

JOURNAL

Mehr–Avan–Adar 1387 AY (Fasli) • Ardebehesht–Khordad–Tir 1388 AY (Shenshai) • Khordad–Tir–Amordad 1388 AY (Kadimi)

YUMALAKTEPA OSSUARY, UZBEKISTAN,
REVEALING ZOROASTRIAN FUNERARY
PRACTICES IN ANCIENT SOGDIANA



ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS



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



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WINTER 2018
PARLIAMENT OF WORLD
RELIGIONS 2018
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Mehrdad Aidun. The ceramic stamped ossuary (a depository of the bones of a deceased) with a removable lid, from the 6 - 7th centuries CE, was discovered in Yumalaktepa, near Shahr-i Sabz, Uzbekistan, in 2012. In the lower right section of the scene, a priest wearing a padam is shown solemnizing a ritual, while holding in his left hand two narrow, long sticks, identified as barsom. The right half of the scene depicts the heavenly judgment at the Chinwad Bridge. The figure holding scales is Rashne, who weighs the good and evil deeds of the deceased, who is shown as a young boy. "Altogether the scene reflects the crucial moment when the soul is questioned and its fate is decided... The left half of the composition is the culmination of the travel of the soul, namely its admission to Paradise. (Berdimuradov, Bogomolov, Daepfen & Khushvaktov, "A New Discovery of Stamped Ossuaries Near Shahr-i Sabz (Uzbekistan)").



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EDITORIAL



The past few months have been devoted to organizing the Zoroastrian participation at the Parliament of World Religions (PWR) Nov 1-7 2018 in Toronto. The first parliament was held in Chicago, September 11-27 1893, the gathering provided one of the first assemblies of individuals from Eastern and Western

religions and spiritual traditions. A hundred years later the Council for a Parliament of World Religions (CPWR) was formed and a centenary parliament in 1993 was again organized in Chicago. Subsequently parliaments have been organized in Cape Town, South Africa (1999); Barcelona, Spain (2004), Melbourne, Australia, (2009) Salt Lake City, USA (2015), and now in Toronto, Canada 2018. In all these parliaments Zoroastrians were very well represented as presenters and participants. At the 1893 event Sir JJ Modi presented a paper, which was read in absentia as he was unable to attend but it is included in the proceedings of the first parliament.

The mission of the Parliament is to cultivate harmony among the world's religions and spiritual communities, fostering their engagement with each other, with all people of good faith, and with the world and its guiding institutions in order to achieve a just, peaceful and sustainable world. The Parliament promotes and addresses the critical issues of today's world.

The 7th Parliament in Toronto whose theme is ***The Promise of Inclusion, the Power of Love: Pursuing Global Understanding, Reconciliation, and Change*** will feature more than 500 programs and events across six major tracks:

- *The Women's Track: The Dignity of Women Across the World's Wisdom Traditions.*
- *Countering War, Hate & Violence Track: Peace and Love.*
- *Climate Action Track: Care for Our Earth, Responsibility for Our Future*
- *The Indigenous Peoples' Track: The Spiritual Evolution of Humanity & Healing Our Mother Earth.*
- *The Next Generations Track: Interfaith Has No Age, Youth Voices for Change.*
- *Justice: Advancing Concrete Change Toward a Just, Peaceful, and Sustainable World.*

We are elected to the Board in our personal capacity not representing any religion but it is not possible to shed the cloak of Zoroastrianism at the door. So my goal was to make the people and the religion as visible as possible as it was at the previous parliaments and even more. And the Community rallied to make that happen. At every opportunity we volunteered.

For Zoroastrian ceremony or Zoroastrian rituals Ervad Tehempton Mirza will perform a "boi" ceremony at the Olympic park with the Indigenous People's Program of PWR. He will also perform the water purification ceremony. Ervad Bagli and Mobedyar Austin will perform a Jashan.

In the Women's Task force from the several names we submitted as major speakers two made the list. Armene Modi accepted the nomination and she will be one of the Major speakers at the Women's Assembly. In a poster for the Dignity and Gender Equality the Zoroastrian religion is prominently displayed. In the list of 1000 women of different religious groups prepared for Wikipedia, Zoroastrian women are prominently featured.

A Universal Declaration against Gender Violence has been prepared and is on the parliament website for all religious communities to sign. Plenary speaker at the opening night is Parisa Khosravi, a Zoroastrian.

But in my opinion the biggest impact we will make as Zoroastrians is in the Sacred Spaces task force.. Excursions to different places of worship in Toronto area was organized with no places of worship of eastern religions. We got the Rustom Guiv Dar e Mehr included as well as the Jain, Sikh, Buddhist, and Muslim Centres. In the display of models of different places of worship there was no model of the Zoroastrian temple. We got that included. The model of the new Dar e mehr of Houston will be displayed. A Zoroastrian Choir will sing the Monajats and the film "On wings of Fire" will be shown.

We have two booths where the best image of Zoroastrians and Fezana will be portrayed. A new video and handouts for the occasion are prepared. There are 16 presentations by Zoroastrians either as individuals or on a panel. We have an amazing community in North America, who rallies round with their best foot forward to project a positive image of the Zoroastrians. Thank you to each and every one of you who is making this happen. And for those of you who may have wanted to attend but could not FEZANA Journal will bring a special issue for our readers.

Rolly Darlton

Homi Gandhi, President



EDITORIAL



Chaiye Hame Zarthosti

Chaiye Hame Zarthosti has long been considered the “anthem” of our community. The lyricist, Firoz Rustomji Batliwalla, was a Parsi and included the lines “*Kayem rahi jalavjo shoobh tooj no jom / Abadi sathe jivjo Parsi kom!*” (“May ye live for ever and glorious fame befall / With perfection ever, O ye Parsis all!”).

Over the years, when the song has been performed at Zoroastrian events in North America, we have replaced the phrase “*Parsi kom*” in this line to “*Zarthosti kom*”. The song celebrates Zoroastrians, and although Parsi Zoroastrians may have been the lyricist’s point of reference, “*our community*” consists of *all* Zoroastrians, not just Parsis.

I am Parsi. I recognize that Parsis made huge contributions to modern India. And I appreciate the contributions of Parsis all over the world today. But over the years, I have learned of other Zoroastrian communities: the Iranians in Iran and in the West, and the Kurds, the Tajiks, the Yazidis and others who, because of the religious freedom finally afforded to them, acknowledge their Zoroastrian faith.

For some time, it was difficult to ascertain the contribution of Iranian Zoroastrians as they remained incognito for centuries. But today it is widely known that Arbab Jamshidi, Keikhosrow Shahrokh, Farhang Mehr, Rustam Guiv, and Zartoshty Brothers are a few of the many Iranian Zoroastrians who have made significant contributions to our community and beyond.

Dr. Farhang Mehr needs no introduction. His contributions are well known.

Arbab Jamshidi introduced modern banking in Iran and was the first Zoroastrian Representative in the Iranian Parliament. Jamshidi was known as the Hatim al-Tai of Iran for his generosity.

Keikhosrow Shahrokh was also a Zoroastrian representative in the Iranian Parliament, who fought for the upliftment of the Zoroastrian community in Iran. He is credited with sparking the Persian nationalist movement during the reign of the Pahlavi dynasty.

Rustam Guiv helped establish many Zoroastrian centers in Australia, Canada, and the United States. And the Zartoshty Brothers’ donation initiated the Department of Zoroastrian Studies at the SOAS in London University.

In future, we will likely hear of the contributions of other Zoroastrians in emerging countries around the world.

It will be a boon to our world when the brilliant, generous Zoroastrians

in our diverse communities come together to do great things! People sometimes are dismayed by our small numbers. But I prefer to think of us as a start up! Just like the individuals who come together to build a new company become a community after a while, so shall it be with the Zoroastrian community worldwide. We will come together - Parsis, Kurds, Persians, Tajiks and more - and work toward the common goal of making the world a better place. Because is there anything that matters more? No difference of language, custom, tradition, ritual, food or dress, should be an obstacle to doing this work.

As our sense of community grows, we will work with purpose and in solidarity. A change to the lyrics of “our” anthem that signals inclusion should be welcomed and adopted as merely a small step toward that unified goal.

Hama Zor; Hama Asho Bade!

May we all be united in Righteousness!

TILL DEATH DO US PART ●

Life is so fragile. It does not matter what age we are, we just lost a young Ervad in our community. When we are young we think we are invincible, we do not think about death even though we know that it is inevitable.

The saying goes that death and taxes are something common to all but there are folks who have never paid taxes. We still have not come across anyone who has successfully avoided death.

For something so certain from the time we are born, we have successfully avoided dealing with the acceptance of it socially, culturally and traditionally.

Why is that so? Is it a self denial process? Why not plan for it? We plan for every major event in our lives, why not plan for death. Why not plan to decide what will be done to our bodies after we are gone, why not donate our organs and other parts of our body to enhance someone's life. Why not add FEZANA Welfare to our will, or any other cause dear to our hearts.

Why not reflect on our lives and think of all that we have gained in our worldly life and plan to give something back to who made us who we are. And when we are making that list do not forget our religion that gave us the ethics and values and the thinking process that has made us who we are.

We have talks on religion, traditions, business, finance, health etc. Why not talk on how to handle the most certain event we will all face and how would we like to handle it.

Plan a celebration of our life, what we got from others so that others can share what they learned from our life.

Besides death, the scarier thing is to be in a helpless situation due to bad health, victim of natural disasters and or financial problems.

We see these situations on a regular basis and that is why we felt the need to include everyone else to reflect on what we have and how fortunate we are to have what we do.

The disruption of life causes so much anguish and stress in different ways and it even changes our personalities at times.

We want to thank all our supporters who value the quality of life as we know it and are always willing to share the burden that others in need are carrying by helping out in different ways.

We are very blessed to be a part of a caring and supporting community.

FEZANA Welfare Committee

Freyaz Shroff



Hosi Mehta



Houtoxi Contractor



ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO (ZAC) HAMAZOR HAMA ASHO BAD

Annual Arbor Day



ZAC held its first **Annual ZAC Arbor Day on Saturday, September 8, 2018** where nearly 50 volunteers came to the ZAC grounds to lend a helping hand in planting new shrubs and other yard work jobs that were necessary as the Ava Project construction finishes up. Coordinated by Zenobia Damania and Persis Driver with the indispensable support of Rohinton Rivetna, the bright, sunny day proved to be a beautiful example of how large tasks can be tackled when many hands work together. In the span of a few hours, the hardworking group, among other things, finished planting 15 new flowering shrubs along the parking lot border, two new juniper shrubs for screening on the East side of the main building, and one new burning bush shrub near the front entrance of the building. The group also prepared the garden bed for the upcoming Festival of Faiths Interfaith rose planting ceremony, and tackled many pruning, weeding and rough grading jobs around the ZAC property. When stomachs began to growl, the volunteer workers were treated to a huge buffet spread, expertly coordinated by Roshan Rivetna, with food donated by volunteers. Many thanks to all the food volunteers including: Arnavaz Barshan, Kiku Engineer, Dilnaaz Rustomji, Persis Guard, Porus Dadabhoy, Dina Darki, Anahita Gonda, Nergish Mehta, Persis Driver, Roshan Rivetna, and Zenobia Damania.

To capitalize on the opportunity, the September ZAC Children's religion class was held on the same morning with great success. The children learned about the elements of the Persian Garden and its connection to Zoroastrian concepts. After class, the children were involved in their own planting projects that day: two new

FEZANA *Update*

container pots were placed at the front door entrance where the ZAC children planted colorful fall annuals, and also the ZAC children planted colorful mums at the foot of the ZAC sign at the driveway entrance.

It was heartening to see how many families took advantage of the day to come and work together in service to our community! Heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers (planting volunteers as well as volunteers who brought food) across



the generations, who helped to make our ZAC a better place. It was a fulfilling experience all around: ZAC grounds got some much-needed TLC and volunteers (hopefully) slept well that evening, knowing they had made a lasting contribution with their community service together

[View the complete ZAC Fall 2018 Arbor Day Report with pictures on the ZAMC website.](#)

[View the ZAC Fall 2018 Arbor Day photo album here.](#)

FIERCE, FEARLESS AND FUNNY

Meet Porus Pavri. He's more than just your average 8th grade Zarathusti from Brookside Middle School in Allendale, New Jersey. He's a 13-year-old ordained Zoroastrian Navar, who has been fighting Hemophilia — a rare chronic bleeding disorder — since he was born, and with nothing but good thoughts, good words, and good deeds.

Children with hemophilia bleed from minor cuts and scrapes, can bleed internally and even minor injuries have serious impact on their health. This tends to impair their ability to engage in the usual childhood games and activities. However Porus has been able to overcome many of these limitations with a maturity usually seen in much older individuals. Despite significant challenges, Porus has already achieved a great deal. "Porus has embraced his situation in life," says his mom, Yasmin Pavri.

Porus decided to follow in his father's footsteps to Zoroastrian priesthood when he came of age. The Priests who assisted Porus throughout his process were very impressed with the intensity, focus and seriousness with which he conducted himself while in Nahan. In the summer of 2016, with the blessings of family, friends and teachers he began his journey to becoming a Navar.





By winter, he was fully initiated and ordained at the Bai Motlibai Wadia Agyari in Mumbai, India. Photo left)

As a family, the Pavris are very grateful to be in the US where they are receiving guidance and support from the New York City Hemophilia Chapter (NYCHC), as well as other families with children suffering from the same disorder as Porus. They have participated in the NYCHC's annual Hemophilia Walk for the past six years, and with the help of family and friends, raised over \$22,000.

"Going through the problem firsthand has made Porus and his sister (Farah) very passionate about the cause which is so dear to our hearts," says Yasmin.

Porus understands that the medicine he receives as a resident of this country, is a privilege he may not have had if they were still living in India or any other underdeveloped nation. He recognizes the difficulties of the children who suffer through the pain, and is devoted to raising awareness and funds for them.

"He hopes that one day he can grow up and be a scientist and find a cure for hemophilia so that no other child has to go through all this pain that almost 400,000 people worldwide, and almost 20,000 people in the US, are going through," says Yasmin.

Through it all, Porus has become a more loving, caring and compassionate individual. His mantra is "live and let live," and he believes that by spreading happiness, it will eventually come back to you.

Porus is a happy child, gracious and generous with his friendship, always courteous in manner and conversation.

"He is so much fun to be around," smiles Yasmin. "He likes to make people laugh and we love that quality of his."

Nawaz Merchant, a friend of the Pavri family says, "As I watched him play with other kids at the ZAGNY picnic in Spruce Run, I had to smile. The gravitas of this little dastoorji was set down for a time, as he squirted the water guns, got wet, smiling, just enjoying being a kid on a lovely summer day."





L to R: Roshini Kapadia Hirjibehedin, Cyrus Hirjibehedin, Nazneen Vimadalal, Zubin Talavia, Pria Antia and Anahita Dastur

On August 25, 2018 at the Zoroastrian Association of the Greater Boston Area (ZAGBA) Shahenshai Navroze function, Cyrus Hirjibehedin was recognized for receiving the 2018 Medal for Scanning Probe Microscopy. This award was given to Cyrus by the Royal Microscopical Society in the United Kingdom for outstanding progress he has made studying materials one atom at a time.

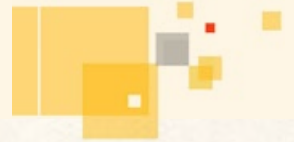
“Atoms and molecules are the basic building blocks of all materials in nature,” said Cyrus. “By using specialized microscopes, we can now ‘see’ individual atoms and molecules on the surface of materials and even build tiny structures on these surfaces atom by atom or molecule by molecule”.

Over the course of his career, Cyrus has helped to pioneer a new set of microscopy techniques that reveal how the environment immediately surrounding a single atom or molecule can be used to control the atom’s electrical and magnetic properties. His research has suggested new ways of interactions between a surface and the atoms and molecules that sit on top of it may be harnessed to create the smallest possible electrical and magnetic devices. In some of his more recent work, he showed that a single molecule can be used to sense magnetic fields, and that a layer of table salt only one atom thick can function as an electrical switch.

Cyrus’s work on atomic-scale microscopy began at the IBM Almaden Research Center and continued at University College London, where he was most recently a Professor of Physics, Chemistry, and Nanotechnology. In the last year, Cyrus has joined MIT’s Lincoln Laboratory as a member of Technical Staff in their Quantum Information and Integrated Nano systems group. He currently lives in the Boston area with his wife Roshini Kapadia Hirjibehedin, and they are active members of the local ZAGBA community. Roshni and Cyrus are also members of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY), where Cyrus is originally from.

Submitted by

Nazneen Vimadalal – Zoroastrian Association of the Greater Boston Area (ZAGBA)



ZOROASTRIAN RELIGION REPRESENTED AT MAYOR'S BREAKFAST OF COMPASSION IN CALIFORNIA USA.



Mayor's Breakfast of Compassion hosted by the city of Laguna Niguel Interfaith council, which was attended by over 200 local people included US senator for CA, Pat Bates, Mayor Elaine Gennawey along with four other mayors of neighboring cities and the world religious leaders. Our religion was very aptly represented by Ervad Zarrir Bhandara.(photo above).

The program started with a welcoming speech by Pastor Monsignor John Urell, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance, "God bless America" by Bob DeCarlo on guitar and prayers and reflections by the world Religious leaders. After which the Mayor Elaine Gennawey and the US Senator Pat Bates cited different examples about how they apply Compassion and Faith in charting and executing different humane policies.

The program was concluded by singing "Let there be Peace on Earth" by Bob DeCarlo with the audience. (Photo right, Ervad Zarrir Bhandara with Mayor Elaine Gennawey.)



Information To Plan Your Attendance At The **WZCC & FEZANA AGM's May 1st- 5th, 2019** **ORLANDO, FL USA REGISTRATION PACKAGE**

HOTEL Wingate By Wyndham Orlando Airport (5750 Hazeltine National Drive, Orlando, FL 32822)

Wingate and Springhill hotel are next to each other within a few feet people can walk over to the event venue.

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEKEND

WZCC GLOBAL IMEETING May 1- 5, 2019

FEZANA MEETING May 3-5 2019

Friday May 3

8:30 AM: FEZANA AGM participants register
9:00 AM: FEZANA AGM Day 01, begins
6:00 PM: FEZANA AGM Day 01, ends

Saturday May 04

9:00 AM: FEZANA AGM Day 02, begins
5:30 PM: FEZANA AGM Day 02, ends

Sunday May 05

9:00 AM: FEZANA AGM Day 03, begins
10:30 AM: FEZANA AGM Concludes

GLOBAL WORKING GROUP

11.00 AM- 6.00 PM.

(BY INVITATION ONLY)

Registration for the WZCC & FEZANA AGM's May 1-5, 2019. is open.

Visit <http://www.wzccandfezanaagm.cf>

The link provide e detailed program including information about special discounted lodging and optional tours including a cruise from May 6-10. 2019 Early bird specials till December 31, 2018. Register now.

It will be a perfect environment to network with 'movers & shakers' from all over the world with cross fertilization of ideas and collaborative Synergy.

The Central Florida Team is working hard to make your visit a memorable and enjoyable event.

4th Annual Kamran Seminar: OFFICIAL RELIGION IN THE ACHAEMENID HEARTLAND: A VIEW FROM PERSEPOLIS

July 14, 2018 at the “Kamran Dar-e-Mehr” in Boyds, Maryland

**A Tribute to Honor Professor Farhang Mehr
by Tahmineh Jamaspian and Dr. Anne Khademian**



From left Dr A Nagel, Shahrzad Goshtasbi; Dr Jamshed Goshtasbi; Dr Zarir Khademian; Mrs Parichehr Naderi Mehr; Prof Wouter Henkelman; Mehraban Manoochehri; Dr Anne Khademian

Professor Wouter Henkelman, Associate Professor at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes (Paris), gave the [4th Annual Kamran Seminar lecture](#) on July 14, 2018 at the Kamran Dar-e Mehr in Boyds, Maryland. Awarded the 4th Kamran Seminar Fellow, Professor Henkelman spoke on the question of the religion of the Achaemenid dynasty. Drawing on years of research with the [Persepolis Fortification Tablets](#) located at the University of Chicago, Professor Henkelman challenged the concept of religious orthodoxy, presenting extensive evidence of Elamite as well as Iranian traditions.

The seminar this year was dedicated to the life and contributions of Professor Farhang Mehr; Mrs. Parichehr Mehr was the guest of honor. A video was shown in tribute to Dr. Farhang Mehr, which was followed by a speech from Mr. Adi Davar on Dr. Mehr's Leadership and his many contributions to the Zoroastrian Community. Dr. Amir Ajami, and Dr. Amir Fardi spoke on Professor Mehr's many contributions to the academic community in Iran. Mrs. Shahrzad Yazdani Goshtasbi and Mrs. Shahin Foroutan also contributed to the commentary on Professor Mehr's many contributions. A round table discussion led by Dr. Alexander Nagel, and Dr. Jamshid Goshtasbi and Mrs. Zenobia Panthaki, offered another opportunity for the audience to ask questions and engage

with Professor Henkelman. The lecture was very well received by the members of the Community. A musical Performance of the “Love Song” from the film, *On Wings of Fire*, lyrics, music and piano accompaniment by Meherji K. Madan, was sung by Yasna Khademian, who also sang “Sang-e-Khara” by Marzieh.

Introduction to the Kamran Seminar: The seminar focuses on independent scholarship and research related to Ancient Iran and Zoroastrian history and culture. The seminar is inspired by a key premise of the Gathas: everyone has a responsibility to seek the truth, to ask critical questions, and to continuously examine our thoughts, words and deeds in light of fairness and equity, and in light of evidence, discussion and reflection. Ushta, or happiness, results from the continuous exercise of Vohu Manna, the good mind in pursuit of Asha, the truth. This focus on the pursuit of truth and the responsibility of each individual for their choices and actions this predates Western liberal philosophy and the evolution of the scientific method. Whether or not the words of Zarathushtra were the inspiration for the Enlightenment and liberal thought is difficult to demonstrate, but the embrace of critical thinking in the quest for truth at the heart of the Zoroastrian faith motivates the effort to think forward. In this spirit, the Kamran Seminar focuses on independent scholarship, research, and critical dialogue regarding Ancient Iran, Zoroastrian beliefs, history, and culture, with the goal of contributing to a vibrant and robust conversation. The seminar aims to explore and inspire our knowledge of the past so we can foster an informed and enlightened future.

Seminar Fellow: Professor Wouter Henkelman, is Associate Professor at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (Paris) where he is responsible for Elamite and Achaemenid studies. His research interest includes Elam and the Elamite language as well as the Achaemenid world in widest sense. Professor Henkelman studied classical philology (specialization-ancient Greek) in Leiden and ancient history (specialization: Achaemenid Languages and Culture) in Utrecht. He obtained his doctoral degree (cum laude) in 2006 at Leiden University with a dissertation entitled “The Other Gods Who Are. Studies in Elamite-Iranian Acculturation Based on the Persepolis Fortification Texts, which was subsequently published by the NINO in the Achaemenid History series (vol. 14. 2008). Following his doctoral research in Leiden, Henkelman held several post-doctoral positions, first at the College de France (Paris), followed by VU University Amsterdam. In both cases his research focused on the Elamite clay tablets from the Persepolis Fortification Archives. Since 2006 Henkelman is formally charged by the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago with the publication of some 3000 of these tablets. In 2012 the same research led to his election as Alexander von Humboldt Advanced Research Fellow at Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Berlin. Prior to and parallel to his Paris teaching appointment, Henkelman taught at the ancient history department of Utrecht University (1995-2000) and the ancient studies department of VU University (2002-2011) and held a guest professorship at the Leopold-Franzens Universität of Innsbruck (2010). Since 2013 he annually offers three intensive classes in Tehran, at the Institute for the Great Encyclopaedia of Islam. Henkelman has initiated and coordinates the International Bisotun Project aimed at a new synoptic edition of the inscriptions and relief of Darius the Great at the rock of Bisotun (Kermanshah, Iran).

The Kamran Seminar is organized by Morvarid Behziz, Mehraban Manoochehri, Dr. Zarir Khademian, and Dr. Anne Khademian. Special thanks to the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, Inc. (ZAMWI) Board for supporting the Seminar. Also appreciation to volunteers Shahrzad and Jamshid Goshtasbi, Parisa Mazdeyasni, Mojgan Ariaban, Mahnaz Marolia, Feroz Campbell, and William Hanff.



**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON IRANIAN DIASPORA STUDIES
SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY | MARCH 28-30, 2019**

**Contemporary Art of the Iranian Diaspora
Two Art Exhibitions Concurrent with the Conference:**

Part and Parcel

San Francisco Arts Commission Gallery
January 25 - March 30, 2019
Closing reception: Thursday March 28, 2019
www.sfartscommission.org

Once at Present

Minnesota Street Project
March 29 - April 21, 2019
Opening reception: Saturday March 30, 2019
minnesotastreetproject.com

cids.sfsu.edu/conference

The Center for Iranian Diaspora Studies at San Francisco State University is the first and only academic institution of its kind – dedicated to research and teaching about the historical and cultural experiences of the global Iranian diaspora.



CENTER for
**IRANIAN
DIASPORA
STUDIES**

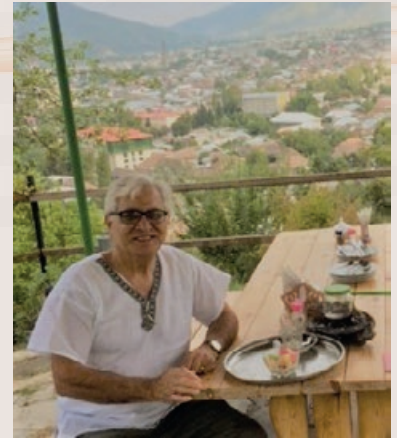
A JOURNEY TO A LAND OF

Airyana Vaeja

KERSI B. SHROFF

Derwood, Maryland, USA

Five North American travelers, lured by reports of many archaeological sites relating to Zoroastrianism in Uzbekistan, were thrilled to tour several rugged sites in September 2017. Though having achieved independence only recently, Uzbekistan has a rich history; its borders include the ancient regions of Chorasmia and Sogdiana. These are among the lands mentioned in Avestan texts as being part of *Airyana Vaeja*—the lands decreed by Ahura Mazda. Historically, these regions had close relations with the Persian Empire (during the Achaemenian, Parthian, and Sasanian periods) and Kushan Empire.



NUKUS, KARAKALPAKSTAN

After a four-hour flight from Tashkent, our tour started in Nukus, a remote town and capital of the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan, located in the northwestern portion of Uzbekistan. The highlight of the visit was meeting Professor Alison Betts, Professor of Silk Road Studies, University of Sydney, Australia, and her team (the Karakalpak-Australian Expedition), at two important sites: Akchakhan-kala, and Tash-k'irman-tepe. Among the archeological findings at the former, according to Dr. Michel Minardi, an Italian archaeologist member of the team, are “massive six-meter-high murals of Avestan gods decorating the royal ceremonial centre of Akchakhan-kala in Chorasmia [that] provide evidence of early formal Zoroastrian practices.”

Professor Betts is the Chief Investigator of a financial grant made by the Australian Research Council on “Shifting the Foundations of Zoroastrian History: A Fresh Focus on Chorasmia”. The other Principal Investigators are Frantz Grenet, dr Michele Mirandi, and Dr Makaset Karylybaeve.

A large mural, thought to be of Srôasha, was recovered at Akchakhan-kala; the figure is portrayed in right profile and wears a crown and an *akinake* (short sword), which is tied to his right thigh. In the foreground, a broad panel contains smaller panels with images of two opposing human-headed roosters wearing masks (possibly designating them as Zoroastrian priests holding a *barsom*, a bundle of twigs used in ceremonies). It is acknowledged that the use of imagery in Central Asian Zoroastrianism sets it apart from the reformed iconoclastic practices in Sasanian Iran. Prof Betts has reported that the Akchakhan-Kala fortress also housed a Fire Altar Complex and a “burning doorway” lined with fires.

At Tash-k'irman-tepe the archaeological team excavated a temple that was in operation until the 3rd century CE. It stood on a platform about 100 meters long and 30–50 meters wide and was comprised of several rooms and corridors. Some of the rooms contained thick layers of ash and several altars were attached to the walls. At the structure's center was a room that contained a fire altar; this part of the complex was probably abandoned as there were no signs of violence and the temple was methodically filled with mud bricks to the roof.

At the Expedition's housing and laboratory building, we learned that Dr. Michel Minardi, had recently located an ossuary necropolis in the nearby Sultan-uiz-dag hills and excavated one of the ossuaries holding the remains of a juvenile. Ossuaries, also known as *astōdān* (Persian: *sotōdān*), are generally made of clay. Ossuaries found in Sogdiana since the 5th century CE generally have engravings depicting the Amesha



Srôasha mural at Akchakhankala

Spentas and other Zoroastrian beliefs, which may not be the case for ossuaries from earlier periods in Chorasmia.

Recently, Dr. Minardi informed us that he found eleven additional ossuaries that contain the remains of one to four persons. It is important to note, he states, that all these skeletons, are incomplete and bear the signs of de-fleshing.

ADAR FARNBAG AND OTHER KALAS (FORTRESSES)

Before departing from Akchakhan-kala, we expressed our interest to Dr. Betts' team regarding one of the four Great Fires revered by Zoroastrians, *Adar Farnbag* (Fire of the Priests), which was first enthroned on Mount Gadmand-Homand in Chorasmia. We were pointed to the same Sultan-uiz-dag hills where the ossuary with the remains of a juvenile was found. Our map of nearby archaeological sites proximal to the Amu Darya River showed Ayaz-kala, Toprak-kala, Koy-krylgan-kala, and others having some Zoroastrianism-related features.

Koy-krylgan-kala is reported to have had a fire temple decorated with frescoes depicting wine consumption. The interpretation of the site is debated, as the Soviets considered it to be a mausoleum and an astronomical observatory, which is doubted by Dr. Minardi. The population is thought to have been Zoroastrian because they revered Anahita, the protectress of waters and rivers, and Siyavus, the divinity of the sun. Ossuaries found here probably date to the 8th century CE, of which the pioneering archaeologist of the region, Sergey Tolstov, had no doubt they belonged to Zoroastrians.

As we left the area, a glance back at the Sultan-uiz-dag hills made us wonder of what must have been a glorious ancient enthronement of Adar Farnbag. Our thoughts were soon overtaken by the sight of a great *Dakhma* in Chil'pyk, over 40 kilometers from Nukus, that presented further evidence of traditional Zoroastrian practices. The Chil'pyk *Dakhma* is a round roofless tower 15 meters high and sixty-five meters in diameter. At one time, there may have been a 20-meter staircase cut into the hill, and at the base there was a passage leading to a river. Many ossuaries were found on the slopes of the walls outside the *Dakhma*.

Dr. Minardi's comparison of the Chil'pyk *Dakhma* to the dakhmas in Yazd, Iran, and Mumbai, India, bears mention. Inside Chil'pyk, he states, it is still possible to notice the radial spaces used to lay the dead bodies for their excarnation but, contrary to the Iranian and Parsi dakhmas, Chil'pyk has no central shaft to house the bones for the final part of the "evil neutralization process." He believes the human skeletal remains in Chil'pyk were collected from where they were originally lying and placed in ossuaries.



At Chil'pyk Dakhma, from left, Mehrdad S. Aidun, Jonnybeck (Uzbek Guide), Ervad Kobad Zarolia, Kersi B. Shroff, Professor Alison Betts, Homi D. Gandhi, Fereydoon Keshavarz

KHIVA, KHOREZM

Our next stop was the ancient city of Khiva, one of three "must visit" places in Uzbekistan—the others being Bukhara and Samarkand. We had lunch at a Chai-khana where the owner demonstrated nan baking on a tanur oven, where the dough was impressed with a metal stamp symbolizing the sun.

We slept in a traditional yurt erected on the steppes near Ayaz-kala. Made of wood, leather, felt, and reed, yurts historically provided transportable housing for Central Asian nomads who could assemble and disassemble them at any place to spend the night. The interior was furnished with thick cotton mattresses and blankets that we used as seats for dining and for sleeping. It was easy for us to envision ourselves transported back in time as a caravan of camels camped near our yurts and the dazzling night sky gave us a taste of the traditional nomadic life as it once was.



Dr. Michele Mirandi,
Italian Archaeologist

BUKHARA, SAMARKAND, AND VARAKSHA

Taking the road to Bukhara marked our entry into ancient Sogdiana (spread across Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) and the storied Silk Road. The Sogdian language (an Eastern Iranian language) was the *lingua franca* of trade. The Sogdians brought Manichaeism, Nestorian Christianity, and Zoroastrianism, albeit a largely unknown local form, with them.

We stood in awe at Bukhara's "holiest spot," the Magokhi-Attar Mosque, under which archaeologists have found fragments from a 5th century CE fire temple and a Buddhist monastery, which were destroyed by the invading Arabs. The same is true for the 8th century Hazrat-Hizr Mosque in Samarkand, thought to be the oldest in Central Asia, which was built over a Zoroastrian temple.

In Samarkand (formerly Marakanda), the capital of Sogdiana, there is an ancient citadel, now recognized as the sacred fortress of Kangdiz. Firdausi's Shah Nameh tells us that it was built by the legendary Siavush. A book on the "Historical Monuments of Uzbekistan" notes: "1200 chapters of a holy book of Avesta" were "written down on gold plates." Ancient chronicles mention that Marakanda was destroyed by Alexander of Macedonia. Samarkand rose again during the 4th -8th centuries when the Silk Road became an important trade route.

In the company of Dr. Jamal Mirzaakhmedov, the Co-Director of the Bukhara Archaeological Expedition, we visited Varaksha in the Bukhara oasis. This was a city abandoned in the 9th century, it had high towers and a palace with many rooms. The reception rooms were decorated with murals, one of which depicted the saga of Rustam and Sohrab. In the Palace of Togshada, a Bukharan Prince, there was a painting of a royal couple performing a Zoroastrian fire ceremony. Although historical sources claim that Togshada, had converted to Islam, the conversion was only part of a political deal and that, in secret, he kept practicing the Sogdian form of Zoroastrianism. It is also known that Togshada was murdered at Varaksha in 782 CE and was buried according to the local version of Zoroastrian rites.

PAIKEND

Dr. Mirzaakhmedov also accompanied us to Paikend, the site of a fire temple, whose construction is attributed to the legendary Persian King Faridun. On top of a hill, we traced the contours of the fire temple from the drawings of floor plans published in Grigori L. Semenov's "Studies in Oriental Religions." The ancient artifacts found in Paikend are on display at a local museum.



Dr. Jamal Mirzaakhmedov 1

SHAHRISABZ

Shahrisabz is the birthplace of Tamerlane, who is very highly regarded in Uzbekistan as *Amir Temur* (Great Temur) who forged an empire extending from India to the Mediterranean. There is a huge Amir Temur monument close to the old Chubin madrasah, restored in 1996 and turned into the Shahrisabz museum of history. Dr. Khushvaktov welcomed us at the museum and discussed the ossuaries found in archaeological expeditions around the Shahrisabz area; many of which were illustrated with scenes from the Avesta (left and cover page). The next day Dr. Khushvaktov accompanied us on a wild ride in Russian-made, four-wheel drive rattletraps to a remote mountainous area that had a building that appeared to be a small family *dakhma*. He explained it was the custom in bygone times to carry deceased family members to their last resting place high in the mountains.



Sectional view of the ossuaries especially displayed by Dr. Nabi Khushvaktov, Director, Museum of History, Shahrisabz, Uzbekistan.

ONCE MORE IN TASHKENT

Upon our return to Tashkent, we explored the History Museum of the People of Uzbekistan, where there are many Zoroastrian artefacts, including several ossuaries and a drawing showing a dakhma from the Kaphirkala Samarkand region. Outstanding was a 1st century BC–1st century CE ossuary from Koy-krylgan, with a lid in the shape of a sitting woman (below right).

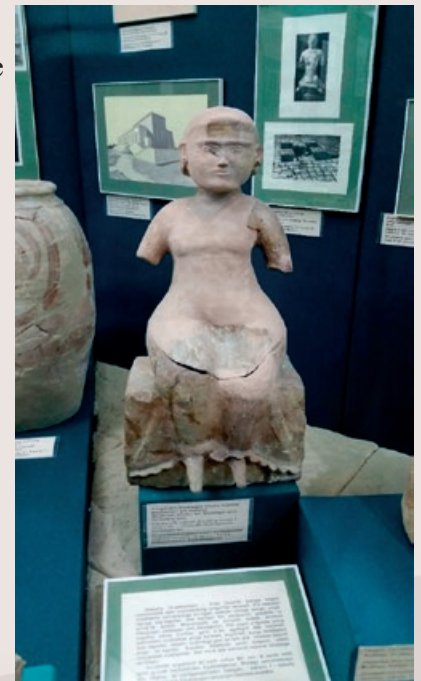
Other items on display at the museum (below) are: “Objects of fulfillment ceremonies of Zoroastrism [sic]. 1–4 century. Tashkent region”. They are not comparable to the modern ceremonial implements but may have some relation to the hoama ceremony.

early history of Zoroastrianism extends a long way into the little known “stans” of Central Asia. We hope this snapshot will encourage you to consider a trip to Central Asia and further appreciate your Zoroastrian heritage.

[ED: The reader is encouraged to read FEZANA Journal’s Summer/June 2014 issue featuring Zoroastrians of Central Asia.]



Tashkent museum, “Objects for fulfillment ceremonies of Zoroastrism [sic], 1-4 century. Tashkent Region.”



Tashkent museum, Ossuary, with sitting lady, from Koy-krylgan-kala, Karakalpakstan, 1st century BC -1st century CE.

Kersi Shroff has travelled extensively in Central Asia and the Caucuses, tracing the footsteps of early Zoroastrianism. In Tajikistan he volunteered with a team of Russian archaeologists and worked on two ancient sites including a 5th century CE Zoroastrian temple in Panjikent. In September 2018, he led a tour of Azerbaijan, “The land of [Ancient] Fires”.

WEAPONS IN THE TOMBS OF PARTHIAN ERA WOMEN IN NORTHERN IRAN A PRELIMINARY REPORT

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Gholamreza Karamian, Archaeology and History Professor at Tehran Azad University



One of the most important finds in the domain of Iranian Studies in this century to date has occurred very recently in the district of Vestemin in northern Iran. The findings are of significance in two ways. First, a very large hoard of weapons (swords, daggers, spearheads, and arrowheads) dated to the Parthian era (c. 250 BCE-224 CE) have been discovered at Vestemin in 2015. Up to the time of these finds, examples of actual Parthian weapons have been very few excepting samples of swords and daggers housed at the Iran Bastan Museum in Tehran (even these are little known to Western scholarship) (Farrokh, Karamian). Second, many of the weapons were discovered buried alongside the bodies of Parthian women. I have co-authored the technical details and statistical data of all these findings as second author with Gholamreza Karamian (Central Branch, Tehran Azad University, Department of History and Archaeology) who originally compiled the data and information discovered by archaeologists of the Mazandaran Cultural Heritage Organization (Mohammad Fallah Kiapi, Hossein Nemati Lojandi and Abdolmotaleb Sharifi). The compilation and statistical analyses of these findings will be published in a refereed academic journal by the end of the 2018.

Especially remarkable is the fact that Parthian daggers were buried in equal numbers in both female and male crypts at Vestemin. Twelve Parthian daggers for example were buried with females and eleven of these with males. Parthian spearheads and arrowheads were also distributed in an equivalent fashion alongside both male and female burials. One of five long swords discovered at Vestemin had also been interned alongside a female skeleton. The data (to be published later in 2018) would suggest that in the case of military culture, females enjoyed an honored status in the military culture of ancient Iran. This is clearly indicated by the fact that females were not differentiated from males with respect to weaponry. These findings corroborate historical sources as well as archaeological findings, the role of women in the context of Iranian martial culture, not just in ancient Iran (known to Westerners as Persia) but also to the Iranian speaking Scythians and Saka in ancient Eastern Europe and Central Asia (before the arrival of Hun-Turkic). Examples of such findings became known with the discovery of the tombs of (Iranian-speaking) Scythian and Sarmatian women alongside with their weapons. These findings along with Greco-Roman references to Iranian martial women during the Achaemenid, Parthian and Sassanian epochs have been summarized by the author in a previous edition of FEZANA Journal (Vol. 28, No.1, March/Spring, pp. 105-107).

Perhaps more remarkable is the relative silence in academia, notably Iranian Studies, to the role the ancient Iranian women played in the military, as well as during the post-Islamic era. One exception is the late Shapour Shahbazi's article on the Amazons in the Encyclopedia Iranica, However (excepting Shahbazi) the general lack of academic rigor in this field is notable. Western academia, entertainment outlets and news media have provided virtually no insight or reference to this topic, however this may be explained in part due to Classicism as well as geopolitical considerations. Put simply, it is a fact, that, women warriors of ancient Persia have received the least amount of attention by Western scholarship and popular media. Nevertheless, regardless of whether Western academia, media and political outlets choose (by choice or ignorance) to disregard the role of women in ancient Iran, that cultural legacy has remained remarkably resilient. One example of this is the April 13, 2016 report provided by Kavehfarrokh.com entitled "Iranian Tribal Women

in Shooting and Horseback Riding Competitions”,

Link: <http://kavehfarrokh.com/uncategorized/iranian-tribal-women-in-shooting-and-horseback-riding-competitions/>

As documented in the report, each year in Iran a national Olympiad takes place in Fereydanshahr area where tribal women from different regions of Iran engage in competitive horseback riding, sharpshooting, and various other martial athletic skills. This is notable given that Iran is currently administered by a conservative Islamic theocratic establishment yet these types of competitions are commonplace throughout Iran's tribal regions, notably Luristan. And despite the current political apparatus in Iran, an ancient martial cultural tradition has endured. Yet it remains a mystery as to why this phenomenon remains ignored in the Western world, notably the media, academia and even by Human Rights organizations and Women's Studies programs advocating gender equality.

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A Sample of the Parthian weapons excavated at Vestemin, northern Iran Copyright: Ghlozareza Karamian, 2017)
- *Figure 1: Parthian dagger; Figure 2: Two Parthian spearheads; Figure 3: One of the Parthian swords excavated from the crypts/graves at Vestemin.*



Archaeological Findings



North Iranian Saka warriors on the battlefield. Note female officer preparing her arrows for battle (c. 5th – 4th centuries BCE) (Source: Cernenko, 1989). While predating the Vestemin finds by 4-5 centuries, Saka warriors such as the above were the ancestors of the Parthians, making them also the ethnic kin of the Medes, Persians, Sarmatian and Alans.



Shapur I and his officers accept the surrender of Emperor Valerian in c. 260 CE. Roman sources report the presence of warrior women equipped and attired like the rest of the Sassanian Spah (army) (Source: Farrokh, 2005). The Vestemin finds are close in temporal proximity to the early Sassanian era. The excavations at Vestemin have found that weapons were interned in the graves of both men and women.



Lur women from Malayer (northwest Iran) pose with their weapons at local shooting range, early 1960s. Majority of locals are descendants of Karim Khan's Lur warriors.



Lur woman in a local competition in Luristan province in Western Iran, partaking in a shooting contest on horseback (Source: Wisgoon.com).



Young Lur girl takes aim with her rifle (Source: Akairan.com).

Kaveh Farrokh was born in Athens, Greece, has authored six books on the military history of Iran and published articles in internationally recognized peer-reviewed journals with translations into Russian, Spanish and Persian. Received awards for the Best History book (2008) as reported in BBC-Persian. He shares the Nobel Peace prize nomination (2011) with WAALM Institute in London.

***Dr Karamian** is an archaeologist and history professor at Tehran Azad University who has excavated several Parthian and Sassanian sites, including the palace of Ramavand known for its famous “Lady of Ramavand”. He is one of world’s foremost Iranologists with respect to the archaeology of the Parthians and Sassanians*

ZARATHUSHTRA: HIS WORLD VIEWS AND THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIETY

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The teachings of Zarathushtra have to be perceived through the text of the Gathas. It would be misleading to draw conclusions by preconceived views, interpreting them through the later Avesta, or the perspectives of Abrahamic religions. Zarathushtra's perception of the living world is based on the realities of existence, which he calls Truth or Asha. He does not resort to mythology and superstitions.

According to those teachings, the only perfect entity is the Wise Lord, Ahura Mazda, who is the Lord of life and wisdom, and the creator and sustainer of the universe. Ahura Mazda is an abstract entity that must be realized in the mind and is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. The Wise Lord is perceived as the wisest, most far-seeing, and best judge who cannot be deceived (Y45/4). Ahura Mazda comprises the highest spiritual and moral values to be matched by perfect humans. These ideal qualities, known as the Divine attributes, are: wisdom, truth and justice, inner strength and good rule, peace and love, wholeness and evolution, and immortality.

The universe is the magnificent creation of God. Our living world is beautified by the splendor of nature and is well governed by the universal order, the Law of Asha. As a part of the universe, Earth provides shelter, food, and energy for all living beings to survive. Zarathushtra does not use legends or mythology to discover the secrets of creation. The Law of Asha

(harmony), the wisdom of God and His creativity are realized by studying the realities of nature, humans, and living beings on the planet. To understand this better, only 1/4 of the Earth's surface is land, with the other 3/4 covered by water. If this ratio were reversed, the world would not be livable. This great creation of the world, however, is not complete. It requires tunnels, roads and channels to extract the mines and develop farms and towns.

Among all creatures, humans are the only ones who can progress toward evolution (Haurvatat). Over several millennia, humans have evolved from residing in caves to living in modern societies, while other species have not changed. For this reason, humans are the best candidates to fulfill the divine plan of promoting the world toward perfection. In this capacity, humans are regarded as mutual friends and companions of God (Urvato). Those who make positive impacts on society and advance civilization are called Saoshyant or benefactors.

Inborn Quality (Spenta Mainyu)

Creatures who live in different societies have been granted a common virtue for cooperation. For example, it has been noticed that bees can guide other bees toward food by a special "buzz". In addition, there are chimpanzees that help the weaker among themselves, and alert others, with different sounds, when a fellow chimpanzee has been attacked, or if a predator is nearby*.

By the same token, sociologists who have spent time among the primitive tribes, have been amazed by the honesty of the tribal men. Despite the absence of an organized religion, police force, and justice system, the primitive tribes not only consider lies, deception, and stealing evil,**but they are naturally gentle toward children, the weak, and elderly. This quality is an inborn Spenta Mainyu that humans innately possess. Because of that they can live together and form productive tribes and societies, which would not be possible if they considered lies, deception, and robbery as good acts. There are other creatures who have the benevolent spirit (Spenta Mainyu), but to a lesser extent; e.g. a dog's loyalty to their owner, elephants mourning the loss of a companion, dolphins' expression of gratitude, and chimpanzees supporting the weaker among themselves, as previously mentioned. A dog is born loyal and not trained to be so, but despite its good inborn quality, at times can become angry, attack, and bite. Human's spirits also can have two aspects, constructive or destructive. Humans, however, are blessed with the utmost values of the benevolent spirit, Spenta Mainyu. These values include love, compassion, sympathy, creativity, ability to judge, and the appreciation of justice. For a better insight in human behavior, we can go to rural areas and visit the

humans, as created by God, who are not polluted by the lures of material life (as Zarathushtra states in Yasna 53/6). Usually they are found to be honest, truthful, and hospitable with the utmost sense of gratitude. So, there is a natural prevalence of benevolence in humans, although they are spiritually vulnerable to change.

By the same token, Zarathushtra finds in humans two phenomena or spirits (Mainyu). One is progressive and benevolent (Spenta Mainyu), and the other regressive (called Angra Mainyu in later Avesta). In Yasna 30 and 45, Zarathushtra recommends that at the “great moment of choice” or decision, we should adhere to the spirit of benevolence, Spenta Mainyu, because otherwise we will be misguided by other Mainyu, (Angra Mainyu). There should be no compromise when the choice comes (Y45/2). We can be generous, kind, beneficial, truthful, and progressive by choosing Spenta Mainyu. If misguided by Angra Mainyu, we could resort to anger, become greedy, envious, rancorous, revengeful, and destructive.

But the concept of an independent entity of absolute evil and vice (the devil or Satan in Abrahamic religions) does not exist in Zarathushtra’s scheme of divinity. The word Angra Mainyu does not appear in the Gathas, and only first appears in later Avesta. Thus, there is no devil to be feared or worshiped out of fear in the Gathas, and no destructive entity standing against constructive God, Ahura Mazda. Of note, there is no mention of the devil or demon in the Achaemenian inscriptions, as well. So, where does this source of confusion and misinterpretation about the divine dualism originate, even though Zarathushtra does not believe in the existence of the devil or a bad god.

Zarathushtra teaches that those who adhere to Spenta Mainyu will choose a right and generate true living, life, or the state of being alive and living. But the ones who turn away from Spenta Mainyu, will be overcome by Angra Mainyu, choose wrong, and bring un-life, non-existence. Un-life has been coined by Zarathushtra to explain the state of being alive but not really living. The word un-life, by some authors, has been translated to death and mistakenly interpreted that Zarathushtra is talking about two gods, one is the good god or the creator of life and the other is the bad god who brings death. Un-life, in actuality, constitutes a life captivated by ignorance, falsehood, oppression, and lack of wisdom. Another reason for the misunderstanding has been the translation of Spenta Mainyu to Holy Spirit and identifying that with the concept of the holy spirit and God in the Bible. As noted, both Ahura Mazda and humans share Spenta Mainyu (benevolence, creativity), but only humans can possess Angra Mainyu (malevolence). Angra Mainyu is not independent of the human mind and does not exist separately as the devil. Wisdom and conscience (bright mind) are the means to correctly choose between the two Mainyu. Therefore, in the end, humans are responsible for their choice of good or evil and God is not accountable for the evil in this world. Perhaps the purpose of the existence of evil is to recognize the value of good. By seeing darkness, we appreciate the light, and by sadness, happiness is best realized. Some authors have translated Daeva, the old Aryan gods, to demons and have added to confusion, while Daevas were rejected by Zarathushtra as false gods. Therefore, it will be more appropriate, if either the term, Daeva, or false god is used. Also

earlier commentators inspired by other religions, have compared the Divine attributes to angels. But like the devil, the notion of angel is alien to the Gathas. It is another source of misunderstanding because the line of access to God is direct and no mediator, including an angel, is required.

Material and Spiritual Worlds

Another important issue in the Gathas is that the material and spiritual worlds are intertwined. God is the creator and sustainer of both worlds, and humans are in charge of promoting the living world, both spiritually and physically, toward perfection. In this context, the Gathic terms also have two aspects, material or spiritual: Asha or Ashoi, at the individual level, reflects one’s physical and spiritual purity. Physical purity comprises personal health and environmental cleanliness, and spiritual purity means to think, speak and do right to achieve the right results.

The Divine attributes apply to humans as virtues. Every human being, man or woman, can become virtuous and God-like by attaining those attributes. A perfect human, indeed, is the mirror-image of God or Ahura. Hence, “Ahura”, not only is the attribute of God, but it can be shared by perfect humans as well. By the same token, Daeva refers to the false gods and to their embodiments in human form. In the contemporary Persian language, “Div” may indicate devil or wicked person. In one’s lifetime, wisdom guides the conscience, which leads willpower and the soul to act (Y48/4). The result of action, right or wrong is discerned in the conscience. With death, also, the soul will be guided by conscience. The soul of the righteous shall pass

the sorting bridge and the soul of the wrongful is upbraided by conscience and shall return (Y46/11, Y51/13). Likewise, heaven and hell can be realized in this material world. In Yasna 46/16, Zarathushtra enunciates: paradise is where peace and love with truth and justice reside, where wisdom and good rule prevail. By the same token, the wrongful can create their own living hell (Y46/11). In the Gathas, the planet of Earth has body “Geush Tashan” and soul “Geush Urvan.” The soul of the mother-Earth laments not only of destruction, but when there is fury, aggression, rapine, injustice, and bloodshed (Y29/1). To overcome injustice, Zarathushtra, however, does not present physical force, but rather spiritual power as inner strength, wisdom, eloquence of speech, and love.

In the Chosen Dominion, both material leader (Ahu), and spiritual leader (Ratu) are to be chosen, but they function as separated entities. The material world according to Zarathushtra, is to be ruled spiritually by wisdom, governed through justice, and stabilized by liberty, love, and peace. Wisdom is a gift of mind by which right and wrong are differentiated and correct choices are made. Justice generates peace. Liberty is a divine bounty that neither should be given up nor is to be taken away.

The concept of love, as viewed by Zarathushtra, is an important phenomenon for survival of the living world, because it binds humans together and is the foundation of family. It is because of the mutual love of parents and children that human generations sustain. The Gathas refer to six varieties of love. In Y46/2, Zarathushtra pleads for God’s love, the same love that is granted by a lover to the beloved. In Y 53.7. the love

shared by the young married couple, stabilizes the family. In Y 44/7 through the “Love” between children and parents, love of man toward humanity and living world, and the love of man for God, the Great Creator of Love is recognized. Hence, by love, man is bound to the living world, humanity, and God; and our world is sustained by love. The Gathas emphasize that we should vanquish anger and hatred by love to establish peace (Y48/12). Peace is the reward of good dominion.

Gathas and New Perspectives

Once the Gathas are well understood, it becomes evident that they are easy to practice. There, however, is a contrast which has to be addressed. At the time of their origination, these very advanced thoughts were developed in a simple society. Some wonder how these new thoughts could have been grasped by that society. The pre-Gatha’s milieu was herding and farming, the names reflected the nature and livestock, and the wealth was in cattle. People had not quite settled, hence, there was no unified government, but only local rulers (Kavis) and priests (Karapans) who were in charge. They had unified forces and exploited the hard-working people under duress. The simplicity of society caused the early authors to develop preconceived views that influenced their translations. They incongruously included meat, milk, cattle, and cow, which were incompatible with the advanced concepts of God, liberty, freedom of choice, love, and the notion of mental faculties in the Gathas. **Today, with better translations and commentaries, we can elaborate the questions further: was Zarathushtra a visionary man ahead of his time? Was there an erudite community within that society who could**

perceive the advanced teachings?

We should remember that, in a setting where none of these concepts had been heard of, the Gathas refer to the mental faculties including mind, wisdom, conscience, intellect, will-power and soul, and adding to them creativity or Spenta Mainyu. In that tribal society, Ahura Mazda is the universal God, not tribal, ethnic or national, and the teachings of Zarathushtra are global doctrine. All humans are addressed equally, and humanity transcends the barriers of race, creed, gender, ethnicity, caste or nationality. The final goal is the foundation of universal brotherhood (Y54). The Gathas know no border and time, and are devoid of violence, discrimination, superstition, and contradiction.

For a civilized society, justice is very important (Y33/1) and all stand equal before the law (Y31/13-15). The line of communication between human and God is direct, based on love, devoid of mediators, rituals and blood sacrifices. The best gifts to dedicate to God are the fruits of good thought, good words, and good deeds with love (Y33/14). We can draw God’s attention and support by the hymns, but the best act of worship is conduct of good deeds, which is acknowledged by God. These men and women are equally praised in the Gathas (Y51/22). Divine attributes are the gifts of God to mankind and at the same time, the means of approaching God.

The Gathas guide to choose right, and avoid issuing commands and taboos. Zarathushtra does not enforce rituals, fasting and prayers as duties. If we carefully review the meanings of the two prayers, Ashem Vohu and Yata Ahu, both believed to have been composed by Zarathushtra, they are guidelines for the better living. The first one is about the responsibility toward

self that can impact the society at large. It is about how to live a righteous life. Yata Ahu is about the responsibility toward society, the foundation of chosen dominion. Even God is not imposed on man, because man chooses God by good deeds (Y53/2).

Every individual, through investigation of the secrets of the universe, can discover truth and recognize God. The chapter of creation, Yasna 44, practically guides everyone to search for truth, but unlike some other beliefs, mythology, legends and superstition are avoided. The concepts of heaven and hell are presented as the two states of mind, spiritual relief and inner torment, both discerned in the conscience. Gathas do not engage in the dreams of eschatology.

Evolution of New Society

With the advent of the new religion, the entire society transforms by the new ideals. To achieve the broader objectives, new directions, with a set of constructive moral values, are in order. Now the perspectives extend worldwide; an individual can be happy, not at the expense of others, but when he/she brings happiness to others (Y43/1). One cannot be happy among unhappy people.

The purpose of life is to develop the world, serve humanity, and work toward the foundation of universal fellowship (Y54). The new teachings are not forced, but rather, men and women are given freedom to choose or reject them through good thinking and bright mind. In the Gathas, liberty and freedom of choice pervade all aspects of human rights (Y31). Free thinking substitutes the blind obedience (Y30/1) and rationalism replaces superstition. Above all, for

the first time, humans take charge of destiny, rather than being condemned by preordained fate (Y48/4). The idea of self-determination is the best incentive to strive for a better life. There is no room for slavery and exploitation, because, now, man stands as the companion of God.

The ideal concept of chosen dominion replaces the corrupt rule of Kavis (rulers) and Karapans (priests) (Y51). To remove the tyrants and replace them by the chosen leaders, all should withhold anger, keep hatred far away, and avoid violence. They should hold on to good mind and love (Y48/7), so that at the end, peace shall triumph over violence, and happy life and love establish through good rule (Y48/11). In simple words, by avoiding violence, a new tyranny is prevented and finally good rule shall prevail. Zarathushtra not only campaigns for the removal of the corrupt rulers and priests, but has his main concern be the plight of the righteous meek and honest oppressed (Drigu, the down-trodden), or hard-working people who are exploited. They should be liberated and rehabilitated (Y53/9). In contemporary Persian language, Drigu has evolved as Darvish, which implies a person who materially is limited, but spiritually strong and contented. Zarathushtra raises hope that one day the oppressed will rise up and gain freedom. Then, by the gifts of liberty, wholeness, and immortality, they shall enjoy the real paradise (Y32/15).

The new teachings generate a new spirit and as a result, even new names evolve: Pouruchista (full of knowledge), Isat-vastra (developer), Urvatat-nara (lover of people), Ashastu (lover of truth), Frasho-kara (renovator of the world), Hush-yaothana (person of good deed), Spent-data (Esfandiar, promoter of justice) and Vohumanah

(Bahman, good-thinker)***. These reflect the new religion with new ideals and evolution of new society. It is a true renaissance as Zarathushtra declares: let us renovate the living world, let us fresh this life (Y30/9).

These topics that were mentioned are social issues that have concerned the human societies from inception and yet, Zarathushtra's resolution is quite modern and timeless.

To address the earlier questions, one can conclude that Zarathushtra was indeed exceptionally ways ahead of his time. He is a man of reason and fairness. His firm belief in human dignity and freedom of choice is particularly reflected in Yasna 30 and 31, which emerges again in Yasna 53, when he advises his daughter to choose her husband with full freedom. In the meanwhile, there was a community of sages who finally could perceive and spread his advanced message. In Yasna 29-11, which is the beginning of Zarathushtra's ministry and declaration of his mission, he states: when my message might spread far, when shall the association of Magas (Magavan, sagacious scholars) discern Your teaching? Yasna 32-1 illustrates that the Magavan have accepted the message, and the association expanded to include all people that understood and accepted the new knowledge that was presented in Zarathushtra's teachings. In conclusion, Zarathushtra perceives creation through the practical perspective (Asha), not a mythological one; it is magnificent but incomplete. The only perfect entity in his scheme of thought is Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord. Humans are the best living creature, but they are not perfect. Humans have to achieve evolution in their life and promote the magnificent living world toward perfection. The purpose of living is to

Gatha Study Circle

promote the living world, physically and spiritually, toward completeness and evolution. Those who participate in this process, are Saoshyant or benefactors and considered as God's companion (Urvato). The devil, demons or Satan, do not exist in Zarathushtra's mindset and no destructive evil entity is in existence to stand against Ahura Mazda. Evil is the result of man's wrong judgment and bad choice; God is not responsible for the evil in this world.

*-C. Zarre, Rahavard, V115, P256-260, Persian magazine.

** J. Ashtiyani, management not governance, in Persian.

***-A.Jafarey, The message of Zartusht, P139-140, in Persian

I would like to express thanks to Banoo and Nathan Duda for their editing contribution.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

We solicit submissions to the Jurnal from different Gatha Study Circles for publication in future issues of the FEZANA JOURNAL

Daryoush Jahanian

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

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SPENTA MAINYU—THE DIVINE MENTALITY— IN ZARATHUSHTRA’S THEOLOGICAL SYSTEM

ERVAD DR. JEHAN BAGLI



It is generally believed that Ahura Mazda was the sole Creator of the Universe. However, in the Gathas, we learn that the credit for the Good Creation is attributed to Spenta Mainyu. In Ys 44.7, Zarathushtra tells us that Mazda is the Creator of all things through Spenta Mainyu; he iterates the same thought in Ys 51.7. The Prophet, in Ys 45.6, also accredits that the Righteousness and Benevolence from Mazda is also through Spenta Mainyu. In an assertion in Ys 43.16, the Prophet proclaims, “I, Zarathushtra, choose for myself that Spenta Mainyu of Wise Lord and prays for a long life of righteousness and Good mind

Philologically, the term Spenta Mainyu is interpreted as the “Progressive Mental Aspect or Mentality.” Some scholars associate benevolence to it as in “Progressively Benevolent Mentality.” Others interpret this Mainyu as the Holy Spirit of Mazda (Taraporewala, Duchesne-Guillemain, Moulton, Bode/Nanavutty). It is clear from the Gathas that Spenta Mainyu is the active principle that projects the creative will and thought of Mazda. Dastur M. N. Dhalla succinctly describes that “Spenta Mainyu symbolizes the ideal or perfect existence as conceived by Ahura Mazda’s thoughts.”

It is clear from above that Spenta Mainyu represents the Divine mentality—the thought process—of Ahura Mazda. This is underscored when Zarathushtra attributes the very origin of this mental aspect to Ahura Mazda in Ys 47.3, through which the Divinity has fashioned this joy-bringing world. Accepting, that Mazda is innate in all Creation, the entire Creation is visualized as the Divine Body of the Creator and the Spenta Mainyu as the mentality of its Universal Mind. Thus, Truth (right-mindedness), including Spenta Mainyu, are thought into existence by the Universal Mind of the Wise Lord Mazda.

Considering the existence of a Universal Mind for Mazda, the human mind is but a minute spark of that Boundless Mind. Indeed, it is ingenious that Zarathushtra conceived of this Progressive Mentality (Spenta Mainyu) to bridge the spiritual Divine Mind and mankind’s physical mind. The Prophet unquestionably teaches that just as Mazda, through Spenta Mainyu, had created this Bountiful Universe. By following this Holy Mental

aspect, mankind must generate words stemming from Good thinking and the performance of acts of piety to preserve and protect the Creation. This is the sum and substance of Ys 47 of Gatha Spenta Mainyu.

Spenta Mainyu is thus so intrinsically interwoven with Ahura Mazda that it is often difficult to find where one ends and the other begins. It is analogous to the relationship of a person with their mind. We are what we think, speak, and do. Similarly, what the Spenta Mainyu (Mentality) of the Universal Mind conceives is depicted by Ahura Mazda (The Creating Force).

It is therefore no surprise that in younger Avestan literature, the relationship between these two entities is so completely diffused that they are portrayed as equivalent. This has unfortunately led to a **gross misconception**. It is extremely important to distinguish that Spenta Mainyu is a part of the message that **relates to the adverse concept** that later came to be **known as Anra (or Angra) Mainyu**. The term Anra Mainyu, as such, does not appear in the Gathas.

In contrast, Ahura Mazda is the **sole benevolent Creator** who has no adversary and is not related to the deceitful mentality of Anra Mainyu. The misconception that Anra Mainyu is an adversary of Mazda is often promoted through the writings of some scholars. This is incorrect. It is our duty and responsibility to clarify and **eradicate this misinterpretation**.

Putting Anra Mainyu (Phl. Ahriman) in direct opposition to Ahura Mazda is **grossly erroneous** for it leads to the misunderstanding that the religion of Zarathushtra is a composite of two Gods, a God of Good and a God of evil. This is **utterly incorrect and blatantly violates** the basic fact that **Zoroastrianism was the first monotheistic faith**.

Historically, this has misled even the early Greek

historians. As Gerschewitz mentions (Gerschewitz I., Jour. Near Eastern Stud. 1964, 23, 12), the 4th century B.C.E. Greek philosophers understood the **Zarathushtrian faith as a religion of two gods:** Oromazdes (Ahura Mazda) and Areimanios (Ahriman), as depicted by the Magian doctrines. This becomes evident from their writings. For example, Plutarch refers to the prophet Zarathushtra as “Zoroaster the Magus.” Diogenes Laertius quotes Aristotle saying, “...Magi are more ancient even than the Egyptians, and according to them there are two first principles a good spirit and an evil spirit one called ... Oromasdes and the other ... Areimanios” (Boyce M. The History of Zoroastrianism Vol II, p281).

The following quotes from several esteemed scholars further clarify the status of Spenta Mainyu and Ahura Mazda:

The respected savant Taraporewala in his treatise, Divine Songs of Zarathushtra (pg 54), elaborates this misconception as follows.

In later Zarathushtrian theology (of Vendidad and Pahlavi works) Spenta Mainyu has been identified with Ahura and Ahura is called Mainyu Spenista; but this is emphatically not the teaching of Zarathushtra in Gathas.

Professor Zehner in his book Dawn and Twilight of

Zoroastrianism (pg 45) also elaborates this misconception stating,

... Ahura Mazda or Wise Lord came to be identified with the Holy Spirit, though nowhere in the Gathas is such an identification made ...

The late Professor Mary Boyce, in her treatise History of Zoroastrianism (Vol II, pg 232), explains:

... neither here nor anywhere else in genuine Zoroastrian tradition is there ever a smallest indication of doubt that the opposed spirit of Zoroaster's teachings were Ahura Mazda and his great Adversary.

Professor Mills L. H. in Sacred Books of the East Vol 31, pg145 states:

The Spenta Mainyu here (in the Yasna 47) is not identical with Ahura, but is, as so often His Spirit.

I sincerely hope the above clarifies the concept of the status of Spenta Mainyu and the thought process of the Creating Force—Ahura Mazda.

Ervad Jehan Bagli is the retired Distinguished Research Fellow and the past president of the North American Mobeds Council

For the Best Mind and for the Best Word and deed activated by Truth

From the Bountiful Spirit of Lord Mazda,
May He in Sovereign Authority and through the spirit
of Right-mindedness
Bestow upon us His two great blessings,
Reflecting integrity here and Immortality hereafter +

Ys 47.1 by D.J. Irani

In The News

NORTH AMERICAN MOBED COUNCIL BESTOWS THE DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR AWARD ON MOBED DR JEHAN BAGLI AND MOBED DR SOLI DASTUR



At the 2018 NAMC AGM in Washington DC, it was unanimously decided to confer the Distinguished Scholar Awards to Mobed Jehan Bagli and Mobed Soli P. Dastur, for their exceptional service to the community both nationally and internationally. Dr Jehan Bagli is the author of several books on Zoroastrian rituals, Dr Soli Dastur is well known for conducting religious tele-classes for adults and children as well as weekly Zoroastrian scriptures extracts e- distributed worldwide to Zoroastrians all over the world. Both are very active in participation in North American and international conferences.

Both Dr Jehan Bagli and Dr Soli Dastur are very well deserving candidates and the community is very proud of them.

The award was presented to Mobed Dr Jehan Bagli at the Toronto ZSO NoRuz Function by Past NAMC President Mobed Kobad Zarolia on Saturday August 18th 2018. Photo left shows Ervad Kobad presenting the award to Dr Jehan Bagli.

NAMC President Mobed Dr Arda-e-viraf Minocherhomjee (with mike) presented the award to Jo Ann and Mobed Soli

P. Dastur at the Zoroastrian Association of Florida Miami/Ft. Lauderdale/Boca Raton, NoRuz function on Saturday August 18th 2018.

NAMC President Arda-e-viraf, flew down from San Diego, to present the award.

The award was presented again on Sunday August 19th, at the NoRuz function of the Orlando CFG Group and at the ZATAMBAY function on August 26th by Past FEZANA President Dr Rustom Kevala and Dr Hoshedar Tamboli.



In The News

INDIA: Democracy in Diversity Briefing at the US Capitol, 26th July 2018

ZENOBIA PANTHAKI



From left Dr. Harminder Kaur (at the podium), Ervad Brig Behram Panthaki, Isa Mirza, Nissim Reuben, Dr. Vijay Sazawal and Mr. Anand Shah

The Hindu American Foundation (HAF) held a briefing session at the US Capitol to showcase India as a vibrant, secular democracy. The event was sponsored by Congressman, Raja Krishnamurthy and held at the Visitor's Center of the US Capitol. There were about 80-100 people in attendance. This briefing session was part of a State Dept. 3 day event to advance religious freedom organized with the HAF and the House Caucus on India and Indian Americans to showcase religious freedom in India for US lawmakers, govt officials, NGOs, political analysts and experts and the general public.

Samer Kalra, Senior Director, and Suhag Shukla, Executive Director (HAF), gave the opening address, highlighting their mission to raise awareness in America to India as the largest and most religiously and culturally diverse democracy. The Freedom of Religion Act and the personal civil codes for each religious entity were introduced in the constitution immediately after independence to protect vulnerable sections of society and according to them, have fulfilled their mandate with minor aberrations of religious tensions and occasional riots.

Thereafter, a panel comprising of representatives of different faiths highlighted their community's experiences and perspective.

BRIG. BEHRAM PANTHAKI talked about **Zoroastrians** and how a small band of religiously persecuted people fled Persia and found refuge in the state of Gujarat. Not only did they willingly abide by the three conditions, laid down by the local ruler who gave them refuge, to adopt the local dress and language, to live in peace and harmony and to not proselytize, but flourished, and gave back to their adopted homeland in large measure. The Parsis, as Indian Zoroastrians are known, have been major contributors to development in all walks of life from law, to medicine, to science, to the arts and the armed forces. This miniscule minority has never demanded any special privileges, preferring to compete with mainstream India.

The **Sikh** representative, **DR. HARMINDER KAUR**, spoke of the contributions of a valiant race that, for millennia, has stood strong against foreign invasions from the north and continues to be the largest contributor to the armed forces. However, she voiced concern about the NDA government's tactless and heavy-handed resolution to the Bhindrewala issue when army tanks were sent into the Golden Temple to flush out separatist elements that had bunkered in the building, which hurt Sikh sentiment deeply. She also spoke of the persecution of Sikhs after her Sikh bodyguard assassinated Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. In both cases, she felt that the government could have handled the situation more astutely, a not too off-the-mark sentiment. She requested HAF to reach out to the American public and raise their awareness to the fact that Sikhs also wear turbans, and that their headdress should not mark them as terrorists, for many Sikhs were

In The News



lynched in the aftermath of 9/11.

ISA MIRZA spoke to his multi-religious roots, his mother being an **American Christian** and his father an **Indian Shia Muslim** from Hyderabad. The Shia Muslims of Hyderabad are believed to be traders/settlers from Isfahan and Shiraz. Along with his parents, Isa went to ashrams and monasteries in India to study Hinduism and Buddhism and grew up practicing a syncretic, ecumenical faith. If Muslims are a minority in India, the Shias are a minority within a minority and he summed up his concern about the current government's inability to curb the extremist elements of the RSS that constitute their far right wing.

NISSIM REUBEN, the **Jewish** representative on the panel showcased India as the only country in the world without a single incident of anti-Semitism. India had three Jewish settlements in Bombay, Cochin and Calcutta but the numbers have dwindled to 5,000 with migration to Israel for economic prosperity and because of the allure of the Promised Land and not because of any disillusionment with India.

DR. VIJAY SAZAWAL highlighted the plight of the **Kashmiri Pundits** who had to flee their ancestral lands with the surge of terrorism and violence in Kashmir. They are internally displaced persons (IDPs) in their own country because in Kashmir they constitute a minority and the local government is paralyzed by political expediency. He pointedly asked, why there was no questioning as to why a national minority community, behaves indifferently in state where they constitute the majority and form the government! Even in a majority Hindu country, the government at the center has not shown any iron in the spine to solve this problem and Kashmiri pundits continue to be IDPs since the last 30 years. The next panelist, **MR. ANAND SHAH** grew up in Houston and moved to India in 2002 – a case of **reverse migration**. This was three months after the Gujarat riots and Ahmedabad was supposed to have been on fire. What he saw was quite the contrary. There was more diversity in one square mile of the state than in the whole of Texas; temples adjoining masjids, children of different faiths playing cricket on the streets. He did not see a city on fire – it's possible that his perspective was limited by what he was shown. But overall his analysis was that given the diversity of the country and problems of poverty and corruption, the occasional riots are a blip on the radar rather than an endemic issue.

HIS HOLINESS, THE DALAI LAMA, whose taped message was broadcast, lauded India for its continued generosity in giving his **Tibetan Buddhists** refuge and for supporting their 'Government in Exile' for over 60 years. Tibetans have made India their home and never felt unwelcomed. Tibetan schools and 262 monasteries flourish in India, while China felt threatened by a peaceful community and chose to destroy their heritage and desecrate their places of worship. The Dalai Lama made a profound statement when he said, *'use your religion to promote the secular path and to serve humanity'*.

SADHVI BHAGAWATI SARASWATI, an American lady who has converted to ascetic **Hinduism** made two insightful statements: When the American Vice President commits to his Christian faith he is lauded; when an Indian leader commits to his Hindu faith he is condemned. In India, if a Muslim or a Christian are lynched the government is indicted; in the US if a member of a minority community is lynched the police is indicted, not the government. The Sadhvi, who has traveled widely, said that no country in the world accepted her as India did.

All of these discourses point to two factors: strong biases and pre-conditioning will make you see what you want to without scratching below the surface as in the case of 'a placid Gujarat'. Faith is such a strong purveyor that personal bias will taint all hypotheses. In this large auditorium, we were all looking at the same glass, but for some it was full and for others it was half empty – so eventually, is it only in the eye of the beholder? A glass half empty is a red flag, a time to call it out for what it is. While you don't cut off your head to cure a migraine, a Band Aid will not help either and worse still, if you ignore the wounds they might turn gangrenous. A fair amount of food for thought but who's going to bell this cat?

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).



In The News

REIMAGINING INTERFAITH

Shayda Sales

My involvement in interfaith organizing for the past 7 years has led me to numerous interfaith conferences. Thus, when I was asked to represent FEZANA and my Zoroastrian community in the planning and leading of the Reimagining Interfaith Conference in Washington DC in August, I was hesitant-- how is this conference going to be any different than the countless put on every year?

After over a year of planning on both the Host and Programming Committees my excitement began to grow for the conference. The faith leaders I was working with were diverse and had expertise in grassroots organizing, activism, and were extremely action oriented. As the name indicates, we built our conference around the idea of a "reimagined" movement in interfaith-- a radically inclusive and accessible movement that supports community and uses interfaith as a tool to achieve justice.



Photo below Shayda Sales second from left with youth leaders from United Religions Initiative in North America.

Interfaith is a movement reserved for talking over action. The conference was youthful and progressive, not shying away from pressing and controversial issues. We discussed racism, poverty and homelessness, women in ministry, and how to involve youth in interfaith our individual faith communities. The conference embraced issues that impact our communities head on and *in light of interfaith activism*.

By combining interfaith with other issues, we set the foundations for a radical interfaith movement that doesn't just talk about peace and change, but actually creates it. I am hopeful of the type of movement I see interfaith transforming into if we keep on the path created by the Reimagining Interfaith Conference. This movement is proving more and more to be one of diversity, proactive change, grassroots organizing, and radical love and acceptance.



Shayda Sales is a senior at The George Washington University studying International Affairs and Middle East Studies. She is Vice President of the Iranian Student Association and has been involved in interfaith organizing since her freshman year of high school. She is originally from San Jose, CA, loves the beach, and is constantly planning her next trip abroad.

In The News

WZO Trust - update on Kerala Relief Project as of 10 October 2018



WZO Trust in association with Kinder Trust, volunteers of local associations have been actively supporting individuals affected by the floods in Kerala providing basic day to day necessities, medicines, holding medical camps and so on. During this week arrangements have been made to supply 410 Mattresses and 410 kits of utensils for those affected in Pullangady area Champakulam village, Lower Kuttanad, Alappuzha District of Kerala.

After having been involved in providing relief since August 20, 2018, our team is now shifting its focus from relief / aid to rehabilitation; a plan to rehabilitate people in severely affected areas where homes have been destroyed and fields washed away.. Our team at Ground Zero led by the dynamic Ms. Diana Bharucha has now decided to assist those whose fields have been

washed away by the floods by training them in disciplines that will assist them in sustaining their livelihoods. She has met and consulted Brigadier Mac Devaiah from Kodagu who as a volunteer is interacting with villagers to start a 'Bee keeping' and honey cooperative with consultation of a bee keeper 'expert' from Bangalore. Approval and consent of the District Collector has been sought to undertake this discipline. Hopefully, this will evolve into a training centre as well as a cooperative society, through which bee boxes can be procured from the horticulture department as well as the Forest department at highly subsidized prices.

Efforts will be undertaken to tie up with the Govt. Emporium to market the produce. Options are plenty and the encouraging part is that the area is 'Bee Friendly'!

Ms. Diana Bharucha who has been spearheading the welfare activities in Kerala and Coorg has decided to start with this venture at Kodagu since it is conducive to rearing bees, being forested by nature and also replicate this at critical locations in Kerala. **By doing this WZO Trust / Kinder Trust will be not only promoting rehabilitation and self employment at a low investment, but also strengthening the environment as bees play a vital role in pollination etc.**

GRATITUDE:

It has been a very fulfilling experience to not only receive support from donors, both institutional and individuals but also the cooperation and support received from all segments of society in the relief operations has been amazing.

Activities of a Zoroastrian Trust being very ably assisted by, the Christian Church, Islam Madrassa's, Hindu Cauvery Sena and very many unknown individuals of different faiths collectively working shoulder to shoulder in this humanitarian exercise is an apt illustration of national integration at its best. The WZO Trust & Kinder Trust consider themselves to be blessed for having been provided the opportunity to be involved in such an activity.

DONATIONS: WZO Trust has, as on 09 October 2018 received donations, amounting to Rs.34,92,094 from 240 donors. **We are now looking forward to receiving further donations, where the focus will now shift from aid to rehabilitation.**

In The News

Donations by way of cheques made out in the name of The World Zoroastrian Organization Trust may be sent to our office at:

Hermes House, 3rd floor, Mama Parmanand Marg, Opera House, Mumbai 400 004.

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**Dinshaw K. Tamboly;
The WZO Trust**

In The News



The Multifaith Action Society and the
Global Clergy Association present - a pre-Parliament
of the World's Religions experience:



Pre-Parliament of the World's Religions Conference, Vancouver, BC

Reconnect to Life

Reflect, Renew, Rejoice!

As a member of the Global Clergy Association of Canada [GCAOC] who organized this forum, in collaboration with Multifaith Action Society, I attended the Pre-Parliament Conference on September 8, 2018. The program was attended by about 100 Vancouver area residents.

The Unitarian Church of Vancouver was the gracious host. Interfaith calendars and researched data on the Western Oil pipe line from Edmonton to Vancouver were distributed.

This was the 5th conference which was organized by the GCAOC in Metro Vancouver Area.

On September 8, in advance of the [Parliament of World's Religions](#) in Toronto, people gathered together to build a meaningful, multicultural dialogue on the power of spirituality and 'spiritual activism' to engender global peace and harmony in the face of an uncertain future.



The program started at approx. 9.30 AM and after initial Benediction and introductions, there was a key note address by Chief Phil Lane Jr., (photo left) an hereditary chief and an enrolled member of the Yankton Dakota Chickasaw First Nations and an internationally recognized leader in human and

community development. He was an Associate professor at the faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge Alberta, Canada. .

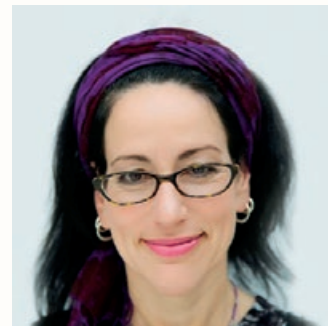
After his presentation a breakout group discussions on social justice issues was conducted by volunteers. After a short break, we re-assembled in the main church hall again to hear Rabbi Dr. Laura Kaplan. Dr Kaplan moved to Vancouver in 2005 and was the Rabbi at Or

Shalom Synagogue. She is a fellow at Rabbis Without Borders, a progressive pluralistic US based Jewish think tank. She holds a doctorate from Claremont Graduate University in Philosophy and Education.

Both the presentations were educative, inspiring and full of social awareness topics of Canadian history.

After lunch there was a second breakout group discussions on the environmental protection issues

The main purpose was to create awareness about the upcoming Parliament of the World's Religions [PoWR] in Toronto from 1st to November 7th 2018.



The PoWR is the oldest and largest international religious organization which promotes respect and harmony between diverse cultures, faiths, spirituality and people, for alleviation of poverty, suffering, injustice, oppression, violence and exploitation. It has been addressing critical issues such as growing disparity between rich and poor, human rights, environment protection, first nations natives, women, youth etc.

It was collectively recognized that we all are individuals, but must relate to each other respectfully and peacefully.

Our collective future can only be reshaped if every human being is treated with love and compassion; and governments ensure transparency and accountability.

For more information visit - www.multifaithaction.org.

Firdosh Mehta
ZSBC Interfaith Committee
Past President, FEZANA



BOMAN DESAI, AN AUTHOR WHO COMPOSES MUSIC

NAWAZ MERCHANT



Boman Desai is the author of *The Memory of Elephants*, *TRIO*, and *Dancing About Architecture* among many other books. In an age when chasing the dollar is a respectable norm, it is refreshing to meet someone who has steadfastly followed his own muse, first writing and now composing. He has been writing songs since his teenage years, and as his interest in classical music burgeoned he developed those melodies into themes for classical movements.

He is modest and self-deprecating, crediting his successes to kindly friends, in particular an elegant elderly lady who handed a sheaf of his manuscripts to the editor of *Debonair*, suggesting he publish them (which he did). Success did not come easily: During the three years he spent doing nothing but writing the first 1,800-page draft of his seminal book, *TRIO*, he earned not a penny and lost many pounds (20). When a friend suggested he get a computer so they could email each other, he said he needed first to get a job and stabilize his bank account – but his friend was adamant, sending first \$1,500, and then \$2,000 more, at which point Boman gratefully bought his first PC.

Boman came to the United States as a student. Realizing that Architecture was not his calling, he got his Bachelors in Psychology and Masters in English. While working as a market analyst trainee in the Sears Tower, a passing conversation with a colleague, “I would love to have written one good book,” took on existential meaning when that colleague died, bookless, six months later. Boman switched to working part-time and ten years later sold *The Memory of Elephants*, about three generations of a Parsi family. *TRIO*, his book about the Schumanns and Brahms, was published almost twenty years later. During that time he also published three other novels and won awards from Dana, Noemi, War Poems, New Millennium, the Illinois Arts Council, and Stand Magazine among others.

His bapajji (paternal grandmother) often asked what she might send her American grandson from Navsari. Boman asked first for a new portrait of herself which she sent after appropriately dolling herself up for the event. Recalling that his bapajji had written plays in her youth, he asked her to write the story of her life. That story, providing the groundswell for his first novel, *The Memory of Elephants*, became his saving grace at a difficult time when the stress of paying bills while writing the novel had driven him into hospital. After enduring about forty rejections from agents/editors he wrote to Diana Athill in London (who had discovered V. S. Naipaul), calculating that since she had published one Indian she might publish another. It was a happy calculation. The book was published first in the UK to be followed thirteen years later by a US publication from the University of Chicago Press.

Boman’s love of music came early. His mother was a piano teacher, but his initial interest was pop music and his mother got him another teacher who taught him to play by ear, plucking out melodies with the right hand and adorning them with chords in the left. He feels blessed by the reception to his classical music of which he has had two live performances. After the first, a Swiss woman approached him to say she had enjoyed the music – and that her husband was a direct descendant of Mendelssohn!

Boman’s music has a haunting, intangible charm, influenced by the 19th century masters he loves so well. Reflecting on his happiest time, teaching writing at the University of Southern Maine, his voice took on a joyful, faraway tone. “To make a living doing what I loved best was indescribable. I was 57 before that happened, but all too many artists are dead before they can make any kind of living, so I have no complaints.”

Personal Profile

A Kirkus Reviews Best Book of 2016!



"A magisterial work ... astonishingly thorough research ... a riveting dramatization of musical history."

— *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

"Boman Desai writes so compellingly that his characters appear as full-bloodedly as if they might have been his neighbors. BRAVO!"

Zubin Mehta

"Immense scholarship ... a story Tolstoy might have told ... a tour de force."

Vernon Howard (Harvard University)

"A remarkable feat ... charming and readable ... a massive achievement!"

Bapsi Sidhwa

"I loved and admired this book!"

Diana Athill

"I read TRIO through at a gallop, the characters appeared on the page in the flesh, and I could hear their music. Congratulations!"

Soonie Tamporevala

Firmly grounded in fact, the book unfolds like a novel, a narrative of Love, Insanity, Suicide, Revolution, Politics, War - and Music.

A novel for people who hate novels (who read about only "real" things) and a biography for people who hate biographies (for the footnotes and other intrusions).

Available from Amazon.com and on order from any bookstore.

An Excerpt from *Trio*, by Boman Desai:

On March 7, 1897, a shrunken Johannes Brahms, suffering from cancer of the liver, attended a performance in Vienna of his Fourth Symphony for the last time. The symphony glides so smoothly into its first theme that the listener finds himself deep in its wake before he realizes it has even begun. The second movement showcases a plaintive melody hovering around a single note like a hopeless lover. A friend had said that only Brahms could have written that symphony, and even Brahms had had recourse to certain locked chambers of his soul for the first time – but he had finally run out of locked chambers. At the end of each movement the conductor turned to Brahms's box to acknowledge the composer, the audience stood, and the composer stood to acknowledge the downpour of applause, knowing the symphony would not otherwise commence. With the conclusion of the symphony, the downpour swelled to a monsoon. All eyes turned on him, a tiny man, hollows in the back of his neck, skin discolored to bronze, trembling with tears, the auditorium awash with light and color in his blurry eyes. Twenty minutes later – twenty minutes later – the emaciated old composer still stood, and the audience still applauded. He was tired, but remained standing, clinging to the rail, buoyed by the love in the hall, wishing no more to sit or to leave than they, his lovely Viennese, wished to let him go, their eyes no less damp than his own, cheeks no less bright, manly beards aglitter with tears like diamonds, all of them knowing it was the last time they would be seeing one another. He died less than a month later, but what remained – the residue, the essence, distillate of his life, gold from straw – remains impervious to fang and claw, at once the heart of the riddle of life and medicine for the heart.

BIRTHS

Zahaan Yazad Parakh, a son to Shamineh and Yazad Parakh (London), grandson to Niloufer and Adil Mavalvala (Toronto) and Kermin and Soli Parakh (Karachi) and great grand parents Zarine and Sam Mavalvala (Karachi), Shireen Wania (Toronto) and Roshan Sidhwa (Karachi) in London, England on April 22, 2018.

Lila Burzeen Karanjawala, a girl, to Burzeen and Tina Karanjawala, sister to Darius, granddaughter to Kamal Mehta and late Kersi Mehta (Willoughby Hills, OH) and Eruch and Lily Karanjawala (Santa Maria, CA) in Roseville, CA on April 27, 2018.

Cyrus Bamboat, a boy, to Darius and Khushnaz Bamboat, grandson to Kewmars and Tanaz Bamboat, Rohinton and Pervin Ogra in Naperville, IL on May 8, 2018.

Arien, a son to Sanaya and Satal Thetty (London) grandson to Dhun and Farokh Setna (Neston). Great grand parents Pallu J. Setna (Karachi) and Roshan R. Sidhwa (Karachi) in London, England on August 3 2018.

Farzan Mehta, a boy, to Arzan and Vira Mehta, brother to Kaizan and Kurush Mehta, grandson to Persis Sadri, Sam and Pervin Mehta, nephew to Sharmin, Rushad, Armin, Meher, Pearl, Huzwak in Bedford, TX on August 21, 2018. (photo below).



NAVJOTES

Zara Engineer, daughter of Shalini and Darius Engineer, granddaughter of Radha Engineer and Shashi and Atul Mehra in Downers Grove, IL on June 2, 2018.

Yohann and Rayhan Guard, children of Persis and Freddy Guard, grandson of Homai Dadachanji and Gool Guard in Naperville, IL on June 16, 2018.

Darius Sabawalla, son of Shara Godiwalla and Cyrus Sabawalla (Chicago, IL) in Houston, TX on July 15, 2018.

Zarius and Cyrus Desai, children of Daneshmund and Nali Desai on July 21, 2018. (Manashni)

Reagan Rash, daughter of Sonia Behrana and Ron Rash on July 21, 2018. (Manashni)

Darius Hormozdyan, son of Spenta and Farshad Hormozdyan, grandson of Gulshan Dinshaw, in Virginia on July 29, 2018.

Cyrus and Arnaz Bharucha, children of Parvana and Burzin Bharucha, brother and sister to Aryan and Cyraa Bharucha in Mississauga, ONT on August 17, 2018. Navjote ceremony performed by Ervads Jal Panthaki, Xerxes Madan, Kaivan Bharucha.

Kaizad and Zarina Sribnick in Darien, IL on August 25, 2018.

Max Shroff Chesko, son of Victoria and John Chesko, grandson of Mahrukh and Hoshang Shroff of Vancouver, Canada on September 29, 2018. Navjote performed by Ervad Adil Antia.

WEDDINGS

Vida Fereydoonzad (Montreal) daughter of Farhad Fereydoonzad and Wanda Bedard to **Tushar Gambhir**, (Montreal) son of Vikas Gambhir and Rano Ahluwalia, in Delhi, on March 15, 2018.

Shane Irani, son of Gulzreen and Sohrab Irani (Bartlett, IL) to **Nikita Patel**, daughter of Kiran Kalidas Patel and Rashmika Manoj Shah on June 23, 2018.

Zal Sethna, son of Zarir and Roshan Sethna (Houston, TX) to **Tatiana Thu-Thao Nguyen**, daughter of Thu and Nick Nguyen in Cancun, Mexico on August 4, 2018.

Rakshane Sidhwa (Sydney) daughter of Katayun and Percy Sidhwa (Karachi) to **Jehangirshaw Parakh** (London) son of Kermin and Soli Parakh (Karachi) in Negombo, Sri Lanka on 20th October 2018.

DEATHS

Daryoush Boostani, husband of Sultan Koklary, father of Koroush, Esfandiar and Mehernaz Boostani in LA on May 3, 2018

Burjor Faramroze Italia, husband of Nergish Italia, father of Keki, Minoo, Cyrus, father-in-law of Viloo, Claudia, Pearl, grandfather of Arnosh, Arzan, Dennis in Mumbai, India on May 17, 2018. (ZANC)

Ervad Jehangir Noshirwan Sidhwa, father of Pervez (Shireen) Sidhwa (Dallas, TX), Ardeshir (Rushna) (Phoenix, AZ), granddaughter Benafsha in Karachi, Pakistan on May 17, 2018. (ZANC)

Seema Navin Sahni, daughter of late Dolly Engineer (San Jose, CA), wife of Navin Sahni, mother of Sheetal, Sonali, Jitu in San Jose, CA on May 26, 2018.

Viraf Bharucha, 86, husband of Rashna Bharucha, father of Armaity (Viraf) Patel, Cyrus (Diana) Bharucha, Darius (Jarafeen) Bharucha, grandfather of Arzaan, Zain, Sanaya, Nariman, Jasper, Freyana in Houston, TX on June 12, 2018.

Keykavoos Vokhshoori, husband of late Irandokht Farokhzadeh, father of Visda, father-in-law of Reza,

grandfather of Hannah in Tehran, Iran on June 18, 2018.

Shirin Ostovan Tafti (Khodobakh) mother of Rostam, Sima (Patel) Cyrus, grandmother of Nima, Taraneh, Tina and Sima, in Los Angeles on June 20, 2018.

Nozer Sohrabji Dubash, husband of Jeroo Dubash, father of Nevin (Roxana) Dubash (Naperville, IL), Renate (Mark) Fernando, grandfather of Stacie, Aliza, Zach, Zayne, brother of Farida (Nusserwanji) Ogra, uncle of Rovenia (Urmez) Daver, Soli (Cindy) Ogra, Ferozshaw (Anahita) Ogra in Dubai on June 21, 2018.

Dolly Pithawala, wife of Soli Pithawala, mother of Soli (Silloo) Pithawala, Mehernosh (Yashmin) Pithawala, grandmother of Bezan, Sharukh, Malcolm, Daisy, sister of Pervez Gotla on June 23, 2018. (ZAC-LA)

Yazdi Rustam Sidhwa, 53, husband of Zarnak, father of Astad and Afshad, son of Late Justice Rustam S.Sidhwa and Roshan R.Sidhwa brother of Kermin Parekh, Dhun Setna and Sohrab Sidhwa, in Karachi on June 23, 2018 .

Goshtasb Meheraban Hamsayeh, husband of Parizad Ardeshiri, father of Niloufer Hamsayeh Collier, Jennifer Hamsayeh, Mehernaz Hamsayeh Farsi, father-in-law of Behrouz Farsi, David Collier, grandfather of Kamron Bagherian, Asha Mehraban Farsi, Mitra Farsi in San Jose, CA on June 28, 2018.

Perrine Amaria, 90, wife of late Keki Amaria (architect of California Zoroastrian Center), mother of Yasmin, Marzban (Karen), grandmother of Ashley, Cyrus, sister of Keki, Adi, Minoo Gandhi on July 4, 2018. (ZAC-LA)

Rostam Sohrab Bastani, 72, husband of Delnavaz Bastani, mother of Zubin Bastani, Mondana (Rostam)

Felfeli, grandfather of Kaveh, Shirin on July 15, 2018. (ZAC-LA)

Villu Motishaw, 93, wife of late Godrej Motishaw, mother of Katy (Hoshang) Khambatta, grandmother of Godrej (Arnaz), Neville, great grandmother of Rohaan and Riya, sister of late Bhikoo Sethna, late Khorshed Malbari, late Bahadur Sethna, Amy Jariwala in San Diego, CA on July 19, 2018.

Shirin Rusi Irani, wife of late Rusi Merwan Irani, mother of Katy, Khodi, Ronny, Pearl, late Dhanu, Cawas, Dolly, Soli, Nergish, Shahnaaz in Toronto, ONT on August 4, 2018.

Jehangir Behboodi, husband of Pooran, father of Pervin, Farshid, Farzad, Anahita in Toronto, ONT on August 21, 2018.

Nergish Pestonji, mother of Zarine (Burjis) Dordi, Parvez (Dilnaz) Pestonji, grandmother of Truzaar, Tanya, Parinaaz, Nainaaz in Pune, India on August 22, 2018.

Jamshid Khorasheh, 83, husband of late Mahindokht Foroughi, father of Shahriar, Farhad, Shideh, late Babak, father-in-law of Mahnaz Misaghi-Tafti, grandfather of Mitra and Triti in North Vancouver, BC on August 23, 2018.

Firoz Mistry, 79, husband of Piloo Mistry, son of late Tehmi and Dara Mistry, brother of Khorshed (Sheetal), brother-in-law of Suresh Deshpande, uncle of Shailesh and Rajesh in South Windsor, CT on September 6, 2018.

Susan Lee Varjavand (Ellenbeger), 77, wife of Parviz Varjavand, mother of Bahram, Delbar, Nahid in CA on September 6, 2018. (Persian Zoroastrian Association, PZO).

Firoza Mehta, daughter of Kolly, sister of Jehangir, sister-in-law of Hinata, aunt of Xaera and Xerxes in Mumbai, India. (ZAGNY).

Mehrafzoon Firoozgar, wife of Ravanshad Goshtasb, mother of

Arshia, Mandana, Yasaman, sister of Mrs Parimarz (CZC)

Parvez Daruwala, 64, husband of Nilufer, father of Kaizad, Delnaaz, (Indianapolis,) and Jimmy (Shirin Cama) and grandfather of Yasmin Daruwala, brother of Jehanbux (Nancy), (Boston, MA) in Pueblo, Co September 25, 2018.

SarvNaz Izadi Anoushirvani, 91, mother of Dr Farin Anoushiravani and Grandmother of Abtin Farrokhejad, in Connecticut on September 29, 2018 (Tir Rooz and Mehr Maah (7th of Mehr) 1397).

Jimmy Jehangirji Kaikobad, son of Jehangirji and Dinamai Kaikobad, brother of brother of Roshan Sohrabji Mavalvala, Shirin Minocher Patel, Homi Jehangirji Kaikobad and Perin Jehangirji Kaikobad, in Florida on October 6, 2018.

Mehraban Bahram Zartoshty husband of Homa, father of Kaikhosrow, Mehrnaz, Mitra and Koroosh in Los Angeles, on October 21, 2018.

Lionel Russell, husband of Jeroo Russell, brother-in-law of Dr. Narsys and Dr. Dinshaw Punthakee of Hamilton, Ont., in Hamilton, on October 23, 2018 .

Homai Minoo (Princy) Setna, mother of Zeenia Khan (Terry) and Pesi Setna (Fawzia), grandmother of Wayne (Janet), Laila, Dani and Jimmy, great grand mother of Ainsley and Hannah, Oakville, ONT, on October 27, 2018.

Gustad Irani, 83, husband of Arnavaz , father of Jhangir (Zena), Rustam (Jennifer) and Navroj, grandfather of Meher, Hvovi, Zachary, Sam & Nicole, in Florida on October 28, 2018 .

Khurshed Jamaji, 89, husband of Perviez, father of Rustam.(Sherna) Pheroza nd Jeroo, in Montreal, October 30, 2018.

MILESTONES

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.

Male, 41, 5' 7", MS Computer Engg (U of S. California), Working in California. Born and brought up in Mumbai. IN USA since 2005. US citizen. Interested in meeting good-natured girl, willing to settle in USA. Contact pdmsfdc@gmail.com. [M17.37]

Female, 23, 5' 5", BS in Human Resources, working as Financial Advisor in Ottawa, ONT, Canada. Contact vmahava@gmail.com. [F18.46]

Male, 37, 5' 8", Bachelor of Computer Engineering, working as IT Entrepreneur in India, providing solutions and services to Corporate Sector, Governments, Educational Institutions. Willing to relocate. Contact hormuzc@gmail.com. [M18.53]

Male, 25, 5' 7", MS in Mechanical Engineering (Wright State University, Ohio) working as Product Engineer in Indiana. National level table tennis player in India/USA. Contact varachhawala.arzan@gmail.com. [M18.59]



PLEASE SEND ALL SUBMISSIONS FOR
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MAHRUKHM83@GMAIL.COM

*Understanding others is knowledge,
Understandubng oneself is enlightenment
Conquering others is power, Conquering onself is Strength
Contentment is wealth, Forceful conduct is willfulness.
Not loosing one's rightful place is to endure
To die but not to be forgotten is longevity*

*Tao Te Ching 77.(.33) by Lao Tzu
Traslated by Victor H Mair*

DR. FIROZ D. MISTRY

October 29, 1938 – September 6, 2018 (79 Years)

Firoz was an incredibly gifted doctor who had this innate ability to make accurate diagnoses that often stunned people. He was a kind, compassionate person who took the time to listen to what his patients and friends had to say. Firoz was not only our Zarthushti community doctor and advisor, but he provided advice to family and friends beyond that. He performed several surgeries for the Zarthushti community when needed and even took the time to make follow up home visits.

Firoz was originally from Mumbai, India where he completed his MBBS from G.S. Medical College, M.S. from Mumbai and then went on to complete his FRCS in England, before he and his

wife Piloo came to the U.S in 1979 and eventually settled in South Windsor, Connecticut. Although he practiced general surgery with peripheral vascular surgery, his knowledge went beyond that and he always made time to provide guidance. His passion for his profession was profound but was founded in the fundamental belief that people are "human beings first".

Firoz loved good food and music. His love of enjoying life was exceeded only by his love for his family and friends. He was surrounded by family and friends when he passed away peacefully. Firoz will forever remain in our hearts for being a simple, loving and gentle person.



Adapted from ZAGNY newsletter.

PROF EHSAN YARSHATER (1920-2018) THE FOUNDER OF ENCYCLOPEDIA IRANICA, MOST EMINENT SCHOLAR OF IRANIAN HISTORY, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE DIES AT AGE 98, AT FRESNO, CA.

Born in 1920 in Hamedan, Iran, Prof. Yarshater received a Ph.D. in Persian language and literature from the University of Tehran in 1947. He then moved to England where he pursued his studies with W. B. Henning at London University and received an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Old and Middle Iranian in 1960. In 1958, Prof. Yarshater was invited to join Columbia University as Visiting Associate Professor of Indo-Iranian, and two years later was appointed to the Kevorkian Chair of Iranian Studies. He established the Center for Iranian Studies (now The Ehsan Yarshater Center for Iranian Studies) at that university in 1968 and served as its Director until his retirement in 2016.

Prof. Yarshater founded the Encyclopedia Iranica in 1973 and remained its Editor-in-Chief until his retirement. The encyclopedia is considered the most significant, extensive, and comprehensive scholarly work dedicated to the study of Iranian civilization in the Middle East, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Indian Subcontinent. In 1990, he established the Encyclopedia Iranica Foundation to ensure the continuation of this monumental scholarly work and until recently served as its President. Prof. Yarshater also authored and served as editor of numerous other notable works. His books include "Persian Poetry in the Second Half of the 15th Century" (1953) and "Southern Tati Dialects" (1970). He edited the third volume of the "Cambridge History of Iran," in two parts, which covers the Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian periods (1983, 1986), and "Persian Literature" (1988). Lecture series in his name have been established at **Harvard University**, the University of London, and the University of California at Los Angeles. Prof. Yarshater died on September 2, 2018, in Fresno, CA. He will be remembered for his strength of character, unwavering dedication, and immeasurable contributions to the study of the Iranian culture and civilization. The Encyclopedia Iranica Foundation honors his life and his enduring legacy.



Two Centuries of Silence

Abdolhossein Zarrinkoub (Translated from Persian with an introduction and explanatory notes by Paul Sprachman). 2017 Mazda Publishers Costa Mesa, California, USA. 315 pp. \$49.00.

**Reviewed by Dr. Ardeshtir B. Damania, Davis, California
abdamanian@yahoo.com**

This book describes the effect of the Islamic conquest of Iran from the Arab Invasion until the rise of the Tahirid Dynasty, a space of 200 years. Dr. Abdolhossein Zarrinkoub (1923-1999) was a prolific writer and was widely read by scholars. In *Two Centuries of Silence*, Zarrinkoub paints a picture of Iranian resistance to the seventh-century Arab conquest—free of Muslim biases often found in other sources.

The author rues the quenching of Zoroastrian temple fires and the murmurings of the Magi (Mobeds); he unflatteringly describes the Arab Invasion. Zarrinkoub nostalgically writes about Iran's Zoroastrian past and compares the elegance of the Persian language to the invader's language. In his view:

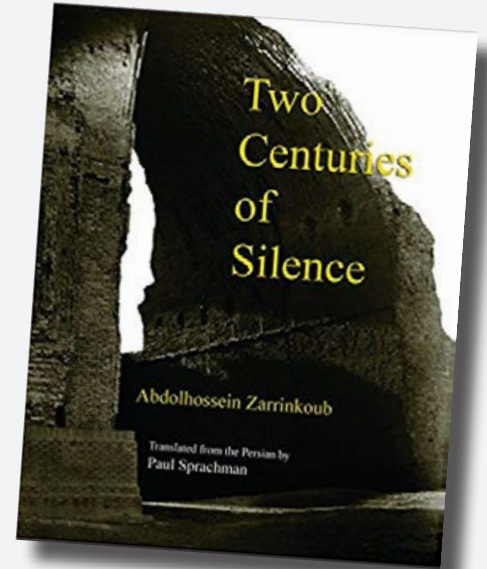
"Even drier and more sterile than the scorching desert sands themselves. If music echoed anywhere in those vast, interminable wastes, it was the drumbeat of war and pillage, the chorus of larceny and murder. No saying or wisdom ever passed from the lips of these folk, nor did any passion or love ever pour from their mouths. Their poetry

described camel dung, and their rhetoric was an incitement to war."

The book begins with a basic, but puzzling, question to the reader: How was a world civilization with so many achievements in art, architecture, religion, law, literature, etc., destroyed by a nomadic people with limited literacy and few accomplishments? The invasion led to a period of cultural dormancy during which Iran's rich literary heritage was nearly destroyed and when Zoroastrianism was forcibly supplanted by Islam.

Some of the questions that the author tries to answer in this work are: 1) Why did the Sasanian Empire fall to the Arabs; 2) How could desert nomads, with very little culture, determine the fate and future of a glorious Persian civilization; 3) How did the Zoroastrian priesthood engage the Muslims in debates about the tenets of Islam; 4) Did the Zoroastrians resist the Arab's aggression; and 5) Why did all attempts to suppress the Persian language and replace it with Arabic fail?

The book consists of 10 chapters with an exhaustive bibliography and comprehensive index. In Chapter 1, "Lords of the Desert," the author describes vividly the Arabs and their desert homeland on the Arabian Peninsula. In Chapter 2, "The Storm



and the Sand," the author tells us something of Muhammad's message to the world and the establishment of the new faith, Islam. The author explores why Sasanian weaknesses and Arab strengths led to ultimate overthrow of the Persian Empire and subsequent dissolution of Zoroastrians. In Chapter 3, "The Fire Extinguished" the author describes the final chapter in the history of the Zoroastrians in Iran. The fall of Nahavand in 642 CE ended 14 centuries of Persian history. The influences of not only Islam, but Christianity from the western part of the empire and Buddhism from the east began to infiltrate and undermine Zoroastrianism. In Chapter 4, "The Lost Language," the author tells us that Arabic was considered the language of a semi-civilized people, a language devoid of grace and refinement. However, the invaders and their language prevailed when the Quran and the call to prayer resounded throughout Iran—the Pahlavi language retreated and became mute. Chapter 5 deals with

“The Black Banner,” the flag that is most associated with Islam and Islamic militancy. The activities and rise of Abu Muslim, a Persian general in service of the Abbasid dynasty, who led the Abbasid Revolution that toppled the Umayyad dynasty, is described in this Chapter. His heroic role in the revolution and military skill, along with his conciliatory politics toward Shia, Sunnis, Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians, made him extremely popular among the people.

In Chapter 6, “On the Other Side of the Oxus”, the author writes about the murder of the last Sasanian king Yazdegird III in 651 CE by a miller in Merv, one of the most distant towns in his former empire. The “City of a Thousand and One Nights” is the subject of Chapter 7. It describes how Baghdad was constructed and became the capital of Iraq, which became the focal point of *A Thousand and One Nights*. Conflict and intrigue continued in the region. Individuals and families who enjoyed great wealth and lived in luxury and comfort one day were reduced to penury and begging for food the next.

In Chapter 8, “The Cry of Resurrection,” the author finally begins to describe what happened at the end of two centuries of silence in Iran after the Arab conquests. The people, the Arabs, that had ruled till now began to give way to Persians who came to the fore, although the latter by now were almost all Muslims. The young and people of wealth did not take well to becoming Muslims at first; religious laws, fasting during Ramadan, pilgrimage to Mecca, animal sacrifices, and ablutions, did not sit well with them.

In Chapter 9, “The Battle of

Beliefs,” the author lists faiths that contributed to lowering the curtain on Zoroastrianism in Iran. These were Manichaeism, Zurvanism, Mazdakism, Christianity, Buddhism, Shamanism, Greek religion, etc. Many stories are told by the author about rivalries and influences exerted by several powerful men who came on the scene at this time.

With the executions of Babak Khorramdin, Mazyar, and Afsin in Bagdad, Zoroastrianism began to wane. Although some Iranians resisted and continued the practice of the old religion, they had to submit to many restrictions and injustices. They were denigrated as *dhimmi*s and *guebres*. These restrictions and taxes are listed in the last Chapter, “The End of One Night.”

The Tahirid dynasty was of Persian dihqan origin that effectively ruled the Khorasan from 821 to 873 CE. Some members of the dynasty served as military and security commanders for the city of Bagdad from 820 until 891. The dynasty was founded by Tahir ibn Husayn, a leading general in the service of the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun. Their capital in Khorasan was initially located at Merv, but was later moved to Nishapur. The Tahirids have been described as the first independent Muslim Iranian dynasty following the fall of the Sassanian Empire and the decline of Zoroastrianism. However, in 821, the Tahirid dynasty took over in Khorasan province and ultimately the whole of Iran. Immediately, the forced conversions, abductions of girls, looting, and attacks and murder of the Zoroastrians began.

Tahir bin Hossein bin Mos'ab, who was the founder of the Tahirid dynasty was called *Zul-Yamínein* (the

ambi-dextrous) .. He was a bigoted tyrant, and his fanaticism against the Zoroastrians and their scriptures knew no bounds. One of his Muslim subjects, who was originally descended from a Zoroastrian family, made an attempt to reform Tahir and laid before him a copy of the Zoroastrian book of good counsel, *Andarz-i Buzurg-Mihr*, named after the precepts given by Buzurg-Mihr, the prime minister of King Anushirvan The Just (531-579 CE). He asked the governor's permission to translate it into Arabic for his royal master's edification. Tahir exclaimed, “Do books of the Magians still exist?” On receiving an affirmative answer, he declared that if the Zoroastrian holy books are in concurrence with Islam they are no longer needed and if they are not in agreement with Islam they should be burnt. Hence, in any case they should be destroyed; he issued an edict that every Zoroastrian should bring him a *maan* or *maund* [about 14 pounds or 6½ kgs] of Zoroastrian books for burning; he concluded his mandate with the order that anyone who disobeyed would be put to death. Imagine how many Zoroastrians lost their lives and the number of valuable religious works that were lost to the world through this persecution. The conclusion is that for two centuries after the Arab conquests, the Iranian people were left alone to practice their religion and culture, but after that the persecution of non-Muslims, harassment, and forced conversions began.

I recommend this book to all, scholars and lay people alike, who seek answers as to why the Persians, who were once such a strong Empire that stretched from Afghanistan to Greece, were defeated by desert Arabs in a battle that eventually sealed their fate as well as faith.

NAVSARI GETS A PARSI MAP

Navsari is a name that is firmly entrenched in the minds of Parsi – Irani Zoroastrians residing in any corner of the world. Navsari has been the fulcrum around which the community has evolved in India since the 12th century A.C. It is the city of culture and has a rich history and heritage.

The stately Atashbehrum at Navsari, is undoubtedly a must on the 'to visit' list of Parsi – Irani Zoroastrians from all corners of India as well as those who visit from overseas. However, what many in the community are not aware of is that Navsari has been the birthplace not only of many Parsi immortals but has as many as 54 active Parsi institutions, an unparalleled feat for a city of its size.

Parsi historian Mr. Marzban J. Giara created a list of the 54 Parsi institutions at Navsari and perceived that it would be useful to publish the same as a guide for Parsi Irani Zoroastrians visiting Navsari. WZO Trust Funds have had a map prepared that provides a glimpse of all the 54 Parsi institutions at different locations.

For the convenience of visitors to Navsari these maps will be displayed at various institutions and places of worship at Navsari, Mumbai and other centres.

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