

Pardis Parker



"I'm proud of the fact that I'm doing what I love," says film director, writer, actor, and comedian Pardis Parker. Pardis was born in Sri Lanka and grew up in Canada. He loved comedy from a young age and longed to perform.

He earned a degree in computer science and psychology from McGill University in Montreal, then owned a successful health food store. In 2008, he decided to follow his dream. He wrote, directed, produced, and acted in his first short comedy film, *Afghan*, which won over 25 awards and honors! He also started doing stand-up comedy in the U.S., Canada, and the UK. He made more short films and two music videos, winning many awards for his work. Pardis lives in Los Angeles, where he continues to create films and bring laughter to his growing audience.

Q: What's your favorite childhood memory?

A: One thing I always enjoyed is I would record these stand-up comedies from TV. When I went in to class . . . the teacher . . . would let the class watch for five or ten minutes . . . I was lucky. I had a pretty good run of teachers.



Pardis spent most of his childhood "just a stone's throw from Peggy's Cove," a town in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Q: Why did you decide to volunteer for a Year of Service* in the Solomon Islands?

A: It was after high school, and I didn't know what I wanted to study, what I wanted to do in life. I did know that I wanted to be challenged. I wanted to be put out of my comfort zone . . . The Solomons were tropical islands that had a rainforest and so on. I felt as if that would provide the sort of adventure that I wanted. It was great. It was the most meaningful learning experience of my life . . . It allowed me to learn about myself, to learn about what I conceived [as] my own limits, the way that I was able to do things when there was only me to do it.

Q: What kind of work did you do?

A: There's no cell phones, there's no Internet, there's no television or anything, so there were pockets of Bahá'ís who hadn't really been in touch with the outside Bahá'í community for years and years and years. So I was with isolated Bahá'í[s] . . . to help them learn about being a [Bahá'í].

Q: When joking with friends, it's easy to unintentionally hurt someone's feelings. How can we avoid this?

A: It's important to realize that there's a difference between having fun *with* someone and making fun *of* someone. There's no benefit if one person is losing. You want to be able to find comedy where everyone's able to benefit and enjoy it, and not at someone else's expense . . . Comedy also means to uplift people. And the best comedy embraces the world . . . Make jokes where everyone can enjoy them . . .

Questions and
Answers with an
Inspirational Bahá'í



Left: Pardis wrote, directed, produced, and starred in the 2011 film, *The Dance*, a funny love story in which not a word is spoken. Below: Pardis performs at a comedy club in California, U.S. in 2009. He doesn't get nervous and says stand-up comedy is like "having a conversation with . . . a large group of people."

Q: How did you decide you wanted to be a writer, director, comedian, and an actor?

A: It was something I'd always wanted to do, and I got to the point where I couldn't *not* do it anymore. So I went forward. *Afghan* was the first thing I did. I didn't have any training or any experience or anything before that. So I just learned on the fly how it was, hired a bunch of crew, I wrote something, and, you know, we were in Halifax, and we shot it, and we got lucky . . . The guy that acted in it was a comedian. I . . . asked him about stand-up and how that worked, and it was simple. You write some material up, and you find an open mike somewhere, and you start, and you keep going, and over time, you get better.

Q: You've acted on several TV shows. What's that like?

A: It's fun. There are probably a lot of kids who think that it's real glamorous, but it's not. Actually, it's a lot of waiting around on sets. You say your lines a bunch of times, and you go home. It's fun and it's not very difficult, but it's not nearly as exciting as people think it is . . . On all of these shows, you're working with so many talented people . . . the best in the business. So they really make your job easy.

Q: What advice do you have for kids who want to pursue a life in comedy or film?

A: Go for it. We need more talented voices out there. There's no magic way or an easy way to get started. Everyone starts out the same way. With comedy, you just go and start doing open mikes, amateur nights. And with film, we're living in an age where it's a lot easier to get a camera and to get friends together and to make something. You don't need to have a huge budget, or any budget, to tell a good story. Have an honest voice, and you'll create work that's meaningful.



Q: In this issue, we're exploring the joyful adventure of life. In your eyes, what makes life a joyful experience?

A: It's the people you're with. It's your friends and family. It's the company you keep. Surround yourself with good people, and you'll have a good time.

Q: If you had one wish for our readers, what would it be?

A: I wish that they find what their passion is in life and they put themselves in a position where they're able to pursue it . . . If there's something you think that you can do, you should do it. The only limits you have in life are the ones you put on yourself.