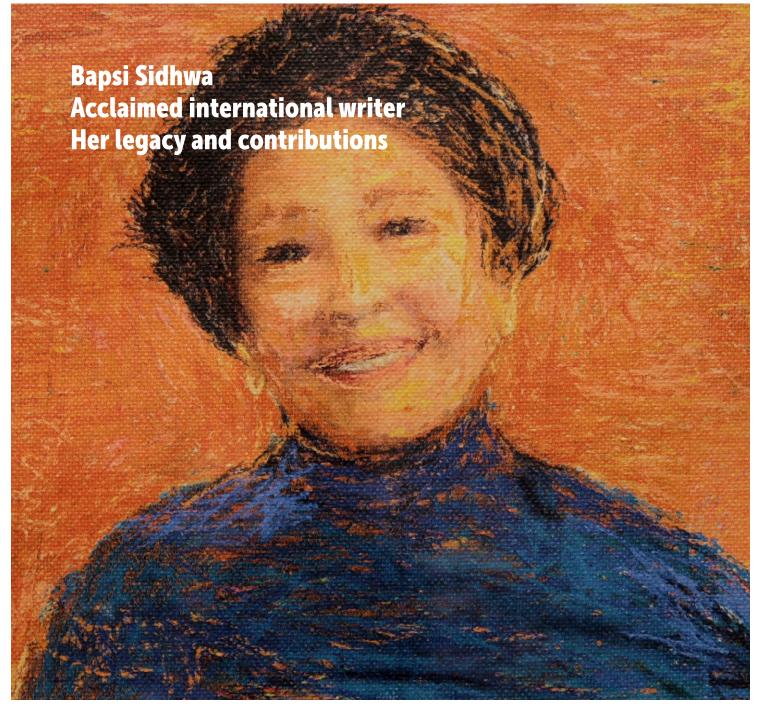
ZEMESTAN 1386 AY 3755 Z

VOL. 31, No 4 WINTER/DECEMBER 2017

FEZANA

Dae-Behman-Spendarmad 1386 AY (Fasli) • Amordad-Shehrever-Meher 1387 AY (Shenshai) • Shehrever-Meher-Avan 1387 AY (Kadimi)







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FEZANAJOURNAL

www.fezana.org



Vol 31 No 4 Winter / Zemestan 1386 AY 3755 Z

PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

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SPRING 2018
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Cover illustration by: Artist Dr Nadeen Aslam, New Jersey. Photographed by Nozar Billimoria, TX; Cover design: Firoza Fitch



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Published at Regal Press, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

FEZANA Journal Vol 31, No 4 ISSN 1068-2376

(USPS 021-495) published quarterly by FEZANA 8615 Meadowbrook Dr., Burr Ridge, IL 60527. Periodical postage rate is paid at Oakbrook, IL 60523 and at additional mailing offices. Annual subscription US \$35 (US and Canada) and \$80 (air) for other countries; details on subscription form. POSTMASTER: send changes to Fezana Journal, 8615 Meadowbrook Drive, Burr Ridge, IL 60527.

EDITORIAL





2017 was a tough year

Turricanes ravaged Puerto Rico, Texas and Florida in the US. Earthquakes shattered parts of Mexico and Iran, fires burnt hectares of land in British Columbia and California; the drought in the Horn of Africa is threatening 20 million people; there was deadly flooding in Southeast Asia; there are an unprecedented 65 million refugees around the world; there are man -made crisis and atrocities created for political and religious reasons. The revelations of the sexual exploits and harassment by men in power have shocked the world. The referenda won but the countries of Kurdistan and Catalonia lost.

In India the Parsi Zarathushti community has had its own share of battles with themselves, questioning the validity of the largess of the Shroff family of Hongkong to help and is embroiled with the municipal corporation over the proposed

underground tunnel for the new metro system which will be too close to the two iconic atashbehrams in Mumbai.

Tragedies overtook our two mobeds in India. Ervad Bharucha survived but Ervad Palanji Dastur died. Sepoy, the caretaker of the Udvada museum also suffered a disastrous accident in which both his legs had to be amputated. The community rallied around him and Mr Sepoy is now beginning his rehabilitation process by learning to walk with his prosthetic legs. We wish him well. The North American community also lost their beloved mobeds, Ervad Noshir Mirza of Ontario and Ervad Dr Darius Antia of New York. The community also lost Farroukh Vajifdar, the well known Zoroastrian scholar.

We go from one crisis to another. But life has to go on. As we enter 2018 we need to resolve and commit that we will work towards Freshokereti individually and collectively to make this gorgeous planet earth, be populated by people who do not build boundaries around themselves.

In this issue we honour the erstwhile internationally known author Bapsi Sidhwa, of Houston TX, who has insightfully given us glimpses of the lives of ordinary people. We salute her and thank her for all the recognition she has brought to the Zoroastrian community internationally through the power of her pen.

Read about the two youth speakers Afriti Chinoy and Sarosh Irani both of Detroit, who delighted the audience at the conference of the Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism in Michigan. Also in this issue you will find scholarly articles on Ancient land of Iran by Dawood Rahni and by Kaveh Farroukh on the excavations in China and in Turkey and the implications of those excavations on the spread of the Zoroastrian religion from Anatolia to China. Can we then rightly say that the Zoroastrian religion belongs only to the Iranian people?

For the past three years the Zoroastrian Associations of Greater New York, of Greater Boston Area and Pennsylvania and New Jersey have held joint religious classes once a year, for adults and children to foster closer relationships and bonding between the groups. This is an activity worth emulating by other associations who are in close proximity.

And finally, a novel idea of a week of service has been launched by the interfaith committee,.Read and reflect so that the associations can implement it and live the message of Yath Ahu Vairio.

Till we meet again in 2018, I wish you all a very happy and peaceful year ahead.

Jolly Darlor

EDITORIAL

Homi Gandhi, President



All trips to India are memorable – reconnecting with friends and family, visiting places full of fond memories, *lagan-navjote* celebrations – but my trip to the motherland at the end of 2017 was inspiring, and I would like to share some highlights with you.

In Bangalore, I attended the Annual General Meeting of the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce. The local chapter had done a phenomenal organizational job, presenting business in a professional manner and lively entertainment in the evenings. The WZCC presented awards to some outstanding Zarathushtis from around the world. The awardees' humility, despite their magnificent contribution to their profession or business, was impressive. These "givers" to our world raise the bar for our community, and make me proud of our fellow Zarathushtis' achievements.

With this feeling of pride, I traveled to Jaipur to present a paper at the 9th International Conference on Peace and Nonviolent Action. The theme of the

An Inspiring Journey through

Conference was "Science, Spirituality and Universal Peace". I presented the Zoroastrian point of view in the plenary session on "Evolution: Scientific and Spiritual Approaches". It was eye-opening to discover that many other community leaders at the Conference were unaware of the contributions of the Zarathushtis to the business and professional world and to the advancement of social issues such as women's equality, ecology, charity, non-violence and peace. It was a rewarding experience to create awareness of our contributions in these areas.

The next part of my journey saw me return to Mumbai to attend the meeting of Global Working Group (GWG). The GWG is a group of elected Zarathushtis from 12 regions of the world who meet regularly to work for betterment our community worldwide. At this meeting, we resolved to continue to support our Iranshah, create a committee to unify all financial and support activities for our agiaries, atashbehrams and mobed community, and award FEZANA the honor of hosting the 12th World Zoroastrian Congress (2022), in New York, jointly with Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York.

Perhaps the most heartwarming part of my travels came in Udvada, where I joined 2000 other Zarathushtis for the 2nd Iranshah Udvada Utsava (IUU). The event was a resounding success and is chronicled in the media elsewhere, but what was most inspiring was the clarion call of Dr. Farokh Udvadia, the recipient of a Lifetime

Achievement Award. Dr. Udvadia reminded Zarathushtis all around the world "to wake up and smell the coffee" and not rest on past laurels and become involved in unnecessary controversies, but come together to face realities if we all wish to continue in *Huvarashta*, and not just stop at *Humata* and *Hukhata*.

And it was that spirit of *Huvarashta* I observed during my stops in Navsari and the surrounding villages. Our small community in Navsari has an impressive organizational set-up that has revived the settlement of young families as well as seniors. Farmers' rehabilitation, rural housing, and self-employment projects run side by side with senior citizens' centers, poverty relief and medical support projects. A paragraph does not do justice to the 25+ years of yeoman services of World Zoroastrian Trust of India here, so I must revisit this at another time.

In the meantime, the Journal should publish an issue dedicated to *Huvarashta* with tales from the world over about how Zoroastrians continue to make contributions towards the betterment of our world.

Atha Jamiy<mark>aat</mark>, Yatha Aafrinaa<mark>mahi</mark>!

May it be so even as we wish it!

Homi. D. Sandhi



The generosity of the world wide Zarathushti community and a big help from donors to FEZANA has enabled the Sepoy family to cope with a great tragedy that befell Aspi Sepoy. Very proud of belonging to a community that steps up to help whenever the need arises.

Thank you to all.

Love and good thoughts,

FEZANA Welfare Committee

December 01, 2017

ee S

UPDATE - MR. ASPI S. SEPOY

The WZO Trust takes the opportunity to inform donors and well wishers that adequate funds have been collected towards the medical rehabilitation of Mr. Aspi Sepoy who met with a train accident at Udvada railway station on September 14, 2017 resulting in both his legs having had to be amputated above the knees.

In response to a global appeal circulated by The WZO Trust, 407 donors, from all over the world have supported and contributed generously in remitting funds.

Whilst Aspi is still at the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital at Mumbai, he has now begun to undergo daily therapy of learning the modalities of using the prosthetic legs being fabricated for him by Endolite India Ltd.

Life of the prosthetic legs with proper usage are estimated to be around 8 to 10 years; looking to Aspi's age (47) he is likely to require a minimum of three additional new sets during his lifetime.

After the first set of prosthetic legs have been are fitted and Aspi has been able to get used to them (which should take 8 to 10 months) we will still need to continue supporting him. As the life of prosthetic legs is limited, we have made provisions to ensure that Aspi will be in a position to receive three sets of replacement prosthetic legs.

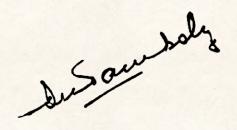
WZO Trust will therefore invest the surplus funds collected for Aspi in Govt. approved securities after the first set of prosthetic legs have been fitted. From the interest received WZO Trust will pay Aspi Sepoy around Rs.25,000 every month for his sustenance and support for his two young sons; this will need to be done till such time Aspi is once again employed and able to lead a near to normal life.

Whilst it is not possible to acknowledge each and every individual and institution that has contributed, it is essential to recognize big donors who have contributed substantial amounts towards the rehabilitation of Aspi Sepoy <u>viz.</u> Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton &

Macao, and Pervin & Jal Shroff of Hong Kong, FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America), ZTFE (Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe) from London, Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy Deed of Settlement Fund, Tata Education and Development Trust, and Mr. Darius J. Khambata from Mumbai.

WZO Trust takes this opportunity to express sincere gratitude to:

- 1. Drs. Jamshed Bunshah & Jehanbux Chichgar and their medical teams, for providing completely gratis treatment to Aspi;
- 2. Counsellor Mrs. Binaifer K. Sahukar for providing gratis counselling services.
- 3. Administration of Parsi General Hospital for the cooperation extended as well as the Nursing and support staff for their excellent services in looking after Aspi.
- 4. Jam-e-Jamshed, Parsi Times, Parsiana & Mid-Day Publications for their support and cooperation in creating awareness that has been instrumental in enabling substantial funds to be raised for Aspi.
- 5. Each and every donor who has supported our appeal and provided Aspi with the opportunity to once again lead a near to normal life.



Dinshaw K. Tamboly; The WZO Trust.



ZAGBA TRIP TO THE DAR-E-MEHR AND JOINT CLASSES WITH ZAGNY AND ZAPANJ MEMBERS



On Saturday, September 16, 2017, the Arbab Rustam Guiv Dar-e-Mehr Zoroastrian Temple was the site of a special gathering of three Zarathushti associations: ZAGNY, ZAGBA, and ZAPANJ. ZAGNY, once again, hosted the two associations for this shared experience—highlighted by religious classes for the youth, an adult discussion session, community prayer, and, of course, food.

About 50 ZAGBA members rode in an early morning bus from Boston, while approximately 20 drove in their own cars. While driving in cars gave the flexibility of stopping when needed, riding on the bus came with the bonus of eating picnic favorites like *sali per eedoo, pora paun*, egg salad, and chutney sandwiches while singing traditional and funny songs.

ZAPANJ members arrived at the Dar-e-Mehr at the same time as ZAGBA members.

All guests were welcomed and greeted warmly by ZAGNY hosts. Many guests took photos of the stunning façade of the Dar-e-Mehr against the blue skies, and many family members posed in front of this magnificent structure. Many guests noticed with delight the new flame on the fountain at the front of the building.

Upon arrival, the guests enjoyed morning chai with bagels, pastries, cakes, tea, and Indian snacks. The group then proceeded outside for the group prayer. Ervads Farhad Panthaki and Rohinton Dadina, dressed in white daglis, led the adults and children in the *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*, *Ashem Vohu* and *Yenge Hatham* prayers. Forming a large circle around the central green, everyone held hands while they prayed together. It was a powerful and beautiful experience shared by about 200 adults and children. Arzan Wadia climbed high upon the Dar-e-Mehr to look out upon the circle, take unique photos, and share his video live on Facebook.

Following the outside prayers, there were indoor prayers inside the Kebla prayer room (right). Children and young people were invited to sit within the prayer room, while adults watched from just beyond the Kebla, through the glass wall, to view the Boi ceremony. The Atash Niayesh and Tandarosti prayers were performed by Ervads Dadina (R) and Panthaki (L).

The children and youth then had their religious classes in the upstairs rooms. Coordinated by Lovji Cama, the volunteer teachers, Avan Patel, Pashna Munshi, Shiraz Antia, Cyrus Toorkey, Farhad Panthaki, Tanaz Karai, Xerxes Kotwal, Vahishta Gati, and Tashan Mistree engaged the students in many fascinating topics. Among the



topics were the significance of the Navjote ceremony, meanings of the Ashem Vohu and Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayers, the importance of Atash in the Zoroastrian faith, and using history and historical sources to answer the question, "how do we know what we know."

In the main hall, Navaz Merchant, ZAGNY Member and FEZANA liaison, gave a presentation on FEZANA, its associations, committees, activities, and scholarships. Students who were awarded FEZANA scholarships and ZAGNY scholarships were announced.





ZAGNY, ZAGBA, and ZAPANJ attendees.

The adult discussion session began with a film on identity. The audience watched a 20-minute documentary titled, "Parsee and Me," on YouTube created by Ava Patel in the UK. This film helped raise many interesting issues; Natalie Vania led a group discussion that encouraged audience members to share their ideas. Themes included: identity, obscurity, marriage, accomplishments of Zarthushtis, religion in the secular west, national identity, and survival. Although it was difficult to clearly hear the video, as well as many of the audience comments in the large room, the issue of identity is one that is central and significant, as was evidenced by smaller group discussions that continued even after the main session was completed.

This was followed by a tasty lunch of rice, *dar*, *keema*, pasta, and *achar*. There were many dedicated volunteers who served the food efficiently and with a smile.

Other activities of the day included a WZCC fundraising initiative and a fashion display of *gara* creations. ZAGNY member Edul Davar gave adults and kids rides in his 1931 Ford Model A. Thank you to Edul and Niloufer Daver who generously shared their vintage car with the community for this day. On display and for sale were handembroidered sarees, shawls, and clutch purses by designer Ashdeen Lilaowala. Lauded in India and around the world for his work, Ashdeen brought his collection to exhibitions in California, New York, and New Jersey earlier in the summer. His unique designs, based on old gara motifs, were admired by many who were impressed by his exquisite work.

The day came to an end with a cake cutting by the three Presidents, Astad Clubwala of ZAGNY, Meenaish



Damania of ZAPANJ, and Firoza Panthaki of ZAGBA.

Donations were made by the associations and individuals toward this special event. (left: Firoza Panthaki, Astad Clubwala. Meenaish Damania)

A heartfelt thanks to all the Presidents and their Boards who planned this event and the volunteers who helped make it very enjoyable. This has become a special experience that adults and children from all the associations enjoy and look forward to every year.

Photos courtesy Yasmin Bhumgara

Parastu Dubash has served as President of ZAGBA (Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston Area) and in other committee positions for over 23 years. She teaches in ZAGBA's religious education program and lives in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts with her husband Jamshed and children, Zarius and Zinara



MICHIGAN BREAKS NEW GROUND SOCIETY OF SCHOLARS OF ZOROASTRIANISM (SSZ) MEETS FOR THE FIRST TIME OUTSIDE OF CHICAGO.



In a first, the Annual Conference of the Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism's (SSZ) was held on Saturday, October 14, 2017, in Metropolitan Detroit, by the Zoroastrian Association of Michigan (ZAOM).

A legacy of the 8th World Zoroastrian Congress, the SSZ, since its inception has been hosted by the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago (ZAC). This year, under the leadership of Dr. Ardeshir Irani, the SSZ was hosted successfully during October 2017 at the Public Library in Farmington Hills, a suburb of Detroit, by the Zoroastrian Association of Michigan (ZAOM).



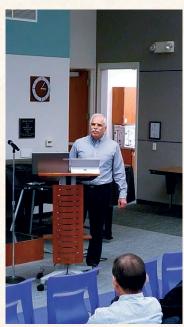
Seated (L-R): Carol Choksy, Roshan Rivetna, Zenobia Mirza, Zarin Irani Standing (L-R): Rohinton Rivetna, Shekufa Irani, Ervad Tehemton Mirza(Speaker), Sarosh Irani(Speaker), Ardeshir Irani, Behram Pastakia, Prof Jamsheed Choksy(Speaker)

The opening presentation was made by **Irani(Speaker), Ardeshir Irani, Behram Pastakia , Prof Jamsheed Choksy(Speaker)**
Professor Jamsheed Choksy, from the University of Indiana, on the life of Zarathushtra, as gleaned from the Gathas. This talk would be of interest, not only to Gatha Study Circles that are forming in North America, but also to teachers of religious education classes for young children in middle and high school. Prof Choksy was presented with the Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism Recognition Award for his dedication to the study and teaching of Zoroastrian Religion and History.

Rohinton Rivetna shared the vision and mission of the SSZ. He emphasized the value of the community providing feedback to the scholars who made presentations so that they, in turn, could fine tune their messages and make them relevant to the needs of the North American Zarathushti diaspora.

Steller presentations by members of our new generation, Afriti Chinoy and Sarosh Irani held the audience spellbound and left wondering at their research and ability to professionally and cogently present their results. Afriti spoke on how Prophet Zarathushtra's teachings are valuable in today's modern world, while Sarosh spoke on Zarathushtra's contributions as a philosopher, scientist, astronomer, and ecologist. (see pages xxxx nad xxxx)

A lively discussion was generated during the question and answer session following the presentation made by Ervad Tehemton Mirza, Vice President of the North American Mobeds Council from London, Ontario. He spoke on Prophet Zarathushtra's influence on world religion and philosophy. Responding to a question asked by a young lady on gender equality, Ervad Mirza indicated that the infrastructure is available and that women *Mobedyars* could look forward to the day when they would be accepted in performing liturgical ceremonies in the decades ahead.







His remark was prescient in that we are expecting a decision by the Supreme Court of India that deals with women's rights in the Parsi Zarathushti community.

What should be taught in the religious education classes was the subject for Dr. Lovji Cama, Chair of the Religions Education Committee of FEZANA, who flew in from New Jersey to speak. His talk concluded the days proceedings. (photo left Dr Lovji Cama at mike with Dr Ardeshir Irani looking on)

The conference was well-attended by local area Zarthushtis, local interfaith leaders, as well as students of theology, some of

whom had traveled from the other side of the state, and even as far away as Texas.

More details of the structure and organizational aspects are available at the SSZ website (www.s-s-z.org).

FEZANA member associations are welcome to host the SSZConference and can contact Rohinton Rivetna at rivetna@aol.com.



The presentations were recorded on video by Neville Bugli and are available on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arl5j1T6nms&list=PLYQq9_Sve3YgqMUrBQhQOSiA263BZ9t4p).

ZARATHUSTRA'S TEACHINGS IN THE MODERN WORLD

PRESENTATION AT THE SSZ CONFERENCE, DETROIT

WHAT ARE THE GATHAS?

The Gathas are the hymns composed by Zarathustra in 1300 BCE. In this literary composition, Zarathustra expounds upon aspects of his teachings. A significant question to ask is: how can someone's teachings from 1300 BCE relate to society today in 2017? Ideas, civilizations, people, concepts, and inventions—these factors have changed the world since that time. So, the question remains: How can Zarathustra's teachings from 1300 BCE impact our world today?

The answer to that question is in the Amesha Spentas (bountiful They are the seven immortals). abstracts of which our theology is constructed, and it is the cultivation of all these qualities in human beings that allows each human being to reach his or her full potential. The immortal Amesha Spentas will always remain significant, regardless of the time period—1300 BCE, the 1500s Renaissance, the 2017s technological world, or even the future world of 3017—the Amesha Spentas are the cultivation of our full potential.

Our first Amesha Spenta is Spenta Mainyu (wisdom). Wisdom comes from learning from our experiences and building our knowledge. Knowledge comes from education—the ability to learn and grow as human beings and receive opportunities. Zarathustra's beliefs in humans gaining knowledge is translated by the progress of knowledge in the world today. Global estimates of literacy and school attendance are above 80%, and the inequality between world regions while still existing—is much lower. Over the course of the 20th century, the world achieved rapid progress in

education. More than 4 out of 5 people are now able to read. Young generations are better educated than ever before. Government financing for education dramatically increased in the 21st century. In 1800, only 12% of the population was literate and 88% was illiterate. By 2014, the literate population was over 85%, the illiterate was only 15%. This shows the rapid advancement in education over the last two centuries; something of which we should be very proud. Due to education inequality declining, income inequality also declines. With both these disparities decreasing, the economy in any country receives benefits.

The next Amesha Spenta is Asha Vahishta (truth). With corruption, politics, scandals, and crime, where can we find honesty as a core value? This would be within business ethics. Even in 1300 BCE, Zarathustra wrote, "Don't hold grain waiting for higher prices when people are hungry." He understood that economics could play an unfair game, yet he strived for Zarathustis to be ethical people and this is exactly what business ethics does in society today. With product safety and liability laws covering warranties, guarantees, and liability, the law is on the side of the consumer. In advertising and marketing, it is vital to sell ethically without making misrepresentations to the customer. In finance, important laws such as Sarbanes Oxley Act and federal boards ensure that all applicable regulations are followed. In sales and pricing, there is a strong need for fair pricing in a competitive market economy. With whistleblowing laws protecting those who are truthful, society shows that we still value honesty. Lastly, in international business and trade, it is significant for

AFRITI CHINOY



WTO, deals, partnerships, and global entrepreneurship to follow the mantra that money is only one aspect of business rather, more significantly, business relies on the honesty of the humans that conduct it.

Our next Amesha Spenta is Vohu Mana (good mind). Vohu Mana is moral cognition, understanding the nature of the real world, and holds out the path to justice and spiritual knowledge. So, what is justice? It is the correct behavior or treatment. However, people don't always get justice. So, what do they do? They fight for it. This brings us to the significance of global uprisings movements that don't just fight for now, but more importantly, they fight for the future. **Important** movements such as Black Lives Matter, The Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong, Ukrainian Revolution, and the 2017 Women's March are created by people who believe in the power of their voices and their ability to cause change. Protesters have been recognized as Time Magazine's 2011 Person of the Year. Time's editor remarked how protestors "did not just voice their complaints, they changed the world while doing so." We must support this movement because this fight is not just for today or tomorrow, but for the American society 50 years from now and the



larger impact that could occur to build a more equal society in 100 years.

Our next Amesha Spenta is Spenta Armaity (beneficent devotion). It symbolizes devotion to good, concern for the good, right mindedness, and spirit of faith. This devotion to goodness is seen by volunteering and community service in the society. Zarathustra once stated, "Doing good to others is not a duty. It is a joy, for it increases your own health and happiness." So, devotion to goodness is really a personal dedication to improving our own lives. Reports state that 62.6 million adults (25.4 percent) volunteered to some organization in 2013. Altogether, Americans volunteered nearly 7.7 billion hours last year. The estimated value of this volunteer service is \$173 billion. In addition, more than 138 million Americans (62.5 percent) also engaged in informal volunteering in their communities, helping neighbors with such tasks as watching each other's children, shopping, or house sitting. Our devotion to good can be strengthened if we increase these values by changing 25 percent to 75 percent and changing 173 billion to 300 billion and changing 62.5 percent to 90 percent. This creates a society dedicated to others and if we continue to empower each other, we are choosing to empower the future.

Our next Amesha Spenta is Khshathra Vairya (desirable dominion). It symbolizes building an ideal society and having power in action. what does an ideal society look like? That is the study of sustainability. Sustainability, when focused on one aspect, such as employees and: Ameretat

discrimination, adding more women to the workforce, and the equal treatment Additionally, more for all races. workplace safety measures; mental and physical health checkups; and paid leave for mothers and fathers, following child birth, need to be made more available and enforced. If companies embrace sustainability, they will see that employee progress leads to company progress. Moreover, sustainability helps corporations showcase their dedication society and a belief in the future.

Our next Amesha Spenta is Haurvatat (wholeness or perfection). It is the security provided with sound mental and physical health. Some of the greatest technologies in our time are based on the advancements of healthcare and medicine. This field works to improve lives by creating new technology such as bioabsorbable stents, liquid biopsies, and diabetes drugs that decrease cardiovascular disease and death. There are a multitude of such advancements leading to changes in the public health scene around the world. This includes impacting millions of lives in third world countries by solving diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and outbreaks such as Ebola. World health issues, that are taken for granted by those in first world countries, include water sanitation, sewerage, and pesticide prevention. The greatest achievement by first world countries will be when they save the lives of people in the third world countries who need these advancements the most.

Our last Amesha Spenta is What: (immortality).

society, includes decreasing employee remains as the immortal being on this earth is Mother Nature. To protect Mother Nature we must realize that recycling is the top action society can do to simultaneously improve: the environment, the economy, sustainable manufacturing, and to prevent waste from going into the oceans. If U.S. recycling levels reach 75%, this could result in the environmental equivalent of removing 55 million cars from U.S. roads each year. generating 1.5 million new jobs in the U.S. Recycling is a corporate responsibility, social responsibility, and a government responsibility. Saving the earth is not for you, rather it is for the generation that come after you. It is to make sure that your great-grandkids one day see a tiger before they all go extinct. So that your great-grandkids can visit Venice before the city sinks under rising water levels. So that your great grandkids don't have to wear face masks to school due to air pollution. Protecting the earth is protecting future generations and giving them the opportunity to see the world that we have been so lucky to live in.

> In conclusion, the Seven significant ideals—the Amesha Spentas exemplify how uniting all these values and morals can make us better human beings. These seven ideals are still being improved, worked upon, and in progress in our world today. We must participate in their growth to make sure Zarathustra's teachings continue to thrive. The future is bright and we must be positive! "What we do today is just a piece of all the things we can achieve tomorrow."

Afriti Chinoy is a senior at Troy High School in Troy, Michigan. Afriti has participated in the Zoroastrian Youth Camp in Chicago, written for the Zoroastrian Youth Newspaper, and spoken at the Michigan World Sabbath. She is a Presidential Gold Award winner for the last two years for highest number of volunteer service hours in the Troy School District. She participates in organizations, such as Nation Honors Society, Model United Nations, and holds various leadership positions with them! She loves to teach golf in her free time!



ZARATHUSTRA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS ASTRONOMY, ECOLOGY, SCIENCE, AND PHILOSOPHY

PRESENTED AT THE SSZ CONFERENCE IN DETROIT.

SAROSH IRANI

ABSTRACT

Along with being a prophet and the founder of Zoroastrianism, Zarathustra was one of the greatest minds of his time. This paper examines His contributions in four distinct fields: Astronomy, Ecology, Science, and Philosophy. These contributions have withstood the test of time and continue to shape Zoroastrian morals to this day.

Zarathushtra's accomplishments ranged from writing treatises on Nature and Astronomy to building and operating an observatory to influencing Greek philosophers and scientists.



ASTRONOMY

The most important distinction we must make when discussing Zarathustra's contributions to astronomical discoveries is the difference between Astronomy and Astrology, as they are often confused. Astronomy is the study of the positions and properties of celestial objects throughout the universe. On the other hand, astrology is the "influence" that astronomy has on human beings, including their desires, their actions, and their future. Astronomy is recognized as a science and modern-day discoveries in this field follow the scientific method. However, Astrology is considered a "pseudoscience" and is generally not held in esteem by scholars.

Zoroastrian philosophy recognizes both free will and an individual's complete responsibility for their own thoughts and deeds. Therefore, priests and followers of the religion do not believe astrology, or the position of extraterrestrial bodies affect humans. As such, there are no references to astrology in surviving Zoroastrian Scriptures. Despite this, astrology plays a major role in non-scriptural religious texts such as Bundahishn (Creation) and Jamasp Namag (Beck, 2017). Astrology can be described as having a <u>cultural</u>, and not a religious role in Zoroastrianism. Many current Parsi aspects of astrology were picked up after the migration to Sanjan.

Many Zoroastrian texts describe the perception of the universe in detail. Initially, the universe and earth were believed to be spherical. A yolk-in-egg metaphor was used to describe this initial model to lay-people and early Zoroastrians. The spherical earth was surrounded by a *vayu* (atmosphere) beyond which was the sky (Beck, 2017).

For some Hellenic Authors, the "proof" that Zarathushtra was an astrologer was that his name contained "astr," Greek for "star". However, the name, Zarathustra, has no such meaning; this is an example of Greek Philosophers extrapolating their culture and characteristics to fit Zarathustra and other Persians (McIntyre, 2017).

A few Zoroastrian texts speak of Zarathushtra as an astronomer who built an observatory in Sistan, a province of Balkh (Pingree, 2017). The observatory was inaugurated on March 21, 1725 B.C.E., the same day King Vishtasp and his court converted to Zoroastrianism. Using this observatory, Zarathustra established a solar calendar consisting of 365 days, 5 hours, and 48 minutes (Pingree, 2017). The primary purpose of the observatory was to measure time, predict the seasons and weather changes, and to maintain a precise calendar. It was also used to determine the accurate determination of the equinoxes and solstices. This knowledge was very important to farmers, herders, and traders, who started and stopped their caravan trains based on the calendar.

It was while working at this observatory that Zarathustra made his most important astronomical discovery. It was in Sistan that Zarathushtra first developed his concept of the meridian. Nowadays, we all know the Prime Meridian as





0 degrees longitude, which passes through Greenwich, England. In 1725 B.C.E., the same year the observatory was inaugurated, Zarathustra calculated that the meridian was at 62 degrees longitude, which was the center of the known world at the time. He called his meridian "Nim Rouz" or mid-day (Pingree, 2017). It is interesting to note that at Mid-day at Nim Rouz, there is sunlight all the way from Japan to Africa, which was the extent of the known world at the time. Even today, the Afghanistan province where the observatory was located is called Nimruz.

Ecology

"Four thousand years before the first Greens, the priest-prophet Zoroaster preached that humankind, as the seventh creation, must protect the other six and keep the earth fertile and unsullied." (So noted the Independent newspaper published in London on 15 May 1990). (Bekhradnia, 2017)

Zoroastrian theology includes a duty to protect nature. It is often labeled as the world's first ecological religion. Its religious scriptures call for the protection of earth, water, fire, and air. Zarathustra claimed that, through the preservation and protection of the material world—which is the Creation of Ahura Mazda—humans will attain spiritual perfection. The Yasnas, the Zoroastrian principal text of worship, also contains many references to the environment.

Yasna 1.16 reads, "I announce (and) carry out (this Yasna) for these places and these lands, and for these pastures, and these abodes with their springs of water, and for the waters, land, and plants, and for this earth and for yon heaven, and for the Asha-sanctified wind, and for the stars, moon, and sun, and for the eternal stars without beginning." (Rahnamoon, 2017)

Ahura Mazda, according to Zoroastrian theology, is both the creator and the sustainer of the universe. The holy book *Kordeh Avesta* also contains several explicit references to the environment and commands devout followers to protect and respect them. In the prayer Jasa Me Avanghe Mazda, *nidhasnaithishem*, or non-violence, is emphasized towards all living creatures (the Avesta, 2017).

In the Char-Disha no Namaskar (Homage unto the Four Directions) prayer, the reciter faces all four cardinal directions. This helps him/her develop an understanding of and a bond with the natural world. It is interesting to note that this is the only time Zoroastrians face **north** while praying. North was the direction from which the Persians worst enemies, the Turanians, used to invade, and therefore most Atash Behrams are arranged so that worshippers cannot face north and the fire at the same time. In addition, the cold and devastating weather came from the north, increasing the dislike the Persians had for the direction. However, their respect for it was still great, which explains why North was not excluded from Zoroastrian worship.

"The Persians revere the rivers and would neither make water nor spit nor wash their hands, nor (allow) anyone to do so. Water, be it of the rivulet, lake, or the mighty sea, is sacrosanct to the Zoroastrian. He esteems it as indispensable to life." Herodotus, 445 BCE (Bagli, 2017)

Early independent Zoroastrian communities were built away from rivers to prevent pollution. The settlements were near enough to the rivers to where they became an important resource; but, were located far enough away to discourage the dumping of waste and other contaminates into the rivers. In these communities, all organic waste was deposited into stone-lined pits where it naturally degraded with the addition of lime. The purpose of this was to ensure that their wastes were not deposited in rivers, on the land (where pollutants could leach into the ground), or destroyed by burning (polluting the air).

"It is said that the body of a male Persian is never buried, until it has been torn either by a dog or a bird of prey. That the Magi have this custom is beyond a doubt, for they practice it without any concealment. The dead bodies are covered with wax, and then buried in the ground." Herodotus, 445 BCE (Bagli, 2017)



A Tower of Silence. (Karkaria)

It is considered a sin by Zoroastrians to defile water by placing a corpse in it, and a person who carries a corpse must remain at least thirty paces from the water. Since Persia has an arid climate, Zoroastrians realized water was in scarce supply and therefore revered it. Zoroastrians also took ecology into consideration when honoring the deceased. To prevent rotting flesh from contacting the soil, dead bodies were placed in towers of silence (Karkaria, 2017). Here, they were exposed to vultures who ate the flesh, after which the bones disintegrated into a harmless powder.

SCIENCE

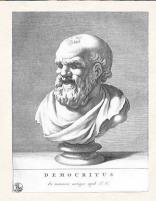
Many times one hears about the conflict between religion and science, so let's examine this a bit more closely. Science is the methodical pursuit of trying to understand the universe as perceived by our senses. Meanwhile, religion is the attempt to understand our Creator and the Universe through our spirituality. Despite what many would have you believe, these two are not mutually exclusive. In the absence of knowledge about the physical world, religion creates myths that temporarily may satisfy humanity's need for understanding the mystery of the physical world. Over time, these myths do not stand up to critical examination via a scientific approach, and this causes strife between supporters of both fields.

Greek scholars are often considered as the fathers of science. Despite their natural bias, Greek philosophers do begrudgingly acknowledge that Zoroaster was the original philosopher, from which the Greeks learned much. The Greeks likely learned all about Zarathustra's life and teachings through the contemporaneous Magi. Existing records indicate this transfer of information from the Magi to the Greeks occurred between 600 and 300 BCE (Cama, 2017).

According to Pythagorean tradition, the Greek Mathematician Pythagoras is said to have studied under Zoroaster in Babylonia. However, we now

know that Zarathushtra lived long before Pythagoras, and the references to Zarathushtra mean the Zoroastrians, including the magi (Eduljee, 2017, Pythagorean Beliefs). In addition, one of the Magi, Ostanes (Persian: Hushtana), was the teacher of Democritus. Democritus was an influential Greek scientist who first developed the atomic theory of the universe. He is often regarded as the "father of modern science." His atomic theory postulated that everything was composed of indestructible "atoms," which were always in motion. He named the smallest piece of matter "atomos," meaning "not to be cut." Democritus also postulated that sleep was caused by atoms leaving the brain (Eduljee, 2017, Persian Influence). Unfortunately, he was largely shunned by the Athenians due to his Persian leanings and education.







According to Hermippus, the Great Library of Alexandria contained over 800 scrolls (about 2 million lines) attributed to Zoroaster, most likely transcribed by the Magi. Within these were two treatises, *Asteroskopika* (star watchings) and *Peri Physeos* (On Nature) that were recorded as having been written by Zarathustra. (Eduljee, 2017, Persian Influence)

During Alexander's conquest of Persia, he burned many copies of the Avesta, but the scientific sections were kept. These concepts were valued by the Greeks, who dispersed them among their scholars and philosophers. During the Sassanid Dynasty, Shapur I sent priests to locate these scientific texts, so that he could reassemble and restore the Avesta.

PHILOSOPHY AND CONCLUSION

Although the Greeks lived in a different area and era than Zarathustra, they respected and revered the Zoroastrian Prophet. The Greeks considered exotic wisdom to be more effective for their purposes and therefore used Zoroaster's philosophies to further their own work. They often cited and plagiarized Zoroaster's work as their own.

Although the Greeks respected the authority of Zoroaster, they transmitted some inaccurate information concerning





the Persian Religion. Diogenes applied a Greek etymology to Zarathushtra's name, labelling him as a "star-worshipper." He also incorrectly attributed some ancient astrological texts to Zoroaster based solely on his name. (Eduljee, 2017, Persian Influence)

The above images are from the Italian artist Rafael's most famous fresco, *The School of Athens*. In this fresco, in the right panel, Zarathushtra and Ptolemy are having a conversation. Ptolemy is holding a terrestrial globe while Zoroaster is holding a celestial one. This is sensible, as Ptolemy was a prolific cartographer and made many maps detailing the ancient world. At the same time, Zarathushtra was an astronomer and used his observatory to study the universe. An interesting point is that Rafael's self-portrait is also located in this panel, and is the only individual who looks directly at the viewer.

Zarathustra's contributions towards the fields of astronomy, ecology, science, and philosophy helped shape Zoroastrian thought and influenced the world around him. Many of his discoveries and teachings were well-known before his time and have held up ever since. His work is something all Zoroastrians should cherish and value for years to come.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my parents, Ardeshir and Shekufa Irani, for motivating me during this project and being



extremely supportive. A big thank you goes out to Rohinton and Roshan Rivetna, who afforded a 17-year-old Sarosh his first opportunity to present his research at an SSZ Conference. Thank you to all the other speakers at this year's SSZ Conference in Detroit who helped make it a truly incredible day. And finally, thank you to Dr. Dolly Dastoor and FEZANA for publishing my paper in the Journal.

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Bio

Sarosh Irani is currently a sophomore at Wayne State University, Detroit, where he is pursuing a dual degree in Public Health and Public Affairs with a minor in Business. He works as a peer mentor in the WSU Biology Department, and as a Neighborhood Ambassador for MoGo Detroit Bike Share. In his free time, he enjoys advocating for public transportation, playing tennis, and volunteering his time at a local hospital.

Sarosh has presented at the Society for Scholars of Zoroastrianism Conference during the past two years. In the 2016 Chicago Conference, Sarosh presented about Pre-Achaemenian history and the Median Empire. In 2017, Sarosh presented on Zarathustra's contributions as an Astronomer, Ecologist, Scientist, and Philosopher. His manuscript is published in this edition of the FEZANA Journal.





"Zoroastrian Shop" is now open on a trial basis at the FEZANA

OFFICE in Chicago to supply basic items used in the practice of our faith.

Initially, the shop is stocked with sudrehs, kushtis, caps, prayer books, sukhad, wicks etc. Dependent on the success of this trial, the shop will be

expanded to include other items, such as ses, muktad vases, diva, farohars and more.

ORDERING INFORMATION

To order online, please visit https://fezana.org/product-category/z-shop/ or go to www.fezana.org and click on "Zoroastrian Shop." Payment may be made online by credit card and orders will be shipped to you by the FEZANA Administrator, or you may pick up from the FEZANA Office in Chicago and pay on delivery. Contact admin@fezana.org for any questions or for information about shipping outside of the USA.

This project would not have been possible without the generous assistance of *Dinshaw Tamboly (WZO –*Trust, India) who donated and arranged for the supply of the entire initial stock of items. From the sales of this initial stock, we will be able to perpetuate the Shop. Your indulgence will be appreciated.



KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR @ JAMSHEDI NAVROZ ~

MITHU MOHNU/ SHIRINI

VERA DINSHAW SPRINGETT

It finally felt like Navroze in the US. Ravo thickening on the stove. The aroma of slivered almonds gently toasting. Golden raisins puffing up alongside. Navroze had arrived and I was eager to spread the word in the neighborhood. I had purchased a dozen Mason jars with lids and tags, just for the occasion. The plan was to make sure every neighboring family member had their own individual serving of Ravo for the celebration.



After the Ravo had cooked and cooled, I carefully filled each Mason jar halfway, then sprinkled some toasted almonds and raisins. Then I added some more Ravo and topped it off with another round of the almonds and raisins. It looked pretty as a picture. Once all the Mason jars were ready, I covered and labeled them. Then I delivered them to five neighboring families along with a brief writeup of the day, the celebration as provided by FEZANA, my own explanation of the significance of Ravo, the ingredients used to cook it, and instructions for reheating.

Our neighbors were so touched to receive this unexpected gift of food. They asked questions like: how do you pronounce Ravo and Navroze, what's in it, when do you eat it, is it full of sugar (ha, I explained my version is protein based along with a healthy helping of sugar). While it felt good to give on Navroze, it took me back to fond emories of





all the food sharing that would occur back home (Karachi, Pakistan) on this special day.

Some neighbors ate the Ravo as dessert that night. Others as breakfast the next morning. Either way, the feedback was heartening. Everything from: thank you so much, we loved it, and thank you for the write up and explanation of your special day, to can you teach me how to make Ravo, my kids want more. My neighbor's daughter is coming over next weekend to learn how to make it. And I'm excited to share my family recipe with this young girl.

This project wasn't just fun, it was my way of creating a new memory for my then brand-new daughter Aryana's first Navroze. She was too young to understand the significance of it of course, but it's a tradition that has begun, and hopefully passed on to her for many years – and generations to come.

TEXT WHICH ACCOMPANIES THE JARS OF RAVO



Good words. Good thoughts. Good deeds.

Navroze Mubarak / NowRuz Piruz Baad (Happy New Year / May you have a blessed New Year)

Navroze / **NowRuz**, the arrival of spring, on the day of the vernal equinox, around March 21St is a time for thanksgiving and celebration. The cold and dark of winter are banished and the warmth and rejuvenation of spring are ushered in, heralding the victory of light over darkness and knowledge/wisdom over ignorance.

Celebrated as the traditional New Year over three millennia, from the time of the Persians, it brooks no ethnic, national or geographical boundaries. Note the Gregorian calendar is a vestige of this ancient calendar, with *Sept*ember, *Oct*ober, *Nov*ember and *Dec*ember as the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth months respectively after the New Year in March. NowRuz has been declared an *Intangible Heritage of Humanity by the United Nations*.

On this special day, we share traditional sweets with our friends and neighbors. This "*Ravo*", enjoyed primarily on auspicious occasions such as Navroze, comes to you with our best wishes for a happy and prosperous year ahead.

Ravo

Ingredients: Cream of wheat, eggs, sugar, butter, vanilla extract, toasted almonds and raisins. *Storage Instructions*: Please refrigerate. Warm for about 30 seconds to eat. Can be frozen.

Individuals interested in participating in the Jamshedi NowRuz, celebrations annually, by sharing *Shirini/Mithu Mohnu* (sweets) may contact: Behram Pastakia, Chair, Information Receiving and Disseminartion Committee of FEZANA (bpastakia (@) aol.com)

Vera Dinshaw Springett is a Senior Copywriter and Creative Lead with 15+ years of combined advertising agency and in-house branding experience. Originally from Pakistan, Vera pursued a BA in Journalism and Mass Communication with a double-major in Advertising and English from Drake University. She then completed an MS in Integrated Marketing Communications from Roosevelt University in Chicago, where she now works and resides with her husband and daughter.



Dear Editor

My Jewish friend recently shared a comment with me expressing distress about the dwindling numbers of both Jewish and Zarathushti communities. This prompted me to write a response. You have my permission to share my letter in the Winter Issue, since others may take heart from it.

Kind regards, Nawaz Merchant, New Jersey,

NOT AFRAID TO START ALL OVER AGAIN

An open letter to a concerned friend.

Hello my dear friend, I read your note below, and found in myself an odd emotion.

Not sadness as you might expect, but conviction. You wrote: "The Parsis, unfortunately, are probably not long for this world – with under 100,000 adherents in all the world. That is why their building this beautiful Fire Temple is such an act of optimism, and the hopelessness of the gesture is what gives it such poignancy."

So, thinking you might be interested, I'd like to describe to you why I feel this way.

Yesterday my parents, hushand and I attended a small Navjote, where a ten year old was initiated into the Zarathushti religion by a 70 year old priest. At ZAGNY, (Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York) we also have a twelve year old priest (perhaps the youngest in North America!).

That Saturday our Dar e Mehr was bright and sunny, bedecked tables full and joyful, and yes, I wore my embroidered 'kor' saree although we left home at 9 am for the two hour drive. It was great fun watching the navjotee kid and his little friends mess about with the microphone, run about like they own the place (they do) and generally feel at home. Reminded me of my own Navjote, in a baug in Mumbai, where my little friends and I played happily in our frilly dresses and generally ignored the adults (!)

Our Dar e Mehr in NY is one of about 15 in North America. About 26 Zarathushti associations and 15 smaller groups are each working on building a permanent structure. Remember most of us migrated to this continent between 20 and 30 years ago. Many, like myself, took out loans just to pay for the flight! So we had zero assets starting out. We now have a 5 million dollar structure that is used every weekend for a host of activities, and even on some weekdays!

Building structures is not optimism. It's what we do. When the Zarathushtis came to India in about 1000 ACE, we built fire temples. There are now over a hundred in India. (Fun Fact, Parsidirectory.com lists 167 worldwide, the first one called Iranshah dates to 721 ACE) When the community in Aden decided to move, they took the fire from the temple in a special flight to India and set it up in a hill station called Lonavla. It's still there today.

Not surprisingly, many of our youth have left India and Pakistan. Our ethical norm makes it difficult, if not impossible to deal with the pervasive culture of corruption after Independence. So perhaps that's why the pre Independence Parsees/Zarathushtis built massive houses of industry, while those today choose to forge a new path and leave behind the structures of the last generation.

But that's ok. We accept that we will build ourselves all over again. Here in North America, and in UK, Canada, Europe, Peru, North Africa, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, and eventually on some colony on Mars. We've done this a few times, and kinda know how. It's never easy, but the right folks step forward to leave their mark on the sands of time, and it gets done.

Change takes time. We're really great at arguing with each other. So yep, the discussion about accepting children born to Parsi mothers and non-Parsi fathers is still going on in India. Meanwhile in North America it's been a non-issue for at least 20 years. In India, Parsees are still passionate about which of the THREE ancient calendars they should follow. In North America a single Zarathushti calendar was published this April and was accepted with zero discussion. Ha! Two hundred years ago, Parsi reformers grumbled about our dwindling numbers. And um, we're still here.

Be well, my friend, and have faith, we'll be okay. Nawaz Merchant

Sadeh

Fariborz Rahnamoon

Any millenniums before Copernicus and Galileo, the ancestors of the Zarathushties had a very precise knowledge of the revolution of the Earth around the Sun. They had a perfect calendar¹ that charted the path of the earth and, as a result, they celebrated the consequential positions of the Earth in relation to the sun and the resulting seasons as festivals. *Sadeh* is one such festival that originated when they lived in Airyana Vaeja in the Arctic region.

In the Arctic region, there are two seasons: the 216 day Arctic Summer, which starts on the Vernal Equinox, 1st Farvardin (March 20/21), and ends 30 days after the Autumnal Equinox, 30 Mehr (October 22), and the Arctic Winter, which starts on the 31st day after the Autumnal Equinox, 1st Aban (October 23), and ends on the Vernal Equinox.



While in the Arctic, the ancestors of the Zarathushtis celebrated the Vernal Equinox as New Year, and the two seasons by way of two Gahanbars. The names of the Gahanbars pinpoints the exact date on which they were celebrated and is also an indication of the region where they lived. The two Gahanbars were named *Maidhyo Shahem* (middle of summer) and *Ayeh Threm/Saarem* (coming of winter).²

Thereafter, they celebrated *Sadeh*, which comes from the word *SAAD* (hundred). It was celebrated on the 100th day of the Arctic winter; that is, the 317th day after the Vernal Equinox, 10th of Bahman (January 30). With two-thirds of the winter behind them, Sadeh marked the start of activities in preparation for the coming summer.

Zarathushtra's teachings promote the enjoyment of life. So, when they migrated to the tropics, they continued the celebrations and enjoyed the festivals of the Arctic while adding new festivals to celebrate the four tropical seasons of their new home. Today, these festivals help prove the history of the migration of the Aryans.

There are a few important points to be noted:

- 1. That all the festivals, including the Gahanbars, were named in such a way as to indicate the exact date of celebration.
- 2. That the festivals were in celebration of nature and not the celebration of divinities, gods, or angels.
- 3. That all the festivals are an indication of the extent of the knowledge and science of the ancestors of the Zarathushtis.

CELEBRATION OF SADEH

In modern days, Sadeh is celebrated by lighting a huge bonfire at sunset in a central location. During the day, people gather twigs, branches, and desert scrub from the wilderness, while children knock on doors for firewood, which is piled at designated locations. At sunset, people gather around it while a group of Mobeds recite *Atash-Neyayesh* in reverence of fire and ignite the bonfire. Then, the members of the crowd greet each other and distribute sweets and other delicacies among themselves.

After the Islamic revolution of 1979, this festival was condemned by the authorities. This instead, drew the attention of non-Zarathushtis to this ancient festival and every



Sadeh

year their attendance grew, to the extent that busloads of people from far and wide would attend the few central locations in Yazd, Kerman, and Tehran. The photo (right) shows the mobeds reciting the *Atash neyavesh*; in the background you can see a pile of twigs that was lighted and became a bonfire at sunset.

For the last two decades, the central location in Yazd was the ancient village of Cham, which has a very small resident population due to lack of water for farming. The celebration at Cham attracted many people from far and wide and had even become a tourist attraction for foreign visitors.



In 2016 the authorities took steps to ban the celebration for non-Zarathushtis. They argued that Cham, with such a small population, cannot have such a huge fire. They ordered that each village should have their own celebration and non-Zarathushtis should not be allowed to participate. They also sent the Islamic police to monitor the attendees and keep non-Zarathushtis out.

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SADEH

- 1. After the Arab invasion and the destruction of books and the forced conversion of the population, there is very little authentic information about the celebration of Sadeh and those that are there were written to discredit the people as fire-worshipers. Repeating them gives it authenticity and should not be used as a reference.
- 2. There is a common mistake, in relating the hundred of the Sadeh to 50 nights plus 50 days before Now Rooz. This is wrong and has no significance.
- 3. Some have associated various myths and events in history to the origin of Sadeh, which cannot be true though it seems patriotic. In effect, the real origin of Sadeh, which demonstrates the knowledge of ancient Iranians about the revolution of the earth around the sun, is lost and the credit then goes to Galileo. Just like the ancient science and medicine of the Zarathushties, because it was translated into Arabic, is today attributed to Islam and Islam is credited for the Renaissance in Europe.

May Mazda (Wisdom) prevail Be a Seeker not a Believer

1 The calendar described in the Bundahishn has been recognized as the Perfect Calendar that needs no adjustment for 110,000 years. For details please visit http://zarathushticalendar.com/

2 The Arctic summer is 216 days long, the Middle of Summer was celebrated on the 108th-day corresponding to 15 Tir (July 3). The Coming of Winter was celebrated on the last day of Summer on the 216th day, one day before the winter started on 30 Mehr (October 22).

Photos from: https://pbs.twimg.com

Fariborz Rahnamoon born in Yazd, educated in Bombay and now living in Canada, is the past president of Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (ZSBC), chair person of Arbab Rostam Guiv Trust – Vancouver, past global director of WZCC and Chapter Chair of WZCC. BC. Fariborz is the editor of Iran Zamin, a bilingual research magazine on ancient Iranian history and religion and webmaster of www.ancientiran.com His latest project is working on the Mazda Yasni calendar.



YALDA AND SADEH SOLAR CELEBRATIONS IN THE WINTER DAVOOD RAHNI

Wrapped up to my neck in a thick blanket, spread over a 2-feet high wooden table (korsi), I enjoyed the warming heat radiating from our charcoal brazier under the table—the only heat source in the house. As a teen, I was mesmerized by the red glow of pomegranates standing high among other fruits, cookies and dried nuts on the table; it was as though we were anticipating the rebirth of the sun from the korsi's top. Since ancient times, the winter solstice in Shemiran my hamlet of birth, snuggled in the Alborz Mountain's foothills, brought shivery, snowy, and windy cold winter nights. Winter solstice night usually falls on December 21 and has been celebrated by Iranians and Zoroastrians as well as still the Nordic



Scandinavians throughout the millennia. Iranians, Parsi Zoroastrians, and a few hundred million more people of Iranian stock, from throughout central and west Asia and the Caucuses, have commemorated Yalda (winter solstice, the Nords call it Yule) and Nowruz (spring vernal equinox) as the zenith of the (new) year. Sadeh, 50 days and 50 nights before Nowruz, is another important festival still revered by Zoroastrians and Iranians.

Jashn-e Yalda Night

The winter solstice celebration, has been called Yalda (Daygaan) in Iran (Persia) since antiquity. Yalda means the Sun's rebirth. There are other derivations of the same word in Syriac (Aramaic) adopted into the (Irano-European) Persian languages. Yalda marks the exit from the longest "pregnant" night of the year, which coincides with the anticipated arrival of the "newly born sun," that is, when daylight begins to lengthen (the triumph of light over darkness). It is also called Shabe Chelleh-ye koochik means the first night of a 40-day period before another revered Persian celebration, Jashne Sadeh (Chelleh-ye bozorg), which is 50 days and 50 nights (thus, a hundred) before the grandest Persian celebration, Nowruz (the Persian New Year) at the spring vernal equinox.



The Romans, especially the aristocracy, celebrated the birthday of Mithra, the Persian Goddess of the unconquerable sun, on December 25th. For Romans, Mithra's birthday was the most sacred day of the year. The preeminent presence of the sun still on flags from Japan to Iran and Kurdistan, is the symbolic indication of reverence afforded to sun as the source of energy, light, enlightenment, and knowledge; this contrasts to the lunar crescent image, which rises at night, found on Islamic flags. In the early years of Christianity, Easter was the main holiday, celebrated as the birth of Jesus, believed to coincide with spring. In the late fourth century, the Christian church declared the birth of Jesus to have occurred during the winter solstice; Pope Julius I designated December 25 as the birth day of Jesus, hoping to supplant the pagan Saturnalia or Mithra's festival. The day after Yalda, known as *Khoram Rooz* or *Khore Rooz* (the day of sun) belongs to Ahura Mazda, the supreme Lord of Wisdom in Zoroastrianism and its subsequent manifestations in Mazdeism



and Manicheism.

One of the Yalda festival's events was to place "order" in abeyance with disorder and chaos, during which the king, dressed in white, would yield his throne to a mock king, the Lord of Misrule, who came from the ordinary people. This may be the origin of the court jester in monarchies since. As the old year passed, rules of ordinary living were relaxed. Following the Persian tradition, the usual order of the year was suspended, grudges and quarrels forgotten, and wars interrupted or postponed. Businesses, courts and schools were closed. Rich and poor became equals, masters served slaves, and children headed the families. Cross-dressing, masquerades and merriment of all kinds prevailed. Candles and oil lamps chased away the spirit of darkness. The Iranian Jews, who have inhabited the country since three millennia ago, celebrated the festival of *Illanout* (tree festival)—like Shab-e Cheleh—at around the same time. Assorted dried and fresh winter fruits (pomegranates, watermelon, meddlers, quinces, and persimmons) were eaten and special meals and cookies were prepared and spiritual prayers and hymns recited.

JASHN-E SADEH NIGHT

The "Hundredth" Celebration, Jashn-e Sadeh is a mid-winter celebration, commemorated since antiquity in Iran (Persia and the region), that falls 40 days after Yalda (winter solstice). The number Sad-eh (100) coincides with 50 days and 50 nights before the arrival of Nowruz. Nowruz is the grandest Persian celebration that has been observed by all peoples throughout the heart of Asia. Sadeh reverberates with the exhilarating celestial message of light and soothing warmth—of leaving the frost and cold behind, and the triumph of light over darkness.



In the Sassanid Dynasty era (7th century C.E.), huge bonfires were lit at Sadeh. Mo'bed, the Zoroastrian *Magi* priest, led the bonfire for those who congregated around the sacred fire,in the *Atashe Niyayesh prayer*, and performed the spiritual rituals and hymns before the bonfire was lit at sunset and lasted till next sunrise; it was generally located outdoors and near the temple and a pristine water stream, fresh air and on cleansed soil. The fire was also meant to drive off the demons of frosts and cold, which could otherwise turn water into stone (*ice*) and kill the plant roots beneath the earth. Traditionally, girls (also boys after 1979 in Iran!) would go door-to-door asking for firewood (to light another bonfire.) Knocking on doors, they would chant poetic verses like, "If you give firewood, God will grant your wish, and if you don't, He won't either!" People would dance around the bonfire. A grandiose celebration of Sadeh during the 10th Century, during the reign of Mardavij Zeyari, the ruler of Isfahan, was held in the suburb still named Sadeh. During the three days of Sadeh celebrations, huge bonfires were set up along the Zayandeh Roud, while hundreds of white doves, carrying lit fireballs hanging on their feet, were released to light up the dark night sky. There were fireworks, clowns, dancers, music, and storytelling, with lavish feasts of roasted lamb, beef, chicken kabobs, and other delicacies, which were served to participants, as well as to the area's needy.

In modern Iran and throughout the diaspora, many Iranians and Zoroastrians have reverted in droves to commemorating historical solar seasonal celebrations. This is manifested in major pre-Islamic heritage, commemorating Nowruz and *Chaharshanbeh Soori* preceding it, as well as *Mehrgan*, *Yalda*, *Tirgan*, Daygan, and, of course, Sadeh.

Davood N. Rahni born in Shermian, Tehran to Natanzi parents, has served as a professor of [bio-electo-analytical] chemistry in New York for over 30 years. He has also held adjunct professorship in environmental science and law, as well as in dermatology. Although prolifically published in his specializations of biosensors, nano-engineering, neuro-psycho-pharmacology and biological psychiatry, nonetheless, his passion to help advancing the better understanding of culture and history especially of Iran and the Southwest region of Asia, integration of immigrant Americans, and advocating for social justice and peace, has yielded hundreds of additional essays, prose, op-eds and articles as gifts to his community.

Personal Profile

BAPSI SIDHWA'S LEGACY AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO HER COMMUNITY

TERESA RUSSO

Thirty-seven years ago, *The Crow Eaters* (1980), a fiction about Parsee life, was published and instantaneously Bapsi Sidhwa was thrust into a spotlight for her use of good-humor, farce, and irony to highlight the indosyncrasies of the Parsee community. Bapsi Sidhwa followed it with another acclaimed volume first published with Jonathon Cape as *Ice Candy Man* (1982). The novel was then published in the United States as *Cracking India* (1988), the title known-well to North Americans about the story of Partition and its aftermath from the point of view of a child, experiencing the shattering of a peaceful co-existence among Hindu, Sikh, Parsee, and Muslims.

[BS] I was a child when Partition took place and Ice Candy Man (ICM) stayed in me for a long time. It struck me also that I heard hushed conversations not meant for my ears about someone's daughter-in-law, sister, or mother that bewildered me. I didn't know what they were whispering about, but as I grew up, I discovered they were talking about hundreds of thousands of women who were kidnapped and raped during Partition. I never met anyone who admitted to having a family member taken away. This was because it would dishonor the family. In fact, the brutality the women were subjected to was meant to not only dishonor the family, but to also dishonor the race, the tribe, and the religion the women belonged to, whether Hindu, Sikh, or Muslim. I felt very strongly that these bestial kidnappings should be recorded.

When I started writing ICM, I had the image of an incident in mind. Men in carts drove to our house intent on looting, thinking we were Hindus. A memory of my mother standing on the veranda with her hands on my and my brother's heads. Apparently, and I am not sure if I recall this or it is a part of an oft narrated story: our Muslim cook comes out saying, "Bastards, they are Parsi and not Hindus!" and the men drove away. I used this incident as a climactic scene in the novel.

An internationally known novelist, essayist, and playwright, Sidhwa has been applauded by her peers for her writing style and treatment of serious cultural issues. The great Urdu poet and Pakistani intellect, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, commended Sidhwa after reading *Crow Eaters* for her

manner of expressing the human condition in her narrative with a combination of comedy, wit, and a racy style.

[BS] Now it happened that my brother, Minoo, was sitting next to the beloved poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz on a flight from Islamabad to Lahore. Faiz was, of course, well-known and everyone on the plane greeted him. After chatting for a while with Minoo, he took out a shabby looking book from his pocket and knowing my brother was a Parsi, handed it to him saying, "This book is written by a Parsi woman. Would you know who she is?"

The Crows

Bapsi Sidhwa's study of some archetypal characters of her community—the Parses—deserves more than praise both as a sociological and as a literary document. The Parsess have always been flamboy—antly prominent in public life, what goes on behind this faced has been, for most of us, as remote and mysterious as the underworld. Bapsi Sidhwa has opened for us all the doors and all the windows of this world's innermost recesses. Ruthlessly truthful, deeply perceptive, she tells her story with rare courage, frankness and good humour. Her exposition, or exposure, may or may not please her conferes but it will certainly endear her to every reader who comes across this book. It is a veritable tour de force.

—FAIZ AHMED FAIZ

After leafing through the book, Minoo found some of the material uncannily familiar and said, "I think my sister writes...I think it is written by her."

They came straight to our flat from the airport. I was so honored to see Faiz Sahib in our home. In those days, we had only one air conditioner and it was in the bedroom. My husband and I ushered Faiz Sahib straight to a small alcove there. It had a cushioned bench against a window with a coffee-table before it, a couple of chairs, and book-shelves on either side.

I remember the scene vividly. Before sitting down, Faiz Ahmed Faiz dropped the book on the coffee

Personal Profile

table and said, "Have you written this book?"

Although I recognized it, I wondered why the book had no covers on either end. I said hesitantly, "Yes, I wrote it."

"It's a good second-rate book," he announced magnanimously.

After Khushwant Singh's laudatory remarks about The Crow Eaters manuscript, I felt a twinge of disappointment, but coming from Faiz, it was nevertheless a compliment. I mumbled, "Thank you, Faiz Sahib."

He said, "It's a good book. You write like Narayan, Naipaul, and all those writers...you know who I mean'

I revered Naipaul's writing and I said, "But Faiz Sahib, that's blasphemy. How can you compare me with Naipaul?"

"Oh yes," he said, "I can."

"If Naipaul is a second-rate writer," I asked timidly, "who do you consider first rate?"

Faiz said, "Shakespeare, Milton, Dante..."

I looked at him, unable to say anything.

We had some tea and samosas and spent a pleasant evening together before my brother took Faiz away to his home for a drink

The story of a murdered bride in the Himalayas is what inspired Bapsi Sidhwa to begin writing and telling stories about individuals in her culture. *The Bride* challenges the patriarchal system in the Indian-Pakistani culture as Sidhwa focuses on the marginalized within the system. She successfully infuses in her narratives her own thoughts about traditions, politics, and the human condition. Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West place Sidhwa among some of the best authors to contribute to Indo-Anglian Literature in *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing 1947-1997*.

Bapsi Sidhwa has been an active member of her community in deeds and in her power of words in both Houston and Lahore. In 1970, before moving to the United States, she served on the women's delegation to Iran and Turkey, and in 1975 Sidhwa represented Punjab at the Asian Women's Conference. In 1991, Bapsi Sidhwa was honored by her country with the Sitara-i-Imtiaz, the highest honor that Pakistan bestows on a citizen for their contributions in the arts. She served women and children in her community at Lahore by assisting with the creation of The Home for Destitute Women and Children. Sidhwa is an active member of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH); the members of the ZAH appreciate Bapsi for the many ways she remembers her community. Bapsi has taught us all how to laugh at ourselves while also reminding us how so many in the world are marginalized and still horribly hurting.

Fatima Bhutto, the author of *Songs of Blood and Sword*, has recently said in the reissue of the *Crow Eaters*: "Sidwa is often described as Pakistan's finest novelist writing in English and rightfully so. It is her warm, gregarious style that parts the curtains and allows us entry into an older subcontinent, a more complete one" (2015).

[BS] When I start a novel, I imagine a scene and often it takes place in the middle. What brought The Crow Eaters to my mind, was a remark by my mother, "You know, your father wasn't always like this. When we were introduced, he asked me 'Which is your favorite color?' and I said Blue and then he wrote me love letters on blue writing paper."

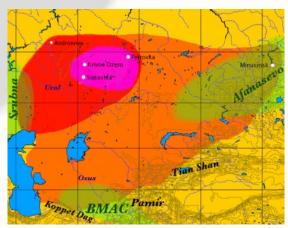
PHOTO OF BAPSI SIDHWA ON COVER

Teresa Russo is the editor of Recognition and Modes of Knowledge: Anagnorisis from Antiquity to Contemporary Theory (University Alberta Press.) She has a doctorate in comparative literature and has taught at American University, The Catholic University of America, and University of Toronto. She is currently teaching at Brock University and editing Bapsi Sidhwa's essays and letters.

IRAN: THE HISTORICAL CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION, THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN DIVERSITY, AND THE BASTION OF HUMANISTIC TOLERANCE

DAVOOD RAHNI

For more than a hundred thousand years, *Homo sapiens, Homo helderbergenis*, and Denisovans found southwestern Asia's temperate Iranian plateau (below) the optimal cradle of human civilization. Forty thousand years ago, foragers and hunter-gatherers



Iranian Plateau, where the earliest common human lived

traversed throughout and first settled southeast Asia; which was later (30,000 to 10,000 years ago) followed by their movement onto the European continent.

In fact, from the original Iranian nomadic tribes (Persians, Medians and Partians) arose the Albanians, Bulgarians, Croatians, Scythians, Urals, Sakas, Western Ukrainians, Ossetians, Minoans, Ionians, and the Irish, followed by Bactrians, Kashmiri and Parsi Zoroastrians of India, the Uighurs of China's Xinjian province. The 80 plus million inside today's Iran and up to five million Iranians of the western diaspora, post-1979, are also all descendants of the ancient peoples of Iran, comprised then of the Persian tribes mixed with the earlier settlers of the same stock

A growing number of etymological revisionists have reexamined the term Indo-European tossed around as early as the 17th century, presumably by the colonial British in India. It is progressively recognized that the term Irano-European is more accurate, as there are still 313 languages belonging to the Iranian family, in contrast to a mere 130 Hindi-derived languages mostly spoken in India. Simply put, proto-Iranian languages as Gathan, Avestan, and early proto-Persian Pahlavi tongues preceded the Rigveda and Hindu languages and vernaculars. Modern Persian is spoken and understood by most people across the "Persian-

world, including India. Today, 250 million people speak one or more of the dozens of Persian dialects and vernaculars. Etymologically speaking, there nearly are 1.000 Persian words comprehensible to Persianspeaking natives that are used in English today.



The Iranian plateau that stretches into Asia Minor was the most fertile ground for sustaining the earliest human settlements that led to the first socio-economic and later religio-political establishments, especially within the past 10 to 20 thousand years. Such primitive settlements led to the first world empire, the Achaemedes, founded by Cyrus the Great whose democratic empowering and just rule spanned across the three continents nearly three millennia ago. This period had been in fact preceded by at least 3,000 years of Elamites in southwest Iran The area, ruled by the Achaemenian King Cyrus the Great (circa 539 BCE), and the major Parthian and Sassanid Empires that followed, is currently comprised of nearly forty plus sovereign nations, from which 44% of the world's population have originated.

Most, if not all, Iranian kings and queens never imposed their religions or cultures—as the Greeks, Arabs did—by way of sword. In fact, the historically broader Iran always enjoyed a degree of autonomous self-rule; this is evident in today's Iran with the ethnical and cultural richness of Azari, Baluchi, Kurdish, Luri, Turkmen, Natanzi, Arab, Guilani, Mazandarani, and Persian groups. That said, however, western instigators as Bernard Lewis' ulterior motives to exploit this and pontificate for dismembering Iran or the region is ludicrously absurd and without any basis whatsoever; the common linguistic and cultural heritage of this vast region remains untouchable.

In a PBS documentary on the earliest settlement of human pedigree, and as based on mitochondrion DNA, traces an earliest "man" who must have lived 40,000 years ago in southcentral Asia, just north of today's Iran and Afghanistan border. Although Iranians today trace back their ancestry to one of the three major Aryan tribes (Persians, Medians, or Partians) descended from the same

exact region three millennia ago, today's genetic makeup of Iranians are far more diverse in that it has not only drawn from the indigenous peoples already on the plateau, but has also absorbed segments of Greek, Arab, and Moghul among other invaders. In a more recent series of BBC documentaries (click From Russia to IRAN crossing Wild Frontiers), the trekker Levison walks the Caucuses ridges nearly 3,000 miles from southwestern Russia and northern Caucuses down to Iran's southern Caspian Sea region so as to demonstrate the inhabitants are all of the same Iranian [Caucasian] stock as evidenced by their genetic makeups, and common language, culture, life rituals, music, and festivals. Another illustration of the lustrous manifestation of Iranians and their rich culture can be viewed in the French journal GeoHistoire. It is astounding how close languages, cultural rituals, hymns, foods, calendars, festivals, music, and birth, wedding, and burial rituals of peoples surrounding the Caspian Sea down to the northern shores of the Persian Gulf truly are.

From the vast Iranian plateau arose many original faiths and religiosities as typified by Mithraism, Zoroastrianism, Mazdeism, and Manicheism, to name a few; they were conceived or transmitted through ancient Iran and beyond as far back at least over 10,000 years ago. These early beliefs have gone on to partially provide the basis for Hinduism, Buddhism, and, later, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Since antiquity, Iran has remained the bastion of pluralistic tolerance of diverse faiths and rainbow ethnicities. As a result, their cultural diversity has been enriched immensely over time through exchange with other neighboring peoples, such as the Greeks, Arabs or Altaics/Moghuls, Indians, Egyptians, and Mesopotamians' many of whom arrived as invaders and conquerors, but stayed in Iran and assimilated.

Notwithstanding the rulers and dynasties that emerge and disappear into the historical bin of oblivion, Iran still has the most ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity—if not worldwide, then, most definitely, in Asia. As a so-called 12-Imam Shiite majority nation, it enjoys the diversity of its eminent Jewish, Zoroastrian, Armenian, Assyrian, Kaldani, Catholic, evangelical and Gregorian Christians, and Bahai faith communities. Interestingly, when Israel offered to pay Iranian Jews \$10,000 to immigrate to Israel, the Ha'aretz paper ran an article in which Iranian Mizrahim immigrants to Israel shared their frustration of having left a lavish lifestyle and their deep roots in Iran to live as multi-famalies in Kibbutzim unit—a number of NGOs in Iran offered to pay \$50,000 for any of disaffected Jewish Iranian citizens to return home to their Iran!

Among all closely knit brethren of Persians/Iranians, Judaic people stand in prominence. In the book Esther's

Children, the author Homa Sarshar even goes further relying on oral narration and historical evidence to conclude the [Jewish] missing tribes must have been absorbed into the people of Iran. This explains why *Mizrahim* Jewish DNA biomarkers are ubiquitous among all Iranians.

In closing, what has truly kept all Iranians and our distant relatives worldwide together, is their rich literature of poetry and prose, as exemplified by the largest compendium of poems of 30,000 verses ever, Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, the epic poems of the Persian Kings, or having given to the world the Persian philosophers and thinkers as Razes, Avicenna, Farabi, Biruni, Saa'di, Hafez, Algorithm, and Khayyam They proudly cherish their common music, seasonal festivities such as Nowruz, their food and way of life, our familial upbringing, etc. all at least several millennia in the making. The first declaration of Human Rights by King Cyrus the Great of the Achaemenid Empire and Sa'adi, the 13th century Persian poet, has articulated such humanistic commonalty masterfully:

All humans are members of one frame, Since all at first, from the same essence, came.

When by hard fortune one limb is oppressed, The other members lose their desired rest.

If thou feel'st not for others' misery, A human is no name for thee.

All the above will, when extraterrestrials may arrive and look back at the earth in the mirror of the cosmos 100,000 years from now, in all likelihood we will be gone; religious Armageddon and self-inflicted environmental and natural resources resulting from greed, self-righteousness, and power grabs will inflict cataclysmic catastrophes on and to the earth. We, as well as other terrestrial species, shall have either perished or may have, as we have throughout our past, moved elsewhere-perhaps far beyond the earth and possibly beyond our solar system?

About the author. See page 23

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DISCOVERY OF AN ANCIENT ZOROASTRIAN TEMPLE IN NORTHERN TURKEY

KAVEH FARROKH, PhD.

Arecent discovery of a Zoroastrian temple in northern Turkey is undoubtedly significant as it adds more insight into the world's first monotheistic religion. The *Daily Sabah* and *Ana Haber Gazete* news outlets of Turkey announced in early November 2017, news of the excavation of an "ancient Persian temple" dated to the 5th century BCE in Turkey's northern Amasya province. The specific site of the excavation was the ancient Persian Oluz Höyük settlement in Toklucak village. The excavations were led by Istanbul University's archaeology professor Şevket Dönmez who presented the findings to the Turkish authorities and the Turkish press corps on November 6, 2017. The actual excavations at Oluz Höyük began as early as 2007, with the site first being discovered during surface research near the Tokluca village as far back as 1999.

In a total of 11 seasons of excavations, Dönmez's archaeological team have made remarkable finds of special interest to Zoroastrian specialists interested in Anatolia during the Achaemenid rule (c. 425-300 BCE). These finds confirm the





Professor Şevket Dönmez of Istanbul University presents his findings at Asmaya, Turkey (Source: Ana Haber). Zoroastrian artifacts discovered by Dönmez and his team are also displayed (see lower right of the photo).

Dönmez described of the discovery of destroyed portable fire burning vessels as well as human skulls. This is very consistent with Zoroastrian sources citing Alexander as "the great destroyer" in his killing of the Magi priests and the burning of the original Avesta texts of the early Aryans (Boyce, 2001, p.78; Kriwaczek, 2002, p.87, 203). Alexander is cited by the Zoroastrian tradition as having "killed the magi...many teachers, lawyers, Herbats [the lower Magi], Mobads [the upper Magi]" (William-Roberts, 1995, p.355). Much of the literature of ancient Persia especially

strong presence of the Zoroastrian faith in Anatolia, bought over by the Medes and the Persians. To this day Eastern Anatolia in modern Turkey hosts the largest number of Iranian-speaking Kurds outside of Iran proper. The excavation site has unearthed a rich plethora of artifacts including cella for the burning of sacred flames, living quarters, stone pavilions as well as shovels and pots for the consumption of the sacred *Haoma* drink.

Interestingly Dönmez has also noted of the destruction wrought by Alexander to this Zoroastrian temple during his conquests. During his press conference with the Ana Haber news outlet,



Zoroastrian artifacts discovered by the Dönmez expedition at the ancient Persian settlement at Oluz Höyük in Toklucak village, Amasya province, Turkey (Daily Sabah & AA Photo).

works of learning and Zoroastrian texts were destroyed during the Alexandrian conquests (Frye, 1988, p.19). Given the scale of destruction wrought by Alexander's conquests, Dönmez's finds are specially significant as it helps modern-day scholars in the painstaking task of reconstruction of the Zoroastrian legacy from the ancient world.

Dönmez has also mapped out the structure of the temple that included a holy room for the burning of sacred fires as well as other stone-paved areas containing various artefacts for worship practices.(see image below Dönmez noted during his presentation that the findings at the Oluz Höyük have the potential of changing long-held notions of



Professor Şevket Dönmez of Istanbul University presenting the architectural layout of the Zoroastrian temple excavated by his archaeological team at Asmaya (Source: Ana Haber).

religion and culture in Anatolia. Put simply, Dönmez was highlighting the fact of the legacy of ancient Persian culture and the Zoroastrian religion. This continued even after the fall of the first (Achaemenid) Persian Empire as a result of Alexander's conquests. The legacy of ancient Iranian culture remained in place in eastern, central and northern Anatolia in modern-day Turkey. The Hellenic and later Roman authorities had certainly created political divisions led by different (regional) kings, however, what remained consistent was the legacy of ancient Iranian civilization and the tenets of the Zoroastrian religion.

As further averred by Dönmez, Oluz Höyük is the only known Persian settlement in the region known thus far. This leaves open the possibility of more such sites being discovered in future excavations. On this note, Dönmez and his archaeological team plan to further continue their

research activities at the site. Dönmez has also indicated the possibility of working in the future, to restore the temple back to its original form as it would have appeared thousands of years ago.

As a final point, the Asmaya finds in northern Turkey complement the discovery of Zoroastrian sites in northwest China dated to 2500 years ago, the same era as the first (Achaemenid) Persian Empire. The Zoroastrian faith and ancient Iranian civilization spanned vast a territorial extent and despite the passage of 2500 years, this is a legacy that continues to endure well beyond the boundaries of modern-day Iran.

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KAVEH FARROUKH

DISCOVERY OF ANCIENT ZOROASTRIAN REMAINS IN NORTHWEST CHINA

The state religion of ancient Persia, Zoroastrianism, was the world's first monotheistic religion. Scholars have long debated the birthplace of the religion's founder, Zarathustra, with a number of theories proposing the eastern marches of the Persian Empire (i.e. northeast Iran, southwest Afghanistan, etc.). In practice, there was a much larger Iranian civilizational zone, one that held sway over much of ancient Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Anatolia and Central Asia. New finds now make clear of the presence of ancient Iranian civilization in northwest China. While ignored by much of the mainstream press, China's CCTV network reported on August 12, 2014 of a remarkable discovery by Chinese archaeologists of Zoroastrian tombs. Located in China's northwest Xinjiang Uyghur region, these tombs are dated to



Archaeologists in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region have discovered major Zoroastrian tombs, dated to over 2,500 years ago (Caption and Photo Source: Chinanews.com).

2500 years ago. As noted by the CCTV report, sun and fire symbols, integral to Zoroastrian-based culture, have been discovered throughout the site. Note that the dating of this site coincides with the rise of the Achaemenid Medo-Persian Empire founded by Cyrus the Great. The 2014 finds in northwest China are among the oldest remains of the Zoroastrian religion. More recently in early November 2017, reports have also been made of the find of an entire Zoroastrian religious site in Asmaya, northern Turkey. Another spectacular find testifying to the enduring legacy of ancient Persia was the

recent discovery in southern Russia (reported on August 6, 2016) of fragments of a marble stele carrying an inscription by Darius the Great.

However, the CCTV report titled "Excavation 'very likely' to redefine the Zoroastrianism's origin" has failed to mention the fact that Iranian-speaking peoples such as the Persians, Medes, Saggarthians, Parthians, etc. had themselves arrived onto the Iranian plateau from the Central Asian steppes, areas adjoining regions known as the Pamirs and northwest China. There is also evidence that China's northwest region was inhabited with Iranian speaking and fellow Indo-European Tocharian (or possibly proto-Celtic) peoples. The CCTV article fails to mention that scores of well-preserved Caucasian mummies have been discovered in China's northwest Urumchi region dated to 2500 years ago and prior to this time. The mummies had headgear and clothing that are strikingly similar to the attire seen with the ancient Medes, Persians, Parthians and Scythians-Saka of Central Asia and ancient Russia-Ukraine of antiquity.

While the find of the Zoroastrian sites by Chinese archaeologists is indeed remarkable, it is important to note that the vast sway of Iranian culture in ancient Eurasia also went far to the north of China in ancient times. This is demonstrated by the discovery of the world's first known Persian carpet at *Pazyryk* in Siberia located over 2800 kilometers north of China today. The Iranian and Tocharian peoples of Central Asia and Eurasia were to be replaced by the subsequent arrival of proto-Turkic and Hunnic peoples. Nevertheless, these same proto-Turkic and Hunnic peoples were themselves to be strongly influenced by the Zoroastrian legacy of the Iranians and Tocharians whom they had replaced.

Archaeologists in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region have discovered major Zoroastrian



tombs, dated to over 2,500 years ago. (Caption and Photo Source: Chinanews.com). As noted in the China News report: "This is a typical wooden brazier found in the tombs. Zoroastrians would bury a burning brazier with the dead to show their worship of fire. The culture is unique to Zoroastrianism... This polished stoneware found in the tombs is an eyebrow pencil used by ordinary ladies. It does not just show the sophistication of craftsmanship here over 2,500 years ago, but also demonstrates the ancestors' pursuit of beauty, creativity and better life, not just survival. It shows this place used to be highly civilized".

The CCTV report also appears to imply that Zoroastrianism may have origins outside of

Iran. This is a somewhat ambiguous and sensationalist observation as Iranian culture and civilization was not confined to the present-day boundaries of Iran, Afghanistan, or the Kurdish speakers of Iraq, Syria and Turkey, but as noted previously, a much larger territorial zone that included much of Eurasia, Central Asia and much of Eastern Europe. Put simply, the ancient Persian Empire was itself part of a larger Iranic civilizational complex composed of Scythians and the later Sarmatians. This is perhaps best highlighted at the Apadana section of Persepolis where Scythians or Sakas are seen, like their Persian and Mede cousins, sporting the ceremonial *Akenakes* short dagger and wearing tall caps, almost exactly like those with the aforementioned Caucasian mummies discovered at Urumchi, northwest China.

What is certain is that China's northwest region, especially in Xinjiang and Urumchi are rich in potential archaeology. Already, the finds of the Zoroastrian sites testify to this fact. These finds are yet another reminder of the vast influence of Zoroastrianism and ancient Iranian civilization in antiquity.

About the author see page 29

WINGS TO FLY

Every time you do a good deed you shine the light a little farther into the dark. And the thing is, when you're gone that light is going to keep shining on, pushing the shadows back.



Charles De Lint

1993 Master's Degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), Teachers' College, Columbia University, New York

2008 CNN IBN Real Heroes Award

2016 Literacy Hero Award - Rotary Literacy Summit

2016 Master's Degree in International Relations, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, Boston

2017 Echinda Global Scholar, Brookings Institution

The list goes on... but so does the work in rural Maharashtra. Armene Modi gave up a teaching career in Japan and returned to India in 1998 after stumbling upon the statistic that 61% of Indian women were illiterate. With Japanese funding, she set up Ashta No Kai (ANK), meaning 'For a Better Tomorrow' in Japanese, a non-profit that works in 10 villages of Shirur County, Pune District, Maharashtra State, to promote education and empowerment of rural women and girls.

Armene was selected this year as one of four Echidna Global Scholars by the Center for Universal Education at The Brookings Institution in Washington DC. The visiting fellowship is a competitive program offered to NGO leaders and academics who have substantial experience in working on global education issues in the developing world. Armene's research at Brookings evaluated the impact



of ANK's interventions over the last fifteen years to empower and improve the educational outcomes of adolescent girls in rural areas. Her research also focused on examining changing gender perceptions in the rural communities where ANK works. In her presentation at the Brookings "Girls' Education Research and Policy Symposium: Reaching the most marginalized" on November 8, 2017, Armene projected India as a land of contrasts. Despite considerable strides in girls' education at 98% enrollment at the primary level, there is still a high dropout rate in secondary school in rural India. In ANK's initial years, Armene quickly realized that while major barriers to gender equality were poverty, patriarchy, ignorance and tradition, the basic obstacles to girls' education in rural areas were child marriages and distant schools. Village norms dictated that the female child, on reaching puberty, should be married off. According to a recent UN study, 47% of girls in India married below the age of 18, and the rate of child marriages in Maharashtra was around 35%. Security of travel to distant schools was a major parental concern. Parents unhesitatingly bought bicycles for their sons to access schools, but felt it was an unnecessary expense for daughters.

To address the barrier of distant schools, ANK launched a Bicycle Bank, a low-cost intervention to give rural girls access to school. At the same time, a Life Skills Education (LSE) program was launched to equip girls with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that would help to promote their future well-being and enable them to make informed life choices. A major catalyst for change was the creation of Kishori Mandals (Adolescent Girls' Groups) where taboo topics of menstruation, pregnancy, contraception and sexuality were discussed, along with other health and legal rights issues. The LSE program taught the girls negotiation and decision-making skills by promoting their voice and agency, and encouraging them to see themselves as no different from boys. Amazingly, dropout rates fell as girls resisted early marriage and expressed a desire to pursue higher education. Since there

were genuine monetary impediments, ANK launched a Scholarship Program. With increasing incidents of sexual violence in India, ANK added on a karate program.

Anecdotal evidence seemed to indicate that the various interventions ANK launched at tipping points in adolescent girls' lives, enabled them to dare to dream, to find their wings and become dentists, pharmacists, engineers, IT professionals and join the police force. However, since there was no research to validate this, a quantitative and qualitative study was conducted this spring. Six villages were selected for the study: 3 ANK villages and 3 control villages with a similar socio-economic background. 684 unmarried rural girls aged 13 to 19 were interviewed, as well as 304 girls married in the last five years.

Empirical evidence highlights ANK's success story. Girls' enrolment in schools in ANK villages stands at 90.3% while the drop-out rate is down to 4.5% compared to 6.7% in control villages. 79% girls make it to Grade 12 as compared to 57% in control villages. 92% girls delay marriage and those who marry use their negotiation skills to complete school, enroll in professional courses, pursue a career and generate income. The median age for marriage, which was around 12 and 13, has shown a significant increase to age 19. 30% of girls in ANK villages have engaged in income-generating activities compared to 5.3% in the control villages.



Promoting adolescent girls' education has been transformational; parents have started buying cycles for their daughters realizing the value of education, proving that female education is a catalyst for social change. Armene is now looking to focus on adolescent boys to help change their gender norms including ideas of masculinity and gender equality, thereby hoping to foster attitudinal change and reduce violence against women, proving again that development is multidimensional, not linear.

Nov. 13, was another big day for Armene Modi. She presented her ground-breaking interventions and lessons learned from her NGO experience to the World Bank's Education Teams that work across the globe.

Report prepared by

Zenobia Panthaki is a Resource Management Consultant with Operations Policy and Country Services Vice Presidency at the World Bank. She has completed 33 years with the institution, first as staff and after retiring, as a consultant. She has also co-authored the book, 'Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw - The Man and His Times', with her husband Brig. Behram M Panthaki (Retired).



ADORIAN – ZOROASTRIAN PRAYER HALL CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

Mobed Mehraban Firoozgary

The foundation stone of this "Adorian" was laid on Aug. 13, 1913 ACE, in the presence of Arbab Kaikhosrow Shahrokh, the then President of the Tehran Zartoshti Anjoman, as well as several State dignitaries and many Community members. The building was funded, mainly, by Mr. Bika Bahram (Who, also funded the building of the neighboring High School) and other community members, from Iran and India. It was ready, for use, by Nov. 1917 ACE.

Aburning portion of the Consecrated Fire of the Yazd Atash e Verahram was carried, to this Tehran Adorian, with due strict Religious Rites,

by three Priests with other followers who prayed in unison all along. Their journey, to Tehran, took 20 days; considering that they could not use public transport and had to maintain strict cleanliness all along. They reached Tehran predawn of the Religious Day Azar of month of Azar (Fasli Calendar), of that same year,



فرتور:همایون مهرزاد 🔹 Amordadnews.com

تارنمای خبری زرتشتیان

While this Adorian was being Consecrated with due Prayers and special Religious Rites, Community members joined in prayers and rejoiced over the opportunity of being provided with the Light and Heat of a Holy Fire that they could consider as a Medium for conveying their Prayers to Ahura Mazda, the Almighty God.

The Followers of Prophet Zarathushtra have, always, visualized God as the Ultimate Light and have used the Light and the radiating Flame of a Fire, or other sources of light, as their Prayer Direction. The Adorian Fire is, to a Zartoshti, as a National Flag is to any Nation and, whenever close to it, they gather around and revere it with their Prayers.

Zartoshtis consider the environmental factors Air, Water, Earth and the likes equally Pious and have, by tradition, always endeavored to keep them clean.

In The News

This Building has been registered by the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization.

On Friday November 24th 2017. Azar Roj Azar Mah. the day of the anniversary arrangements had been made that all the Mobeds/ Mobedyars in different parts of Iran perform the same ceremony as we did in Tehran at the stroke of 8.00AM. The Tehran Mobeds and Mobedyars, including the ladies, joined together to pray around the Adrian (Fire Enclosure) to pray the Atash Niyayesh, after the requisites for Kusti prayers and the needed reverences to the Holy Fire. A group of Behdins joined in also with our Prayers.





Around 9.00AM the Behdins were led to be seated in the adjoining Community Hall, and the Priests were then escorted there with rejoicing traditional Daff and singing. After everyone was seated the priests joined in performing a Khushali Jashan in memory of the contributors of the past priests who maintained this Darb e Mehr for 100 years with such devotion so that all those present, Basta Koshtians (Donned with Sadre & Kushti) and all the Good people of the world could benefit in this adorian .

Report by Mobed Mehraban Firoozgary **Photos**

https://www.berasad.com/?p=33070.





In The News











European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

THE MULTIMEDIA YASNA PROJECT IN MUMBAI



Figure 1 The MULTIMEDIA YASNA team at the Dadar Athornam Institute, Mumbai, November 18, 2017. (L-R) Ervad Asphandiyar Dadachanji, Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia, Mandana Seyfeddinipour, Jamie O'Connell, Benedikt Peschl, Leon Goldman, Ervad Adil Bhesania, Remi and Anna Sowa, and Almut Hintze

The Cama Athornan Institute, one of the only two extant priestly schools of the Zoroastrian religion, is home to a fine collection of 60 manuscripts. Its treasures include the Pahlavi manuscript DH, which once belonged to Dastur Hoshang Jamaspji (1833-1908) of Pune. Written in AY 946 = CE 1597 by Marzbān Frēdōn Bahrām Rustam Būndār Šahmardān Dēnyār, who belonged to an illustrious priestly family of the city of Kerman, folios 160–320 of the manuscript survive and provide the text of the Iranian Būndahišn, the Zand ī Wahman Yasn, and Dēnkard books 3, 5, and 9. There are also several manuscripts of the Yasna, Visperad and Vendidad ceremonies dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. Many of them have illustrations showing the ritual precinct. The research team was warmly welcomed by Trustee Camaji Cama

The European Research Council has awarded Professor Almut Hintze (SOAS) an Advanced Investigator Grant of 2.5 million Euros to film and document Zoroastrian priestly education and ritual and to prepare printed text editions of the Avestan Yasna. The project runs from 2016 to 2021 and provides positions for three postdoctoral researchers and three PhD students at SOAS. During November, members of the project team of the Multimedia Yasna (MUYA, http://multimediayasna.wixsite.com/muya) spent three weeks in Mumbai cataloguing and photographing manuscripts at the Cama Athornan Institute in Andheri (CAI) and filming a full performance of a Yasna ceremony at the Dadar Athornan Institute. (DAI)



In The News

and Principal Khushrow Punthakey and spent happy days in the magnificent buildings of the beautiful CAI.

A further highlight was the filming of the performance of the Yasna ritual in the priestly school at Dadar Athornan Institute. Its principal, Dr Ramiyar Karanjia, a member of the MUYA research team, had secured the permission of the Trustees of the DAI to film on its premises within the school's mock ritual precinct $(yazišn g\bar{a}h)$ which is used for instructional purposes and does not involve a consecrated fire.

The priests Ervad Adil Bhesania (sitting) and Ervad Asphandiarji Dadachanji (standing) in photo, below left, patiently performed the ceremony more than once, and the film team, Anna and Remi Sowa of Chouette Films produced a beautiful full-length video with many close-ups and, in addition, a 360 degree virtual reality film that enables the watcher to feel as if they were present at the performance. The film will be provided with sub-titles showing the Avestan words that the priests recite along with an English translation. The video will become freely available online, hopefully in about two years.





Figure 3 The filming of the yasna ceremony at the Dadar Athornan Institute.

The team also conducted and filmed a range of interviews on priestly education and interpretations of the rituals with distinguished priests, including Dasturji JamaspAsa and Dasturji Kotwal, and with alumni of the Cama Athornan Institute, including Peshotan Peer and Burjor Antia. It was a special privilege for the team to experience the life of the

boys at the priestly school in Dadar, and enjoyed many opportunities to talk to them and film their various activities. All the documentation collected will be put together to be used in a third film the team will produce from this visit. This film will be a documentary for the public and provide insights into the Zoroastrian rituals and education, and the place they take in the life of the community.

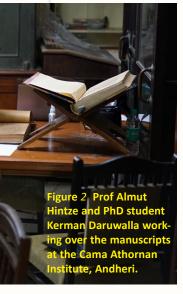


Figure 4 Lunch for the boys at the Dadar Athornan Institute.





oroastrian

PRIESTHOOD AND ITS TRAINING: IN THE MODERN WORLD—PART II

(PART 1 WAS PUBLISHED IN FALL VOL 31 NO 3 PAGE 35-36)

ERVAD JEHAN BAGLI PH.D

Historically, the religion of Asho Zarathosht has survived brutal invasions and the fall of a dynasty. The centuries that followed the Sasanian rule were no exceptions The 21 Zoroastrian volumes of scriptures, compiled by the first Sasanian prelate, Tansar, were all but lost by mid seventh century. Tired and harassed by Islamic rulers, Zoroastrian leaders in Pars province decided the time had come for them to leave the country. The Zoroastrians who set sail to India from Pars, via the Strait of Hormuz in 716 C.E., are called Parsis.

In India, the Parsis continued to privately train their youth for the priesthood under the tutelage of a senior priest. They developed a two-tier system to ordain their priests. The first stage is known as *Navar* (one newly ordained to perform sacred rites), which qualifies a priest-in-training to perform outer liturgical ceremonies. It is only after the second level of priestly training (*Martab*) that a Zoroastrian priest becomes qualified to perform the inner liturgical rituals, which are those that can only be performed within the confines of the sacred spaces in a consecrated Zarathushtrian fire temple. In contrast, outer liturgies are those services that can be performed in a Dar-e-Mehr or within the sacred space created in a house or a hall.

Traditionally, the *Navar* ritual is undertaken by boys from 11 to 14 after having memorized the essential Yasna prayers. While the teaching/learning process of our religion should be initiated at an early age, the decision for priestly commitment must wait until the person is 16 to 18 and must evolve as a gradual, but deliberate choice. Newly ordained young priests are not competent to perform outer liturgical ceremonies unaided, they need the further guidance of senior priests before being permitted to conduct these ceremonies alone.

During the late 15th century, Iranian and Parsi priests initiated dialogues via Parsi emissaries to Iran that lasted for more than three centuries (1478-1778). This exchange revealed some striking differences between the theological comprehensions of the two communities. The focus of the Iranian priesthood was on the Gathic scriptures, where they find their religiosity by following the tenets of Zarathushtra; whereas, the Parsi priesthood regards their rituals as a means to attune with the Divinity and, therein, find the source of their spiritual strength.

By mid 17th century, the rise of affluence and intellect among the Parsi lay community brought a shift in the balance of power of religious authority from the clergy to the laity, leaving the priesthood in a precarious financial position. From this period on, the tendency of priestly families to induce their sons to take up the noble priestly profession were markedly reduced.

Between 1854 and 1923, 4 madressas (schools formed to train Parsi priests) were chartered to produce clergies mainly capable of performing inner and outer liturgical ceremonies with limited knowledge of history and theology of the Faith. However, the lack of a central organization to speak for the priesthood had become acute. To fill this void, an Athornan Mandel (association of Mobeds) was created in 1915 to improve and maintain the general well-being of the priestly community.

The western world's changing socio-cultural ethos will challenge future priests as they attempt to bridge the growing chasm spanning a worldlier society on one side and evolving spiritual notions on the other. In the west, and to some degree globally, advances in biotechnology, coupled with genetic engineering, adds a new dimension to the responsibility of priesthoods in general, and particularly the Zarathushtrian clergy.



Issues, such as organ donation, abortion, euthanasia, use of fetal tissue or stem cells, cloning, and different techniques of procreation will have significant socio-psycho-religious ramifications and will greatly accentuate and accelerate the need for proper priestly guidance.

Today's North American "age of reason" is catalyzing the broadening of the priestly role. The ideal, future Zarathushti priest will play a unique role in guiding and leading the "moral and spiritual consciousness" of the global Zarathushti community.

There is scant value to be had by recruiting a youth into the priesthood whose heart and soul is not in tune with the commitment demanded by important, evolving socio-religious challenges. Presently, the training to prepare a North American youth for ordainment as a priest is done privately using recorded prayers, augmented with priestly mentoring. This approach stresses the rote learning of some prayers and an ability to competently recite others from a book. Imparting the knowledge of history and theology is left entirely to the whims of the teacher and/or parents. A North American youth, ordained as a priest in India, has no knowledge of how to perform even the most common outer liturgical ceremonies of the Navzote or Jashan ceremonies. Without such training, they are priests in name only, unable to satisfy the spiritual needs of the community.

The means currently employed by the North American Mobed Council (NAMC) to broaden the horizon of potential religious leaders is via seminars and publications. After the exodus to India, many religious texts were transliterated and translated from Persian into Indian languages. The North American diaspora has undertaken the task of transliterating many of these prayers into English because younger priests here have little to no knowledge of the Indian languages. NAMC has published a series of four volumes entitled "Understanding and Practice of" various ceremonies.

In North America, in certain areas there are enough priests to adequately cover the spiritul needs of the community, as opposed to areas that have no priests. To address this problem, NAMC instituted a program to train members of the laity as Mobedyars (assistants to a priest) in 1999. NAMC executives developed a curriculum and charged an ordained priest to train interested laity. The program mandates that the layperson, "should have a general knowledge of the meanings of the basic

prayers, and the basic knowledge of History, Doctrines and Traditions of Zarathushtrian religion" and is open to any Zoroastrian (men or women) who has the calling—regardless of if they come from an Athornan (priestly) or Behdin (non-priestly) family. The program has graduated several, NAMC-certified, ordained Mobedyars.

Future priests must learn to cultivate the tolerance and flexibility required to harmonize diverse and competing spiritual needs—it is imperative that tomorrow's Mobeds are imbued with a sense that:

- There is great healing in acknowledging that "mine is not a better way, mine is merely another way" to the same spiritual goal.
- A priest should be able to discern the crux of the tradition from the kernel of the Message. This is not to imply that the crux can be discarded. In fact, they should gradually evolve the ability to rationally evaluate the adequacy of the tradition and attempt to coordinate it with its theological basis.
- A priest must be intellectually capable of imparting the spiritual rationale implicit in the rituals.

In the coming decades, efforts should be directed, in concert with Iranian and Parsi priesthoods, to intertwine and unify the two modes of instruction, to evolve an infrastructure for investiture of young priests in the western world. The past and present generations have done an excellent job to make English translations of the Older and Younger Avestan literature accessible. Future priests must take comparative religion courses to better understand the commonalities (and differences) of the world's religions that are required to conduct successful interfaith discussions and programs. Future priests must also have the knowledge required to deal with contemporary ethical issues, including some exposure to psychology and sociology as they relate to the North American way of life.

To accomplish these goals, an organization must be formed comprised of priests and laypeople, Parsis and Iranians, with sufficient expertise in various disciplines to work in concert and harmony to develop a plan and curriculum. The first task will be to constitute an Advisory Council to formulate the Curriculum for Training of Mobed (CTM). It will manage and obtain



the resources needed to bring teachers and disciples together at suitable locations, at an appropriate frequency, to impart the Global knowledge of the theory and practice of the Zarathushtrian Faith, and to install priestly leadership in North America. As an interim measure, such training should be offered to those ordained priests who wish to further their knowledge and hone their abilities to better serve their community.

This vision and its supporting goals can only happen if the community desires to generate the ecclesiastical infra-structure needed for this new millennium and to furnish the spiritual enlightenment for generations to come. This can be a monumental task.

Today, the world is charged with intense materialistic stress. We need spiritual guidance to recognize and

acknowledge the Divine essence within, which generally escapes humanity and Zarathushtis (in particular). We need Zarthushti priests trained to expound on the harmony of our physical and spiritual selves and to bring into focus the wholeness or oneness (*Haurvatat*) of the Zarathushtrian way of life. One cannot think of a better legacy to leave for the future of zealous Zarathushti community than to bring an insightful and erudite priesthood into reality to enlighten the generations to follow.

May it be so as I say it

Atha Zamyat yatha Afrinami

Ervad Jehan Bagli Ph.D is the past president of the North American Mobeds' Council and President of World Zoroastrian Organization, Canada. He is a retired Distinguished Research Fellow at Wyeth Laboratories



NTERFAITH

MY JOURNEY TOWARDS PRIESTHOOD

Zaal Panthaki

Most of my classmates are amazed when I tell them I'm a priest and that last summer I performed a wedding! To them, the idea of their 16-yearold American friend performing a wedding is unbelievable! The unusual accomplishment that marked my transition from childhood to adulthood was when I was formally ordained as a Zoroastrian priest at the age of Zoroastrianism, which is one 12. of the first monotheistic religions, originated in Persia more than 3500 years ago. Today, there are fewer than 130,000 followers, mostly in India, Iran, and North America.

My ordination ceremony took place in India in December 2010, but my path to becoming a priest started a couple of years earlier in my home. On most weekends, between Boy Scouts, baseball, and homework, I spent several hours learning the ancient Avesta prayers with my dad, also a priest. Finally, after much preparation, I traveled to India to spend 24 days at a spiritual retreat (Zoroastrian temple) in Mumbai. I was apprehensive about the hot weather, the new foods and, especially, being by myself at night, sleeping on a floor mat in the temple. What motivated me was knowing that my three older cousins from Canada had been through this process in tougher conditions, so I knew I could persevere.

My routine for most of the day was to prepare for the ceremony. My dad would visit daily to help me memorize the prayers. I missed my family and friends and, yes, I even missed school. Some days when I reached my limit memorizing, I would just sit and absorb the environment. I would think about where I was and why I was there. I also thought about how generations of young boys from priestly families, including my dad and my grandfather, had gone through similar experiences. I would listen to the interesting sounds around me—the trimming of coconut palm branches, the noisy cawing of crows, the prayers of worshippers next door, and the barking of stray dogs outside. My favorite part of the day was dinner because the cook prepared my favorite dessert, Jell-O, and I was able to watch episodes of my favorite cartoon, Tom and Jerry. These simple comforts felt like home.

After 14 days of being the only priest candidate, I was pleasantly surprised to see another kid, Urvaksh, from New Zealand, join me. Suddenly, the monotony of the routine changed. I had a companion all day and night! We talked about our unique and common experiences; sports, school, activities, and, between hours of learning prayers, we played games like dominos and cards. I was lucky to have found a wonderful friend.

On the 24th day, wearing the white priest robe and cap for the first time, I had my ordination ceremony with my proud family looking on. I was extremely proud of my accomplishment. I left the temple to stay with my extended family, but I would return everyday to



visit my friend, as I knew he would be lonely. I had made a friend for life in this short time and we still send emails and texts even though it has been six years since we last met.

When I returned to my catholic school, my classmates and teachers were curious about my experience and couldn't comprehend how their young classmate could be a priest!

Ever since I returned from this enriching experience, I have been serving my local Zoroastrian community by helping at Sunday school and performing religious services alongside my father. These have included house-warming and community-thanksgiving services, as well as once in a lifetime ceremonies like Navjotes (similar to a bar-mitzvah) and a wedding! I know I will continue to learn new things, whether it is in an explanation of a prayer or an interesting fact about our faith as I continue to serve my community proudly.

Zaal Panthaki is a member of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston Area (ZAGBA). He actively participates in ZAGBA Events. He performs prayers, Jashans and Navjotes alongside his father and other priests in the Boston area. Zaal attends Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) since Fall 2017 to study Electrical Engineering. The essay was written as part of his college application.





UMAN RIGHTS OR FREEDOM OF CHOICE

DARYOUSH JAHANIAN

In 1978, the newly-elected U.S. president, Jimmy Carter, coined and introduced the modern term, "Human Rights." According to which, every individual should have the right to choose his belief, to express his opinion, participate in elections, and, above all, stand equal before the law.

Studying the Gathas reveals that, amazingly, 3,800 years earlier, the perfect concept of "Human Rights" had been presented by Zarathushtra as "Freedom of Choice." According to this notion, in Yasna 31, Zarathushtra declares freedom of belief and conscience, freedom of expression, freedom to choose the leader, and justice for all. One should remember that earlier, in Yasna 30, he had recommended that people are free to choose or reject his message after careful thought by a bright mind—that is, blindly following is not permissible. Now, let us see what he recommended in Yasna 31:

Freedom of belief and religion 31/11: "Since the beginning, when You (The Wise Lord) fashioned the living world, put life in the physical frame, granted conception, intellect, willpower, deed and doctrine, You wished everyone choose religion with full freedom." Zarathushtra always declares that "I have chosen the teachings of Ahura Mazda." Hence, coercive conversion is not permissible. Freedom of expression 31/12: "Therefore, every person whether right or wrong, wise or unwise should announce his belief freely and express in words what is in heart and mind. Wherever doubt exists, one should ask where the two paths lead, and decide in peace and serenity." Choice of leader 31/9-10: "Ahura Mazda is the creator of serenity (peace) and wisdom of mind. He has fashioned and created this world and has granted the living world freedom to choose the right or wrong path, and the good leader or the one who is not good. But between the two, people should choose the leader who is righteous and promotes good thought (wise), and warned against the false leader who has sharp memory and pretends piety (a wolf disguised as a lamb)." It is interesting that in two instances, Zarathushtra mentions wisdom and serenity together. Both are emotional states, one is the election of a leader and the other, the choice of spouse, when he advises his youngest daughter about the choice of husband. In either occasion, if one stays emotional, one can decide wrongly.

Justice for all 31/13-14-15: "The Wise Lord is well aware of thoughts and deeds of everyone in open and in secret, and why sometimes a person for a small sin, pays a heavy price. God knows all and observes with justice.

"Mazda is aware of what has happened in the past and what will happen in the future, what is the reward for the righteous and the punishment for the wrongful and what is their standing when their action is complete.

"I ask, what is the penalty for those who by bad deeds promote the power of false leaders and those who cause division between the faithful and righteous leader."

The spirit of liberty in the Gathas of Zarathushtra is complete; even it is applicable to all aspects of the modern life in the 21st century:

In Yasna 51/1, the ideal society or the Divine Dominion is to be chosen, that is why Zarathushtra calls it *Khshathra Vairya* (chosen dominion), because men and women should be able to choose their ideal society and it should not be forced upon them. In the Dominion, virtuous men and women will use the innate wisdom of their good minds to choose their state's leader (Ahu) and spiritual leader (Ratu), as **separated entities**, based on their respective righteousness. This will ensure that justice will prevail and that the meek and honest who have been oppressed will be rehabilitated. The reward of the Dominion is peace. The chosen Dominion, as foreseen by Zarathushtra 3800 years ago, lays the foundation of modern democracy.

In Yasna 53/3 Zarathushtra, as a father, advises his youngest daughter about the choice of husband: he should



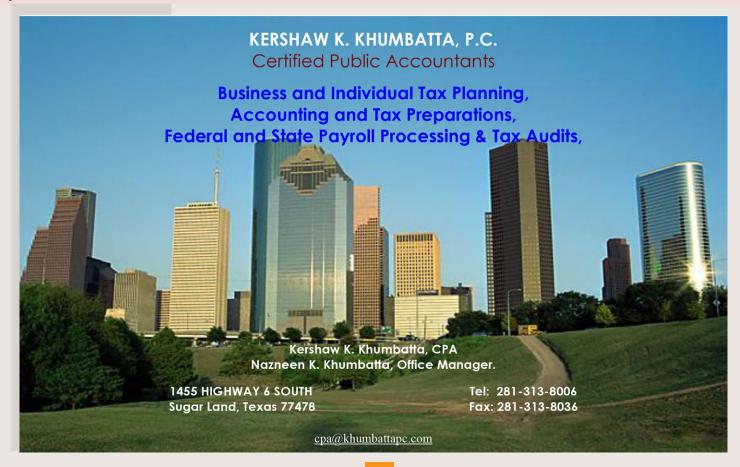
be wise, righteous, and have attained the divine attributes (united with the Wise One), but she is left free to decide. There is no mention of family, class, wealth, or power, only that he should be wise and righteous.

Finally, equal justice for all, respect for human dignity and liberty in Zarathushtra's teachings is so paramount that even God is not imposed on man, because it is man who chooses God, and the best way to choose and worship God is by the conduct of good deeds. **Yasna 53/2**, "So let all strive with thought, word, and deed to satisfy Mazda. Let each one choose to perform good deeds in His true worship."

In conclusion, the concept of freedom of choice by Zarathushtra covers all aspects of life in our modern time. This spirit influences the later Avesta, as every Zoroastrian in daily prayer as well as Yasna 12 (article of the faith) recites: I choose the Mazda worshiping religion, I choose Divine wisdom, I choose good thoughts, I choose good words, and I choose good deeds ... I choose the freedom of passage and dwelling. I praise the good Mazda worshiping religion that teaches the overthrowing of yokes, putting down of weapons, and to be self-reliant.

Freedoms of passage and dwelling and overthrowing yokes by many authors have been interpreted as the prohibition of slavery. Indeed, as the teachings are based on freedom of choice and self-determination, every person is in charge of his path and destiny, and there will be no room for pre-ordained fate, blind obedience, slavery, and coercive conversion.

Daryoush Jahanian, born in Tehran, Iran is one of the founders and first president of the Fravahar Zoroastrian Youth Organization in Tehran and of the Zoroastrian Association of Kansas (ZAKA) and 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 currecutly the president. Dr Jahanian has published articles on the Zoroastrian religion, been a guest speaker at Zoroastrian Congresses and has published a book on The Zoroastrian Doctrine and Biblical Connections





"CREATING GLOBAL AWARENESS OF UN'S SDG-14 GOAL, TO SUPPORT HEALTHY OCEANS"

RUSTOM BHOPTI

June 2017, four FEZANA representatives participated at an NGO, supporting UN Conference on "Sustainable Development Goal-14 that supports the health & viability of our Oceans". At the Preparatory Meeting, Co-Facilitators accepted a suggestion from Rustom Bhopti, to create a public awareness effort as follows:

"PRACTICE WHAT YOU PRAY"

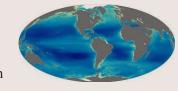
People recite a selection of their respective religion's prayers. He volunteered to obtain a short prayer from each major religion, that relates to maintaining good health and viability of water sources, to support healthy survival of humans and all other life forms. They relate to water in our surroundings – wells, rivers and oceans. He also obtained English translations of these prayers. These short prayers are noted below. This document was shared with all UN conference stakeholders, for general distribution to participating countries on World Ocean Day (8th June, 2017).

Multi-faith statement on importance of Water:

Water is used in ritual washing - "purification" in Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Shinto, Taoism, Judaism, & other religions. Water is also important to the Christian practice of Baptism.

In Judaism, water is used in Mikvah - ritual washing for various purposes.

In Sikhism, water is used to make Amrit, used in Amrit Sanskar, a baptism-like initiation into the Khalsa.



Muslims are required to wash with water, before doing ritual prayers or handling the Qur'an.

Buddhism:

Water flows over these hands. May I use them skillfully to preserve our precious planet.

Zoroastrian:

O waters, you who are productive, and you maternal ones, you with heat that nourishes the needy, you waters rulers of all, we will now address you as the best, and the most beautiful; enjoying far reaching achievements because of your generosity.

We want to facilitate your pleasant distribution, you mother of our life! Ys 38.5





Judaism:

(Blessing on seeing the ocean) Praise are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who has made the great sea.





Islam:

"We made from water every living thing" (Qur'an 21:30).

Water is the primary element that existed

even before the heavens and the earth did:

"And it is He who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and his Throne was upon water". (Qur'an 11:7).

"He sends down saving rain for them when they have lost all hope and spreads abroad His mercy" (Qur'an 25:48).

"And it is He who sends the winds as good tidings before His mercy, and He send down from the sky pure water" [Quran 25:48]

Christianity:

We thank you and praise you, O God, that however we may thirst, whatever we may need to satisfy our souls,

you offer it freely and abundantly in Christ;

So we drink deep of the living water and, as we draw from your wells,

we seek to pass the cup to others who, like us, are thirsty for your grace.

Prayer for Sister Water

We praise and thank You, Lord, for the gift of living water. Guide us to use it wisely, learn from its humility, consume it sparingly,

and protect its purity, so that with St. Francis, we may truly **enjoy water** Amen.

Baha'i:

"The Almighty Lord is the provider of water, and its maker, and hath decreed that it be used to quench man's thirst, but its use is dependent upon His Will.

If it should not be in conformity with His Will, man is afflicted with a thirst which the oceans cannot quench."

Hindu:

Varuna Gayatri Mantra

Om, Let me meditate on the reflection of water, Oh, person of ocean blue, give me higher intellect, And let the God of water illuminate my mind.

Ouote from - Sanskrit SUBHASHITAS

The trees grow fruits for the benefit of others. The cows lactate milk for well-being of others.

The rivers flow for welfare of others.

This human body is meant for helping others.

Sikhism:

Wind is the teacher, Water is the father, and Earth is the great mother. Day and night are the two kind nurturers, and the world plays under them..











Rustom Bhopti retired from active work in 201.7 He is a rational liberal Zoroastrian by faith and practices the Gathas in his day to day work.



EMBASSY OF INDIA IN WASHINGTON DC CELEBRATES 350TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF GURU GOBIND SINGH

Musicians from the Raj Academy Conservatoire (London, England) performed at the Ronald Regan Building and International Trade Centre in Washington, DC on 6 November 2017, to celebrate the 350th Anniversary of the Birth of Guru Gobind Singh, his legacy and his message for humanity.

The legacy of **Guru Gobind Singh**, the 10th Guru of the Sikhs, was celebrated with a memorable offering of sacred music, at the prestigious *Ronald Regan Building* and *International Trade Centre* on 7 November



2017 in the capital of the USA.

The Embassy of India, collaborated with Asian Cultural History Program of the prestigious Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. to mark the 350th birth anniversary of the tenth Sikh Guru.

Preceding the concert, a select group of highly qualified speakers, delved into the history of the Sikhs, and more importantly the message that Guru Gobind Singh, has left, not just for Sikhs, but for all of humanity. *Navtej Sarna*, the Indian Ambassador to the United States a scholar, in his opening remarks, shared, that it was because the message of the Sikh Guru was universal, that the Embassy had chosen the landmark venue so it would resonate in the public square. (photo left)

He has written a book about the Zafer Nameh. -- a letter written in Persian to the Mughal king Aurangzeb, by the Sikh Guru.

The symposium presentations are available on you*tube* for those interested in learning about the contributions of the Sikhs, what they believe, their values and their creed, from the Indian Embassy.

Photo Credit: Embassy of India, Washington DC Conference on 350 years of the legacy of Guru Gobind Singh - Part 1 - YouTube

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=W7aoLpN9Luo

An Evening of Sacred Sikh Music Honouring the Tenth Sikh Guru at the Ronald Reagan Building on November 6, 2017 YouTube

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ftZ-ZLdI794





Zoroastrian Women in Public Square

Telling Others Who We Are.

Sazman-e - Zanaan (women's organization of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc., ZAMWI), were interviewed by TV Asia...at the *Sikh Gurudwara* on Massachusetts Ave NW (Embassy Row) in Washington DC... on 10 September 2017, as part of the annual 911 Unity Walk in the nation's capital.



Left to right: Gulrukh
Gamwalla Khadivi, past
member of the Board of
Trustees, Mina Aidun,
Co-Director, Avesta
Religious Education
Class for children, at the
microphone, and Mojgan
Irandokth Aryaban,
President, Sazman e
Zanaan.

As done every year the Sikh community as part of their call to *seva* (service) to humanity, called a *langar* fed all walkers with a sumptuous vegetarian meal

Zoroastrians find a number of commonalities with the beliefs and practices of the Sikhs: monotheism; gender equality; service for the poor and disadvantaged in society, *sangat*, (meaning carefully choosing the company one keeps of the righteous); self reliance and industriousness; an environmental ethos of caring for air, water, the earth, and all of God's creations; and a strong sense of responsibility of proactively addressing issues of social justice wherever they live.

ZAMWI #knowyourneighbor

Photo Credit: Farzad Aidun, Director of Interfaith Affairs for ZAMWI. https://www.instagram.com/p/BY9uqt0FSEo/?tagged=knowyourneighbor



STRING AND PERCUSSION MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN THE COURTS OF THE SIKH GURUS

RABAB, SARANDA, TAUS, DILRUBA, SARANGI, MARDANG AND JORI

A legacy of India from the 16th and 17th centuries.

Professor Surinder Singh on the **Saranda**, and Principal Ranbir Singh on the **Dilruba**.

Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru, is credited with establishing the tradition of religious music as a divine offering ~ "Gurbani Kirtan". The **Sikh Rabab,** (also called the *Firandia Rabab*, named after the skilled craftsman who carved it), is a plucked instrument with five strings. It accompanied him during his twenty seven years of travel, with his friend, *Bhai Mardana*.

The Holy Book of the Sikhs, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, has 60 *Raags* [Raag means mood], used in recitation of the *Shabads* (sacred verses).

The **Sikh Taus**, is a string instrument played with a bow, a legacy of **Guru Gobind Singh**, the tenth Guru. A master of the Persian language, he named it, after the Peacock (*Taus* is Persian for peacock). The *Taus* is similar to the *Mayuri Veena*, a string instrument in use at that time in Indian history.



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Source: The Raj Academy, London, England (www.rajacademy.com)

Photo Credit The Embassy of India in Washington DC

Report by Behram Pastakia.

The **Dilruba** (Persian for heart-stealer), is a smaller version of the *Taus*, which could be carried on horse back. It is the easiest instrument to learn to play.

The **Sarangi**, said to have been crafted by the great scholar *Ravana* (from the epic of the Ramayana), in praise of the creator, was used in the court of **Guru Hargobind Sahib**, the

sixth Guru, to sing 22 *vaars* (ballads) from the Guru Granth Sahib.

The **Saranda**, was designed by **Guru Arjandev**, the fifth Guru. It was in his court that two musicians, *Satta* and *Balwand*, created a percussion instrument called the **Jori.** (*Jori* means pair). It was made by cutting the **Mardang**, a barrel shaped percussion instrument into half.

The *Jori*, is the precursor of the **Tabla**, well known now in modern music.

A rich cultural heritage from the Court of the Sikh Gurus to Indian Classical musical instruments indeed!

More importantly however, is the message of *Naad Yoga*, the yoga of sound, (also called *Gurbani Kirtan*), which shares a message of love and brotherhood with all of humanity, a message from the *Guru Granth Sahib*, for all of us to learn.



THE PROMISE of INCLUSION, THE POWER of LOVE:

Pursuing Global Understanding, Reconciliation, and Change

The Parliament of the World's Religions was created to cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities and foster their engagement with the world and its guiding institutions to achieve a just, peaceful and sustainable world.

"The solemn charge which the Parliament preaches to all true believers is a return to the primitive unity of the world... The results may be far off, but they are certain." John Henry Barrows, 1893

The 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago, on the shore of Lake Michigan, was the largest and most spectacular event among many other congresses in the World's Columbian Exposition.

The World Congress of Religions marked the first formal gathering of representatives of Eastern and Western spiritual traditions. Today, it is recognized as the birth of formal interreligious dialogue worldwide.

A captivating Hindu monk, Swami Vivekananda mesmerized the 5,000 delegates, greeting them with the words, "Sisters and brothers of America!" This speech, which introduced Hinduism to America is memorized by school children in India to this day. Swami Vivekanada became one of the most forceful and popular speakers although he had never addressed a large audience.

Only 19 women spoke at this Parliament—unprecedented in 1893. The great majority of the religious delegates attending the 1893 Parliament were white men from Judeo-Christian traditions. Very few women were represented

(Annie Besant, the noted Theosophist leader, was one of only a handful of female speakers). Religious leaders from the African traditions were conspicuously absent. Native Americans were marginally present, but only as a sideshow curiosity among the exhibits of the Chicago World's Fair, held concurrently with the Parliament.

Since the historic 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, first held in Chicago, there was a century-long lacuna until this great gathering was reconvened in 1993. Since then, modern Parliaments have attracted participants from more than 200 diverse religious, indigenous, and secular segments and more than 80 nations to its international gatherings in Chicago (1993), Cape Town



Zoroastrian delegation at the 2015 Salt Lake City Parliament of World Religions (L-R) Rohinton Rivetna, Shernaz Minwalla, Homi Gandhi, Behram Pastakia, Firdosh Mehta, Mahrukh Motafram (back), Mobedyar Maneck Bhujwala, Roshan Rivetna, Er Kobad Zarolia, Er Dr Jehan Bagli, and Arzan Wadia.





(1999), Barcelona (2004), Melbourne (2009), and Salt Lake City (2015). These Parliament events are the world's oldest, largest, and most inclusive gatherings of the global interfaith movement.

Zoroastrians have been represented in all Parliaments, both in the opening and closing sessions, in panel discussions, and individual presentations.

Toronto—acclaimed the most diverse city in the world and home to six million Canadians—has been chosen as the 7th Parliament of the World's Religions' host city, to be convened from November 1–7, 2018. More than 10,000 people will participate in the 7-day 2018 Parliament. There will be 500 programs, workshops, and dialogues; alongside music, dance, art and photography exhibitions, and related events presented by the world's religious communities and cultural institutions.

Toronto is also the home of the largest urban concentration of Zarthushtis outside India. This presents a wonderful opportunity to showcase our community and religion in a very positive light. FEZANA will be represented by a team of 25 participants. We are hopeful many more local area and regional Zarthushtis will sign up to make this a memorable event.

All interested attendees are welcomed and encouraged to register and submit a program proposal by March 1, 2018. Program types may include: lecture or oral presentations, academic papers, seminar panel discussions, religious



A Jashan performed at the 2015 Parliament by (L-R) Er Dr Jehan Bagli and Mobedyar Maneck Bhujwala.

or spiritual observances, workshops, training sessions and artistic performance films. They should preferably focus on: the broad critical issues of justice, peace and sustainability; critical constituencies of indigenous peoples; the next generations, and women and girls; and the signature document of the Parliament of the World's Religions, *Declaration Towards a Global Ethic*. Successful programs will be announced by May 1, 2018. Regular programs will be 45, 60, and 90 minutes long.

Each morning there will be a three-hour assembly, during which there will be no other sessions. The assemblies are on indigenous people, women, climate, justice/global ethics, and violence. Major international speakers will be featured daily. Each day will close with a plenary session.

The Parliament will provide a hospitality room where the Zoroastrian community will provide samples of Iranian and Parsi refreshments. There will also be an open space for us to display books, artifacts, and exchange information

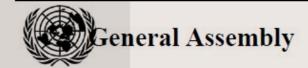
The FEZANA Interfaith committee recognizes that there are many in the diaspora who would like to participate, but are unable to do so for various reasons. We fully understand that issue and, as a result, we have designed a way by which member associations and individual ZARATHUSHTI can participate and contribute remotely. One such way is by participating in a Strategy for Coordinated Community Service that we are planning or, what we also term, the "Season Of Sharing and the Season of Caring," which is detailed in the next article. Once it has been successfully implemented, we plan to collect all the information of the activities carried out by various individuals, associations, and small groups and present it at the Parliament of World Religions Toronto 2018. For more information contact either co-author, Dolly Dastoor (dolly-dastoor@sympatico.ca) or Ardeshir Irani (anirani2@yahoo.com).





United Nations

A/RES/65/5



Distr.: General 23 November 2010

Sixty-fifth session Agenda item 15

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

[without reference to a Main Committee (A/65/L.5 and Add.1)]

65/5. World Interfaith Harmony Week

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 53/243 A and B of 13 September 1999 on the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, 57/6 of 4 November 2002 concerning the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, 58/128 of 19 December 2003 on the promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation, 60/4 of 20 October 2005 on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, 64/14 of 10 November 2009 on the Alliance of Civilizations, 64/81 of 7 December 2009 on the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace, and 64/164 of

18 December 2009 on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief,

Recognizing the imperative need for dialogue among different faiths and religions to enhance mutual understanding, harmony and cooperation among people,

Recalling with appreciation various global, regional and subregional initiatives on mutual understanding and interfaith harmony, including the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, and the initiative "A Common Word",

Recognizing that the moral imperatives of all religions, convictions and beliefs call for peace, tolerance and mutual understanding,

- Reaffirms that mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue constitute important dimensions of a culture of peace;
- Proclaims the first week of February every year the World Interfaith Harmony Week between all religions, faiths and beliefs;
- 3. Encourages all States to support, on a voluntary basis, the spread of the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill in the world's churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other places of worship during that week, based on love of God and love of one's neighbour or on love of the good and love of one's neighbour, each according to their own religious traditions or convictions:
- Requests the Secretary-General to keep the General Assembly informed of the implementation of the present resolution.

34th plenary meeting 20 October 2010



7th Parliament of the World's Religions in Toronto Will Turn to Love and Inclusion to Pursue Understanding, Reconciliation and Change

When in April 2015 a Salt Lake Tribune story broke the news to Utahns that their city would be next to host the world's largest interfaith event later that year, the headline "The Olympics of Religions" seemed an approving message from a paper reminiscing with its readers about the 2002 Winter Olympic Games, a shining moment in Salt Lake's collective memory.

Hosting the global games had inspired Salt Lake into forming an interfaith council that would care for the spiritual needs of visitors from around the world. Just five months before the opening of the Olympics, the events of September 11, 2001 had set explosions off in relations among people within (and with) America. As interfaith services became a kind of emergency response for communities in crisis, this young interfaith group had much to learn, and share, and quickly.



Molly Horan



By 2015, these seasoned interfaith advocates were excited to again open their homes to a new wave of



their homes to a new wave of international guests, and Utahns, including a refreshingly strong show from the Church of Latter Day Saints, geared up to join productive meetings on climate change, terrorism, greed, and women's and Indigenous rights that promised to attract 10,000 people to the 6th Parliament of the World's Religions in 2015.

More than 1000 locals lined up as eager hosts to volunteer, speak, perform at and enjoy the Parliament. Theirs would be an enriching testimony to the power of faiths working together that the global interfaith movement exists to foster and promote. Adding to record-setting attendance, Utahns of multiple faiths and several Indigenous nations helped the



Parliament host the best convening to date—a gathering most respected for its pioneering role in starting the modern interfaith movement at the first World Parliament of Religions in 1893, and for its continued events that have convened more than 50,000 people of faith and conscience, major world leaders, and global institutions to learn how to cooperate in the pursuit of peace, justice, and sustainability.

So, when the opening ceremony of that Parliament concluded on October 15, 2015, it was bewildering that coverage in the *Salt Lake Tribune* would come from a decidedly different angle. Above a panoramic shot of the entire Parliament crowd colorfully filling the front page towered two words in bold capital letters:

"LOVE FEST."

A hippie party?

A description befitting the global interfaith movement in 2015 might mention love, but ideally, with a more resilient, less eye-rolling, *kumbaya* slant. But certainly not what *Urban Dictionary* calls:

"Love Fest: A meeting where people share painful past experiences and make painful confessions while everyone hugs them and tells them it's okay. (like lot's of daytime TV talk shows)"

From agnostic spiritual centers to Jewish Justice Leagues and Zoroastrian associations (and almost every conceivable spiritual tradition in between), people of 200 unique traditions and from 75 countries were together in programs on hundreds of subjects explored through the theme of "Reclaiming the Heart of Our Humanity."

While hugging is rampant, and tears will flow, the love engendered in that crowd would ripple into communities around the world. They came to either expand their worldview or to change the world, or both, and the Parliament would be their catalyst. More than 800 panels, performances, exhibits and keynotes from world-renowned figures from religious and civic life made for a euphoric, life-changing experience that moved people from feeling into action.

125 Years of Movement Building

Articles in *TIME, Forbes, the New York Times, the Guardian,* religious history textbooks, social media entries and documentaries galore will tell a more accurate 125-year story of the Parliament of the World's Religions as the premier convening interfaith gathering in the world where since 1893, giants from many of the world's religious and spiritual communities have given voice to the compatibility of religions to coexist in a world that says religions just cannot get along.

Humanizing and magnetic expressions of his Hindu beliefs and visions of global interfaith harmony shared by Swami Vivekananda at the 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions held at the Chicago World's Fair remain so revered among Indians and religion scholars that his birthday is celebrated as a national holiday.

His legacy, that of other religious leaders, and the Parliament that called them to the United States, are credited for setting a course for interreligious movements that in the 21st century are now increasing influential players in global affairs and serve to bring faiths together in the efforts to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

In South Africa, that looked like President Nelson Mandela crediting interreligious cooperation in a speech to the Parliament for helping overturn apartheid, and in Melbourne, that the Parliament helped accelerate the movement toward reconciliation with aboriginal peoples that included an apology from the Australian Prime Minister.



By the 6th Parliament, Pope Francis had released his Papal Encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si*, and some speakers from the stage for war, greed, and any other subject began to echo each other in offering encouragement and gratitude to the people of religious, spiritual and civic commitments for showing up together to join the fight against climate degradation and to protect the only earth we have.

Next Stop: Toronto

It will be a two-stop return to North America for the Parliament of the World's Religions that is now heading to Toronto for its 7th and most ambitious international convening to date from November 1 - 7, 2018.

At its first-ever gathering in Canada, the Parliament will bring the most religiously and culturally diverse interfaith event to the world's most diverse city at a time when it can powerfully restore hope.

In Toronto, so many immigrants and refugees have been welcomed to live that foreign born residents now number roughly half of the city's total population. Where interfaith groups may number two or three in a mid-size American city, Toronto is home to dozens.

Developing a platform to produce logical, outcomes-based action in forums and workshops, the 2018 Parliament will prominently feature women's, Indigenous Peoples, and next generation leaders on issues of justice, violence and special topics including science and religions.

Moving speeches and performances will be presented in plenary sessions that will call everyone back together, to a place of compassion and openness, to growth, and to connection and back to action.

While the event itself will explore a theme of "The Promise of Inclusion, the Power of Love: Pursuing Global Reconciliation, Understanding, and Change," as an invitational message, it means that people coming together will be encouraged to experiment with new models of power-sharing and accessibility to the forefront of interfaith organizing, spiritual and civic institutions.

Programming around the critical issues and identities will ask participants to draw from the single most universal and greatest force that powers every spiritual community:

LOVE.

The Parliament of the World's Religions is accepting proposals for programs and offers early bird registration rates through March 1, including additional discounts for groups and students. Visit ParliamentOfReligions. org/2018POWR for more information.

Molly Horan is Director of Communications for the Parliament of the World's Religions. She joined the global organization in 2012 coordinating its Faiths Against Hate Campaign, mobilizing action to stem rising hate in the United States through strategic partnerships, producing webinars, events, and creating advocacy media for the interfaith movement. Before delving into social justice work, she trained in media and public affairs with the British Consulate of Chicago, Ireland's Houses of Parliament, Marin Corp. Productions and Tribune Company. She graduated with highest honors from DePaul University in journalism and Irish studies.



INTERFAITH COMMITTEE PROPOSAL FOR COORDINATED COMMUNITY SERVICE

Co Authors: Maneck Bhujwala and Ardeshir Irani

Zoroastrians have a long tradition of community service, charity, and ecology (caring for the environment). Our forefathers were famously charitable—they built schools, hospitals, orphanages, public institutions and dharamsalas, not only for other needy Zoroastrians, but also for members of other communities.

Our prophet, Zarathushtra, was the world's first ecologist; our religion actively preaches the preservation of the elements' (earth, air, fire, and water) purity. In fact, we have festivals to celebrate the elements, e.g. Ava Parab, which celebrates water and Adar Parab, which celebrates fire. The ideals of charity and ecology are as important or even more important in today's world than they were a hundred or even two hundred years ago. Look at the new FEZANA logo—it symbolizes caring for the elements!

There is no denying that our planet is in peril and mankind is at a crossroads. Ever-increasing global conflicts, mass migrations, refugee crises, poverty, and natural disasters like hurricanes, drought, and famine are all taking their toll.

As Zarthushtis, we need to step up to the plate and do our fair share to make this world a better place. And, what better place to start than right in our own communities where we live and work.

Most of us regularly perform community service; however, wouldn't it be truly awesome if Zarthushtis across North America and around the world came together on the same day in acts of service?

Therefore, we propose that FEZANA should organize and launch an annual 2-day event when the entire Zarthushti diaspora can come together in service of mankind and the environment. We plan to roll it out in 2018 and present our combined activities at the next Parliament of World Religions to be held in Toronto November 1–7, 2018.

The first is the "Season of Sharing," which will take

place between September 21st (International Day of Prayer and Peace) and October 2nd (International Day of Non-Violence). This coincides with Mehergan, the festival of harvest and thanksgiving. Meher Yazad symbolizes love and commitment. As part of our celebration of Mehergan, we will organize an activity that involves charity and community service. It could be a food drive (most communities have food drives leading up to Thanksgiving), a fundraising walk or run, or an event at a local food pantry where we could pack food for the needy, work at a soup kitchen, or help out at a retirement community, to name a few.



Volunteers offload 42,000 pounds of potatoes.

A great example of such an activity is the Annual Potato Drop Off that was organized by the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (visit http://zamc.org/2017-zac-potato-drop-off/ for more information).

ZAMC held a community service event to benefit local food banks on Saturday, September 23, 2017. It was organized by the Society of St Andrews (SoSA) (visit http://endhunger.org/ for more information). Over 42,000 pounds of potatoes were driven to the ZAC grounds in a large trailer. About 40 intrepid volunteers had already gathered at the center before the truck rolled in at 9 a.m.

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There were trucks from local food pantries ready to load up. The potatoes were distributed among eight food banks within the area.

The second event would be the "Season of Caring," which would take place between March 21 and April 22. Due to the geographic realities of North America, this event would most likely be done in two segments. The first would take place on or about March 21, when the ground in the southern U.S. (Arizona, Louisiana, Florida, and Texas) is ready to plant trees. As spring flowers don't blossom in the northern U.S. states and southern Canada cities (where many Zoroastrians live), the second segment would be scheduled for late April, perhaps coinciding with Earth Day on April 22.

We can also symbolically link the Season of Caring event to **Rooz E Derekhtkari**, the ancient Iranian day of caring for trees which happens in spring. The activities can include any project aimed at improving the environment like planting trees, cleaning up a park or nature area, or getting involved in a conservation project.

ZAMWI participated in such an interfaith service project, held on Saturday April 16, 2016, which was attended by several Zarthushti families and the newly elected ZAMWI president, Anne Khademian, Ph.D. It was organized by Behram Pastakia through the local VA Medical Center and Casey Trees (see http://www.caseytrees.org).



connecting the Season of Sharing with Mehergan and the Season of Caring with Rooz E Derekhtkari, we can teach our younger generation how our ancestors also had the same lofty ideals that we espouse today. These activities can be organized by the students of the local Zarthushti religion classes. They can be organized to involve the local Zoroastrian community or done as an interfaith event, which would be a great opportunity to educate people of different religious backgrounds about our faith and its principles.

As there are many small groups within FEZANA and individual families or individuals who are not close to any large Zoroastrian communities, we should encourage them to participate as individuals in this effort—<u>Every</u> <u>Zarathushti is empowered to serve</u>.

And what better way to live up to our motto, *Hamazor Hama Asho Bad* (May we all be united in strength and righteousness). We encourage you all to participate and to make the Zarathushti presence felt globally. As Mahatma Gandhi so rightly said about our community, "In numbers, beneath contempt, but in contribution beyond compare."

For more information, please contact Ardeshir Irani (anirani2@yahoo.com), or Maneck Bhujwala (mbhujwala@socal.rr.com).





Jim Woodworth, Director of tree planting from Casey Trees, a local non-profit (www.caseytrees.org), instructed volunteers in safety precautions before the tree planting on the grounds of the VA Hospital in Washington DC. Seventy-three trees were planted on April 16. Breakfast was donated by Shake Shack and lunch was donated by a local pizzeria .Photo Casey Trees Archives, https://www.flickr.com/photos/caseytrees

Dr Behram Pastakia with members of the VA Medical Center Washington DC, Casey Trees and the community with shovels and saplings during a recent tree planting.

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Additional Resources

- Youth Service America annually provides funding resources for activities around Earth Day, Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, etc. (https://ysa.org/act/programs/gysd/)
- Earth Day Network (https://www.earthday. org/)
- Earth Day Action Grants | St. Louis Earth Day (https://stlouisearthday.org/earth-day-actiongrants/)
- 59 Organizations Fighting Food Loss and Waste—Food Tank

(https://foodtank.com/news/2016/07/fighting-foodloss-and-waste/)

 Gleaning and Food Recovery Organizations List (forms.vermontlaw.edu/farmgleaning/ indexnew.cfm?id=cat&&no=5)





Building the Spirit of Entrepreneurship

YAZDI TANTRA GLOBAL VP WZCC TOUR TO USA

COMPILED BY EDUL DAVER, PRESIDENT WZCC GLOBAL

In October 2017 Yazdi Tantra visited USA and made presentations in Houston, TX; New York, NY; Chicago, IL; Sunnyvale, CA; and Los Angeles, CA.

The need to connect is an overwhelming need for life itself and connections enhance the very meaning of our being. This is particularly true of our tiny community which is thinly spread across the world and, perhaps, losing the connections. Today there are probably more Zarathushtis living outside of India than in India. Our future as a community is interlinked with how well we remain connected and be of support to each other.

Yazdi is a firm believer that the internet will help unite the far-flung Zoroastrian community and to that end, he has developed several Zoroastrian Websites. In his talks he gave a brief overview of these websites and how each one of us can utilize them to our advantage, by reviving our connections, and going back to our roots, in terms of religion, culture, and our institutions. We can also connect to the thriving, living diaspora across the world for personal, social and professional connections. Building upon the power of the internet, we should explore the possibilities and opportunities to make it possible for ourselves and also for our future generations.

Yazdi Tantra is a Chartered Accountant by training, Computer Consultant by profession, Entrepreneur Developer by hobby and Trainer in his leisure time. He writes a weekly column for Parsi Times, Mumbai, and a fortnightly column for MoneyLife on Android apps for efficiency at the workplace. He is currently Vice-Chairman of Zoroastrian Co-operative Bank Ltd. and Chairman of the IT Committee. He is also the Global VP and Technical Chair of World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce. And since the last 24 years he runs a medium-sized Computer Company ON-LYNE, developing websites, portals, payment gateways, sales and service of computer hardware.

A brief summary of his visit to each location and the re launch of the Southern California Chapter follows.





HOUSTON CHAPTER Jangoo Mistry

An interesting seminar was presented jointly by the ZAH Library and the Houston Chapter of WZCC on October 13, 2017. Yazdi presented the work he has been engaged in for the benefit of the worldwide Zoroastrian community. He has volunteered countless hours and worked hard to create something of immense and lasting value for all of us. The dwindling numbers of Zoroastrians on the Indian sub-continent and the steady growth of the diaspora which is scattered all over the world. These two factors have created an urgent need for the community to stay connected at the personal, social, and professional levels., With social media and virtual connections being a big part of our lives, the internet presents an effective way to unite and connect. Yazdi recalled the saying of Matthew Lieberman, a famous psychologist at Harvard University: "We are all islands in the sea, separate on the surface, but connected in the deep." With the firm belief that Zoroastrians need to be connected for unity, strength and for our very survival, Yazdi has created numerous web sites that puts incredible amounts of information at our fingertips, whether we are in a city, or in a remote corner of the world. Here's a sample of the websites (the terms Parsi and Zoroastrian are interchangeable. Any one of the two words will take you to the same site):

Zoroastrians.net

This site is a go-to place for anyone seeking news, jobs, community events, recipes, scholarships, songs and videos, prayers and ceremonies, calendars, missing Parsis, and Directories. The site receives over 2.1 million hits as proof of its usefulness. A nifty feature allows you to find the Roj and Mah of any birthday and automatically add that on your Google calendar every year.

TheParsiDirectory.com

A directory of Zoroastrian with more than 81,000 entries is also available as an Android app. You can search for any long-lost friend or relative and get their whereabouts and contact information. Just input either the name, or the location or the profession of the person.

The Parsi Family.com

Connects all Zoroastrians worldwide through a common, single family tree.

TheParsiMatch.com

An online portal dedicated to help the young Z-generation to meet their life partners.

The Parsi Institutions.com

A comprehensive listing of more than 780 community institutions world over.

WZCC.ORG

A meeting place for business people and professionals

NEW YORK by Arnaz Maneckshana

On October 15th, 2017 Yazdi was the featured speaker for the Erach Munshi Memorial lecture as part of the Annual Udvada Fund Raiser. The lecture is a tribute to the late Erach Munshi who helped to found ZAGNY and was himself a distinguished Business Professor.

Yazdi spoke about the web-sites for Zoroastrians Worldwide which was similar in content to the Houston presentation. However, in keeping with the theme of the day he also spoke about "Udvada"





WZCC

then, now, future"

An audience of 70 were impressed and appreciated his pursuit to link the community on a global basis. These websites are not just for our survival but to connect, unite, grow and prosper, they can provide information on any and all types of searches religious, social, educational, professional, business.

The event and lunch was co hosted by Mehru & Lovji Cama and Hanoz & Minaz Munshi. Dariush Jamshidian hosted a dinner at a Persian Restaurant for Yazdi & Thrity Tantra and New York Chapter Committee.

CHICAGO by Jehangir Darukhanawala (WZCC chair, Chicago Chapter)

About 30 persons attended the excellent presentation by Yazdi Tantra on Tuesday, October 17th, at the home of Rohinton and Roshan Rivetna in Hinsdale, IL. For almost 2 hours, Yazdi conducted a strong discussion on the subject of connecting the Zoroastrian community which is now spread to the far corners of the globe. He is a firm believer that the internet will help, and toward that end he has developed numerous Zoroastrian websites.

The report of his presentation at Houston has been meticulously documented by Jangoo Mistry of WZCC – Houston, the Chicago Chapter offers the following addendum: --



- Yazdi emphasized that the success "in bringing the community together" will happen only if we all "*Participate*, *Participate*". The websites developed and supported by Yazdi are valuable tools, that require our participation. He urged that we subscribe by going to Zoroastrians.net, enter our email address and press "Follow".
 - The new WZCC website "wzcc.org", which replaced the old website "wzcc.net" is a powerful tool to publicize the activities being conducted by the various WZCC chapters throughout the world. Each chapter needs to continue to update its part of the website to inform the current members and to attract new members.

Photo by Bomi Damkevala

SUNNYVALE by Bomi Patel

On Sunday October 21, 2017, Mr. Yazdi Tantra, presented a session on "The Need To Connect, and How We Can Do It!". The session was held courtesy of Microsoft Inc. at their Sunnyvale Conference Center.

Though a small gathering, Yazdi's talk was very informative and interesting. A serial innovator and one who exemplifies the idea of tireless social entrepreneurship with his work to bring the community together, Yazdi presented his work on various Zoroastrian web sites, each serving a unique and important need in the Zoroastrian community worldwide.



During his presentation, he regaled the audience with hilarious, yet thought provoking examples of the way the various portals he has built helped serve different needs of the community. For instance, he spoke about the MissingParsi portal and how within 48 hours he was able to connect a person in Pune with his brother who lost his job. Another example, how his work in making available audio recordings of various prayers, monajats and khushali na geet on Zoroastrians. net has helped expose a whole new generation of Zoroastrians to the traditions of the generations that preceded them. There was a lively discussion where he randomly picked on members of the audience and showed them how others in the community who needed to connect, could find them using the Parsi Directory.com. He closed out by talking about the daily Uthamna service that he runs on SMS, WhatsApp and via the Parsi Directory Android App, and many in the audience appreciated the value this service provides - especially to the elderly in the community around the world. A big thank you to Mr. Shiroy Choksey for organizing the event.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA by Cyrus Cama

On October 22, 2017, the Southern California Chapter of the WZCC held an inaugural event hosted by local chapter members and special guest, WZCC Vice President Mr. Yazdi Tantra.

The event started with an introduction by Mr. Kavasji Dadachanji who welcomed the audience of over forty people and introduced Mr Homi Gandhi, president of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA), Mr. Gandhi, gave a brief but extremely informative talk about the WZCC, why it is such an important organization for Zoroastrians worldwide, and how it can be of great benefit to the local Southern California Zoroastrian community Mr Yazdi Tantra, Vice President WZCC spoke at length on "How to Revive Our Connections with Zoroastrians Worldwide.", and how we can and should continue to use technology to strengthen the ties among our thriving but diasporic communities. He showed the audience several community-oriented websites and gave demonstrations on how



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to use many of them. Probably the most intriguing was the section entitled "Missing Parsi," a resource for finding Zoroastrians with whom one may have lost touch. Mr. Tantra's talk was extremely well-received and furthered the cause of the WZCC in southern California.

Mr. Kavasji Dadachanji hosted a dinner in honor of Mr. Tantra's visit at one of southern California's finest Persian restaurants, *Darya* in Costa Mesa, CA.

REVIVAL OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER OF WZCC CYRUS CAMA

Greetings to the already established members and chapters of the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce (WZCC). As the newly-appointed board of the Southern California Chapter, we would like to introduce ourselves to the global WZCC community. We are a relatively young but extremely talented group of individuals and are excited to be working with the WZCC to continually strengthen the business and commercial ties of the Zoroastrian community worldwide.









Faridun Dadachanji, Chair; Neil Spenta, Treasurer, Natasha Torki, Program Chair; Cyrus Cama, General Secretary

Mr Yazdi Tantra's talk and the dinner were huge successes and generated a lot of interest and brought new members in our local chapter

Mr. Cama's brief talk was about the Zoroastrian concept of "Frashokereti" and how it relates to the mission of WZCC. He also emphasized that one of the primary reasons why the new board has revived the local chapter is to use it as a vehicle to help promote Zoroastrian values in business and further increase the prosperity of the community at large. Through networking events, workshops, guest speakers and a multitude of other activities, the Southern California Chapter will work to strengthen business and commercial ties amongst *all* Zoroastrians, regardless of age, profession. WZCC is extremely pleased that the Southern California Chapter has been rejuvenated with a completely Young Adult Team. Congratulations .



WZCC

World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce Global Meet 2017 Bangalore, India

When Dolly Dastoor approached me to write a report of the WZCC Global Meet 2017, I laid my cards on the table and clarified that report writing is not for me. I hope, therefore, that you will find this article more interesting than a report and join me in my journey as I weave my way through the three exciting days of networking, active participation and valuable contributions.

December 14th, 15th & 16th 2017, saw over 120 delegates interact and enjoy the expanse of the Clarks Exotica Resort & Spa in Bangalore, India. We, at the Bangalore Chapter, were delighted at this response, though our motto through all the months of slogging was "numbers matter little…let's give, whoever comes, the best ever Global Meet, they've had so far".

ZARINE KHARAS



The work on this Meet began a year ahead - my diary has a neatly penned in reminder on January 26th 2017 saying "visit to Clarks". It meant many, many meetings with my Committee Members, brainstorming and drawing up plans. The excellent harmony between us, and the enthusiasm and zest of the merry band of volunteers drawn from amongst our Chapter members, was bound to make the Global Meet a success. Of course, one needs to acknowledge the support and assistance of many others; from the hotel management and staff to our community members who helped with the printing and photography to the infrastructure set up and of course to each delegate whose presence there made all the difference.

December 14th saw the first set of delegates check-in, consisting mainly of Directors and Chapter Chairs for the Pre-AGM meeting. Items scheduled for the next day's Annual General Meeting were discussed and fine tuned. An important agenda item was the "Financing Initiative" to help start-ups, professionals as well as grow existing businesses which in turn would uplift and improve the well being of the community. This initiative would be launched jointly with WZOT, represented by Mr.Dinshaw Tamboly, who has already being doing this for smaller projects in the rural areas. The joint effort would widen the range and scope of projects and become one of highlights of this year's objectives. The evening was spent enjoying networking and catching up with old friends through dinner, hosted by the Bangalore & Mumbai Chapters jointly.

For us here, on the organising Committee, December 15th was D-day. Over a hundred delegates would be checking in through the morning so our Reception Committee was set up with their little Diva table, gift bags and document kits, fairly early in the day. The gift bag was a delightful surprise, being filled to the brim with biscuits, chocolates, x'mas cake, wine, a coffee mug and many other give-aways thanks to the many sponsors that came to our aid. The bag itself was tailored by the physically challenged under the auspices of Kinder Trust, run by our community member, Mrs. Diana Bharucha.

The Annual General Meeting began with our Master of Ceremonies, Mr. Shereyar Vakil welcoming the delegates. Shereyar is a much loved & popular member of the Bangalore community, has been a Trustee on the Anjuman for many years and has the gift of the gab. Through the three days he kept the guests entertained whilst being the perfect MC. The Meet was officially opened by the lighting of the diva by our Global President, Mr. Edul Daver and the Bangalore Chapter Chair, Air Chief Marshal Fali Major (Retd.)

All the Office Bearers first presented their reports for the year - Mr. Edul Daver-President, Mr. Yazdi Tantra-Vice-President, Mr. Adi Siganporia - Corporate Secretary and Ms. Katayun Kapadia - Treasurer Two major initiatives were the focus of the AGM, which we expect will be game changers for WZCC long term; -Youth Initiative with the appointment of a Youth Director and their global interaction on Social Media. Financing Initiative to help start ups, grow existing businesses & professionals. Plans include collection of donations worldwide to support businesses and improve the well being of the community, initially in India and gradually long term globally.



The Annual General Meeting - Lighting of the Diva, the Board, the Delegates

It would have been selfish of us Bangaloreans, had we not shared the glorious December weather with our friends who had traveled from all over the world, and so we organised the evening events on the lawns and dined at the poolside. Two speakers of repute addressed the delegates at the start of the evening, followed by entertainment by Sanjay Manaktala, Bangalore's best stand-up comedian.

Dr. Ferzaan Engineer, our first speaker of the evening, is a prominent and well-loved member of the Parsee community in Bangalore, a pharmaceutical scientist and healthcare entrepreneur. A pharmacist by training, he received a PhD in Pharmaceutical Sciences from the University of South Carolina.

He started the international clinical research industry in India and was the Chairman & CEO of Quintiles India from 1997 to 2011. Ferzaan become an independent entrepreneur four years ago and cofounded two companies:

Medwell Ventures offers home healthcare services under the Nightingales brand

Cytecare Hospitals is one of India's only organ-based cancer hospitals and is super-specialized in various surgeries, radiation techniques and chemotherapies. The flagship project was a 150-bed hospital launched a year ago in Bangalore.

Dr. Villoo Morawalla Patell, Founder and current Chairman and Managing Director of the Biotechnology company Avesthagen Limited was our second speaker for the evening.

She obtained her Master of Science degree from the University of Mumbai in Medical Biochemistry and her PhD from IBMP-CNRS, University of Strasbourg, France. The company was founded in 1998 with a long term, strategic model to change the world and make it a better place with affordable healthcare and Environment Adjusted Crops. Dr. Patell is the recipient of many awards and titles. The most important being Charles du Gaulle National Order of Merit, L'officer de Merit, Government of France, awarded by the President of France, Nicholas Sarkozy in 2008.

A most interesting and actively participated Panel Discussion started off Day 3.

The subject read "The Relevance of Zoroastrian Values in Today's Entrepreneurial Environment". Cyrus Dhabhar, a member of the Bangalore Chapter was an excellent moderator, giving the audience food for thought and drawing out

interesting anecdotes from the six panelists from diverse businesses.

Our Speakers obviously held the audience's attention throughout the morning since we continued to have full attendance and actually had to add seats to accommodate the delegates!

Dr. Rashna Writer, who, by training, is a political scientist and has also pursued a parallel career as a political analyst. She



The Panelists (from left to right)
Mrs. Pilloo Aga, Mr. Zerick Dastur,
Mr. Viraf Deboo, Ms. Zaver Divecha,
Mr. Adi Siganporia & Ms. Rokshar Vakharia



The Panelists with Moderator, Cyrus Dhabhar (far right)



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commenced her career as a Research Associate at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London; went on to become a Contributing Editor of the Defense & Foreign Affairs Handbook; Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy. Subsequently, she was Head of Global Risks for a leading strategic risk consultancy in the UK, where she specialised in advising Lloyds of London syndicates specialty insurance underwriters on political risks, war and terrorism risks; as well as being a senior advisor to some major Austrian and German companies. She has authored several books on the Zoroastrian Community and holds a doctorate from the London School of Economics in International Relations. She is also the recipient of several international awards.

Dr. Writer addressed the subject of «Entrepreneurial Social Conscience as a Means of Zoroastrian Self-Preservation" in the hope that her talk will highlight Parsi entrepreneurs who, having acquired wealth, will consider it their duty to re-invest a part of it in the community. In her own words, "this was the genesis of the outstanding Parsi infrastructure that exists to this day. The challenge for today's Zoroastrian entrepreneurs is to assess our current situation and make decisions tailored to our times."

The youngest of our speakers, at 30, was **Ms.Pronita Saxena**, a graduate in Economics, with honours from UC, Berkeley. After earning her degree she worked at MIT's Poverty Action Lab in rural Bangladesh and contributed to several policy papers for the World Bank and IMF at the Center for Global Development in Washington, DC. She moved to India and founded Citizengage, a technology company operating the world's first waste-to-resource platform that channels waste into energy, compost and recycled products. Pronita was recently named one of India's Top Women Entrepreneurs by Cosmopolitan and specialises in creating markets for disruptive technology.









OUR SPEAKERS (from left to right)
Dr. Ferzaan Engineer, Dr. Villoo Morawalla Patell, Dr. Rashna Writer, Ms. Pronita Saxena

Knowing how most eyelids tend to droop post lunch, we scheduled some interactive exercises and drama games for the afternoon. Zerbanoo Gifford, who needs little introduction, along with Adrian Locher, the Artistic Director at the Asha Centre, took the delegates through an interesting, self awareness exercise.

Mrs. Zerbanoo Gifford, is an author, a human rights campaigner and founder of the ASHA Centre, which pioneers youth empowerment in the fields of sustainable development, interfaith dialogue and the arts. She holds the International Woman of the Year Award 2006 for her humanitarian work, which spans fifty years of grassroots and global activism. In 1989, Zerbanoo was presented with the Nehru Centenary Award for her work championing the rights of women, children and minorities. A pioneer for Asian Women in British politics, she made history by being elected as a councillor in Harrow in 1982 and standing for parliament in 1983. Zerbanoo's biography 'An Uncensored Life' by Farida Master is published by Harper Collins.





Mr. Adrian Locher is an actor, voice coach and director of many years' experience. As the Artistic Director of the ASHA Centre, he has run numerous drama-based programmes with young people from all over the world including one play that was created with young South Africans and presented to Nelson Mandela at his home.

The formal evening of the 16th of December, was a glittering gala night and the highlight of the Global Meet.

Young Leah Divecha, 13 years of age, formally opened the evening with a violin recital, playing the first movement of Bach's Concerto No. 1 in A minor followed by a very famous and beautiful piece composed by John Williams specially for the great violinist Itzhak Perlman which is the music for the movie "Schindler's List" but her piano recital of "La Vie en Rose" with vocals, stole everyone's heart.



Air Chief Marshal, Fali Major (Retd), as Chairman of the Bangalore Chapter, gave the Welcome Address, encouraging the youth to strive and achieve great glory for the community and themselves. This was followed by the Global President, Mr. Edul Daver's address and that of Dr. Peter Garland. the Chief Guest for the evening. Dr. Garland is Executive Vice-Chancellor of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education, and it is his hope that



Young LEAH DIVECHA

WZCC and their organisation can work together in the Education field in the months ahead.

Ms. Behroze Daruwalla, as Master of Ceremonies for the WZCC Annual Award Ceremony outlined the basis on which the awardees are selected and introduced each award winner. The 2017 awards were presented as:

For his outstanding contribution, selfless service and extraordinary entrepreneurial

skills, the WZCC 'OUTSTANDING ZARATHUSHTI ENTREPRENEUR AWARD - 2017 was awarded to Mr FEROZE PESHOTAN BHANDARA'.

For his extraordinary devotion in the field of science, medicine & healthcare; his noble pursuit to facilitate & help people in their times of need for medical assistance; and his contribution in developing, setting up & enhancing institutions of medical excellence; the WZCC 'OUTSTANDING ZARATHUSHTI PROFESSIONAL' AWARD -









MC Ms. Behroze Daruwalla and the Award Winners with Chief Guest, Dr. Peter Garland. (from left to right)

Mr. Feroze Bhandara, Dr. Ferzaan Engineer, Mr. Zerick Dastur



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2017, was awarded to Dr FERZAAN NARIMAN ENGINEER.

For his meteoric rise in the legal profession, his selfless service to the community and his unstinted devotion to professional ethics, the WZCC 'OUTSTANDING YOUNG ZARATHUSHTI ENTREPRENEUR/ PROFESSIONAL' AWARD - 2017, was awarded to Mr ZERICK HOSI DASTUR.

Mr. Adi Siganporia, Corporate Secretary, in his Vote of Thanks, called upon the Committee Members and Volunteers of the Bangalore Chapter to take a bow for the meticulous planning and excellent execution of this Meet.

To do justice to an event of this standing, we realised we had to have a thumping finale. As chief event co-ordinator I was given the privilege of doing just that. Earlier on, we had asked all our delegates to fill in small cards stating their "hope for WZCC for the year ahead". During the course of my address to the delegates





I drew upon the symbolism of Fire. When Zoroastrian ideals and values are passed on from generation to generation without interruption we have an eternal flame, one that will endure the passage of time and give us invigorating energy and hope for the future. The "hope" cards were then handed over to Mr. Edul Daver, him being the safe keeper of our hopes as the Global President.

Many favourite songs were requested of our pianist, Ernie, especially flown down from Mumbai for the event, while the delegates mingled, chatted and dined for the rest of the evening.

When I look back at those exciting three days, and the months that preceded the event, I am left with a mix of emotions - Gratitude to the Almighty for keeping the weather in check and ensuring that we didn't

have any hiccups, a wonderful sense of Achievement for an event well appreciated by one and all, Happiness at having made so many friends and Humbled that speakers of such repute offered to be part of our Event. I was truly privileged to have been given the honour of co-ordinating it and will always treasure and value the trust, faith and confidence that my Chairman and fellow Committee Members put in me. In response I say to to them "Ubuntu" - 'I am what I am because of who we all are'.

MILESTONES

BIRTHS

Isabella Rose Irani, a girl to Zubin Irani and Leah Vigneault, granddaughter to Pervin and Jehangir Irani, and Louise Vigneault and Reggie Liboiron in Montreal, on September 2, 2015.

Layla Shetty, a girl, to Niki and Varun Shetty, sister to Zane, granddaughter to Behroze and Sugandh Shetty on April 9, 2017.

Ava Patel, a girl, to Nandini and Zubin Patel, granddaughter to Dolly and Parvez Patel and Minati and late Kailash Chandra Roy on April 14, 2017. (ZANC)

Mars Malundu, a boy, to Kersi and Annie Contractor, grandson to Shazad Contractor and Dorothy McKinney on May 26, 2017. (ZANC)

Rian Juri, a boy, to Dinaz Maia Harmon-Vilms and Mathew Harmon, grandson to Kamal Pavri Vilms and late Juri Vilms and Janet McKenney and MF Harmon in Palo Alto, CA on June 30, 2017.

Yazdaan Dastoor, a boy, to Jennifer and Homyar Dastoor, brother to Nashwan and Kaian, grandson to Hoshang and Bapsy Vaid (San Jose, CA) and Silloo Dastoor (Secunderabad, India) in San Jose, CA on August 2, 2017.

NAVJOTES

Zubin and Zinnia Saher in August 2017. (ZA-Chi)

Ishaan Sarkari, son of Kashmira and grandson of Jal and Roda Sarkari, in Toronto, on October 14, 2017. (ZSO)

WEDDINGS

Zubin Irani, son of Pervin and Jehangir Irani to Leah Vigneault daughter of Louise Vigneult and Reggie Liboiron, in Montreal, January 10, 2015.

Abuzar Zaidi, grandson of Veera Zaidi to **Sarah Humayun**, daughter of Humayun Abbas and Sophia Humayun in California on September 1, 2017. (ZA-Chi)

DEATHS

Rohinton Rustomji Wadia, husband of Pushpa Wadia, father of Delcina Wadia Nigro, brother of Bakhtavar Amaria and Yasmin Iyer in Mumbai, India on June 28, 2017. (ZANC)

Lulu Sohrabji, 84, mother of Sunita, Scherazade, Shireen, grandmother of Geethanjali Chandroth, sister of Roshan Dady Kapadia on July 12, 2017. (ZANC)

Pervez Engineer, 85, brother of Dhun and Rusi Engineer, Roshan Guard, Sheila More in Sacramento, CA on September 17, 2017.

Freny Limki, wife of late Jamshed Limki, sister of Mehroo Dubash, Roshan Sethna, Aban Patel on September 27, 2017. (ZAH-Manashni)

Jerbanu Burjorji Engineer, 101, mother of Rustom Engineer (Sugarland, TX), mother-in-law of Yasmin Engineer, grandmother of Eric and Diana in Mumbai, India on October 2, 2017.

Dinshaw Chinoy, father of Roshan Behramsha, father-in-law of Percy Behramsha, grandfather of Khubyar and Tanaya Behramsha in Secunderabad, India on October 13, 2017. (ZAH-Manashni)

Perin Divecha, 93 years, sister of Mehru c Golwalla (Essex). A Setna (Luton), Farida Meer (Mississauga, Ontario), Rohinton (New market, Ontario)) in Ilford, England, on October 19, 2017

Ruby Savak Majaina, 92, mother of Yasmin Sohrab Mirza (Irvine, CA), Diana Ardeshir Elavia (Irvine, CA), Daisy Hassan Abbas (Houston, TX), grandmother of eight and great grandmother of thirteen in Irvine, CA on October 28, 2017.

Faruk Presswalla, 76, husband of Daisy Presswalla, brother of Cyrus (Toronto, ONT), Zarine Shah, Hilla D'Souza (Austin, TX) on November 1, 2017.

Kaity Boman Dalal, mother of Vera Danesh Dinshaw (Karachi, Pakistan), Yasmin Dalal (Houston, TX), Rashna Ferzad Daroga (Toronto, ONT), grandmother of Nerine and Hormazd Dinshaw and Tanya and Rustom Daroga in Houston, TX on November 1, 2017.

Darius Antia, husband of Hilla Antia, father of Shiraz and Shehriyar, fathr-in-law of Nerina and Zarir, grandfather of Shirin, Dinyar, Azad, Tahmir in NY on November 6, 2017.

Homa Aidun Sohrab, wife of Dinshah Sohrab, mother of Vida, Koorosh Kamkar, Shahram, motherin-law of Ara and Arta, grandmother of Arad, Kamran, Kiana, aunt of Katayoun ZareParsi, Mehrdad, Mina, Farzad, Sohrab Aidun, sister-in-law of Manijeh Aidun in California (CZC-LA)

Dina Wadia, 98, daughter of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, mother of Nusli Wadia, Diana, grandmother of Ness and Jeh in New York. (Zoroastrian News Agency)

Kersi Bhiwandiwalla, 70, husband of Shirin, father of Tim, Connie, Dianna (Aaron), grandchildren Casey, Jacob, Luke, in Maryland, on November 17, 2017.(ZAMWI)

Shernaz Sethna, wife of late Rusi Sethna, mother of Zubin (Tuli) grandmother of Amy, Diana, cousins Lovji, Rohinton, Noshir and Fram Cama in Atlanta, GA, on November 18, 2017 (ZAGNY)

Nari Madon, 87, father of Perin, James and Nina, grandfather of Charles and Tiffany Madon, devoted partner of Nicole Viau Doucet, resident of Montreal, in New Orleans on November 24, 2017.

Obituary



was born in Mumbai to Savaksa and Homai (Kerawala) and had one older sister Behroz. He grew up in Dadar Parsi Colony, Mumbai and attended the Don Bosco High School. He was an active scout in the then 100th Bombay Scout Group (now known as 11th CBDA) in Parsi Colony, Dadar, Mumbai. He was a Senior Sixer in Cubs, a Troop Leader and a Rover. As a Rover, he was one of the team of four Rovers who made a trek through the Himalayas from Kathmandu to Thyangboche in Nepal.

Louad Moshin

He obtained a BSc from Ruia College. He joined the National Cadet Corps (NCC), was a "Non Commissioned Officer" (NCO) in charge of the Maharashtra State 3rd Battalion. After B. Sc., he joined the Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute (VJTI), Mumbai and completed his Mechanical Engineering and an additional year of Electrical

ERVAD NOSHIR SAVAKSA MIRZA

(OCTOBER 13, 1938- SEPTEMBER 13, 2017)

Engineering to obtain a combined mechanical and electrical diploma.

Noshir joined National Steel in Mumbai, then moved to Wanson India in Pune which later became Thermax India. Wanson India was formed in technical licensed collaboration with Wanson Brussels to fabricate automatic packaged boilers in India, a completely new concept for small boilers. Noshir travelled to Wanson Brussels to learn new technology of automatic packaged boilers as well as to Indonesia, Singapore and the Far East. His creativity led to improved version of Wanson boilers made in India. Wanson/Thermax decided to open new market in Canada and in 1976 formed a company Canadian Boilers Ltd. in Mississauga, Ontario.

Married to Putli Damania in 1967, the couple immigrated to Canada in 1976 with their children, Rustom, Aimie and Khurshid settling in Mississauga. Canadian Boilers entrusted him with the development of a steam generator and operations in the Canadian Market. Thermogenicsof Aurora, ON, a competitor of Canadian Boilers, always had an eye on Noshir. When Noshir was available for transition, they immediately offered him a contract with five-year job guarantee to make sure that no other company can match the offer. Thermogenics management and staff kept changing but Noshir continued as he was indispensable, well liked and respected in the organization from top management to bottom apprentice. Even after his recent retirement he was actively involved in developing a high-pressure steam generator for oil field market. He developed a model of the first steam generator which is named after him as "Nosh One" and is on display at Thermogenics in Aurora.

Noshir and Putli loved to be with Nature and in the early '90s, they bought a mobile home in Halliburton, ON. In 1998, they moved to a farm approximately 150 km North of Toronto in Melanthon ON. In spite of being far away from Toronto, Noshir and Putli would be one of the first to be by the bedside of a sick person in a hospital. Noshir loved his pets, (dog, cats, chicken, and geese) and he would sacrifice attending a party or a trip out of town in order to stay at home and feed them.

Noshir was ordained as a Navar from the Dadar Athornan Madressa and he participated in jashans during Gahambars, Muktads, navjotes, weddings and many other religious events. He was past secretary of the North American Mobed Council (NAMC) and attended their annual general meeting (AGM) regularly. Even in inclement weather, he would commute several hours each way to perform the jashans, as long as he was not snowed in and he could open the door of his house and drive out of the long driveway at the farm.

Noshir loved scouting and was eager that the Zoroastrian children should experience the adventures of scouting. With this in mind he helped form the 100th Toronto-First Zoroastrian Scout Group in 1990. Noshir was on the Group Committee as a secretary and later as a Chairperson. He would transport children from Mississauga to the Dar e Mehr if they did not have any transportation and wanted to attend. He wanted to ensure that every kid enjoyed outings, camps and jamborees. Scouter Noshir was a

Obituary

living personification of the "scouting spirit". He also had a nickname of "Pathfinder" when he was in college and true to that name he was a true leader and a "pathfinder" to all scouters

The community has indeed lost a precious gem and a noble and kind person, always greeting everyone with open arms, a hug and a big smile. We are confident that his soul will greet Sarosh, Rashne and Meher Yazatas with wide open arms and a big smile before entering Ahura Mazda's Abode of Endless Light-"Garodemana". May his soul rest in Eternal Peace Amen!!!

Adapted from the obituary in the ZSO newsletter of October 2017 by Fred Mirza

DR. ZINOBIA MADAN

OCTOBER 13, 1962 - OCTOBER 21, 2017



Dr. Zinobia Madan described her life's mission as "impacting human lives by providing meaningful healthcare to patients from all economic backgrounds". This was a vision she lived by unwaveringly until the very end of her life. She passed away peacefully at her residence in Mumbai after valiantly battling Parkinson's disease for nearly a decade. She is survived by her husband Mahiar Madan, daughter Parinaz Madan, and son-in-law Dinyar Patel.

Zinobia born to the Hataria family in Mumbai was the youngest of three siblings. Always a meritorious student, she won numerous awards and scholarships during the course of her school and college life. In recognition of her pioneering work in cardiovascular research, she was awarded a PhD degree by the Mumbai University in 1991. Thereafter, she joined the pharmaceutical industry where she held key leadership positions as Associate Vice President at Wockhardt Ltd. and subsequently as Medical Director at Abbott India Ltd. In a career spanning over two decades in the pharmaceutical industry, she conceptualized and launched a wide spectrum of new drugs, formulated innovative strategies for disease management by using novel therapeutic approaches and conducted a host of clinical research projects. She is credited with carrying out extensive clinical research in the areas of pharmacology, biochemistry and nutrition in India and her research work has been published in numerous prestigious journals.

In acknowledgment of her landmark contributions towards medical sciences in India, Zinobia was awarded the Membership of The National Academy of Medical Sciences and the Fellowship of the International Medical Sciences Academy. As a distinguished expert in nutrition, she was also appointed as the Fellow of the International College of Nutrition.

Zinobia was extremely passionate about employing her research skills towards the betterment of the Parsi community. At the World Zoroastrian Congress held at Dubai in 2009, she presented an informative paper titled "The medical problems concerning the Parsi community". She also played a key role in conceptualizing and launching the "Jiyo Parsi" program announced by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of Parinaz Madan, her daughter.

India aimed at arresting the decline of the rapidly dwindling Parsi population in India. She drafted healthcare proposals, which were instrumental in generating Government approvals and funds for the program.

2010 marked a significant year for Zinobia. She launched ClinOma Healthcare, a Lifestyle Clinic, with the objective of treating lifestyle diseases by using evidence-based primary prevention measures. Under ClinOma's banner, she conducted numerous patient counseling sessions, health camps and patient empowerment lectures. Besides, she fostered partnerships with several pharmaceutical companies collaborations in the fields of medico marketing and clinical research. In 2014, she received two prestigious national awards - the Rajiv Gandhi Excellence Award and the Jewel of India Award for her noteworthy work in the domain of healthcare.

A multifaceted person, Zinobia's interests transcended the realm of science. She was an innovative and accomplished cook and took a keen interest in fashion. She was a dedicated wife, a loving mother, a compassionate social worker and a prolific writer. While we will miss her physical presence dearly, her sterling work ethic, variegated scientific contributions and, above all, her humaneness will serve as her enduring legacy.

Obituary



Iranshah Yozdaathregar Mobed Palanji Pirojshah Dastoor passed away in a tragic rail accident in Mumbai on Shehenshahi Khordad Maah and Raam Roj 1386 YZ – 11/5/2017.

Palanji was born in Tarapore as 9th child of 7 brothers and 4 sisters to Hirabai (Bharda) and Yozdaathregar Mobed Pirojshah Kawasji Dastoor of Iranshah 9 Sanjana Family.

He was miraculously saved from drowning by our Maaghelaa friend Raghunath while swimming in Tarapore sea with his elder brother Naval who did not survive.

Palanji got his Mobedi training at the Dadar Athornan Institute and after Navar, Martab and Saamel in Iranshah, joined our father in our village Tarapore Panthak for many years.

He met his wife Dhun (Taraporewala) in Udvada and they had three children: Navroz,

IN MEMORIAM -

IRANSHAH YOZDAATHREGAR MOBED PALANJI PIROJSHAH DASTOOR

September 21, 1933--November 5, 2017

Maharukh and Kurush. Dhun and Palanji were very active in Tarapore community and Dhun was elected on the Tarapore Panchayat.

Around 1966, our father and Palanji resigned from the Tarapore Panthak and Palanji then became Panthaki of the Bandra Panthaki Agiary and finally the Panthaki of the JD Colaba Agiary in 1975. After 37 years, he finally resigned and moved to Udvada.

Many of our nephews and nieces still remember the Muktad Days at the JD Colaba Agiary under Palanji who helped them and other young Ervads to perform Muktad ceremonies.

Unfortunately, in 1987, after a heart operation, Dhun passed away in ICU due to complications. And his son Navroz who moved to USA passed away in July 1993 in Miami with a massive heart attack. These two very tragic incidents took a heavy toll on Palanji.

He has performed Iranshah Buoy Ceremony every 9 months during our Dastoor Family turn for years. He has trained many a Mobed sons to become Navar and performed the Navar and Martab ceremonies in the Colaba Agiary as well as in Iranshah Atash Behram. Dasturji Hormazdyar Mirza requested his daughter Meher to perform the Navars of her two sons in JD Colaba Agiary under Palanji and not in Iranshah since: "Palanji will do it correctly even in JD Agiary!" He has performed innumerable Navjotes, Navars/Martabs, Weddings and Obsequies. In some families, he has performed Navjote and weddings of the parents, as well as Navjotes and weddings of their children.

Palanji was well known to be the first for anyone needing help. We grew up together in Tarapore and I have many pleasant memories of our childhood. He guided me to help our Humdins when needed. With his help, our Dastoor family has done many projects for our Humdins, one being the Iranshah Buoywalla Mobeds Bangli in front of the Iranshah main entrance within its compound.

When we grew up in Tarapore, there were over 100 families. Now there is only one lady that lives there and a lot of ruined and empty homes. Single handed, Palanji maintained the Vicaji Meherji Tarapur Agiary and Kawasji Mobed Dharamshalla built by Regal Cinema owner Faramji Sidhwa. And on its anniversary on January 26th Palanji has been performing a Gahambar Jashan with lunch for over 200 Humdins each year!

He will be sorely missed by his daughter Maharukh and Khushroo, and his son Kurush, Meher and grandsons Farzaad and Yohan, my sister Dhun and Dinshahji, the



whole Dastoor family, the whole Iranshah nine families, and the whole Parsi community.

May his soul rest in Garo Demana (The House of Songs)!

May the Flame of Fellowship, Love, Charity, and Respect for all burn ever eternal in our hearts so we can do HIS work with humility, diligence, and eternal enthusiasm!

Yatha Jamyaat, Yatha Aafrinaamahi! (May it be so as we wish!)

Love and Tandoorasti, Ervad Soli Dastur.

In Memoriam: Farrokh Jal Vajifdar A scholar and a gentleman

August 24 1939 - November 21 2017



Farrokh Jal Tajildar

was born in Bombay, India, on 24th August 1939 into a high priestly family.

Navjoted at nine, he undertook his initial schooling in Mumbai, and proceeded to London, England at the age of sixteen for his university education where he studied modern languages. He took no interest whatsoever in Zoroastrianism initially, but instead studied and taught modern languages. He converted from Parsiism to Zoroastrianism at age 19, and never ceased studying Indo-Iranian civilizations since. Farrokh specialized in the history, languages, literatures, and religions of Ancient Iran. His writings, translations and

lectures were occasionally broadcast on foreign and national radio and television.

Farrokh was a reluctant midwife to some aspiring Parsi authors, and collaborated with noted non-Zoroastrian scholars on translations, articles and books. He was the co-editor for the commemoration volume 'Mash-a dorun" ("The Fire Within") for the Iranian scholar Jamshid Soroushian, and "Orientalia Romana - 7", essays from the World Zoroastrian Organisation's 1996 London Conference on Zoroastrian Literature. He was also the occasional contributor to the Vohuman.org and CAIS-SOAS websites. Farrokh categorized himself as an independent researcher into Indo-Iranian culture with an abiding interest in the study of Zoroastrianism.

He was a Fellow (and former Vice-President and Fellow-in-Council) of the Royal Asiatic Society, and a review contributor to its Journal.

Farrokh belonged to a rapidly growing group of rational thinkers and educated scholars as he was fluent in the scriptures, written texts, ancient languages and their dialects. His presentations relied on hard evidences, references and quotes from ancient texts, the Gathas, Yasnas, Yashts, Niyaeshes, Rivayats; and various texts spanning a time frame of a 1000 years and also included references from later day research, as opposed to relying on rabid prejudices and misconceived notions based on hearsay which is often mistaken for "tradition". He was a wonderful speaker on religious matters and was a master in lifting the veil on the Gathas in simple language to the delight of the listener. Farrokh never failed to voice his feelings against uninformed priests as lacking in moral rectitude.

Obituar

The intent and purpose of Farrokh's lectures/ talks was to put forth information that was derived through long years of diligent and scholarly analyses and it was for the listener to absorb it, weigh it, and balance it against existing preconceived fallacies and finally arrive at their own conclusion. Farrokh was most certainly not a fanatical preacher raving from the pulpits!

"Zoroastrianism today ... but what of its future?" was Farrokh's earnest plea to the Zoroastrian youth at the two day Seminar & Lecture series on the 5th & 6th of May, 2007 in Auckland, New Zealand, organised by WZO in collaboration with the ZarathushtrianAssociation of New Zealand (ZANZ). The sincerity and passion with which he spoke was missed by none.

Farrokh in his interaction with the Zoroastrian youth through his lectures / talks laid bare the fears and ignorance that generations of gullible people have been susceptible to. He did this by presenting factual history, as opposed to so much of the fiction that unfortunately prevails.

Farrokh always had praise for the high level of awareness and interest and thirst for knowledge, exhibited by the Zoroastrian youth during his lectures / talks.

WZO received constant support from Farrokh Vajifdar who played a central role in organising lectures and seminars and for his scholarly contributions to the Hamazor.

The First Gatha Conference held by WZO in London in 1993 was entirely due to Farrokh's enterprising spirit when for the first time, ten of the world's leading Gatha scholars expounded and debated the Gathas all under one roof. Many such events were central to Farrokh's participation over the years.

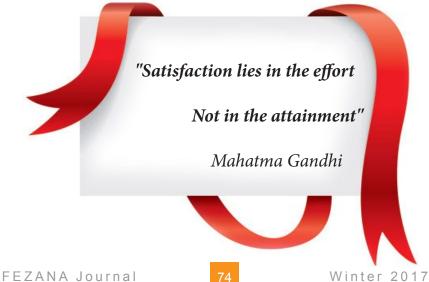
While he was a prolific writer all his life his book on the life of Dadabhai Naoroji (The Twist in the Rope), is a little gem and a must read for every Zoroastrian. This publication was gifted to WZO and played a central role in the fundraising for the N F Cowasjee Medical Benevolent Fund.

The scholarly dissertation presented by the meeting of two great minds, Farrokh Vajifdar and Professor Keykhosrow D Irani on "Conversion in Zoroastrianism" refutes the myth that CONVERSION IS NOT ACCEPTED BY ZOROASTRIANISM and further, that CONVERSION IS BOTH ILLEGAL AND INVALID.

Farrokh frequently participated in the discussions in an advisory capacity in the committee meetings of WZO. He played a great part in motivating the then committee to take a bold step in embracing change in the WZO membership clause and acceptance of non-Zoroastrian spouses and their children. Just about everyone turned to him for guidance and clarity on all religious matters. He never seemed to waiver in providing scholarly guidance to so many around the world, and never sought a penny as recompense. In spite of all his generosity and kindness he was not one to suffer fools gladly. For all this he and his family were vilified in the early years by the orthodox lobby.

Submitted by Shapur Captain, Chairman WZO

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DARIUS E. ANTIA(MAY 10, 1934 – NOVEMBER 6, 2017)

Lewad Dr. Darius Antia

believed in serving others and doing so with an independent spirit.

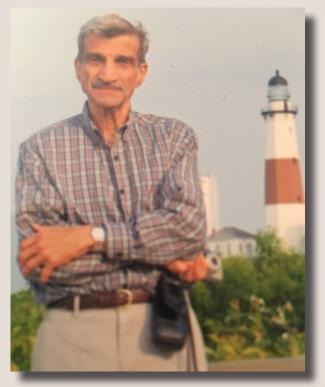
Born in 1934, Darius E. Antia grew up in Bombay with his older brother Faramroze and their parents, Shirinbai and Eruchsha. Their home was the favorite summer destination for extended family and cousins.

After graduating from St. Xavier's College, Darius went to Mahatma Gandhi Medical College in Indore. Several cousins followed suit to pursue medical degrees there as well and they all lived together. This period of youthful exploration in Indore has been the backdrop for countless family tales that are recounted often with great joy and laughter.

Upon graduation from medical school, Darius served as an officer in the Indian Army Medical Corp via the Emergency Commission program. He was assigned to a hospital in Delhi where he tended to wounded soldiers and their families. While off-duty, Darius took full advantage of Delhi's vibrant food culture and indulged his love of Indian sweets.

After leaving the Army, Darius married his wife Hilla in 1967. The newlyweds moved first to New York City and then to Augusta, Georgia for Darius' training in pediatrics and neonatology. The young couple, now with two toddlers of their own, then returned to NYC when Mount Sinai offered Darius a position as an attending. Over three decades at Elmhurst Hospital, Darius mentored and trained scores of resident pediatricians and neonatologists. He would sometimes spend weekends on call and occasionally leave his family in the night to perform a procedure for a premature baby or newborn.

During this time Darius also connected with his spiritual



side. He had been trained as a navar in India, like his father and grandfather; however, he had never practiced as a priest. Encouraged and mentored by other priests in NYC, Darius began to preside over services for Zoroastrians from Boston to Washington to Singapore. Once he began to read about Zoroastrian philosophy and ritual, Darius tapped into a deep passion. He especially enjoyed lengthy discussions with his close friend and mentor Professor Kaikosrov Irani.

Darius had a knack for connecting with people of all ages and backgrounds. This wasn't only his nature – it was a conscious choice he made. Though respectful of tradition and customs, he was not bound by them. He was also mindful not to impose his values or views on others.

Known for his quiet strength and his principles, Darius was also someone who could appreciate a wry comment, belt out Indian movie songs with gusto and relish home cooked Parsi khana. He cherished the joy his children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews brought to his and Hilla's life. He was loved and adored my many and he will be truly missed.

(Written by his son Shehriyar Antia)

THE PARSIS IN INDIA

Delphine Mennant

Volume I (Pages 1-280) and Volume II (Pages 281-445) Reviewed by Dr Ardeshir B Damania (Ph D), University of California, Davies

Enlarged and copiously annotated English translation of Mlle. Delphine Menant's book Les Parsis, histoire des communautés zoroastriennes de l'Inde by M.M. Murzban. Both volumes were published in English by M.M. Murzban and printed at the Modern Printing Works, Madras, India, 1917, with over 200 halftone portraits and illustrations. Reprinted in 1994 by Danai Book Shop, Bombay, in three volumes (can be ordered from Parsiana.com).

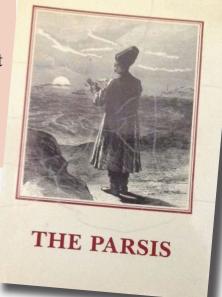


The book Les Parsis published in Paris, France in 1898 in French by Mlle Delphine Menant was largely meant for the western readers of Europe and North America. Later, in the year 1902, Miss Ratanbai Ardeshir Vakil (above), the daughter of a Parsi Bombay solicitor and one of the first lady to be admitted to a graduate course, also posthumously published in London her translated English version of the two books in part. However, she passed away in 1895 at 26 before she could complete the task. But, it was left to M.M. Murzban, a Bombay barrister-at-law, who decided not only to translate Les Parsis into English, but to add a great deal of information to make it more interesting to the Parsis in India and elsewhere. The translated book was published in Madras (now Chennai) during WWI using whatever paper was available to the printer—the war having caused paper shortages. Little is known of Mlle. Delphine Menant, other than her being born in 1850, she remains a mysterious lady; nobody knows anything about where and when she died, most probably in obscurity.

Volume I

Volume I has three chapters: I—The exodus of Parsis from Persia to India; II—Zoroastrians in Persia, that is, the history of the remnants left behind in Persia after the exodus; and III—Population (of Parsis).

Incidentally, a book on the same theme titled *History of the Parsis: their manners, customs, religion, and present position* in two volumes was published by McMillan in London in 1884 authored by Dosabhai Framji Karaka. It was a time when the Parsis in India were at their zenith, enjoying great wealth, pioneering efforts in



industry and trade, as well as culture.

The book *The Parsis In India* gives a detailed account of the reasons for the migration of the Parsis from Persia to India, how they moved from their initial landing at Sanjan, and their struggles as they were repeatedly attacked where they settled in the Hindu kingdom by the Musalmans and their eventual establishment at Navsari and Surat. The account of the Parsis who enlisted in the British army during the Great War 1914-1918 is also given, supplemented with rare photographs of Parsi volunteer soldiers.

At the end of Volume I, a detailed census of the Parsis in the years 1900 to 1911 is given, including listing the population in small villages and towns and various zillas. Interestingly, the census segments the population by males and females. It is revealing to note how Parsis, with their enterprising spirit, settled in small villages in the mofussil* areas of Maharastra, Gujarat, and elsewhere. There was just one solitary Parsi living in Gangtok, Sikkim! The population of Bombay (Mumbai) in 1911 is given as 27,764 males and 24,167 females (totaling 50, 931)—compare that to the population



of Parsis in the great city today, which is just 37,000, according to a quote in the magazine *Parsiana*!

The various charitable funds set up by affluent Parsis for their co-religionists are also listed in detail. Among them is the Bai Hamabai Maneckji Nesserwanji Petit Home for Parsi Widows, where a small room with a tap and common toilet facilities was provided for a rent of eight annas (or half a rupee). It is here that this reviewer's paternal grandmother sought refuge when she arrived in Mumbai from Navsari almost penniless with six young children. There was also, strangely enough, a Nesserwanji Maneckji Petit Fund for the Relief of Insane Poor Parsis, where a monthly stipend of Rs.5 was disbursed to each poor Parsi residing at the Parsi Lunatic Asylum at Colaba. From all the charitable funds listed in the book, we can conclude that the Parsi Sethias did not forget the less fortunate members of their community and did as much as they could for uplifting their lot. No other community in India or abroad has done so much for the poor of their own. A list of charitable donations by the Parsis for each year from 1861 to 1915 is given. The generosity of the Parsis is to be applauded!

Volume II

The second volume contains chapters: IV-Treats of Costumes past and Present (Worn by Parsis); V-Deals with Usages of past and present; and VI-Describes religious and Social Fêtes. The photographs of Parsi men, women, and children in their normal attire from over one hundred years ago is most interesting and revealing. Even during the years following WWII, in towns like Navsari and Surat, young Parsi girls could be seen wearing a round embroidered hat, held in place with a rubber garter below the chin. Parsi men could be

seen wearing a white dagla and a pheta or pugree. The photographs of the luxurious and grand houses of the very successful Parsis, such as Tata, Petit, Readymoney, et al show the greatness and wealth the Parsis had achieved in Mumbai. A Parsi orchestra of ladies and Parsi youth playing western and Indian string instruments can also be seen. The book, through its various and numerous photographs gives us a good sense for the life of a Parsi from the corridors of luxury in Bombay to a well in one of the small Gujarat villages. Parsi cyclists and motorists driving the first cars in India are also depicted.

In the 1880s, it was extremely rare for lady students to attend college as most classes were male-dominated. One morning during early 1886, Mr. Ardeshir F. Vakil, senior partner in one of the leading Bombay law firms in Bombay, brought his two daughters, Meherbai and Ratanbai, to the Wilson College to begin their careers as students of the Bombay University in Science.

The ancient fire-temple at Baku, Azerbaijan, is also discussed. is where a fire, fueled by a naphthafed spring, has burned perpetually for centuries (see FEZANA Vol. 29 No. 3 Fall September 2015). Curiously, as I write these pages I received an email forwarded by a friend in California from one of his Parsi neighbors who visited the fire-temple at Baku. As the story goes, this temple was all but closed, with debris strewn about and the fire extinguished. Former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi requested the Soviets to find the fire-temple and restore it. The Soviets had a hard time finding the fire-temple as people had all but forgotten it. After some search, the fire-temple was located and the debris removed and the interior cleaned. The fire was restarted after the connection to the original naphtha spring was restored. Then, the fire was raised from the floor level to a higher platform and, today, burns splendidly and permanently.

Closing

Unfortunately, the original copy of the book is now out of print and very rare. I was extremely lucky to find a copy (although in a very delicate condition) in the Shields Library of the University of California at Davis and was loaned the books for a whole year. However, the book is available for readers on the internet, thanks to the Hathi Trust who requested the University of Michigan (who has another original) for it and put both volumes on-line at https://catalog. hathitrust.org/Record/000704579.

There is a comprehensive index at the end of Volume II that is most useful. These two volumes are a gem and should find place in all Parsi Alas, the remaining households. original copies are not in good condition. As can be seen, both the set of books, the one at the University of Michigan as well as the one at UC Davis have been attacked by silverfish (I had to go through its pages very carefully). And, it is just as well that the books have been scanned and made available to us on-line for which we are very thankful. So, in conclusion, if any reader wants to know about Parsi history, way of life, religious practices, demographics up to 1915, and other information, please take time to go through these two volumes.

* mofussil (countable and uncountable, plural mofussils) (India) Originally, the regions of India outside the three East India Company capitals of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras; hence, parts of a country outside an urban centre; the regions, rural areas. https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mofussil



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FEZANA Journal will coordinate initial contacts between interested parties. We do not assume any responsibility for verifying credentials. Contact Roshan Rivetna at roshanrivetna@gmail.com.

Female, 25, B.A. in Fashion Merchandising and Designing from Virginia Commonwealth University, working as Market Research Analyst for Fashion Industry in New York. Contact mother <u>farida</u>. aibara@gmail.com. [F17-66].

Female, 27, law graduate, practicing attorney with a reputed law firm in the Washington, DC area. Enjoys travel, outdoors, reading, and cooking and sampling different cuisines. Parents invite correspondence from well-educated, fun-loving, family-oriented professional from a good Zarathushti family. Contact fmistry@hotmail.com. [F17.68]

Female, 27, Graduate in Biology, working as dental hygienist in Canada. Contact <u>aatish9094@gmail.</u> com. [F17-69].

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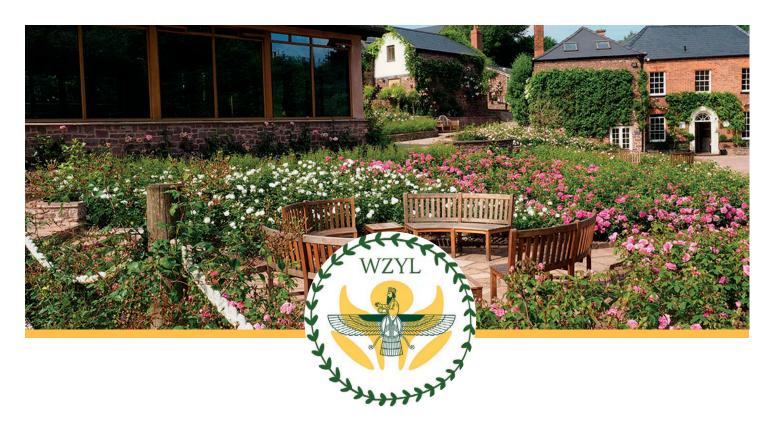
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