

JOURNAL

Fravadin – Ardibehesht – Khordad 1385 AY (Fasli) • Avan – Adar – Dae 1385 AY (Shenshai) • Adar – Dae – Behman 1385 AY (Kadimi)

NOROOZ PIROOZ BAD

NOROOZ MUBARAK

**The new Arbab Rustam Guiv
Dar-e-Mehr in New York**

**Also inside: Kurds and their
Zoroastrian Roots**



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FEZANA JOURNAL

PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

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Summer 2016

THE FESTIVAL OF MEHREGAN

GUEST EDITOR

FARIBORZ RAHNAMEON

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A Word from the Editor

Images of destruction and ravages of bombardments in Mosul, Aleppo, Tikrit, Kirkuk, Suleimani, Sinjar, flood our TV screens and newspaper headlines, devastation of life and property. But those are people far away we feel sorry for them and then turn the channel or turn the page of our tabloid to more entertaining reading. But did we stop to think who these people may be? They were middle eastern people fighting each other!!! Slowly news started to trickle in that the among the Kurds and the Persh-merga fighters there may be Zoroastrians trying to claim back their original religion: the Zoroastrian religion. Dr Daryoush Jahanian of Kansas started looking into the religious connection of the Kurds to Zoroastrianism more seriously and deeply. He made contact with two Kurds Pir Luckman Haji Karim in Kurdistan and Pir Andaz Hawazi, in Sweden. Frank and open dialogue was established which was not always easy because of language barriers. We thought we had enough material to explore this subject and make it a cover story for the spring issue of the Journal. Dr Jahanian volunteered to be the guest editor of this issue and it was a pleasure to work with him.

We have articles from Zarathushtis who have lived in Iraq and who had first hand knowledge of the Kurds in that area, Prof Adi Damania who lived in Aleppo and Adi Davar who visited that area in his capacity as Chief of the World Bank's Middle East & Afghanistan Division, describe their encounters. Prof Kaveh Farrokh who is married to a Kurd, gives a perspective of Kurdish history. In addition we were fortunate to have two well researched articles by Lara Fatah, a global fellow of the Project for Study of the 21 century (PS 21) and Saad Salloum of Al Monitor who gives us an insight into the present situation with the Kurds. I thank Zenobia Ravji, a freelance journalist who had been stationed in Israel, for her contacts with these journalists.

The cover story will give you a different perspective of that region, the hardships the Kurds are facing in wanting to revert back to their original religion and their determination against all odds to do so. Very similar to the story of Iranian Zarthushtis after the fall of the Persian Empire with the defeat of Yazdegerd III.

The spring issue each year covers the achievements of our scholarship winners in academics, sports, performing arts for FEZANA, the ZSBC, scholarships, the Legacy



scholarships of Houston, the Fali Chothia scholarships, the Vakshoori scholarships and this year has been no exception. Rejoice in the achievements of our next generation. We have even published the research of the 2014 Kheradi Scholar on the mental health of young Zrathushtis. Our money is well invested!!

The 35 young adults who had received FEZANA subsidies to attend the 6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in New Zealand sent an exhaustive report which is included in this issue.

With the advent of spring the Zarathushtis of the Tri state area have much to celebrate. Their \$5 million dollar new Arbab Rustam Guiv Dar-e Mehr was inaugurated on March 26. What a spiritually uplifting experience it was!! (Pgs106-108) Congratulations ZAGNY, IZA and DMZT. Your hard work has paid off.

This winter FEZANA lost two past presidents of the member associations, Ervad Darab Unwala of the Zoroastrian Association of Florida and Mrs Moti Rusi Balsara, of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario. May their souls rest in peace. Their hard work on behalf of their constituencies was much appreciated.

We have a new president of the World Chamber of Commerce, Edul Davar of New York. Read about him in the personal profile section .

I wish you all the best of health and happiness this Navrooz !!

Jolly Davar

A Message from FEZANA President

Dear Zarathushtis

My term as President of FEZANA ends on April 30, 2016 and as I look back at the past four years I consider myself very fortunate to have participated and represented FEZANA domestically in USA & Canada and also worldwide at Zarathushti religious and cultural events. It has been a very interesting, challenging & thought-provoking journey for me these past years as I rose through the ranks of FEZANA as Secretary, Treasurer, Vice-President and then President.

It has been an inspiring, exciting and challenging experience to govern a Federation consisting of 26 member associations, 14 corresponding members and 25 committee chairs across the U.S.A & Canada. I would like to thank my colleagues on the FEZANA Executive, Presidents and Representatives of FEZANA's 26 member associations and 14 corresponding members as well as the 25 Committee Chairs for their help, coordination and efforts as well as garnering the support and participation of their community members and fellow Zarathushtis in promoting the various activities and causes supported by FEZANA.

FEZANA was founded with the purpose of giving the growing North American Zarathushti community a united platform to plan and control its future. FEZANA's mission is to preserve our religion on the North American continent by providing a cohesive force. Our core values are being recognized and enhanced through a strong emphasis on education, economic stability, and volunteerism. As we nurture a love for humanity and promote our Zarathushti way of life, we are increasing awareness of our religion and culture domestically and globally. This is the vision we are promoting to instill pride in our future generations.

Let us celebrate charity and honesty within our communities, socialize with our loved ones, and remember to live our lives as dictated by Ahura Mazda. As we nurture a love for humanity and promote our Zarathushti way of life, we are increasing awareness of our religion and culture domestically and globally. This is the vision we are promoting to instill pride in our future generations.



The activities undertaken by FEZANA and its members and committees are showcased in the monthly FEZANA Bulletin and the quarterly FEZANA Journal. Refer to www.fezana.org.

I would like to personally thank my friend, mentor and role model, Dr. Dolly Dastoor, Chair of the FEZANA Academic Scholarships Committee, as well as the judges & members of this Committee for their efforts in reviewing, evaluating and rating applications, their continued efforts in revising & updating this process, automating it, making it user friendly and transparent. I would also like to thank our generous donors who have contributed funds and encourage them and other prospective donors to continue to contribute to FEZANA and help us to award academic, religious education, sports, and performing & creative arts scholarships.

FEZANA maintains a collaborative approach towards other Zoroastrian associations in India and around the world, respecting their autonomy while at the same time coming together to celebrate our commonalities. In that collaborative and cooperative spirit, FEZANA has been an active participant in the Global Working Group (GWG) of the worldwide Zoroastrian organizations.

FEZANA and its member associations have supported the teaching of our religion, history, and culture to the children of the community for decades. There are associations in North America now where the second generation of children is now attending religion classes, many of them in the same Dar-e-Mehr buildings their parents attended as kids. A new religious curriculum was released by FEZANA's Religious Education Committee at the XVII North American Zoroastrian Congress in Los Angeles on December 29, 2014. Go to www.fezana.org for more details.

With technology enablers such as social media, video chat programs and instant messaging, the world is today a global village. Let us continue to encourage our youth to attend religious classes, learn about their roots and meet up at World Zoroastrian Youth Congresses. FEZANA has always encouraged inclusiveness at all levels, including of the two diverse cultures of Iran and India. Therefore Parsi Zarathushtis celebrate Mehergan and Yalda and other traditionally Iranian festivals and Iranian Zarathushtis join in celebrating the Gahambars and Parsi New Year.

My personal message to all of you is that each day brings new opportunities so look for creative ideas and affirmative solutions; partner with other fellow Zarathushtis to provide value added services resulting in the achievement of community service objectives; develop a spirit of teamwork and network with Zarathushtis locally and globally sharing ideas on community involvement and development of Zarathushti religion and culture.

Let us make a promise to dedicate just one hour per week from our overly busy lives to involve ourselves in Zarathushti community activities, and thus empower ourselves to work towards a Happier, Healthier, Unified and Knowledgeable Zarathushti community in the years ahead.

Your generous donations are vitally needed to the FEZANA General Fund to enable FEZANA to continue to work actively towards and participate in various activities (Youth Congress, Religious Education, Sports, U.N.-NGO, Inter-Faith, etc.) as showcased in this Journal and monthly bulletins.

I request that all of us continue to follow the **5-STAR Guiding Principles for FEZANA: Teamwork, Respect Diversity, Innovation, Empowerment & an Optimistic 'Can Do Attitude'**.

May Ahura Mazda shower his choicest blessings on the Zarathushti community as they work collectively in harmony and with an optimistic can-do attitude in supporting FEZANA's goals and activities in 2016 and onwards to achieve the five goals of the FEZANA Second Strategic Plan!

Katayun Kersi Kapadia

FEZANA President (2012-2016)



POPE FRANCIS GIFTED WITH ARBAB RUSTAM GUIV DAR-E-MEHR ILADRO VOTIVE

Armene Modi as part of her Global Master of Arts Program at the Fletcher School, Tufts University, visited the vatican in January 2016 . She was one of the 50 persons chosen to meet Pope Francis. His Argentinian biographer introduced her as a Zoroastrian when she presented the Lladro Porecelain votive on behalf of the community .

His Holiness was intrigued with it and spent a couple of moments opening it.

FEZANA WELFARE REPORT

FEZANA WELFARE COMMITTEE



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Being busy is generally a good thing if one is in business; but, not so, if one is in the welfare business. Our 2016 calendar included some "carry forwards" from 2015.

Updates

Our patient that requires a liver transplant is still waiting for a matching donor. We are grateful that the patient is stable, so some waiting may be acceptable, but we never want to push the envelope when someone's life is in the balance.

Regrettably, we continue to have domestic violence victims that require our assistance.

We recently received an appeal from Pakistan and are working with WZO USA to provide the requested assistance. We continue to work on other appeals.

We are sincerely grateful to all of our donors who have generously helped when we issue an appeal. Please be assured that all monies are directed as efficiently and effectively as possible.

And, we are eternally grateful to our benefactors who have established endowments in their name or in the name of loved ones. Interest from endowment funds provides us with an essential cushion in the time of major emergencies and when special endowment earmarked needs occur.

If you would like to establish an endowment for a specific cause, please contact the co-chairs of the Finance Committee Ratan Mistry and Gev Nentin, who will provide you with information and guidance as to where your largess will have the biggest impact.

They can be reached at ratnamistry@hotmail.com; nentin@optonline.net

Once again we thank our community and friends for their generosity, without which our work could not be done.

Hosi Mehta, Houtoxi Contractor, Freyaz Shroff
Co-Chairs, Welfare Committee



It's Raining Kids, Hallelujah!!



Nestled in the northwest corner of the US lies a city where not only does the rain come pouring down, but so do adorable Zoroastrian babies. Our once small ZSWS (Zoroastrian Society of Washington State) community is now bustling with children around each corner. In the last five years we have celebrated multiple births and the numbers continue to rise.

2015 saw our community rejoice births over 15% and at the same time we were blessed to initiate 10% of our younglings into the Zoroastrian fold. Since the community does not have an active practicing priest, these families decided to return to their roots to commemorate their children's Navjotes.

As much as it brings us joy to mention our new additions, we are equally proud of the generation that came before. The community has an equally large number of talented teens and pre-teens who serve as perfect role models and set positive examples within our community. These young adults encourage intellectual and religious curiosity amongst the younger group by being a brother, sister or friend our preschoolers can look up to.

There is no paucity of talent when it comes to our budding population. In the mood for some classical music? With so many gifted musicians within the fold, that can be easily arranged. Or how about an evening of some epic storytelling from the Shahnameh? we can certainly keep you enthralled with our in house poet. Dance? Sure, consider it done. It makes us extremely proud that there is no dearth of skill within this community.

A relatively young demographic, the community is made up of people who moved here from different parts of the world for education and later work with one of the many companies indigenous to the northwest.



The community strives to set up Z schools whenever the opportunity presents itself to educate our young and learn what it means to be Zarathusti.

Our large and budding community gives us great hope that the torch will burn bright and be passed along for future generations allowing our religion to continue to thrive.



Written by Rushna Bhesania & Nazneen Damkewala

RIVETNA ARCHITECTS AWARDED THE MILLENIUM BUILDERS: *Architecture Firm of the Year Award*



Pastor Larry Bullock presenting the Millennium Builders award to Cyrus Rivetna.
Photo credit Trinal Inc

Cyrus Rivetna of Rivetna Architects was awarded the MILLENIUM BUILDERS: ARCHITECTURE FIRM OF THE YEAR AWARD by the US Minorities Contractors Association (USMCA).

We would also like to congratulate Cyrus Rivetna, the Principal Architect of Rivetna Architects for completing the Goldman Sachs, 10,000 Small Business Program (see FJ Fall 2015 Vol 29, No 3, Pg 96) This was an amazing learning experience for the firm and that allowed it to develop an achievable growth plan that focuses on partnership with the City of Chicago, private institutions and building owners to use local talent to rehabilitate distressed properties, which will in turn stabilize families and neighbourhoods while generating tax revenue and profits. Cyrus was recognized as "most likely to be on the cover of "Chicago Magazine" !!

At present Rivetna Architects are working on a penthouse condo in Fulton Market which suspends a sleek steel mezzanine from the concrete ceiling providing enhanced city views and entertainment space. A floating folded steel stair wraps around the living room up to the mezzanine. In the master bedroom, the client's existing bookshelves were stacked to create a library wall, opening up the room and creating more usable space,(see photos page 8) .





CONGRATULATIONS TO CYRUS and
RIVETNA ARCHITECTS INC
www.rivetna.com

*Photo Credit Cyrus Rivetna for condo
photos*

*Logo Courtesy of Goldman Sachs 10,000
Small Business program*



Kurds & Their Zoroastrian Roots

WE THANK THE RUSTAM GUIV FOUNDATION FOR
SPONSORING THE
COVER STORY OF KURDS AND THEIR ZOROASTRIAN
ROOTS IN COLOUR

Editorial:

My Knowledge of the Kurds

Daryoush Jahanian, M.D.
Kansas City, Kansas



Kurds are descendants of the Medes that currently reside in western Iran (the provinces of Kurdistan and Kermanshahan), southern Turkey, Iraq, and Syria. The Medes started the first unified government in western Iran. In recent years, some Kurds have migrated to western countries. Armenia and the republics of Georgia and Azerbaijan have Kurdish population as well. Shah Abbas, the Safavid, transferred some Kurdish tribes to the east of Iran, Khorassan, to protect the eastern frontier; today, they form a portion of the Iranian Kurdish population. Cyrus' mother was the daughter of the last Median king.

The worldwide Kurd population is estimated at twenty-five million, with the majority, about 8 to 10 million, living in southern Turkey.

History

In 708 BCE, the Medes were unified by their first king, Diaoko (Deioces), who founded the Median dynasty. He was followed by his son Fravartish (Phraortes). Fravartish's son, Hvakhshathra (625–585 BCE)—Hvakhshathra is a Median Avestan name (Avestan: Vohu Khshathra) (Cyaxares)—is considered as a great emperor by the Kurds. His daughter, Amytis, was married to the son of the Babylonian king and, through this political marriage, he was able to forge an alliance with Babylon and defeat the Assyrians in 612 BCE.

The Kurdish national anthem, Ey Requib, Hvakhshathra (Cyaxares) (sometimes pronounced Kai Khosro) is named as the ancestor of the Kurds.

Language

The Kurdish language has Avestan roots and is close to the Pahlavi language, which was spoken during the Sassanian era. There are, however, different Kurdish dialects such as Sorani, Kurmanji, Hawrani (Gorani), Zaza, and Pehlewani. I believe that many missing Persian words will be re-discovered by research in the Kurdish language. For example, I always wondered what *Biji Kurdistan* means. Through personal research, I determined that *Biji* is the Kurdish pronunciation of *Beh-Zi*, which, in Persian, means "live the best Kurdistan." However, we do not use that phrase; instead, we say *Zendeh-bad* or long live.

Kurds & Their Zoroastrian Roots

Religions

The majority of Kurds are Sunni Muslims and about fifteen percent of them are Shiites. There are Kurdish Jews, Christians and, nowadays, Zoroastrians. There are several sects that declare themselves as non-Muslim and are known among the Kurds as the *Zerdeshti*. The Yezidis (Izadis) sect has an estimated following of from 600,000 to 2 million people; the Kakai have 300,000 followers; and the Yarsani (Ahl e Haq, meaning Ashavan), which are located in Iran, claim three million followers among the Kurds, Azaris, and Lurs. Recently, the Yarsanis have been persecuted and have been forced to seek asylum in western countries. Yezidis have preserved more Zoroastrian elements in their tenets and practices than the other sects, they keep images of Zarathushtra and the Fravahar icon. However, they prefer to practice their religion with other Yezidis. There have always been rumors that there are Zoroastrians among the Kurds who practice their religion secretly.

Kurds are very proud nationalists. For them, their Kurdish identity comes first, followed by their religion. During my military service in Iran, two Jewish brothers from Sanandaj, Kurdistan, served with me. They told me “we are Kurdish Jews,” which means, “we are Kurds first, by culture; then, Jewish by religion.” The Iraqi-Kurdistan government is officially secular—religion and state are separated. Kurds have their own dress and Kurdish women, generally, don’t wear veils. The Kurds have group dances where men and women dance together, hand-in-hand. For a long time, Kurdish girls and women have volunteered to fight as guerillas and have served in the Pesh-Merga (Persian: Pish-margan) national army. Currently, women fight alongside men in the Pesh-Merga against ISIS.



Kurdish women Pesh-Merga fighters.

The Religion of the Medes

To this day, no inscriptions have been discovered from the Medes; thus, it is difficult to know what religion they followed. But, the names of the Median tribal rulers and, later, the Median kings are mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions. Igor Mikhailovich Diakonov, a Soviet era scholar analyzed Median names found in Assyrian documents and has concluded that the Medes were Zoroastrians. Today, the Kurds consider Zarathushtra the Kurdish prophet and Zoroastrianism the Kurdish religion.

There is a historical tomb located at Qyzqapan, in the mountains of Suleimanieh, Kurdistan, that has been identified by Diakonov as an imperial tomb. He estimated that it probably belonged to Emperor Hvakhshathra (Cyaxares). Of particular interest is the image of two Mobeds praying before the sacred fire with the Fravahar icon on top. The Fravahar has curved wings and the man in the center holds a torch instead of the ring or book.

Recent Developments

In June 2015, the government of Kurdistan announced that 100,000 citizens have recently accepted the Zoroastrian religion and have asked for assistance to rebuild twelve temples. According to Mr. Mariwan Naqshbandi, the spokesman for the ministry of religion and endowment, they conducted seminars in several cities to introduce the Zoroastrian religion—the Zoroastrian population continues to rise. There have been Sadreh Pooshi and marriage ceremonies conducted in the Zoroastrian tradition. The Government of Kurdistan has

Kurds & Their Zoroastrian Roots



Winged Fravahar with torch in hand on the tomb of Emperor Hvakhshathra (Cyaxares).



Two masked Mobeds praying at the tomb of Emperor Hvakhshathra (Cyaxares).

officially recognized the Zoroastrian religion. Zoroastrians have a representative in the ministry of religion and one deputy in the Parliament. Recently, the Zoroastrian Cultural Center, founded by Pir (Mobed) Luqman Haji Karim, the leader of Zand organization, was inaugurated in Suleimanieh. The Zoroastrian Kurds have even composed their own anthem, (see pag 13), companion to the Kurdistan National Anthem,

In 2012, the first Kurdish Zoroastrian temple was inaugurated in Stockholm. According to its founder, Pir Andaz Hawezi, 3,000 Kurds have joined the religion. To spread the message of Zarathushtra, he has presented seminars on the Zoroastrian religion in London and other cities. In 2013, the statue of Zarathushtra was unveiled in Afrin, Syrian Kurdistan.

Currently, Dr. Khosro Khazai's Kurdish translation of the Gathas is used among the Kurds. Other Kurdish language translations of the Gathas by Mobed Firooz Azargoshasb, Dr. Ali Jafarey, and Dr. Jalil Doostkhan are more or less available. I am impressed by the volume of Kurdish language Zoroastrian texts available on several Kurdish websites and Facebook pages.

My Experience

Kurdish interest in the Zoroastrian religion is not new to us. In 1962, a Kurdish leader wrote a letter to the Tehran Zoroastrian Anjuman, including a map that marked locations of several tribes. He requested that teachers should be dispatched to disseminate the Zoroastrian religion among those tribes. However, due to concerns over possible ramifications, the Anjuman did not take action.

The first time I heard the Hormuzgan poem was in 1963, when a Kurdish officer, who regularly attended the Zoroastrian seminars, stood and read the poem in Kurdish and then translated it into Farsi. This poem vividly recalls the destruction of fire-temples, murder of Kurdish men, and enslavement of Kurdish women and girls by the Arab invaders.

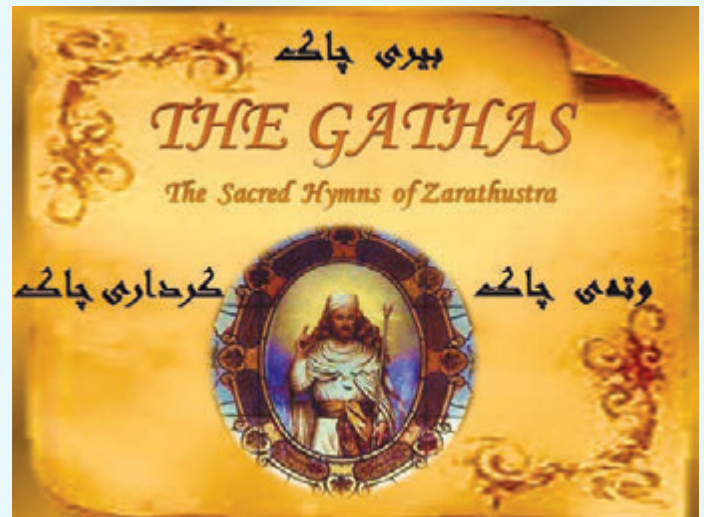


Sudreh Pooshi in Kurdistan

Kurds & Their Zoroastrian Roots



Statue of Zarathushtra in Afrin, Syrian Kurdistan. (Rojava), 2013



The Gathas, translated into Kurdish.

My father, Ardeshir Jahanian was a member of the committee that planned the celebration of Cyrus the Great's founding of the Persian Empire. After consultations, he proposed to the committee to officially change the Persian calendar to an imperial one, beginning with the Achaemenian empire. The first committee member, who was concerned about its religious consequences, abstained. Another member even suggested they should seek the Grand Ayatollah's opinion. He told me, "I thought my motion was dead until another member spoke and, then, I was not worried at all, because I knew he was a Kurd. He declared, 'I have one vote and I raise one hand, if I had two votes, I would raise both hands.' From here the motion gained momentum and was passed."

While traveling in Iran in 1971, I met a Kurd in the City of Rezaiya (now Urumiya). He told me, "Zartosht was a Kurd and we are Kurds, therefore we are all Zartoshti." In the main Kurdish city of Sanandaj, I felt myself in the midst of history. The language spoken was as old as Pahlavi and the Kurdish dress was unique and quite historical.

Despite recent conflicts, as the Iraqi Kurdish writer, Ebrahim Ahmad, wrote, "Kurds, regardless of wherever they live, are Iranians." I would add that Kurds belong to Iran and Iran belongs to them. The presence of the Persian names among Kurds, such as Zardosht, Necherwan (prime minister of Kurdistan), Hushyar (foreign minister of Iraq), Farhad, and Mehrdad are the best evidence of cultural ties. They have preserved the Persian traditions well and can re-introduce the missing portions of the Persian and Zoroastrian cultures to the Iranians. Even by researching the Kurdish language with its Avestan root, we can find many lost Persian words and return them to the Persian vocabulary.

As Zoroastrians, we should extend our love toward our Kurdish brothers and sisters who will further change the Zoroastrian demography.

Photos courtesy of the Kurdistan Historical Zoroastrian Heritage—KHZH "Art and Culture"

Daryoush Jahanian

Born in Tehran, Iran, he is one of the founders and the first president of the Fravahar Zoroastrian Youth Organization in Tehran. He is also one of the founders of the Zoroastrian Association of Kansas (ZAKA) and has served as its president. He has served as a trustee of the Guiv Trust, then as a trustee of the Rustam Guiv Foundation, and is currently its president. Dr. Jahanian has published articles on the Zoroastrian religion, been a guest speaker in the Zoroastrian congresses, and has published a book on The Zoroastrian doctrine and Biblical connections.

Kurds & Their Zoroastrian Roots

KURDISH ZOROASTRIAN ANTHEM, THE MARCH OF ZARATHUSHTRA:



*O'belief and guidance of Zartusht
O'Son of unequaled paradise*

*You recognized the source of all good
You brought the message of justice*

*For thousands of years you have taught us
How to fight against falsehood*

*We are the forgotten Kurds
We are the divided land*

*Our past and future, our goal and desire will remain
unrecognized
If we do not understand you well*

*We were born with the religion of Zartusht
We were raised in this pathway with his guidance*

*Religion of Zartusht is the beacon of peace for all
It is our guidance for living in peace together*

The URL of the stirring Zoroastrian anthem:
[https://www.facebook.com/462570357158871/
videos/883762271706342/](https://www.facebook.com/462570357158871/videos/883762271706342/)

The anthem was translated from Kurdish to Persian by Ms. Shilan Sepehri and translated to English by Dr Daryoush Jahanian.



PHOTO ESSAY ON KURDISTAN



Kurds & Their Zoroastrian Roots



Kurdish children



Children of Kirkuk



Kurdish girl tying her Kusti



Demonstration by Syrian Kurds

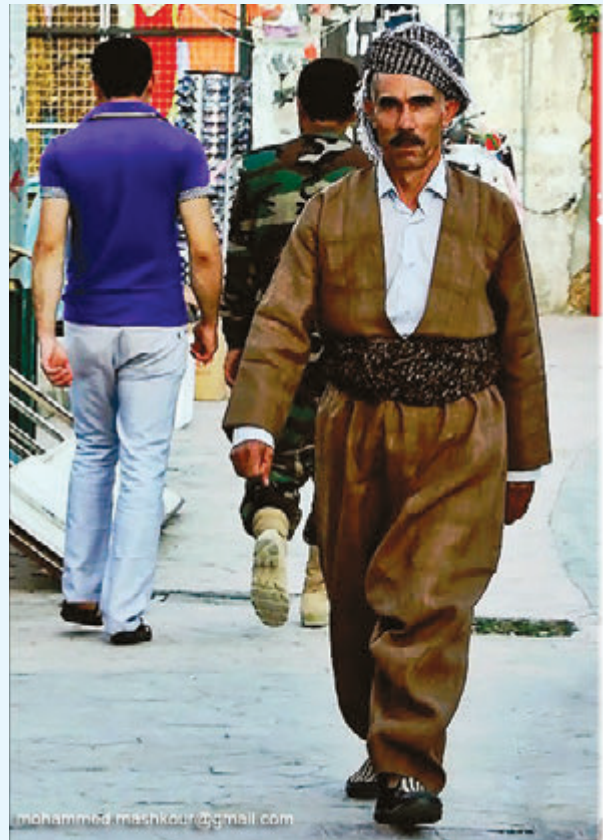
PHOTOS

courtesy of Historical Zoroastrian Heritage
KHZH "Art and Culture"

Kurds & Their Zoroastrian Roots



Cafe in Kurdistan



Kurdish man with a shawl tied three times round his waist to remind him of the ancient Kusti



Pir Lukman performing a Zoroastrian wedding ceremony

Kurds & Their Zoroastrian Roots

Kaveh Farrokh

EXPLORING KURDISH TIES TO ANCIENT IRANIAN MYTHOLOGY AND ZOROASTRIANISM



Despite challenges posed in the study of Kurds (in fact there is controversy as to the origins of the very name “Kurd”), there are good academic works on the subject, but much more remains to be done, especially field studies. Therefore, our reference to Kurds and Kurdish refers to West Iranian speakers that encompass not just Iranian Kurdish areas, but also Iranian speaking regions in modern-day Iraq, Syria and Turkey. There are also small pockets of non-Muslim Yezidis in the Caucasus; however, the notion of whether they are strictly Kurds, versus Kurdo-phone, is debated in the scholarly literature. The regions considered as Kurdistan in modern outlets were all actually part of the ancient pre-Islamic empires, notably the Achaemenids, Parthians, and Sassanians. A number of these regions, such as Cappadocia and the Pontus, were contested between the Roman and Partho-Sassanian empires; however, their languages and cultures remained Iranian, especially with respect to their ancient Iranian cult of Mithras and Zoroastrian legacy.

Ancient pre-Islamic Cults

Two movements among the Kurds, with possible ties to Zoroastrianism and Mithraism, are the *Yaresan* and the *Yezidi*. Although the Yaresan and Yezidi movements appeared centuries after the fall of the Sassanian Empire, the roots of many of their (essentially non-Islamic) theologies could be traced to the pre-Islamic era. Patricia Crone’s recent text “*The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism*” (Cambridge University Press, 2014) provides an illuminating overview of the persistence of old Iranian religious thoughts and their resilience among Iranian peoples, despite the passage of millennia and the arrival of Islam.

The *Yaresan*, also known as the *Ahl-Hakk* in Iran, have a large number of followers in Western Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan (by some estimates, up to a million). The movement was founded sometime in the late 14th – early 15th century by the enigmatic figure Sultan Sahak, also known as *Shah-e Haqiqat* (lit. king of truth). Predominantly Gowrani Kurds, the Yaresan has significant numbers of non-Kurd Iranian adherents (Persians, Azaris, and Lurs) and even some Arabs. A number of key practices and beliefs of the *Yaresan* are distinctly Zoroastrian. These include the notions of:

- Dualism (good versus evil; e.g. Videvdad, 2.29).
- Millennium-ism (notion of major changes occurring in thousand year(s) cycles, e.g. Bundahishn 1).
- Angelic beings or *Yazata*, *Fereshteh*, *Izad*, or *Yazd/Yazad* (e.g. Visparad, 8.1), especially with respect to the Yaresan concept of the “*Bounteous Immortals*,” which, in the Old Iranian Avestan language, is “*Amesha Spenta*”, these are the divine entities in Zoroastrian theology.
- Sanctity of the natural environment and its preservation, a belief system with striking Zoroastrian

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parallels (e.g. Yasna 3.4, 16.9; Yasht 10.13).

- Both believe in the principle known as innatism or nativism, in that human minds bring wisdom at birth.
- Neither believe in the “*Tabula Rasa*” (lit. blank slate) philosophy that humans are born with wholly “*blank*” minds that subsequently acquire knowledge, wisdom, and beliefs as a result of their material (or sensory) experiences with the outside world (i.e. John Locke’s 1689 “*Essay concerning Human Understanding*”).
- In Zoroastrianism, in particular, the notion of human choice (between evil and good) is bestowed upon the individual prior to their acquisition of physical life.
- Yaresanism shares the notion of divine manifestation of holy men born of virgin maidens with both Zoroastrianism and Mithraism; like the Saoshant who is to be born of a virgin (Bundahishn, 33.36-38) and Mithras born of virgin goddess Anahita, Sultan Sahak was born of the Kurdish virgin Dayerak Rezhbar (also known as Khatun-e Rezhbar).

However, the *Yaresan* are very different from the followers of ancient Mithraism and Zoroastrianism—they reject all notions of class, rank, and hierarchy. This curious “Communist” belief system is remarkably similar to that of the Zoroastrian reformer Mazdak (died 524 or 528 CE) at first, patronized by Sassanian king Kavad I (r. 488-496 CE, 498-531 CE) in his effort to counterbalance the growing power of the Zoroastrian magi and the upper nobility, *vis à vis* his throne. Like his predecessor Mani (216-274 CE) during the time of Shapur I (240-270 CE), Mazdak promoted an absolutist social egalitarianism in which all wealth and possessions would be shared (Yarshater, 1985, pp. 995-1006), a viewpoint reminiscent of the 19th century communist writings of Karl Marx.

The notion of absolute egalitarianism persists among several Kurdish Sufi groups, such as the Qaderi movement in Iranian Kurdistan whose followers follow the teachings of their founder Sheikh Abdul Qadir Gilani (1078- 1166 CE). Though nominally Sunni, the Qaderi order’s mysticism sets them widely apart from Islamic theology and practices. Their spiritual leader or “*Pir*” often engages his followers in repetitive mystical chants known as “*Zikr*” rituals. The Pir can even (especially among the Qaderis of Baiveh), be regarded as their earthly intercessor with God, somewhat reminiscent of the role of Mithra. Thus, the Pir’s role is wholly in contradiction of mainstream Sunni Islam. Another major difference between the Yaresan and Zoroastrianism is the former’s belief in reincarnation; excepting the Ilm Khushnoom Parsi sect in India, mainstream Zoroastrian theology does not entertain the notion of reincarnation. The notion of rebirth in Zoroastrianism is, in essence, the process of renovation of the universe: following the final victory of Ahura Mazda over the vast legions of the adversary Ahriman, and after a great destruction by fire comes the great rebirth of the universe.

The Yezidi religion is believed to have its origins as late as the 11th century. However the faith appears to derive much of its theology from the ancient Zoroastrian religion of pre-Islamic Iran. The Yezidis, at present, are primarily concentrated in northwestern Iraq, but are also found in Iran, Syria, and Turkey, with smaller populations in Armenia and Georgia. The term “*Yezidi*” is often incorrectly confused with the Arabian name “*Yazid*,” when, in linguistic terms, it is linguistically closest to “*Yazdi*,” which derived from Iranic “*Yazata*,” broadly meaning “Angels”. The Yezidis venerate the peacock deity known as *Malik Ta-us* in particular, whose image representation has strong parallels with Iran’s pre-Islamic Sassanian *Tawoos* (peacock; modern Persian: *Tavoos*) and its regal tradition. This is evident in a 6-7th Centuries CE stucco type artwork excavated from the remains of Ctesiphon, capital of the ancient Parthian-Sassanian empires, located nearly 40 kilometers from modern-day Baghdad. It is this Sassanian-style peacock motif (in which the bird spreads its tail) that has been preserved among the Yezidis. The entrance at the Yezidi temple in Iraqi Kurdistan displays the Iranian peacock God in the same frontal “spread tail” format. The almost exact same display of the “spread tail” peacock is evident in St. Mark’s, Venice (c. 976 CE), Constantinople (10th-11th CE), as well as (post-Islamic) textiles from Moorish Spain.

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While the Yezidis have ties to Christianity and Islam and welcome their holy books into their theology, they also engage in a number of distinctly Zoroastrian practices such as the sacrosanct water and the holy bread. There is also a Yezidi ceremony known as the *Sar-e Sal* (Kurdish-Persian: beginning of the year) held in early April in which young girls engage in the ancient Zoroastrian practice of gathering red roses on the sides of hills. The Yezidis also have a strong admixture of Zoroastrian type beliefs especially in the notion of a devil arch-enemy (*Ahriman* of Zoroastrianism, e.g. Yasna 30.4), angels and dualism (battle of good versus evil, e.g. Yasna 29.1). Nevertheless, it is in their conception of the evil principle where the Yezidis widely diverge from Zoroastrianism. The Yezidi conception of the prime angel, Malik Ta-us, is wholly different from Zoroastrianism: Mailk Ta-us is seen as a fallen angel who, like Satan of the Abrahamic religions, refused to obey God's command to kneel before Adam. There is no such "fallen angel" association with the peacock in Zoroastrianism, making this a unique Yezidi belief. Interestingly, Muslims and Christians often accuse the Yezidis of "devil worship," an attribution denied by the Yezids, who view Malik Ta-us as an illuminated saint. Like the Yaresan, the Yezidis also believe in the concept of reincarnation.

Another group, known as the Alevi (lit. devoted to Ali), though nominally Shiites, appear to have practices and beliefs much closer to Zoroastrian and Mithraic cults. Living mainly in Eastern Turkey, northern Iraq and parts of Syria, the Alevis are estimated from a few hundred thousand to a million adherents. Although the Alevis are a Kurdish sect, they have very large numbers of followers among Turcomens in northern Iraq, Turkey, and Syria. Originally known as the *Qizilbash* (Turkic: red heads), these were the followers of Shah Ismail (1501-1524 CE), founder of the Safavid dynasty (1501-1736CE) who restored independence to the entirety of Iranian realms in the early 16th century, roughly corresponding to the frontiers of the ancient Sassanian Empire. Shah Ismail continues to be adored as an avatar by the Alevis. In an interview with the author (December 29, 2015), Suzen Ildirim (Alevi activist, of Turkish origin, in Switzerland) noted that Alevis, though nominally Shiite, strove to follow Zoroaster's teachings, especially with respect to the gender equality, dualism, and almost all other teachings that are specifically Zoroastrian. In this way, it is clear that the doctrines of the original followers of Shah Ismail and modern-day Shiism in Iran have diverged widely.

The Kurdish-speaking peoples maintain strong ties to ancient Iran's pre-Islamic Zoroastrian culture. Too numerous to list here, one of these is the *Nowruz* (New Year) (*Newroz* in Kurdish), which, like all Iranian peoples, is celebrated on March 21. Interestingly, many Kurds of Iraq and Turkey regard the Nowruz/Newroz as "*the day of Kawa Ahsengar* (Persian: Kaveh Ahangar [the ironsmith])". *Kaveh Ahangar* (ironsmith) is the legendary hero who unites the Aryans against the evil tyrant Zahak (whose serpents on each shoulder devoured human brains) whose exploits are recounted in Firdowsi's post-Islamic epic of *Shahname*. These particular Kurds believe that March 21 is the day in which Kawa/Kaveh leads the Aryans to victory over Zahak. There is also the Kurdish tradition of *Charshema Resh* among the Kurds of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, which has strong parallels to the *Chaharshanbeh Soori* in Iran. Like their Iranian kinsmen, Kurds celebrate this event by jumping over bonfires in the last Wednesday before the Newroz/Nowruz.

Kaveh Farrokh was born in Athens, Greece of Iranian parentage. He has authored four history books of the military history of Iran and publishes articles in internationally recognized peer-reviewed journals and publications (most recently with Palgrave-Macmillan, etc.), with several of his books and writings translated into Russian, Spanish, and Persian. Farrokh is a lecturer of ancient Persian history at the University of British Columbia's Continuing Studies Division, is associated with numerous organizations (including UN-ACUNS), has received a number of awards (e.g. Best History book 2008) and shares the Nobel Peace prize nomination (2011) with the faculty of the WAALM Institute in London. Farrokh has been interviewed by major international media outlets such as the BBC, History Channel, and Voice of America.

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Mithras, Kurdistan



Yezidi Kurdish youths, 1950

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Navroz celebration in Kurdistan

Photos courtesy of the author:



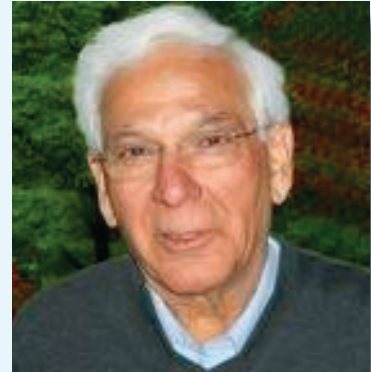
Navroz in Kurdistan



Iran Kurdistan Dervish

■ AWARENESS OF ZOROASTRIANISM AMONGST KURDISH PEOPLE

Adi J. Davar, Falls Church, VA



Introduction

In mid-2015, Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan State, headed by President Masoud Barzani, announced that in response to popular demand, its Constitution had been amended to add Zoroastrianism as an officially recognized religion, as are Sunni/Shia Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Such major changes do not just happen. Some major factors, such as, an historical Kurdish association with Zoroastrianism or powerful political influence of those already practicing it, or a combination, impelled it.

Internet websites published Barzani's announcement with photographs of Zoroastrian centers, bedecked with Asho Farovars and Zarathustra's pictures to slake the public's thirst for knowledge about that faith. News followed that State-recognized mobeds (called "Pirs" in Kurdistan) had initiated over 30,000 Kurds into the Zoroastrian religion. That number exceeds current estimates of Zoroastrians living in the UK and all European countries together. These online reports created an impression that Zoroastrianism is a new phenomenon among the Kurds. Is that really the case?

Nearly 45 years ago, during the latter part of 1972 and early 1973, I became aware, by chance, of the Zoroastrian religion's practice among Kurds in Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran (home of 50 million Kurds) during a visit to Iraq as the Chief of the World Bank's Middle East & Afghanistan Division. The respected Iranian Zoroastrian scholar of Zoroastrianism, Dr. Farhang Mehr, became aware even earlier, in the late 60s, when Kurdish officials approached him to petition the Shah of Iran for Iranian assistance to their Zoroastrians. We tried to make our world community aware of this reality, but to little avail.

Some inaccuracies in dates and other information

are inevitable when one recollects decades-old events. With this caveat, this article summarizes what was learnt in Iraq

What Was Learnt in Mosul and Sinjar Areas of Iraq:

Vice President Saddam Hussein had just concluded a "peace deal" sometime in 1972, with the legendary General Mustafa Barzani, leader of all Kurds. When I visited Iraq thereafter, its Finance Minister conveyed Saddam's "special request" that I meet Barzani. The meeting's objectives were: to acquaint him with the huge economic benefits likely to accrue to Kurdish farmers who tilled agriculturally rich lands around Mosul, from a multi-million dollar dam/agricultural development project for which Iraq wanted World Bank financing; and, to secure Barzani's assurance that Kurds would not later destroy that infrastructure. My team and I thereafter met him with his team, in his house near Mosul.

When informed by his colleague that I was a **Zoroastrian**, Barzani raced across the room in the middle of the meeting, with his blazing eyes more ablaze, and embraced me as "my Zardust brother." Ordering his team to deal with mine, he insisted that he would discuss the purpose of my visit only after I had met Prince Iruch, leader of his "Zardust Yazadi tribe," and seen their temple in the Sinjar area. He drove a Jeep through tortuous mountain-terrain to take me. En route, he and his colleague who joined us, excitedly talked about the Kurd's centuries-old practice of our religion.

Barzani felt that while Kurds today practiced many faiths, including ours, they were secular about their divergent beliefs and practice of their rituals.

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They then sketched a broad historical perspective of Kurdish association with Zoroastrianism. They traced the origin of all Kurdish tribes to Media, in northwestern Mesopotamia, when it was one of the vassal states of the 9th-8th century BCE Assyrian Empire, with Nineveh as its capital. They followed, like all Medes, Assyria's polytheistic faith for centuries until the 6th century BC when Cyrus the Great deposed his father-in-law, vassal King Astyages, and began building his Achamanean Empire. After he conquered Zoroastrian Sistan in the east of ancient Persia, his Magi priests learnt about Zoroastrianism from Sistan's priests. Liking what they heard, they prevailed on Cyrus to make Zoroastrianism his empire's state religion.

To give a historical perspective to the readers, some 1,200 years before the rise of Cyrus, Zoroastrianism had first penetrated northwards from Sistan and spread throughout Central Asia; from there, it travelled east and south along the Silk Road into the Khotan/Tarim basins; and then penetrated northeast China up to the city of Hue (later called Changnan and now, Xian). But without alluding to this history, Barzani and his colleague surmised that like other Medes, Kurds must have become Zoroastrian in 6th century BCE in Cyrus' times. As Kurds later spread into modern Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran, they came in contact with Judaism and Christianity and, later, Islam, which they embraced.

Prince Iruch was not where Barzani anticipated. But, he insisted, at least I should see the Yazidi Zoroastrian temple in a nearby cave. Rolled carpets, buckets, and brooms strewed its entrance. But, it was pristine inside. Within some yards of entering, the cave's stone floor rose sharply to form a natural parapet. Behind that, was a flat stone platform. On it, was a stone pedestal topped by a large stone tray (both typical in agiarys, until the advent of afarghanias in India) with ashes and cold wood embers; two small bells on ropes hung behind in two corners of the platform. To me, it resembled a tiny agiary of ancient times in a cave setting, not the spired Yazidi Peacock temples now seen in today's news.

While returning to Mosul, Barzani and his colleague supplemented each other in explaining Yazidi beliefs/rituals as a combination of Kurdish cultural beliefs and Zoroastrianism. They said that, like Kurds following other faiths, Yazidis also believe in: Adam & Eve, as all Abrahamic faiths do; baptism, like the Christians; physical heaven and hell, like in Islam; rebirth; and

so on. Such concepts are alien to Zoroastrianism. Yet, fundamental Yazidi beliefs and practices appear similar to the Sassanian Zoroastrianism ones that we practice today. Sheikh Adi bin Mustafa, a Lebanese Sufi mystic, gave them to the Yazidis in the 12th century CE. These include: an invisible Supreme Being, who created the world and all in it; He, however, placed six aspects of His creation in care of a Heptad of six Archangels headed by Melek Taus (Peacock Angel), who Yazadis believe to be the Creator's Intellect for everything on earth, (similar to our concept of the Heptad of Amesha Spentas, but headed by Spenta Mainyu in their case, instead of Ahura Mazda in ours?); day and night have five divisions, when a devotee should pray (our five Gahs?); prayers to be always said facing the sun, fire or light (as we do?); pray before, not worship, a fire, as the symbol of the light of creation and wisdom (as we do?); earth, water and fire not to be polluted (as we believe?); souls cross the bridge of judgment after death (like our Chinvat Bridge?); and a Final Judgment day when souls successfully survive their ordeals, to live eternally in Heaven (like Frasho-keriti?).

Although such details might not be exactly like ours, they seem sufficiently like those practiced by Zoroastrians. Is it a wonder that Barzani and Kurds believe Yazidis to be "Zardusts?" Those details should not surprise us either. While Parsi and Zoroastrians both believe in Sassanian-era Zoroastrianism, Hindu/Gujarati cultural practices have since crept into Parsi Zoroastrian practices and rituals, and Shia Iranian ones into those of Iranian Zoroastrians. Indeed, outside cultural/ritual practices have inevitably influenced all faiths in all countries.

In Mosul, Barzani invited other colleagues to meet the Bank team, including Yazidi Kurds who were introduced, as "our Zardusts." Chitchat with them confirmed Barzani's and his colleague's explanation of their beliefs given during the trip.

Parsi Zoroastrians might recall that in the early 80s, Prince Iruch came to meet the Bombay Parsi Panchayat in the hope that his Yazidis might be acknowledged, and protected, by the world Zoroastrian community as one of them. But he was rebuffed. Since then, large numbers of Yazidi Kurds have migrated to Europe and Canada where they practice their version of Zoroastrianism. They apparently outnumber those in Iraq—on whom ISIS recently

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inflicted horrific outrages without a protest from the world Zoroastrian community.

What Was Learnt in Baghdad, Iraq

On a later trip to Baghdad, Iraq I became aware—again by chance—of Kurds following Zoroastrianism in Syria. I was auditing negotiations between Iraqi, Syrian, and Turkish teams focused on finding an equitable formula to share waters of the transnational Euphrates and Tigris rivers. As they were all seeking World Bank financing for projects using them, the World Bank's operative policy to prevent future disputes, was to encourage all of them to agree first on such a formula.

A Syrian representative at the negotiation requested a meeting in my hotel room one morning. I assumed that his team wanted to sound out some proposal privately before formally proposing it. But, when I invited him to tell me what proposal his team had in mind, he smilingly responded that there was none. He only wanted to inquire if I was Zoroastrian, as he had heard. When I nodded, he confided that he also was one. And, so were some 500,000 fellow Kurds living in the hills around Damascus, as also were some Kurdish tribes in Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Iran.

His tribe: revered fire as a symbol of wisdom and creation; did their daily kusti each morning, facing the sun; initiated their youth between fifteen and twenty-one, into the faith; and practiced some other Zoroastrian principles/practices. Seeing my quizzical look, he opened a couple of his shirt buttons to pull out a white vestment (of thick cloth) that his co-religionists wore as the sudreh. He also gave a glimpse of a rope-like thick string that was their kusti. Their materials differed from ours.

Undoubtedly, these details are not copies of those of Parsi and Irani Zoroastrians. But then, neither are their practices, which differ in some respects. As indicated earlier, cultures and religious beliefs of surrounding faiths make such a process inevitable for all faiths. Let us look at it another way. If the

Syrian's figure is discounted as an exaggeration, and halved to 250,000, that equals the world Zoroastrian community's strength bandied for some years. If his figure is discounted to a low 50,000, it exceeds the estimated Zoroastrian numbers in India.

Conclusion

It is important to recall that what I learnt nearly 45-years-ago, relates only to Kurds in Iraq, their Yazidi tribe in its Sinjar area, and Kurds living in hills around Damascus in Syria. On top, comes the recent news of a few thousand accepting Zoroastrianism after Iraq's Kurdistan State officially recognized it as one of its faiths. Such a demand does not happen without a historical association with it or influence of those who have practiced it for years. While there are no first-hand reports yet, some tribes are believed to follow some form of Zoroastrianism in Iran and Turkey.

Considering the historical perspective of the Zoroastrian roots of Kurds originating in Media, what Yazidis practice and some tribes in Syria do (as gleaned from Barzani and his colleagues during the Mosul/Sinjar trip and the Syrian Kurd in Baghdad), a wider practice of our faith already seems to exist among Kurds. Our community may choose to ignore it. But, with the constitutional amendment in Iraq's Kurdistan State recognizing it as one of its religions, its practice will expand further.

Some readers might cast doubts or aspersions, on this article, as it recounts what is beyond the scope of their personal experiences or alien to their beliefs. One should respect that. Yet, one could ask, "Is it not now time for our enlightened community to stop mixing ethnicity with religion and begin shedding its blinkers as to who is a Zoroastrian or not?" After all, Zarathustra wanted his faith to be universally practiced by anyone choosing to believe in, and practice, it. Besides, many with differing ethnicities have practiced it in many lands, for many centuries.

NOTE FEZANA denounced the killing of the Yazidis by ISIS and some Zoroastrians made fundraising efforts to relieve their suffering.

Adi Davar holds a degree in economics and law from Bombay University and a Masters in International Law from Harvard University. Senior executive in the Tata Group and the World Bank—from where he retired as a Director of East Asia and Pacific Region. He came to Washington DC in the 1960s and was the founding President of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington. He is active in community affairs, internationally, nationally and locally. Researcher, writer and speaker on Zoroastrian religion, its history and contemporary issues.

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THE Zoroastrian KURDS



The Kurds are an ethnic group living mostly in the Near- and Middle-East. They basically follow one of the three religions viz., Islam, Yazidi, and Zoroastrianism. However, they have been in conflict with three countries they claim as their homeland of “Kurdistan,” which includes parts of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. The Kurds are to be found in eastern and southeastern Turkey, western Iran, northern Iraq, and northern Syria (or Rojava). They identify culturally and linguistically with Iran. The Kurdish languages form a subgroup of the Northwestern Iranian languages. Kurdish nationalists claim that the Kurds are descended from the Medes (the latter being another Iranian people), which is reflected in some words of the Kurdish national anthem: “... *we are the children of the Medes and Kai Khosrow*.” King Kai Khosrow was a Zoroastrian monarch of the Kayanian Dynasty of Persia known to be just and righteous; is mentioned in the *Avesta* and *Shahnameh*. Kurdish Zoroastrians, and all Yazidis, believe that Zarathustra was Kurdish, as it is now well-established that he was born in Urumiah, a small village on the banks of Lake Urumiah, which, at the time of his birth, was part of the ancient Kurdistan, but is now part of the Iranian province of Azerbaijan.



The Kurdish population is between 35-37 million, with the majority living in West Asia. But, there are significant Kurdish communities in Turkey, in particular Diyarbakir, Gaziantep, and Istanbul. They are mostly agriculturists with fruit orchards. In the last 40 years, the Kurdish diaspora can be found in some countries of Europe. Nearly half the European Kurds (approximately, 1.5 million Kurds) live in Germany, a smaller population lives in Sweden. They are in close touch with their compatriots in West Asia.

The Peshmerga, whose name translates as “those who face death,” are the Kurdish fighters in northern Iraq. In recent months, they have been fighting Islamist militants of the Islamic State. Now, thought to number around 190,000, the Peshmerga have their roots in groups of loosely organized tribal border guards in the late 1800s. They were formally organized as the national fighting force of the Kurdish people after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the wake of World War I. As the Kurdish nationalist movement grew, so too did the identity of the Peshmerga as a key part of Kurdish culture—evolving from tribal

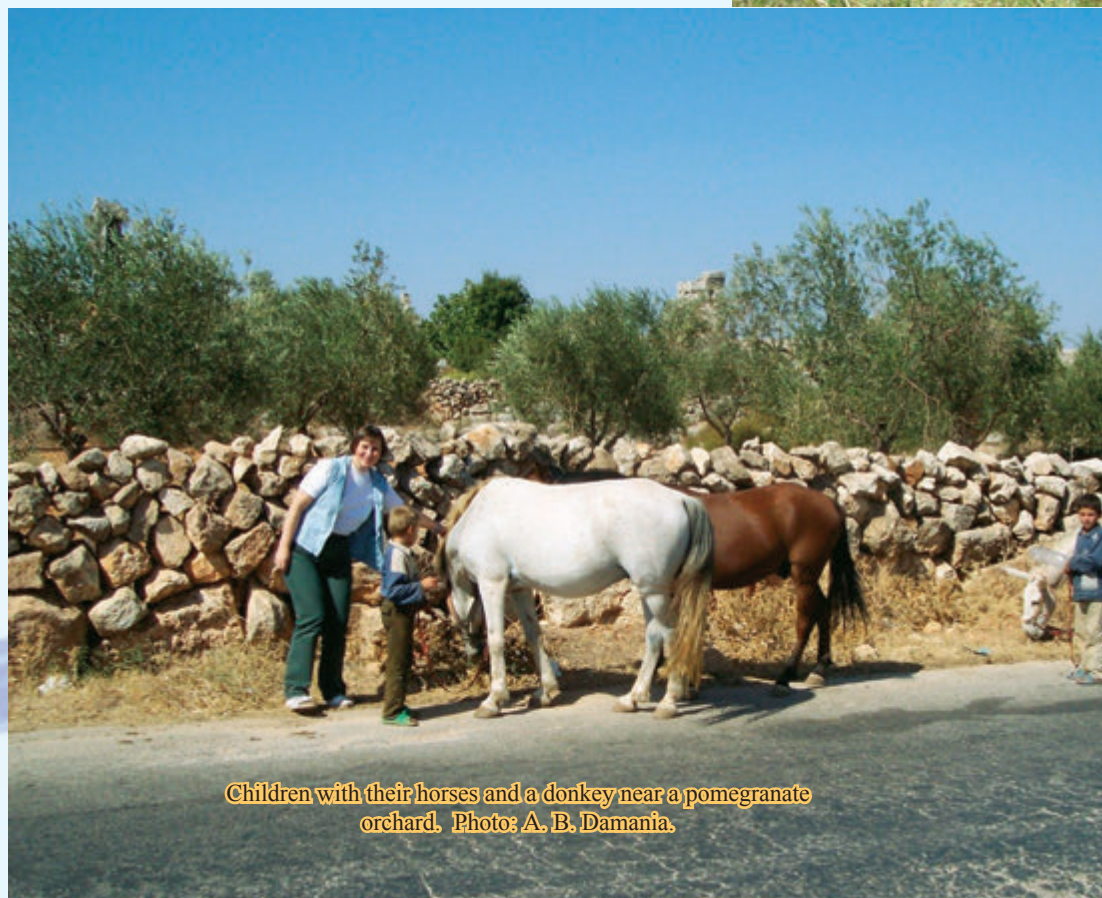
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defenders to nationalist fighters for an independent Kurdish state. The Peshmerga also have many Zoroastrian fighters in their ranks, including women. The photo to the right is of a young Kurdish Zoroastrian girl who has taken up arms to fight the just fight. Notice the *Ashofarohar* symbol necklace she is wearing, showing her indisputable Zoroastrian roots. At least in northern Iraq and Kurdistan, the Zoroastrian religion appears to be safe and even enjoying a formidable resurgence.

The Kurds in Syria

Kurds once accounted for nine percent of Syria's population, nearly 1.6 million people, making them the largest ethnic minority. Today, they are mostly concentrated in the northeast and the north, but there are also significant Kurdish populations in the two major cities, Aleppo and Damascus. Restrictions once used to suppress the ethnic identity of Kurds in Syria, including: various bans on the use of the Kurdish language; refusal to register children with Kurdish names; replacement of Kurdish place names with new Arabic names; prohibition of businesses that do not have Arabic names; prohibition of Kurdish private schools; and prohibition of books and other materials written in Kurdish. Having been denied the right to Syrian nationality, nearly 300,000 Kurds have been deprived of their social rights. However, they are required to report for two years of compulsory military duty like all medically fit Syrians. As a consequence, these Kurds are trapped within Syria. In March 2011, in part to avoid further demonstrations and unrest from spreading across Syria, the Syrian government promised to tackle the issue and grant Syrian citizenship to approximately 300,000 Kurds previously denied the right. Nevertheless, since July 2012, the Kurds have managed to merge parts of Syrian Kurdistan from Andiwar, in the extreme northeast, to Jindires, in extreme northwestern Syria.

I began work for Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) in Aleppo, Syria as a wheat geneticist. Not knowing otherwise, I presumed I was the only Zoroastrian in Syria. However, I was told by one of my Pakistani colleagues at the International Center for Agricultural Research (ICAR-DA), that "my people" live in Afrin, a small town located in northwestern Syria. At first, I thought that he was pulling my leg. However, upon mentioning this to my Muslim field and laboratory technician, Haitham (who



Children with their horses and a donkey near a pomegranate orchard. Photo: A. B. Damania.

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Kurd pomegranate orchard owner.
in Afrin, Syria.

Photo: A. B. Damania

is married to a Kurdish lady, Sinam) he confirmed this to be true and volunteered to take me to the Kurds in Afrin. Sinam told me that marriages between the Yazidis, Zoroastrian Kurds, and Muslims were frowned upon. She said she would have risked being a victim of an honor killing if she had married Haitham fifty-years earlier. But, times have changed and such unions are not rare anymore.

One nice day, Haitham, my wife, Parvin; and I left for an hour's drive to Afrin, where we were told to contact "Aref," who had a vegetable stall in the Bazaar and was a spokesperson for the Afrin Kurds. He took us to a Kurdish house, where I noticed the symbol of the rising sun on its iron entrance gate. Even the house's window grills were welded in the shape of the rising sun. I was still not convinced they were Zoroastrians, so I took out some photos of Zarhost Saheb, which I had brought from Bombay and showed one to the Kurdish family. They immediately recognized the photo and said it was "Zardust!"

They told me of the hardships they were facing, including not being allowed to practice their religion freely. For example, prior to the 1980s, they would light a huge bonfire in the town square and celebrate all night every March 21. They know about the Avesta, but have very few Zoroastrian religious books. They said that they always sleep in the East-West direction at night. For some reason, which was not clear to me because of language difficulties, they do not wear blue-colored items and they do not eat cabbage. They showed me some video tapes of their Iraq headquarters in the Sinjar Mountains. Their main occupation is farming and they showed me their vegetable farms and pomegranate orchards. They presented a big crate of pomegranates to me before I left, and refused to accept any money.

Around this time, I met a Parsi from India, Pilloo "Phil" Elavia, in Damascus. He told me that he had a Zarathusti Kurd friend who lived in Aleppo. I met with this Kurdish family and had tea at their home in downtown Aleppo. Inside their home was a large framed picture of Zarathustra. Although to me they appeared to be Muslims, they insisted they were not.

It is outwardly difficult to distinguish Zoroastrian Kurds from others because of the similarity of clothes and because most have Muslim names as well. Only during very recent years have they come into their own and are no longer afraid to say that they are Zoroastrians. The atrocities carried out against the Yazidis and the Kurds have left an indelible mark on them. I have information that hundreds of thousands of Kurds have declared themselves to be Zoroastrians, which, after all, was once the faith of their ancestors when this region was part of the Sassanian Empire. The "old religion" still has a great attraction among Kurds. In fact, the Kurds I met emphatically claimed that Zarathustra was Kurdish, because they believe Zarathustra was born in a part of



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Iran which had been Kurdish since ancient times. They believe the Avesta was written in the language from which the Kurdish language was derived. They regard Zarathustra as one of them. They are drawn towards Zoroastrianism because the religion is non-violent, promotes free-thinking, and has very few restrictions on food and drink. The major physical difference between the Yazidis and the Kurds is that the former are, on average, much fairer and a large proportion have blue eyes, which makes Yazidi girls targets for abductors.

The Yazidis are partially despised by Muslims and Christians because of a misunderstanding about their beliefs. Western scholars traveling through Turkey and Syria on their way to Persia, one of them being Columbia University professor A.V. Williams Jackson (1862-1937) labeled the Yazidis as “devil worshipers”.

This is not correct. During my discussion with them, I learned that their religion does not hate the devil (shaitan). They believe the devil is part and parcel of the “good versus evil” principle, and should be placated rather than hated. This does not necessarily amount to worship.



Yazidi
girls in danger of abduction.



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Zoroastrians in Kurdistan

For the first time in over a thousand years, locals in a rural part of Sulaymaniyah (or Sulamani) province conducted an ancient ceremony on May 1, 2014, whereby followers put on a special thin belt that signifies they are ready to serve the religion and observe its tenets. This is similar to the Navjote of the Parsis in India or baptism in the Christian faith.

The newly pledged Zoroastrians have said that they will organize similar ceremonies elsewhere in Iraqi Kurdistan. They have asked permission to build up to twelve fire-temples inside the region, which has its own borders, military, and Parliament. Zoroastrians have also visited government departments in Iraqi Kurdistan and requested that Zoroastrianism be acknowledged as one of the official religions. They even have their own anthem. Many locals attend Zoroastrian events and are engaging with Zoroastrian organizations and web pages on social media.

As of now, there are no official numbers for how many Kurdish locals are turning to Zoroastrianism, there is certainly a lot of discussion about it. And, those who are already Zoroastrians believe that as soon as locals learn more about the religion, their numbers will increase. They also seem to be sold on the idea of Zoroastrianism by saying that the religion is somehow “more Kurdish” than other religions in the region—certainly an attractive idea in an area where many locals care more about their ethnic identity than religious divisions. The revival is a part of a cultural revolution that gives the Kurdish people new ways to explore peace of mind, harmony, and love of nature and natural elements.

In fact, Zoroastrians believe that the forces of good, *Ahura Mazda* and evil *Angra Mainyu* are continually struggling against each other in the world. This is why many Yazidis and Kurds suspect that this religious revival has more to do with their own security crisis, extremist Islamic State (IS) genocidal pogroms, as well as deepening sectarian and ethnic Islamic divisions in Iraq.

“The people of Kurdistan no longer know which Islamic movement, doctrine, or fatwa they should follow,” says Mariwan Naqshbandi, the spokesperson for Iraqi Kurdistan’s Ministry of Religious Affairs. He says that the increasing interest in Zoroastrianism is a symptom of the disagreements within Islam and religious instability in the Iraqi Kurdish region ... and the country as a whole. “For many more liberal or more nationalist Kurds, the precepts of the Zoroastrians seem moderate and realistic.” Naqshbandi explains, “There are many people here who are very angry with the Islamic State and its inhumanity towards peoples of other religions, and its own.” Naqshbandi also confirmed that his Ministry would help the Zoroastrians achieve their goals. The right to freedom of religion and worship was enshrined in Kurdish law and Naqshbandi said that the Zoroastrians would be represented in his offices.

“Now it’s time,” says Nouri Sharif, one of the initiators of the Zoroastrian revival movement among the Kurds that was established in Europe in 2006 and who, in March 2015, announced in Erbil (the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan) of the Good Religion’s official return to Kurdistan. In April 2015, the Supreme Council of Zoroastrians in Kurdistan was founded.

Zoroastrian leader al-Karim is not so sure whether it is the extremism of the Islamic State (IS), group that is changing how locals think about religion. “The people of Kurdistan are suffering from a collapsing culture that actually hinders change,” he argues. “It’s illogical to connect Zoroastrianism with the IS group. We are simply encouraging a new way of thinking about how to live a better life (without violence), the way that Zarathustra taught us to.”

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Nouri Sharif, a Zoroastrian Kurd, with a Kurdish book of Zarathustra's Teachings.

Kurdish Zoroastrians in Sweden and Europe

The first Kurdish Zoroastrian fire temple, *Agri Temple*, located in Stockholm, Sweden opened its doors for believers of the Good Religion on the Kurdish New Year, Navrooz, 2012. Inside the temple, there is the holy fire and painting of Zoroaster and a Fravahar icon. Framed texts from the Kurdish-language Avesta have been placed on the temple walls, as well as a Kurdish flag, which warms the heart of the temple. The temple is open to anyone who wants to become a Zoroastrian and practice "Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds."

The Swedish Government gave the license to build the fire temple. According to Andaz Hawezi, the spokesperson for the Kurdish Zoroastrians in Sweden, there were only four Kurdish Zoroastrians in Sweden before the advent of the civil war and catastrophes in Syria and Iraq. Now there are more than 8,000 Kurdish Zoroastrians, and the numbers continue to rise rapidly with more and more Kurdish refugees and migrants declaring themselves to be Zoroastrians and embracing their ancestors' faith. For the Kurdish people, Hawezi argues, the revival of Zoroastrianism is important. *"The historic and cultural language of Kurds was taken away from us," he said. "We know we are the most ancient inhabitants of Mesopotamia and the Zagros Mountains."* Hawezi believes Kurds must return to the Avesta to find themselves. The Kurdish identity is in the Zoroastrian religion," he added.

The Kurds acknowledge Zoroastrianism originated in ancient Persia, but is a religion with no boundaries, and has universal appeal. *"It is a religion without boundaries. The root of the religion is in the brain, that a human being has to think and then behave in a good manner," he said. "It is a religion of happiness and struggle," he adds. "The ultimate decision lies with human beings. No one can tell you to do this or that. It is a religion that pushes people to think for themselves and make their own decisions."*

The Zoroastrian Kurds in Sweden know about the Parsi Zoroastrians in India. However, when contacted by some Parsis from Mumbai, they expressed their wish to remain by themselves, and mentioned that they desire to practice Zoroastrianism as *they* think it should be practiced. They are not interested in coming to India, entering the Parsi fire-temples in Mumbai, or applying for living accommodations to the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP). So, there is no chance that these Kurdish Zoroastrians will come to Mumbai and demand any privileges from the BPP, which some Parsis fear. Nevertheless, they would welcome funds to translate more Zoroastrian books into the Kurdish language.

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Pir Andaz Hawezi, the head of the Kurdish Zoroastrian fire-temple in Stockholm, Sweden

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Dolly Dastoor, the editor of FEZANA Journal recently had the opportunity to pose questions to Pir Andaz Hawezi, the administrator of the Kurdish Zoroastrian temple in Sweden. We appreciate the depth of his responses and clarity he brings to the discussion. We applaud his dedication.

FEZANA JOURNAL (FJ) Was the Zoroastrian religion always practiced in Kurdistan and were they allowed to practice it openly?

Pir ANDAZ HAWEZI (AH) The Zoroastrian religion is the oldest religion of Kurdistan and has, thus, always in some shape or form been practiced there, though sometimes only culturally. It remained as the largest religion of Kurdistan until the influences of Islam began to gradually, during a 900-year period, take the place of the Zoroastrian religion as the mainly practiced belief of the region. However, it is not to be said that the Zoroastrian belief became totally extinct because of this. On the contrary, and perhaps, as a reaction, it lived on culturally and on a differently practiced playing field in the country, for example, morally.

FJ When did this recent interest in Zoroastrian religion restart?

AH If we were to speak generally about the southern part of Kurdistan (Iraqi Kurdistan), we can notice an increase in interest and a dialogue taking form regarding the subject of Zoroastrianism around the beginning of the 1980s. This may be viewed by some people as a reaction towards the increasing influence of the new Islamic Republic in Iran and along with that the increasing threat and oppression from the Iraqi government against Kurdish culture and history.

I was present and a part of the early movement that was created around Zoroastrian beliefs during this time; and, with moving to Europe, I was given more time to elaborate on what this might actually entail. We started our first group in a little Swedish

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town in 1987; but, establishing the fire temple in Stockholm was what pinpointed the return of Zoroastrianism for people feeling a connection to the religion and thus also making it a reality.

FJ *How did you become interested in the Zoroastrian religion, how did you study and learn about it?*

AH My interest in the religion has been with me since childhood. It was passed down to me by my family and relatives, along with the cultural practice of it that remained within the Kurdish people. We weren't officially called Zoroastrian, due to political tensions. But, as we all know, during times of oppression it is not uncommon for people to hold on to their true beliefs behind closed doors. This was the case with me and my family. I came in contact with Zoroastrian religious literature during 1974 – 1975 when I was a refugee in Iran. Since then, I have continued to study and educate myself on Zoroastrianism in an academic sense. This was something I later applied to my academic studies here in Sweden, where I could emerge myself in the details of Kurdish Zoroastrian beliefs and culture.

FJ *Are your parents also practicing Zarathushtis?*

AH One thing that is to be known regarding the Zoroastrian religion and the people who practice it, in an historical sense, is that the Kurds were among the most persecuted people. By this I mean that we faced brutality for more than 800 years, along with economic restrictions because people who refused to convert to Islam were not allowed to own property or land and, thus, were regarded as third-class citizens.

They were not regarded as a part of this emerging new world. This treatment led the newly formed Kurdish society to adapt to a new wave of Islam where the Zoroastrian tradition is still kept, but under the veil of Islam. This is why Kurds were usually referred to in Arabic as *mawali*, which can be translated to "a weaker link to Islam, but not a real Muslim." That definition has remained until today. Therefore, I am not considered, by paper, to have been born to Zoroastrian parents; but, like many other Kurds before me, I was raised like a Zoroastrian Kurd. This was also the case with my parents.

FJ *Historically, did the Kurds remain interested in the Zoroastrian religion? And, what is the reason for the re-emergence of the Zoroastrian religion among them?*

AH As I've mentioned before, Kurds have created an Islamic Zoroastrianism to keep the historic culture alive and, in my opinion, it has been a very successful process. The reason for the uplift in the interest for the belief is the newly emerging Islamic fundamentalism that is a direct attack on the Kurds, their beliefs and culture. Therefore, in January 2011, we started the first Kurdish Zoroastrian religious community (Kurdistan's Zarathustrian Assembly) the world has witnessed in 1,500 years. This was to inform and keep the Zoroastrian religion alive in Kurdistan. With this, we hope to allow many Kurds the opportunity to return to their original religion, though this is not to be forced.

FJ *How many Kurds have become Zoroastrians in Sweden, how many in Europe, and how many in Kurdistan?*

AH The number of people in Europe that have become Zoroastrians since 2011—through the Kurdistan Zoroastrian religious community—is estimated at 10,000. The Zoroastrian population in Kurdistan, based on information provided by several sources, is said to be much more than the estimated number in Europe and is steadily on the rise. Today, we can see two groups emerging from the Kurdish community. One group of those people who have converted to Zoroastrianism, the other is comprised of followers and friends of the community. The latter group has yet to take the final step in becoming part of the Zoroastrian belief, but are nonetheless supportive of the cause.

FJ *Are there Zoroastrian temples in Kurdistan and, if so, are there Pirs or mobeds, serving them?*

AH As of now, the only Kurdish Zoroastrian temple is the one in Stockholm, Sweden, where we have an *athrawan* who is the ceremonial leader. We have very good relations with the Kurdish Regional Government in Kurdistan (KRG) who have visited us in Stockholm

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and have welcomed our registration of the assembly in the region and open a temple in Kurdistan. We were invited to visit them in January 2016 to further discuss our needs to make this plan a reality. This is not to say that there are no Zoroastrian movements active in Kurdistan, but they have yet to be recognized as religious communities. The belief is allowed, but there must be an organization established around the religion and the needs of its believers.

FJ Are there cultural centers also functioning in Kurdistan and is there a plan for constructing new temples?

AH Today, there are two Zoroastrian cultural centers functioning in Kurdistan, they are located in the city of **Sulaymaniyah**. We wish to see them expand to other cities as well. The question regarding building a temple can be answered after our official meetings with the KRG.

FJ We are interested to know how many navjote (sudreh-Pushi) and wedding ceremonies have been conducted in the Stockholm temple?

AH The Stockholm temple has had hundreds of navjote ceremonies and about 25 weddings since its opening in 2011. In addition to this, we have traveled through various European cities where we have been invited to perform navjote ceremonies for people who have gathered for the occasion.

FJ Currently, how many Pirs (mobeds) or teachers in Kurdistan are serving and leading the growing Zoroastrian community and the increasing number of children? Have there been seminars inside and outside of Kurdistan to present the teachings of Zarathushtra to the interested Kurds.

AH As of now, we do not officially have any teachers in Kurdistan that are actively working on getting the message of Zarathushtra out to the people and children. There are two public cultural centers that are very much invested in informing the Kurdish people about Zoroastrianism through various channels. Our hope is that, by getting the Kurdistan Zoroastrian Assembly registered in the KRG, we will be able to establish a platform for a proper teaching outlet in various parts of the country. We have led seminars for the Kurdish

community in most European capitals, and welcome all who wish to attend. Since 2011, there have been many seminars conducted within the Kurdish borders, as well. We have directed our work towards all four parts of Kurdistan by, for example, publishing writings in different languages to better make them accessible to the public and have, thus, been able to make Zoroastrian connections with people outside of the Kurdish community who are interested in practicing the belief. The number of books written about the subject in Arabic and Turkish increases every year.

FJ What are the government's relations with the Zoroastrian community and are they going to provide assistance for construction or re-construction of Zoroastrian temples?

AH During the last visit by the KRG representatives to the fire temple in Sweden it was confirmed that this religious assembly is to be regarded as the main base for Kurdish Zoroastrianism. Hopefully, by getting registered in the beginning of 2016 we will be able to further expand our community and reach out to the Kurdish people in a way that we have not yet been able to do. By getting this recognition, we will also be able to get the full support of the KRG in the same way that the other religions of the area have done.

FJ What help would you like from the Zarathushtis of the world to help you spread the true message of Zarathushtra among the Kurds?

AH Regarding this issue, it is very important that it be managed and conducted in a proper manner. It is well known that the Middle East has several opposing religious beliefs that work against the expansion and re-establishment of the Zoroastrian religion. Therefore, the first thing needed is a lot of help from our fellow Zoroastrians from other regions of the world, such as, those in India and Iran to supply us with needed material and to educate the Kurdish ministry within Kurdistan.

FJ Are there any Zarthushti Kurds in the government or in public services?

AH There are not any openly Zoroastrian believers in the government as of right now; however, I have many friends in high positions throughout the region and in the government who are avid supporters of the

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religion and its process of re-emerging into today's society.

FJ How is the public reaction to the growth of the Zoroastrian religion and have you observed any resentment?

AH Since opening the temple, I have been harassed and threatened almost weekly. This from different parts of the world and from those who practice different beliefs—in this, Kurds are included. One of the first countries who officially had a negative reaction to the opening of the temple was Turkey, where I was declared a “kafir” (heathen) in the Turkish media. This was followed by a reaction from certain political parties in Kurdistan that did not disagree with what the Turkish media had to say. There have also been attempts to bring forth alternative outlets for the religion by following religious leaders put into place by political parties, which shows the importance and fear regarding the situation. There is a feeling of needing to control the Zoroastrian movement politically.

FJ How do you see the future of the Zoroastrian religion among the Kurds and in Kurdistan?

AH I feel there is a great need and importance to start the re-establishment of the religion in Kurdistan and for the Kurdish people quietly and logically. There is no need or room for fundamentalism in this process. It must be guided by reason, combined with respect for all other religions in Kurdistan and supported by a strong belief in the right of choice. There always needs to be an open dialogue. It is my belief that 2016 will be a crucial year for Zoroastrianism in all four parts of Kurdistan.



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THE CURIOUS REBIRTH OF ZOROASTRIANISM IN IRAQI KURDISTAN

Lara Fatah

Lara Fatah is a communications consultant based in Iraqi Kurdistan. She is also a PS21 global fellow.

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Faced with the barbaric actions of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) on their doorstep, a growing number of Kurds, particularly among the youth, are becoming increasingly disillusioned with the various interpretations of Islam on offer in the region.

There is an age-old Zoroastrian mantra: "Good words, good thoughts and good actions."

It still holds for the small but growing number of Zoroastrians living in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region.

While some look to secular, Western cultural ideals, others are looking to the past and exploring ancient Kurdish beliefs. Up until the seventh

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century Islamic conquests, Kurds across the region were followers of various pre-Abrahamic faiths, such as Zoroastrianism and Yazidism.

In August this year, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) officially recognised Zoroastrianism as a religion. The move elicited mixed reactions.

According to local media reports, around 10,000 have converted to Zoroastrianism in the last year alone. Some local media reports purport this figure to be as high as 100,000.

THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

Kurds across the Middle East have generally clung to their ethnic identity rather than their religion. Though Islam has played a more pivotal role in marking out regional identities in recent years, this has not really been the case among Kurds. Islamic parties usually garner only 10-15 percent of the vote in the Kurdistan Regional Government and Kurdish Provincial council elections.

With the Kurdish identity and culture under threat from ISIL, the perceived “Kurdishness” of Zoroastrianism adds to its appeal.

“All Kurds are nationalists and we take pride in our heritage, so of course the Kurdish nature of the religion influenced my decision to convert,” says Shwan Rahman, a recent convert to Zoroastrianism.

Rahman, 30 grew up in London and was a devout Muslim for most of his teenage years, but became an atheist when he returned to live in Iraq’s Kurdistan Region in 2010 and work as a lawyer. He says that the peaceful, Zen-like, philosophy

of the religion was its greatest appeal.

“The main principles of Zoroastrianism coincide with my way of thinking, good words, good thoughts, good actions,” he says.

Mullah Abbas Khidir Faraj, preacher at Awal Bakrajo Mosque and Head of Public Relations for the Islamic Scholars Union in Sulaimania, concedes that ISIL has had a negative impact on the public’s perception of Islam.

“ISIL are criminals and they claim to act in the name of Islam, of course this has an impact on us, but they are not true Muslims,” he says.

Arguably the world’s oldest monotheistic religion, Zoroastrianism – or Zardashti, as it is called in Kurdish – stood out from its polytheistic counterparts during the Bronze Age.

Once the official state religion of three Persian empires (Achaemenid, Arsacid and Sassanian) there are now thought to be less than 200,000 followers worldwide. The most active communities are in Iran and India, though there are a handful of diaspora communities across Europe and the United States. However, there are a growing number of activists in Iraq’s Kurdistan Region trying to reverse that trend.

One activist, Awat Taeab, along with a friend set up the NGO Yasna (which is the name of one of the texts in the Zoroaster holy book the Avesta) to promote the cultural aspects of Zoroastrianism. The NGO was started in London in 2006 and after a failed attempt to open a branch in 2012 in the KRG,

a branch of Yasna was successfully opened in March.

Taeab, who was raised as a Zoroastrian, is passionate about her religion, talking animatedly about its peaceful and environmentally friendly nature as well as pointing out that it promotes equality between men and women, as it doesn’t differentiate between the roles and status of the sexes in the same way Islam does.

In recent months, they have used a combination of seminars and social media to promote their cause and recruit new followers.

“We have held a number of seminars in Sulaimania and also in the surrounding rural areas such as Darbandikhan, Rania and Kifri, as well as cities such as Hawler and Kirkuk,” she says.

“What has become clear to us is that people have been truly shocked by the acts of ISIL – they feel this interpretation of Islam doesn’t represent them and it is attacking Kurdish identity. They feel that what they are learning about Zoroastrianism feels more Kurdish, more familiar.”

But some, including Mullah Faraj, question exactly how “Kurdish” Zoroastrianism is and think that this will limit its appeal.

“Zoroastrian Kurds were always in Iranian Kurdistan and not in this area. There is no history in this area of Kurds being Zoroastrian. For this reason, I think it will be hard for them and it’s unlikely they will be successful.”

Sulaimania resident Galawizh Ghulam is also sceptical as to how successful they will be in recruiting followers.

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"I find the numbers quoted in the newspapers to be very high. I can see that the younger generation might be turned off by Islam because of ISIL, although personally I don't think ISIL represents Islam. Even if the youth are turned off, I don't see large numbers converting," she says.

It was through their Facebook presence that Rahman became more aware of the teachings of Zoroastrianism.

"At the beginning of this year, I started to consider converting to Zoroastrianism after finding a page on Facebook that posted information about the religion on a regular basis," he says.

Converting from Islam is controversial, and society in the Islamic world will not be sympathetic.

Asked his opinion on the matter, Mullah Faraj said that he did not feel people would face reprisals and that, whilst no one likes to lose followers, one had to accept their decision.

"You cannot force someone to follow you. If they believe they will choose to follow you," he explains.

However, both Awat Xan and Rahman have reservations as to how easy it will be for large numbers to convert. Despite the potential for broad appeal, conversions will no doubt be resisted by the dominant religious forces in the region.

Awat Xan says that they have already received threats from various Islamic groups and for that reason they have so far stuck to preaching about the culture of

Zoroastrianism. The NGO focuses its efforts solely in this direction.

"We have received many threats and people try to spread falsehoods that we are fire worshipers, but that is not true," she says. "We will have to work slowly and cautiously, but we are a peaceful religion and we believe in free will."

It is not always easy to have an open debate about the role of religion in politics in the Kurdistan Region. Many, though not all, politicians fear harsh rebuttals – even reprisals – from Islamist groups and shy away from discussing the issues in hand, from whether ISIL is truly Islamic in nature to whether or not the Kurdish constitution should be completely secular so that women can have equal status to men. Previous attempts at instituting gender equality in the charter have been shut down by Islamist factions even though they represent only 10-15 percent of the voting population. The lack of tolerated open debate is leading to black and white views on many sides.

Is the revival of Zoroastrianism in Iraqi Kurdistan a reaction to the increasing role of Islam in politics and the presence of ISIL?

"In my opinion, nothing ISIL have done up until now conflicts with the principles of Islam," says Rahman. "This has definitely taken a lot of people away from Islam, especially amongst the younger generations."

While it is natural that there will be some resistance to a new or returning religion trying to gain ground in the Kurdistan Region, Taeab is quick to point out that they have had support from various individual members of all the main

secular parties in the Kurdistan Region. They are now lobbying the KRG to set up a directorate of Zoroastrian Affairs in a similar way to that of the Yazidis. They have also asked for land to be provided for the construction of a new temple.

Ghulam, however, remains unconvinced,

"I think young people are more likely to just move away from all religions. They will either become more secular or be non-observant Muslims. Myself, for example, I believe in God but I don't pray on a regular basis."

It is unlikely that large swathes of people will suddenly forsake Islam, but in the face of extremism, there is some heated debate over the role religion should play within society and politics. Whether or not Zoroastrianism is actually Kurdish in nature is also being debated. Non-Kurdish academics generally posit that it originated with the Persians and possibly from further East.

It is encouraging to see that cautious attempts to create a space for discussion and tolerance are emerging. However, in order to truly move forward, the debate must also consider the similarities and perhaps even influences that Zoroastrianism has had on the Abrahamic religions. They all believe in heaven and hell, redemption, the Messiah, the existence of an evil spirit and judgement day. A greater awareness and understanding of other religions would help to create a more tolerant atmosphere and debate.

Yet sadly, subversion and manipulation of religion throughout the centuries for political gain have left the region struggling with its identity and stability.

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ZOROASTRIANISM IN IRAQ SEEKS OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

Permission to reprint this article from Al Monitor was requested in February 2016, no reply has been received. Full acknowledgement is given to the writer and site. - Ed.

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Link to Al-Monitor website: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/home.html>

SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq — Zoroastrianism is the world's oldest religion based on divine revelation, which served as the state religion of three great Iranian empires for 12 centuries, from the sixth century B.C. until the seventh century.

SUMMARY

Al-Monitor interviewed the Zoroastrian spiritual leader in Iraq, Pir Luqman Haji, who spoke about the resurgence of this millennia-old religion, the challenges and the need for tolerance in a region plagued by growing religious radicalism.

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Mohammad Khalil

Saad Salloum



While religious diversity is now facing an imminent demise in Middle Eastern countries — especially in Syria and Iraq — the events following the rise of the Islamic State (IS) and its threat to this diversity has made it easier for the adherents of Zoroastrianism to reveal themselves after they had hidden their religion for 15 centuries and to convert to the new religion, in the aftermath of the Muslim conquest of Iraq.

Zoroastrians today are present in several areas of Iraqi Kurdistan and other areas administratively affiliated with the Iraqi federal government. But there are no accurate figures of their numbers as they are still referred to as “Muslims” on their identity documents, even though they engage in Zoroastrian religious rituals. This represents a restriction on their right to freedom of belief, especially since converting from Islam to another religion is considered a crime according to the Personal Status Law.

Kurds & Their Zoroastrian Roots

At the Zoroastrian Cultural and Heritage Center in Sulaimaniyah — which contains a small temple where Zoroastrian rituals are being held for the first time in modern Iraqi history — Pir Luqman Haji, the spiritual leader of Iraqi Zoroastrians, administers the conversion from Islam to Zoroastrianism through the Kushti tying ceremony (a Kushti is the sacred girdle worn by Zoroastrians around their waists) and marriage ceremonies according to the Zoroastrian tradition.

Haji talked to Al-Monitor from this small temple in Sulaimaniyah about the extent of the recognition of Zoroastrianism in Iraq, the number of followers and places of their presence. He also addressed the controversy surrounding the return of this ancient religion after it had disappeared for centuries and how this relates to the emergence of IS and its occupation of large parts of the country. Haji also clarified the Kurds' search for a religious identity other than Islam, in addition to the reactions of Islamic religious circles regarding the return of this ancient religion that has resulted in many Muslims converting to Zoroastrianism.

As far as Haji is concerned, what he is doing is not merely a religious representation of a millennia-old religion, but a cultural revolution seeking to direct the hearts and minds of people toward a loving life and adopting moderation in a country threatened with segregation due to ethnic tensions. He is confident that his revolution will have a positive outcome on the country.

The full text of the interview follows.

Al-Monitor: Is Zoroastrianism an officially recognized religion in Iraqi Kurdistan? And what are the limits of such recognition?

Haji: Zoroastrianism is recognized as one of the religious beliefs as per Law No. 5 of Protecting Components of Iraqi Kurdistan of 2015, which is new and positive. This encouraged us to officially establish this place [Zoroastrian Cultural and Heritage Center] representing Zoroastrians, after an absence of centuries. We also have an official representative at the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, and this is considered a step forward on the path to official recognition. But we do not think these steps are enough for us to act freely, as the ministry has yet to recognize this place as a house of worship for Zoroastrianism, just like mosques and churches. We demand this, so we can have a house of worship that symbolizes our existence and therefore earns us legal protection.

I have been to the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs in Iraqi Kurdistan 12 times since September 2015, met with the minister on five occasions and asked for official recognition, particularly for the Zoroastrian Cultural and Heritage Center as a place that represents us from a religious point of view. The center has already been recognized as a nonprofit organization by the NGO Directorate. This means that the recognition of Zoroastrianism has not yet reached the point of giving us a temple to perform religious rituals, or at least recognizing the center as a house of worship or religious center. And it should be noted that the opening of the center was attended by a representative from the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs. That same day — on Dec. 20, 2015 — we presented a memo to the ministry demanding that the center be recognized.

Al-Monitor: So you are saying that legal recognition of Zoroastrianism did not reach the point of equality with other religions? What aspects of equality are you demanding?



Pir Luqman Haji

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Haji: First, we demand the recognition of this place and the small temple built in it as a house of worship for Zoroastrianism. We also demand that Zoroastrian clerics are recognized just like Christian, Muslim and Zaidi clerics. For example, as the spiritual leader of Zoroastrianism, I have a diploma in Zoroastrian theology from the Zoroastrian school in France. I have earned the rank of “pir,” which is the first rank in the hierarchy of Zoroastrian priesthood and the highest religious rank obtained by a Zoroastrian in Iraq. It was an intricate procedure, for — after earning my diploma in Zoroastrian theology — I had to be officially nominated to represent Zoroastrianism and be officially chosen by the Zoroastrian council in the United Kingdom, which indeed happened. But the Ministry of Endowments has yet to recognize me as a representative of the religion; I am working on this.

Al-Monitor: Were you the first to demand the recognition of Zoroastrianism after centuries of its decline in Iraq, or were there other historical demands?

Haji: I don't think Zoroastrianism really disappeared throughout that time, but it was indeed occulted since human beings have no power over their hearts and spirits, so they would hide their true beliefs for fear of persecution without abandoning them completely. I will give you an example: A Zoroastrian from Khanaqin in the Diyala governorate told me that his grandfather presented an official memo to the Iraqi court in 1924, demanding that Zoroastrianism was stated as his religion on his official documents. But his demand was rejected since Zoroastrianism was not one of the officially recognized religions upon the foundation of modern Iraq. This shows that Zoroastrians have not ceased to demand recognition throughout the past centuries and that political, religious and social reasons have forced them to hide their religious identity — just like they are doing today in fear of the reaction of radical Islamists. As a result, many of them have to go to mosques for prayer so that they are not accused of being Zoroastrian and deemed unbelievers for that. Their ID cards still label them as “Muslim.”

Al-Monitor: Are there any accurate or at least approximate statistics concerning the number of Zoroastrians or those who are adhering to it today in Iraq?

Haji: The number of Zoroastrians in Iraqi Kurdistan and other regions is unknown, and I don't intend to hide these figures because I actually have no idea about the approximate number of public or secret adherents to the Zoroastrian faith. I receive new adherents each day in this temple. They are revealing their true religious beliefs after decades of hiding them or inheriting them from their fathers and grandfathers without being able to go public, until they now finally get the opportunity.

Al-Monitor: How are Zoroastrians distributed across the different regions of Iraq?

Haji: Each day, we discover new stories about Zoroastrians in many areas of Iraqi Kurdistan and others that are administratively part of the [Iraqi] federal government. Zoroastrians are [mainly] found in Dahuk province, in the city of Zakho in the far north [near the northern borders with Turkey] and in Sulaimaniyah province, notably the districts of Darbandikhan, Ranya, Qalaat Daza and Chamchamal. They are also concentrated in Halabja province and in Erbil province, notably Koysinjak district and Koya near Koysinjak. Zoroastrians reside in Daquq [district] and Altun Kupri [northwest of Kirkuk] in Kirkuk province; in Khanaqin and Kafri in Diyala province; in Tuz Khormato [administratively part of Salahuddin province] in Kalar district linking between several Kurdish, Arab and Turkmen areas such as Sulaimaniyah, Diyala, Kirkuk, Salahuddin and Baghdad. Kalar is bordered by Darbandikhan district [Sulaimaniyah] to the north, Khanaqin district [Diyala] to the east, the town of Jalawla [Diyala] and Kifri district [Salahuddin]. There are other areas as well that I am currently visiting and where I am discovering new adherents.

Al-Monitor: Are there high rates of conversion from Islam to Zoroastrianism within Iraqi Kurdistan and among the Kurds?

Haji: It is not a religious conversion per se. A more accurate term would be “returning to one's original religion,” or recovering it. A few days ago, I was in Khanaqin visiting a number of families who adhere to Zoroastrianism. They had paid me a visit at the temple in Sulaimaniyah, and we then set a date for me to

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visit them — so I did. We performed the austerity ritual, which consists of a cleric wrapping the belt three times around the waist of a person, symbolizing his initiation to Zoroastrianism. They formed a Zoroastrian council in the area, and we now have a council in every city hosting Zoroastrians in Iraqi Kurdistan. The council is composed of adherents who take care of the creed and religion, to establish relations with the other adherents in their region and in other areas.

There are high rates of returning to the religion among Kurds through the Zoroastrian Kushti tying ritual, which is the equivalent of reciting the Shahada [Shahada consists of the recitation of “There is no god but God. Muhammad is the messenger of God.”] for Muslims before converting to Islam. The ceremony includes the tying of a girdle three times around the waist, which is called Tathbeet [binding], meaning the person has now become bound to Zoroastrianism and has not just converted from one religion to another. At the temple, I regularly administer marriage ceremonies according to the Zoroastrian tradition. Five couples came to [get married] according to the Zoroastrian rituals, while the sixth arrived with children. This last couple had had an Islamic ceremony, but they were remarried in conformity with the Zoroastrian rituals.

The ceremony starts by me asking the couple to declare their will to marry each other three times. I then start with the ritual; the couple hold hands that are tied with a green cloth. They pledge before the peer to apply the Zoroastrian’s three main rules: good thoughts, good words and good deeds. The groom buys a wedding band for the bride and vice versa; the ring does not have to be made out of a specific material — it could be made out of iron, wood, gold or silver. All this happens in the presence of witnesses; the groom has a female witness and the bride has a male witness. The groom is not required to pay a dowry. After the ceremony is over, the couple vows to plant a tree every year on the day of their anniversary and give up all their commitments and devote themselves to volunteer work to serve others that day.

AI-Monitor: How did Muslims react to the declaration of the new Zoroastrian Supreme Council and the establishment of a temple where Zoroastrian rituals are performed and conversion from Islam to Zoroastrianism are administered?

Haji: To avoid any angry reactions, we worked silently without making any noise. We do not threaten anyone because our call is a peaceful one based on the values of peace and love. However, we still need a legal recognition within the constitution, as well as official financial and moral support in order to reinforce our position against radical clerics. This is especially true since [the latter] already started spreading lies and false accusations through mosques in order to calumniate us. An example is the claim that we are lewd and allow incest. And there are also many other false claims that aim to socially alienate us. This is obvious incitement against us. On Jan. 7, 2016, Mullah Abdul-Latif Ahmad of Sulaimaniyah defamed us publicly in front of an audience. We consider that a direct incitement to kill us. All I want to say is that people — even Muslims — treat us in a positive way, but some radical clerics deem us unbelievers publicly, which calls for an effective reaction from the state.

AI-Monitor: How would you respond to claims saying that Zoroastrianism is resurfacing today in the form of a national religion for the Kurds, and growing as part of a new Kurdish identity against a Muslim Arab one?

Haji: I do not agree with this argument, although we believe that Zarathustra was a Kurdish prophet, and that doesn’t mean that Arabs cannot adhere to Zoroastrianism. Just because Prophet Muhammad was Arab didn’t stop Kurds from adhering to Islam. Three members of the Arab al-Jabbur tribe in Kirkuk converted to Zoroastrianism, and I myself administered their Kushti ceremony here at the temple. I believe that Zoroastrianism is not a national religion for Kurds only, although it was their original religion. Everyone is welcome, especially since we consider Zarathustra as a prophet, philosopher and teacher at the same time. Zoroastrianism is a Reformist religion that is constantly modernizing and developing its ideologies in line with recent developments. Zoroastrianism is beyond any nationalist limitation and is spread in India and Iran. There are even Westerners who adhere to it, including Americans, British, Germans, French and Australians.

AI-Monitor: How about the claims that go as far as associating the resurgence of Zoroastrianism in Iraq

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to the atrocities committed by IS in several Iraqi regions, and that these atrocities have driven people away from Islam and led them back to Zoroastrianism?

Haji: I do not think that the return to Zoroastrianism in Iraq, or officially announcing it, is a direct outcome of the rise of IS and the negative reactions it has sparked. We have been working for years in European countries like France, Britain and many others to bring Zoroastrianism back to its birthplace in Kurdistan. This resurgence would not have seen the light had it not been for Law No. 5 of Protecting Components in Iraqi Kurdistan. The law clearly recognized Zoroastrianism as one of Kurdistan's religions. And only after this have we been able to resurge in Kurdistan, and then we proclaimed the Zoroastrian Supreme Council in Iraq. This was preceded by secret efforts that have taken years, as I used to regularly visit the Kurdistan Region to demand recognition. However, we did not act publicly and officially until after this law recognized us — while many of our colleagues have been working for years without ever abandoning their religious belief in Zoroastrianism.

AI-Monitor: Amid the widespread religious radicalism in the Middle East, what does Zoroastrianism have to offer to counter this phenomenon?

Haji: I think we need a cultural revolution that would pave the way for a new culture of tolerance. As a Zoroastrian cleric, I strongly believe that we have to spread love and repair the house [Iraq] we live in, without any discrimination.

Therefore, clerics must preach reform and build societies on the basis of cooperation and with the aim of seeking heaven on earth, without waiting for Judgement Day to solve our problems. Zoroastrianism advocates for the freedom of religion, so it is up to each person to choose his or her religion. This means that no one should adhere to a certain religion before the age of 15. When religion turns into a strict ideology that rejects any debate or reform while clerics claim they speak in the name of God — believing that their word and interpretation are the word of God — society will be brought to ruins. Reform is an imperative and starting point for us representatives of Zoroastrianism to propagate our message.

Both the Kurdish and Iraqi communities are traditional ones, where religious sensitivities play a role in intensifying the conflict. It seems like the government is failing to reach any level of religious harmony among the believers of all religions and denominations — one that could ease the tension. So it is our duty to start this cultural revolution. We do not only mean the concept of religious freedom or the return to an old religion, but the choice of a new ideology that can suit and reconcile with the spirit of this age. This is why I call this “a cultural and reformist revolution.”

Hundreds of people flock into our small temple to perform marriage rituals according to the Zoroastrian tradition, the Kushti tying or the Tathbeet in Zoroastrianism. You will be surprised when I tell you that my visitors do not come alone but in the hundreds, and they ask me to visit them in other places. They also visit our headquarters in cities where Zoroastrians live. It is a true revolution that will seek to improve society.

Saad Salloum is an Iraqi academic and journalist specializing in Iraqi minorities and human rights. He heads the research department in the College of Political Sciences of Mustansiriyah University and is one of the founding members of the Iraqi Council for Interfaith Dialogue. His publications focus on Iraqi minorities and include the books “Minorities in Iraq” (2013), “Christians in Iraq” (2014) and “Policies and Ethnic Groups in Iraq” (2014)

Luqman Haji Karim is a leading Zoroastrian voice and the leader of the Zand organization. He has founded a Zoroastrian center in Suleimani. There are other Zoroastrian centers in Kirkuk and Erbil as well. Editor, FEZANA JOURNAL

CONNECTION BETWEEN JUDAISM & ZOROASTRIANISM



A closer look by Zenobia Ravji During Her Experiences Living in Jerusalem

In the last two years I learned more about my Zoroastrian and Persian roots living in Israel than I ever had before. I spent two years in Jerusalem working with the foreign press. And what I came to find was a deep-rooted history between Zoroastrianism and Judaism.

Many of our cultural similarities come from the fact that both Zoroastrians and Jews are a religious and ethnic minority group, rooted in the Middle East.

Let me first start with what we, Parsi-Zoroastrians, can resonate with: our Indian heritage. It is almost impossible to meet a young Israeli who has never been to India or wants to go to India. India is a second home for Israelis. They are fascinated with its rich culture and mystery. Living in a society that is plagued by terrorism and war, Israelis want to take extended trips outside of Israel once their mandatory army service is over. The most popular destination is India.. which is seen as a large playground to explore intellectually, spiritually, and socially. And they always bring back to Israel a part of India. India is weaved into their culture, food, clothing, music, and art. Interestingly enough, they bring back Indian philosophy and spirituality as well.



I practiced a lot of yoga while I was in Israel. In fact, during my first week in Israel, I found myself in a Sivananda yoga center. All my yoga teachers spent years in India, learning from Indian yogis. It was surreal to sit with a group of Israelis while chanting Sanskrit mantras.

The spiritual quest is very much embedded in Israeli culture. So naturally one of the first questions I always got in Israel was about my religion. Israelis typically expect to hear one of three things from Westerners: Jewish, Muslim, or Christian. And those who didn't ask me about my religion just assumed I was a Christian because I was from America. Most Israelis told me they had never heard of Zoroastrians or Zoroastrianism, or so they thought.

It turns out that the most famous Zoroastrian in Israel, aside from our dearest Freddie Mercury and Director of the Israeli Philharmonic, Zubin Mehta, is King Cyrus. Jews know him as "Koresh." Cyrus the Great is mentioned several times in sacred, religious Jewish texts. Streets all over Israel are named after him. And, he is on the Israeli postage stamp!

Why is Cyrus the Great, Koresh, so famous? He performed one of the biggest *Mitzvahs* of all time. He freed the Jews from Babylonian captivity and allowed them to return home to Jerusalem, where they were



Purim Synagogue: Celebrating Purim in Costume while Reciting the Megilla in Jerusalem Synagogue.

allowed to rebuild the Second Temple. And this was the last time in history the Jews were able to build a holy temple on the Temple Mount before the Roman Emperor, Titus, destroyed it. Cyrus the Great left a lasting legacy for the Jewish people. In the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible, Cyrus is referred to as a messiah sent by God to save the Jewish people. He is the only non-Jew to ever be referred to as a messiah.

The other famous Zoroastrian who played a major role in Jewish tradition is King Xerxes, grandson of King Cyrus. Jews refer to him as “Achashverosh.” But Xerxes is less revered than Cyrus. I didn’t know about Xerxes’ relation to the Jews till I participated in the celebration of *Purim*. Purim is a festival that is celebrated every year on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Adar, which is in late winter and early spring. It commemorates the salvation of the Jewish people in ancient Persia. The story is written in the *Book of Esther*.

According to the *Book of Esther*, Haman, assistant to King Xerxes, planned to kill all the Jews in the Persian Empire. Fortunately for the Jews, a Jewish woman, Esther, became Queen of Persia and convinced her new husband, King Xerxes, to save the Jews. To celebrate Purim it’s customary to dress up in costumes or facemasks and celebrate in public. It’s also tradition to read out loud the “megillah,” which are the scrolls of the *Book of Esther*.

I am only scratching the surface of the historical relationship between the Jews and Zoroastrians. Jews continued to live under the Persian Empire for centuries, adopting many Zoroastrians traditions, religious and cultural. And, the Zoroastrians adopted Jewish religious traditions and customs, as well.

In fact, the Persian Jewish community in Israel still continues to preserve Persian tradition, much of it being of Zoroastrian origin. It is common to hear Farsi while walking down the street. And the most widely listened to Farsi radio show is broadcasted from Israel and hosted by *Kol Israel*, Israel’s public radio. an Iranian Jew,



Happy Nowruz: Depicting Israeli Celebration of Nowruz, within the Star of David it says in Hebrew "Nowruz Sameach," which means Happy Nowruz. Notice the Asho Farohar on the Top of the Hebrew Letters.

Menashe Amir, who broadcasts from Jerusalem, hosts the talk show. The show draws Persian callers from all over the world and even from Iran.

Most interestingly, Navroze is celebrated in Israel. Iranian Jews, as well as Jews from Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, and other Central Asian countries celebrate it. You hear traditional Persian music and dancing in the streets. And of course they celebrate with a traditional Haft Sheen Table and Iranian cuisine.

In my opinion, in all aspects of its culture and people, Israel has the most in common with Iran than any other country in the world. Israel is a nation filled with an overwhelming amount of talent. Israelis, just like the Iranians, are a population of great intellect, entrepreneurial spirit and depth. And both of these charming peoples maintain a unique balance of street smarts and book smarts. However, the overwhelmingly high number of talented people brings forth fierce completion. And, with this comes great frustration.

Iranian Jews recounted many stories of freely traveling between Israel and Iran before the Revolution. I believe in my lifetime, my generation will come to see a secular Iran. And, when this happens, it will be interesting to witness the creation of a new relationship between two very similar societies.

The similarities between the two faiths are obvious when walking down the streets of Jerusalem. You can see it on the traditional attire of the Orthodox Jewish men. Orthodox men wear a cap usually made of cloth. They call it a "kippa" or "yamaka" and we, Parsis, call it a "topi." The kippa of the Persian Jews is identical to the topi of the Zoroastrians. The Orthodox Jews also wear a "tzitzit", which is similar to our sudreh and kushti.

Unlike Zoroastrianism, in the Orthodox Jewish tradition only men are required to cover their head and wear a tzitzit. Women are required to cover their heads after marriage but cannot wear a tzitzit. However, in the Reform Judaism women are permitted to wear a kippa and tzitzit.

I did find Israelis who were familiar with the Zoroastrian religion. A story comes to mind. An Israeli friend was at work one day. And, he was participating in a discussion of philosophy and religion. His co-worker, Ben, said he was extremely interested in Zoroastrianism and had been studying Zoroastrian philosophy for quite a while and wished he could one day meet a Zoroastrian. My friend said to him that he just happened to know a Zoroastrian (me).



Father and son: Orthodox Jewish Father & Son Praying Together at a Rally in Jerusalem

When I met Ben, he told me his interest in Zoroastrianism stemmed from his in-depth study of world religions. And of all the religions he studied, the Zoroastrian philosophy resonated most with him. In fact, he had once seen a stack of Avestan texts in the home of a well-known Rabbi. Apparently some of the most well-known Rabbis and religious scholars in Israel study Zoroastrian philosophy to gain a deeper understanding of Judaism.

I was once in a bookstore in downtown Jerusalem. I went to the cash register to buy a biography on Freddie Mercury. This sparked a conversation on Zoroastrianism with the owner of the bookstore. He was a PhD student of Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism) at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. A major part of his coursework required studying Zoroastrianism. He told me Zoroastrianism has significantly influenced Kabbalah.

Also, the Hebrew language has borrowed Persian words from Biblical times to the present. For instance, the names of the months in the Hebrew

calendar are Persian in origin. Also, many of the Hebrew names, stemming from Persian, are actually still used among our own community: Gaza (Aza), Cherna (Sherna), Hoshi, Soli, Mani, just to name a few. And let me add that we are not the only people to call ourselves Parsi. When I told people in Israel that I was Parsi, they

just assumed that I was a Persian Jew. “Parsi” in Hebrew (among other languages) means Persian, and the Persian Jews refer to themselves as Parsis.

When it comes to mixed marriages, Zoroastrians and Jews are on the same page. Jewish parents want their kids to marry Jews. Zoroastrian parents want their kids to marry Zoroastrians. Both communities, small in numbers, want to preserve their religion and identity. In the Orthodox Jewish world, it’s forbidden to marry a non-Jew. In the secular Jewish world, mixed marriages are more accepted. There is the option of converting to Judaism. However, to have a full Orthodox conversion is a very demanding and rigorous process.

A mixed Jewish-Zoroastrian couple comes to mind. I had met a Zoroastrian woman and her Jewish husband at a Zoroastrian community event. The couple has two small children. Their children attend both Zoroastrian religious classes and Hebrew school.

The father recounted a very cute story about his older child: his son, who is about 9 years old, had just finished attending Zoroastrian religious classes. The teacher asked the class, from which modern day country did the Zoroastrians originate. No one knew the answer so the teacher gave the class a hint. She said, the country starts with an “I.” This 9-year-old boy confidently raised his hand and yelled out, “Israel!” Of course, the teacher corrected him, teaching him that Zoroastrians are from Iran.

In the Jewish tradition, the religion of the child is adopted from the mother (although initially it was from the paternal line). And, in the Zoroastrian tradition (at least the Parsi-Zoroastrian tradition) the religion of the child is adopted from the father. In the case of the couple I met, according to Orthodox Jewish and Orthodox Zoroastrian law, the children are neither Jewish nor Zoroastrian. When I asked the parents about this dilemma, they told me that their children would have both a Bar Mitzvah and a Navjote.

A Bar Mitzvah, just like a Navjote, is a coming of age and initiation into the religion. Both require recitation of religious texts, as well as training and instruction leading up to the ceremony. Immediately after, both enjoy a party and celebration.

From the moment I arrived in Israel, I felt very connected to the culture, the land, and the people. It was the first time I felt a sense of “coming home.” I smoothly and naturally integrated into Israeli culture. And upon meeting Israelis, it was the first time I felt so comfortable and connected with most of the people I met. Perhaps it’s because I was in the Middle East and physically closest to my ancestral roots from Iran than I had ever been. And perhaps it was because I found so many similarities between our culture and Israeli culture. We as Parsi-Zoroastrians have adopted both Eastern and Western cultures and mentalities, which is very much what Israeli society is like; it’s where east meets west. And, I guess, for the first time I felt I was connected to the larger community around me.

Just like us, Zoroastrians, a strong sense of solidarity keeps the Jewish community prospering and advancing. And just like the Jews, Zoroastrians have continued to live in a diaspora outside of what was once their motherland, Iran, tremendously contributing to the societies in which they have integrated into all around the globe. The difference now is that a Jewish state exists.

All photos courtesy of the author.

Zenobia’s reporting career started in Israel while she was a Graduate Fellow in journalism at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). She holds an MS in Journalism, an MA in Political Science, during which she was a Civic Leadership Fellow, and an undergraduate degree in Economics & Spanish from UIUC.

Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation plans to build consecrated Atashkadeh (Agiary) with Atash Adaran Fire



Atashkadeh (Agiary) Concept

After three years of public consultations and town hall meetings, the Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation (OZCF) voted unanimously to move forward with plans to build a consecrated Atashkadeh (Agiary) with an Atash Adaran Fire. It will be a focal point in North America for Iranian and Parsi Zoroastrians to worship, enhance our religious traditions and preserve our heritage for generations to come. To achieve this, in Phase One, a consecrated Atashkadeh will be built that will house an Atash Dadgah fire. It will be equipped with Yesnagah and Bareshnum facilities to ordain priests and perform the higher liturgical ceremonies and elaborate prayers. In Phase Two, the consecrated Atash Adaran fire will be enthroned within the consecrated Atashkadeh and the fire will be attended to 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The capital cost of the project is Cdn. \$2.7M (approx U.S. \$2.0M). The consecrated Atashkadeh will be built on the 10 acres of land that the OZCF owns in Oakville, Ontario, within the Greater Toronto Area. The land and existing community centre are debt free. Ontario is home to the largest Zoroastrian community in North America with over 5,000 Zoroastrians and a rapidly growing Iranian and Parsi population. We are blessed that within this area there is the largest number of ordained priests in North America able to serve our community and support our Atashkadeh (Agiary).

In the future, our masterplan includes: Revenue generating multi-storied Professional, Commercial & Office buildings with ground floor retail space; Seniors' retirement complex complete with health & medical support services; Banquet Hall & Cultural Centre; Zoroastrian Library, Museum, and Education Centre; Recreation facilities and green space. It will be powered by renewable energy.

We welcome your generous support towards this project. For more information, please contact Phil Sidhwa, Chair, Place of Worship Advisory Committee, OZCF (philsidhwa@ozcf.com).



Future Masterplan Concept



FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

<http://www.fezana.org>

Representing 26 Zoroastrian Associations and 12 Small Groups in the USA and Canada

Registered as a 501(c)3 Charitable organization

March 15, 2016

Dear Member Associations and Community Members,

The FEZANA Executive and the Chairmen of the Finance Committee are sending out this Special Appeal. Over the past few years, we have experienced a steady decline in our General Fund balance resulting from our expenses exceeding funds generated through fees and donations.

Some of the activities of FEZANA are supported by endowments established for specific purposes whereas myriad other activities are funded through the General Fund. Below we detail some of our activities and amounts expended towards those worthy endeavors:

- **Zoroastrian Unity and Welfare** – assesses and scrutinizes requests for critical assistance and welfare for Zarathushtis and for natural disasters in North America and overseas.
- **Youth Oriented Programs** – FEZANA has supported youth oriented activities by sponsoring our youth to attend World Zoroastrian Youth Congresses. FEZANA's sports committee organizes the Zoroastrian Games at which approximately 700 adult/youth athletes, age 7 and older, participate in various events, representing countries across the world. FEZANA supports the **Return to Roots** program which brings together young Zoroastrians from across the world to return to their roots, reconnect with their culture, and revive the community. FEZANA has also held other retreats for the youth so that our youth have an opportunity to meet other youth and further friendships.
- **Scholarships** – Academic scholarships are given to deserving candidates based on merit and need. Scholarships are also given to sportspersons and for creative art which involves financial support to Zarathushtis who are performing artists in music, drama, etc. or practice other creative art forms like literature, poetry, fine arts, sculpture, painting, etc.
- **Zoroastrian Studies Programs** – FEZANA supports Zoroastrian programs at reputable institutions such as Stanford University and University of Toronto.
- **FEZANA Journal** – The official publication of FEZANA is published four times a year to disseminate news and views as well as educational and inspirational articles about the Zarathushti religion, culture and practices as they pertain to Zarathushtis in North America.
- **FEZANA Publications** – FEZANA has published books on the Zoroastrian religion, including the Translation of the Gathas, and the Prayer Book for Jamshedi Navroze which help the diaspora to gain a better understanding of the Zoroastrian religion.
- **UN-NGO Activities** – FEZANA is an NGO in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and the Department of Public Information, and participates in conferences and programs at the UN Headquarters in New York.
- **Interfaith Activities** – FEZANA representatives have been invited to lead and participate in panel discussions at the Parliament of the World's Religions which promotes interfaith activities.

Activities such as these and many others, towards which FEZANA has expended more than \$600,000 in aggregate over the past five years, are supported by generous donors such as yourselves and to a much lesser extent from fees levied on member Associations. These activities are funded by the Unrestricted General Fund whose balance is depleting at a rapid rate because of a significant drop in donations received. **FEZANA needs your donations to the General Fund.**

The need is dire and urgent. Please donate to the FEZANA General Fund. We need your help in continuing the good work FEZANA is doing for the benefit of our community. To address this need we are launching a **Special NAVROZ 2016 General Fund Drive**. Please won't you help? Your tax deductible donation to the General Fund can be made at <http://fezana.org/funds/generalfunds/> or, you can mail your donation check for the **General Fund** to the FEZANA Treasurer, at Cherry Hill Post Office Box 3873, 1175 Markress Road, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034.

Sincerely,

Katayun Kapadia
FEZANA President

Ratan Mistry, Gev Nentin
FEZANA Funds & Finance Committee

www.fezana.org

WZYC Youth Congress

6TH WORLD ZOROASTRIAN YOUTH CONGRESS

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

We would all like to take this opportunity to thank FEZANA for the generous subsidy to many Zoroastrian youths. The subsidy is such a great incentive for us to attend wonderful congresses such as the one we currently attended in Auckland New Zealand. We would like to also thank the congress organizing committee for all their hard work to make this congress a success.

Embrace, Enhance, Evolve



Aerial view of Auckland



King's College

The 6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress (WZYC), held in Auckland, New Zealand from December 28, 2015 to January 2, 2016, was produced exquisitely under the leadership of Miss Tinaz Karbhari, supported by the tireless efforts of committee members and volunteers from the community. The beautiful campus of King's College, located in the suburb of Otahuhu was home to over 250 delegates from Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, India, Iran, New Zealand, Oman, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. The motto, *Embrace, Enhance, Evolve*, heralded this first-ever, ecologically focused Youth Congress with engaging and fun-filled programs.

Prior to the Congress's start, delegates and Zoroastrian residents from the Auckland area gathered at the Marvel Grill at North Wharf for a separate function organized by New Zealander, Kaizeen Kolah. The event brought approximately 120 youths together for an evening of networking at both professional and social levels. This opportunity was the first of many events where attendees could connect with each other in a relaxed and informal environment. For many, this was their first Zoroastrian Congress, others had previously attended the Youth Congress held in Vancouver, Canada, in 2011.

Day One

Delegates arrived at Auckland Airport and were transported to King's College, where they were greeted by aunties, uncles, and parent volunteers. Delegates were registered efficiently and provided with lanyards, gift

WZYC Youth Congress



Traditional Maori Haka Welcome

bags, and laptop cases, with more goodies inside. After registering, they were taken in groups to their housing, where they received a site orientation and settled in before the opening ceremony and official Maori Welcome.

The Congress was officially kicked off with a welcome by the Director of the King's Institute, John Powell. Delegates were then taken outside for the official Maori Welcome, which was performed by Maoris, the indigenous people of New Zealand. Congress participants had great fun participating in traditional Maori dances, where ladies used props called Poi (white balls attached to string) and the men performed the Haka (War) Dance. Delegates then broke for lunch and returned shortly after for the opening ceremony, where Miss Karbhari, Congress Chair, and Members of Par-

liament Su'a William Sio and Alfred Ngaro greeted us. In turn, Navaz Karbhari and Delzin Balsara performed the traditional Zoroastrian welcome, (Aacho Michoo), for our special guests, Mr. Venkat Raman (editor and general manager of Indian Newslink), Zerbanoo Gifford, Jimmy Madon and Jimmy Antia (special guests and keynote speakers), and Michael Fisher (of Fisher and Paykel). Dilshad Shroff, president of the host association addressed the group. Additionally, sponsors and donors were thanked and given gifts for their contributions to the Congress. A Jashan ceremony was then performed by approximately twelve young New Zealand mobeds, delegates, and members of the community. Following the ceremony, we got to enjoy the "chashni" fruits, nuts, ravo, and malido.



Jashan performed by 12 young New Zealand mobeds



Zerbanoo Gifford

Day Two

Day Two started with a presentation from Misses Sanaya Master and Roxanne Medhora that introduced us to the Green Initiative concept. Following their informative overview, the "Jimmy" combo, Mr. Jimmy Madon and Mr. Jimmy Antia gave the keynote speech

Next, the "12 Legacy Series" was introduced. The Series consisted of several sessions that showcased and honoured the legacy of selected Zoroastrian individuals, families, and organizations that have made a remarkable difference in our community, as well as humanity. Mrs. Zerbanoo Gifford was one of the 12 and a special guest at this event; she was introduced by the accomplished author, Mrs. Farida Master, who read the preface of Zerbanoo's latest biography titled *"Zerbanoo Gifford—An Uncensored Life,"* which everyone received in their registration handbags.

WZYC Youth Congress

This was followed by an interactive occupational and career workshop led by Jazeel Mistry, the Master of Ceremonies for the Congress. The session involved dividing participants into groups consisting of engineers, entrepreneurs and business professionals, medical professionals, information technologists, arts students, entertainers, and lawyers. It gave them the opportunity to network and discuss different aspects of their careers and how to better themselves. The last speakers session was a Q & A with all three speakers.

The day ended with a Luau (pool party) that featured a live DJ, and various novelty games like a supersized version of checkers and “dog and the bone” (similar to capture the flag).

Day Three

Today’s morning and afternoon were devoted to the Amazing Race, “City Blitz,” event where delegates gathered in pre-arranged groups of 8 or 9 and were loaded into buses with their packed lunches. Day Three’s activities involved achieving a series of objectives, while exploring downtown Auckland. This was a unique opportunity for team members, who they had just met, to work together and accomplish the common goal of completing and winning the competition. Following the Amazing Race challenge, delegates enjoyed pizza



Start of the Amazing Race “City Blitz”



Pizza party at Sir Michael Joseph Savage Memorial Park

at Sir Michael Joseph Savage Memorial Park. After lunch, we enjoyed amazing views of Auckland’s CBD (Central Business District), Devonport, and also Rangitoto Island (a volcanic island), while soaking up the wonderful sunshine. This event came to an end after the champions for the City Blitz were announced and the winning teams were awarded gold, silver, and bronze medals.

The day was pleasantly brought to a close by Dave Upfold, a famous New Zealand hypnotist, originally from South Africa. Dave played to a skeptical audience, who became believers in hypnosis after witnessing twelve of their compatriots being completely hypnotized; and, under Dave’s command, he made them chant and act like animals, perform like a rock star, had the men deliver and breast feed their own imaginary babies, and made everyone around them, including themselves, think they were naked! We were fascinated by his performance and several of us tried to get Dave to expose his secrets and the psychology behind hypnosis.

WZYC Youth Congress

Days Four and Five

The concluding days were devoted to 12 Legacy Series presentations from an impressive group of international speakers. Topics included the *Green Initiative by Zoroastrians Worldwide*, *Zarathusthi Pride Amongst Youth*, *Symbolism Within Our Faith*, *Inspiration for Youth and Breaking Common Barriers*, *Networking with Social Media*, the *ASHA Centre*, and *Priesthood*. The afternoons included an riveting debate that got people thinking and interacting intelligently, with minimal controversy. In addition, a group Trivia and Karaoke event was held that replaced the previously scheduled “*Crazy Carnival Fair Day*,” because of poor weather on New Year’s Day. The highlights of days four and five were certainly the evening events. New Zealand was one of the first countries to ring in 2016, as delegates enjoyed “The Glo,” an all-white themed New Year’s Eve bash. In the midst of 1,500 white balloons drifting down from the ceiling at the stroke of midnight, and the music of Lil’ Jon’s “Turn Down for What” being played, the dance floor was packed with delegates who had become friends during the four days. Everyone hugged and wished each other the best for the year ahead.



Jimmy Antia



Jimmy Madon

The final night began with a mouth-watering Parsi dinner known as *Lagan-nu-bhonu* (a traditional wedding feast). Catering was provided by King’s College staff and was supervised by Mr. Hoshang and Mrs. Mahrukh Katki. The ladies were dressed in colourful, embroidered saris, and Persian garments known as Makna (a head scarf) and Shaval (short puffy pants). The men were dressed in Daglis and Fetos (traditional attire and hat), suits, and even Topis (prayer caps). The evening’s entertainment started off with MC Jazeel running on stage wearing his Topi, Sudreh and Kushti, while singing Freddie Mercury’s “We Will Rock You.” This was also the chance for delegates from each of their five home nations to compete in the X-Factor Challenge—Australia, USA, Canada, India, and Iran (Canadian Iranians). They sang, danced, and performed interactive skits with the audience. Team Canada took home the X-factor championship title and will hold the reins for the next four years. With the DJ playing a mix of Bollywood tunes and current hits way past midnight, no one wanted the Traditional Night, which was also the final night of the Congress, to come to an end.

Day Six

Closing ceremonies in the afternoon brought the Congress to a successful finish with a show of gratitude expressed by the Congress Chair to King’s College; her entire youth Congress committee; the host association, ZANZ; all the parents and community volunteers who helped plan the Congress for the last four years, and which culminated successfully in the last six days. After an excellent week, a Zoroastrian Post-meet, separate from the Congress was organized by the lovely Kaizeen to bid farewell to the delegates before most travelled back home. A large group of delegates stayed behind in New Zealand, travelling to the South Island and even flying to neighbouring Australia for some additional sightseeing and adventure.

WZYC Youth Congress

Enter Site



New Year's Eve Traditional Night



Team Canada champions of X-factor Contest

AFTER A MONTH OF UNWINDING AND REFLECTION, HERE ARE SOME OF THE ATTENDEES' THOUGHTS:

Hanoz Santoke from California, USA wrote, "I was impressed to hear that ten New Zealand youths planted 522 trees before the start of the Congress. What was also impressive was the fact that "The Gathas of Zarathustra," which contain the full translation and interpretations were made available in an E-book."

Poruz Khambatta of New York, USA wrote, "We were fortunate to hear from Mrs. Zerbano Gifford, a human rights campaigner, former record-setting politician and the founding director of the ASHA Foundation. She spoke eloquently about all of the challenges she faced as a non-white woman running for office in Britain. She also inspired us to follow our dreams and work towards making them a reality."

Arian Sasani of British Columbia, Canada wrote, "The second I arrived at King's college, I felt welcomed with seeing the volunteers and beautiful smiles of the organizers. My favorite events from the Congress were the New Year's Eve party, Traditional Night and The Amazing Race. Among the many strengths of this Congress, there were a few weaknesses. Firstly, email was the only way of communicating with the organizing committee and I found that their responses were often delayed. This is especially important for someone who will be travelling from a long distance and requires adequate time to plan. Secondly, flight information for each delegate was required and I was travelling a day earlier and flying out a day later post Congress, but was not informed of possible accommodation even though all the delegate information was sent to the committee. Lastly, myself and many other delegates would have loved some free time during the Congress. Although King's College is a beautiful college with many amenities, exploring the city was very limited due to time constraints and distance of the college from city center and many other attractions. I along with other delegates would have appreciated more activities such as mini tours in the city, following the example of the Vancouver Congress."

Nazneen Zaiwala of Melbourne, Australia wrote, "I loved how committed the organizing team along with the volunteers were, and so hospitable. I felt welcomed! Our Special Guest and Key Note Speakers were amazing in their own ways, I enjoyed their talks... But to be honest, not so much the other speeches. Don't get me wrong, the speakers were good... but I guess, I was expecting something different. With the speeches, I was hoping they would be thought-provoking, intensive, and reflective in some ways. Instead, they were mostly

WZYC Youth Congress

knowledge I already knew (some of them served as little reminders). It was interesting to see though what the other countries were up to within their own communities (such as the UK) and I liked how the others were keen to take back those ideas to their home countries. I enjoyed some

of the discussions (and also the debate) after the talks. The food, oh-so-good! Safe to say, the traditional-night dinner being the highlight. The campus, dorms, other facilities were decent. I can only begin to understand the amount of effort the committee (and the people backstage) put into making this Congress possible. NYE and Traditional Night were sensational!"



Closing Ceremony

After years of planning and organization, this congress was a significant part of so many people's lives. Here is what the **Chair of the 6th WZYC, Miss Tinaz Karbhari**, had to say about her journey and experiences:

"When the Organising Committee first took the event on four years ago, we were all in our late teens or early 20s; I was 21 years of age. So as anyone can imagine not only has it been a massive learning curve for all that were involved, but the experience, knowledge and exposure to so many different elements has been invaluable and will be treasured forever. Overall, the 6th WZYC was a fruitful event that was full of benchmarks. These included the first ever Zoroastrian Congress to take place in New Zealand, the first ecologically conscious WZYC and the first to create and introduce the 12 Legacy Series. It truly has been an experience of a lifetime and I am very grateful for having been given the opportunity to organise this event."

So much energy and effort went into planning this Congress: the delicious meals, the well-appointed and secure campus and housing of King's College, the facility's friendly staff, and the wonderful host families who shuttled delegates from the airport to the campus and, who also made their residences available to delegates pre-and post-Congress. **Most attendees felt like they never left the comforts of home, and the Zoroastrians of New Zealand spared no expense or resource to make all delegates feel more like family than guests.**

It is evident that the 6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in Auckland, New Zealand, was a grand success. With the next World Zoroastrian Youth Congress coming back to North America in 2019, the bar has been set high. These events are not an easy undertaking to organize. There needs to be support in numbers, but more than anything, there needs to be moral support coming from the community. With the recent cancellations of both the World Zoroastrian Congress and North American Zoroastrian Congress announced for 2015, the American Zoroastrian organizations that are vying to host the 7th WZYC must show unity, and the Zarathushtis of New Zealand have certainly set a fine example of this.

CONGRATULATIONS to all the first and second generation Zoroastrian New Zealanders that made this event possible and memorable for all the delegates. You have really impressed the international community, and they will certainly be talking about this event for the next four years and thereafter.

WZYC Youth Congress

Embrace, Enhance, Evolve. This is one motto no Zarathusthi should ever forget!

Photos by Kayras Irani, except where watermarked by IMAJH.

A special thank you goes to the following individuals who contributed to this article:

Writer/Editor: Miss Arian Sasani from West Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada holds a BHK at the University of British Columbia, is a Western Pedorthic Candidate, as well as a Candidate for PBD in Gerontology at Simon Fraser University.

Writer/Editor: Dr. Hanoz Santoke born and raised in California and has been active in the Southern California Zoroastrian community his entire life. He volunteers extensively for ZAC and currently maintains their website and technology. He holds a Ph.D. in environmental engineering and is currently a Professor of Chemistry at California State University.

Writer/Editor: Ervad Poruz Khambatta is proud of the vibrant culture and community encapsulated within the Zoroastrian faith. He was born and raised in the New York metropolitan area and has been involved with the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York for as long as he can remember. He is currently a PhD student at Stanford University.



Arian Sasani

Editor: Miss Nazneen Rummy Zaiwala is a Laboratory Medicine student at RMIT University. She was born and raised in “Amchi Mumbai,” and moved to Melbourne, Australia at age 18. She has been an active volunteer at the University and with Australian Red Cross First Aid Services as their Program Lead. When she is not studying, working, or volunteering, she enjoys practicing martial arts (in the backyard!), reading books and spending quality time with her family. The 6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in Auckland was her first Zoro Congress, which she thoroughly enjoyed being a part of and is looking forward to many more! (photo page 58)

Contributor: Miss Tinaz Karbhari from Auckland, New Zealand, is the 6th WZYC Chair and a professional photographer. She currently works at the National Business Review. (photo page 58)

Editor: Ms. Bella Tata from West Vancouver, British Columbia Canada, was the former president of the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (ZSBC) and is currently retired.

Editor: Dr. Dolly Dastoor from Montreal, Quebec Canada, former president of FEZANA and current Editor-in-Chief of the FEZANA Journal.



Ervad Poruz Khambatta



Dr Hanoz Santoke

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Writer/Editor: **Mr. Aubtin Yazdgardian from Maple Ridge, British Columbia, Canada**, has been an automotive service technician and Shop Foreman for the Fleet Division of LORDCO Parts Ltd. for the past decade.

Writer/Editor: **Mr. Kayras Irani from Richmond, British Columbia, Canada**, is an Advanced Care Paramedic with the British Columbia Ambulance Service, and has served the general public of British Columbia for approximately eight years.

We all have one common belief, and it is to encourage the community to set aside the differences among the Parsees and Iranians and work toward becoming unified Zarathushtis.



Tinaz Kharbhari Chair of the Congress

Zoroastrian Youth Congresses are a great way of bridging the current generational gap and connecting with one another to discuss issues facing the global Zoroastrian community and finding ways to address and resolve them. We encourage youth everywhere to step out of their comfort zone and take chances to do what is right, when no one else will.

Set a good example for others and they will follow.



Nazneen Rumi Zaiwala

Coordinators for this report
Kayras Irani and Aubtin Yazdgardian

FEZANA sponsored 35 delegates from the United States and Canada to attend the 6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress. The Subsidy Committee (Sherazade Mehta, ZANT; Zain Mavalvalla, ZSBC; Mahrukh Motafram, ZSWS; Tashan Mistree, ZAPANJ, and Saghar Javanshir, ZANT) evaluated all applicants. Each recipient was awarded a subsidy of \$625. FEZANA is proud to support these young Zarathushtis who attended the World Youth Congress. -Editor



Left Kayras Irani; right Aubtin Yazdgardian



FEZANA Scholarships

FEZANA ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS (2016-2017)

Applications are invited for the

FEZANA ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS
MEHRABAN AND MORVORID KHERADI (MMK) ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP
FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE - THE FEZANA SCHOLAR.
FEZANA 25th ANNIVERSARY ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP
MORVARID GUIV ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIPS
PURVEZ AND ABAN RUSTOMJI ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP
BANOOBAI AND MANECKSHAW KAPADIA (BMK) ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP
DR MINOCHER RUSTOM AND DOWLAT MINOCHER VESUNA, WZO CANADA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

THE NAMES OF SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS WILL BE PUBLISHED ON FEZANA.ORG, IN THE FEZANA JOURNAL, AND WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR ONLINE ACCESS.

All scholarships are open to Zarathushti applicants who have obtained admission for attendance at institutions of higher learning (accredited degree-granting colleges or universities) in USA or Canada.

SCHOLARSHIPS:

Scholarships for the academic year 2016-2017 will be awarded in September 2016.

ELIGIBILITY:

Applicants must complete the application form and provide documentation for:

- (1) proof of USA or Canadian citizenship. (For non citizens a minimum of one year or two semesters residency in USA or Canadian academic institution is required)
- (2) past academic records and accomplishments (attach documentation of the past four years only)
- (3) program of study
- (4) annual financial need including assistance already pledged by other funds, charitable institutions or the institution of choice
- (5) other financial assistance available from family and friends
- (6) community service including contributions to Zarathushti functions and organizations
- (7) three reference letters (one preferably from an association nearest to you).

AWARD CRITERIA:

Applicants will be rated on Scholastic Achievement (40%), Financial Need (40%), Extra-curricular Activities (10%) and Community Service (10%).

The Mehraban and Morvorid Kheradi Endowed Scholarship of \$5000 and The 25th Anniversary FEZANA Scholarship will be awarded to post graduate students for scholastic excellence.

The Purvez and Aban Rustomji Endowed Scholarship of \$5000 will be awarded to qualified undergraduate students who demonstrates financial need and academic achievement.

The Morvarid Guiv Endowed Scholarships of \$1000 will be awarded to one graduate and one undergraduate student who demonstrates financial need together with academic excellence.

The Banoobai and Maneckshaw Kapadia Endowed Scholarship of \$2000 will be awarded for undergraduate studies to a student with good academic standing who demonstrates financial need.

Dr Minocher Rustom Vesuna and Dowlat Minocher Vesuna WZO Canada Endowed Scholarships will be awarded to a graduate and an undergraduate student with good academic standing who demonstrates financial need.

APPLICATION: Application forms are available from the FEZANA website at www.fezana.org

or from Dr Dolly Dastoor academicscholarship@fezana.org COMPLETED APPLICATION FORMS SHOULD BE SENT ELECTRONICALLY BY AUGUST 1, 2016 to academicscholarship@fezana.org



FEZANA Scholarships



FEZANA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS - 2015

"Education is one of the most important predictors- in fact- the most important predictor- of many forms of social participation—from voting to association membership, to chairing a local committee, to hosting a dinner party, to giving blood, in short, education is an extremely powerful predictor of civic engagement"
R. Putnam.

Education and training continue to fuel the engine of social mobility and contribute to social cohesion and integration in our ever more diverse societies and cultures. The benefits of education go beyond the economic returns---contributing also to better health, citizenship, lower crime rates. Investment in our youth is the investment in the future of the Zarathushti community. The future belongs to those who give the next generation reason to hope. You have given hope to our youth, And your faith and trust in the FEZANA Academic Scholarship program by establishing endowment funds is much appreciated. Thank you.

This year Sam Vesuna entrusted the management and administration of the Dr Minocher Rustom Vesuna and Dowlat Minocher Vesuna, WZO Canada Endowed Scholarship of \$3000 each to a graduate and an undergraduate student. We are grateful to Sam Vesuna for the trust placed in FEZANA scholarship program, Your continued financial support in this economically difficult period and your encouragement is of utmost importance to maintain this program and sustain the hope of the next generation.

Dolly Dastoor Ph.D

Chair, FEZANA Academic Scholarship program

MEHRABAN AND MORVORID KHERADI ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP— THE FEZANA SCHOLAR (\$5,000)

PARMIS KHOSRAVI, MASTER'S IN PSYCHOLOGY, THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

I like to express my deep appreciation to the FEZANA scholarship and Kheradi family for their generosity and awarding me the scholarship. I graduated cum laude from George Mason University, Virginia in 2013 with a bachelor of science in psychology. I am currently a graduate student perusing my master in psychology at The Catholic University of America.

In undergraduate school I was awarded with Phi Beta Kappa, and Psi Chi honors. While perusing my bachelor, I was involved in research with human factors psychology department, learning about humans' cognition and interactions. I also volunteered with Crisis Link PRS of Virginia, where I responded to crisis of individual callers in immediate danger of suicide. While working for Crisis Link PRS I was awarded Applied Suicide Intervention Skill Training (ASIST) certificate. As a graduate student I am involved with The Catholic University of America's Cognitive and Affective Neuroimaging Lab researching the interactions of cognition, attention, emotion, and mood. I am aiming to pursue my PhD in biological psychology. Additionally, with the entire busy schedule, I have tried to keep up with my hobbies, which are occasional painting, and crafting.

I am from Virginia, our Zoroastrian community is organized by The Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc. (ZAMWI). ZAMWI is one of the several Zoroastrian communities that have been privileged of





FEZANA Scholarships

maintaining a mutual relationship between Irani Zartushti and Parsi Zartushti. Such a bond has made us very unique in our practices and involvements in communities such as interfaith conference. I got to know our community by becoming an active member first as a volunteer in fundraising committee to raise fund for building our new Kamran Darbemehr. Then I became more and more involved with the Avesta class, as a dance choreographer. Now I am serving my second round as the secretary of ZAMWI. My mission for our Zoroastrian community is to improve the involvement of our youth in our religion. Even though we have been advantageous in our cooperative relationship like other organizations we have our ups and downs. By working as a volunteer in different sectors of our community I saw one thing in common, lack of youth's participation. Not only I saw such lack in ZAMWI community but also by traveling to places such as Toronto and California I saw the same situation. Our youths seem to have been isolated for the Zoroastrian community and as a result they all are uninformed about their religion and its origin. Since this realization, my vision has been restoring youth's involvement in Zoroastrian communities and educating them about our wonderful religion.

I hope with the help of our community members and the help of other communities we can once again bring back our future generation toward the religion that is set on the principles of "Asha" and path of "Humata, Hukhta, and Havareshta."

FEZANA 25th ANNIVERSARY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE (\$3000)



ARMENE MODI

GLOBAL MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM, FLETCHER SCHOOL, TUFTS, UNIVERSITY

I am deeply honored and grateful to the FEZANA Academic Scholarship Committee for having granted me the FEZANA 25th Anniversary Endowed Scholarship for Academic Excellence this academic year. I am currently pursuing a Global Master of Arts Program (GMAP) at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Diplomacy. FEZANA's financial generosity will certainly go a long way in supporting my educational endeavor to obtain a Master's degree in International Relations from this prestigious school.

A simple statistic in India's 1991 census that 61% of Indian women were still illiterate was a wakeup call that prompted me to give up a fulfilling teaching career of 25 years in India, the US, and Japan to establish the Ashta No Kai (ANK) project in 1998. The decision to retire from teaching and reinvent myself as a social activist has been a personal journey of challenge and discovery. The ANK project works in 10 villages in Pune District, India to empower rural women and educate the girl child. ANK's efforts have led to personal empowerment for thousands of rural women and girls, helping them to gain a degree of financial independence along with a significant voice in their communities. Despite the inroads ANK has made, and my 17 years of hands-on experience at the grassroots-level, I decided to enroll in the GMAP program as I felt the need for a sound academic foundation to make me a more effective practitioner.

The great in-depth exposure to topics of global interest in the GMAP program have provided me a rich learning environment. I have also had a rare opportunity to interact and network with cohorts from 30 different countries. I was fortunate to participate in two UN DPI/NGO Conferences, in Paris in 2008, and in Melbourne in 2010 as a member of the FEZANA team. I also shared my perspectives on "Combating Poverty", at the 16th NAZC in 2012. I hope to promote our culture and our community through the international exposure of the GMAP network as issues of our miniscule community are very dear to me and I will endeavor to contribute my time and efforts in every way possible to promote its well-being.



FEZANA Scholarships

MORVORID GUIV ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE (\$1000)

**AYESHA RABADI,
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION. TEACHER'S COLLEGE, COLUMBIA
UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK**



Ayesha is from India and has worked with children for the last fourteen years as a director of a children's development center. She continues to be an active advocate for the arts in education. Her Bachelor's degree from Sir J.J. Institute for Applied Art, a well-known art school in Mumbai, gave her a strong background for developing numerous art-based programs for young children.

After visiting Reggio Emilia in Italy, Ayesha was very inspired by the autonomy and creativity of the children. She is currently pursuing her M.A. in Early Childhood Education, with a dual certification in General and Special Education at the prestigious Teachers College, Columbia University – New York. Ayesha is also collaborating on a book about reading and writing for children and is in the process of publishing her own children's books with a positive stance on multicultural education.

FEZANA SCHOLARS (\$2000) GRADUATES

BAHMAN JAMASBI, ARCHITECTURE, UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

I was born and raised in Tehran, Iran where I received my bachelor's degree in Architectural engineering from Tehran Azad University in 2010. I'm currently a second year master of architecture student at the University of Virginia. Before coming to United States in 2014 I worked in 3 architectural firms in Tehran as associate designer. Swimming and Badminton are sports I always was fond of and peruse in my free time. I was a member of Zoroastrian Students Organization (KDZ) and Young Zoroastrians Institution (Faravahar) for a few years prior moving to United States. Participating in many of their activities in diverse social, religious and athletic events, whether as an organizer or just a contributor, helped me gain priceless social and management skills which have been of utmost importance in facing life challenges.

My main area of study in the graduate school is sustainably designed small common spaces in conjunction with parametric analysis tools as the optimizer of the design process. These projects can be built inexpensively using local materials and labor, encouraging the most





FEZANA Scholarships

community involvement possible; which can be easily achieved by harnessing the power of mass media and social networks. The unifying role of such spaces can potentially lead to higher quality of interactions amongst members of any community. Zoroastrian communities all around the world can benefit from such spaces for housing, interaction and educational purposes.

I am honored and incredibly grateful to be one of the recipients of the FEZANA academic scholarship. This was a significant motivation for me as I create my path through all the challenges of graduate school. It made me more confident in the path that I'm in, the contributions I can make to our thriving community and the vision I have for the future of Zoroastrian Society as a firmly united body of professional young minds eager to build a better world.

RUSTOM DALAL. BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL, MASTERS IN INTERNATIONAL ECONOMICS AND FINANCE,

I feel extremely humbled receiving the scholarship from FEZANA; and would like to appreciate the faith FEZANA has shown in me. I did my B.Com from the HL Institute of Commerce in Ahmedabad, India; and am a certified Chartered Accountant.

I am now a graduate student at the Brandeis International Business School in Boston, doing an MA in International Economics & Finance. I will be specializing in Corporate Finance, when I graduate this May 2016; joining KPMG-Boston soon thereafter. I also enjoy researching on the Indian economy; and have written on *happiness-economics*, *global recessions*; and *Corruption and its implications to Trade in the Indian Context*.

At a point in time when each USD is worth almost 68 INR, it suffices to say that FEZANA's support goes a long way in not only keeping up my morale but also in making my graduate studies in the United States possible. It is a reflection of the legacy that we as Zoroastrians carry – that of not only being highly educated and knowledgeable ourselves, but also ensuring that the Zoroastrians of the next generation have the same access to quality-education.

At the age of 24, having a vision for the community makes me sound more philosophical than what I actually am: but if I were to put it in words, I would ideally want to see *zarathushtris* of my generation recognize the enormous weight each of us has to carry on our shoulders – the legacy of ethics, entrepreneurship and philanthropy that's been passed on to us by people like the Navrojee's, the Tata's, the Godrej's. It's no longer sufficient to simply be proud of the fact that we're among the most loved community despite our dwindling numbers – we need to stay true to the image that the world carries of us. For that, we need to go back to our *gathas*, recounting that we can only be happy by making others happy; choosing the right path over the easy path and consciously leading the path of *asha*.





FEZANA Scholarships

JALL COWASJI. TISCH SCHOOL OF ARTS. NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, NY

Jall Cowasji is a graduate film student at New York University's TISCH School of the Arts. He is pursuing an intensive three year program geared towards excellence in the highly volatile medium that is filmmaking. He hopes to strengthen his voice as a filmmaker and contribute significantly to independent cinema in the near future. Prior to attending NYU, Jall worked closely on *Qissa-e Parsi: The Parsi Story* as cinematographer and co-editor. The film explores the history of the Parsi community, their ethos, contribution and relationship with the Indian subcontinent. The film has seen widespread success, winning the National Award for Best Anthropological/ Ethnographic Film in 2014. The Zoroastrian Return to Roots program included a screening of the film as part of its itinerary in India, and ZAGNY recently hosted multiple screenings of the film in New York.

In the same vein, Jall photographed and edited Navroz: The New Day, an educational film commissioned by the Ministry of External Affairs for a special screening at the United Nations. Jall is in the process of honing his craft so that he may become a far more astute filmmaker. When the time is right, he will delve deeper into documentary filmmaking with his sister, Divya Cowasji, exploring further nuances of the Zoroastrian community.



UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS

PURVEZ AND ABAN RUSTOMJI ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP (\$5000)



FRIYANA SIDHWA BUSINESS AND HUMAN RESOURCES, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY .

I cannot convey in words how honored I feel since hearing about receiving the Purvez and Aban Rustomji Endowed Scholarship for 2015-16. It is such a privilege to receive this award instituted by one of the most respected and highly regarded families of our Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) Community. I didn't have the honor to meet Purvez Uncle but I have heard how important education was for him and is for Aban Auntie and I am so grateful to them for this scholarship. It also gives me the opportunity to contribute financially towards my educational goals and support my parents.

It has always been my passion to work with and around people rather than the boring laptops and instruments ☺ whether it's coordinating a blood drive or participating in volunteer activities at school or for ZAH. This made me choose the Business side and I decided to pursue Human Resources Management as my major



FEZANA Scholarships

as I believe people or employees are one of the greatest assets of a company irrespective of its size. I would like to get the best possible education at Texas A&M University in this area of study and ensure that I assist my future companies attract, secure and manage the best talent available.

I am very thankful to the entire scholarship committee and all the judges for all their hard work and dedication. I will always be there to serve our great vibrant community and contribute by applying the knowledge I gather at Texas A&M. Go Aggies!



Friyana receiving the scholarship award from Aban Rustomji, in Houston, with Aderbad Tamboli looking on

KAPADIA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND ACADEMIC STANDING FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT (\$2000)

ROHAN CHAKRABORTY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, CHEMICAL ENGINEERING

I am a freshman at UC Berkeley studying Chemical Engineering, and I am honored to have received a FEZANA Academic Scholarship.

In high school, I participated in various activities including Boy Scouts, Science Olympiad, Chemistry Olympiad, and orchestra. In Boy Scouts, I participated in numerous community service projects and earned the Eagle Scout rank in 11th grade. In Science Olympiad, I earned a 4th place in the Chemistry Lab event and a 1st place in the Forensics event at the national tournament, and I was recognized as one of the Top 158 National Finalists in the 2014 Chemistry Olympiad. During my participation in orchestra, I was a violinist in my high school's symphony orchestra, and I earned recognitions at the Texas State Solo and Ensemble Contest. At the end of high school, I graduated as 8th in my class of 1,000 students.

To me, this scholarship represents an investment of the Zoroastrian community in my educational goals. By aiding my funding through higher education, this scholarship will allow me to increase my skills and challenge myself to achieve my greatest potential – opportunities that I will utilize later in life to give back to our community.

I envision, in the coming decade, a greater closeness among Zarathushtis and an increased public awareness of Zoroastrian values and culture. The Zoroastrian Congress this past December allowed me to connect with notable young Zarathushti adults. Therefore, I will continue to attend Congresses in the future and





FEZANA Scholarships

urge young Zoroastrians to attend these gatherings as well. Moreover, I aim to connect Zoroastrian students I meet in California with those in my home state of Texas in order to engender a more close-knit community. To preserve our culture, awareness of Zoroastrianism must also be increased in the public eye. At Berkeley, students are allowed to create and teach their own classes, called DeCals. I plan to take advantage of this system to lead a casual yet informative course on Zoroastrianism— most likely during my third or fourth year – and consequently increase my peers' knowledge and appreciation of our background.

MORVORID GUIV ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP (\$1000)



CYRUS PATELL, UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH, COMPUTER INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY

I am a senior at the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford seeking a bachelors degree in Computer Information Systems & Technology. I am thankful to have received a scholarship from FEZANA to help me with my studies and hope to be an information security analyst after I graduate. Without this scholarship it would be hard to continue my college education. My major GPA is only a 3.7 but my professors are often impressed with my work ethic often doing much more than needed in assignments and in class. Due to this my school's IT department offered me an internship, which has helped me learn a lot that I would not have been able to learn in a classroom. In my spare time I help my high school's robotics team with designing their robots and troubleshoot their programming. I have also helped my school's Japanese Arts & Media, Gaming, and Computer Club raise money through various fundraisers. I hope to help the Zoroastrian community with the technological skills I will learn through my education. I also hope to continue to teach others about good thoughts, good words, and good deeds.

FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS UNDERGRADUATES (\$2000)

TANAZ NATERVALA, NORTH WESTERN UNIVERSITY, IL, SCIENCES.

My name is Tanaz Naterwala, and I am currently following a Pre-Med track at Northwestern University in Illinois. I graduated Summa Cum Laude from Novi High School in Michigan, am a National Merit Scholar Finalist, and was top ten in my class. In high school, I was involved in many extracurricular activities: I was President of our Science Olympiad team, Vice President of the Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA) club, and on the Varsity Quiz Bowl team. I was also involved in a great deal of volunteer work, as I raised money for the Salvation Army through kettle bell ringing and was a Relay for Life team captain which involved raising money for cancer research and awareness.

I am so grateful for this scholarship and the opportunities it will allow me gain, as it will help make my undergraduate studies more affordable. I see the scholarship as an investment in my future, and I aim to repay that





FEZANA Scholarships

investment by giving back to my community through charity work and by making the Parsi community proud through my good thoughts, words, and deeds. During my time at Northwestern, I plan on participating in a great deal of volunteer work, both locally and internationally. I then hope to bring my experiences, especially those in international charity, back to the Parsi community in order to help make my vision become a reality: that we become known for our service to others worldwide. I feel blessed to have received this award and to be part of such a wonderful, supportive community.

KASHMIN DALAL, KENT STATE UNIVERSITY, PSYCHOLOGY

My name is Kashmin Dalal. I am a freshman at Kent State University in Ohio, majoring in psychology with a concentration in child psychology. My ultimate dream is to become a clinical child psychologist; helping all kinds of children with psychological difficulties. Eventually, I would like to travel around the world, helping kids in third world countries.



I was extremely involved in high school. I was on the board of a volunteer organization run by students for three years. In this organization, we volunteered at multiple places in our community, like schools and nursing homes. I was part of a highly academic club called National Honor Society for two years. Last May, I graduated with Honors with a 4.1 GPA.

The FEZANA Academic Scholarship means a lot to me. Being able to study in a university is a huge privilege and I am extremely grateful that I have been given the means to be able to do so. The FEZANA Academic Scholarship committee gives students, like me, many opportunities to receive help to pursue our academic dreams, and for this I am truly grateful. In the future, I want to see our Zoroastrian community grow. Grow into a larger but still tight knit community. As I grow up, I become more proud to be a Zoroastrian and talking about my religion with my American friends gives our religion the respect it deserves. In the future, when I am financially

able, I would love to be able to donate to the FEZANA scholarship fund and be able to give back to incoming students, who need the same financial help I needed.

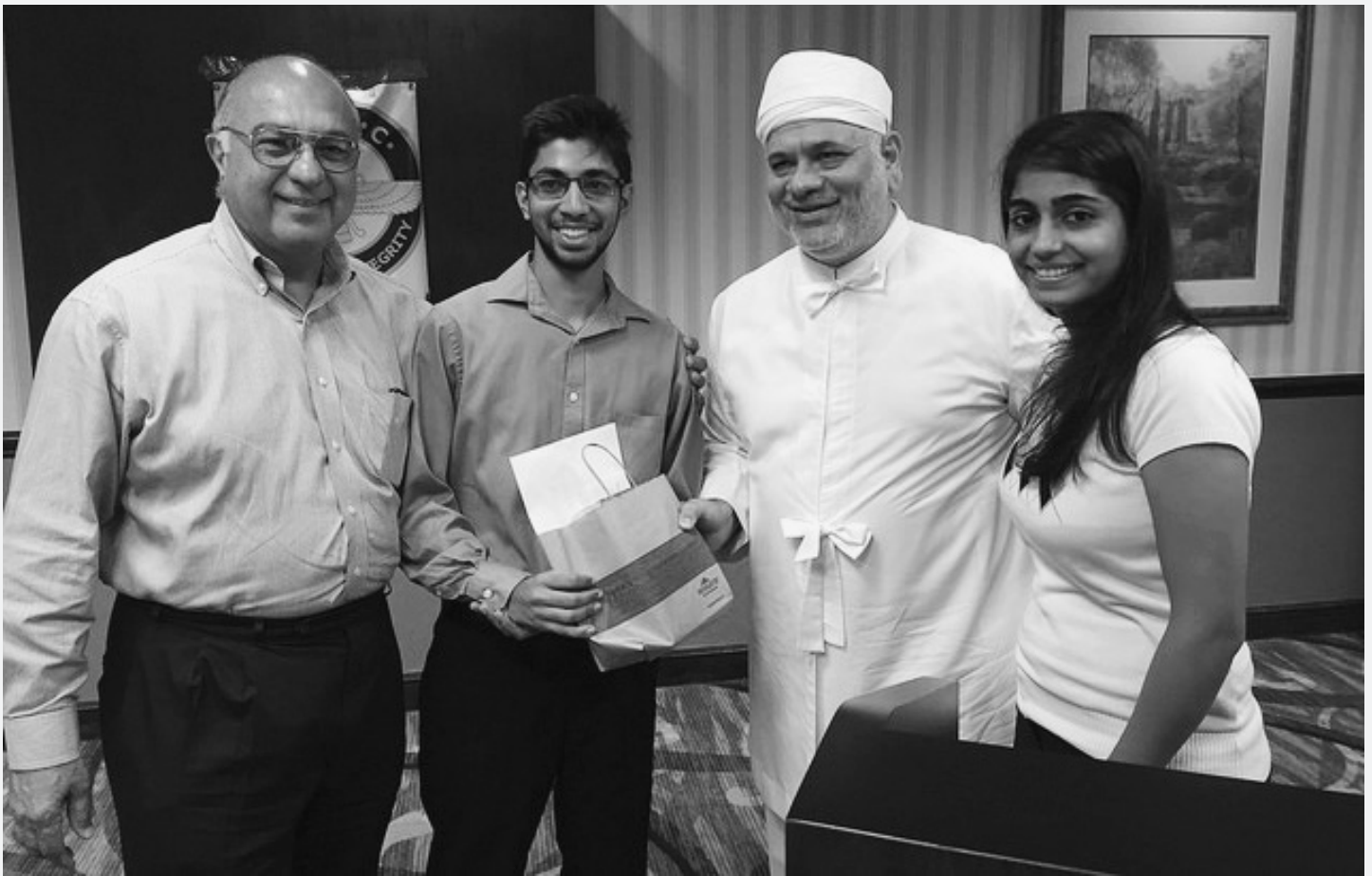
Education

*is the most powerful weapon
which you can use to change the
world*

Nelson Mandela

**FEZANA**

Scholarships

RATUSHTAR KAPADIA, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LA, BIOLOGY

Rateshtar Kapadia was presented his scholarship award by Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor during his visit to Orlando, to attend the WZCC Chamber of Commerce Central Florida Chapter meeting. Also in picture, Dinyar Mehta, President, Quest Hotels, Inc and Zenia Shroff, MC for the evening

I graduated in 2015 as Salutatorian of my class from Winter Park High School, where I attained an International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma. During my tenure there, I started and was the president of many clubs as well as won numerous awards; most important of which was being first in the National Competition of University of Central Florida's Internet Science and Technology Fair (ISTF). Additionally something I cherish with great pride is volunteering over 125 hours at the Arnold Palmer Children's Hospital and for making thousands of sandwiches for the homeless.

Currently, I am a first-year undergraduate student studying Biology at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). As far as my future plans: I aspire to attend one of the top 25 medical schools and study to become a surgeon or an anesthesiologist, the speciality is still to be determined. The Fezana scholarship truly means a lot to me, with so many expenses in attending college and medical school, every support helps and is truly appreciated. Additionally, being recognized by the community means a lot to me. This scholarship has strengthened my desire to pass the help on to others in the future.

My vision of the Zoroastrian community lies in the success of the youth. The youth are the leaders of tomorrow is a saying heard very often and applies to our community as well. In the next decade I envision the Zoroastrian youth to lead the Zoroastrian community to heights where our community will be known for producing leaders who will achieve great accomplishments in any field.



FEZANA Scholarships

WZO CANADA - SAM MINOCHER VESUNA ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIPS

In 2015 Sam Vesuna, of Toronto endowed through WZO Canada two scholarships in the names of his parents Dr Minocher Rustom Vesuna and Dowlat Minocher Vesuna for graduate and undergraduate students. These two scholarships are set up with the assistance of the FEZANA Academic Scholarship Committee.

DR. MINOCHER RUSTOM VESUNA 1903-1978.

Graduated from Grant Medical College, Bombay in 1926. Being a brilliant student he was awarded a scholarship for further studies in England which he had to decline as being the eldest son he had the responsibility to start earning to support the family and to educate his four younger siblings. His father had retired at age 55. After working a few years in Bombay he was appointed in 1929 in charge of the Sir Ratan Tata Medical Hall and Bai Dinamae Desai Dispensary in Yazd, Iran. The Iran League Quarterly Journal of Oct. 1930 states

"The Dispensary and Medical Hall are in charge of a young and enthusiastic qualified Parsi medical man Dr. Minocher R. Vesuna, M.B.B.S. specially qualified in gynaecology in which the women of Yazd needed help badly.' From July to September 1930 a total of 9,427 Zoroastrians and 6,643 Non- Zoroastrians a total 16,090 patients were treated. This medical institution has done much towards bringing about cordial relations between the Zoroastrians and the Moslems of Yazd and 30 villages round about".

In 1934 he was appointed the first resident Doctor of the newly formed Minocher Homji Parsi Hospital in Karachi. This was in addition to his own private practice. In 1940 he joined the Indian Army Medical Corps serving in the Middle East during the second World War until 1945 and in India till 1947. He returned to his practice in Karachi in 1947. He retired in 1968 and lived in London, and Karachi till 1973 when he immigrated to Canada. He died in Toronto in 1978.

DOWLET MINOCHER VESUNA 1912-2000.

In Iran Dr Minocher Vesuna treated Behman Irani, who after obtaining a degree in agriculture in Poona had gone to Iran to help our Zoroastrian farmers. When Minocher visited Poona during his vacation to meet Behman, he met his sister Dowlet who was then only 16 and had just finished school. It was love at first sight, but her Iranian father Ardeshir Khodadad Irani, a successful businessman and philanthropist (built Ardeshir Baugh Housing colony, Behman Physical Culture



FEZANA Scholarships

Institute, Poona Wadia College Sports Stadium and Poona Dastur Boys High School gymnasium) was hesitant and reluctant for his youngest daughter, to go to Iran after marriage. In addition there was the Parsi Shahenshahi and Irani Kadmi religious differences. Love prevailed and in 1931 they were married and lived in Iran, where their son Cyrus was born in 1932. She died in Toronto in 2000.



Dr MINOCHER RUSTOM VESUNA WZO CANADA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

SEPIDEH NORUZIAN DENTISTRY, UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO, (\$3000)

While still somewhat in disbelief, I am excited to share that this past fall I began my first year of studies at Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry in pursuit of my Doctor of Dental Surgery. I would not be where I am today without the guidance and support of my friends and family, particularly my mother.

Although I am extremely grateful for my acceptance at Schulich, the cost associated is at times daunting, as I could imagine being the case for many students in pursuit of higher education. I would like to sincerely thank the Vesuna family and WZO Canada for helping finance my education and allowing me to focus further on my studies. I aspire to follow in the footsteps of our generous donors.

Having grown up in Ottawa, Ontario, with a small Zoroastrian population I never felt the sense of community I witnessed in my late teens when travelling to various North American Zoroastrian events. I hope to be part of a movement towards a collective greater community. I would want to help integrate members of smaller Zoroastrian populations into the greater community through travel scholarships and increased event promotion targeted towards these groups.

I believe we, as Zarathushtis, are extremely fortunate to be a part of such a close-knit community filled with successful, giving individuals who hold beautiful core values. I hope to see the community grow in strength over the years. Collectively, I believe we can create a great deal of positive change in the world.

*To live a creative life, we must lose
our fear of being wrong.*

—Joseph Chilton Pearce (born 1926)

American Author

FEZANA Scholarships

DOWLAT MINOCHER VESUNA. WZO CANADA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

URVAKSH DAVAR, UNIVERSITY OF ONTARIO, INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING (\$3000)



My name is Urvaksh Davar and I am greatly honored to be this year's recipient for the Dowlet Minocher Vesuna WZO Canada Scholarship.

I am currently studying to obtain a Bachelor of Engineering Degree (Honors) in Electrical Engineering at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT). Growing up in this amazing "computer age", being surrounded by an abundance of technology right from very beginning is absolutely magical to me. As a result, I have always been curious to learn and find out how these seemingly magical devices work.

In high school for 4 years I was part of the Robotics FIRST (For Innovation of Science and Technology) Team. With guidance from past students, parent mentors and dedicated teachers, our team was very successful in participating and competing with various other schools from different cities nationwide. We travelled far and wide including going to the US for several Robotics competitions. We won many Engineering Excellence Awards and Engineering Inspiration Awards. I found my true calling with this kind of exposure and it put me on my current path towards wanting to become an Electrical Engineer, while still in high school. My hard work paid off and I graduated high school with Honour Roll and an Ontario Scholar.

Being an engineer, simply means that we get to take the abstract ideas of math and science which are learnt in classrooms and convert them into reality. Living here in Toronto, we are blessed with a fairly large Zoroastrian community which over the years is no stranger to me and my family. I certainly see myself using my skills and profession to contribute greatly for the good of my community. The youth have a lot of scope and opportunities to continue the legacy of our forefathers. My vision for my community is a community that is looking with both eyes forward towards a bright future, ready to leap and embrace these changing times, yet not forgetting our rich and inspiring past.

*No one can destroy iron, but its own rust can !
Likewise no one can destroy a person, but his own mindset can*
-- Ratan Tata



FEZANA Scholarships

FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

- FEZANA -

EXCELLENCE IN SPORTS SCHOLARSHIP (EXISS) FUND FOR YOUNG Zarathushti: Application Form - 2016

A sports scholarship, hereinafter called the EXISS Fund, has been established under the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA). The objective of the EXISS Fund is to provide financial support to young Zarathushti who are performing exceptionally and at highly recognized levels in any sport. The purpose of the scholarship is to enable the recipients to get world-class training and/or study with experts in their field and thus fine tune and enhance their talent and capabilities.

Eligibility Criteria

Beneficiaries of the EXISS Fund must be:

- a) Individuals practicing the Zarathushti faith
- b) Citizens, legal residents, or holding legal student status in USA or Canada
- c) Young Zarathushti between the ages of 10 to 30 years.

SELECTION CRITERIA, at minimum, will include the following:

- a.) The excellence achieved in a specific sport and past record in that sport
- b.) The annual financial need of the applicant
- c.) Financial assistance already pledged to the applicant from other sources
- d.) Applicant's commitment to pursue the chosen sport
- e.) Level of education and past academic record
- f.) Other extra-curricular activities undertaken by the applicant
- g.) Services performed for the Zarathushti community

Beneficiaries may be required to submit any financial information throughout the duration of the financial assistance to ensure that the assistance is being properly utilized. An applicant will be eligible to receive a maximum of two awards, which may or may not be in consecutive years. The EXISS Committee may waive this limit under special circumstances.

Application Procedure

Application forms will be available from the members of the EXISS committee, upon request, and online at << <http://www.fezana.org/exiss-fund> >>. Application forms may be submitted electronically; however, reference



FEZANA Scholarships



letters and examples/proof of the applicants work (portfolio) will be required in hard copy.



Please note that all applications must be completed in full, including answers to all questions, and all three listed reference letters must be received by the application deadline. Incomplete applications will not be considered by the EXISS committee, unless exigent circumstances exist and have been communicated to the EXISS committee directly. Further, for all applicants above 16 years of age, the committee strongly recommends that the application be completed and submitted by the applicant (i.e. not the applicant's parents), and these applicants should also communicate directly and independently with the EXISS committee, as needed.



Three (3) copies of this application form with all attachments (including portfolio items) must be received by **May 30, 2016** at:



FEZANA Administrative Office, ATTN: EXISS Fund, 8615 Meadowbrook Drive, Burr Ridge, IL. 60527, USA

OR

EMAIL: exissfund@fezana.org

The committee will inform successful applicants by email on or before **August 31, 2016**



“

**And still, after all this time,
The sun never says to the earth,
"You owe Me."**

**Look what happens
with
A love like that,
It lights the Whole Sky**”

Hāfez



FEZANA Scholarships



ZOROASTRIAN SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHOLARSHIPS 2015

ZSBC Directors and members of the Scholarship Committee (Homi Italia, Bella Tata, Fariborz Rahnmoon, Dinaz Mizan, and Farrokh Namdaran) extend their hearty congratulations to Atrin Yazdani-Buiki, Shaun Irani, and Shayan Naderi for receiving **ZSBC's 2015 Scholarship Awards** during Late Jamshed K. Pavri's celebration of life on Oct 11, 2015. These are given out annually to those students who have completed Grade XII and have not only achieved good marks but also been active in our community and met other criteria laid down by the Committee.

Photos below Scholarship Committee members with winner Shaun Irani in left photo and with winner Shayan Naderi in right photo. Atrin Yazdani-Buiki was unable to attend in person to receive her award.

MEHRABAN AND PARIDOKHT ZARTOSHTY EDUCATION FUND SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

We can be so proud of our youth, who have been studying hard to better their prospects and some of them even working part time to earn towards their studies. Apart from this, they also do volunteer work. Thank you to all of the youth who have been contributing towards the well-being of our Zarathushti community despite the many scholastic and personal issues you have to handle. We urge all our youth to give some of their time to our community programs here, as it cannot be left to just a few enthusiastic youths. This year's scholarships under the above education fund sponsored by the late philanthropist Mehraban Zartoshty and his wife Paridokht, was awarded to **Vandad Pourbahrami**.

This scholarship is for those in the second year of their graduate studies and thereafter, while



The Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia awards scholarship to those who have completed Grade XII and are going in for the first year of their college, university or technical institution studies. Congratulations to Vandad. Members on the Board of this Education Fund are Homa Zartoshty, Bella Tata, Shirin Abadi, Khodadad Lohrasb, Kourosh Mehin, and Fariborz Rahnmoon.





FEZANA Scholarships

Moobed Faridoon Zardoshty Religion Education Scholarship

This FEZANA scholarship, set up by the daughters of Moobed Zardoshty' and administered by the FEZANA Education, Scholarship and Conference Committee is awarded to any Zarthushti student studying for a graduate degree in Zoroastrianism at a credited university. The award is renewable for three years.



Mr. Kerman Daruwalla is the recipient of this FEZANA scholarship for the 3 academic years beginning Sept 2015. He will receive in three yearly installments: \$2000, \$1500 and \$1500, subject to proper progress in his Ph.D program at S.O.A.S, London under Prof. Almut Hinze.

Mr Daruwalla holds an undergraduate degree in Electronics & Telecommunications Engineering from Mumbai University (2001) and an MS in Electrical Engineering at Syracuse University, New York (2002). He subsequently worked as a consulting engineer at AT&T Wireless in Philadelphia, USA (2003–2007) and was awarded the Shining Star award, an annual recognition program for top performers. In 2007, he returned to India to pursue his MBA education at the Indian School of Business (ISB) at Hyderabad. Here again he was amongst the top performers.

After his return to Mumbai in 2008 and while working with Reliance Communications, he took up the study of Zoroastrianism, Avestan and Pahlavi at Mumbai University. For five years he studied part time with some of the leading priests and teachers in Mumbai, including Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia and Ervad Parvez Bajan. He was awarded a Certificate in Avesta-Pahlavi, a Bachelors-equivalent enabling students to pursue the MA degree. He completed year-1 of the MA from the University of Mumbai in 2014, and part 2 in summer 2015. In July 2015 Kerman took part in the Avestan language course taught by Prof Almut Hinze in Pune, India and favorably impressed her.

Mr. Daruwalla has given up a lucrative business career to follow his passion for Zoroastrian studies.

Students interested in applying for the scholarship should contact Dr Lovji Cama to obtain the necessary application form. Applications may be made any time during the year and the scholarship approval process will take about two months.

Dr. Lovji Cama, Chair, FEZANA Education, Scholarship and Conference Committee,
ldcama@gmail.com 201-569-7359



FEZANA *Scholarships*

THE PERFORMING & CREATIVE ARTS SCHOLARSHIPS (P&CAS)

Call for Applications 2016

P&CAS is accepting applications for Scholarships for the year 2016 . This scholarship is open to all U.S & Canadian residents who are studying in the field of the performing and creative arts, like music, drama, stage craft, literature, poetry and fine arts like painting and sculpture among others.
If you are studying to be a dancer, actor, singer, artist, do apply for this scholarship.

Applications available on www.fezana.org and due by August 1, 2016

For further information contact:

Nazneen Spliedt, Chair, P&CAS committee at 650-624-8888 or nazehler@aol.com

The winners for the 2015 competition were

MS. TAMINEH KHAJOTIA- studying film-making, documentary production & photography at the New York Film Academy, New York

MR. ARDAVAN TARAPOREWALA - studying voice & vocal performance at the University of Western Ontario, London, Canada.

Fezana Performing & Creative Arts Scholarships are available for young Zarathushtis in the Performing and Creative Arts. The scholarship is to enable recipients to study with experts in their field.

Application forms are available on the Fezana Web site, www.fezana.org
Deadline for applications is August 1st 2016

**Productivity is being able
to do things that you were
never able to do before**

Franz Kafka Novelist: 1883- 1924



FEZANA Scholarships

congress2000legacy



August 20, 2015

It gives us immense pleasure to announce that we have our three winners for the **2015 congress 2000 legacy awards**.

We at ZAH recognize and honor our youth going off to college in order to recognize their excellence in the Academic Arena and their contribution to the ZAH center through community service, both, within the ZAH community & mainstream America. This Legacy Scholarship was established in 2006 as a result of the funds generated from the success of World Zoroastrian Congress 2000 & the additional grants received thereafter.

This year, again, the applicants were just spectacular, and it took careful deliberation for the selection committee to come up with our winners. All applicants went through the full award selection process set by an executive judgment of the Legacy Planning Committee Team and acknowledged by the ZAH-EC.

IT IS A TREMENDOUS HONOR TO BE THE RECIPIENT OF THESE GRANTS

THE 2015 OUTSTANDING WINNERS ARE:

Rohan Chakraborty - the congress 2000 legacy award

Rohan is a quiet boy with impressive academic achievements. He graduated in the top 1% of his class from Seven Lakes High School an excellent, large high school in Katy. Two of several of Rohan's academic awards include: National Merit Finalist, National Chemistry Olympiad Champion. Rohan has been a regular at ZAH Sunday School, has tutored other students and is an Eagle Scout. His essay on how the Amesha Spentas helped him in his tutoring, research and life showed his Zoroastrian values will be the firm base for his future achievements. Rohan has started at University of California- Berkley studying Chemical Engineering.





FEZANA Scholarships



Friyana K Sidhwa - the congress 2000 legacy Award

Friyana is the all-around girl with outgoing personality. She was on the all A Honor roll for Grades 10, 11 and 12 at Harmony School of Science in Sugarland. Two of her several awards include: 1st Place in News Writing and 1st Place in Social Studies at the district level. Besides keeping up her academic achievements, she participated in many activities at ZAH and in her community. She was the Chairperson for the first ever Annual Blood Drive conducted at ZAH in 2014. From entertaining us with her dancing to organizing blood drives to working with Youth in Philanthropy Program, Friyana always gives her all. She participated in many ZAH activities and worked tirelessly on such fund raisers as The Ballad of Rudy and Zal, The Blast from the Past and Bollywood vs Hollywood. In her essay Friyana commits to living by the adage "Zarathushti thy name is charity." Besides these she has also contributed to main stream American causes such as Youth in Philanthropy Leadership Program sponsored by George Foundation - Selected as one of the 175 team members from 23 high schools across Fort Bend County. Friyana won a scholarship for Community Service at the YIP luncheon attended by

Council Member Harish Jajoo representing the City of Sugar Land at the completion of the 6 month program. Was selected by Camp L.E.A.D. - A Leadership camp at Texas Tech University out of 840 Charter High school students. Friyana will be a freshman at Texas A&M studying Business.

Ervad Vispi P Katrak - the Cyrus Rohinton Desai Award

Vispi is an ordained priest with the mega-watt smile. Vispi graduated from Langham Creek High School in Houston, and has earned many accomplishments on his High School Swim Team as being the captain for the team his senior year and an All-Region Swimmer. He has demonstrated outstanding leadership and enthusiasm for the community participating in many ZAH activities and worked tirelessly on fundraisers such as Dandiya Night, The Ballad of Rudy and Zal, and The Blast from the Past. During Vispi's junior year as the Treasurer of the Youth Group at ZAH, he prepared a full year Shenshahi and National Calendar to sell to his community. The following year he led his youth group to reach their goals as he was President. Among his community services he participated in the iLead program (a mutli-year commitment) which included collecting kitchen items for refugees. Vispi was also chosen to be a part of the Peer Assistance in Leadership program (PALS) during his senior year at High School, mentoring two kids who were going through rough times with their personal life and worked with special need students. Even outside the ZAH family, people who know Vispi hold him in the highest esteem for his work





FEZANA Scholarships

and community service. In his essay, he indicates how the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer is influencing his life and that he brought alive the concept of Asha by participating in the Peer Assistance Leadership program at his high school. Vispi will be a freshman at UT at San Antonio studying Information Systems.

The ZAH Legacy Awards recognize young ZAH students who are studying at the University level and who have achieved excellence in their scholastic studies, in extra- curricular activities and who have made substantial contribution to community affairs

The "**Cyrus Rohinton Desai Award**" was set up by the Desai family in memory of their son, a courageous young Houstonian who lost his battle with cancer. It was Cyrus's ardent desire to go, even for a day, to college but sadly this was not meant to be. **That is why this award is given exclusively to the person who is going off to college for the first time!**

Let us not forget our distinguished panel of judges who are selected by Dr. Farrokh Mistree from major learning institutions across the USA. **This year the judges were; Dr. Beheruz N. Sethna; Dr. Poras T. Balsara; Dr. Tinaz Pavri; Dr. Farah Shroff; and our ZAH Youth representative on the committee Mrs. Pearline E Collector.** We at ZAH are fortunate to have such a dynamic panel of judges from across North America and who care for our kids!

The ZAH Executive Committee and the **congress 2000 legacy** Committee congratulate our winners. We believe these students deserve to be recognized as innovators and leaders for tomorrow's global community. By supporting the next generation of great minds we pay tribute to the success of the World Zoroastrian Congress we had in 2000 from which the initial funds were generated!

In ending we would like to seriously identify and locate new funds by requesting families and corporations who would like to bequeath funds and have an award set up in the memory of a family member and/or an institution.

With our best wishes,

The legacy committee

Homi Davier - Chair

Dr. Farrokh Mistree

Pearline Collector

Vispi Sagar

Percy Behramsha



The congress 2000 legacy is an award program
of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston



FEZANA Scholarships

ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, INC.



THE FALI CHOTHIA CHARITABLE TRUST
10300 Farnham Drive, Bethesda MD 20814
301 564-3726 / 301 774-0841

The Fali Chothia Charitable Trust was established in 1988 to help provide scholarships to needy Zarathushti students. Awards are based on financial need, educational achievement, and community service. The trust is established under the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc. (ZAMWI), and makes awards to students from all parts of the US and Canada. The US Chapter of the World Zoroastrian Organization supports the Fali Chothia Trust's scholarship program by contributing to this worthy cause. Donations made to the trust are tax exempt, and go directly toward the corpus of the fund. Individual members of the Board of Trustees absorb all administrative, mailing, and other fund-raising costs.

If you wish to make a donation to this worthy cause, please send a check made payable to "ZAMWI/ Fali Chothia Charitable Trust" to: 10300 Farnham Drive, Bethesda MD 20814.

THE FALI CHOTHIA CHARITABLE TRUST IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE RECIPIENTS OF 2015-2016 AWARDS

Kurush Dastur is pursuing a Master of Science in accounting at George Mason University after completing a Masters in Commerce at Mumbai University. Kurush is a sampoorana navar and maratab from Dadar Athornan Institute, and hopes to continue helping zoroastrians by performing rituals for the North American community.

■ **Fareeza Doctor** is pursuing a Master of Law degree at the University of California, Berkeley after obtaining a Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Sussex, England. She has been active in community affairs in her home country of Pakistan, and has continued her involvement in the US by volunteering at local and national zoroastrian organizations.

■ **Sasan Jahanian** is obtaining a Doctor of Dental Surgery degree at Virginia Commonwealth University with the ultimate goal of becoming a community-oriented dentist. While he was a graduate student in California, he developed "Creating Healthy Smiles," an interactive program to educate children on proper oral hygiene. He was also an inaugural fellow at the Return to Roots program, and continues to be an active member of various Zoroastrian organizations.

■ **Parmis Khosravi**, working towards an MA in psychology at Catholic University, has been an honors student throughout her life. She has a passion for psychology and for Zoroastrianism, and is interested in exploring their shared roots. She has volunteered at crisis centers and is very active within the Zoroastrian community in Washington, DC.

■ **Armene Modi** is a rare individual who, after a 25-year-long successful career, gave it all up to volunteer full-time at an NGO for women, Ashta No Kai. Established by Armene in 1998, it has empowered thousands of girls and women in rural India. Armene has also attended and organized a number of international forums on peace and poverty, and has been a volunteer for many Zoroastrian causes. Feeling that she needed more academic education to increase her effectiveness at Ashta No Kai, she is now obtaining a Global Master of Arts degree in international relations at Tufts University.

(winner of the Rotary Literacy Hero's Award 2016, see page 90)



FEZANA Scholarships

VAKHSHOORI FOUNDATION

*Promoting leadership among Zoroastrian youth in academia, public life,
and the arts*

Vakhshoori Scholarship Recipients

Academic Year 2015-2016

Vakhshoori Scholarship Recipients for the Academic Year 2015-2016.

Ms. Anahita Khodadadi: \$5000

PhD in Architecture, University of Michigan, MI, USA

Ms. Golchehr Noshirvani: \$5,000

PhD in Physics, Optical Science, University of
Arizona, AZ, USA

Mr. Jall Cowasii: \$4,000

Master of Fine Arts, Film making, NYU Tisch School
of Art, New York, USA

Ms. Negin Forouzes: \$2000

PhD in Computer Science, Bioinformatics, Virginia
Tech, Virginia, USA

Each winner has shown exceptional leadership in his or her respective academic field, community, and life in general. We invite you to visit www.vakhshoori.org to view short video clips that some of the winners have provided detailing their personal views, life experiences and pledges.

Koorosh Vakhshoori

*Member of the board of directors
Vakhshoori scholarship*

Vakhshoori Scholarships 2016-2017

The Vakhshoori Foundation invites young Zoroastrians to apply for scholarships for the academic year 2016-2017. The awards range between \$10,000 and \$1,000. For more details and application form please visit the foundation web site at www.vakhshoori.org.

**I like the dreams of the future better
than the history of the past**

Thomas Jefferson



FEZANA Scholarships



Anahita Khodadadi was born and raised in Tehran, Iran. In 2003, she was admitted to Architecture program at University of Tehran. Although a significant portion of her time was spent in volunteer activities, she was admitted to the honors to Master Arch. Program in Architectural Technology at the University of Tehran, because of her outstanding academic records. At the same time of her Master's studies, She began working in an architecture firm. There, she gained practical experiences in research and design by engaging in real projects. Besides, she became a member of the Zoroastrian Student Association (Kanun), when she was pursuing her Master's degree, collaborating in organizing and holding the Mantra Annual Congress and the Annual Zoroastrian Sports Competition (Jaam-e Janbakhtegan). In 2010, when she completed her Master's degree, she

acquired the first place among the graduate students that was encouraging to continue her studies at a higher level.

In 2011, she became a part-time lecturer at Architecture School of Islamic Azad University, West Tehran Branch. she began teaching courses in *Construction Technologies* and *History of Iranian Architecture*. Then, another chapter was paged through her life. She should motivate her students and support them to learn, improve and pursue their goals. Her two-year teaching experiences made her more interested in academic work. Then, she strongly determined to continue her studies at a deeper level and acquire her doctoral degree where she can develop her ideas further. There was no faculty member who was working at the edge of the knowledge in her field of interest through out universities in Iran. Thus, she became determined to explore Ph.D. programs in top-ranked universities all over the world where she can work on her subject of interest. In 2013, she was admitted to the doctoral program at the University of Michigan, where she has the opportunity to work in a multi-disciplinary area.

Through her doctoral study, she attempts to develop computational design methods that can assist designers to consider multiple design objectives and make decisions more conveniently. The designer should gather information about the consequences of each alternative solution being presented to the client. Conventionally, some models need to be physically built or virtually generated. These models have to be evaluated and modified through an iterative procedure to approach the ideal solutions that meet the design objectives. The described procedure demands a considerable amount of time and effort and may cause exhaustion, mind blocking and stop the designer from exploring further possible solutions. However, the design method that she is going to offer utilizes computational tools and the principles of the genetic algorithm to facilitate exploration of a greater number of alternative solutions, and to expand the designer's perspective. Consequently, the designers will be able to evaluate the building of different performances, and offer some suitable solutions to their users or clients.

Studying at the University of Michigan has brought light into her path toward being a researcher and instructor in academia. Besides working on her dissertation, she is training at Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) as a future faculty to have a more inclusive and effective class where students with all identities can flourish.

Pledge:

I believe that a community can become stronger and more developed, first, if its generations are well-educated and, second, if they can remain connected to their roots. I encourage Zoroastrian students to keep learning and improving their knowledge and skills in their professional life. I had a two-year teaching experience as a lecturer in Iran and I have been a graduate instructor at the University of Michigan. This allows me to be familiar with the key points of a successful education in both Iran and United States. Furthermore, I can share my knowledge and experiments through the application process with other students who are seeking a graduate degree in North America. In a broader perspective, I feel a great desire to help Vakhshoori Foundation to develop its ideas and projects since my social goals are almost aligned with that of is sought through this organization.



FEZANA Scholarships



Golchehr Noshirvani's passion for science has led her from one side of the world to the other. Born in Iran, she earned her B.S. in physics from Tehran University. In 2009, her family immigrated to United States, where she received an M.S. at Physics at San Jose State University. Now a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Arizona, Golchehr works in a biomedical research group, where she is implementing a low-cost, fast, 3-D microscope for in-vivo, deep tissue fluorescence imaging. Golchehr's project is an instrument compatible with existing microscopes, which can be inexpensively distributed to biomedical research groups that use zebra fish. Her research adviser is Leilei Peng, a professor in one of the top ten optical science departments in the nation. In addition to her research, Golchehr serves as an officer for the university's Women in Physics group, which works to advance women

and minorities in science. The group organizes career seminars and outreach activities in local primary and secondary schools. Golchehr is proud to contribute to the Zoroastrian community. In addition to encouraging youths to pursue higher education, she has helped Zoroastrian families navigate their new lives in the U.S. by helping them prepare résumés and apply for jobs, government insurance, and green cards. She helped the late Dr. Oshidari spread the speech of Zoroaster by organizing and typing the Rahe-e-Asha magazine.

Pledge:

She hopes to open a private network to connect volunteer and Zoroastrians applicant in social activities to reduce the challenges of immigrating to the US. Zoroastrians, despite their historical struggles, are resilient, and Golchehr is committed to nurturing and growing a strong, educated, and united community. She invokes her peer Zoroastrians to be pledged to their society and endeavor to improve the Zoroastrians community in all the fields.

Jall Cowasji is a graduate film student at New York University's TISCH School of the Arts. He is pursuing an intensive three year program geared towards excellence in the highly volatile medium that is filmmaking. He hopes to strengthen his voice as a filmmaker and contribute significantly to independent cinema in the near future. Prior to attending NYU, Jall worked closely on *Qissa-e Parsi: The Parsi Story* as cinematographer and co-editor. The film explores the history of the Parsi community, their ethos, contribution and relationship with the Indian subcontinent. The film has seen widespread success, winning the National Award for Best Anthropological/Ethnographic Film in 2014. The Zoroastrian Return to Roots program included a screening of the film as part of its itinerary in India, and ZAGNY recently hosted multiple screenings of the film in New York. In the same vein, Jall photographed and edited Navroz: The New Day, an educational film commissioned by the Ministry of External Affairs for a special screening at the United Nations. Jall is in the process of honing his craft so that he may become a far more astute filmmaker. When the time is right, he will delve deeper into documentary filmmaking with his sister, Divya Cowasji, exploring further nuances of the Zoroastrian community.



Pledge:

The best way I can serve my beloved Zoroastrian community is to contribute my skills as a filmmaker. Once I graduate from NYU's TISCH School of the Arts, I intend to bring the community to the forefront in my filmmaking pursuits. I pledge to return to the community the plethora of opportunities it has provided me. Any youth interested in the pursuit of filmmaking or the creative arts in general will always find my door open for support or guidance.



FEZANA Scholarships

Negin Forouzes, was born and raised in Tehran, Iran. She got her Bachelor degree in Computer Science from Tehran Polytechnic in 2011. Due to her high GPA, she was awarded admission directly into the MSc program from the same university. She worked on an interdisciplinary project as her master thesis in which she exploited Computational Geometry algorithms to propose a novel ranking method for identifying protein binding sites- a substantial and fundamental issue in structure- based drug design. She then moved to the United States for her PhD in the same major at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.



As a member of Structural Bioinformatics and Computational Molecular Biophysics, she is examining facile yet fast geometry data structures to simulate and maintain the status of dynamic biomolecular complexes. It is worth mentioning that Bioinformatics addresses critical challenges related to the life sciences, and those posed to human health, habitat and well-being. Indeed, research effort in this field is focused on refining methods for diagnosis and treatment of human diseases. The target is closely aligned with Negin's personal goals and beliefs,

which stems from one of the principles of our religion: prosperity belongs to one who seeks the welfare of others.

She was an active member of the Zoroastrian Students Association (Kanoon Daneshjooyan Zartoshti) in Iran for approximately 7 years, where she was the organizer of many religious, sport and cultural events: head of the table tennis committee and the head of public relations committee in the annual Zoroastrian Olympics (Jaame-e Janbakhtegan). In 2014, she was selected as the chief coordinator of the 21st national religious congress Manthra, an annual congress in which more than 150 participants compete with each other by reading Avesta and writing articles about Gatha and related subjects. Negin encourages Zoroastrian students to not only find their field of interest and make progress in academia, but also to commit themselves to their society by attending social events and keep our valuable religion and culture.

Pledge:

As a senior member of Zoroastrian Student Association (Kanoon), I have collaborated with many students to organize various programs annually. I do want to keep in touch with this effective association and propose my opinion to improve the quality of Kanoon programs and events. Moreover, I would love to guide Zoroastrian youths in their education by introducing appropriate materials and also sharing my experience. I am actually advising one of them and like to extend it to more students.

“WITHOUT AMBITION ONE STARTS NOTHING.
WITHOUT WORK ONE FINISHES NOTHING. THE PRIZE
WILL NOT BE SENT TO YOU. YOU HAVE TO WIN IT.”

RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803-1882) PHILOSOPHER, POET, AUTHOR, ESSAYIST



FEZANA Scholarships

ZOROASTRIAN YOUNG ADULTS' WELL-BEING

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Farin Bakhtiari was the recipient of the Kheradi Scholarship, The FEZANA SCHOLAR for the year 2014. This research project was undertaken during Farin's Master's program, but was not part of her thesis. Farin will be graduating with a Master's degree in May 2016 and will start her doctoral program in Fall 2016 at University of Texas, Austin, in Human Development and Family Sciences*



Farin Bakhtiari

*General Experimental Psychology California State
University Northridge, Northridge, CA*



Scott W. Plunkett, Ph.D.

*Dept. of Psychology, California State University,
Northridge, Northridge, CA*

There is a lack of research focusing on Zoroastrian individuals and their families. Thus, researchers in Southern California examined perceived parent-child relations, family qualities, and young adults' mental health in Zoroastrian families, primarily those living in North America. This study focused on young adults (18-30) because this stage of life is important for major decisions about education, career, and, possibly, forming a family and/or becoming a parent. Understanding how family dynamics can impact young adults' mental health could be beneficial for the Zoroastrian community.

Researchers worked with multiple Zoroastrian organizations, centers, and groups to recruit participants (e.g., North American Zoroastrian Congress 2014, 14th Zoroastrian games in Los Angeles). Some Zoroastrian organizations provided a link to the online survey on their Facebook page or included it in their monthly emails. Also, participants were asked to forward the survey to their Zoroastrian friends and family members. The researchers also contacted potential participants on Facebook. Eventually, data were collected from 209 Zoroastrian young adults through the online survey (i.e., 197 residents of North America). This study potentially captured a significant percent of all Zoroastrian young adults in North America—given that a 2012 report¹ from the XVI North American Zarathushti Congress stated the overall population for the United States and Canada is a little over 20,000 Zoroastrians of all ages.

In this study, 67% of the participants resided in the United States, 15% lived in Canada, and 18% lived in other countries. Around half of the participants (i.e., 52%) were women and 48% were men. Both Parsi



FEZANA Scholarships

(43%) and Iranian (54%) Zoroastrian young adults were represented in this study (3% mixed or unknown). About 35% of the participants were born in Iran, followed by the United States (31%) and India (17%). Of the parents, 48% were born in Iran and 39% were born in India. Most participants (72%) were raised in a family with two biological parents, followed by 22% who were raised in a biological father and stepmother family. About 67% currently lived with at least one of their biological parents, and 90% were single. About 68% were college students, and 89% had at least one parent with a college degree.

In this study, most Zoroastrian young adults reported positive mental health, such as good quality of life, happiness, and positive self-esteem. For example, 72% of the Zoroastrian young adults reported their lives were either *pretty good* or *very good*, and 79% agreed with the parameters measuring happiness (e.g., *I consider myself a happy person, I tend to view things positively*). Also, about 89% agreed with the parameters measuring positive self-esteem (e.g., *I feel that I have a number of good qualities, I take a positive attitude toward myself*). Positive self-esteem is a desirable quality because it can result in a more optimistic view of life and better mental health.

Although most Zoroastrian young adults reported positive mental health outcomes, some were struggling. For example, about 31% reported engaging in the parameters that measured negative self-worth (e.g., *I certainly feel useless at times, I wish I could have more respect for myself*). Similarly, about 31% reported frequently engaging in a form of negative worrying called “brooding rumination” (e.g., *Think why can’t I handle things better? Think what am I doing to deserve this?*). For some Zoroastrian young adults, these feelings of negative self-worth and excessive worrying resulted in symptoms of generalized anxiety and depression. For example, about 23% reported frequent symptoms of generalized anxiety (e.g., *Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge, Trouble relaxing*), and about 17% reported frequent symptoms of depression (e.g., *I felt sad, I felt depressed, I felt lonely*). Consistent with research on non Zoroastrians, young Zoroastrian women reported significantly lower self-worth, more brooding, and higher generalized anxiety than men.

In sum, most Zoroastrian young adults reported positive mental health outcomes, but 17–31% may be struggling. Zoroastrian young adults could benefit from educational workshops that teach strategies to cope with stressors and anxiety, as well as learn alternatives to brooding during times of stress. Zoroastrian organizations and groups could sponsor mental health speakers who can address the strengths and needs of Zoroastrian young adults. Special attention should be offered to Zoroastrian women to help them form a higher sense of worthiness that may eventually help decrease their brooding and anxiety.

The next questions investigated (1) what are the family dynamics being reported in Zoroastrian families, and (2) do these family qualities relate to positive and negative mental health outcomes? Slightly over 91% of the Zoroastrian young adults agreed that their parents were supportive and nurturing (e.g., *My parents approve of me and the things I do, My parents tell me how much they love me*). Similarly, over 88% agreed that their families were cohesive or emotionally connected (e.g., *We are very close to each other, We support each other*). This finding is not surprising, given the high value placed on family relationships in the Zoroastrian community. Zoroastrian young adults were also asked how well their families dealt with stress (i.e., family hardiness), with possible scores ranging from 0 (*very poorly*) to 100 (*extremely well*). The average score in the study was 61, which would indicate moderate levels of family hardiness. In previous research, as well as this study, individuals have better mental health when they perceive their parents as more supportive and/or when they see their families as more cohesive or stronger under stress (i.e., hardiness). Specifically, in this study, Zoroastrian young adults had more positive self-esteem, happiness, and quality of life and reported less brooding, anxiety, and depressive symptoms when they perceived more support, cohesion, and hardiness in their families.

About 27% of Zoroastrian young adults reported their parents engaged in intrusive behaviors such as yelling, threatening, silent treatment, guilt, and shaming. The most frequent areas of conflict with parents were



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about chores, curfew (coming home on time), putting family first, and appearance (clothes, hairstyle). Even so, only about 11% reported getting into frequent arguments with their parents. Consistent with previous research, this study found that when Zoroastrian young adults experienced higher intrusiveness by parents and/or more frequent conflict with parents, their mental health suffered.

Next, Zoroastrian young adults were asked if they met their parents' expectations in numerous areas of life. The vast majority felt they met their parents' expectations regarding making good grades (90%), studying hard (85%), making parents proud (86%), not embarrassing the family (87%), making responsible decisions (95%), and being respectful and polite (91%). A smaller percentage felt they met their parents' expectations about college major (45%), choosing an ideal career (41%), or dating (46%). The percentages about dating should be interpreted cautiously because some parents may not have strong expectations about dating, some of participants may not have been in dating relationships, and dating someone outside the culture or religion may be viewed as unavoidable as Zoroastrians have dispersed around the world.

The findings brought to light some of the strengths of Zoroastrian families and effective parenting behaviors of Zoroastrian parents. The Zoroastrian community seems to be doing exceptionally well in this realm and should continue its high value family connectedness. Family life educators and/or mental health practitioners could be invited by Zoroastrian organizations to conduct workshops or presentations to parents that validate the positive family qualities present in Zoroastrian families (e.g., support, cohesion) and educate parents about the negative outcomes of using intrusive parenting techniques (e.g., guilt, shame, silent treatment). Programs can be implemented that target both parents and children to teach them positive conflict resolution, which can promote family bonding and, eventually, enhance young adults' mental health outcomes.

The last purpose of the study was to ask Zoroastrian young adults about experiences of ethnic/cultural discrimination. In this study, fewer than 3% experienced discrimination on a daily or weekly basis, and only an additional 4% experienced discrimination on a monthly basis. Given the data were mostly collected in North America, the findings may not represent ethnic/cultural discrimination experienced by young Zoroastrians in other countries (e.g., Iran, Pakistan). Regardless, those who experience ethnic/cultural discrimination are more prone to worse mental health (e.g., increased brooding, less self-worth, greater anxiety, more depressive symptoms). Thus, it is suggested that community organizations should identify those who are victims of frequent discrimination (even in their country of origin) and offer them more support to enhance their mental health.

In summary, Zoroastrian young adults and their families seem to possess many positive characteristics (e.g., strong family cohesion), and it is ideal for the Zoroastrian community to recognize its strengths and maintain them. It is also beneficial for the Zoroastrian community to acknowledge areas that could use improvement (e.g., decrease intrusive parenting). Providing educational workshops that target identified needs of a community can be very helpful in facilitating positive changes in individuals and families. More research on Zoroastrians and their families can also bring awareness about the Zoroastrian community to non-Zoroastrians.

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(Endnotes)

- 1 Rivetna, R. (2012, August). *The Zarathushti world – A demographic picture*. Paper presented at the XVI North American Zarathushti Congress, New York, NY. Retrieved from <http://www.fezana.org/files/Demographics/Zworld6Sep12.pdf>

In The News

WHY KURNIV?
WHY INDIA?
WHY NOW?



Freyaz Shroff
Founder and Owner of KurNiv

Corporate India is booming and is expected to have one of the highest GDP growth rates over the next two decades—estimated at ten percent per annum.

KurNiv entered corporate India in 2007, more as coaches for leadership and skills development for India's existing workforce; however, the need to coach the upcoming workforce became apparent.

Approximately thirty-three percent of Indian city-dwellers are youth; by 2020, the median age of this demographic will be twenty-nine, making India the youngest country in the world.

Today, India is sitting on a goldmine of raw talent waiting to be developed and added to the growing human resource pool. As of today, India has 600 million people below twenty-five. This means about fifty percent of the population will seek employment over the next ten years. Analysts estimate that another 15 million youth will join the workforce every year for the following ten years.

Historically, our school systems have placed more emphasis on memorizing content, having students strive for high marks on board examinations, and theory rather than on innovation, creativity, individuality, and developing successful thought processes. These practices have not positioned the existing work force—of approximately 300 million people—for success.

Although Prime Minister Narendra Modi's



Freyaz coaching a student in a corporate setting.

In The News

government has become proactive and established some brilliant programs such as Skill India, it will take some time before their results can be assessed.

In 2007, when we began KurNiv, no one anticipated our positive impact on people, corporations, and the educational system.



KurNiv students engrossed in a training session

These early successes caused us to rethink our strategy and work in India. We noticed that strategists and business analysts were myopically focused on economic growth and bottom lines to the exclusion of one critical element, an inspired workforce. Our key to unlocking India's work force was allowing workers to grow and contribute through creative thought, becoming a valued member of a dynamic team and enjoying an improved family and home life. We demonstrated that our program of cultivating individual talent, happiness, and well-being was strengthening our client companies' bottom line. KurNiv was on the right track! We now needed to grow and develop this platform in newer ways.



Our first clients in 2008 were a handful of companies; we focused on coaching their mid-level staff to think strategically—that is, to think like leaders by setting goals, creating budgets, being accountable and delivering results. Our time with factory workers, office staff, middle managers, and senior managers showed us that the work skills they were taught also translated into improved home lives. Our approach to teaching effective communication was quickly turning our students into effective managers, parents, and spouses—and good citizens and leaders.



In 2013, we launched KurNiv Kids, the arm of our business that works with students and schools to equip upcoming generations with strong self-belief. Our vision became “To Educate, Encourage, Empower, and Excite Individuals to become Leaders of Sustainable Growth and Productive Change in India.”

The inception of KurNiv Kids was the role we chose to play in Skilling India; our goals were to engender our students' self-esteem, out-of-the-box ideation, creating change, and bridging gaps across genders, religious beliefs, and social status. KurNiv Kids understand the art of networking, the importance of team work, and the value of self-development.

In The News

Our KurNiv Kids are the future's workforce; they will be the kids who will add a little something extra to Corporate India, advancing themselves and their companies and, hopefully, India as well to higher levels than any analyst, politician, teacher, or citizen of India has conceived.

Today, KurNiv has two branches: KurNiv Corporate and KurNiv Kids. Although social work has been at the forefront over the past eight years, we now believe it is our time to contribute in more ways. In 2016 we will launch the KurNiv Foundation. On Friday, January 29, 2016, we launched a program for mothers living in the slums of Cuffe Parade. It is our hope to empower the moms with simple acts, such as signing their own names, understanding the concepts of hygiene and good nutrition, building their confidence, creating equality of thought across genders, and so much more.

Living in India for the last nine years has indeed been a privilege. America instilled, in me, a deep understanding of the importance of a strong work ethic, an impeccable value system, and the daringness to dream. India has given me the opportunity to practice my values, develop a stronger work ethic, and the ability to make dreams a reality. If America equipped me with education, empowerment, and position, then India has equipped me with an Eastern set of values, family, and a sense of powerful purpose.

We have enjoyed every second of our journey and are brilliantly thankful for the opportunities The Universe has provided us. We look forward to the years ahead of us!

Freyaz Shroff, is the co-chair of the FEZANA Welfare and Critical Assistance Committee. She has served as the co-chair of ZYNA and has also presented with the FEZANA team at the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women. She was the recipient of the Jamshed Pavri Humanitarian Award at the New York Congress in 2012. Freyaz volunteers with the World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust in India. freyaz@kurniv.com

Rotary India Literacy Mission

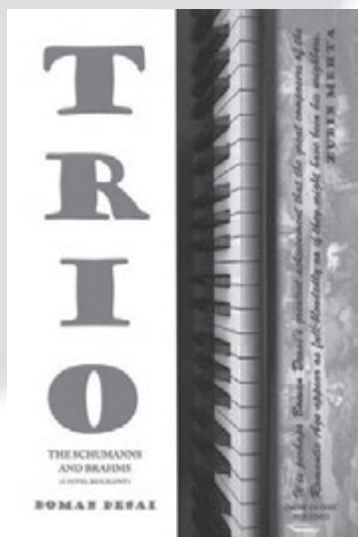
Rotary India has a dream of a Literate India and initiated "Literacy Hero Awards – 2016". Armene Modi was chosen as one of the five awardees which will be given to her on March 11, 2016 in Kolkata, in the presence of Rotarians from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The Jury Selection committee for these awards was headed by Retired Chief Justice of India Mr. M.N.Venkatachaliah and consisted of eminent leaders in their respective fields.

Congratulations Armene, well done. The community is proud of you.

(Armene Modi is the recipient of the 2015 FEZANA 25th anniversary Endowed Scholarship. page 61 and the 2015 Fali Chothia scholarship page 80)

In The News

One woman. Two men. A musical love affair.
The story of the Schumanns and Brahms.



The critically acclaimed novel biography, TRIO, by Boman Desai relates the fascinating love story of three musical geniuses: Robert and Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms. It drew the attention of the Fresco Opera Theatre in Madison, Wisconsin, which strives to cultivate a new generation of opera lovers by presenting opera from a modern perspective. They will be incorporating scenes from the book alongside lieder and instrumental music by the trio into a production to be called CLARA.

There were 3 performances on April 1 and 2 at 8 pm and April 3 at 2 pm : The show was held at The Overture Center Promenade Hall at 201 State Street. Each performance was preceded by a talk from Boman Desai an hour before the show (7 pm on April 1 and 2, 1 pm on April 3), and followed by a book signing. More information regarding Fresco Opera Theatre at: <http://www.frescooperatheatre.com/clara.html>

This is a delightful honor for Boman. We hope you attended the show if you were in the vicinity.

Congratulations, Boman!



In The News

CLAREMONT LINCOLN UNIVERSITY M.A. IN INTERFAITH ACTION

Maneck Bhujwala



Maneck Bhujwala, fourth from left in suit, with students and faculty of on line Interfaith program.

In 2014, Claremont Lincoln University (CLU) in Claremont, California started a new online program towards a Master's degree in Interfaith Action. When I was attending an interfaith related lecture locally, the Director of Educational Programming at CLU announced this new course, inviting people interested in interfaith work to enroll.

Having been involved in interfaith organizations and events, representing the Zarathushti religion for over 25 years in Northern and Southern California where I had previously co-founded Zarathushti Associations, currently serving on the boards of three interfaith organizations and as co-chair of the Interfaith Activities Committee of FEZANA, I saw the potential benefits and enrolled. I started the program in October 2014, and graduated in December 2015.

Living in a world where violence and discrimination is often committed on minorities in the name of religion, learning and promoting education about different religions and mutual respect between religious communities through interfaith organizations and study programs, is becoming increasingly important.

Being a member of a relatively unknown religion, I also realize that interfaith organizations and college courses provide an opportunity to educate the public about our great religion and history and enhance the self-esteem of our youth as inheritors of a living vibrant world religion instead of some small unknown cult.

In the Interfaith Action program at CLU, I gained practical insights into many different aspects of interfaith, through nine courses –

Approaching Religion, Mindfulness, Power and Privilege, Dialogue, Collaboration, Religion in the Public Sphere, Change, Interfaith Leadership in a Global Context, Negotiating Moral Conflict, and one Capstone project in which I used some of that knowledge to create social change in a local interfaith organization.

It is important for our adults and youth to meet and share religious information with others who respect diversity and dialogue, and I hope I can inspire our community to take interest in participating in interfaith events.

Claremont Lincoln University has also started less demanding, self-paced, and affordable certificate programs introducing students to interfaith. More information about CLU courses on interfaith is also available at www.clupassport.org and www.claremontlincoln.org

In The News

Congratulations

DR. HAVEWALA, WELL DONE !

On February 20, 2016, Dr. Arnavaz M Havewala was presented the Award for **Valuable Contribution to the Field of Dentistry** by the Indian Dental Association at their national conference in New Delhi.

Dr. Havewala, has a Bachelor of Dental Surgery and a Master of Dental Surgery in Oral Pathology and Microbiology from the University of Bombay. Dr. Havewala is an Alumnus of the Nair Hospital Dental College. She was guided in her postgraduate thesis by India's first oral pathologist, Dr. H. M. Dholakia. In addition to her private practice, she is the professor and Head of the Department of Oral Pathology and an honorary dental consultant at Masina and B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospitals.

In March 2015, she represented the Medical Women's International Association at the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations and in October 2015 she was invited to speak at the American Dental Conference in Philadelphia, U.S.A., as well as at the Weekend Seminar on Oral Diseases at the University of Salzburg.

She has been an invited speaker at State and National Conferences in India, lectured extensively on oral cancer and the involvement of HPV, and on screening for oral pre-cancer and cancer for general dentists.

She initiated the project **Oral Health Status of Elderly Parsees** and has conducted free dental camps in schools and Ashrams and for children who require special care.

Her aims in life are:

- To spread awareness about dental care by conducting free dental camps everywhere.
- To spread awareness about screening methods for oral cancer and the role of HPV



In The News

Top Indo-Canadians were recognized for Fostering India-Canada Relation



On February 2016, Carleton University hosted the celebration of fifty Indo-Canadian for their achievements and honored as Bridge Builders.

The event was sponsored by Canada India-Centre for Excellence in Science, Technology, Trade and Policy. at Carleton University . Among the fifty stories, one belongs to Dr. Dolly Dastoor within 'The A-List' book, written by Indo-Canadian journalist, Ajit Jain.

'The A-List' presents selected Canadians of Indian origin who with their expertise and tremendous community efforts have helped and encouraged the relations between the two countries. Eight out of the 50 people named in 'The A-List' were present at the ceremony and received copies of the book from the President of Carleton University Dr. Roseann O'Reilly Runte. (photo left)

'The A-List' is an amazing collections of stories.

Details on the event are posted at several web

sites including:

<http://newsroom.carleton.ca/2015/02/06/carleton-celebrates-new-list-indo-canadians-friends-india/>

<http://newcanadianmedia.ca/item/33129-fifty-indo-canadians-honoured-as-bridge-builders>

<http://carleton.ca/india/>

<http://newcanadianmedia.ca/item/tag/IndoCanadian>

Dr. Dastoor was born in Bombay and received her B.A. and M.A. from Bombay University. In 1964, she worked as a WHO Research Fellow at the University College Hospital in Ibadan, Nigeria and in 1973 she immigrated to Canada with her family and joined the Douglas Hospital as a Clinical Psychologist. She retired in 2013 from the post of the Clinical-administrative manager of the Program in Dementia which she had pioneered. She is an Assistant Professor in Psychiatry at McGill University and at the McGill University Research Centre for Studies in Aging.

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She has an extensive list of publications and has lectured on the subject of Alzheimer's disease and was the 1990 recipient of the Roberts Award of the Douglas Hospital for outstanding achievement.

Dolly Dastoor has been the founder President of the Alzheimer Society of Montreal- 1986-91 and is the honorary Life member of the Board. Dolly was the President of Zonta International, Montreal Club, 1982-85, and Governor of District 2, 2002-2004, an International service organization of executives in business and profession. She served as the International Chair of the Status Women Committee 1989-1992 and attended the UN Commission on the Status of Women, in Vienna. Presently she is the International chair for the Foundation Development Committee.

Dr. Dastoor is not only active in teaching, research, presentations in universities and the community centre but also has been deeply involved with the Zoroastrian Community nationally and internationally.

She was the President of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec (<http://zaq.org/officers.html>) from 1978-85, 1993-99, 2005-2007 and 2013-2015. She chaired the Fourth North American Zoroastrian Congress in Montreal, co-chaired the 7th World Zoroastrian Congress, 2000 in Houston and published the first directory of Zoroastrians living in Canada. She was also the associate editor of "Gavashni". Dolly served as the first Secretary of FEZANA from 1988-1993 and as President during 1994-98.

Since 2005, Dolly is the Editor-in-Chief of the FEZANA Journal a quarterly publication of Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America. *What a proud moment for ZAQ community*

*Our Sincere Congratulations
Shahrokh Khanizadeh*

In The News

Raiomond Krishnayya, Executive Director of the Center for Victim and Human Rights (CVHR) in Indianapolis, Indiana, will be one of the 56 recipients of the FBI Director's Leadership Award in recognition of his work in establishing the **Center for Victim and Human Rights (CVHR)** a 501(c) (3) legal organization. CVHR works to empower and advance the safety of victims through legal representation and educational outreach. He was specially nominated by FBI staff for his work on various cases involving serious violence.

This award was created in 1990 as a way to honor individuals and organizations for their efforts in combating crime, terrorism, drugs, and violence in America. Each year, each Special Agent-in-Charge (SAC) of each of the 56 field offices throughout the United States may nominate one individual or organization to receive the DCLA. The award will be presented at FBI Headquarters in Washington, DC, on April 15, 2016, by FBI Director, James B. Comey, to all 56 recipients, including Raiomond.



Raiomond Krishnayya receives the award from Special Agent in Charge, W. Jay Abbott



Raise your words, not your Voice.

It is rain that grows flowers, not thunder. Rumi

In The News

EXPERIENCES OF MY SOJOURN AT NAVSARI

My dear wife Dinsoo passed away at the WZO Trust Funds Senior Citizens Centre at Navsari on 24th December 2015, around 7 am. This article is dedicated to her memory.



Dara and Dinsoo Rivetna

I reside in Chicago, but due to Dinsoo's health and Chicago's unbearable winter weather, we have spent the winter months in Mumbai.

During our sojourns in India, I volunteered my services to the WZO Trust Funds and visited the homes of its beneficiaries in Mumbai and at other places to investigate the beneficiaries' appeals. Dinsoo and I also visited the villages of Gujarat with Bachi and Dinshaw Tamboly, where we solicited donations to fund the conversion of a few huts into cottages. Dinsoo and I also made donations to this project.

This year, Dinsoo's health took a turn for the worse. Being unable to look after her on my own, I requested Bachi Tamboly—who is in charge of the WZO Trust Funds Senior Citizens Centers—to allow Dinsoo to stay there for a few months before our planned return to Chicago during summer 2016.

Thanks to the generous assistance of the Tambolys' we were allowed to stay at the Senior Centre. Dinsoo and I arrived at the Centre, in Navsari, on October 27, 2015, in a private taxi from Dadar, Mumbai, where we had stayed at

our nephew's house. It was our intention to spend the rest of our time in Navsari during this trip to India.

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ABOUT THE CENTRE

It is a place for elderly, retired persons, sixty and older, who are mobile and able to look after their personal needs. It is like a home in some ways and in other ways, a community, where its residents come to spend the evening of their life. Most residents are single except for a few married couples. (photo page 97)

Regardless of disability, everyone is treated with respect and dignity. Residents help each other with small chores. Residents can choose to socialize, or not—as they wish. Some residents stay in common rooms that accommodate four residents per room, others stay in two- or one-person rooms.

Residents are allowed to leave the Centre whenever they wish, but for their safety and well-being, they are required to inform the manager that they will be going out. Their day starts at 7:00 am for tea. Breakfast is at 9:00 am. Most residents shower and get ready by breakfast; then it is leisure time till lunch, which is at 12:30 pm. After lunch, they have siesta time till 4:00 pm, when afternoon tea and breakfast (what we call snack) are served. Daily activities include walking in the neighborhoods, sitting on the veranda, and chatting. Dinner is called at 8:00 pm. All meals are served in the dining room.

Dinsoo and I were most impressed with their wide selection and excellent preparation of meals. ALL THE FOOD IS PARSI-STYLE, NUTRICIOUS, DELICIOUS, AND PLENTY OF IT! A portion of food is preplaced on the resident's plate, then ladies walk to the various tables and ask if anyone wants more. There is never a shortage of food, residents can eat as much as they want. Menus are posted a day in advance to permit residents to request alternative meals if they don't like something on the menu. Kitchen staff consists of four ladies who look after meal preparation. One day Dinsoo mentioned to one of the cooks that she would like to eat Bhelpuri, and a few days later we had Bhelpuri with three different chutneys for her.

Here are examples of breakfast, lunch, and dinner menus:

Breakfast—either Parsi Poro, akuri, Masala eggs, scrambled eggs, Upma with lots of vegetables and nuts, Thepela, and more. There is always a choice of rotli or bread slices with butter and jam.

Lunch—DhanDhar patio; Curry rice with a fried slice of fish, kacumber (onion salad) with lemon; Masala na Dhar chawl with cucumber, Khichdi ne dahi ni kadhi with papad, Parsi style Rus chawal, and often there is



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a piece of fried fish, such as a Pomfret or Boi.

Dinner—Rai na papata with masala murgha, turkey chicken, some vegetables like guvar or girola, and chana ni dhar with shish-kebab. Homemade pickles are always available.

The operation at the Centre is a well-oiled machine. Every morning local ladies come and sweep, mop the rooms, and wash clothes. They help with bathing and preparing hot water for shower for those who do not have showers in their rooms. We were happy there and thoroughly enjoyed our stay.

NOW, LET'S TALK ABOUT NAVASARI, AS I KNOW IT.

Some of this information was gleaned from the 1st Dasturji Meherji Rana Library.



Earlier, Parsis had lived along the west coast of India, mainly in the Gujarat area. There are two towns there that have a long history as Parsi strongholds: Surat, and Navsari. Navsari was once called *nagmandal* (Snake pit, house of snake), but it seems that some more positive-thinking Parsis thought that it resembled Sari, in Iran, so they named it Nav Sari.

Navsari was considered to be the stronghold of Parsidom with many Parsi institutions here even now, but, sad to say, very few Parsis take advantage of the facilities. Some of the most famous Parsis were from Navsari and, those who were not from Navsari came here to pay homage to the heart of Parsidom. Three of the most recent, outstanding Parsis are Jamschetji N. Tata, Dadabhoy Navroji, and, of course, the greatest philanthropist of all times, Sir Jamschetji Jeejeebhoy. These three were not just for Parsis, but for the whole country. India's first PM, Nehru, once said that Jamschetji Tata was a one man planning commission for India.

Navsari is also considered to be the Dharm ni Takdi (Top of the hill, seat or pillar of our religion). His holiness Meherji Rana represented Parsis at the court of Emperor Akbar.

Navsari has the oldest Daremehr in India, Vadi Daremeher, which is well over 875-years-old. There have been more Navars and Martabs performed at Vadi Daremeher than any other place. I believe that Navsari is the only place where one can become a Sampurno mobed. Navsari was also the home of Iranshah for three hundred years. Navsari's Atash Bahram is considered to be the 2nd holiest place for Parsis,

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after Udvada. Located in Tarota, it is set in a nicer setting than many other agairies and Atash Baharams. Navsari once had an estimated population of 30,000+ Parsis, but, like all other Parsi centers, it is declining and now only 2,500 remain. Presently, a lot of Parsis live in an area called Ava Baugh—there is an old Ava Baugh and a new Ava Baugh. Ava Baugh was built by the late Mr. Shapurji Jokhi, who was a contemporary philanthropist whose life story parallels Sir Jamshetji Jeejibhoys. Born in Navsari to a poor family, he made his money through hard work and businesses in Hong Kong, China. As the populations declined so have the Parsi houses. They have been sold to non-community members or abandoned and lay in decay. Many of the old city streets, called Mohallas, have Parsi names like: Vacha, Antiawad (most Antias lived on that street), Dasturwad, Kanga Street, Dudha Mohalla, Damaka Mohalla, Pinjar Mohalla, etc.

There are many hospitals in Navsari, but only two are known to everyone. the D. N. Mehta Sarvajani Hospital, which is locally known as Parsi Hospital, and the Daboo Hospital. The D. N. Mehta Hospital was once known as Parsi Suvavad Khanu (maternity home). It is now a full-fledged hospital. I can't think of a town that we have visited where Dinsoo wasn't interned in their hospital—she did not make an exception for Navsari.

CHANGASHA

There are many Parsis from Navsari that we know from history or contemporaneously. Everyone knows about Meherji Rana who was invited to Emperor Akbar's court. Another great person, often considered as the savior of our faith, was a man called Changasha. Changasha was a Desai, (Desai is like a mini king in a kingdom). He was a very religious and orthodox Parsi who was troubled that many Parsis in the villages and small towns had taken on Hindu customs; assumed their names, like Jaloo, Dhunmai, Mani, etc.; and followed Hindu practices as the rituals of the Parsi weddings. He held Mehfiles (conferences). When Nariman Hoshang of Baruch went to the Mehfiles, Changasha sent him to Kerman and other Iranian religious places to have conversations with the learned Dasturs and return with information regarding their religious practices.

These exchanges continued for over 300 years and are now popularly known as *Revayats*. Another achievement of his was to bring the holy Iranshah to Navsari from Vasanda, it then stayed in Navsari for 300 years. He also settled Parsis in an area of Navsari, which is now called *Malesar*. Changasha's name is recited in our prayers with other great Dasturs and scholars. He had a son called Manecksha, who was called Raja; probably, the first Parsi Raja in India!! Manecksha built the first Stone Dokhama in Navsari. There were many learned scholars from Navsari, to name a few: Dastur Darab Pallon, Dastur Jamspa Asa, Dasturan-Dastur Darabji Mahiarji Meherji Rana, Dastur Farmroze Kutar, and his brother, Dastur Kaikhushru Mahair Kutar of the Dastur Darab Pahlon family. Dastur Kaikhushru Kutar was a scholar who recited and sang the *Shahnameh* at Dadar Rustom Farmana's Agairy, following his lectures on religion and stories from the *Shahnameh*. My late brother, Jamshed, and I never missed his lectures and singing of the *Shahnameh*. He also held religious classes at Wadia Vacha High School in Dadar. Navsari has produced many other Dasturs and scholars. This is probably why it is called Dharm ni Tekri. A little known fact is that a Parsi, named Rustom Maneck Sett, of Surat went to Aurangzeb's (Aurangzeb was the son of Shah Jahan) court to plead for rights for the British to trade on the west coast. Why is this important? Because, if they were refused, the History of India or Mumbai would be different.

THE NOTABLES WHO LIVE IN NAVSARI OF TODAY.

I would like to introduce you to two well-known Navasari Parsis: Hormazd Avari, a horse breeder, with a stable of 16–20 horses, which is kitty corner from Pinjar Mohalla. (Pinjara: a person who takes an old flattened and hardened mattress and fluffs it up with a bow-like tool to make it like-new.) When I was young, we had our mattresses fluffed at least once a year. It is a lost art! The other well-known Parsi is Dara Daboo, who has

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his hand in everything you might want to do in Navsari Parsidom. Both Hormazd and Dara sponsor Navjotes for the children of poor Parsis and sponsor weddings each year on March 21.

There is one more notable person, he is a silent worker and does a lot of social and community work, both in Navsari and Mumbai. He travels to remote villages in South Gujarat to help the helpless and needy. He is none other than Dinshaw Tamboly. You name it and Dinshaw has been there. Dinshaw does God's work. I had the good fortune of meeting him at a WZO meeting during the 1990s when we lived in England.

THE MODERN NAVSARI

Here are my comments about today's Navsari.

A few days ago, sometime before 7:00 am, I sat on the aganiu (a small landing in front of the house's main door) when a Parsi came by shouting the name of Mr. "so and so" who had passed away that morning. He then informed the area that the Paidust would be held this afternoon and the Uthamna would be held tomorrow at the Minocher Homji Dare meher. Interestingly, this happened again the next day. Being curious, I asked the manager if this is normal. I thought that he was making an announcement since the person had died that morning. He said that today's announcement was for someone who passed away yesterday. He told me that he is a lifelong resident and that this has been a normal practice for as long as he remembers. He goes from Mohalla to Mohalla where Parsis have homes. This reminded me of the town crier when we lived in Sunningdale, England. The question of did we copy them or did the British copy us came to mind. Or, is this totally coincidental?

Every mid-morning a whistle blows (like the ones that old time train guards used) that heralds the arrival of a small garbage truck, similar to the ones we have in the US, but smaller. A garbage man walks at the truck's side, blows his whistle to let the folks who live on upper levels to lower a basket containing a small package of garbage, which the man picks up and deposits in the truck. A large plastic bag that hangs from the back of the truck is used to hold recyclables.

One very good practice in Navsari, considering there are no professional street sweepers, is that every house cleans the front of their house till half the street by first sweeping and then throwing water to keep the dust down—a practice similar to what I have seen in southern Europe and South America. Remember, there is no rain before or after a monsoon.

There are no sidewalks (foot paths) so, naturally, the pedestrians must share the roadway with traffic. Most of the traffic is two-wheelers (mostly scooters) and auto-rickshaws. In all my roaming around Malesar there are two small stretches of sidewalks and, guess what, like everywhere in India, the cars are parked on the sidewalks. I believe this is mainly due to the lack of transportation infrastructure caused by traffic volumes getting ahead of government planning. I think our New PM, Na Mo, will change this situation. Hope so!

Speaking about two wheelers, when we first came to Navsari, some longtime residents saw me wheeling Dinsoo out. and they said, "watch out for kids on the scooters," so I said, "Kids?" "Yes," they said, "there are 12 to 14 year olds who ride them like maniacs," I was skeptical but said okay. A few mornings later I stood at my window, looking across the street, when I saw this young girl getting on a scooter with a back pack on her shoulder driving away. I doubt that she was even 12, but then I am not sure, because most Gujaratis are rather small.

There are two lakes within the city limits, one is called Dudhyo (Milky) taloa and provides water to Navsari. The other lake is called Sherbetia taloa, this taloa gets all the dirty water from most of Navsari. A well-known place in Navsari is Lunsiqui, a big open garden where people come and sit in the evening to relax. I am told

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that once it was a nice place (posh) with single family bungalows all around. Now, it is surrounded by tall commercial and residential buildings. We are located in an area called Junathana (old jail house), which is a part of or adjacent to Malesar. I am told that it is called Malesar, as Sir JJ used to meet people in this area, hence the name Male-sar (Sir is Sir JJ).

One evening when Dinsoo and I were out on our walk in Malesar, on Vadi Mohalla, I happened to look through a window and glimpsed a big pile of diamonds on a table with men and women using some kind of a device to grind them. So, out of curiosity, I asked if I could enter and see what they were doing. They were holding a tool that looked like a door handle and were grinding it on something that appeared to be a disk sander. I learned that this is Hira gasu and the people are called Hiragasu (diamond grinders). I asked who their customers are, they told me that a small portion of their product is for Indian jewelers, but most are sold to foreign dealers. Surat is the second largest diamond center, second only to Antwerp.

Nearby, there is a place called Tata Baugh. This is where Mr. J.N. Tata had mango trees planted from each state in India. He loved mangoes. There is a type of mango is called "barmasa-twelve months" because it gives mangoes during all twelve months. There are a couple of rest houses inside the baugh; reserved for Tata company officers who come for rest and recreation.

There are many strange business combinations like optician+perfume store. Lot of businesses have names like Ram's Sweets and Dairy. The one that I found most interesting is "GODS" mobile store. Incidentally, he is a Parsi and I get my internet and mobile phones from him. If anyone has a mobile phone problem, please call God for help! "The biGer bUrGerrr" store has pictures of burgers like the "Big Mac," "Whopper," and a hamburger. There is a store called KOLA G. As most of us know, there is a famous Parsi business that sells pickles, ice cream, strong vinegar, pickles, etc. called KOLAHJI. This store sells COLA made in a soda machine (carbonated water and a flavor of your choice), located at the junction of Junathana and Panch Hateri ("five markets"), which is a major intersection in Navsari after you leave Highway N-8 that joins Mumbai to Delhi. The distance to Navsari from Dadar, Mumbai, by road is 251KM (approximately 157 miles.) but it takes three and a half hours.

Since December 16, 2015, the days have been a little chilly with temperature around 16°C or 60.8°F, for my non-European friends. Both the elderly residents and the people on the street wear monkey caps and sweaters, some of the ladies wear long johns or pajamas under their gowns. For my younger friends not used to Gujarati a gown is a gown, usually a night gown.

IN CLOSING

Before I end, I would like to thank Bachi and Dinshaw Tamboly for their help in making all the necessary arrangements for Dinsoo's funeral services with the local agairy. They also helped arrange for the local hospital mortuary to hold Dinsoo's body till the paidust, as we were waiting for our daughter, Jehan, to arrive and perform the sachkar for her mom. I would be most ungrateful if I did not thank the WZO SCC staff, as well. The administrator, managers, and the entire staff went into action to help my family and me.

In ending, I must mention that Dinsoo was so happy residing at the WZO Trust Funds Senior Citizens Centre that she asked me, "Dara can Dinshaw let us live here for the rest of our lives?" At least, for my dear Dinsoo, her wish of spending her final days in peace and happiness was fulfilled.

Written by

DARA RIVETNA

In The News



The first seeds for a Prayer Hall, where Parsi-Irani Zoroastrians could opt for alternate modes of disposal and be assured of obsequies being performed, were planted in the nineteen eighties. That was when Jamsheed Kanga, then Municipal Commissioner of Mumbai, was approached by the late J. R. D. Tata to recommend which Mumbai crematoriums would be appropriate for the obsequies and funeral of his brother D. R. D. Tata. Many dignitaries were expected to attend the ceremony. At that time, the choices were few, some crematoriums were closed for renovation, whilst others were very shabby.

As an interim solution, the Dadar crematorium was tidied up; however, when Jamsheed Kanga went to console JRD, he was informed that Mumbai deserved better facilities.

From amongst the many crematoriums at Mumbai, the one at Worli had a lot of space and was conveniently located relative to South Bombay. Jamsheed planned to set up a prayer hall there, but before he could get started, he was transferred and the project was shelved.

At the turn of the century, with the state of affairs at the Mumbai Towers of Silence becoming public, many Parsis began considering options for alternate modes of disposal.

For more than a decade, November 1996 to October 2008, the need to allow funerary prayers to be performed at Doongerwadi and to permit family members to dispose of the corpse through an alternate system of disposal was debated. But pressure from the traditional lobby halted any further debate; their opinion was that those who intended to consider alternate systems of disposal should not expect the Doongerwadi bunglis to be made available and that the non-traditionalists should make their own

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From the left: Rustom Dadabhoy, Jamsheed Kanga; Dinshaw Tamboly, and Homi Khusrokhhan

arrangements. This viewpoint sowed the seeds that began to sprout in 2014.

The Prayer Hall's realization was made possible by incredible team work, with most of the credit going to two champions, **Jamsheed Kanga** and **Homi Khusrokhhan**. They led the communication and collaboration efforts with the Municipal Corporation and their executives. Ms. Silloo Billimoria, ex law officer and legal consultant of the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai was most helpful in drawing up the necessary documents.

The Prayer Hall was designed by architect Rusi Khambata of Epicons Consultants, the building contractor was Mr. Ashok Punjabi of AP Enterprises, associated with the House of

Godrej. They were a well-knit, dedicated, and committed team. The project was completed in 16 months. The munificent donation of Rs.15,000,000 (Rupees fifteen million) from the Trustees of the A. H. Wadia Trust facilitated the project's speedy completion.

The excellent goodwill left by Jamsheed Kanga, during his tenure as Municipal Commissioner, ensured excellent cooperation from the executives and departments of the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai; we were pleased when two additional Municipal Commissioners took an active interest in the project.

Mr Jamshyd Godrej, the Godrej family, and their company's personnel provided crucial support for the creation of a beautiful garden at the site, as well as providing construction supervision. Mr. Maneck Engineer kept a professional, watchful eye on the work.

With the two newly constructed halls and the integration of a small existing hall with the crematorium, adequate space is now available for obsequies performed for Parsi-Irani Zoroastrians.



Place for the last ritual bath

I visited the Prayer Hall on January 21, 2016, with Mr Dinshaw Tamboly; we were met by Ervad Framroze Mirza, the facility's coordinator. Mr. Framroze explained the rules governing the use of the Prayer Hall, which is owned by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai and is available for use by all Communities. However, the Zarthushti community is given priority from 7–9 am for morning paidast; 3–8 pm for evening paidast, uthamna, and Srosh prayers; and from 4–6 am for early morning uthamna. The Hall can be used only for the first four-day ceremony. There are two interconnected halls that can be used either separately or together, for a total seating capacity of 200. All the rules can be viewed on their website www.prayerhalltrust.org

The atmosphere at the Prayer Hall was very quiet and serene; one could not hear any outside noise. The inside is spotlessly clean and has facilities for the last ritual bath. There is a pavi in the main hall and in the small hall where the body can be placed and prayers can be said in the traditional way. A water cooler, coffee machine, and washrooms are installed for the convenience of the

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family that wishes to stay overnight with the body. A few yards away is the crematorium, with two furnaces, where the body can be transported by family members and friends on an ambulance trolley, which can be easily wheeled up the ramp. The furnace is the same as what we have in North America



The Big Room where the body can be kept for the traditional prayers

Since the opening of the prayer hall on September 1, 2015, during the short period of six months (through February 26, 2016), the Hall was used for funerals of 49 Zarthushtis. Their names are listed on the website. And as people come to realize the possibility of a dignified method for the disposal of their corporeal remains, while still maintaining the spiritual aspect for the soul, more people will opt for it.

An email from Homi Dalal:

"Er. Homi Bapuji Kotwal, 81, who passed away on February 16, 2016, in Navsari has set an example for people to follow, if they so wish:

He was a yozdathregar varadar (Boiwalla Mobed Saheb), attached full time for more than 50 years to the Navsari Bhagarsath Anjuman. However he was convinced that the system of dokhmenashini had collapsed and had left instructions that upon his passing he should not be consigned to the dakhma at Navsari but instead buried at Vansda.

At this death many mobed and laity paid respect to the body, the paidast was



The Small Room where the body can be kept for the traditional prayers

performed by Er. Freddy Palia and Er. Mehernosh Madan, in the presence of some varadars, trustees and office bearers of Navsari Bhagarsath Anjuman.

The Uthamna ceremony was performed on 18th February 2016 at the Vadi Dar-E-Meher at Navsari, one of the oldest religious institutions of Parsis in India. Even the president of the Navsari Bhagarsath Anjuman and the Atashbehran, **Dastoorji Kaikhushroo Er. Navroze Dastoor Meherjirana** and other mobeds attended the Uthamna ceremony for which Dasturji Meherjirana needs to be complimented for allowing the ceremonies to be performed without objecting to method of last rites being performed before disposal."

The readers may draw their own conclusion.

Compiled by Dolly Dastoor.

Contact information: Prayer Hall, Vaikunth Dham, E. Moses Road, Opp Four Seasons Hotel, Worli, Mumbai 400 018. Coordinator Er. Framroze Mirza, Tel +91 8691012488, prayerhalltrust@gmail.com

NOWRUZ MARKS A NEW HOME IN NEW YORK

BY AYSHA GHADIALI

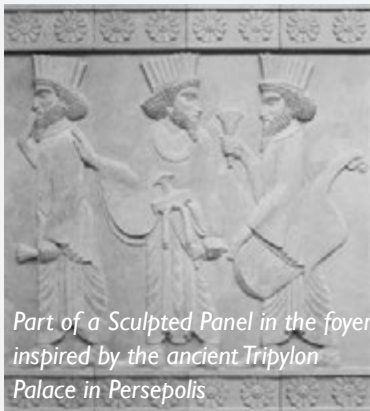
In 1657, 30 Quaker residents in a small settlement of New Amsterdam called Vlissingh requested the intolerant Director-General Peter Stuyvesant for an exemption from the ban on their worship. The petition artfully expressed that all men have a right to enjoy the "Liberty of Conscience, without molestation or disturbance." For a religious minority it was a bold demand. To succeed it would require the persistence of the passionate, meeting the spirit of the revolutionary at just the right time in just the right place.

That petition, the Flushing Remonstrance, became the precursor to the U.S. Constitution's Right to Freedom of Religion. It paved the way for a mere 200 Zarathushti residents in 1977 in New Rochelle, not far from old Vlissingh, to open the first Zarathushti temple in North America. For a religious minority it was a bold move. To create an organized community, while still securing personal financial footing in a new land, was not an easy endeavor.

However, the founding congregants of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) and the Iranian

Zoroastrian Association (IZA), like all immigrants, are resilient. And like fortune, New York favors the bold. March 26, 2016, the Prophet Zarathustra's day of birth, was the right time and Pomona, NY, named for the Roman goddess of fruitful abundance, was the right place for another monumental milestone—a Dar-e-Mehr built for the community.

On a sunny and crisp spring morning that recalls why this time of year—the time of Nowruz—signals rebirth, over 600 Zarathushtis from three generations gathered to inaugurate the new Arbab Rustam Guiv Dar-e-Mehr. Named after the community's original benefactor, the inspiring 22,000 sq. ft. building



Part of a Sculpted Panel in the foyer inspired by the ancient Tripylon Palace in Persepolis



A view of the Prayer Hall and Kebla



The first Jashan in the new Dar-e-Mehr led by Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor and Ervad Pervez P. Patel as Raathwi

impresses visitors at first sight. The Dar-e-Mehr holds a main hall, prayer hall, foyer, library, kitchen, recreation room, four classrooms and three meeting rooms for religion classes and discussions.

Dinyar Wadia, chief architect, masterfully created the Persian façade, detailed columns, and open, sunlit interior with a salute to the style of the past and sensibilities of the present. To commence the Inauguration celebrations, ZAGNY President Astad J. Clubwala and IZA President Shirin Khosravi eloquently spoke about the legacy of this gift to future generations. Community elder and honored professor, Kaikhosrov Irani, cut the ceremonial ribbon along with two of the congregation's newest Zarathushtis: Zarah Shroff and Farhaan Shroff.

Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor, High Priest of Pak Iranshah Atash Behram in Udvada, India led the jashan prayers in the main hall accompanied by Ervad Pervez P. Patel, as Raathwi, along with 28 priests from all over North America. After the jashan, the

priests brought the fire to the new prayer hall and inaugurated the new afarghanyu with an Atash Nyaish prayer. The afarghanyu, manufactured in Mumbai and based on the 250-year old prototype at the Dadiseth Atash Behram, sits prominently in the Kebla. Parents watched their young children marvel as they prayed in front of the largest holy fire they had ever seen.

All are welcome into the new prayer hall with its thoughtfully designed transparent glass wall. The central location allows observers in the foyer, illuminated by a Schonbek chandelier, to observe its beauty. The design removes the element of secrecy that, at times past, negatively impacted those who wished to support loved ones in the faith.

The main hall sits 400 people with generous natural light and views of surrounding trees, incorporating these important elements of Zarathushti philosophy into the physical structure. The ceremony included speeches by Zarathushti and other local leaders, including Dar-e-Mehr Zoroastrian Temple Chair Viraf Commissariat, musical performances by talented children and adults, awards for members of the community, and a youth presentation of internationally prominent Zarathushtis.

The commemoration ended with a moving Khan Ashem Vohu and Chaiye Hame Zarathushti proudly sung in unison, followed by a delicious lunch of traditional Parsi and Persian cuisines. The entire festivities were broadcast live online attracting around 1,500 viewing households from 32 different countries. The event's social media engagement includes 5,000, and counting, YouTube viewers and an impressive 98,000 total reach for the week on Facebook.

Edul Daver and Farrokh Patel collaborated with

Atash Nyaish in the Kebla





Guest of Honor Prof. Kaikhosrov Irani and our newest Navjote youth cutting the ribbon with ZAGNY President, Astad J. Clubwala and IZA President, Shirin Khosravi looking on.



ZAGNY members being felicitated L to R: Yasmin & Jamshed Ghadiali, Framroze K. Patel, Ervad Pervez P. Patel, Mehru & Lovji Cama, Gev Nentin & Arzan Sam Wadia

Dinyar Wadia to spearhead this enormous project to fruition by dedicating over six years of meticulous executive leadership. However, the occasion honored hundreds of donors. Starting with the 16 New Dar-e-Mehr Initiative (NDMI) families and young adults who provided the seed money in 2010; the 17 families that contributed over \$100,000 each, totaling \$2.9 million and over 60% of the total new building funds; as well as the Lladró and other fundraising efforts. The all hands on deck approach created pride and ownership in the community which transcended age and class.

Zarathushtis in the New York tristate area do not see the world through rosewater-colored glasses. The state of aging Agiaries abroad loomed in the back of some knowing congregants' minds. The costs of maintaining such a grand structure will require serious effort. The kind of sacrifice that one day could make upkeep feel like burden. This Dar-e-Mehr, as Edul Daver stated, "Shouts Zarathushti!" It begs the question, if you build it, will they come?

New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut is home to descendants who survived persecution in Iran, a migration to India, and a journey to the West. When you travel great distances, you acquire heavy baggage. Two generations that know the weight and the advantages of living in two worlds are the brave immigrants and their pioneering children. They have loved, respected, and, at times, disappointed each other over the last 50 years, all while creating a new community. But, that's an old story.

Dar-e-Mehr means Door of Peace, and these doors are open to North Americans that may not be distinctly Indian, Persian, or Pakistani. They are an entirely new breed, but burn a recognizable inner fire. The children that played outside on the lovely late-March day under a protective Faravahar are oblivious to past struggles and cultural differences. In their DNA weaves all that their parents and grandparents have given, of mighty Persian kings and courageous settlers, as well as the spirit of 30 Vlishing Quakers and political revolutionaries. They are part of a 3,000-year old tradition, but also belong to another, newer story. A story about a city that demanded religious tolerance and the freedom to reinvent.

And if they can make it here, they can make it anywhere.

Aysha Ghadiali works and lives in Washington, DC, but grew up in the ZAGNY community. She is proud of and grateful to her parents, and the entire founding generation, for all they have accomplished in the New York tristate area. This article is for them and her cherished nieces and nephews.

Photographs by Mahafreen H. Mistry



ZAGNY & IZA Youth performing "Prominent Zoroastrians" during the entertainment presentation

EDUL DAVER

The Entrepreneurial Force Behind ZAGNY & WZCC's new frontier

Ferzin Patel

On March 26th, 2016, ZAGNY and IZA opened the front doors to their newly rebuilt Arbab Rustam Guiv Dar-E-Mehr. The ZAGNY and IZA community have waited 6 years for this momentous day—ever since the idea was first presented to rebuild the center, at a cost of \$4.6-million, which would facilitate the cultural, historical, and social needs of the growing Zarathushti community. The driving force for the project is Edul Daver. The former Doon School and IIT graduate in Metallurgy, now retired, was a successful business owner and top executive of a metal powder company, ACuPowder International, LLC. Edul has put all his energy into the Zarathushti Community, dedicating his time to overseeing the completion of the new Dar-E-Mehr.

At the 2015 World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce meeting in Goa, he was elected as the WZCC Global President for 2016-2018. WZCC also named Edul the **Outstanding Zarathushti Entrepreneur of the Year in 2014**. During my interview, Edul discussed how he was able to sustain his high levels of energy and passion toward a cause which many would have said, *"Let's just forget having a new building and stick with what we have."* He spoke on how others can embody this motivation and pursue their dreams of making the impossible possible. He also shared his vision for the larger worldwide Zarathushti business-minded community during his term as the Global President of WZCC.

Like most small Zarathushti communities in North

America, the community centers where individuals and families can gather do not embody the true essence of Zarathushti architecture, culture, or religious practice. Edul and a small group of like-minded members could see that community's interest and attendance was decreasing and that people complained about the cost and ineffectiveness of continued "band-aid" repairs.

Ferzin Patel (FP): *What motivated you to initiate the 2010 fund raising efforts for a new Dar-e-Mehr?*

Edul Daver (ED): In the 2009–2010 time period, the subject of a rebuilt Dar-E-Mehr was constantly being discussed in the community and, specifically, within our circle of friends, mainly because the facilities were inadequate and youth attendance was slowly, but surely dropping.

The DMZT AGM held on May 1, 2010, proceeded in the usual routine way. However, during the Q&A session, I asked the faithful a question as to the DMZT's plans regarding the long contemplated New Dar-E-Mehr. We had \$900,000 in the New Building Fund (NBF) and, with the very low interest rates and cost of construction increasing; we were actually sliding further away from our goal. The trustees' response was that the financial environment was not good and this was not a good time to proceed. The response from the floor was, "it is never a good time and we should get started." The trustees asked if we had a plan and if we would like to lead the effort. It was decided that the interested parties



should collaborate and develop a plan over the next few months. This was the starting point for the chain of events that led us to “Chasing our Dream.” At a summer party hosted by Gev and Aban Nentin, this subject was discussed. We decided to form an entity and name it NDMI, LLC (New Dar-e-Mehr Initiative), which would be funded with a corpus of \$500,000 from a handful of like-minded believers. In September, we presented a plan that included NDMI as the project lead. One thing led to another and I gradually got more and more committed into taking the lead role. The need was very apparent and once the objective was clear, it became an obsession and failure was no longer an option. I have faced about half dozen such major challenges in my life, which has demonstrated that laser focus and persistence will allow one to accomplish anything

FP: Where does your tenacity and dedication come from?

ED: I think it started at a very early age. We all face challenges while growing up. Successful accomplishments build confidence, which I believe is the number one prerequisite. Then, when opportunities come knocking, you will need the passion and fire in your belly to chase your dream. One also has to realize that nothing big can be accomplished without some accompanying sacrifice. And, finally, you need to work with people, keeping a laser focus and the persistence to plod forward in the face of obstacles.

FP: What advice would you give to someone who was feeling indifferent or unable to commit to dedicating their life to something?

ED: I would advise guarding against over analysis and wanting to see the road ahead 100% clearly. This will frequently kill the initiative before it even gets off the ground. “Just Do it” is a good way to get started, which is half the battle, and then move forward with incremental objectives—and, soon, the end result will be on the horizon. So I feel, with confidence, passion, and persistence anyone can accomplish anything.

FP: Who provides you with the daily inspiration to make a difference in the world?

ED: This is a difficult question. My daily inspiration, I think, is based largely on the values instilled in me by my dad. He seldom said “No” and let me try to reach for anything. When he wanted to give us advice, he would use quotations like “Work Hard and Play Hard;” *“If there is any good I can do, let me do it now, as I*

shall not pass this way again;” “The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night;” and, his favorite, *“If every man’s eternal care were written on his brow, how many would our pity share that raise our envy now.”* This culminated in a value that said, *“we are here on this earth to make a difference.”*

The other person would be my grandfather’s brother, **Sorabji Pochkhanawalla**, who brought up my mom, and started the Central Bank of India, which was the first Indian owned bank. Sorabji Pochkhanawala resigned from the bank where he had worked since 1911, at 27, to found a completely Indian bank. When his boss, Mr. Stringfellow, heard about it, he thought it was a “big joke” and asked Sorabji to reconsider. Sorabji replied, *“Sir I have made up my mind and one day my bank will be bigger than yours.”* He formed the Central Bank and succeeded against all odds and, in recognition of his attainments, was knighted in 1934. Growing up, I must have heard this story a hundred times from my mom at the dining table and have no doubt that it had a subconscious effect on me and perhaps even motivated me to buy and own my own business. Last, but not least, my wife Niloufer’s support, understanding, and encouragement has inspired me do even better.

FP: How do you compare the challenges you faced as a business owner to the challenges you faced working with a large group of people in the Zarathushti community?

ED: If you look at the big picture, both required timely completion of objectives and both involved calculated risk, but on a micro scale the execution was quite different.

With respect to ACuPowder, the stakes were high because it was a highly leveraged Company. The decisions had potentially bigger consequences, so that the highs and lows were more extreme.

The Dar-E-Mehr effort involved numerous boards that wanted to be involved, which required an inordinate amount of patience, listening, and coordination. The effort to gain consensus was taxing but resulted in a much more visible and successful result. Appreciation, when received from one’s own community, is unmatched.

FP: How do you envision the future of the Worldwide WZCC? What will be some challenges?

ED: I was elected President of the World WZCC at the 2015 AGM in Goa for the 2016-18 term. The WZCC has come long way since it was founded in 2000 at the WZC in Houston. During the last six years, under the leadership of Minoo Shroff, WZCC in India has become a mature organization and risen to great heights. The chapters outside India are operating at various levels and need to be boosted with value-added benefits.

WZCC's mission is to "*Energize the Entrepreneurial spirit of Zarathushtis*" so they can capitalize on global business opportunities. I believe we have a great team and the future of WZCC looks bright with the expected accomplishment of the identified objectives. First, the trait of Entrepreneurship is most visible within "Start Ups and Small Companies," but pockets of entrepreneurship are also visible in large corporations, professionals, government, and even home makers. By making the scope too narrow perhaps people misunderstood the mission so we plan to explain entrepreneurship more clearly as, "the pursuit of opportunity beyond the resources currently controlled" and thereby widening the scope to include a wider range of people. The following are some of the objectives and challenges we have identified.

Carleton's

- First and foremost, every Global Director, every Area Director, and every Chapter Chair is expected to become a Champion. We need hard workers, who will take on projects with responsibility and accountability.
- We will continue doing what is working well—Networking, Education, Business Plan Competitions, and WE (Women Entrepreneurs) activities.
- Create a master website and app, with a section/link to each chapter's activities. Also, we will have a global job portal that list available jobs, business opportunities, and available job seekers by country.
- Cooperate and conduct joint meetings, projects, and education and training with other similar organizations, such as, TIE,

IIT alumni, and Asia Soc. Also, learn how to start businesses in Canada and the U.S., thus, earning immigrant status.

- Organize a major trade fair in India, where all Z-businesses can display their products and services, while learning how to conduct business with each other.
- Coordinate high value and visibility projects to advance Zoroastrian causes in rural areas e.g. joint projects with WZO or Lions Club related to Solar Energy or Clean Water.
- A must do objective is to build a venture fund in the amount of 3-5 crores. Professionally evaluate business plans and disperse funds in amounts of 5–20 lacs with, appropriate pay back provisions.
- And, perhaps the most important of all, is how we expose entrepreneurship to our youth, teenagers, and, even, children, so they can think about starting businesses as viable career alternatives. Educate parents so they can discuss entrepreneurship, along with medicine and engineering to their children.

So we certainly have challenges. We are shooting for the moon and we believe in "*not failure, but low aim is crime.*"

As Edul prepared for the opening of the new Dar-E-Mehr, I queried him as to what was going through his mind and what he is looking forward to. He states, the greatest gratification would be to see the building's constant use by the children, young adults, and seniors. Watching the community use the building for religious, cultural, social, and educational events will make him feel it was all worth it. Although the construction phase of the project is completed, he does not plan to slow down one bit. There are many projects on the horizon that Edul plans to be involved with, including the installation of solar energy, which is aligned with Zoroastrian environmental values, as well as taking the reins of WZCC as their Global President. He would also like to write a book to chronicle his family history and share his business experience and philosophy. Edul enjoys travelling abroad, visiting national parks, playing racquet ball, reading, and photography.

Ferzin Patel is an active member of ZAGNY and was Co-Chair of the 2012 North American Zarathushti Congress held in NY. She lives in New City, NY, with her husband Rajan and son Davin. She remains dedicated to her career as a psychotherapist and currently works in a law practice.



INTERFAITH ITALIA

Zenobia Ravji

Represents FEZANA at Faiths and Politics Luncheon in D.C

On November 12th, just a day before the terrorist attacks in Paris, I represented FEZANA at “the Faiths and Politics Luncheon” in Washington D.C., hosted by the Sustained Dialogue Institute and Interfaith Works. The topic of discussion was how to create more understanding and tolerance among different religions in the U.S.

At this point I had recently returned to the States after spending 2 years as a reporter in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. I used my experiences reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to lead the discussion. These are the lessons I learned and shared with the rest of the leaders and representatives of other communities. Note that these points are a reflection of my personal experience and they are my observations and opinions, not facts.

1. Israelis and Palestinians can get along. Jews and Arabs cannot. It is strict religious fundamentalism and the concept of one religion being superior to another that creates deep-rooted conflicts between religious groups.
2. Trust is the only means toward creating a strong base for peace and tolerance. Human relationship and connection is the most powerful tool to build peace. When two people of different faiths come together to find that they are indeed more alike than different, it builds a human connection, which can lead to trust. An aggregate of these trusting relationships can lead to a more peaceful cooperative society.

I filmed a documentary in the West Bank on economic cooperation. It was a feature story between an Israeli farmer and a Palestinian who worked with him. The Israeli, a secular Jew, told me that he had more in common with a secular Muslim (his employee) than he did with a religious Jew. This was a common theme throughout the region.

We, as Zoroastrians, live in a diaspora outside of what was once our homeland, Iran. Despite living in a diaspora, I believe the reason we are still flourishing and have achieved so much is because we have traditionally upheld liberal and tolerant views towards other faiths. We have a unique ability to integrate seamlessly into any society, weaving into these societies altruism and human connection, building trust with members of all communities we connect with.

***Zenobia's** reporting career started in Israel while she was a Graduate Fellow in journalism at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). She holds an MS in Journalism, an MA in Political Science, during which she was a Civic Leadership Fellow, and an undergraduate degree in Economics & Spanish from UIUC.*

BIRTHS

Farzan Daruwalla, a boy, to Anahita and Ruzbeh Daruwalla, brother to Zubin, grandson to Mitra and Noshir Irani on October 20, 2015 (ZAC-LA).

Casey Charles Bredlau, a boy, to Katie and Mark Bredlau, brother to Cody and Emily, grandson to Ken and Dinaz Weber (Chicago, IL) and Pat and Cathy Bredlau, niece to Michelle and Karen, cousin to Edele in Folsom, CA on December 11, 2015.

Aiden Farhad Shroff, a boy, to Persis and Farhad Shroff, brother to Armaan, grandson to Katy and Phiroze Ghandhi (Mumbai, India) and Farida and Rohinton Shroff (Chicago, IL) in Seattle, WA on December 16, 2015.

Mackenzie Reese Rash, a girl, born to Sonia and Ron Rash, sister to Reagan granddaughter to Zenobia and Mehelli Behrana in Houston on February 2, 2016..

Reiko Harris, a girl, to Tristin and Zachary Harris, sister to Kyrin, granddaughter to Mahnaz and Yazdi Turner and Lynn and Leon Harris in Montreal, QUE on February 7, 2016.

Maya and Rubi Dastoor, twin daughters to Sarosh and Ami Dastoor, granddaughter to Tehmi and Firdaus Dastoor on February 8, 2016 (MANASHNI, ZAH).

NAVJOTES

Zoish Byramji, daughter of Dilshad and Behram Byramji, granddaughter of Shirin and Sarosh Byramji and Shernaz and Kersi Banaji in Mississauga, ONT on October 24, 2015.

Nina and Yazad Hilloowala, children of Rusi and Dilnaz Hilloowala (Bothell, WA), grandchildren of Rusi and Sunnu Kasad and Hosang

and Dinoo Hilloowala in Baroda, Indian December 15, 2015.

Cyrus Gandhi, son of Viraf and Parizad Gandhi (Kirkland, WA) in Mumbai, India on December 24, 2015.

Kyra Vakil, daughter of Kersi and Dilshad Vakil (Tacoma, WA), granddaughter of Hoshang and Shirin Vakil (Mumbai, India) and late Nariman and Mani Daruwala (Mumbai, India) at Saher Agiary in Mumbai on December 28, 2015.

Iyanah and Aarish Jamula, children of Anhaita and Cyrus Jamula (Kirkland, WA), grandchildren of Huti and Minoo Daruwala (Seattle, WA) and Armaity and Bomi Jamula (Mumbai, India) at Albless Baug, Mumbai, India on January 1, 2016.

DEATHS

Jaloo Bacha, daughter of late Hirabai and late Framroze Fanibanda, wife of late Jal Bacha, mother of Freny and Mehernosh Bacha, sister of Eruch, Minoo, Nari, Homi, Soli, Dinshaw, Kersi Fanibanda and Katy Elavia in Fullerton, CA on September 20, 2015.

Manocher (Minoo) Kayani, 78, husband of Govher, father of Mahnaaz Firozgari, Danesh and Gulestan, grandchildren Karishmeh, Gohar, Bahrom and Nozer in Pune, India on December 4, 2015. (MANASHNI, ZAH)

Pervin Maneck Chichgar, wife of Maneck Chichgar, mother of Zubin, mother-in-law of Ferzin, grandmother of Yashna and Milad on January 5, 2016 (ZAC-LA).

Perin Irani, 84, in San Diego, CA on January 23, 2016.

Ervad Minoo P Daruwalla, father of Ervad Khushroo Daruwalla and Meher Downing, grandfather

of Jedd and Ethan Daruwalla and Neil Downing in South Florida on February 8, 2016.

Sarosh Hodiwalla, husband of Nergish Hodiwalla, father of Zubin and Feroza in Flushing, NY on February 8, 2016.

Rostam Abadian husband of Mehrangiz, father of Qmars, Kiasah, Kourood, in Iran, February 12, 2016

Shirin Kanga, mother of Sarosh and Anahita Kanga, Kamal and Sarosh Saher, Neville Kanga, sister of Rustom (Yasmin) Kevala and Boman (Bachi) Damkewala, grandmother of Sophia, Ethan, Zubin and Zinnia in Elgin, IL on February 13, 2016.

Vira Bhathena, 72, wife of Jehangir (Billy) Bhathena, mother of Zexxes and mother-in-law of Pariza Langley in Mumbai, India on February 14, 2016 (ZSBC)

Ervad Darab Unwalla, 88, husband of Nellie Unwalla, father of Ervad Perry (Sasha) Unwalla, Jasmin (Ruston) Deboo, grandfather of Anisa, Ariana, Tatiana, Rainia, and Kaiyan in Boca Raton, FL on February 18, 2016.

Sam Jehangir Antia, 77, husband of Homai Antia, father of Nazneen Parakh, father-in-law of Eddie Parakh (Richmond, BC), grandfather of Iyana in Mumbai, India on February 19, 2016.

Perin Eruch Surti, mother of Aban (Gev) Nentin, Jal Eruch Surti, grandmother of Farida, Sarosh, Sheri, Cyrus and Amy on February 21, 2016 (ZAGNY)

Dr. Iraj Naghdi husband of Parivash Naghdi, father of Azita Nosrat, and Arash Naghdi, in California, on February 22, 2016.

M I L E S T O N E S

Shirin Bilimoria, wife of Behram Bilimoria and mother of Nauzer and Rushna Bilimoria, in Houston on February 22 2016.

Avan Aspi Irani, wife of Aspi Bejon Irani, mother of Mithra Ramaley and Manizeh Rimeh, sister of Fali Balsara (Houston, TX) and Jimmy Balsara (Mississippi) in Geneva, Switzerland on February 25, 2016.

Moti Balsara, 91, wife of Russi DinshawBalsara, mother of Khorshed (Darrin) Tooth and Navroze (Andrea) Balsara and grandmother of Zara, Emma, Aidan, Justine Tooth and Mehra Balsara, daughter of Late Mehra and Manecksha Nanavati, sister of Late Kawus and Late Frainy and Hoshang Nanavati in Totonto , February 26, 2016

Keshvar Ardeshir Samia Kalantari mother of Samia Kalantari, Sami Kalantari, Jamshidi Kalantari, Manuchehri Kalantari, Lor Kalantari, Veerabi, Khademi Kalantari, Kademi Kalantari, Kaji Kalantari in Los Angeles, 23, February 2016.

Bejan Sidhwa, 89, husband of Dinoo, father of Dinshaw, Phil and Shahroukh, grandfather of Michelle, late Darius, Farokh, Lila, Danny, Jahan, Kashmira and Arman, and great grandfather of Cyrus and Archer in Toronto, ONT, on March 2, 2016.

Shahjahan Soroosh Kamdar husband of Poursan Ghaibi, father of Kianoush Behnoush and Mahnoush Kamdar in Las Vegas, in March 2016.

Banoo Barhamand (Abdehi), 91, wife of Behram, mother of Homi

(& Shahnaz) Barhamand; Fariborze (& Barbara) Barhamand and Dilnavaz (& Kekoo) Irani in Naperville, Illinois, in Naperville, Illinois, on March 9, 2016

Soli Betab, 91, in Burnaby , BC March 10, 2016

Roshan Fali Porbunderwala, mother of Kersi (Silloo), Dolly (Hormaz) Mehta, in Poughkeepsie, NY, on March 22, 2016

Rostam Jahanian husband of Merangiz, father of Armita (Hormazd) Dalal, Ariasb(Farangiz) Jahanian grandfather of Shahyan, Arman , Shireen, Shanaya, Asha, in California, March 26, 2016

Dhun Dhunjishah Ghadialy, mother of Homi, Alla Rustomji, Rashna (Chicago) in Karachi, March 28, 2016.



Matrimonials for Spring 2016 -

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

Male, 52, in IT field. Family owns Indian restaurant in Florida. Would like to meet lady up to 38 years old, with good family values. Contact khushnood@live.com. [M16.1]

Male, 26, Post-graduate in Business Management (International Business) from Toronto. Working as Financial Services Representative in a bank in Edmonton, Alberta. Contact zaxis.bharucha90@gmail.com. [M16.2]

Female, 33, Graduate, Indiana University, Kelley School of Business (Finance); Master's from Fashion Institute of Technology, New York. Currently working as Business Development Manager at International company in Dubai. Contact sna2808@gmail.com. [F16.6]

Female, 33, Masters in Business Information Management & Systems, working as Provisioning Analyst in a Telecom company in Melbourne, Australia. Family in Mumbai and UK. Contact Khushnawazi@gmail.com. [F16.8]

Male, 35, good looking, B. Com, PGDBM, working for a reputed airline. From reputed, affluent Parsi family. Hobbies include music and travelling. Contact chokseymeher@gmail.com, or by what's app on +97 1559 8941 33. [M16.10]

Male, 31, Bachelor's, Institute of Hotel Management, Ahmedabad, India; MBA in Hotel and Tourism Management, University Centre Cesar Ritz, Switzerland. Work experience at Five star hotels (Novotel Dubai, Maldives, Le Royal Meridien Mumbai, Phoenician Resort in Scottsdale, AZ. Contact peterasp11@gmail.com. [M16.12]

Noble priest, brilliant professor, successful businessman, founder and first president of the Zoroastrian Association of Florida

ERVAD DR DARAB BYRAMJI UNWALLA 1928-2016

Darab Unwala was born in Udvada to Ervad Byramji and Shineenbai Unwala. He had his early religious training and education as a mobed at the Dadar Athornan Madressa, Mumbai. He obtained his Bachelor of Law degree in 1957 and an MA in Advanced Sociology with a doctorate in 1958 all from Bombay University.

After coming to the United States he had a brilliant career as a Professor of Business Administration at Michigan State University and Professor of Business Administration at Florida Atlantic University (FAU). In 2004 he was appointed chairman of the Department of Management.

While at FAU he started the first weekend MBA program in the country and was a pioneer in the introduction of the executive MBA Programs in different Universities in America. He created one of the first Master's program in Crisis Management. He authored and co-authored several books : *Textile Technology*, *The Emergent American Society*, *Vol 1 Large Scale Organization*

He retired as Professor Emeritus of Business Administration from Florida Atlantic University and the university flew the flag half- mast in his honor on March 1st 2016.

He was the owner of a family business for over 25 years of exclusive high-end gift shops and Bed and Bath shops in South Florida. As founder and first president of the Zoroastrian Association of Florida he was a great help to all in South Florida.

He is survived by his beloved wife Nellie, of 53 years, the love of his life, his son Perry, daughter Jasmin and grandchildren Anisa, Ariana, Tatiana, Rainia, and Kaiyan.

On behalf of the whole North American community we offer our heartfelt condolences to Nellie, Perry, Jasmin and all their families!



MOTI RUSSI BALSARA

1924–2016

A Life Well-lived and Shared

President, Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) 1994-98

Moti Balsara was born in Karachi, in 1924, at Mama Palace (later converted to Palace Hotel), which was the home of her maternal grandfather Khan Bhadur Ardeshir Mama, the Mayor of Karachi and founder of the prestigious Mama Parsi Girls School. Her childhood was spent at Nagpur, with her parents Mehra and Maneckshaw Nanavati and siblings Kawus, Frainy, and Hoshang. Her father was Professor of Economics and English at Nagpur University.

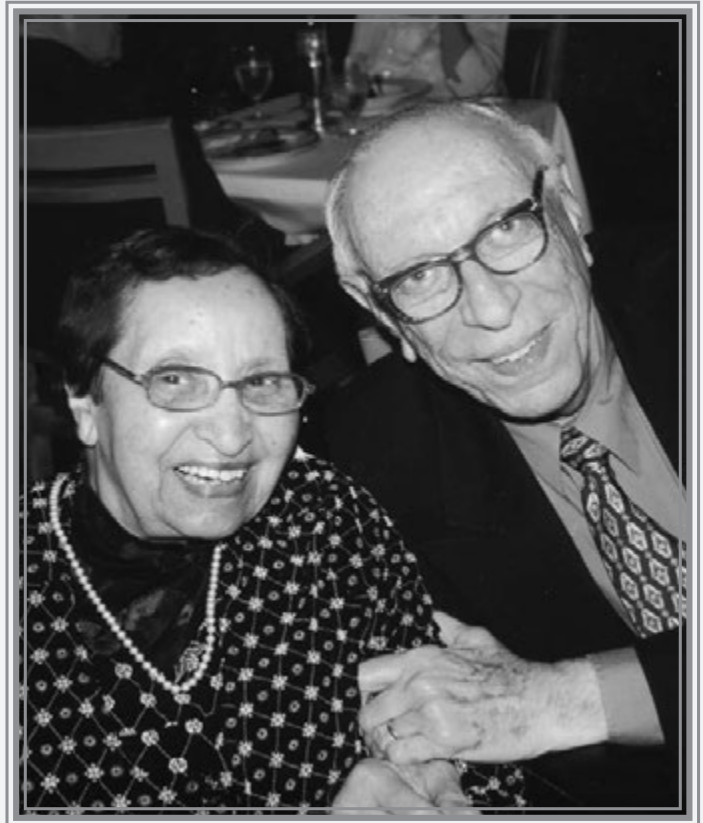
She attended the Tata Girls School in Nagpur, where she excelled in her studies and athletics. Her last year of schooling, and graduation, was at the Panchgani Convent School. After graduation, she studied at Elphinstone College, University of Bombay, and obtained her Bachelor's of Arts degree in 1946. Always interested in the nursing profession, she joined the nursing college at the University of New Delhi in 1947—the year India received its independence and was partitioned into India and Pakistan.

The violent riots that followed the independence and partitioning of India, resulted in nursing students and staff at the Delhi University being mandated, to attend to the injured and dying victims in the streets and refugee camps. This was a dangerous, but useful and rewarding learning experience for young Moti.

With her degree in nursing, Moti returned to Bombay and joined the prestigious J.J. Hospital and started as an Assistant Tutor in 1951, as well as a nursing assistant with Ophthalmology and Obstetrics surgery.

In 1957, she received a World Health Organization scholarship for a Master's degree in nursing education and administration to Columbia University in New York City. There was some hesitation from her family, for travelling to the USA, and also Moti, herself, who had just met and was dating Russi, who was studying at the Nair Hospital Dentistry School. However, with encouragement from her renowned uncle, Dr. Sohrabshah Nanavati—who had studied under the famous Dr. Banting, the discoverer of Insulin—and her own determination, she accepted the scholarship and went to Columbia University. Missing Russi, she worked hard, including the summer and winter breaks, and finished her two year course in one year. On her return to Bombay in 1958, with the Masters degree from Columbia University, she was appointed the Dean of the first accredited College of Nursing, University of Bombay and, together with two other faculty members, started the BSc nursing program at the JJ Hospital.

Together with her colleagues, she introduced public health and hygiene in the villages of Marashtra and assisted the Lions Club, which ran two slum clinics and child health centres in Pali Hill, Bandra.



Obituary

In 1959, she married the young dentist, Dr. Russi Balsara. They were blessed with a daughter Khorshed (1962) and son Navroze (1964). In 1966, the family immigrated to Canada. Moti had previously visited Toronto during the year she was at Columbia University, which was then, as she said, “a small city.”

In Canada, she was appointed Assistant Professor of Nursing at the University of Toronto, a position she held till her retirement in 1984, at 60.

After a few short years of retirement “relaxation,” she became actively involved in:

Services in the General Toronto Community

Moti started helping her husband Russi with various service projects sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of North York, which dealt with children with disabilities and other problems.

Moti worked with the City of Toronto, Public Health department in Family Planning and Services unit, in the troubled Jane/Finch area of Toronto.

From 1994 to 1998, she returned to nursing in the Geriatric wing of the Cummer Lodge Nursing home, a City of Toronto Long-term home facility.

Services and Involvement in the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO)

In 1980, Moti, with her family, got more involved in her Zoroastrian faith organization.

- Along with the late Mrs. Sabar Patel, Moti became actively involved with helping senior citizens by forming and, later, chairing the ZSO seniors’ sub-committee for many years. She and the sub-committee developed many activities and social events for the seniors, including the popular Annual Food Fair and Gourmet Competition, exercise classes, senior-related lectures and health documentaries, senior trips and tours, grandparent’s day, and more.
- Moti also served on the Board of Directors (Executive Committee) in various positions including President (she was the first woman President of ZSO), Secretary, and Executive Director.
- In addition to the seniors’ sub-committee, Moti also chaired the Archives Sub Committee and was deeply involved with the Iranian Youth Refugee Committee, throughout its duration. She also served as a member of the religion and newsletter sub-committees.
- Moti was instrumental in getting the Federal Seniors Grant, from the Government of Canada which provided furniture, entertainment, and office equipment to the organization, which is still in use.
- As Chair of the Iranian Refugee Sub-committee (a North American project), she and the British Columbia Zoroastrian Association helped to obtain permission from the Canadian Government to accept approximately 100 Zoroastrian-Iranian refugees caught in the Iran/Iraq war.
- She was President of ZSO from 1994–1998 and a member of the ad hoc ZSO Silver Jubilee Sub-committee celebrations.

Moti is survived by her husband Russi Balsara; children Khorshed and Navroze; five grandchildren Zara, Emma, Aidan, Justine and Mehra; and her brother Hoshang Nanavati.

She was a wonderful and accomplished lady and a tower of strength to her family, her Zoroastrian community, and the multitude that she helped as a friend and compassionate social volunteer. We will miss her very much.

May her soul rest in peace.

Contributed by
Sam Vesuna, President ZSO 2000-2011

A World War II Parsi Hero

FRAMROZE RUSTOMJI BHANDARA

1919 –1989.

This is the story of our hero and our father Framroze R. Bhandara, who served with pride in the British Navy during World War II. He was born in Mumbai into a middle class Zoroastrian priestly family to Tehmina and Rustomji Bhandara. The purpose of writing this article is to motivate our Zoroastrian youth to join the armed services, be it the Army, Navy, or Air force.

Being the elder daughter, I had the good fortune of listening to my father's adventurous stories and was completely fascinated by the diversified cultures of various islands in UK, which he had visited. The dance and costumes that he described greatly amused me. When I grew older and came across the same in school, I realized that much of what he shared was true. Summarizing all the stories and viewing his medals, trophies and documents, made Ome and my little twin brothers Zarrir & Cherag feel very proud to have him as our father. He was truly a hero to us.

Fali, as he was fondly called was a young lad of 19, who after completing his matriculation, was contemplating his future, when a signboard that read: "JOIN THE NAVY AND SEE THE WORLD" got his attention. During that period, India was ruled by the British, and World War II had already started. After training he was sent to Rangoon - Burma, a jungle-like territory. While he and his comrades were there, they sometimes had nothing to eat, and, were compelled to roast and eat a dead horse to survive. Later on he was transferred to the southern region in India (I cannot recollect the specific geographical location) and from there he was positioned on a war ship as the Leading Gunner. As per his documents the year was 1940, and this was the first warship with an all Indian crew sailing towards Great Britain.



Midway through his journey, Nazi forces started bombing the British ship, by attacking the British soldiers through air strikes. The Nazi war plane swooped low on Fali's ship and an active battle took place. Fali valiantly fired rounds at the Nazi war planes, forcing the Nazis to flee, leaving the ship he was on, unharmed. Now at a matured age, I am beginning to grasp the level of stress and determination and realize what it really must have

Obituary

been like, to be in the line of fire continuously, and I am amazed by the skill, judgment, fearlessness and vigilance my father had exhibited at that young age of 19. He was in England, Belfast, Dublin and Glasgow from 1940 to 1949, on active duty, serving the Royal Indian Navy.

In one of the aerial strikes on the British Isles, he was injured whilst saving a comrade's life. He was shot in his forearm and the elbow, and he would proudly show the scar to us as his trophy for saving a life.

Since he was positioned in the British Isles for Naval warfare, the essential parts of his duties included war submarines and under water diving, in which he excelled.

After the war he returned to India for good in the fifties, with war stars and medals. He was released as a Class "A" officer.

Along with the exciting adventures, there was tragic sadness and rage when fellow soldiers dropped dead and sometimes there would be strong fights amongst the Indians themselves, which was like the law of jungle. These searing emotions made him very stern in nature.

Fali was a very humble man, never ever boasting or telling anybody, except his children, about his life in the UK. He followed a simple lifestyle, upon first glance one would never imagine that he had spent twelve exciting, adventurous years in Great Britain, while defending his country. Furthermore, he knew some tap dancing and waltz, but at heart he was an Indian and a simple Bawaji, who loved his Parsi food.

Later on he joined the Municipal Corporation and worked in the water department for 30 years. He married a Parsi lady Khorshed from the entrepreneurial Writer family, and had three children (Hira, Zarrir & Cherag) and passed on to his spiritual journey at the age of 69.

Unfortunately, much of the noble and brave deeds of brave young Indian militia have gone unnoticed, because they were not descriptively



documented by the British, in the heat of war.

Our salute to you oh Father Fali,

*"The drums may not beat, the sirens may not blow, but
Our love for you will remain forever."*

FROM:

Hira, Zarrir, and Cherag Bhandara, your children

Zoroastrians of North Texas Invited to Festival of Spring in Dallas



The Zoroastrian Association of North Texas(ZANT) was invited to participate in the Festival of Spring at the Dallas Thanksgiving Square as a part of multi-faith group. Participants from different faiths presented their festivals related to spring.

The Zarthushti faith was represented by several members from the ZANT community. A poster was prepared giving an overview of the religion, customs, festivals, and history. A complete Haft Seen table was also set up exhibiting a variety of delicacies for the participants to taste. ZANT will be more than happy to share the contents of this poster with any organization if they are interested in creating their own poster.

Iran in World History

by **Richard Foltz**

Oxford University Press 2016, 151 Pages, Price \$19.95
Paperback ISBN 978-0-19-922549-7

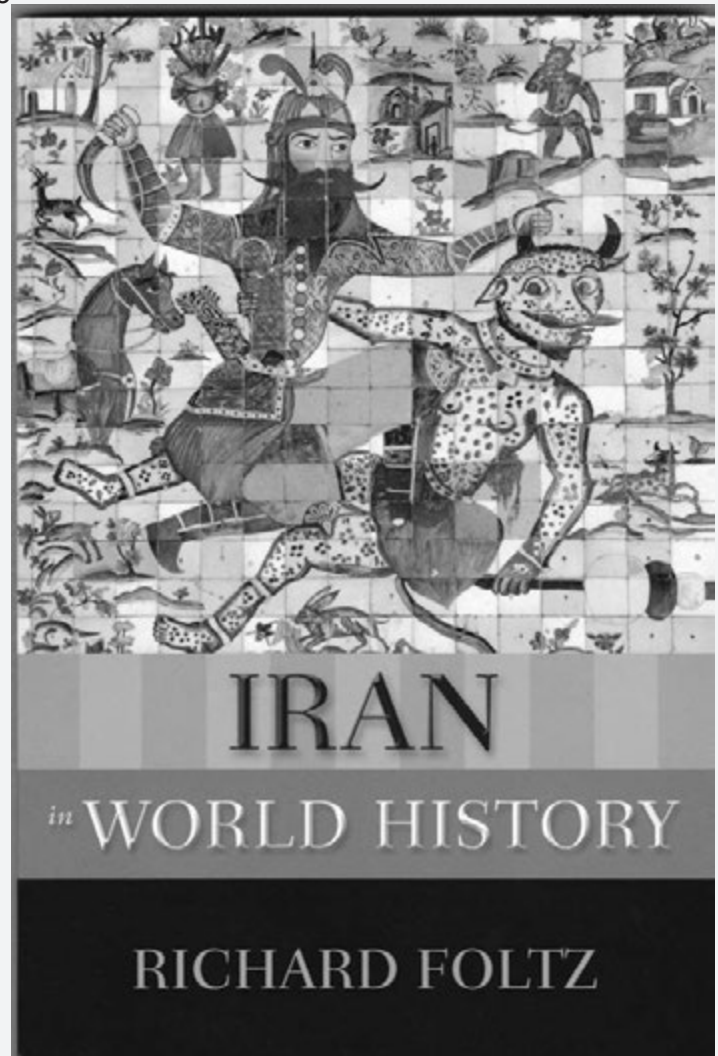
Reviewed by **Keki Dadachanji, Ph.D**

We often see people and places not as they are but, as we are. Thus, Zarathushtis living in North America may fondly remember Iran as the birthplace of their religion; they may also see the present-day Iran as a country of religious fanatics stubbornly refusing to submit to Western hegemony. Richard Foltz, Professor and founding Director of Centre for Iranian Studies, Concordia University, believes that, today, Iranians are often pained by the mostly negative ways their culture is portrayed in Western media. Their pride in their own history and cultural heritage remains unshaken, and they do not believe the current government properly represents who they are.

Iran's identity is defined by the language (Persian or Farsi), the "Land of Iran" (which extends well beyond the country's present-day borders), and its shared cultural memory (most fully embodied in the Shahnameh). The book elaborates on these dimensions. The short paragraph devoted to the Book of Kings (Shahnameh) illustrates the style and sympathies of the author:

[Shah-Nameh] has been every bit as popular in Turkey, Central Asia, and India as it is in Iran. Adding to the irony, this tale of the pre-Islamic Iranian heroes—which treats the coming of Islam as an apocalyptic tragedy—was composed by a Muslim poet (Abol-Qasem Ferdowsi), for a Muslim audience, and ultimately offered to a Turkish royal patron (Mahmud of Ghazna).

The author outlines the identity and teachings of Zarathushtra briefly. He considers Zarathushtra not as a prophet, nor as a divinely inspired human, but as "a hereditary priest who began to compose ritual hymns of a very distinctive nature. His hymns, called the Gathas (songs), dramatically reconfigured the relationships and rituals associated with the old Indo-Iranian pantheon, elevating one deity, Mazda (the Lord of Wisdom), to the status of Supreme Being,



while relegating others to the level of either Mazda's servants (ahuras) or his demonic enemies (daevas)."

His view of Zarathushtra, and his teachings, seems to be one of an outsider, thus differing in his interpretations from many practicing Zarathushtis. While he does not explicitly call the religion dualistic, his description of it implies that:

All good things come from Ahura Mazda, whereas evil is due entirely to the workings of a dark spirit, Angra Mainyu; it is up to each person to choose a side." Spenta Mainyu is not mentioned, thus raising Angra Mainyu to the same level as Ahura Mazda.



Books & Arts

The time and place Zarathushtra lived are estimated, based on linguistic and sociological grounds, to somewhere in southern Central Asia, shortly after the Indo-Iranian split, during the second millennium BCE. The language of the Gathas, called Old Avestan, is an east Iranian dialect very close to the Sanskrit of the Vedas. Both texts were orally transmitted, and eventually written down by priests who no longer fully understood either language. Unlike the Vedas, which were commented on by sages who lived very close to the time of their composition, no detailed commentaries exist on the Gathas by people who lived in the time of Zarathushtra.

A chapter is devoted to interactions between Iran and Islam. Iran had a profound effect on the development of Islamic civilization. If civilization is defined to include urbanization, political institutions, scientific achievements, literature and the arts, the Arab conquerors had little of this of their own, whereas Iranians had some twelve centuries or more from which to draw. Over time, Iranians who accepted Islam and wrote in Arabic, shaped that language (both vocabulary and grammar) to fit their needs. The book gives basic understanding of why and how Sharia (the Islamic Law) was formulated, and the origins of Shia and Sunni schism. The chapter ends nostalgically with the final scene from Rostam and Sohrab, etched into the Iranian psyche.

The Turk warlord Mahmud of Ghazna raided India during the first half of the eleventh century. He brought with him a highly Persianized form of Islamic civilization. He will be remembered for the disappointingly small honorarium he offered to Ferdowsi for completing the Book of Kings. Like their Turkic predecessors the Ghaznavids, the Seljuks were avid patrons of Persian language and culture. The mathematician-poet Omar Khayyam flourished during their rule, as did the theologian Mohammad Ghazali and the Sufi poet Jalal od-din Rumi. The Sufis were Islamic mystics, whose beliefs in uniting with God as the beloved is closer to the Bhakti Yoga tradition of the Hindu religion than anything in Islam.

Iran is virtually unique in the non-Western world in that it never became a colony of any European state. However, it was exploited by Russians, and various British entrepreneurs, for its natural resources (particularly oil) and for the control of strategic lands.

The last two chapters of the book describe the Pahlavi Years (1925-1979) and the Islamic Republic of Iran (1979-present). They provide useful perspectives on these periods for readers whose familiarity is based mostly on the Western media. The recurrent themes are (1) attempts by the last monarch (Mohammad Reza Pahlavi), and before him by his father (Reza Shah), to modernize Iran, (2) those attempts meeting with resistance from the clergy and from the poor strata of society, (3) that resistance being crushed with brute force, and (4) the interventions of other countries (initially Britain and Russia, and subsequently United States) to protect their own interests, mostly revenues from Iran's oil.

The book portrays Ayatollah Khomeini as a shrewd operative, for whom the Shah was no match. Sending Khomeini to exile was a strategic error, because he could disseminate his diatribes using more sophisticated methods without facing retaliation. The fall of the Shah brought to an end two thousand five hundred years of Iranian monarchy.

After the fall of the Shah, effort was undertaken to establish an Islamic Republic, and a constitution to guide it. Khomeini ultimately prevailed with the principle that the head of the government should be the person most qualified in Shi'ite jurisprudence. The new constitution provided for an elected parliament, but with ultimate power reserved for Khomeini as the Supreme Leader. The unelected nature of the post of faghih (tailor-made for Khomeini himself) did not clearly specify a procedure for succession.

The book describes, with admirable concision, the American hostage crisis, the Iran-Contra episode, and the Rushdie affair. One of Ayatollah Khomeini's stated aims was to export Iran's Islamic revolution, starting with countries that had large Shi'ite populations. We have witnessed the unraveling of this ambition in the emergence of Hezbollah, ISIS, and other extremist organizations. The book does not include the outcome of the latest negotiations to end Iran's nuclear program. Instead, it ends with the profound cultural heritage that unites Iran, and is beyond the politics of the day. The description of the Noruz festival is given vividly as the time of renewal that transcends all divisions.

The book outlines the contributions of great Iranian theologians, writers, poets, scientists, artists and filmmakers. Interested reader is encouraged to explore further the works of these men and women.

Books & Arts

The text covers with concision and lucidity the vast history of Iran.

The perspective of the author is balanced, and ultimately affectionate towards its subject. A beautiful reproduction of Rostam, the hero of the Shahnameh, fighting the White Demon, adorns the front cover of the book.

Dr. Keki Dadachanji has a Ph.D. in Operations Research from Case Western Reserve University. He was a Senior Logistics Manager at Masterfoods USA and transitioned to teaching in 2005. He was a part-time lecturer in Supply Chain Management at Rutgers University, and a teacher of mathematics and computer science at Parsippany High School in New Jersey. Dr. Dadachanji has served on the board of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York, and was the chairman of the program committee of the 16th North American Zarathushti Congress.

First in Indian Philately

Written and published by Ervad Cyrus Dinshaw Sidhva

Pgs 41; Price: Rs.50/- Available from Dadar Athornan Institute, 651-652, Firdoshi Road, Mancherji Joshi Dadar Parsi Colony, Mumbai 400014. E-mail: knowledgiate@gmail.com

Reviewed by Marzban Jamshedji Giara

Kudos to Ervad Cyrus Dinshaw Sidhva for publishing this beautiful, eye-catching, illustrated, informative booklet **FIRSTS IN INDIAN PHILATELY**. A keen philatelist himself, Sidhva was awarded a bronze medal and

different heads such as triangular, hexagonal, diamond shaped stamps, stamps of different designs, stamps on writers, paintings, migratory birds, gallantry award winners, gems and jewelry, national parks, Himalayan lakes, renewable energy, Agra Fort, Khadi stamp. This booklet has a foreword by renowned philatelist Mr. Vispi S. Dastur.

To commemorate 100 years of Indian cinema, 50 cinema personalities pertaining to films in different Indian languages were honored by issuing 50 stamps on a single day on 3-5-2013. These include a stamp on Sohrab Modi. commemorative stamps, definitive stamps, miniature Sheet & Souvenir Sheet, Indian Masks, Wild life, archaeology, freedom fighters, Children's Day, stamps issues on living legends, scented stamps, greeting stamps all portray the rich philatelic materials of our great country India.

A series called **My Stamps** on different themes such as animals, trains, Zodiac signs stamps, Panchatantra, Taj Mahal was issued by the postal department, Government of India. They also include stamps printed outside India, Refugee Relief stamps, stamps issued and withdrawn, colours used for printing stamps, wild flowers of India, stamp booklet and Panes, First Stamps of Independent India, Stamps with Rs. Logo to celebrate XIX Commonwealth Games. They show tennis, archery, hockey and athletics in symbolic style. Perforations, Maxim Cards, Greeting Cards and Folders with stamps.

Ervad Cyrus Sidhva is a teacher and scoutmaster at Dadar Parsee Youths Assembly High School and at Dadar Athornan Institute. For the past several decades he edits KNOWLEDGIATE magazine annually. Such efforts to promote hobbies deserve every encouragement.



certificate at MAHAPEX 2016 philatelic exhibition held at Nashik last month where he presented this booklet. He also got permission to visit India Security Press where stamps, passport and government security articles are printed.

The author has lucidly presented valuable information under 30

Dr. NAJMA HEPTULLA
Minister of Minority Affairs
Government of India



FTS No. 2913 MMA/2016
डा० नजमा हेपतुल्ला
अल्पसंख्यक कार्य मंत्री
भारत सरकार

19 February, 2016

Dear Ms. Roshan Rivetna,

Thank you very much for sending a copy of the book titled "*My Mother Used To Say*" compiled by you and Ms. Dinaz Kutar Rogers.

I compliment you and Ms. Dinaz Kutar Rogers for the work, and am indeed happy to have the opportunity to have a glimpse into the traditions of Parsis Zoroastrian community through its pages.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

Najma Heptulla
(NAJMA HEPTULLA)

Ms. Roshan Rohinton Rivetna,
The FEZANA Journal,
Federation of Zoroastrian
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5750 South Jackson Street,
Hinsdale,
Illinois 60521, USA

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My Mother Used to Say

Parsi and Persian Quotations

Vignettes of their inimitable language and lifestyle

Compiled by Roshan Rivetna and Dinaz Rogers

Illustrated by Kaizin Pooniwala

Hardcover, published by FEZANA, 2015. Pages 145

\$10+shipping (shipping in USA is \$4 for the first book plus 50c for each additional book)

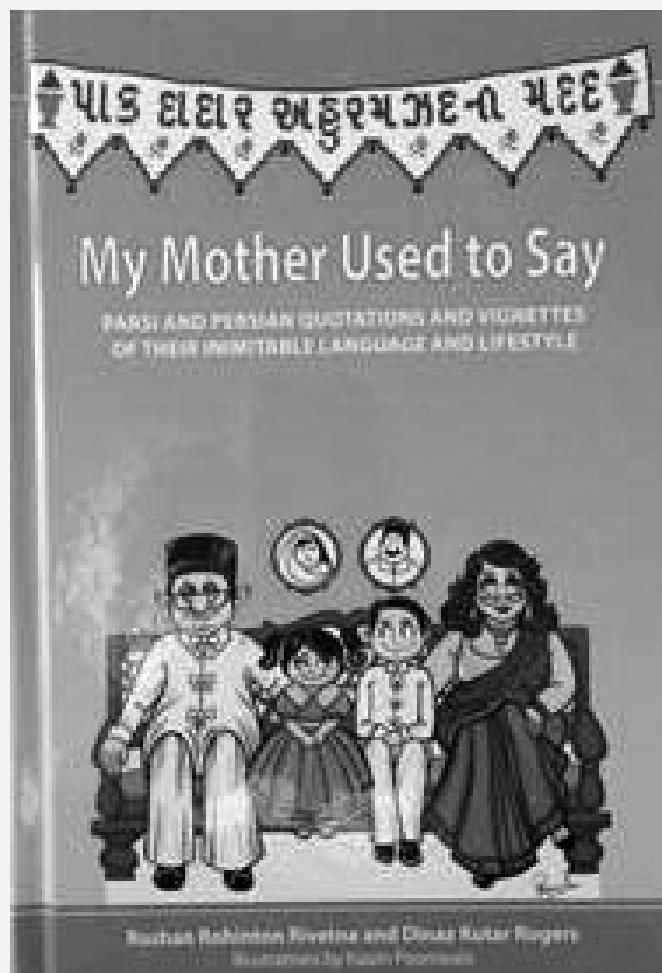
To order contact FEZANA Office, admin@fezana.org or purchase at www.fezana.org

Book Review by Aban Aspy Daboo

Nostalgic, humorous, memory jogger, emotional, are some of the feelings and adjectives that come to mind when going through this collection put together by Roshan and Dinaz. The illustrations by Kaizin are very precise – doing full justice to the subject matter. The best one is of Roshan and Dinaz, before the “Foreword”.

If you grew up in a very Parsi environment either in the Bombay Parsi colonies or in the Parsi neighborhoods of Navsari, Surat, Bharuch, Udvada, Pardi, Bulsar, and other coastal towns in Gujarat your past will come rushing back to you like an old movie. You will think of all those carefree days growing up not only with your immediate family, but all the neighbors. All the “aunties”, “uncles”, “majees”, “masees”, “bawajees” will come back to life and revive memories of Naja Aunty, Jermai, Minoo Makoree, whose lives we all shared. Our neighbors were our extended families and we listened to their words of wisdom. We shared in each others joys and sorrows, and to this day remembering their sayings make us chuckle.

The book has an interesting mix of chapters ranging from “Growing up in a Parsi Colony, Bombay” by Rohinton Rivetna to “Remedies and Health Tips” contributed from all over the globe. Turmeric powder was our magic potion - for soar throats and bumps and bruises. “Edu” (castor oil) the cleanser of all bad health, and “chana-no-atto” (gram flour) for teenage pimples! For minor ailments we always had “gherno upai” (home-made remedies) - aspro-anacin at the most. No





Books & Arts

pediatricians and specialists were consulted unless your family “daakter” (doctor) could not diagnose what was wrong. The chapter on “DO’s & DON’T’s” during a death in the family is pretty informative and enlightening. All the Parsi and Persian sayings are sorted subject-wise and give the reader a wide variety of fun reading. One wonders how some of them came into being. Example: “Kunjoos Kakree” – what does cucumber have to do with being a cheapo???? The cartoons and caricatures alongside the saying are most appropriate and my favorites are “Boodhi Ghoree Lal Lagam” and “Lego Pukreene Doryo”. Persian saying “Rashmeyer oshtoor be-band wah tawakkol bar khodo kon” meaning Trust in God, but tie your camel is so apt!!!!

No need to read all 145 pages of this collection from beginning to end. The reader can open any page and relax - reading a few sayings or enjoy the poem “We Parsis Love our Food”. Children growing up in the west will find this interesting and educational especially if they have had a chance to visit India or Iran and experienced firsthand the way of life and the language vignettes of their parents and grandparents. All families with Parsi and Persian roots should get a copy for their kids and grandkids not only “for old times sake” but when the second generation are middle aged they can keep the tradition going “MY MOTHER USED TO SAY’....to reminiscence, giggle and chuckle to their heart’s content.

The chapter on Parsi Gujarati is amusing as all our Gujarati friends always say “tamey Gujarati bolo tey ghanu mithoo lagech”. (When you talk in Gujarati it sounds very sweet.)

I do wish the cover was a bit more authentic. Maybe a collage of pictures with Parsi and Persian ladies/families from middle of the last century.

The total package is lots of fun and as mentioned on the last page “Khel Khatam paisa hajam”. (Show is over and the money is digested!)

SALAMATI!!!!!!!! CHEERS.

Aban Daboo lives in Aurora, Illinois with her husband, Aspy, of 51 years. After retiring from McDonald’s Corporation she started her catering service Parsichef specializing and shipping Parsi food all over USA. In 2010 she and her husband become franchisees for Quiznos Restaurant.

*What you can do today can improve all your
tomorrows.*

Ralph Marston

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