

JOURNAL

Fravadin – Ardibehesht – Khordad 1386 AY (Fasli) • Avan – Adar – Dae 1386 AY (Shenshai) • Adar – Dae – Behman 1386 AY (Kadimi)

NOROOZ PIROOZ BAD

NOROOZ MUBARAK

FEZANA TURNS

30

Introducing the new logo created by Zara Contractor to commemorate FEZANA'S 30th anniversary.






***Congratulations on your 30th
Anniversary***

***With Best Compliments
From
The Incorporated Trustees
Of the
Zoroastrian Charity Funds
of
Hong Kong, Canton & Macao***



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 The new logo created by Zara Contractor, Pakistan to commemorate the 30th anniversary



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HAPPINESS

Guest Editor Farishta Dinshaw

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SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY

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Celebrating the Past, Charting the Future

30th Anniversary Issue



Over the past thirty years, Fezana Journal has been a platform for young writers, scholars and our enthusiastic readers to emerge as public intellectuals, and for established thinkers and academics to posit groundbreaking philosophies and novel ideas. It has also been the stage for authors to flex their minds and for spiritual progressives and social change activists to urge self-reflection, spiritual healing, and direct action. Our writers and thinkers have much to contribute to the world, and for this 30th anniversary issue of the magazine, we want to celebrate them and thank them for their contributions.

Living in the Diaspora (living outside our ancestral home) is not a new experience for Zoroastrians. Since 716 CE, Zoroastrians have been living in the first diaspora of India, then branching out to Hong Kong, England, North America, South and East Africa. We have lived peacefully well integrated in the societies we found ourselves in. We arrived in North America in the early nineteen fifties but it was only 30 years ago that we joined forces to form the Federation. And what a glorious 30 years it has been, developing strategic plans to chart the course collectively of our growth, awarding scholarships, organizing North American and World Congresses, both for adults and youth, North American and World Sports

Events, producing the FEZANA Journal on new topics four times a year, participating in Interfaith activities, in UN-NGO activities, sprouting independent entities like the World Chamber of Commerce, and the North American Mobed Council. In my editorial for the 25th anniversary issue I had written “the basis for this steady growth was good and ethical governance by like minded people who believed in “give and take” and not in entrenched position”. This still is very much true and serves us well in all our efforts.

The first generation established the roots in all the diasporas that we lived in. Now it is second generation who has to carry the torch forward. Have we prepared them? To investigate this we asked them the question *How do the young adults see their future in the diaspora?* In this issue we gave them a voice to express their hopes, aspirations and fears as we move forward. Fifteen young adults from across North America, responded with essays in the section **VOICES FOR THE FUTURE**. You will find a great divergence of thought, many optimistic and some apprehensive.

We then asked the leading voices of the activists of North America, England, Australia, Hong Kong, Pakistan, India, as to what they thought the future of the Zoroastrian **Creed, Community and Culture** was in the diaspora of the next 50 years? What are the challenges faced by the next generation not only in maintaining the status quo but to consolidate our position further to develop our brand of Zoroastrian identity.

But at the back of our mind is the nagging question: *Given the current Zoroastrian political scene in India compounded by the diminishing demographics, does the responsibility of maintaining the creed, culture and community rest with the diaspora for the next 50 years and beyond? And what of the emergence of the new diaspora of Kurdistan?*

Kersi Shroff an independent thinker from ZAMWI in his article **Looking Back to Look forward** sets the tone for the section **Diaspora for next 50 years**. Shernaz Cama of ParZor fame eloquently pleads for the preservation of Culture, and Brigadier Ervad Behram Panthaki emphasizes the role of creed. Iran being the mother country and not a diaspora, we did not ask for reflections from our co-religionists. Instead we asked leading Iranian Zoroastrians in North America, Daryoush Jahanian of Kansas Khosro Mehrfar of California and David Rahini of New York to give an Iranian perspective for the diaspora. We also thank Dorab Mistry and Malcolm Deboo, activists in England, Neville Shroff a leader of the Hong Kong community, Kazween Boiko of the Australian Diaspora, and Sunnu Golwalla, knowledgeable of the Pakistan landscape for sharing their perspectives for our future. We conclude this section with a thought provoking critical article by Bergis Desai, **Diaspora will delay our dying** where he states from his Indian perspective, *“The situation in India is likely to worsen, unless there is a dramatic reversal in community consciousness. Hence, it is the so-called diaspora, where hope lies.*

However, can the diaspora ensure our survival as an ethnic group, despite the homeland mess, is the question." And we leave this question with you dear reader, to engage in dialog, to discuss options, because it is only with a collective strategy for the diaspora that we will be able to meet the challenge of branding our identity.

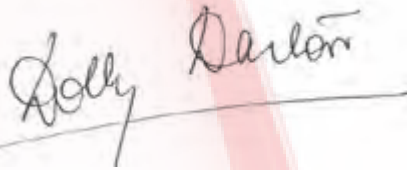
So thank you for spending your time with us, reading the Journal. Send your comments, your suggestions for the way forward for the next 50 years.

What an amazing time to be alive. What a joy to be part of a movement where members wish to celebrate the

grandeur of our past, recognize our fundamental interconnectedness and are willing to dedicate time, money and energy toward the next steps for our future in the third diaspora. The volunteer culture is alive and growing!

Three Cheers FEZANA, may you celebrate multiples of thirty more years.

Dolly Dastoor
Editor in Chief



WINNER OF THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY LOGO CONTEST.

Zara Contractor, a Vancouver based designer, now living in Pakistan, was chosen from 100 entries. She has a Masters in Applied Arts from Emily Carr University researching on how a sense of community may be built in culturally -diverse urban neighbourhoods. She has over 10 years experience working with South Asian and Zoroastrian communities. A natural story teller, she draws a narrative thread through her work.

CONGRATULATIONS ZARA

FEZANA 30TH ANNIVERSARY

30th anniversary is a big milestone
May there be many
Many many more
Through all the "tiny Islands"
Like ZSO, OZCF ZAGNY etc
Through these "islands"
The pristine Message like a peaceful
River continue to flow

Since we've left our homeland
We needed some Kind of Identity
These "islands" Grouped together
That's how was **Fezana** was born

Have a Very Happy Anniversary
Blow the candles & whisper!
May we bring peace harmony
As well Serenity throughout our
Zoroastrian Community!
As well for entire humanity

Between the "islands"
May there be no worries or woes
But like a glass of Crystal clear
Bubbly Champagne that
Perpetually overflows!!

By Farida Bamji, Ottawa, Canada

Happy 30th Birthday, FEZANA

Homi Gandhi, President



Over the last 30 years, FEZANA has come a long way and given the North American Zarathushti community much to be thankful for.

In 1986-87 the North American diaspora, scattered across sixteen Zarathushti associations, decided to come together—*practicing Hamazor*—to form a federation for the betterment of our North American community. FEZANA has since grown as an organization with 26 member associations and 15 corresponding groups. It has basic infrastructure in place with an administrative office, a quarterly Journal, a monthly bulletin, and a library system—*FIRES*—that can link anyone with an interest in Zoroastrianism to resources available across this continent.

In keeping with the Zoroastrian focus on *vohu manah* (the good mind), FEZANA has created opportunities for Zoroastrian education for students of all ages and all backgrounds. In addition to a uniform curriculum for Zoroastrian Studies in youth religion classes, FEZANA has established a Religious Lecture Series to engage adults. We have supported scholars of Zoroastrian studies and related

programs at Stanford University, the University of Toronto, and London University to study Zoroastrianism. FEZANA supports students with scholarships for academics, performing arts, and sports.

A desire to nurture our small community's bonds across the world has driven FEZANA to invest in numerous congresses that bring our community together. Never forgetting the future of our community, we have been particularly supportive of youth efforts to come together as a community and make a difference by supporting their participation in congresses and programs like Return to Roots and Zoroastrian Youth Without Borders.

FEZANA provides a way for individual Zarathushtis to reach out to their own community and beyond, whether it is by organizing critical assistance where needed, or actively participating in Interfaith events, where the universal appeal of the principles of our faith make us, not only relevant, but also significant participants in a dialogue that seeks to promote peace in our world.

FEZANA has a lot to be proud of at thirty!

But we should not rest on our laurels. FEZANA should do more.

There is a spirit of resurgence, especially amongst the youth and young families, in our community. More young Zoroastrians have joined FEZANA committees in the past year, than at any time in

FEZANA's history. FEZANA should become more relevant in the lives of Zarathushtis in North America, rather than being an abstract "federation". Zarathushtis should not work in silos of their own local organizations, but rather coordinate their work, and engage in result-oriented activities.

FEZANA should become a more effective and nurturing partner for the North American and worldwide Zarathushti community. Remembering the blessings of a world brought closer by instantaneous communication, we must share our resources, our stories and our successes. We can plan our priorities for the future and work toward them seamlessly. Remembering the curses of advanced technology, we must also remember to be kind and thoughtful in our communications, using good words to unite our community and the world for the greater good, rather than creating a discourse that divides us.

Let us celebrate what we have achieved over the past 30 years. Then, FEZANA, let's get to work for the future. Here's to more good thoughts, good words and good deeds to come in the next thirty and beyond!

Hama Zor; Hama Asho Bade!

May we all be united in righteousness!

Homi D. Gandhi

FEZANA

Presidents



Rohinton Rivetna (1987-1994)



Rustom Kevala (2006-2008)



Dolly Dastoor (1994-1998)



Bomi Patel (2008-2012)



Framroze K Patel (1998-2002)



Katayun Kapadia (2012-2016)



Firdosh D Mehta (2002-2006)



Homi D Gandhi (2016-

Salute
The Zarathushtis of North America
On their vision, determination and Commitment
To come together to build the community,
Moving it forward in harmony and peace
For 30 years

MAY NORTH AMERICAN ZARATHUSHTIS AND THE MAZDA YAZNA RELIGION
CONTINUE TO FLOURISH FOR YEARS TO COME

ATHA JAMYAAT, YATHA AAFRINAAMI

Voices for the Future

The focus of the 30th anniversary issue is “Voices for the Future”. The Fezana Journal invited the next generation of emerging leaders to share and articulate their vision and mission for the organizations they lead and for the community in general. The role of the Journal is to educate, to inspire, and to build community. The questions asked were: Where do you see the North American community heading? How and what do you see the future to be? What role do you see FEZANA and the North American Zarathushtis playing in the diaspora?

We need new voices, new leadership, new vision to galvanize the North American community for the next 30 years.

ZOROASTRIAN YOUTH OF NORTH AMERICA



Diana Vania



Fareeza Doctor



Vahbiz Karanjia

The co-chairs of the Zoroastrian Youth of North America (ZYNA) committee congratulate FEZANA on its 30th-anniversary! We are thrilled to be part of the 30th anniversary souvenir issue of the FEZANA Journal, aptly named “Voices for the Future.” As we look forward to the next 30 years for young North American Zarathushtis, we must also consider the progress we have made. Here are several significant initiatives FEZANA and ZYNA have achieved together in the past 30 years:

- One of FEZANA’s most important efforts is the North American Congresses. For Zarathushti youth in North America, Congresses are often the first time they are exposed to Zoroastrians beyond their local associations. It is not surprising that since the first World Zoroastrian Youth Congress (WZYC) in California in 1989, we have seen an increase in the interest for each congress. Today, in addition to World Youth Congresses, there are also North American Youth Congresses and every main Congress typically

runs a concurrent youth program, and many youths also present at Congress sessions as well.

These Congresses play a critical role, as they are often the gateway for getting youth involved in the community. It is our hope that North American Zoroastrian associations from across the diaspora will continue to sponsor, financially support, and vocally encourage as many youth members as possible to attend these events. The 7th WZYC is expected to take place in Los Angeles in July 2019. On behalf of the organizing team in Los Angeles, we encourage you to contact us if you would like to contribute or help.

- FEZANA and ZYNA also coordinate several smaller-scale events. For instance, young professionals in North America have organized and participated in weekend mini-conferences to expand their professional and personal networks in New York and Vancouver. These events have provided an opportunity for like-minded young career-driven Zarathushtis to self-invest and develop mentor/

Voices for the Future

mentee relationships. FEZANA also regularly invites youth to represent the Zoroastrian community for various events at the United Nations.

- Some of the events that FEZANA and ZYNA are involved in also take North American young people abroad. The Return to Roots (RTR) program, started by four Zoroastrian youth from India, Pakistan, the UK, and the US, has taken over 40 youth from around the world (over half of which are from North America) to experience Zoroastrian history, culture, and religion in India. After the trips, RTR Fellows feel more connected to the community, understand how our rich history has helped influence our laudable reputation, and have made lasting friendships with other young Zoroastrians. The RTR organizers hope to organize alumni meet-ups and are planning future trips to Iran. If you are interested in taking part in Return to Roots, please contact us and we will happily connect you.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, ZYNA is not only involved in planning more Congresses and meet-ups, but we are always seeking to support other youth as they coordinate their projects as well. Do you want to organize a weekend event for young people around you? Great, let's go skiing or snorkeling or sailing; we have the expertise and the access to the resources to help you make it happen. Interested in exploring the world with a few Zarathushti buddies? Terrific, here's who to talk to in Singapore or London or Sydney or Mumbai; we can coordinate with other national or international youth bodies who can help you have a fun (and possibly cheaper) trip. Want to start a charitable project? Good on you, let's support that Zoroastrian library in India or a school in Iran! We can help you get projects like these off the ground. Even if you know you want to lead a charitable community project, but you don't have a good idea for one, we would love to connect you with institutions who would benefit from your enthusiasm. Once again, reach out to us if you want any help with initiatives like these.

Providing the Resources Needed by the Next Generation to Succeed

Apart from helping coordinate events, we are also in the early planning stages of some exciting

initiatives, including a university application review system that will become the centerpiece of an education and career mentorship program. Youth from across North America are constantly looking for guidance on applying to universities, graduate schools, and how to navigate early career decisions. As we start to think about what a program like this would look like, we welcome input from member associations and youth from across North America. We would especially love to sign up volunteers: people who have experience applying to and attending different programs and schools, as well as professionals who would be available to give career advice to young Zarathushtis who are just starting their careers.

Promoting and Fostering "Z" Interconnectivity

These are the kinds of initiatives that we are planning for the near future. Looking ahead, it will become much more important for us to determine how to promote more youth activity within local associations. Unlike in India, Pakistan, and Iran, where many (if not most) Zarathushtis live in baugs or clusters of families, North American Zarathushtis are far more spread out, with some cities only having a handful of families. In the United States and Canada, our youth move away from their local associations for schooling, professional, or family reasons. How do we promote community among a young population that is geographically disparate and constantly moving? Does the answer come with developing better leaders or programs? Are there some kinds of technology solutions that we can use? How can we make it easier for Zoroastrian youth who are new to an area to connect with other Zoroastrian families, specifically youth? Should ZYNA facilitate local activities directly?

Creating a Brilliant Future by Shedding Past Differences

In the long-run, how do we maintain our sense of community in the North American diaspora? Thirty years from now, today's youth will be the parents and grandparents of our next generation, tasked with sustaining our connections to Iran and India, ensuring that future youths understand and are involved in our customs and celebrations and are making an impact on the wider global community. One of the ways in which we can help support today's youth with this monumental task is to allow us to be heard when we voice our opinions about our community's future. It is hard for youth (or

Voices for the Future

anyone, for that matter) to abide so much conflict in such a small community. In-fighting and clashes between members of our associations, both in India and in North America, reduce our desire to become involved and exposed to such unnecessary drama. If our parents' and grandparents' generations do not recognize this, especially knowing that we are so few in numbers, how can today's youth be expected to help our community flourish and thrive? How youth feel about our community now will surely have an impact on our community in the next 30 years. This bickering is not something that can be solved by ZYNA or FEZANA alone. It is our generation that will

maintain our religion and community, and we need to ensure that we can move forward in an inclusive and cohesive manner.

The answers to these challenges are not straightforward, we will doubtlessly have to experiment with several programs as we find out what works. We would love to figure these questions out together. If you have any ideas, are interested in any of our upcoming initiatives, or would like to join ZYNA, please contact us! For more information regarding ZYNA, please visit our website zyna@fezana.org.

***Diana Vania**, born and raised in Toronto, is actively involved in the Zoroastrian community. She has volunteered for the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario, represented FEZANA at the United Nations, spoken at various Zoroastrian Congresses around the world, and participated in the Return to Roots program. She currently works in health care consulting in London, UK.*

***Fareeza Doctor** is an aspiring attorney who lives in Palo Alto, CA. She participated in the Return to Roots program and had written for the Zoroastrian community newsletter in Karachi, her home town.*

***Vahbiz Karanjia** is an attorney in Somerset, New Jersey and New York, litigating Consumer Fraud Act and Title Insurance claims. Throughout her education and professional career, Ms. Karanjia has served as a mentor and advisor for youth, and has been a constant presence in the ZAPANJ community.*



Iranian Zoroastrian Association (IZA) congratulates 30th anniversary of FEZANA and their service to the Zoroastrian associations and communities throughout US and Canada. May their service continue to its highest productivity.



7th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress 2019/California, USA

The first **World Zoroastrian Youth Congress (WZYC)** was established in Westminster, California in 1993, with the mission to create a global platform for the Zoroastrian youth to embrace our treasured culture, enhance our unique traditions, and evolve to create a united future.

After nearly 25 years, we are excited to announce that the California Zoroastrian community is once again honored to host this momentous gathering in **2019**.

In an effort to organize one of the best World Zoroastrian Youth Congresses to-date, we are reaching out to all of our dedicated Zoroastrian youth between the ages of 15 and 35, who wish to contribute their time and talent into organizing this congress. There are a variety of involvement opportunities that you can be a part of!

To find out more about how to get involved, please email us at **7wzyc.czc@gmail.com**

To learn more about our upcoming meetings, events and programs, make sure to join our Facebook group at: **www.facebook.com/groups/7WZYC**. We look forward to seeing all of you very soon!

BEST PRACTICES AND THE FUTURE OF OUR NORTH AMERICAN ZOROASTRIAN COMMUNITY

THE STATUS OF OUR NORTH AMERICAN COMMUNITY

In the past two decades, there has been a global shift in the population of Zoroastrians from the East to the West. Many articles discuss the dwindling numbers of Zoroastrians in India and Pakistan. However, there has been an influx of Zoroastrians in the West, particularly to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). We have found increases in individual, family, and students relocating from eastern countries. In the early 2000s, the Toronto area saw a need for expansion of services to the growing community. A second Zoroastrian Association was started in the west end of the GTA. Two centres are needed to hold all the prayer ceremonies, religious and social events, religion classes, Scout meets, and Avesta classes and lectures. While Toronto may not be representative of other Zoroastrian Associations in North America, it is the one that has been growing steadily. The children's religion classes have always had registrations of around 70 to 150 students. There is a constant need for more teachers and assistants as the classes grow every year. Another area of major growth has been services for the seniors. Seniors contribute a significant amount to the community and, in return, we hold many events to promote their interaction, many of which include bi-weekly light exercise classes and day trips to various entertainment events and lectures.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE LIKE IN NORTH AMERICA?

In examining younger generation Zoroastrians in North America, it is apparent that the young Parsee children are not well versed in Eastern languages, especially if they are first generation. Whereas, young Iranian children speak Farsi quite fluently, even though some of them are first generation. Some Zoroastrian Centres in North America have Avesta classes where they teach the Avesta in the Avestan language, others teach the young children in Farsi. In the future, we will need to make sure that we do not lose the Farsi and Gujarati languages.



In many North American Zoroastrian Associations, there are leaders who are constantly rotating in or within the Board and Executive positions. Those Associations do not have a proper succession plan to hand over the Association to the youth. Three associations, ZAMWI (Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc.), ZAQ (Zoroastrian association of Quebec), and ZAC-Chicago have young presidents, which the associations encourage to attend FEZANA AGMs, so that they are kept current on North American and global happenings. Unfortunately, not all associations send their presidents to FEZANA AGMs; usually, the people that attend have attended for the past two or three decades. Unless the associations create succession plans, we will lose the youth to other activities and other priorities in their lives.

There are many associations scattered throughout the US and Canada. If Zoroastrians living in remote area cannot afford to attend a congress or FEZANA AGM, they may not have any opportunities to meet or interact with other Zoroastrians. Once, two yearly events were held for North American Zoroastrian youths, where they could meet for a weekend getaway in a North American city. Since 2005, we have had only two events, both in 2013. These events were normally organized by the Zoroastrian Youth of North America (ZYNA), which has not held any events in the US and Canada for many years. With the lack of these frequent youth events, the next generation in many of the areas in North America will be lost to other activities.

Voices for the Future

BEST PRACTICES AND WHAT CAN FEZANA AND THE NORTH AMERICAN ZOROASTRIANS DO FOR OUR DIASPORA?

FEZANA needs to understand the Zoroastrian growth in North America and consider increasing the services they offer local associations, increase the number of scholarships, and share best practices and knowledge from associations that have a great working model. FEZANA AGMs happen once a year where local associations get a chance to find out what other associations are doing good and to learn from them. One evening of presentations to cover 26 associations is usually not enough time to brainstorm best practices and share knowledge. There needs to be a forum (online) where discussions within the larger community can take place. For those of you who are familiar with *Zpeakerbox* know that during 2004-2006, our youth used an online forum where ideas and discussions were exchanged globally. That website brought together more young Zoroastrians from around the world than a youth congress.

One best practice that should be adopted from Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) is their Welcoming Committee, which was setup for all new immigrants or people that come to Toronto from overseas or the US. The committee works with individuals and families to provide them with information in advance of arriving in Toronto. Help is given in terms of finding accommodation, how to conduct a job search, how to use local transportation, etc. The committee sends out resumes to people in the same field that may help find the new immigrant a job. This kind of helping hand makes the immigrants feel more positive and comfortable about moving to Canada.

A second best practice that should be adopted from ZSO and OZCF is their seniors' programs. The seniors in Toronto are very active and hold events for themselves very often. The membership rate for seniors is small, due to low incomes. OZCF has started a share-a-ride program where seniors needing

transportation to an event can be matched with someone willing to give them a ride.

The current FEZANA President, Mr. Homi D. Gandhi, has assigned three new ZYNA co-chairs to help get the youth events started up again. This is a critical committee because they are the only youth that are part of the working FEZANA group. This committee needs to be highly encouraged, guided, and grown to a level so that they can function seamlessly, like all other FEZANA Committees. Youths wishing to participate on this committee should refer to the FEZANA website for a ZYNZ co-chair's contact information.

In encouraging our young people, the local associations and FEZANA are building their confidence, making them leaders with experience and including them in a succession plan. We do expect the youth to make some mistakes, failure is a stepping stone to success. However, we need to realize that we should encourage them to step forward and support them. We need to provide them with the appropriate resources to execute their plans. Before we know it, we will have a generation of members that are confident, successful, and, most importantly, ready to mentor our next generation and preserve our community for years to come. ZAMWI and ZAC-Chicago have collectively brought three different youth presidents to the FEZANA AGMs. In some cases, since the president was new to FEZANA, they were usually accompanied by another member of their association who is more experienced with FEZANA. At the meetings, the president is encouraged to speak on behalf of the local association; it has been good to see new and novel ideas being put forward.

My hope for the future is that local associations learn from each other. As we encourage our youths to step forward and work with us, we preserve our unique culture, food, and religion, as well as our languages. We also open our minds and hearts towards to our seniors.

Afreed has been actively involved with her local Zoroastrian Community and with FEZANA. She has attended eleven Zoroastrian congresses all over the World and has been a speaker at five of them. Afreed works at Bank of Montreal as a Network Designer. She loves to travel and experience new cultures. She is the current Assistant Secretary of FEZANA .



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*The Members and Board of Directors
Of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario
Extend their congratulations and best
wishes to*

FEZANA

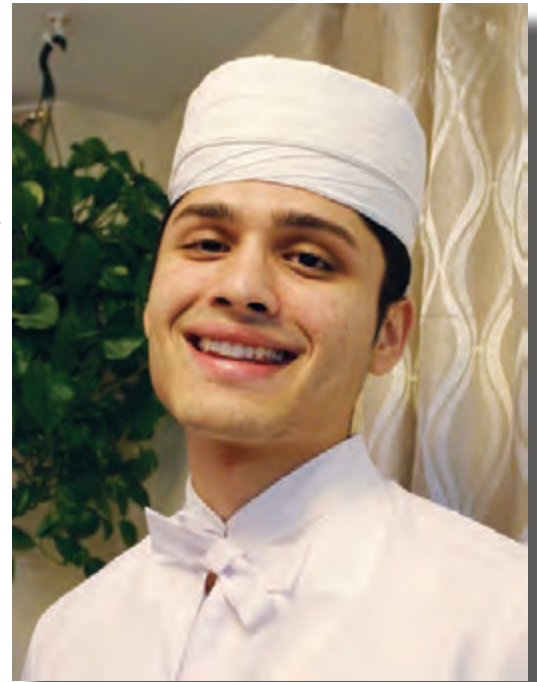
On the occasion of their

30th Anniversary

President, Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago

LIVING IN HARMONY

Out of a seed meaningfully planted thirty years ago, FEZANA has blossomed into an extraordinary entity. Growing under the careful nourishment of our community leaders, past and present, FEZANA has kept our North American Associations connected, promoted the study and understanding of our religion, and represented our interests on a national and international platform. As we celebrate FEZANA's invaluable contributions to our community over the past thirty years, I am reminded how powerful a vision can be when cultivated with collective belief and support. The religious vision of Zarathushtra was realized through a faithful community of believers thousands of years ago; the idea for a North America-wide federation that would help preserve this identity and heritage in a new country crystallized out of purposeful action; and, now, it is the responsibility of the next generation of emerging leaders to envision a positive direction for the future of our Zoroastrian community and collectively work to ensure it comes to fruition.



THE FUTURE OF A HARMONIOUS COMMUNITY

My vision of an ideal future is for the Zoroastrian faith to flourish under a growing community that is passionately dedicated to the pursuit of a righteous existence for itself and humankind; to preserve our ancient, beautiful religion— theology, creed, practice, rituals, and symbols—and nourish it through positive service within our community, society, and the world accordingly. To achieve this ideal, I believe Zarathushtis must focus on enduring harmony. The *Law of Asha*, introduced in the sacred Gathas, describes the world in its ideal form: a perfect union of law and order, both in the physical universe and the moral compass of humanity. It is understood that to progress towards a perfect world we must live accordingly, in fellowship with appropriate intention and action, forging ahead with mutual purpose in pursuit of this righteous future. The ambition of living in harmony is more significant considering our community is an ethnocentric one, two groups (Iranis and Parsis) with different cultural traditions bound together by a common religion, Zoroastrianism; through this desire the passion and participation needed to perpetuate our faith will be sustained. We can cultivate a harmonious community in several ways, most notably, through rituals/ spiritual enhancement and doctrinal study/religious education.

RITUAL PRACTICE & SPIRITUAL ENHANCEMENT

Ritual connects members and allows them to strengthen their relationships with one another. Through repeated action and intention, our rituals become ingrained within us, reinforcing a sense of community, serving as a reminder for the principles of our faith, and bringing members together to experience a spiritual resplendence that provides the wisdom and confidence necessary to lead an enlightened, fulfilling life. As an example, the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago has implemented a *Humbandagi Prayer* initiative, a mass prayer event in which all participants collectively and loudly recite a set of prayers specifically chosen for the occasion. This monthly activity is built upon the premise of active and collective participation; all worshippers pray together, along with a priest, in one united voice. By reciting together in both Avestan and English, our community members can better internalize the valuable teachings behind each prayer and connect with each

Voices for the Future

other on a greater spiritual level. With several property improvements we can have facilities to serve our community, most notably a traditional Atash Kadeh that will allow for a higher grade of fire for inner liturgical rituals, like those currently performed in Iran and India. This would expose the North American Community to the sacred rituals of our religion, and would certainly help increase our solidarity.

DOCTRINAL STUDY AND SCHOLARSHIP

Zoroastrianism is a view of the world and a way of life. Consequently, study and scholarship—coupled with action—are vital to the sustenance of the faith. Our ritual activities aid in spiritual elevation, but it may not satisfy individuals who look for guidance and advice to immediately overcome daily challenges and live a fulfilling life. Incredibly, the wisdom preached by Prophet Zarathushtra thousands of years ago, is very relevant today. As a young Mobed, I have made it a responsibility to prioritize self-education to spread this knowledge to others; however, scholarship should be a priority for all Zarathushtis, laymen and religious leaders alike. To take the infrastructure initiative discussion to the next level, we envisage a growing facility with an Atash Kadeh and a Zarathushti learning center, a seminary to train prospective priests, with living quarters for a full-time priest. Realizing this vision could create a vocation that is a catalyst for higher knowledge. If we use a seminary to develop courses in Zoroastrian studies and offer accredited college level courses, future young priests may more likely be inspired to pursue a degree in ministerial studies if they know they can sustain a living through it. A resident priest—who can provide ritual and spiritual enhancement, ministerial services and provide religious education to community members on the ethics that will help us navigate life's challenges—could become the glue to keep us engaged and fortify our harmony with one another.

STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

As today's young Zarathushti leaders continue to build on the foundation that was laid decades ago, organizations like FEZANA will play a fundamental role by coordinating our secular activity in North America. Without FEZANA's support we cannot sustain or improve upon the infrastructure that supports our spiritual interests. By placing a central focus on the rituals that provide us with an anchor of connection and nurturing the eternal message of our faith through promotion of scholarship within the heart of our community, I believe we can nurture the fellowship we need to keep the flame of our ancient faith burning, vibrant and eternal. As I reflect on FEZANA's longevity and its contributions to our community for the past thirty years, I would like to recognize the individuals who planted the seed for a vision to become reality, all those who have contributed to FEZANA's growth along the way, and those of you who keep the flame burning today, including the support of community members from all our associations—*thank you*. If we stay connected in a meaningful way—with a passion for our roots and an understanding of our faith's impact on our communities and greater humanity, I feel very confident looking ahead at the next thirty years.

Hamazor Hama Asho-Bed!

May we all be united in strength and righteousness!

Ervad Rayomand Ravji was born in Mombasa, Kenya, and raised in Illinois. In 2002, Rayomand was ordained a Nâvar at the Cama Baug Agiary in Mumbai. He later returned to Cama Baug to achieve a higher degree of priesthood, the Martab. Rayomand received his Bachelors of Science (B.S.) in Psychology—as a premedical student—at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He currently volunteers his services as a Mobed and as President of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago (ZAC).



ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION *of* METROPOLITAN CHICAGO

Sending our heartfelt congratulations to FEZANA on the achievement of an incredible milestone: 30 years of service and support to the Zarathushti Community of North America.



FEZANA & ZAC Execs at FEZANA's 30th Anniversary Inaugural Gala in Chicago on November 5, 2016. Photo: Ken Weber

Best wishes and everlasting success from the entire
Chicago Zarathushti Community!

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Voices for the Future

ATRIYA SALAMATI, DDS, PhD

VOICES FOR THE FUTURE

As an Iranian Zarathushti, I grew up in Tehran, Iran. My parents, grandparents, and teachers instilled in me the beautiful and meaningful teachings of Ashu Zarathusht and the Zarathushti faith. However, as a woman of a minority religion, I was constantly faced with restrictions. As a Zoroastrian, I was teased in school for my beliefs. As I grew up and became more educated, I learned to stand up for my values, while acknowledging and respecting the beliefs of others.

Moving from Iran to the United States at the age of eighteen was another challenge that I had to overcome. Although the United States may rightly be considered the land of opportunity, moving here, about 13 years ago, was full of challenges for me, not the least of which was adjusting to a new language, new people, and, most importantly, a new culture. However, I was very happy knowing that I could practice my faith and be proud of who I am without being teased, that there were Dar-e-Mehr and centers that Zarathushtis could get together to pray and celebrate our beautiful faith and culture. But, above all, a more fascinating aspect to me was the mix of Parsee and Iranian Zarathushtis—something that I was not exposed to back in Iran. In my opinion, this was a unique and precious opportunity to learn from and teach one another about the aspects of our shared faith and origin that had evolved through centuries and formed the present similar, yet different, cultures that we each belong to.

After living in New York for a year, I moved to Seattle, where there were fewer Zarathushti families than New York. And, there were no Dar-e-Mehrs in the State of Washington. However, most Iranian families were members of the Zoroastrian Society of Washington State (ZSWS); we got together to celebrate the cultural and religious ceremonies to keep our culture and faith alive, and pass it on to the next generation.

In 2009, I volunteered and was elected to the ZSWS Board of Directors and was reelected in 2011 to serve as their treasurer and, then, from 2014 through



2016 as their president. During the last 12 years, I have seen dramatic changes in the Zoroastrian community in Washington state. Like other states, Zoroastrian families and individuals have come to our state to work or live—most having emigrated from Iran.

A few of these changes and achievements are: as a society, we have increased in numbers, specifically regarding our younger members. A hallmark of our evolving and growing Zarathushti community (Iranian and Parsee) was when we came together to host the 2014 FEZANA/AGM meeting in Seattle. The Iranian and Parsee Zoroastrians collaborated successfully to make the event a success and strengthen their ties under the ZSWS umbrella. For the past two years, ZSWS has proudly celebrated the Zoroastrian faith. The ceremonies and Z-classes are hosted by the Iranian Cultural Committee (ICC), Parsee Cultural Committee (PCC), and Religious Committee; they have been well-attended by the community. Thus far, we have learned and benefited considerably from our interactions; for example, when I first moved to Seattle, ZSWS did not have a Dar-e-Mehr or Mobed, and the membership was mostly Iranian Zarathushtis. We still celebrated the Gahanbars and events, and one of our community (Jamshid Pouresfandiari) would generously offer to recite the Avesta for us. Today, we are all united under the ZSWS umbrella and, with help from Soli Dastur, we will soon have our own Mobed Jamshid, and we will be able to celebrate many more events. One of our goals is to have our

Voices for the Future

own Dar-e-Mehr, where we can more conveniently hold religious functions and our members can enjoy reciting Avesta in a spiritual place without having to travel to either Vancouver, BC, or California.

This brief history sets the stage for the point that I would like to make about *where I see the North American community heading and how I see its future*. In my opinion, we are in a golden, yet critical, era in our history. Having been suppressed as members of a minority religion in Iran, many Iranian Zoroastrian families are migrating primarily to North America, with a smaller number to other parts of the world. Many of the emigres are younger adults who are well educated and tech savvy. I see this as a golden opportunity as our fellow Zarathushtis can live and practice their faith in the US in peace and, with some effort, their technological expertise can be put to good use to make our small community stronger and closer together. I also call this critical because,

just as it can become stronger and grow in number with a closer and tighter relationship and connection between our fellow Zarathushtis, our younger members can lose their connection to their roots and faith. My concern is that, by not being in touch with other Zarathushtis or by living in places where there are no nearby Dar-e-Mehr or active anjomans, they may fail to celebrate and keep our faith and traditions alive for the next generation. I think it is important to focus our resources on building such religious centers in all major cities to ensure there are places for our children, youth, adults, and seniors to get together and learn from each other and make connections. It is very pivotal to stay united as Zoroastrians under the one umbrella of Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds, and be proactive in sharing our talents and developing tomorrow's leaders to pass these values along to future generations.

Atriya Salamati came to the US in 2004 at 18 and attended Nassau Community College to strengthen her English and take biology courses. She moved to Seattle where she obtained her BS in Biology (Physiology) from the University of Washington (UW) and continued at UW to complete her DDS in 2013, followed by a PhD in Oral Biology in 2016. Currently, she works as a general dentist at the Community Health Center of Snohomish County, Washington, and also teaches as an affiliate faculty at the UW School of Dentistry's Department of Restorative Dentistry. In July 2017, she will move back to NY to start her advanced specialty training in Pediatric Dentistry. She enjoys outreach opportunities and volunteering to help those in need. Her outreach work for the past 12 years in Seattle has earned her numerous prestigious awards and scholarships that have supported her goals. She hopes she can continue to use her knowledge and experiences to better serve the Zoroastrian community, people of the world, be a good advocate for Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds, and make this planet a better place for all to live in peace and unity.



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Voices for the Future

CYRUS GAZDAR, PRESIDENT OZCF

THE FUTURE BECKONS BRIGHTLY

On behalf of the Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation (OZCF) and its members, we congratulate FEZANA as they celebrate their milestone 30th Anniversary.

As Zoroastrians continued to emigrate to North American shores, their communities in Canada and the USA began to proliferate. Established communities continued to welcome new members while others grew from a mere handful to forming their own organizations. Having linked communities for 30 years, FEZANA has provided a North American perspective for associations to promote and further their objectives, as well as providing information on numerous topics, vis-à-vis our religion.

OZCF

The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in Ontario, Canada, is a magnet that attracts Zoroastrians who choose to emigrate abroad. With a population of approximately 6,000, and growing, it has become one of the largest Zoroastrian communities not only on the continent, but one of the largest in the world outside of Mumbai.

Due to population growth in the western GTA, the OZCF was formed in 2002 and came into the fold of North American Zoroastrian organizations. We are fortunate to have two organizations within the GTA landscape. Members of the OZCF and those of the long-standing Zoroastrian Society of Ontario get to share the benefits of both associations through various community events.

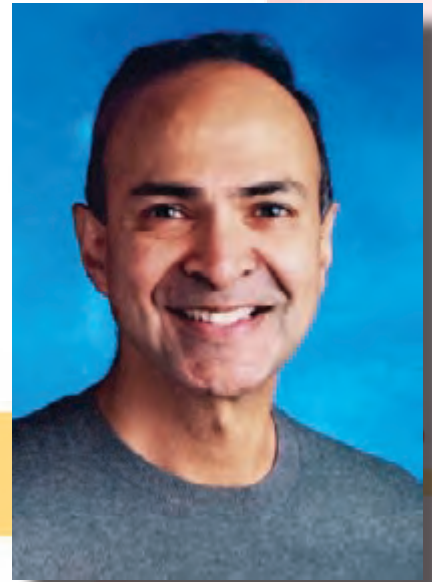
The OZCF was formed on the principles of enriching and



advancing our religion through tenets and observances that we affiliate with our faith. It was also envisaged to form a community center where we could hold communal, religious, and cultural events. We wanted to have a religious school to instruct our children and future generations in our revered faith. To ensure the flame remains forever lit, a consecrated Place of Worship was also part of the blueprint. In the future, we wish to construct a center for our seniors that would provide housing, health care, and various activities and services—permitting them to enjoy their golden years in a communal setting. Lofty goals indeed.

Our founding members had the foresight to lay out these objectives, in all their complexities, in their master-plan, which envisioned the need for sufficient space for us to construct these edifices and achieve the objective of perpetuating and enhancing religious knowledge for our future generations.

Around 2004, it was put to the membership to purchase a ten-acre parcel of land in Oakville, here in the western GTA. Seeing the opportunity, our members agreed to purchase the land. Incredibly, within a few short years, we paid off the land and constructed and paid off our community center, the Zoroastrian Religious and Cultural Centre.



These facilities are used year-round for numerous activities for the young generation and seniors, and for both Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrians.

Every religion requires a place to share sacred communion with God, a place to venerate and communicate with the Almighty, a place of worship. Through the mandate of its members, the OZCF has begun the process whereby our community shall have an Atashkadeh, a consecrated Place of Worship, which will house an Atash-e-Adaran consecrated fire. Currently, the Place of Worship Advisory Committee continues to strategically navigate through the various channels for us to see this project through to its completion.

This endeavor has been made possible via the support and generosity of FEZANA, our sister associations in North America, and our members and donors. In June of 2016, we held a gala, raising an eye-popping \$2.2 million in donations and pledges. Currently, this figure stands at \$2.4 million and we look forward to receiving your continued support.

Voices for the Future

Within a few short years, we have put in place the building blocks to construct our community for today, tomorrow, and forever. The current generation, through determination and drive, vision, and vigor, is laying the foundation. However, it will be the future generations who will be responsible for ensuring that the faith remains vibrant within our communities; it is our duty to provide them with the tools to enable them to do so.

You can read more about the OZCF and its activities at www.ozcf.com.

Issues and Challenges Moving Forward

The younger people of today will be our future guardians of the faith. Whilst this is a universal concept, I do see some headwinds going forward. In speaking with people from various communities, I often hear of the underrepresentation of youth on many (but not all) boards and sub-committees within associations.

The youth feel that adults disagree with their views and become dismissive. Elderly members sometimes feel their goals and those of youngsters are not aligned and cast them aside. Whatever the reasons, our younger people feel disenfranchised. This generational gap must be bridged. FEZANA and our communities must find new ways in which to involve youth, showing them they have a

vested interest and vital role to play in our communities.

Hearing their voices loud and clear at our AGM last June, I spoke with our youth, where they echoed similar beliefs and said they feel their voices are not always heard. This appears to be common sentiment within quite a few North American communities. Yet, this also tells me that they want to be involved.

Prior to becoming president last year, I had some youngsters express these concerns. I mentioned that, during my presidency, I wanted to give our young members a platform to express their opinions and support their ideas. I am pleased to mention that we have many dynamic youth on our board who now feel empowered, valued for their opinions, and are active participants in meetings and within the community.

The young people today face numerous challenges in trying to balance careers and family life, while facing the headstrong winds of western influence. As community leaders, we need not impose further challenges unto our youth. Instead it is essential we provide them with guidance, mentor them, and work in partnership with them. It is what we are implementing here at OZCF. And, we are better for it as our youngsters become tomorrow's leaders.

I feel it is incumbent on every community to ensure that our

youth are involved in the decision-making process, it is imperative that our communities invest in this dynamic demographic today so that we reap benefits tomorrow and beyond.

The Future

Settling on North American shores has been fruitfully beneficial for so many of us. Yet, decades-old issues continue to persist between oriental and occidental beliefs. Many of us find ourselves trying to balance traditions of the old country with progressive ideas in the new world. Topics such as acceptance of children from inter-marriage and dwindling numbers, amongst many others, are at the forefront of present day Zoroastrian life. These issues and their intricacies are beyond the realm of these pages.

Progressing into the next decade and beyond, FEZANA will need to play a pivotal role, drawing upon all its resources and looking at new ways in which to tackle these complex issues. For 30 years, FEZANA has been a repository of information on topics pertaining to our religion from a North American perspective. As greater numbers flock to our communities, FEZANA will play an even greater role as the conduit that binds these communities.

The future beckons brightly. Through Vohu Mano, dialogue and Mazda's guidance, I am confident that our best years lie ahead!

Cyrus Gazdar was born in Mumbai in 1966. However, the family lived in Kampala, Uganda at the time until 1972 when they were forced to emigrate. They settled in Mississauga, Ontario, a suburb just west of Toronto in April of 1973 where they have seen the community grow and flourish over the years. Cyrus is in his 18th year as a Middle School Teacher with the Peel District School Board. He has served on OZCF boards, from 2006-2008 as Secretary and 2008-2010 as Vice-President, and has been part of various sub-committees (current and past) within OZCF: Facility Management; Sports; Entertainment; Gala and Newsletter.



**The Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation
congratulates FEZANA as you celebrate your
milestone 30th Anniversary.**

**Through its various programs and initiatives,
FEZANA remains a vital source of information on
numerous aspects of Zoroastrianism with a North
American outlook.**

Wishing you many more years of success!



Voices for the Future

Zareen Hakim Austin

MOVING TOWARDS A BRIGHTER FUTURE

“Mommy, why aren’t there more Zoroastrians in the world? Wouldn’t the world be a better place with more Zoroastrians in it? And, why don’t people know about us?” asked my nine-year-old daughter.

I told her that I, too, have been searching for answers to these same questions all my life. My eleven-year-old son chimed in and tried to explain to his sister, “We don’t convert, that’s why.” to which I immediately exclaimed: “No, that’s not true!”

So, how do we explain this to our children? What will their next generation North American Zoroastrian future look like? I want them to know that they are part of a progressive, dynamic, kind, and diverse community, not part of a dying breed. I want them to know that Zoroastrianism is an important universal religion, which paved the way for other world religions and influenced major philosophies around the globe. I am optimistic that Zoroastrianism can flourish in North America. How can we continue to build this strong Zoroastrian community? I will attempt to address this from my perspective. Here are a few thoughts:

One aspect of ensuring a successful future is to give our kids exposure to other Zoroastrians through activities, such as youth camps, religion/culture classes, Jashans, sports, etc. Many associations have done an incredible job in this area, and I congratulate them. I, for one, feel blessed to have grown up with easy access to a Dar-e-Mehr in New York (ZAGNY). My parents would bring us to religious classes on the first Sunday of every month. There, I would meet my friends from all over the Tri-State area. It was great. I felt an immediate sense of belonging and comfort, knowing that we all shared the same religious/cultural identity, while also juggling our North American identities. I was even more fortunate to form mentor relationships with many people, most notably Dr. Lovji Cama and Professor Kaikhosrov D. Irani. What I have learned from them has been an invaluable gift in my life.

Now, having settled in Montreal, Canada, for almost fifteen years, and trying to raise my own family, I have been happy to serve on the Board of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec (ZAQ). It’s a wonderful, diverse association; in fact, the first one



in North America! There are a handful of volunteers and leaders in our community who have done so much for so many years, but at times, we struggle to get community participation, other than for social events. These are the challenges that smaller communities face, especially if they don’t have a Dar-e-Mehr. And, while it’s not mandatory to have a Dar-e-Mehr a physical structure would validate our presence in the population and would ground our respective communities.

Another aspect for ensuring a successful future is education. This addresses the “Why don’t people know about us?” question. I feel my children’s frustration when they ask this, because I felt the same way, growing up. The other day at school, my daughter’s class discussed the important aspects of five major religions. Unfortunately, Zoroastrianism was not one of them. Following that, my son had to do a project on religion, but he wasn’t allowed to choose Zoroastrianism. I believe we need to make sure that Zoroastrianism is recognized as a world religion and is taught more in schools and universities. I know that in some schools and textbooks, Zoroastrianism is mentioned. And, while a lot has been done to remedy the lack of material in schools, we can each do more in our local communities to help further this agenda.

Lastly, we must diplomatically sort out the issue of intermarriage, or as I see it, a **NON-issue**. Zarathushtra’s message is a universal one, open to everyone. Therefore, we must continue to welcome non-Zoroastrian spouses and children of mixed marriages to the community. I am truly disheartened by the amount of times I’ve heard that these spouses and children were turned away from

Voices for the Future

entering fire temples in India. This doesn't sound like Zoroastrianism to me. In fact, there is nothing in the Gathas that even remotely points to such exclusions.

No harm would come to our community if loving, open-minded non-Zoroastrian spouses and innocent children of mixed marriages were to enter and pray in our fire temples. In fact, by welcoming them, their connection to Zoroastrianism would grow stronger, as would our community. All families should be allowed to worship together in a Fire Temple. After all, religion is something you choose to believe in and choose to follow. I remember asking my mentor, Professor Kaikhosrov D. Irani, about this when I was younger. He told me, very matter-of-factly, that if one chooses to follow Zoroastrianism that it is our obligation and responsibility to help them along in their journey.

Welcoming spouses and children is the most basic thing we can do. What about others who have found their way to Zoroastrianism, who have been seeking

all their lives for a good and kind way of life? I would love to see a global resource, where people who wish to follow this beautiful religion can go and learn and even have their navjotes/sudreh pushis done. I know that North American Zoroastrians are moving towards the universality and core message of the religion, and this gives hope that Zoroastrianism will live on. Let's be happy that so many people want to be Zoroastrian. I'm not talking about proselytizing—I'm talking about helping people who genuinely approach the community with a desire to learn and live a Zoroastrian life.

Zarathushtra's message is such a powerful one that no one group can contain it. I'm confident it will survive, as it has for thousands of years. Together, we can help shape and grow the community. I want to tell my children that, yes, the world will be a better place with more Zoroastrians in it and that it will happen as we move towards a brighter future.

Zareen Hakim Austin, originally from Cortlandt Manor, New York, currently resides in Beaconsfield, Québec, with her husband, Pheroz, and two children, Rushad and Shiraz. She enjoys a career as a fashion graphic designer and has been a long-time volunteer for the Zoroastrian Association of Québec.

Best wishes from
ZAPANJ
Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and New
Jersey



Zapanjnews@gmail.com

Zoroastrian Association of Québec
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Congratulations to FEZANA from the Sacramento Zoroastrian Association
on reaching a milestone of 30 years of growth and achievement.

We are also proud to announce the opening of our new Dar e Mehr
on March 26, 2017.

With about a hundred Zoroastrian families in the greater Sacramento area, a need was felt to legally organize and coordinate group activities and also give a sense of belonging to the younger generation. The Sacramento Zoroastrian Association was formed to link together all Zarthustis in this part of Northern California with the purchase of a Center with a new Dar e Mehr built on the property.

This newest and youngest association is proud to join the Federation of over 25 such associations to officially be a part of the diaspora and participate actively to promote the vision of FEZANA on this continent.

We see FEZANA as an organization that provides a guiding hand to all such Zoroastrian associations, gives an impetus to propagate our culture, and increases the understanding of our religion for this generation and the next.

10528 Armstrong Avenue, Mather, CA 95655 sacza.org

Voices for the Future

A NEW HYPHENATED IDENTITY

ARZAN SAM WADIA

FEZANA will celebrate the 30th anniversary of its founding at a glittering gala in Houston at the end of April 2017, as part of the 30th Annual General Meeting. And, it will be the first time all eight presidents of FEZANA will be in one place. While this is a fantastic photo opportunity, one for the history books, it may be the last time this happens. These men and women are part of the “founding” generation of Zoroastrians in North America and, as they all move on to other ventures and interests in their lives, they leave behind giant footprints for those of my generation to walk in and continue the journey they began.

Over the last six decades and counting, Zoroastrians have been settling in North America to the point where we are now the largest geographic diaspora. FEZANA, The Federation of Zoroastrian Association of North America, was the culmination of community building movements that started a couple of decades before the birth of FEZANA.

As our community grows in North America, we have planted permanent roots in many places. Just in this decade, five new Dar-E-Mehrs have been built; and, we’re counting, as the decade is not over. This permanence is even more important in this fast-changing world where major aspects of our lives are becoming virtual.

The founding generation from the old “motherlands” found a commonality of belief, language, culture, and social customs that

made things simpler for them in many ways. The first generation born on the North American continent did not have the same luck. And, in many ways, that is their biggest challenge. Religion can be self-taught and learnt through practice, culture needs to be imbibed and practiced by example. That is the real task at hand for those of my generation and the ones to follow.

Local associations have done a fantastic service regarding religious education; however, the social and cultural practices are not pursued with the same rigor and structure. There could be various reasons for it. Language is a primary reason. Zarathushti Parsis from the Indian subcontinent do not understand Farsi and Dari spoken by their Iranian Zarathushti brethren. The opposite is true when it comes to Gujarati. Many of our social customs are tied to our surrounding influences. Hence, the chalk and “toran” from India may seem alien to Iranian Zarathushtis, where the Yalda and Sadeh may seem so to those from the Indian subcontinent.

However, the new generation born here has a big advantage, in that everyone speaks a common language. Therein lies the opportunity to celebrate everything. Local associations should emphasize the practice of both Iranian and Parsi Zarathushti customs, festivals, and food. Let us be more varied rather than doing less to assimilate more within our surroundings.

There are plans afoot in



my local association ZAGNY to have regular cooking classes for children, so that they can learn something of our unique cuisines, not only in terms of eating it, but also knowing how to make it and, thus, pass on this part of our culture to the next generation.

The founding generation had the yearning for the motherships they had left behind and they banded together. The next generation has to find their own cause and their own reason to carry the baton and reach higher. It is imperative that we all experience the Zarathushti “game” as players on the field, and not as spectators in the stand.

North America is ready for a new hyphenated identity, one that transcends political geography and rises one step above. Let it be FEZANA’s goal to make Zarathushti-American or Zarathushti-Canadian part of the common vocabulary here, in time for its 50th Anniversary in 2037.

**Atha Jamyat, Yatha Aafri
Nami**

Arzan Sam Wadia is an architect and urban designer in New York City. He serves on the Board of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York and is the current Vice-President of FEZANA. Originally from Mumbai, India, he is equally at home in his city of birth and his city of residence.

EMBRACING CHANGE

As FEZANA marks its 30th anniversary, it looks to the future rather than congratulating itself on past achievements. Contributors to this special edition of FEZANA Journal were asked to contemplate where they see the North American Zarathushti community heading. I see it heading in the direction of establishing a new identity, no less vibrant than the identity of Zarathustis in Iran and the sub-continent, but essentially different. Immigration and integration shapes and changes the bones of any group. Just as the Parsis of India and Pakistan bear little resemblance to the Zarathustis of the country they left behind and have an identity entirely their own, so will North American Zarathustis of the future generation be entirely different from the ones who immigrated from Asia.

Stuart Hall, a cultural theorist, suggested that identities of groups are “... not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture ... It is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute Return” (Hall, 226). We cannot go back, only move forward. If we want our North American community to continue, the first thing we must do is to accept that we cannot use all our energy trying to preserve our *bawa* identity. This may be a controversial recommendation, considering that we are often suggested to include travel programs that encourage youth to reconnect with their roots, recognize our achievements in the diaspora, promote traditional cuisine. and use cultural objects in everyday life. These are all wonderful strategies for maintaining our heritage, but they do little to grow our community. We can talk in committees and conferences about supporting young Zarathushti couples to have three or more children, but the reality is that this is not going to happen. Instead, if we are to aim for Generation Four (and beyond) we need to realistically assess what can be done to achieve the goal.



PRAGMATICALLY ADDRESS INTERMARRIAGE

A significant paradigm shift that is needed will be the recognition that interfaith and interracial marriages are here to stay as North American Zarathustis integrate into North American society. There are several reasons for this:



- (a) This is a predictable phenomenon that Milton Gordon recognized in the 1960s when he presented his “straight-line” theory of racial and ethnic assimilation, which states: as people from different cultural and faith groups live, study, and work together, the suspicions and barriers between groups fade and the likelihood of intermarriage increases. Children of interfaith and/or interracial couples are likely to continue to marry outside their respective groups, thus steadily decreasing the barriers between groups.
- (b) To assimilate into their adopted country (likely a legacy of how refugees from Pars adopted Gujrati ways), Parsi-Zarathustis stress speaking English at home and adopting American cultural norms (Super Bowl parties,

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anyone?). Linguistically, culturally, and educationally, second- and third-generation Zarathushtis are not so very different from other North Americans. It is no wonder then that they find like-minded partners from the indigenous population.

- (c) North American Zarathushtis are, by-and-large, highly-educated and affluent. Research shows a link within minority groups between high education levels and intermarriage (Clark, 2008). The reasons may be that highly-educated people marry at a later age, are less influenced by family and community pressures to intra-marry (because they are more individualistic), have broader intellectual interests, and higher levels of socioeconomic achievement.
- (d) Also, it is a numbers game. The majority of people young Zarathushtis interact with are non-Zarathushti. I have heard suggestions about developing online dating sites like e-Harmony, even Tindr-like apps to provide young Zarathushtis with access to the wider, international Zarathushti community. However, as it is difficult to find the right partner when the world is at your fingertips, the expectation that all Zarathushtis should restrict their search to 0.0002% of the population to find a long distant love is hoping for a Harlequin-miracle.

THE WAY FORWARD

Zarathushtis are not the only ones who are concerned with identity dilution through interfaith marriages. The Jewish community in the Diaspora faces a similar dilemma; however, they have responded to the challenge by turning the conversation from preventing interfaith unions to one of inclusion. FEZANA's member associations could learn from their experiences and strategies.

1. Institutional and Attitudinal Changes

In a July 2016 report, the Institute for Jewish Policy Research found that intermarried couples in the UK were less likely to bring their children up as Jewish. Rabbi Aaron Goldstein, Senior

Rabbi Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue, responded, "Surely, the figures say as much about how the Jewish community treats such couples as it does about the attitudes of the couples themselves? If we treat people with disdain then it is hardly surprising that they choose to opt out." (Oryszczuk). FEZANA's organizations need to repudiate "disdain" and embrace interfaith marriages into their policies and practices. For example, priests performing marriage ceremonies should recognize the matrilineal descent for acceptance into the fold, adapt rituals to be inclusive, and include English translations into rituals and ceremonies. This metamorphosis must be in spirit and action. Children of the union need to be welcomed without discrimination. There should be zero tolerance for priests and leaders who use derogatory terms like "mule" or "half-breed." Efforts should also be made to reach out to "the lost population," i.e. adult children from intermarriages.

The Danforth Jewish Circle, Toronto decided that some ritual leadership roles would be open to both Jews and non-Jews, provided individuals "first engage in a process of Jewish learning, deepening their Jewish knowledge, understanding and commitment." (Sarick, 2016). Similarly, Zarathushti associations could debate ways in which non-Zarathushti partners could become informed and involved.

2. Sessions with Engaged Couples

In her book, *'Til Faith Do Us Part: How Interfaith Marriage is Transforming America*, Naomi Schaefer Riley offers insights into the tensions and successes of interfaith marriages. A theme repeated throughout the book is that couples need to move away from "love conquers all things"

way of thinking and seriously discuss differences in beliefs, children's upbringing, and life passages. Since most couples are not inclined to have such conversations on their own, she suggests that clergy



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should help couples begin the dialogue. FEZANA, in collaboration with the North American Mobed's Council (NAMC), should develop a session for engaged couples to be facilitated by a trained mobed to discuss some tough questions. Will the children be circumcised, christened ...? Will the children have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah or a navjote? Who will take them to Sunday classes and teach them prayers? Which festivals and holy days will be celebrated and how? Will they be buried or cremated? The idea is not to emphasize the differences in beliefs, but to realistically understand how religious beliefs impact life decisions.

3. Support Families to be the Keepers of the Faith

In *A Flame Still Burns*, a study of self-identified Jews from interfaith marriages Beck found several contributory factors in identity formation: (1) having a Bar/Bat Mitzvah was the strongest determinant of later Jewish identity, (2) a Jewish mother was more influential than a Jewish father, (3) having an ongoing and close relationship with a Jewish grandparent was crucial, and, most importantly, (4) more than 60% identified with whatever religion their parents practiced at home. Barring Zarathushtis who live in cities like Chicago, Houston, or Toronto, North American Zarathushtis are scattered all over the continent and cannot benefit from communal interaction to foster a sense of Zarathushti identity. Thus, more than ever, families need to take on the role of keepers of the faith. Going forward, FEZANA needs to develop user-friendly web-based resources for families. For instance, the FEZANA website could have information and resources for parents and children stored in one place to explain and encourage navjotes/sudreh pushi—such as, Jamshed Rivetna's *My First Zoroastrian Prayer Book*—and audio files to teach navjote prayers (the ones currently available on the internet do not pause to let the child repeat the words).

As we head into the future, Zarathushtis in North America collectively and proactively need to stop fearing change and embrace it.

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A NEIGHBORHOOD OF ZARATHUSHTIS

Dear Reader, like many of the authors whose articles appear in this issue, I am concerned that our assimilation into other cultures and the incessant competition for our mindshare from myriad external sources will result in the dissolution of our Zarathushti community and, ultimately, challenge our core beliefs. This isn't a doom and gloom article, rather, I have attempted to advance solutions to counter my concerns, then turn them upside down, shake them, and muse on the results. This article is intended to share my concerns and ruminations with those who can make change happen—of course, that is You.

Close your eyes for a moment and think about what the North American Zarathushti community will look like thirty years from now. What did you see? Perhaps some of you imagined taking your children or grandchildren to a monthly Sunday school class. For the fortunate few who live close to a Zarathushti Center, maybe you thought of attending Sunday school there. Or, perhaps, you were watching these same monthly classes online. Possibly, you thought about doing the same thing you are doing right now, reading about community affairs in FEZANA Journal. Maybe you envisioned a Congress being held at a futuristic hotel.

These are some of the programs and activities that FEZANA and our local associations have successfully pioneered over the past generation. They all play important roles in promoting community and we should build on them. Perhaps that Sunday school class, in thirty years, will also include adult classes so that the community could come together as a whole. Maybe we share more community news through online discussion boards or email chains. We might even want to organize more Congresses.

But, as important as initiatives like these are for a strong community, we are going to have to do more. A community's strength can be measured in many ways, but a useful starting point is to think about how often people within the community interact with one



another. Today, some of us interact once a month at our children's classes, we read FEZANA Journal once a quarter, and we attend a congress once every few years. This is not enough. Even if we expand these initiatives, it will not be enough to sustain us.

We are now at a point where we need to think bigger. If we want a strong community, we need to start thinking about how we can enjoy meaningful daily interactions with each other. Technology provides some answers, but social media and email will only get us so far.

When I close my eyes, and imagine what our North American Zarathushti community should look like in thirty years, I think about enjoying constant daily interactions with other Zarathushtis. For some reason, I always envision Zarathushti neighbors. I remember the Zarathushti neighborhoods in Iran, the colonies in Pakistan, and the baugs of India. I also recall the five young Jewish families I met in my hometown of Atlanta. Together, they decided to buy all the houses at the end of a cul-de-sac. That seemed to work well for them.

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I do not know exactly what a Zarathushti neighborhood in North America would look like, but I know I want to be a part of one. So many good things would come from living with Zarathushti neighbors nearby. Our children would go to the same schools and partake in the same after-school activities, adults could pursue common interests together, and retirees would even get to enjoy one another's company. We would look out for one another. Depending on the neighborhood's size, there would always be a babysitter or a tutor around. If you ever walked past someone's kitchen, the smells would be great. The list of benefits goes on and on.

What can FEZANA do to make Zarathushti neighborhoods a reality? This is something we should think about and discuss more carefully. To shape the contours of this discussion, let's consider the possibilities.

At the extreme, FEZANA could work towards something akin to what the *anjumans* do in Iran or the Parsi Panchayats do in Pakistan and India: they could buy and develop land and then provide long-term living spaces to Zarathushtis (either apartments or houses). Such an initiative would be very difficult for FEZANA, however, and it is unlikely to happen in thirty years. Legal and financial challenges aside, FEZANA does not have the expertise to do housing developments and it was not designed to invest so heavily in localities. Using community resources to serve what would presumably be a small and specific population would be questionable at best. As much as you might be thinking that I wrote this article to get a free house from FEZANA, I concede that this approach is probably not how we should move forward.

Indeed, given FEZANA's limited budget and all the other great programs it supports, expecting FEZANA to devote financial resources to build Zarathushti

neighborhoods is far-fetched at this point. Perhaps in the future if FEZANA establishes an endowment, we could talk about offering incentives such as discounted mortgages to get Zarathushtis to live together, but we are still a long way from there.

FEZANA could possibly still play a role in promoting Zarathushti neighborhoods without spending money, however. Although I have not bought a home yet, I have moved across and within cities several times and this has given me some insight about the process that people go through when they choose a place to live. Generally a family hires a real estate agent, then the real estate agent tells the family about which neighborhoods have which features, and then they make a decision.

For a Zarathushti family that moves into a new city, the family is unlikely to know the local landscape. They might not know where other Zarathushtis live. Perhaps FEZANA could help those who are moving connect with local associations, or better yet, FEZANA could connect us with Zarathushti realtors. For those who already live around other Zarathushtis and want to attract more Zarathushti neighbors, perhaps FEZANA could do a better job in advertising these properties. FEZANA could also consider developing a database of localities that already have large numbers of Zarathushtis.

These strategies for promoting Zarathushti neighborhoods are admittedly half-baked: honestly speaking, I do not yet know the best way for FEZANA to go about helping Zarathushtis live near to one another. But I know what I want our community to look like in the future. Hopefully, when some of you closed your eyes, you shared the same vision. Hopefully we can make Zarathushti neighborhoods a reality.

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ANAHITA KAVIANI DESTJERDI

President, Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (ZSBC)

CONGRATULATIONS TO FEZANA ON ITS 30TH ANNIVERSARY

Dear all,

First, a big CONGRATULATION to FEZANA on its 30th ANNIVERSARY. We, The Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (ZSBC), wish FEZANA all the best for more years to come. Thank you for your dedication and continuing work and effort.

Second, thank you for giving young adults the opportunity to be heard. We appreciate it and are certain many other young Zoroastrians appreciate it as well. We are grateful that you want to know what we think and say as the “future generation.” It means a lot to us and thank you again for this wonderful chance to make our voices heard.

A while ago, a dear member forwarded an e-mail to me from Dr. Dolly Dastoor (Chief Editor of FEZANA Journal) that asked me to write an essay of 1,000-1,500 words for FEZANA Journal’s 30th anniversary issue with the theme of “Voices for the Future.”

Well, my first thought was “that’s nice and I’m honoured.” My second was, “what do I write and do I have the time? I do not have time to sit down and think about the future because I need to think about the NOW. I have so much to do and to get done for my community NOW that there is simply no, or, not much time, to think about the future.”

However, I took the time! I took the time because I think it is very important for us “young emerging leaders” to share our vision and mission. We have the responsibility to share our collective thoughts to our respective communities, we need them to understand that, and we need them to know that we cannot do it alone.

When I became president of ZSBC, my vision was to lead a resurgent, flourishing community whose membership grows stronger and larger. This is still my vision! I am working hard to make it happen—my mission was and remains to “... serve our society with the best of one’s knowledge and belief. To improve in all the fields and bring in new, innovative and creative ideas and all that with the help and support of all the members of this society.”(ZSBC President’s message September 1, 2016 to November 30, 2017)



Unfortunately, I could not really focus on my vision and core mission because I simply am so consumed on just trying to keep everything running and functioning during this challenging time. The reality is that my community, which I serve as a volunteer, is in survival mode. The reality is that we are far from being the dynamic and proactive group that I and we envisioned and, to be honest, our active community members are only a handful. I don’t know if we are unique among other North American communities in this regard or “average.” Therefore, I cannot tell where I see other North American communities heading, but I see my community heading into an uncertain and scary future and, to be honest, I am thinking about the *near* future. To think about thirty years from now is impossible—at least for me.

Therefore, with the support of the members who are still standing, my immediate mission is to keep our most fundamental events (Verahram Izad, Gahanbars, Z-Classes, Norouz...) running.

Please allow me to go back a little in time and lay the foundation to help you better understand what I mean.

Well, when I moved to Canada from Germany, I was very excited to go to the Dare Mehr for the first time. Not only because we did not have Dare Mehr in Germany, but also because I looked forward to joining my new community, join with them as we celebrated our religion, and make new friends. My first night was one of disappointment. There were only maybe twenty people there—mostly elderly. Although I thoroughly enjoyed the evening, my expectations were crushed. I truly thought that with all the opportunities that we have in North America (considering that we have Dare Mehr here and our German co-religionists do not), our Dare Mehr should have been filled with Zoroastrians of all ages and backgrounds; but, that was not the case when I went to my first Dare Mehr in Canada.

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Since then, I have settled in and I have been to Dare Mehr many, many times and, unfortunately, things have not really changed. When I went to my first Dare Mehr, I thought, *maybe* the reason not many people showed up was because it was during a weekday, *maybe* many had to drive long distances after a long and tiring workday, *maybe* because it was dark and rainy outside, or *maybe*... I became focused on understanding why so few were actively involved in my community—was it because of the rationalizations I concocted on their behalf or an unspoken *truth*?

The truth is that more and more Zoroastrians are turning their back on their own communities and faith. It is unfortunate, but it is the truth. At least that is what I observe here.

Most young people are not interested in participating in or becoming an active part of their Zoroastrian community. Why? That is a good question. I do not have the correct, or complete answer. However, I know from listening to some of our young people, that they blame it on the community—**not really understanding or accepting the fact that they are the community!**

Here is a sampling of some of the reasons I have heard:

Whenever I come to Dare Mehr, I do not see any people of my age and I get bored.

There is not much to do so why should I come. They (and mostly it means only the few volunteers that are working overtime to get everything organized...) have no programs for us.

My friends are all “non-Zoroastrian” and it is weird to bring them to our events. We are so different.

Even my parents do not come to Dare Mehr, so, why should I?

I live in Canada now and need to adjust myself to be more Canadian. What do I care about Norouz while everyone else is celebrating Christmas?

Ah, that all gives me such a headache. My

responses are most often to those excuses are:

Next time call your friend and bring him/her with you and then you will not be alone and bored anymore. What about you taking responsibility for a program and starting something fun for everyone instead of waiting and complaining about how others do not plan fun events. Maybe your friends are weird, or maybe they do not know about your religion and community and if they knew, maybe it would not be “weird” and, by the way, what do you mean by weird? Teach your parents a lesson and become their role model, perhaps they need a reminder (or nudge) that whatever they do and where ever they live... **they will always be Zoroastrians!** Darling, so you live in Canada, the first thing you learn in Canada is that you are encouraged to accept diversity and multiculturalism.

I could go on, it is a long list and our community is shrinking more and more. However, that does not help. What would help is our community to stand up for itself and to understand that they are responsible for their own beliefs and community.

The biggest issue is that our Society is not really a community. Yes, right, there is no sense of “WE ARE ONE COMMUNITY.” Otherwise, a lot of our problems would be solved and we could focus on the vision and get on our mission to achieve it.

Therefore, I see an insecure and scary future for my community that I have the honor to serve and if our community remains as it is (always blaming everything on others, never really stepping up to take responsibility, never understanding the meaning of being a community, and so forth) nobody can really help. We are the problem and its solution.

Still, never give up hope, right? I hope that we can change and do better. I hope that we can look to ourselves and find the help we need and that maybe this writing can help others to see our struggles and help us—and vice versa. Therefore, I continue to work hard for my community because I have hope of a better future.

Thank you again for this opportunity, FEZANA, to hear our “Voices,” hopefully that will change the future for the better.

Anahita Kaviani Destjerdi

Born in Iran, grew up in Germany, and has been in Canada (Vancouver) since 2008. In Germany, she studied Education, New German Literature and Social Psychology. In Vancouver besides working, she also volunteers at Richmond Multicultural Community Services, G.V. Counselling and at the Dar-e-Mehr because she believes that giving back to the Community is very important.

THE ZOROASTRIAN SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

**Great work is done by people who are not
afraid to take on leadership.**



CONGRATULATIONS

FEZANA on your 30th Anniversary

**whilst thanking FEZANA for the remarkable work it has
done for the Zarathushti community in North America,
ZSBC wishes it all the very best for the future.**



ZSWS.org

Zoroastrian Society of Washington State



Congratulations to FEZANA on celebrating 30 years ;

*Inspiring and encouraging Zarathushtis in North America
to work collectively and passionately!*

NORTH AMERICA , THE NEXT CHAPTER IN THE ZOROASTRIAN HISTORY

Humata, Hukhta, Huvarashta—approximately 3,000 years ago, these three simple words changed the course of human history, bringing forth the bold new ideas of an Almighty Supreme Creator, of Light and Darkness, Good vs Evil. The concept that everyone was responsible for their own actions, to think and act responsibly upon their own free will, and not just to blindly follow rote instructions handed down through the generations.

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness—241 years ago, these seven simple words launched a revolution that led to the birth of a nation and changed the course of a continent, bestowing upon its inhabitants the inalienable rights to religious freedom, free speech, and the right to govern themselves.

Fast forward to fifty years ago, and we began to see a trickle of Zoroastrians, both Parsis and Iranis, leaving their ancestral lands and moving to the western world. Unlike the diaspora during the 7th–10th centuries, this movement of Parsis from India/Pakistan primarily began as an economic migration, in search of a better life. For the Iranian Zarathushtis, the search for a better life transitioned to an escape from religious persecution after the return of the Ayatollahs. Very soon, that trickle became a torrent and, now, North America is home to a significant portion of the worldwide Zoroastrian population.

The confluence of these ten words is where we are today. The thought foremost in our minds is how to meld these different cultures, traditions, customs, language, and other challenges and move forward, assimilating without losing our identity and our next generation.

We tend to view cultures, customs, traditions, and languages as fixed and unchanging. While that may appear true, they are constantly evolving. There are



two types of change: evolutionary and disruptive. From a cultural perspective, evolutionary changes are slow and subtle; whereas, disruptive changes are sudden, abrupt, and potentially severe. Disruptive events, such as diasporas, migrations, natural disasters, wars, genocide, etc., naturally cause an acceleration in the rate of change in social constructs such as customs and traditions, because survival may be at stake.

For example, the life of Parsis in India, until the 17th century, was very rural and their culture maintained its status quo for generations. The next disruption was the advent of the British, and the subsequent rise of the Parsi business establishment, created a more urban Parsi culture. This may have caused the first and second generation of urban Parsis considerable angst as they tried to adapt to their new environment. We, in North America, are facing a similar challenge and, as we adapt, we are changing our cultural norms as well.

Traditions, customs, rituals, and cultures are not chains that imprison us to the past, but instead, they are a rich vibrant tapestry that envelops and enriches our lives. Each thread of this tapestry is an individual life story, changing ever so subtly. Each row is a new generation and together they create the fabric of our shared experience, our evolving culture, customs, and traditions.

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Zoroastrians bifurcated into two primary branches: the Iranian experience and the Parsi experience. Slowly, but surely, they started diverging, based on influences from their environment. The result is that they are now distinctly different in terms of language, food, traditions, and, even religious ceremonies. We are now at a crossroads. North America is the place and now is the time for these two major branches of Zoroastrianism to merge and create the foundation for the next Zoroastrian century.

What should we do and how do we create the foundation for the next resurgence? How should the North American experience change who we are and what we can become? Here are a few thoughts to help move us forward.

1. Stop worrying about the traditions and customs. As we go forward old ones will evolve and new ones will be created.
2. Build our religious institutions, both physical and spiritual, in North America. Build the Atash Kadehs and Agiaries, add training centers for Navars, and higher learning for our priests. Don't blindly copy, but adapt them to our environment. Stop looking at India/Pakistan/Iran for approval, but only as guidance and reference for the future.
3. The Zoroastrians of North America must create our own identity by integrating and expanding our communities. Bring together Zoroastrians from all over the world and create strong communal bonds. Know that, even though we have different traditions and customs, together we can forge a new beginning.
4. Build a strong financial foundation for our communities and organizations so that they thrive and expand.
5. Educate our children and adults on how to live as a Zoroastrians.
6. Bring the spouses and children of mixed marriages back into our fold. Make them an integral part of our community.
7. As Zoroastrians, we love to socialize. Organize more entertaining and fun events to get

all the different generations together and create lifelong bonds.

8. Change is inevitable, the rate of change is variable, standing still and looking back is not an option.

9. We must move away from the concept that India, Pakistan, or Iran is the source of our guidance. By the second generation, interactions with the home country will be significantly diminished and, by the third generation, completely gone. So, instead of looking back, let's look forward and create our own destiny.

10. Bring the lost generation (18 to 30-year-old singles) back into the community by creating special events just for this age group. They don't want to be surrounded by kids or their parents' generation.

Western democracies are the natural nurturing ground for the rebirth of Zoroastrianism. We have overcome adversity and hardships before, adapted to new environments, faced and met numerous challenges, and flourished in the face of disaster. It would be ironic if we faced extinction because of the very freedoms we now enjoy in North America and other western democracies. Our challenge is simple, but we make it more difficult by allowing trivial issues to derail us. It doesn't matter where one stands on the continuum from ultra-traditional to non-traditional—we all have the same goals. That is, the perpetuation and expansion of the Zoroastrian faith. But, instead of focusing on the prize, we let our differences define us and separate us. As the cliché goes, you cannot drive forward if you keep looking in the rearview mirror.

In closing, let's borrow a phrase from the U.S. Marines: *Improvise—Adapt—Overcome*. We can do this without losing our religious identity, without changing our heritage, and without worrying about our customs and traditions. Let's move forward, adapt to our new environment, and overcome any adversity, any challenge, while staying faithful to our core principles, established 3,000 years ago—Humata, Hukhta, Huvarashta.

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*In appreciation of FEZANA's 30
years of nurturing and unifying
the Zoroastrian community in
North America*



Zoroastrian Association of Houston
Home of the 2017 FEZANA AGM
Home of the North American Zoroastrian Congress 2020

PARSI: THY NAME IS CHARITY

Parsi, thy name is charity, is so rightly said. We, as a religion and community, have always been charitable and have done all we could for humanity. It's just not here in North America that we have excelled, but also back home in India, where we have been the backbone and pioneers of many businesses and institutions.

Many of us have moved far from our homeland looking for fresh pastures and opportunities. When we came to this land of opportunity, we came with many dreams and hopes. Although it has not been a smooth and easy ride for everyone, the largess of others has often changed lives. Specifically, FEZANA's scholarship programs have made life-changing impacts to our deserving candidates' lives. There are many students from our Zoroastrian community who have the intelligence, but have run short of funds to pursue their educational dreams.

FEZANA and its scholarship programs have come as godsend to many of our students; however, there are many of our young students that are unaware of these valuable and important financial aid programs.

We need to increase our internal promotion of FEZANA scholarship programs and seek ways of bringing awareness of these programs to more and more deserving individuals. Also, I would like to note that it would be a great step forward if FEZANA were to provide financial aid to our international students who come here for further studies. As we know, many international students start their academic career abroad, depending on financial assistance from their parents and friends. Studying abroad incurs additional expenses for housing, travel, and cost-of-living differentials; any help that FEZANA could provide to these youngsters (and their parents and friends) to help defray these incremental



expenses would be more than an extra spoon of sugar in their coffee—it would be the difference between a good education and a stellar education. As this could be a life-changing investment by our community, this should be thought about and considered in the future.

It is wrong to think that the Zoroastrians who have left the shores of India have also left their culture and religious beliefs behind. In fact, it's just the opposite. We, who have settled in North America, have not forgotten our roots and steadfastly cling to them like a creeper to a wall. We do follow all the rituals and customs which were imbued in us by our ancestors. Each of us, in our own little way, try to follow in the footsteps of our Mammai Mammawaji (maternal grandparents), Bapai and Bapawaji (paternal grandparents), and the guiding lights of our parents. It is so truly said that one can take away a Parsi from Khushroo Baugh, but you cannot take away Khushroo Baugh from a Parsi.

We the North American Zoroastrian community are headed in the right direction and, come what may, hope to further prosper and grow. With our zeal, hard work, and aspirations nothing but the best should follow. Our new generations, which are

Voices for the Future

growing up in this land, are well-guided by the elders of our community. It is wonderful to see, in certain cities and places, that religious classes and camps are being held for the youth of our community to keep them informed about our religion and culture. We, who reside in Florida, are blessed to be under the guidance and fellowship of our very dear Ervad Soli Dastur and his dear wife JoAnn. They have stood by us like pillars of strength and guided us every step of the way with religious ceremonies, for pious and happy occasions, and functions. Soli Bhai has reached and influenced many of us via his teaching classes and online preaching; we are fortunate to be the recipients of his learned offerings. One would be surprised to know that, for the five days of Muktd ceremonies, he and JoAnn performed all the rituals and prayers from morning to night for our dearly departed in the most pious way. Additionally, the annual Gahambhar ceremonies are performed under his guidance and supervision at Orlando and Miami they are something to look forward to and participate in. Soli Bhai has always been an inspiration to us—the youth—and has been our guiding light. As Soli Bhai has mentored and shared his knowledge with us, I am sure there are other such noble souls in other locations throughout North America who similarly inspire their youth and keep them close to their cultural and religious roots and background.

The FEZANA Journal, in its own way, has tried to bind our small, but vibrant, community together with its articles, news, and information. It has kept us well-informed and well-connected with each other. The scholarships that they offer to the deserving students has helped many youngsters to fulfill their dreams and achieve their life goals. Words are not enough to fully express our appreciation for the role FEZANA is playing in getting us all together and keeping us connected with one another, as well as being a valued resource for of information and

guidance. The members of FEZANA are dedicated, committed to performing a selfless job and nurturing our community as it grows and flourishes more and more everyday. Thank you.

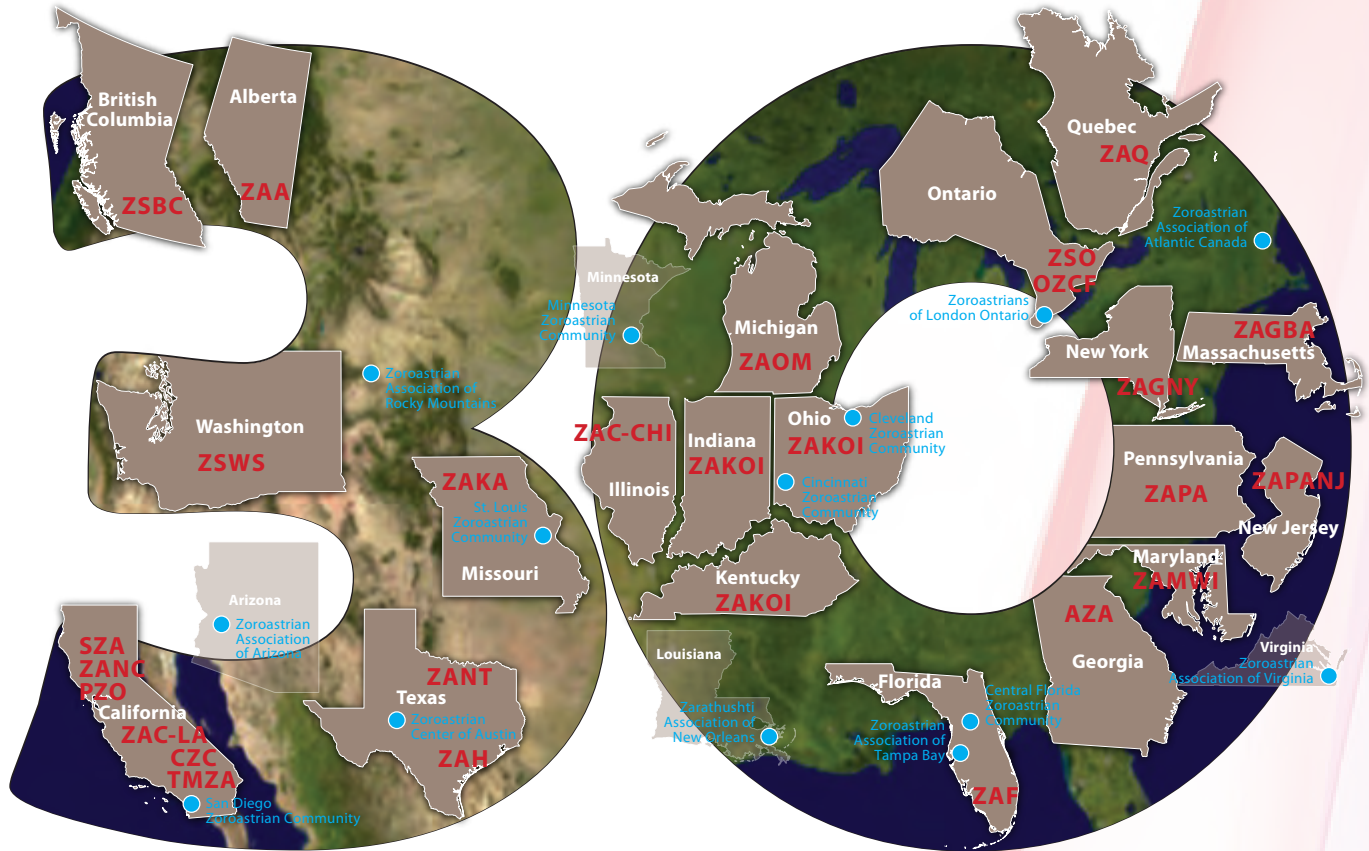
Its so very heartening to know about the opening of new Dar-E-Mehers in North America. I hope that more such places of worship for the Zoroastrian community are built and maintained for future generations to come.

A very important aspect of our community, which everyone needs to be reminded of, is the need to be united and preserve our culture/traditions for the future. I believe that our young generation needs to step up and take responsibility to ensure that our religion is kept alive for generations. A way of accomplishing this is for our youth to communicate among their peers and reaffirm their commitment to the community. There are a lot of us that are experts in our various fields and finding a way to leverage that knowledge would help us to preserve and maintain our religion/tradition/culture as we go forward. It is true that youngsters today are too much involved in their own lives in this fast-paced world. But, we really need to become introspective and align our priorities in such a way that we find time for our beautiful community. The key to our future prosperity and communal health is dependent on all of our young emerging leaders, around the world, coming together, communicating, and taking ownership of the future.

I was exposed to FEZANA at a very young age and sincerely want to give forward and help others in our lovely community. I will try my level best to be involved and hope to create some change in this flourishing community.

***Afsaan Kermani**, lives in Orlando, Florida, and is a Computer Engineer by Profession. He works in the Healthcare IT field. He has been actively involved in the Zoroastrian Community throughout the past years, currently serves as the WZCC (World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce)—Central Florida President, and is co-chair of the FEZANA Scholarship Committee.*

FEZANA



YEARS OF DEDICATED SUPPORT TO THE ZOROASTRIANS OF NORTH AMERICA

We appreciate all that you have done, and continue to do, to bring together the Zoroastrian Communities throughout North America.

Keep up the good work from all your friends at the **Zoroastrian Association of Florida**.



zafonline.org

A PRAGMATIC APPROACH FOR OUR COMMUNITY'S SURVIVAL

I will be frank: if we continue on our current trajectory, I cannot state much optimism about the future of our community. Thirty years from now, the Zoroastrian community in North America might very well be numerically stronger than it is today. This growth, however, will be due to continued migration from India, Pakistan, and Iran—not from those of us who are already here. Our community bonds will probably be looser and weaker, and the transmission of Zoroastrianism to future generations in North America will remain an open question. The threat of our disappearance and extinction, I believe, is as strong in North America as it is in our original homelands. I wonder if, long-term, our potential disappearance in North America might precede that in India or Iran.

Today, it is challenging to be an ethnoreligious minority anywhere in the world; it is particularly challenging in North America. We live in highly assimilative societies. We are dispersed in small numbers across a vast continent and, even in the same cities, we are scattered miles away from one another. Zoroastrian communities in India and Iran remained tight and close-knit because of geographic and social proximity, something that is quite difficult to replicate in places such as Toronto, Houston, or New York.

In spite of these challenges, it must be noted that FEZANA has, over the past thirty years, done a commendable job of sustaining and creating ties among emerging population centers in the United States and Canada. FEZANA could not rely upon the centuries-old institutions and corpuses of funds that exist in Bombay or Tehran. It has, instead, forged new institutions, such as this journal, and brought together community members in rented school auditoriums or churches. Numerous students—myself included—have benefited from FEZANA scholarships. We have recently witnessed a building boom, of sorts, of Zoroastrian centers and *dar-e-mehers* in various cities. At the same time, FEZANA has, by and large, avoided the poisonous politics that rankle the Parsi community in India; instead, it is marked with a praiseworthy tone of civility and inclusiveness.

Why, then, am I pessimistic? I have written elsewhere about the demographic crisis that Zoroastrians face worldwide. This crisis—largely driven by late marriage and non-marriage—is anecdotally evident here in North America, as well, although we have no precise demographic figures with which to work.

Here in the diaspora, however, what worries me more is the long-term transmission of our religion and culture to subsequent generations. I am extremely worried about the following question: will our



descendants remain Zoroastrian? I have been saddened by the sheer number of my fellow American- or Canadian-born Zoroastrians who remain ignorant or apathetic about our heritage. I have seen many of them marry out of the community. What is the likelihood of them passing on the religion to their children? I have been troubled by the number of elderly Zoroastrians I have met in North America who tell me that none of their grandchildren were brought up in our faith. All of this is symptomatic of a serious existential problem in our community.

In our desire to avoid polarization and politics, we in North America have oftentimes neglected an important duty: to ensure our community's self-preservation. I mean, specifically, encouraging and facilitating in-marriage among young Zoroastrians. Again, we have no precise demographic data for North America, but marriage announcements, such as those published in this journal, suggest that our rate of intermarriage is quite high. Do not get me wrong: I think that we must continue to be inclusive of intermarried families. We must especially ensure that their children—regardless of whether the mother or father is a Zoroastrian—remain active members within our community.

But, at the same time, this should not preclude emphasizing the importance of finding a Zoroastrian spouse. I think that we in the diaspora have wrongly interpreted promotion of in-marriage as a politically conservative position. It is not. For any small, ethnoreligious community, endogamy is not a conservative or liberal question, but rather the reason for why we are here in the first place. The liberal position on marriage should not be, "It does not matter who you marry," but rather, "Give your best effort to find a Zoroastrian spouse." If we as a community want to have a future, then we should put more resources into efforts that promote

Voices for the Future

in-marriage, rather than studiously avoiding the issue over worries about its political overtones.

High incidence of intermarriage, of course, is not a challenge unique to the Zoroastrians of North America. The American Jewish community has been furiously debating the implications of intermarriage for several decades. A recent study by the Pew Research Center (“What Happens When Jews Inter-marry,” November 2013) supported the contention that intermarriage tended to diminish Jewish identity through subsequent generations. Children of intermarriages were less likely to identify themselves as Jewish and were more likely to marry outside of the community (only 17 percent of them were found to have a Jewish spouse).

Zoroastrians are fond of comparing themselves to the Jews. We must remember, however, that our position is far more precarious than that of the Jewish community. America is home to as many as eight million Jews. Numerous other Jewish diaspora communities exist around the world. There is, of course, a Jewish nation-state, Israel. We Zoroastrians in North America today probably number, at most, a paltry 20,000 to 25,000. Worldwide, there are most likely no more than 122,000 Zoroastrians (reports of mass conversions in Iran, Russia, Central Asia, and Iraqi Kurdistan are largely unsubstantiated and should not be seriously entertained). We could, if we wanted to, all fit into a particularly large football stadium.

What steps, therefore, can FEZANA take over the next thirty years to remedy our situation? Primarily, I believe that FEZANA needs to devote the bulk of its resources to youth activities—far more than it does at present. It is good and proper that FEZANA participates actively in interfaith meets, United Nations delegations, community service and humanitarian work, and myriad other civic activities. It is commendable that FEZANA continues to expand its scholarship program and its corpus for critical assistance and religious education. But, these efforts will be in jeopardy unless we ensure that there are future generations to continue this good work.

It is heartening to see that so many young Zoroastrians are now members of the FEZANA board and the organization’s various committees. I hope that they will be able to focus on efforts that bring together youths from across the continent, inculcating a stronger sense of community identity. In particular, it would be good to revive the North American Youth Congress, which has not been held for several years. Congresses play an important

role in getting youth to meet one another and, even, marry one another—indeed, my wife and I first met at the Dubai World Zoroastrian Congress in 2009, and we know of two other Mumbai-based married couples who also met here.

It would be good to have regional youth meets (bringing together, say, youth from the Bay Area and Los Angeles, or New York, Boston, and Washington) as well as to support youth activities that are not necessarily limited to North America. Could FEZANA help fund participants to youth congresses and meetings in India and Iran, or further help defer expenses for participants in the Return to Roots program? Can there be better interaction with other young Zoroastrians in the diaspora in places, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand?

Lastly, I would encourage FEZANA to examine youth programs and initiatives in Iran and India, evaluating what has worked and not worked. In India, there have been several innovative ideas for promoting youth interaction and community cohesiveness. The Holiday Program for Youth has played an exceptional role in bringing together young Parsis from around the country, providing many Parsis with their first real sense of community bonding and identity. Parsi youths have recently launched Aapro App, a dating app that complements the many Zoroastrian matrimonial websites that exist in India.

By supporting youth activities, I am suggesting that FEZANA can take a pragmatic approach in addressing our community’s most important concern: our long-term survival. I have argued that promotion of in-marriage should not be a political issue—it should be recognized as an imperative. At the same time, I strongly believe that the North American community must continue to remain inclusive and welcoming of intermarried couples and their children. Taken together, these policies might sound a little contradictory or incongruous. I instead believe that they constitute a pragmatic middle-way for sustaining our religion and culture. We have wasted far too much time on politics and dogmatism; it is time that we be more pragmatic.

If we can reorient our priorities based on pragmatism, then, perhaps, my current pessimism about our future will be proven wrong-headed. I earnestly hope that this will be the case.

Dinyar Patel is an assistant professor of history at the University of South Carolina and a past recipient of the FEZANA Scholarship. He completed his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 2015. He is married to Parinaz Madan, a Mumbai-based solicitor.

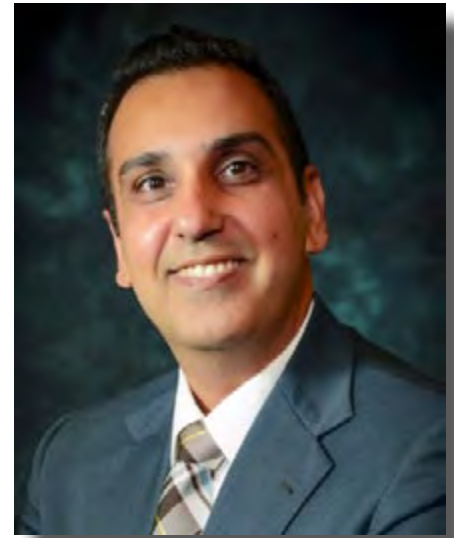
DAR-E-MEHRS WILL NURTURE FUTURE ZOROASTRIANS

Having lived in the United States for almost 20 years, I have seen many children grow up and become young adults. Growing up in the Zoroastrian-American communities that we created for them has had a great, positive influence on their development. The Zoroastrian Sunday School classes, as well as having a safe and home-like temple, has been a great help to them.

I think that the many Zoroastrian temples across North America have achieved amazing results, which demonstrates community's growth and vigor. The positive influences of these results will certainly motivate our youth to stay in our community,

get to know one another, and, hopefully, find their life partner.

I suggest that we should have more temples established and run in different cities across North America in the future. Of course, this is easier said than done. However, on the other hand, this has been a proven way to keep our religion in the fold and pass it to next generations. When we have these temples, the Zoroastrian kids will have a second home they can go on the weekends to learn about our religion and its basic tenets. It will be more effective since they see other Zoroastrian kids gathering on regular basis, which will create bonds for the rest of their lives and, hopefully, keep them in touch. These



points are based on my personal thoughts and experiences. I hope that they may be found helpful to FEZANA Journal's readers its 30th anniversary—for which, all of us Zoroastrians should be thankful.

Armin Ghaiby was born in Tehran, graduated from Azad University, Tehran with a major in Business Management. He works as a Realtor in California.

On FEZANA's auspicious 30th Anniversary



Wishes our Zarthushti brethren a bright future

Answering the Call

How attending a recent conference call refreshed my view of everything good about FEZANA and the present generation of first-class leadership

On the auspicious occasion of FEZANA's 30th anniversary, FEZANA Vice President Arzan Wadia asked if I'd serve as a judge on the review panel for a logo competition he was promoting throughout the North American Zarathushti community. I gladly accepted. I viewed the logo competition as a phenomenal way to reach out into the community and harness the creativity of Zarathushtis across North America. A new logo captures and defines a generation, reflects who we are as North American Zarathushtis and what we believe and value.

Most of the voices on the first and only conference call we held were voices familiar to me. Fellow PR, marketing, design colleagues who were brought together to evaluate, discuss and critique 100 incredible entries. It was an informal reunion with some and a delightful first-time meeting for others. We also were honored to be joined by FEZANA President Homi Gandhi, and VP Wadia who oversaw the project.

We varied in age, gender and background, and discussed a variation of views and perspectives during a wide-ranging discussion of the logos. We were thrilled with the turnout, the creativity, the next generation feel and creativity in design, and the thoughtfulness put into each entry that reflected a different perspective of FEZANA against the backdrop of a North American Zarathushti identity.

As we entered the 90th minute of the call, however, laughing, sharing experiences and sharing raw candor, we realized we'd need to reach a consensus decision and to be flexible on our preferences in zeroing in on the top two or three entries. Despite our differences in perception and preference, we were able to come together and deliver consensus choices for the benefit of the group.

The experience was fulfilling and worthwhile, and we brainstormed on a number of ways to cross-promote



the incredible FEZANA art work developed at the grassroots level by North American Zarathushtis as young as six-years-old.

More importantly, the exercise reminded me that fruitful, substantive dialogue, consensus decision-making and an understanding of views different from our own continue to be the critical ingredients required for us as a community to be successful.

Thanks to fresh, next generation leadership from Arzan Wadia, and active engagement and perspective shared by the wise President Gandhi, I left the conference call fulfilled and proud; particularly in hearing the ideas and reactions of my fellow judges.

FEZANA hasn't always worked cohesively. Each passage of time has been marked, and sometimes marred, by varying leadership styles, personalities and competing interests. This we cannot change. But we can learn from our failings and benefit from what we've done right to pave a path toward harmony and goodwill as a unified North American Zarathushti community.

The conference call refreshed my thinking on how we need to work for the collective good of our community, and advance by:

- electing our administrators wisely;
- working toward shared, common goals;
- unifying where there is division;
- compromising and reconciling during impasse;
- promoting our religion actively to non-Zarathushtis;

Voices for the Future

- investing in our infrastructure;
- leading by example; and finally,
- being governed by a philosophy that puts the good of the community ahead of our own self-interest.

As FEZANA's public relations co-chair, I have had the pleasure of working alongside a number of leaders in the current administration; they are focused,

responsible, agile, and working hard to advance FEZANA.

Let us take pride in FEZANA's 30 incredible years, in our maturity and transformation over three decades, as a responsible governing body, in the growth of our 26 member associations and 15 corresponding groups, and look confidently to the future with a sense of pride and anticipation that our best days are ahead of us.

Jim Engineer co-chairs FEZANA's Public Relations committee and is a board member of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago. He has served as a guest editor, writer and founding youth editor of the FEZANA Journal, and most recently led marketing efforts for the 15th Zoroastrian Games in Chicago. Jim also serves as a founding director of NextGenNow, working with his peers to foster inter-generational unity, and leadership incubation through: panel discussions at congresses, articles in journals, focus groups, social media engagement; and in contributing thought leadership to strategic planning efforts.

Professionally, Jim is an award-winning public relations professional and is a Managing Partner at Naperville, Illinois-based Rainmaker Growth Partners (www.rainmakergrowth.com), where he parlays more than 20 years of technology public relations and marketing expertise. Jim resides in Chicago's western suburbs with two incredible daughters and an aging English bulldog.

Come join us for
The 11th World Zoroastrian Congress
Perth, Australia
June 1st - 4th 2018



info@wzcpertth.com.au



Congratulations on turning 30

Wishing all the associations under the FEZANA umbrella and their members all the very best on this momentous occasion. This is a truly fantastic achievement operating seamlessly for the past 30 years!

Hats off to all the hard working, visionary and dedicated members who founded FEZANA and to those that have maintained its legacy. May FEZANA continue to grow from strength to strength and be a leading example to the worldwide Zoroastrian community for many years to come.

The 11th World Zoroastrian Congress Organising Committee

See you all in Australia - 2018



www.11wzcpertth.com.au

“If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.”

- Sir Isaac Newton

Saluting FEZANA, its devoted and hard working administrators, 26 vibrant member associations and 15 pioneering corresponding groups on a well deserved 30-year anniversary.

May we continue to build, grow, reconcile and advance our treasured North American Zarathushti community in solidarity.



Jim Engineer
Managing Partner

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With best wishes on FEZANA's 30th Anniversary Celebrations!

From

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**Thank you Fezana for 30 years of
leadership and for the
preservation of the Sacred Fire in
North America**





Happy 30th Anniversary
FEZANA

**May the Zarathushti community in North America
grow and prosper together in unity and friendship**

Congratulations & Best Wishes

FEZANA

*on serving the Zoroastrian Community
in North America for 30 Years.*

We salute the contributions of all who made this possible.

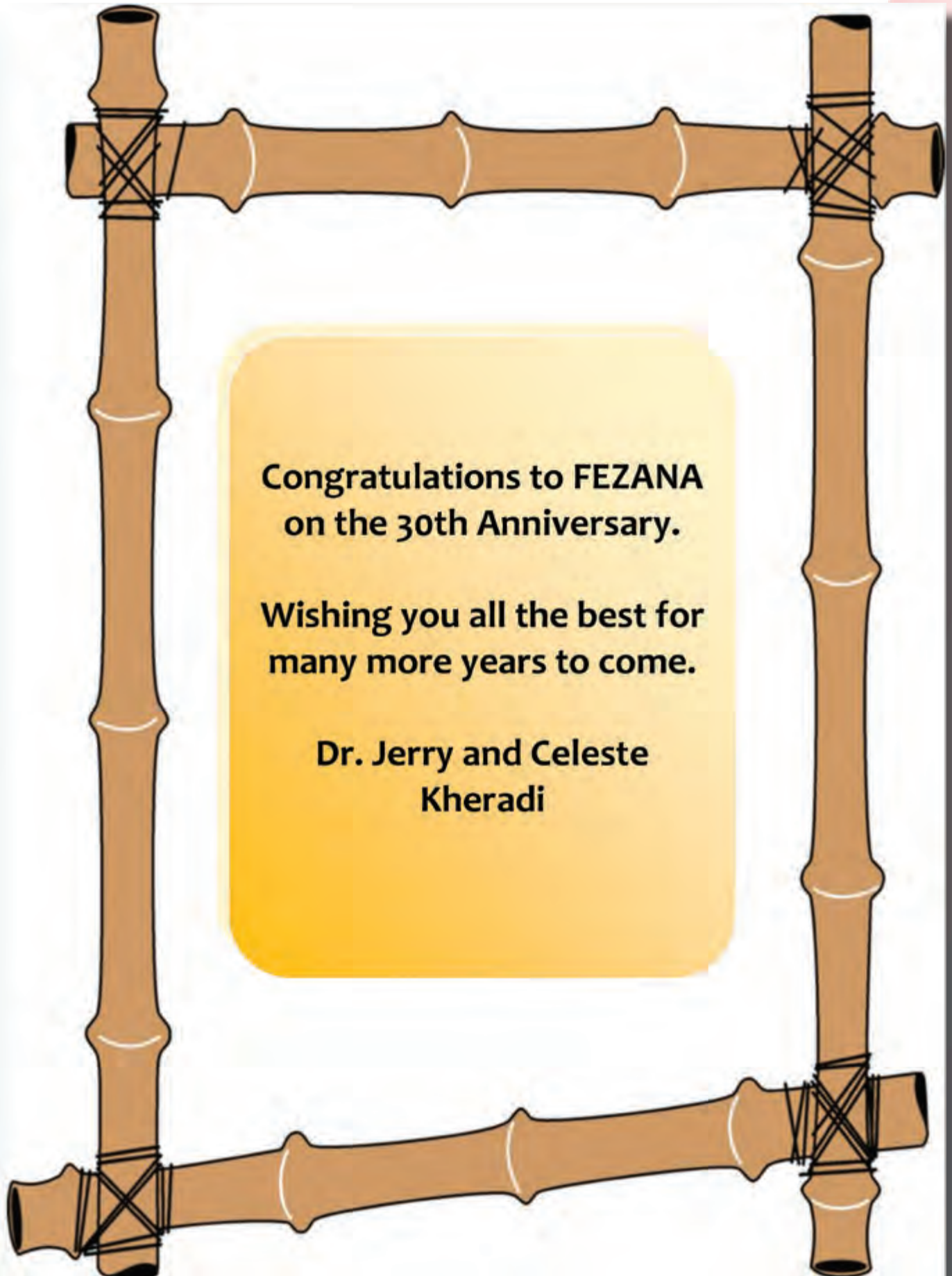


Zoroastrian Association of California
Orange, California





The Zoroastrian Association of Michigan congratulates FEZANA on its 30 years of service to the Zoroastrian community and we look forward to 30 more years of promoting our faith.



**Congratulations to FEZANA
on the 30th Anniversary.**

**Wishing you all the best for
many more years to come.**

**Dr. Jerry and Celeste
Kheradi**



WORLD ZOROASTRIAN ORGANISATION, LONDON
 FELICITATES FEZANA ON ITS 30th ANNIVERSARY OF
 REPRESENTING THE NORTH AMERICAN ZOROASTRIAN COMMUNITY
 AND WISHES THEM CONTINUED SUCCESS



WZO is open to all Zoroastrians, their spouses (irrespective of their faith) and their children
 WZO supports the youth. Membership is free to all students under 25.
 WZO US Region representative: Kayomash Melita wzo_usa@w-z-o.org
 WZO Canada representative: Ervad Dr Jehan Bagli wzo_canada@w-z-o.org
 Share our ideals and become members of WZO by applying at <https://www.w-z-o.org/membership/>



HAPPY 30th ANNIVERSARY, FEZANA!!!

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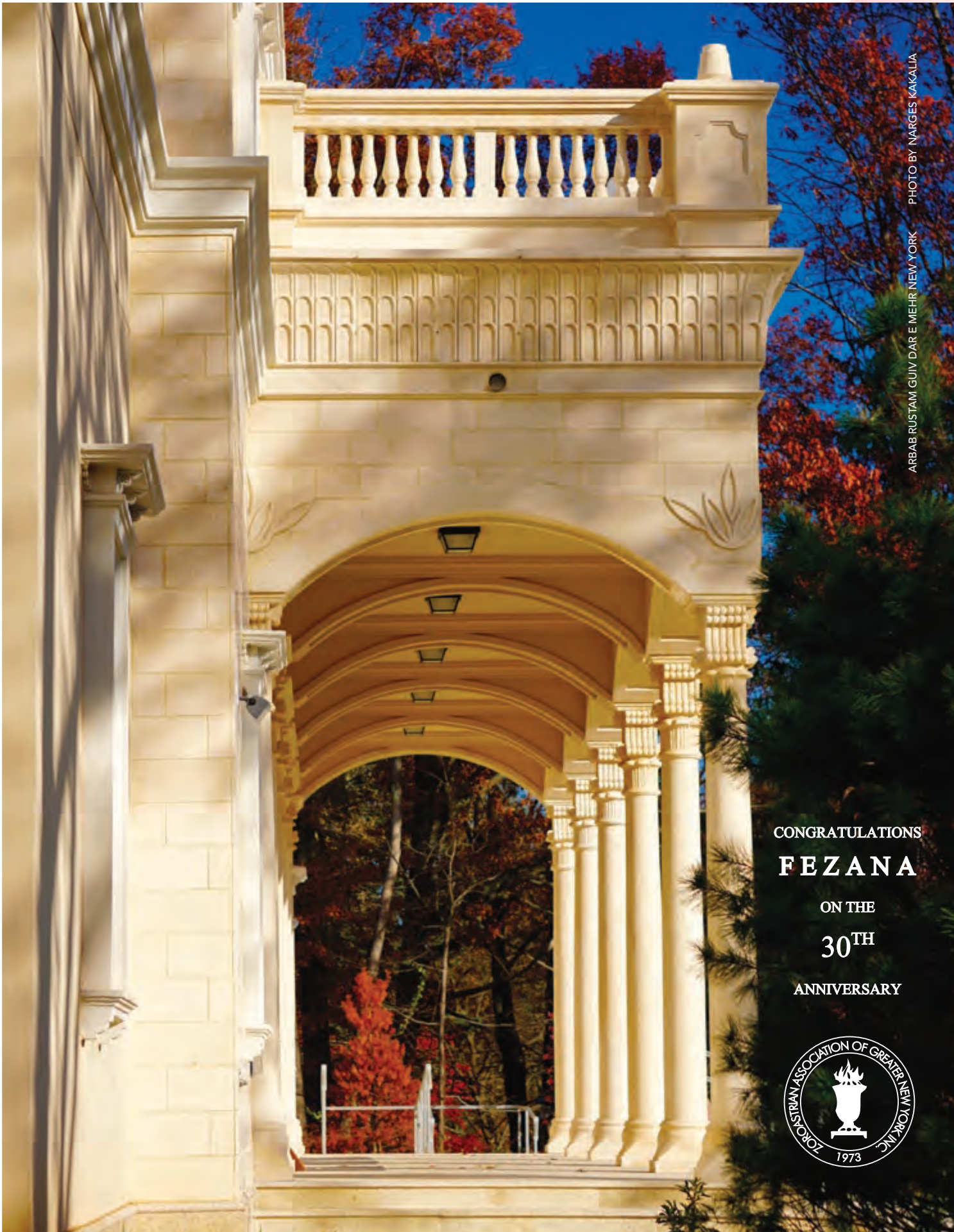
- * Koprapak * Badampak * Ribbon Toffee * Persian Toot *
- * Mava Cake * Macaroons * Puff Pattice * Sali *

Mandap, Flowers & More ...

- *Silk/fresh floral arrangements * hars * torans * Mandap *



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ARBAB RUSTAM GUV DAR E MEHR NEW YORK PHOTO BY NARGES KAKALIA

CONGRATULATIONS
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In loving memory of Mrs. Shehnaz Neville Munshi who passionately dedicated her life to educate Zoroastrian Parsi youth about the religion and who spared no efforts to promote the rich Parsi culture and its timeless traditions. She travelled to remote villages in Gujrat to record the songs and stories of our brethren and then partnered with scholars and artists to bring their stories and songs to the world.

Her life was one of selfless devotion and inspiration for the Parsi Youth in Mumbai. I remain ever inspired by her example.

"May the Wise Lord who reigns at will grant to each of us that which he desires"
(Yasna 43.1)

Happy 30th Birthday FEZANA.
May you flourish serving the Zarathushti community and all humanity!

**Best wishes to FEZANA
on 30 successful years
of serving the Zarathushti community,
Yasmin and Shapur Pavri**

**Congratulations
FEZANA**

**For 30 years of service
To the North American Zarathushti Community
Wishing you continued success in the Years
ahead**

**Katayun Kersi Kapadia
Zarin, Farrokh, Tralene**



In Loving Memory of the late
Khorshed Jungalwala

Who dedicated her life with extraordinary passion, broad vision and with spirit of righteousness to serve the Zarathushti Community. We wish FEZANA a very happy and successful 30th Anniversary.

May the bright light of Zoroastrianism continue to shine on to forge another 30 successful years of Zarathushti spirit for FEZANA.

Firoze, Cynthia, Ferzin, Rajan, Jehangir,
Julie, and Davin

**“IF YOU DREAM IT,
YOU CAN DO IT”**

BEST WISHES

NILOUFER & EDUL DAVER

Diaspora

The question we asked leaders in the diaspora across the world is "Will the diaspora of the next generation maintain the Zarthushti creed, culture and community for the next 30 years?"

LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD

KERSI B. SHROFF

A NEW BEGINNING

An increasing Zoroastrian population in the West and the thirst of many others to adopt the creed of Zarathushtra are cause for an optimistic outlook, compared to declining numbers in India, Iran, and Pakistan. During these initial decades of settlement, our renewed "immigrant" energy has been expended on achieving individual economic sustainability and for creating a community infrastructure to further our common religious and social needs. A significant element of the diaspora is the fortunate coming together of the two major strains of our faith and traditions—Iranian and Parsi Zoroastrianism. The Islamic revolution in Iran has ironically given us the opportunity for revitalizing our Rivayats from the merger of the two traditions separated for centuries.

The decades of our presence in the West have already seen the nurture and growth of foundational institutions that have a great potential to serve us well into the coming years.

A MODERN TRANSFORMATION

These new beginnings also require a reappraisal of the traditions and practices that we have brought with us and as to what and how they are best conveyed to the coming generations. A mass of youth is growing up that awaits a transfer of their inheritance of Zoroastrian teachings, history, and traditions. They are faced with a sea of multiple faiths and communities in which they must find a rightful place, and be comfortable in their identity based on a cohesive belief system viewed through a modern lens.

Throughout the ages, we have gone through transformations to meet changing times. Zoroaster's teachings "travelled" in oral form from its origins to eastern Iranian lands and eventually reached western Iran. The codifications of the scriptures came much later, largely at the behest of the



Sasanian King Ardeshir who commissioned his High Priest Tansar to collect scattered Avestan works to prepare an authorized compilation of the sacred texts in Pahlavi.¹ Later, in India, to ensure the survival of the Parsi community certain traditions were adopted. Post-Sasanian developments in Iran continued to see the emergence in the ninth and tenth centuries CE of other religious texts in Pahlavi. This was done over two thousand years after the death of the Prophet.

The reappraisal requires a frank airing of the beliefs and doctrines that have led to schisms within what should be a one faith community. In the absence of an authoritatively endowed hierarchy of Mobeds² and community leadership, it may be overindulgent to expect a Sasanian-type renewal of the scriptures, with a generally accepted rendering, including into English, easily understood by the newer generations in the diaspora. But, at the very least, we need to create common ground among the various categories of adherents to the faith: those who strongly believe in the mantric vibrations of Avestan texts, emphasizing their hidden esoteric

Diaspora

meaning; those for whom the rituals are very important, while leaving aside questions of their meanings; and, those who look for a theology, based on meanings rather than just rituals and stress the differences between the origin and nature of the various texts.³ It is noted that as a result of the “lack of shared premises,” even today the followers of these different schools are unable to communicate among themselves.

These differences are in addition to the sects that arose out of controversies concerning the calculation of the calendar, which persist to the present day. The diaspora is also leading to a thinner dispersal of a small community over wider geographical regions. Unless these differences are amicably resolved, there is a danger of individual communities settling into the same schisms, or even adopting newer forms that may give cause for the labeling of Zoroastrians in Country X as “super liberal” and those in State or Province Y as “arch traditionalists.”

A VIGOROUS DEBATE

We can learn from other communities that have gone through similar experiences, whether they be “reformist Jews” or those who may practice Buddhism in ways that have newly evolved from earlier teachings. An inspiring example for a vigorous debate may be taken from a movement among Christians in the American Midwest, during what is called the “Golden Age of Freethought” 1870s -1910s.⁴ A society was formed in 1870 to encourage German Christians to band together, debate, and publish, for the benefit of their young generation. The leaders called for provocative and intellectually robust arguments, even against Christianity itself and contradictions in the Bible. One clergyman, Roger Ingersoll, challenged audiences to think for themselves and critique their own philosophy and beliefs. The result was the decrying of mere religiosity and the further illumination of the Midwest’s conceptions of the religion.

During the movement, an adverse example even occurred of a Christian commune, organized on a specific theology, that folded due to “theological squabbling.”

We, too, need to discuss and debate—but not attack, differences of doctrine, to reach a new, via media, wider common ground on the various approaches to the scriptures. The outcome of such

a movement must be implemented so that the differences do not persist to our detriment.

PRESSURES FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES

The comments made by Professor Skjaervo during the 2nd North American Gatha Conference to the “common Zoroastrian man, woman, and youth,” continue to hold merit:

Modern Zoroastrians as I have gotten to know them ... in New York and Boston have a real problem. Being a small religion in a country that tends to efface religious differences ..., they are clearly faced with the very real prospect of extinction... I have repeatedly suggested to Zoroastrians that instead of looking to Western scholarship ... they should look at their own culture ... and try to find there what it is that has permitted it to survive a millennium and a half of adversity and intense pressure from surrounding religions and cultures, after having, been a state religion for another millennium and a half.⁵

The reference to “pressure from surrounding religions” must remind us of the determined efforts by a Scottish missionary, John Wilson, to convert Parsis to Christianity in 19th century India.⁶ There are even modern counterparts of that missionary activity, particularly on college campuses. As was found from just a cursory look at missionary literature, the Wilson-type threat to influence the young is present, real, and cannot be ignored.

One comprehensive and currently accessible Christian website degrades Zoroastrianism for allegedly having “fire as its supreme deity of worship.”⁷ It claims: “Zoroastrians are prejudiced against non-Zoroastrians but the prejudice can be negated by a missionary who is highly educated.”

In a related site, Global Prayer Digest, the Daily Topic, as recently as September 2015, called to “Pray for godliness and righteousness to change the hearts of the Parsees of India. Pray that churches and missions will evangelize the Parsees. Pray that Parsees will be attracted to Jesus. May they know the fire of the Holy Spirit.”⁸

A little earlier, The Daily Topic for October 25, 2010, asked to:

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[p]ray that the Parsees of India would realize there is only one God and that He is always good. They also need to know that right living, as taught by Zoroaster, won't get anyone to heaven. Ask God to lead people of faith to reach out to the Parsees. Pray that the Lord would open the hearts of this people group to salvation by faith in Jesus, the one true God.⁹

The successes of this missionary zeal exercised on college campuses have already affected Parsi parents by the loss of their children's Zoroastrian faiths. An open letter by the first member of the family to convert, addressed to a "Dear Parsee friend," states, in part:

At college I encountered some religious students who introduced me to a message ... They told me that I needed a savior, because I was a sinner... They insisted that God had provided a means whereby I should have my sins fully pardoned and be reconciled to God, simply by believing in Jesus Christ ... I could not find in my inherited [Parsi] faith the certainty of forgiveness, joy, unconditional love or salvation from sins that my Christian friends possessed. Afterward I turned to Christ and began to realize the wisdom of his moral percepts... I waited one year before I told my parents who were deeply hurt and disappointed.

The letter continued:

"My Parsee friend you also have an unpayable debt of sin, which cannot be balanced by your good deeds... If you believe in Jesus Christ ... he will give you eternal life ... based on the grace and mercy of God and not on your good works. I hope you will take the first step and contact this ministry for literature or a Bible."

Another open letter from a person in the same family, under the influence of the elder sibling, addressed "Parsee Brothers and Sisters," in a damning tone: "We have all sinned... Are you prepared to stand alone in His [Christ's] Holy presence and try to win his acceptance on your own?"

The push back to these pressures must lie in a renewal of learning by the "common Zoroastrian." To paraphrase an exhortation made by a young

Zoroastrian scholar: A real commitment must be made to acquire a deeper knowledge of the rich heritage, not just the spouting of platitudes, both at the personal and institutional levels, so that the Zoroastrian identity is not dissipated in the diaspora.¹⁰

WAY FORWARD

As we continue to add to our numbers in the diaspora, there is no doubt that our educational achievements, the entering of professions, and a full embrace of entrepreneurship, will allow us not just to survive, but to thrive. But, as to our Zoroastrian identity, what form will it take? Will we overcome the ossified traditions and practices that we have brought from our home countries?

Overall, in just a few short years much has been achieved through the many undertakings of FEZANA, the World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO), North American Mobed's Council (NAMC) and individual Associations and groups. But we have just crossed the threshold to this very diverse world of multi-faith communities. While many of us may keep their faith private and personal, each time we describe Zoroastrian beliefs at inter-faith gatherings, the surprised response of others is that it sounds much like what they consider to be their own faith. To stand among the major Abrahamic faiths we need to publicly articulate our cohesive belief system in an easily comprehensible manner. An energized reform movement can do just that.

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- 3 Philip G. Kreyenbroek, 'Religious Knowledge in Oral and Written Traditions, The Case of Zoroastrianism' 101, www.academia.edu.
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CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINING THE ZOROASTRIAN CREED

What should we in the Diaspora do to prepare ourselves in the Leadership Role?

BRIGADIER ERVAD BEHRAM M. PANTHAKI

In the second half of the last century, the US and Canada saw a confluence of Zoroastrians from India, Pakistan, and Iran, most of whom migrated for educational, economic, and security reasons. Some of those who came in the 1960s, came with a conservative mindset and continued to practice their faith traditionally, as was done in their country of birth, stressing conformance to ritual, custom, and tradition. While they did assimilate socially, they steadfastly clung to their religion; faith was not to be questioned, only to be followed, and observances kept as were practiced by their forefathers. This essay does not dispute any of that; it was possibly the need of the hour, but the changing milieu in an era of rationality has changed that dynamic. Not only youth, but many of the "not so young" were turned off by dogmatic responses.



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By the 1970s, there was a second generation of Zoroastrians, born on this continent that saw the US as home, or those who came to avail themselves of educational opportunities. They grew up in an environment where the questioning mind is held in high regard. Blind faith was going to be a hard sell. This was a demographic change that required the viewing of our faith through a new prism. To add to this, Zoroastrians from South Asia and Iran were living together as one after centuries of separation, which meant a reconciliation and acceptance of differing world views and divergent religious practices. It is to the credit of the nascent community that it balanced assimilation, while maintaining its religious identity and inculcating religious precepts and practices in the next generation.

Let us examine the community needs by age group: we have school-going children in the catch 'em young category; those between 20 and 45 who are either pursuing higher education and/or struggling to achieve their professional goals while holding up the responsibilities of a young family; the well-established professionals (the majority) in the 45-70 age group; and last, but not least, the elderly, most of whom have never worked on this continent and are dependent on their children. This latter group could have a plethora of issues from loneliness to nostalgia to financial and health-related issues.

Young parents are making concerted efforts to enlighten their young ones on our great faith and the simple precepts and the benefits of following the Zoroastrian religion—for example, by bringing them to community events to ensure integration and keep the support mechanisms going. The challenge comes from the second group, where personal goals become all-consuming and time is at premium. It is this segment for whom professional

achievement takes priority and religion and community take a back seat. But, experience points to a gradual return, especially when the young marry and have children. They return to the fold and bring their children with them. This needs to be encouraged and maintained. “Sunday School” and Adult Discussion Groups conducted by most associations are commendable and must continue. We must continue to practice the tolerance we have exhibited; whether it be the acceptance of all forms of practice from ritual at one end of the spectrum to only the Gathas and philosophy at the other—let a thousand flowers bloom. Each of us must have the liberty to practice our faith as we choose; for, after all, isn't the Zoroastrian faith all about freedom of choice? And, we don't have to look back from whence we came; but, forward, to where we are headed and what the needs of Zoroastrians on this Continent are and will be in the future. It would serve us well to inculcate in our children the spirit of the Triad of our Faith and Zoroastrian ethics rather than dogma. While we must always respect our roots, and look to our original homelands as the countries of our origin, we must also break new paths. Our Mobedyar program and acceptance of interfaith marriages and children thereof is the path-breaking and the way forward.

And, a last, but important point: After 30-40 years of integration of those who came from India, Pakistan, and Iran, are we thinking about “what if this matrix changes once again?” How will we react to and accept new Zoroastrians—Kurds and Yazidis—if they reach out to us and arrive on this continent? How will we embrace them and take them into our fold while ensuring that the basic principles of our faith are not compromised? Are we thinking and planning? I'll leave you with this thought.

Brigadier Ervad Behram Panthaki, a graduate from Pune University, served in the Indian Army for 30 years. A fully qualified and ordained priest, he serves the Zoroastrian community of Washington Metropolitan Area and works toward making the Zoroastrian faith better understood by speaking at churches, schools, and universities in the Tristate area.

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CULTURE IN CHANGING WORLD

DR. SHERNAZ CAMA

At the beginning of this new millennium, the world seemed confidently headed towards a homogenized global culture. The internet and rapid travel between continents had brought people together while the “Monster Language,” English, had made its way into the far reaches of our planet both linking people with a common linguistic future, while deleting a diverse past. Only a few purists or scholars looked back to a world divided along lines of country and culture.

It is astonishing how rapidly this has changed. Events of the past twelve months have upturned a globalized economy and overtaken “Modernism.” The benefits of “One World” are suddenly facing reactionary reversals. Be it in the America of Donald Trump, in Brexit, or right wing politicians across Asia and Europe, the world has suddenly returned to almost xenophobic division. What will the next generation of Zoroastrians, Parsi and Iranians, spread thinly across the world face perhaps thirty years into the future? Will they have disappeared into history books or will they too experience a cultural change, driving them back to their roots? The modern industrial age relied upon individual success stories, but it forgot a key ingredient of the psyche—the issue of identity.

I had realized as far back as 1996, when the Babri Masjid was brought down that, paradoxically, globalization and migration to economically greener pastures seemed to be leading to a retreat into narrower identities and an increase in communal mentalities, where differences became divisions.¹ In India, differences of every kind have always coexisted, but today that earlier basic unity in diversity is threatened; all the world’s technology cannot bridge barriers once they become invisibly erected in the mind. The Parsis of India were the first Asian community to establish a presence in Great Britain, they fitted in, it seemed, seamlessly and a century later this held true of those Parsis who migrated to the US and Canada in search of education and an escape from the government’s socialist policies. The



West offered freedom and choice to them, as it did to the Iranians, who fled from a reactionary revolution in Iran after the fall of the Shah.

Today, these Western countries of “freedom” have become reactionary. The East is rising; China and India are facing the economic fruits of a demographic dividend, but while malls and airports have become more glitzy and efficient than the West, the infrastructure still leaves much to be desired. Pollution of air and water, overcrowded cities and even more crowded roads, a total imbalance between poverty and ultra-luxurious living, jars not only the eye but the soul. The Zarthushti ethos has always been one of the Middle Path, carefully cultivated to perhaps, in a race of refugees in India and those left behind in Yazd and Kerman, to prevent standing out too obviously. ***How and where will Zoroastrians then fit in?***

We have not proselytized, have practiced our religion silently and along with hard work, the “Sugar in the Milk” of India’s tolerance has affectionately maintained its “Bava” identity, while our contribution from Atomic Physics to Zoology has made us a minority, held up as an example for everyone to follow. ***India wants to preserve its tiny population of***

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Figure 1—Ma'arfet-The Awakening. A visual performance inspired by Zoroastrian mythology and stories, Dadi D. Pudumjee, The Ishara Puppet Theatre Trust. This picture showcases the battle of Good and Evil.



Figure 2—Elemental Divine, Dance performance by Astad Deboo with drummers of Shree Shree Govidajee Nat Sankirtan. Manipuri Dancers performed with the chants of the Yatha Ahu Vairyo.

Parsis, (57,264 per 2011 Census), but do the Parsis in India and the Zoroastrians outside, really care about saving themselves?

We are the last of a line that created many firsts—the ancient world’s first empire, the first belief in human rights, freedom of worship, environmental practices to nurture the Earth—things that any race would proudly proclaim as their heritage, millennia before we became rich traders and builders of

modern India.

But, while rich Parsis have created some of the finest institutions of modern India, why is there not even a single chair of Zoroastrian studies in India? Avesta is as old as Rig Vedic Sanskrit, but when the Government of India tries to establish Comparative Studies through MOMA (Ministry of Minority Affairs), there are no Zoroastrian Avestan scholars who take up the offer. Our ancestors toiled and suffered in the deserts of Iran to keep the little Pirs and hidden Fire Temples alive, how many Iranian Zarthushtis in the western diaspora think back and examine, rationally or emotionally, the reasons why their ancestors suffered instead of converting to a “convenient” faith and economic security? At a time when a postmodern world is re-examining that culture and



Figure 3 Wendell Rodricks, **The Gireban Collection**.

Western attire inspired by the Pocket of Good Deeds.



Figure 4 Ashdeen Z. Lilaowala, **Spenta: Magical Manifestations**. Showcasing Parsi Embroidery in Modern form.

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identity which makes each civilization unique, why are we Zoroastrians not more worried as our youth discard the sudreh and kusti, immediately on the day of the Navjote itself, marry into other faiths, often letting their own lapse, forget their languages and dress, spinning, weaving, and embroidery traditions. We are discarding identity as if it were an embarrassment.

Quarrels in community leadership, a lack of respect for dogmatic priesthood and rational scholarship, as well as emotional disconnect with the core of the faith are some problems. During field trips with UNESCO Parzor, there are young people who join our research, but the ones who remain are not the Zoroastrians whom we train, but others who value a culture and identity as the heritage of humanity. Our Zoroastrian researchers move on to more financially lucrative professions. Have we, as a community, become extremely consumerist? Is

identity and culture? At the **Everlasting Flame** exhibition, school children came armed with notebooks to understand a race they had never heard about. The sudreh and concept of the gireban (the small pocket in front of the sudreh to collect your good deeds) fascinated them, as did the holy fire. Each tiny aspect was noticed and drawn carefully into their books.

Teachers at workshops offered “Tell us what we can do to help you survive.” The positive of the past few years, has been the close ties created by UNESCO through its declaration of Navroze as an **Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**. In 2009, when the 71st UN General Assembly proclaimed March 21 as the *International Festival of Spring*, it was hardly noticed. It has however created a ripple effect; today seventeen countries of the Ancient Iranian Empire, including parts of Russia celebrate the ICH Program. Each year, more people from these



Figure 5 (L) School children at IGNSA, exhibition “**Threads of Continuity: Zoroastrian Life and Culture**” and Figure 6 (R) A drawing representing a child’s view of the Fire Temple display.

money our only God and material wealth our only criterion of success? Is this the tradition we will hand over to our children—if we have any, because we seem to have become so self-absorbed that we do not even want children to disrupt our upward mobility? We are A-type personalities, heading corporations, with high IQs, sadly insufficiently equipped to even understand the EQ, which creates a holistic life. There are so many examples of such characters amongst us that it is almost too easy to despair.

Can we survive—can we regain pride in our

original homelands grow their seven seeds, recite their stories, clean their homes, and await the signal that symbolizes the victory of life after the death like embrace of a cold winter.

The SOAS London **Everlasting Flame** exhibition could not borrow items from Iran due to strained political ties. India succeeded in bringing out some of the most precious treasures of the National Museum of Tehran. These ties happily continue to grow and we Parsis continue to re-learn our traditions. On December 20, 2016, the India International Centre, the host of so many cultural events last year, held a

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Yalda Night. Ali Nari and Mirza Ali Mohsen, two great exponents of music and the traditional drama of Iran, held an audience of over 300 people spell bound as they musically enacted stories from the *Shahnameh*. It was all in Farsi, but the resounding ring of the huge bell and the Yalda decorations with red, the color of life, did not need any translator. The Iranian Empire of the past still celebrates Yalda on the longest night

elements, showed us Parsis of Delhi how all humanity cherishes and is trying to revive our cultural heritage.

It was the human spirit and the rich legacy of thought that displayed the confidence of people who had always : embraced their differences, rather than becoming divisive which resulted through discussions. It is a matter of pride that Zoroastrians in India and Iran,



Figure 7 Penaz Masani India's famous Gazal Singer at the Navroze Table March 21, 2016, IGNSA.



Figure 8 An Iranian Navroze Table with a roast chicken.

of the year. Here in India, Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Armenia came together under the auspices of the Iran Cultural House, to recreate this family celebration. A book of the poems of Hafez stood open upon a book stand for

the *Faal-E- Hafez*, or Omen of Hafez, where a wish is followed by random opening of a page from which the eldest of the family reads aloud the luck of the following year.



Figure 9 Tiny Musician, Second Millennium B.C., Khuzestan, National Museum, Tehran. *Threads of Continuity Exhibition*, IGNSA.

The *Shahnameh* is recited in all the regions of the old Empire, definitive of the ethno-national and cultural identity of this area, once the center of civilization. Is it not tragic that we have given up this recitation just fifteen years ago? The two Naqqal at Delhi were not just entertainers, they were the torchbearers of Persian literature and culture, their talent of improvisation, their use of comic and tragic

during their very long history, never persecuted Jews and, even now, diversity is encouraged. We saw how we Zoroastrians are not parts of what Prof. Lokesh Chandra calls "Cousin Cultures,"² but more as Sister Cultures—linguistically and in belief. Our region of Central Asia, which today is a place of tragedy and violence, was the cradle of civilization. Even the fables of the *Panchatantra* travelled to the West, via the translation of Burzoya, the Persian doctor and scholar, when, in 1483, it became one of the earliest books after the Bible to be printed in Europe by Gutenberg's press.

Many scholars iterated that to travel to India was never regarded in Iran as going to a "foreign land;" it was a second home. This held true when Zoroastrian refugees sailed to the coast of India—they were one of many groups who came to trade, study, and explore. India and Central Asia have never believed in a clash of civilizations, but a mosaic pattern of co-existence not a merger into a melting pot, has been our example of shaping human history.



Figure 10 The two Naqqal with traditional instruments and the Shahnameh pictures, IIC, December 20, 2016

Our Zarthushti ancestry gave the world a confluence of cultures upon which the ancient Silk Route was based. These “Two eyes of humanity,” as Prof. Abhay Kumar Singh of Rohilkand University stated at the Conference, looked squarely upon justice, knowledge, good governance, and, above all, the ethics of tolerance and acceptance of difference. There were no reactionary reversals because our faith has always respected the synthesis of the best.

So, to ask my question again—Where will we Zarthushtis stand thirty years from now in the diaspora and in India? If we look at how keenly sociologists, historians, linguists, and other scholars are examining Iran and India, we stand at a very fortunate place. The Eastern world is looking back upon its own history and experience. Perhaps the modern West needs to look at the ancient Zoroastrian Empire of Darius, which spread into Sindh, to see how geopolitics and statecraft should be handled. The Vice President of India stated: Both Iran and India are inventors of civilizations whose origins date back deep into the past... Being geographically adjacent, they witnessed a seamless stream of movement of people. These inevitably resulted in movement of beliefs, cultural practices and a multiplicity of shared pattern of living.³

Globalization and its reactionary reversals are not the norm. Our Zarathushti forebearers taught a more humane sharing millennia ago. Zarathushtra taught harmony and his teachings are even more relevant today. “What causes fear of other cultures is the misconceptions that each culture is an indivisible monolith; accepting one part of which equals accepting the whole.”⁴ The Zoroastrian identity is a hybrid that has grown and flourished while facing innumerable odds. Today it stands uniquely placed to lead the modern world as we did in an ancient past. We have the tools and training in our DNA. However, we need to re-embrace our own cultural identity, study it carefully, and use it creatively. We have always been pioneers—perhaps, in this destabilized world, we can once again lead civilization into an area of stability and prosperity.

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Dr. Shernaz Cama, Associate Professor, teaches at Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi University. She is Founder and Honorary Director of the UNESCO Parzor Project for the preservation and promotion of Parsi Zoroastrian Culture and Heritage since 1999. Besides academic publications, she guides researchers in their work in the fields of literature, culture studies and Zoroastrianism.

CHALLENGE: MAINTAINING THE DIASPORA FOR THE NEXT FIFTY YEARS INSPIRING AND EDUCATING OUR YOUTH

ZENOBIA RAVJI

Despite living in the diaspora for centuries, our Zarathushti grandparents protected our faith and traditions. We kept a tight knit community and invested in it greatly, while instilling a strong sense of pride in our children. The diaspora continued to grow and thrive in India, eventually spreading its influence around the world.

The Zoroastrians, who stayed in Iran after the Arab invasion, and refused to convert to Islam, suffered centuries of persecution and rejection from consecutive Islamic regimes. Several documented accounts of European travelers in Iran portray the harsh living environments of the Zoroastrian ghettos. These were the Iranians, who refused to abandon their identity; the ones who refused to have their profound religion and philosophy extinguished by ignorance and greed.

Who were we before the Arab invasion of Persia? Many of us don't know that our ancestors were the core of the cradle of civilization and creators of the world's first democracy. Or that the Cyrus Cylinder, referred to by some scholars as the first bill of human rights, influenced and inspired the U.S. Founding Fathers and the U.S. Constitution. We were the world's first organized monotheistic religion and the foundation for the three major Abrahamic religions of the world: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Although now small in number, we have been great in influence.

It is evident that our ancestors risked their lives and refused to surrender to persecution, so we could be here today. Contemplating the thousands of years of effort it took for my parents to maintain their identity, inspires me to do the same. But, I cannot speak for the Zarathushtis of my generation in North America, most of whom seem to have little appreciation or knowledge of their origin and have contributed nothing but the hand of ungrateful



apathy to our ancient roots.

The challenge now is to maintain the diaspora for the next thirty to fifty years. Fortunately, the pioneering generation of Zoroastrians to North America has created a solid foundation for us to build on and a few inspiring Zarathushtis of succeeding generations are building programs to maintain our community and its legacy.

Roshan and Rohinton Rivetna, founders of FEZANA, believe that the next phase of growing our Zarathushti community in the diaspora is focusing on spirituality.

They believe the most important element missing in our community is a spiritual leader; someone who delivers sermons, particularly to our youth.

According to Rohinton, "Any community you go to has a spiritual leader, who inspires, delivers, and keeps the community together, informs them of their

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day to day living, how to approach difficulties. This is completely absent in our community.”

With the Zoroastrian population dwindling in numbers due to several factors, mostly intermarriage and complete assimilation in western society, how do we intend to pass on the torch?

Dinsha Mistree appears to have found an effective solution. Dinsha is the co-Founder of Zoroastrian Return to Roots, a heritage program for Zoroastrian youth.

Dinsha’s inspiration for the Return to Roots program was his former student’s experience with the Jewish equivalent, called Taglit or Birthright Israel, which is a non-for-profit that sponsors free trips to Israel for young adults to learn more about their Jewish roots.

Dinsha remembers, while teaching at Princeton, the experience of his student, who before participating in Birthright was an atheist and almost anti-Jewish. After returning from his experience in Israel and graduating from Princeton, he joined the Israeli Defense Force and became much more community orientated.

“It was shocking to me that they [Birthright] were able to get him to flip like that,” said Dinsha.

Return to Roots consists of a dynamic itinerary in India for fifteen to twenty fellows that exposes and encourages the participants to explore their cultural and religious identities. The bulk of the participants come from North America.

Highlights include Jashan at Saher Agyari, visit to the Shahanshai Atash Behram, the Meherji Rana Library in Navsari, Tata’s Bombay House, and connecting with influential Zoroastrians in business, science, politics, and the arts.

Participants range from young Zarathushtis, who were brought up and immersed in their cultural and religious identity, to those who had yet to explore

their roots. Although not its intention, the program has resulted in marriage for some of the participants. Marriage aside, Return to Roots has served as a driving force of Zarathushti pride and connection for its participants.

Jennifer Rostami was a fellow on the January 2014 trip. Jennifer’s father is a Zoroastrian from Iran and her mother is a Catholic of French and Italian descent. Before taking part in Return to Roots, she had very little exposure and understanding of her Zoroastrian roots.

“I had never seen a fire. I didn’t know how to tie the rope [Sudreh Kushti]. I didn’t know anything. I didn’t even know how to go into a temple.”

But for Jennifer the heritage trip to India was one of the most transformative experiences of her life, specifically her visit to the Udvada Atash Behram.

When seeing the fire in the Atash Behram for the first time, Jennifer felt deeply connected to her Zoroastrian faith.

“I always felt really spiritual, but I felt my spirituality didn’t make sense in Catholicism.”

In addition to the spiritual aspect, was a rich cultural influence for Jennifer, where she felt inspired by the legacies and accomplishments of the Zoroastrian community in India.

“It created a positive momentum in me to live up to those legacies, for example, giving back to the community and doing good through our work.”

The Return to Roots trip gave Jennifer a sense of belongingness, something she had searched for during her youth and adult life. Connecting to her Zarathushti roots was the next step in her spiritual journey she said.

“It just became a part of my fabric. I remain active in the community. And, I have a whole group of friends that I did not have before. I still keep in touch

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with many of them.”

Arzan Wadia, advisor for Return to Roots, accompanied the fellows on their trips. He said one of the most extraordinary aspects of the program is the moment when people from different parts of the world meet, only to find that they have more in common with each other than their counterparts in their respective countries.

Arzan recounts the story of two Parsi sisters from Lahore, where now only 26 Parsis remain. Before the trip, the sisters had never seen or interacted with so many Zarathushtis in their life. There was instant connection between them and the other participants as they came to realize they shared a cultural identity.

“It didn’t matter if one Parsi was from California and the other from Pakistan. They came to find that their parents also did the same *sagun* and *tili*, and made you take bath with milk and flowers. ‘My mom also says the same thing!’ they would often say,” Arzan observed.

Arzan Wadia, is also the founder of Parsi Khabar, an online archive of Parsi and Zoroastrian information and articles. He started Parsi Khabar when he moved to New York for graduate school and felt deep nostalgia for his Parsi-Zarathushti culture. It was his pride in being Zoroastrian that fueled his need to create the site.

Arzan believes that instilling a strong sense of Zarathushti pride in our children is a fundamental requirement to ensuring our community sustains itself and continues to grow with future generations.

“As an adult if you don’t wear your Sudreh Kushti, it is very difficult to morally tell your kid to wear it. Lead by example. Make the child proud of it. Don’t

just give them the education. Live it,” said Arzan.

Jennifer Rostami’s experience with Return to Roots is unique. Despite growing up without Zoroastrianism, she was able to connect to her roots and identity. It was instinctive, but she needed Return to Roots to take her to the places and meet her Zoroastrian brothers and sisters, in order to inspire the fundamental part of who she is.

We need to rekindle and instill a profound sense of pride in our youth by educating them about their ancient history and the great accomplishments of the Zoroastrian people and the Persian Empire, which continue to influence civilization today. We need to expose our people to the arduous and volatile journey our ancestors have walked since the fall of our empire to protect and preserve our faith and identity.

What if we were able to inspire hundreds or thousands of our youth like Jennifer? Funding and supporting programs like Return to Roots can help reconnect young Zoroastrians to their identity and encourage them to keep our flame burning.

If our fire stops burning, it will be a tragic loss to humanity, as our people have greatly contributed economically, socially, politically, and culturally to the world. But, most importantly we owe it to our ancestors, who despite great odds, continuous persecution, and no homeland, have persevered so we can still call ourselves Zoroastrians today.



Zenobia Ravji is a journalist based in New York City and the Associate Director of Coalition Building at the Israel Project. She focuses on covering the plight of religious minorities in the Middle East and the Israeli Palestinian Conflict.

THIRTY YEARS OF FEZANA

DARYOUSH JAHANIAN, M.D.
KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

Perhaps, the contemporary history of Zoroastrian communities in North America goes back forty years to when pockets of Zoroastrians formed associations, longing to build temples and community centers. At that time, the construction of even one center seemed to be a remote possibility. The main question was: how can a small population preserve its identity among the vastness of the 50 states and Canada. History has proved that, due to our adaptability to new environments and the mores of 20th and 21st centuries, not only our survival is certain; but, even under the circumstances, our community can thrive. We have formed associations and constructed temples and community centers, which, through the assistance of the second generation, we are expanding. In many respects, our community has shown an exceptional ability to mature and adapt. The realities of the new environment in which we find ourselves today has proven to most of us that the closed-door policy is neither practical nor favorable for the community's survival. Today, as we observe, most temples have kept their doors open to any interested individuals and welcome the participation of newly joined Zoroastrians in management committees and positions of leadership. This adaptation, even extends to our practice of religion. Forty years ago, knowledge of our religion was limited to the rote recitation of memorized prayers and the presentation of a few slides showing fire temples in India and Iran. But, time and the demands of the modern world have proved those practices were not sufficient. Despite this, many of us have committed to learning about the teachings of our religion and even have spread this knowledge to others.

Religious and social evolutions have brought about a demand for a central organization to coordinate the efforts of our associations and manage the affairs of North American Zoroastrians. Thirty years ago, FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) was founded by dedicated people who devoted their time and energies to advance the unity of the Zoroastrian communities throughout North America and succeeded. We should express our sincere thanks



to them. FEZANA Journal has effectively facilitated communication among the North American Zoroastrian communities—and beyond. Having had the privilege to serve as the guest editor for last year's spring issue, I could not appreciate more the devotion of the editor and her colleagues. Under FEZANA's leadership, local associations have hosted the North American and World Zoroastrian congresses. Organizing each congress, per se, has been a very heavy task requiring hard work and full cooperation of the local community.

Our Mobeds have formed their council to promote religious education in the community. Among them, we have brilliant and progressive members with a good knowledge of our religion and believe in promoting Zoroastrianism worldwide by keeping the doors open to those who sincerely search for Truth. We should not neglect the power of the internet. The miracle of the internet has enabled the dissemination of knowledge worldwide; it has brought the world so close together that, nowadays, the message of Zarathushtra can be heard in very remote areas. Despite all the efforts by the Mobed council to train Assistant-Mobeds (in some parts of America), there is a shortage of practicing Mobeds. This deficiency is particularly apparent in northern California and Arizona. By reviewing our history, we learn that our Mobeds have provided strong leadership in preserving our sacred books and protecting the community at-large; they have been

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at the forefront of events and even, at times, have sacrificed their lives. The presence of knowledgeable Mobeds is essential for our collective education and the preservation of our spiritual well-being. Our children are growing up in a secular society where they are mostly concerned with their daily lives and short-term material issues. Therefore, it is imperative to start their religious education at a very young age. In the meantime, we can try to make our ceremonies more attractive, relevant, and meaningful to our young generation. It is well known that the Gathas—which are in the form of poems—were originally chanted in the Chahar Gah system of Iranian music. Then, why shouldn't we have Gathas chanted by the choir? We do not need to be nervous about abandoning practices that have become attached to our tradition, some of which are not even practiced consistently. Iranian and Parsi wedding ceremonies are enlightening and include prayers, expressions of good wishes for a happy life, and advice to the couple as to how to live following Zoroastrian principles. Then, why should the two ceremonies (Iranian and Parsi) not be reconciled in one official form and suggested to the North American Zoroastrian community? To meet our community's spiritual needs, we should have weekly or bi-weekly Sunday services consisting of prayers, explanation of their meanings, and talks. Otherwise, those in need of such information/enlightenment/knowledge may become attracted to other congregations.

Time is of the essence! We should stay alert and be well-prepared for new developments, needs, challenges, and opportunities. The Kurdish and Iranian phenomena are real, each with profound historical roots. Today, the most popular pendants in Iran are the Fravahar icons. Many Iranians display the poster of Zarathushtra in their homes. Kurdish development and their interest in Zarathushtra also have shared cultural roots. In June 2015, the government of Southern Kurdistan (Iraqi Kurdistan) announced that an estimated 100,000 Kurds have declared themselves as Zoroastrian—their population

grows every day. They have presented seminars, performed initiation and wedding ceremonies in accordance with the Zoroastrian tradition. In 2012, Zoroastrian Kurds opened the first temple in Stockholm, then in 2013 the statue of Zarathushtra was unveiled in Afrin, Syrian Kurdistan. Last year the local Zoroastrians in Suleimany, Kurdistan opened two community centers and temples, which were opened in the presence of Kurdish officials and dignitaries. They even extended their activities to other cities where they have opened branch offices. **How can we help?**

We should deliver the true message of Zarathushtra, not only by setting up educational programs and founding a seminary at the academic level in North America, but by taking the message to them in Kurdistan through seminars, translation of our books and literature in Kurdish, and, hopefully, building schools and seminaries. We have the information about parts of Iraqi Kurdistan (Southern Kurdistan), where the residents have remained Zoroastrian; but, due to fear of persecution, have hidden their religion. Now, as the newly established Kurdistan government has declared freedom of religion, these people are reclaiming their real faith by openly declaring themselves Zoroastrians. We need to maintain our physical presence there and meet their educational needs, otherwise other, well-funded groups will fill the vacuum.

The Zoroastrian demography is changing and so the prospect for the future middle east. As one Kurdish leader wrote: the soul of the Middle East is lamenting the turmoil and bloodshed, while entreating peace and love. In response, we have the message of Zarathushtra that meets their demands. This is a historical time; the expectations from us are high and we should be active participants. As Dastoor Bode said: "there is a reason why the small Zoroastrian community has survived the harsh treatment of history. It is because we have a mission."

Daryoush Jahanian born in Tehran, Iran, 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*. His new book, *Gathas The Message of Zarathushtra, Comments and free translation* will be published soon.

**OUR CONGRATULATIONS TO FEZANA
FOR THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY**

**THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR ENDEAVOR FOR THE
PROGRESS
OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ZOROASTRIAN
COMMUNITIES.**

WISHING YOU MANY MORE YEARS OF SUCCESS

TRUST OF RUSTAM GUIV FOUNDATION

We Congratulate FEZANA on its



The Journal has played a stellar role in bringing the diaspora together through the dissemination of knowledge in all fields.

The Pir-o-Herishi Yazd Agyari | Photo by: Minocher Vakharia



ROLE OF THE DIASPORA IN PRESERVING THE RELIGION, CULTURE AND THE COMMUNITY WILL WE BE ABLE TO SUSTAIN OURSELVES AND HOW?

DORAB MISTRY

At the outset, my heartiest congratulations to FEZANA on 30 years of active and eventful existence. As a Federation, FEZANA has brought the Zoroastrian community together in North America and given Zoroastrians there an identity and a voice. The founders of FEZANA must be congratulated for their persistence and their wisdom.

The Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe have been in existence since 1861 and continue to go from strength to strength. As one of its past presidents and having been active in community work for almost 3 decades, I feel emboldened to offer some thoughts on the role of the diaspora in preserving our religion, culture, and community. I am most grateful to the editor of the EZANA Journal, my good friend Dolly Dastoor, for giving me this opportunity.

The simple fact of organizing ourselves into local groups and then keeping those groups active is the first step towards preserving our community. As time goes by and the diaspora becomes more prosperous, local communities have established places of worship and community centers. These have become the pillars of local community activity. Their importance in preserving and developing our unique culture, language, traditions, and identity cannot be overemphasized. It is heartening to see progress along these lines in almost all parts of the worldwide diaspora.



We, in the UK, moved to a much larger Zoroastrian center in the suburb of Harrow, in 2005. This happened thanks largely to the generosity of the Zartoshty Brothers—who I would name as the greatest Zoroastrian philanthropists of our time. In North America, it is most heartening to see local FEZANA associations establishing their own Dar-e Mehr or modernizing old ones. These are the community's infrastructure and, the more we have of them, the better the chances to preserve Zoroastrian culture and community. What is most impressive regarding the recently established Dar-e Mehrs in North America is the fact that most, if not all, of the funding has been raised from local Zoroastrian members. This refreshing emphasis on self-help is to be admired and emulated in other parts of the diaspora.

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The preservation of our community will depend upon instilling in our youth a sense of Pride in being known as Zoroastrians. One could sum this up in one word—**Recognition**. In my opinion, recognition comes from **Achievement** and from **Propagation** through channels such as interfaith activity. Recognition of our small, but wonderful, faith and community by sibling faiths is very important. The more we participate in interfaith activities, the taller we shall walk and the stronger our youth will feel in society at large.

The diaspora will be able to sustain itself better and preserve our religion, culture, and identity if we follow one tried and tested principle—keep close contact with your mother country—whether it be India or Iran. By so doing, we have access to a thousand-year-old reservoir of information, advice, tradition, and history. In the case of Iran, the history is, of course, much longer. Such tradition and history is a cardinal segment of the area called **Identity**.

Organisations, like the local FEZANA associations, are key to holding the community together. They provide a platform for religious worship and social fulfilment. Nothing can replace the joy and satisfaction that participation in their communal activity brings to fellow Zoroastrians. However, as one generation passes the torch to the next, traditions and identity need to be renewed and strengthened. That is where stronger links with the mother country play a very important role. Without regular renewal of those links, we shall merely survive. Links are not difficult to maintain in this modern age. Travel and periodic visits to family and ancestral domains is very important. Regular contact is easily provided if there is willingness to engage.

In the case of India, it is important to realise that the economic vitality of the Indian Zoroastrian community still exists in a large measure. The emergence of new business houses and the recent

emergence of the Poonawalla family as billionaires bear testimony to this success. In corporate India too, the success of Zoroastrian managers who have attained the topmost level is very heartening. Many of these have studied in the West and have returned home to take advantage of the great opportunities available in India. I do believe this transformation in India is slowing down the flow of migrating families to the West from India.

The other major step that Zoroastrians in the West need to take is participation in public life. In the UK, the Hindus have a scheme for young aspirants to be mentored by Parliamentarians who provide internships to qualified Hindu candidates. In the case of Zoroastrians, we have not found young professional people who are prepared to take a year or two off from their professional work or career and work as political interns to chart a political career. North America has a much bigger Zoroastrian population and it may be possible to find such candidates. Zoroastrians, who shine in the political arena, would be tremendous role models for our youth. Above all they would ensure recognition for our community. And, their presence and success would give enormous pride to others and drive them harder to keep the Flame alive.

FEZANA's first thirty years have been very successful in bringing the community together and building some infrastructure. The next thirty must focus on two aspects: **First is the motivation of our youth to greater success and recognition; the second is the care of the elderly and the need to give them hope and company in the twilight of their lives.**

May I once again warmly congratulate FEZANA on its thirty glorious years and wish you greater success in the decades to come.

Dorab Mistry OBE served as President of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe Inc from 1997 to 2005. He has also served as Vice Chair of the Interfaith Network of the UK. In the June 2013 Diamond Jubilee Honours List, he was conferred an OBE by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for services to Interfaith Relations. Dorab has always worked for GODREJ and is a Director of Godrej International Limited

CHALLENGES OF MAINTAINING THE CREED, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY IN THE DIASPORA EVOLVING AND MOVING FORWARD

JEHANGIR SAROSH

The global Zoroastrian community has an opportunity to continue its evolution while being mindful that its attempt to maintain creed, culture, and community may assume that Zoroastrians have a monoculture or a universal understanding of the Mazdayasni creed.

In particular, the diaspora ought to see this opportunity, not only in America, but for Zoroastrians worldwide to promote the mission: to refresh the world (*Frasho-kereti*); give happiness to others and have happiness for oneself; and be prosperous, charitable, and make a difference. Furthermore, attempts to maintain a strict dogmatic position hinders evolution of the creation towards *Frasho-kereti*.

The recent development of Zoroastrian Associations at local and national levels, throughout the world, has empowered us to think of ourselves as an interconnected world-wide community.

This advance has given birth to many “world” bodies, each with specific mandate(s). While attempts to form governing World Councils have not materialized.

I firmly believe that, while each of our “world” bodies has its own *particular* theology, it is nearly impossible for others to join. For example, the vast differences among WAPIZ, WZO, and the Zoroastrian Assembly make it nearly impossible for one to be under the umbrella of the other. Furthermore, these and other similar bodies often have “advancement of the faith/religion” declarations in their respective constitutions. Whose theology or philosophy will dominate?

The community also benefits from world bodies having specific mandates that offer a “*specialist service*,” such as the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce. While the World Zoroastrian Organisation is becoming increasingly involved in social welfare; whereas, WAPIZ seems to be more about Parsees.



Today, the Zoroastrian diaspora is mature and confident. The world-wide Zoroastrian community is able to elevate itself to addressing and accepting the monumental changes taking place within and beyond our community: intermarriage, an aging population, generational gaps, and the community’s acceptance of new converts and “returnees.”

It is likely that those who believe Zoroastrianism is an ethnic religion will be outnumbered by those who believe Zoroastrianism is a universal religion and they have an inherent right to practice Zoroastrianism and worship Ahura Mazda.

To tackle external problems, including the rise of Zoroastrianism beyond “ethnic boundaries,” we need to cooperate and work together, celebrating our diversity. Evolutionary science informs us that diversity is crucial to the development of humanity. Diversity also helps us to review and renovate the direction of our journey towards the goal.

For the world’s Zarathushties to cooperate effectively and bring about the renovation and healing of the world (*Frashó-kéréti*), we will need to cooperate with other religious communities, governmental organisations, and Non-governmental

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Organisations. Our considerable resources and assets (our women's organisations; youth associations; local anjumans and associations; national bodies and federations; and world councils, bodies, and organisations) are skilled, qualified, and anxious to engage on our collective behalf.

This requires us to create a coordinated global network. A network that would support and complement the work of the existing bodies, not as a competitor for mindshare.

A global network of Zoroastrian organisations (not individuals) would:

- *Create links within the global Zarathushti "family;"*
- *Build relationships with other global, regional, national, local faith-based, and secular organisations, including interfaith organisations;*
- *Speak with one voice for the Zarathushti community (where appropriate); and*
- *Enable us to move towards being an interlocutor with international faith-based and secular institutions e.g., the UN (and its organs UNESCO, UNICEF), European Union, Council of Europe, World Council of Churches, Muslim Federations) to achieve common objectives.*

The network would not be a governing body. It would foster and ensure equality among its members, thereby respecting the dignity of each. The network would be solely a linking (facilitating, coordinating) structure with neither authority over its members nor *jurisdiction over its members—who will remain independent bodies.*

It would offer statements and declarations on global issues (e.g., ecology from a Zoroastrian perspective) and, for example, help mobilize youth, women, and the Mobeds for international advocacy projects on disarmament, freedom of religion or belief, human rights, and UN SDGs.

A major benefit to our "smaller" communities, scattered over the world, will be to become part of the larger whole, communicate and seek help and offer help in working as a single body, and promote the "spirit" of Zoroastrianism beyond our community for the common good. Through our involvement, we would enhance the visibility of Zarathusties all over the world and safeguard them.

As an international advocate for Zarathusties, recent statements like *Zoroastrians the traitors*, which appeared in a Turkish daily, and death decrees issued against Kurdistan's Zoroastrians could have been challenged publicly.

I am convinced the network would heal intra-faith wounds as people meet to promote the common good. Just as we work for the common good with people of other faiths (Hindus, Muslims, Jains, and others), so we will be able to work with people of different understandings of Zoroastrianism.

Living well together requires a new approach to problem-solving within and among Zoroastrian communities. To achieve a sharing and growing together we must all be together in finding the solutions.

The network will encourage us to speak to each other and share the wisdom of the light through Ahura Mazda; the light of wisdom. As we join hands and build this much-needed International network, let each organisation choose its responsibility for the fulfilment of the vision of Asho Zarathushtra—those who wish to work together ought to come together.

PS: I have a detailed draft constitution with aims, objectives, etc. that I would be pleased and honored to share with whomever wishes to build on it. jehangirsarosh@me.com

Jehangir Sarosh represents the Zoroastrian community for the past forty years on various national and international organizations. He is the co-president on the World Council of Religions for Peace, Secretary General of the Regional Body European Council of Religious Leaders, and Executive Director of the National Religions for Peace UK. With his love for the philosophy of Asho Zarathushtra and his community, Jehangir is passionate about ensuring that the community receives full recognition for the contributions Zoroastrians have made and their rightful place within society.

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ROLE OF THE DIASPORA IN PRESERVING THE CREED, CULTURE, AND THE COMMUNITY

NEVILLE SHROFF, PRESIDENT

Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton and Macau

These are my personal views.

This is a complex issue, involving many aspects of perceptions in a continuously evolving world. There is no single solution in preserving our faith, but several, which includes the mindsets of parents and, more importantly, our youth. How we manage and influence our youth is the key to our sustainability and the future of our religion, traditions, and the community.

With globalization, our community is traveling to all parts of the world to improve their lifestyle, students aiming for a better education, business opportunities, etc., which is diminishing our core population in India. This gives rise to either an increasing population outside India or, at least, that of a stable one—including HK—where we may even be marginally increasing annually.

In Hong Kong, we are fortunate to have our own building, including a community area and a Prayer Hall. This allows the community to gather almost on a weekly basis to socialize and mingle; which keeps a bond between our members. The Parsi community gathers regularly for various functions including Ghambars, community dinners, and on important occasions. There is even a small, but regular, card playing group. This simply adds to our connectivity, and a harmonious community.

On religion, we have a resident Dastoorji, who performs Navjotes, weddings, Jashans, Muktaf, and Gatha prayers for the benefit of the community. This offers a promising religious aspect for our youth to observe and, hopefully, follow, as well as aiding in preserving our wonderful rituals. Our Dastoorji teaches prayers to our young ones, and explains the significance to them, with some background history, making it interesting enough for them to understand. These classes are conducted regularly.

On the cultural side, we enjoy many activities relating to Parsis, as well as celebrating Christmas, Diwali, and Chinese New Year. We have events where we invite dignitaries and organizations to experience our unique culture and our Parsi food for our young and old to enjoy. We call these Awareness Programs. We have formed a youth group where the young adults can get together, network, and enjoy.

So, what are we doing right to preserve our religion, culture, and community?

Besides providing facilities for all to enjoy, we encourage our youth to meet whenever they can. We try to maintain our traditions and heritage and make an all-out effort to do so. It is a battle that we all face, but unless we are united to tackle the issue and make a great



effort; it will be a difficult task.

Attitudes must change globally. Certain community members must refrain from being cynical in making derogatory comments; like publishing that we are diminishing and will be extinct in 50 years; as this is discouraging our youth and they may become despondent.

In Hong Kong, we take this seriously; as our Trust supports the constructions of many Dar-e-Mahrs around the world. We support Zoroastrian events, such as the World Zoroastrian Congresses and the Youth Congress, expecting that this will help in our preservations.

Global preservation of our religion, culture, and community requires a determined mindset from each and everyone of us to take responsibility to direct their children towards this path. Unless the parents do not instill into their children the importance of all this; we are not moving in the right direction. It can be as simple or as difficult as this; but parents play a large influencing factor.

The solution lies with ourselves and more importantly our youth.

Neville S Shroff, JP Chairman and CEO of Shroff and Company Ltd, and Chairman of Direct International Hong Kong Ltd, had his secondary education in HK, a science degree from the University of Sheffield, and an MBA from the University of Warwick. Currently, he is director of the World Zoroastrian C of C, immediate past Chairman of the Europe Committee of the Hong Kong General C of C, Vice Chairman of the Asia and Africa Committee of the Hong Kong C of C. Council Board Member of the Royal Commonwealth Society since 2016 He was awarded the title of Justice of Peace by the Hong Kong Government in 2015.

RAISING AWARENESS IN THE COMMUNITY IS THE KEY TO OUR SURVIVAL

KAZWEEN BOIKO
MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

The population of Zoroastrians in the diaspora is steadily increasing and moving from India and Iran. We have observed that first generation Zoroastrian migrants are the ones most committed to preserving the culture, traditions, and religious practices with which they were raised. For us to pass our culture, traditions, and religious practices to our children, it is essential that we, in the diaspora, also have the religious and cultural facilities as those residing in the mother countries (India and Iran). If these facilities are not made available to us over time, then the commitment of our fellow Zoroastrians to do something for the community decreases.

To sustain the future of our community in the diaspora, one of the key elements is the dissemination of knowledge related to our religion, culture, and heritage. Zoroastrian parents and other adults should know and practice our religion to the extent that they can teach the children, lead by example, and educate new generations. Navjote (sudreh Pushi), for example, is one of our most revered religious events; its essence is to initiate the youngster into our religion so they can follow ceremony righteously. Today, it seems that the Navjote has become more of a fashion event to us in the diaspora; its religious significance has become noticeably reduced. Many in the diaspora seem to want to complete the initiation ceremony so that they can be content with themselves knowing that they have fulfilled their obligation. But, the question is, how many children in the diaspora practice the religion and continue their prayers and religious obligations post event? How many parents encourage their children to wear their Sudreh and Kusti, recite their prayers, or follow our cultural practices?

The spirit of our religion needs to be imbued by the younger generation from an early age. Kids need to be instructed about the religion in an engaging, stimulating, and fun way. There have been



instances throughout the community when religious classes have been lackluster and forced, which may have achieved a short-term objective, but failed in the long-term. I recommend that the worldwide community needs to come up with effective ideas, which can be easily implemented and sustained.

Also, Zoroastrians (the Zoroastrian Persians, Iranians, Parsis, and any other sect that follows the teachings of Prophet Zarathustra) should come together on one platform to perform community services or educate the masses.

It is essential that, as true Zoroastrians, we learn to respect our Mobeds and give them the respect they deserve. Most of the mobeds, specifically the High Priests, are very learned in the ways of our religion; we should respect their knowledge and strive to follow their teachings and advice. A religion that does not respect and support its priests is doomed.

While the Indian sub-continent has massive funds available for local Zoroastrian causes, these funds are not available for the Zoroastrians overseas. Due

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Figure 1: Facing the camera are Farzan Antia, Keki Madon, and Kaivan Antia. With backs to the camera are Adil Antia Armin Dumasia.

to the lack of facilities, like a Dar-E-Meher, some of our religious ceremonies are held either in a rented hall or at a private residence, which may result in non-engagement by the community. Imagine the engagement of the community if we had a place of our own, where religious ceremonies could be held, the kids could be taught, and older youths could hang out on weekends—resulting in more marriages within the community. It may be worthwhile considering how (and if) funds available overseas can be directed to where they are most required to achieve the goal—that of Zoroastrianism becoming a thriving and vibrant religion and epicenter of our lives.

Due to not having a place of worship, some of the younger generation are not connected to the faith and do not properly appreciate and understand the significance of their Zoroastrian heritage.

A positive aspect about living in a small, tight community is that everyone is very supportive and events, such as the monthly prayers, functions, and youth outings, are sufficiently varied to be interesting to a diverse audience.

The monthly prayers should be held, as it provides the next best thing to an agairy, the atmosphere is peaceful and makes you feel like you are back in Bombay or Udvada

Raising awareness in the diaspora—both within and outside the community—is the key to survival. Once the awareness of our religion is there, government support may become available. A classic example is Singapore, where the land for the Aram Gah belongs to the Government of Singapore and has been provided to the Zoroastrians for their use.

Following our traditional ways is a time-tested formula that has ensured our survival over the centuries; this practice should be followed. This means that we should follow the teachings of our prophet Zarathushtra and, where we are unsure, follow the guidance provided by our learned priests.



Several past and present committee members:

Front row from left: Mrs Betty Khosravi Yazdi (general secretary), Mrs. Maharukh Billimoria (membership secretary), Ms. Dilshad Bharucha (Ex general secretary), and Mrs. Kazween Boiko (President).

Back Row from left: Ervard Kaivan Antia (Chair, Building subcommittee), Mr. Cyrus Tengra (treasurer), Mr. Cawas Sethna (ex Treasurer), Mr. Narius Sethna (Chair Events Sub Committee), and Mr. Khurshed Mirza (vice- president).

Kazween Boiko has resided in Melbourne, Australia, since 2001 and has been the President of the Zoroastrian Association of Victoria, Australia, since 2014. She is married with two children and works full time as a licensed real estate agent.

BEST WISHES

From

ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA



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THIRTY AND BEYOND THE ZOROASTRIAN COMMUNITY OF NORTH AMERICA

SUNNU GOLWALLA
PAKISTAN

FEZANA completes thirty years this year, which is completing a generation of presence. Quite apparently, FEZANA has ploughed well as we can see where our creed, culture, and community stands today in North America.

Having said that, I will add that Zoroastrians are known to adapt to their surroundings and conditions. Also, it must have been easier for the Zoroastrians in America with the country's concept of "freedom of speech, religion, and assembly" to facilitate them. However, it remains to their credit that FEZANA has taken full advantage of this freedom.

THE ZOROASTRIAN CREED OR FAITH

Many of our religious scholars are in North America, where they have given an enlightened and appealing understanding of our faith to the diaspora and to anyone interested globally. This is a great service for which the community-at-large is indebted. The learned and dispassionate information that our scholars have given through their publications, talks, and discussions has opened many minds and created an increased interest in the faith. FEZANA's participation in the Parliament of World Religions is laudable, as it creates awareness of our faith to others.

The North American Mobed Council has encouraged more to become Ervards, while simultaneously pursuing a profession of their choice. Proportionately, there must be more mobeds in North America, when compared with the diaspora's global population. Also, these mobeds want to open new and bold initiatives that will appeal to the younger generation. What better way to perpetuate our creed?

The new Atashkdehs in North America have another story to tell; one of the love and strength of our people in the new land, for their faith. The Atashkdehs are sufficiently large and can accommodate events and activities of the diaspora, and in surrounding areas. The opening of each one was as exciting to us here in the subcontinent as to the North Americans. The sheer number of people



and mobeds present on the opening day confirmed that Zoroastrians are alive and kicking! Another point to note was the contribution of Zoroastrians from Iran in building the Atashkadehs. In North America, the Parsi and Irani division I hope ceases and we become one identity: **the Zoroastrians**.

In the new land, Zoroastrians can shed the burden of controversial *dokhmanashini* and *conversion*. The former being unthinkable, and the latter easier to practice as the promise—real or apocryphal—was to an Indian raja. The latter is not expected to stop our dwindling number, but the open-mindedness creates a healthy environment.

Having said all this, I cannot comment on how people throughout the diaspora hold their religious beliefs and practices, but the FEZANA associations do hold religion classes and activities for young and youth, to keep them correctly informed of the Faith.

To conclude, I will say I am more attracted to spirituality than religion, and would look to FEZANA to feed that need in future.

THE ZOROASTRIAN CULTURE

The terms *Gara* and *ghambar* are familiar to most North American Zoroastrians, including the younger generation. But, more laudably is the way FEZANA Journal has showcased the not-so-widely

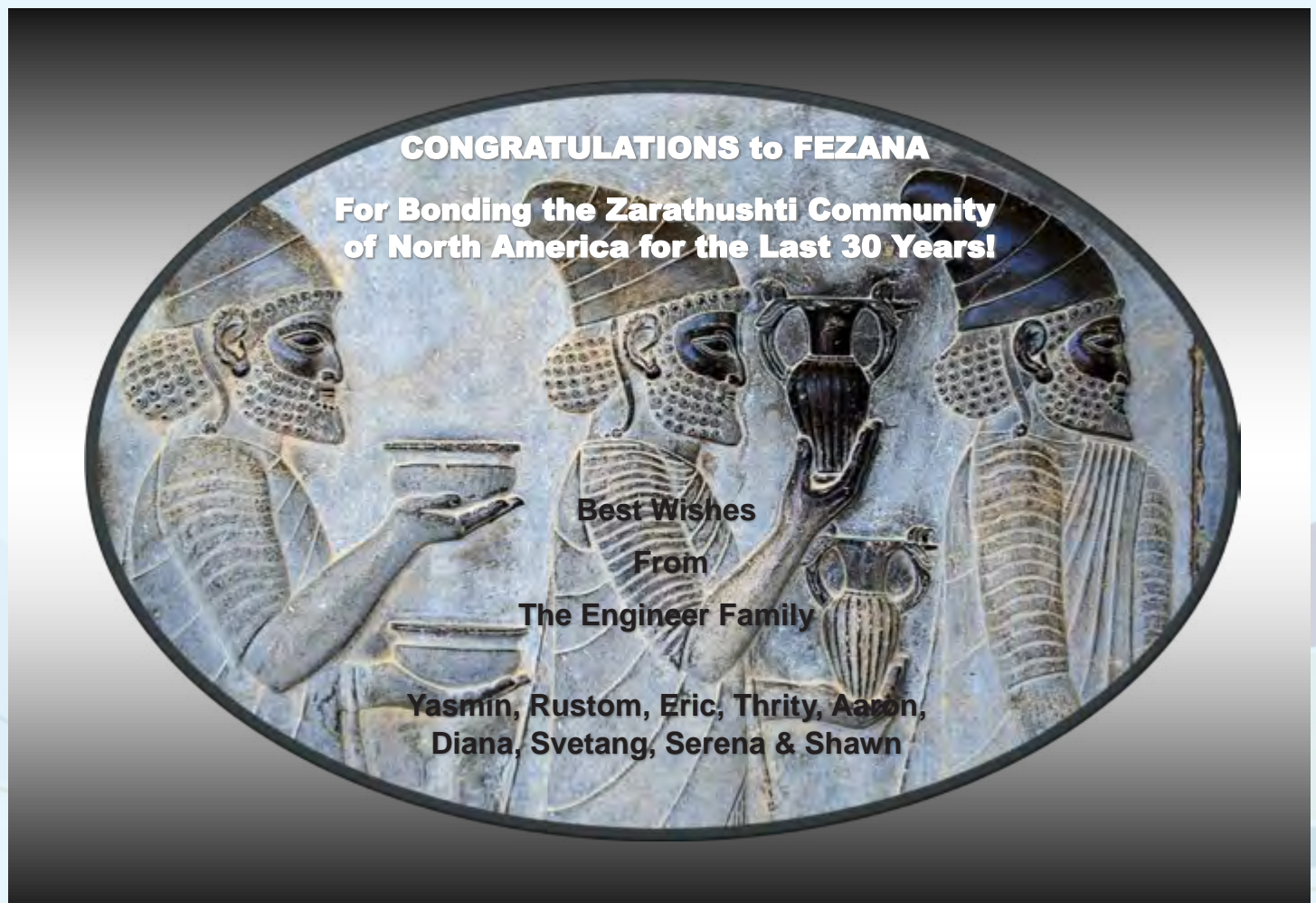
Diaspora

known Zoroastrian festivals, such as *Yalda*, *Sadeh*, and *Mehrghan*—devoting an entire issue to those festivals. This has taken us to our real roots. The festivals, being seasonal, lost its underlying meaning on the subcontinent as it does not have four seasons. Today, a fair number of Zoroastrians, at least, know about these beautiful celebrations and the way the festivities are done and why. Moving our awareness of these festivals from two-dimensional paper to actual celebrations by the FEZANA associations make these festivals alive and relevant.

The Navroze Table, and the festival itself, is so colorful that non-Zoroastrians constantly write about it in Pakistan and request for permission to be there during the celebration, but this was not seen a generation earlier. It is the effort and projection from the western cousins that the festival has become popular in Indo-Pak homes.

While holding dear our festivals and traditions, North American religious scholars have not shied away from researching into traditions and questioning them when they found that they hindered advancement. A recent case in mind is Dr Dina McIntyre’s research into the practice of isolating menstruating women (article appearing in the Hamazor Issue 1/2017) and Dr McIntyre’s conclusion that, “None of them (the Avestan text) teach that a menstruating woman is spiritually unclean, nor prescribe exclusionary rules to avoid her spiritual ‘pollution.’” She also presents detailed research that can enable individuals to decide whether to keep the tradition or let it go: an open-minded and respectful approach sometimes missing from custodians of a faith.

Sunnu Farrokh Golwalla is the editor of WHATZ ON, the monthly e-newsletter of Karachi Zarthosti Banu Mandal. She also enjoys sketching flowers and birds in her leisure time.





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on 30 years of addressing pressing topics that are
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keeping them connected

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Happy 30th Anniversary

THE ZOROASTRIANS' FUTURE?

A RELIGION ONCE DEEMED IN DECLINE IS NOW A VIBRANT CULTURE GONE GLOBAL... BURGEONING AND THRIVING!

DAVOOD N. RAHNI



Trepidation often underlies heated discussions regarding the Zoroastrian population's worldwide decline¹—currently estimated at 200,000. Even mainstream western media has started to take note, *e.g.*, *Zoroastrians Keep the Faith and Keep Dwindling*² and *Why is India's wealthy Parsi community vanishing?*³ Iran—the birthplace of Zoroastrianism over 3,000 years ago—has approximately 30,000 Zartushtis; India's Parsi Zoroastrians are estimated to number 60,000 (mostly descendants from Parsi pilgrims that arrived from Iran at the shores of Gujarat and Mumbai in two mass exoduses⁴—1300 and 600 years ago). Rapidly growing diasporic communities in the U.S., Canada, Pakistan, and the European Union, with smaller clusters of up to a few dozen each in most major cities, add 50,000 to the global tally.

Beliefs, History, and Competition for Mindshare Challenge Zoroastrian Growth

Parsi intermarriage with non-Zoroastrians has historically been discouraged over concerns that Parsi beliefs and identity would become diluted. Outside India, especially in diasporic communities, intermarrying has slowly and steadily increased during the past few decades. Parsis have retained their conservative approach believed to safeguard

their community through adherence with original religious rituals—which have remained essentially unchanged since the Sassanid dynasty. By-and-large, Parsis have avoided proselytizing other faiths or propagandizing their faith to others—based on the noble, non-confrontational ethos of non-interference in others' lives, which has resulted in the community's inexorable attrition. The four hundred year old declaration of Zoroastrianism as Iran's official religion by the Sassanid Empire, with their subsequent over taxation of non-believers and imposition of an onerous caste system may have backfired on the Iranian Zoroastrians, which paved the way for their rapid conquest and occupation by the Arabs. Simply put, forced conversion of so-called "infidels" to Christianity or Islam by the power of the sword has proven far more effective than the power of words. Today, almost all religions are in decline—if not through self-association, then by the incessant contention for mindshare from the sciences, technology, information and transportation revolutions, socio-economic, educational advancements, and so forth. Contemporaneous internal and external influences pose a serious challenge to the continuation of Zoroastrianism as a strict and invincible religion.

Cultural and Religious Diversity Cross-pollinate Zoroastrianism and the World's Religions

As Zoroastrianism has shaped other faiths and cultures since antiquity, it is now being influenced by other faiths and contemporary thought. As much as one would like to think that we practice our faith unadulteratedly and have retained our heritage's identity, modern genetic data corroborate the heterogeneity of our gene pools. Although some nostalgically attribute the pure Persian Aryan race to 80-million Iranians, all modern genetic analyses prove the Persian gene pool's heterogeneity, which includes their pre-historic ancestry, as well as bits

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of genes and biomarkers from every neighboring community in south, south-central, and southwest Asia. One could extend the argument to include, at a lesser extent, Zoroastrians—albeit, in lieu of their historical protectionism and isolation spanning millennia.

A religion as profoundly contextual as Zoroastrianism, is truly a complex doctrine with its foundation and philosophies anchored in the Avesta and Yasna—written in ancient Avestan and old Persian Pahlavi languages—that provide us with a multi-dimensional lens through which we can view life in nature. However, very few of our community are independently versed in the deeply embedded religious aspects of our faith, especially in regional languages. This rich foundation has served to

develop and foster more pragmatic cultural rituals, psyches, and ways-of-life to which we recognize, observe, and embrace.

Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds are the three pillars of Zoroastrianism founded on the concept of **light (aka illumination)**, which connotes **knowledge** and **enlightenment** and is now ubiquitously embedded in every major religion, socio-philosophical, and righteous way of life that promotes justice on the earth. The

seasonal Zoroastrian celebrations of Nowruz, Tirgan, Mehregan, and Yalda (birth of Mithra, sun, light) are inextricably entwined with the psyches and lives of up to 250 million people in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and the Kurds located in Central Asia, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and the Caucasus regions.

Our Core Values, Roots, and Influences

Fulfilling one's life purposes, including achieving the highest education, acquiring and utilizing that knowledge, and honing one's skills with the goal of contributing to humanity through philanthropy, volunteerism, and altruism, while sustaining a loving and nurturing close-knit family, are laudable aspects of Zoroastrianism. Who could not subscribe to these noble humanistic values?! Hence, rather than practicing a *one size should fit all* philosophy within our increasingly scattered Zoroastrian communities, we should reaffirm our commitment to safeguarding our deeply rooted religious beliefs in the faith and support those who genuinely wish to practice it. Why should we not also embrace other non-Zoroastrian communities (Iranians-Afghans-Tajikis-Kurds *et al*) and celebrate with them the myriad cultural rituals we share; such as Nowruz, which are currently observed in more than a dozen nations. After all, had it not been for the Babylonian emancipation of the Jews and their protection by Cyrus the Great, the Jews would not have incorporated many Zoroastrian principles into the Torah and Talmud, which, in turn, became the basis for Christianity and Islam. Is this not true?!

Today, many Iranians yearn to rediscover their heritage as narrated in the 30,000 verse poetry compendium written by Ferdowsi (*aka* the Persian Homer) over a 30 year period: the *Shahnameh*, the Epic Book of the Persian Kings of the Pishdadian (remember King Jamshid the founder of Nowruz) and Kayanian Dynasties. The mystical, heroic, and historical sagas contained in this epic book have and continue to be recited, often accompanied by music, in every tea and coffee house in Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan, as they have for hundreds of years. In fact, quoting a half verse to any Iranian—literate or not—provides him or her with the impetus to spontaneously complete the second half! By doing so, Iranians have reconciled a harmonious equilibrium between their faiths and national identity, which is anchored by a rich treasure trove of revered national and religious poetry and prose.



THE SIMORGH BIRD

Hence, the merit and need to balance our faith and sustain our Zoroastrian community's identity while reaching out to non-Zoroastrians to celebrate common cultural rituals, such as Nowruz, is NOW. The rapidly emerging Zoroastrian communities throughout the diaspora, must provide the leadership to execute and guide this ambitious, proactive plan of action before it is too late.

Using our Voices and Actions to Continue the Good Work of FEZANA

We need to more effectively use the internet and social media to bring the world's Zoroastrian communities together and showcase our heritage and seminal historical and contemporary contributions to the broader community and embrace everyone—irrespective of their race, identity, religion, or faith (or, lack thereof)—NOW. Whilst one might argue the Zoroastrians of Iran are less restrictive and, thus, more engaged with mainstream Iranians, due in part to their common observances of pre-Islamic celebrations as Nowruz, sub-science obedience to the three pillars of Zoroastrianism, and a renewed yearning to understand their distant past, it is from the communities in the (free) west where our future leaders are emerging. As we commemorate the 30 year anniversary of FEZANA as one of our most effective platforms to sustain and propagate Zoroastrianism—not as a religion in the strictest sense, *per se*—but, rather as a platonic social phenomenon that transcends all and embraces commonalities shared by other global religions and cultures. Hence, let me iterate: the merit and urgent need for Zoroastrian communities (through the voice of FEZANA and our emerging leaders from

throughout the diaspora, especially those in Europe and North America) to sustain, advocate, showcase and expand Zoroastrianism, not necessarily as a strict religion, but far more importantly as a viable way of life and culture, is NOW.

The bird Simorgh⁵, as it appears in Shahnameh and Persian mythology, is the metaphorical Persian equivalent of the Phoenix *resurrecting from the ashes*. What is important is the inner meaning of the prefix *Si*, 30, that symbolizes when 30 birds fly together in harmony, they ascend HIGH as one giant bird toward attaining *faravhar*, the quintessence of *Ahura Mazda*, God. Well, speaking of 30 *Persian birds of paradise*, permit me to congratulate FEZANA on its 30th anniversary. May the current 30th anniversary only multiply by more 30s along the destiny of the Zoroastrian community especially those in the diaspora.

(Endnotes)

- 1 "A Brief Overview of Zoroastrianism." *YouTube*, uploaded by Calabasas Online Tutoring, January 6, 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlWKusYj8uU.
- 2 Laurie Goodstein, "Zoroastrians Keep the Faith, and Keep Dwindling." www.nytimes.com/2006/09/06/us/06faith.html. Accessed January 2017.
- 3 Bachi Karkaria, "Why is India's wealthy Parsi community vanishing?" www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-35219331. Accessed January 2017
- 4 "The Zoroastrian Journey." *YouTube*, uploaded by TwoBinc, April 30, 2009, www.youtube.com/watch?v=K83F4URTS9I.
- 5 "Simorgh." *Vimeo*, uploaded by Meghdad Asadi, July 2016, vimeo.com/175266909.

Davood N. Rahni (drahni@optonline.net). *Be it in the diaspora or back in his homeland of Iran, the lifelong aspiration is to harmoniously bridge or bind the seemingly diverse communities through their common cultural heritage, humanistic aspirations, and family values. As a professor of chemistry and past adjunct professor of environmental law at Pace University, and dermatology at NY medical College for thirty years, he is a prolific writer of several hundred articles, essays and manuscripts, typified by his coauthoring the book, Bioimaging in Neurodegeneration, as well as numerous manuscripts that have appeared in Progress in the Canadian Neuro-Psycho-Pharmacology and Biological Psychiatry Journal. Reelected for the third time, he continues to serve as the president of the university senate, which was preceded by a stint as the associate provost (int.) for academic affairs. Davood, an ordinary Persian wanderer, was a Fulbright Scholar and visiting professor in Denmark, Oxford, Rome, and Florence, to name a few.*

OUR FUTURE IN THE DIASPORA

K. E. MEHRFAR

Look at this critical issue with hope but, at the same time, with fear. Today, I am torn by these powerful forces.

On the hopeful side, I am optimistic regarding how telecommunications and the internet can help our religion; albeit, an ancient religion, but one with everlasting and ever-fresh messages of love, peace, joy, happiness, and harmony—the time for Zarathustra’s Mantras has arrived. And, none too soon. At long last, the light of His knowledge can shine on and dispel the dark clouds of bigotry and ignorance around the world. Although it may take a century or two for His light to fully shine, we have started the journey of a thousand miles—with Confucius’ proverbial first step, which is also the hardest.

On the fearful side, we may lose our wonderful religion (as we know it today) in three to four generations because of our collective intellectual dilution with non-Zoroastrian philosophies coming at us from a plethora of secular and religious intrusions. There are many contributing factors on the fear side of my spectrum, but I believe they can be overcome, thereby empowering the forces of hope not only for our survival, but also for the prosperity of our religion. For more than 4,000 years, our ancestors have passed down and bestowed on each of us a priceless, yet fragile, blessing.

The fundamental elements of my idea are simple: create a plan that ensures our religion’s endurance and sustainability. Any viable plan must be based on a process and not be a one-time event, hence, it needs to have short- and long-term goals, objectives, implementation, management, feedback, and upkeep to make sure the plan reflects the social, economic, and cultural realities of the world we live in.

My proposed plan must be kept simple, fundamental, and back-to-the-basics, which are sometimes forgotten in the hectic life of the 21st



century. I have a more detailed plan prepared; but, due to space constraints, I have summarized it below in three steps for this special thirtieth anniversary issue of FEZANA Journal:

EDUCATION: Everything starts at home. It is not just a duty, but a holy obligation of our Zoroastrian Families to teach their children the tenets of our Faith in a simple, preferably, graphical format. It must be based on facts and logic and not based on emotions, feelings, and pushes. While some of us are fortunate to live in big cities with a Zoroastrian temple, we must not expect the temples to be the only source of knowledge for our young. David Ben-Gurion put it well, “For us to survive, we must put our own hands on our own knees and not anyone else’s.”

TECHNOLOGY: We must leverage technology wherever we can. We have many extremely talented young Zoroastrians scattered around the world who are willing, able, and ready to help; but, the big problem is our sprawl, which takes me to the last point of this simplified proposal for our future

CONNECTIVITY: We must have a central repository of knowledge for all Zoroastrians living in the diaspora. This is not just a sophisticated database of information but, rather, a living repository that would be kept up-to-date and managed by a small team of young Zoroastrians from around the world.

I close my 3-step proposed plan with more hope than fear. I wish FEZANA and the Journal, more continued success in decades to come.

Dr. Khosro E. Mehrfar was born in Tehran, Iran. He moved to the US in 1979 to pursue his higher education. Dr. Mehrfar has served the Zarathushti community in many capacities. He is an author of many articles and has been interviewed by local, national, and international media regarding social and cultural issues.

Mehr Group



Congratulations to FEZANA on 30 years of success serving North American Zoroastrian communities in many capacities. And best wishes for more success in decades to come.

Roya & Khosro E. Mehrfar – Mehr U S Corporation – Honored by being voted one of the 25 influential Zoroastrians of quarter century of North America.

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MOBEDYARS SAVING ZARATHUSHTI TRADITIONS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

MANECK BHUJWALA

The religion founded by Prophet Zarathushtra, thousands of years ago, has survived invasions, genocides, and persecutions—we are fortunate to have inherited the Zarathushti religion from our ancestors. Despite the loss of many original texts of our prophet's teachings (the Gathas), portions were saved and incorporated in the Avesta scriptures. The oral tradition of regularly memorizing and reciting Avesta prayers before and after they were written, was important to the teachings' survival.

In ancient times, skills and knowledge were mostly transferred from parents to children; so, we had generations of families as farmers (especially praised by Prophet Zarathushtra), warriors, traders, artisans, doctors, priests, etc. Over time, institutions of learning were established where professional teachers taught the skills and imparted the knowledge to whomever desired to join a certain profession. For farmers, we have agricultural schools; for doctors, we have medical schools; for warriors, we have military schools; for priests, we have Athornan Madressas; and, similarly, other institutions for different careers. So, today children are not obliged to follow the professions of their parents and can choose the career and training in which they are interested.

During the rule of Persian emperors, the priestly profession was patronized by the rulers and, in India, when the Parsis became prosperous, priests were generously patronized by rich businessmen. So, the children of priests continued to practice their family occupation. But, when the era of prosperity ended, the number of rich patrons declined and the children of priests began to choose other, more lucrative, careers. This led to a shortage of practicing priests and, although children may be pressured by their parents to get priestly training, many do not chose to practice the priestly profession afterwards,



at least, not as a full-time career. Exposure to western-thinking also played a part in reducing the attachment to traditions, which led to lessening demand for performance of prayer rituals, which, in turn, led to reduced patronage of priests. Many articles in Parsi magazines and news media have reported on this shortage of hereditary priests to serve the community in the many temples in cities, as well as in small towns and in private homes in India and Pakistan. There is also a shortage of practicing priests throughout the diaspora.

To address this problem, the Parsi community has started to accept persons not of priestly lineage, but who have volunteered to serve as priests on a part-time or full-time basis. These non-hereditary priests (Mobedyars or Paramobeds) obtain priestly training that allows them to perform many basic rituals such as Jashans, funeral services, initiations (Navjotes), and weddings. This shortage and its solution is not unique to the Zarathushti community, as I have personally seen an American convert to Hinduism learning priestly rituals and performing them for Hindu families in Southern California.

Diaspora

There is resistance to non-hereditary priests from some career priests in the Parsi community who see them as unwelcome competition. There is resistance, as well, from some ultra-orthodox Parsis. As compared to the Parsi Zarathushtis, there is a much earlier and broader acceptance of non-hereditary priests (which includes both men and women), in the Iranian Zarathushti communities, where the title of Mobedyars is raised to that of Mobeds after several years of service to the community.

As per Ervad Shams-ul-Ulama Dr. Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, occupational classifications were not strictly followed in ancient Iran before the Sassanian dynasty, and even then, exceptions were made. In his scholarly book *"The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees"* and referring to the founder of the Sassanian empire Ardeshir Babakan, Modi writes:

One of the innovations, said to have been introduced by him, or rather one of the old customs, - more honored in their breach than in their observance at his time, - reintroduced by him with the aid of his Dastur Tausar or Tansar, was, that the members of different professions and trades, and their descendants, should adhere to their old professions and trades and not change them for others, except with the special permission of the king, or the Government authorities.... But we learn from Tansar's letter that Ardeshir had intended to make certain exceptions. For example, a man by special qualifications or examinations, can qualify himself for a profession, we find such an exception, in the case of priesthood, made in Persia, even as late as the 17th century. One

Dastur Rustam Gushtasp Ardeshir is said to have sprung from the laity and not from a priestly family.....The copy of the Dinkard in the Mulla Firoze Library, a copy of the Mino-Kharad in Mr. Tehmuras Dinshaw's possession and a Persian Rivayat in Mr. Manekji Unwala's possession are by his pen.

Learning from history, we see that even when Sassanian kings patronized priests, there were exceptions made for persons who qualified, and even priests could not leave their parent's occupation unless an exception was made. Today, the community is practicing a double standard that allows children of priests to change their occupation to lay professions, but discourages children of laity to become priests of their own free will. And, per Modi, the title of Ervad (which means master of learning or teacher) is granted to some children of priests without having properly qualified for it, especially if they are not intending to choose the priesthood as a career.

Coming from the laity, I experienced resistance from some career priests for obtaining training as well as for practicing; consequently, I was not invited to participate in or perform dedicatory prayers at the inauguration of a prayer building with an unconsecrated gas burning fire. If the inclusion of Mobedyars continues to be resisted (and, in some cases, refused), the community will gradually have no priests to perform the traditional prayer rituals. It is better that the community wakes up and respects Mobedyars to keep the Zarathushti traditions alive.

Maneck Bhujwala , MSEE, MBA, M.A. co-founded Zoroastrian Associations in California, past-president, Greater Huntington Beach Interfaith Council, Board Member, South Coast Interfaith Council, North American Interfaith Network, Director, World Zoroastrian Organization, Co-Chair, Interfaith Activities, Research/ Preservation Committees of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America, serves as volunteer priest.

Diaspora

ROLE OF THE ZTFE IN THE ZOROASTRIAN DIASPORA Preserving the Zoroastrian Religion, Culture and Community

MALCOLM M DEBOO

The Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) was established in 1861 in London when there were only 50 Zoroastrians in the United Kingdom. These Zoroastrians from India travelled to the UK for various reasons and some made several return journeys during their lifetime. Prior to the construction of the Suez Canal, if any Zoroastrian unfortunately died while in the UK, then it was extremely challenging to repatriate their body back to India. Pragmatically the body would be buried in the UK, but it was important the Zoroastrian last rites were performed. Hence acquiring a separate burial ground for the Zoroastrians was one of the primary reasons for establishing the ZTFE. The other five broad objectives of the ZTFE, since 1861, are:

1. To maintain a Zoroastrian place of worship for ceremonial prayers and promulgation and practice of the Zoroastrian Faith.
2. To organise religious, communal, and social functions.
3. To serve, protect and enhance the interests of Zoroastrians in Europe.
4. To assist Zoroastrian researchers in Zoroastrianism and purchase books on Zoroastrianism by learned Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians.
5. To maintain a European Zoroastrian Religious Fund.

Today the ZTFE is the oldest Indian / Asian religious voluntary organisation in the UK. As per the 2011 UK Census, there are 4,015 Zoroastrians in England and Wales, of which 2,235 reside in London.



TO MAINTAIN A SEPARATE BURIAL GROUND FOR ZOROASTRIANS AND, IF NEED BE, PAY FOR THEIR FUNERAL EXPENSES AND CEREMONIES

In 1863, ZTFE acquired an exclusive burial ground for Zoroastrians at Brookwood Cemetery, Surrey, as it allowed burial of non-Christians. Brookwood was incorporated by an Act of UK Parliament in 1852 and was the largest cemetery in the world. Today, it is one of the largest in Europe. Our cemetery grounds are the oldest in Brookwood and remain in the service of the Zoroastrian community. The community gathers annually at Brookwood for the Fravardigan Jashan. Hence, Brookwood is the oldest anchorage of the UK Zoroastrian Diaspora, which continues to preserve the Zoroastrian Religion, Culture, and Community.

TO MAINTAIN A ZOROASTRIAN PLACE OF WORSHIP FOR CEREMONIAL PRAYERS AND PROMULGATION AND PRACTICE OF THE ZOROASTRIAN FAITH

The second oldest anchorage for the UK Zoroastrian Diaspora is the requirement for the ZTFE to maintain a Zoroastrian place of worship, which it has done since 1921. The current Zoroastrian Centre in West London has seating for more than 700 people, a purpose-built Setayash Gah, modelled on the inner sanctum of an Agairy in Mumbai, flat for the resident mobed, library, games room, office, and board room. ZTFE patrons



Tata Mausoleum, Brookwood Cemetery

Diaspora



Wadia Mausoleum Brookwood Cemetery

and benefactors Faridoon and Mehraban Zartoshty, internationally renowned for their philanthropy, donated the lion share for its purchase and renovation. The Zoroastrian Centre was formally inaugurated by Mehraban Zartoshty on June 24, 2005 in the Zartoshty Brothers Hall, on the opening day of the Eighth World Zoroastrian Congress hosted by the ZTFE.

TO ORGANISE RELIGIOUS, COMMUNAL, AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

For most of its over 155-year history, the ZTFE has continued to celebrate Zoroastrian festivals on the actual day as per Shahenshai or Iranian Zoroastrian calendars. The oldest photographs in the ZTFE archives are from the Jamsheedi NoRuz Banquet of March 21, 1906, and the Shahenshai Navroze Banquet of September 14, 1906. The first Navjote was performed in 1915 and the first Zoroastrian wedding in 1940. In the 1950s the practice of performing the annual ten day Muktads was initiated.

During the 1980s, ZTFE initiated annual Gahanbars per the Iranian Zoroastrian calendar and, in the 1990s, the monthly Parab Jashans as per the Shahenshai calendar. Since the 1930s, ZTFE has organised purely social events including, outings, bingo, sports tournaments and Parsi comedy plays. During the 1970s, the Young Zoroastrian Group (YZs) was initiated; in the 1980s, the 18–40s Group; in the 1990s, the Extra Young Zoroastrians Children Educational Fun Club (XYZs); Zarathushtrian Education Team (ZET) to organise in house religious courses; and in 2014, the over 50s Group (Z Club). In November 2013, the Zoroastrian Senior Citizen Home Project was launched.

TO SERVE, PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE INTERESTS OF ZOROASTRIANS

From 1873 till 1926, ZTFE played an important role in the amelioration of the Zoroastrians of Iran. Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran, ZTFE

was asked to assist Iranian Zoroastrian refugees, for which it was instrumental in establishing the World Zoroastrian Organisation. As recently as February 2017, it assisted an Iranian Zoroastrian refugee family from Yazd to stay in the UK. Currently, it is assisting Iranian Zoroastrians in the UK for their travel visas to the US.

In the 1990s the ZTFE began to increasingly engage with other faith communities and the UK Government. The sudden demise of Freddie Mercury (1991), the Parliamentary Centenaries of Naoroji (1992) and Bhowangree (1995), ZTFE joining the Inter Faith Network for the UK (1993) and HRH Prince of Wales 'Defender of Faith' interview in which he mentioned Zoroastrians (1994) enhanced the ZTFE and the Zoroastrians in the UK. During the millennium year, ZTFE was invited by the UK Government to showcase the Zoroastrian religion in the Millennium Dome. Post millennium, the Zoroastrian Centre has been visited by senior members of the Royal Family and religious leaders, including the Archbishop of Canterbury. ZTFE is regularly consulted by the UK Government and its representatives are invited to national commemorations, and have been formally introduced to Her Majesty the Queen, Prime Minister, HH The Pope, HH The Dalai Lama and other religious heads.

In 2013, ZTFE Members, Jehangir Sarosh and past president Dorab E Mistry were honoured with an OBE by Her Majesty and the UK Government for their work in interfaith and the Zoroastrian community. Both are active in the European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL).

Zoroastrian festivals at the ZTFE are reported in the media, including a live broadcast on BBC News 24 on Shahenshai Nooruz, August 16, 2013.

The ZTFE actively participates in World Zoroastrian Congresses. It hosted the Second World Zoroastrian Youth Congress (1997) and Eighth Zoroastrian World Congress (2005).

ZTFE's relationship with FEZANA was formally established in 1992, when it was invited to make a presentation at its AGM in Vancouver. It actively participated at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago (1993) and the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston (2000). At the behest of FEZANA, ZTFE established the WZCC UK and is a founding member of the Global Working Group.

ZTFE is extremely fortunate that its patron, Lord Karan F Bilimoria CBE DL, is in the House of Lords. He was instrumental in establishing the Zoroastrian All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) in the Houses of Parliament in 2013, with ZTFE as Secretariat.

Diaspora

Annually, at least two receptions are organised in parliament by the Zoroastrian APPG and the ZTFE.

TO ASSIST ZOROASTRIAN RESEARCHERS IN ZOROASTRIANISM AND PURCHASE BOOKS ON ZOROASTRIANISM BY LEARNED ZOROASTRIANS AND NON-ZOROASTRIANS

Over the years, ZTFE has forged links with academic institutions for the learning of Zoroastrianism, including the Universities of Cambridge, Oxford, Manchester and School of Oriental and African Studies, (SOAS); numerous other Institutions, like The British Library, The British Museum; and organizations such as The Ancient India and Iran Trust and The Iran Heritage Foundation, amongst others. It has assisted in the publication of books on Zoroastrianism, amassed a reference library containing over 1,000 books on Zoroastrianism and sells books on Zoroastrianism. It assists researchers of Zoroastrianism, including Professor John R Hinnells for his book, "Zoroastrians in Britain".

Thanks to the vision and largesse of the Zartoshty Brothers and Professor Mary Boyce, 'The Zartoshty Professorship of Zoroastrian Studies' was established at SOAS. As the only Chair in Zoroastrian Studies in the world, SOAS is now the foremost institution in the world to offer recognised Degree courses in Zoroastrianism. Since 2000, 'The Faridoon & Mehraban Zartoshty Fund for Zoroastrian Studies' managed by the ZTFE has awarded thousands of pounds to Zoroastrians studying Zoroastrianism at SOAS. In 2013, the ZTFE core funded the successful 'The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination' at SOAS, which was the first ever exhibition on Zoroastrianism in the West.

TO MAINTAIN A EUROPEAN ZOROASTRIAN RELIGIOUS FUND

The ZTFE continues to be the oldest Zoroastrian association in the West and the oldest Asian faith based voluntary organisation in the UK primarily due to the hard work put in by its dedicated volunteers and donations received by its generous donors! Without these two active ingredients, it would be challenging for the ZTFE to sustainably preserve and enhance Zoroastrianism in the UK.

By the Grace of Ahura Mazda, the ZTFE has a healthy balance sheet, thanks to periodic donations it received in the last two decades, especially from the Zartoshty Brothers, from the sale of the previous Zoroastrian House in 2004, continuing to generate income on its investments and be prudent with its

expenditure.

ZTFE faces challenges on the human resources front in the era of globalisation due to the younger work force's work schedules. This has made it difficult for



The Author with Queen Elizabeth II. at Lambeth Palace on February 12, 2012 showing her majesty the restored Shahnameh manuscript S147 Vol 1. which belongs to the First Dastoor Meherjirana library. Others in the photo are Trustee Ervad Rustom K Bhedwar and VP P B .Jila.

many community charities in the UK to persuade younger generations to volunteer their services for continuous community work on a medium- to long-term basis. Thus, the payroll for the ZTFE staff team has increased exponentially since 2010. Currently, it employs a full-time administrative secretary, facilities coordinator and a mobed, and a part-time caretaker at Brookwood. Without the staff team, it would be extremely challenging for the ZTFE Managing Committee, Trustees, and its numerous volunteers to continue their efforts in preserving the Zoroastrian religion and culture in the community.

OUTLOOK FOR THE NEXT 30 YEARS

Changes will continue, thus preserving the Zoroastrian religion, culture and community in the UK holds many challenges for the ZTFE as it does for other Zoroastrian associations the world over. Although the future is difficult to predict, we must continue to have faith in Ahura Mazda and continue to serve our respective Zoroastrian associations. With the current trajectory ZTFE is on, anchored in the six historical broad objectives set by its founders in 1861, should continue to inspire the Zoroastrians of the UK, young and old, to serve the ZTFE for the next 30 years and beyond 2061.

Malcolm M Deboo has served the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) and the Zoroastrian community since leaving university in 1989. He is currently the president of the ZTFE, elected annually since 2009.



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DIASPORA WILL DELAY OUR DYING

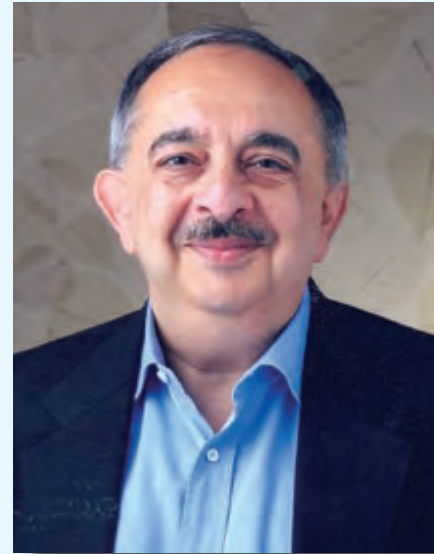
BERJIS DESAI

An ethnic group, in irreversible demographic decline, soon reaches a point, when it becomes statistically insignificant. Undoubtedly, the Parsis are fast approaching this point. Dismal demographics are being aggravated by a sizeable number (unfortunately, more of the young), who are indifferent to the fate of the community. In India, the near gerontocracy, which thus controls and manages community institutions including charities, fire temples and panchayets, is often incompetent, unimaginative and averse to reform. Beneficiaries are, therefore, cynical and disillusioned with the management of community issues and resources. Internal dynamics of these institutions is vitiated by politics, ego, and at times, senility. All the symptoms of the 'last-days-of-Rome' are manifest.

This piece is concerned only whether the diaspora can stave off the existential threat to Parsis, as an ethnic group in India. This writer continues to believe that Zoroastrianism, as a faith, will continue to flourish and thrive, despite (or probably, even in spite of), the Parsis. Be as it may, there are multiple good reasons (both rational and emotional) why we ought to endeavor to ensure that the Parsis continue to remain a significant and unique ethnic group. Parsis have earned the right to be preserved.

The situation in India is likely to worsen, unless there is a dramatic reversal in community consciousness. Hence, it is the so-called diaspora, where hope lies. By diaspora, we mean, for the present purpose, Parsi Zoroastrian communities in North America, Canada, Australia/ New Zealand and the U.K. The smaller diasporas do contribute, as the recent munificent donation of the Shroffs of Hong Kong to the Parsi General Hospital, which has the potential to dramatically transform healthcare for Parsis in India.

Non-Parsi Zoroastrians (NPZ) continue to proliferate in Kurdistan, Azarbaijan and countries near the Caspian Sea, as well as in Iran. The only



commonality between Parsis and the NPZ, is, the faith. However, there is wide divergence in culture and way of life. Hence, these large flourishing Zoroastrians cannot help in preserving the unique cultural identity of the Parsis.

Why the ills which afflict the original homeland not seem to affect these diasporas. The principal reason, is, that these migrants terribly miss the Parsi way of life. Nostalgia pounds them daily and they hanker for the smells, sights and sounds of the culture they have left behind. This void spurs them to greatly value and cherish Parsi culture. They are anxious to ensure that their young identify themselves as Parsis. Luckily for them, the pluralist society around them greatly appreciates the distinctiveness of the Parsis. The diaspora is doing a terrific job in preserving its unique identity. This stellar performance is despite most marriages being interfaith and almost all the homeland community institutions missing.

A sense of bon homie and camaraderie unites the leadership in these communities. In the past, there have been divides over religious views. These divides seem to have dissipated, with the emergence of a younger leadership. Unlike India, a professional

Diaspora

approach permeates community associations in the diaspora. Silly public spats are unheard of. Politics takes a back seat and differences are resolved in a civil manner. Handagiri (loutish behavior) remains confined to Mumbai. As a result, the youth is not cynical but remains interested in community issues. Close knit groups enjoy their togetherness with an inclusive approach to non-Parsi spouses and partners. Community events are vibrant and fun. This often leads to non-Parsis practicing the faith and assimilating the Parsi way of life. Imperceptibly, the nucleus grows.

Terrible though this analogy sounds, the best mangoes get exported. Expat Parsis are likely to be more educated, suaver, more refined and more 'Parsi' than their counterparts in the homeland. Being away, tugs at their heart and they prefer being warmly ensconced in the companionship of their brethren;

rather than being nasty, carping and downright odious. This helps in passing on the baton to the coming generations and popularizing the faith in the larger society.

Publications like FEZANA JOURNAL are exquisitely produced, well researched and highly readable. Emphasis is on cultural history. They fire the instincts of the youth, even the agnostic, who are fascinated by the anthropological rarity of the Parsis.

However, can the diaspora ensure our survival as an ethnic group despite the homeland mess, is the question. This writer believes that the diaspora will considerably prolong our survival, like guardian angels correcting the follies of mortal humans. Nonetheless, it is too early to predict, with confidence, that the diaspora will succeed in ensuring that our unique identity is preserved for all times to come.

BERJIS DESAI, is the Senior Partner of a large Indian law firm; a breeder of thoroughbred horses; a columnist in the PARSIANA; and considers himself an unsuccessful community activist.



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North America in many capacities.*

*Your organizational achievements and various national and international projects
successful accomplishments are admirable and a role model for many other non-
profit organizations to follow.*

*Wishing FEZANA and all its officers and staff the best for the next 30 years and
beyond.*

*Behnam & Marjan Abadian
President & CEO, Saxton Industrial, Inc.*

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Thank you for publishing a great journal**

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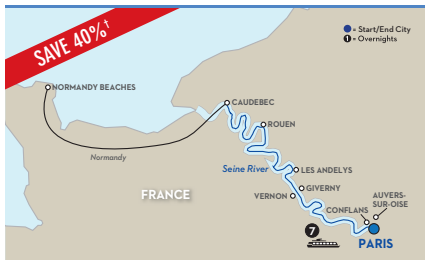
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Journey of a Lifetime - **The ZFS Story**

**ABAN RUSTOMJI
HOUSTON, TX**



The Zarathushti Field Student Project was a legacy project of the 2000 7th World Zoroastrian Congress held in Houston, Texas. Conceived by Aban and Purvez Rustomji—whose world was expanded by traveling and the experiencing different cultures—the ZFS project celebrated our energetic youth from around the world and to instill in them a sense of responsibility for their immediate surroundings. The project was made possible by generous donations from the international community and local representatives who acted as judges.



It has been seventeen years since we selected twenty-one students from Australia, India, Iran, and Pakistan, based on their academic achievement, financial need, community service, and the completion of an essay. The group that arrived in Houston were young adults, ages 15-23-years-old. What happened to these young leaders over seventeen years? Where are they now? And, did the project succeed? Delightfully so! These students are now accomplished globetrotters, articulate communicators, young parents, and contributors to their communities. They collectively acknowledged that their Houston visit was

a life-changing experience that allowed them to understand that making a difference in the world begins with understanding one's place in it.

Ashdeen Z. Lilaowala, from India



In 2005, Ashdeen moved from Bombay to Delhi to work with UNESCO's Parzor Foundation. Today, as an executive member of the foundation, he works on several programs whose goals are to protect and promote the heritage and culture of the Parsi Zoroastrian community. He is also a Trustee of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman (DPA) and chairman of the Social Centre Committee. His eponymous label, ASHDEEN, specializes in hand-embroidered saris. ASHDEEN is the first port of call for those looking to buy a Parsi gara; his clients enjoy his exceptional craftsmanship and exquisite designs. Ashdeen co-curated the exhibition titled "Threads of Continuity—Zoroastrian Life and Culture," which was held at IGNCA in New Delhi during March 2016. His seminal research on the traditional and vanishing craft of Kusti weaving has been published in the

Journey of a Lifetime - The ZFS Story

book, *Threads of Continuity – The Zoroastrian Craft of Kusti Weaving*. The book documents the various Zoroastrian rites of passage, with discussions of rituals and customs of the community.

Binaisha Kotwal, from India



Attending the 7th World Zoroastrian Congress was Binaisha's first step to be a part of the global community. Perceptions, understanding, and respect for others' beliefs are something that she gained by attending the event. Another personal highlight for her was meeting Bapsi Sidwa, whose work she had studied in University. Being born and brought up in a Parsi baug in Mumbai, she wrote, "my views and connects were limited." Now, seventeen years later, she is part of the Sydney-based Australian Zoroastrian Association where she volunteers and continues to apply what she learned at the Congress.

Faridoon Pundole, from India



Originally from Pune, Faridoon was a *navar martab* who studied computer engineering and took part in the closing Jashan ceremony at the 2000 Congress. He returned to Houston to study and found that the ZAH (Zoroastrian Association of Houston) was vibrant, inclusive, and growing. He is presently a manager at an oil and gas company and is happily settled with wife and two adorable daughters. He is an active member at ZAH and contributes to the ZAH legacy scholarship fund, participates in fund-raising activities, works on the ZAH website, and recently started teaching young adult Sunday school classes.

Farhad Billimoria, from Australia



As a third-year engineering student from Australia, Farhad was a cadet and good debater. He writes, "ZFS opened my eyes to where I am from, who I am, and where I am going." He lived in the US for a few years (2007-14) —moving from Connecticut, to New York, and California. Presently, he works in Australia's energy industry and lives in a little village outside of Melbourne. He says that his life is busy with his wife and infant daughter, but is rewarding and fun. He enjoys his hobbies of photography and guitar-playing in his spare time.

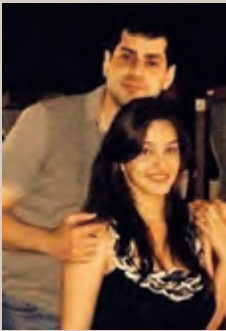
Kaiyzad Giara, from Pakistan



As the youngest member of the group, Kaiyzad says that he was taken care of by the "sweetest people." He remembers sleeping on the softest bed and thinking this is how it feels to sleep on clouds. He asked his host one morning if he could take the cloud bed to Pakistan, she smiled and politely said that the clouds won't fit in the airplane. She whispered to her husband, "I love him, but what is wrong with that kid?" He is now the Associate Creative Director of an advertising firm. Music has always played a significant role in his life, and he has been a drummer for many underground bands ranging from psychedelic rock, post rock, metal, and other genres which make people still say, "What is wrong with that kid?"

Journey of a Lifetime - **The ZFS Story**

Kaizad Deboo, from India



Kaizad writes, "I can never forget the Houston trip. It was such a great experience for all of us. The memories will be cherished by me forever. It was my first international exposure which not only gave me friends for life, but also the confidence to network and the way I look at things." He joined Emirates Group thirteen years ago, and currently works in their Leadership and Talent Team as a Leadership Specialist. His job profile encompasses all aspects of leadership learning and development of the group, which includes organizational resource utilization, systems integration, staff motivation, team effectiveness initiatives, and employee relations.

Meher Mody, from India



As a house prefect from Pune who was awarded many scholarships and recognition, ZFS was her first visit to America. "It was such a big adventure for me and opened my eyes to the big wide world of opportunities." She later moved to Sydney, Australia, graduated with a Masters degree in clinical psychology, and married a wonderful Karachi boy, Sarosh Mistri. They now have a beautiful baby boy, Zubin, who is just over two-months-old. She is involved in the local AZA association activities. "Life has been very kind to me in the last few years."

Narius Shekdar, from Pakistan



Currently, Narius lives in the greater Toronto area and works in the banking sector in Treasury and Risk Management. He immigrated to Canada in 2013 and, to echo what Kayzad and Farhad have said, "life has definitely become very busy, but I am having lots of fun at the same time." He was married in 2015; he and his wife are expecting their first child this July." As his wife recently moved to Canada from the US, they are enjoying exploring Toronto, taking road trips across Canada and the US, and are now getting ready and looking forward to all the exciting changes that a baby will bring.

Paymaneh Soroushpour, from Iran



Paymaneh returned to Iran after the 7th North American Congress and earned her Bachelors degree in Mathematics and a Masters degree in Administration. In 2005, she started working as a supervisor in a software company in Iran. Her next job was planning and scheduling oil well drilling for a project in South Pars. She married in 2007 and has a seven-year-old son. Two years ago the family immigrated to the US and she writes, "I have a perfect family and a perfect job in San Francisco Bay area as accountant." The transition from Iran to living in USA was easy as she had already visited the US. Her weekends are spent driving to the Zoroastrian temple in San Jose as, "it is very important for us to hold and keep Zoroastrian culture in our family".

Journey of a Lifetime - **The ZFS Story**

Spitaman Shroff from Pakistan



This Karachi kid has become a superstar, for which he credits the ZFS experience. Presently, he lives in Dubai, UAE, where he is a chartered accountant in Christian Dior's Finance Department. "ZFS has influenced me a lot, as my attendance opened my vision and gave me a bigger picture of the world. Having met dignitaries, businessmen, and religious scholars in a multi-cultural environment, I realized hard work, dedication, humility, and care for fellow Zoroastrians and mankind at large are the very basic foundations for happiness and success. All the events and conferences were great, they gave me an insight to the basic tenants of Zoroastrianism and issues being faced by the community at-large."

There were other ZFS students as well, but this small group shows how much a legacy project can make a big impact on an individual's life and their community spirit. The ZFS Legacy Project was about community. It took a community to develop the idea, raise funds, choose the scholarship winners, host the students, and make them feel at home. And, it is to the community that these young Zarathushtris turn, as they make their contribution in our world.

Aban Rustomji is a member of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston and is the current chair of the FEZANA Information and Educational Research Systems (FIRES).

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FEZANA Scholarships

FEZANA ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS (2017-2018)

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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
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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 2017-2018 will be awarded in September 2017.

AWARD CRITERIA:

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).

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.

The Sheroo Darabsha Kolsavala Endowed Scholarship of \$1000 will be awarded to an undergraduate student with demonstrated financial need and good academic standing

APPLICATION: Application forms are available from the FEZANA website at www.fezana.org or from Dr. Dolly Dastoor academic-scholarship@fezana.org

COMPLETED APPLICATION FORMS SHOULD BE SENT ELECTRONICALLY BY AUGUST 1, 2017 (11.59 EST) to academicscholarship@fezana.org



FEZANA Scholarships

FEZANA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS—2016

DOLLY DASTOOR PHD

Chair, FEZANA Academic Scholarship Program

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, and lower crime rates.

Investment in our youth is an 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. Your faith and trust in the FEZANA Academic Scholarship Program—as demonstrated by your support and endowments are appreciated by your committee and the recipients. Thank you.

This year we have a new endowed scholarship, the Sheroo Darabsha Kolsawala WZO Canada Endowed scholarship, in the amount of \$1,000, designated for an undergraduate student who has a great financial need. We are grateful to the donor for the trust placed in FEZANA scholarship program.

Your continued financial support and your encouragement is of the utmost importance to maintain this program and sustain the hope of the next generation.

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

of North Texas (ZANT), I would like to continue dedicating my social life to serving the Zoroastrian community and spreading Zarathushtra’s words to Zoroastrian youths, as I have done so far.”

PANTEHA SOROUSHPOOR, University of North Texas (UNT)



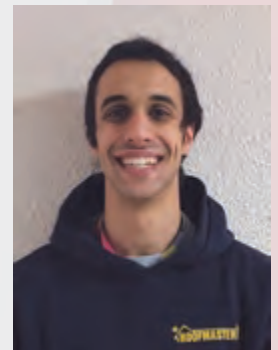
Master of Science in
Geospatial Information
System (GIS) University of
Science and Technology
Bachelor of Science in
Chemical Engineering

Panteha enrolled in graduate school to further her knowledge and obtain skills by pursuing Geospatial Information System (GIS) program, her future career goal in petroleum industry. Worked with the Faravhar Journal and Amordad News in Iran as heads of their respective news departments. She was on the Zoroastrian Student Association’s board and remains active in sports.

“As a member of the Zoroastrian Association

FEZANA 25TH ANNIVERSARY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE (\$3,000)

TYRON GHASWALA, University of Waterloo Doctorate Candidate, Pure Mathematics



He holds a Bachelor of Science (Pure Mathematics and Mathematical Physics) from Western Australia. He came to Canada in 2011. He is an intermural squash and basketball player, as well as a guitarist in a folk and jazz band.

His vision for the community is one that embraces



FEZANA Scholarships

its online presence. A community which can benefit from greater connectivity that comes with online engagement, a well-connected community, with ease of access to knowledge, travel buddies and perhaps most importantly, recipes!

MORVORID GUIV ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE (\$1,000)

ANAHITA KHODADADI, University of Michigan, Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning
PhD Candidate



She has a BSc In Architecture and M.Arch in Architectural Technology from University of Tehran, where she stood first in the Master's degree. She has taught at the

University of Tehran and University of Michigan and is a graduate student instructor/graduate student research assistant. She teaches structures and is involved with research projects in the field of building technology. She was a member of Zoroastrian Student Association (Kanun), organizing the Mantra Annual Congress, and the Annual Zoroastrian Sports Competition (Jaam-e-Janbakhtegan).

FEZANA SCHOLARS (\$2,000) GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS

PARSHAN KHOSRAVI, University of California, UCLA
Master's in Public Policy



“Seven years ago, when I came to the US as a religious refugee, I didn't know how to speak English and didn't have any idea about the American culture. I didn't have a clue on how to find a way to belong here. All I knew was that I had three things: myself, my

family, and my community. Now, as I work toward

my Master's in Public Policy at UCLA—the school of my dreams—I see myself blessed to have a healthy mind and body, a loving family, and a supportive Zoroastrian community.” Parsan is the recipient of several prestigious scholarships and awards, was on the Dean's Honor list, was president of the Student body, and organized conferences for the university. “I will use this deeply appreciated grant to get back to my Zoroastrian peers and strengthen our religious and cultural community. Thank you, FEZANA, for believing in me! I look forward to making you proud!”

ATREM RASHIDI Roseman University, Pharmacy School, Utah
PhD Candidate



Atrem is the recipient of several awards and scholarships and is active in sports; a member of the California Zoroastrian Centre, youth committee; and

participates in fund-raising activities, blood drives, group sudreh pushis, reads the Gathas in Avestan, and has translated them to Farsi. As a pharmacist, she intends to teach people with type 1 diabetes about insulin and exercise and help her community.

DELSHAD SHROFF, Columbia University
Masters in Developmental Child Psychology



She has a Bachelors in Psychology from New York University, Abu Dhabi. She intends to facilitate the creation and implementation of the most effective early childhood programs and create a safe environment for children's intellectual and

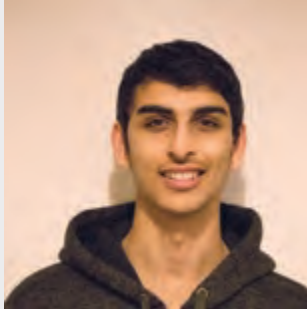
emotional development. She would like to be a career mentor to other Zarathushti students and give back a fraction of what the community has done for her.



Fezana Scholarships

UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS PURVEZ AND ABAN RUSTOMJI ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP (\$5,000)

CARL CANTEENWALLA, University of California, Berkeley



Majoring in mechanical engineering with a minor in electrical engineering and computer science

After graduation, he hopes to work in control systems before returning to university to obtain a graduate degree. He was the school valedictorian and the recipient of several awards, including: National AP scholar, President's award for community service, national award for public service, and the University of Berkeley Leadership Scholarship. He volunteered for Habitat for Humanity. As a member of the Zoroastrian Anjuman of Northern California, he participated as camp counselor in two Z camps, which he found to be a very enriching experience that brought him closer to Iranian and Parsi Zarathushtis of his generation

KAPADIA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND ACADEMIC STANDING FOR AN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT (\$2,000)

SHIRIN ASGARI, University of California, Irvine



Major in Biological Sciences and minor in Medical Anthropology

She works as a lab assistant in Department of Development and Cell Biology, is a recipient of several prestigious scholarships and was on the Dean's Honor list. She was a NOYCE scholar and completed 120 hours at RH Fleet Science Centre in San Diego. She shadowed an optometrist and has become interested in a career in optometry and obtaining a Doctor of Optometry. She is an active member of the California Zoroastrian Youth Centre.

MORVORID GUIV ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP (\$1000) UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS

PARSA KHORRAMDIN, University of California, Berkeley

Applied Mathematics freshman, with a focus on Mathematics for business and economics.

He was on the Honors Roll for Academic Excellence and received the Excellence in Outstanding Scholastic Performance Salute to Youth Award and the President's Educational Award for outstanding academic Excellence. Parsa was captain of the boys soccer team for four years and has been involved in community work. He participated in the Brady Campaign for gun control. He serves on the San Jose Interfaith Youth Council and is an active member of Persian Zoroastrian Association.

FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS UNDERGRADUATES (\$2000)

FRIYA RANDELIA, Rutgers University, Rutgers Business School and Honors College, New Brunswick



Concentrating in Finance and a minor in International and Global Studies.

Her vision for the community is to see generations come together and take the time to understand and listen to each other's perspectives. "There must be a balance between tradition and adaptation in today's rapidly changing world." She hopes to see the younger generations have a larger, more prominent place in the community via online or live meetings where they can participate in decision-making and planning of events, celebrations, and more.



FEZANA Scholarships

SAROSH IRANI, Wayne State University, Detroit



Freshman hoping to major in Nutrition and food sciences with a minor in Business.

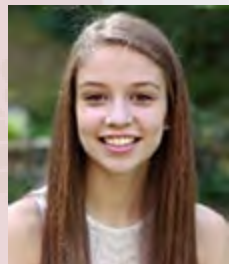
His goal is to pursue a career in medicine. In high school, he was the president of the National Honor Society and graduated as a National Merit Scholar. He plays tennis and ran in track events for his school. He is an active member of Zoroastrian Association of Michigan and regularly attends religious classes. In 2016, he presented a paper on Pre-Achaemenian History at the Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism in Chicago. He thanks his community and FEZANA for supporting him through all his endeavours.



He has an Honors B.Sc. (double major in Immunology and Neuroscience) from the University of Toronto. He plans to pursue a career in immunology as a clinician-scientist specializing in infectious diseases. He was a valedictorian, the recipient

of several scholarships, and is on the Editorial Review board. He is a published author based on research collaboration with his professors. His vision for the community is, "To continue to build upon the legacy that our forefathers have left in India as transformative and altruistic entrepreneurs in areas such as infrastructure, education, and industry, by carrying on their industrious spirit into the 21st century and on the global stage."

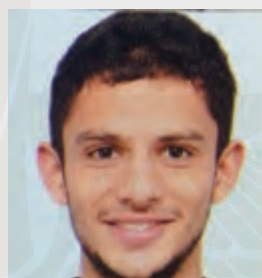
PERI VIMADALAL, Syracuse University, Whitman School of Management



Major in Finance

She is the recipient of several Girl Guide medals for her hundreds of hours of community work, she was also the captain of her volleyball team and sang in the school chorus for four years. "Our community may be small but we are big in every other way." She is proud to be a Zarathushti and, as she begins her new phase of life at the university, she hopes to continue to be connected and share her experiences with the younger generation and help students achieve their goals just as FEZANA has helped her.

DOWLAT MINOCHER VESUNA-WZO CANADA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP (\$3,000)



MAHIYAR SHROFF, University of Toronto Undergraduate, Engineering Physics

He was a school valedictorian, an honors student for three

semesters; best male athlete for three years; played soccer; varsity mountain biking; track and field; debating champion; and participated as delegate, ambassador, and chair of the East-African model UN. Assisted the city of Toronto for the 2015 Pan-Am and para Pan American games for track and field events. He envisions an enlightened Zoroastrian community in the next decade. A community in which the younger generations knows about our past and our heritage. "Today's community offers great learning opportunities that were previously missing. This will enable us to be a community that knows more about the most important thing, themselves. I envision a social cohesive, knowledgeable community that is dedicated to serve humanity in the best ways possible."

WZO CANADA-SAM MINOCHER VESUNA ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIPS DR. MINOCHER RUSTOM VESUNA WZO CANADA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

FARZAN PAVRI, Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry at Western University, Ontario, Canada MD Candidate



FEZANA Scholarships

FEZANA PERFORMING AND CREATIVE ARTS SCHOLARSHIPS–P&CAS

The scholarship provides young recipients with an opportunity to study with experts in their respective fields. It is open to all US and Canadian residents who are studying in the field of performing and creative arts, like drama, stage craft, literature, poetry, fine arts like painting, sculpture, etc.

2016 Recipients



Ms. Danish Bhandara, Irvine CA

Studying at UCLA for further studies in Dance and Performance Arts.

She has been heavily involved at University and in the greater community putting on Dance performances in Kathak, West African, and Modern styles.

Tina Sigantoria, Chicago IL

Studying in New York City

She is furthering her studies in the vocal arts, while singing and participating with local choirs as a soprano and soloist. Ms. Sigantoria has also toured with the choir to the UK, Germany, and around the US.



Application forms for this scholarship are available on the FEZANA website, www.fezana.org. The deadline for applications is August 1, 2017.

For more information, please contact Nazneen Spliedt, Chair P&CAS, at nazehler@aol.com

MOBED FARIDON ZARDOSHTY RELIGION EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP

Ruzbeh Hodiwala is the latest recipient of the Zardoshty Scholarship. He was admitted at SOAS in September 2016 for an eventual Ph. D. degree with Almut Hintze. He will receive \$5000 over three years.

Kerman Daruwala continues at SOAS and started his 2nd year in September 2016.



FEZANA Scholarships

VAKHSHOORI FOUNDATION

Promoting leadership among Zoroastrian youth in
Academia, Public life, and the Arts

Vakhshoori Scholarship Recipients for the 2016-2017
Academic Year:

MR. KERMAN DARUWALLA: \$5,000



**School of Oriental and
African Studies (SOAS),
London, England**

Doctor in Religions, specializing
in Zoroastrianism

*(Recipient of the FEZANA
Zardoshty Religion Education
Scholarship for three years)*

Mr. Daruwalla holds
an Electronics and
Telecommunications engineering
degree from the University of

Mumbai, India, and an MS in Electrical Engineering from
Syracuse University in New York where he was the Phi
Beta Delta International Scholar. He pursued a degree
in Avesta and Pahlavi up to the Masters level at the
University of Mumbai.



MR. GOODARZ MEHR: \$5,000

**Virginia Polytechnic Institute,
Virginia, USA**

PhD in Mechanical Engineering

Mr. Mehr was awarded silver
(in 2010) and gold (in 2011)

medals of the Iranian National Mathematical Olympiad,
which was a first for Iranian Zoroastrians. He graduated
as the top student of his class in the Department of
Mechanical Engineering. After graduation, Goodarz
started NETTRO Technologies Ltd., a startup company
that plans to create a web-based platform for intelligent
and efficient transportation management to alleviate the
environmental and urban traffic problems in Tehran.

MR. ARMAN IZADI: \$3,000



**Virginia Tech University,
Virginia, USA**

PhD in Civil and Environmental
Engineering

Mr. Izadi has a B.Sc. in
Industrial Engineering from
Yazd university and in his M.Sc.
program in Tehran Polytechnic
he attained the fifth rank in the
nationwide entrance exam, For
his Transportation Infrastructure
and Systems Engineering Ph.D.

program he is a researcher in Air Transportation Systems
Laboratory.

MS. AYESHA RABADI: \$2,000

**Columbia University, New York,
USA**

PhD in Education

In 2016, Ms. Rabadi completed
her Master of Arts Degree–Dual
Certification, at Teachers College,
Columbia University, with an
increased knowledge of early
childhood education. She has been

selected as an ambassador for the Arts for the Very
Young International network. And, she has begun
research with Teachers College and the Department
of Education in New York City to study the teaching
practices in Universal Pre-Kindergarten classrooms
across the city.

*Recipient of the FEZANA 2015 Movorid Guiv Endowed
Scholarship*



Fezana Scholarships

MR. ARASH YAZDANI: \$1,000

MS. DELSHAD SHROFF: \$1,000



UC San Diego, CA, USA

PhD in Materials Science & Engineering,

Mr. Yazdani is working on the development and improvement of mechanical and structural properties of advanced ceramics and

amorphous composites. His Masters *Research Deposition of nano-sized hard titanium nitride coating on tool steel using active screen plasma nitriding (ASPN) method* was positively reviewed and certified by the Iranian Research Organization for Science and Technology (IROST) and the National Foundation of Elites (NFE), which are funded by the NFE and the INIC (Iran Nanotechnology Initiative Council).



Columbia University, New York, USA

M.S. in Education,

Ms. Shroff is also a recipient of the Fezana scholarship, and Chothia Scholarship for 2016 see page 109 and 115 for her bio.

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 that detail their personal views and life experiences.

Vakhshoori Scholarships 2017-2018 Call for Applicants

The Vakhshoori Foundation invites young Zoroastrians to apply for scholarships for the 2017-2018 academic year. These scholarship awards range between \$1,000 and \$10,000. For more details and an application form, please visit the foundation web site at www.vakhshoori.org.

Koorosh Vakhshoori, Member of the board of directors

Vakhshoori Foundation

To promote leadership among young Zarathushtis in the Academic, Social and Artistic spheres.

Best wishes on FEZANA's 30th anniversary from Vakhshoori Foundation.

At the Vakhshoori Foundation, we believe that each Zoroastrian can and should help shape our future. The smaller the community, the greater the responsibility and potential impact of each of its members. As Zoroastrians, we measure our achievement as a community by our positive contributions to humanity at large. We are motivated by our respect for all living things, and we seek to follow Zarathustra's example in the Gathas:

*All my actions I dedicate to Truth.
May the Wisdom of the Good Mind guide me.*



FEZANA Scholarships

FALI CHOTHIA CHARITABLE TRUST FUND

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. Members of the Board of Trustees absorb all administrative, mailing, and other fund-raising costs.

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



2016-2017 Award Recipients

Darayus Chaiwalla is pursuing his MBA at Ryerson University. He obtained his undergraduate education, with distinction, in India and has worked in business management for several years. Upon graduation, his goal is to design, manage, and lead projects for multinational organizations.

Kashmin Dalal is working toward her BA in Psychology at Kent State University. Her goal is to obtain a PhD and work as a clinical child psychologist. She has been involved in community service from a young age and has recently returned from a medical mission trip to Haiti.

Sanaya Hormozdyan is studying for her Doctor of Medicine degree at Albany Medical College. As a youngster, Sanaya witnessed her grandmother struggle with Alzheimer's and resolved to become a doctor and dedicate her life to helping others in a compassionate manner. Sanaya has generously donated her time volunteering at numerous medical facilities and local Zoroastrian communities.

Armene Modi is a rare individual who, after a successful twenty-five-year 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 several international forums on peace and poverty. She is now working toward a Global Master of Arts degree in international relations at Tufts University.

Armene has been selected as a 2017 Echidna Global Scholar by the Center for Universal Education (CUE) at the 100 year old Brookings Institution. The Institution is think tank based in Washington, DC. whose mission is to conduct in-depth research leading to innovative ideas for solving problems

at the local, national and global level. Brookings Institution's Center for Universal Education is one of the leading policy centers focused on universal quality education particularly in the developing world. **Armene was the recipient of the 2016 FEZANA 25th Anniversary Endowed Scholarship, and the 2016 Chothia scholarship**

Atrem Rashidi is pursuing his doctorate degree in pharmacy. Born and raised in Iran, he immigrated to the US at eighteen and obtained his Bachelor's degree in Biological Sciences from the University of California. He is keen to become a hospital pharmacist and help people make informed, safe medical decisions. He is also actively involved in the California Zoroastrian Youth Community. **Recipient of the 2017 FEZANA Scholarship**

Khushmeen Sakloth is pursuing his MS in Chemical Engineering at the University of Washington, Seattle. He completed his earlier education in India, always at or near the top of his class. He sees the devastating problems caused by global warming and air pollution, and hopes to use his education to make a difference by expanding solar energy technology.

Delshad Shroff is obtaining a Master's in Developmental Child Psychology at Columbia University's Teacher's College. Delshad was one of two students who earned merit scholarships to study at the NY University of Abu Dhabi and has been an active volunteer at several schools and with special needs programs, as well as local Zoroastrian organizations in Chennai, India. Recipient of the 2017 FEZANA Scholarship



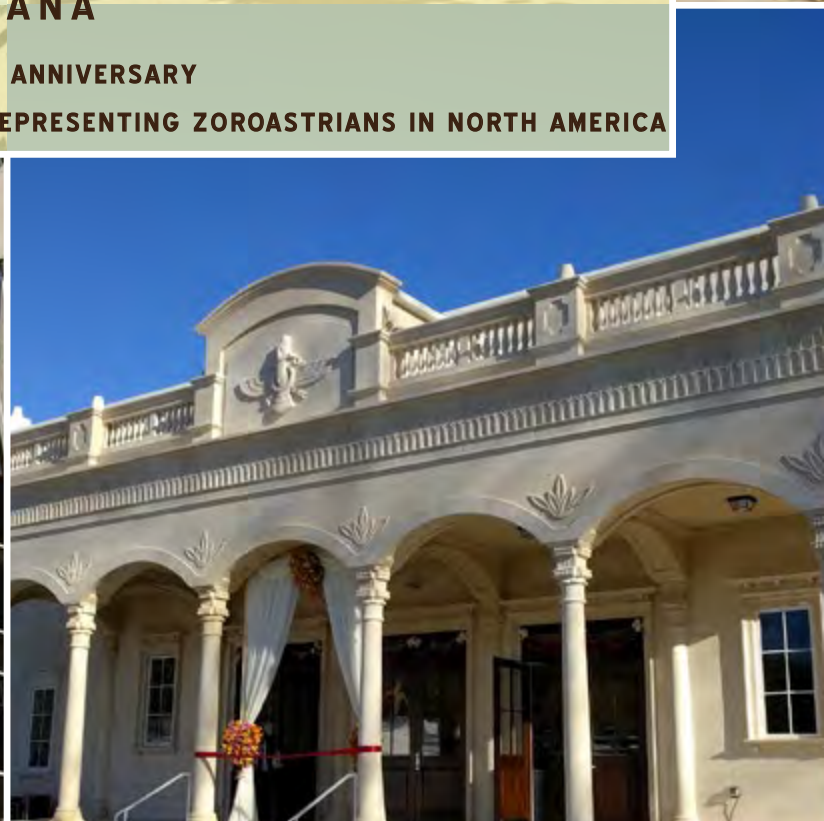
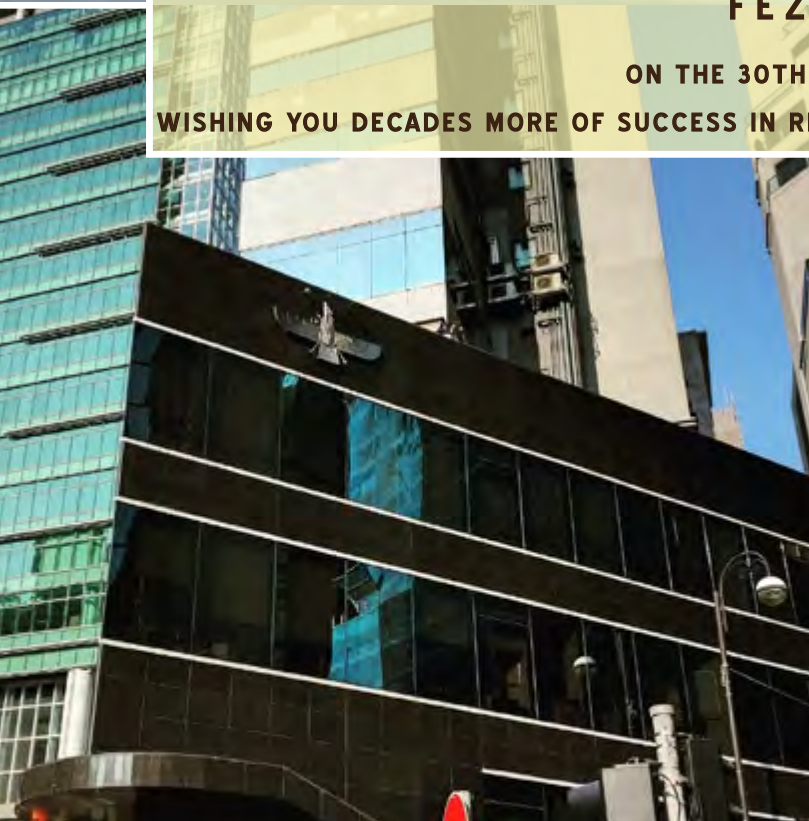
CONGRATULATIONS

FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

FEZANA

ON THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY

WISHING YOU DECADES MORE OF SUCCESS IN REPRESENTING ZOROASTRIANS IN NORTH AMERICA



PARSI KHABAR

The World's Leading Portal about Parsis: The Zoroastrians of India, Pakistan and The World
ESTD. 2005

www.parsikhabar.net

MOTIVATION + ACTION + FACILITATION = ENGAGEMENT

Arzan Sam Wadia

FERZIN PATEL

In North America and, specifically, New York and the tri-state area, he is known as “Appro Arzan,” and there is a reason for it.

As fast as he came on the North American scene in 1998, this young, dynamic individual has demonstrated the true meaning of giving back to our community. Of course, I am speaking of my fellow ZAGNY member and good friend, **Arzan Sam Wadia**. Arzan is an individual who not only leads by example, but puts into action the true meaning of activism, Zarathushti community development, and a teamwork approach to bring about first class results. Arzan taps into everyone’s true talents and abilities and then incorporates his own—this makes a wonderful recipe for success. Arzan was not involved until a couple from the community reached out to him and encouraged him to participate. My interview outlines how he got involved and why.

Arzan is an architect and urban designer based in New York City. Originally from Mumbai India, he refers to both cities as home. He attended the well-known Rizvi College of Architecture and graduated with honors with a Bachelors in Architecture in 1998. He moved to New York in 1998 to attend the Pratt Institute School of Architecture and earned a Masters in Urban Design and received The Pratt Institute Presidential Medal for his Master’s thesis. Arzan’s portfolio as an architect is vast and extensive.

While practicing as an architect with a leading firm in NYC, Arzan started his own design and technology consulting firm in 2001. His wife, Shirrin, joined him in the practice in 2006. The firm runs two parallel business verticals, one dealing with architecture, design and consulting; and, the other, with technology consulting. The firm manages 20 small and medium local businesses and their branch offices in Hong Kong, Mumbai, and New Delhi.

Arzan’s knowledge in the technology field enables him to design and manage the websites of FEZANA, ZAGNY, Zoroastrian Return To Roots, North American Mobed Council, ZAMWI, and DMZT—pro bono.

Since settling in North America, Arzan notes that he and I share the loss of community that we had in India:

I truly missed it. My involvement started with a conversation with Sheroo and Vispi Kanga nearly 12 years after I had moved to NYC, which found me in front of ZAGNY



Arzan Sam Wadia

board members at their May 2010 Board meeting. And something clicked. I knew I had found my “homing beacon.” I did not realize it till then how much I had missed being part of my community, and how important a role it plays in my life personally. I also saw a whole new set of paradigms within the community that I came to love and embrace. I felt that I had the skills and the passion to make a change, a change that would far outlive me and my own self-centered view of my own being. And, I also found a community that was all-embracing and welcomed me and my wife with open arms.

Since that conversation, he continues to serve on the Board of ZAGNY for his fourth term, Chaired the Technology and AV Committee for the 2012 North American Zarathushti Congress in New York, National Coordinator for the Good Life Program, Co-Chair of the Information Technology Committee for FEZANA, Core Coordinator and North American representative for the Zoroastrian Return to Roots Program, Co-Founder of the world renowned Parsi Khabar website portal, and most recently, elected Vice-President of FEZANA in 2016.

Ferzin Patel (FP): What motivates you to become so involved in community affairs?

Arzan Sam Wadia (ASW): I think my upbringing. My grandparents, parents, and aunt and uncle always showed me and my sister Mehernaaz, by their action that helping others and doing things that are larger than one’s own self was the natural thing to do. I also found a community that had the confidence and

Personal Profile

provided the opportunity to implement new ideas and projects. As I got involved, I saw the issues and also the possibilities of what one can do to create the community I had back at home, in a very different way, but also very similar. I am not an overtly religious person and believe in my dad's motto of Work is Worship. I feel that our good religion has survived for 3500+ years and will continue to do so. What may not, is our culture... the "Parsipanu" and that is my biggest worry, and also where I try to channel most of my energy. The culture we know today needs to be passed on to the next generation, not just as notes in a diary, but as a living breathing "being" and that is what I would love to see and do in the years ahead.

FP: You have traveled all across North America and visited many of the larger Zoroastrian communities, what do you see that the Zarathushti community needs in North America?

ASW: Youth need to step on the field, be in the game. Not just sit in the stands. Currently I can count very few Zarathushtis who were born here in North America getting involved and getting their hands dirty in the game. And you, Ferzin are the poster child for this elusive subset. Most Z communities are still being run either by the founding generation who arrived here, or by younger folks who are from back home. The youth born in this country need to put in extra effort, more so than their parents, because for their parents, being born in the "motherlands"- whether it be India, Pakistan, Iran the cultural aspects came easily. For those born here, they have to learn and imbibe them to the point where they become second nature, and then pass them onto their kids. That is a massive undertaking.

Having been involved with a Boy scout group that has lasted a century and more, completely run by folks over generations who volunteer their time and often their money too....to created lifelong experiences for young scouts and teach them skills that will help them become better citizens and leaders had a very big impact on me. I saw the true value of getting involved in something that was larger than oneself. In Architecture College my Principal Professor Akhtar Chauhan was another person who had, and still continues to inspire me to do more and get involved with whatever community I count myself to be a part of.

I've always maintained that institutions far outlive the men and women who set them up or run them.

And therefore I do whatever I can to build and run established institutions, and do my own little bit in leaving them in a better state for the next generation to come.

FP: How you think you can motivate the Zarathushti youth of the world to become more involved?

ASW: I hope to motivate the Z youth by action. I hope that through my actions I can help facilitate other Z youth and provide them the access and the leverage they need to jump start their journeys towards getting more involved. Nothing beats walking the walk and I hope to continue to do that to inspire the youth. I think it is a duty for each one of us to foster a sense of community involvement in all our dear and near ones. Be it siblings, extended family or friends, bring them in. Take the initial steps, don't feel disheartened that you don't see results, and stay at it. Even if 1 in 10 sees your vision, it's game on. Keep in mind, for a successful game, one needs both spectators and players. But there is no game without players on the field. Be the player.

FP: Where do you see yourself in ten years?

ASW: I hope to be a citizen of the world, comfortably placed in both my city of birth and my city of residence. I look forward to having a professional arrangement that allows me to seamlessly roam in these two cities and anywhere in between. I also hope to continue to be able to be the social agent of change within our community here in North America. And I hope to have a better work-life balance. And most importantly be happy. Just that....Be Happy.

FP: In this growing age of round the clock activity and work, where do you find the time?

ASW: I strongly believe that if you like what you are doing and believe in it, be it work or a cause, you will make time for it. And after one passes away, that's all there is to do, sleep, so why waste time just now.

FP: What do you do to relax and your favorite pastime?

ASW: My pastimes include following current affairs and politics. Parsi Khabar is another pastime. I also love to go for motorcycle rides. Travelling and finding hole-in-the-wall food spots is a favorite pastime. Deep down in my mind, I'd love to be **Anthony Bourdain** on the CNN show Parts Unknown. He combines my thirst for adventure, travel, food and current affairs all in one being.

Arzan can be reached at arzan@wadias.in

Ferzin Patel is currently a Trustee for the Dar E Mehr in NY. She was Co-Chair of the 2012 North American Zarathushti Congress held in NY and previously held a Board Member position at ZAGNY. 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.

BIRTHS

Kaya Villariba Dessai, a girl, to Rustom and Katheryne Villariba Dessai, granddaughter to Soonamai and Jamsheed Dessai (Santa Rosa, CA) in Emeryville, CA on October 15, 2016.

Kaydan Jokhi Singh, a boy, to Jadwinder Singh and Monaz Jokhi Singh, brother to Nishaan and Anaiya, grandson to Gool Jokhi and late Fakir Jokhi on October 27, 2016. (ZANC)

Leo Minoo Gazdar, a boy to Karina and Minoo Gazdar, grandson to Roshan and Bomi Gazdar, in Houston, November 7, 2016 (ZAH)

Layla Commissariat, a girl, to Farah and Piran Commissariat, granddaughter to Kashmira (late) Eruch Commissariat (Mumbai, India) and Dara and Katy Panthakee (Toronto, ONT), niece to Zenobia Mistry (Perth, Australia), Cyrus Panthakee on January 16, 2017.

NAVJOTES

Yohann and Shania Birjie, children of Pareezad and Anand Birjie at Dar-e-Mehr San Jose on October 6, 2016.

Meher Wadia, daughter of Persis and Percy Wadia in Mumbai, India on December 19, 2016. (ZANC)

Sanaya and Zenia Shroff, children of Roxan and Nekzad Shroff in Mumbai, India on December 31, 2016. (ZANC)

Nozar Sethna, son of Parizad and Khurshed Sethna grandson of Tehmina Sethna and Bapsi and Noshir Sidhwa in Sugarland TX. February 19, 2017

WEDDINGS

Narissa Vania, daughter of Darab and late Nilufer Vania (San Ramon, CA) to **David Harris**, son of George Harris and Anne Georger-Harris (Buffalo, NY) in Tahoe City, CA on September 3, 2016.

Dina Colabewala, daughter of Shernaz Colabewala to **Derek Sant**

Clair, son of Margaret Wood and Wesley Saint Clair in Toronto, ONT on September 17, 2016.

DEATHS

Katie Dhun Engineer (nee Katie Framroze Sarkari), wife of Dhun Sapurji Engineer, mother of Tinaz, Niloofer, Sapur, grandmother of Shirin and Maxwell Adams in Martinez, CA on November 3, 2016.

Daulat Sam Choksy, 91, mother of Nina (Kersi) Daruwalla (Cupertino, CA), Zarir Sam Choksy (Houston, TX), mother-in-law of Kersi Daruwalla, Zenobia Choksy, grandmother of Mahnaz, Taronish, Tishtar in Mumbai, India on November 9, 2016. (ZANC)

Kaikhosrow Farahmand (67), husband of Arnavaz Farahmand, father of Farahnaz, Kamran, Kaiwan, father-in-law of Haley, grandfather of Kya in Walnut Creek, CA on November 20, 2016.

Bapsy (Framjee) Irani, wife of Darius Irani, mother of Cyrus (Jessica) Irani, Kerbanu (Viraf) Pudumjee, Roxan (Farhad) Bottlewalla, grandmother of Farhad, Peshotan, Bijan, Shahn, Ariana, Shanaya, Jehan, Kamran in CA on December 31, 2016. (CA-ZC)

Aspy Mistry, husband of Roda Mistry, father of Percy (Laura) Mistry and Khoosnam (Cawas) Commissariat, grandfather of Eric, Amy, Ava, Cyrus in CA on January 4, 2017 (ZAGNY)

Jamshed Pestonji Sethna, husband of Prochi Sethna, father of Kairas and May Sethna, brother of Fram and Yasmin Sethna, brother-in-law of Keki, Dhunji, Pervin and Soli Patel, grandfather of Emerald in Toronto, ONT on January 5, 2017.

Shah Keikhosrow Mehrshahi, father of Shahnaz, Hooshang, Farokh, Faroborz Mehrshahi in Sacramento, Ca on January 13, 2017.

Rostam Shahjahan Jahanian, husband of Shirin, father of

Homa and Hooman, father-in-law of Khodabakhsh Khanbadr and Behnaz Khadem, grandfather of Nikta and Arsham Khanbadr and Vespan Jahanian on January 14, 2017. (CA-Persian Zoroastrian Association)

Maneck Byramji Javat, husband of Katy Javat, father of Mahveer Javat (ONT), Khurshed Kotwal, Byramji Javat in Karachi, Pakistan on January 16, 2017.

Keki Rustomji Bharucha, brother of Nanu Bharucha (Ottawa, ONT) in Toronto, ONT on January 19, 2017.

Motla Tehmuras Anklesaria, wife of late Tehmuras Anklesaria, mother of Soonu Jehangir Darabshaw (Mumbai, India), Perin Adil Panthakee (Toronto, ONT), grandmother of Aimy and Farokh Panthakee in Toronto, ONT on January 20, 2017.

Mani Kanga, wife of Edul Kanga, mother of Sam and Faroukh Kanga in Oakville, ONT on January 22, 2017.

Aspi Rustom Homavazir, son of Naju and late Rustom Homavazir, father of Jerome on February 1, 2017. (ZSO)

Zarine Chenoy, wife of Jehangir Chenoy, sister of Khushroo Vajifdar, Shernaz Colabewala, sister-in-law of Etty Vajifdar, aunt of Arash, Shara, Dini on February 9, 2017. (ZSO)

Farrokh Kerwalla, brother-in-law of Dhun Sam Gazder, uncle of Aban, Roy, Diana, Natasha, Kashmira, Nina, Mikiyo and Cyrus Gazder on February 4, 2017. (ZSO)

Perin Nari Patel, wife of late Nari Patel. (Florida), sister of Mehroo (Minu) Patel (ZA-Chicago), sister-in-law of late Roshan Patel (ZA-Chicago) in Mumbai, India on February 16, 2017.

Dariush Darayan, 60, husband of Gitty, father of Natasha and Navid. Memorial service February 16, 2017.

Soli Mavalwala, husband of Roshan Mavalwala, father of late Cyrus

MILESTONES

Mavalwala, Yesmin Petigara, Perveen Petigara, Aspi Mavalwala, Maju Mavalwala in Vancouver, BC on February 21, 2017.

Homai (Mody) Canteenwalla, 93, wife of Shiawax Canteenwalla, mother of Jambi (Jehanbux) Canteenwalla and Zeenia Fernandes (Vancouver) in Montreal, QUE on February 24, 2017.

Mahyar Ardeshiri, husband of Bibi Yazdani, father of Farnaz and Farzad Ardeshiri in Oakville, ONT on February 28, 2017.

Homayoun Hormozdiar Keykhanzadeh, mother of Hormoz, Alborz, Fariborz Azarkeyvan in Toronto, ONT (ZSO)

PLEASE SEND ALL SUBMISSIONS FOR MILESTONES TO MAHRUKH MOTAFRAM TEL 425-961-0298 MAHRUKHM83@GMAIL.COM

Matrimonials for Spring 2017

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.

Female, 31, US born and educated, employed in Hospitality Management in New York. Interests include music, nature, travel, history. Parents invite correspondence via e-mail connectzoro@yahoo.com. [F17-08]

Female, 30, Postgraduate Diploma in Media Studies, working as a consultant in Mumbai. Practical, fun-loving, ambitious and independent. Loves traveling, reading, food and meeting new people. Looking for a partner who is a friend first, is social, intelligent, with a good sense of humor. Contact: thegoodlife3039@gmail.com. [F17-09]

Female, 42, MBBS, MD, FRCR, FAMS (Radiology), Senior Consultant, Interventional Radiology in Singapore. Enjoys sports and the outdoors, and traveled widely. Contact: +65 92723679, drfarahirani@gmail.com. [F17-11]

Female, 33, 5' 5", graduate, IATA/UFTA (Montreal), 10 years experience in travel industry – airlines, reputed travel agencies. Presently General Manager in a reputed travel agency. Good personality, smart, loyal, understanding, caring, with good family values. Career oriented but also loves family. Elder sister in Florida. Interested in meeting educated, well-settled, loyal, family-oriented man in USA/Canada. Contact: suitablematch83@yahoo.com. [F17-21]

Female, 50, originally from Mumbai, citizen of New Zealand, currently working as Executive Secretary in Healthcare Industry in Dubai. Outgoing personality, enjoys being with family and friends, willing

to relocate. Interested in meeting compatible gentleman. Contact: shenaz_nz@orcon.net.nz, mb: +971 50 3091885. [F17-23].

Male, 30, 5' 10", BBM (Business Management) Bangalore, Post graduate Diploma in Photography. Photographer with India Today Group in Mumbai. Good family background. Enjoys traveling and exploring new cultures, listening to music and playing the guitar, movies, deep conversations, adventure sports and art exhibitions. Contact: danesh.j@gmail.com. [M17-25].

Male, 27, 6', Masters in Advanced Data Analytics and Business Intelligence from Carnegie Mellon University. Working as a Data Analyst in DC Metropolitan area for a leading cloud-based software analytics company. Enjoys reading, nature, travel, respects social, religious and family values. Interested in meeting a loving, caring life partner, preferably from the US. Contact: kharas.pervin@gmail.com, +91 9820182023. [M17-31]

Female, 44, Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com) with a Diploma in Travel. Currently working as Business Analyst in Dubai. Fun-loving and out-going. Contact: +971 55 962 2447. [F17-32]

Female, 29, 5' 4", Masters in Behavioral Psychology, living in Los Angeles, CA. Volunteer at local hospital. Musically talented, classically trained in piano and currently learning to play the guitar. Loves to read, travel and learn new cultures, watch TV and films, crochet, quilt and bake. Contact: gypsygirl9387@hotmail.com. [F17-32]

Female, 36, beautiful, from reputed, affluent Parsi family. MBA (Finance), working in Mumbai. Enjoys music, traveling and reading. Parents invite correspondence from well-placed family of similar status. Contact: parsimatch@yahoo.com. [F17-33]

ZOROASTRIANISM I—A BOOK REVIEW

Zoroastrianism—A Collection of Articles from the Encyclopedia Iranica,

Edited by Mahnaz Moazami, August 2016, Published by Encyclopedia Iranica, New York, VOL. I & VOL II, ISBN-13: 978-1-934283-46-2, pages 1070 and ISBN -13: 978-1-934283-47-9, pages 2116. \$79.

Reviewed by **Ardeshir B. Damania (Ph.D.) U.C. Davis.**

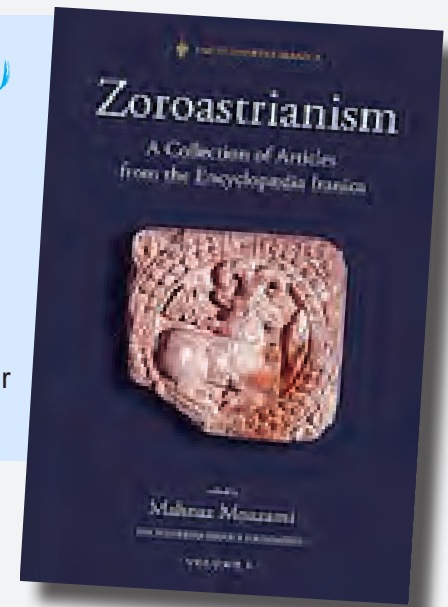
Review of Vol 2 Ardeshir Damania (Ph.D) will appear in the FJ Summer issue Vol 31 No 2.

At the outset let me say that it is an honor and a great pleasure to be asked by FEZANA Journal to write a review of this 2-volume set of scholarly chapters on Zoroastrian religion edited by Dr. Mahnaz Moazami. This review is done in my capacity as a layperson. I am neither a scholar nor have any deep knowledge of the Zoroastrian religion. Dr. Moazami is a graduate of the Universities of Tehran and Paris-Sorbonne, where she studied Old and Middle Iranian languages and historical anthropology of ancient religions. Her research focuses on religion in pre-Islamic Iran and she has published several articles on different aspects of Zoroastrianism. Dr. Moazami is an Associate Research Scholar at Columbia University, New York. There are many books written by scholars on Zoroastrianism and the teachings of prophet Zarathustra, but these two volumes are among the most comprehensive I have seen. The title could very well be *Everything You Wanted to Know About Zoroastrianism and Its Followers But Were Afraid To Ask!* Credit must be given to the editor for presenting views of different authors even though they may not agree.

Owing to both the nature and availability of sources, it is difficult to write a comprehensive history of Zoroastrianism, as there are periods about which we know very little, others for which information is restricted

to circumscribed subjects or genres, and still others that must be reconstructed by reading back in time from the contents of later writings or by reading forward from the sources of cognate cultures.

Many youngsters in our small community ask questions like, when was Zarathustra born? Did he perform any miracles? When and how did he die? What is the Zoroastrian religion? Which is the holy book of the Zoroastrians? All the answers can be found in these two volumes. Zoroastrian theology; cosmology and cosmogony; history of the faith; its rituals and ceremonies; Avestan and Middle Persian texts; festivals such as *Nowruz*, *Mehregan*, and *Sadeh*; and a host of other topics, hitherto dispersed amidst other entries in their alphabetical sequence in the Encyclopedia Iranica, are gathered together under one cover. The volumes enable the readers to chart their way through complex traditions and debates throughout history, and bring into focus the interdependence of these pioneering contributions. As a thought-provoking and authoritative work of reference, it is a testimony to the fine scholarship and remarkable erudition of its contributors, scholars who have been foremost in ensuring that the Encyclopedia Iranica maintains its high reputation for authoritative comprehensiveness and pioneering research on Zoroastrianism.



Volume I Includes the Following Sections:

- Religious Concepts and Philosophy—17 chapters
- Zoroaster and Zoroastrianism—9 chapters
- The Elements in Zoroastrianism—11 chapters
- The Divine Beings (Yazatas)—21 chapters
- Demons, Fiends and Witches—19 chapters
- Zoroastrian Literature—69 chapters
- Sacrifices and Offerings—13 chapters

In the first volume, in the section Religious Concepts and Philosophy, there are chapters that cover the origin of the name “Ahura Mazda” and the meaning of “Dualism” in the Zoroastrian religion. Gherardo Gnoli writes about dualism in the Zoroastrian religion and states that “It can reasonably be concluded, however, that dualism lay at the heart of Zoroaster’s message ... the final triumph of good (over evil) is implicit.” The evil or dark spirit of “Ahriman” and “Angra Mainyu” is discussed by Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, a scholar and professor at

the University of Liège in Belgium and a specialist in ancient Iran. He writes, “Zoroaster, who propounded belief in one supreme god, yet wanted to explain the existence of evil—a fact of life—as a consequence of free choice.” In the chapter on Cosmogony and Cosmology by learned Philip G. Kreyenbroek of Gottingen University, Germany, he discusses the Zoroastrian concept about the origin of light. “Ahura Mazda created light, that the sun had shone in the middle of heaven before the onslaught of evil, and that the sky was made of rock crystal or shining metal.” This was, of course, before the concept of limitless space became known. The chapter by Mary Boyce on Amaša Spenta is very interesting. Many have heard or used the term Spenta, it is an Avestan term for beneficent divinity, meaning literally “Holy/Bounteous Immortal.” According to Mary Boyce, Zoroaster coined the term. In fact, in the next chapter by Johanna Narten on Vohu Manah in the Avesta, she tells us that Vohu Manah (Good Thought) is one of the divine beings to whom the name Amaša Spenta is given in the post-Gathic parts of the Avesta. The author of this chapter further tells us that, “Vohu Manah means literally the good moral state of a person’s mind which alone enables him (or her) to perform his (her) duties, whether these be worship of Ahura Mazda...”

The next chapter by William W. Malandra, titled Zoroaster: General Survey. This chapter is a “must read” as it contains information about the name, “Zoroaster. In his Gathas, he refers to himself as “Zarathustra;” this is the form of the name used in the Avesta. Hence, to call followers of his teachings “Zarathustis” is most correct. Whereas “Zoroaster” is the name given to him by the Greeks and is used generally in the West when referring to the prophet of ancient Iran. The names “Zardušt” or “Zarathust” were derived from Zarathustra. Malandra attempts to place the date of Zarathustra’s life

as “1000 BCE, give or take a century or two. However, we must note that various scholars have placed the prophet as far back as 1750 BCE and as early as only 258 years before Alexander.” Regarding the place where Zoroaster lived, there are strong arguments for Chorasmia (a large oasis region on the Amu Darya river delta bordered on the north by the Aral Sea) and Sogdiana (which is a region including parts of today’s Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). But Mary Boyce attempts to place him on the Inner Asian Steppe of today’s Kazakhstan, prior to the migrations into the Iranian Plateau. Malandra says that it is safe to place him somewhere in the northeast of Iran, rather than in the southeast of Sistān (Balochistan-Afghanistan area).

The chapters on Zoroastrianism by William W. Malandra is full of interesting and useful information as it includes an historical review of the religion (its golden age) up to the Arab conquests (633-651 ACE). The most important source of our knowledge of this ancient period of Zoroastrian history comes from a collection of scriptures that form the Avesta. The Avesta was written in the ancient Eastern Iranian language called “Avestan.” According to Malandra, much credit for the book goes to several Zoroastrian priests who collected, edited, and codified a variety of written and oral traditions during the Sasanian period (224 to 651 ACE). However, those constituent pieces of tradition composed by the Zoroastrian priests were lost after the Arab conquests and what survived is only a fraction of what the Zoroastrian priests produced.

When Professor A.V.W. Jackson of Columbia University, New York—during his travel to Persia in very early 1900s—asked the Zoroastrians at Yazd in 1903 to show him their religious books, they told him that all remaining important religious books and manuscripts, which were not

confiscated or destroyed, had been sent to Bombay for safekeeping. The Zoroastrians of Iran ascribed much of the loss of their sacred books to the persecution following the Islamic conquests. Jackson wrote that about a century and a half after the Arab conquests—or, more accurately, in the year 820 AD—there was a Mohammedan governor of Khorasan named Tahir bin Hossein bin Mos’ab who founded the Taharid dynasty (821-872 AD) and was called *Zúl-Yamínein* (the ambidextrous). He declared that if the Zoroastrian holy books are in concurrence with Islam they are no longer needed and, if they are not in agreement with Islam they should be burnt. Hence, in either case, they should be destroyed. He issued an edict that every Zoroastrian should bring him a *maan* or *maund* (about 14 pounds or 6½ kilograms) of Zoroastrian books for burning. He concluded his mandate with the order that anyone who disobeyed should be put to death. It may well be imagined how many Zoroastrians thus lost their lives and the number of valuable religious works that were lost to the world through this catastrophe, notes Jackson (1906).

In the chapters on Demons, Fiends, and Witches there is a lot of valuable information on Zoroastrian beliefs. In this volume, Maneck F. Kanga elaborates on the sorcerer named Axt, who would slay anyone who could not answer any of his 33 riddles. Some of the deeds of demons and witches defy imagination. They are not simply a psychological threat, but rather a present reality in an embattled world that we live in. One must not forget that these theories and writings come from a bygone age when there was little scientific information of the Universe and many natural phenomena

The chapters on Zoroastrian literature will be of interest to scholars who are studying the religion. The most important chapter

is the one on the Avesta—the origin of the word, its author(s), and its contents per the Denkard. In the chapter by Jean Kellens, it is mentioned that the existing copies of the Avesta were destroyed by Alexander when he set fire to the Royal Library at Persepolis. Later, after his death, the first attempt to restore the Avesta was made by an Arsacid king named Valaxš, who collected book fragments and those transcribed from word of mouth. Ardashir I (226-241 ACE) ordered his high priest Tansar to complete the task. Subsequently, Shapur I (241-272 ACE), initiated a search for any lost documents that were dispersed by the Greeks and had them reintroduced into the Avesta. Then under Shapur II (309-379 ACE) his high priest Adarbad Marespand made the general revision of the holy book and ensured its orthodox correctness by submitting himself successfully to the ordeal of fire. To learn more as to how he did it you have to read the chapter.

This volume contains so much information about Zoroastrianism during the great Achaemenian and Sasanian dynasties that it is impossible to write a review in a few pages. In fact, the reader will need months, if not years, before he/she can fully grasp everything, sift through the various chapters, and form an opinion or conclude about the various aspects of the Zoroastrian religion and its various facets and myths. What would be of interest to a layperson would be what Zoroaster says about Ahura Mazda, the philosophy of the good thoughts, good words and good deeds; the beliefs of birth and death; thoughts on the after-life; and the judgement of the soul.

One of the most vexing problems for a history of Zoroastrianism is the location of Zarathustra in place and time. While some research scholars, like Professor Jackson, place His birth

place close to Lake Urumia, others say He was born elsewhere. However, there is general agreement that He did not live in western Iran. Attempts to place Him in specific regions of eastern Iran, including Central Asia, remain tentative. Datewise, He has been placed anywhere from the 13th century BCE to just before the rise of the Achaemenid empire under Cyrus the Great in the mid-6th century BCE, with the majority of scholars seeming to favor dates around 1000 BCE, which would place him as a contemporary, at least, of the later Vedic poets hailing from India or Hindustan.

The ancient world at the time of the Sasanian rise to power under Ardashir Babekan (ca. 224 ACE) was very different from that which the Achaemenids had entered more than seven centuries earlier. At that time, the Roman Empire extended throughout the Mediterranean world. Although the Roman Empire embraced and tolerated a vast array of local and national religions, the Roman Imperial Cult, soon to be replaced by Christianity, was imposed throughout the empire. Local religious movements and cults were gaining universal followings. Not only was the tide of Christianity rising in the west, but also the wave of Buddhism had been sweeping over Afghanistan and Central Asia. Jewish communities were long settled in Mesopotamia and Persia, and Manicheism was soon to burst on the scene. Zoroastrianism had been the national religion of the majority of Iranian peoples, whether they were living in the Near East or on the Iranian plateau.

Also, in the chapter Zoroaster and Zoroastrianism (which is the longest chapter in Volume I), the writer Jamsheed K. Choksy gives us a full account of the hardships, harassment, persecution, and murder that the Zoroastrians in Iran had to suffer for centuries. For example, “The British

educationist Rev. Napier Malcolm (1870-1921) noted that, in 1865, Zoroastrians were required to follow essentially demeaning medieval rules for non-Muslim protected minorities.” I recommend all Zoroastrians, who do not know what events led up to the migration from Iran to India (around 892 to 1005 ACE) and elsewhere, to read this chapter. The Zoroastrian resurgence under the rule of the Pahlavi dynasty (1925 – 1979) is described, as is their reverting back to their lower status and discrimination after 1979 is also noted.

The recent resurgence of interest in Zoroastrianism in Central Asia has been coupled with a significant number of inhabitants of the former Soviet Union and the Kurds seeking knowledge about the ancestors’ religion. Several thousands have declared themselves as Zoroastrians and have begun building new fire-temples and renovating the old abandoned ones. In the largely Kurdish town of Afrin in northwest Syria, close to the border with the Kurdish part of Turkey, they have even managed to put up a big statue of Zoroaster. These two Volumes edited by Mahnaz Moazami could be immensely useful to these peoples who have embraced Zoroastrianism or those who had never left the faith, but were unable to practice the religion under Communism. I would recommend these two volumes highly to anyone who seeks deeper knowledge of Zoroastrianism, not only the religion but about Zoroaster himself, his early followers, practices, and beliefs.

REFERENCE

Jackson, A.V.W. 1906. *Persia Past and Present. A Book of Travel and Research.* Macmillan & Co., New York. 471 pp.



**Heartiest Congratulations to
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DADABHAI NAOROJI: SELECTED PRIVATE PAPERS

Edited by: S.R. Mehrotra and Dinyar Patel
New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016 PP 602 ISBN -13: 978-0-19-807666-7
Jointly published with the National Archives of India

REVIEW BY: DINSHA MISTREE

Have you ever wondered why Parsi females are so well educated? After all, many cultures have discouraged their women from pursuing education. It turns out that we must thank Dadabhai Naoroji for this. In the 1850s and 1860s, many of our Indian ancestors were against women becoming educated. Naoroji fought passionately to convince community leaders that women need and should be educated. His side won and thus, for more than a century, the Parsi community has been an advocator of women's education.

Dadabhai Naoroji is better known for his involvement in national and international politics than for his leadership in Parsi community affairs. Throughout his illustrious career, Naoroji served as a *diwan* (prime minister) in one of India's princely states, co-founded the Indian Congress Party, was elected to the British Parliament, and mentored Mohandas Gandhi. For these activities, Naoroji will always be remembered as the "Grand Old Man of India."

The Grand Old Man of India, however, was more than just a political giant. He corresponded with philosophers and prominent writers, he climbed the ranks of academia, and he even succeeded in business. The multifaceted complexities of this man are on full display in a new book that brings together the correspondences of Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917).

This edited volume presents a man who is guided by a set of evolving principles, which were regularly updated by reading, writing, and reflection. Naoroji's correspondences suggest that he was not driven by principles alone; he was a shrewd and calculating politician whose calculations not only changed the course of world history, but directly affected the lives of many of our community members.

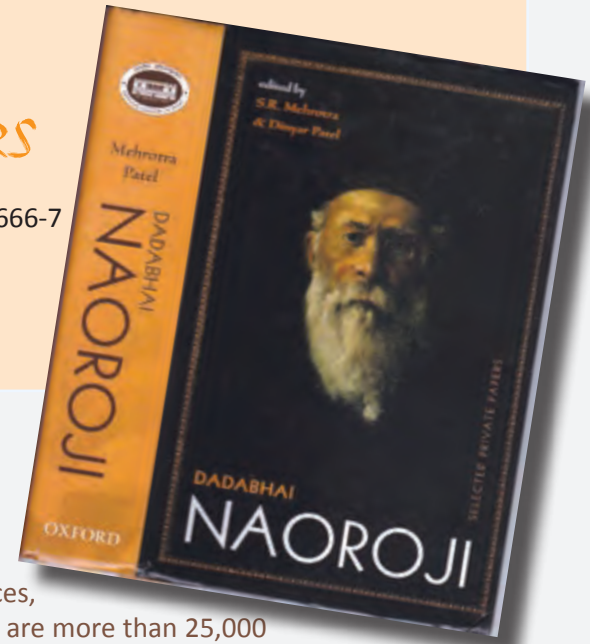
The editors of this volume, S.R. Mehrotra and Dinyar Patel, have done a tremendous service by painstakingly

collecting, organizing, and selecting Naoroji's

correspondences, of which there are more than 25,000 letters and documents. The quality of the work they produced should be of little surprise for anyone who knows them: Mehrotra is one of the most well-respected historians of modern India, who initially started compiling Naoroji's correspondences for his *History of the Indian National Congress*, while Patel is an up-and-coming scholar who seems to eat, sleep, and breathe Naoroji's legacy. The collection presented in this volume also serves as a teaser for Patel's biography of Naoroji, which will be coming out soon.

So, just who was Dadabhai Naoroji? Born on September 4, 1825, in Khadak (on the outskirts of present day Mumbai), Naoroji came from a priestly family of humble circumstances. He would later become a priest. Naoroji would also enjoy a free education and scholarships for higher studies; he would later say that he chose to devote his life to public service because he felt he had to pay society back for educating him. Naoroji first tried to give back by becoming an educator. After completing his studies at Elphinstone College around 1845, he was honored with a teaching position.

It was around this time that Naoroji began to involve himself in Parsi community affairs. Together with Navrozi Fardunji, he started the *Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha*; later, he would publish the circular *Rost Gofdar*. He earned a seat on the Board of Education and became involved in building three schools for girls. At the same time, he distinguished himself in academic circles; at 28 or 29, Naoroji became a full professor in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy.



He occasionally taught at University College, in London, and became involved with causes advocating that India should be allowed to, at least, partly administer itself. Continually arguing that Indians were not inferior to whites, he also fought the “continuous bleeding” of India’s wealth by the British, a rallying point for greater self-rule and, ultimately, independence.

In 1873, Naoroji was invited to put his skills into action by the Prince of Baroda who asked Naoroji to become his diwan. This would provide Naoroji’s first formal foray in governing. The book’s editors make it clear that Naoroji tried to bring about too many changes, too quickly. Naoroji sought to introduce reforms to reduce corruption; he learned that fighting corruption is a good way to make many enemies. By 1875, Naoroji lost his position. Following a short break, he joined the Bombay Municipal Corporation and resumed his academic writing and focused on poverty in India. During December 1884, Naoroji founded the Congress Party with Dinsha Wacha and Allan Octavian Hume.

Naoroji was about 61 when he decided to return to

Britain to run for a seat in Parliament. He would fail to win a seat, but his campaign brought him considerable attention across the United Kingdom. In July 1892, Naoroji won a seat from Central Finsbury, by just five votes, making him the first Indian elected to Parliament. After losing re-election in 1895, his correspondence with socialists and anti-imperialists increased. In 1906, as President of the Congress Party, Naoroji issued the first call for *swaraj* (Independence from the British).

Naoroji spent the last decade of his life in retirement, occasionally opining on the issues of the day, but largely keeping out of the public eye. He died in 1917 at the age of 92 as the father of a future nation. Not too bad for a poor kid from Khadak.

Naoroji should be an inspiration for all of us. He spent his life in service to others, fighting for just causes in the best ways he saw fit. His decisions and work advanced the Parsi community and the Indian nation. We can learn a great deal from this grand old man. *Dadabhai Naoroji: Selected Private Papers* is a great place to start.

ZOROASTRIANISM: MOTHER OF ALL WORLD RELIGIONS

Author: Keki R. Bhote

Publisher: BHOTE PRESS

Pages 462 + xvi Posthumous Note

Price: US\$ 65.00

REVIEWER: FIRDOSH MEHTA



This book is loaded, in terms of content and detail. I was so intrigued by the title that I could not bring myself to decline the request to review the book.

Many years ago, when I served on the Edmonton Interfaith Center’s board, I was asked by Father Barringer, Rector of St. Joseph’s College of the University of Alberta, “Firdosh, you folks profess that Zoroastrianism is the MOTHER OF ALL RELIGIONS; why, then, are your numbers dwindling?” Such a statement from a Roman Catholic priest filled my mind with sadness with the truth that our

community is, indeed, declining.

With the priest’s comment in mind, when I was asked to review the book, its title was motivation enough. Bhote wrote approximately twenty books during his lifetime that focused on business, excellence, management, quality, and reliability as the foundation for success. He further delved into other issues, such as excellence in customer satisfaction and



Books & ARTS

profitability. The book is replete with erudite charts, graphs, tables, and figures. Bhote selected relevant quotations the YASNA to introduce each chapter's topic. He proficiently and engagingly details his thoughts and arguments in the most educated, well-researched, civilized, and wise manner, which spans many disciplines: history, geography, astronomy, geology, chronology, theology, philosophy, science, maps, connections with other religious beliefs, and much more.

His knowledge of the Gathas and insights into other scriptures and liturgies is highlighted with erudite explanations of significant royal lineages, their empires, and intrigues. Complex and intertwined topics are presented using well-defined technical and lay terms, which makes this book truly remarkable and a must read.

Bhote's work celebrates the benefits of hard work, honesty, integrity, industry, charity, compassion, and ever higher levels of human achievement throughout history, when melded with the principles of Noble Thoughts, Noble Words and Noble Deeds.

Rounding out the book's synoptic view history, he thoroughly documents a community's success in terms of its maturation in the areas of education, welfare, performing arts, sports, agriculture, architecture and engineering, law, commerce, sciences, armed forces, humanitarian initiatives, hospitality industry, medicine and research, etc.

One other aspect that impressed me immensely is the history, geography, political ideologies and social interactions of numerous cultures, from Central Asia's Northern Steppes to the developments of various human discoveries and inventions, in and out of the Ariyana Vaeja lands.

History unfolds clearly as he describes significant events in context, taking the reader from the Kayanian and Peshdadian dynasty's orally transmitted myths through the archeological and linguistic evidence from the Achaemenian, Ashkanian, Sasanian, and post Islamic Iran periods. Of interest to us is his discussion of the

exodus to India and the Parsi's relative growth, success, and prosperity in all walks of life and from throughout the diaspora.

Not one to skirt controversy, he introduces and discusses germane topics from historic and contemporary points-of-view; he intelligently presents the major posits and schools of thought, then offers his wise counsel and mature opinions.

Such works are rarely undertaken for personal or worldly gain. They are done with an enthusiasm born out of love of life and fellow humanity. And, it shows in Keki's grand work.

It is an excellent book for all Zarathushtis to read, study, and have readily at hand as a reference source. It should grace the book shelves of every Zoroastrian library. The title ***Mother of All World Religions*** could have easily been, "ALL YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT ZOROASTRIANISM, BUT WERE TOO BUSY TO ASK."

My answer to Father Barringer was that, "All Mothers grow up to be grand and great grandmothers and move on, but what they leave behind in the minds and hearts of their succeeding generations is what makes them immortal. The Zoroastrian world view of righteous living with the understanding of the good creative force of Mazda Ahura, under any name or title or banner will be with us forever." I found ample evidence to know this truth in the writings of our honored Hum Din, Keki R. Bhote.

His family should be commended for taking on the difficult task of publishing the book.

May he be lovingly remembered by his admirers for this monumental literary work.

Rest in the abode of bliss and light, for your legacy is in good hands.

Firdosh Mehta, is a Mechanical Engineer, Past President and V P of FEZANA and Z.oroastrian Association of Alberta, and resides in Vancouver. He is a member of ZSBC and, currently, a Trustee of the Arbab Rustom Guiv Trust BC. He is an active member of the Global Zarathushti community with involvement in WZCC, Global Working Group and Interfaith organizations. He believes that we may not be able to prepare the future for our YOUTH, but we can surely prepare our Youth for the future.

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