescued street children in India who now live in the Sneha Sadan Homes and are loved and cared for.

Eight-year-old boy working in a Columbian mine.

Raising awareness

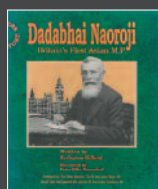
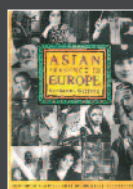
In all her books, Zerbanoo has championed the achievements and noble campaigns of heroes and heroines who deserve acclaim, like Thomas Clarkson. Described by Zerbanoo as one of the noblest of Englishmen, he dedicated his life to ending the transatlantic slave trade and yet was written out of our history books.

In 1992 Zerbanoo co-chaired the Dadabhai Naoroji Centenary, for which she wrote his biography, in order to bring to light one of the best kept secrets of British political life – that there had been a non-white MP, elected to Parliament in 1892, in the reign of Queen Victoria.

In 2004 Zerbanoo was awarded a NESTA Fellowship (National Endowment, Science, Technology and Art) for which she interviewed and wrote about over 300 women from 60 countries, whose inspirational lives have changed our world.



Zerbanoo's husband, Richard, with older Chagos Islanders, and (right) some younger Chagossians wondering if they will ever return to their home.



A selection of Zerbanoo's published titles.

Is this the world we created?

*Just look at all those hungry mouths we have to feed
Take a look at all the suffering we breed
So many lonely faces scattered all around
Searching for what they need
Is this the world we created ...*

*If there's a God in the sky looking down
What can he think of what we've done
To the world that He created.*

THE Z FACTOR

Interfaith action

Interfaith is part of ASHA's holistic approach to healing communities who are torn apart because of their unhappy histories.

At ASHA, people are challenged to be open to life and understand others' faiths and spiritual beliefs.

The Centre is recognised as a sacred place. It has been chosen by Interfaith ministers as a base for their training and spiritual retreats.



Young British Zoroastrians enjoying tea-time.

Far left: Rev Juliet Stephenson and Swamini Kalji discussing their faiths at the ASHA Centre.



Young people from around the world celebrating Navroze, the Persian New Year, which falls on the spring equinox.

The ASHA Centre Creating the future

Zerbanoo established the ASHA Centre, in the beautiful Royal Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire, to build a lasting and worthwhile celebration of the Millennium.

A stunning home and gardens which are enjoyed by everyone, ASHA is a centre of excellence where pioneering ideas are put into action and where service is not just a motto but a reality.

The ASHA Centre is now recognised internationally as a hub of activity for young people who come from Britain and all over the world to experience each other's cultures, faiths and shared humanity.

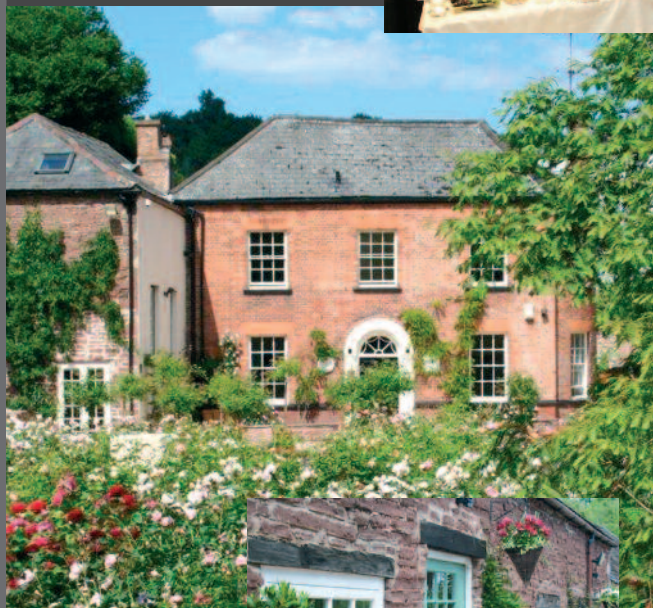
Young people from war-torn countries and divided communities, those with disabilities, volunteers keen to contribute, and high achievers re-evaluating their priorities all find that being at ASHA gives them a new perspective on how to live a good life.

They all value the space they are given to explore their own identities and the chance to examine social justice and the importance of principled and inspirational leadership.

They are encouraged to experience the joys of working on the land, sustainable living and the use of the creative arts. The ethos at ASHA is that everyone has special gifts that need to be nurtured and that everyone can enrich their world. ASHA is a place where hope becomes action.

It is said that the ASHA Centre is the only stately home in Britain that doesn't charge entrance fees to walk around or study wildlife in its magnificent gardens. It is a magical place, where everyone feels at home and leaves transformed.

Many thanks to the Erach and Roshan Sadri Foundation, and everyone worldwide who has contributed to the Z Factor with such enthusiasm and generosity of spirit.



The ASHA Centre main building.

The beautifully appointed cottages next to the main house provide accommodation for visitors to the Centre.

ASHA's got talent!



Theatre for peace

The Tongues of Fire Youth Theatre is affiliated to the ASHA Centre. Drama, voice training and presentation all underpin the work of teaching young people self-confidence and allowing them a creative space to express their vitality and individuality.

The young people create plays which they perform in Gloucester and London before then staging the production in their home countries. Young Arab and Jewish Israelis have produced plays together which they have taken to their warring homeland in an effort to bring together their divided communities. The Israeli media have called this one of the most significant contributions to the peace process. Young South Africans performed the play they had created at ASHA, on the history of their nation, for Nelson Mandela at his home.



Zanandule, a play written by Zerbanoo's son, Alex, and presented in London and South Africa by young people from the townships.



A Jewish girl putting make-up on an Arab boy before they performed together in the play Arabian Nights.

These are the days of our lives

When we were kids, when we were young
Things seemed so perfect - you know?
The days were endless, we were crazy - we were young
The sun was always shinin' - we just lived for fun
Those were the days of our lives
The bad things in life were so few
Those days are all gone now but one thing is true -
When I look and I find I still love you.