

## JOURNAL

Tir–Amordad–Shehrever 1384 AY (Fasli) • Behman–Spendarmad 1384 AY Fravardin 1385 (Shenshai) • Spendarmad 1384 AY Fravardin–Ardibehesht 1385 AY (Kadimi)

## Fostering Zoroastrian family values in the new diaspora



**PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA**

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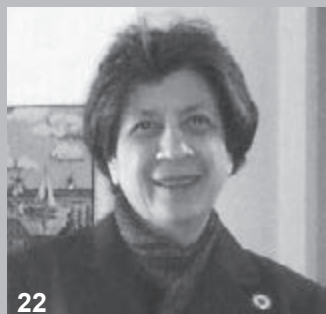
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# FEZANA JOURNAL

PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

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(Kadimi)

## FALL 2015:

YALDA, the Persian Festival .Guest Editor: Massoume Price

## WINTER 2015

Zoroastrian Financial Institutions: Guest Editor Yazdi Tantra.

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## UNITY IN ACTION

Since the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Zarathushtis, Iranis and Parsis, started trickling into North America, gathering momentum due to several geopolitical events in the 50s and 60s. This momentum gathered more speed in the 70s with the advent of the Islamic Republic of Iran. After centuries of living apart Iranian Zarathushtis and Parsi Zarathushtis found themselves in much closer proximity in North America. FEZANA was formed and in the early days, the buzz words were ***Iranian- Parsi unity***, and committees were formed to work at it formally. But nothing works as well as personal informal contacts and friendships.



The sports events, the youth congresses and now the adult congresses have brought the two branches of the tree to swing in the same direction. We celebrate Tirgan, and Mehergan, Sade and Yalda, the festivals the Parsis had forgotten, we celebrate the different ghambars in their appropriate seasons as they should be, and we sit on each other's boards.

This issue of the ***FEZANA JOURNAL*** is another example of the two branches working in harmony and unison. Fariba Pirghaibi, the well known editor of Chehrenama, the publication of California Zoroastrian Centre (CZC) and myself collaborated to bring you a combined edition. We chose a topic which is applicable and of importance to both our communities: ***Transmission of Zoroastrian values in the diaspora***". We were both worried as to how the logistics would work out. But they did. We exchanged articles, the journal carries two articles in Farsi from *Mobed Kourosh Niknam* and *Mobed Pedram Soroushpour* as well as an article from *Anahita Behmardian* in English. Chehrenama carries the articles in English from the guest editor Dr Hovi Shroff of the FEZANA Journal issue and from Sherally Munshi. In addition we shared the articles by Fariba on the three Co-chairs of the LA congress. In future we plan to bring more combined issues on other appropriate topics. I thank Fariba and the Board of CZC for their openness and their willingness to experiment with trust. This is the link for Chehrenama. <http://czcjournals.org/CN/174/PDF/CN174.PDF>. You will see that the views expressed in both the issues are similar yet different which add flavour to our community. The guest editor of this Summer issue, Dr Hovi Shroff, has done a tremendous job of soliciting the views from a cross section of our North American Zarathushti demographics.

And while we forge ahead with unity on this diaspora, our motherland in Mumbai is becoming more fractious with trustees of BPP fighting between themselves leaving the affairs of the community by the wayside, wives weighing in, defending their husbands, and the second generation wanting to take up the mantle of trusteeship to maintain family fiefdom (for what one may ask). We encourage and support our young to ***Return to Our Roots*** but we want them to stay strong and reach out and up in the diaspora.

Enjoy the summer, it passes so quickly

# A Message from FEZANA President

# Editorial

**STATE OF THE FEDERATION AT THE FEZANA AGM ON MAY 2, 2015** (Complete report available on [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org))

It has been an interesting, challenging and thought-provoking journey these past three years since you elected me as President of FEZANA. Each day brings new challenges, so as we look ahead to 2015-2016 let us look for creative ideas and affirmative solutions and continue to support the initiatives started.

## WAY FORWARD

**SECOND TEN YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN** –The Executive with the help of the Strategic Plan Working Group, Committee Chairs, member associations and small groups will continue working with the complimentary organizations like NAMC, WZCC, ZWIN, RTR and others to find resolutions and resources within the community to bring this plan to fruition.

1. **INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN NA** – We continue to identify and prioritize the Infra Structure needs of North America and work together to make it a reality.
2. **WELFARE & CRITICAL ASSISTANCE** – supports the welfare & critical needs of the NA and global Zarathushti Community in conjunction with WZO-Trust thanks to continued and consistent efforts of Dinshaw Tamboly.
3. **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASS CURRICULUM** – FEZANA supports workshops to train and explain the curriculum to the Zarathushti community educators at future NAZCs.
4. **SCHOLARSHIPS** – We thank our donors for contributing funds and encourage them and other prospective donors to contribute to FEZANA to help us award academic, religious education, sports, and performing & creative arts scholarships.
5. **NAMC, WZCC, ZWIN AND RETURN TO ROOTS** – Develop a spirit of teamwork and partnership with these complimentary organizations and programs, to provide value added services.
6. **CORRESPONDING MEMBERS** – Reach out and involve these small communities in FEZANA activities.
7. **YOUTH INVOLVEMENT & DEVELOPMENT** – Working with youth committees and organizations like ZYNA, ZYWB, Zoroastrian Sports Committee, Return to Roots (RTR), and others to foster community involvement and youth participation in interfaith, UN-NGO and other related NA and global activities.
8. **CONGRESSES, SPORTS EVENTS & INTERFAITH ACTIVITIES** – Member Associations together

with FEZANA need to develop a strategy to subsidize the participation of youth in North American & World Congresses, Sports Events and Interfaith Activities. Encourage small member associations and corresponding members to host the FEZANA Annual General Meetings to facilitate their meeting the FEZANA family and get involved in FEZANA activities and projects. Foster participation and representation of the Zoroastrian religion and the Zarathushti community in the 2015 Parliament of World Religions in Salt Lake City, Utah in October and during the visit of Pope Francis at the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, September 2015.

9. **COMMUNICATION STRATEGY** - To build a unified NA Zarathushti Community requires a well-planned and organized communication strategy. Our achievements, upcoming events, community service projects, welfare & critical assistance appeals and other information need to be shared using the FEZANA Journal (quarterly), FEZANA Bulletin (monthly), the fezanayahoo groups emails and the updated FEZANA website.

FEZANA's mission is to preserve our religion on this continent by providing a cohesive force. Our core values are enhanced through a strong emphasis on education, economic stability, and volunteerism. As we promote our Zarathushti way of life, we are increasing awareness of our religion and culture domestically and globally and instilling pride in our future generations.

Thanks to your generosity, we are able to achieve this and much more. The work of adjudicating scholarships, allocating your donation dollars wisely to those in real need, planning and coordinating religious education workshops, seminars, sports, publications, etc. is done by committees of volunteers who give their time and money freely. To continue this work and prepare for our future, we constantly need to raise funds. Please support FEZANA's goals and activities with your generous donations.

I request that we all continue to follow the **5-STAR Guiding Principles for FEZANA: Teamwork, Respect Diversity, Innovation, Empowerment & an Optimistic 'Can Do Attitude'** both individually and collectively for a unified, healthier Zarathushti community in North America. May Ahuramazda shower his choicest blessings on all.

**Katayun Kersi Kapadia**, FEZANA - President



**Behram Pastakia**

Climate change stares the world in the face.<sup>(1)</sup> Conflict in the Middle East, Central Asia, the Far East, Northern Africa and other parts of the world is traced to a struggle for resources because the world economy runs primarily on fossil fuels.

***sraêstâm at tôî kehrpêm kehrpãm âvaêdayamahî mazdâ ahurâ imâ raocâ barezishtem  
barezimanâm avat yât hvarê avâcî. ýenghê hâtâm ... tâscâ ýazamaide [!]***

The most beautiful form of forms we then devote to Thee, Mazda Ahura, these lights [i.e. fires] here below, and that yonder, the highest of the high, which is the sun<sup>2</sup>

**Yasna 36:6**

Zarathushti scriptures praise the sun. Our NowRuz, Mehrgan, Tirgan, and Deygan celebrations are based on a solar calendar. Should we be looking to ancient wisdom, to address the issue of climate change? Can dreams become realities?

Many years ago, we dreamed of celebrating Zarathushtra's contribution to world civilizations. Thanks to the efforts of the Government of Tajikistan and support from UNESCO that dream came true.

We then dreamed of Norooz being recognized as an Intangible Heritage of Humanity by the United Nations. In spite of setbacks, with perseverance, that dream was realized. Now Persian Parades to celebrate NowRuz are held in many cities in North America. The Haft Seen table display is an annual fixture during the spring equinox in the White House. What we dream of, when we are united with a sense of purpose to collective action, transforms itself into reality.

In 2015, as we participate in the Parliament of the World's Religions, is it time to ask whether interfaith dialogues in their current *avatar* are worthwhile? If we conduct the same experiment over and over again, how can we expect different results? World peace remains as elusive as ever. Should we change strategy in where we expend our efforts and begin by retrofitting houses of worship, and homes to make them environmentally friendly? Roof top gardens can conserve energy. Rain water harvesting, a legacy from our forebears, could be resurrected in our own times. Germany is ahead on the technology curve to capture the sun's energy to meet the needs of humanity. China is the supply powerhouse of manufactured goods. As world leaders plan to meet in Paris<sup>1</sup>, could we look to *Juggad*—the product of the innovative mind—to lower costs in the installation of solar panels<sup>3</sup> and promote a model that eliminates transmission lines and electricity power grids?

There may still be hope for freedom, for peace and for tranquility in civil society if we could learn our lessons from ancient wisdom to focus our collective energies, on the Highest of the High—the sun!

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**Behram Pastakia** is Chair of the Information Receiving and Dissemination Committee and Co-Chair of the United Nations–NGO Committee of FEZANA

***“Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase.”***

Martin Luther King, Jr.

## FEZANA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MAY 2-3 2015 , HOSTED BY ZAPANJ

Every year, elected representatives of the Zarthushti community from across North America, serving as delegates to the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA), gather to look back to tasks completed and ahead to tasks unfinished or yet to be undertaken.

In this respect, FEZANA's annual general meeting, much like a birthday or anniversary, is an opportunity for the community to both celebrate and take stock – celebrate the accomplishments of the year past and take the measure of the distance yet to be traveled.

FEZANA President Katayun Kapadia touched on both aspects as she kicked off the organization's 28<sup>th</sup> annual general meeting, which was held in King of Prussia, Pa., May 2-3, with the Zoroastrian Association of



ZAPANJ Volunteers  
[L-R] Havovi Jokhi,  
President Khorshed  
Unwalla, Hutoxi Sarkari,  
Tanaz Daruwalla

Pennsylvania and New Jersey being generous and ever-attentive hosts.  
Among the accomplishments:

- The Return to Roots program that for a second year in a row took a group of Zarthushti young adults on a tour of places in India of historic, cultural, and religious significance to the community. "The idea of a Zoroastrian Return to Roots program was born out of the increasing disconnect between those Zoroastrians in the diaspora with their ancestral communities in Iran and India," Kapadia said.
- The successful staging of the XVII North American Zoroastrian Congress in Los Angeles, Calif., in December 2014.
- The creation of a new curriculum by the Religious Education Committee.
- FEZANA's presence at the Global Working Group meeting in Dubai in December 2014 where topics of common concern were on the agenda, including a mobed upliftment program.
- The extension of the Zoroastrian Studies program at Stanford University for three more years, through 2018.





Among tasks in progress:

- Continuing to advance the goals of FEZANA's second 10-year strategic plan, including fostering "hamazori" – harmony – among various Zarthushti groups and ensuring economic stability through fund-raising and prudent investments
- Assessing and finding ways to bring to fruition the infrastructure needs of the community in North America, a difficult task given funding challenges.
- Developing a strategy to subsidize the participation of youth in North American and world Zoroastrian congresses.

Two dynamic pre-AGM sessions were held on May 1, each aimed at providing tools

essential for success to FEZANA member associations.

**Arzan Sam Wadia**, FEZANA Webmaster, (picture above) led an informative presentation titled *"Take Your Association Online,"* which addressed the topic of creating and maintaining websites. *"Keeping your web presence current keeps your community informed and involved,"* he said. Wadia provided guidance on a range of web-related ideas, from setting up websites to integrating and making more efficient use of the association mailing list. He also offered to assist FEZANA member associations build their web presence.

The second pre-AGM session was a workshop on fundraising. It provided useful tips for success in fundraising, using case studies and success stories. The discussion was led by **Kavasji Dadachanji, Gev Nentin, Ratan Mistry, Sarosh Collector, Rohinton Rivetna, and Edul Daver.**

The AGM that followed heard reports from various FEZANA committees, all of which have been compiled in a report book that is available online at [www.FEZANA.org](http://www.FEZANA.org). It also heard from **Rohinton Rivetna**, a former FEZANA president and widely considered a community visionary, who made a case for creating small *dadgahs* as focal points for worship.

On the evening of May 2, ZAPANJ, in collaboration with the New York Chapter of World Zarathushti Chamber of Congress (WZCC), hosted a dinner banquet at Milestone Events in West Chester, Pa., that heard from keynote speaker **Homi Kapadia**. The speaker, a principal at Deloitte Consulting LLP, vice chairman and National Life Sciences Leader there, emphasized that constant innovation and an entrepreneurial spirit were needed to be successful in today's ever-changing business environment.

The AGM was attended by representatives of 15 member associations, representing 70 percent of FEZANA qualifying votes. Also in attendance was the complete FEZANA executive – President Katayun Kapadia, Vice President Homi Gandhi, Treasurer Nilufer Shroff, and Secretary Saghar Javanshir. Also participating were representatives of 18 FEZANA committees and working groups.

Throughout the event, the sessions inspired vigorous discussions, with vice president **Homi Gandhi** ably playing referee.

**Report by Porus Cooper, Co-Chair, FEZANA Public Relations Committee**



**FEZANA WELFARE REPORT**
*TO GIVE IS TO RECEIVE*
**FEZANA WELFARE COMMITTEE**


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We say this every year, there are times when we have tears in our eyes reading about or talking to people who are going through challenging times. Sometimes they just want to talk to someone and, through those discussions, they find a way to help themselves. Sometimes the challenges are bigger and we try to help with donations we have received from the community. Then there are times when we have to put out an appeal to the community.

When we send out appeals, we hope that you share it with your local community members as it not only generates more help but also awareness that we have a larger community that needs help.

The authenticity of each appeal is checked and funding from other sources is ascertained. Once the need has been assessed, we work with the local associations and people in their community who may be able to help in different ways. After the need is met, our role is to follow up to make sure that life is back to normal.

We recommend that appeals be sent through the associations or through FEZANA Welfare as this provides accountability and enables us to make a record of the help given. We have developed a system of checks and balances, which though not perfect, reduces wastage of the limited resources of our community, avoids duplication of services provided, and prevents abuse of the system. We are not as intrusive as some other funding agencies and we operate on the principle of "err on the side of compassion".

Often we have worked with other FEZANA Committees when the recipient's needs overlapped with our committee.

We have had another busy year. And some of the cases helped by our committee last year are:

- a domestic abuse victim in Virginia with two daughters, who now resides in Texas.
- a family in California who had immigration problems.

- a lady in New Jersey who was helped last year with expenses for her father, who later passed away, and now for her elderly mother who has health issues. The daughter is the only provider looking after the parents. There are other issues connected with this situation.
- a stroke victim recovering in Illinois who will be going through long-term rehabilitation.
- a ten year old boy from India, suffering from Fanconi anemia, a congenital defect and hence not covered by any Medicaid policy in India. As of April 24, 2015, the boy and his family are in Seattle. The Seattle Cancer Alliance will treat him at no expense to the family—however, a deposit of \$50,000 was required to cover any unforeseen tests and expenses not covered by the hospital. Through our generous donors, we were able to underwrite the deposit. However that was not necessary as we learned later that the hospital would waive the deposit. The Seattle community is a great source of moral and emotional support to the family.

Dinshaw Tamboly of WZO Trust India is an honorary member of our committee and provides invaluable help to us when dealing with requests from India. We cannot thank him enough for his help and guidance. Dinshaw is a big part of what we do from here, even though we might be a very small part of what they do there.

#### **OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

- Every community should have a unity and welfare committee, which can coordinate with the FEZANA Welfare committee regarding local needs—this will enable all needs to be efficiently and effectively managed. We can learn and grow with each other.
- Major associations should think of future needs of the community, viz. retirement facilities, partnership in retirement facilities, and nursing homes.
- Purchase cemetery lots, have relationships with funeral homes and crematoriums; also, as a community, encourage alternative options and organ and tissue donations.
- Provide for long-term sustainability of our Dar e Mehers and Dadghas by purchasing/building rental properties. The income generated from owning such properties would reduce the burden of maintaining our religious property and, in the long run, benefit our community.

We thank our endowment donors and others who donate regularly to the welfare fund. We are blessed to have a caring and compassionate community that steps up to help whenever called upon. **In giving we receive** and we have received much gratification from being the co-chairs of Unity and Welfare Committee. We thank you for that.

*We are all related, belonging to the Human Family  
Nepal earthquake has devastated lives and families.  
Welfare committee has sent \$2000 through Shelter Box, USA  
If you wish to donate through FEZANA please send your check or credit card  
to FEZANA Treasurer, Nilufer Shroff, Cherry Hill Post Office, Box 3873  
1175 Marlkrass Rd Cherry Hill NJ 08034, marked WELFARE-NEPAL*

## **THE AIDUN FAMILY OF NORTH VIRGINIA, MEMBERS OF ZAMWI**

On the cover of this Journal issue is the Aidun family from Virginia, an excellent example for the Transmission of Zoroastrian Family Values in the Diaspora. They are from left to right Mina Aidun (daughter), Raquel Caldera (fiancée), Artin Aidun (Mina's son), Manijeh Aidun (mother), Amitis Aidun (Farzad's daughter), Farzad Aidun (son). Those not in the picture are Mehrdad, Farnaz, Sohrab Aidun and Moojan Zare-Parsi.

The Aidun family arrived in North America in Dec 1978 and after living in Syracuse, NY, moved to Northern Virginia. Over the years Mehrdad, Farzad, Mina, Sohrab and Moojan have served on the ZAMWI Board as President, Vice-president, Secretary, and Jt Treasurer. The Kamran Dar-e-Mehr was initiated and completed during Mehrdad's Presidency. Almost from the beginning of the children's religious classes Mina has been co-coordinator and teacher. Farnaz was the bowling and snack coordinator, Farzad and Sohrab coordinated the Sports Day program for the religious classes. A grocery gift card program was also initiated by Mehrdad to raise funds for the religious classes. Manijeh now runs the program and is also the vice-president of the newly created ZAMWI Women's group. Farzad in addition to being a religious class teacher founded the ZAMWI IT committee and moderates its website, Facebook and listserv. In 2009 PBS in their Navrooz program featured the Haft Seen Table in the home of Farnaz and Farzad Aidun. Many of the Aiduns have participated in the ZAMWI adult choir for the Interfaith Conference's Annual concerts and the younger Aiduns have participated in the Interfaith Children's choir. Artin has been the Music and Concert conductor for the Orchestra and ensemble for ZAMWI.

The Aidun family donated a cemetery plot in Virginia to the ZAMWI community.

This family has also been very actively volunteering in the mainstream community. They have collectively volunteered as a TA for local schools, PTA delegate, ESOL tutor, YEARUP mentor and web designer at George Mason University. Farzad received President Obama's Volunteer Service Award in 2012.

This Family represents the best of Zarathushti traditions of giving and serving to one's community in the diaspora and to the larger community where they reside.

**Rubina Patel, ZAMWI**



### **CELEBRATION OF GHAMBAR- A REVIVAL**

Editor's Note

In the Fall/ September Vol 28 No 3, 2014 issue of the Fezana Journal "*Gahambars Around the Haft Keshvar Zamin*", *Kayomارش Mehta*, the founder of the **Zarathushti Learning Centre** for North America makes the following observation

*«In the past, most Gahambars were funded by a corpus established by individual families. We need to come to grips on how to fund them going forward, if we are to perpetuate this tradition. The successful and desirable model would be to fund them with individual contributions of community members».*

Toward this end, we have created a template (see page 10) that local associations, small groups and individuals can use in creating a funding mechanism to institutionalize the celebrations of Gahambars in North America.





# Celebration of Gahambars

— a revival



## Whereas

The tradition of Gahambars, is a legacy of our forefathers in *Ariyana Veija* when in the middle of the first Arctic Gah, *i.e.*, the summer season, corn was harvested in the month of *Tir*, and was called the celebration of Maidhyo-Shahem Gahambar or the Mid-Summer Gahambar (June 29 to July 3) (8 to 12 *Tir*).

The second Arctic Gah, the winter season, which started in the month of *Aban* was celebrated just before the start of winter and was called *Ayah-Threm* - the Coming of Winter, to celebrate the sowing of the winter crops (Oct 12 to 16) (20 to 24 *Meher*)

Later, when our fore-fathers migrated to the temperate region where they had four distinct seasons, instead of discarding the earlier two traditional Gahambars, they added four new ones to represent the four seasons of their new homeland.

1-**Maidhyo-Zarem or Mid Spring** – when fresh vegetables are in plenty. (April 30 to May 4)

2- **Paiti-Shahem – End of Summer** – gathering of fruits. (Sept.12 to 16)

3- **Maidh- Yarem – the Middle of the resting time** – when farmers, shepherds and their animals are resting. (Dec 31 to Jan 4)

4- **Hamas-Path-Maedem – Equality of heat and cold, day & night**, -in preparation for the revival of Nature. (March 16 to 20)

Being in harmony with nature and the seasons is an inherent part of our Zarathushti ethos, our traditions and our scriptures:

*“The coming of the seasons at the proper time of the solar year”*

***Haptan Yasht Ha 3***

*“I learn about and I work with the solar year, the righteous period”*

***Yasna Ha 1.9 Ha 3.11 Ha 4.14***

***Visparad 1.4***



As the names of the six gahambars signify, it is our duty to celebrate them with the seasons:

Maidhyoizaremaya	Mid-spring	April 30–May 4
Maidhyoisam	Mid-summer	June 29–July 3
Paitishahya	Harvesting time	September 12–16
Ayathrima	Homecoming of herds	October 12–16
Maidhyairya	Mid-year/winter	December 31–January 4
Hamaspathmaidhya	Fravardegan days	March 16–20

These celebrations serve as a reminder in our daily lives, to speak and to take action at times best suited for the purposes at hand. The concept of Gahambars is an egalitarian coming together of the community in a spirit of collective giving, sharing and celebration of life.

Participation in the celebration of Gahambars is to be by way of :

*Yazad* –joining in prayers

*Sazad* – provide service

*Khurad* – offering food

*Dehad* – offering money.

Iranian Zarathushtis and Parsis coming together after many centuries of separation now on this North American continent gives us an opportunity to create a new identity for ourselves, by creating a vibrant, prosperous, caring, sharing, united community that perpetuates the Mazdayasni Zarathushti faith tradition for future generations is a goal we have set for ourselves

### ***Be it now resolved that:***

In the spirit of ***Dehad***, a Fund is created by (provide the name of Local Zarathushti Association/ Small Group/ or entity e.g. WZCC chapter or SSZ), to be subscribed to by members of the community, to establish an endowment to be used as a nucleus to perpetuate the celebration of \_\_\_\_\_ Gahambar.

In the spirit of ***Sazad*** the (provide the name of Local Zarathushti Association/ Small Group/ or entity e.g. WZCC chapter or SSZ) , encourages its members to provide humanitarian services and have them recorded in the annals.

In the spirit of ***Khurad*** the (provide the name of Local Zarathushti Association/ Small Group/ or entity e.g. WZCC chapter or SSZ), encourages its members to subscribe to the food bank or perform other services to feed the hungry.

Signed:

Name of Trustee (s)

**INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH AMERICA****AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE**

***“A dollar in your pocket will remain a dollar but when mingled with 20,000 others will become \$20,000. That is the power of Collective Giving.”***

We have known that infrastructure is the life blood of any community. In North America our infrastructure needs are to be developed so that our community survives and prospers. To name a few we need a **Community Headquarters**, an **Athornan Institutes**, a **Learning Centers** and there is a long list of services we need to provide. All of this needs funding and the only source is us. If we put our minds and hearts to developing our infrastructure we can do it. The suggestion is that each man, woman and child contribute a small sum of \$10 each year to the cause. We are requesting Associations to spread the word and collect \$10 from each individual for the development of infrastructure in North America. There is of course no compulsion but a kind word will go a long way. There are 20,000+ of us in North America which implies that the target ought to be \$200,000 annually. Can you imagine what the sum might have been if we were to have started this drive 30 years ago?

Checks should be made to FEZANA, with the words **“FEZANA INFRASTRUCTURE FUND”** in the memo section of the check. Mail your check to:

**Nilufer K. Shroff FEZANA Treasurer.** Post office Box 3873, 1175 Markkress Road, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034. Or donate online with credit card using the link <http://fezana.org/funds/infrastructure-fund/>  
Donations to FEZANA are tax deductible.

*Many thanks,*  
**FEZANA Infrastructure Committee.**

**ZAH LIBRARY ANNUAL GALA EVENT OCTOBER 9-11, 2015**

The ZAH Library , home of FIRES, has finalized the dates for its annual gala function for October 9, 10, and 11.2015. Speakers **Rashna Writer and Roshan Rivetna** will address issues vital to the future of Zoroastrianism in North America. Roshan Rivetna will present *“Demographics Determines Destiny: Charting our Course in North America*; and Rashna Writer will present: *“Decades Hence: Whither North American Zoroastrians?”* A panel of young Zarathushtis who will address their concerns and suggestions will also be featured.

On Friday October 9, a **“Meet and Greet”** for the speakers is planned for the evening The main program is on Saturday, October 10. On Sunday, October 11, there will be a 2-hour informal question-and-answer session. ALL ARE WELCOME





# SAVE THE DATE!

## 15<sup>th</sup> Zoroastrian Games - Chicago!

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**THE 11TH ANNUAL ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF HOUSTON  
LECTURE SERIES  
*THE BRILLIANCE OF "THE EVERLASTING FLAME."***

**MEHERYAR N. RIVETNA**



ZAH Library Committee Lto R Nauzer Billimoria, Jangoo Mistry, Meheryar Rivetna, Aban Rustomji, Sarah Stewart, Arnavaz Sethna, Sarosh Maneckshaw, Pearline Collector, Yasmin Pavri, Zubeen Mehta, Yezdi Engineer

In 2013, the School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London held a fabulous exhibition *The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination*, a visual narrative of Zoroastrian religion, history and culture. On November 1, 2014, some Houstonians, who missed the exhibition, were enthralled to view many of the artifacts and hear about the exhibition from a talk given by Sarah Stewart, organizing curator of the exhibition as well as lecturer in Zoroastrianism at SOAS. The library committee of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) invited Sarah Stewart who studied under the doyenne of Zoroastrian studies, Mary Boyce, to speak to the ZAH members as part of its eleventh annual lecture series to enlighten the community on varied aspects of Zoroastrianism

The ZAH event titled ***Pictures at an exhibition--Voices of the People*** was a two-part lecture program. Sarah Stewart captivated the audience during the morning session as she pictorially described sections of the exhibition highlighting artifacts from the ancient world stretching from Mesopotamia to the Indus Valley offering scholarly perspectives on the relics exhibited. The exhibits brought light to the sacred Zoroastrian texts including the Gathas and the concept of the *Amesha Spentas*, the manifestations of Ahura Mazda. The exhibits also focused on early Zoroastrian merchants arriving in China culminating in the Parsis dominating trade in cotton and opium in the Far East.

During the afternoon talk, ***Themes of Self Definition among Zoroastrians in Contemporary Iran***, Dr. Sarah Stewart gave a fascinating account of what it means to be a Zoroastrian in Iran today. Her talk centered on what makes Zoroastrians in Iran stand apart from other Iranians as well as what are their shared identities. This was an interview based project conducted in Iran by Dr. Stewart and her students in areas with a fair concentration of practicing Zoroastrians. Amongst the many informative points she communicated, it was interesting to hear that the Iranian Zoroastrians are steadfast in their sense of Zoroastrian identity. The



Zoroastrians have an unwavering loyalty to Iran and live well with their Muslim denizens. Dr. Stewart determined that there are 60 Zoroastrian priests in Iran and eight are female. The Iranian government has mandated formal religious education in the nation's schools every Friday. While the Muslim youth learn about their faith during this class period, the Zoroastrian students study Avesta. The *Shah-Nameh*, the *Farohar*, the tomb of Cyrus the Great and the Cyrus cylinder are shared symbols of national pride among all Iranians - Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian. (Photo above Aban Rustomji, chair of the Library Committee presenting a commemorative gift to Sarah Stewart)

The day ended with a few ZAH members showcasing their talents in song and dance to entertain the attendees. Some of the performers may have missed their calling!

On Sunday, November 2, Sarah Stewart presented her *Everlasting Flame* talk at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston to an audience outside of the ZAH community. Dr. Stewart addressed a packed auditorium and with superior acoustics and projection facilities the talk was a roaring success.

Needless to say, programs of this caliber bring awareness of the richness of the Zoroastrian religion and history to its adherents and beyond and the ZAH is in the forefront among the Zoroastrian Associations of North America in this endeavor.



**Meheryar Rivetna** is employed at Merck & Co., Inc. as an Executive Customer Representative. Meheryar enjoys cooking, reading, writing, and photography in his spare time. Meheryar is an active member of the ZAH/FIRES library committee. He and his wife Zubeen Mehta live in Houston, TX.



# Transmission of **Z** Values in the Diaspora

## ZOROASTRIAN FAMILY VALUES AND CULTURE IN THE DIASPORA.

GUEST EDITOR: Dr. HOVI SHROFF

The summer issue of the FEZANA Journal showcases and discusses the many viewpoints on the central topic, namely the *Transmission of Zoroastrian Family Values and Culture in the Diaspora*. Our guest authors comprised of a myriad of respected individuals from the United States and Canada and were asked to share their opinions, research and anecdotal experiences based on a series of questions that pertained to the definition of Zoroastrian family values and culture, the difficulty of living in a multi-cultural society with having to transmit Zoroastrian values and culture to the next generation and a multigenerational overview of the topic at hand.

When asked to take on the role as Guest Editor of this issue I personally had a few unanswered questions. The salient questions in my mind have always been: What is my identity as a Zoroastrian? Does being a Zoroastrian make me any different from say a Hindu or a Jew? Furthermore, does being a Zoroastrian make me possess special family values and culture? My personal exploration led me to basing my foundation on the definition of certain terms. According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, *Culture* is defined "as the beliefs of a particular society its own thinking, behaving, customs, arts and way of life." On the other hand Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines *Values* "as a person's principles or standards of behavior and one's judgment of what is important in life."

I know that as a Parsee Zoroastrian individual who was born and raised in Bombay, India and whose mum came from a long line of "*Panthakys*" (*Priests*), I grew up going to "*Bhanvano Class*" (Prayer Class) every Sunday morning, I knew at age ten what a *Ghahambaar* was and what it stood for, and I knew what it was to attend and take part in *Jashans* and *Muktaad* prayers. I want to say that this was not the norm, or at least it was not the norm amongst most of my other Zoroastrian friends who were perhaps not raised with the same strong framework of our Zoroastrian religion. So how does my Zoroastrian identity play into all of this? As a young adult I traveled to different parts of India, Europe, the Far East, and the Middle East and resided at many different locations all throughout my life until I got

married. The one thing that was constant through all of this was, as I now perceive it, my Zoroastrian identity. So if I were to describe what this means to me I would have to say that my Zoroastrian identity is comprised of the knowledge I have of our Zoroastrian religion and the Zoroastrian values and culture that I learned to follow because of the family I was raised in. These factors are valuable to me. When it comes to our religion and to Zoroastrian culture, I also have to defer to the *Gathas*. These hymns of Zarathustra demonstrate the way of a good life for all humans based on a simple yet significantly important principle of *Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds* and following the path of Righteousness. Furthermore, the *Gathas* also make our religion so relatable and current as it addresses themes like the fight between Good (*Spenta Mainyu*) and Evil (*Angre Mainyu*) and the decisions that we can make as individuals in this period of *Getig* and the society that we currently reside in.

For me coming to the United States in the mid-eighties has been a kind of enlightenment. This is because I have been exposed to Iranian Zoroastrians who practice the same religion as I do and yet follow a culture quite different from mine. The tenets of our religion and the core values that the Parsee Zoroastrians and the Iranian Zoroastrians follow are the same, yet the culture and traditions are significantly different. For example, celebrating of birthdays for me in India comprised of the making of *Sev* and *Ravo* (*Parsee Traditional sweets*), standing on the *Patlo* (*Ceremonial Stool/Platform*) decorated with *Chalk* (*Colorful designs*), and going through the *Tili* (*Vermillion*) and *Haar* (*Flower Garland*) ceremony. These were all the traditions that I went through because of as I like to call it the "Indianization" of our religion. Furthermore, even the languages that we speak are different, namely *Gujarati* versus *Farsi* and our two most paramount passages of life ceremonies, namely the *Navjote* and *Lagan* rites differ greatly between the Zoroastrians from the Indian subcontinent and the Iranian Zoroastrians. So then how do I uphold my Zoroastrian culture in the diaspora?

Promoting and educating my own children about our religion and culture was extremely thought-

# Transmission of **Z** Values in the Diaspora

provoking. I took it upon myself to teach them their daily prayers and took each of my boys to India pre-Navjote for a total immersion experience. My sons would wake up early in the morning and get dropped off to the Agiary (Fire Temple) where our family Dastoorji and Gorani (Priest and his wife) would teach the Kusti/Navjote prayers and other religious rituals every day from morning till after lunch five days a week. These experiences always started out with a lot of grumbling and temper tantrums but my sons remember fondly everything that they learned from Dadibaji and Shireen Auntji. Furthermore, we as a family have continued to be involved in the local Zoroastrian community and hosted Jashans and Muktaad ceremonies for several years at our home. All these events have helped solidify our family values, our belief system and assisted with the preservation of our Zoroastrian identities. Additionally, teaching Sunday school to the youth in my hometown of Boca Raton, has opened my world to the pure essence of who I am as a Zoroastrian. When it comes to the transmission of family values and culture I have strived to research our ancient texts and engaged in discussions with notable scholars in order to promote our Zoroastrian religion, values, and culture to our youth in as pure a fashion as possible. For me it has always been about Zoroastrian identity and the value of what it means to be able to transmit and speak about our religion, our culture and our traditions to the next generation. In my mind, the teachings of Zarathustra highlight so many areas that we as Zoroastrians can imbibe and follow with much ease. The word *Asha* is quite simply world order. *Asha* is based on a logical set of rules based on the freedom of thought, will, human rights and choice. In *Gatha 30-2*, Zarathustra

reminds us that man is free to choose the path he wishes with the use of his good mind or *Vohu Mana*, along with *Humata* (Good Thoughts), *Hukhta* (Good Words), and *Hvarshta* (Good Deeds), which in turn will lead him to Righteousness. In fact the first declaration of human rights issued by Cyrus the Great roughly 2500 years ago was based on the equality of man based on the teachings of Zarathushtra as recited in *Gatha 31-11*. The word *Behdin* in the Avesta is an individual who follows the Good Religion or the religion of Zarathushtra. So for me personally, the transmission of Zoroastrian family values and culture is quite simple. I try to do this daily by being a *Behdin* and by being cognizant and aware of the three pillars of our religion. These for me are a moral compass so to speak, that enables me to make choices in choosing the right path for living, by following the path of Righteousness as a citizen of the world as recited in *Gatha 31-12*.

We hope that the articles in this issue of the FEZANA Journal will help assist the reader better understand and explore what it means to be a Zoroastrian living in the diaspora, whether he/she be a teenager, an adult or a senior, whether he/she be a Parsee Zoroastrian or an Iranian Zoroastrian. We may come from different lands, pronounce certain words and chant our daily prayers differently, we may eat *Aush* or *Dhansak* and we may dance to the songs of *Googoosh* or *Lata* but our core values and culture is inherently Zoroastrian. This certainly makes me different in some ways, yet similar in other ways. In a nutshell, living as a Zoroastrian in the diaspora is jubilantly hopeful, empowering and awe-inspiring!

**Dr. Hovi Shroff** is a psychotherapist and a licensed mental health counselor in the state of Florida. Additionally, Hovi is a researcher, clinical supervisor, adjunct professor and proponent for adult trauma and elder care related issues.



Hovi is the recipient of President Obama's Volunteer Service Award for 2013-2014 for her commitment to mental health and her hours of pro bono service helping individuals and families who can ill afford mental health services within the community. Hovi resides with her husband Burjis and sons Dustyn (on left) and Kevyn (on right) in sunny South Florida. She is an active member of the Zoroastrian Association of Florida where she is a Sunday school religious teacher. Hovi can be reached at [info@sflcounselingassociates.com](mailto:info@sflcounselingassociates.com)

# Transmission of **Z** Values in the Diaspora

## IN PRAISE OF AUNTS

SHERALLY MUNSHI

*"There is a great variety in aunts"*

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

I share with an older generation a worry that something beautiful and singular may be passing from existence. I wonder how a gentler way of life might survive the shock of migration and dislocation. And I assume that I share a burden with my generation in salvaging and preserving the fragility of our difference.

But I do not think that what distinguishes Zoroastrians from any others are our "family values." Nor do I think that the family is the only vehicle for preserving or transmitting language, culture, or values. On the contrary, when particular groups invoke family values in the United States, it is often to claim superiority over others, to put others down, or to justify exclusion and intolerance.

When Parsis invoke family values, there is something else that I worry about. For many Parsis of the diaspora, of my generation, it is difficult to name or identify our difference, our particular cultural or religious inheritance. Speaking for myself at least, I have been exposed to a few abridged rituals and can recite fragments of prayers, but I have never really felt myself to be part of a continuous tradition. When we are unsure of what our cultural or religious inheritance consists of, we sometimes think of our inheritance in racial or ethnic terms. Having lost a sense of religious or cultural distinction, some of us cling to racial or ethnic distinction. Then, what we mean by 'family values' is transmission not of an ethical orientation, a repertoire of stories or habits, but *blood*.

So, when we collapse our concern for preserving or transmitting our 'values' into questions about 'family', I worry that what we are *really* talking about is biological continuity or, less flatteringly, preserving racial integrity. I have heard a Parsi priest insist that "biology is culture." Those are not my values, nor are they worth preserving.

When Parsis talk about family, they are often talking about marriage and children. This is perhaps unsurprising given that Parsis are among



the least marrying and least reproductive people on the planet and on the verge of extinction.

A few years ago, I went to Bombay to write a story about the Towers of Silence. I regarded the Towers of Silence—or, more precisely, disagreements about how best to dispose of the dead—as a sort of metaphor for the general crisis confronting the community. In the face of imminent decline, should the community remain steadfast in preserving its past, no matter how difficult, or should it yield to the exigencies of the present? At the time, it seemed that the decision-makers had chosen a course of *pretending* to preserve the traditional practice, though the practice had become rotten, literally.

While writing the story, I had the opportunity to meet with a number of Parsis. Though they held very different views on a range of matters, they were uniformly kind towards me. For the first time in my life, I understood what it was that my parents missed in this country. Such tenderness, such an intimacy, even from those who hardly knew me.

Invariably, at some point in every conversation, I would be asked, "Are you married?" So invariably that it became a sort of punchline in my story. The question



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was always well-intended. Some found the question funny in the same way that I did—the divorcees, the widows, the rogues. But with some others, the question left me feeling a little bereft, as though, no matter how good or clever I was, in their eyes, unless I was married to a nice Parsi boy, I was incomplete, a failed person.

Everyone had his or her own theory about why Bombay Parsis don't marry. The women are snobs, the men are *Poccha*. The pressure is overwhelming, the pickings are underwhelming. The housing market is tight. And while other communities squeeze, young Parsis, having become accustomed to a certain family form, are reluctant to bring a new partner into their parents' home.<sup>1</sup>

Some suggest that it's the women who decline to marry. They explain that Parsi women are especially well-educated and independent. They feel unmatched by their male counterparts. As Parsi daughters are perhaps better provided-for than the daughters of others communities, they are under less economic pressure to marry. At the same time, the existing rules are more punishing to women who "marry out" than men who marry out or women who never marry at all.<sup>2</sup>

It's striking how much we talk about marriage when so many of us are unmarried. It's striking how we invest a sense of being in children who haven't been born. It's striking how much we talk about what we are not.

We often talk about marriage as though marriage will save us from death and decline, but we overlook and devalue those who are most vital among us. Growing up, it was the childless couple that was the life of the party. The confirmed bachelor was the most reliable, insanely generous caretaker. On return visits to India, as my parents had grown timid to flag into a rickshaw, my Aunt Mahazerine could do it. And she could get us on a second-class train compartment, and she introduced us to horse riding in Juhu. (photo below Sherally with her aunt Mahazerine)

After publishing the story I wrote about the Towers of Silence, I heard from many readers that they were fascinated by the tradition, and how unfortunate the crises confronting Parsis. But, most of all, they said, my aunt seems amazing. And she is.

When we talk about family or the transmission of values, we are usually talking about parents and children. We seldom talk about our aunts and uncles.

Eve Sedgwick, a writer who I admire, observes that the fun of having grandparents is that their presence allows you to imagine your own parents as someone else's children.<sup>3</sup> But like many of my generation, I was not able to enjoy the presence of grandparents. I was here and they were there. And they died before I had a chance to develop much of a relationship with them.



# Transmission of **Z** Values in the Diaspora

Since then, as an adult, I have had a chance to visit India on my own. I visit my aunts and uncles, married and unmarried. Sedgwick observes that the special thrill of having aunts and uncles is they allow you to imagine your parents as siblings. Grandparents belong to that single chain of replication that leads invariably to you; but aunts and uncles lead you in other directions.

When I see my parents' siblings and cousins, I see other versions of my parents, other versions of whom or what they might have become under different circumstances, neither better nor worse. When I see my aunts and uncles, I see my parents wondrously splintered, varied, and multiplied, as if through a kaleidoscope. I am reminded that each of us contains many lives, and that every life can be lived differently, in ways neither better nor worse.

Now that I am an aunt, I am proud to hold the office of representing to my niece the many possibilities of adulthood. Your parents model one set of values for you; your aunts and uncles can model another.

A curious thing about the Indian diaspora: when our parents migrated, many of us lost the chance to know our grandparents, but we were given a new set of aunts and uncles. Not just those relations we visit in India, but those strangers we see on the weekend.

Growing up, I often lamented the smallness of my family. I wished that Thanksgiving drew together a tidy clan of continuous relations, as it seemed to for some of my American friends. But over time, I have come to appreciate the cacophony of our own *invented* clan, the many aunts and uncles who arrived as strangers to this country and to one another but have since become our extended family. Migration has freed us to embrace as aunts and uncles all those adults who are not related to us by either blood or marriage. When we talk about family, we often forget about these aunts and uncles, the bonds that extend well beyond blood or marriage.

For me, what it means to be a Parsi is to be a stranger. I think of my inheritance not as a trunk full of antique rituals and recipes, but as loss, discontinuity and dislocation. And that's perfectly fine. My parents are immigrants, so were their ancestors. What I often wish for other Parsis is that, rather than worry

about how our past distinguishes us from others in our present, they would embrace the ways in which others share in this very modern inheritance of loss, discontinuity, dislocation. Rather than worry about salvaging things that have already been lost, why not embrace the things we have found in our experience of diaspora? For me, one of those discoveries is a surprisingly elastic and inclusive experience of family, one that begins with the embrace of our aunts and uncles, and extends to fully recognize the unmarried and the childless, the married-in and married-out, our step-bonds, our same-sex bonds, our non-biological bonds, and outward toward the unrelated and unfamiliar who we nonetheless value as family.

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## (Endnotes)

- 1 Dinyar Patel, "Understanding Parsi Population Decline in India: A Historical Perspective," at <https://zoroastriansnet.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/2011-05-understanding-parsi-population-decline-in-india-nehru-centre.pdf>
- 2 Kareena Gianani, "Why Parsi Girls Won't Pick Parsi Boys for Marriage," at <http://www.dnaindia.com/lifestyle/report-why-parsi-girls-wont-pick-parsi-boys-for-marriage-1578032>, citing Vispy Wadia.
- 3 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (1993), p. 61-2, 71. My thinking about aunts and uncles is deeply indebted to Sedgwick's essay, "Tales of the Avunculate."

**Sherally Munshi J.D., Ph.D.**, grew up in Miami, Florida. She is currently a lawyer and professor teaching at Georgetown University Law Center. Next year, she will be a visiting fellow at Princeton University.

# Transmission of **Z** Values in the Diaspora

## A CONFLICT OF TWO CULTURES

ANAHITA BEHMARDIAN

I'm a Zoroastrian Iranian who was born and raised in the US. I grew up in a Persian household in which my parents always spoke Farsi to me and instilled Persian traditions, culture, values, and beliefs. I've had the privilege of living in two very different and unique states, Georgia and California. As a child living in Georgia, Iranians were definitely a minority. Everyone I knew was American, there weren't many Persians.

At a very young age, my father taught me how to read and write in Farsi, so I would become familiar with my native tongue and background. My mother taught me to recite the Avesta and showed me the meaning of the Zoroastrian religion. My parents and grandparents taught me Persian history, heritage, and explained holidays and rituals. As a child I didn't care much for these things. I questioned why I was supposed to speak, read, and write Farsi; as I feel most children do when they are young.

I moved to Tehran, Iran with my family when I was 11 years old and everything that my family had taught me had now made sense. But, living in Iran was completely different than Georgia. As an 11 year old kid who had completely left her American culture and ways, I became immersed in the Iranian culture—the two of which are different in a multitude of ways. I was made fun of by all the kids at the school I was attending, even though I could speak, read, and write Farsi. Nobody liked me, they told me I talked funny and that I was American; this was conflicting to me as I was taught that I was Persian! The children I met didn't consider me as Iranian; I was a social outcast. As you can imagine, it was very hard. I was only 11

years old and I never felt so alone. I cried myself to sleep many nights; but, I couldn't tell my parents for I didn't want to disappoint them, I wanted them to know I was trying to fit in as much as I possibly could.

My family and I traveled the country and visited the many cities and landmarks that Iran has to offer in such cities as such as Shiraz, the Caspian Sea, and Yazd. I got to see and experience my heritage first hand with my favorite memory by far being when I visited Persepolis.

Seeing the ruins of Persepolis must have stopped my heart a few times during my visit. It was magnificent. I got to see it, I walked through the different corridors and I got to touch the stone carved columns where, thousands of years ago, Persian Kings and royalty lived. It was truly a memory that will always have a special place in my heart, for not only is it magnificent and historical, it belongs to my culture and I'm so proud of it.

I moved to Irvine, California, when I was 12 years old and have lived in California ever since. It seems like there are thousands of Iranians everywhere you go, definitely much different than Georgia. The Zoroastrian Iranians are very close knit here and that's wonderful. However, this was another transition for me. I had to reacclimatize to an Iranian-American life style again. And, honestly, I don't know if I ever completely made this transition.

California is a state that is a huge melting pot of different ethnicities, cultures, and religions. It's fast-paced and people are constantly on the go. Yet, at the same time, as more time goes by, I feel myself becoming more at home to the American ways and I lose more of my Persian heritage. It's not just me—many Persian



Zoroastrians, especially those near my age or younger who have lived in the US all of their lives or for the majority of their lives are forgetting their Persian heritage and culture. It's so sad. From what I have observed, we all speak English to one another, not Farsi. Religious and cultural gatherings are more for socializations and fun rather than remembering the importance of the religious or cultural importance of a holiday. There is no one to blame for these things happening; unfortunately acculturation tends to occur in areas that are so culturally diverse.

In my opinion a trip to the root helps engrain who we are. We all need to become familiarized with our roots, especially those of us who are second generation Zoroastrians in the US. I think it's so crucial for us not to forget our cultural background, the significance of our religion, our language, our history because that is what makes us unique. We are all unique and we should cherish and be proud of who we are and where we come from.

**Anahita Behmardian** has a Master's Degree as a Nurse Practitioner and currently lives and works in Long Beach, California



# *Transmission of **Z** Values in the Diaspora*

## **VALUES ARE CAUGHT MORE THAN TAUGHT!**

**DR. ZAREEN KARANI ARAOZ**

### **Why is it Important to Maintain Our Core Zoroastrian Family Values?**

The survival and future of our community is a burning topic for many of us today. As someone deeply interested in Culture and Values, and in our Zoroastrian community and its future, I have given this much thought. As an Educator and Psychologist, I have also wondered for a long time whether at the heart of the issue “Will we survive?”, may be the fact that we have let slip some of our core Zoroastrian Family Values that made us who we were, and helped us thrive and excel as a community.

Could a decline in some of these pristine core Values, once passed on through generations by devoted closely-knit families, have led to our slowly losing our highly respected place in society, that we had, just by virtue of being a true Zarthushti? In North America, this status was unknown, and we had to prove ourselves and demonstrate who we were and what we stood for. Though most of us have done reasonably well on this continent, have we gained the same reputation of “We trust him/her, because s/he is a Zarthushti?” Do we stand out because of our values? Do our children? We might have gained a lot, but have we lost something precious in this transition?

Losing some of these valuable core Zoroastrian Family Values might have made us evolve into a different type of people than what we used to be, as Zoroastrians—both here and in our home countries. Coming to North America gave us many opportunities to excel and contribute. But have we appropriately availed of these? Are we really happier as we look at the next generation growing up here, and also consider their future and their place in society?

I believe that Zoroastrian core values, passed on through our families, were fundamental to our success as individuals and our respect as a community in the last Century. It is these Values that prompted the development of a strong character in our people, deeply respected by all. This solid, reliable “goodness” made our community distinctive and attractive to others. People trusted Zoroastrians instinctively. Not only our Integrity, but the Values



we stood for, helped develop our ancestors into successful professionals—at least, in India.

If that is the case, why have we allowed those core Values that were known to be unshakable and respected in our forefathers, to waiver? And sometimes, even, to let go of them? Does the North American culture and its pressures compel us to do that? Or, if we believe in these Values, as being core to our religion and heritage, should we stay true to them, ensure they are passed on, even as we successfully adapt our behaviors to this culture, as needed?

Did coming to this new land and culture, and being exposed to a totally different way of life and values and outside influences make it harder to maintain the Values we were brought up with, as many parents indicated?

### **Cultural Adaptation and Integration is NOT incompatible with maintaining one's own core values**

Let me assert that maintaining one's Values does not mean the inability to adapt to a new culture. It does not mean being rigidly traditional or inflexible. One can maintain one's core Values, but express or demonstrate them in different environments,



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cultures or situations in different ways and with a variety of culturally accepted behaviors. Ideally, it means respecting these core Values, integrating them into our way of being and expressing them appropriately in our different cultural milieu here.

This process may not have happened successfully for all the families that moved to here, as the Survey indicated. Almost all the children who were brought up in North America also indicated that their parents did not help them in their cultural adaptation. Some indicated that their parents were so overwhelmed with their own survival and cultural adaptation, that they could not live by or help their children learn about our core Values, especially with not much family or community around. Many regretted this isolation that has contributed to a lack of reinforcement of our Zoroastrian Family Values.

## **But what are Core Zoroastrian Family Values?**

I thought there would be much disagreement on what exactly core Zoroastrian Values were. So I sent out a quick Survey, open to Zarthushtis in North America (on the FEZANA Yahoo group, ZWIN, ZAGBA Facebook page etc.). I suggested about 15 Values based on my own understandings, which were instilled by my parents, the Karani family, as I was growing up. I told participants they could delete or add what they thought were core Zoroastrian Values and asked them to rate the importance of these as core Zoroastrian Values, as they saw them, and whether they have tried (and succeeded) to continue to instill these in their children.

In two days I got about 40 responses, (mainly from Florida, California, Boston, Chicago and Texas). Surprisingly, most Respondents were unanimous in agreeing that the first five Values I suggested were Extremely Important as core Zoroastrian Values, and all except the last two were Somewhat Important. The only Value added to these by one person was hard work or else most commented on the comprehensiveness of these values. Most agreed that these were Core Zoroastrian Values and a few felt the latter ones (6 onwards were Values of any good human being). Very interesting comments and insights were shared from people's experiences, about how they have struggled without family or a public that recognizes and supports their values and religion, and what they think helps—most felt it was the

example of how the parents lived their lives. But all that would need another article to write about! I will be writing about it on ZWIN and all who are interested can let me know and we will add you as "Friends of ZWIN", even if you are males, and you are welcome to join the discussions. I was also requested to send this out to Zarthushtis worldwide. I will refine the questionnaire and send it, later this year. Any suggestions would be welcome.

The Values I suggested that I see as core Zoroastrian Family Values were:

1. **Absolute Honesty and Integrity:** Instilling in children that Truth is the highest Virtue. Demonstrating it as a non-negotiable in family life. Having an atmosphere of mutual candid sharing and Trust within the family.

2. **Faith in the Law of Asha:** Belief in the Importance of Moral Choices and universality of consequences. Having on-going discussions and demonstrating "As you sow, so shall you reap."

3. **Charity, Generosity and Helping Others:** Living so that we put others and family members first, even in this individualistic comparatively "me first" environment in North America. Emphasizing "Happiness Unto Others" as a family creed. Teaching and demonstrating the value of sacrifice.

4. **Kindness, Non-violence and Harmony:** Creating an environment of courtesy, harmony, and consideration in your home and as a family. Not allowing rudeness or lack of respect, that children might see as more acceptable in this new culture.

5. **Cleanliness** in thought, word, and deed. Demonstrating a Love, Enjoyment, and Protection of Nature as a family. Expressing a concern for the Environment and Purity of the Elements.

6. **Respect, Love and Reverence for Elders:** Naturally expressing this with parents and other elders and expecting it of one's children. Cherishing the inter-generational family/ mutual obligations. Enjoy taking care of one another in the family, with love, kindness, and natural inclusion.

7. **Importance of Education & Life-long Learning:** Supporting and encouraging

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Reading, Education, and being well-informed. Aiming for excellence in all endeavors. Having candid intellectual discussions in the family. Dinner table conversations include sharing of one's day and exchanging important perspectives on Life.

**8. Inter-generational Socialization within the family and with other families** seen as common and enjoyable. Importance of meals together, family outings, and vacations. Having fun together, enjoying one another.

**9. Concern for the Zoroastrian Community:** Family discussions that include community issues, immediate, and world-wide. Doing something as a family to support the community as part of one's life growing up, even in North America.

**10. Open demonstration of Love:** Warmth, Hugs, and Respect for one another's well-being and comfort. Encouraging children to help elders, be loved and demonstrate love.

**11. Pride in one's Family Heritage:** including ancestors, their lives, family stories, good deeds, and the noble examples in our community and our Zoroastrian history, shared by parents. Visiting the family's country of origin often.

**12. Pioneering Spirit & Openness to eliciting and respecting different cultural perspectives:** Demonstrating the Zoroastrian way of considering Truth from wherever it comes (encouraged even in the Gathas). Showing flexibility and openness to absorbing new and diverse ideas in this culture, while maintaining one's core. Not letting children feel judged or scared to share.

The last two Values were seen by a few as not relevant to Zoroastrian culture. Maybe that is at the crux of the issue we are addressing here. These are the Values that are really needed by parents as one migrates to a new culture, like Jadav Rana's "sugar in the milk" story in India—to help their children become part of the culture, respect it, add sweetness to it and yet maintain their core Family Values and religion, sacredly. But how?

I strongly believe, and almost all respondents expressed, that the strongest influence in

childhood to transmit these Values is the way parents actually live their lives and the discussions they have at home, explaining "how the child can become a successful and happy adult by living according to these core Values."

Another strong influence is marriage. What the newly married couples understand and know about Zoroastrian Family Values will differ according to their own families and upbringing, and their susceptibility to being drawn into and being dazzled by the more individualistic culture around them. And without a strong extended family and community to constantly support our core Values, can the new couple really sense how to continue to live by these values and be transmitters of our beliefs? Or will some of these cherished Values and ways, be lost, as our children build their own families with different, more "Americanized" Values after marriage? What will they transmit to their children, if they never "caught" these values in their own families and believe that their new values might serve them and their children better in North America?

However, we also have some North American youth who are more committed to Zoroastrianism and concerned about the future of our community than their counterparts in India, and they carry on the Zoroastrian spirit and aim to bring it into their new families, staying closely in touch with their extended families and community.

So, we will continue to see different ways and values that the next generation of Zoroastrians will live by. We can help our community in North America by reflecting about, discussing, sharing, and most of all, living sincerely by some of the suggested Core Values mentioned above, if we want our children, grandchildren and coming generations to respect and continue to live by these sacred Core Zoroastrian Family Values.

Besides, on-going references in one's home, as we bring up our children or discuss the morality of events, I think, every child having their Navjote, every couple getting married, every time we celebrate a Zarthushti festival, we should have these Values taught, recited, respected, discussed, refuted or embraced, repeated and understood, so we know why we really say and write on our T-shirts "*I am proud to be a Zarthushti.*"

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**Dr. Zareen Karani Araoz**, President of Managing Across Cultures, coaches global leaders and trains cross-cultural teams in 25+ countries, is currently a Senior Leadership Coach and Group Facilitator, in the Advanced Management Program at the Harvard Business School, and teaching “Managing Across Cultures” at the School of Management at Boston College, while being on the Senior Leadership Coaching Cadres for Dell, Intel, Microsoft, Amex. She was founder of the Master’s Program in Intercultural Relations, Lesley University, and Director of a Management Institute, Pune University.

Dr. Araoz was given the NRI Institute Award for outstanding contributions to the image of India abroad, and on President Obama’s Business Delegation to India.

Dr. Araoz has been the Founding Network Director of ZWIN/ Zoroastrian Women’s International Network. She was a Global Director of WZCC and facilitated the first Zoroastrian Worldwide “Coming Together Round Table” in London, being a regular speaker at the World Zoroastrian Congresses, caring about the harmony, unity and heritage of the Zoroastrian Community and its Values.

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## TRANSMITTING ZARATHUSHTI VALUES TO THE NEXT GENERATION

**Pervin Jimmy Mistry**

***Living in a multicultural society—a melting pot, so to speak—and being in the minority, do you find it difficult to transmit these values to your children? Subsequently, would this transmission of our values be that much harder if you were living in a small community and not within proximity TO other Zoroastrian families?***



When we discuss transmission of values living in a multicultural society in a melting pot milieu, and being in the minority, it is important to note that for nearly 14 centuries, Parsi-Irani Zarathushtis in India have lived in an identical situation as currently experienced in North America. Still, during all these centuries, our ancestors did not find it difficult to transmit religious values to their children. They came to India only to preserve their **religion**—not their lives, which could have been spared had they accepted Islam! The recent, second diaspora to western and eastern countries was not to safeguard the religion but for a better lifestyle. By embracing materialism, the transmission of our age-old religious traditions and family values, which stood us in good stead so far, has taken a back seat. In such an environment, many parents find less time these days to practice the religious tenets

themselves and to pass on these values to their children.

Today, the Sikhs, Muslims, and even Hindus in North America do what we Parsis did when we moved from Iran to our original diaspora established on



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the western coast of India. These communities are more committed to maintaining their own identity, to preserving their language, religion, and culture in North America. They even set up their own schools. The Greeks, Italians, and other European Christians also have their own denominational churches, schools, and live in ghettos to conserve their individual cultures and traditions. While these larger communities are committed to preserving their religion and culture in the same secular environment, being a micro-minority community, we are at a greater risk of becoming assimilated into other cultures and religions if we fail to transmit our religious values to our future generations. In time, our ethno-religious identity will be lost.

This topic is certainly very close to the heart of many Parsi-Irani Zarathushtis in the diaspora. I do not believe the transmission of “values” is harder if we live in a small community and not within proximity of other Zarathushti families. When using the word, I am referring to the religious traditions we, as a Parsi-Irani Zarathushti Community, are accustomed to. These values are:

- 1) *to wear the religiously mandated sudreh-kusti at all times after navjote till death;*
- 2) to pray the daily obligatory prayers (manthra) as revealed in the Holy Avesta;
- 3) to perform the essential rituals with faith;
- 4) to maintain the worship of Fire who is Ahura Mazda’s Son; to keep at least a divo lighted in the home 24/7; and
- 5) to safeguard our unique lineage which our ancestors preserved at the cost of their lives!

It is not a community responsibility, but the responsibility of the parents and family to pass on these religious values from when children are very young, no matter where one lives.

I would like to share my personal experiences only from a couple of places we lived in, out of the many, to validate what I have stated about preserving our religious identity. My husband and I left Bombay for Toronto, Canada, in 1969, with our 18 month old son. We came from families with traditional backgrounds. Back then, in 1969, I observed that some Parsi Zarathushtis who had settled in Canada before us also came from families with the same religious values; but within a span of two or three years started to “melt” in the new environment. I did not want the

same to happen to us. I realized I knew little about my religion, which, till then, I took for granted. I realized that my parents had passed on **faith**—not knowledge of “where is it written?” or “why?”

I have always been very proud of my heritage, lineage, and religion; I never thought any of this needed improvement or change because we moved from one country to another. However, witnessing the rapid degree of change that many families accepted for themselves in a “melting pot,” I started studying religious books so that I could answer my children’s questions. I felt a great satisfaction in knowing more about my religion. Soon, with our three young sons, we started our travels that were to take us to various parts of the world where there were no or few Zarathushtis.

After settling in different cities in Canada and the US in 1980, we were transferred to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea (PNG) for 2 years. There was only one other Parsi Zarathushti family who we met by coincidence. But there, in the equatorial jungle, living amongst cannibalistic indigenous people, snakes, and other unique flora and fauna, we forged a deep-rooted family bond. At the time, there was no television in PNG and entertainment venues were very limited; so, we spent time sightseeing, learning the local culture and dialect (“Pigin”), playing board games, discussing religious issues, and becoming avid readers. As always, I recited my daily prayers, read, and taught my kids about sudreh-kusti—“where is it written” and “why.” I also explained our moral responsibilities as to why we must marry within the community and keep our unique lineage unbroken, about the sacred fire, and why I kept a divo perpetually burning in whichever part of the world we lived! In this manner, we absorbed our culture and religion, while learning to respect other cultures and religions.

From PNG we were transferred to Brindisi, Italy for a few years. As far as we knew, there was no other Zarathushtis in the vicinity. Again, we learned a lot about the Italian culture and traditions, travelled throughout Italy, learned to speak a little Italian, and enjoyed the food; but, once again, we learned to spend more time on our own as a family! I used to read the *Shahnameh* to my kids during holidays, kept a divo in the house, and prayed daily, which the kids absorbed as our Parsi way of life. I continued my religious studies and whatever I read during the day, I passed on to my sons after dinner. We came across



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remarkable Italian friends but we never thought we were unique or saw any reason to stop practicing our own religion and traditions. We loved Italy and the Italians, but we were just as much respectful of our own religion and customs! We found evidence of our Zarathushti religion through Mithraism, which was practiced locally during Roman times, visited many Mithraic sites, especially in Sicily, and always felt a sense of pride in our ancestry and religion.

I had made up my mind that my sons will know about our religion and learn to have **faith** which is the most important quality a parent can infuse in a child. Religion is all about faith because we are not acquainted with the spiritual world. Therefore, I stressed that just as we obey our teachers in school, likewise, we must also obey the religious disciplines taught by our (prophet) Paigambar Asho Zarathushtra. Because I started teaching these values when our sons were very young, they took this as a discipline, which is who we are: Zarathushtis!

It was unavoidable that my three young sons were at times mocked at school by fellow students about their sudreh-kusti and the name “Zoro.” I was prepared for this and, in anticipation, educated my sons from an early age as to “why” and “where is it written” regarding various topics and issues. I made them feel proud to be the descendants of the oldest religion and civilization from when they were young! I made them proud of their lineage and the all-encompassing knowledge (including science and

meta-science) our Asho Zarathushtra and ancestors knew during the remote Avestan times! So much so that we had the honor of having some of their teachers and parents of friends visit our home to inquire more about our religion and its spiritual discipline.

Our sons had no problem growing up in places where there were few or no other Zarathushtis. They retained their religion, customs, traditions, and family values. Location does not matter, how many fellow Zarathushtis are in the vicinity is also immaterial. What is important is the right religious and historical knowledge which we pass on to our next generation, which makes us who we are—that is, “**practicing**” Parsi-Irani Zarathushtis—not in name and not simply by wearing *kor-ni saree*, *dagli-paghree*, doing *chok-toran* and *achoo-michool*! For me, “melting pots” exist when one willingly chooses to give up their identity.

Unlike many others who find it easier to get immersed in the melting pot situation, I struggled to pass on our irreplaceable religious heritage and distinctive lineage to my sons. Now, all my sons are married within the community and my husband and I are the proud grandparents of eight beautiful grandkids, and we hope that they too will follow our mandated religious disciplines with faith and obedience in any part of the world they live.

**Mrs. Pervin Jimmy Mistry** graduated from the University of Bombay with honors in Philosophy and Literature. She was a recipient of the Father Divine Scholarship award from St. Xavier's in 1962. After graduation she has remained an independent student of the religion interested in mysticism and studies the teachings of Ilm-e Kshnoom.

She has served on the Executive Committee of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario, and has contributed articles to The Eclectic Theosophist, The Canadian Theosophist, Jam-e Jamshed, FEZANA Journal, and on the Zoroastrian Networks. She has also presented papers at the Parliament of World Religions (1993 and 2009), World Symposium on Mythology at California (1987), North American Zoroastrian Congress (1992), World Zoroastrian Congress (2000 and 2013), and Interfaith Symposiums. She has chaired sessions at the North American Zoroastrian Congress (1994) and The First International Avesta Conference (1997).

She immigrated to Canada in 1969 with her husband and one son (the first of three). She has spent most of her adult life here. Due to her husband's assignments, they've lived in various parts of Canada, as well as, spending a few years overseas in Papua New Guinea, Italy, China, South Africa, Ukraine, Australia, and other locations. She is proud of her family and their achievements, including those of their 8 grandchildren.

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## NAVIGATING ZOROASTRIAN PARENTHOOD

TRITY POURBAHRAMI

In 2012 I was sitting on an intergenerational panel at the New York Zoroastrian congress when a quick survey of the audience revealed an interesting fact to me. The survey showed that a key demographic of the Zoroastrian population, parents with children under 18 years of age, was missing from the audience. As a member of this group it surprised me and guided my decision to get involved with the organization of the 2014 Los Angeles congress. Furthermore I decided to organize a panel of parents to start a conversation at the congress about navigating Zoroastrian parenthood. For six months leading to the congress the panel members and I would have regular teleconferences and discuss our experiences as Zoroastrian parents.

One of the many topics raised by the fathers and mothers on the panel was that of Zoroastrian family values. For the purposes of this article I would like to define values as ideas and practices that Zoroastrians care about. More specifically I would like to define family values as ideas and practices that parents of children under 18 years of age care about and want to pass on to their children. I recognize that as the children grow the parents evolve and make changes to their approach but I do believe that there are some values that are fundamental.

For examples in the case of my nuclear family (which consists of my husband Peter, our two elementary school children, and me) the following Zoroastrian values are very important:

- *the right and responsibility of every Zoroastrian to choose their path in life*
- *to be authentic and truthful with yourself and with those you care about*
- *to have a strong commitment to serving society and making the world a better place through our thoughts, words, and actions*

We use a variety of approaches to transmit these values to our children. Because Peter and I both work outside the home from Monday to Friday and we are far from our extended family, we do not see



our children from 8am-5:30pm because they are at school and in afterschool care. Therefore we have instilled certain family practices to ensure the time we do spend together is quality time. For instance we insist that we eat dinner together around the table. During dinner we go around and ask each member of the family to talk about the rose and thorn of their day. The rose is the best part of their day and the thorn is a part of the day that was irritating. As the children bring up events from their day, Peter and I are conscious of our values and try to stress points that emphasize our values.

The other day at dinner our third grader was tickled by a story her teacher told her about when she was a

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baby and being baptized. Her teacher's first name is Robin but apparently the priest thought she was a boy and called her Robert. This upset her mom who ran and taped a bow to her head to ensure she was seen as a girl. Peter and I saw this as a great opportunity to reemphasize our values regarding religion and choice. Our children have learned about the Sedreh-pooshi ceremony at Zoroastrian studies classes but what we emphasize at home is the importance of choice. As a follow-up to her teacher's story we talk about how in Zoroastrianism we wait till the child is old enough to choose her religion. We mentioned how it is the parent's responsibility to teach the child about Zoroastrianism and ensure that she has all the information she needs to make a good choice. This was a very light conversation at the level of our third grader as well as our first grader. One evidence of this was how our third grader started giggling as she thought out loud about giving a baby a choice of which religion to choose by placing representative items from different religions in front of her and seeing what she reaches for.

Peter and I have found that it is during such casual day-to-day interaction at the dinner table or in the car that we have some of the most important value conversations with our children. Our first grader has a wild imagination and loves to tell elaborate stories which often given us an opportunity to instill our value of being authentic and truthful. We talk about the difference between what actually happened and how she likes to tell the story. We talk about the consequences of not being truthful about her own actions, as well as those of others. We also hold her accountable by checking the facts with others who were involved in the situation. A phrase we often use is "every family is different and in our family we think it is important to ..." and in this way we differentiate

our approach.

In our busy, competitive, and materialistic world it is often hard to stop and evaluate what is important to our Zoroastrian family. What does success mean for our children? How can we help them be happy and productive individuals? What role do we want them to play in the greater society? These questions and objectives can become very overwhelming. We tackle this by involving the kids in decisions of how to spend our free time. For instance, we discuss how contributing to the Zoroastrian community is important to us, so that is why they have to get up early on Sunday morning and join us on the 45-minute ride to the closest Dare Mehr (Zoroastrian gathering place). After class we talk about our experiences. For example I share my disappointment that on that day only a small group of my students chose to attend and the others chose to spend the morning in a different way. We discuss how holding hands and reciting the Avesta calmed us all down before class. We talk about the other ways we calm our mind and bodies down to have a happier and more productive day.

By sharing a part of Peter and my journey through Zoroastrian parenthood I am trying to continue the dialogue about this subject that was started at the Los Angeles congress last December. If you were not able to attend the panel discussion you can view a recording online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFyatnPJ9tk>. I welcome your comments and thoughts on the greater issue of Zoroastrian parenthood and the more specific issue of Zoroastrian family values. Feel free to contact me at [trity.pourbahrami\(@\)gmail.com](mailto:trity.pourbahrami@gmail.com).

**Trity Pourbahrami** is the Director of Communications for the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) Division of Engineering and Applied Science and the Editor of the award winning publication *ENGenious*. She has Bachelor of Science degrees in Physics and Physiology and Masters degrees in Social Welfare and Public Administration. She is also a certified mediator and facilitator. Trity and her husband Peter live in South Pasadena, California with their two young daughters Neeku and Meena. The family is active in the Iranian and Zoroastrian communities, where Peter and the girls are taking Persian Language (Farsi) classes and Trity is teaching the Gathas. Trity and her family migrated to Canada when she was eleven years old in order to leave the Islamic Republic of Iran as well as the Iran-Iraq war. As a young adult she was very engaged in the local and international Zoroastrian community and served as a President of the Zoroastrian Youth of North America (1997-1999).



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## ZOROASTRIAN VALUES WITHIN YOUTH OF THE CONTEMPORARY AGE

BURZIN P. BALSARA



Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism, are some of the major religions of the world, but what do they all have in common today? It is a very simple answer, but nonetheless sadly revealing: only select parts and virtues of the religions are thoroughly practiced today. Just about every key member or follower of such faiths has their own underlying view of certain defining characteristics of the religion. Unfortunately, many religions have *lost what they have chosen to forget*, and rather than search for true answers, key individuals have replaced centuries old teachings with their own opinions. Even after witnessing the impairment caused by unreliable information and sources, many still choose to follow such opinions rather than search for answers with the sources all around them. Fortunately, I have grown up in a situation where that is not the case. All my life, people around me have shaped my character in the most positive way, but for those who have had negative influences, I've ignored them and moved on. Despite the influence of other Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians, I have never been any farther than

a Google search and some reading or thinking to get to true answers. It is this combination of technology and people around us in the modern day that has the greatest influence on the youth of this ancient religion.

Interestingly, many scholars have actually dedicated their work towards highlighting generational differences in religions, i.e. Generations X, Y, and, most recently, Z. However, most agree the greatest difference is evident between generations Y and Z. This, in my opinion, is true for several key reasons. Overall, humanity's growth has brought about new technology and social media, which have gradually brought a decline in religious expression to smaller religions, as our own, while providing another means of spreading to much larger religions. Any Zoroastrian teen in America would agree that the reasoning behind this trend can be seen in our daily lives; in other words, school. Be it college or grade school, an overwhelming amount of religious pressure from much larger cultures has, unfortunately, led a large number of Zoroastrian youth to slowly give up many basic values. For example, a key issue pointed out in my panel at the 17th North American Zoroastrian Congress, was that many younger Zarathushtis are no longer wearing their sudreh and kusti. Such a simple value has slowly been lost amongst other popular culture in our generation. The problem here is that this is not the only other cultural trait that is lost. Countless other examples meeting their ends, include speaking Gujarati or Farsi and eating *good* "ancestral" food (be it Parsi or Iranian), these traits were instilled at a very young age in my family and more.

However, it is one thing to acknowledge that a problem exists and another to start solving it. That is not to say that acknowledgement of a problem is not a good idea, but needless to say, we have to do more. On a side note, to all grandparents, aunties, uncles, and parents, an effective solution to get your children to speak Gujarati is most definitely not making fun of their different accent as they speak the language! Instead, as fellow mobeds on my panel Rayomand Katrak and Rayomand Ravji explained, elder anjuman



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in communities need to convey the importance of maintaining cultural values through the generations. They suggested for lack of a better word, a nostalgic approach, where elder anjuman would explain the honor of following the original values of our ancient religion. To younger anjuman this could be seen as making our values seem “cool.” In other words, by demonstrating how amazing it is to have such an ancient religion, we could effectively maintain the values.

Another means of maintaining our values and religion is through reaching out towards Zoroastrians that are not in contact with other groups. My sister and I were fortunate enough to have been raised in North Texas where Zoroastrianism is extremely prevalent. This provided us with an opportunity to meet some of the most influential people in our lives today. Unfortunately, for possibly many across the U.S. this is not the case; it is the 21st century yet there have been no means of communicating with them. We constantly hear that all Zoroastrians are somehow related; yet there is still a lack of communication of values with those who are not located near large “centers.” An ideal way to solve this problem would be an online site where such Anjuman can have access to basic “Sunday School” curriculum to supplement their own practices and instill basic Zoroastrian ideas into their own children.

Additionally, we have to find another way to address the ever-increasing problem of the loss of Zoroastrian values amongst older youth, who have been left out in the process of seeking a solution. Unfortunately, a solution here is not too easy, but some personal experience reveals that congregation is an effective strategy. This past December, a large body of peers and I attended the North American Zoroastrian Congress in Los Angeles. Anyone who attended, whether they went to sessions or not, could clearly feel as if they were a part of something bigger, much larger than what they thought they were as a Zoroastrian in their own communities. This enabled many to rekindle simple values that would have otherwise been forgotten. Granted, it is difficult to have a congress every

year for such older youth, it certainly creates a connection between Zoroastrians across the nation.

Lastly, we are all taught the most basic prayers at a young age and, hopefully, continue to pray them. However, something is extremely wrong here; though we may even memorize a prayer, what good does it serve to pray it if one does not know what it means? It is because of this issue that my youth group has taken up a small project to bring deeper understanding to the words we say in hopes of receiving blessings. Ervad Soli Dastur is a close family friend, who always suggests using [avesta.org](http://avesta.org) for information regarding prayers. By applying such a great tool, our group has thrown together a presentation to achieve the goal of understanding what we are praying and thus bringing us to a new level in our religion. The point here is that we can more effectively apply ourselves in the modern day if we know what our prayers aim to do.

Now as we look to the future, we need only look towards one direction, certainly not towards various leaders who give their opinions or interpretations of our ancient religions, but rather the younger Zarathushtis. We must first, as a whole, recognize that a problem exists with relation to our values that seem to be lost; after all, acknowledgment of a problem is the first step towards its resolution. Then, we have to develop a way to solve each issue; thus far, there have been no efforts, to my understanding, in communicating with small, secluded Zoroastrians across America, this has to change.

In order to be a growing and sprawling religion, like many others in our world, leaders need to be of a unified frame of mind, see a future in our youth and to continue efforts in maintaining the cultural values of our ancient religion as they grow up in the bustling world around them.

**Burzin Balsara** is a 15 year old from Plano, Texas who attends high school at Clark in PISD. As a Zoroastrian he enjoys taking leadership roles in his local community, ZANT, and often enjoys talking about Zoroastrianism to his fellow youth. He hopes to bring greater understanding of the religion to all his peers in and around his community.

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## ZOROASTRIAN FAMILY VALUES IN NORTH AMERICA

BY NATALIE R. GANDHI, PH.D.

*“to those entering marriage, ... . surpass each other in truth, for this will be profitable for you”*  
*Yasna 53(1)*

Our religion provides enduring inspiration for respecting and elevating cherished family values. Let me share my departures on this topic for your reflection.

### **I. Yasna 53: Crystalline Gem of Distinctive Social Thought**

A small and potent verse from the Gathas outlines the social threads woven into Zoroastrian community. In Yasna 53, we find indications for marriage, education, community-building, natural order, Youth, fecundity, gender respect, law, obligation, beauty, and of course, the path of Truth.

Give due regard to the distinctiveness of this early message for our married lives. The marriage promise is given directly to the new spouse rather than through an intermediate; as, for example, through Christ. The promise is in the service of a distinct value, *The Best Truth*, not simply agape, love, romance, or companionship. The fundamental assist of one spouse to the other centers on the moral worth of the beloved person and furthest elevation of that moral worth. It is a pledge, an obligation, made by individual choice and responsibility using our Vohuman, the wise and Good Mind granted us by the Divinity. It strikes me as solemn and joyous at once, thus profound.

Marriage anticipates the fruit of fertility. Its good act anticipates the best type of production, our reproduction; that is, our children. The inherently Youth-loving stanza reminds us of their beauty and brings appreciation of reproduction into the lofty ideal of society built from marital and family cohesion.

The beauty abiding with children emphasizes a Zoroastrian aesthetic weighted towards light-filled qualities. The faces of Youth reflects light; the eyes of Youth shine with the divine spark, the fire, of the Good Mind; and the righteous thoughts, words, and acts of Youth are glorious in the choice of Truth, Light, over falsehood. (2)

With many lovely strains in other traditions, no other

tradition or culture has a finer vision for human accord than is found in the Gathas.

### **II. Cultural Patterns Reflecting Ideals**

As first and second generation immigrants in a new land, many of us are fortunate knowing the effects of good family life first-hand. We know the commitment, love, and good work of our parents, we know the deep kindness of our extended families and community, and we know the sweet touches and graces found in our homes worldwide.

Generations ahead are due to take this special knowledge forward, even in environments losing the cultural value of cohesive family life. We must live by the first values of our tradition and help renew in others the hope for beautiful, natural family life. Jamsheed Barucha, President of The Cooper Union, posits that subsequent generations will “regress to the mean” of cultural predominance in North America. (3) This would replace the low rate of divorce in immigrant generations with the higher rate prevalent in American culture.

America’s declining rate of marriage and huge out-of-wedlock birth rate may become part of newer generations. Yet we should go forward holding the values of a noble antiquity as dear and precious for societies often in despair over best ways to live. The answer to nihilism and darkness in ongoing and emerging social trends is steady brightness, patient good effort, and cheer.

Our bright-right is our freedom for wise, good choice and that is also something intrinsic to the American creed which inspires us. Through thought, word and action, we value our tradition and the West together as we build good families and good communities.

Young adolescents and adults are the ones most

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immediately impacted by our ideals of marriage. As a very distinctive religion and people, courtship should also reflect the wisdom of our tradition by developing distinct tones and resonances highlighting a Zoroastrian style. As well, courtship patterns need to be comfortable and effective for Youth in addition to being in our distinct style.

We can witness wide variety in our courtship patterns across continents. But our own diversity should not have us overlook how other distinctive communities style family life and courtship among their adolescents. I get intrigued by the Mormons, who have a lower rate of divorce than others. Another personal intrigue is fostered by the Amish, who I see when traveling through Chicago's Union Station. They enjoy large families averaging twenty-one cousins per person and are noted for integrity in business. They have sustained their distinctiveness in American society across many generations.

### **III. Clear Light in Contentious and New Times**

I am writing at a moment when very soon the US Supreme Court will have impacted the civic standing of marriage. Can the court define the very institution itself when culture now sees an explosive force in play around it? Nowhere in the debates about "same-sex versus traditional" marriage does one see an argument surely outside the predominate culture: Individuals in minority religions as ours have hard-won and nascent roots on our continent. We have far to go as our communities slowly establish themselves in this new land. Perhaps with this unusual circumstance, some of us felt especially comforted by the steady and unchanging quality of marriage in the civic arena that once was enjoyed in America.

Do we measure the toll for radical change upon building a new community derived from an ancient and vanishing heritage? Will it be said there is no toll? Since even discussion of mere politics brings our noted contentiousness to the fore; how will we envision our adaptation amid a culture in upheaval? No doubt, we will be called upon to employ the very virtues and kindness our tradition encourages.

New reproductive technologies and choices offer explosive change ahead as well, for us and our next generations.(4) Let us use wisdom in new terrains and carry forward the fine things given and entrusted

to us. Let us use new reproductive technologies to emulate rather than subvert the beautiful vision of Yasna 53.

Zoroastrians have innumerable sources of departure in their heritage for exploring marriage and family. Prof. Jenny Rose mentions "five types of marriage" elaborated in the Rivayats!(5) But also consider other departures and the strength of our Zoroastrian mind-set when developed alongside these ideas. Compiling worthy directions to conclude this essay, I ask why we so often fret over survival when the best natural resource can be through new human life and increasing population growth? The economist Julian Simon advocated for growing population, not shrinking numbers. Could we double our population by bringing the offspring of a Parsee parent into our fold?

What if people in Persia, Central Asia, Russia, Latin America and elsewhere were free to affirm Zoroastrian life and our population increased by orders of dimensions?

We are fortunate to live in a land with many avenues for our cultural and social attention. Come Sunday, we could visit the Dar e Mehr, meet a bowling league, fundraise for a concert, practice in a language class, or prepare for manning the polls at a local election. How is it that America's robust civic life makes religion one contender among many lifestyle contenders? How then must religious choice and style appeal amid the many strains of popular and general culture? What is the impact of wide cultural and social choice on family, marriage, and children? Consider DeTocqueville's observations on America's very broad civic sphere and how the civic sphere shapes social life in contrast to places without it.(6)

Those who wish a thoughtful perspective on an unchanged view of marriage might look at Prof. Robert P. George, the Witherspoon Institute, and Ryan T. Anderson (see <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/>).(7) The beloved Chicago Profs. Leon and Amy Kass in their due regard for courtship and marriage are well worth bringing into conversations about marriage preparation and avoiding painful romantic mishaps Youth so often encounters.(8)

Aquinas and St. Augustine give substance to the idea of the universe's implicit order and inform us of how

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natural law may be thought to underlie creation and unfold through time (see <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/natural-law-ethics/>).<sup>(9)</sup> Emerging reproductive technologies including genetic transplantation and gestation outside of and beyond women of child-bearing years have implication for the prospects of Zoroastrian population growth.<sup>(10)</sup> Can we use new science to emulate the implicit natural order highlighted in Yasna 53 and use it to grow the Zoroastrian people?

Can we weigh our valuing of marriage along with Tolstoy's examination of its depths (see [www.commentarymagazine.com/article/the-moral-urgency-of-anna-karenina/](http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/the-moral-urgency-of-anna-karenina/))?<sup>(11)</sup> With our family values, let us cherish each other and our noble religion.

## End Notes

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**Dr. Natalie R. Gandhi** is among the first Parsees to be born in America and is the first Zoroastrian born in the Land of Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois. A Philosopher and Entrepreneur, Natalie taught in ten universities and worked in Silicon Valley's environment of innovative, disruptive technologies. Currently, she is a World Director of WZCC. Natalie and her husband, Rusi D. Gandhi, M.B.A., live in New Jersey with their young daughter, Asha R. Gandhi.

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## LESSONS TAUGHT

DINAZ KUTAR ROGERS

*For the three excellent things be never slack, namely, good thoughts, good words and good deeds; for three abominable things be ever slack, namely, bad thoughts, bad words and bad deeds.*

The Zend Avesta (Part I, Fargard XVIII, II, 17(41))

Will young Zoroastrians outside India and Iran be able to carry on the religion, its rituals, and customs followed by their parents in their *maadar vattan* (mother countries), and brought with them in the last century to their new homes in Western countries?

Also how would those who live in small or rural towns, far from big city centers (with higher concentrations of Parsis and Irani Zoroastrians, newly built fire temples, and Zoroastrian priests who perform our ancient rituals) be able to teach their children born and raised in our new home countries? Some have suggested that, if needed, one should adapt and let go of some old ways. As L. P. Hartley said, "The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there."

Without the benefits of "big city centers," I took matters into my own hands and taught the basic tenets of our faith to my daughters: go forth in this world thinking good thoughts, speaking good words, doing good deeds, and reciting the basic *Asham Vohu* and *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* prayers. I taught them a few Gujarati words; told them the Milk and Sugar story, some simple tales from the *Shahnameh* and memories of my childhood in a Parsi colony in Bombay, and a few odds and ends about our Parsi culture.

I knew I had taught them well from the following incidents on our long-ago trip to India and felt secure and blessed that children *do* listen, absorb, and internalize values passed on to them by their parents.

One evening, on our first visit to Bombay, we went to a crowded vegetable bazaar. Noxious, acrid fumes from the exhaust pipes of auto rickshaws, mixed with black smoke from city buses, made it difficult to breathe. The constant cacophony—blaring horns from the traffic, housewives and merchants loudly haggling, and vendors hawking their wares—added to the hustle and bustle. The crowded market



street was littered with garbage. A cow and a couple of stray dogs wandered freely through the rubbish. Filth, pesky flies, ragged children begging presented a shocking contrast to our small-town America. My daughters were overwhelmed, as was I.

It was past our dinnertime and my younger daughter was feeling hungry. Not acclimatized to foreign foods and water, we paid close attention to what we ate; so I decided to buy her a banana, as there would be no need to wash it. After eating it, she looked around for a trash bin, but none was to be found.

My aunt, at whose house we were staying on our visit to India, pointed to the side of the street and said, "Just dump it anywhere by the rain gutter."

"Throw it on the *ground*?!" My daughter's eyes widened in horror and her palm tightened around the banana peel.

"What's one banana skin? Maybe one of these animals will eat it," my aunt rationalized.

However, my little girl was adamant. "Sorry, but I won't," she informed everyone in a polite, but loud, voice heard over the incessant noise. "I can't throw

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garbage on the streets. My mom, dad, and teachers taught me not to.” True to her convictions, she carried that banana peel in her sweaty palm through all our shopping and the long walk back to the house.

Upon entering the kitchen, she threw the peel in the garbage pail with an exaggerated, ceremonial flourish. We were all a little embarrassed but pleased. “If everyone did what I did, Bombay wouldn’t be so dirty,” she stated.

Later, she reminded me in front of everyone, “You’re the one, Mom, who tells us that Parsis believe in keeping things clean. Isn’t it, Good Thoughts, Good Words, and especially Good Deeds?” My precocious young daughter pointed to the garbage pail.

Everyone complimented her for standing up for her beliefs. Her challenge reminded me of a pet phrase I used to quote as a child to erring adults—practice what you preach. Bombay was cleaner that evening, by one banana peel, and once again the message of Zarathustra rang out loud and clear in the land that gave us sanctuary and safety.

On another day we went sari shopping for my older daughter at one of those enchanted places of my childhood, Kala Niketan—a sari shop, opposite the Marine Lines Railway Station. This shop was brimming with a spectacular collection of saris of the softest silks, dazzling brocades, gorgeous georgettes, and thousands upon thousands of yards of fabulous fabrics. Sparkling sequins, bright beads, gold, silver, and radiant pearlescent pastels adorned every available wall and draped every shelf. It seemed to me that a million stars, suns, and moons had descended on the shop.

I told my daughters that, as a child, I would go with my mother and my aunts to buy saris for weddings, *navjotes*, or other auspicious occasions; fondly remembering my first sari. In India, amongst us Parsis, a girl’s first sari was an outward expression of her coming of age—this shop held a special place in my heart.

After going through several saris in dazzling pinks, sunset corals, bright greens, and flaming oranges, eagerly unfurled for us by a saleslady, we decided on one for my daughter—a ruby-red and indigo-blue sari with paisley patterns. As my aunt and a cousin wrapped her in that sari, my husband took pictures, and other patrons and employees *oohed* over my daughter.

Next, we wandered up to the mezzanine, where a spectacular collection of silk and brocade shawls

with tasseled borders was housed. While everyone looked around, my eyes zeroed in on an unusual crimson—a vibrant hue, somewhere between a deep raspberry and cherry red. “I must have this, it’s gorgeous!” I exclaimed. The sales lady, eager for more sales, spread out quite a few others, but that unbelievable red one was going to be mine. My daughters, brightly decked out in their own selections, drifted back to see what had caught their mother’s attention. Their eyes grew wide when they saw the design in gold threads that adorned my dazzling shawl.

“Mom! You can’t buy this, it has swastikas!” My older daughter whispered. Others around us did not understand our hesitation.

“Isn’t it beautiful, madam?” The perplexed saleslady pressed on.

I whispered to my daughter. “Oh, don’t worry. It’s a holy symbol of the Hindu faith, I’ll make sure to explain this to everyone at home.”

“Don’t worry,” I repeated, more to appease my conscience than my daughter’s objections. My daughter was adamant. “This will hurt people’s feelings, Mom. This shawl will reflect badly on you. I know it will.”

In that moment, I understood her bewilderment. At home, she had heard me proudly tell others that Parsis were called the “Jews of India” by the British. She had heard me enlightening others about Zoroastrianism by citing the interactions of the Persians with the Jews in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). (When invited to talk about Zoroastrianism in churches and to groups, I would take one of my daughters with me.) They were paying attention; they had cherished and internalized the principles of our faith.

“Aren’t you the one who always brags that it was Cyrus the Great who liberated the Jews from their Babylonian captivity?” She questioned me as her fingers traced the pattern woven in gold thread that was pure yet profane. “Come on, Mom. Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds. Remember, Mommy? Do your Good Deed. Don’t buy that shawl.”

My aunt, touched by her passion and proud of the wisdom of her late sister’s granddaughter, whispered in my ear. “She feels it’s hypocritical and insensitive of you to buy that shawl. *Ma-ray moo-voe* Hitler.” She cursed “death” on the dictator.

Suddenly the beauty of the color paled in com-

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parison with what swastikas meant to my young daughter and to all of us in our Western society. Without regrets, I left that beautiful, shining, red silk material behind.

In this symbolic rite of passage, my daughter's first sari, the sparkle and bright colors shone brighter in the light of her maturity and sensitivity; and, that day, the flames in all our fire temples leaped a little higher and burned a little brighter.

## **A Life Lesson of Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds**

Later on in the week, while waiting for the *Flying Rani* at the Navsari railroad station for our return to Bombay, a little shoeshine boy came up to us asked us if he could shine our shoes. We were all wearing sandals and declined his offer.

Soon, a northbound train pulled across the platform from us. Disappointed at not being able to procure any business from us, the shoeshine boy sprinted to the other platform on his matchstick legs to offer his services to the passengers that had just disembarked from the now-departing northbound train. From what we were able to observe, the boy was unsuccessful. The laziness of the warm afternoon descended upon the railroad station and we resumed our watch for the southbound Flying Rani.

Soon a commotion near the rickety fence that separated the station from a dusty road attracted our attention. We saw our shoeshine boy was on his knees tending a goat. We thought he was playing with the animal. What could one expect of a boy who carried the burden of being a breadwinner, but who occasionally acted like a little boy? When a few beggars started to gather around, we knew something had happened. The northbound train had almost severed the goat's hind legs. The poor creature was bleeding and unable to move.

The crowd watched as the boy cradled the hapless animal's head in his bony little lap. The lad looked around and asked for someone to bring

some water for the goat. Realizing the futility of the situation, the cluster of the curious faded faster than the life from the poor, scrawny animal. No one helped. The lad looked around him and his eyes lit up. Gently laying down the dying creature, he ran back to our platform and asked the tea stall vendor for a glass of water. The vendor shooed him away.

"How much?" the boy asked.

"How much do you have?" The vendor challenged.

The boy laid out his day's earnings on the shabby counter.

"That's enough to buy that wretched animal a glass of water, but don't bring the glass back," the stall owner replied. "I've had enough of these stray goats nibbling on everything, destroying my property."

The little boy walked cautiously, lest he spill the precious liquid. He held the tumbler to the animal's mouth and the goat managed to lap up a few drops. Suddenly we heard a familiar whistle and the thunder of our approaching train. One of my daughters whispered, "Mom, that is Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds" as the massive locomotive abruptly and majestically drew the curtain across the poignant drama.

My heart was heavy at leaving the village where my father had grown up and at which place my grandfather had built a magnificent house with jewel-colored glass windows. My eyes were misting faster than the gathering speed of the train, but that little incident at the railroad station and the thought that our faith had been so beautifully understood and expressed by a young child, brought an exhilarating feeling and eased the pain of leaving my beloved Navsari.

**Dinaz Rogers** is a published author and poet and is active in local poetry and writing groups. Her poem *MY WINTER VIEW* was selected along with a few others to celebrate Albany's 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday for October 2014. She and Roshan R. Rivetna are working on a soon-to-be-published heritage book: *MY MOTHER USED TO SAY*, extolling the Parsi/Persian culture. She lives in Albany, Oregon with her family and flowers.



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گفتوگو با دکتر موبد کورش نیکنام، درباره راه‌های ماندگار کردن آیین‌های کهن زرتشتی در خارج از ایران:

پستی و بلندی پاسداری از آیین‌های زرتشتی در خارج از ایران



اشکان خسروپور (۲۲ مهر ۱۳۶۷ خورشیدی): این روزنامه‌نگار زرتشتی فعالیت مطبوعاتی را از سال ۱۳۸۴ خورشیدی با کار در روزنامه شرق و خبرگزاری میراث فرهنگی CHN آغاز کرد. با تعلیق فعالیت روزنامه و نیمه‌تعطیل شدن خبرگزاری میراث فرهنگی، همزمان با هفته‌نامه خبری فرهنگی زرتشتیان ایران (امرداد) به عنوان گزارشگر و بعدتر، دبیر بخش برونمرزی و دبیر بخش رخدادهای زرتشتیان با هفته‌نامه و تارنمای امرداد همکاری کرد. وی هم‌اکنون با موسسه همشهری (روزنامه همشهری، وبسایت همشهری آنلاین، مجلات دانستنی‌ها، همشهری جوان و سرخ) و نیز روزنامه تجارت همکاری مستمر دارد.

اشکان خسروپور:

موج مهاجرت که بالا گرفت، عده‌ای هم با آن همراه شدند. درست یا غلط، در گوشه‌ی دیگری از دنیا، دور از آنجایی که به دنیا آمده بودند دور هم جمع شدند و سعی کردند بفهمی نفهمی، همان خاطره‌های خوش یزد و کرمان یا تهران و شیراز را زنده کنند. گیرم جای صدای چک‌چک قطره‌های پیرسبز در میان کویر خشک یزد را شرشر آبشار پارکی سرسبز در کانادا بگیرد و دف و اربونه‌اش، میکروفون و گیتار بشود. شاید آش شولی آمریکایی، مزه برادر یزدی‌اش را ندهد و سیرگ آن‌ور آبی، صدای قرچ و قروچش کمتر از نسخه ایرانی آن باشد. هرچه هست، جامعه مهاجران آن‌ور آب با وجود دوری از ایران در تکاپوی زنده نگه داشتن فرهنگ و آیین زرتشتی می‌کوشند. سوالاتی مثل این که آیین و فرهنگ زرتشتی چیست. ذهنمان را درگیر می‌کند. شاید با خودمان پرسیده باشیم، آیا می‌شود در خارج از ایران هم فرهنگ زرتشتی را زنده نگه داشت؟ یا باید به زعم بعضی، بگذاریم تا فرهنگ‌های دیگر ما را هم با خودشان ببرند و حل کنند؟

دکتر موبد کورش نیکنام، علاوه بر موبدی، دکترای فلسفه زرتشت دارد. او جوانی‌اش را در یزد گذرانده و بعدتر راهی تهران شده است برای آموزش دینی به نوجوانان زرتشتی. بعدتر هم یک دوره نمایندگی زرتشتیان در مجلس شورای اسلامی ایران را برعهده گرفت و پس از پایان دوره نمایندگی‌اش به فرانسه رفت. نیکنام سفرهایی هم به کشور تاجیکستان داشته و با مردم این کشور و آیین‌هایشان به خوبی آشناست. او این‌روزها در مرکز زرتشتیان پاریس حضوری فعال دارد.

کورش نیکنام در این گفتوگو به یکی از دغدغه‌های جوان زرتشتی امروز پاسخ می‌دهد. این که آیا فرهنگ زرتشتی را می‌شود جایی دور از میهن نیز پاس داشت و اگر آری، چگونه.

س - فرهنگ و سنت زرتشتی که از پاسداری‌اش بسیار سخن رفته، دقیقاً چیست؟ از کجا آمده و چطور به دست ما رسیده است؟



# Transmission of Z Values in the Diaspora

ج - فرهنگ و سنت زرتشتی به گنجینه‌ای از آداب، رسوم و آیین‌هایی گفته می‌شود که زرتشتیان در گذر هزاران سال زندگی در ایران فراگرفته اند و پیوسته همچون کشکولی با خود به همراه داشته‌اند. در این کشکول پرمایه، از رنج‌ها، کمبودها، مبارزه با فرهنگ‌های بیگانه و جایگزینی جلوه‌های نیک به جای پندارهای نادرست گلچینی به یادگار مانده است. برخی از این سنت‌ها از هزاره‌های پیش از اشوزرتشت به جای مانده ولی زرتشتیان که ریشه در فرهنگ پویای این سرزمین داشته‌اند بهتر و بیش‌تر از دیگران در نگهداری و پاسداری آن کوشیده‌اند. از آن جمله، جشن‌های سده و مهرگان هستند که از آیین‌های ایرانی‌اند ولی همچنان زرتشتیان آنها را به خوبی برگزار می‌کنند تا شاید زمانی همانند آیین‌های نوروزی و شب چله در بین تمام ایرانیان فراگیر شود. گاهنبارها از آغاز جشن داده‌های کشاورزی و دامپروری بوده‌اند ولی تاریخچه‌ای از ستم و رنج دوران را با خود دارند. از زمان ساسانی سرود آفرینگان آماده شده تا جلوه دینی بگیرد و با پاسداشت جایگاه شهریاران هماهنگ شود. در واقع گه‌نبار، گونه‌ای پرداخت مالیات بوده تا در آن، هرکس نسبت به توان مالی خویش دادودش کند. زمانی که اموال زرتشتیان را به زور تصرف می‌کرده‌اند، زمین‌ها وقف گاهنبار می‌شد تا از دست‌اندازی در امان باشند و برای اینکه در یوزگی در هازمان شکل نگیرد خوراک، نان، میوه و خشکبار را به همه پیشکش می‌کرده‌اند که این آیین همچنان به شکل یک سنت نیک زرتشتی، پابرجاست. در همان جریان آیین گه‌نبار اگر دقت کنیم، با بریدن میوه‌ها توسط موبد روبه‌رو می‌شویم. این کار به زمانی اشاره دارد که قربانی کردن حیوانات ناشایست بوده و کاربرد کارد و چاقو رابه قربانی کردن میوه‌ها اختصاص داده‌اند. برخی سنت‌ها نیز ویژه باورهای زرتشتی است مانند سدره‌پوشی که به گفته موبد رستم شهزادی، جایگزین لباس رزم و کمر بند شکاری بوده که پیش از زرتشت به جوانان داده می‌شده است. آیین زرتشت که مخالف جنگ و خونریزی است پوشش رزمی به لباس نیک‌اندیشی تبدیل کرده و اکنون سدره‌پوشی، جشن دین‌پذیری برای نوجوانان است.

س - آیا در جاهای دیگر دنیا هم می‌شود از این فرهنگ پاسداری کرد یا این موضوع فقط در داخل مرزهای میهن و خاستگاه اولیه فرهنگ و سنتی زرتشتی امکان پذیر است؟

ج - فرهنگ و سنت‌های زرتشتی به شیوه ای است که از زندگی روزانه، مناسبت‌های حماسی و تاریخی ایران برگرفته شده‌اند. برخی از آنها را می‌توان در همه جای جهان برگزار کرد ولی پاره ای نیز تنها در سرزمین ایران جایگاه خود را دارند. نوروز جشنی است که در بسیاری از کشورها برگزار می‌شده و از زمانی هم که یونسکو آن را به ثبت جهانی رساند کشور های بیشتری آن را برگزار می‌کنند. در میدانی کنار برج ایفل پاریس، هر سال جشنواره نوروزی باشکوهی برپاست و در کشورهای دیگر هم چنین رخدادی اتفاق افتاده است. سیزده به در و جشن مهرگان و اسفندگان راهم می‌توان برگزار کرد ولی برای مثال، برپا کردن آتش باشکوه جشن سده، با آن شیوه و شکوهی که در ایران برگزار می‌شود، در خارج قابل برگزاری نیست. شب چله را نمی‌توان با عنوان بلندترین شب سال در برخی از کشورها مانند سوئد برگزار کرد. رفتن به نیایش‌گاه های سنتی مانند پیرسبز هم تنها با حضور در ایران امکان دارد. به هر روی گاهنبارها، جشن‌های ماهیانه و آیین‌های دینی مانند گواگیری و سدره‌پوشی را چنانچه در خارج از ایران نیز گسترش دهیم، بسیار نیک خواهد بود.

س - با توجه به این‌که شما هر دو جامعه زرتشتیان داخل و خارج از ایران را از نزدیک دیده‌اید، از کارها و برنامه‌هایی که برای نگهداری از آیین و فرهنگ زرتشتی انجام شده، برایمان بگویید.

ج - در ایران از یکسو به دلیل باشندگی گسترده همکیشان، سنت‌ها بسیار باشکوه‌تر برگزار می‌شود و از سوی هم، انجمن‌ها توان مالی بیشتری دارند تا پشتوانه برگزاری جشن‌ها باشند. برگزاری جشن‌هایی مانند

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سده در ایران با هزینه زیادی که خود انجمن‌ها پرداخت می‌کنند، برگزار می‌شود در حالی که در خارج از کشور وضع به گونه دیگری است. هرکس که به جشن می‌آید، باید مبلغی بپردازد برای همین هم کمتر استقبال می‌شود. در ایران، به ویژه در چند دهه گذشته، برخی از سنت‌ها بازسازی شده و بهتر برگزار می‌شود. برگزاری واژیش گاهنبار در آدریان تهران، به شکلی که اکنون با باشندگی همکیشان و دهش ناشتایی خیراندیشان برپا می‌شود، از نزدیک به ۲۰ سال پیش آغاز شد. یادم هست که آن روزها دانش‌آموزان دبیرستان فیروزبهرام را برای شرکت در گاهنبار به آدریان فراخواندیم و کم‌کم وضع رونق بیشتری گرفت تا اکنون که هرچهره گاهنبار با واژیش بامدادی همراه است. در خارج از کشور ما به موبدان، هیربدان و همکیشانی نیاز داریم که فلسفه برگزاری جشن‌ها و آیین‌ها را بدانند و پیش از این، بارها در برپایی سنت‌ها در ایران نقش داشته باشند. سخنران باشند و بتوانند با آهنگ دلنشین بخش‌های اوستا را بسرایند. شوربختانه برخی که این آمادگی‌ها را ندارند، در برخی کشورها آیین‌ها را برگزار می‌کنند که اثر ویژه خود را نخواهد داشت. به ویژه اینکه جلوه‌ای برای جوانان ندارد. البته در ایران نیز شخصیت موبدان در برگزاری آیین‌ها بسیار موثر است. موبدی که با لباس پاکیزه و مرتب، آهنگ خوش اوستا، سخنان دلنشین همراه با فروتنی او در دریافت پاداش مادی باشد از جایگاه معنوی بیشتری برخوردار است و موبدی که اینگونه نباشد بی‌گمان اثر نیکی بر برپایی مراسم نخواهد داشت.

س - در این چند سال، موزه‌ها و نمایشگاه‌هایی درباره آیین و فرهنگ زرتشتی برپا شده یا وب سایت‌هایی برای اطلاع‌رسانی درباره همین موضوع‌ها شکل گرفتند. به نظرتان این کارکردهای تازه تا چه اندازه می‌توانند در نگهداری از آیین زرتشتی موثر باشند؟

ج - هرگونه ابتکار و ایزاری برای نشان دادن بیشتر و بهتر فرهنگ و سنت‌های نیاکانمان شایسته و پسندیده است. در شهرهای زرتشتی‌نشین بهتر است در کنار آتشکده‌ها نمایشگاه و موزه ساخته شده یا آثار هنری به نمایش گذاشته شود زیرا بازدیدکنندگان زیادی هر سال از چنین مکان‌هایی دیدار می‌کنند و نباید زرتشتیان را تنها با موضوعی مثل نگهداری آتش در ایران بشناسند. ما و نیاکانمان، در گذر تاریخ هازمانی پررنج خود، اینهمه آداب و رسوم زندگی ساز را با خود پاسداری و نگهداری کرده ایم. آتش و آیین‌های مربوط به آن هم یکی از سنت‌هاست و به گمان من، نباید از بین تمام این داشته‌های ارزشمند فرهنگی تنها آتش و آتشکده را به نمایش بگذاریم تا دست آخر با تهمت ناروای آتش‌پرستی هم روبه‌رو شویم. اگر به مناسبت برپایی هر آیینی، مانند جشن سده، مهرگان و مسابقه‌های ورزشی، بتوانیم نمایشگاه‌های جانبی برگزار کنیم، گسترش فرهنگمان را ساده‌تر کرده‌ایم. به ویژه برپایی نمایشگاه کتاب در کنار برپایی آیین‌ها کم‌کم جوانان ما را خواستار خواندن نسک‌ها خواهد کرد. شاید بهتر باشد، در این رابطه به همکیشان‌مان نو شدن و تازه‌گرداندن جهان که اشوزرتشت همیشه ما را به آن سفارش می‌کرده‌اند در نظر داشته باشیم. مثلاً وقتی آیین برپاست، به جای بردن چیزهایی مانند روغن، شکر، چای، شیرینی و سبدهای گل، می‌توانیم داده‌های فرهنگی مانند نسک (کتاب)، سی دی و مانند اینها بهره بگیریم تا نسل جوان را به باشندگی و همکاری بر برپایی سنت‌ها تشویق کرده باشیم. اکنون سنت‌های ما هرچند ارزشمند هستند، به دلیل نبود نوآوری، کششی برای جوان و نوجوان ما ندارند. همین است که وقتی به سن باشندگان در آیین‌ها و گاهنبارها می‌نگریم درسد زیاد آنان بالای سی سال دارند و این هشدار برای کهرنگ شدن سنت‌هاست.

س - از نگاه شما چه راهکار دیگری می‌توان برای پاسداری از فرهنگ و سنت‌های ایران اندیشید؟

ج - به باور من سنت‌های ما بایستی از حالت نمایشی بیرون آمده و بر پایه ایمان برگزار شوند. نهادهایی مانند انجمن موبدان، باید ساختار بهتری به خود بگیرد و کسانی به هموندی آن در آیند که شایستگی سفارش



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و پیشنهادهای مناسب برای نوآوری در سنت‌ها را داشته باشند. برخی از سنت‌های گذشتگان برای همان زمان کاربری داشته است. اکنون که فرزندان ما و خواستارانی بیرون از هازمان زرتشتی به دنبال درک و شناسایی کلید واژه‌های درست بینش و فلسفه زرتشت برآمده اند، نیاز به هیریدان و موبدانی روشنفکر و نوآور داریم تا به نیازهای مینوی جوانان آشنایی داشته باشند و دین را آن‌چنان که درست است، به نسل تازه بسپارند. این روزها، دیر زمان آن گذشته که بتوان دین را با پوششی کادو کنیم و به فرزندانمان هدیه کنیم. نخست باید به چیستی و چرایی فلسفه آیین‌ها و سنت‌ها بپردازیم تا آنان را با ایمان کنیم تا بدون خواسته و پافشاری ما، به دنبال گم کرده خویش در لابلای سنت‌ها باشند و به برپایی هر جشن و آیینی بر خود ببالند، بدانند که یادگار نیاکان آنان چه ارزشی در روزگاران گذشته داشته که اکنون نیز همچنان تازگی دارد. بگذارید مثالی بزنم. جوانی را در ذهن‌تان مجسم کنید که در آیین درگذشتگان نشسته و به نیایش موبد گوش می‌دهد. هنوز موبدانی هستند که به بستن راه دوزخ و گشادن راه بهشت اشاره می‌کنند، ولی جوان این را نمی‌پذیرد چون پژوهش کرده یا شنیده که در بینش اشوزرتشت مکانی به نام بهشت و دوزخ را خداوند از پیش نساخته است تا پس از درگذشت انسان، پرونده‌اش بررسی شده و راه بهشت و دوزخ را برایش آشکار سازد. ما به عنوان بزرگتر چگونه می‌توانیم این دوگانگی را به او توضیح دهیم؟ نکته‌های بسیاری مانند اینها وجود دارد که پرداختن به آنها نیاز کنونی هازمان ماست. پانزده سال پیش، پیشنهاد بازنگری در سنت‌ها را یادآوری کردم که آن زمان در فصلنامه چیستا نگاشته شد و همچنان بر روی وب سایت من با نام «بیگانه آشنا و آشنای بیگانه» وجود دارد. ما باید به این مسایل توجه کنیم.

س - آیا شیوه کار برای نیل به چنین هدفی، در بین زرتشتیان ایرانی و پارسیان یا حتی کسانی که خود را علاقه‌مند به فرهنگ زرتشتی می‌دانند، با هم متفاوت خواهد بود؟

ج - سنت‌ها و آیین‌های ما و پارسیان اندکی متفاوت است. زیرا ما سنت‌ها را در ایران و زادگاه فرهنگی آن پاسداری کرده‌ایم ولی پارسیان که بیش از هزار سال پیش به هندوستان کوچ کرده‌اند، بی‌گمان سنت‌های خویش را گاهی با آموزه‌ها و باورهای ادیان دیگر نیز هماهنگ کرده‌اند و اکنون چون افتخاری به ایرانی بودن خود نداشته، ملیت هندی را بر خود دارند، تنها به آموزه‌های دین زرتشت می‌پردازند و از آن‌چه به واسطه نیاکانشان، پس از دوران ساسانی به یادگار برده‌اند، نگهداری می‌کنند. ما سنت‌هایمان را ایرانی و زرتشتی می‌دانیم و از آنها پاسداری می‌کنیم در صورتی که آنان، تنها زرتشتی بودن را با نگاهی ویژه پاسداری می‌کنند. پارسیان جشن‌های سده، مهرگان، تیرگان، گاهنبارها و... را مانند ما برپا نمی‌کنند اما اگر بخواهیم درباره کسانی که به تازگی خواستار پیوستن به ما و بازگشت به فرهنگ نیاکان خود هستند، بپردازیم، باید گفت. شناسایی و پیروی از سنت‌ها با همت و پشتکار بیشتری در بین آنان مشاهده می‌شود که گاهی گوی سبقت را از ما نیز می‌ربایند. آنان با ایمان بیشتری به دنبال شناخت و پاسداری از آیین‌های باستانی برآمده‌اند و چنان‌چه ما آموزش‌های درست را به آنان نرسانیم، بی‌گمان به یافته‌های دیگران نسبت به فرهنگ باستانی ایران توجه خواهند کرد. از همین رو، شاید خرافاتی را که گاهی در برخی از نوشته‌های اوستایی مانند وندیداد آمده و به بینش زرتشت نسبتی ندارد را در جایی به نام اشوزرتشت آشکار سازند و این هشدار برای دست‌اندرکاران آیین ما در آینده خواهد بود.

SUMMARY TRANSLATION OF PAGES 38-44 WILL BE IN THE FALL ISSUE.

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## مهاجرت زرتشتیان

### تهدیدی که باید به فرصت تبدیل شود

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طی دو دهه اخیر جامعه زرتشتیان ایران با یکی از بزرگترین مهاجرت‌های تاریخی خود مواجه گردید. مهمترین مشخصه این مهاجرت بی‌هدف بودن و بی‌برنامه بودن از سوی جامعه زرتشتی بود. در حالی که هدف اصلی دو دوره مهاجرت زرتشتیان ایران به هندوستان در سده‌های گذشته بقای جامعه و فرهنگ زرتشتی بود این مهاجرت اخیر زرتشتیان، به یک حرکت رفاهی شباهت داشت که بدلیل شرایط مناسبی که فراهم شده بود به صورت گسترده طی دو دهه جامعه زرتشتیان ایران را تحت تأثیر قرار داد.

تاریخ جامعه زرتشتی به خصوص در سده‌های پس از ورود ساسانیان، بیانگر دلاوری و پایداری نیاکانمان می‌باشد. بزرگ زنان و مردانی که با اعتقاد و باور خود به حفظ و پاسداری دین و فرهنگ کهن این مرز و بوم از جان مایه گذاشتند.

کوچ و پناه آوردن آخرین بازماندگان دین زرتشتی به مناطق خشک و کویری یزد و کرمان نیز نمادی با ارزش از این پایداری و همت ایشان می‌باشد.

واقعا بسیار حیف است که با فراموش کردن تاریخ خود، اینچنین در قبال خالی شدن سرزمین نیاکانیمان از زرتشتیان بی‌تفاوت برخورد نماییم.

مهمتر آنکه ایران همواره چه در گذشته و چه حال و چه در آینده هسته مرکزی زرتشتیان بوده و خواهد بود و این تصور که در این دنیای مدرن و گسترده با جمعیت اندک زرتشتیان بتوان هسته مرکزی دیگری را شکل داده و جایگزین جامعه زرتشتیان ایران نمود تقریبا غیر ممکن است. جامعه‌ای که علاوه بر تمام اینها، تاریخ، فرهنگ و بناهای باارزش و کهنی را نیز پشتوانه خود دارد.

اگر چه قشر پیر و کهن جامعه زرتشتی به صورت خودجوش با دل نگرانی از بین رفتن جامعه و دین زرتشتی تلاشهای درخوری را انجام داده و می‌دهند اما متأسفانه ارگانها و نمایندگان جامعه زرتشتی نتوانستند یک عملکرد درخور و موثری در این زمینه انجام دهند.

آنچه که بدیهی است مهاجرت یک تهدید بزرگ برای جامعه زرتشتی می‌باشد اما به این نکته نیز باید دقت کرد که از سوی دیگر مهاجرت به کشورهای پیشرفته و آنهم قشر جوان یک جامعه ارزشها و مهمتر از همه فرصتهای مناسبی را نیز فراهم می‌کند همین جوانهایی که از ایران سفر کرده و در کشورهای صنعتی دنیا جذب شده و ادامه تحصیل داده و پیشرفت می‌کنند در آینده بزرگترین سرمایه‌های جامعه زرتشتی را تشکیل می‌دهند.



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اگر در قالب یک کار علمی درست و برنامه ریزی شده، این نقطه ضعفها و قوتها شناسایی شده و بر اساس تاثیرگذاریشان به درستی ارزش گذاری بشوند، آنگاه می توان زمینه های شکل گیری یک برنامه استراتژی موثر در راستای تبدیل این تهدید به یک فرصت مناسب برای جامعه زرتشتی را فراهم آورد.

در این راستا نخست باید سیر تاریخی این روند جدید مهاجرت را بررسی کرد. ترک وطن و مهاجرت زرتشتیان، به آمریکا و سایر کشورهای اروپایی در این سه دهه را به طور مشخص می توان به دو برهه زمانی تقسیم کرد نخست مهاجرت بخش قابل توجهی از زرتشتیان در یک بازه زمانی کوتاه در حین انقلاب ایران و پس از آن و دور دوم مهاجرت که از نزدیک به دو دهه پیش آغاز شده به دلیل مداوم بودن آن بسیار تاثیر گذارتر از قبلی بوده است.

در اول انقلاب بیشتر مهاجرتها مختص به طبقه توانمند و خواص جامعه بود که همراه با خانواده، سرمایه خود را نیز از کشور خارج می کردند. ترک وطن این گروه خاص به واسطه اینکه پشتوانه های جامعه زرتشتی بودند علی رغم اینکه شاید از نظر کمی در مقایسه با جامعه زرتشتی قابل توجه نبود ولی تاثیرات جبران ناپذیری را به جامعه زرتشتی وارد ساخت.

اما نزدیک به دو دهه پیش با آغاز به کار نهادی به نام «هایاس» که تسهیلات خوبی را برای مهاجرت زرتشتیان فراهم آورد موج جدیدی از مهاجرت زرتشتیان آغاز شد که در این موج علاوه بر خانواده ها، بیشتر جوانان را شامل می شد. به عبارت دیگر این جوانان بودن که پیشگامان این مهاجرت شدند که البته شرایط ایران و خواسته های این گروه سنی در این رویه بی تاثیر نبود. اما رفتن فرزندان و به مرور سایر اعضای خانواده ایشان یک سیر گسترده و کامل مهاجرت شکل داد. به قسمی که زرتشتیان در ایران به وضوح این کاهش جمعیت زرتشتیان را حس می کنند.

نقاط ضعف و تهدیدهایی که جامعه زرتشتی در قبال این مهاجرتها با آن مواجه می باشد عبارتند از :

## - ضعیف شدن جامعه مرکزی زرتشتیان در ایران

جامعه زرتشتیان در ایران در طی سده های گذشته در قالب یک جامعه دفاعی شکل گرفته است و از خصوصیت های جوامع دفاعی این است که در هنگامی که در فشار باشند متمرکز شده و قوی می شوند و اتفاقاً اینگونه جوامع زمانی که از فشار خارج شده و آزاد می شوند به این دلیل که زمینه های تبدیل شدن به یک جامعه در حال توسعه را ندارند به شدت تضعیف می گردند. این در مورد جامعه زرتشتی هم صادق است با خروج بزرگان جامعه زرتشتی در دور اول مهاجرت، نهادهای اجتماعی جامعه زرتشتی تضعیف شدند و در دور دوم مهاجرت با کاهش جمعیتی، فشار مضاعف دیگر بر جامعه زرتشتیان ایران وارد آمد.

یک مقایسه ساده بین نتایج و عملکردهایی که جامعه زرتشتی در دهه های پیشین داشته با عملکرد انجمنها در این سه دهه به روشنی بیانگر این واقعیت تلخ می باشد.

به طور مثال، زرتشتیانی که 120 سال پیش در زمانی که هنوز در ایران مدرسه نبود از پیشگامان مدرسه سازی در ایران بودند و به همت روانشاد مارکار نخستین مدرسه شبانه روزی ایران را نه فقط مختص زرتشتیان بلکه برای تمام ایرانیان در شهر یزد ساختند و در یزد و کرمان و تهران قدیمی ترین و باارزش ترین مدارس بنا نهادند. در مقایسه با آن دوران، زرتشتیان نسبت به جامعه کل در جایگاه بسیار پایین تری قرار گرفته و نه تنها با پیشرفتهای و توسعه همراه نشده ایم حتی در نگهداری بازمانده های همان مدراس کهن و 100 ساله نیز بازمانده ایم.

## - جایگزین شدن مهاجرت سازنده زرتشتیان بین کشورهای ایران و هند با مهاجرت به سایر کشورها

بعد از شکست ساسانیان و ورود اعراب به ایران، گروهی از زرتشتیان طی دو بازه زمانی برای حفظ و پاسداری از دین فرهنگ خود این سرزمین را ترک کرده و به هندوستان مهاجرت نمودند و در آنجا جامعه با ارزش پارسیان را شکل دادند. در طول این سده های سخت گذشته، حمایت و پشتیبانی دو طرفه زرتشتیان ایران و هند (پارسیان) مهمترین دلیل پایداری جامعه زرتشت بود. متأسفانه اکنون شاهد یک شکاف عجیب بین زرتشتیان ایران و هند هستیم که شاید در طول تاریخ 1400 سال گذشته با تمام جنگها و فشارهایی که به زرتشتیان این دو کشور اعمال شده است بی سابقه می باشد.

با یک بررسی ساده نمایان می شود که اتفاقاً طی این نیم قرن گذشته جامعه پارسیان هند هم به صورت گسترده ای تحت تاثیر مهاجرت و پخش پارسیان تاثیرگذارش در سراسر جهان بوده است. ولی نکته قابل تأمل کمرنگ شدن رفت و آمد و مهاجرت زرتشتیان پارسی به ایران و بالعکس بوده که این خود یک بررسی جداگانه را می طلبد ارتباطاتی که طی سده های سخت گذشته باعث بقای زرتشتیان ایران و هند شده بودند از بین رفته و اینها با

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سیر جدید مهاجرتها جایگزین شده که مهمترین نتیجه آن جدایی این دو عضو یک بدن، یعنی زرتشتیان ایران و هند (پارسیان) می‌باشد.

- **حل شدن در جوامع بزرگتر و از بین رفتن هویت فرهنگی زرتشتیان مهاجر**  
سوی دیگر این تیغ، حل شدن زرتشتیان مهاجر در جوامع بزرگتر است که در مورد جوانان این اتفاق بیشتر رخ می‌دهد. حتی خانواده‌های زرتشتی هم نمی‌توانند هیچ تضمینی داشته باشند که فرزندان‌شان و در نهایت نسل بعدی ایشان زرتشتی باقی مانده و بتواند در این جوامع غالب، هویت فرهنگی خود را حفظ کنند.  
اگر دغدغه پدران و مادران زرتشتی در ایران آموزش دین و فرهنگ زرتشتی فرزندان‌شان است دغدغه ایرانیان خارج از کشور آموزش زبان فارسی به کودکان می‌باشد و این نگرانی وجود دارد که فرزندان در خارج کشور حتی زبان مادری خود را فراموش کنند، همین مثال کافی است که تا به عمق تهدید حل شدن فرهنگی در فرهنگهای دیگر پی‌بیریم. متأسفانه این تهدید نسل به نسل قوی‌تر هم می‌شود و ملتی که زبان خود را فراموش کند به تبع دین و تمام داشته‌های فرهنگی خود را از دست خواهد داد.
- **خطر بزرگ برای جوانان مهاجر**  
سن غالب مهاجران جوان بوده و این ریسک بزرگ دیگری را به همراه دارد و آن هم از دست رفتن و بی‌پناه ماندن جوانانی است که با هزار امید و آرزو به آمریکا سفر می‌کنند. آمارها بیانگر این واقعیت است که درصد کمی از این افراد به قصد ادامه تحصیل و طی مدارج عالی علمی از طریق هایاس مهاجرت می‌کنند بلکه اکثریت ایشان به قصد درآمد و زندگی بهتر به آمریکا می‌روند. جدا شدن این جوانان در این سن حساس از خانواده و تفاوت فرهنگی ایران و آمریکا ریسک مشکلات جوانان از قبیل اعتیاد، افسردگی، شکست در زندگی، بی‌هویتی و بی‌بندوباری را به شدت افزایش می‌دهد.  
متأسفانه هیچ ارگان یا ساختاری نیز برای کنترل این معضل وجود نداشته و اکثر این افراد به صورت خاموش از بدنه جامعه حذف می‌شوند. از آنجایی که جامعه زرتشتی یک جامعه کججمعیت است حذف شدن یا فاصله گرفتن حتی یکی از این جوانان زرتشتی بسیار تأثیرگذار می‌باشد.
- از سوی دیگر مهاجرت و سفر به نقاط مختلف جهان همواره فرصتهایی را نیز برای جوامع فراهم می‌سازد که تعدادی از آنها عبارتند از :
  - **زندگی بهتر حق هر انسانی است و جامعه با چنین افرادی موفق‌تر**  
اگر بخشی از جامعه با رفتن به خارج از کشور به زندگی بهتری دست پیدا می‌کنند البته به شرط آنکه عضوی از جامعه زرتشتیان باقی بمانند برآیند مهاجرت ایشان می‌تواند در ارتقا کیفی جامعه زرتشتی موثر باشد.  
زرتشتیان در طور تاریخ چند هزار ساله خود نیز همواره ملتی پیشرو و رو به جلو بوده‌اند و در هیچ دوره‌ای ما شاهد آن نیستیم که زرتشتیان در مکانی یا زمانی خود را محصور کرده و ساکن بمانند. با چنین دیدگاهی بوده که جامعه زرتشتی همواره به عنوان یک جامعه نیک و پیشرو مطرح بوده است.
- **تغییر و تجربه موفقیت‌های جوامع دیگر خود یک فرصت است**  
این تصور که زرتشتیان در یک محیط بسته بمانند حتی به قیمت بقا از ایشان یک جامعه ضعیف و مهم‌تر از همه عقب افتاده می‌سازد که احتمال فرسایش و نابودیش چه بسا بیشتر هم باشد از طرف دیگر مسافرت و مهاجرتها باعث ارتباط فرهنگی بین جوامع سایر کشورها و بهره بردن از تجربیات و موفقیت‌های ایشان در جامعه خودمان خواهد شد.
- **امکان رشد و بهره بردن از امکانات و شرایطی که در ایران وجود ندارد**  
طبیعتاً هر محیطی شرایط خاص خود را دارا می‌باشد و این طبیعی است که در کشورهای مختلف شرایط و امکانات جدیدی وجود دارد که به شرط بهره بردن از آنها فرصتهای جدید فراهم می‌گردد. به خصوص آشنا شدن با ساختارهای آموزشی و اجتماعی کشورهای پیشرو می‌تواند نقش به سزایی را در رشد و توسعه جامعه زرتشتی به همراه داشته باشد.



# Transmission of Z Values in the Diaspora

البته همانطور که مشخص است فرصتهای موجود همه به صورت بلقوه بوده و اگر یک برنامه استراتژی مدون و اجرایی تهیه نگردد و سازمانی یا نهادی متولی اجرای آن نشود متأسفانه هیچ کدام از این فرصتها به نتیجه نخواهد رسید.

اولین گام برای دست یافتن به یک برنامه استراتژیک تعریف موضوع و چشم انداز می باشد.

**موضوع :** برنامه ریزی برای تبدیل تهدیدهای مهاجرت زرتشتیان به فرصت

**چشم انداز :** دست یابی به یک جامعه در حال توسعه زرتشتی

چشم اندازی را که برای پایداری و بقا جامعه باید متصور شد تبدیل جامعه زرتشتی از یک جامعه سنتی با ساختار دفاعی به یک جامعه در حال توسعه است.

برای دست یابی به یک جامعه در حال توسعه باید روی سه رویکرد فرهنگ، قدرت و اقتصاد برنامه ریزی نمود که به تبع آن در راستای این استراتژی برنامه‌های راهبردی برای دست یافتن به این سه مقوله الزامی است. اما مهمتر از تهیه برنامه استراتژی، سازمانی است که باید متولی اجرا یا هدایت اجرای آن برنامه در جامعه زرتشتی باشد.

براساس پژوهشی که اتفاقاً در یکی از دانشگاههای معتبر آمریکا صورت گرفته آینده روشنی برای کشور ایران پیش‌بینی شده است که یکی از مهمترین پارامترهای این سنجش تعداد بالای افراد تأثیرگذار و با تحصیلات ایرانی است که در کشورهای خارجی به استادی یا مشاغل مهم گمارده شده‌اند دوم عشق و علاقه‌ای است که همه این ایرانیان به سرزمین مادری خود دارند. این دو به درستی با هم می‌تواند یک آینده روشن را برای ایران نمایان سازد به عبارت دیگر هر زمان فرصتی فراهم شود همه این افراد بادانش و عشق خود به ایران آمده و کشور خود را خواهند ساخت و اتفاقاً این در مورد جامعه زرتشتی نیز به درستی صادق می‌باشد با این تفاوت که به دلایلی باید این افراد تأثیرگذار و ارگانهای زرتشتی با تعجیل بیشتری در این زمینه به فعالیت بپردازند.

در گامهای نخست باید چنین مسائلی مطرح شده و به دغدغه اصلی ارگانها و نمایندگان زرتشتی به خصوص در ایران تبدیل شود و از سوی ارگانها و زرتشتیان خارج از کشور حمایت گردد و در گامهای بعدی با ایجاد ارتباطات و رفت و آمدها، توانمندی شکل‌گیری این برنامه راهبردی را برای تبدیل مهاجرت زرتشتیان به یک فرصت فراهم گردد و تنها در این صورت است که همه ما ایرانیان در تمام نقاط دنیا می‌توانیم افتخار کنیم به خودمان و جامعه‌مان و اینکه توانستیم همچون نیاکان با فرهنگ و باغیرت زرتشتی در پایداری جامعه و فرهنگ زرتشتی سربلند بمانیم.

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# Transmission of **Z** Values in the Diaspora

## Transmitting Zoroastrian Values in the Diaspora

*In alliance with the theme for this issue “Transmitting Zoroastrian Values in Diaspora” there was an opportunity to find out what these 3 active members of the Zoroastrian community from Southern California, who have all raised families in diaspora think about this topic. Khushroo Lakdawala, Dhunmai Dalal and Darayus Mistry were the Co-Chairs of the North American Zoroastrian Congress held in LA December 2014. Read their responses:*

**FARIBA PIRGHAIBI**

**WHAT IS YOUR VISION OF Z. VALUES? WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU FOR YOUR CHILDREN AND THEIR CHILDREN TO KNOW, VALUE AND PASS ON?**



**Khushroo Lakdawala (KL)** Always maintain moral and physical purity. Emphasis on living a righteous life with good ethics and trying to make this world a better place. Be willing to sacrifice when necessary and have conviction in your philosophy of life



**DHUNMAI DALAL (DD)** It is a valuable lesson to know for young and old that our beautiful Zoroastrian faith, our Gathas and Zarathushtra's teaching are still the most relevant beliefs today. To Be Good!

What is questionable today are some of our community's customs and practices which are not wrong but were necessitated out of self-preservation as Zoroastrians throughout the Persian Empire were forcibly converted, discriminated against and killed. The community chose a low profile life style and married within out of fear and to preserve the faith. Particularly, in India, there was fear of the Zoroastrian/Parsee demise through assimilation within other vast populations. The community's unwritten laws of self-preservation are not the essence of our beautiful faith. Our faith is about the environment, righteousness, truth, being good and making the right individual choice.



**Darayus Mistry (DM)** Keep our Traditions & Culture alive – based on what we have been taught by our forefathers and at the same time move with the times – Maintaining the most important aspects : “ our value system & parsipanu”. Follow all our basic prayers and Tarikats, and believe in them. Community involvement with humility and helpfulness .



# *Transmission of **Z** Values in the Diaspora*

## **WHAT IS THE MOST PROFOUND THING YOU VALUE AS GROWING UP ZOROASTRIAN?**

**KL:** Implicit faith in my religion and understanding that truth is the greatest virtue as indicated in Ashem Vohu prayer.

**DD:** Growing up as a Zoroastrian, we suffered no discrimination in India or Pakistan. In fact, we were a respected community. We had a carefree childhood.

**DM:** I was born in a great religion and had the opportunity at various stages of my life to learn, experience and witness our Traditions & Culture .

## **WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST WAY TO REACH THE YOUTH IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE WHERE THERE SO MANY INFLUENCES FROM OTHER RELIGIONS AND CULTURES?**

**KL:** There is no simple formula – I feel it is important to emphasize the virtues of our religion and create a sense of belonging. Also, make the youth feel that they are a significant part of our religion and we as adults will rely on their judgment and understanding to sustain our religious ideology and culture.

**DD:** Growing up in the Western culture, it is necessary to emphasize that our faith stands out as outstanding and it was the basis of goodness in other religions that followed. The Bible mentions how the Jews considered our ancestors their saviors. Jesus's goodness and humility came centuries later.

**DM:** Mold them when they are young! Practice what you preach...and expose them as much as you can to all Z Values & Traditions. Listen when they talk! Offer them a platform like the congress – where they are not intimidated to discuss openly...

## **HOW CAN WE INTEREST THE NEXT GENERATION IN A RELIGION NO ONE HAS HEARD OF AND IS OUTNUMBERED BY MANY OTHER CULTS OR RELIGIONS (SADLY)**

**KL:** Indeed, very difficult to overcome the odds. However, if we as parents can be exemplary, it will instill the right values of our religion and culture within the next generation. We adults, should also be willing to listen to the view point of the next generations and be willing to change when necessary.

**DD:** Go forward to teach the Goodness of the Zoroastrian Faith, the soundness of the Gathas. They may be compared to and even surpass all other faiths. People are turning away from religion. Our faith is appealing to all.

**DM:** Books, classes, open forum discussions within small community groups.

# *Transmission of **Z** Values in the Diaspora*

## **DO YOU FEEL WE MUST BROADEN OUR HORIZONS AND LOOK AT THE Z. RELIGION GLOBALLY?**

**KL:** Definitely!. It is a great thought but I do not have a suitable answer to make Z. religion a significant global entity.

**DD:** Yes, it is time that Zoroastrianism flourished everywhere through choice. Who are we to stop others from adopting or readopting the Zarathushtrian philosophy?

**DM:** Without compromising our traditions, values and ethics.

## **DO YOU THINK WE WILL LOSE OUR IDENTITY IF WESTERNERS JOIN US?**

**KL:** I have mixed feelings but I am willing to listen to reason and do not have a closed mind

**DD:** We need confidence in ourselves. We have a great and glorious history where the Persians of old were well ahead of the times. We were foremost in astronomy, mathematics, literature, largeesse, governance over the largest empire, postal service, military prowess and equality between the sexes. We had modern thinking and taking the right path most of the time thousands of years' ago. Our academicians need to disseminate our faith, our history and our progress. The changes in culture are inevitable but our faith is timeless.

**DM:** No - we will forever be fun loving Bawajees.

## **DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE SUCCEEDED IN INSTILLING ZOROASTRIAN VALUES IN YOUR CHILDREN?**

**KL:** Definitely.

**DD:** I believe we instilled Zoroastrian values in our children, perhaps unknowingly. Reason, respect, love and persuasion trumps abuse of all kinds.

**DM:** Yes. Time commitment from parents is the most important factor in instilling Z Values! Take children to religious classes and the parents should also get involved in the classes & participate in daily prayers at home, children learn more from observing than from being told!

## **WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ZOROASTRIAN VALUE FOR THEM TO HAVE?**

**KL:** Strong sense of moral purity and I consider truthfulness as a very important virtue. Work hard with honesty and respect for all.

**DD:** All Zoroastrians must be truthful as it is our foremost prayer – The Ashem Vohu. Sadly, many do not practice what they pray daily. Truth will always prevail.

**DM:** Daily Prayers - Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds.

# Transmission of **Z** Values in the Diaspora

## DEFENDING THE DIASPORA- RESPONSE TO A JAME JAMSHED EDITORIAL

### ROSHAN RIVETNA

I heartily endorse your sentiments about "Incredible India" expressed in your editorial in the Republic day issue of Jam-e-Jamshed – no doubt there is no other country in the world that has "nurtured our hopes, given wings to our dreams" and inspired our illustrious men and women to blaze the trail in all walks of life, while also giving us the freedom to practice our faith and develop our own unique ethnic identity, like India has. It was a little disturbing though, to read your remarks about those who have taken "flight to distant lands" where "few make it to the upper echelons," where the "community is largely faceless. And increasingly fragmented." Where the "young drift into a cosmopolitanism that takes them further away from their Parsi identity, culture, cuisine and customs." For those of us who have chosen to settle in the West, your remarks certainly do reflect our own concerns and fears as well. One must realize the tremendous odds we face, as a tiny, tiny minority, spread sometimes in ones and twos across the vast continent (speaking of the diaspora in N. America), amongst a largely Judeo-Christian society, trying to find the right balance between assimilation and preservation. If we had come to America in seven shiploads and settled in a colony around a Dar-e-Meher, maybe our story may have been different.

12 Sunday, February 9, 2014

**ROSHAN RIVETNA,** one of the leading lights of the Zoroastrian community in the US and long time resident of Chicago, Illinois, explains how determinedly the Parsis of North America are trying to preserve the faith



Members of ZAGNY (Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York) at a function, wearing daglis

## "Parsis in America are trying hard – very hard"

I heartily endorse Jame-Jamshed Editor Shernaz Engineer's sentiments about "Incredible India" expressed in her column in the Republic day issue of Jame-Jamshed – no doubt there is no other country in the world that has "nurtured our hopes, given wings to our dreams" and inspired our illustrious men and women to blaze the trail in all walks of life, while also giving us the freedom to practice our faith and develop our own unique ethnic identity, like India has. It was a little disturbing though, to read the remarks about those who have taken "flight to distant lands" where "few make it to the upper echelons," where the "community is largely faceless and increasingly fragmented." Where the "young drift into a cosmopolitanism that takes them further away from their Parsi identity, culture, cuisine and customs." For those of us who have chosen to settle in the West, Shernaz's remarks certainly do reflect our own concerns and fears as well. One must realize the tremendous odds we face, as a tiny, tiny minority, spread sometimes in ones and twos across the vast continent (speaking of the Diaspora in North America), amongst a largely Judeo-Christian society, trying to find the right balance between assimilation and preservation.

If we had come to America in seven shiploads and settled in a colony around a Dar-e-Meher, maybe our story may have been different.

Besides our geographic dispersion and the pull of assimilation exacerbated by the rising rate of intermarriage, our differing ancestries add yet another dimension to the challenges we face, as, after a thousand years of separation, Zoroastrians from Iran and Parsis from the Indian subcontinent come together in North America.

But we are trying hard. Very hard.

If you could visit a Zorathshahi home here in North America, where parents are striving to instill Zoroastrian values in their children, and see their efforts to maintain the traditions...

If you could have seen our latest Dar-e-Meher, in Dallas, being built; the tremendous dedication and effort put in by the (mostly second generation) members – from fundraising, to searching for the land and and paint for interminable days; the arrival of the Afarganyu in a crate from Bharuch; down to the momentous inauguration, when the sacred flames were installed by our Mobeds with prayers and blessings of the community. There are twelve such Dar-e-Mehers now, each built with love and dedication by the community...

If you could come to our Dar-e-Mehers and feel the warmth and power of praying by the shining Afarganyu in the dim light, with the flames roaring...

If you could come to our centers on a Sunday and see the ladies making Dar-e-Pors for Arz Ardvisor Parah...

If you could come and enjoy the Gahambars and Jashans, and Mehregan and Jashne Sadeh, and NouRuz celebrations...

If you could attend a FEZANA meeting and see how the Executive Officers (who by the way have no voting rights) work together and see the commitment of the Associations (who alone have voting rights), to discuss, deliberate, make strategic plans and take actions...

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getting permits, through design and construction, as members gathered to sweep and clean, and sand and varnish, and polish

dedication of the religious education teachers and the children gathered to learn and pray, some of whose parents drive a 100 miles to bring them; or adults traveling long distances for Gatha classes...

If you could see the Board Members interminably discussing and debating community matters...



FEZANA's six Presidents: Somi Patel, Dolly Dastoor, Firdosh Mehta, Ruston Kevata, Robinson Rivetna & Frances Patel, cutting FEZANA's 25th anniversary cake at gala in New York



Roshan & Robinson Rivetna



Hosi Mehta, Ashkan Banihae, Robinson and Roshan Rivetna, Katarun Kapadia (then VP and now President) of FEZANA, at FEZANA's 25th anniversary celebrations in Chicago



# Transmission of **Z** Values in the Diaspora

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**But we are trying hard. Very hard.**

Jan-e-Jamshed Weekly
Sunday, February 9, 2014 13



**Persian Nouruz parade in New York**  
on March 21st every year



**Zoroastrian Association of Chicago celebrates FEZANA's 25 years**  
with the traditional *Jagan-na-bhoni*!

notion, like we have done so admirably in Iran and India...

If you could see our involvement with local, national and international charities and service organizations, providing financial help and selfless medical services, mobilizing to help at times of a catastrophe, be it a hurricane in New Orleans, or an earthquake in Iran, or in Pakistan, or a tsunami in Indonesia...

If you could attend the Parliament of World Religions or watch our participation in interfaith organizations, where Zarathushtri stand tall side-by-side with other world religions, far out of proportion to our minuscule numbers...

If you could see FEZANA members participating at the United Nations, taking leadership roles organizing projects to address world issues of poverty and violence...

If you could have a taste of some of these things that are happening in North America, in the short span of barely half a century...

Then you would understand why I am so very proud to be a part of this Western Diaspora that is working hard and has accomplished so much to preserve and perpetuate our religion, values, customs and traditions for our children, and to bring awareness, recognition and respect of our religion to the outside world.

The way forward... In his retrospective of the WZC2013, Sam Baharum said it well: "We must find a way to shake off the apathy of Mumbai Parsis in matters of our religion and community and seek inspiration from UK and USA."

The population in these "Western Diaspora" countries - approx. 21,000 in North America, 5,500 in Great Britain and 4,000 in Australia-New Zealand

is steadily growing, while the numbers in the homelands - an estimated 81,000 in India, 15,000 to 25,000 in Iran and 1,700 in Pakistan are declining (see FEZANA Journal, Fall 2013).

With these demographic shifts and the dispersion of Zoroastrians in pockets across the globe, the need of the hour is for world leadership to come together at a common forum and seek ways and means to support, nurture, respect the various ethnic streams - from Iran, India and the Diaspora communities - and accept, nay celebrate, the differences that are inevitable over the times and climes.

Fragmented, we are too few in numbers to survive and flower. But collectively as a "Community without Borders" we can and shall be successful in bringing about a worldwide Zoroastrian Renaissance.

- note that 6 of the 7 past and present FEZANA Presidents traveled to Mumbai for the World Zoroastrian Congress...

If you could attend a NAMC meeting and see our Mobeds discussing ways and means to perpetuate and practice the religion in this new environment...

If you could come to our Congresses and Conferences and Seminars, where educators and scholars and community members come together to learn and meet and mingle...

If you could attend a Youth Congress and listen to the wisdom from the minds of our young men and women...

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If you could see our efforts to inspire young Zarathushtris to marry within the faith...

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If you could see how our professionals and entrepreneurs, many of whom came to this country

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with barely \$100 in their pockets, have striven to build their homes and families, and risen, purely by dint of hard work and perseverance, to high positions in their chosen fields and developed successful businesses from scratch...

If you could read the stories of our stars who are making waves in all fields - academics, fine arts, literature and journalism, science and technology, medicine, commerce and industry, business and enterprise, each weaving Zarathushtri values of integrity, industry and charity into the fabric of this

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IF you could see the joyous navjotes and weddings that take place at these Centers, and the *uthamna*, *chahrums* ceremonies when the community gathers to pray for the soul of a dear departed one...

IF you could see the Dar-e-Mehers during the Muktads, sparkling clean, filled with table upon table of flowers and the fragrance of loban...

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The article was first published in Jam e Jamshed of February 9, 2014.

**Roshan Rivetna**, of Chicago, has been an active and vocal participant in the North American diaspora. She has authored several publications on behalf of FEZANA and was the first editor of the *FEZANA JOURNAL*



A restaurant Persia Classic at Keyzers gate 7B in 0165 Oslo, Norway Persia Classic AS is owned by Muslims but has a Farvahar symbol and Zoroastrian dictum , when asked why they responded that it is our Persian Heritage.

Information supplied by  
**Jehangir Sarosh, Secretary-General**  
**European Council of Religious Leaders**

# Transmission of **Z** Values in the Diaspora

## FAMILY VALUES

Parents are like farmers  
Tillers of soil  
Hoeing & planting  
From dawn to dusk  
Covered in sweat  
Making sure every  
Bud that blossoms

Roots starts to take hold  
Baby buds start to peep  
Thriving under the  
Rays of the sun  
Blue skies & fresh air  
Reared with devotion

**FARIDA BAMJI,**

**Ottawa, Canada**

And blooms  
Embedded in the  
Fertile ground  
Is able to suck  
Reviving blood

As well as tender  
Loving care  
“Essential Nutrients” fed  
During infancy  
Stand them in good stead  
Will deter them from evil  
Will follow the Path of Asha  
Instead!

Since the “essential nutrients”  
Are buried deep beneath

## CORRECTION TO THE DECEMBER 2014 Vol 28 No 4 RITUAL IMPLEMENTS

*Page 23 NAOGAR-THE NINE –KNOTTED STICK*

Firoza Punthakey Mistree in her article **The Meaning Of The Term Alat And Nine Knotted Stick** on page 23: wrote

*"Naogar (graom nava-pikhem) is a nine-knotted stick used by Zoroastrian priests during the Bareshnum and Vendidad rituals".*

Ervad Gustad Panthaky of Toronto drew our attention to the fact that *"Navgareh is only used while administrating Bareshnum and during Vanot (Vanant) Baj, and is neither used during the Vendidad nor Nirangdin ceremonies. During Vanot (Vanant) Baj the priest strikes the Navgareh eight (8) times to the hindhola; refer to "The Baj-dharna" pg 42-43 by Ramiyar Karanjia."*

Dasturji Kotwal is also of the same opinion

*"Navgareh is not used in the Vendidad ceremony, but during the Dron service in honour of Vanant Yazad performed in the Hawan Gah on Roz Hormazd Mah Fravardin on behalf of the Hamaa Anjoman (the whole Zoroastrian community)."*

**Thank you Ervad Gustad Panthaky for bringing this to our attention.**

# In The News

## ERVAD PARVEZ MINOCHER BAJAN AWARDED A DOCTORATE IN AVESTA PAHLAVI BY MUMBAI UNIVERSITY



Ervad Parvez Minocher Bajan, Panthakee of the Seth B.M. Mevawala Agiary at Byculla, has been awarded a doctorate (Ph.D) degree in Avesta Pahlavi by the Mumbai University for his in-depth research and editing of an authentic and ancient Pahlavi text : ***A son desiring knowledge-the reason for tying the Kusti.*** His research and thesis supervisor was Dasturji Dr Kaikhushroo M. JamaspAsa, through St Xavier's College, Mumbai. Ervad Bajan trained as Navar and Martab in Navsari at a very young age. His research contributes to our corpus of understanding

of the abstract nature of the text and brings out the very essence of the most basic and ancient customs as practiced by the followers of Asho Zarthusht.

Er. Dr. Bajan, a graduate in Physics and Mathematics, holds a Bachelor of Science degree (BSc) and a post graduate degree in law (LLM) specializing in international law and Criminology. In addition he holds a Master's degree in Avesta, Pahlavi and Ancient Iranian languages for which he was awarded the Gold Medal from Mumbai University.

Before taking over the panthak from his father of the Mevawala Agiary, which has been managed by the Bajan family for six generations, since the enthronement of its fire in the year 1851, Ervad Bajan had worked in the Union Bank for over 23 years.

He is the principal of the Sir J.J. Zarthoshti and Mullan Firoze Madressa, managed by the Bombay Parsi Panchayat. He is a Trustee of the Athornan Mandal, the apex body of the Zoroastrian clergy and is a member of the Governing Body of the K.R.Cama Oriental Institute. He is an honorary lecturer at St. Xavier's College as well.

Ervad Dr. Bajan is a friend of the North American Zarathushti Diaspora, having visited this continent several times and given presentations and recitals of the Shah-Nameh. He had been invited to the NAMC Seminar in Toronto and after which a circle trip had been arranged for him to visit 10 other cities in USA & Canada, Viz Toronto, Montreal, Boston, New York, Houston, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver. He attended and presented ***Across the Arabian Sea but for the Faith and Unity*** at the North American Zarathushti Congress in L A, California in December 2014

We congratulate Ervad Dr. Parvez Bajan on his outstanding achievement and may he continue to lead and guide our community from his learned scholarly perspective.



# In The News



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University of London

**BHANDARKAR ORIENTAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE, PUNE  
AND SOAS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON,  
SUPPORTED BY UNESCO PARZOR**

proudly announce the course

## **AN INTRODUCTION TO THE AVESTAN LANGUAGE**

Made possible through a generous donation from France, this free course enables students of all backgrounds to study the ancient language of Zoroastrianism.

The course is designed to provide students with a clear understanding of the basic principles of the Avestan language in a way that enables them to translate simple Avestan texts.

**Dates: Monday, 6 July – Friday, 17 July 2015**  
**Venue: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, India**

Teacher in Charge: **ALMUT HINTZE, ZARTOSHTY BROTHERS PROFESSOR OF  
ZOROASTRIANISM,  
SOAS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**

Those wishing to attend should email the completed attached registration forms to:  
[shrikant.bahulkar@gmail.com](mailto:shrikant.bahulkar@gmail.com)  
[bhandarkarinstitute@gmail.com](mailto:bhandarkarinstitute@gmail.com)

**Attendance of this course is free of charge.**

For more details, please contact:  
Prof. Dr. S. S. Bahulkar, Honorary Secretary In-charge  
Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune 411 004 India  
Email: [shrikant.bahulkar@gmail.com](mailto:shrikant.bahulkar@gmail.com)  
Phones: +91-9272296556 (Cell Phone)  
+91-20-25661363 (Office, Direct Line); +91-20-25656932 (Office)

# In The News

## YOUNG PIANISTS PHIL AND KARL OF VANCOUVER PERFORM IN A PIANO ENSEMBLE WITH LANG LANG.

On his tour across North America, one of the world's greatest pianists, Chinese born Lang Lang who has performed with leading orchestras throughout the world has also been spending time with music students, as part of his work through the Lang Lang International Music Foundation, which promotes music education around the world.



The "101 Pianists with Lang Lang" concert held in Vancouver on March 17, 2005 was the opportunity of a lifetime for 7-year-old twin boys **Phil and Karl Daruwala**, children of Aimy and Zubin Daruwala.

The twins who were born in Vancouver, BC , are in grade 1 and have been learning piano at Vancouver School of Music since the age of four. The father Zubin, has been playing piano since he was four years old as well and studied in India (for 14 years most of which were under the guidance of Tehmie Gazdar in

Bombay) and the United States (2 years at university). The mother Aimy does not play an instrument but enjoys the rest of the family's music making and helps with the children's practices.

The twins were paired together for the concert along with 49 other pairs of students of all ages including adult students and teachers. On the program was Schubert's Marche Militaire and Brahms' Hungarian Dance Number 5.

Practising for the concert began in November 2014 but the twins were away all of December travelling and so they started their routine practice middle of January. Practices at home were regular and the twins struggled at first as the pieces (even in arranged versions for their age group) were



# In The News

harder than anything they had played. Once they learned the notes, there were rhythmic challenges, fingering issues, and musical dynamics and phrasing to be tackled.

By the end of February, Phil and Karl managed practising in smaller groups at the music school learning to synchronize with each other in the music studios which accommodated a maximum of four students on two pianos. Since some adult students and piano teachers were also called upon to join in the concert and play the original four-hand versions of the pieces in concert, their dad (also a piano student at the school) began practising too and would double up with each son at home helping them play and synchronize their part together with the original version. Dad Zubin was also part of the concert, having paired off with another adult student.

On the day of the performance, there was just one rehearsal with all 50 pianos on stage and Maestro Bramwell Tovey, the conductor of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, leading the group of pianists almost all of whom had never played with a conductor before. It was a struggle for the maestro to get so many little children to maintain utmost silence and not play a note until he gave his cue with the baton.

The public performance, which was very well attended, was at the 2,700 seat Orpheum concert hall. Phil even got his question to Lang Lang read out in front of the audience. "How many minutes or hours a day do you practice?" he had asked of Lang Lang to which the prompt response was, "When you're six, you practice six hours a day, and when you're eight, it is eight and so on...". To this the conductor sighed, "I'm sixty-one, Lang Lang!"

After the performance, there were back stage photos and conversations with Lang Lang and every child left that day having lived through an amazing opportunity and with lifelong memories.





# In The News

## ADIL F. DALAL, CEO OF PINNACLE PROCESS SOLUTIONS INTERNATIONAL, PRESENTED WITH THE CROSBY MEDAL BY THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF QUALITY

Adil Dalal receiving the Crosby Medal presented by Cecilia Kimberlin (ASQ Chair), Stephen Hacker (Past-Chair) and Mike Nichols (Awards Board Chair)



*"As the impact of The 12 Pillars book spreads globally and the importance of this work is recognized, I hope Adil Dalal will be recognized as the Guru of Leadership. ~ William Scherkenbach"*

On May 3 2015 Adil F. Dalal received The 2015 Crosby Medal from the American Society of Quality (ASQ) at their Annual World Conference for authoring '**The 12 Pillars of Project Excellence: A Lean Approach to Improving Project Results**'. The ceremony was held at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Conference Center in Nashville, TN, The medal was presented to Dalal by ASQ Chair, Cecilia Kimberlin, Awards Board Chair, Mike Nichols, and past Chair, Stephen Hacker, (photo above)

The medal is named after the quality and business philosophy guru and legend Philip B. Crosby, whose book '*Quality is Free*' launched the zero defects philosophy and is credited for the quality revolution world-wide for organizations seeking to achieve greater efficiency, reliability and profitability. ASQ, a leading authority on global quality, recognizes recipients for their innovative contributions and

exemplary achievements that are representative of the ideas and tools that make our world work better. This book provides a formula, case studies and cultural assessments to achieve 'Zero Defects' outcomes in projects, programs, thus leading to overall operational excellence in organizations world-wide.

Dalal's book was the winner of the prestigious **2014 Shingo Research and Publication award**, and the **2013 Axiom Business book medal**. In addition, Dalal is the recipient of the Global Award for outstanding Contribution to Quality and Leadership. This success was predicted by some initial reviewers of this 700-page book. The Foreword of the book includes prophetic words by William Scherkenbach, a protégé of Dr. Deming and a Deming medal winner, who wrote, "*Adil Dalal's The 12 Pillars of Project Excellence can be described in one word – 'Enlightening!' Just as Deming's concepts have universal applications far beyond the field of quality; Dalal's concepts will reach far beyond the field of project management. As the impact of this book spreads globally and the importance of this work is recognized, I hope Adil Dalal will be recognized as the Guru of Leadership*". This book has been adopted as a *Leadership Body of Knowledge* by the Human Development & Leadership division of ASQ.

Dalal is the CEO of Pinnacle Process Solutions, Intl®, LLC, past-Chair of ASQ's Human Development & Leadership division, and Co-founder and Chairman of the Board for Patriots4Our Heroes, a non-profit serving veterans with PTS and TBI. A distinguished global keynote speaker and radio show host, Dalal has authored '*A Legacy Driven Life*', and co-authored ASQ's '*Lean Handbook*' and '*Changing Our World*'. Dalal is currently pursuing a PhD in Performance Psychology from GCU.

<http://www.prweb.com/releases/CrosbyMedal/AdilDalal/prweb12720138.htm>

# In The News

## **WZO TRUST & D. N. MEHTA SARVAJANIK HOSPITAL, NAVSARI COLLABORATE WITH PARZOR & OTHERS TO TAKE 'JIYO PARSI' FORWARD IN SOUTH GUJARAT.**

**DINSHAW K. TAMBOLY**

The Government of India and the Ministry of Minority Affairs are to be congratulated for the care and concern they have demonstrated for the Parsi community by launching and funding the 'Jiyo Parsi' scheme that is aimed to reverse the declining trend of Parsi population by adopting a scientific protocol and structured interventions, with the objectives of stabilising and increasing the population of Parsis in India.

While the Parzor Foundation of Delhi have been appointed to administer the scheme, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences at Mumbai are implementing the same. Bombay Parsi Punchayet & Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India are also playing equally important roles of propagating and administering the 'Jiyo Parsi' initiative.

The 'Jiyo Parsi' scheme has essentially been put in place to provide financial assistance to Parsi married couples for medical treatment with respect for fertility and childbirth under standard medical protocols, as well to focus on advocacy and outreach programs to generate awareness within the Parsi population towards lineage enhancement.

It is a known fact that many Parsi families reside in the villages of South Gujarat who being economically challenged would be unable to participate in this '*community saving*' venture as it would not be possible for them to first pay for the fertility treatment and thereafter recover the same as per norms laid down.

Keeping the above in mind, Parzor Foundation, World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust and D. N. Mehta Sarvajanik Hospital at Navsari have agreed to collaborate their efforts in order to create awareness about the Jiyo Parsi scheme amongst the Parsi Irani population in South Gujarat, and to aid and / or facilitate economically challenged Parsis and Irani Zoroastrians to take benefit under the Jiyo Parsi scheme in the manner stated below:

1. World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust shall issue the Jiyo Parsi application forms to prospective couples of South Gujarat intending to participate and take benefit of the scheme. On receipt of applications from such prospective couples, World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust will conduct a 'due diligence' in respect of the financial capacity of such applicant couples. Such due diligence shall be for the purposes of determining whether the applicants can be determined to be "economically challenged".
2. The signed application forms of those determined to be 'economically challenged' shall then be forwarded to Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai for scrutiny and changes if necessary.
3. D. N. Mehta Sarvajanik Hospital, Navsari will arrange for a Doctor specializing in providing 'Fertility Treatment' to give a consultation to such applicant couples and to give such treatment as may be found appropriate. This facility will be available to couples that avail of the treatment at the D. N. Mehta Sarvajanik Hospital, Navsari or at the clinics of doctors approved by them.
4. D. N. Mehta Sarvajanik Hospital will make sure that the referred doctor presents the bills within the

# In The News

limits stipulated by Ministry Of Minority Affairs and will also directly settle the bills of the doctor providing such consultation and treatment to such couples, without the doctor in question having to raise any bill upon the applicant couples categorized by World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust as being economically challenged.

5. D. N. Mehta Sarvajani Hospital will open joint bank accounts with participating couples to facilitate banking the cheques received from Parzor Foundation - (which as per government procedure will be in the name of the beneficiary couple) - and recovering what they have already paid to the attending doctor .
6. Thus, economically challenged Parsi couples will receive fertility treatment on a cashless basis with D. N. Mehta Sarvajani Hospital, Navsari first making payments on their behalf to the attending doctors and thereafter recovering the same.

It is hoped that couples of South Gujarat who are unable to make payments first and thereafter recover the same from Parzor Foundation, as per the 'Jiyo Parsi' scheme will come forward and take advantage of the 'cashless facility' being offered under the collaborating institutions.

In our country of 118 crores, where there are 86,853 babies being born every day, where the focus of the government is on containing the galloping population, we Parsis must recognise and be extremely proud of the fact that our government, has in spite of these factors recognised the importance and necessity for Parsis to survive and continue to be an integral part of India have conceived, launched and funded the 'Jiyo Parsi' scheme to ensure, we Parsis do not get wiped out.

Atha Zamyad, Yatha Afrinami.

## *Chehrenama Calling All New Graduates*

**To congratulate and honor our young Zoroastrians on  
their achievements**

**As we celebrate graduations of loved ones in 2015 if  
you wish to share your own or your family member's  
acceptance or graduation from a university please  
email their name, university's name, and field of study  
to [cninfo@czcjournal.org](mailto:cninfo@czcjournal.org) by August 10, 2015. It will be  
published in the Fall issue of Chehrenama .**



# In The News

## FIRST INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA (IDY): JUNE 21, 2015

### FROM RAJPATH TO TIMES SQUARE- YOGA GOES GLOBAL

Addressing the UN General Assembly on 27 September 2014, the PM of India Mr. Narendra Modi had said: *"Yoga is an invaluable gift of India's ancient tradition. It embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfillment; harmony between man and nature; a holistic approach to health and well-being. It is not about exercise but to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and the nature. By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help us deal with climate change. Let us work towards adopting an International Yoga Day."*

On Dec 11, 2014, India's Permanent Representative introduced the draft resolution in UNGA, which received broad support from 170 Member States, including USA, and was adopted without a vote. June 21 was declared as the International Day of Yoga.

This day was chosen as International Yoga Day as in the northern hemisphere the Summer Solstice, June

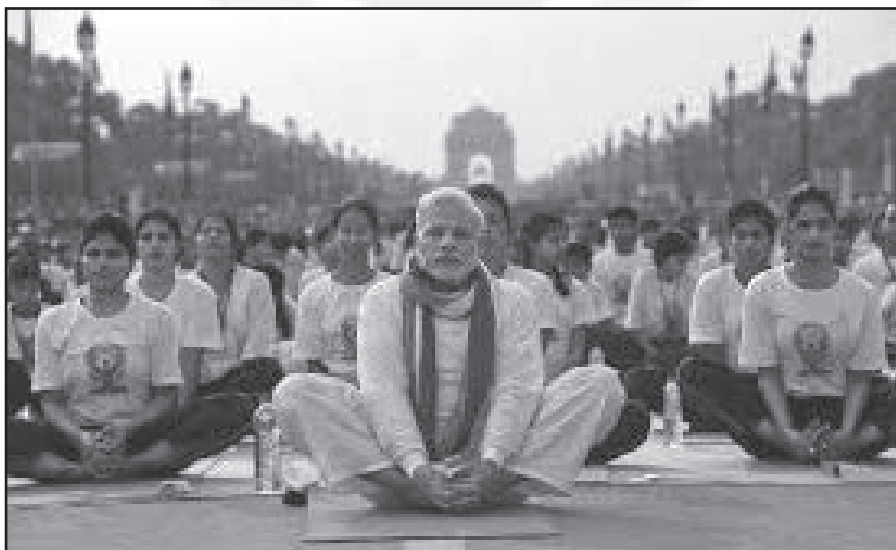
21, is the longest day of the year, the day when the earth is the closest to the sun on its orbit from the North to the South. From the yoga perspective, it was the day when Lord Shiva, first taught Yoga to his disciples, hence this day is the birthday of Yoga. For Zoroastrians the summer solstice is celebrated as Tirgan, according to the Ancient Mazdayasni calendar.

#### First International Day of Yoga (IDY):

192 countries participated in the celebration. In the US, the First International Day of Yoga was celebrated at the National Mall, Washington, DC organized by Friends of Yoga in association with the Embassy of India with several 1000 people participating. In addition there were several 100 events around the country. Addressing the celebrations were The Indian Minister for Press, Information and Culture, Sridharan Madhusudhanan, the Indian Ambassador to the US Sri Arun K Singh, representatives from the White House reading the messages from President Obama, and from

Secretary of State John Kerry, and from Health and Human Services Department.

In India there were celebrations in all major cities. In New Delhi, 37,000 participants were led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the Rajpath converted into a



sea of white Yogapath. People from all walks of life, including students, diplomats and cadets participated in a 35 minute organized session. 32 LED screens were placed for the public to watch the celebrations. It was a wonderful sight to view on <https://youtu.be/BUWK6nO6K3E>

Source: Indian Embassy, Washington DC

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B4Fj0aTbBV3bfk1ONWlnaGItaENnbXp0Q1c3RFdfNExLMkVGQzRsVXJ0M1JxaG9kWko4b3c&authuser=0>

# In The News

## ISRAEL POST SERVICE ISSUES A NEW STAMP FEATURING THE CYLINDER BEARING THE CYRUS DECLARATION.

The Israel Post Service has issued a new stamp bearing an image of the famed clay cylinder which bears an inscription by King Cyrus of Persia declaring he built a Temple for the Jews. This was discovered in

the ancient city of Babylon in 1879. A long inscription in Akkadian includes a plea made by King Cyrus of Persia to the Babylonians in which he declared that he had acted on behalf of the Babylonian god Marduk. "I, Cyrus King of Babylonia... Marduk the Great Lord... blessed me... and I built for them a permanent Temple. I gathered all their inhabitants and restored their place of residence."

The stamp tab features a coin minted in this autonomous province in the mid-4th century BCE, during the Persian rule. The front of the coin is engraved with a lily and the back is adorned with a spread-winged falcon as well as the word "Yehud" in ancient Hebrew letters. The coin is part of the Israel Museum collection.

In the year 586 BCE, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia conquered the city of Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple and sent many of the inhabitants of Judah into exile. The Babylonian Exile ended when the empire was conquered by Cyrus II of Persia and Media,

who made a public declaration granting the Jews the right to return to Judah and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.

[http://unitedwithisrael.org/israel-post-issues-cyrus-declaration-stamp/?ios\\_app=true](http://unitedwithisrael.org/israel-post-issues-cyrus-declaration-stamp/?ios_app=true)



# In The News



## 6<sup>th</sup> WORLD ZOROASTRIAN YOUTH CONGRESS

DECEMBER 28 2015 to JANUARY 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016

SANAYA MASTER  
Marketing Co-Chair, 6<sup>th</sup> WZYC

### HIGH FIVE

*With 101 questions flying back and forth as the countdown to the 6<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Youth Congress begins, we thought it would be a good idea to have a snap chat with the youth who are making it all happen.*



*To be held at Kings College from 28th December 2015 to 2nd January 2016, the 6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress (6WZYC) promises to be an experience of a lifetime. (photo above)*

*Here are the five most wanted answers to the questions you've been asking about the most anticipated event on the Zoroastrian Youth calendar. You asked, we answered.*



# In The News



**AUCKLAND BY NIGHT**



**AUCKLAND BY DAY**

## **1. WHAT FOOD WILL BE SERVED AT THE CONGRESS?**

As young Zoroastrians we understand exactly how important good food is! Since Zoros will be arriving from all parts of the world, international cuisine will be served at the Congress. There will be a wide variety of foods to cater to all palates

Please let us know of any specific dietary requirements or allergies on your registration form. Each of the in-house kitchens on campus will also be replenished with sufficient snacks, fruit, tea and coffee. There will be food and drink vending machines on campus as well.

## **2. WHAT DO I NEED TO BRING ALONG TO THE CONGRESS?**

If there is one thing that is predictable about Auckland weather, it's that it is totally unpredictable! Though it will be summer time, we highly recommend that you bring along an all-weather jacket. Also bring along your cap, shades and sunscreen as the New Zealand sun can be quite harsh. Your check list should also include:

- Appropriate footwear for events such as The Amazing Race, New Year's Eve Celebration and Fair Day
- Swimwear since we have access to the pool on campus.
- A scarf or topi for the Jashan and traditional attire for glam Traditional night
- And last but not least, don't forget your lifeline-your universal adapter that will keep you charged and connected through your stay in NZ.

## **3. IF I WISH TO EXTEND MY STAY IN AUCKLAND, EITHER BEFORE OR AFTER THE CONGRESS, WHAT ARE THE ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS AVAILABLE?**

New Zealand is one of the most beautiful countries in the world so why not make the most of your trip and stay back to explore. If your visa permits you to stay in Auckland outside of the Congress dates, you can contact Mrs Tanaz Siganporia at [tanaz2210@yahoo.co.nz](mailto:tanaz2210@yahoo.co.nz), who will be happy to arrange accommodation for you with a local Zoroastrian family, free-of-charge!

## **4. HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE IN EACH ROOM?**

Each delegate will be given single room accommodation. Delegates can request to be put in rooms next to one another. Married couples have the option of sharing a room. Minors (15 -17 years) of the same gender will be given the option of sharing a room with one other person or having individual rooms.

## **5. IS IT TRUE THAT YOU CAN'T REGISTER FOR THE CONGRESS UNLESS YOU STAY IN THE ACCOMMODATION ARRANGED BY THE CONGRESS?**

We want everyone to have the full Congress experience and part of that experience is living at the venue. So yes, all delegates will have to stay at the accommodation provided by the 6WZYC team-- including locals from New Zealand.

Over the last count, over 200 delegates from across Australia, USA, Canada, UK, India, Iran and New Zealand have already registered to attend the Congress. All Zoroastrians between the ages of 15 and 35 are invited to attend. The casual rate is now available until 16<sup>th</sup> August 2015. Visit: [www.6wzyc.co.nz](http://www.6wzyc.co.nz) for more details.



# *Return to roots* 2015

## FOREWORD

**ROSHEEN KABRAJI,  
RETURN TO ROOTS CO-ORGANIZER  
AND REPRESENTATIVE FOR UK, EUROPE AND PAKISTAN**

When the Zoroastrian Return to Roots program launched in 2012 I had no idea whether young Zoroastrians, like me, would want to spend ten days of their hard earned holidays or money trekking around the depths of Gujarat and bustling around the megacities of Mumbai or Delhi, in search of their Zoroastrian roots. Three years on, and two Return To Roots trips later I am indebted to the 30 young men and women who took a risk on a youth-led program and made the trip over from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Denver, Atlanta, Minnesota, New York, New Jersey, Vancouver, Toronto, London, Karachi, Mumbai and Delhi.

In the following articles, written by Return To Roots Fellows from the most recent trip in March 2015, each has provided their personal reflections of the trip. As you read through the articles, you will see the common threads that each of them touch upon: being in an environment where you are exposed to and debate different views from within the community on key issues; the ability and desire of an Iranian Zarathushti from California to relate to a Parsi from Pakistan and vice versa; for the warmth and generosity that permeates the community from an orphanage to multi-billion dollar business houses; and the retrospection that a journey like this



*Return to Roots fellow, at the start of the program in front of the Delhi Dar e Mehr.*



# Return to roots 2015

demands of a young Zoroastrian adult growing up in the diaspora.

As I listened to the conversations, the questions, the debates that our Fellows have on these trips, there is one overwhelming conclusion that these particular youth from our community agreed on: the space for intolerance, bigotry and ignorance needs to be curtailed and the space for thinking, knowledge, and respect needs to be expanded and nurtured by our community leaders and organizations, both Parsi and Iranian. Using one's *Vohu Manah*, with respect and compassion after one has made an effort to learn and question from scholars with differing views is the only way forward.

Both Perdís Gheibi and Arash Jahanian, our American Iranian Zarathushti Fellows, were intrigued not only by the importance and preservation of ritual by Parsis in India but also by the diversity of the community within India. From there conversations flowed between Perdís and her fellow Californian, Khush Italia, both active members in their respective local Zoroastrian communities who proceeded to discuss ways and opportunities to bridge the divide between the Iranian and Parsi Zoroastrians in their local communities in California.

I could not tell you what factors will ignite each of the Fellows to 'connect' to an experience of being on the Return To Roots trip. For some it is the stillness of standing on the shores of the Varoli River (where the first Zoroastrian boats from Persia landed on the coast of Gujarat), or visiting a particular Atash Behram, or the timeless friendships made on long bus journeys. All I know is that it is driven by their individual passion, curiosity and internal spiritual journeys. As the Fellows point out, the result can be both immediate in the friendships you make, or wearing your sudreh kusti more often, and ever unfolding in learning more about your identities and the religious community it is tied to. Equally rewarding is to see how some of the Fellows, such as Perzen Patel and Veera Rustomji, have contributed and benefitted from the trip in their own professional lives. The many culinary experiences allowed for our Bawi Bride, Perzen, to tell the other Fellows about the basics and intricacies of some of our favourite Parsi food. Veera, on the other hand, was able to expand on her knowledge of Zoroastrian texts and images for her own art projects.

As you read the stories of the Return to Roots Fellows 2015, if you are a parent I hope you see how it could give your children the opportunity to reconnect to experiences and places it may be difficult for you to expose them to on your own, if you even want them to in the first place. If you are a twenty or thirty-something wondering what the point of this trip is i.e. why not just go to another Congress and meet a bunch more Zoroastrians there, then continue reading below. If you are still not satisfied or are even more curious join our Facebook group or email [contact@zororoots.org](mailto:contact@zororoots.org) and get in touch with one of our Fellows directly and ask them about the trip. As you can see they are all over the world so you really have no excuse. We look forward to seeing you on the next trip!

## About

The Zoroastrian Return to Roots program is a youth-led organization established in 2012 in partnership with PARZOR. We are greatly indebted to our institutional supporters for the 2015 trip including FEZANA, ZAGNY, ZSO, ZAPANJ, Himmie and Jamshed Nusserwanjee Trust, and Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal. We are also thankful to all the individual donors who generously support this endeavor, especially our Fellows from Roots One who upon returning have donated funds back to the program, exemplifying the spirit on which the program is being built.

**Rosheen Kabraji** is a co-organizer of the Return To Roots program. She is currently pursuing her PhD in Contemporary Indian Politics at King's College London. Her favourite Return To Roots moments so far were spending quiet moments in the Navsari Atash Behram, watching the Return To Roots men line up with on the shores of the River Varoli with their kustis hanging out for a photo-op, singing Bollywood songs with young girls in the orphanage in Surat, photographing the fellows on their heritage tour of Bombay, meeting young dynamic Parsi artists and entrepreneurs, and laughing till she cried thanks to some charming and mischievous Zoroastrian bawas and bawis!





# Return to roots 2015

## Arash Jahanian

Standing near the mouth of the Varoli River, I took a moment to step away from the group whose company I had come to enjoy so much, and I wandered closer to the waves and farther from chatter. I kneeled down to hear the waves better, and thought to myself, now *this* is a religious experience. I looked out and imagined the boats that carried the first Zoroastrians to India sailing toward these banks. Those refugees, the first Parsis, were not my ancestors, but they were such an important part of my religion, my history, and my identity nonetheless. Learning and experiencing their story in such a real way was indescribable. That day's historical journey—which included visiting an ancient *dakma* with the archaeologist who had excavated it—invigorated me so much that I, the self-proclaimed grumpy old man of the trip, found myself suggesting the “jumping photo” later that day at the Sanjan Monument.



Group on the bank of the Varoli river, Gujarat, where some of the earliest settlers from Iran arrived on the very exact shores when they fled from Persia to India

I was not the only one to try to isolate myself for some reflection there on the shores of the Varoli. In fact, I had mimicked one of my new friends who I noticed had wandered out toward the water (though when I asked him about it later, he said, “Oh, I just like listening to the waves”). And in the group's pictures, I later noticed shots of others who had apparently taken the opportunity to experience this moment on their own.

Part of the uniqueness of the Return to Roots journey was that it was at once an individual and a shared experience. We each explored our religion and ourselves through our individual lenses, yet the group experience fed into and informed each journey. And, although we ranged over a decade in age and three continents in geography,



# Return to roots 2015

we came together and gained an invaluable education from one another.

This intersection between the individual and group experience is where I think religion manifests itself. I have no doubt that for me, religion had always been a very individual experience, and one of ideology as compared to practice. In large part, this was by necessity. My father did not found the Zoroastrian Association of Kansas until I was about ten years old, and even then the community was too small to meet more than once a month. When I (frequently) have to explain my religion to my friends and others I encounter, I quickly point out that the closest temple I had growing up was in Chicago (an eight-hour drive), and that now I'm even not sure where the closest temple to Denver is.

My religious education started out with me seated on the floor upstairs with my father, who read from books in Farsi that he thought provided a good introduction to Zoroastrianism. When the time came to have my *navjote* performed, I studied on my own and with his help to memorize the necessary prayers. As a family, we did observe various practices including *nabor*, the days on the Zoroastrian calendar on which we do not eat slaughtered animals. And to this day, when I'm getting ready to leave the house, my mom will sometimes say, "Look at Asho Zartosht's picture before you go." But when people ask me whether I consider myself a practicing Zoroastrian, I say yes, and explain that to me that really just means praying every night and adhering to a basic set of beliefs that includes monotheism and good thoughts, good words, good deeds.

Thus, growing up and being a Zoroastrian meant something very different for me than what I experienced in India. Walking into the Delhi Agiary on our first day, I was terrified. Whenever we visited temples in the U.S., my family would basically just kind of walk in, sit down, pray, and leave. Beyond putting on a *topee*, (cap) taking off my shoes, and washing my hands, I had no idea what to do. Frankly, before the trip I didn't even know that there were laypersons who wore their *sedreh* and *kushti* every day. But, thanks to the

distinguished scholars with whom we visited as well as my companions on the trip, I learned the rituals and the meaning behind them. The importance of ritual to the Parsis was eye-opening. So were the many specific and nuanced beliefs that in some cases contradicted my understanding of Zoroastrianism as a simple and progressive dogma.

Also eye-opening was to witness the presence of a Parsi community in India: colonies, businesses, food, culture, and ethnicity. It was actually the night after the trip was officially over that a few of us were invited to the Navroze celebration at the Dadar Parsi Colony in Mumbai. My friend turned to me and said, "Look around. This is one of the largest gatherings of Zoroastrians in the world." And so I did look around as the thought sank in, along with another thought: Wow.

Having experienced these various aspects and representations of the Parsi community, I can relate to my Parsi brothers and sisters in a way I could not before. It can start with conversations about basic things like their experiences in places like Bombay, Udwada, and Navsari. The increased understanding of the Parsi experience will hopefully help me and the other Return to Roots Fellows serve as unifying bridges for our own Zoroastrian communities as well as the larger community.

As for the larger personal impact of my journey of India, it was undoubtedly a formative experience. But I can't measure or predict the precise nature of that impact, as such issues of identity, faith, and community have to play out over time. Frankly, my disagreement with some of the things I learned will persist, and in some cases there were even things that turned me off to Zoroastrianism. But the deeper understanding that I gained of the Zoroastrian experience and identity is invaluable, and that is something I will carry forward in my religious practice, in my understanding of what it means to be Zoroastrian, and in my contributions to my communities.

**Arash Jahanian** is a civil rights attorney in Denver, Colorado. Originally from Kansas City, Kansas, he is a graduate of the University of North Carolina and Georgetown Law, and he taught in Chicago's underprivileged schools with Teach For America. His loving family include his parents, Daryoush and Mahin, and brother Keyarash.



# Return to roots 2015

## Transmission of Zarathusthi Family Values in the Diaspora - North American Parsi Perspective Through Return to Roots Program

Khushchehr Italia



If you grew up in a traditional Parsi household you know how much the Parsi culture had a hand in various aspects of your life from customs, rituals, religious beliefs, and especially food. Regardless of where you grew up, there was a distinct Parsi influence in one way shape or form. Our religious customs versus our cultural customs are so closely tied, sometimes it's hard to tell whether they came from a religious standpoint or a cultural standpoint (of the Parsis settling in India). For example, the religious holidays we celebrate or our birthdays, we always prepare *tilli* and a flower garland for Zarathustra's photo frame and for birthdays, also one for who's birthday it is. Also on holidays/birthdays, we celebrate by putting chalk outside and inside our house. Now whether these are rituals that are religious-based or culturally-based is besides the point. The point is this is what Parsis do. We have been brought up with these distinct rituals.

Growing up in North America in a traditional Parsi household, I was exposed to all things Parsi, including a strong sense in our Zoroastrian faith. My brother and I had our navjotes by the age of 10, we were expected to wear our Sudreh and Kusti daily, say our prayers daily, light divos on special occasions, celebrate religious holidays with Parsi food, attempt to adhere to the special vegetarian days, live by the motto "*Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds*", make good decisions, live honestly, and always pay it forward by giving back to charities. These are the ideals and values we were brought up to live by. While being taught about these values, we were always reminded of how much the Parsis have done for their community and country in India, Bombay in particular. It was also spoken of with such pride, and after seeing these things first hand during the Return to Roots trip, I can honestly say I feel and speak with the same pride and appreciation as well. Considering what a small community we are, it is simply amazing what we have contributed to this world.

Our Zoroastrian community is a small one, unlike Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, and the Parsis are an even smaller sub-community of Zoroastrians. It is rare to find a person outside of our faith who has even heard of Zoroastrianism. What makes it even tougher is answering the question that comes after telling someone you're Zoroastrian, "What's that? What are you? What do you believe in?". The way I usually go about it sounds something like this: "*I'm from India, but of Persian decent. My religion is the oldest monotheistic religion in the world. We believe in the teachings of Zarathustra with the basic belief of Good Thoughts, Good Words, and*





# *Return to roots* 2015

*Good Deeds. We have fire temples mainly in India and Iran where we worship God through the means of a sacred fire. We don't believe in converting anyone, so both my parents and their parents and their parents are Zoroastrian. So if one marries out their kids are not considered Zoroastrian, though there is debate on that issue. Hence, our numbers are dwindling." After this schpeal, people usually respond with "Oh wow, so then do you have to marry in your religion? Isn't it like super hard? Do you have a lot of options?". I answer "Well, ideally yes I do need to marry within my religion and yeah we know people but to find 'the one' out of such a small pool of possibilities seems to be an impossible task (feels like it many times)." Each time this conversation is had, it leaves me wondering why I even try considering the odds that my own children will probably not be able to "keep this up". Yet, I guess most of us try for the sake of our parents, our upbringing, our religious faith, and/or maybe the fear of being excommunicated from our family and faith. Also the idea that it would be easier to find someone who understands who we are without us having to explain and for them to go through the "breaking in" process in trying to understand Zoroastrianism and the Parsis community.*



*Shroff Eye Hospital, one of the biggest in North India, run by the fourth generation of the Shroff family*



# *Return to roots* 2015

Most of us, Parsis, living in North America do the best we can to maintain our culture within our homes and community. A big issue for most communities in meeting up more frequently is distance; how widespread our community is throughout North America. Using my example in Los Angeles, we have one of the largest populations of Parsis in North America, but our association, Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC), encompasses all of Southern California, spreading across hundreds of miles, making it very difficult for our Committee to plan many events and for our Members to attend many events. Not being surrounded by your community more often, leaves one feeling fragmented, even so much as to say feeling like a part-time Zoroastrian. I cannot speak for everyone, but I can say that's how I feel. Most of the time (95% or more), you are surrounded by Non-Zoroastrians who don't have a clue as to what you are and your cultural background. The only thing you can do is try to stay true to being a Zoroastrian, share your world with those around you, and keep those who align with your moral values and respect who you are and what you stand for.

The Return to Roots (RTR) Trip reinforced the importance of maintaining bonds and friendships with other Zoroastrians because we share the same foundation; family upbringing, religious beliefs/customs, traditions, food and language (except with the Irani Zoroastrians), and similar experience with our world and those around us. We spent two weeks glued to each other and surprisingly we loved and appreciated every minute of it. I think we were all surprised by how easy it was to form close bonds in such a short time. Not only did the Roots trip allow us to experience the beauty of India, the Parsi community, and the journey our ancestors had made to get us to where we are today, but we were able to understand and feel the pride Parsis share in where we came from, the struggles of preserving our deep rooted religious customs, and the immense impact we have had in India inspite of our samll community.

I have been to India numerous times in my life, but I've never experienced India the way I did this time. The RTR trip was a once in a lifetime experience. Not only was it well organized, but I have never felt so comfortable in India as I did this time, from the accommodations to the RTR leaders and speakers, to the warm receptions we received everywhere we went, and of course the amazing participants from all over the world. We all walked away having the most positive and enjoyable experience! The bond we formed with the participants and organizers made me appreciate being around those in our community and filled a void that I didn't realize was there. There is just a certain level of comfort and understanding that comes from being around those in your own community (Iranis or Parsis). I was amazed to learn that Zoroastrians from other parts of the world are pretty much the same as me from North America. We enjoy the same kinds of music, food, and activities. We have quite a bit in common. I was especially surprised to learn a lot about Pakistan and how it is to live there from the Karachi crew. It is astonishing how misinformed we are in the US. Most importantly, I think we all left with a greater love and appreciation for our community and religion. This uniqueness Parsis talk about is something I learned to be proud of and appreciate, rather than shy away from and hide. I never realized I was doing that, until I came back from the RTR trip, and people told me I was glowing when I spoke about my experiences. I came back to the US truly feeling proud to be a Zoroastrian, more so, because I had a better understanding of who I was and where I came from. This trip changed my life and I am so eternally grateful for this amazing experience. Since returning, I have shared my experiences and encouraged many others to participate in future trips. I don't know of any other program that gives back so much to Young Zoroastrians in such a short amount of time.

*Khushchehr "Khush" Italia resides in Los Angeles, California, where she has been working in Finance and Operations, since retiring from a successful professional tennis career.*



# Return to roots 2015

VEERA RUSTOMJI

Within a small minority such as the Zoroastrians in Pakistan, much of the acquired knowledge of the religion is made possible through oral transmissions of history. As a young Parsi in an increasingly globalized world I have always found it difficult to reinforce and grapple with my Zoroastrian identity primarily because of the lack of literature I have read and been exposed to. Although there is an irreplaceable personal attachment to the stories we inherit from our grandparents -or that one particularly kooky aunt in every family – there is a definite need to provide academic and approachable resources for the young Parsis in Pakistan.

As a Fine Art student, my thesis and dissertation had begun to revolve around Zoroastrianism and I found that there are so many lacunas in our knowledge of our ancestral lineage. The Return to Roots (RTR) trip was an absolute gold mine for me with an exposure to the varied and lively Indian Parsi culture with fascinating talks by eminent figures of the community.



I have always had a deeper understanding with visuals and growing up in Karachi's Parsi community created a treasure chest of images for me which included everything from *garas*, chalk patterns to the endearingly happy smiles from Parsi uncle and aunties after they recognized who we were. I was mainly looking forward to the Return to Roots trip to explore the visual dialogue of Zoroastrianism in India and to gain a conducive explanation behind iconic features such as the farohar, the fish patterns or even the initiative reasoning behind the design of the *sudreh kustī*.

*At the Tata Central Archives, Pune*







# *Return to roots* 2015

Much to the credit of the young organizers of the Roots program, the trip was not just a guided tour of historic sights and an excuse to say “I have officially done, eaten and seen everything Parsi”, but open up opportunities to talk, discuss and reflect on important issues. It really started off from the first day in Delhi after the screening of Qissa-e-Parsi as the content of the film urged everyone to speak up about their opinions on marriage outside of the community and the isolation of people who chose to do so. One of the most apparent values which everyone took away with from the RTR trip was that it is paramount to not only empathize but respect another person’s opinion. Especially in the case of religion where the subject matter is naturally sensitive, the RTR program and organizers promote mutual respect and appreciation for different opinions. Coming from a country where intolerance and a clamp over freedom of expression prevail, I thought it was great that every RTR participant not only appreciated different perspectives on Zoroastrian history or praxis but want to know more. At times we would hear contradictory scholarly opinions on matters such as the Qissa-e-Sanjan or Zoroastrian eschatology but RTR encouraged a holistic understanding of Zoroastrian values – both traditional and scientific.

Perhaps the most consistent feature I saw and experienced with the Indian Parsi community is the warmth and generosity of the people who hosted us at their homes and institutions. In Navsari, Surat, Sanjan, Bombay and Delhi, Parsis opened up their homes to us and we had an incredible time learning about their family history and contribution. Even as walked through the streets of Parsi homes in small residential towns in Gujarat, it was heartwarming to see and wave to Parsis playing cards on their balconies inviting us into their living rooms. We were also treated with such importance in institutions such as the Shroff Eye Hospital, The Bombay House, Della Resorts and The Poonawalla Stud Farms. It was overwhelming to see entrepreneurs making such an effort to accommodate a bunch of strangers.

The Roots trip also established the fact that the essence of community, inter-reliance and trust are very prominent in the global Zoroastrian community and it seemed that our group encompassed these values and became one (bizarre) family. Whether we woke up at one in the morning to collectively sit and pray together at the Iran Shah in Udvada, or hysterical sing along battles on bus rides, the relationship dynamics were such that any experience was amplified because of our collective presence. The two weeks of the Return to Roots itinerary seemed to have ended before it even began for most us. However, after visiting Parsi institutions such as the Parsi General Hospital in Mumbai and the orphanages for girls and boys in Surat, I realized that while India has a much larger population of Parsis, not everyone was bathing in the pride and glory of being born into this community. It is crucial to understand and recognize that there are avenues which very much need help. Although we immediately associate the Tatas, Mistrys or Poonawalla’s with the grandeur and economic burgeoning of Parsis, the Roots agenda reflects upon how we can help make the lives of our community members easier and more enjoyable. Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia and his priest pupils gave us an insightful experience into some of the less glamorous aspects of the Zoroastrian heritage by talking to us about the difficulties the priesthood has faced and continues to battle with. Similarly, meeting and interacting with ill and alone Parsis echoes the need for more involvement with people who may not be making headlines but do deserve the global community’s attention and more importantly, care.

It would be presumptuous to state that these values and characteristics are predominantly Zoroastrian but after the Roots trip, I feel that these qualities are nurtured and preserved in Zoroastrian institutions and homes. Not many people from other minority communities would unconditionally smile and wave at each other every time they crossed paths or cook an exorbitant amount of food to keep strangers happy and welcomed. Much of the credit lies with the key organizers Aban Marker Kabraji, Shireen Havewala, Rosheen Kabraji, Dinsha Mistree, Kaiyan K. Mistree and Arzan Sam Wadia for their hard work and commitment to create such wonderful interactions with Zoroastrians.

***Veera Rustomji is a Fine Art student at the Indus Valley School of Art & Architecture in Karachi, Pakistan. She continues to pursue freelance projects with publications and has written and directed a play called The Lost Jews of Karachi.***



# *Return to roots* 2015

## Zoroastrian India Through the Eyes of an Iranian Zarathushti

PARDIS GHEIBI

During my experience at Return to Roots, I had the pleasure of exploring the Parsi/Zoroastrian culture in India. It was an amazing experience to be able to see how the Parsis have kept the Zoroastrian practices and traditions alive in India. During the trip, I was able to see many traditions that I hadn't known about and was never exposed to. For example, one of the things that really stood out to me was the fact that weapons were kept at the temples. When one of my fellow roots members explained to me that the weapons were kept at the temples because the Mobeds were trained to fight and would actually fight off anyone who would try to put out the fire, not only was I able to learn and witness something extraordinary, but I felt a great deal of pride, as I thought about the dedication that was felt by the Mobeds for their faith and religion.



***At Doongervadi,, Mumbai ,fellows learn about the sky burial practice with Khojeste Mistre***

I also had the chance to see that the Parsi community in India as they continued to use the Dakhmas. Visiting the Dakhmas was a beautiful experience, as it gave me a great feeling to see that older traditions such as this one are carried out, especially since the function of Dakhmas have stopped in Iran due to several reasons. Not only that, but it was astonishing to see the amount of dedication and resources that goes into maintaining such Dakhmas.



# *Return to roots* 2015

All the temples I had attended both in Iran and in the United States, although beautiful, are artificially lit, allow cameras, and are generally more modernized. Which is why visiting the Atash Behrams in India was an extremely rewarding experience. The traditional nature of the temples such as Iran Shah provide a spiritual experience that cannot be described in words. I was able to compare the experience of visiting the traditional and the nontraditional temples. In a way, the form of less traditional temples that I have been attending before I visited the Atash Bahrams in India are more inclusive and allow for more freedom as to how one chooses to connect with the religion, however, the experience of visiting the more traditional temples in India was completely different. Visiting temples such as Iranshah that had no artificial lighting, a separate place for people to put on their sedre-koshti, and was lit completely by candles was a once in a lifetime opportunity. That form of an experience, although traditional and difficult to replicate in the United States, opened my eyes to the beauty of tradition.

Before my experience on the Return to Roots trip, I had always viewed the religious experience to have a strong spiritual connection that is not related to rituals or traditions, so much so that I had not had my Sedre-poshi ceremony done until immediately before my trip. Completing the trip however,



***Hands on Kusti weaving demonstration at Jamshed Baug in Navsari, Gujarat.***

not only made me realize the importance of rituals in terms of keeping our tradition and religion alive, but also in terms of giving a spiritual experience. For example, watching my peers on the trip regularly put on their Sedre-koshti made me want to attempt the ritual which is when I realized that the practice of putting on the Sedre-koshti itself gave me peace as well as a spiritual experience. Growing up in an environment in the United States that encourages the young to pursue a spiritual route that is unique for them, I had always chosen not to put on the Sedre-koshti because I assumed that it was a practice that was outdated, and that there are much better ways of gaining a spiritual experience such as meditation. This type of mentality prevented me from ever trying to wear the Sedre-koshti. But now that I have had the experience, I choose to put on my Sedre-koshti because I find it to be a much richer, both religious and spiritual experience.

Furthermore, throughout my trip, I had a fantastic experience being able to communicate with my fellow Return





# Return to roots 2015

to Roots participants who were both Parsis and Iranians living all over the world. It made me realize the strong connection that we all have to each other due to our religion, regardless of the cultural differences. Through these experiences, I had the opportunity to understand the similarities and the differences between the Iranians and the Parsis. Although there are many cultural differences such as the food and language, even within those differences, we were able to find similarities. For example, although Parsi food is very close to the other types of Indian food that I have tried, the slight similarities in the food was intriguing such as Faloodeh, and Sekanjabin as desserts as well as the Berry Polo. Although minor details, it was beautiful to see that after centuries of separation between the Persian and Iranian Zoroastrian communities, such small similarities exist.

Moreover, one of the great benefits of the Return to Roots trip, was being able to familiarize myself with the numerous religious as well as cultural similarities and differences between the Parsi community and the Iranian Zoroastrian community so that I can work closely with these communities here in Northern California and unite the two, because even though our cultures and traditions might differ, we all share the same religious roots.

**Pardis Gheibi.** *was born in Iran and moved to California when she was eleven years old. She currently lives in California, and is a student at UC Berkeley. She hopes to attend law school in the future. In her free time, she enjoys dancing and spending time with her family.*



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# *Return to roots* 2015

## FINDING ROOTS THROUGH FOOD

PERZEN PATEL

If someone were to ask me a couple years ago, 'who are you?' it would be quite a confusing question to answer.

Having spent equal parts of my life both in India and NZ I'd be hard pressed to choose between being an Indian and a Kiwi. Or, am I a Persian, as many Parsi's in NZ like to refer to themselves as? After much teenage angst, I am now comfortable saying that I in-fact am neither of these things.

What I really am is a Parsi.

The word 'Parsi' to me, encompasses so many values I hold true that I often believed no further definition was really required. But, if one were to ask me who are we exactly? Or, why our traditions are a mixture of Iranian and Gujarati customs or why we like our food a certain way, I'd always be at a loss.

Which is why, attending the Return to Roots trip earlier this year was a game-changer.

We all know about the much talked about disconnect taking place between Zoroastrians in the diaspora and those descending from ancestral communities in Iran and India. The Return to Roots program tries to plug this gap in a really unique way by bringing together young Zoroastrians from across the world back to their roots. No pointless discussions while sitting in plush 5-star here. While those debates may have their own value, there is something about actually seeing the sudreh's flapping in the wind in the now haunted town of Nargol and listening to tales of how Parsi's were once the pride of Bharuch to put facts about how endangered a community we really are into perspective.

As a caterer dishing out Parsi food and hosting Parsi experiences, the entire trip was hugely educational for me for various reasons.

Not only did I get to talk to Bharuch home-owners about the evolution of the Bharuchi Akoori and visit the legendary E.F. Kolah's office in Navsari to stock up my stash of vinegar, but I also got to actually see a hand-written manuscript of the Khordeh Avesta which is more than 600 years old and walk on the shores of the Varoli river where our ancestors landed 1000 years ago – goose-bump inducing moments, I must add!

Another great thing was seeing the consistent pride in our cultural heritage displayed by all the Zoroastrians we met along the way. Be it the traditional Parsi 'Tanka' system of water harvesting brought from Iran to Bharuch by our ancestors or the art of weaving a kushti - each taking at least 40 hours to weave - all of these inventions and crafts are cornerstones of our 'Parsipanu' and to me, as important to learn about as our ancient prayers.

It was also heartening to learn about the contribution Parsi's have made to Mumbai – arguably the only 'home'







# Return to roots 2015

for many Zoroastrians globally. Riding atop an open double decker bus with our guide telling us that practically every alternate building in the 'Fort' area has been built or is owned by a Parsi was truly a moment of pride.

On the flip side, if you think back to how many more buildings or institutions we have been able to add to the list in the past 80 or so years then warning bells start ringing. What has happened to our legendary values of giving back? Surely we can't ride on the coat tails of the charity done by the Tatas' and Wadias' for much longer?



*Bombay Heritage walking tour with a stop at the famous Bhikha Behram Well*

Return to Roots however wasn't just about flitting from one historical place to another. It was also about forming friendships that will span time and place and about learning what 'Parsipanu' means to each one of us across the globe.

So, while I have always brought in Navruz with a table (I am only 25% Irani but the Navruz table is too cool a tradition to not celebrate), I never knew about 'Chahar Shanbeh Souri' until my roommate Pardis mentioned it to me. Done the Wednesday before Navruz, the tradition involves jumping over a small bonfire. The idea is that

you give the fire all your 'yellow' which is all the illness and negativity of the year and ask the fire to give you it's 'red' which is the positivity and strength. Eager to ensure my roomie didn't miss out this family tradition, we convinced the hotel manager in Surat to light us a small bonfire on the lawn and we all proceeded to celebrate Chahar Shanbeh Souri with great merriment – one of my favourite memories from the trip!

The best part? Return to Roots goes beyond the 15 days that the program lasts. I now have a great new set of bawa friends dotted around the world – all of us united by our Parsipanu. Not only that, coming back from the trip I've felt a renewed sense of vigour to learn more about my heritage and explore ways in which I can contribute. So to contribute in my own little way, the Bawi Bride Kitchen will soon starting walking Parsi food tours around Fort and Grantroad and I've placed a renewed focus on hosting more Parsi experiences at home so I can introduce the uninitiated to the splendours of Parsi bhonu.

*Bawi and a food-lover since birth, **Perzen Patel** is Mumbai's Bawi Bride. While she didn't know how to cook even a simple Parsi Dhandar until she got married, Perzen is now on a mission to spread happiness through Dhansak. When she is not busy running her full-fledged Parsi catering service, Perzen writes about food, travel and startups, organizes Parsi food experiences and also offers cooking classes.*



# Personal Profiles

## Background and thoughts of the three co-chairs on Congress 2014 in Los Angeles

FARIBA PIRGHAIBI

The saying goes it takes a village to raise a child. The same could be said for organizing a congress, in this case the North American Zoroastrian Congress which was held in December of 2014. Saying yes to dedicate one's time to this event was certainly no simple feat. The time commitment, the differences of ideology, having to oversee all the tasks including but not limited to: getting commitment from speakers, arranging the hotel, fund raising, securing the room arrangements, IT, getting the right food to appeal to all the different palates, and let's not forget entertainment. My hat certainly goes out to this trio DhunMai Dalal, Khushroo Lakdawala, and Darayus Mistry who worked tirelessly to pull this congress together. On a personal note I have to give Khushroo full marks for an outstanding performance, for going above and beyond my expectations. He was the peace keeper, he heard all sides with an open mind when subcommittees did not see eye to eye. ***To me he personified good thoughts, good words, and good deeds.***

The editor in chief of the FEZANA Journal asked me to interview our fearsome threesome in regards to their experience and below is the summary of their answers. Due to the extremely hectic travel-work schedule of two members this interview was done by email only.

***Fariba Pirghaibi.***



Darayus Mistry



Dhunmai Dalal



Khushroo Lakdawala

# Personal Profiles

## **WHERE DID YOU GROW UP?**

**Dhunmai Dalal (DD)** :I grew up in Karachi, Pakistan and have lived in Los Angeles since 1976

**Khushroo Lakdawala (KL)**: I grew up in Mumbai; completed my B.Tech from IIT Bombay and was offered a full scholarship at USC – where I completed my M.S. and Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering. So, I have been in LA since 1981.

**Darayus Mistry (DM)**: I was born and lived in Bombay stayed there until 1995 then moved to USA

## **WHY DID YOU AGREE TO VOLUNTEER FOR THE CONGRESS?**

**DD** : When the congress was announced by FEZANA, we were intimated at our ZAC AGM by the then President of ZAC that the XVII North American Zoroastrian Congress was to be hosted by the Zoroastrian Association of California. I was nominated from the floor. Later in the year, Khushroo Lakdawala and Darayus Mistry volunteered to be co-Chairpersons.

**KL**: I always believed that we had good resources and we could pool a strong team to make the congress effective, successful, draw youth and make it enjoyable for all attendee

**DM**: I love and enjoy community Service - It gives me immense pleasure to serve my community. Southern California has had a history of diversified groups & associations (Orthodox to Liberals). Having a congress and setting a platform to discuss various forums was a growing need not only within our community; but also a need in North America. Hence I decided to step up and take on the task of Co-chairing this Congress.

Past Congresses have been financially rewarding it was always in a dilemma on how I could contribute financially to my center & prayer hall – This was my avenue to help....

## **WHAT WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT OBSTACLE TO OVERCOME?**

**DD**: The most difficult obstacle to overcome was for all the co-chairs to have the same vision - to be inclusive and welcome both the Iranians and the Par-

sis, as well as to have a balanced congress.

**KL**: The most difficult obstacle was to ensure that the entire team worked in unison with a vision to create the best experience and to sacrifice personal biases

**DM** : Selecting a Team – Keeping them focused on the Vision – Orchestrating a “Well Balanced Program” that would benefit the entire Z community – last but not the least Battling Politics!

## **WHAT WAS THE MOST REWARDING MOMENT FROM THE WHOLE EVENT?**

**DD**: The most rewarding part was the high attendance which indicated our success. I was confident we would be successful.

**KL**: Seeing the 200 plus youth having a blast before and during the congress. In addition, the congress had 150 youth under age 21 attend the congress

**DM** : When the event was moving along smoothly - the joy & happiness of seeing so many young adults (youth) participate. It was heartwarming...I was very impressed, touched and happy to see so many youth together, to hear people commenting and complementing daily as to how much they were enjoying and thanking all volunteers for their efforts and hard work!

It was very gratifying to work with dedicated smart individuals.

## **IF YOU HAD TO DO ONE THING DIFFERENTLY WHAT WOULD IT BE?**

**DD**: This point is unimportant in the larger scheme of things but it would have been better not have any complaint about the food and the service at table. I agree that it could have been much better to have well served menus.

**KL**: Give more emphasis for vegetarian food

**DM** : Would love to do it all over again.

## **DO YOU FEEL YOU WERE SUCCESSFUL IN REACHING YOUR PERSONAL GOAL IN THIS CONGRESS?**

**DD**: Yes, considering all the inevitable differences of opinion, we achieved a fairly balanced program.

# Personal Profiles

**KL:** I never had any personal goals – the vision was to create an extraordinary experience for all attendees and I constantly worked with that thought in mind

**DM:** Absolutely – on all fronts – Orchestrating a well rounded program which set a platform especially for the youth to discuss & participate. It was most heartwarming when some issues were discussed outside the allocated program time frame with respect to everyone's opinion. Financial Goals were reached – above expectations – we all were rewarded for doing the right thing.

## **WORDS OF WISDOM FOR FUTURE ORGANIZERS OF SUCH EVENTS?**

**DD:** It is essential for the Associations to vote on the Congress so that all hands are on board for the congress. It is important for FEZANA to emphasize Zoroastrian unity and always work toward it. Our

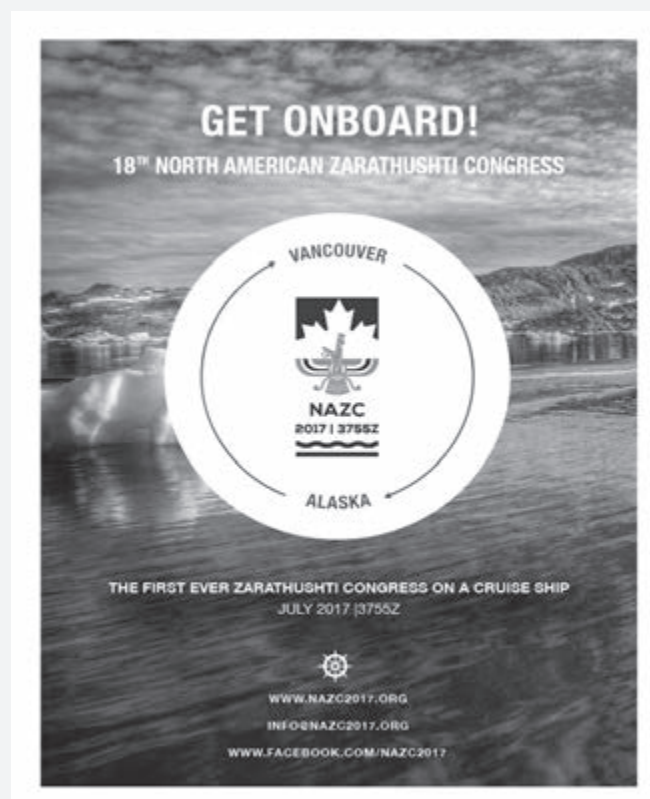
logo and our intent was decidedly to have a unifying congress in the Southland.

**KL:** Strong teamwork is the key. Listen to all individuals and keep significant focus on hotel and AV contracts

**DM:** Each Committee should select individuals – from varied age groups – that can offer different perspectives – which will lead to a well balanced program & a congress that will be beneficial & enjoyed by the FAMILY! (This was the first congress that had a mini congress, a puppy petting party, and an ice cream social etc.)

All volunteers must understand the congress Terms Of Reference (TORS)

***Fariba Pirghaibi** is a medical laboratory scientist who lives and works in in Orange County, California with her husband and two daughters. She has been involved in the Zoroastrian community in various capacities for many years and currently teaches a teen class "Gatha Ethics and principle" at CZC on Sundays. She has been the editor of Chehrenama (CZC journal) since 2008.*





# Zarathushti Youth *Without Borders*

## **RAD-AID CHILDREN'S HEALTH**

MOST COUNTRIES HAVE NO  
PEDIATRIC RADIOLOGISTS  
TO CARE FOR A BILLION CHILDREN  
WE CAN CHANGE THAT



### **RAD-AID**

**GARSHASB (GARY) SOROOSH**

RAD-AID is a non-profit, non-governmental organization (NGO) supported by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Google, AmazonSmile, and the Clinton Global Initiative just to name a few. RAD-AID began in 2008 to answer the need for more radiology and imaging technology in the resource-limited regions and communities of the world. The organization began with a few people at Johns Hopkins, and has now grown to include more than 2,700 contributors from 200 countries, 45,000 web visitors per year, 29 chapter organizations, and on-site programs in more than 12 countries. RAD-AID's mission is to increase and improve radiology resources in the developing and impoverished countries of the world. Radiology is a part of nearly every segment of health care, including pediatrics, obstetrics, medicine and surgery, making the absence of radiology a critical piece of global health disparity.



According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 4 billion people around the world live with widespread losses and deaths that could have been avoided or treated, if radiology had been available. Every Fall, the Annual RAD-AID Conference and Chapters Roundtable meets to discuss how to mitigate this health disparity and bring access to radiology to those around the world who need it the most. This year the conference will be hosted at the PAHO Headquarters in Washington, DC on November 7th, and is open for registration to anyone interested in becoming engaged in radiology public health outreach.

# Zarathushti Youth *Without Borders*

PHOTO: RAD-AID CAPE VERDE

**Photo page 82 bottom** RAD-AID programs in China began in July of 2010, focusing on Cancer Imaging and Treatment and Pediatric Radiology, in collaboration with Project HOPE.

We invite you to visit <http://www.rad-aid.org> in the coming months to register for and attend the conference once the online registration goes live. Whether you are a physician, medical technician, or are simply a person interested in making a difference in the world, your attendance and support will help better the lives of others. Every member of RAD-AID is a volunteer and works for free; 100% of grants and donations go directly to funding programs and bringing radiology to those in need.

**Garshasb (Gary) Soroosh** is a rising Junior enrolled in the Honors College at the University of Maryland, College Park. He serves as Assistant Conference Manager for RAD-AID International, as well as being a Founding Member and Extramural Funding Officer of the University of Maryland Medical Center RAD-AID Chapter.



## 2015 RAD-AID CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 7, 2015, WASHINGTON, DC

Registration for the 7th annual 2015 RAD-AID Conference on Radiology for Developing Countries is now open.

Due to RAD-AID's new affiliation with the United Nations and WHO, this meeting this year will be held at the **WHO Headquarters in Washington DC** at the Pan American Health Organization Building near the Lincoln Memorial.

Presentations will include projects on global radiology from Nicaragua, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Laos, Nepal, India, Haiti, China, Bhutan, and much more. This is a great opportunity to meet people and join RAD-AID's teams serving across the globe.

RAD-AID Chapter members, or those interested in forming a chapter, are also urged to attend the RAD-AID Chapters Round Table Meeting November 8th in DC. As in previous years, CME and CE for physicians, technologists and nurses will be available for this meeting as well.

We hope to see you and please register ASAP. Last year's conference was 100% booked 2-3 months ahead of the meeting. Questions about the meeting can be emailed to:  
Gary Soroosh, Associate RAD-AID Conference Manager, at [gsoroosh \( @ \) rad-aid.org](mailto:gsoroosh@rad-aid.org).

Sincerely,  
RAD-AID Team

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# INTERFAITH INTERALIA RELIGIONS FOR PEACE

Religions for Peace  
European Council of Religious Leaders

European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL)

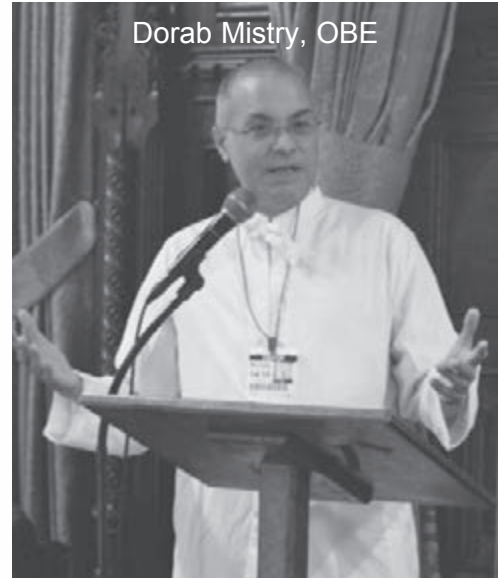
Jehangir Sarosh OBE



Dorab Mistry OBE  
Elected to the European  
Council of Religious  
Leaders

Jehangir Sarosh OBE,  
appointed Secretary  
General of the Council

Dorab Mistry, OBE



**Religions for Peace** International, accredited to the United Nations - is the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition advancing common action for peace since 1970. It is an umbrella organization and the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition, bringing together religious leaders and grassroots representatives, academics and activists from more than 100 countries.

The European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL) founded in Oslo in 2002 brings together senior representatives of Europe's historic religions Christianity, Judaism and Islam, together with Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs and Zoroastrians. Together they address concerns affecting the wider community, including poverty, AIDS, interreligious co-existence, combating violent religious extremism, human trafficking, human rights issues, disarmament and the environment. ECRL answers to the call for action to promote peace and fruitful coexistence in the midst of an increasingly multi-cultural and multi-religious Europe. It lives up to its motto of different faiths common action.

ECRL has participatory status with the Council of Europe. ECRL is one of five regional

Interreligious Councils with the Religions for Peace network.

At the meeting of the 40 members of the European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL) in Frankfurt, Germany on May 11-13, 2015 hosted at Frankfurt's Jesuit University (Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschule Sankt Georgen), they unanimously welcomed **Dorab Mistry OBE** as a Council Member to represent the Zoroastrian Community. Dorab is the Past President of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe and honorary treasurer of the Inter Faith Network for the UK. and treasurer of the Council of Dharmic Faiths of the UK. He is director of Godrej International Ltd **Jehangir Sarosh** the former Zoroastrian representative to the Council suspended his membership to take on the position of *Secretary General of the Council*. He was elected to this post October 2014 but took office January 2015.

Jehangir who was the president of the Religions for Peace Europe, a grassroots body felt that religious leadership should be more involved hence he initiated the formation of the European Council of Religious leaders by inviting five religious leaders, Metropolitan Kirill, who is now the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Bishop Gunnar Stalsett,

# INTERFAITH INTERALIA

the Bishop of Oslo, Protestant grand Rabbi Sirat the president of the European conference of rabbis, Cardinal Daneels, Cardinal of Belgium The Grand Mufti Mustafa Ceric of Bosnia-Herzegovina to a meeting in Paris to establish The European Council of Religious Leaders.

During its Frankfurt meeting, members discussed an action plan on tackling violent religious extremism. The action plan is intended to be implemented in conjunction with

“Religion is a sublime ethical and spiritual force that aims to heal human society, provide security and peace among people and ensure human dignity and the rights that flow from it. However, some extremists abuse their religion, distorting its image and using it to achieve non-religious objectives. They project violent images that contradict and violate the essence of their religion”, ECRL moderator Thomas Wipf quoted an important statement recently released in Abu Dhabi, calling violent religious extremism *“a plague to the entire world”*. Wipf described a multi-religious response to be *“a concrete and effective religious demonstration against violent religious extremism”*.

Katharina Von Schnurbein, European Union (EU) Commission Adviser for the Dialogue with Churches, Religions and Non-confessional Organisations, stressed that since the Paris attacks, the EU commission has recognized the vital role ECRL will play in the future of a safer Europe. The ECRL welcomed representatives of the Interreligious Youth Forum. They expressed their disappointment that the deadline for achieving the millennium development goals has not been met, and called for a new focus on sustainable goals in the years ahead. ECRL supported their statement addressed to the G 7 Summit in June 2015 in Germany.

More information: contact [sarosh\(@\)rfp-europe.eu](mailto:sarosh(@)rfp-europe.eu)

## THE COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO (CRLMC)

The Council of Religious leaders of Metropolitan Chicago (CRLMC) as the name suggests is a forum of Religious leaders in Metropolitan Chicago with a representative from major world religions. When CRLMC was formed more than 25 years ago by Cardinal Bernadin it had representatives only from Christians and Jews. Later the Muslim representatives were added and now since 2011 representatives from other religions including Zoroastrians, Jains, Hindus, Sikhs and the Bahais are also included. Rohinton Rivetna played a significant role in inspiring this extension to other faiths. He serves as the Zoroastrian representative on the Council.

The Council is the Religious voice of the community in Chicago complementing the secular voice of the Mayor of Chicago and the City Council. A unique model worth adoption in other major metropolis around the globe.



**His Eminence Cardinal George  
honored in Chicago on his retirement  
in 2014.**

*From left Rabbi Herman Schaalman, Chicago Board Rabbis, His Eminence Francis Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago, Rohinton Rivetna, the Zoroastrian representative on the CRLMC.  
Cardinal George died 1 April 2015*



# INTERFAITH INTERALIA

RELIGIONS  
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## Nostra Aetate

**Behram Pastakia, MD, FACR**

*"In our time, when day by day humankind is being drawn ever closer together and the ties between different peoples are being strengthened...<sup>1</sup>"*



Volunteers from the United States were in Nepal from May 9 to May 30, 2015, to assist the victims of Nepal's tragic earthquake. RAD-AID assembled a team of radiologic technologists and radiologists to work in Kathmandu at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital to care for the injured and displaced. We thank our partners, the American Society of Radiology Technologists (ASRT) Foundation, The Society & College of Radiographers (SCoR) in the United Kingdom, and the Gorkha Foundation for supporting this team.

October 28, 2015, marks the 50th anniversary of the Vatican's promulgation of the *Nostra Aetate*—a soul-searching by the Catholic Church after the Second World War, as Europe was coming to grips with the aftermath of the Holocaust and what it had wrought on world consciousness. It was an attempt to heal, to reach out, and to respect "the other" after the ravages of violence, conflict, and savagery which had seared civil society in the last century. Questions from the very first page of the *Nostra Aetate*, give us pause and an opportunity to introspect:

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**“One expects from the various religions answers to the profound enigmas of the human condition, which today, even as of old, deeply stir human hearts: What is the human being? What is the meaning, the purpose of our life? What is moral good, and what is sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the way to genuine happiness? What are death, judgment, and retribution after death? What, finally, is that ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?”**

We have responded to these questions with an action-oriented initiative—**Zarathushti Youth Without Borders**. An idea embedded in the first strategic plan of FEZANA, the concept has blossomed to provide opportunities for Zarathushtis to volunteer, touching the lives of the poor in need of help and succor worldwide.

The Winter 2012 issue of *FEZANA Journal* showcased RAD-AID. At last count, with 3,300 volunteers in 20 countries, RAD-AID, now affiliated with the United Nations, was recognized in 2015 with the First Global Humanitarian Award by the Foundation of the American College of Radiology. Sponsored by Johns Hopkins Radiology, RAD-AID’s annual meeting—where triumphs and setbacks are shared, lessons learned and best practices identified—will be held at the World Health Organization (PAHO HQ) in Washington DC (near the Lincoln Memorial) on November 7, 2015. All are invited to attend, to learn, to network, to find a place where they can meaningfully address the questions raised by the *Nostra Aetate*—and answer what each one of us can do for “the other” in our own time.

For more information on the upcoming event, please visit: <http://www.rad-aid.org/programs/rad-aid-conference/2015-rad-aid-conference/>

Individuals or organizations interested in participating can contact, Behram Pastakia, MD, FACR at [bpastakia@aol.com](mailto:bpastakia@aol.com) (Chair of FEZANA’s Zoroastrian Youth Without Borders Initiative).

1 DECLARATION ON THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS **NOSTRA AETATE**, PROCLAIMED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI ON OCTOBER 28, 1965

**“Walking is the best possible exercise. Habituate yourself to walk very far”.**

**Thomas Jefferson**

**Behram Pastakia, MD, FACR, President, District of Columbia Medical Radiological Society, is FEZANA’s Chair of the Zarathushti Youth Without Borders initiative.**

# INTERFAITH INTERALIA<sup>th</sup> 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF NOSTRA AETATE DECLARATION

IN 1962, POPE JOHN XXII OPENED THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL BEGINNING A PROCESS THAT WOULD LEAD TO A REVOLUTION IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE INTERNATIONAL JEWISH COMMUNITY. IN 1965, THE COUNCIL ENDED, AND THE DECLARATION NOSTRA AETATE WAS PUBLISHED.

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE FEZANA JOURNAL WE HAVE TWO ARTICLES ON THIS SUBJECT.



## SPLENDID HALF-CENTURY: THE EXAMPLE OF *NOSTRA AETATE*

NEVILLE PANTHAKI

Using a cricket analogy, one could reflect that the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* (October 28, 2015) represents a 'splendid half-century' for the efforts of the Catholic Church. *Nostra Aetate* was promulgated as part of Vatican II (1962-65), which was the 21<sup>st</sup> time in history that an executive conference was convened to discuss Church doctrine (the second such occasion this convening occurred at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome). What are some of the more critical features that one can surmise about this document and its context, in reference to Zoroastrianism presently?<sup>1</sup>

Titles are important as teaser-information for the reader, but are also a concise representation of how the author contextualizes her work. *Nostra Aetate* translates from Latin as "in our time", and if one were to peruse the rest of the documents of Vatican II<sup>2</sup>, it would become obvious that the nature of *Nostra Aetate* is markedly different in that it does not concern itself with matters of ritual procedure, ecclesiastic organization or theological dogma.

Most are familiar with the version of events that depicts the 1960s as a turbulent time in the socio-cultural history of Western Europe and the United States of America (USA). However this was merely a part of, and reaction to the general post-1945 global political and economic upheaval caused by two World Wars (First: 1914-18; Second: 1939-45), contributing to the collapse of European imperialism (leading to decolonization)





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Religions Working for Peace and Justice

and correspondingly leading to the decline of Euro-centrism via the rise of 'peripheral' powers such as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the USA.

Many, including dissident Catholic clergy, have incorrectly dismissed *Nostra Aetate* as an inconsequential document produced by Euro-Catholic-Western guilt and negligence during the Shoah.<sup>3</sup> However it has to be appreciated that *Nostra Aetate* was a reflection by then Pope Paul VI<sup>4</sup> about the place of the Church, Catholicism and the nature of religion to society, during the turbulent era of the Vietnam conflict, Cuban Missile Crisis, and the rise of contesting non-religious ideologies such as atheism, existentialism and secularism. As such, *Nostra Aetate* is monumental not only for its content but its sentiment.

The document entitled "In Our Time" begins with the assertion that the Church has re-evaluated "her relationship to non-Christian religions" not from an evaluation of precepts but with a view to investigating "what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship".<sup>5</sup> It goes on to affirm that "one is the community of all peoples, one its origin...one also is their final goal, God."<sup>6</sup> The unity of humanity, its purpose and most importantly its shared concerns are how "fellowship" is defined. There is an expressed value in dialogue and investigation of the human condition and its common anguish: what are we, what is life's purpose, why is there suffering.<sup>7</sup> The Church acknowledges that "various peoples" have "perception of the hidden power" of divinity and its machinations, expressed in Hinduism as "an inexhaustible abundance of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry", while in Buddhism a realization of the "insufficiency of this changeable world" leads to a quest for higher self.<sup>8</sup>

*Nostra Aetate* transcends the limitations of organized religions, as institutions of power and codified dogma, by rejecting exclusivism and exceptionality! Representing the loftiest religious power structure of its day (by economy, organizational reach, and adherents), the Church admits that all religions are products of "ways" to bring relief to human suffering and that:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men.<sup>9</sup>

As if this were not remarkable enough, *Nostra Aetate* expounds on chronology not only presently "In Our Time" but regarding the place of Catholicism as a religion and the Church as an institution within all of history. This is accomplished through an evaluation of Judaism and Islam, representing faith traditions prior to and after Christianity, respectively. Continuance of certain beliefs and common heritage is the celebrated theme, while several extremely basic yet fundamental tenants of Catholic religious doctrine which are not shared by the other Semitic faiths, are glossed over with an unbelievable degree of superficiality: "Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as prophet."<sup>10</sup>

Arguably, the pride and exclusivity of most religions is based on the historicism of departure. That is, a notion that their faith-group represents a new and most-correct version of belief and worship. It is often the claim by institutionalized religion, that their 'possessing' of singular truth, its interpretation and its practice, provides legitimacy and justification for their existence. In the case of Christianity as a whole (Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants) the denial of Jesus by the Jews<sup>11</sup> contributed not only to Christian messianic notions of superiority and exclusive salvation<sup>12</sup> but translated to hegemonic violence against heretics and non-believers after the conversion of the Roman Empire to 'official' and singular religious practises.<sup>13</sup>



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In response to those who analyze *Nostra Aetate* as Church pandering to accusations of culpability in its recent past (Holocaust) or feelings of insecurity about its moral legitimacy due to political intrigues, a simple 'mea culpa'<sup>14</sup> would have sufficed. This is especially true if one considers that there are numerous historic and contemporary issues regarding Church administration and practises which have never been acknowledged, let alone become the subject of Papal dispensation and exegesis.

*Nostra Aetate* begins to revise notions that history is 'progressive' and unidirectional. It lays the basis for consideration of multiple centres of civilization which contribute to the co-constructed development of humanity and its "spiritual patrimony" of welfare. It disregards both 'primacy' (being first) and 'finality' (being last as in most innovative), in favour of solidarity. It defines the main task of the Church as universal "social justice and moral welfare" rather than in terms of doctrinal conflict or primacy.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, 'being' Catholic is an inconsequential badge compared to 'acting' Catholic. It is practise of life rather than practise or performance of ritual which is the mark of measure for both spirit and its salvation. In this vein *Nostra Aetate* rebukes those who seek to perpetuate discrimination with reference to liturgy.<sup>16</sup> I would posit that it is suggestive; although the document stops short of incriminating those who would continue to define tradition and practise through the exclusive use of scripture to the exclusion of contemporary circumstances.

With reference to the last paragraph, I believe that the context of *Nostra Aetate* and its spirit, lends itself to consideration for contemporary Zoroastrians because we too require a contemporary understanding of ourselves, our location within history and as part of a humanity, and the function of our faith and its institutions. In the Op-Ed article within this issue, I have elaborated upon some of the debates with which we are preoccupied. However I believe that all of these debates have their origins within the basis of how we perceive and construct our identity, and our opinion of its historic interpretation and contemporary relevance.

The Catholic Church as an organization and religious belief system is mostly thought of (and generally not incorrectly) as intransigent due to its mammoth size and the staying power of its orthodoxy. Despite this norm, it should not be forgotten that the immense history of the Church is replete with numerous reforms, each of which was not without controversy, but which inevitably contributed to the strengthening of both faith and structure. *Nostra Aetate* was part of the courageous initiatives of Popes John XXIII and Pope Paul VI who convened Vatican II. Of the many landmark reforms inaugurated, were: the vernacularization of liturgy<sup>17</sup>, greater lay participation in the performance of ritual<sup>18</sup>, education revision for clergy with an emphasis on their pastoral rather than administrative duties<sup>19</sup>, and a closer collaboration with non-Catholic Christians<sup>20</sup>. The language of Church resolutions and declarations also changed, to avoid harsh criticisms and outright condemnations.

The question may arise: why weren't Zoroastrians mentioned by the Pope? If this is a comment of indignation than it betrays an inflated sense of ego and in fact is also misplaced due to a lack of understanding of the context of the document.<sup>21</sup> However it is extremely important to realize what non-inclusion means....

Zoroastrians should take note that *Nostra Aetate* is an example that the possibility of a religious reorientation while simultaneously reaffirming a commitment to core tenants of faith, exists. Moreover that it is necessary because religion is meant to serve society, so it is unconceivable as well as antithetical in premise that it should remain immutable while humanity evolves.<sup>22</sup>

Returning to the cricket analogy, of course this requires a solid partnership between institutional leaders and community. Otherwise the probability of batting past a splendid half-century is unlikely, and we must be aware that this is a single-innings ODI match rather than a 5 day test.

# INTERFAITH INTERALIA

## (Endnotes)

- 1 [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html)
- 2 [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/index.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm)
- 3 Sho'ah (Hebrew: catastrophe). Word used to denote the Jewish genocide during WWII known also as 'The Holocaust'.
- 4 Who succeeded Pope John XXIII. Pope John XXIII died in 1963 shortly after the first session of Vatican II.
- 5 1<sup>st</sup> section, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph
- 6 1<sup>st</sup> Section, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph
- 7 1<sup>st</sup> Section, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph
- 8 2<sup>nd</sup> Section, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph
- 9 2<sup>nd</sup> Section, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph
- 10 3<sup>rd</sup> Section, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph. This is a reference to Islam, but could also be said of Judaism.
- 11 More accurately, the refusal of most Jews to follow Jesus as a reformist Rabbi
- 12 Ironically, a 'continuance' in that it represents a trend within Judaic thought about 'chosen people'.
- 13 Such as the Inquisition which targeted Jews but also nonconformist Christians. Officialdom actually began with the Roman emperors calling the first Church Council(s) to centralize and rationalize doctrine and administration.
- 14 Latin, literal: though my own fault (figurative usage as: forgive me, I am culpable)
- 15 3<sup>rd</sup> Section, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph
- 16 4<sup>th</sup> Section, 7<sup>th</sup> paragraph. Here the reference is against vilifying Jews, there is another general statement against discrimination in the 5<sup>th</sup> Section, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph and 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph.
- 17 The translation of Latin prayer and its use in ceremony.
- 18 Moving from ritual as passive observation, to ritual as active communion.
- 19 Education being understood to include how clergy could 'better serve' their community and its 'contemporary' concerns. A means to make and keep priesthood relevant to society. The stress on 'counseling and humanitarian service' as much as 'conducting ceremony'.
- 20 Toward inter-Christian union, rather than endless debates and separation based upon issues of ritual and theology. A transition based upon the awareness of the contemporary relation between religion and society.
- 21 Jew and Muslims were mentioned in reference to Christians as other Semites, while Hinduism and Buddhism were mentioned with a view of Eastern alternate faith examples which are numerically the majority of Asia.
- 22 The distinction should be made with the activity of 'sacrifice' which is to 'placate' God. Religion in this way is not 'for God', but for 'communion with God in fellowship with community'. Thus sacrifice may be part of religion, but religion is not exclusively sacrificial.

**Neville Gustad Panthaki** has pursued two Doctorates (Ph.D.), in: *Eurasian History and International Diplomacy* (York University, Toronto) and *Social Justice Education* (Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, at the University of Toronto).



# INTERFAITH INTERFAITH

## THE MESSAGE OF ZARATHUSHTRA AND THE RELIGION TODAY

*Religions Working for Peace and Justice*

**PROF KAIKHOSROV D IRANI**

### **PREFACE**

Nostra Aetate was a paradigm changing declaration for the Catholic Church. It began the process of normalizing relations with the Jewish faith, but also made a positive acknowledgment of the other Abrahamic faith—the Muslim faith. In dealing with non-Abrahamic faiths such as Hinduism and Buddhism it acknowledges that they have many different philosophical viewpoints to offer, which should be considered. It does not mention Zoroastrianism which is a pity since the roots of many ideas of the Abrahamic faiths lie in the teachings of Zarathushtra.

In the multi-faith contexts as in Nostra Aetate we must consider the three dimensions of Institutional Religions.



- 1) The belief systems articulated in mythology or theology which give a vision of our existence, here embedded in a spiritual reality, from which we receive aspiration to elevate humanity and ourselves and pass to a spiritual existence after death. Such a view is common to most religions.
- 2) In rituals we find great differences because rituals are rooted in time and place.
- 3) In the congregations of various religions we have significant differences. Some may be open to all humanity and some not. When a congregation is closed, it may be the requirement of ritual or it may have just become tribal, in which case it moves away from Enlightenment.

Zarathushtra was a religious teacher, a founder of a religious vision which he communicated in his poetic hymns. This was the mode of religious communication in the second millennium BCE among the Indo-Aryan peoples. His teachings became the basis of a religion called Zoroastrianism. The study of the religion is based on the practices of the few small religious communities and the writings of the clergy over the periods when it flourished in Iran as well as the scholars who studied the languages of the Iranians.

However, though the base scripture, i.e. the Yasna incorporates the Gathas (the hymns of Zarathushtra) the clear recognition of his message and its implications does not come through. What we are examining here is the message of Zarathushtra and its place in the history of human thought and civilization.

First consider the stages of religious belief and activity in human history. The earliest practices we find were offerings to divinities, usually some food. The beliefs were limited to primitive divinities who accounted for whatever was problematic. This is what is called Archaic Religion and existed for millennia from the time mankind emerged from the caves. The next major stage of religious life was Ancient Organized Religion. Here the institution of clergy was formed as a profession; sometimes a caste and they developed a vast series of rituals, built temples and specified socio-religious practices in the community. This became quite dominant in the ancient world. Many elements of this persist to this day. Sometime around the second and first millennium BCE we have the emergence of religious teachers or prophets, who provide religious visions and preached them to the people. This form of religion, one may call Reflective Religion. Prominent among these were



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Zarathushtra, Buddha, Jesus and some of the prophets of the Old Testament. This is what may be called the beginning of the process of Enlightenment.

Consider the teachings of Zarathushtra. This is of course given in the Gathas. Since the Gathas are hymns and not lessons, we have to consolidate the doctrine from different verses.

The divinity, Ahura Mazda, the Divine Wisdom, conceived of Existence as a scheme of Perfect Order, called Asha, the Truth- Truth, because this is what ultimately is Real. When we reflect on human social existence we can conceive of a perfect, just social order, i.e. no one is under a burden giving a benefit to another. But we see that human society is not in this state. This is accounted by it being the case that there are two opposing vectors in the material social order. One functioning to promote Asha, called Spenta Mainyu, the other functioning to frustrate the promotion of Asha, later called Angre Mainyu. However we are told that ultimately the Good will prevail and we shall reach a state of perfect existence. This needs our cooperation and constant care and effort. Here is the Vision of Reality that Zarathushtra provides us to interpret the World.

This is only one part of the teaching. The other quite necessary, is what kind of life does he want us to live?

We humans are endowed with a spiritual gift of the **Good Mind, Vohu Mana**. Our mind is able to comprehend Asha, so that in any situation in life we recognize in our conscience whether Asha is being actualized or violated. Our conscience, gifted with the spirit of Right Mindedness, Spenta Armaity inspires us to act to promote Asha. An act so motivated is judged Good. An act which disregards the implementation of Asha is Evil.

We creatures endowed with the Good Mind, recognize a situation in which we are called upon to act. We envision, what we might bring about, we formulate what we should do. Then we evaluate the consequences of the intended action, thus we find it acceptable, or we modify it, and decide what to do. This activity is called *Good Thought, Good Thinking*. We should present this to those who may be concerned, with what they think about it, and discuss it, if need be. This is called *Good Words*. And finally as our reason and conscience declare proceed to enact our decision with integrity. This is called *Good Deeds*. This is the way Zarathushtra wants a worthy human being to live. The heart of this enlightened message is not obedience but moral comprehension and reason. That such a religious vision should have been provided in the second millennium BCE is truly amazing!

The religious vision that Zarathushtra presents as the message he received from Ahura Mazda is truly one of the earliest, if not the first vision of a Reflective Religion.

I like to put it in Kantian style:

- a) A Religious Vision without a View of the World is blind.
- b) A Religious Vision without a Way of Life is empty.

This is what we in the post-Enlightenment world find most inspiring, but what happened to the Message in the age of Zarathushtra? In the period of history when Zarathushtra and his disciples preached life was essentially tribal and religion was ritual embedded in mythology.

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Before we can comprehend this history, consider the various aspects of religious experience. Religion in human experience can be seen to have three distinct aspects.

1. Religious Belief, i.e. How we understand the nature of Existence and our place in it.
2. Ritual, i.e. how we engage in interaction with a Reality beyond the physical world.
3. Congregation, i.e. the coming together of those who share the Life bound by the beliefs and set of sacred practices.

All Religious Institutions in human history have these three dimensions. At any one period in history the Religion is identified by the dimension that is considered the Core. For Zarathushtra, it was the Belief that was the Core, a profoundly enlightened view. He speaks of no ritual in the Gathas, except words of praise for Ahura Mazda, and pleas for enlightenment. He calls for people from near and far to listen to his message and decide to accept or otherwise. Those who accept can come together to share the state of spiritual wisdom.

When the teachers of this Faith went to various adjoining kingdoms to promulgate it, they found the priesthood resistant to this Reflective Religion. They were probably impressed by the message, but brought in their own divinities and introduced them in prayers. These prayers became part of a historical Zoroastrianism, as a kind of settlement of the differences, these are called the Yashts. A few may have been composed by later Zoroastrian priesthood.

There is a set of rituals in Zoroastrianism, around the sanctification of bull's urine. This comes from the practice of herdsmen from centuries before Zarathushtra. Herdsmen suffering injuries in the field applied cattle urine to their wounds. This urine, we know today, is a mild antiseptic. This became incorporated into their conception of a spiritual curative power and received ritual recognition. When the Zoroastrian religion reached these areas, their ritual which they incorporated into the Zoroastrian tradition, became traditional in Zoroastrianism and has persisted until the last century. But rationality has prevailed and there are hardly any Zoroastrians who rely on physical or spiritual cleansing with bull's urine today! Yet we have sacred bulls in Fire-Temples today and there are priests who sanctify the urine. This meaningless operation is continued in the name of religious tradition and rational evaluation is forbidden.

The Gathas of Zarathushtra were preserved because they were incorporated in prayer of the Yasna, which later had 72 chapters. These were memorized and thus preserved over centuries. What was the ritual where it was recited? It is the Yasna ceremony, or as it is known among the Parsis, as the Ijeshni ceremony. That is where the juice of the Homa plant is extracted, mixed, filtered, drunk and emptied into a specific well. One might well ask: What has the extraction of the juice of the Homa plant, or for that matter any plant, to do with the message contained in the Gathas? The answer lies not in some understanding, but in a historical accident. The juice of the Homa plant was taken to be religiously significant for centuries before Zarathushtra, when it was sacred during the Indo-Aryan Period before the Indian and Iranian tribes had separated. In Sanskrit the Homa plant was called the Soma plant and its juice was sacred as mentioned in the Soma Veda.

There are also funerary prayers in which the first section of the Gathas, the Ahunavaiti Gatha is recited. One cannot comprehend the significance of this, because the Ahunavaiti Gatha has no reference to death or the after-life or the final judgement.



# INTERFAITH INTERALIA

Religions Working for Peace and Justice

There certainly are rituals which are perfectly comprehensible, e.g. the Initiation Ceremony, the Wedding Ceremony and many other collective rituals such as Jashans which celebrate or memorialize events.

The issue for our present day is: let us replace Tradition considered unquestionable, with Tradition rationally comprehensible, not through mythology.

We now ask: what is our congregation? It is the persons who gather at our ceremonial worship such as Gahambars, Jashans etc. How are they to be identified? By the fact that they had made a declaration to that effect at their Initiation Ceremony. Zarathushtra called for the individual to make a choice. But today the community demands more, at least the Parsi community in India. They demand that such a person should be born of Parsi Zoroastrian parents or at least a Parsi father. The present Parsi community has made Zoroastrianism into an old Indo-Aryan tribal religion. The so called contemporary orthodox members of this tribal nation are not only not orthodox, but in violation of the teachings of the Prophet, who offered his vision to all humanity!

I have offered this as a situational evaluation of the religious state of our community, not as a criticism of any person's belief or practice. Let us as rational human beings decide how we shall live and practice our Faith, with a clear mind, as the prophet called for. Are we a tribe? Do we commit ourselves to Asha by being born to parents who have such beliefs? Should we perform rituals that have no relation whatsoever with the Religious Vision provided by the Prophet? These need careful reflection. Let me end this with the Blessing of Zarathushtra: "May we be like those who bring the World towards Perfection!"

**Prof Kaikhosrov D Irani** is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the City College of New York after teaching there for 41 years. His original field of teaching and research which he still continues, is Philosophy of Science. His research and publication has been in two areas:

*Conditions of Acceptance in Scientific Theories; and the reality problems in Quantum Mechanics. In the last 25 years he was worked in the area of History and Philosophy of Ancient Thought –Religious, Moral, Mythic and Technological. He has formulated, what he calls his "original contribution to philosophy" namely the theory of "Domains of Belief".*

***"The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen."***

***Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1926-2004)***

## EDUCATION AND GENDER EQUALITY AT THE UNITED NATIONS

**ADINA MISTRY**

As a 13-year old, an opportunity to present at the United Nations comes very rarely. It was an honor for me to participate as part of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) UN NGO team presenting, "Education: A Powerful Tool for Gender Equality", at the 59<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women: Implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, on March 16, 2015.

But I have to be honest that at the beginning, I had no knowledge of what this topic meant and how I could relate to it. To live in the United States, go to school, have options to study what I am passionate about, and enjoy afterschool activities are part of my life that I take for granted. I now know that getting even basic primary education is a struggle and privilege for many children around the world.

According to UNESCO, worldwide 121 million children ages 6 – 11 are denied access to education. This is a sobering statistic especially when viewed together with how the lack of education breeds poverty and exploitation, especially for girls.

I was very fortunate to learn about Pratham and was proud to introduce our audience to Pratham during our presentation. Over the last two decades, since its inception in 1995, Pratham has become the largest educational movement in India and one of India's largest and most respected education NGOs. Pratham has been recognized for its innovation and impact by many of the world's leading experts and philanthropic organizations, and received several awards year after year by a range of external and independent organizations for both the quality of its innovations and for its extensive impact in addressing literacy problems. And Pratham has achieved this success through several innovative programs such



as *Read India*, which is Pratham's flagship program and helps to improve reading, writing and basic arithmetic skills of children 6-14 years of age; the *Second Chance Program*, which helps girls 14 years and older complete their secondary education; the *Annual Status of Education Report*, which is a highly influential survey and most comprehensive large-scale educational measurement tool that helps shift the focus of primary education from enrollment to learning quality; and the *Vocational Training Program*, which provides underserved young adults occupational skills so that they can be employed in the manufacturing and service sectors.

Today, I benefit from those that have come before me who made education an equal opportunity for boys and girls, men and women, and as I commence my high school years, I have the opportunity to pay it forward. Pratham has given me the inspiration to dedicate myself to the spread of education, especially education for girls, as a tool for gender equality, as I do believe that knowledge brings independence and freedom of thought because as Nelson Mandela said, "*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.*"

*Adina Misty is an 8<sup>th</sup> grade middle school student. Adina is interested in the sciences and is co-captain of her school's Science Olympiad team, which placed first in the Lower Hudson Valley region and is advancing to the States competition in April. Adina plays the violin in her school orchestra and plays soccer at a competitive level. She is President of the Class of 2019 Blue Girls Group of Lion's Heart, and is involved in several community service volunteer opportunities.*



## UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN 2015 EVERY GIRL DESERVES A “SECOND CHANCE”

FEZANA presentation at the Church Building, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, on 16 March 2015.

### NINA MISTRY

This year, the United Nations 59<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) celebrates Beijing +20, which is the 20th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA). BPfA was the result of advocates for women's rights from around the world who came together to network and lobby governments to develop a framework of comprehensive commitments promising to change the lives of women and girls everywhere and address the twelve critical areas of concern - Women and poverty, Education and training of women, Women and health, Violence against women, Women and armed conflict, Women and the economy, Women in power and decision-making, Institutional mechanism for the advancement of women, Human rights of women, Women and the media, Women and the environment, and The girl-child.

The 59<sup>th</sup> CSW is a two-week event at the UN Headquarters in New York from March 9 – 20, 2015, attended by representatives of Member States, UN entities, and accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from around the world. Active participation of NGOs is an essential component in the work of the CSW as NGOs have been influential in shaping the current global policy framework on women's empowerment and gender equality.

I was honored to participate at this forum through

the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) UN NGO. Our FEZANA UN NGO team presented “Education: A Powerful Tool for

Gender Equality” at a parallel event of the CSW on March 16, 2015. Collaborating with **Pratham**, one of India's largest and most respected education NGOs, I had the privilege to present Pratham's **Second Chance Program**. The Second Chance Program, so aptly named, promotes secondary education for economically marginalized girls and young women forced by circumstance to opt out of continuing their education, literally giving them a second chance to get back what they once lost – a chance to complete their formal education, a chance to empower themselves and a chance to strive for gender equality! It is inspiring to see the

work done by Pratham in the short span of three years since the Second Chance Program was introduced in 2011. Equally impressive is how Pratham has grown to become the largest educational movement in India advocating for educational reform and standing up for children's, especially girls, right to education. It is no doubt that Pratham's strategies and best practices coupled with innovative and cost effective program solutions are tested and built to continue to position Pratham for greater success in its mission to have “every child in school and learning well”. I hope that with my presentation I may have in my own small way inspired others, especially men, to play a crucial role in society to advocate and work towards gender equality, one girl at a time!



**Nina Mistry:** Nina is a New York State Licensed Real Estate Salesperson. She previously worked with Deloitte & Touche LLP in their Assurance & Advisory Services, Banking & Securities Group. Nina is an active member of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) and is involved on the Fundraising Committee for the new Darbe Mehr building project in New York.





## LEARNING FOR ALL—A NEW PARADIGM FOR THE NEW SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

**DR. RUKMINI BANERJI**  
*Pratham Education Foundation.*



**Dr Banerji (on left with raised hand) with the children in Bihar**

Experience has shown that simply being in school does not automatically translate into learning for students. As we enter this new phase of global goal setting for education, UNESCO, through its Institute for Statistics, has initiated a very timely online consultation about indicators that might be used to monitor learning around the world. As we provide feedback, it's essential to ask whether current approaches to measurement can stretch to cover new contexts. Or do we need a fundamental paradigm shift?



Western countries have developed standard models to measure student achievement and learning outcomes by developing samples based on the assumption that all (or nearly all) children are in schools registered by a national or local authority. However, this is not the case in many South Asian and sub-Saharan African countries. In India, for example, a large and growing proportion of children attend private schools, which may or may not be on official lists. And while India's primary enrollment rates are well above 95%, on any given day, actual attendance ranges from 60% to 90% across the country. In short, not all children are in school. By leaving out irregular or non-attending children who are likely to have poorer learning levels, school-based assessments of student learning paint too rosy a picture.

As we focus on the post-2015 sustainable development goals in education, calls for ensuring equity mean that we must find ways to measure all children's learning. To do this, we must step out of "school." Finding a representative sample of all children requires meeting them where they are. Many issues will arise as we begin to address children's learning in countries that are new to learning assessment. As a first step, we must take a hard look at our own realities in the global south and develop methods and measures that reflect our conditions and that reach all our children. Assessments must be aligned to learning goals set for and by each country.

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)—drawn from practically every rural district in India annually for the past ten years—has sampled well over half a million children. It is probably the world's largest annual household survey of children's learning. ASER is a robust, cost-effective, large-scale model for measuring basic reading and arithmetic developed in the global south. In the past few years, the approach has been adapted and used in countries like Pakistan, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Mali, Senegal, and Mexico. And Nigeria is about to join the family.

This model reflects our contexts and conditions, where the majority of the parents of school-going children do not have much schooling themselves and are struggling to understand what learning entails. In our household-based surveys, the tools to measure children's learning are easy to understand and the estimates are robust, reliable, and ready to be acted on. Western countries have developed schooling and learning assessment models to suit their conditions. In Africa and Asia, we need to work out our own paradigms for effective teaching and learning and align them processes for assessment based on our own contexts, needs, and resources. Importantly, we also need to come up with ways to communicate what we learn that make sense to teachers and parents and can be directly actionable.

By using the household approach and by working with citizens, ASER and similar assessments prove that it is possible to get valid, large-scale, and reliable data on student learning outcomes for all children at a fraction of the cost of other assessments. These simple yet powerful tools enable people and governments to see the problem and the progress of our children in order to focus on what needs to be done.

As we think about children's education and learning in the post-2015 era, we must develop systems for measurement of learning outcomes and mechanisms for improving learning that work for our contexts. We need new pathways to seize opportunities and resolve problems for all of our children.

This article originally appeared in the [The Hewlett Foundation Blog - Work in Progress](#).

***Dr. Rukmini Banerji is the director of the ASER Centre in New Delhi, India. She is also CEO-elect and a senior member of the national leadership team for Pratham Education Foundation.***

# M I L E S T O N E S

## BIRTHS

**RAYAN** Kurush Sanjana , a boy to Khyati and Ervad Kurush B. Sanjana on Roj Marespand, Mah Dae , brother to Jia in Houston, TX and grandson to Freny and Ervad Bomanshah Sanjana on 12th June 2014. **(Correction from Spring 2015 issue)**

**Zarina Gustad Mody**, a girl to Gustad and Tanaz Mody of New Jersey, granddaughter to Diane and Keki Mody of New Jersey and Yasmine and Adi Irani of Florida, in New Jersey, on March 16, 2015 .

**Lily Katyal**, a girl, to Amie and Neel Katyal, sister to Norah, granddaughter to Shabbir and Aban Hakim and Subhash and Suman Katyal in Calgary, Alberta on February 10, 2015.

**Elijah Andrew Walendziewicz**, a boy, to Andrew and Tanaz Walendziewicz, brother to Aiden, grandson to Adil and Zarin Balaporia and Patty Walendziewicz, nephew to Rita Balaporia and Dilshad (Michael) Gump, cousin to Jolene Gump in Pittsburgh, PA on February 12, 2015.

**Cyrus Karl Mistry**, a boy, to Karl and Rosemary Mistry, brother to Lyla, grandson to Kavas and Kashmira Mistry (Keller, TX) in Houston, TX on March 2, 2015.

**Lyla Farzad Dutia**, a girl, to Farzad and Vinifer Dutia, granddaughter to Behroz and Minoo Dutia and Nergish Pardiwalla, niece to Tanaz Reed, cousin to Azarin Reed in West Caldwell, NJ on March 27, 2015.

**Madelin Zubin Bagwadia**, a girl, to Zubin and Kaynaz Bagwadia,

granddaughter to Cyrus and Vera Bagwadia (Mumbai, India) and Godrej and Feroza Mehta in Boston, MA on April 2, 2015.

**Alina Gandhi**, a girl, to Viraf and Parizad Gandhi, sister to Cyrus in Seattle, WA on April 2, 2015.

**Ziaan Irani**, a boy, to Karishma and Kaizad Irani, grandson to Farida and Parvez Irani (Mumbai, India) and Marukh and Khodayaar Irani ( Mumbai, India) in Redmond, WA on May 18, 2015.

**Samira Roshni Jussawalla a girl** to Firoza and Malcolm Jussawalla of Markham, Ontario, and sister to Zarina Kaia Jussawalla on May 24th, 2015.

## NAVJOTES

**Yohann Bacha**, son of Tehmtan and Monaz Bacha (ONT) in Mumbai, India on December 22, 2014.

**Behzad and Yazad Karani**, children of Viraf and Winifer Karani (ONT) in Mumbai, India on December 28, 2014.

**Yohan Ghadiali**, son of Hoofrish Patel and Mehernosh Ghadiali (ONT) in Mumbai, India on December 28, 2014.

**Cyrus and Delna Surveyor**, children of Nilufer and Darius Surveyor in Houston, on May 23rd 2015, Roj Adar, Mah Dae, 1384 Y.Z.

## WEDDINGS

**Binaisha Todiwalla**, daughter of Hira and Zarir Todiwalla (Chicago, IL) to **Narius Shekdar**, son of Yasmin and Jehangir Shekdar (Karachi, Pakistan) in Mississauga, ONT on March 21, 2015.

# Summer 2015

**Adi Kavarana**, son of Pervin and Rusi Kavarana (Toronto, ONT) to **Shyamila Goonetilleke**, daughter of Nandini and Revith Goonetilleke (Brampton, ONT) on March 21, 2015.

**Ardeshir Yazdgerdian**, son of Rustam and Firoozeh Yazdgerdian to **Tanaaz Irani**, daughter of Jamshed and Farangis Irani in Vancouver, BC on May 25, 2015.

**Tanya Patel**, daughter of Pesh and Zarine Patel (ONT) to **Scott Wishart**, son of Doug and Sandy Wishart in Puerto Vallarta.

**Shirin Farhadi**, daughter of Isedvaster Farhadi and Farah Sabeti (ONT) to **Mazyar**, son of Arastoo Farsi Nejad Kermani and Banoo.

**Shifte Farhadi**, daughter of Isedvaster Farhadi and Farah Sabeti (ONT) to **Abtin**, son of Shahpour Ardeshiri Jam and Armita Mazdae.

**Dinsha Mistree**, son of Yashfara and Farrokh Mistree to Fareeza Doctor, daughter of Meher and Zarir Doctor, in Pennsylvania on May 22, 2015.

## DEATHS

**Mehrnaz Khosravi Kermani**, wife of Dr. Manoochehr Shahriari, sister of Aflatoon, Rostam, Shahrokh, late Cyrus, Hooshang and Mahin in west Vancouver, BC on December 20, 2014.

**Aban Nariman Daruwalla**, daughter of late Tehmina and Nariman Daruwalla, sister of Pervin Irani, Hoshang Daruwalla on December 31, 2014. (ZAC-LA)



# M I L E S T O N E S

**Burjor Ferdunji Alamshaw**, 81, husband of Dhun Alamshaw, father of Katy, Sharukh (Pearl), grandfather of Kyle and Camren, brother of Parvin Bamboat, Rusi Alamshaw, and late Aspi Alamshaw in Irvine, CA on January 8, 2015.

**Dhun Jal Irani**, wife of late Jal Irani, daughter of late Jaiji and Dinshawji Sumariwalla, sister of Jehangir (late Saker), Russy (Anita), Minoo (Amy Sumariwalla (Chicago, IL), Mehroo Aziz, Katie Cawsie Daruwalla, late Nargish Adi Cooper in Pune, India on January 8, 2015.

**Khodadad Alghabi**, husband of Nargess Alghabi, father of Sasan and Human Alghabi, father-in-law of Anahita Khadkhoda, brother of Rostam Alghabi, grandfather of Yasmine and Kian Alghabi in North Vancouver, BC on February 18, 2015.

**Feroze Sohrab Nargolwalla**, husband of late Kay Nargolwalla, father of Pervez Jamula, Tanya Nargolwalla and Charis Wania, brother of Mani Divecha, Sam Nargolwalla, Nari Nargolwalla and Dinaz Rustomji, grandfather of Zaamin Jamula, Liam, Sam and Finnegan Junkermann, Zane and Cyrus Wania in Toronto, ONT on February 18, 2015.

**Coomi Treasurywala**, wife of Minoo Treasurywala, mother of Adi (Mary Rose) and Anaita (Helmut), grandmother of Katayun (Paul), great grandmother of Jasper in Etobicoke, ONT on February 21, 2015.

**Dina Mistry**, daughter of late Sohrab and Nergish Sui, wife of late Behram Mistry, mother of Threety, Armaity, Yazdi and Maya Mistry on March 1, 2015

**Nergish Jamshed Patel**, 92, wife of late Jamshed Maneckshaw Patel, mother of Cashmira (Malcolm) Holt, grandmother of Ryan Holt in Surrey, BC on March 11, 2015.

**Piloo Nekoo**, 92, mother of Pouru Hirjibehedin, mother-in-law to Farokh, grandmother to Cyrus Hirjibehedin in New York on March 26, 2015.

**Khorshed Nowsherwanji**, wife of Zal Nowsherwanji, mother of Shanaz (Jal) Khodaiji, Kerman (Yasmin) Nowsherwanji, grandmother of Khurush, Huzaan, Zayaan, Husvak, Paricheher, Parizad, grandmother-in-law of Mona Nowsherwanji, Sheroy Mistry, Meherzad Elavia, great grandmother of Zara, Cyrus, Freya, Kyra in Mumbai, India on March 28, 2015.

**Dolly Homi Patel**, wife of late Homi Patel, mother of Dinshaw, Cyrus and Neville, mother-in-law of Firoozi and late Jacqueline, sister of Pillo Nauroz, Kaity Patel and Sheriar Haveliwalla, grandmother of Natasha and Eric in Toronto, ONT on April 5 2015.

**Shirin Fouroudi Mizanian**, mother of Mitra, Mehrdad, Mahtab, sister of Banoo Khanom in Seattle, WA on April 7, 2015.

**Freny Behli Irani**, wife of late Behram Khudamurad (Behli) mother of Gulbanu Bapuji Divecha (USA), Behroze Khushroo Irani (USA), Armaity Pheroze Bharucha (USA) on April 10, 2015.

**Homi Cawas Bhedwar**, 68, son of Roshan and Cawas Bhedwar, husband of Zarine, and father of Cyrus (Naina) and Carl

# Summer 2015

(Amanda), grandfather of three beautiful grandchildren in plane on flight from Singapore to London on April 16, 2015 .The family resides in Hockessin Delaware,

**Farhad Ardeshir Dabestani**, husband of Parizad, father of Ardeshir Dabestani and Bahman Dabestani, brother of Khodayar Dabestani, and Alayar Dabestani (Marysville, WA) in Tehran, Iran on April 16, 2015.

**Feroze Burjorji Kharas**, husband of late Thrity Feroze Kharas, father of Nazneen Kershaw Khumbatta, Noshir Feroze Kharas, Yezdi Feroze Kharas, brother of Minocher Burjorji Kharas (Karachi, Pakistan), Mani Minocher Patel (Karachi, Pakistan) in Houston, TX on April 18, 2015.

**Firdosh Mistry**, husband of Hutoxi Mistry, father of Natasha Mistry, brother-in-law of Havovi and Rohinton Vicajee in Toronto, ONT on April 18, 2015.

**Gospi Pervez Daroga**, wife of late Pervez Daroga, mother of Javareh (Ferzin) Daroga, Parvana (Burzin) Bharucha, grandmother of Taiana, Cyrus, Arnaz in Ahmedabad, India on April 25, 2015.

**Kashmira Hoshang Udwadia**, wife of Ervad Hoshang Udwadia, aunt of Piran and Sherezad Damania (Mumbai, India) in Toronto, ONT on April 28, 2015.

**Homayoun Kodabakhsh Bozorg**, 91, mother of late Dinyar, late Sohrab, late Manoucher, Borzoo, Firoozeh, Iran, Mahdokht, Shahdokht Arghavani in North Vancouver, BC on May 2, 2015.

# M I L E S T O N E S

## Summer 2015

**Jamshed Gati**, husband of Gooly Gati, father of Anaheeta (Farhad) Sethna (Richmond Hill, ONT), Vahishta (Shiavax) Kavasji (Sharon, MA) in Karachi, Pakistan on May 5, 2015.

**Jeroo Dhunjishaw Kapadia**, 82, mother of Sharook Kapadia, mother-in-law of Yasmin, and grandmother of Benafsha of

Burnaby, BC, in Mumbai, India, on May 26, 2015.

**Jini Eruch Variava**, 95, mother of Khurshid Jamshed Jamadar of Dallas and Naju Soli Tavaría, in Dallas, TX on May 29<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Hilla Manchershah Davierwalla**, mother of Homi (Nergish) Davier, (Houston) Kashmira Commissariat, and Benaifer (Marzi) Tarapore; grandmother of Jenistene Davier and Piran Commissariat, in Mumbai, India, on June 6, 2015.

### Matrimonials for Summer 2015-

FEZANA Journal will coordinate initial contacts between interested parties. We do not assume any responsibility for verifying credentials. Contact Roshan Rivetna at [RRRivetna@aol.com](mailto:RRRivetna@aol.com).

**Male, 39**, B.Com, Bombay University, has own business in Mumbai. Independent, with separate house, family-oriented, very helpful and kind-hearted, willing to relocate. Contact aunt [mkhosroo@gmail.com](mailto:mkhosroo@gmail.com). [M15.19]

**Male, 27**, good-looking, currently enrolled in MD/ MBA program in Ivy League school in USA. Three years to finish the study. Interested in meeting good-looking, smart, educated, good natured young Parsee girl, willing to settle in USA. Contact [Fedcokd@aol.com](mailto:Fedcokd@aol.com). [M15-21]

**Male, 34**, 5' 7", B.Com, Bombay University, executive at Hindustan Unilever Ltd in Mumbai. Contact [mchhapgar@gmail.com](mailto:mchhapgar@gmail.com) or call 9833623607. [M15-35]

### LOOKING FOR A SOUL MATE?

Have you seen the **new user-friendly matrimonial website** created to assist Zarathushtis of all ages.? It was made possible through the personal funding assistance of a concerned gentleman in the USA. He writes "*Ahura Mazda willing, it will continue forever with my support, and that of other like-minded individuals. There will be no charge for participants.*" Please visit: [www.zoroastrianmatrimonial.com](http://www.zoroastrianmatrimonial.com)

Also try these matrimonial sites and services:  
[www.chaalokaajkariye.com](http://www.chaalokaajkariye.com)  
[www.Matrimonial.Zoroastrianism.com](http://www.Matrimonial.Zoroastrianism.com)  
[www.zoroastrians.net](http://www.zoroastrians.net)  
[www.TheParsiMatch.com](http://www.TheParsiMatch.com)  
[www.shaaadi.com](http://www.shaaadi.com)  
[www.ParsiMatrimony.com](http://www.ParsiMatrimony.com)  
[www.ParsiShaadi.com](http://www.ParsiShaadi.com)  
[www.MatrimonialParsiZoroastrianism.com](http://www.MatrimonialParsiZoroastrianism.com)  
Mrs. Gool Banaji, Parel, Mumbai, [goolpesi@gmail.com](mailto:goolpesi@gmail.com), tel: 91-22 2416 6120

PLEASE SEND ALL SUBMISSIONS FOR MILESTONES TO

MAHRUKH MOTAFRAM

TEL 425-961-0298

[Mahrukhm83@gmail.com](mailto:Mahrukhm83@gmail.com)

## **Dr. Homi Cawas Bhedwar (1948-2015)** **Community Loses a Brilliant Leader in Scientific Research**

As a celebrated research leader and icon of DuPont Science, he had flown more than a hundred times around the world. He wanted to retire, but he was in the middle of establishing a second international research lab in Singapore. On April 16, 2015, he was on a routine flight on British Airways between Singapore and London on the way to the U.S.

But this time, 20 minutes before landing at Heathrow, the flight crew could not wake him up and he was taken to a London hospital.

Homi Cawas Bhedwar, 66, was pronounced dead.

Homi had an exceptional 38 year career with DuPont. When he started at DuPont in Wilmington, Delaware, in 1977, he was promoted to a management position very early in his career and then to progressively senior positions within the Company.

He was especially proud to have established the DuPont Knowledge Center (DKC) in Hyderabad, India, which in the last 8 years has grown to over 400 scientists and engineers. He demonstrated a unique blend of leadership and research skills in managing interdisciplinary teams, which included research in agriculture, biotechnology, genetics, and materials. DKC is one of the more productive labs in the DuPont global enterprise and considered exemplary within the company. In recognition of his science and research leadership, in early 2014 DuPont promoted him as Regional Technology Director, DuPont Asia Pacific.

At the Memorial Service on May 5<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Douglas Muzyka, Chief Science and Technology Officer at DuPont remarked that “Everyone who visits DKC can feel the hand of Homi in all that is great there, the labs and semi-works, the creative and stimulating culture, and especially the people. He was responsible for attracting, championing, nurturing, challenging and mentoring one of the most effective teams of industrial researchers in all of India and in all of DuPont.”

An honors graduate from IIT Bombay (IITB) in 1972, Homi graduated as one of the top students in a very hyper-competitive environment at IITB. His colleagues recall that Homi made time for “outside the classroom”. He was involved in the drama society taking lead roles including playing Justice Haywood in *Judgment in Nuremberg*, and earning favorable reviews in the press. His future wife Zarine was often present to encourage him. He was active in the first



production of Metamor4sis, which grew into the Mood Indigo Festival, and is still held annually on the IITB campus.

His advanced degrees included a Master's from Cornell and a Ph.D. in Metallurgy and Materials Science from Carnegie-Mellon.

Homi was the great grandson of two men of great eminence in India - Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Jehangir Marzban. He was the son-in-law of Professor Jamshed Kotval of Wilson College in Mumbai.

The family is based in Hockessin, Delaware. Homi is survived by his wife Zarine, their two sons – Cyrus and Carl, and three grandchildren.

*Prepared by Hoshi Printer, New Port Coast, California*



## SERMON BY MOBEDYAR MAHSHAD KHOSRAVIANI AT THE DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF KAMRAN KHODAMORAD, WASHINGTON, DC.

### Editor's Note:

The second death anniversary of Ravanshad Khodamorad Kamran, a soul remembered fondly by his Zarathusthi community, was celebrated at the Dar-e-Mehr in Boyds, Maryland, by his family and friends on 8 February 2015. Gracing the occasion with prayers and selected tracts from Zarathushti scriptures with their translations, Mobedyar Mahshad Khosraviani from Toronto, Canada, reminded those present of the duty of every individual to participate with zeal in acts of collective giving.

An extract from her sermon given in Farsi with an English translation are shared below.



دل ز تنهایی به جان آمد خدا را همدمی  
چشم آسایش که دارد از سپهر تیزرو  
ساقیا جامی به من ده تا بیاسایم دمی

با درود و سپاس فراوان از خانواده شادروان خدامراد کامران که بنده رو قابل دوستن تا مراسم پدر و همسر گرامیشونو برگزار کنم.

تا چندی پیش وقتی کسی فوت میکرد خیلی ساده به زیون می وردم [روحشون شاد / راحت شدن دیگه / یه جا بهتر هستن] بدونی اینکه درکی بکنم از درد و قمه خانواده و اترافیانسون . تا اینکه مادر بزرگم حدود ۳ هفته پیش فوت کردن و به معنا واقعی فهمیدم که چه قد این گفت ها پوچ هستن. و چه درد و رنجی هست از دست دادن عزیزی که لحظه لحظه زندگیمون بدون اون خالی و سرد می شه.

تنها می تونم از اهورا مزدا صبر و آرامش خواستار باشم تا اینکه بتونیم جای خالی آن ها را تحمل کنیم.

امروز ما اینجا گرد هم آمدیم تا زندگی این شادروان خدامراد کامران را جشن بگیریم و از اهورا سپاگذار باشیم که همچنین دوست، پدر، همسر، و بهدینی را در جامعه ما حضور داد تا به بهترین نحو زنگانی سرشار از مهر، آشویی، و راستی را بر دو اصول اشم وهو و یاتا آهو که راست گویی و کمک به دستمندان به سر کند.

درب مهر کامران نمونه ایی از زحمت و خیر اندیشی شادروان خدامراد هست که برای استفاده همه زرتشتیان به جا گذشته شده است.

زرتشت به ما می‌آموزد که ما اول انسانیم، بد ایرانی و بعد زرتشتی. ما به دنیا نیامدیم که زرتشتی بمیریم، بلکه زرتشتی شدیم که با پیروی از پیامهای آشو زرتشت، روح بزرگی را در خورد پرورش دهیم و با استفاده از همه دادهای اهورایی و قدرت شناخت و استفاده کردن از آنها انسانی کامل گردیم و فروهری از خود جا گذاریم. آشوزرتشت باور دارد بهترین راه ستایش خدا انجام کارهای نیک است “ با بهترین اندیشه، گفتار، و کردار ستایش‌های خدا را به توای مزدا اهورا پیشکش می‌نمایم” این جمله گاتا و باور زرتشت است.

از لحظه لحظه زندگی باید لذت برد و استفاده کرد. به دگران کمک کرد. حتماً اگر کاری به سادگی یک لبخند یا تعریف از لباس یا مو یا کاری که انجام دادند. نه وقتی زیادی از ما می‌گیره و نه کار سختی است اما به راحتی روز یک نفر را می‌سازد. تاحالا فکر کردید چقدر ما آدمهای خوشبختی هستیم، همه بزنم به تخته سالم، باسواد، تحصیل کرده، دورمان پر از دوستان و آشنایانی که واقعا دوستان دارند، تو کشوری زندگی مینیم که آزادی داریم، تو محیطی درس می‌خوانیم که افکارمان، امیدمان، ارزوهایمون متلاشی نمیشوند. امکاناتی داریم که میتونیم به زندگی راحت را برای خود و خانواده‌مان فراهم کنیم، و در حین حل به دیگران نیز کمک کنیم. از نعمتهایی که اهورامزدا در اختیارمون گذاشته باید استفاده کامل کرد ولی نه سواستفاده. او به ما عقل، دانش، زیبایی، توانایی بخشیده و بدون هیچ منت و درخواستی تمام دنیا رو در اختیارمون گذاشته و هیچ وقت ازمون نیمپرسد چه ماشینی سوار شوی بلکه میپرسه چند نفر بی وسیله رو سوار کردی ؟

او نیمپرس مساحت منزلتان چقدر بوده بلکه میپرسه به چند نفر خوش آمد گفتید، او نیمپرسد در کمد خود چه لباسهایی داشتید بلکه میپرسه به چند نفر لباس پوشانیدید.

او نیمپرسد عنوانه شغل شما چی بود، بلکه میپرسه چه قدر سعی کردید با بهترین توانایی تان بهترین کار رو انجام دهید. نیمپرسد چند تا دوس داشتید بلکه میپرسه دوست چند نفر بودید. از رنگ پوستتان نیمپرسد بلکه از محتویات شخصیت شما میپرسه. امروز بهتر از دیروز و فردای ناشناخته است، پس از این فرصت استفاده کنید تا دلی را شاد کنید، دلی را به دست بیاورید، به دگران کمک کنید و کمی مهر و محبت را در زندگی روزانمون بی افزایشید.

با دگران جووری رفتار کنید که خودتان شایسته آن باشد چون زیبایی به وسعت دل است. آنچه میماند کارهای ماست. آن حلقه دوره کمره فروهر، دایره هست که از هر نقطه از آن شروع کنیم به همان نقطه خواهیم رسید. منظور آن نشان دادن روزگار بی پایان است. به این معنی که هر عمل و کرداری که در این زندگی صورت گیرد، نتیجه آن در همین دنیا متوجه انسان میشود و اثر آن باقی خواهد ماند.

مرد ثروتمندی از کشیشی پرسید نمیدانم چرا مردم مرا به خسیسی می‌پندارند، کشیش گفت، بگذار حکایت کوتاهی از یک گاو و خوک برایت بگویم: روزی خوک از گاو پرسید، مردم از طبیعت آرام تو به نیکی سخن می‌گویند و تصور میکنند تو خیلی بخشنده هستی زیرا هر روز برایشان شیر و سر شیر میدهی. ولی در مورد من چی؟ من همه چیز خود را به آنها

میدهم، از گوشت ران گرفته تا سینه ام را، حتا از موی بندم بورس کفش درست میکنند، با وجود این کسی از من خوشش  
نمیاد، علتش چیست؟ گاو در جوابش گفت: علتش این است که هر چه من میدهم در زمان حیاتم است نه پس از مرگم.  
پس با اندیشه و گفتار و کردار نیک، زندگانی سرشار از خوبی را در پیش گیرید تا همیشه به خوبی یاد شود.

روان خدامراد کامران شاد بعد و تنها برای بازماندگانش صبر با آرامش خواستارم.

آن کس که مرا روح و روان بود، پدر بود

آن کس که مرا فخر زمان بود پدر بود

افسوس که رفت از سرم آن سایه رحمت

آن کس که برایم نگران بود، پدر بود



## TRANSLATION OF SERMON BY MOBEDYAR MAHSHAD KHOSRAVIANI AT THE DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF KAMRAN KHODAMORAD, WASHINGTON DC

Ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests, my dear friends and family,

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Kamran Family who has deemed me worthy of performing this prayer ceremony for their beloved husband, father and friend.

Only recently when I lost my Grandmother, I was able to unravel the grave matter of emotions one endures in the absence of their loved one; and no condolences - however much fervent they may be - is enough to ease the agony. I can only ask from Ahura Mazda to give us the patience and strength to endure the loss of our loved ones.

We have gathered here today to celebrate the life of the beloved Khodamorad Kamran. We are thankful for having known a father, a husband, a friend and a true Zartoshti who lived his life by the main principles taught in the Ashem Vohu and Yata Ahu prayers. Mr. Kamran had a kind and generous heart and lived a life of Asha based on Homat (good thoughts), Hookht (good words), and Hovaresht (good deeds). The Dare-mehr in which we are gathered today was one example of his generosity and good will to the Zartoshti community.

Zarathustra teaches us that we are first humans, then Iranians, and lastly Zoroastrians. We have not been created to die as Zoroastrians, but instead to live the life of purity and to become better human beings by following Zarathustra's guidance and behooving spiritual beings. Zarathustra believed that the highest praise to god is to think good thoughts, say good words and do good deeds.

It is vital that we live and relish each second of our life. As Zoroastrians, we ought to help others, even if a



# Obituary

deed is as simple as smiling or complementing someone. We have all been blessed with health, wealth, education, family and friends who love and cherish us dearly. We live in a land where our freedom, our thoughts and existence are not prosecuted. We should be thankful for and take advantage of God's blessings and not abuse them. God has given us wisdom, intelligence, beauty and a bountiful world. In return, God never asks about the type of car we drive, but how many people who needed transportation we have given a ride to. He never asks about the magnitude of our house, but how many people we have welcomed with an open heart. Be sure that God never questions our profession or income, but the way we help and contribute to the less fortunate. God does not count how many friends we have but asks how many people we have shown our friendship to. Our race and gender is never quizzed but our personality is assessed by God.

Let us not worry about yesterday for it is in the past. Today is what matters to paint a better future by helping and treating others as we wish to be treated ourselves. The ring around Faravahar's waist represents Karma and the circle of life, meaning whatever goes around ultimately comes around with its ramifications. We reap what we sow in our lifetime.

A wealthy man asks a priest *"why does everyone conceive me as a Scrooge?"*

the priest explains the public's outlook on affluence with a story; *"a pig approaches a cow with great bafflement and distress, and asks why is it that humans regard you as a calm, giving, and nurturing animal when you simply supply them with milk each day, but I give them everything from my body parts to even my hair, and yet no one is as fond of me as they are of you!?"* The cow's response is *"because all that I give is during my viable life, not after my death."*

The moral of the story is for everyone to embrace and live our lives by the principles of *"Humata, Hukhta, Hovareshta"*, or "Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds" to live a good and empowered life and to be remembered fondly.

May Khodamorad Kamran's soul rest in peace. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family.

**Mobedyar Mahshad Khosraviani** is currently a student, double majoring in International Business Law at the Schulich School of Business and Human Resource Management at York University, Toronto Canada.

Born and raised in Tehran, Mahshad and her family migrated to Toronto a little over a decade ago. In Canada she became an active member of both the Irani and Parsi communities teaching Avesta classes and working with children preparing for their Navjote,

Through perseverance and dedication, Mahshad trained and qualified for the ordainment as a Mobedyar under the guidance of Ervad Dr. Jehan Bagli and Ervad Kerman Katrak and her determination and sincere effort made the participation of women in Zoroastrian priestly activity a reality.

Before her ordainment in Toronto she went to Iran for training. Mahshad is the only Mobedyar in the Zoroastrian History who is recognized both by the Iranian Mobed Council as well as by NAMC (North American Mobed Council) and is the first female Zoroastrian mobedyar in North America.

Mahshad has been conducting religious functions and events in Canada, Iran, Australia, America and UK.

## **The *Sīh-rōzag* in Zoroastrianism: A Textual and Historico-Religious Analysis**

By Enrico Raffaelli

(London: Routledge, 2014), xvi + 348 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-81232-0, Price US\$160

**Reviewed by Prof Jamsheed K Choksy,  
Distinguished Professor, Indiana University**

Dr. Enrico Giuseppe Raffaelli's book about the *Sīh-rōzag* or *Siroza*, "Thirty Days," provides a detailed history of manuscripts, discusses the text's relationship to other parts of the *Avesta*, analyzes its linguistics in both the Avestan and Pahlavi or Middle Persian languages, and provides critical editions and translations. Detailed commentaries on the lines are provided, with extensive reference to previous studies and to other relevant scholarship. All is on par with expectations in the academic field of Iranian studies

Raffaelli commences by examining the location of *Sīh-rōzag* within the corpus of Avestan texts, including its internal organization, correlations with other Avestan materials, and philological evidence for its dating, especially on pp. 1–6, 10–14, 15–17, and 35–36. It should be noted that, among Parsis, *Siroza* 1 is termed *Nānā*, "small, little," because of its incomplete formulae with the names and epithets of divine spirits whereas *Siroza* 2 is termed *Mōtā*, "big, great," because it contains complete invocations in which worship is offered to the divine spirits. Lack of definiteness on the chronology and early transmission of the two *Sīh-rōzag* Avestan versions is indeed unavoidable. Raffaelli then endeavors to pin down a possible time framework for the Pahlavi versions of the liturgy through comparison to relevant portions of the *Bundahišn*, "Book of Primal Creation." Raffaelli's conclusion, on pp. 39–40, of a 10<sup>th</sup> century CE date may be extended on the basis of the *Bundahišn* evidence even to the 11<sup>th</sup> century because that cosmological and eschatological text had its final major redaction in 1078 CE—on which see this reviewer's "An Annotated Index of the Greater or Iranian Bundahišn (TD 2)," *Studia Iranica*, vol.15, pt. 2 (1986), p. 204. Next, the *Sīh-rōzag* manuscript tradition is then carefully analyzed by Raffaelli, not only with regard to those manuscripts he utilized, pp. 44–65, but in relation to historical transmission, pp. 66–70.

The core and most important contribution is found from pp. 80–145 in the form of a critical edition and translation of both the Little and Great *Sīh-rōzag*. Of equal value and erudition is the commentary on specific lines of each *Sīh-rōzag*, pp. 149–292. Raffaelli's scholarship adheres to very high standards of philology and codicology.

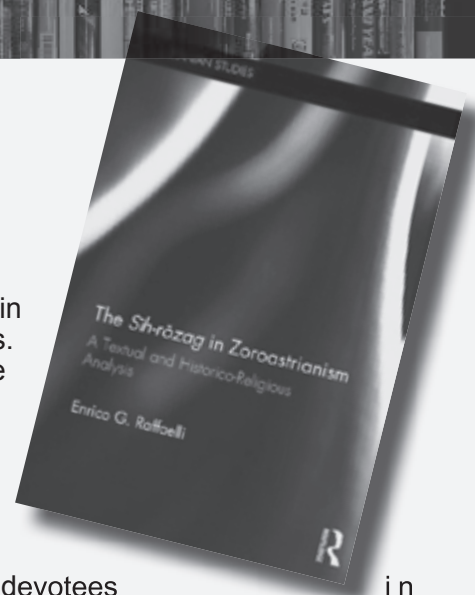
There is one area, however, that could have considerably augmented Raffaelli's research and would have made it more relevant to the study of Zoroastrianism: An extended discussion of the roles

of the *Sīh-rōzag* within ritual and liturgical uses. How and why did the text serve Zoroastrians in their spiritual and communal lives during past centuries and how and why does

it continue to serve devotees in modern times? Granted, several aspects of the ritual and liturgical uses have already been analyzed by Dastur Dr. Firoze Kotwal and this reviewer in their "Praise and Piety: Niyāyišns and Yašts in the History of Zoroastrian Praxis," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London), vol. 68, pt. 2 (2005), pp. 215–252, especially pp. 242–243, where the *Siroza* are discussed specifically. Yet, Raffaelli neither references that article nor provides any details for understanding how the *Sīh-rōzag* was and is utilized within the religion.

Not surprisingly, the two *Sīh-rōzag* occasionally were even presented as a single text with the title of *Siroza Yašt* in manuscripts from eighteenth and nineteenth century CE, and still serve Zoroastrians both individually as synoptic prayers and together as a synoptic *Yašt*. So there is considerable overlap as well in how and why Zoroastrians turn to the *Yašts*, *Niyāyišns*, and the *Sīh-rōzag*—again largely undiscussed by Raffaelli in any comparative ritual sense. The textual overlap is, on the other hand, well documented by Raffaelli through citation of the other Avestan materials in which identical passages are found; see Appendix, pp. 293–313.

Two lists of terms are provided, one titled List of Lexical Items but actually correlating Avestan words of the *Sīh-rōzag* with their Pahlavi renditions, on pp. 314–320 and the other as an Index containing words from Avestan, Pahlavi, Pāzand, and other languages, on pp. 340–344. A Bibliography of sources utilized in Raffaelli's study is provided, as standard, on pp. 321–339. Ultimately the study of *Sīh-rōzag* is a careful revision of the fruits of Dr. Raffaelli's graduate studies. It is indeed a fine philological inquiry and should become a standard reference work on that Avestan text among scholars of Iranian languages and of the textual tradition of Zoroastrianism



## UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICE OF – CONCISE NAVAR CEREMONY BY ERVAD JEHAN BAGLI & ERVAD ADI UNWALLA

**Pages 298, Published 2014 by the authors**

*This book is available for a suggested donation of US \$20 in United States from Ervad Adi Unwalla ([nergisadi2\(@\)aol.com](mailto:nergisadi2(@)aol.com)) and in Canada from Ervad Jehan Bagli ([jbagli\(@\)rogers.com](mailto:jbagli(@)rogers.com)). All proceeds go to the OZCF (Ontario Zarathushti Community Fund) Place of Worship Fund.*

### REVIEW BY ERVAD BRIGADIER BEHRAM M. PANTHAKI

Ervad Jehan Bagli and Ervad Adi Unwalla have done yeomen service by co-authoring their fourth book in the series '*Understanding and Practice of - Concise Navar Ceremony*', which will be of great value to young boys from priestly families in this Diaspora who cannot read Gujarati and are keen to become Ervads. It will address their queries and make the experience of becoming Navar more meaningful than rendition of prayers merely by rote.

This erudite thesis explains the mechanics of the abridged (*Kāchhā*) Navar Ceremony and describes rituals that are performed during the recitation of the mandatory 22 *Yazashne Has* (chapters). In addition, it also provides a complete set of prayers and rituals of *Afringans* and *Baj* with relevant *Khshnumans* to be recited and performed by the initiate during the subsequent three days of ceremony. The authors, by thoughtfully devoting a chapter on "*Baj Dharna*" ceremony which includes relevant prayers with rituals to be enacted, have helped the existing crop of priests in this Diaspora who now should feel confident to accept laity's invitation to perform this ritual. The Glossary of Terms at the end helps the reader better comprehend the subject. The book will also be of interest to laity as it explains the '*Yasna*' ceremony covering all 72 chapters of *Yazashne* from Pgs 9 to 24.

As to the authors, **Ervad Jehan Bagli**, a scholar in his own right, has presented a number of papers at various conferences and seminars and continues to research and write books on Zoroastrian philosophy and on subjects related to Zoroastrianism. It is his passion to perpetuate Zarathushtra's message in *HAFTA KESHWAR ZAMIN*. (around the world). **Ervad Adi Unwalla**, is one of the most qualified mobeds having vast knowledge of our faith. He has the distinction of having performed the *Boi*, *Yazashne* and *Vendidād* ceremonies at the Iranshah at Udwada at the young

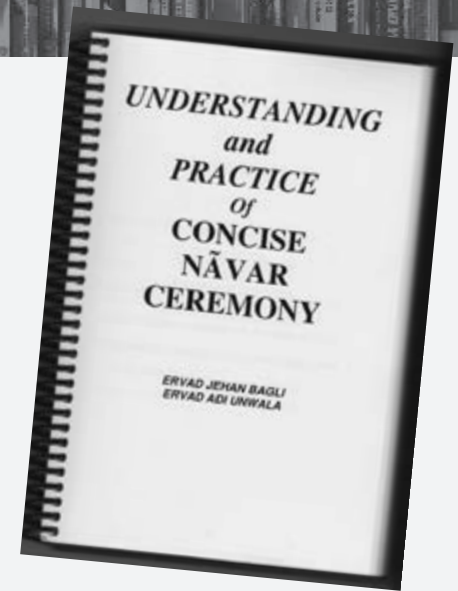
age of 21 years. Today, very few mobeds can lay claim to this fame.

It is commendable that in spite of their divergent views, these two Ervads worked together on this project, thereby setting an example worth emulating by our community's elders and self-styled scholars who egoistically remain unwilling to even listen to differing views. Ervad Dr. Ramyar Karanjia, Principal, Athornan Institute, Dadar, an authority on Zoroastrian rituals, practices and traditions has written an educative foreword.

In the 1940s and 50s it was a standard practice to admit sons of priestly families to one of the two Athornan Institutes in Bombay at Andheri or Dadar where they trained to become *Sampurna* Navars and Maratabs, ensuring continuation of the Athornan lineage. It was also a matter of economics since most priests were too poorly paid to afford education in private schools for their children and were compelled to send them to these seminaries that often limited the child's exposure and consequently his aspirations and limited him to a lifetime of priesthood.

With time the avenues for higher education and job opportunities increased and fewer male progeny followed in their fathers' footsteps. While they did become ordained priests, there was a greater realization of their potential and most young men pursued other vocations. Many became successful architects, doctors, engineers, lawyers, professors, psychologists, nuclear physicists, scientists and officers in the Armed Forces. In this Diaspora they form the bedrock of the community, providing honorary services to the laity at the expense of their personal time.

Undoubtedly, given these changed circumstances





and the pressures of academic life, the ceremony for priesthood has undergone several changes through necessity. Young men are ordained as abridged (*Kāchhā*) Navars by recitation of the minimum required 22 Yazashne Has (chapters) with related liturgies. Most of the coaching is done at home with the help of a local priest. This has become the norm rather than the exception worldwide, even in India. Since ordainment is no longer onerous, more young men from priestly families are showing an interest in becoming Ervads, even if their preceding generations had abandoned this practice. Consequently the theory that in a priestly family if three successive generations have not become Navar, the family loses its Athornan

lineage, has been invalidated. A male progeny from priestly families can exercise this right at will. A case in point is Dastur Firoze Meherji Kotwal, whose family at one time had no Ervad for four continuous generations.

The Zoroastrian community in general and the Mobed fraternity in particular owes a debt of gratitude to Ervads Jehan Bagli and Adi Unwala for their time, effort and selfless service by documenting and explaining the nuances of the abridged (*Kāchhā*) Navar Ceremony in their Book.

## COMING SOON A PUBLICATION BY FEZANA

### *MY MOTHER USED TO SAY*

**PARSI AND PERSIAN QUOTATIONS ; VIGNETTES OF OUR INIMITABLE LANGUAGE AND LIFESTYLE**

**COMPILED BY  
ROSHAN ROHINTION RIVETNA AND DINAZ KUTAR ROGERS**

**ILLUSTRATIONS BY KAIZIN POONIWALA**

*Tale bharinay kantyu, nay pate bharinay sanchyu*

*We've burnt the midnight oil and worked as hard as possible and now hope our readers enjoy this book as much as we did writing it ---*

*Roshan and Dinaz*

A look at a quintessential slice of Parsi and Persian life –capturing their inimitable language, lifestyle, culture and idiosyncrasies

Deeply committed to preserving the Zoroastrian (Parsi and Persian) religion, customs, culture and traditions for future generations in the diaspora, Roshan Rivetna and Dinaz Kutar Rogers have captured and recorded –lest future generations growing up in the West forget- this collection of priceless heirlooms. These include Parsi/Persian quotations and fun phrases for all ailments from the “doctor” in every household and nostalgic memories of growing up in the “baugs” of Bombay

The compilation is a great way to remind and regale those who grew up in India and Iran about a part of their heritage they left behind. New generations born and raised in the Western diaspora will be enlightened and entertained. And all readers will appreciate the wisdom our parents and grandparents dispensed in their own incomparable way



"THE PATH OF ZARATHUSTRA" IS A FILM ABOUT A JOURNEY UNDERTAKEN BY A YOUNG PARSI WOMAN IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES SEEKING TO DISCOVER THE ESSENCE OF THE MESSAGE OF ZARATHUSTRA. THE TITLE IS METAPHORICAL AND NOT INTENDED TO BE INTERPRETED IN A LITERAL MANNER AS THE FILM IS NOT ABOUT THE LIFE STORY OF ZARATHUSTRA BUT INSTEAD ABOUT THE PATH THAT HE PRESCRIBED WHICH IS DISCOVERED BY THE PROTAGONIST IN HER LIFE'S QUEST FOR MEANING, TRUTH AND KEEPING THE FLAME ALIVE.

THE FILM IS NOW COMPLETE AND BEING READIED FOR A WORLDWIDE RELEASE STARTING WITH A PREMIER IN NEW YORK.



This is an original image from the film  
Image Courtesy SBI Impresario Pvt. Ltd. India  
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## "The Path of Zarathustra" – Synopsis

There is no belief without believers. A young woman, 'Oorvazi', born into Zoroastrianism, the religion of her forefathers leaves the isolation of her remote home when her grandfather with whom she lives alone dies. He leaves her a mysterious message and an even more mysterious book. Oorvazi journeys to Mumbai, the city where the dwindling Zoroastrian community, an endangered species of believers lives. She is welcomed in her aunt's house by her aunt's adopted son who confesses that he still loves her.

The meaning of the mystery her grandfather has left her with is revealed in layers as Oorvazi comes across figures from the historical past of the Zoroastrians. The mystery of the book too is revealed. Are these figures and the magical book real or figments of a philosophical imagination? Does her quest end in love or in understanding – or are these interchangeable or ultimately the same?

## Walking on the Path

### *The Path of Zarathushtra*

*Born from a silent cry  
a quest to seek the truth  
running away from the mundane being a choice  
arriving at the shores of the magical and mysterious my destiny  
to seek myself anew*

**Oorvazi Irani**

The seed for the film was born out of a personal quest to discover my identity as I could not separate the Parsi/Irani and Zoroastrian from me. I was not a regular at community events or a very religious person but there was something very special that I wanted to hold on to and I discovered this when in 2006 I attended a Minority Commission meet and was made aware of our dwindling numbers and the specter of extinction looming; it hit me then that my Parsiness was so special, so unique, the idea of it being lost forever seemed at the time dreadful. I felt like a part of me will die beyond my physical death and that opened the floodgates of a creative yearning and a deep longing to remain connected to my roots and my Parsiness.

Life went on and belonging to a film family I got involved with many a film projects as I grew up in the profession of filmmaking being made the Director of my home production company SBI Impresario Pvt. Ltd. (incorporated by my dad Sorab Irani in 1975) and then also began teaching film and being a film educationalist. The spark however of a creative yearning was now turning into a passionate fire within to have a creative response out there in the world to counter the specter of our community's extinction.

I struggled for many years but could not find a form that could contain the essence of what I wanted to express and not having definitive answers still I knew what I did not want to say and that was, not to repeat what was already known.

Finally two years ago with the active collaboration of Farrukh Dhondy as the screenplay writer, the film began to take shape. Farrukh brought to the subject knowledge and depth that opened the doors of new possibilities and we set out on the challenge of creating the first international Parsi feature film which tackles the Parsi dilemma and puts a spotlight on the essence of the message of the first Prophet - Zarathustra. For me a major breakthrough from the writer was the idea of bringing to the contemporary reality of the film the heretics and heresies of Mani, Mazdak and Zurvan respectively, this opens a door to take the film into the past, present and future and question history and looks at things in a new light. However what was important for me as a filmmaker was to tell a human story which the audience identifies with so at its core the film is the quest of this young Zoroastrian woman to find the mystery of her grandfather's book. The screenplay can seem deceptively simple at times but the genius of the writer is that the film unfolds within itself into different dimensions challenging the viewer to participate.

For me the great appeal of cinema lies in the fact that it can explore realms between the real and the unreal and my film exists in a space where there is a blurring of the lines between the two. The film form is in sync with auteur driven art cinema particularly Iranian new wave cinema in a way that it goes beyond the conventional cause and effect plot driven film to a gentle contemplative narrative to reflect on contemporary times.

To share with you why I choose to be the face of the film, and play 'Oorvazi' the lead character in the film; one being that it was my personal quest in many ways as an artist and the other being a deliberate creative choice to not use a glamorous professional actor instead use a real human being which added another dimension to the artistic creation of the film, in line with a choice of many auteur driven films internationally. It was a desire to absorb myself more completely in its creation where the bond of creator and creation blend into one.

I know I have not made a conventional film that might excite the passive viewer but I hope I can touch a chord in a sensitive and active audience as I believe you don't make a film for an audience but the film creates an audience and hoping this film will create a beautiful one for itself.

**Film Website:** [www.thepathofzarathustra.com](http://www.thepathofzarathustra.com)



## *The First Navjote*

**Ava Mehta**

**COMING SOON    A PUBLICATION BY FEZANA**

At some time or the other in our lives most of us will wonder or query some of these fundamental questions such as: Why are we here? Why is life not always happy even though we try so hard to do what is good; why is there so much pain and suffering; why do some of us suffer more than others? Why are there earthquakes, floods,



storms and other problems which make life so difficult? What happens to us when we die? Are we judged? Why in fact do we exist at all? Where do we come from and for what are we born?





# Books & ARTS

There are as many answers to these questions as there are religions. These are universal questions we as adults ponder over and debate. Children too can, from a very early age be introduced through stories such as in the narrative of the First Navjote as to why we are here on earth. They can be guided and shown that as Zoroastrians they have the responsibility and power to, however small, help make our world a happier and better place to live in whatever their circumstance and through the myriad of situations that they may encounter as they go through life.

It is my hope that through the way in which I have written and illustrated this simple tale, children will enjoy learning and understanding facts about the Prophet Zarathustra and the messages he received from Ahura Mazda in a fun yet informative way. This interest would maybe lead them to continue the quest to find out even more about this wonderful religion. I also hope the book helps to highlight some answers as to the way to live our lives together with the customs and traditions based on Prophet Zarathustra's teachings which are being practised, even to this day.

Through the story of the First Navjote, I have endeavoured to convey the power of prayer and belief and the individual contribution we as human beings can each make towards the ultimate victory of goodness over evil. It is this triumph that is the very purpose of life, as emphasised by Prophet Zarathushtra.

In the story, the two princesses are the fictional two daughters of King Vishtaspa and Queen Hutaosa and it highlights their encounter and fascination with their visitor. Zarathushtra their 'strange' visitor, had left home in search of the Truth and answers to his many questions until, one day he arrives at the court of the King and Queen to share his revelations. One Princess in particular is completely in awe of their guest, studying him from a child's perspective and the story continues, leading to the First Navjote! In the pages following the Navjote story, I have given a very simplified explanation of the kushti ritual and the five prayers which are recited whilst tying the sacred woollen cord (the kushti) over the appropriately designed cotton vest (the sudreh). To make it relevant and enjoyable for the youngest of Navjote aged children I have explained the meaning of each prayer through the princesses way of thinking and reasoning which young children will identify with. The names of each prayer are also embedded into the story itself so that the reader can identify the relevant prayer recited to a given circumstance.

These prayers are recited in the ancient Avestan and later Pahlavi language and though through translation we understand their meanings, pronouncing the prayers in the original sacred words as they have been passed down on to us from ancient times gives each prayer a supernatural, almost magical power relevant to its content.

I hope both adults and children enjoy this book together and absorb many new facts as they devour all that each illustrated character represents and teaches.

## TESTIMONIALS

### Foreward by Prof John Hinnells

This is the second book to be published by Ava Mehta. The first was ***Zoroastrianism: The story of our religion***, published in Bombay in 1988. As the title implies it was written for young Zoroastrians. The author's own illustrations in both books greatly enrich and bring the story alive. The text is clear and readable for children and adults. Ava Mehta is a school teacher which is evident in the very accessible style of both text and illustrations. This book starts with the prophet's birth and tells the crucial moment

in Zoroastrian history when the king Vishtaspa was initiated into the Good Religion followed by the royal court and the enemies who had attacked Zoroaster slunk away defeated. Zoroaster went on his way to tell others about the Good religion as he had been taught in his vision of Ahura Mazda. May this book give insight into and appreciation of the Good Religion to all its Zoroastrian readers.

## Blessing from Dastur Dr Firoze M. Kotwal

My felicitations to you on writing another book for children on our religion Zoroastrianism. Your creative and imaginative illustrations, through which aspects of the religion have been explained by you, will attract the young mind to look forward to learning the religion through a visual expression of colour and form. The Sudreh and Kusti are our religious vestments and are the spiritual shields which have come down to us from Zarathushtra and the sages who were with him. To put on the Sudreh and Kusti is the command of Ahura Mazda and this command should be upheld by all Zoroastrians throughout their life, from spiritual birth of navjote to the last breath of life.

Your zeal for inculcating the teachings of Zarathushtra among the youth is truly commendable. It is important that in this day and age information on our religion is made available for the younger generation. Your earlier book *\*Zoroastrianism The Story of our Religion\** has gone a long way in creating an abiding interest in our faith for the young adherents of the faith. We pray to Ahura Mazda to grant you the strength to pursue such good works..

**Ava Mehta**, with her passion for teaching children, trained initially as a primary teacher, from Loreto House Calcutta, a profession she likes best and was born to deliver! Being interested in how children think and learn, she later obtained an Honours degree in Early Years Teaching in London and subsequently taught at several prestigious schools. While bringing up her two little girls she established and ran many successful craft clubs for children and also ran family learning sessions in schools using recyclable materials to create seasonal models and teaching aids.

After securing the *Early Years Professional Status* she chose to work with disadvantaged children and families and use her skills to motivate not just children but their families and the staff to maximise the potential in people.

With her daughters enrolled at university, Ava can once more put her talents not only in teaching but on writing and illustrating books on diverse topics, hoping to spread knowledge in a fun and meaningful way to young children and their families.

She is the author of *'The Story of My religion Zoroastrianism'* which is now in its 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Her new and long awaited next illustrated book is titled *'The First Navjote'* and this will be available shortly published by FEZANA .

## UN INVITES WORLD'S SEVEN BILLION PEOPLE TO BECOME AGENTS OF CHANGE ON WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY- JUNE 5, 2015

With many of the earth's ecosystems nearing "critical tipping points", the United Nations invited each of the seven billion people on the planet To mark this year's ***World Environment Day*** by making one change towards a more responsible consumption of resources – "be it refusing to buy single-use plastic bags or riding a bike to work."

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DR. IRACH J.S. TARAPOREWALA

## THE DIVINE SONGS OF ZARATHUSHTRA



*The Gatha or the Divine Songs of Zarathushtra are timeless and ageless. For thousands of years these Divine Songs have inspired and spiritually nourished generations and the Divine Truths expressed by Zarathushtra over 17 chapters will indeed continue to uplift and revitalize generations to come.*

*FEZANA has done a signal service to the community by publishing a reprint of the 3rd Edition of Late Dr. Taraporewala's seminal work in which the message of Prophet Zarathushtra comes through as refreshing and relevant for the new tech-savvy generation as it has since thousands of years.*

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*The 157 years old Union Press – a household name among Parsis in India for printing calendars and Zoroastrian prayer books – deserve special acknowledgement for painstakingly reprinting this work with quality printing, paper and binding of this work of over a thousand pages. It is a hardbound book with a beautiful dust jacket.*

*This book is recommended not only for every library, school or institution but every household in India and abroad. It's not only visually appealing to adorn every bookshelf but also a book to be read as often as possible to enrich one's day to day life with its timeless wisdom.*



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