



Back to the Future:

*- A theme explained.*

I have been asked many times if there is a theme to the 4th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in December 2007 and I answer, "Yes, there is!" The theme that I have chosen for it is "*Back to the Future*". The words simply popped into my head, the minute I was delegated to be the next Chairman! Not only is it a catchy phrase that all the Youth will be able to relate to immediately, it culminates via deeper links, in our religion.

Most people will associate this theme with a 1980's movie of the same name. I know some of you were not even born then, so here is a quick lesson. The movie is about a youth named Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) who gets the help of an Eccentric Professor and his Time Machine in the form of a DeLorean car. Without giving too much away about the movie, Marty must use the time machine to change the past and thence return to the future. For a better explanation of the film, please see - <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0088763/> as this has more on it.

When I talk about "*Back to the Future*", I am talking about returning to the past and learning lessons for the future – not trying to change it! What do I mean by this? Well, the 'past' could be thousands of years old or it could be something we did last week! However, generally speaking we are referring to our traditions and customs when we discuss the 'past'. So what about the 'future'? The future is something that has not happened yet and therefore is something to look forward to. And knowledge of our past is one sure way of getting there in style!

Some might call it hope and expectations. We don't know what tomorrow brings, but many of us are always hoping for better days ahead. Hope, like all others, is an emotion generated by the mind, but felt in the heart! Concepts such as *retirement* are seen as humans planning for the future. Share markets, portfolios and investments are of future concerns that are in many people's lives. As intelligent human beings we should be learning from the past and building nest eggs to comfortably retire on in our future. As human beings first and Zoroastrians as well, it is in our human nature and our Zoroastrian upbringing to be prepared and leave something for the next generation to enjoy and respect, just as we ourselves are grateful to our parents and grandparents for all that we have inherited from them – not just in material wealth or physical form, but also in spiritual enlightenment.

One thing to be very clear about in regards to the past is we are not going to be able to change it. Right now I am constantly using the 'backspace' key to write this Word document. This is not the same as undoing our past. Why would anyone want to undermine or change a glorious past? As the old expression goes, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it"! The best thing about a past is the ability to learn from it – to keep all that is good about it and never repeat anything that may not be – though I am sure most Parsis would find it rather difficult to find anything they would like to forget about their past! As mentioned earlier, no one can erase the past with a simple click of the mouse or the use of a Time Machine even if it happened in the movies. We can only go back to it to see how we can better ourselves and how we can create an equally wonderful future for ourselves from it.

We are following some guidelines as set out by the Pune Congress in December 2003. Again, we do not want to reinvent the wheel. Certain things that have worked in the past will be followed and there may be slight adjustments as required to create a slightly more dynamic and different situation. Please note that the Pune Congress Committee only had 9 months in which to organise the event. If we are to learn anything from their example, we have realised just how fortunate we have been to be given this task at an early stage. It was thanks to London's Malcolm Deboo delegating Australia for the next Congress that we are able to start off running and get things organised from the onset. Again, I wish to make clear that the delegation was given to a country – Australia, and as such, we are depending upon all Aussies to come forward and participate. I know what you must be thinking if you're not from Down Under... that you don't need to be involved. Sorry to say, that is the furthest from the truth. All hands on deck to make this an Experience worth working for and even waiting for. After all, this is a WORLD ZOROASTRIAN Congress and we are all Zoroastrians together, aren't we?

Speaking to several key members of the past teams, we have learnt a great many things, such as, making sure that the Youth Organisers are interactively participating in the Congress and not just organising it. It is after all meant for the Youth and those best ones who help organise it, should be the first ones to be enjoying it! Little bits of information like this from the past are vital to create an even better event in the coming months for the Youth from around the world. But these are mere bits and pieces to nibble upon – we mean much more! Every race and religion in the world needs to know about its roots – every man wonders, How did I get here? Where am I going? Fortunately for all of us Zoroastrians not only do we have no need to wonder, we already know! Our past is the guiding light that shines from behind us channelling us onto a pathway to an equally bright future ahead! Just as the halo behind the head of Asho Zarathushtra is the light of the Prophet eclipsing the sun, we will use his example and wisdom to be guided by to make ours a better world.

I spoke of a glorious past before – we want to create for ourselves an atmosphere where we can have an equally glorious future, not only for ourselves but as something that we can happily pass on to our future generations as something they too can be proud to have inherited. Upon the wall of my bedroom I have stuck a saying and picture that reads, "Do for others with no desire of favors. We all should plant a tree we'll never sit under." And that's exactly what we want to do! In the present, we want to create a future, based upon our past – so that ALL of it is equally superb!

As you read this article, I hope that some of you are busy planning your own methods of coming to the future. After all, the future has not been written yet and it will be what you make of it.

IF we don't know anything about our past we can never hope to have any sort of future and that is why I have chosen this as our 4thWZYC2007 theme.

So thank you for taking the time to read about the theme. Now I hope that you have a better understanding of why I chose it.

See you there!

Shiraz J. Mistry.

P.S. Please note this was written while I was in India earlier this year. Hence, the date above was when this document began.