

JOURNAL

Dae-Behman-Spendarmad 1388 AY (Fasli) • Amordad-Shehrever-Meher 1389 AY (Shenshai) • Shehrever-Meher-Avan 1389 AY (Kadimi)



**Humanitarian Activities
Around the World**



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

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FEZANA Journal

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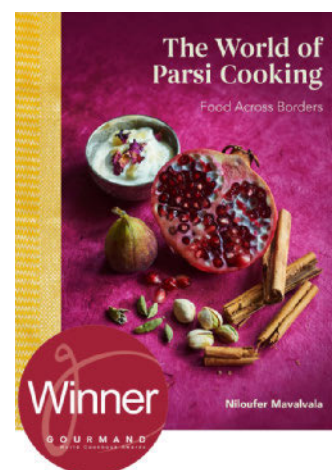
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Dilnavaz Irani (cover) with Mani Rao, Behnoosh Sethna together with over 4000 volunteers packed 500,000 meals for children over the span of the Conference. This project was partnered with Feeding Children Everywhere, #1amFCE, a non-profit organization dedicated to creating a hunger-free world

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Dae –Behman – Spendarmad 1388- AY (Fasli)

Amرداد – Shehrever- Meher 1389 AY (Shenshai)

Shehrever – Meher – Avan 1389 AY (Kadimi)

COMING SOON: SPRING 2020

UDVADA UTSAV, WZCC AGM, GWG, FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS, PERSIAN GARDENS

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The Winter 2019 issue “Humanitarian Activities Around the World” has been an eye opener as to what good Samaritans do from Albania to Zambia. They work in the hard to access hills of Satara, Maharashtra, in the rehabilitation homes of the physically challenged in Orlando, in the dangerous hills of Afghanistan to help children with disability, bringing the gift of sight, bringing compassion, healing, hope and warmth when everything seems desolate and lost, when hopes and dreams are thwarted because of your gender. What we are reporting in this issue, is just the tip of the iceberg, there are countless others in North America and around the world who do amazing work quietly without seeking fame or name. We salute all because the world needs each of us to help the other.

This issue has been very ably curated by Sanaya Master, a very welcome addition to the North American diaspora from New Zealand by virtue of marriage!! It was an absolute delight to work with her, knowledgeable and responsive and responsible.

The 68th UN DGC Civil Society Conference in Salt Lake City, August 2019 brought many Zarthushtis as participants and panelists. A panel partnered with WZCC, RAD-AID International and Partners Asia was hosted by FEZANA on “Global North-South-South Model of Sustainable Development”. Grateful thanks to friends of HRDC c/o Eileen Moncoeur, Executive Director of Partners Asia, Oakland, Cal, for designing the exhibit. A very special thanks to Mr Bahram Soroosh of ZAMWI for his technical assistance in modifying the posters to suit the journal specifications.

This has also been the season of celebrations for the FEZANA member associations. The Zoroastrian Association of Florida celebrated their 25th anniversary, the Zoroastrian Anjuman of Northern California celebrated their 35th anniversary. FEZANA is not only growing but also solidifying its roots. There has been a mushrooming of educational seminars sponsored by the Jamshed Pavri Fund in Vancouver, BC, by the NAMC, by SSZ and FIRES and the Zoroastrian Association of Houston. All very successful with high quality speakers, Cyrus The Great day in October was celebrated by the Sacramento Zoroastrian Association and by the California Zoroastrian Centre with a statue of Cyrus the Great made and sponsored by Mr Abadian of Saxton



Industries, Inc. California. (details in FJ. Spring 2020) You will also read the amazing story of Mobed Burzin Atashband of Calgary, who converted his ground level basement into a dadgah, when he realized there was a need felt by the community and yet nobody would come forward to finance a building. So he decided to finance it himself. It was inaugurated on November 24th complete with a brand new afargan made in Mumbai and all the paraphernalia of the Alat. (page 79)

The Zoroastrian Association to Chicago needs to be congratulated on hosting the first Youth Project Fair in November. Read about all the amazing displays and the confidence with which the youth explained their projects This was followed in December, by the Career Day organized by WZCC, New York Chapter (page 122)

What do we have to look forward to in 2020, the FEZANA AGM in April/May 2020. The North American Zoroastrian Sports in Washington, June 2020, the SSZ seminar in Toronto in Oct 2020, the North American Congress, Houston, in December 2020. And so we March on to the third decade of the 21st century. I wish you all a very fruitful and fulfilling next 12 months of 2020.

Dolly Dastoor Ph.D

FEZANA Must Continue the Zoroastrian Tradition of Selfless Service

Not much is prescribed for the followers of Zarathushtra, who are given the gift of Vohu Manah and asked to make righteous choices based on their own free will. But in the primordial utterance ascribed to the Ahura Mazda himself – the Ahunavar prayer – the one thing that all translations and interpretations agree upon is that the blessings of Ahura Mazda fall upon those who serve their meekest brethren. For as long as we have existed, service with humility and sharing the fruits of our labor with others has been the *modus operandi* of all Zoroastrians everywhere. Philanthropy by Zoroastrian kings of yore, or Zoroastrian industrial and commercial empires, and wealthy individuals of today, is not touted with the prefix of “Zoroastrian” because we feel that it is simply the right thing to do.

FEZANA is no exception to this tradition. The preamble of the FEZANA Constitution states “The activities of this Federation shall be conducted ... with due regard for the principles of GOODNESS, TRUTH, REASON, BENEVOLENCE, IMPLICIT TRUST and CHARITY towards all Mankind.” Further, one of FEZANA’s stated objective is “[t]o engage in charitable activities as required by the Zoroastrian faith...”. FEZANA member associations, committees and individuals had been active in advocacy of humanitarian activities through various groups or Interfaith organizations even before the federation was formed. And the advocacy transformed into action items as and when the need arose. These practices were furthered by the formation of FEZANA’s Interfaith Activities and UN-NGO Committees. Coordinating with its member associations, committees and other organizations FEZANA participated in supporting disaster relief actions in the aftermath of earthquakes in Bam, Honduras, and South Asia and floods in Louisiana, Kerala etc. We also participated in the Socio-Economic Project of providing clean drinking water to the Bardipada community in India.

Noting that many Zoroastrians, especially the youth, in North America were individually involved in humanitarian activities, FEZANA established the Zoroastrian Youth Without Borders (ZYWIB) in 2006 to promote humanitarian internships whose initiative is to give financial support to Zarathushti youth interested in helping the underprivileged from ZYWIB Funds. The internship is to encourage acts of charity.

FEZANA also financially supported many other humanitarian activities of Zoroastrian youth—a gynecologist providing aid in Kenya, Palestine, and

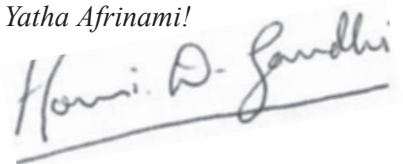
Scotland; an educator teaching alternate habits for HIV-AIDS patients in the West Indies; and a Zoroastrian youth collecting funds online to provide food for hungry, etc.

In 2012, FEZANA supported the Zoroastrian Stepping Forward initiative with a first Zoroastrian Day of Service. The FEZANA community collected gently used shoes and donated locally to homeless and women’s shelters, orphanages, community centers, etc. to make a difference locally.

As an organization that brings together all Zarathushtis in North America, FEZANA must not only support the humanitarian activities of Zarathushtis taking place sporadically at the local level, but also organize more coordinated initiatives so that persons who are not able to devote time to service individually have the opportunity to help discretely as part of a group. Undertaking humanitarian projects in a coordinated manner also allows for assistance to be delivered on a larger scale. The project undertaken on the First Zoroastrian Day of Service in 2012 was one such initiative. This was intended to be an annual service inspiring tradition, but we have yet to organize a second Zoroastrian Day of Service. We must not let this lapse discourage us.

FEZANA stands ready to provide all the support it can for humanitarian leaders who step up to take on the world’s challenges! Our youth must pick up the reins of ZYWIB and lead the way in organizing activities and projects that will allow us to live up to our obligations to help all of God’s creatures. We look to the next generation – for they will inherit the world – to lead us in undertaking projects that will renew the world.

Atha Zamyad, Yatha Afrinami!





FEZANA 33rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING APRIL 30th to MAY 3rd 2020 IN SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

The 33rd Annual General Meeting of FEZANA will be held from Thursday 30th April 2020 to Sunday May 3rd 2020,, hosted by the Sacramento Zoroastrian Association at their center in Sacramento California. April 30th the Pre-AGM Day will focus on Zoroastrians and Advocacy and will tentatively include plans to visit the California Senate and meet with state legislators. On May 3rd the last day of the AGM there will be a Gahambar celebration which should end by 2 p.m.

HOTEL INFORMATION

Comfort Inn & Suites

12249 Folsom Blvd.

Rancho Cordova, CA 95742

Phone (916) 351-1213

BLOCK RESERVATION UNDER: ZSAC

GROUP RATE: \$90 PER ROOM (25 ROOMS HAVE BEEN RESERVED)

The hotel is 10 minutes from the Sacramento Zoroastrian Center and about half an hour drive from the Sacramento airport.

For AGM: 3 nights in hotel: Thursday April 30 - Saturday May 2, 2020 (Some may want to arrive on Wednesday April 29th)

PLEASE BOOK EARLY.



CELEBRATING 35 YEARS OF ZARTHOSHTI ANJUMAN OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA (ZANC)

Nazneen Spliedt

On November 2, 2019 the Zarathoshti Anjuman of Northern California (ZANC), celebrated with much 'dhamal' (gusto) the 35th anniversary of its establishment with a gala dinner at the India Community Centre in Milpitas (a town in Silicon Valley/ the San Francisco Bay area.) The evening started with singing of "Chaiyye Hume Zarthoshti"



Everyone had been encouraged to wear garas and daglis, which they showed off during the gara parade. Our children performed a skit based on the story of the woodcutter and the king as well as performed some dances, choreographed with the help of our youth member Azita Patel. Dina Marawala Lalkaka gave a solo performance and there was more dancing to the DJ after appetizers and dinner.

Mr. Homi Gandhi, President of FEZANA and the Board of PZO were invited as guests, as well as the major donors- for the event - Mr. Bejan Malbari & Ms. Zarine Batliwalla.

The President, Mr. Bomi Patel made a speech recounting the history of ZANC in a PowerPoint presentation and Homi Gandhi also said a few words. It was also the 90th birthday of the much beloved Mr Rusi Sorabji, a long time member of ZANC and a regular contributor to Parsiana.

Dressed in a Dagli and sporting his father's 91 year old "Pheto" by Chinoy Bros, Bombay, Rusi was felicitated lovingly by the 250 guests present.

ZANC was officially registered as a non-profit on Nov 5, 1984, though many members of the Zoroastrian community who came to Northern California had formed loose associations and would meet informally in various restaurants, homes, other centers around town. They also started religious classes for children and adults meeting in homes of various members. ZANC was one of the founding members of FEZANA and is still very active

A core group of 6 families used to meet informally, and Dr. Framroze Bode, who lived in Southern California urged them to form an association for the Zoroastrians of Northern California. In 1985 through the generosity of the Arbab Rustom Guiv Trust, and the members of the community a property was located in the hills above San Jose to be used as a meeting place for our Community.

Funds were raised to build a small Atash Kadeh on the premises and on March 8, 1992 an Atash Kadeh was inaugurated with much religious fervor, with the lighting of the flame by 10 priests, followed by a celebratory meal for 800 attendees many of whom had come from all over California specially for the occasion.

Zarthushtis living in Northern California- north of Santa Barbara and south of Santa Rosa (in the Sonoma wine growing valley) and east up to Sacramento can be members of our association We have a population of 450 plus

families, though not everyone is a member, and unfortunately many people still keep under the radar. The first recorded Parsi to arrive in San Francisco was Mr. Pestonji Daver in 1908 followed by Col. Ghadially in 1912 and Kaikhushroo Hormuz in 1910/11. The latter served in the US Army in World War I and is buried in the Military Cemetery in San Bruno, California. Er. Rustom Bana (Sept 17,1903-June 5,1989) arrived in San Francisco on Nov 2, 1942 from Vancouver, Canada claiming to have been the first Indian-born person to have received an official visa from the Canadian authorities.

Our main events- Navroze, Ghambars, attract nearly 300 people making it difficult for our own small Dar e-Mehr to accommodate these numbers, hence



Photo above Current Board of ZANC (L to R) Meher Mistry (member at large) Kathleen Chothia (member at large), Kerman Deboo, Secretary, Bomi Patel (President) Adil Engineer (Vice President) & Ratan Mistry, Treasurer (not in picture Kersi Daruwalla, member at large).

we have to look for other places to meet & celebrate our traditional holidays. Together with the Persian Zoroastrian Association (PZO) which serves the Persian Zarathushti in the same area, we now have a Capital Campaign going to raise funds to buy a new centre which will be used as a religious, cultural & educational space for our growing community.

All the Zarathushtis in our area support this major project. As we grow as a community there is a need to support the next generation of Zarathushtis, who can be proud of their heritage and carry the spirit of Asha forward to the next Millennium.

♦ *Nazneen Thanawalla Spliedt, born & raised in Karachi arrived in the USA from HongKong in 1998 with her husband Ehler, to 'retire' after 30 years of living and working in many places around the world. They are both active in the Zarathushti community and Nazneen was President of ZANC from 2005 -2017. They have both served on the board for over 15 years.*

PAST PRESIDENTS OF ZANC



1980	Jiji Patel
1983	Dhun Engineer
1985	Maneck Bhujwala
1986	Darius Captain
1988	Er. Jimmy Makujina (Deceased)
1990	Erach Tarapore
1991	Feroze Bhandara
1993	Maneck Bhujwala
1994	Peshotan Irani
1996	Jiji Patel
1998	Bomi Patel
2005	Nazneen Spliedt
2017	Bomi Patel

From left Nazneen Spliedt , Bomi Patel , Darius Captain, Maneck Bhujwala , Dhun Engineer; Jiji Patel, Feroze, Bhandara; Eruch Tarapore; not in pic- Peshoton Irani & the late Er. Jimmy Makujina

25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF FLORIDA (ZAF)



JIMMY DUBASH

President, ZAF

Zoroastrian Association of Florida (ZAF), a member of FEZANA, celebrated its 25th Anniversary on Saturday, August 17, 2019 on Shehenshai Noruz, in Parkland, Florida. 160 ZAF members, families, and friends enjoyed this memorable occasion.



The celebration started with a Khushaali nu Jashan performed by five ZAF mobeds: (l-r) Ervards Zubin Panthaki, Jehangir Bhada, Soli Dastur, Khushroo Daruwalla, Firdaus Dhabhar.

The Jashan was followed by a message from FEZANA President Homi Gandhi, delivered by Ervard Soli Dastur congratulating President Jimmy Dubash and the whole ZAF community for achieving this memorable milestone. The ZAF Board and members of ZAF community were all thanked on behalf of the Executive Committee, all FEZANA Associations and the whole North American Zoroastrian Community.

A special **Ervad Darab B. Unwalla** Award (named after the founder of ZAF) was presented by the Unwalla family (Nellie, Perry, and Jasmin) to Ervad Soli Dastur for his 25-years of dedicated service to the South Florida Zoroastrian community. The total support of his wife Jo Ann Dastur was also gratefully acknowledged



Awards were also given to Religion Class teachers: Jimmy & Freny Deboo (children under 10), Azita Dotiwala (Substitute teacher), Hovi Shroff (children over 10), and Jasmin Deboo (Substitute teacher).

Awards were also given to Simon Gee for his dedicated service to the ZAF website and directory, and to Rumi Major for his service as an ex-ZAF VP.

Everyone enjoyed the food that included masala dosa, chat, pani poori, chicken pulao, dar, kebab, patra ni machhi, (fish in plantain leaves) and laganshala istoo, (veg stew) including the delicious desserts ras malai and gajar halwa.

Thanks to the hard work of the ZAF board members, the evening was a great success, enjoyed by all.



Daisy Patel choreographed the children's Sari Dance performed to the tune of Rang De (bring color of life).



Hovi Shroff organized a successful raffle and choreographed the Persian folk dance performed by mothers that showcased our Persian and Iranian heritage and its journey through time.





A Latin Cha Cha performed by Cyra and Oscar Mobed showcased the culture of our vibrant city, we now call our home, namely Miami and the surrounding areas.



ZAF Board (l-r) Merzy Karanjia, Zeus Avari, Farhad Vankadia, Farhad Dumasia, Daisy Patel, Jimmy Dubash, Ali Lankarani, Shiraz Mehta, and Firdaus Dotiwala.

ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON INC (ZAMWI)



ZAMWI held its Annual General Meeting on Sunday, September 22, 2019. The first order of business was the election of the Board of Trustees for a 2 year term beginning October 1, 2019. The following officers (in order, pictured below) constitute the new Board: Dilmeher Mistry (Joint Secretary), Mahnaz Marolia (Secretary), Mehrdad Izadyar (At-Large member), Anne Khademian (President), Jamshid Dehghanian (Joint Treasurer), Jamshid Parsinejad (Vice President), Neville Elavia (Treasurer). This year the Board is working closely with the community and appointed committees to host the 2020 Z Games in July, and to raise funds to complete construction in the Kamran Dar-e Mehr and establish an operations and maintenance fund. (Photo courtesy Dr Behram Pastakia)

FEZANA JOURNAL WISHES THE NEW BOARD ALL SUCCESS IN THEIR PROGRAMS AND THE ZOROASTRIAN GAMES IN 2020





SMALL COMMUNITY, BIG DREAMS.
TOGETHER STRONGER!

Dear friends,

The Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, DC, Inc. (ZAMWI) is excited to welcome athletes, spectators, volunteers, friends and family from across the globe to the 2020 Z Games, July 1 - 5!

The Z Games Advisory Committee, chaired by Farshid Behmardi, has been working hard to prepare for this great event. This email provides important updates, deadlines, and ways you can get involved.



The **early-bird registration** is now open! To save money, we highly encourage you to take advantage of this early-bird opportunity. You can start your registration by visiting our website <https://www.zgames2020.com/register.html>. Bahar Boroumandrad chairs the registration subcommittee. Please reach out to Bahar at zgames2020@zamwi.org with any questions.



Stay informed about 2020 Z Games updates and deadlines by following our Instagram [@2020zgames](https://www.instagram.com/@2020zgames). In our Instagram account, you will also learn more about our volunteers, event developments, and you can reach out with suggestions and questions.



Hosting a well-organized and unifying event can only be possible with the help of volunteers. ZAMWI volunteers are partnering with volunteers from ZAPANJ to support the Games throughout the 4 days. If you are interested in volunteering, please click the link to complete the volunteer form from <https://www.zgames2020.com/volunteer.html> or by going to our website, and submit the form under *Get Involved*.



The Z-game promises to be filled with intense competition, camaraderie, and lots of fun. Our mission is possible with your donations. For donations, please visit our website's donation page, <https://www.zgames2020.com/donate.html>.



If you are a business owner, this is the perfect opportunity to promote your business by becoming a sponsor. Our fundraising group has worked hard and put together several great sponsorship packages from which you can select what works for you. For more information please visit <https://www.zgames2020.com/sponsor.html>.

We are super excited for 2020 Z Games and hope that you join us!

Best,

2020 Z Games Advisory Committee

ZARATHUSHTI ROOTS---- ANCIENT AND MODERN

ZOROASTRIAN SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA SEMINAR , OCTOBER 6, 2019

FIRDOSH MEHTA
ZSBC Religion Education Committee



L:R (Manochehr Dini, Homi Italia, Eddie Eduljee (back), Firdosh Mehta, Anahita Kaviani (back), Rashna Mehta, Kayras Irani (back), Sanaya Master, Darius Dharsi (back), Shirin Kiani, Eddie Surman (back), Bella Tata, Fariborz Rahnamoon (back), Aurash Yazdgerdian, Mobed Ardeshir Behi

42 people attended the Third Seminar, held on Sunday, October 6, 2019 at the Arbab Rostam Guiv Dar-e-Mehr, Burnaby, BC , It was a day of knowledge, learning, social connectivity and shared experiences.

Organized by Rashna & Firdosh Mehta, under the flagship of ZSBC and sponsored by FEZANA & ZSO through the Jamshed Pavri Religion Education Fund, it was a day well worth the experience. Firdosh and Rashna, organized a volunteer team of Pervin Buhariwala, Jasmine Bharucha, Aurash Yazdgerdian, Kayras Irani, Sanaya Master, Anahita Kaviani, Manochehr Dini, Percy Billimoria and Rohinton Unwalla, among others who not only catered to our intellectual rejuvenation, but also to our gastronomical enhancement with plenty of food and beverages during the break and a hot lunch of Indo-Persian Fusion Cuisine, during the course of the seminar, which was from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Firdosh Mehta started the program by requesting Moobed Dr. Ardeshir Behi to offer a benediction. He then recognized the contributions of the Nirumvala Family of DELTA 4 Productions for donating the large screen to ZSBC. He welcomed all present and announced the sale of the 2020 Canadian Multifaith Calendars and the complimentary hand out literature.

The speakers of the day were introduced .

Mr. K. E. EDULJEE

Beyond the Silk Roads - Zoroastrian-Aryan Presence & Influence in Mongolia, Turkistan, India & China

Continuing his 2017 presentation on the Silk Roads where primary focus was on the older western roads, this presentation focused on the eastern lands.

Did you know how many Fire Temples we had in just one Chinese city?

Is there a connection with the time and land of the terracotta warriors?

Could Ancient Iranian influence have spread to Japan and does evidence still exist in the Japanese Imperial palace?

Did one of our High Priests officiate in Mongolia & Turkistan?

What does the evidence from the Indus Valley tell us about the true story?

He welcomed us to join him in a magical journey.

(See detailed presentation on page 14)

The second presentation was made by

Dr. ED SURMAN

On the Mazdayasnian Roots of Monotheism

In the 21st century more than half of the 7.5 billion people in the world belong to religions called monotheistic. The high numbers and geographic distribution of adherents increase the influence of these religions on global politics, economics, and communication.

The significance of this category in the modern world raises the question: “where did it come from?”

This lecture considered the origins of monotheism as a type of religion using the oldest example: the development of specific components of the ancient worship of Ahura Mazda seemed to have served as a template for the religions deemed monotheistic that followed.

After lunch the program continued with a discussion on community issues moderated

by MOOBED Dr. ARDESHIR BEHI, who also introduced the Speakers and their topics, followed by Question/Answers

YOUNG ADULT ZARATHUSHTI PANEL of four local speakers.

SANAYA MASTER : *Empowering Future Leaders.*

KAYRAS IRANI: *Return Reconnect Revive: Zoroastrian Return To Roots.*

SHIRIN KIANI : *Zoroastrian values as a platform for... social movements !*

DARIUS DHARSI: *Proposals for the Prosperity and Survival of the Zoroastrian Community in North America.*

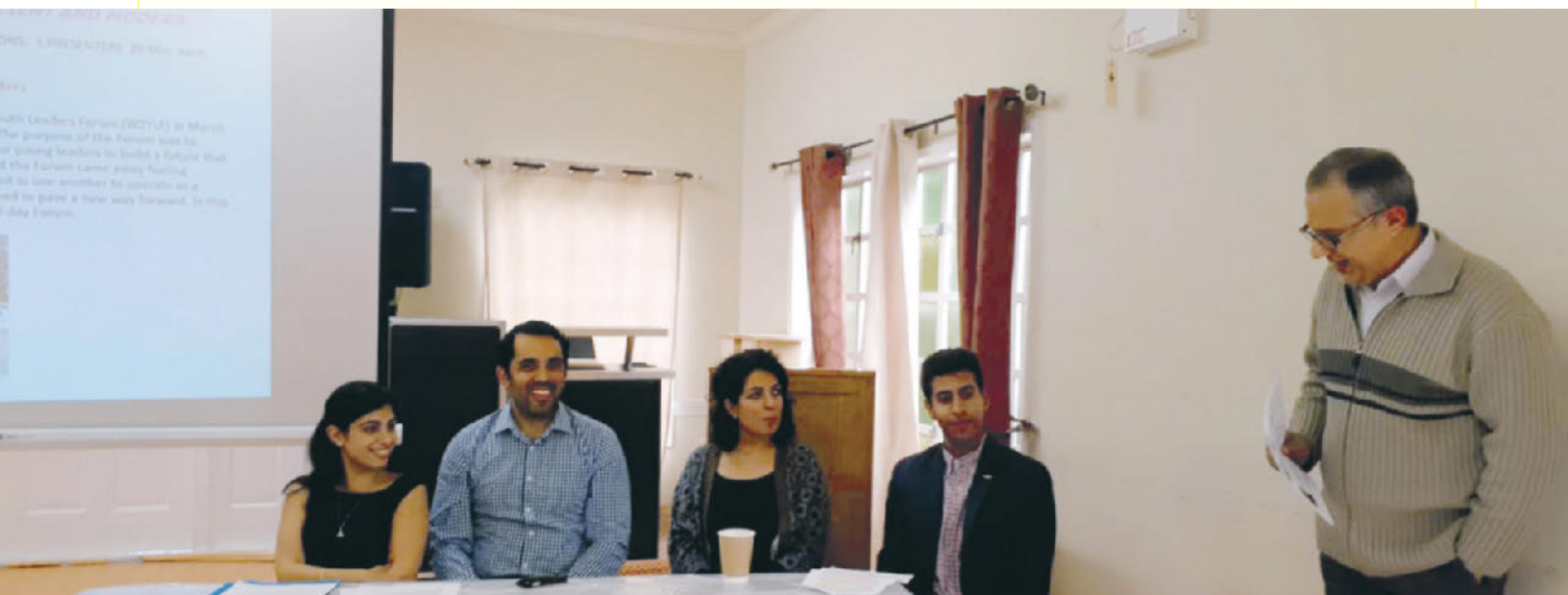
In appreciation of the speakers gifts were presented by various members of the community to all the Speakers. All attendees were thanked for their participation.

The seminar ended with a “vote of thanks” to ZSBC, FEZANA, all the volunteers, to both the speakers and participants for an interesting, informative and educational seminar, with expectations to continue this activity next year. Firdosh Mehta was thanked by the Education Director, Jasmine Bhathena, with a gift from ZSBC.

The direct link to the You-Tube video of the seminar is: <https://youtu.be/-3XMuQxyHR8>

The web link for the proceedings is on the report. Special thanks to Manochehr Dini and Arzan Sam Wadia for this video.

Photos courtesy of Kayras Irani.



from left Sanaya Master, Kayras Irani, Shirin Kiani; Darius Dharsi , standing Dr Ardeshir Behi.

LESSER KNOWN STORIES FROM THE SASSANIDS' FINAL DAYS

K. E. EDULJEE

1. Islamic-Arab Invasion of Iran-Shahr

In 633 CE, the Islamic Arab army invaded Sassanid-Iranian Iraq. In 636, the Arabs engaged and defeated the Sassanid Persian army in the battle of Qadisiyyah (now in South-Central Iraq). This event brought to an end Zoroastrian rule between the Euphrates River and Zagros Mountains—in the region of Iranian Iraq then called Eraq-e Ajam. ‘Ajam’ is a derogatory term used by the Arabs for Iran and Iranians. It means ‘mute’ or ‘dumb’.



Image caption: Miniature painting depicting the Battle of Qadisiyyah in a manuscript of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh.

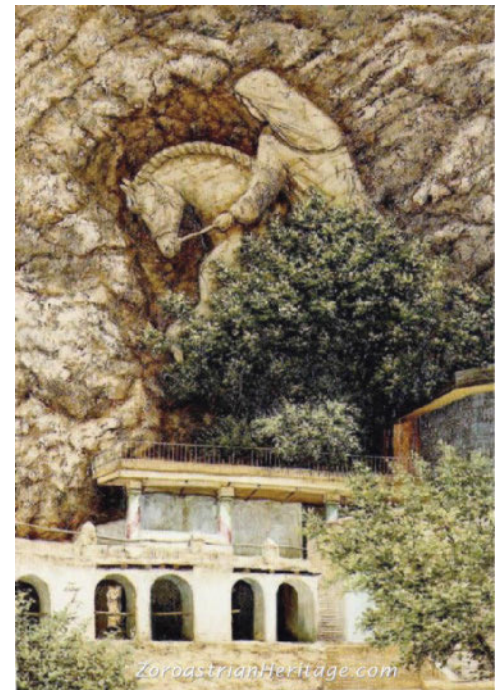
The Arab armies next crossed the Zagros Mountains into the Iranian plateau. Their invasion of the Iranian heartland culminated in the defeat of the Persian armies at the battle of Nahavand (near Hamadan) in 642. With the flight of the last Zoroastrian-Sassanid king, Yazdegird III (r. 633-649 CE) before the advancing Arabs, Zoroastrian rule of Iran-shahr effectively came to an end in 649.

2. Sassanid Royalty's Flight

In the face of the advancing Arab armies that sought their heads or servitude, the Persian royal family split up as they fled eastward. Yazdegird eventually arrived in Merv (now in Turkmenistan) where he was betrayed and murdered in 651 or 652. The queen-mother and her daughters fled to the mountains of Yazd. According to legend, they were never taken prisoner by the Arabs or their Iranian collaborators, the mawalis (an Arabic word denoting non-Arab converts who became agents, clients or slaves of the Arabs) who were often bribed with special concessions to turn against their own people.

3. Fight & Flight c. 650-750 CE

The fight against the Arabs and their allies would nevertheless continue for a couple of centuries. Ahmad Ibn Yahya Ibn Jabir al-Biladuri, a ninth century CE Arabic writer in his Futuh-ul-Buldan tells us about Zoroastrians who took a stand against the advancing Arabs at Hormuz on the south-eastern Iranian coast. The Zoroastrians were eventually over-powered and the survivors fled by sea to Makran, the coast of Baluchistan, which lay to the east of Hormuz (and perhaps from there eventually to the Indian west-coast). al-Biladuri's text reads in translation, "He (the Arab commander Mujasa bin Masood)



Sassanid King Yazdegird III's daughter, Princess Nik-Banu disappearing into the fold of the hills at Pir-e Sabz, Yazd, Iran. Credit: Bijan 1351 at Flickr.

conquered Jeraft (Jiroft, Kerman) and having proceeded to Kerman, subjugated the city and made for Kafs (Hormozgan) where a number of Persians who had collected there, opposed him at Hormuz (the port of Kerman). Masood fought with and gained victory over them and many people of Kerman fled away by sea. Some of them joined the Persians at Makran and some went to Sagistan (Sistan).” [Adapted from Rustam Meheraban Aga’s translation as quoted in ‘The Kissah-e-Sanjan’ by Dr. Jivanji Modi (Journal of the Iranian Association Vol. 7, No. 3, 1918.)]

4. Obstinate Zarang

Despite the now overwhelming size, power and intimidating reputation of the Arab-Islamic armies, the Sistani town of Zarang (Zaranj in Arabic) with its minuscule number of defenders was a thorn in the side of the rapidly advancing Arabs. Zarang, now capital of Afghanistan’s SE Nimruz Province, lies some 700 km NE of Hormuz and was once part of old Sistan.

Faced with overwhelming force against them, the defenders of Zarang decided to surrender to the invaders. The story goes that when the Arab commander summoned the marzban of Zarang Aparviz (Parviz?) to discuss the terms of surrender, the Arab was seated on the corpse of a dead defender. The terms included 1,000 slaves each with a golden goblet. However, the surrender of Zarang did not mean quiet compliance. Led by Aparviz, the citizens of Zarang began an insurgency and in 654 rose up in open revolt and drove out the Muslim garrison. The Arabs counterattacked, took back the city, exacted retribution and doubled the tribute, but this too did not the end of Zarang’s resistance. Around 661, they again overthrew the Muslim garrison. Yet again, the Arabs with overwhelming force retook the town. As we will read below in the account of Yezdegird’s son Piruz, this would not be the end of Zarang’s role in a continued defence of Aryan lands. Significantly, it is from the nearby Lake Kasava (also called Kasaoya/Frazdan thought to be present Lake Hamun) in Sistan that the Saoshyant is expected to rise and herald the final defeat of the forces of evil. [Yashts 13.129 & 19.92; Vendidad 19.5. Details at <http://zoroastrianheritage.blogspot.com/search?q=Saoshyant>.] Rebellions such as this were breaking out all over the conquered lands, but the fractured and uncoordinated rebels were for the most part no match for the Arabs and the immense wealth they had gained through plunder.



Stark landscape of obstinate Zarang/Zaranj, Afghanistan.

5. Yezdegird’s Son Piruz Goes to China & Counter-attacks

Medieval historian Masudi (896-956 CE) in his *Ma’aden al-Javaher* (Meadows of Gold) records that Yezdegird III had two sons Piruz and Bahram, and three daughters Adrag, Shahrbanu, and Mardawand. The 10th century CE Chinese *Jiu Tangshu* (Old Book of Tang, chronicles about the Tang dynasty r. 618 to 907 CE) and the 11th century *Xin Tangshu* (New History of the Tang) also contain accounts of the Persians including post Arab invasion events and Persian collaboration with the Chinese.

From the latter we learn that after the murder of his father, Yezdegird’s son Piruz gained the support of the Bactrians and with their help liberated Zarang from the Arabs, making the noble town his capital. Obstinate Zarang had now become the interim Sassa-

nid-Zoroastrian capital. Piruz recognized that he needed help and sent an embassy to the Tang Emperor of China, Gaozong (r. 649-683 CE), suggesting an alliance and requesting help.

There are conflicting accounts of what happened next. In one account, help did not arrive soon enough. In another, a Chinese general and his troops sent by the Chinese Emperor went as far as Kyrgyzstan and stopped leaving Piruz to fend for himself. As a result, around 663, Piruz could no longer maintain his po-

sition in Zarang and had to flee, seeking refuge in the Chinese court in Chang'an (now Xi'an) a journey of some 5,000 km along the old Silk Roads.

From a diary [translated by Frank Wong, q.v. 'Pirooz in China' at the Iran Chamber & CAIS] written by Piruz's son Narseh we read of another variation of what happened—though the end result was the same. From Wong's translation of the diary (which, we do not see referenced in any other source), we gather that one of Yezdegird's daughters was married to the Emperor of China. In seeking Chinese assistance, Piruz wrote a letter (likely sent via an embassy) to his sister who was the Chinese Emperor's wife. In the letter, Piruz requested a Chinese alliance and assistance in stopping the Arab advance. That help did not arrive. With the Arab armies now in sight, Piruz was compelled to flee eastward. Together with other Persian nobility, their families and accompanying soldiers, they crossed the Pamirs in the 660s and made the long journey to the Chinese capital.

We also read that when Piruz arrived at the Tang Chinese capital, he found settled there long-established Aryan, i.e., old Iranian, Sogdian and Bactrian merchant communities who had plied the Silk Roads. Es-

corted into the Chinese emperor's presence, Piruz prostrated himself before the emperor. The Emperor embraced and kissed Piruz on the cheeks and then reassured Piruz saying, "You've come a long way. Fear no more for you are my brother and this is your new home." With tears in his eyes, Piruz knelt and thanked the Emper-



Could Yezdegird III's son Piruz & his soldiers on their journey to China have looked something like this? Source unknown.

or who permitted Piruz and the Iranians to settle in 38 villages—that number indicating a sizeable community. The emperor also allowed Piruz and his nobles to set up a royal court in exile.

Piecing together the different accounts, it appears Piruz did not stay in the Chinese capital for long. We gather the Chinese made Piruz (called Bilusi in Chinese) 'Commander of the Western Guard' giving him a battalion with which Piruz returned to Central Asia without delay and continued his campaign against the Arabs. It is possible that he advanced all the way to Zarang, since the Chinese Emperor recognized Zarang as the capital of 'Bosi Dudufu', the Persia Command, with Piruz as 'Bosi Wang', King of Persia. Piruz governed what remained of Iranian-Aryan lands for about twenty to forty years until his death around 700 CE.

Antonio Forte [in 'Il persiano Aluohan (616-710) etc.'] surmizes that during this time—a Persian noble Aluohan who was held in high regard by Emperor Gaozong and sent to the Byzantium court as a Chinese envoy—was none other than Piruz's brother Bahram. Aluohan's career is recounted on a funerary stele discovered near Luoyang (not far west from Xi'an).

6. Piruz's Passing

According to Wong, Narsieh's diary contains an account of the ailing Piruz's last words. With members of his court gathered by his side, Piruz turned to the west and said words to the effect, "I have done what I could for my homeland. I have no regrets." Turning to the east he said, "I am grateful to China, my new homeland."

Then he turned towards the gathered Persians and said, “Contribute your talents and devote them to the Emperor. We are now Chinese.”

At his funeral, a magnificent stallion was led at a gallop 33 times around the regent’s body, that being the number of his military victories over the Arabs.

Regardless of the account, Piruz had spent his last years fighting the Arab invaders of Aryan lands, Iran-shahr. Piruz had also been assisted by his son Narsieh in the struggle against the Arabs and their allies. Beset by ill health Narsieh died in Chang’an not long after his father’s passing.

7. The Last Sassanid Resistor, Khosro

Our Chinese sources as well as a Turkish source [q.v. Chavannes, E., Documents sur les Tou-Kieu (Turks) Occidentaux, 1903] state that at least from 728 to 731 CE, a Sassanid descendant of Yezdegird III named Khosro, continued the campaign to liberate the eastern lands of Iran-shahr (old Sogdiana) from the Arabs, this time in alliance with the Turgesh Turks and Sogdian forces. Fortes believes, that Aluohan/Bahram’s son (named Ju Luo on the stele) is the same Khosro who fought against the Arabs making Khosro, Yezdegird’s grandson, and the last Sassanid known to history.

Mazandarani historian Tabari (839–923 CE) in his Tarikh details the battles in Central Asia against the Arabs and their allies. Arab hold over the region was largely diminished in the 720s. One of the most celebrated battles was the 729 siege of Kamarja that lasted for 58 days. When Khosro demanded the surrender of the besieged Arab forces, he also proclaimed the restoration of the Sassanid realms under him. The Arabs ultimately surrendered under promise of safe-conduct and the region was completely liberated in 731. Regrettably, by 741, a hundred or so years after the Arabs crossed the Zagros, Arab rule of Sogdiana—the second and one of the oldest Aryana nations listed in the Vendidad—was re-established and the rest, as they say, is history. The defeated Zoroastrians made their last stands against the Arabs in several places. In these regions, insurrections and revolts against the Arabs and their Islamic allies continued for about a century after their invasion.

Image caption: Coin with the name Khosro dated to Yezdegird III’s 30th year (CE 661-62) from the American Numismatic Society

[#1975.238.40] but surprisingly attributed to the Darabgerd Mint in Pars (which would have been under Arab control at that time). Could this be among the last Sassanid coins minted perhaps with moulds transported east?

8. The Last Blow

If the Tang Chinese emperors had welcomed and supported the fleeing Iranian Zoroastrians, later rulers of China were not so gracious. In the 9th century CE,

the Chinese launched a purge of Zoroastrians & Christians. By the 11th century, by some estimates, a million refugee ‘Persians’ and their descendants had all but disappeared as an identifiable community.

We dedicate this account to the many unknown Zoroastrians who fought and perished in the defence of their motherland—who fought selflessly and valiantly to kept the flame alive.



◆ *K E Eduljee, past director of the Zoroastrian Society of BC and a founding trustee of the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr trust for BC, lives in West Vancouver, BC, Canada. He is the author of the Zoroastrian Heritage website at www.zoroastrianheritage.com and the Zoroastrian Heritage blog at zoroastrianheritage.blogspot.com. He hosts Facebook’s Zoroastrian Heritage group and has written several monographs on subjects such as the Farohar/Fravahar motif.*



Sacramento Zoroastrian Association

IN HONOR OF CYRUS THE GREAT—AN ANCIENT EMPEROR AHEAD OF HIS TIMES the International Day of Cyrus the Great, Oct 26, 2019

world, many travelling long distances to attend.

Three scholars kept the audience spell bound at the all-day conference—as they shared highlights of their years of in-depth research—each focused on a different aspect of the glory of the Persian empire under Cyrus, and its relevance today.

Dr Touraj Daryaei, (below) Maseeh Chair in Persian Studies, Professor of Ancient Iranian History, University of California, Irvine, gave a background of Cyrus's multi-cultural approach to administering his vast Achaemenid Persian empire (550-350 BCE). Dr Daryaei's information was culled from Aramaic literature, Persian documents, and Greek writers-- Herodotus and Xenophon.

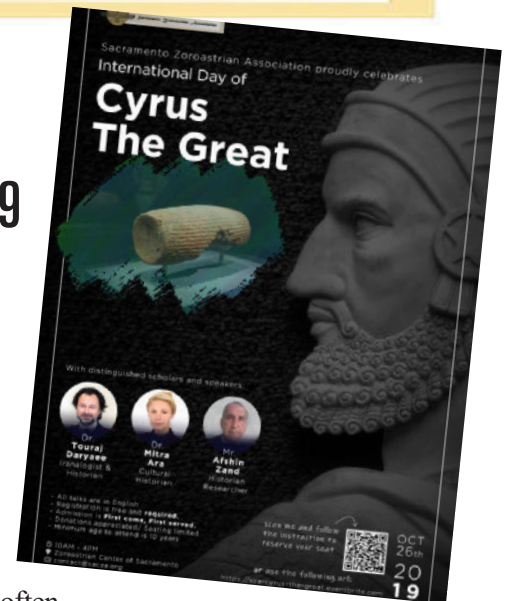
The now famous Cyrus cylinder, created 2500 years ago and excavated in 1879, often

described as the first charter of human rights, is a symbol of the tolerance and freedom espoused by Cyrus. It

describes Cyrus as a harbinger of peace who honors local traditions, rebuilds temples and restores rituals.

Inscribed in cuneiform, one of the earliest known scripts, the Cyrus cylinder contains Cyrus's declaration of tolerance which is a model of how to govern a multi-cultural, multi-faith empire—an empire that survived 200 years of stability before it was destroyed by Alexander.

A letter written by Cyrus when he conquered Babylon and freed the Jews, gives a glimpse of his generosity, his respect for the people he has conquered, and his will to do the right



thing.

"I have given leave to as many of the Jews as dwell in my country as please, to return to their own country, rebuild their city, and to build the temple of God at Jerusalem," said the letter from Cyrus to the Jews. The expenses of rebuilding the temple were to be given from Cyrus's own revenues.

Thus Cyrus played out the Zoroastrian theme of putting back into order what had been broken or undone, said

Dr Touraj Daryaei.

The second speaker, **Dr. Mitra Ara**, (photo right) Associate Professor of Persian and Iranian Studies, San Francisco State University, focused on scriptural presentation of Cyrus the Great, quoting from the Old Testament, Book



of Isaiah, where Cyrus is referred to as the “Lord’s anointed.”

The Jewish prophet Isaiah, 8th century BCE, made a prophetic declaration of Cyrus the Great taking action to restore the nation of Israel from Babylonian captivity. Isaiah, in what is known as the Old Testament, Book of Isaiah, 45:1-3, makes the relationship between God and Cyrus explicit: “thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whom He has taken by his right hand to subdue the nations before him....”

Cyrus is mentioned again in the Bible in the Book of Daniel 10:1: “In the third year of Cyrus, King of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel (11:2). Now then, I will tell you the truth: Three more kings will arise in Persia, and then a fourth, who will be far richer than the others. By the power of his wealth, he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece...”

One may wonder, what is the relevance of this ancient material to our present day and age?



The third speaker, **Mr. Afshin Zand**, (left) who has done extensive research under Professor Richard Frye of Harvard University, explained the relevance of Cyrus’s ideas:

All major cities of the world today have multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-faith populations living in close proximity. It is now more imperative than ever to look at how an ancient emperor with similar challenges managed to maintain peace and stability in his vast empire—the largest empire the world has known.

Additionally, Mr. Zand described how the Founding Fathers of the US were inspired by the ideals of religious and cultural tolerance espoused by Cyrus.

How did that happen?

Xenophon, an ancient Greek philosopher, historian and student of Socrates, wrote the *Cyropedia*, (literally the “Education of Cyrus”) around 370 BC. Xenophon describes the education of the ideal ruler and offers a glimpse of the character of Cyrus in order to understand why his subjects obeyed him willingly—even those who did not speak his language nor followed his religion.

Cyrus led by example rather than precept or coercion, says Xenophon. “There is a deep and usually frustrated desire in the heart of everyone to act with benevolence rather than

selfishness, and one fine instance of generosity can inspire dozens more...When they perceived moderation and self-control in the actions of their leader, the subjects were eager to curb their own anti-social instincts.”

Originally written in Greek, the *Cyropedia* survived antiquity and became a favorite of many well-known figures including Rousseau and Thomas Jefferson.

Jefferson is believed to have at least two volumes of *Cyropedia* in Greek and Latin in his possession. In a letter to his grandson, Jefferson exhorts him to read the *Cyropedia* first, such was his reverence and admiration of this ancient text...

Over all, it was a very informative and thought-provoking conference. In between the scholarly discussions, there was cultural entertainment: while a sumptuously catered Persian lunch was being served, Ali Sheybani performed his composition titled “Children of Cyrus”.

Teriti Jahani, Paniz Sohrab and Farnaz Jahani performed an energetic and graceful Persian dance.

The conference was welcomed by Mr. Khodadad Pashutani, vice president, who has studied Persian history and conducts regular lectures at the Sacramento Zoroastrian Center. Ms. Negar Namiri, a young adult did an admirable job as Master of Ceremonies. Vote of thanks was given by Mr. Darius Captain and plaques of appreciation were presented to the speakers by the president, Dr. Nahid Afshari.

The conference was free for all participants, thanks to the generosity of several sponsors.

REPORT BY JEROO CAPTAIN

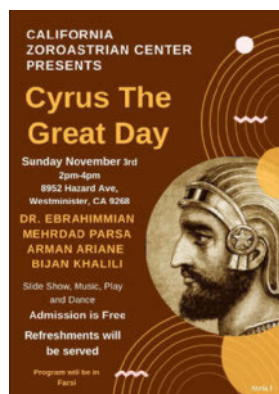
◆ *Jeroo Captain, RN, MA holds a Master’s Degree in English with a gold medal from Nagpur University. She served as Managing Editor for Nurseweek for several years. She retired after 25 years as an RN in the Department of Child Psychology, Kaiser Permanente Hospital. She lives with husband Darius in Granite Bay, near Sacramento California.*



SZC Board with speakers

Board (starting from right - Farzin Jahani, treasurer; Mehrdad Bastani, secretary; Kodadad Pashutani, Vice-President; Darius Captain; Dr Nahid Afshari, President; Mr Afshin Zand; speaker; Dr Mitra Ara, speaker; Dr Touraj Daryaei, speaker; Negar Namiri, MC for the evening

CYRUS THE GREAT DAY AT CALIFORNIA ZOROASTRIAN CENTRE



From right Shahjahan Kasravi; Mehrdad Parsa; Dr Jafari's friend, Dr Ali Jafari; Mr Abraamian; Dr Abramiaan's friend; Shahrooz Ash; Dr Ardashir Anoushiravani; Shideh Anoushiravani; Abraamain.s wife; Rouzbeh Kasravi

YOUTH FAIRS IN CHICAGO AND NEW YORK

YOUTH PROJECT FAIR - ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF CHICAGO

Do you know what the Zoroastrian Creation Story is? Do you know why the number 4 is so very important in the formation of a Persian Garden? Do you know that one of the first ever textual references to medical surgical procedures was in the Shahnameh? Do you know why Zoroastrians are ecological scientists? These questions and many more were explored at the First Zoroastrian Association of Chicago (ZAC) Youth Project Fair on Sunday, November 17, 2019.

The ZAC hall was filled to capacity with a buzz of energy in the air. It was converted into a bastion of learning where 40 children and youth from the ZAC Religion Class (ages 6-13) displayed the incredible effort they had put into designing and creating educational projects of their own choice related to Zoroastrianism. The event started with a welcome address and benediction from two next generation mobeds, Rayomand Ravji and Sheroy Gonda. The youth projects included creative displays, interactive exhibits, dioramas, knowledge building activities, and informational talks grounded in research and understanding of our religion. Topics included: *The Navjote Ceremony*, *Persian Gardens*, *Articles of the Zoroastrian Faith*, *Heroes of the Shahnameh*, *Life of Zarathushtra*, *Asha vs. Druj*, *Novruz/Haft Seen*, *Three Yazatas*, *The Zoroastrian Creation Story*, *Farohar*, and *Amesha Spentas*. Four youth gave presentation talks to the crowd on their topics of choice which included: *Cyrus the Great*, *Healing and Wellness and its Roots in Zoroastrianism*, and *Zoroastrian Places of Worship*.

In preparation for the event, ZAC religion class teachers worked on familiarizing the children with a science fair/talk



Arjan Desai (age 9) points out highlights of his team project on *The Zoroastrian Creation Story* to eager listeners



Fellow ZAC-CHI religion class students learn about the Amesha Spentas, as they view this tri-board project with supporting slide presentation created by Cyrus and Ariana Darki



Zara Engineer (age 11) answers questions about her project on *Persian Gardens* for which she made a mixed media 3-D model to represent important concepts

model of delivery including presenting main ideas and key points with detail and authority, and gave tips for engaging their audience in a skill-building session prior to the event. The preparation was well rewarded. The children were eager and excited to share their projects with their audience.

As an added benefit, the enthusiastic multi-generational interaction between the guests and the youth presenters was inspiring. The ZAC community packed the hall and actively engaged with the youth about their individual projects, carefully listening and asking thoughtful questions. These one-on-one interactions between the children and adult

community members were priceless.

It was incredibly heartening to see the level of enthusiasm and care with which the children immersed themselves into the Youth Project Fair and also the fantastic turn out from ZAC Community members in a show of support for the children, in turn rewarding their efforts with an incredible sense of achievement.

The event will be long remembered by all as an exciting day full of energy, proving to be a refreshing twist on truly bringing the community together.

Photo credit Zenobia Damania

"CAREER FAIR: GET TO KNOW THE MENTORS"

WZCC, NY CHAPTER MEETING, DECEMBER 8, 2019



an example of Social Entrepreneurship in the Medical & Healthcare field. In the *photo left*, Zareen Mistry, Medical and Health care mentor, explains about HRDC to ZAGNY children

After the event Ushta said, "It was really heartening to see the younger cohort, age 7-10 yr old show so much interest. One of my goals was to increase awareness of various professions to the younger group as well, so am happy with the turnout. An unexpected benefit was that the mentors actually enjoyed networking with each other and were glad they had the opportunity to do so. I think while many of us know each other in a social construct,

Ushta Davar, Mindi Mehta and a host of Mentors organized the Career Fair for the ZAGNY Youth wanting to learn about various disciplines and careers.

There were six tables comprising of

1. Advertising, Arts & Hospitality, 2. Business, Finance and Government Policy, 3. Engineering, Architecture & Real Estate, 4. Education & Entrepreneurship, 5. Medical & Healthcare, 6. Law & Technology.

Each table had multiple Young Mentors who could relate better with the youth.

The HRDC Exhibit was installed in the vicinity of the Medical & Healthcare and Entrepreneurship Tables as



Sajith Ranasinge at the Engineering, Architecture and Real Estate zone, talking to teenagers about Real Estate Investment.



Kaizad Cama at the Business & Finance zone, talking to kids about Finance.

we may not fully understand our friends' professional work – so this was a great avenue to further network."

Based on this experience, Ushta Davar, Mindi Mehta, Narges Kakalia, Temi Mehta have thoughts & plans to help kids framework their thoughts for future careers and perhaps have professionals/mentors come into the classes to talk about how their profession embodies Zoroastrian values.

Edul Daver-WZCC Global President <http://www.wzcc.org>

Photo credits Edul Daver

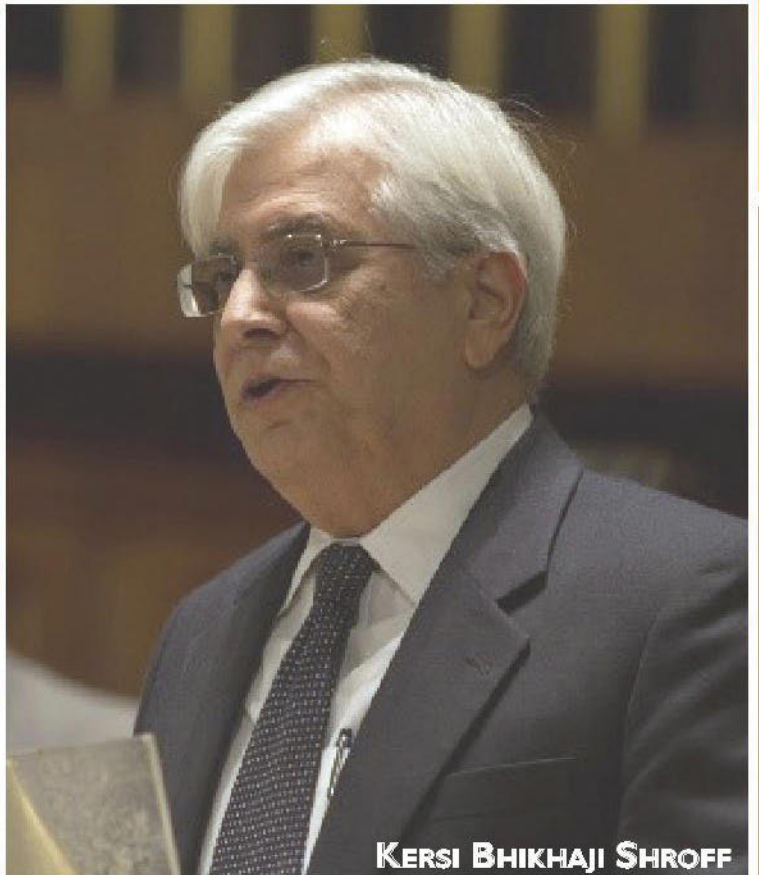
"YESTERDAY'S GIFTS TOMORROW'S ASSETS

YESTERDAY'S GIFTS.....TOMORROW'S ASSETS

PRESENTED BY
ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF HOUSTON
FEZANA INFORMATION RESEARCH EDUCATION SYSTEM
SOCIETY OF SCHOLARS OF ZOROASTRIANISM



PROFESSOR ALMUT HINTZE



KERSI BHIKHAJI SHROFF

October 11-13 2019 at PURVEZ RUSTOMJI ROOM AT ZOROASTRIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURAL CENTER, HOUSTON

On Friday, October 11, the seminar opened with a welcome and introduction of speakers by Aban Rustomji, the Co-chair of FIRES and the chair, Library committee of ZAH.

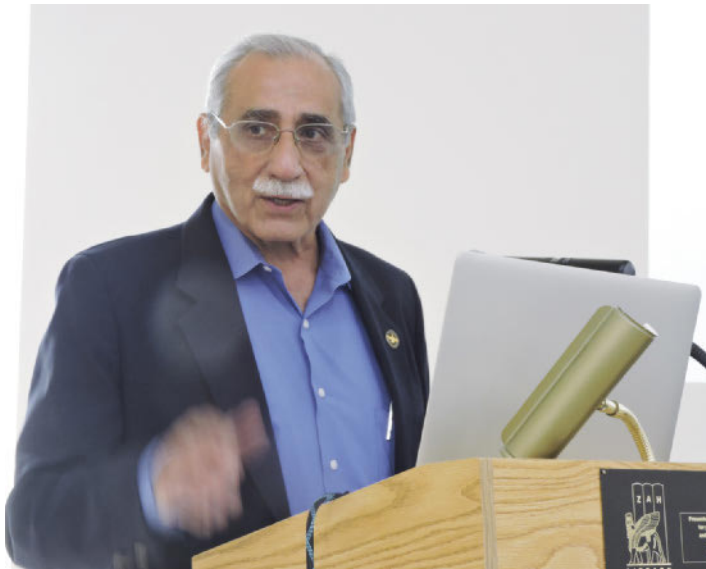
Prof. Almut Hintze, Professor of Zoroastrianism at SOAS (University of London) spoke on "*The Past in the Present: The Ancient Zoroastrian Ritual of the Yasna.*"

Her talk highlighted the main features of MUYA. (Multimedia Yasna) capturing the audience with her state-of-the art presentation of the millennia-old Yasna ritual in Virtual Reality, enabling the viewer to experience this ritual by full immersion. Up to the



present day Zoroastrian priests perform a millennia old ritual, the Yasna, in which the recitation of ancient Avestan texts accompanies the performance of ritual actions. This ritual is at the heart of the tradition as it includes the recitation of the most sacred texts, the so-called hymns of Zarathushtra. However, the words which the priests recite are very hard to make out and their relationship to the ritual actions is little understood. No edition and translation of the complete Yasna is currently available. The Multimedia Yasna, MUYA, a SOAS project funded by the European Research Council with an Advanced Investigator Grant, has tried to fill these gaps by producing a sub-titled interactive film of the Yasna ritual and a state-of-the-art edition with translation and commentary based on the manuscript while developing digital tools for electronic editing. In addition, MUYA is producing the ritual in Virtual Reality, thus enabling the viewer to experience the ritual by full immersion. (synopsis supplied by Prof Hintz)

Saturday October 12, Prof Hintze presented “*A Zoroastrian Vision*” focusing on the fate of the soul after death, and examining the encounter of the soul with its *daena*, as described in the texts. The Zoroastrian sacred texts collected in the Avesta bear witness to a number of beliefs and observances that have been adhered to throughout the long history of the religion. Such beliefs and observances include the ritual and devotional worship of Ahura Mazda and other Yazatas, the rejection



of Angra Mainyu and the Daivas, a series of purity laws and an elaborate imagery relating to the fate of the soul after death. Focusing on the latter theme, this talk examined the way in which the encounter of the soul with its belief, or *daēnā*, is elaborated in the texts and in the later tradition. (synopsis supplied by Prof Hintz) A boi ceremony was performed at the new Bhandara Atash Kadeh at 11.00 a.m. followed by lunch catered by

Nauzad Mehta and a brief talk by Rohinton Rivetna on the vision, mission, accomplishments and future plans of SSZ. He ended with a plea to all present to get more involved with the project of SSZ. (photo left)

In the afternoon Kersi Bhikaji Shroff, an Attorney at Law, who, since his retirement as Division Chief in the Law Library of Congress, has travelled extensively in Central Asia and the Caucasus (in Azerbaijan), with expeditions led by Russian archeologists to trace and research the ancient roots of Zoroastrianism, gave a most interesting talk on “*Central Asian Arts & Archeology: Selected Zoroastrian Themes and Sites*” – showing how archeological remains provide rich evidence of the practice of Zoroastrianism (see summary Pg 25)

Ervad Khushrav Nariman moderated a panel discussion with young mobeds: Bahrom Firozgari, Zubin Kotwal and Noshir Khumbatta. The Mobeds gave the audience an interesting perspective on what is required for our religion and culture to thrive and grow in the future. (photo below)



The Houston youth provided the entertainment during the gala dinner. The event was MC'd by Mitra Khambatta, The Houston Zoroastrian Choir led by Lyla Daroga sang several songs starting with Chhaiyye Hamay Zarhostj, Natasha Dungor and Mahtab Dastur performed a Mexican Dance choreographed by Vehishta Kaikobad, a piano recital by Tayte Choudhury and Hallelujah rendition by Chloe Choudhury. A piano has been donated to ZAH by Tenaz and Chesley Choudhury.

An open forum, round table face-to face discussion was held on Sunday morning with the speakers, mobeds and other experts at the FIRES library,

This three day event was very well organized by Aban Rustonji and her team of dedicated workers. The 2020 seminar will be hosted at Toronto in October in collaboration with ZSO and OZCF.

To give visual relevance of the topics of the event, the four display cases in the Purvez Rustonji Hall exhibited artifacts of Central Asia and implements of the Yasna Ceremony artfully arranged by Vehishta Kaikobad.

Credit for the poster Arzan Sam Wadia

Credit for the photographs at ZAH Yezdi Engineer

CENTRAL ASIAN ARTS & ARCHAEOLOGY: SELECTED ZOROASTRIAN THEMES AND SITES

(Summary of a presentation made by Kersi Shroff in the Program “Yesterday’s Gifts ... Tomorrow’s Assets”, sponsored by the FEZANA Information Research Education System (“FIRES”); the Zoroastrian Association of Houston; and, the Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism, in Houston, Texas, October 11 – 13, 2019).



Archaeological remains in the ancient regions of Bactria, Chorasmia, and Sogdiana, provide rich evidence of sacred structures, artefacts, and mural paintings depicting the practice of Zoroastrianism. Dating from Achaemenian times, organic findings reveal religious and cultural traditions that sometimes drastically differ from the monotheistic and codified faith of the Sasanians. Many of these findings were made by Russian archaeologists which, according to the World Atlas of Archaeology, “count among the great adventures of recent times in the important discovery of the Middle Ages.” These discoveries have increased the understanding of religious life along the ancient Silk Roads, a striking feature of which is the variety of beliefs that existed, thus displaying “an ability to tolerate and incorporate different beliefs within their communities.”

The presentation featured archaeological findings in little known sites in present day Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. In Akchakankala, situated in the autonomous region of Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan, an Australian-Uzbek archaeological expedition has revealed “important new evidence of Zoroastrian imagery with royal ritual and cult practice.” A colossal mural found at the site has been identified as Sroasha, the Avestan divinity, wearing a crown and a tunic with a panel showing motifs depicting Zoroastrian priests holding a bundle of barsom twigs. It is claimed that this figure is the earliest representation of a well attested Zoroastrian symbol. Akchakankala and nearby Tash-k’rman-tepe are found to have a rich array of features, including a fire altar placed on the floor, indicating the veneration of fires in a variety of forms. According to Pahlavi sources, the legendary Atash Farohaba, also called Atash Farah, was first enthroned on nearby Mount Gadmand-Homand, presently named Sultan-uiz-dag Hills. The expedition has located a necropolis in the region

and uncovered many ossuaries (astodan or bone boxes) holding human remains. The expedition has received funding from the Australian Research Council under a grant entitled: “Shifting the Foundations of Zoroastrian History: A Fresh Focus on Chorasmia”.

In Paikand, Uzbekistan, at a site near the famous city of Bukhara, a Russian-Uzbek archaeological expedition is excavating another fire temple, dating at least to Sasanian times. Referred to in the Shahnameh as Kunduz, the fire temple is stated to have been built by “Kay-Hosrow, the son of Siyavush.” More recently, a second fire temple established after the Arab invasion (according to written sources, Sogdians tried to return to the religion of their ancestors), is also claimed to have been found.

After a group of North American Zoroastrians visited Paikand in 2017, FEZANA raised funds for accelerating the archaeological work. In acknowledging the funding provided, the head of the expedition reported: “[E]xcavations in Paykand’s Fire Temple in 2018 discovered novel details which help to understand the past of one of the most ancient Fire Temple in Central Asia. New discoveries speak about the prospects of archaeological studying of the citadel in order to reconstruct important



aspects of Zoroastrianism history in the Bukhara region in general.”

In August 2019 the expedition uncovered the upper part of a copper flambeau (torch) (photo above). It had a wooden handle, as suggested by particles of wood found in it. The flambeau was found at the base of a special platform which had links to the fire temple. A previously uncovered burnt wooden panel (photo page26) shows similar objects held by several figures surrounding a deity. (Note also the fire altar in centre of the bottom row)



In view of these findings, in an article published in 2018 an Uzbek archaeologist declared: “Discovery of the most ancient temple of fire and Zoroastrian dakhmas ... confirms the opinion of Uzbek scientists that the territory of [Chorasmia] is the cradle of Zoroastrianism.”

Crossing the border into Tajikistan, the only ‘Persianate’ country in Central Asia, a street painting close to the capital, Dushanbe, displays “The first Profit [sic] of Zoroastrian People.” This frank acknowledgment of the heritage of the Tajiks, although surprising for a Muslim nation, is evident in many ways in the country.

In the archaeological site of Panjikent, 250 kms from Dushanbe, of two temples excavated, one is acknowledged as being a Zoroastrian temple. Murals found in the temple illustrate ceremonies in front of a fire, and among the deities identified are Mithra and Druwasp, the latter the protector of horses. Other murals depicted seasonal festivals including a Fravardigan scene, and the exploits of the legendary Rustam. Around the temple area shards of pottery were found inscribed with the Sogdian language, indicating that the temple also housed a school.

The temple was set on fire by the Arab invaders, but the ruins of the temple were later used for performing a ceremony referred to as the ‘Baresnum Gah of the nine nights’, as evidenced by nine pits found on the side of the

courtyard, in the 2nd half of the 5th century CE, a special room for an eternal flame. The fire altar found at the site is reported as being similar to fire altars at the famous Oxus temple in Bactria, suggesting a “single tradition affecting the development of temple architecture [in] the Iranians world.”

Sarazm, another ancient site in Tajikistan, situated 15 kms from Panjikent, on the way to Samarkand, the capital of Sogdiana, was discovered in 1974. Among its structures many fire altars from different periods were found. Sarazm is now on UNESCO’s list of World Heritage Sites. In applying for this designation, Tajikistan stressed its Zoroastrian provenance and an archaeologist has maintained that “Zoroastrian religious concepts going back to the bronze era of the Central Asian region came up in the cult views of Sarazm communities.”

In general, Central Asia is being revealed to be the repository of early Zoroastrianism (or Mazdayasnism), extending beyond the borders of present-day Iran.

Credit for the photograph of the burnt wooden panel : Dr. Andrei V. Omel’chenko, Head, Bukhara Expedition (State Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia).

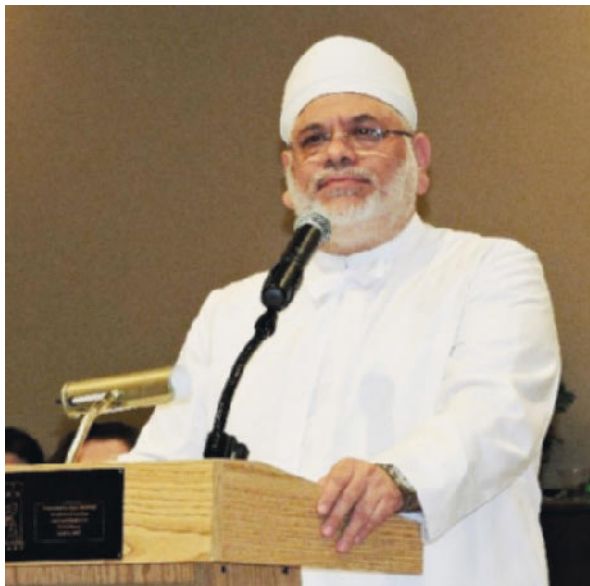
Credit for Copper Flambeau to Kersi Shroff

A HOUSE DIVIDED...

Mehery N. Rivetna

It was an honor to have the High Priest of Udvada, Daštūr Khurshed Daštūr, in Houston during the inauguration festivities of the *Atash Kadeh*. He was the keynote speaker on March 22, 2019 giving a talk on a very apt topic for Zoroastrians not only for the Houston audience, but for all. His subject was “*Zarathushti Way of Life in Today’s World.*” The talk was very uplifting with some very salient messages in his address on the importance of our individual conduct for the community to thrive in this fast-paced world we live in. Apart from the import of values such as righteousness, charity, good thoughts, words and actions, what was striking was his call for the community to rise and be *united for the survival of the Zoroastrian faith*.

We all know the importance of unity, yet the community is fractured with people asserting their distorted views deviating from the basic tenets of our prophet Zarathustra



High Priest of Udvada, Daštūr Khurshed Daštūr

of the *Khordeh Avesta*.) Zarathustra’s teachings emphasize wisdom, truth and moral conduct rather than drummed up beliefs, rituals and practices contrary to the prophet’s doctrines. To be united, we must first transcend the apathy that is so pervasive in the community, generally speaking, towards the profound knowledge of our faith. Secondly, we must rid ourselves of labels such as conservative and liberal. Zarathustra gave humankind *one* set of principles. He did not divide his tenets to satisfy the whims of those choosing to follow him.

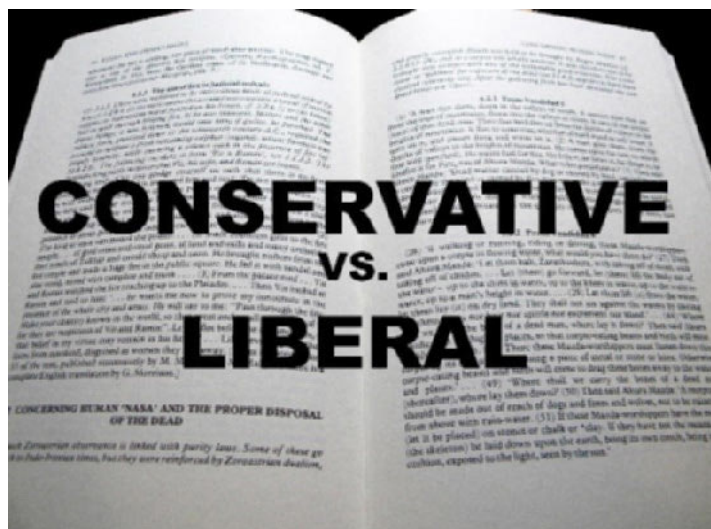
Conservative and liberal ideologies spring from our prejudices which are born of ignorance, traits antithetical to Zarathustra’s religious creed. Both camps, the conservative and the liberal, demonstrate an acute paucity of the knowledge of our prophet’s teachings. It is this lack of knowledge that must be overcome for us to be united. Recalcitrant conservatives and liberals often say: “You do your thing, I will do mine.” If that be the case, then, why have a religion? Such a mindset does not engender unity; that outlook is to be deliberately divisive. Many who pride themselves as “conservative” (and “liberals”, too) are content with incoherently mumbling words from a prayer book without knowing what the words mean. When questioned if they are cognizant of what they are praying, they retort: “My God knows what I am praying.” Oh, really? Die-hard conservatives are shocked when it is revealed to them, through several scholarly translations, that oftentimes they actually pray for assistance from Ahura Mazda for what they vehemently disavow in their rabid discourses on the Zoroastrian religion! Their



leaving many of us wondering on the future of our glorious religion. A laudable endeavor such as the *Atash Kadeh* was the target of unwarranted, idle criticism, at home and abroad, instead of celebrating a monument to our cherished religious principles. And so it is worth reflecting on the High Priest’s entreaty for unity as well as attempting to understand the cause for the disunity given our “Way of Life in Today’s World.”

INTRODUCTION

Religious principles emanate from the laws of nature. Religion is not according to the Will of the People, that is, its followers; it is the Will of the Almighty and that Will is explicitly revealed to us by our prophet Zarathustra. The penultimate verse in the *Hosh-Bām* prayer states: “I who am Zarathustra will guide the leaders of the house, of the clans, towns and lands to think, to speak and to act in conformity with this Religion which is of Ahura, revealed by Zarathosht...” (Ervad Kavāsji Edulji Kanga translation



angry riposte to these revelations is: “Who asked these people to translate the prayers?” Ignorance of our faith is not a sign of a devout Zarathushti—conservative or liberal.

There must be consensus on the prophet’s teachings among the adherents and the teachings not twisted by individuals to conform to their prejudices, but by conforming to the truth inherent in the knowledge Zarathustra has left for us. And that knowledge is acquired by embracing a primary attribute of Ahura Mazda—*Vohu Manah*—the Good Mind which comprises of wisdom, intellect and rational thinking.

In a chapter dedicated to Zarathustra and his religion in Rabindranath Tagore’s “The Religion of Man” the author states: “The revelation he [Zarathustra] announces is... a matter of intellect, of spiritual perception and **knowledge**...there are probably not many religions of so high antiquity in which this fundamental doctrine, that **religion is a knowledge or learning, a science of what is true**, is so precisely declared as in the tenets of the Gathas. **It is the unbelieving that are unknowing; on the contrary, the believing are learned because they have penetrated into this knowledge.**” [Emphasis is mine.]

Tagore concludes: “I feel proud whenever I find that the best in the world have their fundamental agreement. It is their function to unite and to dissuade the small from bristling-up, like prickly shrubs, in the pride of the minute points of their differences, only to hurt one another.”

Creating divisions of traditionalists and progressives and being ill informed cannot be the “Zarathushti Way of Life in Today’s World.” It will not insure our survival in the long run. What will secure the future of our religion is to abjure these labels, fuse the divisions and unite as one true religion. For that unity and to ensure the religion’s perpetuity is to start with the pursuit of truth innate in the phenomenal knowledge extant in our great religion.

But, how did these divisive labels and camps of traditionalists and progressives arise? To understand the disease let us explore its cause.

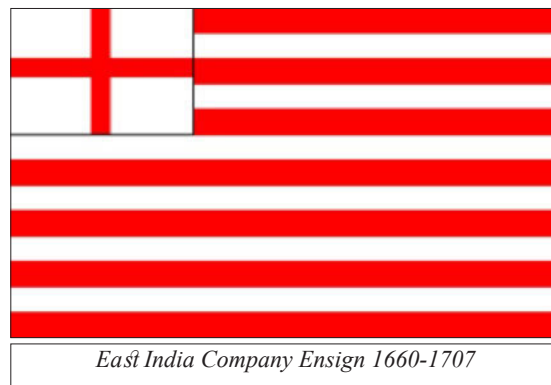
IGNORANCE IS NOT BLISS

After the Arab invasion of Persia, many Zoroastrians concerned about the decimation of their faith by the invaders left Persia seeking refuge in India circa 936 A.C.E. These refugees left with scant religious texts. Apart from the *Khordeh Avesta*, a few Avesta works such as the Gathas and, perhaps, some Pahlavi books historians tell us there was not much religious literature carried by those fleeing Persia. The exodus to India occurred in waves and none of the later arrivals carried any religious material with them, either. The priests dictated and arbitrated all civil and religious disputes in the community in the absence of a fixed “code of law¹.” Furthermore, the priests in India, of which there were many at the time, did not record the knowledge they had with them¹. This seems to have continued for several centuries. The clergy orally communicated religious matters to the laity, which was now getting restless not knowing the meaning behind what the priests advocated. Shorn of reliable religious texts, the laity and clergy slipped into religious ignorance. The Parsi community in India felt the need to seek an understanding of their ancient faith from the Zoroastrian priests in Iran. The Indian Zoroastrians sent a list of questions on religious matters to the Iranian Zoroastrian clergy. This communication, circa 15th century, came to be known as the *Rivayats*. The SOAS (University of London) scholar on Zoroastrian studies, Sarah Stewart, points out, “if the contents of the early *Rivayats* are a true reflection of the concerns of at least a proportion of the Parsi population it seems that by late fifteenth century there was a growing awareness amongst some Parsis that there were distinct gaps in their religious knowledge, regional differences in the practice of rituals, and a diminution of priestly scholarship¹.” The lack of religious knowledge among the Parsi population as a whole was further compounded with many Parsis moving out of Gujarat to other parts of India for economic opportunities where authentic religious education and resources were all but absent. Lacking in knowledge and understanding of Zarathustra’s principles a few Parsis gravitated towards deities from other faiths becoming devotees of *Babas* and *Bibis*, *Sants* and *Devs*; believing in pseudo-science such as *chakras* and vibrations bestowing some bizarre purity and protection on individuals and Zoroastrian temples; thereby corrupting the Zoroastrian faith with superstitions and abrogating the pristine teachings of Zarathustra.

And then came the British.

The East India Company (EIC) established in 1600 under Queen Elizabeth I had its charter to conduct trade in certain commodities in the East Indies. The company was not to meddle in the internal affairs of the Indies..

European travelers to India and Persia during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries carried back to their homelands stories about the customs and beliefs of a people following a prophet known as Zoroaster². Thomas Hyde, an English orientalist and professor at



the University of Oxford, was the first scholar to offer a comprehensive description of Zarathustra's religion³ around 1700. Hyde studied and understood Zoroastrian theology acknowledging Zarathustra as an enlightened lawgiver of true monotheism³. Hyde's pioneering work was, to a degree, impressive, but far from perfect in that much of his interpretations of the Zoroastrian doctrines were erroneously based on his Judeo-Christian beliefs⁴.

Copies of what few Zoroastrian manuscripts were available were brought to England from India and housed in the library at the University of Oxford. Anquetil du Perron, a young Frenchman, came across a facsimile of the Zoroastrian manuscripts at Oxford and his curiosity was greatly aroused prompting him to travel to Surat, India, around 1759, to learn more about the religion he had discovered^{4,5}. He did not get much support from the Parsi clergy or laity in Surat to help him learn more about the religion. Du Perron, however, managed to convince the High Priest, Dastur Darab Kumana, in Surat, to translate the Avesta for him⁴. Dastur Kumana was censured by the Surat clergy for this deed⁴ notwithstanding that the Dastur's knowledge of Avesta was inadequate, to say the least⁴. Anquetil du Perron published his "findings" in 1771 only to invoke the wrath of other Europeans who declared the work was a "forgery or that he was duped by the Parsi priests in Surat⁴". The Avesta translation du Perron introduced to the West smacked of the Zoroastrian religion being polytheistic contrary to Hyde's scholarly determination of Zarathustra having preached strict monotheism⁴. The seeds for a need to bring Christianity to India were sown in European minds.

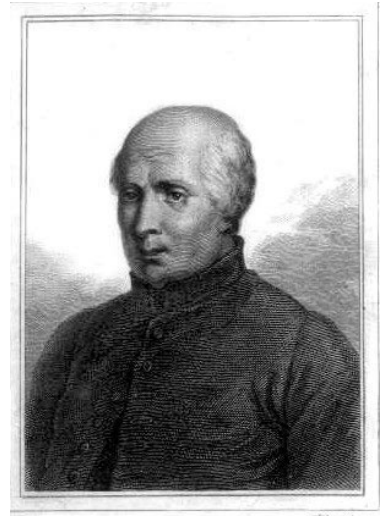
The charter given to the EIC was for trade and not empire building. The charter for the EIC was renewed every twenty years. The charter of 1813 was crucial in the sense that among conditions for the charter's renewal one was that the British monarchy has sovereignty over all the territories occupied by the EIC and another was that missionaries be allowed in India to convert the "heathens" to Christianity. Missionary activity was proscribed until this point and now parliament faced enormous pressure from evangelists to grant this condition.

The first missionaries arrived in Bombay in 1820⁴. Under the influence of these English newcomers, Parsi youth were exposed to western culture, ideas, and education. The Parsis of the time, lacking knowledge of their own religion, were unable to perceive that some of the Christian ideas espoused by the British conflicted with their prophet Zarathustra's teachings. The Parsi clergy was not any help, either. Dastur M. N. Dhalla in his book *Zoroastrian Theology: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* states: "The Parsi priesthood had long before degenerated into ignorance. The situation was not keenly felt so long as the laity was equally illiterate. But now when the latter sought enlightenment, the clergy had kept less and less abreast of the times. During the long period of twelve centuries, hardly twelve priests rose above mediocrity."⁶

The lack of religious knowledge among the Parsis was very apparent to those British with religious inclinations as early as 1818. William Erskine, a Scottish orientalist and historian, penned a letter regarding the Parsis to a fellow Scottish historian and EIC administrator, Sir John Malcolm, in 1818: "Directions for the order of the services are frequently intermixed in the Guzaratee [sic] language; but these are no part of the holy writings, but added in India for the benefit of the priests who are ignorant of the original tongue."⁷ Erskine goes on to say in the letter: [The *mobeds*] "are not in general learned, seldom understanding the meaning of the books which they read, or the prayers which they recite, these being in the Zend or Pehlevi [sic] languages."⁷

In 1829 John Wilson, a Scottish missionary, arrived in Bombay. Wilson had studied the works of Anquetil du Perron as well as Zoroastrian religious texts such as the Bundahishn and numerous European writings on Zarathustra and his religion⁴. The vast majority of the Parsis had never heard of the Bundahishn (as is also true today) and when Wilson put forth the contents of this ancient book the Parsis were quick to "repudiate the whole book as 'entirely false' and composed by 'some enemy of the religion'...a defense that proved embarrassing to the Parsis when Wilson showed the material was derived from the Avesta..."⁴ Wilson proclaimed that the Zoroastrian faith was not monotheistic, but polytheistic. He ridiculed the purity laws laid out in the Vendidad forgetting that the Biblical book of Leviticus had much of the same laws as in the Zoroastrian Vendidad⁴.

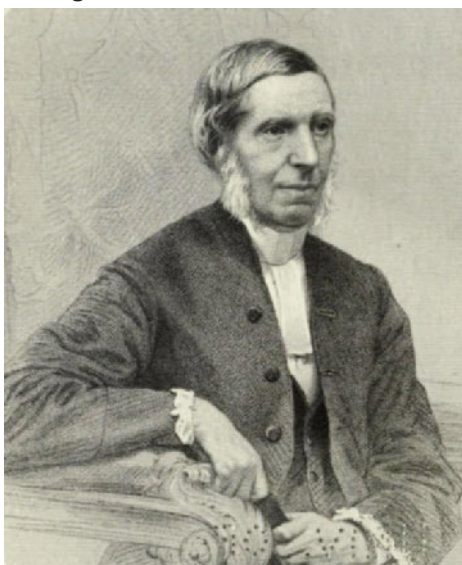
Wilson was hell-bent on converting as many Indians as possible to Christianity. The Parsis who embraced English ways more than other



Anquetil du Perron



Maneckji Nusserwanji Dhalla
(Columbia University)



John Wilson

communities became an easy target for the proselytization efforts of Wilson and other missionaries. Men like Wilson and Erskine were much more familiar with Zoroastrian religious texts than were the Parsis and the Englishmen knew that. However, it is obvious from the communications they left behind that the English had a fledgling understanding of the meaning of Zarathustra's principles in those texts. They saw the Zoroastrian faith steeped in rituals and superstitions (many adopted from other Indian faiths, not very different from our own time.) They pronounced that the Zoroastrian religion lacked any "connection with morals at all" and was riddled with "ceremonies and of prayers; and the prayers being in an unknown language, and their meaning unknown to those who repeat them, cannot be supposed to have much influence on the conduct of life⁴." This illustrates that the missionaries were no less ignorant than the Parsis about the Zoroastrian religion. Zarathustra's teachings in the Gathas are replete with the importance of righteousness, proper exercise of free will, truthfulness, moral conduct and combating evil in the affairs of life among numerous other virtues laid out by the prophet. What Wilson and others failed to comprehend was the abundance of virtue and moral values in the rich figurative language in the Avestan works. They took the words literally, as do many Parsis today, making the religious tenets sound like fairy tales.

Wilson was relentless in his attacks on the Zoroastrian faith; even sowing doubts in Parsi minds of the veracity of Zarathustra as a prophet. He hammered into the Parsi psyche that the religion they practiced was polytheistic and not monotheistic. The Parsis were unable to defend their insistence that their religion is monotheistic, because of their own lack of knowledge of their tenets. Where did this false notion of the Zoroastrian faith being polytheistic in the minds of these missionaries come from? It is safe to assume that the missionaries latched on to the Parsis "worshipping" the *Amesha Spentas* and *yazatas*, thus proclaiming the Parsis practiced a multi-deity religion. Wilson and others failed to grasp that the *Amesha Spentas* and *yazatas* are not independent deities, but attributes or manifestations of God, i.e., Ahura Mazda. They are characteristics (*Vohu Manah*—the Good Mind; *Asha*—Righteousness; *Armaiti*—Piety; and so on) that humans must emulate and incorporate in their life. The Parsis, lacking an in-depth knowledge of Zarathustra's teachings beyond parroting words from a book, were unable to defend their faith against the ludicrous proclamations of the missionaries.

Wilson succeeded in converting three Parsi youth to Christianity. This was a wakeup call for the Parsis as they saw their religion under attack. Being ill-informed they were unable to defend their faith with any rational, intellectual arguments. The consequences of a lack of knowledge of religious principles are obvious.

Part II

GENESIS OF DIVISIONS IN THE ZARATHUSHTI COMMUNITY

The Parsis were in a quandary how to tackle the missionary onslaught on their religion. The priesthood was incapable of dealing with this dilemma. "The Zoroastrian priesthood was traditionally hereditary and required the memorization of large quantities of Avestan language liturgies that were often poorly understood. Priests were thus unable to respond effectively to rising Christian missionary and scholarly challenges in the nineteenth century"⁵. It fell into the hands of the learned Parsi laity to gain an understanding of their true religious principles precluding the superstitions and beliefs antithetical to Zarathustra's teachings.

The Zoroastrian faith was not unheard of among western scholars who had an interest in the Zoroastrian faith as one of the oldest world religions⁵. In the seventeenth century much of the Zoroastrian literature was brought to England from India from where it landed in other parts of Europe. As mentioned earlier, Anquetil du Perron was instrumental in introducing Zoroastrian literature to Europe. While much of du Perron's impressions of the Zoroastrian faith were flawed, he, nevertheless, opened up the gates to a greater understanding of the religion leading to a plethora of studies conducted in Europe to get an appreciation of Zarathustra's tenets. These scholarly works were not available in India and even if they were the Parsis were oblivious of the research done.

In 1859, a German orientalist and philologist Martin Haug who had studied Sanskrit and philology at the University of Tübingen accepted the position of superintendent and professor of Sanskrit at the University of Poona, India. Haug had published a couple of papers on the Gathas and Zarathustra's religion. Haug's primary reason for accepting the University of Poona position was to learn more about the theology, religious dogmas and rituals of the Brahmins and the Parsis⁸. In India, Haug lectured extensively to the Parsis proving from his studies that of all Zoroastrian scriptures the Gathas were the actual compositions of Zarathustra and that Zarathustra unequivocally preached monotheism. The Parsis were elated. Here was their savior from the likes of Wilson. Haug further expounded that since the Gathas made no mention of rituals, Zarathustra "neither believed in them, nor thought them to be an essential part of religion."⁴ Haug also showed through his studies that the Gathas were the only true utterances of Zarathustra and that all the other scriptures came long after Zarathustra's passing. That is not to say that the later scriptural verses are without merit. These later compositions must be understood in their proper context.

It is worth noting what Martin Haug said in a lecture titled "Origin of the Parsee Religion" he gave in March 1861 at the United Service Institution of Western India. He concluded the lecture thus: "Still the scanty fragments of his own speeches and sayings, left to us suffice to show that he really lived, that his aims and pursuits were the highest to which a mortal can aspire viz., the temporal as well as the spiritual welfare of mankind, his motives the purest and loftiest, love of truth and virtue. So we must class Zoroaster amongst the greatest men who ever lived and as one of the real benefactors of the human race."⁹ It behooves all modern day Zoroastrians to appreciate and accept the fact that the Zoroastrian faith is a universal faith for the "welfare of *mankind*" and Zarathustra was a "real *benefactor of the human race*."

Scholars concluded on linguistic evidence that Zarathustra's religion over the centuries had undergone significant changes after his death and these changes were at variance with his message.⁵

This was the beginning of a segment of the Parsi community calling itself "reformists" and another calling itself "orthodox" or "conservative."

PATHWAY TO LEARNING

Many, among those considering themselves orthodox, dismiss philology as some mundane discipline of study and inconsequential in understanding, particularly, Zoroastrian scriptures. Philology is a science entailing an in-depth study of literary texts and oral communications of ancient doctrines. It is through philology that Zoroastrian scriptures are mainly authenticated and the *meaning* underlying the figurative language elucidated. Dastur M. N. Dhalla in his autobiography *The Saga of a Soul* states: "The science of philology has thrown much light on our religious scriptures... like all sciences, philology demands the scrutiny of every sentence, every word. Before expressing an opinion, he [the philologist] must give sound evidence of his statement. According to the rules of philology he has no right to announce anything authentically without accounting for every single syllable. Like every other science, philology too follows certain principles and minute rules and regulations."¹⁰ Philology is not merely a study of linguistics and literary studies; a profound knowledge of history is also essential. It is through philology that philologists have given us a sense of our own history, as well as the meanings behind our prophet's words, lost through the ages.

The young men whom John Wilson converted to Christianity justified their conversion in their belief that the Zoroastrian faith comprised of tales of fantasy, superstition, endless rituals and meaningless mumbling of verses without a clue of what they meant. The prayers and scriptural works, of course, made no sense to them, because neither they nor the community understood the rich meaning of the figurative language of the tenets. It took philologists like Martin Haug and other western scholars that followed to shed light on Zarathustra's message to humankind.

It must be emphasized that the reformists were not opposed to rituals and ceremonies, as many tend to think. They recognized that the purpose of rituals is to express religious principles and have a place in the practice of the religion. Rituals, they maintained, cannot replace the moral conduct that the practicing Zoroastrian must exercise in daily life. Their contention, rightly, was that rituals and traditions, in and of themselves, are not religion; they do not confer supernatural boons on the ritual performer or sponsor of a ritual in the temple as a few of the orthodox persuasion fervently believe. Rituals symbolize religious principles to observe and thus must be understood in their proper context. That takes knowledge and learning.

The reform movement, as it were, did not intend to change or alter Zarathustra's teachings. The learned reformists seized on the scholarly evidence that the prophet's original message and teachings were practical, steeped in high moral standards, and devoid of fantasy and nonsensical beliefs and practices. They saw Zarathustra's wisdom distorted and weakened from its original *form* and thus their aim was to *re-form* the religion to its original state from the corrupt *form* it had taken. They "were determined to identify the 'original' or 'essential' Zoroastrianism and to return to it."¹⁵ The orthodox/conservatives were up in arms. They excoriated the reformists for their stance accusing them of abandoning their religion.

By definition, a "conservative," speaking in a political or religious context, is one who *conserves* or *preserves* the founding principles of a nation or religion, respectively. In a religious context, to preserve or conserve the religious principles requires a sound knowledge and understanding of the meaning behind the religion's founder's message; a religious conservative does not twist the message to satisfy personal whims. A "liberal" or "progressive," on the other hand, by definition, is one who corrupts the founding principles twisting the meaning and beliefs behind the founder(s) words to suit his/her fancy.

Ironically, those Parsis branded as reformists or liberal were attempting to re-instate—to *conserve*—the original teachings of Zarathustra by learning through scholarly research the true meaning behind the prophet's teachings. While the so-called conservatives, in reality, given their lack of knowledge, took the *liberty* to alter Zarathustra's doctrines, corrupting his canons by introducing cooked up practices and beliefs borrowed from theosophy, Sufism, astrology, vegetarianism, other religions, and cults promoted by charlatans claiming to have studied under cave dwelling mystics who never die; practices and beliefs, anathema to Zarathustra, masquerading as the prophet's teachings.

Adding to this irony, the very people proclaiming to be orthodox or conservative call Zarathustra a *reformer*. They have no hesitation in declaring that Zarathustra *re-formed* the Mazdayasni religion. Zarathustra, thus, using his profound wisdom, intellect, insight, i.e., *Vohu Manah*, discarded the corruption in the Mazdayasni belief system *re-forming* it to the original, unsullied laws of Ahura Mazda.

And that is precisely what the reformist Parsis were doing in the nineteenth century, i.e., cleaning up, in a sense, the rubble accrued in the Zoroastrian faith. Monica Ringer in her book *Pious Citizens* cites from Eckehard Kulke's book *Parsis in India*: "The founders of the new seminaries believed that 'they should be in a position not only to recite prayers, but to present an intellectual exegesis of the holy scriptures and a sophisticated explanation of the essence of religion and religious matters also acceptable to educated believers'."¹⁵ The reformist movement was engaged in re-education of the priesthood and laity. "As opposed to traditional training solely in memorization of Avestan prayers, priests were trained in European philology, languages, and comparative religion, as well as contemporary Zoroastrian studies."¹⁵ The reformists objective was to eliminate the traditions and beliefs that did not conform with what Zarathustra had instituted; traditions and beliefs that had crept into the religion long after the prophet's passing away.

Many orthodox believers refuse to recognize the contribution western scholars have made towards an understanding of the Zoroastrian faith. The Parsi scholars who were also priests such as Ervad Kavasji Edulji Kanga, Ervad Jivanji J. Modi, Dastur Maneckji N. Dhalla among many others owe an immense debt to western scholarship as they acknowledge in their own statements and by references in their works. Stalwarts of the Zoroastrian community such as Kharshedji R. Cama also relied on western scholarship for an understanding of the faith as is clear from the references in the works he published.

CONCLUSION

The unity that is essential for the survival of the religion will thus come when the community accepts one common set of principles that Zarathustra has given humankind. It is not whether converts are accepted to the Zoroastrian faith or not (the Zoroastrian faith actually favors conversion), nor inter-faith marriages and performing navjotes of their offspring (nothing in the scriptures prohibits that), nor arguments over the mode of disposal of the deceased (the soul, according to scripture, will meet its fate consistent with life led on earth and not how the carcass is disposed), nor the multitude of mindless controversies the community engages in (scriptures instruct pursuit of truth inherent in the prophet's teachings), that will ensure or hinder our survival in today's world. What will assure our survival is the unity in the practice of our religion consistent with the true knowledge of the religious principles available to us and conforming to those principles without imposing, or believing in, ill-conceived theories about our great religion.

Monica Ringer in *Pious Citizens* states that Dastur Rastamji Edulji Dastoor P. Sanjana, a *conservative* priest in the nineteenth century, insisted that, "All distorted and eccentric reasonings as also inferences [sic] which do not harmonize with the spirit of the religion and its integral doctrines, must be discarded as heretic stuff⁵."

[Dastur Sanjana] "as a religious leader, he was concerned with promoting community survival through religious identity and practice⁵." Monica Ringer quotes Dastur Sanjana from one of his books: "One of the effective means for keeping a community welded in harmony and union is to insist on it a scrupulous observance of all that its religion enjoins⁵"; that is practicing the religion in harmony with Zarathustra's doctrines and not individual impulses. "Dastur Sanjana believed that the alternative is internal division, faction, and eventually, dissolution. This threat, he believed was the challenge confronting his Parsi community.⁵"

The survival of the Zoroastrian faith rests on its adherent's unity which requires a thorough knowledge, not corrupted beliefs, of Zarathustra's principles.

Let us not ignore the wisdom in Abraham Lincoln's immortal words: *A house divided...against itself...cannot stand.*

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◆ *Meheryar N. Rivetna is an active member of the library committee of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston, a group dedicated to advance knowledge in all aspects of the Zoroastrian faith. He also serves on the FIRES committee—the information, research and education arm of FEZANA. Meheryar retired from Merck & Co. and resides with his wife Zubeen M. Mehta in Houston, TX.*

Humanitarian Activities Around The World

*"Do all the good you can.
By all the means you can.
In all the ways you can. In
all the places you can. At all
the times you can. To all the
people you can. As long as you
can." – John Wesley*

The challenges we face in this modern world are unprecedented. Around 134 million people need humanitarian aid and conflict remains the main driver of humanitarian needs (*Global Humanitarian Overview 2018*). So much of the painful disruption we're experiencing is being fuelled by stories of fear, disintegration, separation and individualism.

Humanitarianism is probably the most important "ism" in the world today. There is a universal call to our global family to open hearts, expand minds, and bridge divided worlds.

This issue is dedicated to those who have chosen to live a life of service and humanitarianism. To honour those who put their faith and love into action and walk the walk. You will get to read about many such real-life heroes in this issue. I have been deeply moved and learned so much from every single one of our contributors. The promotion and protection of human rights is a key purpose and guiding principle of the United Nations (UN). As the world's only truly global organization, the UN has become the foremost forum to address issues that transcend national boundaries and cannot be

resolved by any one country acting alone. My husband Kayras Irani and I were lucky enough to be able to attend the 68th United Nations Civil Society Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah from 25-28 August 2019 thanks to the continued affiliation of FEZANA with the UN.

At this first-of-its-kind UN event in the USA, over 4000 representatives of non-governmental and faith-based organizations, including professors, students, politicians, monks, nuns, African kings and queens, CEOs, Hollywood actors and social activists from around the world gathered for a global conversation to learn from each other, share ideas and create a blueprint for a brighter future. It was incredible to be surrounded by such a diverse group of people from different arrays of life who cared so passionately about making our world a better place.

At the opening plenary Alison Smale, Undersecretary-General to Global Communications in the UN, said, "It is my hope through this conference that we recognize that the challenges we face are not insurmountable and can be overcome if we work in unison." She added, "It is only through our collective efforts that we can face the critical challenges that lie ahead of us to build resilient societies and build prosperities for progress." The three-day conference was jam-packed with sessions hosted by various NGOs that were eye-opening, stimulating and inspiring. FEZANA's participation at the conference included displaying an

GUEST EDITORIAL SANAYA MASTER



exhibit booth at the UN, as well as coordinating and hosting "A Global North-South-South Model of Sustainable Development" workshop. FEZANA partnered with WZCC, RAD-AID International and PARTNERS ASIA to showcase the incredible humanitarian work achieved at the Hospital for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Children (HRDC), in Nepal over the last thirty years. The workshop promoted several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including ensuring healthy lives and wellbeing for all, reducing inequalities within and amongst countries and promoting inclusive and equitable education for all.

Dr. Behram Pastakia (Co-Chair of FEZANA UN NGO Committee) who has been involved with UN affairs for nearly 20 years moderated the workshop. Panellists *Dr. Ashok Banskota* (HRDC Founder), *Mr. Krishna Bhattarai* (HRDC Director), *Dr. Carlin Ridpath* (RAD-AID Country Manager for Nepal) and *Ms. Emily Lenzen* (RAD-AID Paediatric

Ultrasound Program Manager) illustrated the example of the three-decade success story of HRDC, which has made a transformative difference in the lives of indigent children with musculoskeletal disorders in resource-poor environments. Education and innovation coupled with technical know-how and a dedication to excellence are the hallmarks of this highly successful model of social entrepreneurship.

In addition, panellist Edul Daver (President of WZCC) spoke about how entrepreneurship can be the answer to creating a model to promote a global North-South-South model of sustainable development for the UN and its efforts. For those not familiar with the North-South-South model...

The traditional North-South model suggests that the 'South' or

developing countries are completely dependent on the developed 'North' to resolve all their problems. The North-South model of development is not sustainable and creates a sense of perpetual dependency.

The North-South-South model, on the other hand, encourages innovation and entrepreneurship in the "South" and supports the "South" to find creative solutions to resolve the issues they face locally and nationally. For the equation to become sustainable, a move toward the North-South-South model is what we need to implement in the decades ahead as the UN tries to reach its 17 SDGs by the year 2030.

I would like to sign off by saying that we can ALL make a difference, big or small, in the lives of others. We can use our head, heart and

hands to create a better world - free of poverty, hunger, war, and injustices of all kinds. So let's aim to transcend boundaries, reach out and make a difference.

◆ *Sanaya Master (New Zealand/Canada), conceptualized and organized the first World Zoroastrian Youth Leaders Forum at the ASHA Centre in the UK in March 2018. She has been a speaker at global and local Zoroastrian events including the 7th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in LA, USA and the Jamshed K Pavri Seminar in Vancouver, Canada.*

*In August 2019, Sanaya attended the 68th UN Civil Society Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah and compiled the Rap-
porteurs Report on behalf of FEZANA. To continue her learning journey, she will be a panelist at the 64th UN Commission on the Status of Women Conference in March 2020 at UN headquarters in New York.*

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The Hospital and Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children (HRDC), Nepal

Healing disabled children for over 30 years

Empowering children, supporting families, and
strengthening communities



HRDC: changing the lives of Nepal's most vulnerable children for over 30 years

Just outside Kathmandu, The Hospital and Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children (HRDC) is a 100-bed hospital within view of the snowcapped Himalayan Mountains. HRDC provides medical services to the poorest disabled children in Nepal. Here in this warm and caring environment disabled children and their families are given new hope. Children arrive, some after travelling great distances, and are given a bed, a diagnosis, medical treatment and rehabilitation plans, and for some, the first chance at formal education in HRDC's school housed on the hospital campus.

These disabled children arrive with a myriad of challenges, from families who don't know how to cope to those who simply cannot afford the extra cost of a wheelchair, or corrective surgery. HRDC performs an average of 2,500 surgeries every year. Children leave, sometimes many months later, armed with skills, knowledge and

in many cases custom prosthetics that enable them and their families to start life anew with all the opportunities afforded to other Nepali children.

VISIONARY

Dr. Ashok Banskota returned to Nepal in 1984 after completing medical school at All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi and further training and board certification in New York, USA. Upon his return, he was appalled to see the lack of available services for disabled children. He began a small program offering free services to the disabled poor in 1985. Dr. Banskota has now dedicated decades of his life to this service and has grown this once



small initiative into the world class Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children (HRDC), outside Kathmandu.

HRDC's work has been recognized with *The World of Children Award* (US), *The STARS Impact Award* (UK) and the *World of Children Alumni Award* (US). In a brilliant turn of events, Dr. Banskota's son, Bibek, has followed in his footsteps! Dr. Bibek Banskota was trained and certified in the UK and Nepal, and has now joined at his father's side to continue dedicating *their* lives to changing the lives of others. The Dr.'s Banskota are the living embodiment of the Nepali greeting "Namaste", which translated means "I salute the divine in you". They salute the divine in Nepal's most marginalized children.



REACHING CHILDREN IN REMOTE AREAS

While this life changing work is miracle enough for the children who arrive at HRDC, the Dr.'s knew that many more were not finding their way to Kathmandu. HRDC set up five regional offices and began running Mobile Medical Camps in rural

Nepali areas. Field workers go house-to-house searching for "hidden" disabled children, links are made to local and regional services, and medical, social and rehabilitative services are provided. Communities are also educated on support to the disabled. **The goal: to reach all of Nepal's disabled children and give them the rights and respect they deserve.**

MOHIT'S STORY

Seven months old, Mohit lives a three-day journey from Kathmandu. His parents didn't know that clubfoot could be mended, and were anxious the family would be ostracized. When our Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) worker evaluated Mohit, he gave the parents the happy news that his foot could be corrected and referred them to HRDC. They are very happy knowing that soon their son will be able to play with other children, go to school and live an active, full life.



Building Sustainable and Inclusive Communities

HRDC is dedicated to empowering disabled children, supporting families and strengthening communities. Traveling the length and breadth of Nepal, HRDC is a shining example of an organization committed to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals.



- Over 92,000 children have received life saving medical care since 1985
- Approximately 2,500 surgeries are performed every year; cost of surgery is \$170
- Physiotherapy sessions delivered in one year: 66,582
- Community Based Rehabilitation delivered in all districts in Nepal (175 days per year)
- Average of 5,000 children receive x-rays every year



- 90% of children with disabilities in the developing world do not go to school
- HRDC's school ensures children receive an education during post-operative care
- 772 children received quality education at the HRDC School in 2018
- HRDC has trained 32 orthopedic surgeons, who are practicing in Nepal
- Disability Orientation & Awareness training reached 13,169 people in 2018



- 39% of the children benefitting from HRDC's services are girls.
- 42% of HRDC staff are women
- 47% of the children attending the HRDC School are girls.



- An average of 5,000 prosthetic devices are locally created by HRDC every year
- HRDC's clubfoot program uses the nonsurgical Ponseti method – 498 children were treated in 2018



- HRDC teams reached over 44,000 people after the 2015 earthquake.

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for Nepal





The HRDC / RAD-AID / Partners Asia / FEZANA exhibit booth designed by Allyson Appen from Partners Asia at UN Conference. L-R: Sitting: Heather Kavarana, Firoza Kavarana, Dilnavaz Irani. Standing: Jehan Kavarana, Mani Rao, Firdosh Kavarana, Cyrus Kavarana, Edul Daver, Emily Lenzen



Admiring the view of Salk Lake City from the 10th floor of Joseph Smith Memorial Building L-R: Behnoosh Sethna, Sanaya Master, Mani Rao, Dr Behram Pastakia, Kayras Irani, Homi Gandhi, Dilnavaz Irani, Firdosh Kavarana, Edul Daver



FEZANA representatives holding a placard with the title of our session at the UN Conference. L-R: Kayras Irani, Dilnavaz Irani, Behnoosh Sethna, Homi Gandhi, Sanaya Master, Dr Behram Pastakia



Holding the flags of the UN
L-R: Dr Behram Pastakia, Dilnavaz Irani, Behnoosh Sethna, Sanaya Master, Homi Gandhi



Panelist and moderator of "A Global North-South-South Model of Sustainability Development" session at the UN Civil Society Conference
L-R: Edul Daver, Emily Lenzen, Dr Carlin Ridpath, Dr Behram Pastakia



FEZANA representatives alongside Maher Nasser (Director, Outreach Division, UN Department of Global Communications) on Day 3 of the Conference.
L-R: Sanaya Master, Maher Nasser, Kayras Irani



FEZANA participants supporting the 17 UN sustainable goals.
L-R: Behnoosh Sethna, Kayras Irani, Sanaya Master



Volunteers assembling meals for children. This project was partnered with Feeding Children Everywhere, American Airlines, Just Serve and Latter-day Saints
Behnoosh Sethna - 4th from the left.

CAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP BE THE SOLUTION PROMOTE A GLOBAL SOUTH-SOUTH MODEL OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE UN

By Edul Daver, Global President of the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce

At the 68th UN Civil Society Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, Edul was a Panelist on the “Global North-South-South Model of Sustainability Development” session. He believes that the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals can be achieved only if we move to a south-south model of sustainable development, harnessing the power of entrepreneurship, in civil discourse.

Let us start by understanding the origin of the word ‘Entrepreneurship’, what it means and how it is different from Management and Leadership. Let us go back in time to 1911. An Austrian economist, Joseph Schumpeter, studied various business models and found that “Continual infusion of energy into startups and owner-operated companies was the vital source of economic creativity. One can also have pockets of such energy within large corporations.” He found these self-owned companies were run with more caring and were more efficient than large corporations. He wrote a book, titled “Theory of Economic Development” in German and called this observation “*Unternehmer*” whose literal translation is ‘caretaker’. He became Austria’s Finance Minister and then because of the untenable political environment in Austria, he decided to emigrate to the US and became a Professor at Harvard. In 1934 a new edition of his book was published in English and the German word ‘*Unternehmer*’ was re coined into ‘*entrepreneur*’.

So now, how is entrepreneurship different from Management and Leadership?

Management is “the action of managing a group of people or organization to accomplish desired objectives”. This is typically seen in large corporations.

Leadership is “the art and science of motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal”. It is very different from management and seen more often in smaller companies.

Entrepreneurship is “the pursuit of opportunity beyond the resources currently controlled”. It is practiced in an environment where the required resources are not in our control. It could mean insufficient capital/money/people/



technology or any other resource. This in turn implies the need for creativity, innovation and calculated risk. This is commonly seen in start-ups, small companies and new technology companies. However, this could also apply to pockets within large corporations, non-profits, professional organizations, educators and even government. As such a leader operating under limited resource constraints could become an entrepreneur. So, all Entrepreneurs are effective leaders, but all leaders are not necessarily entrepreneurs.

FOUR CORNERSTONES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

1. **Entrepreneurs are opportunity driven:**
They see an opportunity, perhaps, where others do not.
 - Proceed with a flood of optimism, confidence and ‘Can Do’ attitude.
 - Have fire in their belly and ignore the negative naysayers.
 - They network, build relationships and capitalize on opportunities to utilize other people’s resources.
- Entrepreneurs provide a clear shared vision:**
 - They provide a clear vision and then align people and goals by providing inspiration, motivation and incentives.
 - With a laser focus they look for incremental successes that cumulatively contribute towards the vision.
 - Openness, honesty, integrity and credibility are critical components of the vision.

2. **Entrepreneurs are action-oriented and change agents:**

- They prefer flat/informal structures to facilitate decision making and decisions.
- ‘Just do it’ and ‘speed is money’ are mantras.
- Change is welcome, failures tolerated and the role of ‘calculated risk’ understood.
- Lead by example and can operate with ambiguity or what some call ‘organized chaos’.
- They strive to “Be First, Be Different, Be Best”.

3. **Entrepreneurs are value driven:**

- They develop a skilled and knowledgeable team
- Create an environment to enhance creativity and innovation
- Provide serious motivation with generous incentives
- Everyone has a stake in the success of the entity

At our company, ACuPowder International, LLC we had a simple formula to make sure we were maximizing OUTPUT:

$$\text{OUTPUT} = \text{ABILITY} \times \text{MOTIVATION} \div \text{ENVIRONMENT}$$
$$\text{ENVIRONMENT} = (\text{Aptitude} \times \text{Learning}) \times (\text{Need} \times \text{Incentive}) \div (\text{WC/Health/Fatigue/etc})$$

Let’s look at each component in more detail:

OUTPUT is any result we are looking for – Productivity, Performance, Quality etc

ABILITY = Aptitude (Inherent) X Learning- Education/ Training/Experience (can impact long term)

MOTIVATION= Need (varies, identify and satisfy if possible) X Incentive (powerful short-term impact)

ENVIRONMENT= Everything else including working conditions, fatigue, problems at home etc, some controllable and some not.

An entrepreneur will constantly focus on the elements that are controllable to maximize needed Output.

At ACuPowder we did hundreds of entrepreneurial elements but three factors that contributed the most to our success were:

- 101 Business training to every single employee – Example of Learning.
- Open Book Management (OBM) - Example of Need to build credibility.
- Stake in the success of the business – Shared 20% of profits with all employees – Example of Incentive.

The results were nothing short of magical.

DEFINITION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Economic development that is conducted without depletion of natural resources
- Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future to meet their own needs.

UNITED NATION’S 17 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

No Poverty; Zero Hunger; Good Health and Well Being; Quality Education; Gender Equality; Clean Water and Sanitation; Affordable and Clean Energy; Decent Work and Economic Growth; Industry Innovation and Infrastructure; Reduced Inequality; Sustainable Cities and Communities; Responsible Consumption and Production; Climate Change; Life Below Water; Life on Land; Peace and Justice Strong Institutions; Partnerships to Achieve the Goal.

HOW CAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP ADDRESS UN’S 17 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS?

Each of the goals is very challenging but by every institution and every person focusing on incremental accomplishment which can then cumulatively leads us to achieve each goal.

As discussed earlier we need to consciously work on the ‘Four Cornerstones of Entrepreneurship’

- Step one is to “Recognize the Opportunity”
- Step two is to “Have a clear Vision”
- Step three is to be “Action Oriented and Change Agent”
- Step four is to be “Value-Driven”

Invariably resources will not be under the individual’s control and hence creativity, innovation and calculated risk will become critical needs.

In short, one would have to be an Entrepreneur.

I would go further to say, “*Sustainable development goals cannot be achieved without Entrepreneurship*”.

HOSPITAL FOR REHABILITATION OF DISABLED CHILDREN (HRDC) EXEMPLIFIES ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- It has major resource limitations.
- Uses the North-South -South model of development with the help of RAD AID and others.
- It displays entrepreneurship by being creative, innovative and taking calculated risks by having its own manufacturing facilities for Prosthetic Devices at a fraction of the cost. An example of a South South Model.
- It displays the same entrepreneurship by having a school for children during rehabilitation. Again a South-South model.



ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT HRDC

N-S Model \$20,000

S-S Model \$25

SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN DURING REHABILITATION

CAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP BE THE SOLUTION TO PROMOTE A GLOBAL SOUTH-SOUTH MODEL OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

The short answer is YES!

Open flow of information in today's Internet Age empowers the population in low resource countries. Economic and political realities are facilitating such a shift.

Newfound confidence and entrepreneurial spirit are promoting a shift from the North-South model to the South-South model as demonstrated above with two examples from HRDC. Another example narrated by my Plastic Surgeon brother is about an entity, sending Plastic Surgeons to poor countries to perform "Cleft palate" operations, a North South Model. However, local Indian Plastic Surgeons could triple the surgery rate with the same \$ resources, displaying the advantages of the South South model.



CONCLUSIONS:

- **Entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunity beyond the resources currently controlled.**
- **Entrepreneurship is what will propel sustainable development.**
- **A shift from the North-South model to the South-South model is inevitable and desired.**

***"IT IS IN DREAMING THE GREATEST DREAMS....
SEEKING THE HIGHEST GOALS
THAT WE BUILD THE BRIGHTEST TOMORROWS."***

Edul Daver was involved in the development and launch of the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce (WZCC), served as its Founder-Director from 2000-2006 and now as the Global President. He was also the President of ACuPowder International, #1 Copper-based powder manufacturer in North America with a market share of over 50%.

A BRIEF REPORT ON PANEL DISCUSSION AFTER SHOWCASING HRDC IN THE NORTH-SOUTH-SOUTH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE AT THE 68TH UNITED NATIONS' DGC NGO CIVIL SOCIETY CONFERENCE

Mr. Krishna Bhattarai, Vice Chairman of HRDC.



BACKGROUND

Hospital and Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children (HRDC), a non-profit charitable institution in Nepal, was established in 1985 by Prof. Dr. Banskota, with a vision of providing services in pediatric musculoskeletal disability to the marginalized children in Nepali communities. Professor Dr. Ashok Kumar Banskota's inimitable contribution towards the realm of orthopedic medicine is treasured in its domain.

It did not take long for HRDC to cross the geographical borders and get recognition globally. It is also because of Professor Dr. Banskota's constant communication with his batch-mates and colleagues from around the world and mainly from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) where he had studied. In one of the ex-medical students' gatherings, HRDC got a platform to be recognized and was also appreciated for how it has been a boon to those marginalized families having children with disabilities. HRDC is one of the numerous examples of how action contributes to achieving national frameworks and bringing about global impact.

Eventually, HRDC's working mechanism and consistent contribution towards pediatric disability were showcased at the recent United Nations Conference, which was held in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA from 26-28 August 2019. The foundation of the conference was Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the actions, advocacy, and partnership in order to ensure inclusive development including those who are poor and vulnerable.

Similarly, successful rehabilitation of children with physical disabilities promoted RAD-AID, Partners South Asia and other colleagues to utilize the opportunity of United Nations' the 68th NGO Civil Society Conference in a North – South and South – South frame capitalizing the entrepreneurship to continue the global effort for intervention even in scarce resource scenario and keep bringing the change in this target population.

ISSUES RAISED DURING THE PANEL DISCUSSION:

The challenge of running a charitable institution providing costly care for indigent children cannot be overstated.

However, with the model that the HRDC operates in, the return of investment is high, in the form of a dependent child who becomes independent to pursue a life of dignity. This, we believe, is a model that can be replicated successfully in other similar low-resource environments.

Implementing the South-South model has increased the exchange of resources, technology, and knowledge between developing countries or countries of 'Global South' which helps in addressing the need for relatively less costs. Also, it helps in reaching the unmet needs by using productive and feasible working mechanisms which address the sustainable development goals. Following are the issues raised and responded during the panel discussion on HRDC:

• VISIBILITY OF THE CURRENT MODEL OF INTERVENTION

The UN's 68th NGO Civil Society Conference was the best platform to utilize and make others know the HRDC's model on North-South and South-South dialogue which are being successfully used in establishing rights of the focal marginalized group/s even in low resources environment.

- I. North-South coordination: Resource support from developed countries;
 - American Himalayan Foundation, USA
 - RAD-AID DC, USA
 - CBM, Germany and Switzerland
 - Miracle Feet, USA
- II. South-South coordination: Production and distribution of low-cost assistive devices by mobilizing local resources are as follows:
 - Lower limb prosthetics
 - Upper limb prosthetics
 - Spine/Upper limb orthoses
 - Lower limb orthoses Foot orthoses
 - DB Splint
 - Wheelchair
 - Aluminium crutches
 - Wooden crutches.

- III. Integrated Model of Schooling has been implemented at HRDC for utilizing children's time at HRDC, a school has been set up at the hospital where most of the children who are from 'normal' schools, can continue their studies with the guidance of teachers available at HRDC. This program basically acts as a bridge between students and education so that they can have an uninterrupted teaching-learning facility on an individual basis in a multi grade teaching frame.
- IV. The inflow of service users from neighboring countries:
Many children come to HRDC from northern India specially from bordering towns, children from Bangladesh and Bhutan also visit HRDC for intervention. Below is the data :

Country	Number
India	784
Bhutan	97
Others	2

- V. Also, many medical students from different developed countries like the USA, Holland, Belgium, UK, Austria, France, and Australia visit HRDC for their elective study every year. The table below shows the data.

Year	Country	Number
2016	Holland	2
	Belgium	4
2017	Holland	4
2018	Belgium	13
	Germany	2
	UK	1
	France	1
	Austria	1
	Holland	2

- Global entrepreneurial and/or 'give and take' models have raised our recognition especially in the introduction in 2004, of 'Ponseti' Technique of clubfoot management in Nepal, HRDC is a pioneer in introducing this technique in Nepal which has not only reduced the cost of clubfoot intervention but also shifted the intervention from complex to simple and cost-effective management.

HRDC'S MECHANISM IN RELATION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

HRDC has not only catered the children from disadvantaged families with the help of local communities and HRDC's own resources (SGD 17) but also have enabled the children with disability

re-integrate into their communities and live up to their optimum development. HRDC is operating as a tertiary referral center in co-operation with its various partners for comprehensive management of children with physical disabilities and has successfully intervened in 24,874 cases in 2018 itself.

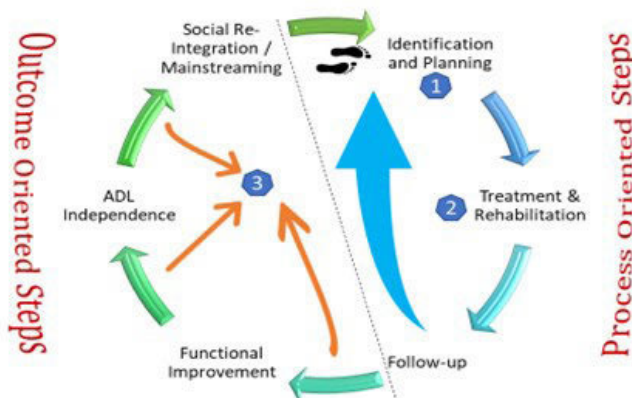
Likewise, hospital-based services along with field-based services help in promoting good health and well-being (addresses SDG 3). Orthopedic graduates from Dr. Banskota's program are practicing in different parts of Nepal meeting the unmet needs in services, and an in-house school addresses the educational needs of children while they recover (SDG 4).

'Child Protection Policy' and 'Gender Policy' (SDG 5) at HRDC protect the vulnerable groups. As mentioned earlier, the Orthotic and Prosthetic department have manufactured over 50,000 low-cost assistive devices (SDG 9) that are vital to activities of daily living for children with disabilities. Rehabilitative services that help in rebuilding their lives and livelihood (SDG 11) have further helped the children regain their confidence and live a life of dignity.

HRDC's self-explanatory 3 tier functional mechanism is illustrated below:

The current model of intervention is an individual-based model that promotes self-care and functional mobility. This model is in practice at HRDC since years which is the result of years of tertiary care practice and subsequent re-integration efforts. CBR Network plays a vital role

HRDC's Modality: Illustrative Diagram



in continuously follow-up to ascertain the quality of intervention. This has allowed us to maintain a high level of tracing of children who got intervention at HRDC.

There are 5 Ponseti intake and intervention centers across Nepal to provide the children with accessible and feasible care. As a result, HRDC has been recognized as one of the change-makers in clubfoot management. The Ponseti



Fig: Ponseti coverage/intervention centers across Nepal.

intake/coverage and intervention centers in Nepal are indicated with the red dots in the map above:

The rehabilitation services have been cascaded to different regions of Nepal making a positive difference in accessibility. The Regional Rehabilitation Centre in the eastern part of Nepal is being constructed which will cater to 14 districts of Province # 1. The locals are in the leadership role with our technical support in the process of decentralizing treatment and rehabilitation services. A similar effort has been initiated in other parts of the country. To make the rehabilitative services further accessible and sufficient, HRDC is trying its best to expand the regional centers.

The multi-disciplinary team at HRDC not only plays a vital role in screening the cases and developing a thorough plan of intervention for each child but also bridges the communication barriers by maximum use of local volunteers. This is critical in planning and conducting the outreach programs since there are as many as 126 castes and ethnic groups having various cultures and about 123 dialects/languages (2011 National Census).

HRDC has trained about 34 Orthopedic Surgeons who are now working in different parts of the country in different health institutions. During the screening camps, HRDC collaborates with these surgeons when required for treatment and rehabilitation services. In the map given in right column, the green patches show the districts/regions where the Orthopedic Surgeons are currently functioning, whereas, the pink patches refer to the location where the PRT graduates are working.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- Every year we have a number of medical students visiting HRDC from overseas as well as from Nepal for elective study which supports national as well as international collaboration and strengthens the bond both ways for the future.
- CBR Network that has been continuously functioning in different parts of Nepal not only keeps track of clients but also ascertains quality of intervention along with its cost-effectiveness. This will certainly lead us towards sustainability.
- HRDC has the history and experience of 35 years in tertiary care of children with physical disabilities and over 95,000 children have been benefitted to date. HRDC takes pride in its achievements and is ever ready for a productive collaboration/partnership in order to replicate its successful modality in the sector of physical disability management among children.

FUTURE GOALS:

- Seeking a sustainable scenario to regularly maintain and upgrade HRDC's medical as well as rehabilitative services for "enabling abilities" of children with physical disabilities.

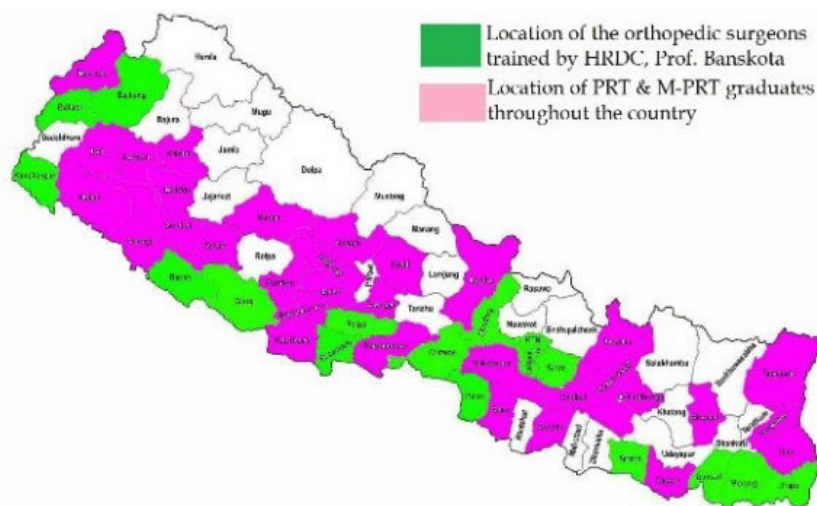


Fig: A map of Nepal showing orthopedic surgeons and PRT/MPRT graduates across Nepal

◆ *Krishna P Bhattarai is Vice-Chairman Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children (HRDC) and responsible for the overall management of the hospital and rehabilitation service. Krishna was also a Panelist on "A Global North-South-South Model of Sustainability Development" session at the 68th UN Conference 2019 via Skype from Nepal.*

BIODATAS

Biodata of all who participated in the 68th UN Civil Society Conference held in Salt Lake City, August 2019

FEZANA



Adil Minocherhomjee, Product Manager based in Salt Lake City, UT, holds a Masters in Business Administration from UCLA and a Masters in Information Systems from Indiana University Bloomington. Adil was responsible for the audiovisual recording and dissemination of “A Global North-South-South Model of Sustainability Development” session at the 68th UN Conference 2019.



Afreed Mistry, FEZANA’s main representative to the United Nations, Co-Chair of the FEZANA UN-NGO Committee. Afreed has attended seven Commission on the Status of Women conferences and 1 UN DPI NGO Conference.



Behnoosh Sethna, born in Pakistan, now living in Baltimore, Trade Analyst for Morgan Stanley, has completed Bachelors in Economics and Finance from State University of New York, Plattsburgh, volunteers for various NGOs. Behnoosh is interested in learning how youth can collaborate and be involved to eradicate inequality, and build inclusive communities.



Behram Pastakia, MD, Fellow of the American College of Radiology, Co-Chair of FEZANA UN NGO Committee (www.fezana.org), Chair of the Zoroastrian Youth Without Borders, Metropolitan Washington DC, Chair of Information Dissemination Committee of FEZANA. Moderator of “A Global North-South-South Model of Sustainability Development” session at the 68th UN Conference 2019.



Delzin Choksey, Children's book illustrator, studied Commercial Art and Psychology and Mastered in 3D Animation, Graphic Designer, passionate about making inspirational art for children. Delzin designed FEZANA and RAD-AID banners supporting the SDGs for the exhibit booth at the 68th UN Conference 2019.



Homi Gandhi, B Com, B Sc (Econ) London, Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales, President of FEZANA. Presented papers on Climate Change at the annual UN-NGO conferences and Parliament of World's Religions, Panelist at the "Interreligious Understanding, Secularism and Non-absolutism Alone Can Pave the Way for Universal Peace" session at the 68th UN Conference 2019.



Firdosh Kavarana, Operations Management Specialist with over 22 years of experience in the energy industry, involved in innovative technologies to reduce the global carbon footprint. Key coordinator for HRDC/RAD-AID/Partners Asia/FEZANA exhibit booth at the 68th UN Conference 2019.



Kayras Irani, Advanced Care Paramedic with the British Columbia Ambulance Service, enjoys volunteering for the Zarathushti community at a local and global level, loves exploring the outdoors and water sports, Vancouver, British Columbia.



Mani Rao, MBA, Business Development Consultant for TMS Therapy – The Treatment for Major Depression, Health Benefits Consultant. Mani is passionate about Music especially creating and singing Zoroastrian Monajats (www.soulfulserenades.com).



Sanaya Master, Communications Specialist, Project Manager of First World Zoroastrian Youth Leaders Forum in 2018 at the ASHA Centre, Guest Editor of FEZANA Journal, Speaker at 6th and 7th World Zoroastrian Youth Congresses. Compiled the Rapporteur's Report for the 68th UN Conference 2019.

Friends of FEZANA



Cathrine Venter, Middle-school teacher and former vice-principal at a school in South Africa. She graduated cum laude with a bachelor's degree in Mathematics and Psychology, as well as obtaining a Graduate Education Certificate in 2004.



Christo Venter, South African astrophysicist, obtained PhD in 2008. Christo loves art, music, travel and reading. As followers of Christ, he and his wife, Cathrine, support community projects that help those in need.

HRDC



Ashok Banskota, MD, Fellow of American College of Surgeons, Founder of Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children (HRDC), (www.hrdcnepal.org). Over three decades of serving children in resource-poor environments. Building an international centre of excellence in Banepa, Nepal. Panelist on "A Global North-South-South Model of Sustainability Development" session at the 68th UN Conference 2019.



Dr. Bibek Banskota, Orthopedic surgeon, Medical/Executive Director, Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children (HRDC). Undergraduate training – MBBS in Jaipur, India. Postgraduate training – MRCS in the UK, and MS Orthopedics in Nepal respectively. Involved in delivering quality health care to indigent children with physical disabilities in Nepal.



Krishna P Bhattarai, Director, Social Inclusion, Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children (HRDC), Benepa, Nepal. Panelist on "A Global North-South-South Model of Sustainability Development" session at the 68th UN Conference 2019 via Skype from Nepal.



Prakash Kumar Yadav, Masters of Public Health, Hospital Manager and Head of Clinical Research Division at Hospital and Rehabilitation for Disabled Children, Nepal. Published 5 papers in national and international journals like JBJS (Am).



Shesh Awa, in charge of Information Management at the Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children (HRDC), a graduate of Kavre Multiple Campus, holds an A+ Certification and a Diploma in Software Engineering.

WZCC



Dilnavaz Irani, Secretary of Central Florida World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce Chapter (WZCC), Cardiac Certified Medical Assistant & X-ray Technician, holds degrees in Science, Commerce, Radiology Tech and a Diploma in Computer Programming.



Edul Daver, Global President of the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce (www.wzcc.net), Owner, President and Manager of ACuPowder International LLC (sold in 2010) New Jersey, USA, graduate of the Indian Institutes of Technology, IIT in Mumbai, India. Edul believes that the SDGs can be achieved only if we move to a south-south model of sustainable development harnessing the power of entrepreneurship, in civil discourse.



Yazdi Tantra, Chartered Accountant by training, Computer Consultant by Profession, Entrepreneur Developer by hobby and Trainer in his leisure time. Involved in Banking, Education and Community affairs. He runs a popular community blog - www.zoroastrians.net.



Meherji Madan, Senior Financial Executive, has professional experience, public sector (eg., World Bank, US/RTC), the private sector (eg., Price Waterhouse, Sallie Mae, Perpetual Bank), Producer and Music Consultant for the docu-drama, "On Wings of Fire", with Zubin Mehta and Sir Derek Jacobi, past US National Squash Referee. Docu-Drama "On Wings of Fire" available on - www.zoroastrians.net.

Partners Asia



Allyson Appen, Founder of StudioA2, (www.studioa2.com) has over 30 years' experience spanning online media, mobile and print, enjoys building apps and creating clean, well-targeted marketing communications for her clients.



Eileen Moncoeur, Executive Director of Partners Asia, a US non-profit which funds community-based initiatives and capacity building in Southeast Asia, 22 years' experience developing and overseeing multimillion-dollar programs that change lives at a global scale.



Laura Szabados, Development Officer at the Friends of HRDC Foundation and based in Oakland California, graduate of UC Santa Barbara with a B.S. in Environmental Studies.

RAD-AID



Carlin Ridpath, MD, RAD-AID Country Manager for Nepal (www.rad-aid.org) President, Missouri Chapter of the American College of Radiology (www.acr.org), Leading a Humanitarian mission to Nepal from 7 to 20 September 2019, Missouri, USA. Panelist on "A Global North-South-South Model of Sustainability Development" session at the 68th UN Conference 2019 where she spoke about her first-hand experience in global health.



Emily M. Lenzen, MS, RDMS, RVT, RMSKS, World Wide Em, LLC & RAD-AID Pediatric Ultrasound Program Manager (www.rad-aid.org), experience in Laos, Malawi, New Zealand and Qatar. Now based out of Salt Lake City, Utah. Panelist on "A Global North-South-South Model of Sustainability Development" at the 68th UN Conference 2019 where she spoke about her passion for helping children and harnessing the cutting edge technology of ultrasound.



Kara Jones (BS, RDMS, RVT, CTT+) graduated from the University of Minnesota with degrees in Biology and Psychology and from Argosy University with a degree in Sonography, 19 years' clinical history including work in hospitals, breast centers, vascular labs, and outpatient clinics. Her experience teaching at the collegiate level as an ultrasound program director, prepared her for her current position in clinical education with Philips Healthcare.

RECORDINGS

To view the introduction of HRDC by Prof. (Dr.) Ashok K Banskota, click the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpZGmYnrCpM>

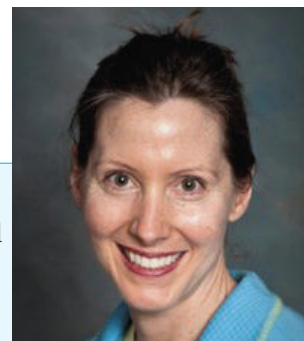
To view the outcome of the 68th UN Civil Society Conference, click the link below.

<http://webtv.un.org/watch/the-outcome-of-the-68th-un-civil-society-conference-press-conference-6-september-2019/6084091933001/>

Speakers: Maher Nasser, Director, Outreach Division, UN Department of Global Communications; Jackie Biskupski, Mayor of Salt Lake City, Utah (via phone); Fannie Munlin, Chair of the NGO Executive Committee; Maruxa Cardama, Chair of the 68th UN Civil Society Conference (via phone); Rebecca Hardenbrook, Co-chair for the Conference Youth Planning Sub-committee; Ali Mustafa, Co-chair of the Conference Youth Planning Sub-committee.

RAD-AID VOLUNTEER EXPEDITION TO NEPAL

Carlin Ridpath RAD-AID Country Manager for Nepal



This past August, the Hospital and Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children (HRDC), in Banepa Nepal, was represented at the 68th United Nations Civil Society Conference held in Salt Lake City, Utah. HRDC has provided over three decades of community building through outreach, innovation and, application of skills that affect a very vulnerable section of civil society, children with congenital musculoskeletal disorders, such as club foot, with limited resources to health care. Orthopedic interventions at HRDC create a transformative impact on the lives of the children and their families lifting them out of despair and poverty.

The theme of the presentation centered on working towards making HRDC more sustainable. The model focuses on a North-South-South model of sustainable development. For example, when a group of volunteers from the United States or Canada, travel to Nepal and provide workshops on furthering education, that is an example of a North-South model of development. The Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children (HRDC) serves many children in Nepal as well as children from India who are low income in need of a musculoskeletal procedure, such as treating club foot. The practice of providing care and services to other low resource countries is a South-South model of sustainable development.



Dr. Behram Paštakia, Emily Lenzen and Dr. Carlin Ridpath supporting the booth at the United Nations conference.

Rad-Aid International, a global health organization, bringing medical imaging technologies, education and equipment to low resource regions, has signed a memorandum of understanding with HRDC. Rad-Aid is currently involved in 31 countries and affiliated with 55 hospitals. Rad-Aid is working with HRDC to provide radiology equipment and training for HRDC's staff. This past September, a team of volunteers from Rad-

Aid traveled to Nepal. The volunteers from the United States and Canada went to HRDC to aid in creating a sustainable environment. One source of this included working with several staff, including doctors and nurse practitioners to be able to use Ultrasound to detect a congenital abnormality of hips in infants. If the condition is caught early in infancy, treatment is much more successful rather than later in childhood.



A group of Rad-Aid volunteers at HRDC

HRDC currently has one ultrasound machine, donated by an Australian radiologist.

Another volunteer was able to observe and assist in reducing radiation exposure to the patients and staff at the facility. A radiation safety talk was given to the staff



Working with the staff at HRDC to accurately evaluate an ultrasound of the fetal hip.

at HRDC. This benefitted both the staff and the patients.

While the team of volunteers was observing HRDC, the method the staff had of visualizing x-rays of the patients was noted to be adequate, but improvements could be made. One of the volunteers had a background in Information Technology (IT) and noticed that a digital system could be put into place to improve the surgeon's and staff's ability to view the patient's x-rays. In addition, this digital system of viewing x-rays will save the hospital the cost of film and processing. This digital system will be a goal that the hospital can work towards over the next few years.

HRDC was represented at the annual Rad-Aid



Dr. Behram Pastakia representing the Nepal program at the annual Rad-Aid conference in Washington DC. Jason Lee one of the conference organizers.

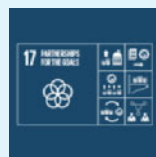
conference help at the PAHO/WHO headquarters in Washington DC on November 2, 2019. A digital poster and banner were utilized to inform participants about the current and future goals in Nepal.

An important and pivotal concept in low resource countries is self-sustainability. It is a useless endeavor to provide equipment or machines to countries or regions which are unable to sustain them. Each region is unique and has its own barriers. Therefore, Rad-Aid has an assessment that each facility must complete as a preliminary effort at improving medical imaging. Currently, Rad-Aid is affiliated with several hospitals in Nepal. The needs vary from teaching to acquiring and documenting information. Any help in this endeavor, including video, photography, etc is needed. A return trip to Nepal is planned for 7-21 June 2020. Any volunteer is welcome, even one without a medical interest or background. If interested in the upcoming trip or any future trip yet to be decided, please contact Dr. Carlin Ridpath (ridpathc@yahoo.com).

◆ **Dr. Carlin Ridpath** is RAD-AID Country Manager for Nepal and the President of the Missouri Chapter of the American College of Radiology. Carlin was a Panelist on "A Global North-South-South Model of Sustainability Development" session at the 68th UN Civil Society Conference 2019 where she spoke about her first-hand experience in global health. Most recently, Carlin led a humanitarian mission to HRDC, Nepal from 7 to 20 September 2019 and in June 5-19 2020, she will lead another Rad-Aid mission to Banepa, Nepal.



FEZANA SUPPORTS SDG 4,5,8,9,10 11 GOALS OF UNITED NATIONS



Armene Modi



TRANSFORMING LIVES: CHAMPIONING GENDER JUSTICE IN RURAL INDIA

To awaken people it is the woman who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves.”
Jawaharlal Nehru

A chance reading of a book titled “May You Be the Mother of a 100 Sons” turned out to be a life-changing experience for me. The year was 1997, my tenth year of a fulfilling teaching career at a well-known university in Tokyo, Japan. What made me decide to give it all up, return to India, and reinvent myself as a social activist and entrepreneur was a shocking statistic in the book that 61% of Indian women were still illiterate according to India’s 1991 census. As an educator, I felt a responsibility to make a dent, even if a small one, in addressing the problem of female illiteracy since literacy could clearly be a powerful tool to improve the quality of life for poor women in India. However, never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined that my determination in attempting to alter that alarming statistic would lead to making a positive difference in the lives of thousands of marginalized women and girls in rural India. I would now like to share the challenges and successes of my personal journey of more than two decades in rural India.

My initial plan was to work in slums near Pune. While I had the desire to make a difference, I did not have personal funds to launch such a project. Hence, as a first step, I wrote a proposal hoping to raise funds in Japan. The response, much to my great surprise, was overwhelming. My campaign plea that literacy could change the cycle of poverty and dependence which characterized the lives of poor Indian women touched a chord among many Japanese friends and colleagues. The project seemed to take on a life of its own when more than one thousand Japanese pledged their wholehearted

support for ten years to the cause. With such resounding support, we decided to widen our reach. Gandhi’s words seemed to resonate in my ears, *“Find purpose, the means will follow.”*

Since I had no experience in the social sector, I reached out to Dr. Banoo Coyaji, a renowned surgeon in Pune, who had set up the KEM Hospital Research Center, a non-profit focusing on health, in thirty villages in Shirur County, Pune District. She suggested that the project I envisioned be rural rather than urban based as the need for such interventions was much greater there, and kindly offered to assist me in setting up the project in the same county where she worked.

Along with the assistance of KEM staff, ten villages were selected based on their lack of adequate infrastructure, such as schools, clean water supply, health care facilities, good roads, etc. As in many

parts of the country, the status of women in these villages was low. Poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, and rigid social traditions had hampered women’s progress and affected the quality of their lives. And so, in October 1998, Ashta No Kai, (ANK) which means ‘For



a Better Tomorrow’ in Japanese, was launched in ten villages in Shirur County to promote the literacy and empowerment of rural women.

The promotion of literacy for adult women turned out to be the first major challenge ANK faced. The goal of 100% literacy for women that had been determined at the very outset of ANK’s founding, did not recognize that poor women’s need for literacy paled in comparison to the immediate necessities of their daily lives. This

top-down approach of assuming that literacy was the magic bullet that rural women needed to better their lives did not work, obvious from the failure of the program even after two years of struggle to promote it. Not even 15% of adult women had become literate. A bottom-up approach was needed, Women needed to be taken into confidence and *their* needs assessed. Village women voiced their desire to overcome their poverty by engaging in income-generating activities. They needed easy access to credit to escape the clutches of shark money lenders who charged 120% interest! At that time, the Self-Help Group (SHG) movement was taking off in India. These were voluntary savings and loan collectives of between 15 to 20 women that could access loans from banks without collateral. Accordingly, ANK organized village women into 250 such Self-Help groups, as a result they could now easily access funds in emergencies and engage in livelihood



initiatives such as dairy cooperatives, goat rearing, backyard poultries, farming, or small businesses, etc. An unintended but very positive consequence of SHGs was that besides giving rural women some degree of financial independence for the first time in their lives, SHGs acted as a pivotal place for social justice to occur. Women, who had hitherto never left the four walls of their homes except to fetch water, suddenly realized their strength in unity, and banded together to solve the problems of their village. Rural women became change

makers actively campaigning against social maladies, like alcoholism and dowry, and even infrastructural problems like water shortages and bad roads. With ANK's support, the voices of village women that were once passive now became vocal as they began to demand their rights.

The focus of ANK's work in the early years was limited to empowering village women. However, the discovery of a high number of child brides in the villages in 2000 prompted me to widen the focus to include adolescent girls. I was shocked to find several young girls, who were barely in their teens in the tailoring classes we held for the women wearing *mangalsutras*, the black and gold beaded necklace that is the Hindu symbol of marriage. This, I was told, was due to the custom of child marriage, common among the villagers. Lack of high schools within easy reach of villages and fear for their daughters' safety often prompted parents to marry off their daughters after they reached puberty. Boys were provided bicycles to reach distant high schools as parents felt it was important for them to promote their son's education since they would, after all, look after them in their old age. At the same time, parents felt buying bicycles for their daughters was an unnecessary expense as they would soon be married off. I felt that if all that was keeping adolescent girls from accessing high school was a simple bicycle, I would leave no stone unturned to provide them. I reached out to all our supporters and before long, we received a flood of bicycles. Thus was born ANK's Bicycle Bank in 2001, an innovative intervention at the time.

The Bicycle Bank became a catalyst for promoting adolescent girls' education in our villages. They proved to be wheels of change that positively impacted the lives of thousands of girls. The average age of marriage for girls rose to 19 years from an earlier 12 and 13 years. The Bicycle Bank not only helped to arrest child marriages, but also enabled rural girls to live out their dreams of accessing an education. Moreover, it gave many poor village girls a sense of pride in having something they could call their own. A mother of a girl who received a bicycle once poignantly remarked to me, "Had I received a bicycle to go to school when I was growing up, my life would have been very different than what it is today."

Other interventions for adolescent girls were initiated as it was not enough to arrest the high drop out rate of adolescent girls from high school, but also to provide a life-skills education program that would teach them the skills they needed to cope with daily life. To promote further education, scholarships were offered to rural girls which resulted in our village girls becoming dentists, pharmacists, biotechnologists, taxonomists, engineers and challenging difficult courses like medicine and law. It is a matter of great pride to have nurtured a first generation of female learners in our villages, many of whose mothers had never gone to



school.

Additionally, karate classes were offered to enable girls to learn self-defense which gave some of them



the self-confidence to win at national and international meets. The various interventions ANK introduced gave adolescent girls wings to fly and fulfill their dreams of realizing their full potential.

Recognizing the important role that engaging boys and men can play in promoting gender equality, ANK launched a gender equality curriculum in rural schools in June 2019, a new initiative to mainstream values of gender justice for girls and boys from grades 6 to 9. The project aims to foster gender equitable attitudes and behaviors, and nurture gender champions in village schools to challenge gender stereotypes and become change agents. Hopefully, the ripple effect of this curriculum will lead to promoting positive shifts towards gender equitable norms in our rural communities.

Initially there was suspicion among the villagers, especially the men, regarding my motives for working in their village communities. In the early days, many husbands forbade their wives and daughters from

attending ANK meetings. The *Asho Farohar* pendant I wore also raised suspicion. They thought it was a cross, and that I had come to convert them. Others felt that my work in the villages was a ploy to further my own political ambitions. However, when they realised the genuineness of my desire to make a positive difference in the lives of their women and girls, they were deeply grateful for ANK's activities: for the windows of opportunity that had been opened up for their women and girls, and the substantial boost in the village economy, etc. In fact, now that the project has reached many significant milestones, many *Sarpanches* (head of village assemblies) today even offer to build a home in the village for me to live in!

I have never regretted the decision to retire from teaching and reinvent myself as a social entrepreneur. Although my efforts to promote female literacy and empower rural women and girls has not been a smooth ride, it has been a rich journey of discovery and learning. It has been truly satisfying to watch the seeds we planted twenty-one years ago grow and flourish, knowing that it has made a positive difference to the lives of the many girls and women the project has touched. Inspired by Gandhi's principle to "*Be the change you want to see in the world*", I hope to continue making a difference through the work of ANK in the lives of many more in our rural communities.

♦ *Armene Modi, an educator, social activist, and Founder of Ashta No Kai, holds an MA in International Relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, and an honorary Doctorate in Education from J. F. Oberlin University in Japan. Armene was awarded a Visiting Fellowship, as 2017 Echidna scholar by The Brookings Institution in Washington DC. She has received several national awards for her contribution to the empowerment of rural women including CNN-IBN's "Real Heroes" the 2016 Rotary Literacy Hero and the Dr. Sushila Nayar Literacy Award for Outstanding Contribution to Women's Literacy in Rural Areas.*



BRINGING JOY INTO THE LIVES OF DISADVANTAGED ADULTS IN ORLANDO

A MONTHLY "BEHRAM ROJ" OUTREACH BY DINYAR MEHTA AND COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

Reported by Dilnavaz Irani

Each Behram Roj, a man keeps a promise he made to himself, to bring a bit of joy into the lives of the mentally and physically challenged in a small part of Orlando. This Mushkeliasan** effort, spearheaded by Dinyar Mehta, an Orlando area hotelier, starts and ends with a short prayer session and a remembrance of people going through difficult times. With the help of the volunteers, Dinyar loads his car with a full meal of barbecued chicken, macaroni and cheese, cornbread, cupcakes, birthday cake, lemonade, etc. and heads to the Russell Home for Atypical Adults, a private, nonprofit facility at 510, Holden Avenue in Orlando. The group doesn't just drop off the food, they serve it on plates and stay and interact with the residents, including hand feeding the people who need help. They hand out birthday presents, chocolates for everyone, low sugar ones for the ones with health issues, and generally bring much-needed sunshine into the lives of the Russell

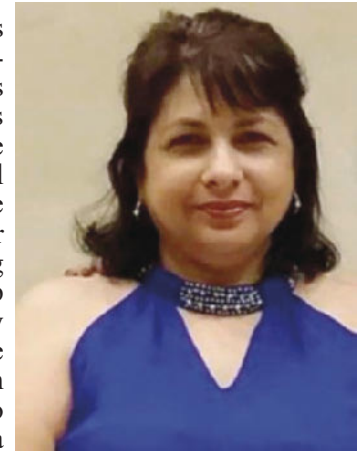
Home folks who look forward to the event each month. *{Respecting the policy of Russell Home, we are unable to publish any of the beautiful photos of volunteers}*



bringing joy to the residents and hand feeding those who needed to be fed.}

Dinyar Mehta is an exceptional man, a driving force in the central Florida community. When people of means make a donation and move away, Mehta also gives of himself. He is generous with his time and on his annual trips to India he finds time to visit homes for widows, etc. Never going empty-handed, Mehta takes along traditional, catered dishes reminiscent of wedding celebrations and happier times.

Mehta opens up his doors for community get-togethers, prayer meetings and happy occasions alike. He functions as the treasurer of the Central Florida chapter of the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce, encouraging younger members to take up positions of responsibility and bring in new ideas. The annual Gahambar which brings together, the Orlando and wider, Central Florida community, kicks off at the Wingate Hotel, Dinyar's home base, with meetings of the young Board of Directors headed by Afsaan Kermani, Dilnavaz Irani, Zenia Shroff and willing members who cheerfully come together to form committees which make the Orlando Gahambar wonderfully successful each year.



**** Mushkil Aasan and Behram Roj** has different versions. Basically it is a simple tale of a woodcutter and his family, which is recited every Behram Roj or every Friday along with Chana (gram), Khajoor;(dates) sugar crystals in front of a fire vase agarbatti,(incense sticks) mirror, prayerbook and a framed photograph of Mushkil Aasan which has a deep and profound message. It is a very powerful link in life for asking Ahura Mazda's help, when in need or in despair. The story is woven around the holy spirit of "Mushkil Aasan Behram Yazad" who comes to our aid when in trouble and helps us find solutions to our important problems. It is believed that miraculous powers can be invoked by the recitation of this story. There are many different traditions with regard to the Mushkil Aasan Behram Yazad ritual - some just recite the story and some recite the story as well as the Nirang.(small prayer)

◆ **Dilnavaz Irani**, is a double graduate from Bombay University (Science and Commerce) and has a Radiology Tech degree along with a Diploma in Computer Programming. She is currently working as a Cardiac Certified Medical Assistant and X-ray Technician. She is the secretary of the Central Florida WZCC Chapter

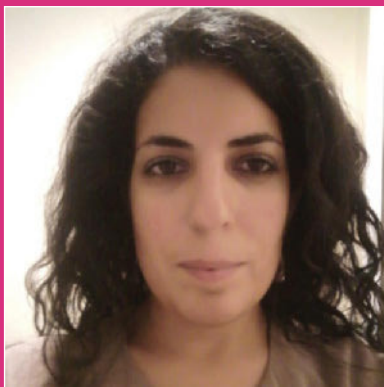
10 REDUCED
INEQUALITIES



FEZANA supports the SDG #10 of the United Nations

THE THIRD CULTURE
(ZOROASTRIAN)
CHILD SEEKS
FULFILMENT
ABROAD

Shirin Kiani



◆ *Shirin Kiani has worked in international development and humanitarian aid for over 10 years, in a variety of settings in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. She has helped promote the rights of persons with disabilities and their social inclusion and access to livelihood activities. She currently works with UNICEF on disability inclusion policies.*

It was the second day of my training in Herat and my translator turned to me and kindly stated, «The participants are asking why you forget to open the training with a prayer from the Koran again today”. I gazed at the participants. There were a group of mostly bearded men with turbans and salwar kameez’s and thought: “Of course, how did I not know this was so important in this context!” My translator quietly asked, “You’re not Muslim, are you?” “No, I’m Zoroastrian. I can explain that was the reason I didn’t know trainings had to be prefaced with prayers in Afghanistan.” My translator gently responded, “Shirin, it is better if they think you are a bad Muslim than someone of a different religion.” And so, it was that I completed the rest of my training as a so-called bad Muslim. I invited other colleagues to lead morning prayers for the remaining days and everybody was happy. The participants were, otherwise, very kind towards me. Their receptivity to me – a young Iranian girl with broken Dari – was surprising and they listened intently to my training on disability. There was one woman who attended my training but she was quiet for the majority of the five days. I imagine she was not accustomed to speaking up. Some of the participants disclosed that they hoped for their children and women to be better educated and how they wished Afghanistan could advance if it were not for the turmoil it continued to face. My time in Afghanistan was one of the most memorable experiences I have had in my career.

So how did I find myself in Herat, you ask? I think my upbringing as a ‘third culture child’ had something to do with it. I was born a year after the Iran/Iraq war started and two years after the Iranian revolution. It was a tumultuous time in Iran and my father knew he didn’t want to raise two daughters in that context. Thanks to his job with Iran Air, hard work and a bit of luck, we were relocated to Switzerland. There, we were exposed to a European life for five years before needing to move yet again, this time to Canada – the place closest to what I call ‘home’ today. My exposure to Iranian, Swiss and Canadian cultures – all by the age of eight as well as learning to converse in three different languages was good training for career in international work. Our life in Canada was difficult and stressful for both my parents. And so it was that my dad passed away when I was sixteen. Although a hard experience, it also made me familiar with grief at a relatively young age – another pre-requisite for working in humanitarian settings. A peculiar experience of grief helped me relate somewhat to the numerous people I would meet who would lose family members or be separated from them for years. My mom passed away 16 years after that when I was 32. Another experience in grief, this time as an adult but this time with the haunting feeling of ‘I am an orphan’.

During my university years, I saw myself in the medical field and chose to study occupational therapy – also because of my sister’s recommendation to choose something ‘practical and useful’. This was some of the soundest advice I received in my life. This career choice led me to work in many different places where disability is a close companion of war and poverty. I forgot to mention, I was born prematurely and with a severe case of jaundice. This meant I needed several blood transfusions and extended time in the incubator before I could go home with my parents. My mom often told me, “We were afraid you were going to lose your sight or your hearing”. Maybe it was my karma to work in the field of disability and public health.



Shirin speaks to refugees fleeing ISIS. They were from Mosul and staying in a church in Erbil, Iraq. This is the mother of a child with a disability who had specific nutritional needs that we had to address as normal food distribution was not consumable by the child. (Fall 2014)

Like many of you, I was exposed to those overly graphic ‘World Vision’ commercials intending to make a person’s heart bleed. They did that for me. I also learned about the work of ‘Amnesty International’ and knew they helped many Iranian political prisoners, which drew me further into global awareness. After a few years of working in Canada as an occupational therapist, I decided to volunteer in Guyana and test the waters of working outside Canada. It was a great experience. I subsequently chose to do a Master’s degree in Global Health, knowing I needed the qualification to be taken seriously when applying for jobs internationally and where being able to think on a larger scale and analyze health trends would be useful. My Master’s thesis was focused on the situation of women with disabilities in Cameroon. Interestingly, in developing countries, health is dependent on ‘social determinants’ (e.g. housing, education, social network, transport) even more than the quality of the health system. And so, I started to move away from thinking in a medical way to wondering how disability is impacted by society. For instance, how access to education, sexual health, legal rights and livelihood, can impact persons with disabilities – who make a big chunk of the planet, nearly 15% of the world population.

After Cameroon, I was thirsty to experience everything I could and expose myself to different experiences. I worked as a project manager in the Northeast of Sri Lanka during the Civil War. I learned about the conflict between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. It made me wonder, ‘Is this what it was like for Zoroastrians when we were trying to hang on in Iran?’ I would ask myself this question on the plight of minorities several more times when encountering other minority groups (e.g. Kurds in Iraq, Kurds in Syria, Anglophone minority in Cameroon, Dalit people in Nepal, Hmong people in Laos, Hazaras in Afghanistan, Rohingya in Myanmar, and so on). I spent one of the most memorable years of my life, working in community-based rehabilitation in Nepal. Though I was based in Kathmandu my job required regular treks through villages in Nepal to the foothills of the Himalayas. How lucky was I?

In 2010 my first exposure to humanitarian work happened when I arrived in Haiti, four months post-earthquake.

That experience was generally a confusing one for me. I found the country flooded with NGOs and aid workers, the work of my organization and my role was not always clear to me. I left that experience a bit lost. I had several more experiences that stretched me. My last job abroad involved working on the Syrian Crisis to help Syrians with injuries and disabilities access livelihood opportunities. Living in the Middle East and being a few steps closer to Iran was important for me. My life in Canada feels as far geographically and culturally as it can be from my Persian roots. Though Canada is a peaceful haven and I am forever grateful to call it 'home', it is 'different' and I still feel there is much I do not understand or know about Iranian culture.

After nearly a decade working internationally, I thought it important to recalibrate and set down roots, even if temporary. I also wanted to have a stronger connection with my nieces and nephew and not to be known as the 'khaleh' whom we visited that one time in Jordan and that one time in Laos. I wanted to have a stronger connection with them. As I write this, I am nearly one year after my repatriation to Canada. It has had its ups and downs. I am often uncomfortable with my comfortable life here. The process of reintegrating takes time and I am not sure I will ever be able to be connected to just one place. Some days it is hard - other days are better. I feel that the whole planet is my home and I need to continue seeking and exploring. I blame it on being a third culture child- and have been told by others like me that these feelings are normal.

I really value being able to use my skills as an occupational therapist where they are deeply needed and appreciated. In Canada, I am just another therapist. Internationally, I have had the chance to take on many leadership roles and stretched myself to think in really strategic ways. My work abroad has also taught me to be a chameleon and adjust to the social norms of the culture I choose to work in. I have learned to speak confidently yet jokingly in Cameroon as per the norm there, or to sit quietly within Lao culture and observe deeply what is NOT said and the non-verbal communication at play. Maybe some of these lessons can be integrated into my encounters with newcomers to Canada.

Working in the humanitarian field has helped me imagine some of the experiences of my Zoroastrian ancestors. Though we each have our own stories, hearing the stories of refugees helps me understand what my ancestors may have gone through and those of my Parsi friends' ancestors. The boats filled with refugees crossing the Mediterranean are not dissimilar to the boats Iranians took to India. How many of them died on the journey, similar to Alan Kurdi?

People think I am a 'good person' for doing this work. The truth is that these experiences have served me more than I have served the people I have met. Truly. We try as aid workers to 'help', but the political games and devastation at play are way beyond a level we can impact. And oftentimes, we just do not understand well enough the cultures where we work to be able to work effectively within them. Cross-cultural training and deep pronouncement are essential to be being effective not only in Canada but principally abroad. Thank you for reading.

Retirees, see what the 3 established 55+ Communities in the Tampa Bay area of Florida offer by visiting the link below.

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FIGHTING POVERTY SINCE 1991

ADAPTED FROM WZO TRUST FUNDS REPORT

The World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust established 1991, The WZO Trust for Women and Children established 1993 and The WZO Trust Funds established 1995 were formed to combat the unimaginable levels of poverty existing amongst many Zarathushtis, particularly those residing in the rural areas of South Gujarat.



During the course of a sample socio-economic survey of the then three districts (Valsad, Surat and Bharuch) of South Gujarat, undertaken by Dr. Cashmera P. Bhaya in 1987, she identified 687 Zarathushti families in 209 villages to be living below the poverty line.

A sample survey generally covers only around 20% of the target audience. And our work over the years has confirmed just that! Since 1991, the major focus of the three Trusts has been the rehabilitation of underprivileged Zarathushtis, particularly those residing in the rural areas of South Gujarat. Recognising that a war on poverty of such epic proportions cannot be fought with a single weapon, we have multifarious programs which help us meet the needs of our Zarathushti brothers and sisters in the manner most relevant to them.

A Typical Day in the life of an underprivileged member of society

It's tough for many living in squalid conditions; in isolated villages without basic needs which we take for granted. Very little hope and limited dreams for themselves or for their children. Men usually do manual labour, women work as maids or do housework, the elderly are alone and have to fend for themselves. Due to lack of schools in the area, education is neglected which makes the next generation fall into the same cycle of poverty that has been existing for generations in their family.

Where can they go for help?

The WZO Trusts aim to help by giving them the boost they need while maintaining their self-respect and dignity. Our objective is to provide Zarathushtis with a livelihood, restore their self-respect and dignity and give them hope for a secure future.

Our beneficiary families need our understanding, time and support as much as they require our financial aid. We offer continued emotional support, guidance and mentoring until they are back on their feet and become self-sustaining members contributing to society and most importantly, daring to dream for themselves again!

Farmers Rehabilitation Program

Keeping farmers up-to-date with modern agricultural practices

Agriculture is the largest livelihood provider in India, contributing significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). At present, India is second in the world in agricultural production which plays a major role in the socioeconomic growth of the country.

Agriculture is a sustainable business model, well suited to those living in the rural areas. It makes perfect sense to capitalize upon land that is already available and start generating an income! We work to give farmers the necessary tools to increase productivity and yield.



Figure 1 Sugar cane plantation being undertaken at the Doongerwadi Estate of Mahuva Parsi Anjuman to enhance their revenue, through support of WZO Trust.

Since, 1991, till the present (March 2019) our WZO Trusts have rehabilitated 498 farmers in 202 villages.

Through our Farmer Rehabilitation program, we offer assistance by purchasing pump sets, drilling wells and bore wells, levelling their fields, providing tractors and mini tractors, encouraging sugarcane plantations, laying pipelines, encouraging vegetable and paddy farming, setting up poultry farms and setting up dairy farms.

Rural Housing Program

Transforming sub-standard huts into cottages

It is often a major surprise to many that fellow Zarathushtis are living in dire poverty. What would cause even greater shock would be to witness the shanty huts in which they live, calling it home. The walls are made of mud and cow dung patted onto bamboo poles, many huts have no roofs, those that do have a combination of tin roofs covered with plastic, none of the huts have electricity, indoor plumbing or running water. Those keeping livestock (such as cows and chickens), have no distinct segregation between where the humans and the animals live. They live in actual squalor!!

Every season brings new challenges. In the summer, the heat compounds the stench. In the monsoons, the ceiling and walls leak, as rain easily penetrates the mud and cow dung. In the winters, the bitter cold increases the risk of circulatory and respiratory diseases. We have transformed 290 huts into cottages thus far.

Self-Employment/Microcredit Program

Interest free loans and mentoring offered to help establishment of businesses



Whilst agriculture remains an excellent source of income for the families in rural areas, it is not adequate to sustain future generations. Only one family can use that land, but what would happen to their children? It was this reality that spurred the establishment of the Self Employment' initiative, whereby interest free financial support is offered in both rural and urban areas. The loans are for those who wish to be self-employed in vocations of their choice.

We recycle the loan repayments, allocating them to other individuals who desire to become self-employed. Many of these self-employed Zarathushtis now have various types of businesses including autorickshaws, motor garages, catering, gara embroidery, building and construction.



Educational Support and Youth Activities

Giving youth a childhood

Investing in education is the single most effective way of reducing poverty. Research tells us the negative effects of poverty on children and its effect later in life. Malnutrition due to poverty affects the mental and physical growth of children from birth with ongoing ramifications into cognitive difficulties, poor health and earlier childbirth for women.

Whilst Zarathushi children are given academic help, they are also encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities such as sports, crafts, personality development, yoga and much more.

In 2018-2019 we supported 198 youth, day trips were organised, summer camps are now a regular part of the agenda, athletic day camps and, fitness through sports is also promoted. In short, we want to create holistic, well rounded children with fond memories of a happy childhood.

Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy Sanatorium at Sanjan

Serenity, bliss, nature at its glorious best

The very name of Sanjan conjures up nostalgia and sentiment in the heart of every Zarathushti, for it was on the shores of Sanjan in Gujarat that we Zarathushtis received sanctuary when our revered ancestors landed 1389 years ago to preserve our Faith and escape from religious persecution.

The WZO Trust Funds Sanatorium at Sanjan is the result of a munificent donation received from the benevolent Trustees of Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy Deed of Settlement Fund. A palatial bungalow, comfortable rooms

radiating with understated elegance, a huge beautiful garden provides a magnificent frontage. In the back yard we have a mango orchard and coconut groves. It is a great place for the weary to recharge their batteries. The environment is pollution free and a very welcome change from everyday life.

The Sanjan Memorial Column, the local Adarian (Agiary) are additional features to make the stay at Sanjan more enjoyable and fulfilling. An added bonus is that it is probably the only Zoroastrian sanatorium completely powered through solar energy.

The extremely reasonable charges (@ Rs 580/- per day) in which wholesome meals and airy cross ventilated rooms are provided at the sanatorium, it is within reach even for those who cannot afford the luxury of staying in commercial establishments.

The Sanatorium has become a popular facility for community members.



Centres for Senior Citizens Building *Independent and happy living*

Our Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy Senior Citizens Centre and Dolat and Hormusji Vandrewala Senior Citizens Centre became operational at Navsari in January 1998 and December 2005 respectively. They are our pride and joy.

Our residents are encouraged to lead a full and independent life. Day picnics are organised for them periodically. Twice a year residents who are eager for a change of scene are sent on week-long holidays to our sanatorium at Sanjan, from where they are also taken on a day trip to Udvada to visit Paak Iranshah.

Fifty-five Senior Citizens live independently in happy surroundings, enjoying socializing with their peers. Yoga classes are held, Bowen Therapy and, Physiotherapy is given when required; a doctor visits periodically to check the residents and but is summoned if there is an emergency. We have an access to the D. N. Mehta Sarvajani Hospital, a leading medical institution at Navsari where a special 'WZO Trust Ward' is available for our residents.

The charges for full board and lodge are just Rs 5,000 per month; some residents who are economically challenged stay gratis and a few others pay according to their capacity. All residents, whether paying or staying gratis are treated on par. Our Administrator, Resident Manager and two Assistant Managers, along with our complement of 18 support staff are all trained to provide the highest quality of service to our residents which have made our Centres vibrant and much sought after institution/s that have over the years been running to full capacity.

Economy Housing at Navsari *Economical apartment buildings*

Recognising the work that we do, many residents of Navsari, gift to us, their ancestral houses, most of which are in dilapidated condition. We demolish the old structures, raise funds and construct apartment buildings at economical rents that are allotted to community members.

We have so far constructed 16 Buildings having a total of 107 flats that are given on leave and license basis at very moderate license fees to Zarathushti families who cannot afford to purchase houses of their own.

Our 17th building donated to us, as per the WILLS of Late High Priest Dasturji Meherji K. D. Meherjirana and his wife Late Mehroo M. Meherjirana, is under constructions and expected to be ready in 2020. Acting on a request received from the Trustees of Navsari Atashbehrum and Vadi Dar-e-Meher Trust Fund we were informed that property of a Zoroastrian family opposite our Navsari Atashbehrum was going to be sold, and the same purchased

by a non-Zoroastrian family, from where the main hall of Atashbehrām could be clearly viewed, where jashan and other religious ceremonies were being performed. The building housing the Dadgah in the Atashbehrām building was also clearly seen. Since it was a question of preserving the privacy and importance of our religious place Trustees of Navsari Atashbehrām and Vadi Dar-e-Meher Trust Fund requested us to extend support in purchasing the said building.

It is to the eternal credit of the generous Trustees of Zoroastrian Funds of Hong Kong, Canton and Macao that they responded immediately to our request and remitted the funds to us to enable us to purchase the building, now called 'Hong Kong Zoroastrian Center'. The building has been purchased by WZO Trust Funds and handed over to Navsari Atashbehrām and Vadi Daremeher Trust Fund who will use the building to provide residential facilities to Mobed Sahebs tending to the fire at the Atashbehrām, provide residential facilities to families of young Athornan boys being initiated into priesthood (Navar and Maratab), provide facilities for pilgrims visiting Navsari and use the shop on the ground floor for selling sandalwood and other religious items.

Food Grain Distribution

We cannot ignore the fact that many need basic assistance before they can dream of achieving higher level goals. This means their basic needs of food, shelter and good health need to be met before we can help them with their confidence, dignity and self-esteem. Considering that food should be a basic human right, it is sad to note that some Zarathushtis living in the areas we serve don't have access to food on a regular basis. Food grains are provided to the economically challenged residing in abject poverty in these rural areas



Medical Support

We receive numerous requests from individuals for support for various illnesses. Whilst we extend support to a few from our own humble resources, we have evolved a system of circulating the appeals that we receive after completing our 'due diligence.' We forward the researched appeals with our recommendations to our major and known donors. Trustees of Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton and Macao, Mrs. Pervin and Mr. Jal Shroff also at Hong Kong and FEZANA are by far the most generous donors contributing towards providing medical relief.

Relief from Poverty

Many find it difficult to accept that poverty is rampant in sections of our community, both in rural as well as urban areas. However, the number of requests that we receive is quite staggering.

The support extended enables the elderly, the infirm and physically challenged to lead a dignified life. At the time of writing, 480 individuals are supported by making available to them Rs 4,000/- per month on a quarterly basis. Additionally, we support around 200 individuals on a lump sum basis.

If you would like to support our worthy projects, donations may be forwarded to us by way of cheque/ draft. Donations may be forwarded to: The World Zoroastrian Trust or The WZO Trust Funds, C-1, Hermes House, 3rd Floor, Mama Parmanand Marg, Opera House, Mumbai 400 004
Donate to any of our many projects, as an individual or as a group.

Get together with friends and family to transform:

- A hut into a cottage
- Sponsor a child's education
- Sponsor a Child's future
- Help an individual realize their humble dream of running their own business
- Initiate a food grain distribution drive

Rebuild lives, families and communities. Create a chain reaction of giving!

BEL-AIR PANCHGANI – A LAMP ON THE PEDESTAL



FEZANA SUPPORTS SDG GOALS 3,4, 9,11 OF THE UNITED NATIONS



Fr.Tomy Kariyilakulam



Founded by Dr. Rustomji B Billimoria in 1912, as a Tuberculosis (TB) Sanatorium, Bel-Air stands on sprawling 44 acres of land in Panchgani that was gifted by Sir Dorabji Tata.

TB WORK

Today as TB is making a resurgence, Bel-Air is fully committed to continuing its original mission of combating TB, with the added dimension of treating Multidrug-Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR TB). Bel-Air is a major NGO partner with the Government of Maharashtra.

Bel-Air is one of the very few places available to admit and treat sputum positive and MDR TB patients. They are given excellent care, a nutritious diet, counselling and treatment education addressed during their stay in the hospital. Required medications for TB patients including the first and second line, and for MDR TB are procured from the national TB program by linking each patient with the Revised National TB Control Program (RNTCP).

HIV/AIDS WORK

Over the years, Bel-Air Sanatorium enlarged its mission from TB to address the challenges of an unfolding disaster relating to HIV/AIDS. Since 1995 Bel-Air began to treat HIV/AIDS patients and is now pioneered treatment and care of HIV/AIDS in India and today is one of the best treatment centres in the country. More than 24,000 HIV/AIDS patients have been admitted for treatment and over 50 patients are treated on an OPD basis daily. Patients from 20 districts of Maharashtra and four districts of

Karnataka regularly visit Bel-Air for treatment. The hospital has a very high success rate in the treatment and is considered as an example of a friendly environment and a place that successfully tackled stigma and discrimination.

ACCOLADES

Bel-Air was acclaimed by [National Public Radio](#) as one of the best health care programs in the developing world. In 2009 *Family Health International* selected the director of Bel-Air as one of the most influential persons in the world in HIV/AIDS. A team of British Red Cross volunteers led a one-year expedition from Oxford, UK, through Europe, Africa, and Asia and finally Oxford in New Zealand visiting all the Red Cross Programmes in every continent except the Americas. Bel-Air was certified as the most inspiring Red Cross program they had visited. (www.oxford2oxford.co.uk)

In 2014 Bel-Air Hospital was awarded the Times of India Health Care Achievers Award in the category of “*Innovation in managing long term condition*”. These awards are considered to be the most prestigious and credible Healthcare Awards in India.



Photo above -Fr.Tomy K, Director, Bel-Air Hospital and College of Nursing, Panchgani, receiving the Times of India Health Care Achievers Award 2014 from Hon'ble Mr.Ram Vilas Paswan, Union Cabinet Minister, Mrs Homai Modi and Mr.D Srinivasan – Chairman, New India Assurance Co. looking on

Today Bel-Air is also a general hospital with 200 beds in General Medicine, Orthopaedics, Paediatrics, Gynaecology, TB and HIV/AIDS medicine with weekly clinics for Ophthalmology. An Emergency Department (Casualty), an ICU, an operation theatre block, a well-equipped laboratory, pharmacy and investigations like X-ray, ECG, etc. are available.

VILLAGE HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

For the last six years, with funding from various organizations, Bel-Air Hospital has been implementing a comprehensive village health and development program in the hilly areas of Mahabaleshwar Taluka of Satara District. This is one of the most inaccessible parts of Maharashtra tucked in the Sahyadri hills across the Shivsagar lake created by the Koyana dam. The project area has 123 villages including 12 Muras (villages on top



Medical camp in a rural village

of mountains) with a total population of 72,830. The two Primary Health Care Centres (PHC) and 24 sub-centres are most often understaffed or non-functional.

Health Care workers especially doctors are reluctant to work in the area. Those available, often lack motivation and do not have adequate training. The villagers have little awareness of health, hygiene, proper nutrition or sanitation. Their huts/ rudimentary houses are tiny, without any ventilation and at night their livestock and their children sleep



together inside these dark places.

The access to these villages is through country boats and in the monsoon season, boats do not ply.

The project is quite challenging which required the Bel-Air team consisting of doctors, ANM nurses and social workers to set up base camps across the lake to provide services in the villages and to bring, awareness programs, health check-ups, nutrition for malnourished children, etc.

Due to this project, the villagers now have better access to quality health care. The overall health of the children in the target area has also improved due to the nutritional support, villagers have started maintaining a kitchen garden to supplement their diet. And by harvesting rainwater and other water supply projects, drinking water needs have been addressed.

There has been a significant improvement in levels of hygiene, general health among the villagers, a marked change in the attitude towards medical care, institutional deliveries, hygiene, nutritional aspect, and maternal health.

(Photo page 67 bottom) A paediatric camp being conducted in the village by Dr Prem Sheth, MBBS;MD-Paed.

HANDING OVER OF THE RURAL HOSPITAL AND TWO PRIMARY HEALTH CENTRES TO BEL-AIR

Recognizing the integrated health and rural development work done by Bel-Air in the villages of Mahabaleshwar Taluka, in July 2018 the



Government of Maharashtra handed over the management of the two PHCs at Taldev and Tapola and 14 Sub-Centres to Bel-Air Hospital, and in February 2019 the Rural Hospital Mahabaleshwar. Within months of taking over, Bel-Air has been able to make a big change in access to health care and services. In the last 16 months at Tapola PHC 23,928 patients were treated on an out-patient basis, 1718 as in-patients with 43 deliveries. Tapola PHC which was 67/71 PHCs performance-wise under Satara District is now in 1st position. At Taldev PHC 13,695 were treated on OPD basis, 448 admitted and treated and 11 deliveries were conducted. Taldev which was previously 46th performance wise is now in 2nd position.

Rural Hospital at Mahabaleshwar which was in a dilapidated condition was handed over to Bel-Air on



1st February 2019. Today, the number of patients accessing services has increased from 30-40 a day to over 200 per day. In the first 8 months a total of 35,390 patients attended OPD, 978 were treated on an IP basis, 922 emergency cases were attended to, 414 surgeries and 31 deliveries conducted in Rural Hospital Mahabaleshwar.

Bel-Air has garnered the support of corporates and generous citizens to raise funds to completely revamp the rural hospital with a modern ICU, 24-hour casualty, digital X-ray, colour doppler, laboratory services, modern operation theatre, delivery room cum maternity department, male, female, and paediatric wards, OPD, and pharmacy.

The increased number of patients who now avail the services shows the acute need of the area. In addition to the complete lack of health care facilities in the villages, Mahabaleshwar did not have any medical facility or emergency/ accident care services for the thousands of tourists thronging coming each year. Over the years there had been many deaths due to the lack of primary care.

Bel-Air College of Nursing

In 2006 the Bel-Air College of Nursing affiliated to the Maharashtra University of Health Sciences was added to the hospital campus. It is the first Nursing Education Program in India having collaboration with the University of Illinois at Chicago and Columbia University, New York.

The college trains nurses for B.Sc. and M.Sc. Nursing degrees. Lila Poonawala Foundation provides attractive scholarships to our students most of whom are from very poor rural financial backgrounds. A free two-year Diploma Nursing Training Program sponsored by Johnson & Johnson is being conducted also. On graduation our nurses are placed in reputed hospitals in Mumbai like Breach Candy Hospital.



CONCLUSION

The health planners in India have visualized the Primary Health Centers and sub - centers as corner stones of rural health services, a first port of call to a qualified doctor/nurse for a thousand million rural Indians for preventive, curative, and promotive health care. However, a huge shortage of doctors and nurses in public sector has made the task very difficult especially in remote and hilly regions. Hence, the Government of Maharashtra, with 80 million rural population is collaborating with Indian Red Cross Society to address this issue. This policy decision of the Government, in delivering public health services is reaping rich dividends as is evident from the huge upward changes in the indicators.

This is a role model for India to achieve its vision in healthcare.

◆ *Fr Tomy Kariyilakulam MCBS, is the Director of Bel-Air Hospital in Panchgani. He's been the Hon. Project Director of INC-GFATM project for Training of Nurses since 2009. Fr Tomy is also the Founding Director of St. Xavier's High School and the Founding Director of Bel-Air College of Nursing. Fr Tomy has been the recipient of several awards, the most recent being the 2014 Healthcare Achievers Award of Times of India.*

ENVIROFAITH AT THE

10th World Assembly



Meher Sidhwa
Founder, Envirofaith, India
www.envirofaith.com



The 10th World Assembly at Lindau, Germany in August 2019 was an interfaith event organized by Religions for Peace International and Ring for Peace. It brought together faith leaders and the interfaith sustainability fraternity from across the world to discuss on its agenda of peace-building and reconciliation, faiths for forests, ban on nuclear arms etc.

I was there representing Envirofaith my own social initiative where I publish stories on Facebook and Instagram from diverse faiths and cultures on how their faith addresses sustainability or peace-building. I started Envirofaith after returning from the COP 21 climate negotiations with a view to involve the civil society in sustainability matters. At the Assembly, I had an enriching experience meeting renowned Faith leaders and Environmental advocates of so many faiths under one roof. The conference was inaugurated by the German President Mr Frank-Walter Steinmeier (photo right) who shared his government's seriousness and political will towards environment, peace and sustainability.

At Envirofaith, we believe in coexistence—whether it is people of diverse faiths; or faith itself and science. Cultures across the world have imbibed in them various ways to live sustainably which we today revisit as the science of climate change. While we want the world to continue its scientific research and development to make lifestyle changes and move to sustainable options; we want to explore what people of various cultures follow because that age-old knowledge is gold. Every culture in the world refers to taking care of



President Steinmeier

the environment, respecting human rights, preserving natural resources as mankind is meant to be the stewards of all other creations of God. We therefore ask people of various cultural backgrounds to share an experience, teachings on ecology from their religious text, a sustainable practice they (or their community) follow, their own belief system on sustainability and peace building, a change they experienced, a movement etc from their culture. Most of our stories get shared among various networks and people try incorporating positive changes to their lifestyles; as a result they contribute to the impact. It has



Discussing UN's SDGs with regards to faith

also contributed to peace building since most judgements and cultural barriers are broken between cultures, and people learn about cultures they do not know about. We already have 50+ stories from across the world that you may find on our social media handles. At the World Assembly we had numerous enriching perspectives that helped Envirofaith.

The opening ceremony was memorable with the Ring for Peace ceremony. Various faith leaders and indigenous leader from Canada were part of this including Mr Moratinos, currently the UN representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. He was the former foreign affairs minister of Spain. Faith and political leaders from various countries shared success stories on how they handled religious conflicts peacefully like the example from Timor Leste and Indonesia. When they had tensions at their border, neither side indulged in religious rioting. A matured yet strong leadership could actually prevent destruction and end the enmity. We brainstormed about the propagation of hate speech and how it affects people's perception and creates fears. We had press interviews on our backgrounds and faiths where we discussed on how we need a global peace index (GPI), like the GDP as one the prime parameters for ranking a country.

I had the opportunity to re-connect with Dr Jeffrey Sachs again after the COP21; this time with his wife. He made some interesting statements, one of which was—the world economy is so rich yet most of the world is poor. He stressed on the fact that only a handful of people are running the world and holding most of the world's wealth and how this greed and inequality is the prime reason to the world's problems. He added that



With Ms Ela Gandhi, Granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi



Samsung Triple Camera
Shot with my Galaxy A70

*Interfaith
participation*

we are facing a moral crisis and not an economical or technological one. The fact that most of the countries invest their wealth in war and weapons proves that we are spending more on punishing than flourishing.

One of the many success stories was about Nigeria where a few youth gathered during the Muslim-Christian riots. They formed 2 vigilante groups of Christians and Muslims. The Christian youth would patrol outside the mosque on Fridays to ensure that no Muslim is harmed during/after their prayers and similarly the Muslim youth patrolled on Sundays during the Christian mass to ensure that their Muslim brethren was safe. This was a great step against any politically motivated rift and showed solidarity among the civil society. I was fortunate to meet Ms Ela Gandhi who runs the Gandhi Foundation in South Africa and is instrumental in women empowerment and education.

The other two Zoroastrians I met were —Mr Jehangir Sarosh (RfP International, UK) and Mr Homi Gandhi (RfP USA), who had nominated me to attend the Assembly.

The citizens of Lindau brought home-cooked food and had organized a community dinner in the town square with Catholic and Protestant churches on either sides. It was symbolic of peace.

I was also part of the youth discussion and one of the things that we all as citizens of various countries agreed was that we need to delink politics and religion. On the political front people agreed that the constitution must be adhered to. Rather than defining people by majority and minority groups, citizenship must be followed. This is because if power is linked with religion, religion has historically been compromised. We even discussed religious hooliganism which was defined by a Muslim religious leader as people who are not seeking God but seeking identity.

After the World Assembly, I was invited as a panellist at the Faith in Action 3.0 in Singapore to speak about Envirofaith and share inputs on projects by Singaporean youth on sustainability. I recently met one of the delegates who visited Mumbai. With all this and more I ended up enlightening myself of so many different cultures worldwide and made some friends for life.

◆ *Meher SIDHWA an engineer, working in the solar energy sector is a sustainability enthusiast participating in numerous international forums on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. After attending the UNFCCC COP 21 climate conference Meher founded a social media initiative Envirofaith. Her vision is to build a mindful civil-society, which can prevent rapid climate change and prevent the 1.5 deg C global temperature rise. www.Envirofaith.com | India ; envirofaith@gmail.com*

LIONS IN SIGHT

Khush Bodhan



■ *Khush Bodhan, a CPA and real estate broker, was an accountant with Deloitte and Touche in London and San Francisco. After Deloitte, he owned and operated the ASK Accountax and ASK Real Estate corporations. Mr. Bodhan joined the Amador Valley Lions Club in 2004. Mr. Bodhan's interest and support for Lions in Sight (LIS) occurred after the LIS clinic trip to Vera Cruz, Mexico. He served as LIS President in 2012. Mr. Bodhan credits his parents with his desire to help others. They spent innumerable hours giving service to the less fortunate in India and often had Mother Teresa as a visitor in their home.*

Approximately 2 billion people in the world need eyeglasses. Many remain disabled, a burden on the family and society, for lack of a simple intervention, of providing a pair of eyeglasses to address the issue of preventable blindness.

More than life itself the most important gift one can give to another human being is the gift of sight.

To that end I have endeavored, for the last 15 years, to do just that. I have worked with an awesome nonprofit organization to achieve that objective. The inspiration to do this comes from three sources and they are:

The Tatas's – growing up in the steel city of Jamshedpur we learned first-hand the powerful focus of Jamshedji Tata and other Parsees towards philanthropy. Taking care of those that are not as fortunate as others became a rallying cry for the entire community.

My parents – Homi and Homai Bodhanwalla. I learned from dad that we earn to make a living, however, what we give, makes a life. He was in charge of the Tata Main Hospital, Tata Institute for the Blind, Tata Meherbai Cancer Hospital and for thirty plus years the Jamshedpur Blood Bank. My mom, in her own quiet way, ran the fertility clinic and worked tirelessly with Mother Teresa of Kolkata Saint Teresa – I had the distinct pleasure to meet her and in a life-changing moment she put her hand on my head, blessed me and asked me to serve the poor. I have tried as best as I can to do just that. After my dad passed away about 15 years ago I was told that the Lions Center for the Blind based in Oakland, California was going to close due to a lack of funds.

During that year I, along with three others, reduced the Blind Center deficit from \$200,000 to \$6,000. We actively worked to rescue

the Lions Center for the Blind in Oakland from closure and for this achievement I was given the Melvin Jones Award, the highest award given to any Lions Club member. Lions Clubs are an international organization whose tenet is very simple – ***We Serve***. They have a total of 1.4 million members in about 130 countries. I then learned of the Lions in Sight (LIS) of California and Nevada and have



served there as a Past President and also as the Treasurer for the past 14 years. The basic premise of LIS is that many of the poor in third world countries cannot see because they cannot afford a pair of eyeglasses. I have personally set up 4 permanent eye clinics in India and have been on at least 40 Missions all over the world.

The LIS program begins with local Lions Club members in the





community. The club members collect eyeglasses and take them to the LIS warehouse in Vallejo, California. The collected glasses are sorted, cleaned, processed, and packaged for delivery to clinics in developing nations. Volunteer doctors and Lions Club members travel to the clinics with the eyeglasses and exam equipment. LIS trains a small group of inmates in five California prisons regarding how to determine the prescription of eyeglasses with LIS-provided lensometers. The inmates process the thousands of eyeglasses delivered to prisons every quarter. They clean the glasses, insert them into small zippered plastic bags, and write the prescription on the bag before the glasses are shipped back to the LIS warehouse. The inmates benefit by receiving a small fee per eyeglass, having a responsibility, and feeling productive. In some instances, inmates might be able to use the skills they've learned working with the lensometers when they are released.

In November of 2018, MDAiD Foundations of Albania and U.S., in collaboration with Lion In Sight and with the local support of the Iranian refugees and the Mayor of Tirana carried out a major charity mission in which close to 7000 Albanian Citizens were examined for eye care and 8400 eyeglasses were provided to them free of charge at 7 sites. Ashraf site served the largest cohort.

Close to 40 doctors and volunteers served those needing eyeglasses, at seven sites in Albania. This overseas mission was led by the Lions Club of California and Nevada www.lionsinsight.org in partnership with the MDAiD group (www.MDAiD.org)

In the city of Vera Cruz – Mexico, in working with the Lions, our days usually start at 9 am and we serve the poor until the last patient has been served or after a rigorous 12 hour day. I found out very quickly that by the time we got to the mission site, that people had been waiting there since 6 or 7 in the morning and many had walked long distances to get a pair of eyeglasses. One particular patient had me in tears — a defining moment that spurred me to continue on this path of helping the visually impaired. An elderly Mexican grandmother who could barely see was fitted with a pair of eyeglasses and she started to cry. This was my first Mission and I thought that I had done something wrong when she thanked me profusely and through an interpreter said “ I am crying not just because now I can see, but now I can see the faces of my grandchildren”.

I was in Zambia, a country deep in the heart of Africa, where on the last day of the Mission I was approached by a poor gentleman who I had just fitted with a pair of eyeglasses. I was serving the visually impaired with another wonderful charity, the Kailash

Medical Foundation. (www.kailashmedicalfoundation.org) He saw that I was exhausted after a 12 hour day and he bought a cup of coffee, sat next to me, and asked “ why are you doing this “ . No one had ever asked me this and after thinking about this I could only respond with - “passion - it’s a passion for me and it comes from deep within my soul “

I have been to Lima in Peru but the country that is very close to my heart is Panama. I have been there every year for the last 7 years. We are always welcomed there by Lion Mario Himm who is now the leader of all the Lions clubs in the entire country. He invited me to march with the Lions of Panama at the next annual meeting of Lions International with three flags — USA, Panama and of course the Indian flag.

I would like to thank my good friend from school Dr. Behram Pastakia about 70 years ago) for his support in getting this message out to the community. I would be greatly remiss if I did not appreciate the support and encouragement from my wife of 50 years, Nancy, and my children Shanta and Seth Bodhan.

Next visits for LIONS IN SIGHT
Mexico -Puebla April 23-26 2020
Panama July 25-August 1
Albania to be decided

Kbodhan@gmail.com

FEZANA Supports Sustainable Goal # 14: Life Below Water Conservation of Oceans

Afreed Mistry



The FEZANA UN-NGO Committee sent a team of participants to the Oceans Conference at the United Nations in June 2017. This conference coincided with the Graduation Day for the Religion Classes at the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York. So, it seemed very fitting to combine an Oceans Presentation along with the Children's Religion Classes. Nawaz Merchant and Rustom Bhopti helped to make this a successful event for FEZANA and ZAGNY.

On Sunday, June 4th, 2017 there was a large group humbandagi, where Co-Chair of UN-NGO Committee, Dr. Behram Pastakia, did an introduction of the Oceans Presentation and that was followed by Rustom Bhopti inviting religion class students to read prayers related to water from all the major religions. These



prayers were published in the FEZANA journal. Each student was asked to take a pebble from a bowl of water which was in the centre of the hall. The pebble was to be placed on their prayer table at home so it would remind the students of conservation of water and the oceans.

Rustom Bhopti prepared a brief summary of what the major countries in the world are doing with conservation of water and their key concerns.

Anahita (Ana) Verahrami, who has

a background in bioacoustics, or the study of sounds produced by or



affecting living organisms, spoke on how anthropogenic noise affects ocean life. She gave examples of how ocean creatures find it difficult to communicate when there is a lot of anthropogenic noise in marine ecosystems. Anthropogenic noise in marine environments is generated from the numerous ships crossing our oceans at any given point, offshore drilling, navy sonar, and more. When accounting for the socio-ecology of many marine organisms, we saw that many species rely not on sight for communication and travel, but on sound.

Anahita graduated from Cornell

University in 2017 and is currently working as a research analyst and science communicator with the Elephant Listening Project, a conservation group at Cornell that utilizes acoustic monitoring to conserve forest elephant populations throughout central Africa.

Sanaira Mondegarian, spoke about her study of the migration habits of great white sharks in Mossel Bay, South Africa. There have been population estimates in Mossel Bay, Gansbaai and False Bay in South Africa using the same method of photo identification put into a mark & recapture model that give an estimate of the super-population. Sanaira discussed the traditional mark & recapture methods used





The next Oceans Conference will be held June 2-6, 2020 in Lisbon, Portugal. For more information please go to:



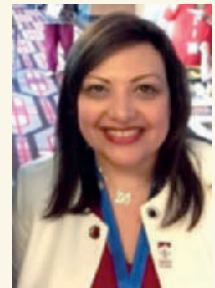
<https://oceanconference.un.org/>.

We invite all Zarathushti Associations worldwide, to celebrate World Oceans Day, on June 8th every year and inform us about it.

to develop population counts, migration patterns and current marine conservation efforts for sharks on the Southern Cape. Sanaira Mondegarian graduated from University at Buffalo with a degree in Applied Mathematics. She currently lives in Cleveland with her fiancé, Edward Selig, and is working as an AML analyst. Each ZAGNY graduating student was awarded their certificate and also handed a small arborvitae tree to take home and plant. This was to remind them that water and earth are to be cared for.

The Zarathushti legacy of caring for the air, water, fire, earth and sky comes to us from Ancient Iran.

◆ **Afreed Mistry**, from Toronto, Canada, is the FEZANA UN-NGO Committee Co-Chair. She has been actively involved with the local Toronto community, FEZANA and the Global Zoroastrian community. She was one of the Masters of Ceremonies at the 11th World Zoroastrian Congress in Perth, Australia. Afreed is also FEZANA's main representative to the United Nations and facilitates the participation of FEZANA at the United Nations.



L-R: Dr. Behram Pastakia, Sanaira Mondegarian, Anahita Verahrami, Ašad Clubwalla, Ruštom Bhoṭṭi, Arzan Sam Wadia



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEZANA DELEGATION TO ATTEND THE 64TH UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN CONFERENCE IN MARCH 2020

02 DECEMBER 2019 | MONTREAL, CANADA

FEZANA will be participating at the 64th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) conference to be held in March 2020 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, USA. Marking the 25th anniversary of the 4th World Conference on Women in 1995, this year's theme will focus on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – the most progressive blueprint for advancing women's rights. The team representing FEZANA is comprised of a diverse group of individuals from USA, Canada, Pakistan and New Zealand.



Ferzeen Dadabhoy (Auckland, New Zealand) – Analyst by profession, with a Bachelor's in Business, majoring Management and International Business. Ferzeen is passionate about giving back to the community and raising awareness on the work done by various NGOs. In her leisure time, she likes to use her event planning skills to create fundraisers to support various NGOs and is always looking for unique ways to support NGOs that work with kids.



Miraal Mavalvala (Pakistan/Canada) – Graduate student at McGill University pursuing a Master's degree in Public Health. Born and raised in Pakistan, Miraal has worked with organizations including the Aga Khan University, WHO Sri Lanka and Palladium in the areas of Maternal and Child Health and Sexual and Reproductive Health. She recently completed her graduate placement at the Pan American Health Organization in Washington D.C., where she worked in the Department of Public Health Emergencies.



Sanaya Master (New Zealand/Canada) – Sanaya conceptualized and organized the first World Zoroastrian Youth Leaders Forum at the ASHA Centre in Mar 2018. She has been a speaker at global and local Zoroastrian events including the 7th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in LA, USA and the Jamshed K Pavri Seminar in Vancouver, Canada. In Aug 2019, Sanaya attended the 68th UN Civil Society Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah and compiled the Rapporteurs Report. She has also been the Guest Editor of the FEZANA Journal twice.



Shirin Mehri (Karachi, Pakistan) – Shirin's passion for an equitable educational and social landscape continues to be evident in her professional and volunteer work. After successfully completing projects in education in UAE, Tanzania, Azerbaijan and the US, Shirin is leading a project on family-friendly workplaces in Pakistan focusing on availability of childcare services. She holds a Masters degree in Entrepreneurial Leadership from Babson College and an undergraduate degree in Economics & Finance from SUNY Plattsburgh.



Afreed Mistry (Toronto, Canada) – FEZANA's main representative to the United Nations. She is also the Co-Chair of the FEZANA UN-NGO Committee. Afreed has attended 7 Commission on the Status of Women conferences and 1 UN DPI NGO Conference.



Behram Pastakia, MD, FACR (Washington DC, USA) – Chair of the Zarathushti Youth Without Borders initiative of FEZANA, and Co-Chair of its UN - NGO Committee is a practicing radiologist in Metropolitan Washington D.C. He is part of RAD-AID International (www.rad-aid.org), an NGO which promotes health care in low resource countries, through education, innovation and entrepreneurship.

About FEZANA: Founded in 1987, FEZANA serves as the coordinating body for 26 Zoroastrian member associations and 15 corresponding groups throughout the United States and Canada. The Federation promotes the study, understanding and practice of the Zoroastrian faith, represents the interests of its member associations, and carries out philanthropic and charitable activities worldwide. FEZANA was placed on the Roster of NGO's in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN in 1997 and is registered with the Department of Global Communications.

Collaboration for the workshop at the United Nations comes from FEZANA (www.fezana.org), Asha Centre (ashacentre.org), Pakistan Business Council (<https://www.pbc.org.pk>), Aahung (aahung.org) and Shirkat Gah – Women's Resource Centre (shirkatgah.org)

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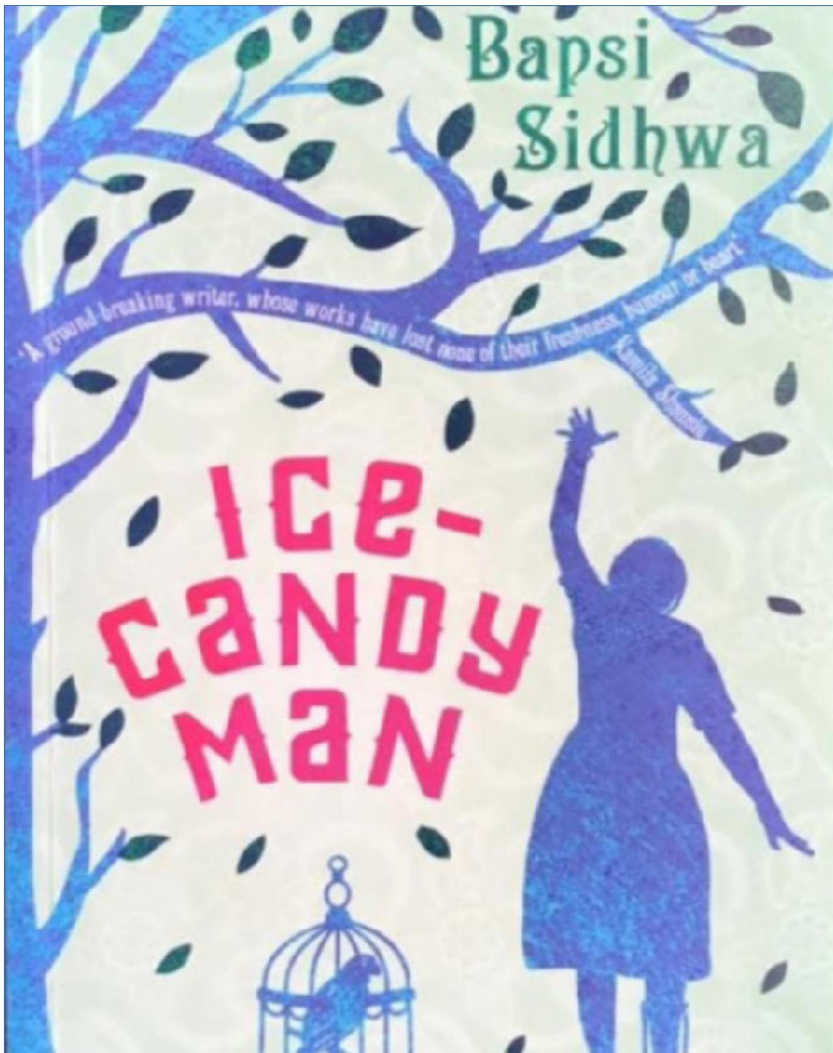
Farnaz Boroumandi

Each year, the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) delivers performance awards to their top performers

It is a pleasure to see Farnaz Boroumandi, member of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, be among the recipient of the 2019 Gold Award.

The award ceremony was held on 20th September, 2019 at Hotel Evo Montreal.

Congratulations Farnaz



**Ice Candy Man
(Cracking India in
USA) was listed by
BBC among the 100
“most inspiring novels
that have shaped our
world!!”**

FIRDOSH MEHTA

GOOD THOUGHTS, GOOD WORDS & GOOD DEEDS !

FIRDOSH MEHTA

I would like to share some thoughts regarding this profound teaching that permeates through most theologies, ideologies, philosophies of people of many cultures.

It is a maxim of prime importance to the Mazda Yasni (a.k.a. Zoroastrian) scripture, liturgy, iconography and symbolism. However, it is not unique to only one faith or theology. Almost all faiths profess this, including humanists and atheists. Frankly one does not need religion to practice Good Thoughts, Words & Deeds. This is enshrined in the Golden Rule,

DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD LIKE OTHERS TO DO UNTO YOU.

This is the *GOLDEN RULE FOR ACTIONS AND DEEDS.*

I prefer the translation in some other languages which reads as:

NOBLE THOUGHTS, NOBLE WORDS, NOBLE DEEDS.

But for this write up I will stay with the common English usage.

In today's world of mass communication via internet and social media, this rule for Deeds is grossly inadequate. Today one can think things and say things that can cause immense damage at the level of the average citizen by expressing one's right to free thinking and free speech, by expressing one's opinion however uninformed, unlearned, untruthful it may be by expressing it to a large number of people at the speed of light, just at the click of a few buttons.

SOME EXAMPLES:

The misinformation campaign that led to the BREXIT fiasco and Teresa May's exit instead.

Gross lying to the public by our politicians only to get our votes so that they can do whatever they wish later. And *WE THE PEOPLE FALL FOR IT EVERYTIME.*

There is a suggestion to add NONE OF THE ABOVE (NOTA) on the ballot paper for the candidates but no one sees the value of it. The State of Nevada is the only State that has this on their ballot paper and once NOTA has won the election!! This is a peaceful democratic way to clean house, and not get stuck with the **BEST OF A BAD BARGAIN.**



The massive practice of gun violence and control of it via vested interests and social media etc. and other institutions that depend on electronic medium to promote lies (DRUJ) in the name of fake news.

The Gathas specify that all bad actions start with the bad thought and bad word of DRUJ, i.e. LIES.

We now have so many socially acceptable ways of telling LIES, without calling it so, such as Advertising, Sales, Marketing, Politics, Business, Photoshop, Product Promotion etc. and by forwarding emails full of lies at a press of a button, to so many at the speed of light, not realizing what we are doing.

I am no Angel, and as guilty as the next guy, but I learn my lessons from my mistakes.

We were brought up to believe that we will be judged for our Bad Deeds while crossing the Chinvad Pul (Bridge of Judgement) but that has proved inadequate, so perhaps we should add Bad Thoughts and Words to that list of Judgement as additional Golden Rules.

I know we are all human and can have bad thoughts, use bad words and do bad deeds sometime/many times, but we are supposed to recognize them as such and commit to not repeating them, instead we justify their use and continue, because that has become the new NORM.

I am not talking about small individual issues, I am talking about Mass Murders, Vast Violence, Gross Destruction of our cities, putting millions out of their homes and livelihoods; all because we fall for the LIES dished out to us.

Where are those “Weapons of Mass Destruction” for which we started wars?

What happened to the Edict of CYRUS before marching into Babylon? Just keeping the Cylinder as an artifact, a souvenir, is meaningless unless we follow its teachings. Same goes for the Ten Commandments.

According to my understanding even telling a half-truth is LYING. Otherwise why do we need to take an oath to TELL THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH.

In our history and culture, before we had writing and printing, our WORD was everything for our integrity and reputation. Mitra, the Aryan God of Contract was invoked in curses when one would break a contract, such as

..... ***MAY MIGHTY MITRA STRIKE YOU WITH HIS SWORD.***

But those were the good old days, now we need to promote NEW BETTER DAYS.

I do not wish to sound like a preacher or be holier than thou. Even our thinking has changed over the years. If you owe someone money, they will express their trust in you by saying: “Your money is good”. Money is good for all. What they should really say is your “WORD” is good.

Hence, I would like to propose similar Golden RULES for Thoughts and Words.

THINK ABOUT OTHERS AS YOU WOULD LIKE OTHERS TO THINK ABOUT YOU, AND

SPEAK ABOUT OTHERS AS YOU WOULD LIKE OTHERS TO SPEAK ABOUT YOU.

Let's think about it and practice it, even if there are some that may not care. I know I am not saying anything new, for many others have said the same in different languages and at different times, but it is good to remind ourselves, once in a while.

So, let it be written, so let it be done!

◆ ***Firdosh Mehta***, Fellow of the American Society of mechanical engineers, recipient of the FEZANA 2012 Outstanding Zarathushti Award, and the NRI Visionary Awards 2011 from Vision Foundation, Ahmedabad. is founding member and Past President of Zoroastrian Association Alberta, Canada and of FEZANA. He has represented at Interfaith and community organizations at International religious and peace conferences in Barcelona, Salt Lake City, London and Pune – India, and made presentations at schools, universities, churches, temples, seminaries, interfaith groups globally.

NEW HOME IN A HOME FOR CALGARY ZOROASTRIANS

REVIVAL IN THE COMMUNITY

ZAHIN SORABJI



We have a new sanctuary and a place to call home in Calgary. It is not a shiny square building with impressive columns or pictorial archways, rather it is even more majestic. It is a prayer room, or I like to call it the “Atashband” Dar- e-Mehr in the basement of Burzin & Renaz Atashband’s house.

Burzin Atashband, our one and only Mobed in Calgary, Alberta, has dedicated his walk-out basement of his brand new home as a prayer hall for the community. The walls are set in marble and the floor is covered in stone. At one end of the elongated room is the afargan that sits on a handmade marble pedestal. In the corner of the room is a small pot with a growing pomegranate tree, and on the other end are chairs for people to sit facing our fire.

Over the years the Zoroastrian community in Alberta has been meeting in community households, church basements and community center rooms. The population has grown over the years but never to the level where there has been a greater need for a place to call our own.

Many in the community have talked about having a place, and some have even spent their time and energy in creating a non-charitable association as a first step to having a community property. But with life, commitments and financial ups and downs it has been difficult to build momentum.

During all this time, Burzin has been quietly contemplating about how, as our Mobed and our community member, can shed more light in our lives now and for future generations. Burzin is very humble, when you ask him where he got his idea or

inspiration. His reply, “Most men want a man cave, and this is my man cave. A place I can go to leave my day to day thoughts, and coincidentally I can also share in the space with others.”

Burzin has spent a few months getting his permits and approvals, city bylaw requirements and fire approvals. The entire construction cost has come out of his own pocket of approximately CDN \$50,000. To keep costs down, he cut up his dinning room table into two, one for diwas and the other to keep sukard and flowers. He also used his living room side tables to carry donated prayer books and spare topis and scarves. This community ‘man-cave’ would not have been possible without the support of Burzin’s loving wife and daughter, Renaz and Mahhrin.

To add to the strength of our small community, a tight-knit team made up of Persis Cooper, Robina Kapadia, and Burzin Atashband, supported by Renaz Atashband volunteer their time and energy and to whom we are thankful to fit into their busy schedules a two-hour monthly class called “The Fun and Learn Club” (FLC) for our Calgary kids. It is a youth-focused Zoroastrian



Club now in its 7th year. They make every effort to teach the children Zoroastrian history, culture, religion in a fun, productive, and age-related way. (photo above) Over the course of almost 4 years, the children have learnt about our religion: our history, the meaning behind our prayers, the Ghambars, our many calendars including the Roj and their meanings, life and death as a Zoroastrian, and of course, the importance of Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds. Burzin has

his own way to cover these various topics and the team does not shy away from discussing difficult topics either. When the class first started, parents would drop off their kids and use the time to have coffee, run errands...etc. Now most parents like me sit in the class because we end up learning too!

The Fun & Learn Club also hosts charity-driven events such as making sandwiches for the homeless and recently the Club met up to make traditional Zoroastrian Food: Dhansak, Kebabs and Falooda on a lovely Sunday afternoon for their parents.

At each Novruz event, one of the big highlights of the evening is when the youth present to the entire community their new-found knowledge and understanding which they have gained from FLC. Topics in the past have included: What are The Gathas, Knowledge of the Zoroastrian Calendar, How Parsis came to India, What is on a Typical Novruz Table and the History of Zoroastrian Kings and Queens.

FLC has directly contributed to ensuring our youth bond with each other and their religion, and we can be proud and appreciative of the values that our youth have instilled within themselves, as they are now contributing to our community and our religion.. Without the commitment of the parents, their sacrifice and perseverance to make the effort to attend, the FLC program would not be possible. Thank you.

Back to Burzin's basement, he and his family have sacrificed a place in their home that they could have used for themselves, but instead they have given us a precious gift. They are living the true meaning of Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds. The gift is not a sparkling new temple or an ancient temple in India or Iran. It is more than that to any Zoroastrian living in Calgary. It is our precious gift we will hold and celebrate everyday and it is the best fire temple we have ever seen!

Burzin will accept financial support. Zahin Sorabji of Calgary can facilitate this. His e-mail is zahin.sorabji@gmail.com Cell is 403.554.4427

Photo credit Burzin Atashband

◆ *Zahin Sorabji resides in Calgary, Alberta, Canada since 2002. He is the proud husband to Delna Sorabji and a loving father to Aiden and Ashton Sorabji. He is a Chemical Engineer for an Oil & Gas Service Company and believes very strongly in Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds.*

ABOUT BURZIN ATASHBAND

I am Zoroastrian from Hyderabad India, completed Navar from Batha and was involved with local associations including study at Athornan Institute in Andheri Mumbai and Zoroastrian College in Sanjan.



Later, based in Moscow and Ukraine I was instrumental in meeting local Zoroastrians and taking regular religious classes in Kiev.

We are now based in Calgary and I am involved in community by performing Jashan, Navjote, Marriage, Funeral, taking monthly children's classes etc. For many years we have been waiting to officially recognize Zoroastrianism in Alberta and as we needed a religious organization and for the recognition to officially perform marriages, I along with some community members formed ***Zoroastrian Fire Temple of Calgary (ZFTC)*** as a Religious organization under Religious Act of Alberta and I am one of the trustees. ZAA helped me in getting signatures from the community for getting registered as a priest through ZFTC. As ZAA is registered as a social organization, it could not be a religious entity and hence could not recognize me as an official priest in Alberta I had been speaking to many individuals in the Zoroastrian community about having our own place of worship but most were disinterested because of small population and finances to build and maintain the



place of worship. "I had my good thoughts and good words now was the time to make good deeds" so I decided to make my own prayer place. My family helped me completely and gave full support in getting it materialized.

We have our basement which is a walkout and has a green space behind. It has high ceiling, tiles on the floor, and one side of the wall is marble with a powerful exhaust. At present we have the prayer place including place for Afarganyu, divos, prayer books, lamps etc. With help from my sister and friends we arranged to make a new Afarganyu and other alat (photo page 80) in Mumbai by Chandresh Somi and got them all couriered to Calgary. Ervad Jal Panthaky of Toronto and Ervad Arda Minocherhomji, President NAMC have been very helpful in answering my questions on various religious subjects.

24th November 2019, Adar Roz Adar Mah as per Dini calendar was a very special day. I performed the Jashan ceremony with the new Afarganyu and alat. The whole community was invited to my house. After the Jashan ceremony and after the congregation completed their prayers Mobedyar Pilsum (right) and myself (left) performed Atash Niayesh and kept the Dadgah Atash on the big Afarganyu. (photo page 82)

It has been a very solemn day where everyone joined together taking the blessings of Ahura Mazda for peace, happiness and prosperity for everyone. The prayer hall will be managed by my family and I. We will invite the community for worship regularly. They can also call and come in for worship. I am thankful to almighty Ahura Mazda, my family and friends for having the Atash Dadgah installed in our house.





The FEZANA Journal salutes Mobed Burzin Atashband for his fervor and dedication to preserve the religion of Asho Zarthushti in Calgary , Canada.

ZARATHUSHTI YOUTH WITHOUT BORDERS (ZYWIB). CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Zarathushtis traveling abroad to participate in Humanitarian missions are encouraged to apply for financial aid to the Zarathushti Youth Without Borders initiative of FEZANA. The offer is available to qualified Zarathushti youth worldwide.

Past participation under this initiative have helped recipients in fulfilling their dreams in working for the indigent in civil society in South America, Africa and Asia.

There is no deadline. Applications can be made on an ongoing basis, till the allocated budgeted funds for the current fiscal year are exhausted.

Please refer to the Terms of Reference for the ZYWIB program on the Fezana website www.fezana.org and send completed applications to both the undersigned.

Behram Pastakia Bpastakia (@) aol.com
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A NEW MOBEDYAR IN CALGARY, ALBERTA, -- PILSUM MASTER



On **Roj Marespand and Aneran,** Mah Farvardin 1389 YZ (Shenshahi) -- September 14 and 15, 2019, Pilsum Phiroze Master was initiated as Mobedyar in Calgary, Alberta by Ervad Tehemton Mirza the representative of the North American Mobed Council (NAMC).

various ceremonies (viz. Jashan, Afringan, Satum, Navjote, Wedding etc). Only in the absence of a Mobed, a Mobedyar can perform certain basic ceremonies like Jashan, Afringan, Farokshi, Satum and funeral ceremonies throughout North America. A Mobedyar cannot perform Wedding, Navjote or Inner liturgical ceremonies (Yasna, Visparad, Vandidad, Baj, Boi etc.).

It took more than three years of training for Pilsum to complete NAMC requirements of a Mobedyar and to prepare for this initiation. September 14, started early for Pilsum. In preparation of this “Mobedyar” initiation ceremony and

my body; for the purification of my soul”. He also recited “*Patet Pashemani*” (repentance of sins) to purify his mind in preparation for his initiation.

Once physically, spiritually and mentally pure, he recited his basic obligatory prayers farajyat) of Kusti, Sarosh Baj, Haaven Geh, Khorshed and Meher Nyesh. He also recited “*Patet Pashemani*” (repentance of sins) to purify his mind in preparation for his initiation.

Following the preparation, Pilsum (left in the photo) performed a Jashan ceremony as the Jyoti at his home, by first offering reverence to the holy fire by reciting “*Atash Nyesh*”, followed by “*Doa Naam Satayeshne*” to offer homage unto Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Wisdom. Thereafter, he invoked the blessings of “*Ahura Mazda*” for thanksgiving, “*Dahm yazad*” for prosperity and “*Sarosh yazad*” for protection. Finally, he blessed the congregation with “*Aafreen*”.

To prove his competency, Pilsum as “*Jyoti*” recited the “*Dibacho*” aloud for “*Dahm*” and “*Sarosh*” kardo. He also recited the “*Aafreens*”. The entire congregation of 35 Zarathostis



who travelled to Calgary from London, Ontario with his wife Zenobia, As outlined by NAMC regulations, a “Mobedyar” is not a “Mobed”; nor a replacement of a Mobed. Mobedyar is an assistant to a Mobed. It is a Mobedyar’s role to assist a Mobed in his duties of performing

as set out by the NAMC protocol, Pilsum had to undergo a “Nahan” ritual, or a spiritual and physical purification process. During this Nahan, he chewed a “mint leaf” and sipped juice in lieu of Nirang while reciting “*in khurram, in pakieatan, yozdathre ravanra*”, meaning “I drink this for the purification of





Ruby, his sons Ruhshad and Cyrus and his grandson Kaizad joined in the recited Tandaroosti. Ervad Tehemton Mirza of the NAMC joined Pilsum as the Raspi while examining him for competency in Jashan and Afringan ceremonies.

The oath and certificate presentation was on September 15 at the Banff Springs Community Association hall coincided with the ZAA's celebration of Gahambar, where about 60 Calgary Zarthoshtis were present. Ervad Burzin Atashband of Calgary, who was Pilsum's mentor and guide for the Mobedyar training, introduced Pilsum to the congregation and presented a listing of his community service and involvement,

On satisfying himself of Pilsum's competency in the requirements of

a Mobedyar as set out by NAMC, Ervad Tehemton Mirza presented him with his "Mobedyar" certification and pronounced him a "Mobedyar". He also presented him with a shawl and spoke of his duties and obligations to the community.

On page 83 photo shows Mobedyar Pilsum taking the oath from NAMC VP Ervad Tehemton Mirza. and on page 84 left Mobedyar Pilsum receiving the certificate from Ervad Tehemton Mirza, VP, NAMC.

Pilsum's son Cyrus Master then spoke about his father and the members of the congregation greeted the new "Mobedyar" with ovation, presentations and felicitations. Pilsum thanked the community for their support and well wishes. (photo above)

of Calgary, including Pilsum's wife



THOUGHTS ON BECOMING ONE OF THE PIONEERING FEMALE MOBEDYARS IN N. AMERICA.

MOBEDYAR GULOO AUSTIN

Sometime in 2010, the North American Mobed Council (NAMC) made a bold decision to allow women to be trained and be initiated as Mobedyars, to perform Jashans as a Jyoti for Afargan, Farokshi, Satums, funeral prayers and Boi in a dadgah, but only in the absence or non-availability of a Mobed. Under the current regulations, Mobedyars are not allowed to perform and rightly so, inner liturgical ceremonies. They are also not allowed to perform Navjotes or Sudreh-Pushi ceremonies and weddings but can assist.

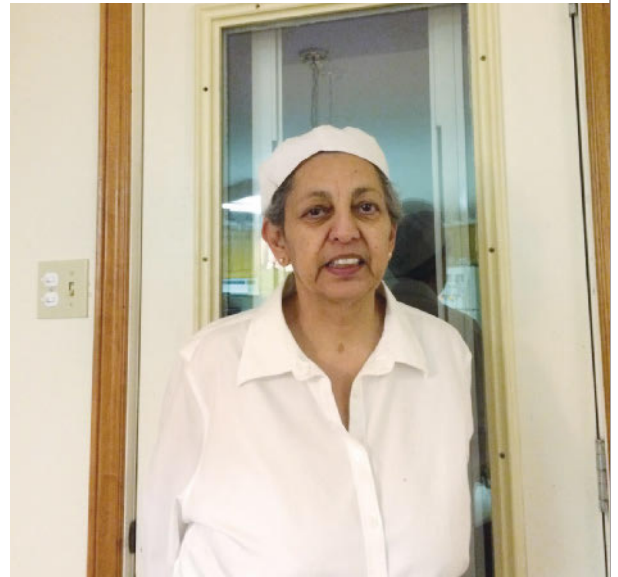
On December 2, 2012, after two years of training under the guidance of our esteemed Mobed Ervad Tehemton Mirza in London (Ontario), Mobedyar Aspi Dorabjee and I were deemed qualified to assist mobeds in their prayers. We performed a Jashan under the watchful eyes of the then NAMC President, Ervad Kobad Zarolia and other NAMC members. We were thus initiated as Mobedyars.

Since that inaugural jashan seven years ago, I have had the opportunity to perform jashans, sachkars and paidust prayers in Canada. I also travelled to Pittsburgh with Mobed Ervad Tehemton Mirza to assist with prayers at the funeral of a friend.

Looking back at these experiences, I am glad that I took the opportunity to train as a Mobedyar. I have a more profound admiration for the work of Mobeds, and a greater understanding of the role they play in our community. I also have a more meaningful appreciation of their sacrifices; travelling long distances, praying tirelessly, and providing emotional support and guidance to those who need help, this is not for the faint of heart.

Going forward, and despite my age, I would cherish the opportunity to assist in more prayer ceremonies. Performing jashans just twice a year is not sufficient. Practice makes perfect. While I am grateful for requests to assist in weddings and navjotes, according to NAMC rules, Mobedyars are not allowed to perform with a Mobed in such ceremonies. I find it hard to understand why, and frankly a bit stifling for aspiring Mobedyars. Perhaps this is something NAMC should re-think. NAMC may also want to refine rituals so that there is consistency in practices from place to place and different regions.

For Behdin men and women interested in prayer, or those interested in giving back to the community, I would strongly encourage training as a Mobedyar.



♦ **Guloo Marzban Austin** is a retired speech/language pathologist (having practiced for 42 years) and the founder member of the Brain Injury Association of London. She conducted religious classes for 10 years prior to training as a Mobedyar. She is known to all as someone who is happy to extend a helping hand, be it in settling new Parsi / Zoroastrian students in London, or by volunteering as and when needed. Guloo and Marzban are proud parents of Pheroze, Navroze and Arshes and loving grandparents of Rushad, Shiraz, Zander, Zyler, Darius and Ava.

ZARATHUSHTRA—THE FIRST ARYAN PROPHET ORIGIN OF MAZDA-YASNA

Ervad Dr. Jehan Bagli



southeast into northwestern India and are known as Indo-Aryans, and those who migrated southwest onto the Iranian plateau are known as Indo-Iranians.

To establish the relationship between these two Dharmic (Hindu and Zoroastrian) traditions, it is crucial to undertake a comparative study of the Avesta, including the Gathas with the Vedic scriptures. A scholar who stands out in this study area is Jatindra Mohan Chatterjee. In the preface of one of his books¹—*The Ethical Conception of Gathas*—he states, “**I did not come across any book which points out that Zarathushtra is as much a Prophet of the Vedic Religion as Ramachandra,**

The influence of Zarathushtrian tradition on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are frequently discussed. These three great traditions that followed Zarathosht’s religion emerged from the Semitic cultures. In contrast, the Zoroastrian and Hindu traditions are rooted in the Aryan people’s Dharma. The term Dharma signifies a behavior in consonance with *Rta* of Hinduism and *Asha* of Zoroastrianism. They both imply the order that makes the Universe possible with the “right way of living.” Several religious scholars address Zarathushtra as the first Aryan prophet.

Relatively little time and effort has been devoted to the comparative study of the relationship between the Hindu and Zoroastrian traditions to uncover their common origin. History reveals that the Iranian and Aryan homelands in the “archaic era” were in proximity to each other. We notice in Vendidad (Fargard 1.3) a reference to the creation of Airyana Vaego by Ahura Mazda. Therefore, it is not surprising that Avesta and Sanskrit are sister languages and that Gathas and Vedas have similar poetic styles, syntaxes, and meters in their songs. The people of that era are generally referred to as proto-Indo-Iranians. It is accepted that around 2nd millennium BCE the proto-Indo-Iranians migrated

and as much a Reformer of the Vedic Society, as Gautama Buddha.” He recognizes the creed of Hindu-Zarathushti (Parsi) unity in the line that is repeated in all 22 stanzas of the 55th hymn of the third book of the Rigveda which states:

Mahadh devnam asurtavam akem
In all the gods there is only one divinity

Vedas

Vedas are the most authentic ancient sacred scripture of Hinduism. Veda means knowledge; they are referred to as *sruti*, which means “what was heard by or revealed to the rishis or seers.” They represent the holiest hymns and mantras compiled into four collections: the *Rig*, *Samana*, *Yajur*, and *Atharva* Vedas.

Of these, Atharva was added later as a supplementary Veda. Atharva is derived from *Athravan*, which is the Sanskrit equivalent of the Zend *Athervan* or *Atrivan* (the fire-keeper). *Atharva* Veda, is the Veda of the fire priests. These priests are the preservers of domestic fire and are duty-bound to tend it. This is

perhaps the first indication of reverence to Fire from that era.

We shall try to uncover its meaning relative to the Zarathushtrian *Atar* or *Atash*. Hodiwala ² describes Atharva Veda as the Veda of the *Maghas*.

“Magha” occurs in the Gathas six times (Ys 29.11; 46.14; 51.11,16; 53.7, twice), while *magava* (Ys 53.15) and *magaono* (Ys 33.7) once each. The Gathic magha, or magava, refers to the fellowship or brotherhood that Zarathushtra evolved through his teachings. Consequently, Hodiwala refers to *Atharva* Veda as the Veda of the Zarathushtrian fellowship.

Mazda Yasna and Daeva Yasna

Atharva Veda consists of two books, the *Bhargava* and the *Angirasa Samhita*. The later Hindu scriptures of *Gopatha Brahmana* consider each of these as separate books, thus bringing the total number of Vedas to five. It is believed that these books came into being after the Indo-Iranians separated on the question of monotheism and polytheism, as well as the worship of an iconic and/or aniconic deity. These are the basis of Mazda-Yasna and Daeva-Yasna.

Chatterjee ³, in his studies, emphatically asserts the fact that Bhrigu, the author of *Bhargava Samhita*, was the preceptor of Ahura Worship in India and that Avesta was the scripture of Bhrigu. Chatterjee’s discussions often addressed the Prophet as Dharmaraja-, MahaRatu- or Bhagawan- Zarathushtra. Based on the work of Vedic scholar Bal Gangadhar Tilak ⁴, he believes that “Bhagwan Zarathushtra who had flourished in Vedic period is the first prophet of the Aryan race.”

Noticing the similarities between the Gathas and the *Swetaswatara* Upanishad, Chatterjee ⁵ concludes that the Gathas were an inspiration for Upanishad. Based on astronomical data provided by Tilak, the composition of Rigveda could have started 5000 BCE and the Gathas are contemporaneous with the Rigveda and were composed around 3500 BCE. These facts put the Prophet Zarathushtra’s lifetime at a date much earlier than what is generally accepted (1500-1700 BCE) by western scholars.

Ahura Mazda and Hari Medhas

The legend of King Vistaspa, who accepted Zoroastrian faith, as described by Jackso ⁶, is analogous to the one of King Vasu in later part of *Mahabharata*, composed around 1000 BCE. King Vasu performed a sacrificial offering to the highest God *Hari Medhas* and followed the custom of offering prayers five times a day.

Hari Medhas is the highest God of early Iranian religion; it is believed to be a Sanskritization of the epithet Ahura Mazda and occurs five times in Narayaniya chapters of Mahabharata. According to Mahabharata worship, *Hari Medha* was prevalent in Satya Yuga sometime before 3500 BCE. Chatterjee asserts that the term *Hari Medhas* proves the antiquity of Atharvan Zarathushtra.

Although the name Zarathushtra is not mentioned in the Rigveda, He is referred to by other designations. Rigveda 1-83-5 states “Atharvan first revealed the way of worship.” It is believed that Atharvan refers to Zarathushtra. Rigveda 5-34-3 has a line that uses the phrase “a rebel, head of the *Magha* and a friend of Kava.” Chatterjee argues that these attributes are characteristics of the Prophet Zarathushtra. He was a rebel who overthrew Daeva-Yasna, founded the brotherhood of *Magha* and he was a friend to Kava Vishtaspa.

Rigveda 10-93-14 states, “I would now speak of Rama... along with *Asuras* and the *Maghavats*.” Here the term Rama undoubtedly refers to Parsu Rama meaning Rama of Persia who can be none other than Zarathushtra. The prophet has often been described as Rama in Mahabharata and Puranas. Rama is also a Yazata (Ram) in the Iranian Faith.

Asuras and Ahuras

A word that has profoundly shaped the historic conformation of the early Vedic scriptures in relation to the Gathas is *Asura*. The word is derived from Sanskrit root *Asu* meaning Life-breath⁷. It is relevant to note that the corresponding Avestan analog for *Asu* is *Ahu* meaning, the Being, from which the term Ahura emerges.

Before the migration of proto-Indo-Iranians to the south, Daevas and Asuras were both held in high reverence⁸. Thus, in the older sections of Rigveda all the prominent gods Varuna, Agni, and Indra were addressed as Asura. With the passage of time, reverence for Daevas and Asuras in the Vedic and Avestan communities declined. Asura came to be regarded as demon for the Vedic society, while Daeva were recognized as demon to the Avestic people.

With the passage of time, the term Daeva came to be associated with a visible God and represented iconically. In contrast, Asura was considered a formless God. This iconic worship, coupled with polytheism and caste-distinction, led to the emergence of the Daeva-Yasna cult. Whereas, the worship of Asura, together with monotheism and caste-equality, was identified as

Ahura-takesa; which, in time, became Mazda-Yasna.

It is interesting to note that Fravardin Yasht⁹ credits the followers of Zarathushtra

as the first ones to praise the religion of Ahura (Asura), while rejecting the Daevas in following words:

*ýô paairyô stôish astvaithyâ vâcim aoxta vîdôyum
ahurô-tkaêshem*

Who first in the corporeal world uttered the word of
the law of Ahura that destroys the Daevas,
Fravardin Yasht 90

Chatterjee affirms that Daeva-Yasna was already in existence when Zarathushtra appeared on the scene and the Prophet raised His voice against the worship of Daevas. It is thus clear that the seeds of the Mazda-Yasna and Daeva-Yasna were sown in the two books *Bhargava* and *Angirasa* of Atharva Veda.

Asha and Rta

Zarathushtra taught that Asha constitutes the basic law governing the order of nature. Rta, in the Vedas, is the natural order that regulates the Universe's operation. The Vedic deity *Varuna* attained the uniquely high position as the omniscient creator and guide of rta. A close analogy of Varuna to Mazda is found in Haptanhaiti¹¹ where Ahura Mazda emerges as the creator and the preserver of Asha. Varuna, the ancient God of Rig Veda, was also recognized by the early Indo-Iranians as Vouruna¹⁰. In the evolved 101 names of Lord Wisdom (Ahura Mazda), the 44th name is *Varun*, which means "protector from evil."

Rta is congeneric with the Zarathushtrian concept of Asha (the signification of the Global truth entrenched in the Immutable order of Nature). In the Vedas, Rta lays the philosophical foundation for the Hindu Dharma, as the path of Asha that marks the cornerstone of the Zarathushtrian way of life.

Chatterjee argues that Mazda-Yasna, which resembles the old Varuna cult, came to be known as *Pitri-Yana* (the way of the forefathers) in India. Based on what is stated in Rigveda¹², he concluded that Pitri-Yana worshiped at a fire-altar. They had no need of a God in human form. It was Maha Ratu Zarathushtra who turned to Varuna when more than one god, such as Indra, began to be worshipped.

However, Rigveda 7-34-24 describes Varuna as a friend of Indra. This indirect entry of Indra worship

was not acceptable to Zarathushtra. He therefore chose the term Vedhas, which was used in Veda as Highest Lord. Over time, with linguistic morphing, Vedhas came to be related to Medhas and evolved in early Iran to Mazda.

It was Zarathushtra who proposed that God is one and should be worshipped only by one name: Mazda. It is interesting to mention that Sukta 45-10 of the Veda describes God, "Who is known by the name Ahura Mazda." Further, Sukta 29-4 states¹³ "Mazda alone is most-adorable."

In the words of Chatterjee¹⁴, "Mankind heard for the first time a definite, decided resolute proclamation of Monotheism from the fore-most prophet of the Indo-Iranians. It has been and is still being echoed in different climes. Maha Ratu Zarathushtra asserted monotheism not by words alone. He established the Magha Church for the confirmation and propagation of monotheism. It was a bold challenge thrown to the existing society."

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11. Yasna 35.3,5,9,10
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14. ibid 1967 pg xxx

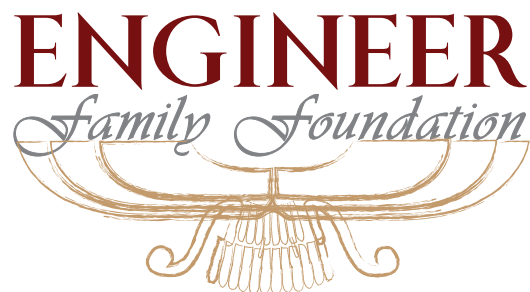
♦ *Ervad Dr Jehan Bagli is a retired scientist, an ordained priest. member of the International Board of World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO), past president of WZO Canada, past president of the North American Mobeds' Council. He has lectured worldwide and written extensively on Zoroastrianism and related topics.*

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ZARATHUSHTRA—THE FIRST ARYAN PROPHET

ORIGIN OF MAZDA-YASNA II

Ervad Dr. Jehan Bagli

Many occidental scholars believe that many names of the divinities appearing in Iranian pantheons mentioned in various inscriptions have counterparts in the Vedic scriptures. Indo-Iranians in their nomadic era had no temples and their gods were seen to exercise their influence over a boundless domain. For example, Meher Yasht states (10.7), “We revere the heavenly Light of Mithra widely united to mother earth.” However, little effort has been spent to understand the relationship between the Vedic and Avestanic traditions.

EFFORTS TO ERADICATE POLYTHEISM AMONG ARYANS

Maha Ratu Zarathushtra used a new epithet Mazda for Varuna. The prophet had the courage to oppose the worship of other gods such as Indra, Vishnu, and Rudra mentioned in the Rig Veda. Bloomfield, in his book *The Religion of Veda*¹, states, “It seems to me almost an unimaginable feat of skepticism to doubt the original identity of Varuna and Mazda.” The Iranians called the new cult Mazda Yasna. The Indians saw some differences in the new system and chose the name Pitri Yana.

Of the two sects of Atharva Veda, Bhṛigu were the worshippers of Bhargava Veda and occupied the western region (Iranian plateau); the Angirases spread eastwards (in India). The followers of Bhṛigu were like blazing fire, believers in Mazda Yasna, and bright like Spitama in the Gathas. Those following the Angirasa Veda were like a smoldering ember, followed Daeva Yasna, and were like the Anghra of the Avesta. These differences foundational for the emergence of supplementary Veda—Atharva Veda—the Veda of Fire Priests.

The scriptures of Gopatha Brahmana and of the Sankhayana Sutra consider Bhargava Samhita to be superior to the Angirasa Samhita. In general, Asura worship was accepted in that era as outstanding, despite that Angirasa continued to claim that Indra ruled over both communities. In Rig Veda (10-48-7) we note that, out of vengeance, Indra threatens to crush Mazda Yasna. Zarathushtra was not intimidated by the threat and soon all of Persia and Media adopted Mazda Yasna.

PRAY FIVE TIMES A DAY

With the advent of the Upanishads, Yajna fell into disrepute and a new form of worship evolved called the Puja. This consisted of offerings of fruits, flowers, and leaves². In India, the Bhargava evolved a new form of Bhakti known as Pancha-Ratra, which was deemed “un-vedic” As the name suggests, this form consisted of offering prayers five times a day (Sanskrit: pancha = five;

ratra = nights).

Chatterji in *Ethical conception of Gathas*³ describes the Pancha-Ratra sect’s origin in detail. Referring to the monumental work *Gita-Rahasya* by Lokmanya Tilak, he states that Rishi Narayana of Mahabharata founded the ritual of Pancha-Ratra. There is reason to believe that the ancient Indian Zarathushtrian cult was recognized as the Pancha-Ratra cult. The chief source of information regarding the Pancha-Ratra school can be traced to the Narayaniya section of Mahabharata. The term Narayana also has its etymology in the Avestan word Naroish Nara found in the Gathas⁴ and means “the best among man.” In India, the root word was coined as Nara and, over time, evolved into Narayana—the greatest man.

It is suggested that Pancha-Ratra and Bhargava are synonymous. Each describes a religion that is Monotheistic (also known as Ekayana [one-pointed]), preaches the pursuit of action, contemplation or Bhakti, and does not demand ascetic renunciation. The main feature of the religion was devotion to a personal God as against Impersonal Brahma, as advocated in the Upanishad. In India, the religion was deemed “un-vedic” as it did not originate in India. Its ideals were anti-ascetic, did not permit slaughter of animals for sacrificial ceremonies, and required its adherents to maintain a high level of purity. Chatterji states, “If Zarathushtrian customs were to be described in an Indian book of that distant age, it could not have been described in any other terms.”

SPREAD OF MAZDA YASNA

Indo-Iranians in the West adopted Mazda Yasna, while the Deva Yasna cult spread largely in the East. There were undoubtedly some idealistic differences between the two groups, however they were too civilized to decide the theological issues through weapons. The outstanding feature of the Mazda-Yasna cult was its simplicity and freedom from unwanted rituals. The Deva-Yasna on the other hand spent more time on ceremonial precision than to think of God. Another striking feature of the Mazda worship was the passion of the Prophet for Equality. No person—Aryan or non-Aryan—was excluded from the worship of Mazda (Ys 33.3, 46.12)⁵.

Swetaswatara Upanishad, a celebrated ancient Hindu Scripture, proclaims the great message of monotheism (Swetaswatara 3-2), worship of aniconic god (3-19), equality among mankind, and discouragement of the caste system⁶. It was in this era that Shiva worship appeared on the scene among Indians and was presented as a replica of the Iranian Ahura Mazda. Various Rishis

in Rig Veda have mentioned the parity of Daevas and Asuras as they performed the rites of Daeva Yasna and Pitri Yana. Attempts were made to assimilate the principles of Zarathushtra through ideals of Shiva and Vishnu.

However, Mazda-Yasna and Daeva-Yasna continued to prosper in the west and in the east, respectively. Narayana chapters of Mahabharata attempted to introduce Ahura Mazda in India under the epithet of Hari Medhas. In an effort of reconciliation between the two sects Rudra emerged as a common God of both Daeva—and Ahura—worshippers in India and the two groups flourished by learning from each other.

VEDAS AND THE IRANIANS

The roots of Rig Veda run deep into the Indo-Iranian period. It is believed that some of the earliest hymns to Varuna were composed in Bactria by the ancestors of the present day Iranians⁷. Angirasa Veda (4-15-12) states, “May the shaven sages of Iran, with Scriptures in their hands pray to Veruna for rains.” Rig Veda (8-20-17) speaks of Rudra as the common God of Mazda and Daeva worship and even the name Asura Vedhas an equivalent of Avestan Ahura Mazda, which occurs in the Rig Veda. These facts confirm the Rig Veda’s composers’ awareness of the reformation initiated by Maha Ratu Zarathushtra. It is therefore futile to date the prophet in the vicinity of 1000 B.C.E⁸.

Zarathushtra was most passionate to teach the Aryan society how to realize God, so he adopted the austere lifestyle in Sabilian hills (Mount Sabalan) by lake Urumia. He chose a life of deep discipline and meditation in the quest of Truth. He was not satisfied with His own salvation and was determined to lead the Spirit of other Mazda worshippers over the Bridge (*Chinvato peretu*) of the separator⁹. He desired to protect the Aryans from the constant attacks by the Turanians from the north and the Semites (Paanis) of the west, as is mentioned in the Avesta. Rig Veda also refers to the hostilities from Turvasus (Rig. 7-18-6) from the north and Paanis (Rig. 10-108-4).

COSMIC DUALITY AND AMESHA SPENTAS

Zarathushtra, in his masterly conception, introduced a major innovation: the duality of two mental aspects in the creation of the Universe. He introduced the notion of the two forces (two Mainyus): Spenta and Anghra. Interestingly, we see a glaring reference to the Mainyu in the books of Atherva Veda, where the term Ugra Mainyu is found in Angirasa Veda (1-10-1), which is believed to be the Sanskrit version of Anghra Mainyu and occurs only once, as contrasted to the ubiquity of Anghra Mainyu in the *Bhargava Veda*¹⁰.

It should be noted that Chatterji interprets Spenta and Anghra as the two forces employed by the Creator for creating and dissolving the Universe rather than mentalities

as elaborated in Avesta. Curiously, we find in the Rig Veda (10-173-3) a verse that states,

“The Lord rotates all along, with His two forces,
the Sadhrichi (Spenta) and the Vishuchi (Anghra) and that
is how the Universe comes into being.”

Regardless, it is evident that there was a distinct awareness of Zarathushtrian concepts among the Rishis of the Vedic era.

There were also some striking differences in the comprehension of the Faith between the Iranians and the Indians of that era. For Indians, the governing of the faith was in four steps: *Karma Yoga*—Formation of character, *Dhyana Yoga*—Appreciation of higher self, *Jnana Yoga*—Identification with Brahma, and *Bhakti Yoga*—Attunement with God through Love.

Maha Ratu Zarathushtra conceived of a uniquely different scheme that he defined as Amesha Spentas—the Holy immortals. Chatterji states that Vohu Mannah, Asha Vahishta, and Khshthra Vairya represent the ethical sphere analogous to Karma Yoga with Aramaiti leading the way to devotion through offerings of prayers and meditation comparable with Bhakti Yoga to identify the Divine. The evolution of this attribute leads one to Haurvatat where one initiates the awareness of their spiritual self within, which resembles Dhyana Yoga, to finally arrive to Ameretat to be in tune with the Creator Ahura Mazda as in Jnana Yoga.

The gospel of Maha Ratu resides in the conception of Asha, to do the right and to be righteous. He also guides his followers to search for what is right, when he says “Happiness unto him who works for the happiness of others.” (Ys 43.1). However, it is one thing to know what is right and quite another to find the courage to follow it. It is through Khshthra Vairya that we can evolve the courage of our conviction to serve humanity.

The fundamental reality of Asha proposed by Zarathushtra is that of an Eternal Principle from which the Universe emerges, it is in Asha that the universe subsists, and it is in that Eternal law where it returns on dissolution¹¹. The Zarathushtrian concept of Asha is analogous to Rta of Hindu tradition. Following these pathways lead us to Mazda of the Avesta or Brahma of the Vedanta. These basic notions also lead to Ananda—the eternal bliss.

NATURE OF GOD OF ZARATHUSHTRA

The presence of the Divine Self in each one of us is characterized in Zarathushtra’s scheme of Amesha Spentas as Haurvatat and Ameretat. This notion resonates in the Taittiriya Upanishad, where it is stated (Taittiriya 2-6), “If one denies the existence of Brahma, he denies the possibility of his own existence.” Zarathushtra disapproved of the Indra cult as it encouraged polytheism. He approved

of Varuna for its lofty ideals but chose to address the entity as Mazda to reveal the new concept of rational Bhakti that recognizes the fact that God is both personal and impersonal.

The Divine guiding light of Fravashi and the Divine voice Sraosha embodied in every human, in general, and Mazda worshippers, in particular, makes the relationship of Ahura Mazda intimately personal. It is the immanence of the same Divinity in the entire universe that renders God transcendental and apersonal. Among the early Vedic philosophers, Adi Sankaracharya held the view that the Ultimate Reality is impersonal. In contrast, Ramanuja contributed to the notion of a personal God¹². The answer to this debate came from Gita—the words of Govinda Krishna—that says the personal God is rooted in the Impersonal. Aurobindo¹³ further clarifies by stating that Brahma (Impersonal) and Ishwara (Personal) are two aspects of the same entity.

In the words of Chatterjee, “without the conception of Brahma, religion degenerates into superstition. Without conception of God religion remains barren. It is to the great super-prophet of Iran that the whole world is indebted for suggesting the solution that saved the religion from degenerating into superstition and from remaining barren

of influence on human character.”

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In the Gathas, Zarathushtra says something -- twice -- that presents a bit of a puzzle. It ties into our activities that help to improve existence, make it better. But this little puzzle gives an added dimension to that idea.

He speaks of ruling at will over reward, and ruling at will over life. Meaning?

Well, his path is the path of truth (*asha-*, the true (correct, good) order of existence), a path that incrementally personifies this order of existence through its comprehension, good thinking, (*vohu- manah-*), its beneficial embodiment in thought, word and action (*spenta- aramaiti-*), its good rule (*vohu- xshathra-*), a beneficial way of being (*spenta-mainyu-*) -- the path of the qualities of the Divine (*amesha spenta*) -- a spiritual evolution, which is enabled through our experiences in (mortal, material) existence.

And in his thought the end result, the good reward for following this path, is personifying these divine qualities completely (*haurvatat-*), resulting in a state of being that is no longer bound by mortality -- non--deathness (*ameretat-*), because when the perfecting process is complete, material, mortal existence is no longer needed.

So the ultimate good 'reward' includes *ameretat-* 'non-deathness'. And 'life' is simply another (flip side) way of saying 'non-deathness'. So both 'reward' and 'life' refer to a perfected existence. And this is consistent with his statement that we rule over life at will in the House of Good Thinking.

Referring to evil priests and princes, he says

"... They shall not be brought to

those who rule over life at will in the House of Good Thinking. This is equal to the best [*vahishta-* 'most good']" Y32.15.

In his thought, the good reward -- commonly called 'heaven' -- is not a place. It is a perfected state of being that 'houses' good thinking; a state of being that 'houses' the bliss, the high, we experience in beautiful music (the House of Song). So his notion of reward is an enlightened, joyful, state of being, an existence that is wholly good (*ahu- vahishta-* another of his terms for 'heaven').

Which brings us to the question: What does he mean by the ability to rule at will over reward/life? Well, he does not specifically explain. But he gives us a hint.

"... When I could rule at will over my reward, then I would, exercising such power, be in the stride of the blessed one [*hudanu-* the 'blessed-good-giving-one']." Y50.9.¹

The word *hudanu-* which Insler 1975, translates as "blessed", is translated as "generous" by Humbach 2010, and Skjaervo 2006. But I think these differences can be reconciled.

Hudanu- derives from *hudah-* (*hu-* means 'good' and *dah-* means 'to give' etc.). The ways in which *hudah-* is used in the Gathas, it means a bountiful generous, loving kindness, that gives what is good. So (in fewer words), *hudanu-* means a 'blessed-good-giving' when used as an adjective, and a 'blessed-good-giving-one' when used as a noun.

Now ask yourself: Who is the ultimate blessed-good-giving-one [*hudanu-*]? It is the Divine, Wisdom (*mazda-*) who personifies completely, the true (correct, good) order of existence (*asha-*) -- its comprehension, its embodiment, its rule, the beneficial way of being -- an order of existence

THE ANGELS AMONG US

Dina G. McIntyre.



◆ Dina G. McIntyre is a retired lawyer, studied Zarathushtra's teachings since the early 1980s, has written and lectured on the Gathas in the US, Europe, India, Australia, New Zealand and South America. On her website <https://gathasofzarathushtra.com> she lays out Zarathushtra's teachings at both basic and in-depth levels.

that includes being generous, loving, good-giving, a perfected existence, one that is no longer bound by mortality (non-deathness *ameretat*-). An order of existence that we also can attain completely -- the 'good' reward/life.

"... When I could rule at will over my reward, then I would, exercising such power, be in the stride of the blessed one [*hudanaosh* 'of the blessed-good-giving-one']." Y50.9.

This ties into a fundamental aspect of Zarathushtra's teaching -- mutual, loving help (a blessed good giving) between the Divine and man and all the living -- so fundamental indeed, that it was remembered across the millennia even into Pahlavi times. The Pahlavi High Priest *Zadsparam* wrote that "mutual assistance" is one of the three requirements for perfecting existence.

Following this line of reasoning, I speculate that in times of need, when mortal existence seems overwhelmed by evil and needs help, perfected souls who are part of the Divine have the power to rule over their non-deathness (reward/life) at will -- they are not bound by their non-deathness. They have the power at will to assume ordinary mortal existence (not as Superman or Wonder Woman!) to help us break the stranglehold of evil.

And I speculate that such help may occur in many ways. It may occur once in a thousand or more years in ways that influence millions of people (as with the founders of many good religions), and it also occurs continuously, millions of times, in small ways that may help only a few, or even just one person who is going through a dark night of the soul and needs a hand.

The poet Francis Thompson, expressed the idea that there is

a continuous traffic of 'angels' between earth and 'heaven', to help in times of need -- their "ancient places" are not in some stratosphere isolated from the rest of existence. Their "ancient places" are right where they are needed. He says,

"... The angels keep their ancient places --
Turn but a stone and start a wing!
'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces,
That miss the many--splendored thing.

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
Cry -- and upon thy so sore loss
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
Pitched betwixt Heaven and
Charing Cross. ...".

If we set aside Francis Thompson's terminology, his imagery captures what I am trying to express (and what I see in the Gathas) -- a continuous traffic of light filled being(s) who -- ruling at will over non-deathness (reward/life) take on ordinary mortal form, with all its limitations, in order to continue to help those of us who are drowning in difficulties, or perhaps just need a hand to make it -- whether the need is that of nations, or communities, or a family, or one individual soul. The continuous traffic of help is all around us (even though we often are unaware of this 'many--splendored thing').

If this is so, then the end of the evolutionary process -- a perfected state of being -- is not an end. Enlightened being(s) continues to be involved in the work of perfecting existence as a whole.

Take it a step further.

If a perfected being is the complete attainment of the qualities of the divine (*amesha spenta*), then the (perfected) angels among us are the essence of the Divine. And if we imperfect beings think, speak

and act, in a way that promotes the true (correct, good) order of existence (which is the existence of the Divine), then in each such moment, we bring the Divine to life, in ourselves and in our world. So, although imperfect, we become (part time) angels.

As I understand Zarathushtra's thought, we all -- perfected and unperfected -- are still part of one existence. In the Gathas, achieving completeness, wholeness, (*haurvatat*-) occurs at both an individual and a collective level. No one makes it until everyone makes it. So each of us -- the perfected and the unperfected -- continue to give and receive mutual, loving help in 1,001 ways, large and small, until everyone makes it.

But the key word here is 'help'. The angels among us cannot act for us. We still have to think, speak, act, ourselves. Making a choice that is true, right, good, is sometimes difficult. It sometimes requires courage. It sometimes results in grief, hardship, loss, difficulties (short term). But each such choice helps to bring about the true (correct, good) order of existence (*asha*) in our world, and in ourselves. That is how we (incrementally) heal existence -- ourselves, other life forms, the environment. In so doing we join the angels among us. True, as part time angels. But all on the way to full time!

* * * * *

¹ All quotations from the Gathas are from the Insler 1975 translation unless otherwise stated. All references detailed in these chapters are in my website <https://gathasofzarathushtra.com>, in Part Three: *Chinvat, The Bridge of Discerning*; in Part Two: *A Question of Immanence*; in Part One: *The Identity of the Divine*.

MY ROOTS SPREAD

Yasmin Kouchesfahani

In a place to the East, there is home,
Home is Yazd, the birthplace of my grandparents,
Where my mother use to visit as a little girl.
The home of my ancestors,
The same ancestors of the Persian Empire, many generations before
Where just law and agricultural prosperity flowed throughout the land
And the carvings of our prophet and our symbol,
Decorate the cracked walls and broken columns of what was left behind
How I wish I could see Persepolis.

Home is a place where the salty air and sounds from the Caspian Sea consume your senses.
Where your father's pipe collection hung on the walls to admire
Baba, it's also where your father lays today,
In his favorite spot
How I wish I could see my grandpa's grave.

A place where people sing when they're happy,
And sing when they're praying,
And sing when they're playing.
Where your family is your best friend and your worst nightmare
Where the sense of community always drives you together to celebrate
life and love and nature,
This, I have seen.
This, I know.

I used to love Sundays because we would go to Dar-a-mehr, our temple
Because home is also the sound of prayer.
You know that texture of your grandma's voice,
That is gentle, yet scratches and makes you purr.
You should hear Mamanie pray,
When she prays, she closes her

eyes.

*"Ashem Vohu vahishtem asti
Ushta Asti
Ushta Ahmai
Hyat ashai,
Vahishtai ashem"*

You may not know what it means,
But you should know what these words have been through.
These words have triumphed through invasion,
These words have triumphed through imperialism,
These words have triumphed through revolution,
These words will forever triumph,
Even through the journey, away from home.

I am not from home,
I cannot go.
The triumph is to keep our roots,
Even if we are banned from the land they were seeded in.

Is it still my home?
Because home is still the smell of turmeric in the kitchen,
And the lavenders that grow in my backyard,
And the way my hair flies on its own when I ride my bike to school,
And the feeling of a loved one's arms around me,
And the blue couch in our living room where you sit on the left and I sit on the right,

And that moment when you're at the bottom of a pool completely submerged and everything is quiet and light,
And the hair on my arms softly reminding me to stay warm and true,
And the stretch marks that reach up to my belly button as they extend like roots connecting me to the tree temple of my own body,
And the way Maman brushes my hair.

Oh, Maman, this poem is for you.
Because my roots spread,
To the place in the East I cannot go,
And the place where the lavenders grow,
To the marks on my belly,
And right back to you.
You are home.
And when my roots ache for something,
You are what blossoms from them,
The Jasmine flower, or as you named me, Goleh Yas,
That sweetly but brightly brings me back,
Always.

◆ *Yasmin Kouchesfahani is a 23 year-old Zoroastrian Iranian-American from Davis, California. She is an activist, poet, daughter, granddaughter, and proud community member. She graduated from the University of San Francisco with a B.A. in International Studies in May 2018 and will be attending UC Hastings Law School in Fall 2019. Yasmin attended Mabid and gatherings at the Persian Zoroastrian Organization (PZO) Dar-e-Mehr in San Jose, California. Her poetry is inspired by her family, her community, and her life growing up bicultural in the United States.*





Hosi Mehta: There are many paths to a successful life

By Nawaz Merchant

Many Zarathushtis know Hosi Mehta from his work on the FEZANA Welfare and Critical Assistance Committee. A long time resident of Chicago, this entrepreneur and business owner since early eighties is married to Kim and has three sons Shawn, Sheroy, Shazad. In keeping with this issue's theme, we interviewed Hosi about his life and career, as well as his humanitarian activities over the decades and learned some surprising facts from this unassuming man.

Humble beginnings: Hosi's father passed away when Hosi was three years old, so his mother took the family to live with an uncle and grandparents in Ahmedabad. This uncle and aunt had four sons, so along with Hosi and his brother, the six boys of this middle class family managed in a flat

with a single bathroom! One can only imagine the youthful enthusiasm and rivalries of such a childhood. Hosi acknowledged that in his youth he was not a good student and had a problem with authority. Perhaps this is why many of his later philanthropic work has centered around providing guidance to youth to keep them from straying to the wrong path! "I was the black sheep!" he says, with characteristic modesty, "but for a couple of good people, I might have ... well, gone the wrong way!" However he was also a state champion in bicycling, and came second at the National level.

Later, Hosi's older brother brought him to the USA to study automotive technology. During that time Hosi also worked fixing radios and in a gas station. When he met his future wife Kim, she

was nineteen years old. It must have been a whirlwind romance, for they married, had their son Shawn and later moved back to Ahmedabad, where Hosi's ambition was to build a business and contribute to India's growth as an entrepreneur. For a while this seemed to work out, as his auto repair shop employed over thirty employees. Kim learned to manage an Indian household, dealing with tradespeople, water shortages and more. However the monthly grind of corruption and necessity of bribing officials posed a serious moral dilemma for Hosi, which caused a series of epileptic seizures. Faced with a choice between fulfilling his dream and losing his integrity, in 1982 he bit the bullet and moved the family back to his brother's home in Chicago.

Career: Life was not easy in the

A happy family picture : Sitting Second son Sheroy; Hosi, mother-in-law Dolores; wife Kim; Standing Shawn, s wife Pei Shan (Sam) , youngest actor son Shazad; Sheroy's wife Sarah; oldest son Shawn.



USA. In 1983 he started his first business, a gas station and repair shop. When the five year lease was over, the rent was doubled and so he decided to look for a place of his own. However, having no asset as security, he had no way to raise the \$150,000 down payment. His voice glowed with gratitude as he described what happened next.

At a community get together one of his customers asked how the purchase for the new location was going and dejectedly he answered “not too well as the financial partner backed out”

She said, “why don’t you ask people you know for a loan?”

He protested, “But I can’t give anything as security!”

“No matter,” the lady replied, “You are the security!”

So with the help of community members, Hosi was able to purchase the property, and repaid the debt over coming years.

Humanitarian Activities: Joining the FEZANA Welfare Committee, There have been highs and lows. He has seen over 10 cases of spousal abuse over the years. In some cases, even after counseling her, the abused woman could not or would not leave, and refused to walk out on her children. But there have been rewarding experiences as well. The 2006-2007 rescue of Baby Ushta a four year old burn victim was a community undertaking where multiple volunteers came forward willingly, Hosi recalls fondly. He also counselled a young man facing a difficult time managing the care of his ailing parents, who faced serious depression. Hosi feels glad the young man got on his feet and moved on after that difficult time. “I get invested in their wellbeing,” says Hosi, “they become a part of me.” What drives him to do this, is a feeling that we are all connected—the “God Particle” in all of us.

Hosi came across a difficult situation at work when two youths who worked for him forged paychecks. Confronted, they were horrified at the long term consequences, so Hosi worked with the bank to have them repay the funds, and to personally guarantee their future behavior. Given the seriousness of the offence, getting a second chance helped these young men move to a better path. In the following years, Hosi also helped guide two young men away from gangs. “When you’re younger, you do stupid things,” he says, “but if you get a second chance, it pushes one to turn one’s life around.”

Not surprisingly, Hosi was appointed to the Youth Commission by the Mayor. He met Frank, a police officer who mentioned youth delinquency was a chronic problem, saying, “By high school it’s already too late.” Learning there were kids without role models, they set up a mentoring program for “At-risk” youth, expecting few to want such an awful label. Yet within weeks, when youngsters saw their friends partnered with entrepreneurs and businessmen (recruited by Hosi from his business contacts), playing ball with them, doing homework, many more kids wanted to join! The successful program grew and has since been managed by the school district. He is also a member of the Kiwanis club and was the founding President of Character Counts in his city.

“People need to learn how to think,” says Hosi, “how to become resilient, to pick up and decide what to do when something goes wrong.” Therefore in 2014 Hosi began cohosting a Radio Show, (suspended in 2016 when his co-founder Zenobia took time off, as she and her husband adopted two kids.) The radio show has just restarted with the goal of creating a discussion on the theme of change your thinking to change your life.

How can we better support our youth? Hosi feels we need to go back to the basics of our religion. “Our primary allegiance is to humanity,” says Hosi. “Rituals and traditions should not replace the true principles of our religion.” Sports is a great training ground, teaching youngsters how to handle both winning and losing.

His Philosophy: Life is simple, we complicate it with overthinking. “If I feel bad about something, that is on me. It’s how I’ve taken it. If I feel taken advantage of, then I should do better with setting boundaries, and communicating them. It’s up to me.”

Hosi’s **advice to youth** is straightforward. “Consider what you aspire to be and go for it. Persistence, hard work, and ethics will take you where you choose.” He asks young entrepreneurs to “Have big dreams and work toward that. If you’re hard working and honest, your effort is the same, so dream big. Have confidence in yourself and don’t dwell on failure.” He regrets no part of his life, he says, “Because my mistakes made me what I am. Mistakes form you more than success. It humbles you, makes you think more, strive more. Failure is a good teacher, makes one grow.”

Hosi credits his success to his wonderful family who always stood by him, and the mentors he was fortunate to have. He believes there are many different pathways to success. “All (youngsters) may not follow an academic route. Some have different skills and can become entrepreneurs, take educated risks, start a business. Each person is unique and precious.”

We thank Hosi for his years of service to the community and commend him and his wife Kim for giving us a worthy example to follow.



Between the Covers

The World of Parsi Cooking : Food Across Borders has just won the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards for 2020.

THE WORLD OF PARSI COOKING

– Food Across Borders

By Nilufer Mavalvala

Available on Amazon , Published

2019 Pgs 120

Cost US\$29.99; Can\$ 35.99

ISBN 978-1-99900099-0-8

A good cookbook teaches the reader how to cook. A really great one transcends the cooking genre entirely by offering a rare, almost anthropological glimpse into the fascinating history of a culture and its traditions through food. That is what Niloufer Mavalvala has accomplished with the book *The World of Parsi Cooking – Food Across Borders*.

In her introduction, Niloufer explains that she compiled the book in order to leave her family, her community and the world a compendium of Parsi food. To make sure Parsi recipes are preserved and not lost. For a Pakistani-born American Parsi like me, the book is a necessary reference guide for my own cooking (I keep many of the dishes described in the Mamaji nu pinjru section of the book in my own pantry), and a gift of heritage to pass on to my American children. It also is a book I return to regularly, to feast on photos of delicious dishes, beautifully presented in a historical context.

The recipes are of course the most important component of any cookbook. For every Parsi food aficionado, this book provides step-by-step recipes for all the usual favorites, from the basic Parsi pora, palao and rus chawal, to the more complex lagan nu stew, khekra ni curry (a personal favorite!), mango chutney, sali boti, sua pak, daar ni pori, paneer and so much more. But *The World of Parsi Cooking* isn't just an encyclopedia of Parsi cooking. It also presents a visual feast – each recipe is accompanied by a photo of the

beautifully presented finished dish, often served in an iconically Parsi way. The gharab nu achar recipe, for example, is accompanied by a photo of the dish served on a ceramic fish plate reminiscent of many Parsi dining tables. Sekta ni singh no patio is photographed in a Parsi langri, with another accompanying langri of rice by its side. I find myself reading and re-reading Niloufer's meticulously recorded recipes, in part so I can recreate my favorite cuisine. And in part also because looking at the recipes and photos evokes happy memories and a nostalgia for afternoons spent peeling potatoes or shelling peas in the steamy, fragrant Karachi kitchens of my mother and grandmother.

In addition to a step-by-step guide to Parsi cuisine, Niloufer introduces the cuisine by describing the history and character of Parsi cooking. She also prefaces every single recipe with a personal note – either the provenance of the dish, or her family's history of cooking it, or her personal notes about certain ingredients or cooking techniques or traditions associated with cooking a dish. For instance, she lovingly recounts an extensive history of sua pak and vasanu, and explains that her gajar mewa nu achar recipe is at least 150 years old. The tamota, aadu nay limbu nu jam is a tribute to Niloufer's aunt Jeroo, "a great jam connoisseur." And that the word khichri is derived from a Sanskrit word meaning rice and lentils. It is through these prefatory notes that Niloufer imbues the entire book with warmth, love and historical context. This is what makes the cookbook special. And so much more than a cookbook. Through these notes, a simple recipe is transformed. It is at once a history lesson and a story of culture and tradition. It is certainly about food, but it is also about family and community and that community's historical context.



Ultimately, flipping through *The World of Parsi Cooking* will evoke different feelings in different people. For me, it is like visiting an old friend. That friend is very much like Niloufer herself. In the book Niloufer notes that she is from Karachi, "with London, Toronto and Dubai also very much a part of my life." The book, like Niloufer, contains well-traveled stories, recipes, histories and traditions. It shows how various culinary traditions – mainly Persian and South Asian – have combined to create a cohesive new culture and cuisine. It is a book about food, love and tradition. Go get your copy from Amazon today. You will find yourself glancing through it over and over again for stories that are both new yet familiar. That are khathu, mithu and tikhu – tart, sweet and spicy. Like Parsi cuisine itself.

◆ *Narges Kakalia a mother of two is a corporate litigator in New York City. She loves to spend her spare time cooking for her friends and family. Her first foray into The World of Parsi Cooking involved making Tamota Aadu Nay Limbu Nu Jam — it was absolutely delicious!*

The World of Parsi Cooking : Food Across Borders has just won the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards for 2020.

The Weight of Heaven

Thrity Umrigar,

Hard cover pgs 365 Price Can \$58.04

Published April 2009, Harper , (first published January 1, 2009)

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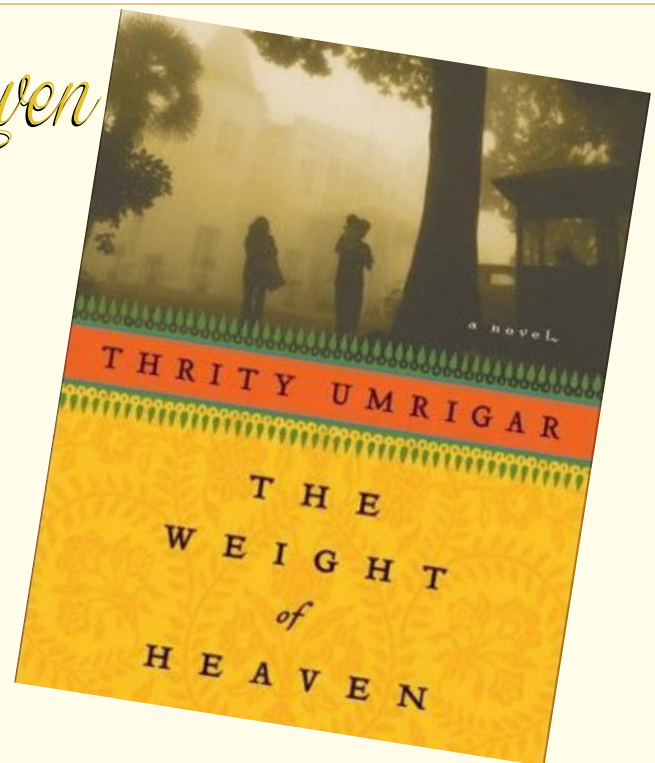
Reviewed by Farah Maharukh Coomi Shroff
The Weight of Heaven (2009). HarperCollins, USA.

As an avid reader of books by and about Zarthushti I was thrilled to happen upon this book by Thrity Umrigar. I have read all her other work and enjoyed it. As I picked this new title I thought it'd spoil the suspense if I read the front flap description as I have learned far too much about the story from the tell-all words. So I started the book with fresh eyes. As with her other books, I read it on vacation so I took a couple of days to finish it. Like most of her novels, the plot was not exciting or fast paced. The development of the characters and the depth and detail that Umrigar offers us is often the most engrossing part of her stories. This is true in *The Weight of Heaven*, until the last part of the book.

The main characters are Ellie and Frank, a US couple whose only 7 year old son died from a sudden illness. As we'd expect, the couple was grief-stricken. Their grieving process drove them apart and their marriage was in jeopardy. When Frank got an offer to work for his company in India, they decided to try out life in a country where nobody knew them and where they'd see no signs of their deceased son.

They arrive in village near Mumbai and Frank is immersed immediately into the difficulties of doing business in India. He sees corruption, police brutality, dishonesty and more. Ellie, on the other hand, while she has a doctorate in psychology and worked full time in the US, chooses to volunteer as a teacher and therapist with local village children and women. They are experiencing 2 different Indias. Frank develops a dislike for the people and the culture which leads him to judge harshly and slip into a discriminatory mindset. Ellie loves India and wishes to spend many more years there. Their marriage is not mending as a result of this change of place and pace.

The one solace that Frank finds in India is Ramesh,



the boy of the servants, Prakash and Edna, who live in their compound. Prakash is an orphan, raised in the same village where they now live, Girbaug. The first time he left Girbaug he met Edna in Goa and they eloped, knowing that her parents wouldn't approve of their mixed marriage. The couple lives an isolated life in the village as Prakash has never been accepted by the people. Frank's interest in their son brings tension. On the one hand, having no extended family, the parents welcome his help with homework, athletic training and gifts. On the other, they feel threatened that his world of wealth and power will lure their son away from them. Much of the story revolves around this tension.

I found the last part of the story to be disturbing, even macabre. It weaves a tale of a person who is mentally, emotionally and spiritually unravelling, whose hair turns white in one tortured night. I am sure that this kind of story occurs in real life but I hope it is rare. Umrigar has strayed from her hitherto theme of writing about Parsis. In fact, not one Parsi appears in this book. Most of her novels revolve around India and the US and this book does as well. All in all this book, written by a Zarthushti, weaves an engaging tale.

◆ *Farah Maharukh Coomi Shroff, PhD, is a public health researcher and educator; mother; wife and more, living in Vancouver Canada on the lands of the Coast Salish Nations.*



BIRTH

Violet Nina Fix, a girl to Daisy and Alexander (Alex) Fix, granddaughter to Sanobar Kasad and Dinyar Daver (originally of Montreal) and Joan Fix and late Douglas Fix, in Edmonton, on September 11, 2019.

Vairya Munshi-Ivanov, a girl, to Pashna Munshi and Yanko (Yani) Ivanov, granddaughter to Neville Ardeshir Munshi and late Shehnaz Neville Munshi (Mumbai, India), niece to Nilufer and Khushroo Shroff (New Jersey), Farhad and Yongmei Munshi, cousin to Ashi Munshi (Virginia) in Falls Church, VA, on September 25, 2019.



Armaan, a boy to Nina and Ryan Koerner (Coral Springs, FL), grandson to Jimmy and Freny Deboo (Deerfield Beach, FL) on November 10, 2019. (Photo above)

NAVJOTES

Zara and Karl Kekobad, children of Dilshad and Jamshid Kekobad, grandchildren to Jeroo Behram Kekobad (Santa Clara, CA) and Meher and Kersi Choksey (Chicago, IL) in Milpitas, CA on July 1, 2019.

Kiyana, daughter of Hufri Damania and Vibhor Chandra in San Jose, CA on July 21, 2019.

Diana Mistry, daughter of Percy and Dilber Mistry (Cupertino,

CA) in Fremont, CA on July 27, 2019. st

Shavir Bhujwalla, son of Dazzle and Sonal Bhujwalla in San Jose, CA on August 17, 2019.

Ava Shokraneh, daughter of Feroz and Soraya Rofagha Tarapore, granddaughter of Silloo and Erach (Lafayette, CA) in Pleasant Hill, CA on September 2, 2019.

WEDDINGS

Karl Mehta, son of Natasha and Darius Mehta (Brentwood, CA) to **Alexandra Elson (Alex)** in Squaw Valley, CA on April 27, 2019.

Anaita Bharucha, daughter of Veera and Sarosh Bharucha to **Robert McKee** in Hawaii on August 25, 2019. (ZSO)

Charlene Irani, daughter of Cashmira and Adil Irani to **Juan Pablo**, son of Alcantra and Juan Velazquez on September 28, 2019. (MANASHNI)

Jamshed Vesuna, son of Nilufer and Sarosh Vesuna (Los Altos, CA) to **Haley Winner** in Menlo Park, CA on September 28, 2019.

Mahnaz Daruwalla, daughter of Kersi and Nina Daruwalla (Cupertino, CA) to **Drew Dodge** in Long Beach, CA on October 4, 2019.

Neville Irani, son of Behram and Farieda Irani (Plano, TX) to **Angela Cantu**, daughter of Cindy and Hector Cantor (McAllen, TX) in Florence Italy on October 4, 2019.

Farial Desai, daughter of Mahrukh and late Kersi Desai to Michael Sam Tion, son of Andre Sam Tion and late Chang Lo Lai Ye, in Montreal on December 14, 2019.

DEATHS

Khojasteh Siavash, 89, mother of Mojgan and Arman Khosravani-Fard, grandmother of Aria, Kia, Conrad, Shireen, great

grandmother of Addison Layla, Kaitlyn Yasmin, in West Vancouver, BC on June 14, 2019.

Dara Baria, 95, husband of Polly Baria, father of Arshad Baria, Mahrukh Tamboli, Niloofar Baria, Havovi Parker Sutton, in Vancouver, BC, Canada on July 2, 2019.

Alam Shapurji Limzerwala, husband of Gool Limzerwala, father of Jennifer (Purazar) Gowadia, Huzvaak (Marina) Limzerwala, grandfather of Ryaan, Aidan, Zanaiya and Zoraiya in Gujarat, India on August 30, 2019. (ZAPANJ)

Kety Piloos Patel, mother of Phiroozhy Jamshedji, Dilshad Karanjia, grandmother of Aaresh and Farzain Jamshedji, Zaine and Zanareh Karanjia, great grandmother of Armin Jamshedji in Houston, TX on September 10, 2019.

Khorshed Patell, wife of late Minoo Patell, mother of Nargis (Rigo) and Darius Patell, sister of late Homai Bomanji and late Godrej Khursigara on September 12, 2019. (OZCF)

Roshan Hakim, wife of Khushru Hakim, mother of Friaan Hakim, Zubin and Chris White, daughter of late Rustomji and late Cooverji Contractor, sister of Behram Contractor, late Gool Patel, late Sheroo Contractor, late Jamshed Contractor on September 12, 2019. (ZAGNY)

Adel Eruch Engineer, 85, husband of Firoza (nee Mehta), father of Jamshed and Sohrab (Paul Lambert) Engineer, brother of Amy (Amar) Singh, Arnavaz (Kelly) Dastur, Gulestan (Kersi) Mehta, brother-in-law of Meher Mehta, grandfather of Zara and Alea Engineer in Wheaton, IL on September 21, 2019.

Soli Maneckji Surty, husband of Lily Surty, father of James and Aaron, father-in-law of Malisa in Toronto, ONT on September 21, 2019.

Aspi Jamshed Colah, husband of Persis Colah, father of Ziba and Zubin Colah on September 23, 2019. (MANASHNI)

Perozji Cawasji Navder, husband of Piloo Navder, father of Yasmine (Nozer) and Khursheed, (Shailendra), grandfather of Kaiwan-Yanet, Khushnam, Neville, Natasha in Mumbai, India on October 9, 2019. (ZAGNY)

Mayyar Noushi, husband of Sasha Noushi, father of Zubin, son of Piloo Irani, brother of Farokh and Firdose on October 10, 2019. (ZAGNY)

Daisy Presswalla, wife of Farouk Presswalla in Frisco, TX on October 14, 2019. (ZAGNY)

Arnavaz Sarkari, 87, wife of late Maneck Sarkari, mother of Marazban (Hutoxi) Sarkari, grandmother of Mithra, Saena, Rashna in Mumbai, India on October 17, 2019. (ZAPANJ)

Freny Yazdi Jasawala (Wimbledon, London, UK), wife of Yazdi Jasawala, mother of Rumi, Kerman, Taronish (Aadil) Billimoria, mother-in-law of Xenobia and Nina, grandmother of Xarius, Rhea, Roshni, Yasmin, Zara, Anoushka, Ava, sister-in-law of Homai and Rusi Mowji, Villy Badhni, late Perviz Badhni, late Silloo and Kersey Jasavala, late Nargis and Rohinton Jasavala on November 21, 2019. (ZSO)

Sarosh Minoo Challa, son of late Nivaz and Minoo Challa, husband of Aban Challa, father of Meher Mobed (USA), Aban Pestonji (Canada), Rustom Challa (USA), Noshir Challa (USA) in Lahore, Pakistan on November 29, 2019.

Aban Nargolwala, 82, wife of Nari Nargolwala, mother of Cyra (Jean-Michel Vuillamy)

Nargolwala, Shaan (Behram) Dubash, grandmother of Clara, Leo, Farzan, Arish, sister of Shiawax Canteenwalla (Montreal) on Monday, in Mississauga, December 2, 2019. (OZCF)

Shirin Ardeshir Daneshmand (Javanmardi), 89 years wife of Shahriar Javanmardi, mother of Iran, Mahvash, Mahnaz, grandmother of Armiti, Arash, Azita, Mitra, Mojgan, Shahriar, Keyvan, Gita, Babak, Siamak, Negin, in Yazd, on December 6, 2019.

Mehin Knot, 88, wife of Rashid, mother of Khodadad, Kavous & Zarrin, grand mother of Caroline, Daryan, Aryasb & Abtin, in Kelowna, Canada on December 07, 2019.

Fataneh Farid, mother of Haleh, Babak, Sanati. (CZC)

Noshir Clarke husband of late Farida, father of Rasheed, brother of Homi, in Toronto, on December 17, 2019.

Katy Rusi Sethna, wife of Rusi Tehmurasp Sethna, mother of Shahveer (Cyra) Rusi Sethna (Richmond Hill, Canada) grand mother of Nasha and Mitra Sethna, sister of Sam and Zarine Mavalvala; sister-in-law of Houshang and Arnavaz Sethna (Houston), in Karachi, on December 22, 2019.

Hutoxy Aspy Trombaywalla wife of Aspy Trombaywalla, mother of Hoshnevar (Munizeh) Trombaywalla, Tashnumaity (Jamshed) Minwalla, Sarfaraz (Naomi Behrana) Trombaywalla and Pauruchisty (Varun) Mody, grandmother of Vera Mistry, Narius and Jazmin Minwalla, Simrah Trombaywalla, Zaraan and Shawn Mody, in Vancouver, on December 27, 2019.

Roshan Boman Bhappu, husband of Perin Shroff Bhappu, father to Manek Bhappu, Zorine & Craigen Shirley, Soonalynn & Dan

Jacob, Ross & Candy Bhappu, Homee Shroff and Arbez Shroff Patel, brother to Ruby Jamshedi, late Eddie Bhappu, and late Nargiz Mana, beloved grandfather and great grandfather, in Tucson, Arizona USA, on 28th December 2019

Meherji Madan, 77, husband of Bakhtavar, brother of Jamshed Madan, in Washington, DC, on December 29, 2019.

Shahryar Varjavand husband of Parvin Keykhanzadeh, father of Hooman & Firoozeh Varjavand, (CZC)

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*(zot..) humatanam huxtanam huarstanam
iiadaca aniiadaca
vereziiamnanamca vauuerezananamca
mahi alibi.jaretaro
naenaestaro yavena vohunam mahi*

(Chief priest:) Of good thoughts, good words, good deeds
both here and elsewhere
being done and having been done
we are welcomers,
not revilers of such good (things) are we.

Yasna 35.2

SOURCE:

*A Zoroastrian Liturgy - The Worship in Seven Chapters.. the Gatha Haptanghaitti
Almut Hintze, Iranica 12, Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, 2007, page 61.*

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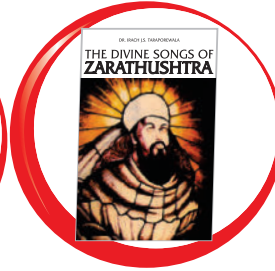


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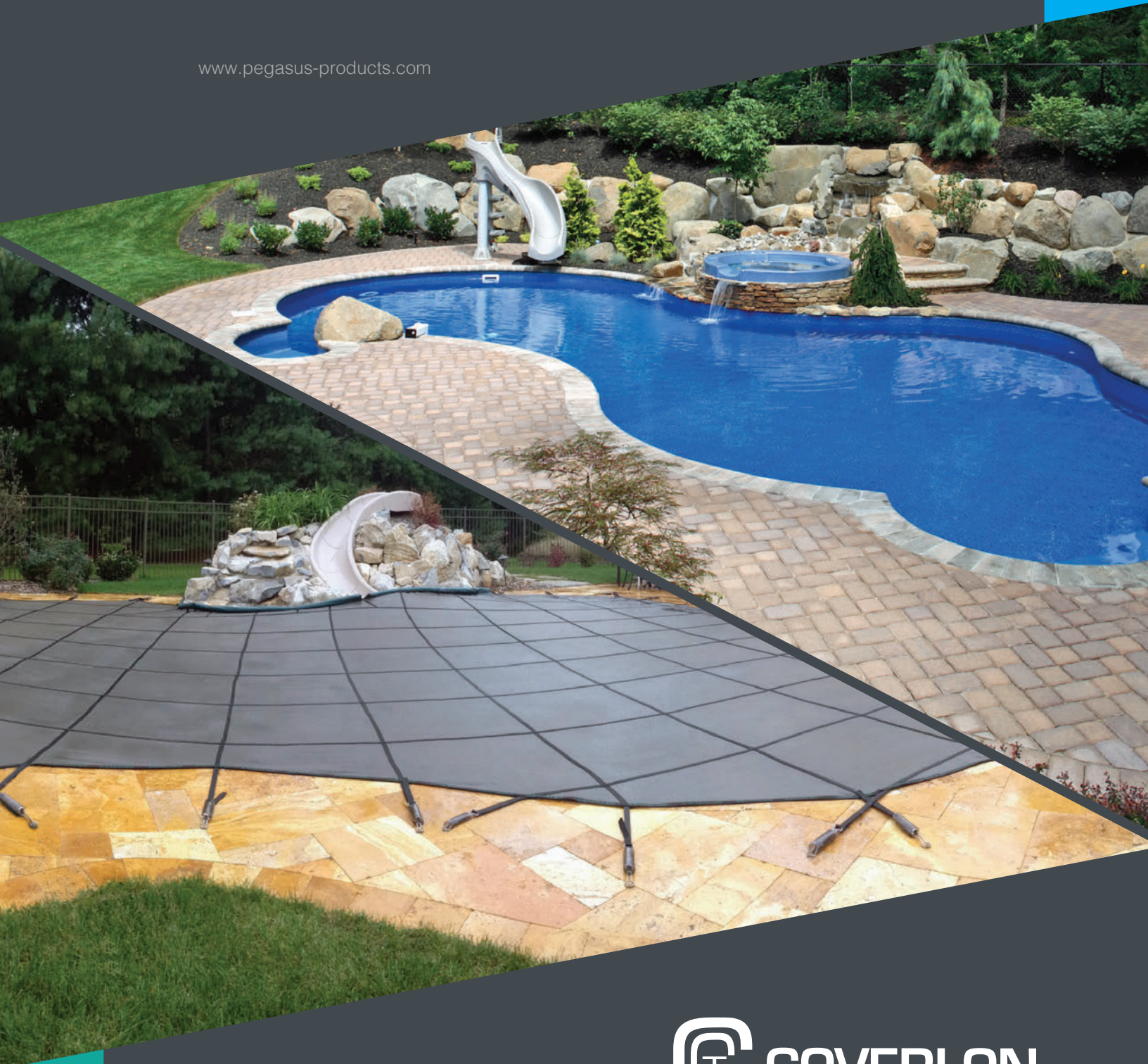
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