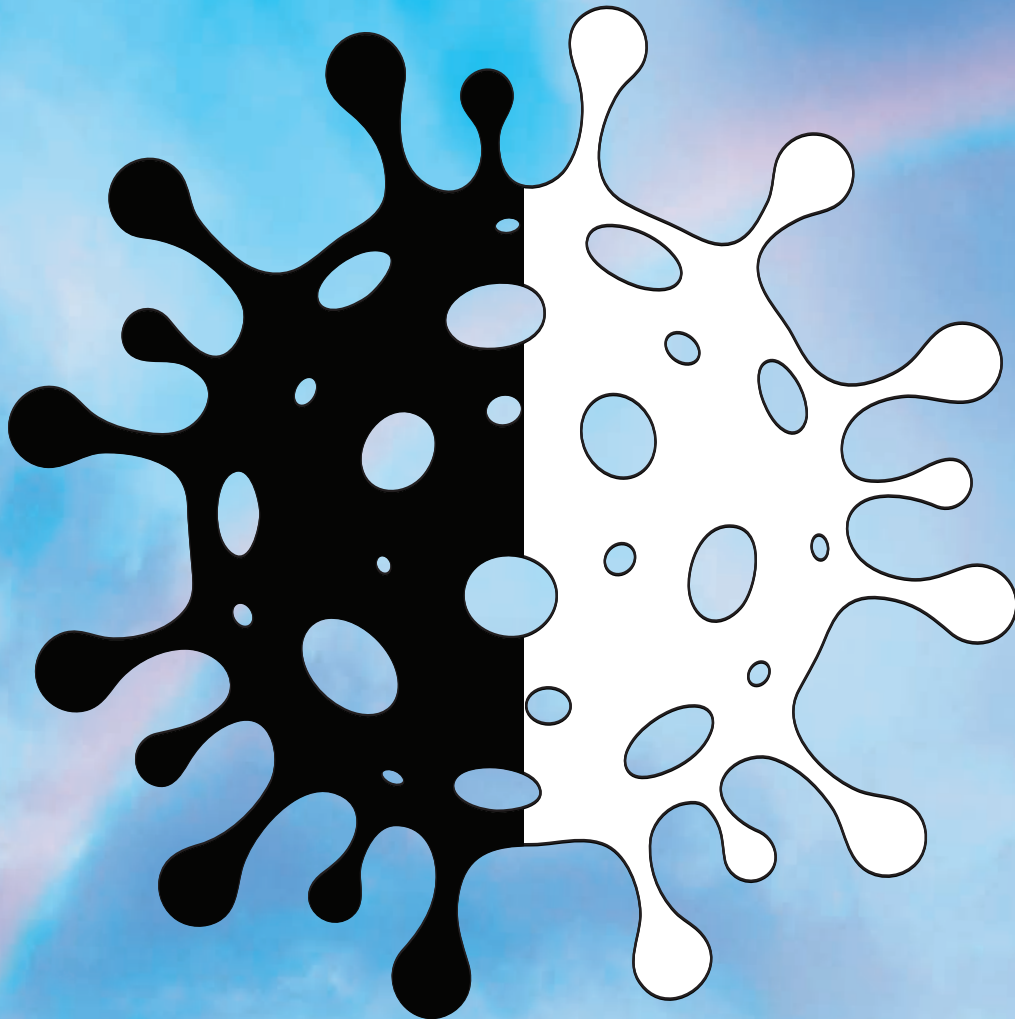


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COVID 19: ZARATHUSHTI PERSPECTIVES ON TRAGEDY AND HOPE





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FEZANA Journal
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Editor in Chief: Dolly Dastoor
editorinchief@fezana.org

Graphic & Layout:
Feroza Fitch
ffitch@lexicongraphics.com

Shahrokh Khanizadeh
www.khanizadeh.info

Layout of this Issue:
Farishta Murzban Dinshaw

Technical Assistant:
Coomie Gazdar

Consultant Editor:
Lylah M. Alphonse
lmalphonse@gmail.com

Language Editor:
Douglas Lange
Deenaz Coachbuilder

Cover Design:
Feroza Fitch
ffitch@lexicongraphics.com

Publications Chair:
Behram Pastakia
bpastakia@aol.com

Marketing Manager:
Nawaz Merchant
nawaz@fezana.org

Copy Editors:
Yasmin Pavri
Vahishta Canteenwalla
Nazneen Khambatta

Subscription Managers:
Arnavaz Sethna
Kershaw Khumbatta

Asst Subscription Manager
Farzana Sidhwa

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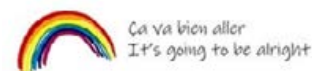
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COMING SOON: Fall 2020

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND CELEBRATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

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DARK CLOUDS, SILVER LININGS



In January, we first started hearing of the corona virus popularly known as COVID 19, and by March 19 the world came to a halt. This microscopic virus has caused havoc around the world. Life as we knew and

lived had disappeared. Just yesterday, we were still busy, free and confident. Then, society came to a sudden halt. Our lives have been turned upside down by constraints that were previously unknown. We have, collectively, experienced a trauma. It is impossible to go through such a crisis without a profound impact on our psyche, thousands are mourning the loss of a loved one; others are grieving the loss of their jobs, even their businesses, it has exposed the fault lines in our health care system, in our system of caring for our elderly, the most vulnerable members of our society.

But the human spirit is very resilient, the panic mode we were all in - what will we do, how will we survive - quietly calmed down and as days went by, we all took a deep breath, settled down and our resilient spirit surfaced. People started becoming creative, and we discovered ZOOM!! We started enjoying the "new normal" of working from home, spending family time together, learning new skills, visiting museums virtually around the world, listening to operas, viewing stage performances, which we never had time for BC (Before COVID). I had to keep an agenda for all the free items on Zoom!!

Our summer issue of the FEZANA Journal, ably curated by Farishta Murzban Dinshaw, captures that spirit of "what can I do to make it better?" We have collected stories, from all age groups, personal and institutional, from our Zarathushti Associations in North America and

from the diaspora of Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Pakistan, United Arab Emirates, Iran, India, the UK. Their creativity and zeal to help in this time of crisis is an eye opener and also inspirational. People were very generous in sharing their experiences, as well as their health issues, worries, and anxieties. We have been saying "we are all in this together" and the stories from North America and the diaspora truly illustrate this very well.

There has never been a time when the diasporic community came together so positively. Isolation brought us together. Religious services on ZOOM for the living and the dead were held across the diaspora and all were invited to participate. Our priests from every continent gave yeomen service to the community, bringing comfort with their words of wisdom. We mourn those we lost to COVID-19 in North America and around the world, and we commiserate with those whose lives have been destroyed by economic hardships and personal losses.

We are experiencing history, which our children and grandchildren will relate to their progeny. We have been given an opportunity to rejuvenate the world, which we were on the verge of destroying. We must seize this opportunity to go forward, and take the first steps to bringing renewal or *frashokereti*.

Remember social distancing is not social isolation.

Wishing us all good health,

FEZANA ELECTED OFFICERS FOR 2020-2021

President	Arzan Sam Wadia
Vice-President	Ervad Kayomarz Sidhwa
Treasurer	Rooky Fitter
Secretary	Percy Master
Asst. Secretary	Xerxes Commissariat

Fezana Journal congratulates them and wishes them continued success.



Message FROM DASTUR KHURSHED DASTOOR

God as a Master Weaver, has woven His tapestry with colourful threads of compassion, mutual support and humanity unifying without hierarchy and individualism. Whether rich or poor, educated or uneducated, belonging to one nation or another, ultimately each of us is born into this huge family called the human race. Consequently, we share the same right to the pursuit of happiness. We feel empathy and closeness towards others, giving rise to a sense of universal responsibility resulting from the building blocks of our fundamental, timeless religious tenets of universal brotherhood.

If Covid-19 knows no borders, neither does faith, hope, love or prayer. My compulsive need to pray for the well-being of all, every day, at Iranshah is a privilege I enjoy. With heartfelt feelings of concern for my brethren who are passing through difficult times, I pray that health, peace and happiness are soon restored to them. Faith and prayer are both invisible but they make the impossible, possible. Faith begins where reason sinks exhausted. Prayer is the language of the heart connecting the devotee with Spiritual Divinity. The focus of a Zarathushti's prayer is based on the central ethics of *humata, hukhta, huvarshata* (good thoughts, good words, good deeds).

"A prayer based on good thoughts, good words and good deeds, protects man from all evil things and persons. I bow down to Ahura Mazda for the protection, defence and preservation of my soul and offer all my wealth and riches to Him". Yasna 58, verse 1-2.

After the sudden changes we have had to make in these last couple of months, we need to pause and listen to what is stirring in our hearts. We need to acknowledge our feelings and new experiences; especially those of disorientation and fear about our future. We need to



realise we are not alone, though physically distant, we are emotionally closer and in greater understanding of each other. Now, more than ever, we need "a positive outlook" to undo the negativity that is floating in the air. We need to pause and offer prayers for those affected and vulnerable and shower our gratitude onto all those who stake their lives for ours. We need to pause and reassure ourselves with the oft repeated phrase, "This too shall pass".

We, humans, since inception, have faced, fought and survived challenges. Not only have we displayed the ability to survive them all but have emerged victorious and stronger. We attribute this ability to Ahura Mazda, who has endowed upon us the faculty to gain perspective, when endangered. This is the reason we are full of hope today because we trust human ingenuity and science to triumph over the problem looming large ahead of us. Words of wisdom and comfort, at this juncture,

were delivered by the Dalai Lama "If there is something to be done—do it, without any need to worry; if there's nothing to be done, worrying about it further will not help".

I leave you with a beneficial verse from the *Sarosh Yasht Hadokht* that summarises the importance and purpose of prayer. "O Lord Zarathushtra! Prayers are good for mankind. They are the best. They give abundant protection from all evil. A man who prays with devotion repels evil. Conscious prayer acts as a shield, protecting man against evil."

May Ahura Mazda guide our footsteps and enlighten our mind!

Dastur Khurshed Dastoor is the Vada Dastur of Udvada Iranshah Atashbehrām



A RESPONSE TO COVID-19

North American Mobeds Council (NAMC)

*Er. Arda-e-viraf Minocherhomjee, Er. Tehemton Mirza,
Er. Xerxes Madan, Er. Kurush Dastur, Er. Soli Dastur*

We have been living in perilous times since the COVID-19 pandemic began in early 2020. There is so much uncertainty and so little in our power in the absence of effective drugs or vaccines that people sometimes feel helpless, anxious, and stressed. At times like these, people of faith tend to pray more as many look to a higher power for comfort and peace. People are also looking for a deeper meaning in this devastating pandemic that has killed tens of thousands, caused such vicious sickness in millions, and caused economic hardship for tens of millions.

In times of crisis and adversity, Zarathushtis pray to Ahura Mazda to give us strength and power to overcome these difficult times, and for a sound/peaceful mind. Some scientists who have studied prayer believe that people who pray may benefit from a feeling of emotional support and are more likely to have stable mental health. Importantly, prayers can also foster a sense of connection to God and to our fellow human beings. Incidentally, in March 2020 the number of Google searches for prayer sky-rocketed.



Atash Kadehs in North America initially grappled with how to keep the centers open while maintaining social/physical distancing. Many organized live-streamed worship services. In late February, when serious COVID-19 sickness and deaths began to be widely publicized, many of our Zarthushti brethren asked us for advice on prayers to be recited during these difficult times. On March 16, 2020, NAMC circulated a COVID-19 communique for humbandagi (congregational) prayers. NAMC recommended certain prayers including *Paadyaab Kusti*, certain *Yashts* and/or their *Nirangs* and *Tandarosti*. These prayers were recommended for all Zarthushtis as well as for anyone affected by COVID-19, their caregivers, and medical professionals.

Importantly, NAMC offered to have our mobeds pray pro bono for anyone who required our services. Because of the rather high demand for these prayers, from April 9, 2020, NAMC began to offer daily *Tandarosti* prayers. NAMC mobeds would recite a short prayer (*nirangs* or paragraphs from Avesta) followed by *Tandarosti*. Community members provided over 300 names of persons requiring help or solace. These names were then divided among mobeds and recited by them.

Over 150 participants from the United States and Canada attended these prayers that were streamed over the web. As the US opened up for work (Phase 1), NAMC continued the service by offering prayers, but only twice a week as people found it difficult to attend at 3:00 p.m. PST. Our mobeds, however, continue to pray *Tandarosti* reciting all the names for our *humdins* (co-religionists) on a daily basis. NAMC thanks all our respected dasturs and mobeds for their prayers and blessings for good health, peace, and happiness.

We continue to pray for those who have passed away and for the quick recovery for those who are still afflicted with COVID-19.

Finally, let us remember the first sentence of *Gatha Ushtavaiti Yasna Ha 43:1*:

“Ushtaa ahmaai yahmaai ushtaa kahmaaichit!” May happiness be unto that person, through whom happiness may reach others!

We pray for those who are suffering economic hardship, and ask those who can, to contribute generously to relieve their financial burden and uplift their spirit.

“Yazdaan Panaah Baad”
May God protect you.

“Der Zi O Shaad Baad”
May you have a long and happy life.*

Zarathushti Rituals in the COVID-19 Era

REOPENING OF UDVADA ATASHBEHRAM



On June 16, 2020, Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor of Udvada Atashbehram writes that after careful deliberation and caution, the Udvada Nine Family Athornan Anjuman has decided to start welcoming from Roj Khorshed, Mah Bahman Y. Z. 1389 (June 22, 2020), devotees to our Holy Iranshah subject to strict guidelines of the government.



While the dasturs will do their part to maintain the sanctity of the Holy Iranshah and protect the wellbeing of the *pav mahel mobed sahebs* it is the responsibility of devotees that they adhere to the guidelines:

1. The daily visiting hours from 8:30 am to 2:00 pm and 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm with separate entry and exit points, with only 15 devotees at a time, at 15 minutes intervals. Devotees are urged to pay homage and leave within 15 minutes. Access will be restricted to certain areas only, no access to the wells, no flowers or garlands, no mobile phones even in shut-off mode.

2. Temperature detectors will be used at the entrance and hand sanitizers after entering the premises and the *kusti* area. A fresh mask will be provided to wear within the premises and not the one they came in with. Masks or hand gloves are not to be disposed off in the premises of the Atash Behram

3. A safe distance of two meters to be maintained at all times even with the *boiwalla mobeds*, *sukhad* and *kathis* (sandalwood) to be placed in their designated place and will be offered to the *Padshah saheb*, at the convenience of the officiating mobed.

4. Devotees should not visit if unwell or having any suspected symptoms related to COVID-19. If staying in a hotel or *dharamshala* (guest house) they should return back within 24-hours.

DOKHMENASHENI & FUNERAL RITES

In a letter to the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP), Ervad Dr. Pervez Bajan and Ervad Rohinton Peer, write that during the deadly plague of 1896-97, 250+ Parsis had lost their lives, and in the second more deadly wave, nearly six or seven years later, nearly 800 or so Parsis died. Dr. Sir Jivanji Modi, the then Secretary of the BPP, kept a record of the plague and described in detail in his book, "Mumbai-ni-Parsi Panchayat-ni-Tawarikh" (History of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat) that during those times the doongerwadi had been able to absorb the effects of the same.

In order to combat the present plague the Government of Maharashtra has invoked THE EPIDEMIC ACT OF 1897, which was promulgated to fight the deadly plague. According to it, a detailed protocol must have been mentioned to handle the dead bodies, including those of the members of the Parsi community.

In 2020, when a COVID-related death occurs, the BMC

workers themselves consign a dead body directly to the crematorium in a special plastic bag. But the members of the Muslim and Christian communities are exempt from that ruling. According to Ervad Dr. Pervaz Bajan and Ervad Rohinton Peer, there should be an exemption for the disposal of bodies of Parsis.

The suggested guidelines could be:

1. The government authorities bring the body to the *doongerwadi* behind one of the *bunglis* (place of funeral rites) and *nassesalars* (corpse bearers) who are trained and provided with all the protective gear accept the body.
2. They should immediately take the body directly up to the final marble slab just before the gates leading to the *dakhmas* (Towers of Silence).
3. Then, a pair of mobeds would recite the *geh-sarna* ceremony standing at a distance of more than 30 feet.
4. The body could be consigned to a designated *dakhma*, and the materials used for the dead body would be destroyed according to the set procedure issued by



the Bombay Municipal Corporation authorities.

In another letter sent to BPP, Dastur Dr. Jamasp Dastur Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa wrote that dead bodies are not infectious, and cadavers do not transmit disease, but those handling the bodies should be protected by Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and apply standard precautions of hand

hygiene. The body need not be in a body bag and can be wrapped in cloth, no need to disinfect the body and should be transferred to the *dakhma* as soon as

possible. In theory, we could still continue to use our *dokhmenashini* system for disposal of the dead bodies, if we take the requisite precautions and adhere to the guidance drawn out by the World Health Organization and the Government of India Guidelines, providing the *khandias/ nassesalars* with the necessary PPE and teaching them how to use it wearing masks, gloves, a gown and a face shield/eye protection. The same applies to people doing the *sachkar*; they need protective gear as well.

Dr. Dastur Jamasp Dastur JamaspAsa quotes the guidelines from part of the recent Hon'ble Bombay High Court's Judgment pronounced on May 22, 2020, by the Chief Justice, CJ Dipankar Dutta and Justice S.S. Shinde.

- Any person (e.g. family member, religious leader) preparing the deceased (e.g. washing, cleaning or dressing body, tidying hair, trimming nails or shaving) in a community setting should wear gloves for any contact with the body.
- For any activity that may involve splashing of bodily fluids, eye and mouth protection (face shield or goggles and medical mask) should be worn. Clothing worn to prepare the body should be immediately removed and washed after the procedure or an apron or gown should be worn.
- The person preparing the body should not kiss the deceased.
- Anyone who has assisted in preparing the body should thoroughly wash their hands with soap and water when finished.
- Apply principles of cultural sensitivity and ensure that family members reduce their exposure as much as possible. Children, older people (>60 years old), and anyone with underlying illnesses (such as respiratory illness, heart disease, diabetes, or compromised immune systems) should not be involved in preparing the body. A minimum number of people should be involved in preparations.

Dr. Dastur Jamasp Dastur JamaspAsa concludes:

“There is thus no reason as to why an individual who dies during this period of crisis because of suspected/ confirmed COVID 19 infection would not be entitled to the facilities that he/she would have otherwise been entitled to but for the crisis. Should the exact guidelines for disposal of the cadaver be adhered to, we find little reason to deprive the dead of the last right i.e. a decent burial according to his/her wishes.” *

(Summarized from reports received).

COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Perspectives of Zarathushtis on Tragedy & Hope

Guest editorial by Farishta Murzban Dinshaw

The world is currently facing a pandemic brought about by a newly discovered coronavirus, which has wrought extraordinary changes to our lives. It seems a lifetime ago, but the term 'COVID-19' was only coined in February 2020, when the World Health Organization announced the official name of the virus. Unlike tsunamis, earthquakes, and other natural disasters that have claimed a large number of lives in the past, this pandemic is not localized to a region. It has had a global

impact, affecting millions of people in myriad ways, ranging from the unthinkable medical tragedy, and the anxiety over the unknown, loved ones' health, the economy, to acts of kindness and generosity, to gratitude, to hope.

The pandemic has also increased our everyday vocabulary, both formal (social distancing, flattening the curve, stay at home order, furlough) and informal (covidots, quarantinis). And you cannot leave out Zoom.

In this issue, we take a look at the situation in the Zarathushti community, both in the Diaspora and in the 'mother' countries - Iran, India, and Pakistan. We heard from Zarathushti associations about how they have mobilized resources and volunteers to continue their work. We have stories of personal sacrifices on the front line, of harrowing experiences of the infection itself, of personal reflections, and recollections of living through historical upheavals like World War II and

the Partition. And we have music. And food. And humor. Human beings are intrinsically resilient, thank God.

Talking of God, as our jashans and Nowruz celebrations moved online amidst growing fatal statistics and impactful images of nurses with bruises on their face from wearing masks all day, and stark and still streets, the pandemic raised questions about God's goodness. As we share the Zarathushti perspective on the pandemic, from both the Gathic and later scriptural points of view, the authors are clear that Asho Zarathuhstra's Ahura Mazda is pure goodness. The pandemic is not a punishment; it is an agent of transformation.

Catastrophes happen as part of the cycle of cause and effect. They become news only when human lives are affected. In our inherent egoism, we only care when the ripples of the disaster are immediate and personal. This pandemic has opened our eyes wide to the reality that all of Ahura Mazda's creations are interconnected: what affects one, affects us all. Countless contributors have referred to turning to Nature for solace, from walks in parks to growing things in their garden. We've seen stunning photographs of peacocks strutting down streets and flamingos flocking marshes. This "anthropause" has given us an opportunity to reflect on what the Earth could be like in the future if we choose.

If we choose. We come back to the fundamental tenet of Asho Zarathushta's message about what it is to be a Zarathushti. How will we use our best mind to create words of comfort and acts of oneness? The debate, largely fueled by conspiracy theorists on social media, of whether this is a natural virus or

created in a lab, is unessential. The virus is here. Our choice is how we react to it.

There is talk of an "echo pandemic", the long-term psychological impact as a response to the isolation, to the heightened uncertainty, to perceiving human contact as harmful. We can take steps to mitigate the elevated stress in a crisis like this - refocus our negative thoughts, reach out to others who we know are likely to be isolated, cut down our consumption of sensationalized news. We can also accept without judgment that there are some amongst us who have additional vulnerabilities and that telling them

How will we use our
best mind to create
words of comfort and
acts of inclusiveness?
...The virus is here. Our
choice how we react
to it.

to "be positive" diminishes their daily struggles with mental health and addictions. Being present and connected, even if it is virtual, is more beneficial.

In a 2015 cognitive neuroscience study, UCLA professor, Matthew Lieberman and his team found that the brain's default setting is to search for human connectedness. Not surprisingly, a recurring theme in the contributions to this issue has been a renewed need to stay in touch with family and friends, long-lost classmates and ex-neighbors. And, while we coast on the high of these bonds of affection, we need to consciously expand our reach to

people beyond our familiar circle. COVID-19 is not connected to any racial or ethnic group, so as believers of *hukhta* (good words) we need to speak up when we hear discriminatory comments against Asians. We also need to have courageous conversations about our role in dismantling anti-Black racism and indigenous oppression in the wake of worldwide Black Lives Matter protests that have erupted during this period.

Another glistening thread shared in this issue is that of gratitude. As North American Zarathushtis, we have privileges that many others similarly affected do not. With our choices, we can ensure that the version written in history books about this pandemic reflects the best of humanity in alignment with Asho Zarathuhstra's vision of an inclusive and splendid world.*



Farishta Murzban Dinshaw is an adjunct professor with the Immigration and Settlement Studies, and Criminology and Social Justice graduate programs at Ryerson University, Toronto. She also works with newcomers to raise awareness about Gender-Based Violence and mental health issues, and to encourage help seeking. She enjoys writing and has an eclectic collection of publications to her name such as a young adult novel, "Discovering Ashavan". She has also presented about Zarathushti faith and heritage at conferences and interfaith events, including the Parliament of World Religions.



Is the virus God's wrath?

By Noshir H. Dadrawala

From a Zarathushti perspective, the corporeal world that we live in is not perfect. Dasturji Maneckji Dhalla referred to it more positively as 'our perfecting world' (1930). Planet Earth has seen natural calamities like earthquakes, tidal waves, and meteor hits for millions of years. Earth has witnessed at least five Ice Ages. These were not because of human beings. In fact, one significant outcome of the last Ice Age was the development of Homo Sapiens.

Plagues, pestilence and pandemics too have played havoc since centuries. One of the earliest recorded pandemics happened during the Peloponnesian War in 430

BCE. The plague passed through Libya, Ethiopia, Egypt and, finally, into Athens when the Spartans laid siege. As much as two-thirds of the population died. In 1665, bubonic plague led to the death of twenty percent of London's population. The cholera pandemic of 1817 killed thousands across India, Russia, Africa, Indonesia, China, Japan, Italy, Germany and America. The 1918 flu pandemic infected a third of the world's population and the death toll is estimated to have been anywhere from 17 million to 50 million. But despite all these calamities, life on Planet Earth goes on! The world's oldest case of cancer was documented in 1,500 BCE in ancient Egypt.

The details were recorded on papyrus, detailing eight cases of tumors occurring on the breast. Today, almost ten million people die of different kinds of cancer annually. Human beings continue to battle all kinds of diseases. Some have been eradicated while others still persist. But despite various illnesses, life on Planet Earth goes on!

RESPONSE TO A CALAMITY

There is no way we can fathom the deep mysteries of this universe, including the origin of evil with our very limited intellect. It would be akin to measuring the Pacific Ocean with a six-inch scale. We

do not even know why during any calamity some die, some are badly maimed, and some survive. What is more important is to recognize what one can or should do when calamity strikes.

When an earthquake or any natural calamity strikes, the real and immediate need is to alleviate the affliction, pain, and discomfort of the suffering. It is not a time to start a debate on why God allowed this to happen. Calamities are neither God's anger nor Nature's vengeance. The God of Zarathushtra is neither an 'Angry God' nor a 'Testing God', nor a 'Vengeful God'. Zarathustra's God (Ahura Mazda) is the Lord of Wisdom, Bestower of Life, and a 'Loving Beloved Friend'. Therefore, the Novel Coronavirus, COVID-19, is neither 'Divinity's Wrath' nor 'Nature's Vengeance'. From a Zarathushti perspective this virus is a particle of biological origin that causes sickness when it enters a human body. That is the opposite of all that is Good, God-given, Life-giving and Health-promoting.

In the Gathas, Zarathushtra refers to Ahura Mazda as his *friya* (Sanskrit *priya*, beloved), a beloved friend. Would a beloved friend inflict pain and suffering on another friend? We refer to Nature as Mother Nature. Would a mother make her children suffer? Even during this current pandemic, a true Zarathushti would not be asking why God is punishing the innocent or Mother Nature is taking revenge on the already ailing and the elderly? A truly Zarathushti's response would be – yes, we have been struck with a pandemic. What can one do by way of finding a remedy or solution to the problem? How best to flatten the curve? Adar Poonawala of Serum

Institute of India is already working on developing a Covid19 vaccine, which would be affordable and can be mass produced. Now that's a truly Zarathushti response to a calamity.

ORDER AMID DISORDER

A fundamental precept of Zarathushti beliefs is *Asha*, which is variously interpreted as Truth, Purity, Righteousness, and Divine Order. The Colophon to Yasna asserts, "There is but one path, that of *Asha*. All other paths are false."

In the *Hoshbam* we pray, "Through the best righteousness, excellent righteousness, O Ahura Mazda, may we catch sight of Thee and may we come near Thee and attain Thy eternal friendship." According to this prayer, devotees affirm that they aspire to know and understand Ahura Mazda and the only way they can achieve this ultimate and sublime goal is by walking on the path of *Asha*. And, in doing so, the devotees earn Ahura Mazda's 'friendship'.

Zarathushtis consider ignorance, poverty, suffering, injustice disease, flood, famine and all calamities as evil and to alleviate these afflictions of evil is not only a religious duty and part of Zarathushti culture, but an act of spiritual merit, depriving 'evil' of sustenance. The Zarathushti response to calamity is not through acceptance of the calamity (as God's Will), but measures taken to alleviate the consequences of the calamity.

Asha is an important attribute of Ahura Mazda representing qualities of Order and Perfection. Calamity is the antithesis of *Asha* and believed to be the work of *Angra Mainyu*, the mentality that feeds disorder and destruction, mainly

associated with humanity in the corporeal world. *Angra Mainyu* is, therefore, a state of the mind.

Mainyu is variously translated as 'Spirit', an abstract energy, or 'Mind' (Sanskrit *mana* or mind). *Angra* is viewed as destructive, chaotic, disorderly and inhibitive. One of the chief manifestations of *Angra* is destruction which arises from anger and anger is a state of the mind. Thus, *Angra Mainyu* is a destructive, chaotic, disorderly and inhibitive state of the mind, which often manifests into anger and destruction of all that is good.

PRIMORDIAL CONFLICT

The opposite of *Angra Mainyu* is *Spenta Mainyu* – the progressively benevolent, creative-mentality and architect of all that is good and represents truth, light and life. Both *Angra Mainyu* and *Spenta Mainyu* are perceived as twins in conflict.

As human beings we have the freedom to choose positive or negative mentality. What we individually and collectively reap is the consequence of our choices.

In Yasnas 30.3; 32.5, there are references to *Aka Mainyu*. *Aka* is Avestan for 'evil' or 'retrogressive' and is the antithesis of *Spenta* which is good, bounteous, and progressive.

Thus, while the earlier Avestan texts refer to *Angra Mainyu* in the abstract the later Pahlavi texts refer to a more personalized embodiment of evil by the name *Ahriman*.

EMERGENCE OF AHRIMAN

Zarathushtis believe that human beings find happiness or sorrow according to moral and ethical choices made at an individual and collective level.

A school of thought emerged during Sassanian times that changed the primordial conflict between *Spenta Mainyu* and *Angra Mainyu* and postulated the theory that *Ohrmazd* (derivative of Ahura Mazda) is Totally Good and Very Powerful and *Ahriman* (a reference to *Angra Mainyu*) is the Evil Spirit, in direct opposition. *Ahriman* is not a creation of Ahura Mazda, and, at the end of Time, the latter will be completely vanquished. According to this school of thought, Ahura Mazda cannot and should not be blamed or held responsible for death, disease, suffering or pain in this 'perfecting world'. According to the *Bundahishn* and other Pahlavi texts, Ahura Mazda created the corporeal world in order to trap and finally vanquish evil.

Thus, Zarathushtis who adhere to this school of thought do not consider disorder or disaster as the work of Ahura Mazda and believe that Ahriman is the architect of all calamities. The presence of evil makes our corporeal world unstable and renders all creation susceptible to disease, decay, death and disintegration.

WISDOM OF ADERBAD MAHRESPAND

Aderbad Bin (son of) Mahrespand was the *Mobedan Mobed* (Supreme Pontiff) and Prime Minister during the long reign (309-379 ACE) of Shapur Hormazd, also known as Shapur II. He was a man of great worldly and spiritual wisdom. Often, when bad things happen to good people, we begin to question God. Aderbad Mahrespand used to derive six kinds of comfort when misfortune would befall him.

1. That the misfortune was no worse than what it was;
2. That the misfortune fell upon his body and not his soul;
3. That from his total quota of misfortune there is now one less;
4. That the arch fiend *Ahriman* was desperately making him the target of his attack on account of his goodness and allegiance to *Ohrmuzd*;
5. That *Ahriman* chose to attack him and not his children;
6. And finally, he would be thankful that since all the harm that the accursed *Ahriman* and his demons can do to the creatures of *Ohrmazd* is limited, any misfortune that befalls him is a loss to Ahriman's treasury, and he cannot inflict it a second time on some other good person.

FREEDOM OF CHOICE

Whether one believes in *Angra Mainyu* (negative mentality) or *Ahriman* (devil), both are in eternal conflict with all that is Good and Bountiful. As Zarathushtis, our duty is to bring order amid disorder, relief where there is pain, and rebuild - better and stronger - all that is destroyed. Calamities are negative and the choice we have is to be bitter about it or make things better.

A calamity is a disorder and the only antidote for disorder is *Asha* or order. In fact, our sacred texts categorically affirm that it is only through the practice of *Asha* that evil will finally be vanquished and perfection will prevail over imperfection.

As intelligent human beings, we have been given the freedom to choose and what we reap is fruit of

our individual and collective choices - Good or Evil. Let us not blame the Divine or assign calamities to Divine Wrath. The sum total of humanity's collective thoughts, words, and actions lead to reactions. It's a scientific law.

To conclude, between stimulus and response there is space. In this space lies our freedom to choose our response. When something negative happens in our lives we cannot expect a positive change with a negative attitude. We win some battles and we lose some battles. The issue is not whether we win or lose - it's how we fight or respond. The true reward of a well fought battle is not what we get at the end of it, but what we become at the end of it.

May we all emerge stronger and better Zarathushtis through our positive thoughts, our kind and comforting words, and our good deeds. Indeed, all of us can play a role in ushering *Asha* (order) and *Ushta* (happiness).*



Noshir H. Dadrawala is CEO, Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy and member on the advisory board of the US-based International Center for Not-for-profit Law (ICNL). He is trustee at the Forbes Marshall Foundation, Everest Industries Foundation, the Bombay Community Trust and the Bombay Parsi Punchayet.



COVID-19: An Agent of *Transformation*

By Dina G. McIntyre

According to Zarathushtra, our universe is a friendly place. By “universe” I refer, not to inter-stellar and inter-galactic space, but to the universe of our lives - that realm which encompasses our day to day existence. Just as each life is unique, so is the universe which surrounds and defines it.

In the face of a pandemic, in face of natural disasters like hurricanes, tsunamis, earthquakes, in the face of centuries of religious persecution, in the face of personal tragedy and loss, in the face of all the hostile and unfriendly forces beyond our control which we hear about, or experience ourselves, how can any thinking person conclude that the universe is a friendly place? How can we reconcile the existence of so much suffering with a friendly God, a God of wisdom and goodness, who is supposed to

be in charge of it all?

When the immediacy of a calamity is brought home to us through personal experience, or through television, all explanations and generalizations seem inadequate. But at the risk of sounding inadequate, let us consider the matter.

It's not just a question of pandemics, hurricanes, or earthquakes. A thousand and one painful things happen to each and every one of us during the course of our lives. True, we are horrified by the devastation wrought by hurricanes or earthquakes, because the loss of life and the suffering is on so massive a scale. Yet, even without a hurricane, one family whose house burns down experiences the same loss as a person who loses his house in a hurricane. It's just not multiplied a thousandfold.

The same goes for loss of life. A person who loses a parent or a spouse, or a child to, say, cancer, or a traffic accident, is as devastated as a person who loses a parent, spouse or child in an earthquake. The loss is just not multiplied a thousandfold. And the same goes for the sometimes quiet disappointments or sadnesses which we suffer which may not be hurricanes, but which can generate a lot of heartache.

So we again ask the question, “Why?”. Let us consider the matter from a different perspective.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Zarathushtra teaches that one of the purposes of life is to evolve or grow, from a state of being (*mainyu*) that is a mixture of ‘good’ and ‘bad’, to a state of being that is completeness, perfection (*haur-*

vatat), a state of being that personifies *asha*, that personifies all that is true, good and right.

How is this kind of spiritual growth brought about? If Mazda had ordered existence in such a way that we never suffered any pain, or any disappointments, or any loss, we would be in a state of perpetual status quo, we would never grow. No matter how old we may be chronologically, we all have a child inside us.

We are all mixtures of child and adult. To pray, "Please don't let this bad thing happen to me" or "Please make this bad thing go away" is the prayer of the child inside us. Reacting to difficulties by getting angry, kicking and screaming, is also the reaction of the child inside us (and heaven knows, that is exactly the way in which I first react to such crises - rebellion, anger, kicking the furniture in my mind at the senselessness of such 'bad' things). Yet Zarathushtra teaches, and I believe deeply, that God is Wisdom personified (which is the meaning of His name - Mazda). As such, He is not arbitrary. He is not capricious.

We know from the Gathas that Zarathushtra himself experienced persecution and life-threatening difficulties.

"To what land to flee? Where shall I go to flee? They exclude (me) from my family and from my clan."
Y46.1

But when he prays, he does not pray that the 'bad' event be taken away or never happen. He prays for understanding. He prays for help through good thinking (*Vohu Mano*). He asks for help through solutions that are in accord with *asha* (what is true and right).

"What help by truth [asha] hast Thou for Zarathushtra who calls? What help by good thinking [vohu mano] hast Thou for me,..."
Y49.12.

"Throughout my lifetime I have been condemned as the greatest defiler, I who try to satisfy the poorly protected (creatures) with truth, Wise One...come to me and give support to me. **Through good thinking**, find a means of destruction of this."
Y49.1.

Wise One, where are those sincere ones who, **through their possession of good thinking**, make even immoral decrees and painful legacies disappear? ... **protect us in accord with truth [asha]**.
Y34.7.

A PERSONAL INSIGHT

So now, when I find myself living through a difficult time, in the midst of all my rebellion and frustration, I try to follow Zarathushtra's example. I ask for understanding. I ask for help in solving the problem in a good way.

In my own life, each time I have experienced a given crisis, it seemed senseless at the time, and I did not see how any good could possibly come of it. But on looking back at each of these so-called 'bad' things, I see that each one has taught me something. Each one, in some way, has made me a better person. These painful or disappointing 'bad' experiences have the capacity for being our teachers, sculpting our souls. They are agents of transformation, transforming us into something better than what we were, depending on how we handle them.

It is true that often the devastation and loss we suffer can be traced to, or made worse by, wrong human choices. But it makes no difference. Whether we suffer grief, pain, and loss because of the wrongful choices of others, or our own wrongful choices, or because of things that are beyond our control, the solution is still the same. It's how we handle the situation that matters, not its cause. Whether at a collective level, or at an individual level, we need to help each other make it - a simple word of kindness, having the courage to take action to correct an injustice, devising ways to minimize the devastation of future natural disasters, sending a financial contribution. As such, these difficult experiences become agents of transformation - heavy blessings, but blessings nevertheless.*



Dina G. McIntyre has been studying and teaching the Gathas since the 1980s. She hosts a website, "Gathas of Zarathushtra". Prior to her retirement, she practiced law and was a member of the bar of all federal and state courts in Pennsylvania, as well as the United States Supreme Court.

This article is extracted from "A Friendly Universe" (Part One: The Basics) from the author's website gathasofzarathushtra.com.

Translations of the Gathas are based on "The Gathas of Zarathushtra" by Stanley Insler (Brill, 1975).

THE CRY OF THE EARTH

By Keki Dadachanji

Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, conceived an ideal creation. The totality of that vision of ideal creation is called *Asha*. *Asha* proposes an ideal form of creation where all constituents are in perfect harmony, and no one prospers at the expense of someone else. This vision was then actualized in the material world. In the material world, in which we live, it is possible that *Asha* may not be realized, the harmony may be disrupted, and the world may go out of balance.

The disruption to the harmony within Ahura Mazda's creation triggers the dramatic episode that opens the *Gatha Ahunavaity*, Yasna 29.1. The soul of Mother Earth approaches Ahura Mazda and pleads for help: Here is Yasna 29 Verse 1, in Irach Taraporewala's translation:

*"Unto You the Soul of Mother Earth Complained:
"Wherefore did You Create Me? Who Fashioned Me?
"Me all-round do Passion and rapine and violence
"enmesh completely, and outrage and aggression;
"for me there is no Protector other than You,
"reveal, therefore, to me a way out through an efficient Savior."*

This call to Ahura Mazda for a savior is answered by the advent of Zarathustra, and the gift of the Gathas.

Shri Khrishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*, "Whenever dharma declines and purpose of life is forgotten, I manifest myself on earth. I am born in every age to protect the good, to destroy evil, and to re-establish *dharma*." Such divine intervention seems to be a universal theme, expressed by various spiritual traditions. However, we have a responsibility to do our best to restore *Asha* when the world drifts away from it. Our responsibility is two-fold: (1) to discriminate between Right and Wrong through our God-given intuitive wisdom (*Vohu Mana*); and (2) once we recognize the Wrong, to strive to correct it.

If that intuitive wisdom was not clouded by selfish tendencies (such as greed, fear, and hatred), we would recognize that this moment in our life resembles the moment Mother Earth pleaded with Ahura Mazda. We need to only look around. Hundreds of species are dying each year. The waters of the great oceans are being contaminated to a frightening degree. Air is polluted.

Forests are being destroyed. Violent storms rage with unprecedented ferocity and frequency. And, among humans, the gap between the poor and the rich is ever widening. This is not the harmonious universe Ahura Mazda had imagined.

Vohu Mano is not intellect. It is an intuitive faculty that grasps what is Wrong. It is felt within the depths of our consciousness, just as emotions like love and compassion are felt. We have not felt the pain of Mother Earth in our souls, and so we keep debating whether the crisis is real, and whether we can afford the cost of fixing it. Until the coronavirus came to us.

Before the COVID-19 crisis, we were oblivious of Ahura's countless gifts given to us. It is a gift to be able to walk in a beautiful park and listen to birds. It is a gift to be able to spend time with our loved ones. It is a gift to be able to breathe fresh air and drink clean water. Healthy body is a gift. COVID-19 has taught us that we don't own any of these. We are merely the trustees. And we may have to return them to where they came from if they are recalled. We are expected to take good care of them while we are allowed to have them. And we realize that we have not been good trustees.

COVID-19 took away many of these gifts. Now we know that all our security, our accustomed way of life, can vanish in a very short time. If we were sensitive, we would recognize that the COVID-19 is a compassionate call by Ahura Mazda to be good trustees and fix the environment. If we fail in this role, the gifts will disappear. Zarathushtra's faith is a religion of choices. The choice is ours.

CALL TO ACTION

Mahatma Gandhi said strength is not in numbers. It is in the intention and will of solitary individuals. Let us do what Ahura Mazda would expect us to do, and not worry if others will follow us.

An alternate interpretation of *Asha* is as the Eternal Law, or Spiritual Law. The first expression of the Spiritual Law is Unity of Life, the recognition that all life is one. This is poetically expressed by Francis Thompson in the *The Mistress of Vision*:

*All things, by immortal power, near or far
Hiddenly to each other linked are
That thou canst not stir a flower
Without troubling of a star.*

Unity of Life implies compassion for our fellow human beings, for animals, birds and sea-life, and for the environment. Compassion leads to serenity and joy.

The following are my personal thoughts. I encourage you to add further ideas to this list.

Buy Only What You Need

Stop buying things you don't really need. The Zarathushti faith is not ascetic, but we need to recognize that all things we buy are transformations of earth's resources. So, if we stop consuming what is not essential, we contribute to preserving earth's resources. This is an absolutely essential step towards protecting the environment. The belief that we can solve the problem by making things more efficiently is not supportable over time.

Recognize that if many people stop buying what they don't truly need, there will be an impact on the economy. We can partly offset that impact by creating environment-friendly industries. Nevertheless, there will be a major political backlash. But limitless growth in consumption is incompatible with limited resources of the earth. This is a clear example of how our natural wisdom, *Vohu Mano*, gets clouded by selfish desires.

Eat Mindfully

What you eat affects the environment. Large forests have been turned into grazing fields to grow cattle that provide meat for human consumption. This is cruel to animals, and destruction of forests affects the eco-balance.

Strive for a Green Occupation

The Buddha names "Right Occupation" as one of the points in his Eightfold Path. If you are a young Zarathushti, choose an occupation that contributes to life. Making useful things, growing nutritious food, treating sick people, and teaching children to contribute to life. There are occupations that make a lot of money but contribute little to life and often harm life. This is a moral choice we all have to make some day

Advocate for Change

Some of these suggestions seem to be calling for political and social reform. What does that have to do with religion? Gandhi has answered that question: "My devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and in all



“Shepherd the Meek”

Ahuna Vairya refers to the Will of Ahura. The last line of *Ahuna Vairya* (Irach Taraporewala’s translation): *Xšthrem -ca Ahurai a yim drigubyo dadat vastarem*. “and the Xšthra of Ahura (descends) indeed, upon (him), who becomes a shepherd to the meek.”

Here *drigubyo* (“meek”) should be interpreted as any part of Ahura Mazda’s creation (humans, animals, birds, sea-life, and the environment) that is suffering, and is not able to resist the forces that are inflicting this suffering.

Henry David Thoreau has said, “What good is a beautiful house if there is not a decent planet to put it on?” If we walk hurtfully on the world, we are violating *Asha*, and we cannot be called true Zarathuštris. The health of the environment is a spiritual issue; it is an existential issue. It is a moral issue. In fact, we could argue that at this moment in time, it is the only issue. Because if we don’t solve this problem, nothing else will matter.*



humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.” So, become meaningfully engaged in politics. The future of this earth, and the happiness of its inhabitants, depends on what our chosen leaders do. Even in this world of “fake information,” I have unshakable faith that our God-given inborn wisdom, *Vohu Mano*, will tell us unerringly what is Right and what is Wrong, if we guard that wisdom against the deception of self-interests.

Some of us may feel that we are alone fighting this battle; powerful forces are stacked against us. Zarathuštra would say, “Why do you think you are alone? If you strive to do the Lord’s work, cosmic forces will be with you.”



Keki Dadachanji Ph.D. was a senior manager at M&M/Mars for 26 years. A part-time lecturer at Rutgers University and a teacher of mathematics and computer science at Parsippany High School, Dr. Dadachanji is a faculty member at Osher Lifelong Learning Institute within Rutgers University. Dr. Dadachanji, along with Adil Mistry, has initiated the Gatha Study Group for promoting a deeper understanding of Zarathushtra’s teachings.

ARDIBEHESHT YASHT

A Healing Prayer

By Farishta Murzban Dinshaw

On July 1, Zarathushtis celebrate Jashn-e Tiregan in honor of Tir yazad (Tishtrya in Avestan), the angel associated with rain and a bountiful harvest. Tir yazad is also considered a healing angel by many Zarathushtis, especially for eye ailments.

ARDIBEHESHT YASHT

In Zarathushti scriptures, healing takes many forms. The *Ardibehesht Yasht* classifies physicians under five categories:

1 - *Asho Baeshazo* – who heals through truth (*Ashoo Pezeshk* in Persian)

This physician was in charge of the well-being of the city, preventing the spread of contagious diseases by quarantining, keeping the four sacred elements of water, wind, earth and fire free from contamination, and making sure the sanitation of houses was maintained.

2 - *Dato Baeshazo* – who heals through knowledge (*Dâd Pezeshk*)

Similar to modern-day pathologist/coroners, their duties included examining the dead, performing autopsies when required, the issuance of burial licenses and ascertaining the cause of death with an eye toward finding cures for future cases.

3- *Karato Baeshazo* – who heals through the knife (*Kard Pezeshk*)

Archeological excavations in the Burnt City in Sistan have yielded skulls that show signs of surgery. Surgical procedures, difficult and dangerous even in the present time, were much more so in the past when it was not possible to properly anesthetize patients and medical instruments were rudimentary.



4 - *Urvaro Baeshazo* – who heals through plants and herbs (*Gyâh Pezeshk*)

The origin of herbal medicine predates the development of agriculture and cultivation in Iran, but the ancient Persians were the first to document the properties of herbs and to use plants to cure diseases.

5 - *Manthra Baeshazo* – who heals through words (*Mantreh Pezeshk*)

This physician used holy words and prayers to cure patients suffering from a sickness of body and soul, which could not be cured with herbs. Treatment consisted of verbal communication, a forerunner of therapy that psychiatrists, psychologists and counselors offer today. It also includes the reading of poetry, listening to music and the recitation of prayers, including ones from the holy books of other nations, which were designed to console and heal the patient. The fifth type of healer is considered the most effective, which once again indicates the essential connection between the mind and the body.

AFFIRMATIONS AND PRAYERS

Healing through words can also include affirmations. Around a century ago, a Frenchman named Emile Coue coined an often quoted phrase that helped many people change their thinking and their lives. Coue was a psychologist and pharmacist who believed that most mental and physical illness was a result of the person's attitude. Negative thinking may result in loss of faith, anxiety about the future, depression and sense of helplessness that may hinder a person's full enjoyment of life.

Auto-suggestions, or affirmations, can counteract this. Coue experimented with different phrases for different conditions but his most well-known affirmation is: “Day by day in every way I’m getting better and better”.

As with prayers, affirmations must be recited daily and with full involvement. P.M. Magol writes in “Daily Good Thoughts” (Informal Religious Meetings, Karachi, 1985; p26), “To meaninglessly mutter prayers orally, without proper attention, cannot be termed real prayers. We must thoroughly understand whatever word we utter while praying. Moreover, every word must be uttered with full force and the very depth of our conscience. Only such prayer can be called real and effective. We must offer our very life to Ahura Mazda while praying and we must concentrate our full attention on Him while reciting every word of the prayer, thus making the prayer more efficacious and effective.”

However, as Dr. Jehan Bagli explains in his book, “Religion of Asho Zarathusht and Influence through the Ages” (Informal Religious Meetings, Karachi, 2003; p116-117), “It is important to understand that prayers are not magic potions that can produce their effect upon recitation, and translates into cures. The results of this phenomenon are markedly dependent on sensitivity of the state of Mind under which the offering is made...it was Zarathustra the first prophet of the Aryan

society who revealed the crucial nature of *Manah* – the Mind – and its importance to maintain it Best – *Vahishta* – at all times...It is only through the peaceful mind, free of chaos of the worldly disorder that the brain can transmit signals to generate a physiological response to wellbeing”.

MINDFULNESS MATTERS

The idea of the mind and body relationship is not just an esoteric concept. A growing body of scientific research is supporting Zarathushtra’s teaching that all that wellness springs from a Good Mind. There are many ways to cultivate a Good Mind or *Vohu Manah*. Meditation is one of the most common, particularly mindfulness meditation, which simply refers to being conscious of the present moment rather than holding on to the past or worrying about the future. Studies on the benefits of mindfulness to

treat a range of health issues from allergies to depression to cancer have shown great promise. The Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) was developed by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn and his colleagues at the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical School (now The Center for Mindfulness). Since that clinic first opened in 1979, MBSR has become a recognized medical intervention that continues to attract research and influence other treatment programs around the world.

Another way is to practice healthy eating. Ayurveda practices suggest that a meatless diet makes the mind more alert. Also, spinach contains lutein and tomatoes contain zeaxanthin, which prevents macular degeneration making any intervention from Tir yazad unnecessary.

An interesting aside is that Bahman is the distorted Persian form of the

Avesta term *Vohu Mana* and Zarathushtis often give up meat during the month honoring Bahman yazad since he is the caretaker of animals, particularly cattle.*



Information in this article was previously published by the author in Ushao, an Informal Religious Meetings publication.

Healing Through Words, Ushao, Summer 2012

Tir, The Healing Angel, Ushao, Summer 2010

Alternative Medicine In Ancient Iran, Ushao, Summer 2010

Author's bio is on page 8.

ASSOCIATION ROUNDUP



North Americans Rise to the Occasion

By Afreed Mistry

2020 will forever be remembered by the World for the COVID-19 pandemic. How a small receptor-destroying enzyme, not visible to the naked eye, brought the whole World to stand still. Other than health and essential service workers, the rest of the professionals have been confined to their homes. Some doctors and nurses have been away from their families, sleeping in garages or temporary trailers, so as to not infect their loved ones. Some people have transitioned to working full time from home. Many people have been enjoying their time with their family, cooking wonderful meals, spending more time with their kids and pets and catching up on online shows and movies. For some families this time has been challenging due to financial hardships, loss of jobs or income, losing loved ones and feelings of anxiety and loneliness.

The shelter in place order in March occurred just

before the Fasli Muktab and was a challenge for all community Associations who had planned to have five days of prayers and a big Nowruz celebration. A few of the Associations like the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO), Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY), and Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston Area (ZAGBA) went ahead and held the Fasli Muktab prayers and Nowruz and live streamed it for the members to attend in person and virtually. No food was served.

On March 16, the North American Mobeds Council (NAMC) sent out a communiqué on Nirangs with English translations that can be recited during the COVID-19 pandemic. These can be found on their website: NAMCmobeds.org. NAMC have also been doing the daily Tandarosti prayers since April 10 where people can hear the mobed pray live at 6 PM EST. Mobeds recite a short prayer (Nirang or

other) followed by a Tandarosti prayer. Over 100 participants have joined the daily meetings and over 150 names have been recited daily, by three mobeds. Since some industries have returned to work recently, the daily prayers have changed to Sundays and Wednesdays at 6 pm EST.

CANADA

In **Toronto**, the ZSO Darbe Mehr used to have activities 5-6 days a week so having to shut down meant that there were a lot of people that were not able to socialize as usual. Using ZSO's YouTube Channel, they have been able to livestream the Fasli and Shahenshai gahambars, jashans, *Atash-Nu-Parab* and *Zarathosht-No-Diso*. They have also been holding funeral prayers for the departed with no more than five people present in the DarbeMeher.

The seniors are the most vulnerable age group for COVID-19 hence almost all Associations are offering help with groceries, picking up medications, or general help to their local Zarathushtis. With a very large number of seniors in the Toronto area, both OZCF and ZSO have been helping with grocery and

medication errands and delivery.

On the bright side, the youth and entertainment committees of the Ontario Zoroastrian Community Fund (OZCF) and ZSO have been working together to use online sources to bring the community, with weekly Zumba sessions, Quarantine Bingo nights, Quiz Nights, *Antakshari* and Karaoke Nights using Zoom. OZCF has made one of their *nataks* available on YouTube for a short time and they hosted a YouTube watch party in April. The ZSO Youth host weekly recipes online using Instagram.

OZCF and ZSO both have scouting groups that have been using Zoom to hold their meets on Sundays. The ZSO Religion Class group has teamed up with the Zoroastrian Anjuman of Northern California (ZANC) Religion Class group to alternate hosting Sunday classes to all ages. Most recently, Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania (ZAPA) has also joined in to host religion class with this group. This has worked out quite well as they cover a range of topics with different speakers each Sunday. Well over 140 students attended the first joint talk on April

26 where the speaker was Delnavaz Dastur and the topic was "Atash and the Atash-Nu-Parab". These talks are usually interactive so the kids get to join in the lectures. On May 18, Farrokh Mistree and Dinsha Mistree both presented on the "Amesha Spentas" with a good discussion with parents and children after the lecture.

World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce (WZCC) Toronto Chapter hosted a virtual meeting in May on how essential oils can help with your health. Speaker Zarine Bharda from Udvada, India explained which essential oils work to improve different aspects of your health. There were many questions and a good discussion.

In **Ottawa**, Sharon Chothia, who is a Registered Nurse in one of Ottawa's largest hospitals, has shown courage and dedication in going to her regular job. She has been actively collecting donations to provide meals to her colleagues within the Maternal/Newborn teams and sister units at all hospitals across the city. At a time when there is no normalcy and teams are working around the clock to keep patients and the staff safe, a hot meal for the entire team



Bringing groceries and supplies to seniors, Toronto; bringing meals to hospital staff, Ottawa.

has been well received and very much appreciated. The Maternal/Newborn and Childbirth groups have been at the frontline from day one. A hot meal is just a little token of gratitude to acknowledge their efforts and hard work. In honour of Sharon's dedication to her job, while also raising three kids with her husband, Paakzaad, ZSO donated \$500 to her cause.

The Zoroastrian Association of Alberta (ZAA) serves a very small community in **Edmonton** and **Calgary**, and they are in close touch with its members through various communication modes to see if anyone needs any special help. Assistance is rendered as needed on a case by case basis. Till date the community is doing well and no members has required any special help. They have taken a decision to cancel all gatherings till further notice, however they are proposing some Zoom meetings for their members. Executive committee is in close contact with each other.

USA

In **Houston**, a small group of volunteers, who call themselves the Masketeers, have stitched 500+ cotton masks which were donated

to the seniors, hospitals and clinics.

Individually doctors and healthcare providers have been providing service as required, either through hospital visits or through tele-medicine. The youth group raised over \$9,000 by fundraising for the Houston Food Bank. (See page 55).

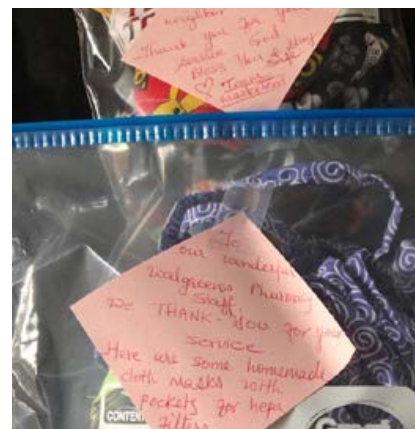
At Houston's new Atash Kadeh, there has been a *Boi Ceremony* conducted at 5 pm CT and live streamed to people nationwide three times a week. Individually, Peshotan Unwalla, conducts Humbandagi Prayers at 5:30 pm CT and that is also live streamed online.

Zoroastrian Association of Houston's (ZAH's) Helping Hands Committee has been sending bi-weekly messages to seniors letting them know that assistance is available.

In **Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana**, the Zoroastrian Association of Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana (ZAKOI) has also been having humbandagi prayers and get-togethers online every three weeks. The community has been happy to chat and catch up with

each other's lives as they would have done in person. Their members are connecting more with each other and with other faith communities. ZAKOI is a member of a local interfaith organization called EquaSion, and participates actively in many interfaith activities like virtual interfaith programs that ZAKOI have put together for various faith communities. Examples include participating as panelists with other faith representatives in a series of virtual events like, turning to faith and learning how to handle hopelessness, fear, anger, retaliation and other negative feelings especially during times of crisis like the one we are all going through right now during the COVID-19 pandemic. ZAKOI will also be participating in a virtual interfaith concert, wherein all faith communities recorded a song, for this virtual concert. ZAKOI kids, especially our teens, have been participating with other teens in interfaith groups cosponsored by our local interfaith groups and kids4peace.

In **Arizona**, the Zoroastrian Association of Arizona (ZAAZ) had organized an online Zoom meeting with their members on



"Masketeers" Darius Dastur and Nargis Cooper stitch masks to donate, Houston.

April 26 and they had 17 families participate. The meeting started with a *Tandorošti* prayer for health and well-being of the community followed by sharing of videos from the youngest members of the association. The videos were recorded by parents showing 60 seconds of the kids saying a short prayer, reading a poem, singing or doing a small act. This was a successful event for ZAAZ and they have plans to organize a virtual game next time.

The Arizona Zoroastrian Association (AZA) has a Telegram channel where members are added and receive text messages. They use this platform to send news, information on fundraising projects, for example the Zarathushtis affected by COVID-19 in Yazd.

In **Boston**, ZAGBA has been connecting with their members to find if anyone needs assistance during this difficult time. They have been providing "acts of kindness" to folks that need some financial assistance. The ZAGBA board and community have coordinated to provide a generous donation (over \$4,000) to support the Outreach Program (outreachprogram.org), a non-profit that helps provide nutritious meals to food insecure families in the US and abroad. ZAGBA held its very first Virtual Talent Fest on Saturday, May 9. The adults, youth and kids participated as a community. To encourage the community to participate, there were also prizes given out. ZAGBA is proud to say that they join in FEZANA and other associations' prayer gatherings online. Rita Kapadia will be conducting Zoom classes for cooking soon.

In **Washington State**, the Zoroastrian Society of Washington State (ZSWS) have been hosting online gahambar prayers, virtual Z-school for kids and gathering of members using Google Hangouts to chat and socialize.

In **California**, the Traditional Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Anjuman (TMZA) realizes that as the world fights the battle with COVID-19 many people have been thrown into financial hardship. They decided to try to help some of the Zarathushti brethren in North America. TMZA's initial intention



was to help some families in their own Anjuman who they knew first hand were struggling financially. For this purpose, TMZA sent an appeal to their members to build a corpus for the welfare of deserving members within our community, but the members rose to the occasion and they collected over \$10,000.

As the word got out, TMZA got appeals from Zarathushtis from other states too. They have identified and helped six families in the USA and Canada. Most of them are elderly and were working part-time and so were without

the only meagre income they had before this crisis began. TMZA are still receiving appeals, so they have decided to keep raising funds until the crisis is over and families are able to stand on their own feet again.

TMZA Youth also help computer-challenged elderly with on-line shopping for their needs.

The Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC) has been extending help in cash and in kind to those who need it the most, especially people who cannot venture out. Religious ceremonies and prayers are being done online by Ervad Zarir Bhandara and Ervad Zerkxis Bhandara. Following examples from OZCF and ZSO, ZAC also plans to have more virtual games offered to their members.

The Sacramento Zoroastrian Association (SZA) is working on offering online classes and they hope to open their centre in a month or two.

Persian Zoroastrian Organization (PZO) has finished the Sunday school semester by moving to Zoom and having the year end graduation via Zoom. Other weekly programs that have shifted online include meditation classes, Yoga classes, playing the Daff Class (Persian round drum) instructions, and Gatha classes. They recently opened the Atash Kadeh to visitors on an appointment basis. The caretakers have removed the scarfs and prayer books and are requesting people to bring their own.

In **Michigan**, Zoroastrian Association of Michigan (ZAOM) is planning a virtual Annual

General meeting along with virtual Bingo/Booze night, game nights and *Antakshari*. They also have youth classes once or twice a month.

In **Pennsylvania**, Saros Sepai has created a WhatsApp group for ZAPA members. They use the group to share useful information regarding COVID-19.

In the **Washington, D.C.** area, the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc. (ZAMWI) has been busy each week with hosting a Zoom session every Monday evening at 8 pm EST called “ZAMWI ZOOMS”. Each Monday night they open with “Monday Musical Moments” with art and music performances by the youth. They then get to the main speaker of the evening. So far the topics have been, COVID-19 with two community physicians, Pashna Munshi and Shirin Engineer, Ana Verahrami’s harrowing second trip to Africa conducting research with the Elephant Listening Project, Mani Rao performing songs in English, Gujarati and Farsi, and Homi Gandhi talking about the work of FEZANA in Iran and India during the Pandemic. Other events include Family Trivia Night and College Prep, featuring current college and graduate students providing insight and guidance to younger students preparing to make college and grad student choices.

Every Saturday, ZAMWI has the Gathas Study Circle led by Jamshid Goshtasbi. Every Sunday, they have prayers for the departed or Tandarosti prayers at 10:15 am EST and Avesta prayers and class at 10:45 am EST. Every Tuesday and Thursday evening they have humbandagi Prayers at 6:30 pm.

In **Chicago**, ZAMC’s Welfare Committee has raised approximately \$10,000 to aid and assist those in the Chicago community who are in severe need. ZAMC continues to build a reserve fund in the event of a future calamity and fallout from COVID-19. ZAMC has established a Volunteer Task Force to actively reach out by phone to assist their elderly, the isolated, and those struggling with child care issues. ZAMC is joining forces with WZCC Chicago and it’s new Women’s Wing to coordinate



a face covering production and distribution initiative. Through this initiative, anyone in need of face coverings for general interaction with loved ones, especially around the homes of the elderly, can get one.

ZAMC is sourcing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for their facility ahead of a gradual opening and have created a new project, “Re-imagining ZAMC” where they will have new ideas for social distancing, facility modifications and how to best serve their community members spiritual and social needs.

They also conducted their first virtual religion class on May 17th and they are using virtual technology to live stream Boi and humbandagi prayers.

In **New York**, ZAGNY had their first ever Nowruz event online that was attended by 40 people. They also had their AGM online and voted in their new board members. They have religion classes once a month and decided to conduct them online, with the teachers setting up their own virtual classrooms. The *Atash Niyaesh* prayers done by Ervad Cyrus Pavri was live streamed online by 150 people in lieu of their regular humbandagi circle. ZAGNY has also encouraged people to attend their Gatha classes and Z-Goldies group online. They also offer online resources like virtual garden tours, online classes, exercise links, Z Goldies Bingo, a workshop on managing through lock-down and how to sew cloth masks. Nawaz Merchant is making reusable cloth face masks for ZAGNY to support the FEZANA’s University of Toronto Professorship in Zoroastrian Languages.

ZAGNY is also conducting virtual funeral services and *Tandarosti* prayers. They are collecting names of healthcare professionals in the community, as well as those who have been affected by it so that we can offer assistance. ZAGNY members have contributed individually and collectively to a number of local efforts, through donations to food banks, Meals on Wheels, local food pantry donations, making free masks for healthcare workers, and through keeping in touch with each other and checking in on those who may not have anyone to shop for them.*



Afreed Mistry has been active in the Zoroastrian community since a young age. She is currently the Executive Vice-President of ZSO and FEZANA's main representative to the United Nations. Afreed works for Bank of Montreal as a Network Design Specialist.



A big thank you to the following people for their reports: Delbar Jahanian (PZO) Mehbod Dastur (NAMC), Natasha Karanjia (PZAS), Afshan Barshan (ZAMC), Anahita Kavarana (ZOAM), Anne Khademian (ZAMWI), Arash Tavanaei (AZA), Ardaviraf Minocherhomjee (NAMC), Arnavaz Sethna (ZAH), Marzi Mehta (ZAA), Arzin, Zara and Zal Italia (ZAH), Bakhtavar Desai (ZAKOI), Darius Captain (SZA), Dariush Shahgoshtasbi (ZSWS), Farhad Cama (ZAPA), Gulnar Bhagwagar (ZAAZ), Jim Engineer (ZAMC), Nawaz Merchant (ZAGNY), Nazneen Vimadala (ZAGBA), Neville Patrawala (OZCF), Nozer Dungor (ZAH), Rooky Fitter (ZAC), Sharon Chothia (Ottawa), Vira Santoke (TMZA).



COVID-19 CARE IN INDIA

MASINA HOSPITAL At the Forefront of COVID-19 Care

By Dr. Vispi Jokhi

Masina Hospital is the first privately run hospital of Bombay established in 1902. The oldest private healthcare institute in the city of Mumbai, it has served the community for over a hundred years. Presently it is located in Byculla which is the E-ward of the Mumbai municipal ward limits. It falls under the coronavirus red zone which has almost the highest number of COVID-19 positive cases and is only outnumbered in Mumbai by Dharavi and Worli areas in terms of hotspots.

The hospital has risen to the challenge of tackling the pandemic and taking care of the staff. In the early few weeks the hospital established a strong protection and entry policy with the establishment of a fever Out Patient Department (OPD). We gave our staff hydroxychloroquine prophylaxis doses and training to maintain social distancing and hand hygiene practices. The hospital's topography of multiple buildings and open spaces has proved to be a boon in these times. Dr. Hormasji Manekji Masina would have been extremely proud of

how the Masina hospital is fighting to save COVID-19 patients. World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO) Trust Funds have contributed towards the purchase of two Porta cabins that will be utilized for members of all communities who are suspected of having contracted Covid 19 and require to be kept in isolation.

Four Porta-Cabins have also been installed. They are fabricated units with two doors, toilet and overhead storage space. These units are in lengths of 20 feet and 40 feet, and are used not only for patients, but also medical personnel attending to them; two for patients and two for the medical team. Each Porta Cabin costs Indian Rs.500,000. They comprise toilet facilities, internal electrical wiring, lights and fans. Beds and protective gear for the staff are supplied by Masina Hospital.

Presently, [May 2020] we have successfully treated more than a 100 COVID-19 patients and have had a mortality rate of 2%. Both the patients who died had major co-morbidities, and were in a bad shape when they were admitted. At this time, we are running an

Isolation Unit where we are giving care to nearly 65 patients. We have also got a holding area and are running services for non-COVID-19 patients too. This is helping to take care of Cardiac and Orthopedic patients along with Obstetric services. We also have a Dialysis unit wherein eight dialysis patients are being treated in four shifts. We are also treating COVID-19 positive dialysis



patients at reasonable cost.

There have been over 30 discharges and all the patients are doing extremely well.

STAFF RESPONSES

Our staff nurse, Bindu, and our resident doctors Dr. Rahul, Dr. Enub, Dr. Disharathi, Dr Sakshi and many others have changed their attitude from an initial feeling of fear to an exhilarating experience of service to society. The discharges have resulted in creating a positive environment among the rank and file of the hospital.

Working in a well functioning triage ward was a great experience of which I also feel proud of. The

nursing staff were helpful and the management responded very quickly to any complaint. Glad I could play a part in tackling this pandemic. **Dr. Sayan Maji**

The satisfying part of our medical professional duty is that we are in a position to make a difference. We must embrace that. With this positive thought, it was a great opportunity treating the COVID-19 patients in Masina Hospital, and watching them leaving the hospital with a smile and getting cured. **Dr Disharathi Patel, Gynaecologist.**

Setting up the fever OPD, Casualty, triage, isolation and COVID-19 ward under Dr Jokhi and Dr Mehra's guidance was a very great experience. For setting up the departments, everyone worked as a team and it is my pleasure that I am a part of the management team handling and providing the services during this crisis. **Lt. Pushpa M.Ambwani, Nursing Superintendent**

I recently finished my COVID-19 Isolation Ward duty. I am proud I am a part of "Corona warriors" and I had completed my duties without any queries. Each and every facility were available like PPE and N95 masks. When I was in quarantine, my proper care was taken by the department. I really give thanks to my hospital management. **Savita Malve, Sister in Charge**

This is the first time I did duty in the Isolation Ward. This is the time to show my responsibility as nurse to the society and the value of my profession. It was a good experience for me. I am thankful to my management for the support which they given me. **Bindu, Sister in Charge**



Porta Cabins for Isolation of frontline Staff who man the Triage & Isolation Facility



COVID-19 Patient TRIAGE & FEVER OPD Facilities

Patients who present with non respiratory medical emergency (like stroke, seizure, etc) on screening in triage have to be tested for COVID-19. So the policy at Masina ensures that the patient continues to get treatment for his emergency and patients are not asked to shift to other hospitals. Once the family knows that the patient has tested positive for COVID-19 there is fear in the family and it requires lot of counselling and assurance as there is a fear of what will happen to other members of the family.

Dr. Ashish Gosar

With a new disease of this enormity, what is most important for a hospital to have is not just excellent preparedness policies, but an undeterred effort to protect its health-care workers. What also helps good patient management is to rapidly evolve management protocols based on the latest evidence that becomes available. It has been a very enriching experience to work with the extremely cohesive and determined COVID-19 team at Masina Hospital where the feeling of fighting this battle together far supersedes any feeling of fear.

Dr. Trupti Gilada, Infectious Diseases Physician

It is human to feel scared of COVID-19 based on hearsay, but once I actually started going in the Ward, I was at ease. With adequate PPE and infection control measures, I soon realised that patients need healthcare workers to be positive and sometimes just address their basic concerns. Not all patients will deteriorate and timely action and support is key.

Dr Sonam Solanki, Pulmonary Medicine

The dedication of the medical team in the fight against COVID-19 has been priceless. *



Dr. Vispi Jokhi is the Chief Executive Officer, Masina Hospital, Mumbai. He is also an Orthopedic surgeon, specializing in trauma, joint replacement, and hand surgery. He has over three decades in the Hospital and Health Care sector.



VIDEO WATCH

CNN-News18's, Shreya Dhoundial @shreyadhoundial brings a ground report from inside the Mumbai's Masina Hospital, which is at the forefront of fighting COVID-19.

Twitter
<https://twitter.com/CNNnews18/status/1250991849243738112>

AN APPEAL FOR SUPPORT

Dr Vispi Jokhi and the Masina hospital were congratulated by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai for providing excellent services to COVID-19 patients and for keeping the mortality rate to a low of 2%. The Hospital needs financial support to continue their remarkable work. It is FCRA and 80 G compliant, and every donation will be suitably acknowledged.

The Bank details are as follows:

Nam :	Masina Hospital Trust
Bank A/C No.:	911010065291241
Bank Name:	Axis Bank Ltd.
Branch:	Byculla, Mumbai - 400008
IFSC Code:	UTIB0000592
MICR Code:	400211051
Service Tax Registration No:	AAATMO786DSD001
PAN No:	AAATMO786D



WZO TRUSTS – COVID-19 RELIEF

Assistance to Zarathushtis in India

The World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust & WZO Trust Funds have undertaken a massive programme to support poor Zarathushtis in India who have been affected financially due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with contributions primarily from the Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton & Macao as well as other individuals and companies.

The massive programme to distribute food grains, utility items and cash to low income and financially affected Zarathushtis residing in villages and towns has begun. At the writing of this report in May 2020, 500 Zarathushti families were projected to receive support in and around the following villages, towns, and cities: Mandvi and Mangrol areas, Vansda and Ahwas Talukas, Surat, Navsari, Vyara, Ankleshwar and Bharuch, villages in Dharampur Taluka, Jawahar and Dahanu in Palghar Taluka, Karchond and other places in Union Territory of Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Ahmedabad.

The food grains distributed are sufficient to last a family of four individuals for just over a month. If necessary, another round of similar supplies will be distributed. The names of beneficiary families are being furnished by the local Zarathushti Anjumans and resource persons who have volunteered to extend support in the areas in which they are located.

FOOD PACKAGE ITEMS

5 Ltr. Edible oil
1 Kg Vegetable Ghee
5 Kg Wheat Flour
4 Kg Rice
5.2 Kg Tuvar Dal
500 Gram Masoor
500 Gram Moong Dal
500 Gram Chana Dal
500 Gram Chole Chana (chickpeas)
500 Gram Chora (Black-eyed peas)
500 Gram Besan (gram flour)
500 Gram Ravo (semolina)
500 Gram Poha (Pauvaa)
2 Kg Sugar
1 Kg Salt
200 Gram Chili Powder
100 Gram Garam Masala
100 Gram Turmeric Powder
200 Gram toothpaste (tube)
4 cakes of bath soaps
3 bars dish washing soap
3 cakes of detergent soap
1 Kg. detergent powder

Rs.2,000 cash for purchase of vegetables and other utility items as required.

There are other areas in which financial support is also required.

1. Financial support for families of white- and blue- collar workers who have received only half their regular salaries or, in many cases, no salaries.

2. Financial support for individuals involved in modest self-employment initiatives such as driving autorickshaws and commercial taxis, auto mechanics, stationery shops, etc. whose

livelihood has suffered because of the lock down.

3. Financial support for full-time mobeds who are not employed by *agiaris* (place of worship) but are daily wage earners.

4. Support for agriculturists who have been unable to harvest their standing crops, which have decayed on account of non-availability of labour force.

5. Support for dairy farmers having suffered financial setbacks as milk collected from their livestock has being unable to reach the processing dairies, and cannot afford feed for their cattle.

6. Support for poultry farmers whose livelihood has come to a standstill as it is not possible to transport fully grown fowls to processing units.

8. Support for Zarathushtis with brick kilns who have suffered financial setbacks as the migrant labourers have left leaving half-baked and unbaked bricks, given that brick kilns are productive during a short seven-month window (December to June).

(From a report by Dinshaw Tamboly, WZO).

Donation checks for WZO relief programs may be mailed to Rooky Fitter, FEZANA Treasurer, PO BOX 266, Sunset Beach, CA, 90742, USA.



SUPPORTING ZARATHUSHTIS IN IRAN

By Kritika Mudgal and Mahtab Irani

According to Radio Farda news (March 18, 2020) "Coronavirus Epidemic Hits Iran's Small Zoroastrian Community Very Hard". According to Iran's latest census there were 25,000 Zoroastrians in the country most living in Yazd and Kerman. Along with Christians (Armenian and Assyrian), and Persian Jews they are one of the three religions acknowledged by the Iranian Constitution. The Chairman of Iran's Society of Zoroastrians has said that coronavirus (COVID-19) has impacted the small Zoroastrian community in Yazd very hard with a fatality rate much higher than the general population.

In a tweet on Tuesday Sepanta Niknam who is also a former representative of Zoroastrians in Iran's Parliament said the community accounts for 30 percent of coronavirus deaths in Yazd, one of the two cities with the biggest Zoroastrian communities in Iran. The community is very small and comprises only two percent of the population of the city.

Describing the situation as "critical" for his community he said the damage would not have been so sizeable if coronavirus had been detected and the public had been informed sooner. The community held some traditional religious ceremonies before the outbreak was announced, during which the virus appears to have spread among them. (Radio Farda website).

On March 13, 2020, Sepanta Niknam, President, Yazd Zoroastrian Association, and Member of Yazd City Council got in touch with the President of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA), Homi Gandhi, and the Embassy of the Republic of Iran in New Delhi, through Mohammad Hekmat. Dr Shernaz Cama, Executive Director, Parzor Foundation, a UNESCO Parsi Zoroastrian project, was also contacted, sharing details of the crisis and its worsening impact in Yazd and all of Iran, and requesting her to reach out to Dr Cyrus Poonawalla of Serum Institute, and to the global Zarathushti community.

With generous community support, life-saving medicines, masks, surgical coveralls, and

gloves, and some ventilators, were sent to Yazd. Supplies were transported by Mahan Airlines; they ran emergency flights at a time that local and international flights were suspended.

In all, three shipments of medical supplies were sent to Iran to deal with the challenge of controlling the COVID-19 outbreak. By March 26, 2020, the Yazd Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Science, Iran, had received two humanitarian packages of medical supplies and safety equipment through the support of the Zarathushtis of India and the world. The first Actemra Injections generously supplied by Dr. Yusuf Hamied and carefully transported through cold-chain logistics was used for a nurse in critical care. The final shipment left from New Delhi on the Mahan Air

flight on Sunday, May 10, 2020.

Dr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in a video-conference with the governor of Yazd, praised the Zarathushti philanthropic activities in the fight against COVID-19.

Dr. Shernaz Cama has been working tirelessly for the community and creating strong links with Iran, especially this year, which celebrates the 70 years of diplomatic relationship between the two nations on March 15, 1950. Iran and India shared a border till 1947 and have several common features in their language, culture, and traditions. To celebrate this momentous occasion, two partners - the Embassy of the Republic of Iran, New Delhi, and Parzor - organized the "Derakht-e-Doosti Festival" in



Refrigerated medical supplies and safety equipment arriving in Tehran and being transported for delivery to Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Science.

February 2020. The program included an exhibition on Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, a panel discussion on this epic, and a musical performance by a small troupe from Iran. Sadly, almost simultaneously with this festival the COVID-19 crisis was taking over the world. We are proud that Dr. Cama managed to reach out to Iran with the backing of the strength of the global Zarathushti and humanitarian community.

The task of facilitating individuals who wanted to support this worthwhile cause, with the world entering a huge challenge in the form of the rapidly spreading COVID-19 virus was difficult and often heart-breaking. Each day brought bad news, and yet each day strengthened the positive responses and resolve of a people who have followed the principles of Good Thoughts, Good Words and most necessarily, Good Deeds to all Creation.

Firstly, we are grateful to Mr. Homi Gandhi, President, FEZANA, USA, for his initiative and coordinating the relief from Zoroastrians who donated generously from abroad.

The generosity of several Zarathushtis around the world ensured this was possible.

- Dr. Cyrus Poonawalla, Mr. Adar Poonawalla, Serum Institute and the team of Dr. Dhare and Mr. Dureja, Serum Institute, Pune
- Dr. Yusuf Hamied, Cipla, London, and his team especially Mr. Jaiswal,

Cipla India

- Lord Karan Bilimoria, London
- Dr Ali Chegeni, Ambassador of Iran in India

We must especially thank:

- Mr. Mohammed Hekmat, Iranian Researcher affiliated with Parzor and working at the National Museum Institute, Delhi, for his constant support, his communications with Yazd, as well as his work with the Iranian Embassy officials in Delhi and officials in Iran
- Mr. Ali Moghari, Embassy of Iran in India
- Dorab & Shernaz Mistry of Singapore
- Homa Zartoshty USA of the Zartoshty Brothers Funds & Malcolm Deboo President, ZTFE, London
- Gaiv Irani, Vice President and the Trustees of the Iranian Zarthushti Anjuman, Mumbai
- Shahin Bekhradnia, WZO, UK
- Darayus S Motiwala, President, WZO, UK

We are also deeply grateful to those who immediately rallied around to help: Sanaya Nariman, Darius Khambatta, Shireen Sethna Baria, Anosh Kelawala, Prof Armaity Desai, Dadi Pudumjee, Perin Pudumjee Coyaji, Sarvar Khambatta Chand, Delzine Wankadia, Dinyar Patel, Dorab R Sopariwala, Ervad Jal Birdy, J.N. Amroliya, Jehangir Cama, Kayomars P Mehta, Pervin Jehangir, Roshan & Rohinton Rivetna, Shernaz & Farhaan Lala, Yasmin & Jamshed Ghadiali, Yezad Kapadia, Kersi Shroff, Anton Zykov, Russia.

Last, but not the least, we must recognise the enormous energy and effort put in by:

- Mr Sepanta Niknam, President, Yazd Zarthushti Anjuman. We as a community must applaud his dedication to his people and the hospital in Yazd
- Dr Mohammad Reza Mirjalili, President, Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences
- Mr Mohammad Hekmat who has done all the coordinating with Iranian officials
- Kritika Mudgal for coordinating all contributions, purchases and supply logistics across India with several

Museum Institute, New Delhi, who has previously collaborated with Parzor, praised the Parsi-Zarathushti community. "During the COVID-19 crisis, I have been in touch with my Parsi friends in Delhi and saw all efforts of Zoroastrians from across the world to prepare the medical consignments for Yazd. This humanitarian aid reminds me of the beautiful poem of Saadi Shirazi, 'Human beings are members of one another/ since in their creation they are of one essence'. Besides, the relationship

While this pandemic has shown us tragedy, there are also many positives that have been observed the world over. Our environment has already begun to renew, the ozone has started to heal itself, families and friends are reconnecting emotionally even as they may be physically distant, and we are all learning to slow down. Global healthcare, organised food supplies, and international political organisations followed the pandemic in the 1920s. There is hope that a better world awaits us post this pandemic.



The commonalities that unite our race across the world must be recognised and given precedence over the political, geographical, and social differences that divide us. A long journey and trying times lie ahead of us, but in the face of crises, political uncertainty, and human greed, we must relearn and remember to be loving, giving, and kind.*

Sepanta Niknam, President of the Yazd Zarthoshti Anjuman (left) along with representatives of Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Science.

- dealers and pharmaceutical companies
- Mahtab Irani for her accountancy skills in keeping tallies of donation and expense and support
- Mr Rajiv Kumar of Lucknow Medical Agencies, Lajpat Nagar for providing the medical supplies and dealing with many different people across the world.

Mr Mohammad Hekmat, a Ph.D. research scholar at the National

between Parsis and Iran, Yazd particularly has an interwoven tie with their identity. You can still see the generosity of Parsis in the past for Iranian Zoroastrians to construct fire temples, schools, *dahkma* etc. Regarding historical accounts, they always remember Iran and help Iranian Zoroastrians beyond political and religious issues, and distances. As an Iranian and a humble person, I am glad that I could help consignments reach Yazd."

References:

- *Coronavirus | Iran's Parsis thank Indian Parsi associations for help, The Hindu, March 30 2020*
- *President praises Zoroastrians' Benevolent Activities against Coronavirus, Berasat, March 26, 2020*
- *Zoroastrians In India Send Second Relief Shipment To Iran, Radio Farda, March 26, 2020*
- *Zoroastrians In India Send Second Relief Shipment To Iran, Payvand, March 26, 2020*



Kritika Mudgal is the Programme Officer at UNESCO Parzor. Since 2015, working with the Parsi-Zarathushti community in India and abroad, has developed socio-cultural and educational projects for heritage preservation. She was the Deputy Curator for the exhibition *Threads of Continuity: Zoroastrian Life and Culture* held as part of the International Everlasting Flame Programme in 2016.



Mahtab Irani is a policy and communications professional. She has worked with *Global Health Strategies*, *The Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs (G3ict)*, and the *National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP)*. A cultural enthusiast, Mahtab is associated with the UNESCO Parzor Foundation through several projects.



I. AID SENT TO IRAN AS MEDICINES AND EQUIPMENT

1. 100 Actemra Injections: Rs. 15,57,046 (Community donations from the Parsi-Zarathushti community in India and abroad)
2. Fluvir 2000 Tablets: Rs. 78,400 (Parzor Trust and Community Donations)
3. 1000 Antiflu Tablets: Rs. 4,83,225 (Parzor Trust: from Community donations)
4. Two (2) Philips Trilogy Ventilator with Accessories (Bought as donations by Dr Cyrus Poonawalla)
5. 500 breathable performance Surgical Gown (Bought as donations by Dr Cyrus Poonawalla)
6. 1000 N99 Face masks (Bought as donations by Dr Cyrus Poonawalla)
7. 30 boxes Latex Examination Gloves (Bought as donations by Dr Cyrus Poonawalla)
8. Warf 4500 Tablets + Metafort 500, 97,500 Tablets + Antiflu 500 Tablets: Rs.1,88,525 (Community donations from the Parsi-Zarathushti community in India and abroad)
9. Maxirich 28,000 Tablets: Rs.2,46,413 (Community donations from the Parsi-Zarathushti community in India and abroad)

II. NUMBER OF CONSIGNMENTS AIRLIFTED WITH DATES THEY LEFT DELHI

- a) March, 2020: Mahan Air, Delhi-Tehran
- b) 25 March, 2020: Mahan Air, Delhi-Tehran
- c) 10 May 2020: Mahan Air, Delhi-Tehran

Mahan Airlines carried the consignments gratis as humanitarian assistance to Iranian citizens. This was arranged for us through the help of the Embassy of Iran .

III. TOTAL EXPENDITURE FROM DONATIONS COLLECTED

Rs.25,53,609/-

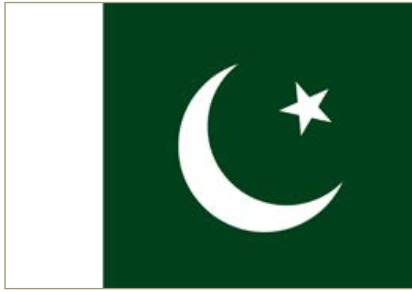
The Medicines were sold to us by Cipla at a highly discounted rate. The ventilators were around Rs10 lakhs and the other equipment of high quality were well over Rs 25 lakhs. These were purchased and shipped out to us from across India through the kindness of Dr Cyrus Poonawalla and his very helpful team.

All prices in Indian rupees.

A NOTE FROM PARZOR

An appeal has been circulating that asks for donations for Iran Zoroastrians Afflicted by the Dreaded Coronavirus to be sent to the Parzor Foundation account. Parzor being an Indian NGO is not permitted to collect funds for any cause abroad.

Please DO NOT SEND MONEY in any form as donation for Iranian Zarathushtis into the Parzor Account. Please contact Dr Shernaz Cama at shernazcama@hotmail.com and she will explain how to help.



REFLECTING ON THE PANDEMIC IN PAKISTAN

LAHORE

The Lahore community comprises eighteen persons. One gentleman, unfortunately is blind, his sister is bedridden. Another gentleman is also physically disabled and his brother is mentally unstable. Except for five or six persons, the others are all in their late seventies or early eighties. There is, therefore, little action in the community even at the best of times.

However, we are happy to say that in spite of the pandemic and consequent movement restrictions, the fire of our Bai Awabai Ardesir Cooper Agiary is tended regularly and continues to burn. The caretaker, Byram King, drives over daily and rejuvenates the fire and prepares the *divas*.

During the pandemic, the community has had the pleasure of being augmented in numbers by a guest from Karachi who is now anxiously awaiting the resumption of flights. In the mean time, she has been applying her culinary skills and regaling her hostess and friends with delectable meals. In fact, we find, a lot of time seems now to be devoted to discussing and cooking meals, which are ultimately, happily consumed! We are truly grateful to be in this position as we are painfully aware of many daily wagers who are not so fortunate.

Most of us have tried to do our small bit in making contributions of one sort or another to alleviate the suffering of those less fortunate in our immediate circle.

Most families are confined to their homes. A lot of time is spent communicating with loved ones on the phone or iPad. In line with the rest of the world, we wear masks and gloves and movement has been severely restricted and strictly confined to occasional visits to groceries or to the bank where there are long queues because of social distancing. Ladies and the elderly, however, are invariably given consideration and courteously allowed to enter without delay.

We console ourselves with the thought that this too, shall pass.



Perin Boga is the granddaughter of Ardesir and Nawazbai Cooper. She is the Managing Trustee of the Bai Awabai Ardesir Cooper Agiary, Lahore, gifted by Ardesir Cooper in memory of his first wife Awabai, to the Parsi community in 1893.

RAWALPINDI

There are about 13 Parsis all together in Rawalpindi. Like the rest of the country mostly are home bound and trying not to go insane! It's a good time for reflection and be grateful for things and people who we took for granted. This time is also an excellent opportunity to help the poor and the hungry.

Though our businesses are shut which is very painful, but I'm taking advantage of doing business with God where I know I can never be at loss. All are praying for this difficult time to pass and get on with life.



Isphanyar Bhandara is a former Member of Parliament for the minorities, and currently President Parsi Anjuman Rawalpindi. He is also majority shareholder of 160-year-old Murree Brewery.

KARACHI

We came home to a world that had changed completely. Our “Zoroastrian Return to Roots” trip to India came to an abrupt end because of the pandemic and we returned to Karachi two days before Nowruz. The stark difference was evident just as we stepped off the plane. Our once thriving and busy duty-free shops were all closed and medics in full gear were checking our temperature even before looking at our passports. The scenario was just as concerning on the outside; the balmy temperatures and the evening sun replacing the harsh fluorescent interiors. For a city that never sleeps, with honking and loud chattering registered as its default soundtrack, it was rather unnerving to experience the absence of the usual 6:00 pm rush hour traffic on a weekday.

Within the next few days, the city-wide lock down was in place and regular activities ground to a halt. There were no more Monday morning scrambles or traffic snarls.

Since the day we returned, we have seen life stripped to its essentials and shrunk to the people who are immediate in our families.

The Zarathushti community has been part of Pakistan since much before Independence in 1947. Although our population has been diminishing in this part of the world, due to the general trend of outward migration, Karachi remains one of the hubs of our community; housing two *atash adarans* (place of worship) and under a thousand Zarathushtis of varying ages. Being

small in number, it required taking even firmer measures to ensure the safety and health of our community.

This resulted in our Nowruz festivities and events being canceled; simultaneously those who may have traveled recently were requested to self-quarantine for two weeks along with their immediate families. Soon after the fourteen days of quarantine had ended, we were out in the open, greeting friends and neighbors within the Parsi colony. The pandemic made us realize how fortunate we are to be living in one of the gated community colonies in Karachi, which provide us a safe space to be outdoors, instead of being cooped up in our houses.

Everyone has been adopting to



the pandemic and its effects in different ways. For most of the world, the days are spent staring at screens, working online, studying, and keeping in touch with friends and family through the daily Zoom and WhatsApp encounters. As the days pass by, we keep hearing about the palpably cleaner air, the quietness on the streets that was much needed, and the chirping of the birds. But as evening approaches, there is a spill of people onto the colony streets, in phases. While *khawanu* (eating) and *peewanu*

(drinking) is still our priority (and I must add that this pandemic has brought out the master chef in several of us), we have also incorporated physical exercise into our routine. From 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm, one is bound to come across small groups of people, walking or cycling in the colony while maintaining appropriate physical distance. Young children, who are unable to play at the colony playground, cycle with their parents. Even the residents of other Parsi colonies have managed to evolve with the pandemic looming large. Individuals are seen brisk walking around the compound as the sun starts to set and by night, it's just the wind howling with the empty benches in sight.

Over the weeks, several community events were canceled due to the city-wide lock down. The annual volleyball and throwball tournament between teams representing different Parsi colonies and *baghs* that is a decades long tradition during the Islamic month of Ramadan, was canceled, which was thoroughly disappointing, but understandable.

As Karachi Parsis, one of the things we miss the most is the regular restaurant visits and home deliveries, especially on weekends when we spend time with extended family and friends. This loss of taste has become a sensory quarantine. However, there is always a bright side to everything and what keeps us motivated is the reminiscing of all the memories and generational bonds whilst flipping through family cookbooks and preparing meals.

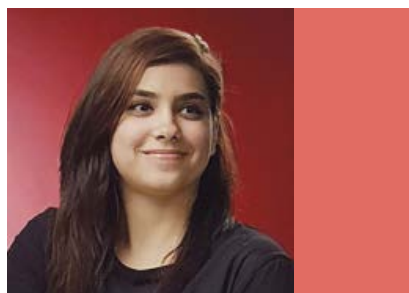
Oral storytelling has become one

of the things that pass the days of the young ones as they spend quality time with their grandparents learning about Parsi culture and heritage. Others have been documenting their daily life with photographs as their social habits keep changing. One of the by-

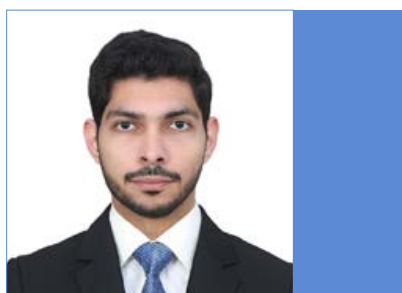
products of the lock down is the revival of indoor and board games, the learning of new crafts, and the inculcation of hobbies.

Life has transformed drastically over the past couple of months, and we have a long way to go

before things go back to 'normal'. Hopefully, we shall make it across the unpredictable journey as long as we take responsibility for our well-being, avoid potential risks, and adopt a proactive attitude. *



Zeritta Mavalvala holds a Bachelor of Architecture degree from the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture in Karachi. She is currently working as an architect at Mundist, an interdisciplinary studio that provides residential, commercial, landscape, and interior design solutions.



Homi Sethna holds a Bachelor's degree in Accounting & Finance from the Institute of Business Management in Karachi, Pakistan. He is planning to continue studies and has applied for a Master's in Computer Science.



Safna Virji studied MBBS from Aga Khan University Hospital in Karachi, Pakistan. She is currently working as a general surgery resident at the same place.

ACROSS THE RAINBOW

Harmony in Helping Hands organised their first ever online, and sixth overall, concert, ACROSS THE RAINBOW on May 27, 2020. It was a fund raiser for The National Institute of Child Health, Karachi,

Harmony in Helping Hands is the brainchild of Rashna Gazder who uses art and music to raise funds for various children's charities. For this event, she was partnered by her son, Dr. Darayus Gazder, who came up with the idea of the concert and is on the front line in the fight against COVID-19 in Karachi.

The concert was available as a non-shareable video link for view for 24 hours. It featured classical and popular piano performances as well as songs. One of the numbers, John Lennon's 'Imagine' was performed by Azad Iqbal, grandson of Freedom Fighter, Allama Muhammad Iqbal.





ZOROASTRIAN TRUST FUNDS OF EUROPE

A Report by the President

By Malcom Deboo

Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) in the United Kingdom has been established for over 155 years. It remains the oldest established religious voluntary organisation in the UK of South Asian origin. Zarathushtis are recognized as one of the nine world faith communities in the UK, although we are the smallest.

ZTFE continues to serve the Zarathushti community during these challenging times. Our 700-seater, heritage-listed Zoroastrian Centre in London was closed to the public following the lock down announcement by UK Government on March 16, 2020. Since then some have been infected by COVID-19, including our patron, Lord Karan F Bilimoria CBE DL and, sadly, there have also been deaths of some Zarathushtis here.

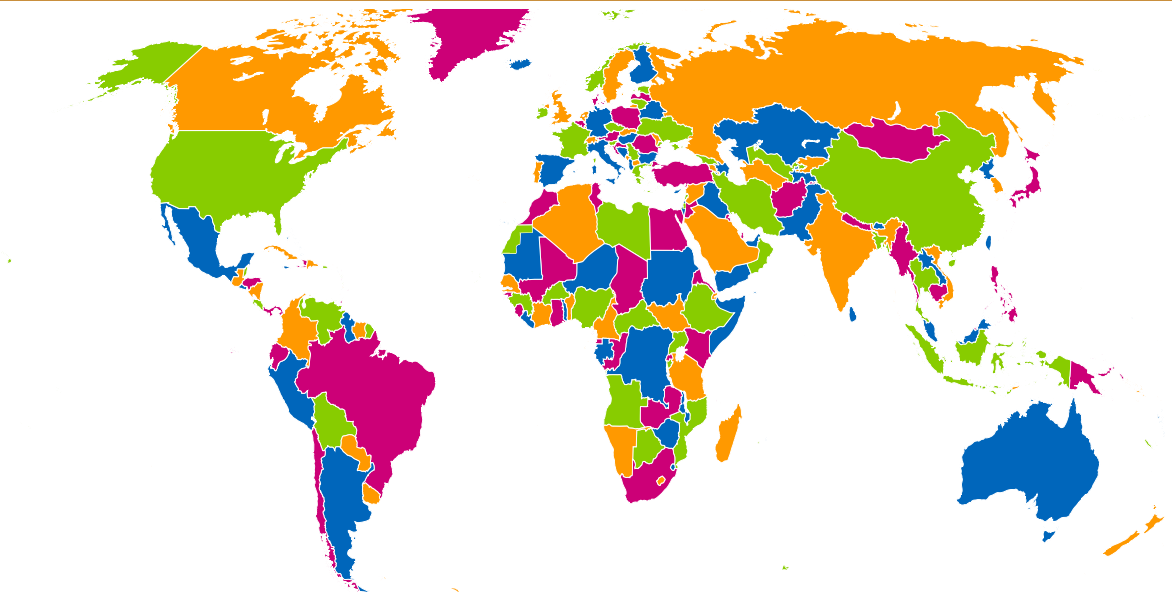
ZTFE has successfully managed to continue with all essential prayers and ceremonies as a result of the far-sighted actions of our donors and the Management Committee in availing of services of our resident Ervad Yazad T Bhadha with the support of a volunteer Ervad to continue to work as usual through this crisis, and provide the spiritual sustenance and support that our co-religionists need at this unprecedented time. They continue to perform religious ceremonies - so far, at least five monthly *Boi* ceremonies and jashans on Nowruz, for Ava Parab and on Khordad Sal. They were live streamed on YouTube and proved popular. Children's religious educational classes are also live streamed.

ZTFE has regular briefing meetings with the UK Government, Metropolitan Police, and UK interfaith networks. Following the UK Government guidance announced on March 16, 2020 on social distancing, ZTFE's Management Committee, subcommittees and volunteers, including Care in the Zoroastrian Community (CZC), Zoroastrian Senior Citizens Care Home (ZSCH), 50s+ Z Club, Young Zoroastrians, and Children's Educational Fun Club, recognised

that the lock down will cause concern to many senior citizens and those with underlying health conditions. Over some time volunteers of all these groups have built up a social network. CZC volunteers built up a network of dedicated volunteers, which maintain regular telephone contact with Zarathushti senior citizens. The volunteers keep in touch with them to alleviate any apprehension or feelings of loneliness, and if in the event they have to stay at home, then volunteers assist by doing their shopping and other errands provided all appropriate necessary precautions are taken. CZC is also working with food outlets and fundraising e.g. Rangrez Indian Restaurant, Ealing, London, as they provide freshly cooked simple meals for people who cannot go shopping or cook for themselves. These meals are provided free of charge and delivered to those in need, such as self-isolating 65+ and National Health Service (NHS) hospital staff.

ZTFE also continues to raise funds for related causes in affected parts of the world where Zarathushtis reside, including Parzor's initiative for medical aid for Yazd, Iran; Masina Hospital, Mumbai; food distribution to low income Zarathushtis by WZO Trust India; and support for impoverished mobeds and *chasniwallas* because the lack of religious activities in *agiaris* has affected their livelihood.

Like all other businesses and charities globally, ZTFE too has been impacted by the deterioration of the financial markets and significantly lower levels of community activity due to the lock down and social distancing measures. From June 1, our paid Secretariat is on furlough until further notice. ZTFE experienced similar financial challenges after World War II because of our contribution to the war effort. Thus, we are taking this downturn in our stride. By the Grace of Ahura Mazda, ZTFE is in a much better position now than we were after the War. Together our community will get through this united and stronger.*



A GLOBAL ROUND UP

In **Melbourne**, Australia, Zoroastrian Association of Victoria (ZAV) used Facebook to stay connected with their community. They live streamed prayers for *Atash-Nu-Parab*, *Zarhosht-No-Diso* and Friday nightly prayers where priests pray a *Tandorošti*. ZAV also has a Sunday School virtual learning group and ongoing emotional support for the community. They also have regular online chats with alcohol and snacks so they can spend time with friends and have some laughs.

Perth, Australia has 250-300 Zarathushtis. Zoroastrian Association of Western Australia (ZAWA) reached out to the community offering assistance, economic and other, but fortunately Western Australia has not been hard hit and the community fared well.

In **Hong Kong** the situation has been very different and mostly in working mode. Hong Kong has

only had just over 1,000 cases of COVID-19 and four deaths (at the time of writing). They have slowed down and there have been some restrictions but it has not been a pandemic as the rest of the world has experienced. Some places have been closed like sports facilities but restaurants have remained open, keeping social distancing in mind, they allow gatherings of up to four people and in May they allowed gatherings of up to eight people. Businesses that had to close were effected and so were people who lost their jobs or have been asked to take unpaid leave or reduction in salaries.

From the start, all kindergarten classes, schools, and Universities were suspended. Once that was put in place, parents had to be with their children to monitor their online school work. This was the major impact on society in Hong Kong.

The local Zoroastrian association,

The Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton & Macao (ZCFHK), has been supporting Masina Hospital for their isolation units and also with WZO for their food programs in India.

Neville Shroff, Chairman of ZCFHK, has been working throughout this time and has kept his business open, even though it's slow, so that it boosts morale of the employees and they can get paid to feed their families. He has been hoping to get new business and contracts from the pandemic by offering up new PPE items created by his company to Europe. The trustees are fully committed to the health, safety and well-being of all our members here.

Additionally, Neville Shroff wrote in an email: "Safety and wellbeing of our community is our top priority and paramount importance. We were prudent to have taken some proactive steps well in advance based on advice

from relevant organisations.

At no cost was I prepared to take any risks particularly with a growing elderly community. It is an extremely tough call as by making certain decisions within the guidelines of the HKSAR Government and Health Authorities, some of the decisions were not well received, but never the less if we fail in our duty to do the right thing it reflects on us and shows extreme lack of judgement and leadership on our part.

In that light, even well before Jamshedi Nowruz, we had made the correct decision to postpone all forthcoming events until further notice. This included all social events and gatherings from our Zoroastrian Building are all at a standstill.

Jashan was performed by our

mobedji; and held respecting the religious sentiments of some. But the Trustees clearly emphasised that they did not recommend attendance; and the members were informed “they may wish to exercise their own judgement and assume the risk of their own accord.” There was no snacks, food or drinks, as we were trying to discourage social gathering. Fortunately, nearly all members respected the decision of the trustees and did not attend.”

In Singapore, Parsi Zoroastrian Association of South East Asia (PZAS) held their AGM on March 15 at the Zoroastrian House. Measures were put in place for temperature taking and obtaining travel declarations (prior to the Circuit Breaker rules in Singapore) at the venue itself. In addition, since the government directive was for senior citizens to stay home, the committee arranged for members

to dial into the AGM and vote for the Managing Committee.

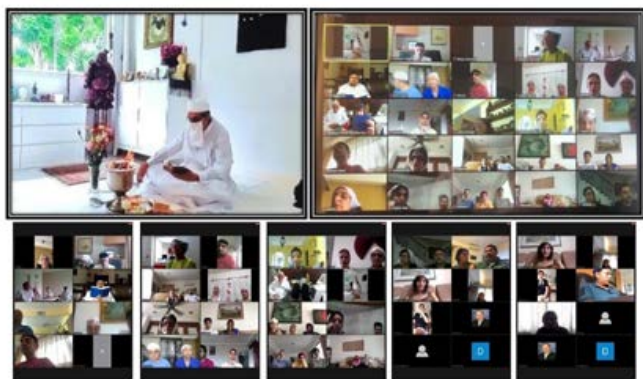
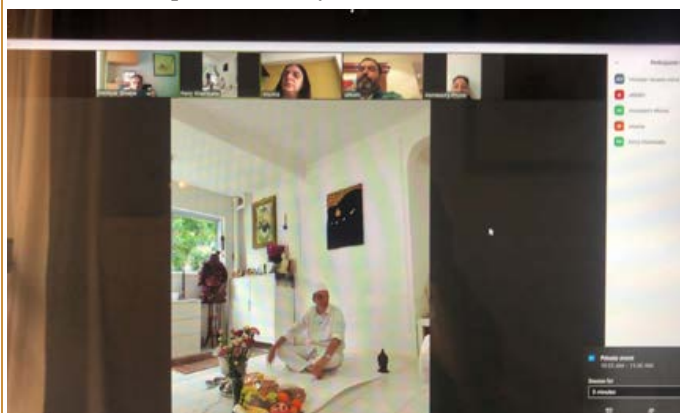
Every May 1, PZAS holds a jashan ceremony at the Parsi burial ground. Since this year it was not possible, they had it held over Zoom (see photos). Ervad Percy Khambatta performed the ceremony from his residence and it ended with a humbandagi with everyone joining in, including members from Bangalore and Calcutta.

Since May 1st, PZAS has organized weekly Sunday morning prayers, a Bingo Fundraiser with money going to local charities and an Online Quiz event.

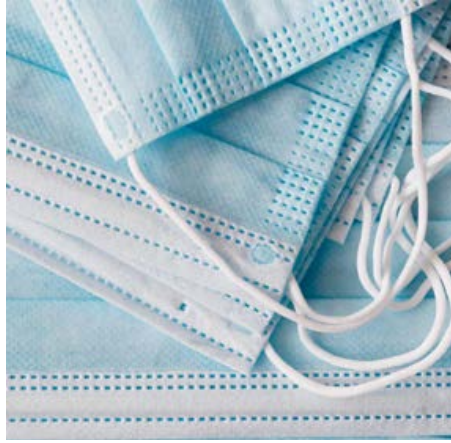
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates hosts a thriving community now rising to about 30 plus families. There has never been an official Association, so they call themselves the “Abu Dhabi Bawa Gang”. Each weekend, the close-knit group would meet for pot-lucks on Thursday’s and bowling on Fridays, but COVID-19 has moved activities online. They have organized Bingo on Zoom. Magic shows, art lessons and concerts are all in the planning process, mostly organized by youth who are currently living away from their families in other countries. One young adult, Persis Zack in the UK, has pioneered the first ever Global Zoroastrian Facebook Page, with the immediate uptake of over 7000+ members.

Globally, Zarathushtis have banded together to keep connected and assist one another.*

- *Afreed Mistry (bio on page 24) collated the information from reports by Khurshed Mirza (ZAV) and Homiyar Vasanja (PZAS), Neville Shroff (ZCFHK), Narius Irani (ZAWA).*
- *Additional information about ZCFHK from Neville Shroff.*
- *Information about residents of the United Arab Emirates from an article, “Unity in Adversity: The Abu Dhabi Bawa Gang” in Parsi Khabar on May 26, 2020 by Mahzarin Katrak and Sheherazad F. Kapadia.*



Ervad Percy Khambatta performed a jashan via Zoom, Singapore.



CORONAVIRUS Simply Explained

By Vispi Kanga

ParsiKhabar.net has posted Dr. Zarir F. Udawadia's very informative TEDx Gateway interview on coronavirus. According to Dr. Udawadia, "In 120 days, the world as we know has changed beyond our wildest dreams and beyond our most dystopian nightmare. The virus has changed the life of millions of people and this is not the last pandemic that we will face". Therefore, it is important to know some facts about this virus.

The official name of the disease: COVID-19 (previously known as 2019 novel coronavirus), The official name of the virus: SARS-CoV-2 (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2)

COVID-19 VS. THE FLU

Why has the coronavirus caused a pandemic and is a bigger deal than seasonal flu? Both are infectious respiratory illnesses. The difference has to do with RNA sequencing (genetics). While sequencing DNA gives a genetic profile of an organism, sequencing RNA reflects only the sequences that are actively expressed in the cells. Seasonal flu is an "all human virus". The DNA/RNA chains that make up the virus are recognized by the human immune system. This means that your body has some immunity to it before it comes around each year. You get immunity either through exposure to a virus, or by getting a flu shot.

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) viruses come from animals. The World Health Organization (WHO) tracks novel viruses in animals, (sometimes for years watching for mutations). Usually these viruses only transfer from animal to animal (pigs in the case of H1N1 and birds in the case of the Spanish flu). But once, one of these animal viruses mutates and starts to transfer from animals to humans, then there is a serious problem. The reason is SARS-CoV-2, which jumped from animals, is an RNA virus since its genetic material is encoded in RNA. Human RNA produced by our DNA is targeted by this new coronavirus. Our immune system was never 'introduced'

to these novel viruses, so it does not know how to respond to the uninvited guest. When this virus infects humans, the human protein synthesis mechanism mistakes it for RNA produced by its own DNA. As this occurs, the human immune system needs to retaliate because it needs to ‘catch up’ with the virus’ evolution and create an immune response. The human body has never been confronted with this threat before, and, therefore, has no pre-existing immunity in its arsenal.

When the coronavirus infects the human host it latches onto a host cell, entering it or injecting bits of itself into it, and then hijacking it. It forces the host cell to make copies of the virus, all of which will go on to hijack other host cells. Our hijacked cells serve as virus factories, reading the virus’s RNA and making long viral proteins to compromise the immune system. The virus assembles new copies of itself and spreads to more parts of the body. Thus, coronavirus infected humans pass on the infection to other humans by way of coughs, sneezes, surface or aerosolized transmission.

Coronavirus existed in animals only and nobody knows for how long. Then one day, at an animal market, in Wuhan China in December 2019, it mutated and made the jump from animal to people. At first, only animals could give this virus to a person. But

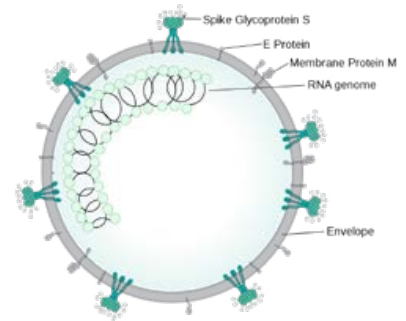
what happened was that in just *two weeks* it mutated again and gained the ability to jump from human to human. Scientists call this virus “slippery” because it evolves fast. A deep dive into the genetics of the novel coronavirus shows it seems to have spent some time infecting both bats and pangolins before it jumped into humans. But they said it’s too soon to blame pangolins for the pandemic and say a third species of animal may have played host to the virus before it spilled over to people.

What is clear is that the coronavirus has swapped genes repeatedly with similar strains infecting bats, pangolins and a possible third species, a team of researchers from Duke University, Los Alamos National Laboratory and elsewhere reported in the journal Science Advances.

Since this Coronavirus was not a “human” virus (to which we would have some natural or acquired immunity), it took off like a rocket and turned into a pandemic. It so happens that this mutated animal virus changed itself in such a way that it causes great damage to human lungs. History has shown that fast and immediate closings of public places has helped in the past pandemics.

As per WHO, there are currently no drugs licensed for the treatment or prevention of COVID-19.

DESTROY THE VIRUS



According to John Hopkins Coronavirus Research Center, the virus is not a living organism, but a protein molecule (DNA) covered by a protective layer of lipid (fat) which, when absorbed by the cells of the ocular (eyes), nasal (nose) or buccal (mouth) mucosa, changes their genetic code (mutates) and converts them into aggressor and multiplier cells. Since the virus is not a living organism, but a protein molecule, it is not killed, but decays on its own. The disintegration time depends on the temperature, humidity and type of material where it lies.

The virus is very fragile; the only thing that protects it is a thin outer layer of fat. That is why any soap or detergent is the best remedy, because the foam “cuts” the “fat” (that is why you have to rub for 20 seconds or more to make a lot of foam). By dissolving the fat layer, the protein molecule disperses and breaks down on its own. Alcohol or any mixture with over 65% alcohol (hand sanitizers) also dissolves the external lipid layer of



the virus. Also, a mixture of 1-part bleach and 5 parts water directly dissolves the protein, breaks it down from the inside. Refer: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/>.

PRACTICE PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Coronavirus patients remain contagious for much longer than those with flu, in one case as long as 37 days. To fight coronavirus, we need to know: Who has it, where they are, where they have been and with whom they have had contact with. In the absence of rapid and wide testing, it is better to protect yourself by maintaining six feet distance between you and someone

who may have coronavirus but is still not showing symptoms. Even if you don't show symptoms or do not get tested, health experts recommend quarantining yourself for 14 days if you have been exposed to coronavirus by being in close contact with someone who has been confirmed or suspected to have the disease. You may not know if you have been exposed, but if you start to show respiratory signs or symptoms, you should self-quarantine for 14 days and seek medical advice.

REFER TO CREDIBLE SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Finally, despite official warnings and monitoring, viral messages touting conspiracy theories and phony medical advice, misinformation and hoaxes regarding the virus has continued to spread online on platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. The World Health Organization (WHO), country-specific government agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH), WebMD, Mayo Clinic, John Hopkins in the US, the National Health Service in the UK, or the Public Health Agency of Canada and India, are your best bet for COVID-19 health and behavioral information and recommendations.

The Science of Testing

COVID-19 is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation. There are 39 clinical studies as of June 1. They are both federally-funded and funded by NIH. Reference: ClinicalTrials.gov

BASIC REPRODUCTION NUMBER (R0)

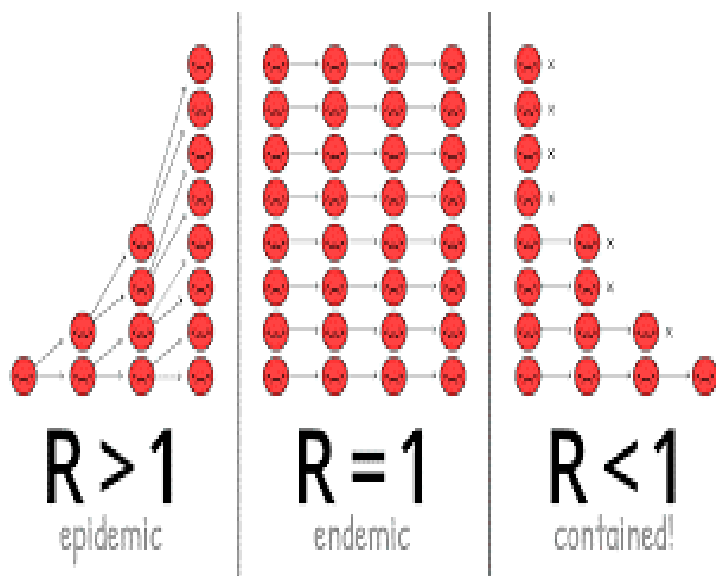
This is pronounced R-nought. R refers to reproduction and 0 to the zeroth generation, as in patient zero. This describes the average number of new infections that a single infectious person can generate in a population that was not previously exposed to the virus.

COVID-19 has a R0 of 2 to 2.5. This is significantly higher than the Flu (1.3-1.7). Estimates can vary by location and other factors. Control measures can lower a virus's "R0". An R0 greater than one suggests that the number of people infected is likely to grow, whereas a R0 of less than one suggests that the viral transmission "is likely to die out". To know how quickly a virus spreads, you also need its serial interval, or average time between each successive infection. Some studies estimate the coronaviruses at 4 to 4.5 days which is almost twice as fast as SARS, which is why the coronavirus spreads so much more quickly.

VIRAL SHEDDING

Viral shedding is what happens when a virus has infected a host, has reproduced, and is now being released into the environment. It is what makes a patient infectious. The flu virus typi-

According to JAMA (Journal of the American Medical Association) and ISIRV (International Society for Influenza and Respiratory Virus Diseases) studies,



cally sheds in the first two days after symptoms start, and this can last for up to a week. But a study in *Lancet* which had looked at Coronavirus patients in China, showed that survivors were still shedding the coronavirus for around 20 days (or until death). One was still shedding at 37 days, while the shortest time detected was eight days. This suggests coronavirus patients remain contagious for much longer than those with Flu.

CORONAVIRUS TESTING

To fight coronavirus, we need to know: who has it, where they are, where they have been and with whom they have had contact with.

- A viral test tells you if you have a current infection.
- An antibody test tells you if you had a previous infection.

Who should be tested for COVID-19?

Individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19 should be tested for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so that they will know to isolate themselves from others so as not to spread the disease. In certain cases, such as outbreak investigation, testing of people without symptoms is also indicated.

There are two main types of tests: Molecular and Serological:

- **Molecular test:** When you have symptoms of SARS-CoV-2 infection and/or have been exposed to someone with the virus.
- **Antibody test:** When you previously had or suspected you had COVID-19 and your healthcare provider wants to determine if you have antibodies to the virus.

Molecular Tests

Most used test is a nasopharyngeal swab, where a special Q-tip is put up your nose to take a sample. This swab is then sent out to a laboratory that can extract the virus's RNA since COVID-19 is an RNA virus which

uses ribonucleic acid as its genetic material. It requires a process called "reverse transcription (RT)", to transcribe its RNA into DNA. Reverse transcription is the process that some other viruses called retroviruses, use to make a DNA copy of their RNA genome. These tests are highly specific because they are based on the unique genetic sequence of SARS-CoV-2. If a test comes back positive, you can be confident that there was SARS-CoV-2 viral RNA in the specimen collected from the patient. However, the sensitivity of these tests varies based on both the timing and the way the sample is collected. Ideally, samples should be collected near the time of symptom onset to achieve the highest test sensitivity. Patients who are infected but not yet symptomatic may have false-negative test results, as may those whose symptoms are waning.

A positive result indicates that SARS-CoV-2 viral RNA genetic material is present, but it does not indicate that bacterial or other infections also are present. A negative result indicates that the SARS-CoV2 virus that causes the COVID-19 disease was not found. It is possible to have a very low level of the virus in the body with a negative test result.

Even if you don't show symptoms or do not get tested, health experts recommend quarantining yourself for 14 days if you have been exposed to coronavirus by being in close contact with someone who has been confirmed or suspected to have the disease. You may not know if you have been exposed, but if you start to show respiratory signs or symptoms, you should self-quarantine for 14 days and seek medical advice.

Serological Tests

These are antibody tests, which essentially detect whether someone's immune system has reacted to the

coronavirus, regardless of whether they had symptoms. Antibodies are created by the human immune system to fight off foreign invaders, like the coronavirus. If you test positive for SARS-CoV-2 antibodies, that usually means that you were likely infected with COVID-19 at some time in the past. It may also mean that you have some immunity.

SARS-CoV-2 antibody tests are intended for use as an aid in identifying individuals with an adaptive immune response to SARS-CoV-2, indicating recent or prior infection, by detecting antibodies to SARS-CoV-2 in human blood. The test detects the body's immune response to the infection caused by the virus rather than detecting the virus itself.

Serological tests use small amounts of blood, usually from a finger prick. Doctors test for two kinds of antibodies to SARS-CoV-2. They look for: IgM antibodies, which develop early in an infection, and IgG antibodies, which are more likely to show up later after you have recovered. It takes your body about one to three weeks to develop IgM antibodies after symptom onset.

According to CDC, it remains uncertain whether individuals with antibodies (neutralizing or total) are protected against reinfection with SARS-CoV-2, and if so, what concentration of antibodies is needed to confer protection. Ongoing studies will eventually reveal more data on this.

In the future, this may potentially be used to help determine, together with other clinical data, that such individuals are no longer susceptible to infection and can return to work. Roche's COVID-19 antibody test received FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) and is available in markets accepting the CE mark. FDA approval always requires a full clinical trial or trials, whereas the CE

Mark can be obtained through a clinical evaluation. The FDA website lists all tests authorized for emergency use under EUA.

How long does it take to get test results?

The time can vary based on several factors. Some testing machines promise results in <30 minutes, whereas some laboratory methods can take hours. If a health facility has to send a test out to a separate laboratory, it can take additional time due to transit plus additional time to relay the test result to the healthcare provider and patient.

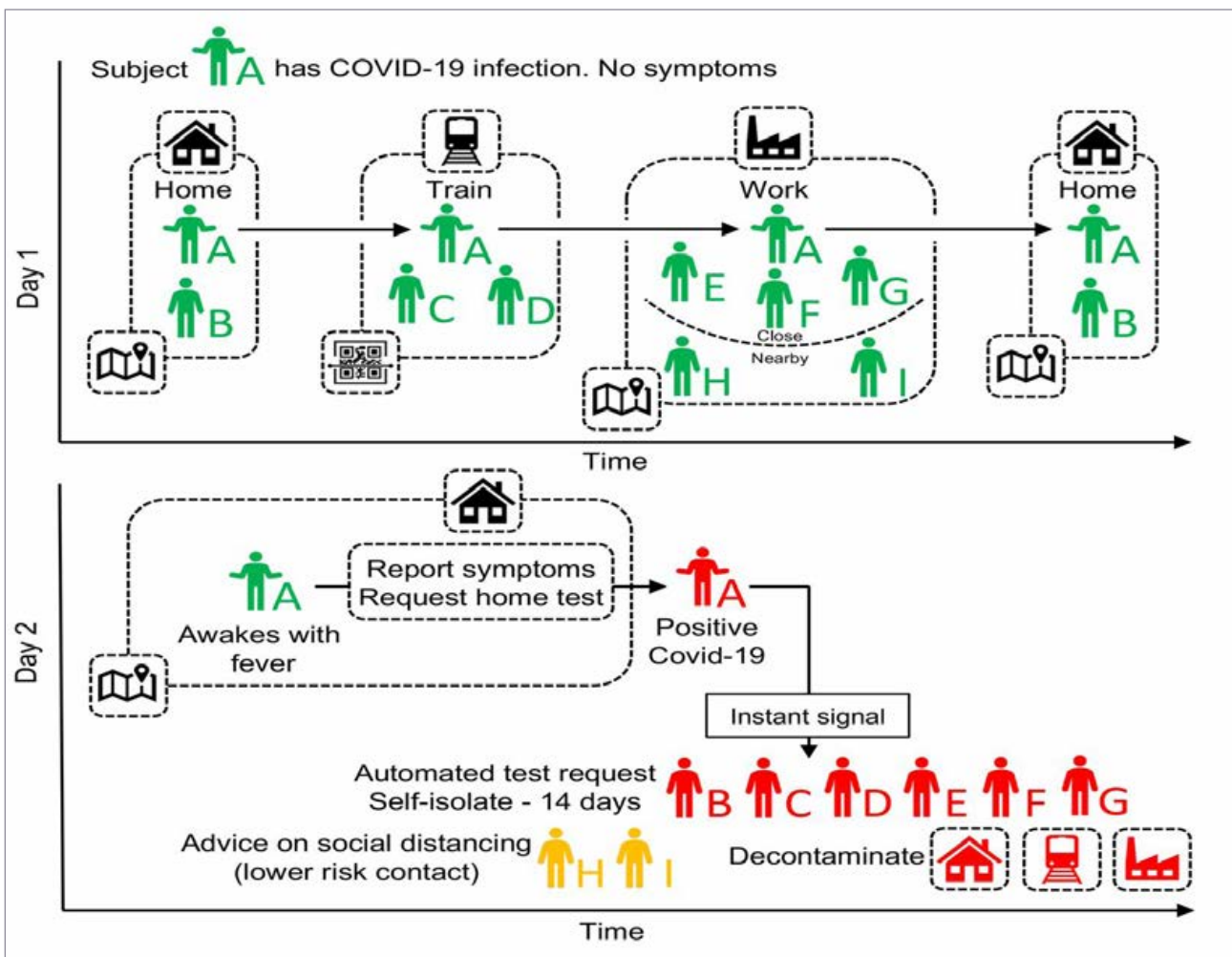
The FDA named more than two dozen coronavirus antibody diagnostics that should be taken off the market weeks after the agency closed its open-door policy on COVID-19

blood tests and required developers to submit their products and data for review. The National Institute of Health (NIH) mobilizes national innovation initiative for COVID-19 diagnostics. "We need all innovators, from the basement to the boardroom, to come together to advance diagnostic technologies, no matter where they are in development," said NIH Director Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D

EXPOSURE NOTIFICATION TECHNOLOGY (CONTACT TRACING)

Contact tracing is a critically important tool in pandemic response. Public health officials have long used this tactic to break the chain of transmission of infectious diseases and limit the spread of infections.

Google and Apple are now building a coronavirus tracking system using iOS and Android APIs to create "exposure notification technology" using AES encryption algorithm to help in the fight against COVID-19. Users on an opt-in basis will be allowed to share data through Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) transmissions and approved apps from health organizations. Automated contact tracing involves using smartphones, using a public-health app in tandem with Bluetooth to detect when two people are close to each other for long enough that there is a significant risk of contagion, so that one can be warned if the other is later diagnosed with having the disease. The world's first contact-tracing app built on the backbone of the API jointly developed by Google and Apple was just launched as a large-scale pilot in Switzerland.*



Guest Editor's Note: Although contact tracing has benefits in containing the spread of COVID-19, there are some privacy-related risks. Data has potential vulnerability to malicious hacking. Also, there is a potential for governments, private companies that operate the app or have access to its data to use the data for vested purposes not directly related to disease containment, such as law enforcement, immigration, insurance, or marketing. More robust discussions are necessary to put in safeguards before adopting these technologies.



Vispi Kanga was the principal scientist in global technology at Unilever and has more than 35 years' experience in product development in dermatology and skin care formulations, working for multi-national companies. His postgraduate degree is from Arnold & Marie Schwartz College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences.

Dr. Zarir F. Udwadia (referenced in the beginning of this article), is a renown pulmonologist on the Core Committee of doctors elected by the Indian government to inform Mumbai's COVID-19 pandemic response.

His TEDxGateway webinar "Lessons from a Doctor in the Front-line" explaining the pandemic is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtKnnapPPq0>



VACCINE NEWS

Adar Poonawalla says Serum Institute of India is delighted to partner with AstraZeneca in bringing COVID-19 vaccine to India as well as low-and-middle-income countries.

British-Swedish multinational biopharmaceutical company AstraZeneca on Thursday announced it has reached a licensing agreement with Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) to supply one billion doses of University of Oxford's potential Covid-19 vaccine, AZD1222, for low-and-middle-income countries, with a commitment to provide 400 million before the end of 2020.

Adar Poonawalla, Chief Executive Officer, SII, said that the Serum Institute of India is delighted to partner with AstraZeneca in bringing this vaccine to India as well as low-and-middle-income countries. "Over the past 50 years, SII has built significant capability in vaccine manufacturing and supply globally. We will work closely with AstraZeneca to ensure fair and equitable distribution of the vaccine in these countries," he said.

The Cambridge-based company is building a number of supply chains in parallel across the world to support global access at no profit during the pandemic and has so far secured manufacturing capacity for two billion doses of the potential vaccine, it said in a statement.

(From *AstraZeneca joins Serum Institute of India to supply 1 billion doses of Oxford's COVID-19 vaccine*. TimesNowNews.com, June 5, 2020).



OUR HEROES *in scrubs*

Across the world, grateful people have clapped and banged on pots and pans to show their gratitude for those fighting the pandemic on the frontline. Fezana Journal would also like to thank all healthcare staff for putting themselves on the line to save so many others.

Dr. Cyrus Joshi - A Frontline Hero

Dr. Cyrus Joshi, MD, Internal Medicine, lives in Louisville, KY, with his wife, Neena, and his children, Kaezad, and Maya. While he runs his own medical practice, he also attends to patients in a local Louisville hospital, when he is covering for other physicians. During this pandemic, he has been on the frontline, working tirelessly with COVID-19 patients daily at a local hospital.

He says that initially life was stressful, but now it has

become more of a routine. At first, he and Neena were very worried as to what would happen if he became infected with the virus, or worse, brought it home and infected the family. Now after doing this for over a month, they have both become more accustomed to it. Dr. Joshi is also gravely concerned about the safety of his non-COVID-19 patients. Before rapid testing, when it would take over four days to get the test results, he would hope that he would not be inadvertently carrying the virus to his non-COVID



patients from the infected patients.

Initially, there was an intense shortage of personal protection equipment (PPE) such as masks and gowns. In the hospital, doctors were told not to wear more than one gown per day, and reuse their masks as well. Dr. Joshi would scrub his gown down with disinfectant between patients, and would try to keep the COVID-19-positive patients to be seen last. At one point, doctors were notified by the hospital authorities that they may completely run out of PPE and were told to buy rain ponchos and wear them in the hospital! Thankfully, he said, he did not have to resort to that. Now things are better, but masks are still precious and they only get one new mask per day from the hospital.

Dr. Joshi is careful that he does everything he can to keep his family and staff safe. After he completes his hospital rounds, he sanitizes all exposed parts of his skin, like the back of the neck, with sanitizer and disinfectant wipes. He also changes out of scrubs into new ones every day at the hospital before coming home. He is grateful that the hospital has been providing them with scrubs in the doctors' lounge. The hospital sanitizes the used scrubs and leaves fresh ones out for the doctors. He also showers as soon as he gets home.

Dr. Joshi says that this virus has made him realize the frailty of the human body, and the resilience of our immune system. He shared, "It does affect me mentally when I see younger people suffer and die from this virus. Two days ago, I lost a 53-year-old lady, a mother, and, I believe, a recent grand-mother, after a long battle in the ICU. I also had to treat a 28-year-old nurse who, thankfully, survived, but not before giving us all a scare".

Dr Joshi sincerely urges everyone "to please listen to the scientists, epidemiologists and doctors, because in the end, we all are one, interconnected hive of human beings, and if we do not come together as one to protect our weakest, oldest, and the most frail, then we all have lost our humanity". *

Submitted by Bakhtavar Desai, President, ZAKOI.

Zoey - A Nurse on the Front Line

As a Registered Nurse, I've been given the chance to observe multiple perspectives from our community, as COVID-19 has continued to change life from what we once knew it to be. The overwhelming fear of physical danger from Covid-19 takes front seat among members of our community. However, it isn't the only way the pandemic has impacted us.

Emotional grief, anxiety, and frustration have plagued many of us. The things we all looked forward to, taken away from us; cancelled weddings, graduation ceremonies, highly anticipated family vacations, job loss, losing the means of providing, cancelled baby showers, not being able to spend time with our loved ones or even being able to attend funerals for those whom we've lost. These just to name a few dreadful

changes to the life we expected to live these past few months.

One painfully unwanted change we see at the hospital are family members unable to see their loved ones during their last moments. Visitors can put everyone at a greater risk of contracting COVID-19. We are also concerned for those who are reluctant to visit the hospital with other conditions to get the help they need because of their fear of exposure to COVID-19.

The mental struggles that come as a result of the pandemic are experienced by the staff as well. An increase in patient volume means longer shifts in an even more demanding environment for our nurses and doctors. We have employed many changes to the

normal routine including the strict use of protective attire and equipment, all of which come with many challenges for our staff as well. The mental effects due to high stress of our jobs leave our staff exhausted and in need of relief.

For the many healthcare workers that put in all of their energy, time, care and compassion for the sake of our community, changes must be made to our healthcare system. The changes we make must keep mental health and stress reduction along with physical safety and accessibility at the centre of its focus.

My heart is with those who have been affected by the pandemic. I will give all I can to continue to serve my city, my community and my co-workers. For many of us life may not “simply go back to normal” but this doesn’t have to be the reality that we look forward to if more of us do our part and contribute to a better tomorrow. *

Editor's Note: Zoey practices in the Greater Toronto Area, Canada. As per her hospital's privacy policy, she prefers not to share her full name.



Beware of Ventilators

An unknown nurse circulated information on social media about what it is like to be on a ventilator. Fezana Journal fact checked it with one of our front line heroes and she said, “the information is not inaccurate, but seems intended to scare people and is extremely morbid; it is rare to put a patient on an ice fluid bed to reduce a fever”.

For starters, it's NOT an oxygen mask put over the mouth while the patient is comfortably lying down and reading magazines. Ventilation for COVID-19 is a painful intubation that goes down your throat and stays there until you live or you die. It is done under anesthesia, [the patient remains] for 2 to 3 weeks without moving, often upside down,

with a tube inserted from the mouth up to the trachea which allows you to breathe to the rhythm of the lung machine. The patient can't talk or eat, or do anything naturally - the machine keeps you alive. The discomfort and pain they feel from this means medical experts have to administer sedatives and painkillers to ensure tube tolerance for as long as the machine is needed. It's like being in an artificial coma.

After 20 days from this treatment, a young patient loses 40% muscle mass, and gets mouth or vocal cords trauma, as well as possible pulmonary or heart complications. It is for this reason that old or already weak people can't withstand the treatment and die.

Add a tube into your stomach, either through your nose or skin for liquid food, a sticky bag around your butt to collect the diarrhea, a foley to collect urine, an IV for fluids and meds, an A-line to monitor your BP that is completely dependent upon finely calculated med doses, teams of nurses to reposition your limbs every two hours and lying on a mat that circulates ice cold fluid to help bring down your 104 degree temp.

Many of us are in this boat ... so stay safe unless you want to take the chance of ending up here. This is NOT the flu.

(Social media post; author unknown).

FAST, FURIOUS & FORTUNATE

By Anne Khademian and Gordiya Khademian

At 4:00 AM on March 15, Zarir fell out of bed. The thud shook us awake. His head was 90 degrees against the bed stand, eyes open, but unconscious. We checked his pulse and tried to wake him without moving him, frantically called 911, and waited for the ambulance. We didn't know if he hit his head and fell unconscious, or passed out from the 104 degree fever that washed over him during the night. "He might have COVID-19," we explained to the 911 operator. "He left work today early with a crushing headache and fever." He was becoming conscious as the EMTs arrived. They wore masks and gloves and asked him questions to determine if there was any trauma from the fall. We couldn't ride with him in the ambulance. If he had COVID-19, we were now exposed. "Call ahead to the ER at Suburban," the EMT explained, "and let them know you are coming so they can prepare. Do you have a mask? Wear a mask." Driving to the hospital through the blinking yellow lights in the predawn, we ran through the symptoms, "High fever and headache, but no cough, no shortness of breath. It can't be COVID-19."

Zarir was in a small containment room in the ER with a machine that drew the air out of the room to a large flexible duct connected to

the ceiling. The rooms, the nurse quickly explained, were configured for the Ebola outbreak a few years ago. She wore protective gear, face mask, plastic shield, goggles, blue long-sleeved gown, and gloves. She tested Zarir for three different strains of flu, strep throat, and COVID-19. The nurse took Zarir to radiology for a CT scan of his head and neck to rule out trauma, a complex effort with a potential COVID-19 positive patient, and after a few more hours in the cold containment room, they sent us home at 10:00 AM. "You should have the results in 24 hours," a nurse reassuringly called out to us. Our own 20-day quarantine began.

We wouldn't know the test results until Zarir was hospitalized a second time later in the week when his breathing problems began. Instructed by our doctor to take him to the ER right away, the hospital managed to get the results in-hand before we arrived: COVID-19 positive. This time the ER staff met him at the door, strapped on a hospital bracelet, and took him briskly inside. He would be moved to an isolation ward that day, and immediately to ICU when his blood pressure and pulse plummeted. Then, twenty four hours after he had been admitted, he was "stable" and was sent home.

He went right to bed. His hands were in tight fists and he held his arms stiffly across his chest. The headache pain radiated through his body, and any movement required tremendous effort and strength that was disappearing. "What medication did the hospital prescribe?" our friends and family asked. "Nothing, just Tylenol." As a physician, Zarir reads the images of the brain, neck and spine with the neuroradiology team at Children's National Medical Center. When the hallucinations began, he started dictating the case of a large tumor growing in his own brain as if he was reading the MR images of a brain scan, noting the segment of the brain, the size of the tumor, and the need to consult with colleagues. We would reassuringly remind him there was no tumor in his brain. He would say, "ok," and then begin describing the tumor again in excruciating detail. He stopped eating, could barely drink.

Two weeks into the illness, standing near the shower, he started to fade. His eyes were blurry and he was looking into the distance; his knees slowly gave way, and his body sank to the ground. We grabbed him and sank to the ground with him so he would not hit his head. He lay there, staring, but unconscious, frozen in the moment as we shook his shoulders

and arms, asking, “Are you there? Can you hear us? Are you OK?” Thirty seconds later he closed his eyes, opened them again and was saying, “I’m here, I’m ok”. By the time our doctor called, he was in bed, sleeping. Blood pressure, breathing, temperature, stable.

We were a team. We monitored Zarir constantly to be sure he didn’t fall, had enough oxygen, and was able to eat something. We also had to function without spreading the virus, disinfecting every surface we touched, washing our hands and face and changing our clothes every time we entered Zarir’s room, or handled any of his food or clothing. Our inner thoughts were a constant stream of, “Put on the gloves and mask, strip the bed, get the sheets downstairs and into the washer without touching the wall, the door knobs, the railing, or the top of the washer.” “Don’t touch the handle of the faucet, use your elbow.” “Wash for 20 seconds, two happy birthdays.” “How do we get the plates Zarir used into the dishwasher? Don’t put the plate in the sink, don’t let it touch anything.” “Bleach everything, but be careful of the wipes; Costco and everywhere is out of stock.” “Did you clean your phone this morning?” “Did you touch the mail?” “Let the bags from outside sit for 24 hours. Then to the hall, then bleach down the containers.”

For three weeks we didn’t leave the house. Once our required quarantine was over, we began an evening walk with the dogs, face masks on, and a good distance from anyone else. When we would go out for walks we would see groups of high school kids walking together, riding their bikes behind us. We would see groups of families without masks, taking up the whole street. We would always take a wide

corner to keep six feet between us. It was, and is, so frustrating that people are oblivious to the danger of this virus. We were reminded of the danger when Zarir’s condition took another turn that required a trip to the ER and an ambulance ride to Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. He needed treatment of the COVID-19 lung disease that was compromising his breathing while the virus was still shedding five weeks after the first onset of fever.

After two months Zarir is finally COVID-19 free. In these two months he has lost twenty-two pounds and still struggles with reading and his short-term memory, but we have been so unbelievably lucky. We have insurance that covers the majority of the costs of his three hospitalizations. We have an amazing network of family and friends who have been with us every step of the way (by text, phone and prayers) providing food, medicine, masks, gloves and cleaning supplies when we were unable to go out. And we stayed employed and could work from home. As states are beginning to open up and the weather gets warmer, please keep our story in mind. This could happen to anyone, young, elderly, healthy, or immunocompromised. This could happen to us again. Please wear a mask, stay six feet away from other people, and avoid going out if you can. Please also think about who you vote for when elections come. Many are not as fortunate as we are, and this virus will continue to destroy lives and livelihoods. Access to healthcare, basic needs and a steady income is a necessity for all of us if we are to get out of this pandemic. We know this is hard, but so is waking up everyday unsure if today will be the day your loved one dies. *



Gordiya Khademian is the Administrative and Communications Assistant at the Middle East Studies Association. She received her BA in Politics from NYU in 2017 and an MA in Near Eastern Studies from NYU’s Hagop Kevorkian Center in 2019.



Anne Khademian is the President of ZAMWI and a professor and presidential fellow at Virginia Tech, working with the university office of the president on strategic priorities. She is the wife of Dr. Zarir Khademian and mother of Gordiya and Yasna (a student at McGill University).



If you have the funds to do so, please consider donating to a mutual aid fund in your area:

<https://itsgoingdown.org/c19-mutual-aid/>



A Corona Experience from the Epicenter

By Jehangir Madon

On January 23, 2020, China locked down the city of Wuhan. Fifteen million people were prohibited from leaving their houses. This sounded serious. I was not worried, I felt COVID-19 would be similar to SARS or MERS—something that would stay far away and fade.

“Che Disastro,” said my fiancée Anna’s friend as she learned about the first two cases in Italy. At first, we laughed at her reaction; this rapidly changed to concern as the virus quickly overwhelmed northern Italy. I started following news about the virus because Anna and I planned to be married this June in Venice, but now these plans were starting to look shaky.

By early March, we were living in two realities: one with terrifying updates from Italy and, the other, a blissfully ignorant New York City about what was to come. The shutdown was to occur in a week, but it was already too late. On March 8, only 14 cases were reported in NYC; it was also the last time I socialized.

Day of Infection: Although I was extremely careful, the first infected person I got to know was the one

staring back at me from the mirror. How? Touching my face? Linger-ing too long in a grocery store? I will never know how I got it.

Three days before symptoms (March 15). As I go to pick up my car from my brother, I feel a tickle in my throat. Immediately, I am SURE it is COVID-19. I convince myself I am being ridiculous, as there are only 149 cases in NYC. I have tea with honey, the cough goes away.

Two days before symptoms (March 16): My brother and I socially distance. I am happy my parents are safe in India.

One day before symptoms (March 17). Normally, I am a calm, happy-go-lucky person, but I now stress about COVID-19. I am the one telling friends and family to be extremely careful. Anna and I plan a little trip away from New York where it should be safer for the next 10

days; I will throw myself into work and forget about COVID-19 for a while.

Day 1 of Symptoms (March 18): I wake up feeling tired, but know our trip will cure my ills. I start to pack—a box of masala, food, and the thermometer my brother had given me. I decide to check my temperature: 100.6°F, which Google states is a fever. We cancel the Airbnb. I cannot believe that I have picked up some bug in these stressful times. But, it CAN’T be COVID-19, right? Just a fever and a bit of a cough.



8:00 pm update: I am sure it is COVID-19. I am sure I'm going to die.

9:00 pm update: I am sure it is not COVID-19, I am better already. I just spat up some green phlegm, which is not a symptom of Covid-19, right? The rollercoaster has started.

Day 2 (March 19): So, phlegm IS a sign of COVID-19. I am calm as I feel a little better and, by evening, the fever is only 99.6°F. I check with my brother, he is okay. Anna sleeps in the other room, just in case. I intend to work the next day and maybe go away from NYC. I go to bed thinking, "Phew! I'm so glad this isn't COVID-19."

Day 3 (March 20): Morning brings a 101°F fever. That evening, my brother is running a slight fever. The HORROR! I am now 100% CERTAIN it is COVID-19! I tell some friends in NYC, they put me in contact with someone who has tested positive. He walks me through his bout with COVID-19. He got better in a week. I steel myself for the fight, my adrenaline is at full blast.

Day 4 (March 21): At three in the morning, I wake up completely drenched in sweat. I change my sudreh and T-shirt, go to the bathroom, wash my hands, and go back to sleep. My temperature fluctuates from 99.5°F in the morning to the high 101s or low 102s in the evenings. I lie in bed for 20 minutes, willing my legs to support me. My new normal consists of fever, malaise, shaky legs, coughing, tea, and reading; Anna's has become calming me, cooking, and constantly disinfecting the house. I have not told my parents I am ill.

Day 5 (March 22): Anna has

developed a slight fever. This is not a "regular" flu! A friend helps me find a place where I can get tested. They ask if I have been to China or Italy recently or know someone who has COVID-19. I answer, "No, no, and no," and am not allowed to get tested. At dinner, I realize I cannot smell or taste anymore; the fresh cilantro is wasted on me.

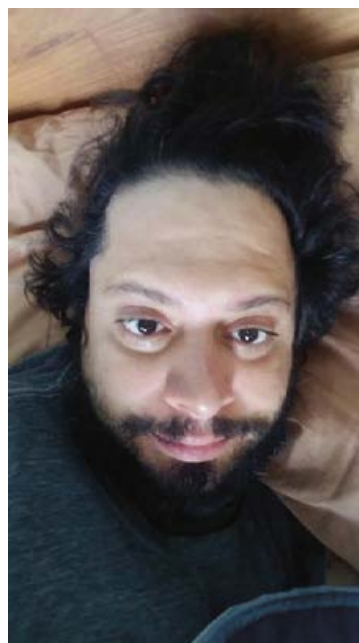
Day 6 (March 23): My brother is getting worse while Anna still manages to take care of me. I feel a little better that night and think the worst is over and I can become Anna's caretaker.

Day 7 (March 24): I will not be her caretaker. Anna beat the fever, while I am worse off. A strange, different, and uncontrollable cough besets me today. It feels like the high-altitude sickness I had when I climbed the Himalayas and Bolivian mountains. Talking is difficult, I can barely complete a sentence. As Anna cooks, an ex-neighbor calls and asks if we heard about the second-floor neighbor who died from COVID-19.

Day 8 (March 25): A night of sweats, delirious dreams, and cold chills. As I warm water on the stove, I laugh at my new surrealistic world. I will pour the warmed water into a plastic bottle and sleep with it to help stop my shivering. Morning comes and I cannot say a whole sentence without stopping to breathe. I call the hospital. They ask my how short my breath is. I can't fully respond due to my shortness of breath. I now know it is time to go to the hospital where they have set up a COVID-19 testing tent in their parking lot. Their staff is professional and calm. This buoys my spirits. I am given a COVID-19 test and a chest X-ray, which reveals I have pneumonia,

but not bad enough to hospitalize me. I fear that if I am admitted, there is that 1% chance that I might not see my loved ones again. I tell my brother to get tested. I tell my friends and my parents about our situation; they are calm and start a prayer marathon, assuring me I will be okay. At night, it is round two with the warm plastic bottle.

Day 9 (March 30): The hospital calls and informs me that my brother and I have tested positive. I wish there were Vegas odds on



this test, for I would have made a lot of money. I improve enough to worry about my brother. He has lagged me by two days during the ordeal.

Day 10 (March 31): No fever! Have I Triumphed? My brother is not in good shape and ponders if he should visit the hospital. I tell him that if he is thinking about it, he should just go. His temperature is 103.4°F. His annoyance at my constant questions may signal that he is feeling better too.

Day 11 (April 1): My brother's fever reduces and he is sent home.

My parents manage to help us from India and have asked their network of friends to drop off large amounts of food for him. Before going to bed, I call India and my mom tells me I will be okay tomorrow. Somewhat irked by her presumptuousness, I tell her she is not a doctor and should not give me false hope.

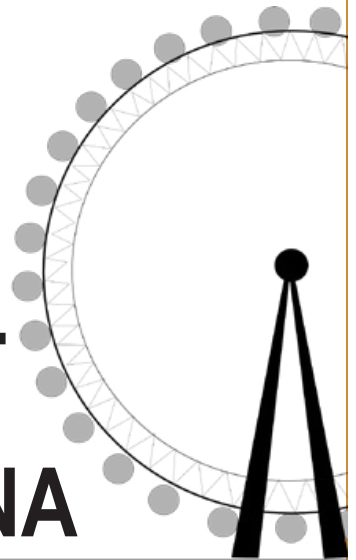
Day 12 (April 2): I am okay the next day. Mom was right. My brother is healing too.

Day 13 (April 3) onwards: Everyday my brother and I get better. Anna still cooks, cleans all day to remove any viral vestiges. I ask myself if I am well enough to start helping her - this is a much easier question than the one regarding breathing the hospital posed only a week ago. I have lost 10 pounds, but I would not recommend a Corona diet.

It has been tough and, for most of us, the world has changed in a way we only thought possible in a scary, apocalyptic movie. We must remember this is temporary and try to enjoy this new state because we have the rest of our lives to return to "normalcy." I am nearly back to normal with a newfound appreciation for each simple, unencumbered breath.*

Jehangir Madon, originally from Dadar Parsee Colony in Bombay, now Lives in Brooklyn with his Fiancé Anna who is from Italy. He has a BSc in Geography from Rutgers University and has always worked in the world of Navigation Technologies. His parents Rohinton and Yasmin and brother Kaizad live in New Jersey.

BEER MOGUL RECOVERS FROM CORONA



From the Office of Lord Bilimoria of Chelsea CBE DL

Karan Faridoon Bilimoria, Baron Bilimoria, is an entrepreneur, life peer in the UK House of Lords, and a university chancellor. He is well known for founding the popular global beer brand, Cobra Beer.

Lord Karan Billimoria was infected with the virus on March 15, but luckily he had a relatively mild bout of COVID-19. The onset was sudden, literally overnight with no warning. He had a fever, aching bones and muscles, headaches, pain in his eyes, and lost his sense of smell and taste.

He feels relieved that although he succumbed to the virus he has recovered fully. What frustrated him was not being able to be tested when he first fell ill to confirm that he had the virus. It was only a month later that he was able to get an antibody test, which showed that he has strong antibodies.

Although it took him two weeks



to recover and then being tested much later to confirm that he had the virus, he was able to work throughout his illness from home and did not need to be hospitalised or need intensive care.

Throughout the crisis he has been working 14-hour days in his role as Vice President and incoming President of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) in supporting the restaurant and hospitality sector in the UK, where Cobra supplies

to over 6000 restaurants, the vast majority of which are shut and suffering greatly. He has also been taking part actively in the House of Lords, which has been operating virtually since the third week of April.

He has been hosting and speaking in webinars globally and has been active in his role as Chancellor of the University of Birmingham, chairing the Advisory Board of University of Cambridge Judge Business School, and as an Honorary Group Captain in the RAF (601 Squadron). He has also been in regular touch with the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE), being its patron, and the Zarathushti community in the UK. He is proud of the unceasing and tireless work of his cousin Dr Shernaz Cama of PARZOR, including when she approached him to help to procure urgent medical supplies for critically ill Zarathushtis in Yazd, Iran. He is grateful to his friend, Dr. Yusuf Hamid, who unhesitatingly and instantly responded to the request along with the immediate generosity of Cyrus and Adar Poonawalla and the assistance of Homa Zartoshty, Dorab Mistry and Malcolm Deboo of the ZTFE, which enabled the consignment to be dispatched in time to save precious lives of fellow Zoroastrians Iran.

He feels extremely sad for all the victims of Covid 19 worldwide and his thoughts and prayers go out to all the families and loved ones and how lucky he feels that he had relatively mild symptoms of the disease and made a full recovery in two weeks.*

THE EPICENTER OF HOPE



Survivor Corps is the largest grassroots movement in America dedicated to actively ending this pandemic. We are mobilizing all those affected by COVID-19 to support all ongoing scientific, medical and academic research to find a vaccine and a cure. With every passing day, thousands of people across the country are being infected with COVID-19. The vast majority will survive and most will likely develop antibodies to the virus. The mysteries to this virus will be solved, in part, by individual donations to scientific research.



The mission on their website, **SurvivorCorps.com** says, “We hope to get people back into their communities and back to work, all while fostering the spirit of unity and solidarity that is urgently needed during this time of crisis.”

They also have a Facebook group where survivors and their families can share experiences and stories. The page has over 52,000 members. One of the members wrote, “The wide range of symptoms and the prolonged recovery time makes it hard for non-victims to understand.” Another said, “Just wanted to remind the survivors of Covid19 who tested positive for antibodies to donate plasma. I was finally able to donate Convalescent Plasma on May 25th with the New York Blood Center. 45 minutes can possibly help extend someone’s life and help in this battle.”

(From Survivor Corp website and Facebook page).

HELPING HANDS



CONTRIBUTION BEYOND COMPARE At the Forefront of Disaster Relief

By Marzban Jamshedji Giara

Over the past two centuries, Parsi Zarathushtis have always been foremost in relieving the suffering of the unfortunate, and making large-hearted donations to victims of fire, floods, famine, and epidemics. This philanthropic virtue is not only true of Parsis in India, but wherever they settle. In 1850, during the famine in Canton, China, Parsis of Hong Kong collected 2,000 dollars to send grains to Canton. Fifteen-hundred people were daily fed porridge under the supervision of Rev. Mr. Kalat.

The Jejeebhoy Family

Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy was a merchant and philanthropist whose services were recognized by the British in 1857 by the award of baronetcy, thus becoming the 1st Baronet

Jejeebhoy of Bombay. His charitable acts include helping during the Great Fire of Surat, which broke out on April 24, 1837 and went on for twelve days during which twenty thousand houses were gutted. Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy sent a chartered ship to Surat with hundreds of bags of rice and daal, hundreds of bales of cloth, and cases full of rupee coins to reduce the hardships of those rendered homeless and penniless. He also sent help to unfortunate victims of floods in France in 1856. He donated large sums during the Great Famine of Ireland in 1822. He helped during the famines of Cuttack in 1832, in the Deccan in 1833, in Northern India in 1837 and the Irish Famine of 1846. During the cholera epidemic in



"Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy and his Chinese Secretary"

1857, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, arranged for tents and roofs in his open airy space in Mazgaon, Bombay for affected residents. His donations would run into crores of rupees by today's standards.

Seth Rustomjee Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, son of Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, 1st Baronet, donated Rs.25,000/- to Lancashire Labourers and Weavers Starvation Fund in 1862. In 1863, he donated Rs.25,000/- for weavers of Conjeevaram in Madras Presidency. In June 1864, he sent 1,000 bags of rice for free distribution to the poor in Ratnagiri. During the Deccan Famine in 1864 he donated Rs.1,00,000 and sent 7000 bags of rice for distribution to the poor. In 1863, he made a will in which he earmarked Rs.51,00,000 from his estate to Government of India, the annual interest of which was to be utilized for relief of poor against fire, floods, storms, misfortunes.

Fire

During the Great Fire of Bombay on February 17, 1803, over one thousand houses were completely razed. Naoroji Seth gave his bungalow to house the homeless government officials, and Pestonji Bomanji Wadia gave food and shelter to hundreds who had been rendered homeless in his mansion in Parel and the surrounding grounds.

Floods

On the night of July 2, 1883 in Surat, flood waters rose to a height of 46 feet and receded on July 4. Dadabhai Dorabji Pandya, an ace swimmer, saved 106 lives from drowning. A swimming pool in Surat is named after him. Dosibai Behramji Dhalla, a resident of Rustompura, pulled out the

thatched roof of her house and made a raft and saved 300 lives and gave them shelter in her house. A fund was raised in Bombay in aid of the flood victims. Hindus contributed Rs.28,000/-, Muslims Rs.6,301/-, Englishmen Rs.2,106/-, Christians Rs.9,000/- and the Parsis contributed the maximum - Rs. 45,811/- of which Bai Motlibai Wadia alone contributed Rs.15,000/-.

Famine

Sorabji Readymoney was so magnanimous that during a famine in Gujarat in 1890 he fed thousands of refugees from Gujarat twice a day free of charge for a whole year. Similarly Pestonji Bomanji Wadia, grandson of Lowjee Wadia and Dadiseth also fed refugees for ten months thus earning the blessings of the unfortunate victims in search of shelter and relief.

Epidemics

Dr. Kaikhushru Nusserwanjee Bahadurji was the first Parsi and Indian to pass medical exam in London. During the plague epidemic, he set a splendid example by bringing qualified medical assistance within the reach of all patients by establishing the Parsi Fever Hospital and devoted his services absolutely free to all communities. He worked day and night becoming a victim of the plague himself. He died in the prime of his life at the age of 38, loved, respected, and admired by all.

During the Bubonic plague epidemic in Bombay in 1896, Shams-ul-Ulama Ervad Dr. Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi served as a plague volunteer along with his mentor Kharshedji Rustomji Cama. Dr. Modi even sent his

children and family to work as plague volunteers.



In 2020, in the current COVID-19 pandemic, Tata Sons and Tata Trusts have contributed Rs.1,500 crores to fight COVID-19 for which the Prime Minister of India thanked Mr. Ratan Tata (photo above). Dr. Cyrus S. Poonawalla's (photo above) Serum Institute of India is the world's largest vaccine maker. They are collaborating with scientists to develop a vaccine to fight the COVID-19 virus.

The Parsi Ambulance Division

This was founded in 1904 under the St. John's Ambulance Brigade India in Bombay. During the Influenza epidemic in 1918 members of the Division aided the Public Health Department to fight the highly infectious epidemic unmindful of the danger to their lives. Twenty-one Table Dispensaries were set up in various wards. House-to-house visits, removal of persons infected to hospitals, distribution of stock mixtures, grains, and pneumonia jackets were some of the service

rendered. During the Great Fire of Parsi Bazar Street in May 1936, members of this Division rendered selfless service with devotion to duty, removal of the injured to hospital, and rescuing victims from collapsing buildings. 24-hour Ambulance Service was started in 1958. Sick Bed Requisite Services were started in 1964. Members of this Division rendered service during the Latur Earthquake in Maharashtra on September 30, 1993 as also during the Gujarat Earthquake Relief Operations in Bhuj in February 2001.

The spirit of sacrifice and service to humanity demonstrated by Parsis is set in the history of the world. In the words of Sir Winston Churchill, "Never have so many owed so much to so few." Our contribution has truly been out of proportion to our minuscule numbers. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the Indian nation, has rightly observed, "In numbers beyond contempt, but in contribution beyond compare". *



Marzban Jamshedji Giara is the author and publisher of books on Zarathushti religion and Parsi history. Interested in devotional music he has compiled and published two song books and also produced audio CDs of devotional hymns. Marzban is a keen student of Parsi history and Zarathushti religion, an independent thinker, writer, public speaker, free lance journalist and research worker.

Fezana Journal is proud of Zarathushti youth who are continuing the tradition of serving the community and lending a helping hand when needed.

Raising Funds for Food

By Zal Italia

Zara, 17, and Zal, 15, decided to take it upon themselves to do something positive and make a difference during the COVID-19 pandemic.

One ordinary day, my family and I were watching the 5:00 pm news and we noticed that the lines to pick up food were endless. We saw that one woman, in Texas, waited for 13 hours just to have food on the table for her family. We knew that there were more people who were in need and we wanted to help out in some way. Zara and I realized that we are fortunate to have food on our plate everyday. We were motivated to make a difference in people's lives by helping to provide more meals for those in need.

We wanted to help, but we knew that we could not help anyone physically. We realized that the Houston Food Bank was distributing food in the Houston area. At that point, we contacted and started a conversation with the Houston Food Bank Representative, and then we started to spread the word to people to donate and help the initiative amongst our local Zarathushti community. After we designed the plan for collecting the donations, we developed a course of action to send to the Youth Group and the executive committee of Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH). After we were approved by the executive commit-



tee, we created an email to send to everyone in the ZAH community. With the support of the executive committee, we were able to create a PayPal account that allowed everyone to donate online. With the help of Arnavaz Sethna we were able to send the email to everyone in the ZAH community. In the first two weeks we raised almost \$5,000. Without the help of the executive committee and the ZAH, we would not have been able to go this far. Dina Hormuzdi assisted us to write thank you notes to our donors.

The Houston Food Bank fund drive was for three weeks and we collected a total of \$9,327. This amount will be triple matched by Sysco Food Systems. *

Connect Against COVID

By Myra Bhatena



Due to the pandemic, patients that are admitted to the hospital are kept in isolation units. Not only can they not have any visitors, but they often do not have their personal devices with them, so they cannot stay connected with their loved ones. Patients often spend hours alone with occasional human contact only with nurses and doctors who are in PPE gear. Their families are unable to connect with them and the anguish this brings is almost as unbearable as the disease itself.

As soon as my mother, Chief of Pediatrics at Atrius/Harvard Vanguard in Peabody, MA, helped me understand the gravity of

this situation, I knew I had to do something to help. I thought about my grandparents currently living in Mumbai. I FaceTime them every night, and if one of them were hospitalized without their iPad, I would be devastated. I know that this is the very real situation facing many families across the world, and I could not stand by while this was happening.

Within a few days, I learned how to make a website and set to work creating Connect Against COVID. My initiative provides an easy and safe way for people at home to donate their used devices, such as Apple iPads, to hospitalized patients in need. With the help of my website (<https://connectagain-stcovid.com/>), people can ship their donations to us, drop-off their devices at the local Staples store in North Andover, or have their donations picked up from their mailbox by me! Once we have collected the donations, we sterilize them, wipe them clean of any personal data, and package them before organizing a drop-off with hospital staff. As of now, we have donated over 60 devices to four local hospitals. My mother and I have been on WCVB's Channel 5 news and the Andover Townsman trying to spread this message. Along the way, we have connected with some amazing, kind, and caring people.

The help and support I have received from my community has been absolutely outstanding. For starters, both of my parents played a key role in this initiative, and I

could not be more appreciative. I am successful because of my parents from my mom coordinating the drop-offs with local doctors and spreading the word in the medical community to my dad stepping in as the IT official, working tirelessly on every device we collect. Additionally, my friends and extended family have stepped up and spread the word more than I could have imagined. My school as well as my coaches have also worked hard at sharing my initiative. The ZAGBA community has reached out to every person they know and have helped collect many devices.

I have received support from countless people, even those who I do not know personally. Medical administration from many hospitals, such as Dr. Donald Ganim from Beverly Hospital and Dr. Rachael Hitt from Atrius/Harvard Vanguard, have played a key role in getting these devices to the patients in need. I am forever thankful for the support I have received from so many people in my community – together we are connecting the world against COVID! This virus may try to isolate us, but we can still help our families and friends stay connected.*

Myra Bhatena is a sophomore at Phillips Academy Andover, MA. At school, she plays soccer and is a hurdler on the track and field team. She also loves skiing, figure skating, acting, and spending time with her family and friends.



**World Zarathushti
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ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO

WZCC-Chicago and ZAC Task Force Face Covering Project

As a service project during this pandemic, the "ZAC COVID -19 Task Force" in collaboration with the "WZCC-Chicago Women's Wing" is offering to distribute "Cloth Based Face Coverings" to community members who need them. Please note, these cloth face coverings are not similar to N95 or any other surgical mask quality.



These Face Coverings are washable, with a wire nose-grip, and a pocket for a disposable interface material like a coffee filter or wipe etc. (See photo).

Since our resources are limited, we request you to limit your orders to a minimum number required for your family. To order, please contact Zenobia Tantra (dqzen1@gmail.com, 847-219 6278) or Mani Rao (manirao@comcast.net, 630-452 4068).

VOLUNTEERS WELCOME

Initially, Roshan Rivetna will be making the face coverings, but we are looking for more volunteers to help. If you have a sewing machine, cotton fabric (even an unused bed sheet will do) and

are willing to make them, please contact Roshan Rivetna at roshanrivetna@gmail.com or 630-340 8272. Instructions will be provided.

CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME

The orders will be delivered to you by volunteers from ZAC's COVID-19 Task Force. There is no charge for the face coverings, but contributions will be very welcome for the ZAC Welfare Fund or WZCC-Chicago.

Contribution checks may be mailed to:
Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago
8615 Meadowbrook Drive
Burr Ridge, IL 60527

(From a report by Zenobia Tantra (ZAC COVID-19 Task Force) and Mani Rao (WZCC-Chicago Women's Wing)).

Unmask Your Talent

By Nawaz Merchant

As we entered week two of lock down in mid-March, my sister-in-law forwarded me an email appeal from Grace Healthcare Services and said, “Why don’t you make masks for these nurses?” Grace Healthcare, a New Jersey home health provider, has five hundred nurses and nursing aides who visit seniors at home. The volunteer coordinator said that they had only fifty face masks and needed hundreds more.

Since I had learned to sew from my mum as a teen, and seeing the acute shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), this seemed a timely project. Little did I know that as we complete week nine of lock down that my sewing project would expand and I’d have completed 410 cloth face masks to date!

Grace Healthcare provided volunteers the link to a sewing video. Filled with excitement, I watched the training video twice over and printed out the recommended pattern from [craftpassion.com](https://www.craftpassion.com).

Then my sister-in-law and I scoured our home to find remnants of fabric from decades of sewing projects: children’s pajamas, skirts, draperies and valences, *sudrehs* and more. Gathering up all the cotton cloth including six yards of material that was once bought to line a curtain, we cut out the first batch of masks. Following the steps below, it took about 40 minutes to assemble and sew a single mask.

To make the mask the steps are: 1) Cut out two shapes for the front and two slightly larger ones for the back. 2) Sew these together, top and bottom to form a sleeve or pocket for the disposable filter (which is added before wearing each time). 3) Sew in the nose-wire across the top. 4) Invert the mask by turning it inside out. 5) Finish the mask by turning in the flaps on either side to make strap holders. 6) Insert the strap and knot the ends so they don’t come loose later in the wash. All done!

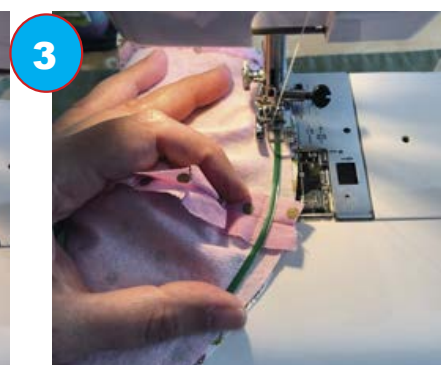
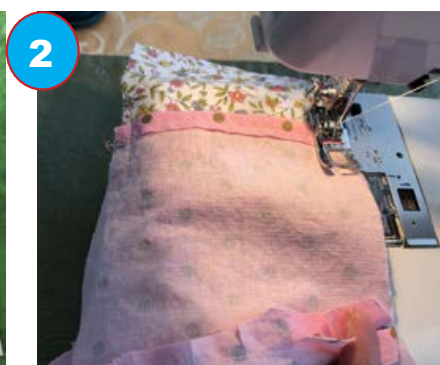
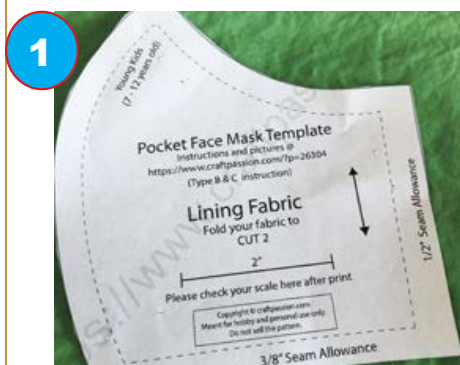
Then the first blow fell. I had no elastic for straps! But the basement

stash yielded thirty packets of bias tape (cloth strips). Experimenting with these, we found that each packet made four straps. Next, we needed to insert nose-wire so that the top of the mask could be shaped to the nose to make a seal. Lo and behold, our kitchen drawers contained forty used twisty ties! Straightened, they served as nose-wire for the first set of masks.

Disaster struck often. After the first batch of 23 masks I ran out of cloth. The sewing machine snapped my thread a dozen times an hour, and we had no more nose wire. But each time, someone came to my aid! The volunteer coordinator from Grace Healthcare gave me yards of pretty pink fabric with gold polka dots. After sewing the fiftieth mask, I starting to see polka dots everywhere, even in my dreams. Fortunately, my friends, Arlene and Catherine donated loads of different fabrics - country scene fabrics, floral prints, red checks, blue checks, yellow with blue stars. We cut up two white cotton bedsheets as well.

For nose wire, I found plant ties, used to tie vegetable plants to stakes — three hundred of them. When cut in half, they were more than enough.

When I ran out of thread, my friend, Catherine gifted me two massive spools of thread, 5000



yards each, from her Serger machine. Hurrying home in excitement, my hopes were dashed again. The large Serger spool could not fit on my little portable sewing machine! However, by placing it on top of a regular spool and covering it, I was able to jury rig it.

My little Janome sewing machine stitched sweetly for weeks, then got grumpy, clotting up clumps of thread. It developed a dislike of a pretty blue checked cloth and chewed it up at every opportunity. So I had to learn its language:

Whirrrr: I'm good, all good, everybody's happy;

Dug-Dug-Dug: This cloth is thick but no sweat, I can handle it;

Krrrr-chk: Nope, not gonna move, not a chance; You need to clean out the bobbin.

TAK: If you persist in this foolishness I'm gonna break your needle!

SNAP: I need a break, so I'm gonna snap the thread and snooze while you peer at me and try to thread it again, hee hee.

I learned that the thread tension was making me tense. I fiddled with the three controls on the sewing machine without a clue of what they do. Once I got it working (pure chance, I think) I resolved to never tinker with them again. And after eighteen years, I found a 'fast-speed' button! I also learned to make bias tape by cutting cloth on the diagonal, but found that it's a bit tedious to join. Thank heav-

ens, my sister-in-law helped cut out straps, invert the masks, insert the straps and more.

Hearing about my success, friends and neighbors began to request face masks for their families, so I began giving them away. Making masks in batches was quicker, stringing them together like flags. Each week Grace Healthcare Services got 30-60 face masks from me. In April, I offered them to our local senior group the Z Goldies and mailed out a half dozen envelopes each week.

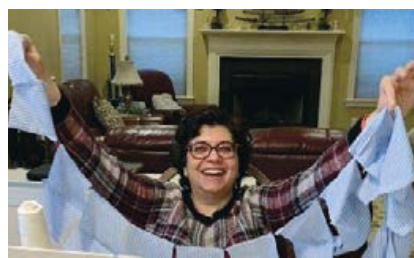
In order to generate donations for the FEZANA University of Toronto initiative, in May we offered them free to Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) members. The ZAGNY board agreed to cover the mailing cost. Soon 32 people requested a total of 120 masks, so we made multiple batches from different fabrics. Then, wearing mask and gloves, I ventured into the dreaded post office again to mail them out, and returned to disinfect myself top to toe.

Most difficult was making masks for children, where the margin of error is an eighth-of-an-inch, but they turned out quite adorable. I expect children will not like wearing masks, but hope that one in bright colors might make it more appealing.

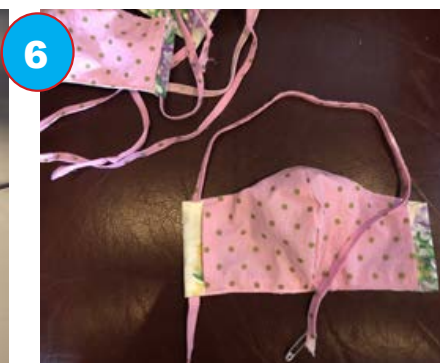
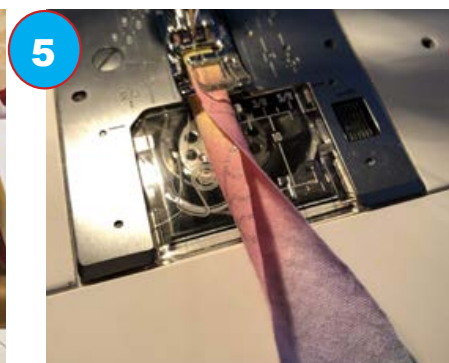
My pictures of the mask got some hilarious reactions. When I sent them to a friend on WhatsApp, she said, "Are you sure? They look like bras." The pattern is made to bump out for the person's nose and mouth so I suppose they do look like bras. Another person, turned the picture upside down, grinned and said, "So, you're making thongs?"

Through this effort I gained new friends all over the country. When a friend in California traded me her dehydrated sourdough starter for a pair of masks, I learned to bake my own bread.

Sewing the masks gave me a new sense of purpose, the feeling that I was contributing in some small way in this difficult time. Each mask was my ambassador, sent as a guardian to fend off the virus. *



Nawaz Merchant is the author of soon-to-be-published *Historical Mystery Murder in Old Bombay*. Based on a real crime, her novel won the *Minotaur/Mystery Writers of America* award for Best First Crime novel in 2019.

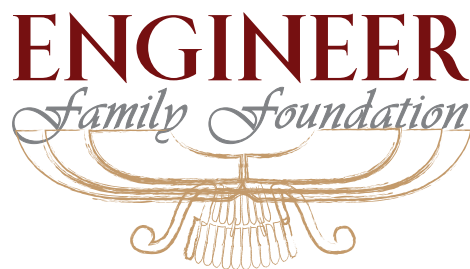


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IMPACT & EXPERIENCES



OUT OF AFRICA

Journey Home from the Jungle

By Ana Verahrami

As the sun began its daily descent in the sky late one afternoon, I said goodnight to my colleagues at camp, gathered my pack, and set off with my tracker, Azobé, to the research platform where I would spend the night. As a researcher with the Elephant Listening Project (ELP), I had traveled to the Central African Republic (CAR) for my second field season, where I would spend two months collecting acoustic and behavioral data on the forest elephants in the Dzanga-Sangha National Park.

As Azobé and I walked swiftly through the forest, our eyes darted every now and then from the path ahead to the dense vegetation around us, as our ears carefully listened for any hint of a forest surprise, often delivered in the form of a charging elephant or slithering serpent. As we approached the platform, we were met with the familiar reverberating pulsations of the rumbling giants I was here to study. Before us stood a global treasure: Dzanga Bai, a natural forest

clearing where at times, more than a hundred forest elephants will gather at once to socialize and mingle as they drink deeply from the mineral pits that characterize the clearing and supplement the diets of many creatures in the Congo Basin.

As the undertones of the forest began to evolve from chirping birds and squeaking moneys to whooshing bats and shrieking katydids, I bid farewell to Azobé, who would return tomorrow morning to guide me back to camp, and began to get my equipment ready for what would be my eighth and unbeknownst to me, final all-nighter of the field season. I had heard a bit about the spread of COVID-19 by then, but I did not realize how bad it was until I opened my GPS device that night to a message from our department that simply said you must come home.

The next morning, my team and I drove to Bayanga, the nearby village, to use the internet to speak with

family and read a bit about a pandemic that, for us, seemed to appear out of nowhere. We sat for hours debating the pros and cons of staying versus leaving. But as we learned of the closing borders that would mean no food coming in and no flights going out, and faced the stark reality of what it could mean if one of us contracted the virus in a country that is home to more than five million people, but has just three ventilators. We accepted defeat, as it became clear that we had to go home.

The next morning, we returned to the forest and set to work. We were faced with a ticking clock as the last flight out of CAR was in just 48 hours. Adrenaline fueled us as we sprinted from charging elephants and buffalo in the forest, while collecting our acoustic recorders and camera traps, and stayed up all night packing and backing up data. The morning of March 23 arrived and with it a land cruiser that would take us and our equipment to the airstrip. As we packed ourselves and our belongings into the truck, my heart felt as if it would break when I said my final goodbye to the forest and to our team of trackers and friends, Bonga, Azobé, and Mobeawe.

We arrived in Bangui, CAR's capital, several hours before our flight to Nairobi would depart. Not wanting to risk unnecessary exposure to the virus, we decided to wait at the airport. But when we went to check-in, we learned that one of our later connections had just been

cancelled. We could not board our flight to Nairobi without proof of connection all the way back to the States.

Cornell worked furiously to find us another route home from Nairobi. I called contacts at the US Embassy that I had made during my last field season when I found myself spending a night in jail for not paying a bribe. Unfortunately, by the time Cornell found us another way home, the plane had finished boarding and the airport officials would not let us on. Hoping for a last-minute reprieve, I called one of the US embassy members I knew on the flight, hoping she would be able to do something. Before our very eyes, we saw the plane stop mid-taxi on the runway as she made her way to the cockpit and convinced the pilot to let us board. But the airport officials would have none of it. They disappeared, and with them, so did what seemed like our last hope of getting out of CAR before the virus arrived in full force.

Over the next couple of days, we were forced to hunker down in Bangui until Cornell was able to charter a private plane from Johannesburg, one of the only available planes on the entire continent at that moment. Thanks to the University, we found ourselves flying to Ethiopia, where we were able to catch one of the last flights to the US. Exhausted, but filled with relief, we arrived in Washington DC on March 26 to a very strange new world.



An aerial view of Bayanga; Gargantua, an adult female elephant that frequents Dzanga Bai.
© Ana Verahrami, Elephant Listening Project.

We spent the next two weeks in mandated self-isolated quarantine, but, luckily, were able to do so from the confines of our own homes. My home was in Ithaca, New York. That said, this period was still a difficult adjustment for me; I had spent the last two months deep in the jungle with my wonderful field team, but suddenly found myself trapped indoors alone with nothing to do but enter data. My friends graciously left groceries for me on my porch and I did my best to keep in touch with friends and family online.

My anxiety grew tenfold when I learned that one of our colleagues in CAR, with whom we had been in recent contact, had tested positive for COVID-19. As a result, each of us were ordered to get tested for the virus. Luckily, our colleague recovered fully, and each of the team members tested negative. But while this came as a relief, a darker worry sat in as I watched the number of reported cases in CAR grow while the tourism industry came to a screeching halt, leaving many people in the region without any source of income. In Bayanga, many people need to go out daily to gather food from the forest to feed their families. But now, with reduced income and fewer anti-poaching patrols, poaching will likely become rampant as has already been demonstrated in other areas in Africa hit hard by the virus.

As of May 2020, the local population is working diligently to implement preventative measures. Fortunately, thanks to a very generous donor, my lab has

been able to send \$20,000 to Bayanga. This money will be used to pay locals to produce and distribute masks and hand-washing stations throughout the village, which will also put money back into the local economy. Any remaining funds will be used to replenish supplies in the medical clinic. While these are small victories, they are still victories, and when paired with the strength and resilience that characterizes the people of CAR, I feel such hope that both they and the forest will come out as victors on the other side of this. I just pray that I am right.*



Ana Verahrami has a BS from Cornell University and will be starting her Masters in Conservation Biology at Colorado State University this fall. In addition, she is a researcher with the Elephant Listening Project, a research lab at Cornell University that uses acoustic monitoring to conserve and protect forest elephants throughout central Africa.



Forest elephants covered with fresh red mud at Dzanga Bai.
© Ana Verahrami, Elephant Listening Project.

RETURN TO ROOTS: A PARAMEDIC'S STORY OF KEEPING DELEGATES SAFE IN INDIA DURING A PANDEMIC



By Kayras Irani

No amount of training as a paramedic in the last 11-years could have prepared me for a global pandemic. However, my tenure as a paramedic did teach me how to stay calm and act in a logical manner during any crisis. I was reminded about this recently during a weekly video broadcast to all employees when a senior executive emphasized that, “There is no emergency during a pandemic.” His words would reinforce my approach to patient care.

In March 2020, the seriousness of the pandemic was reaching a peak and within weeks prior to Nowruz, nations began preparing themselves for the catastrophic impact of COVID-19.

While governments and health authorities were attempting to contain COVID-19, twenty-five young Zarathushti adults, alumni and volunteers were in India for the sixth installment of the Zoroastrian Return to Roots (RTR) Program from March 7 to 21, 2020. Throughout the planning stages leading up to the start of the program, organizers were constantly assessing the seriousness of COVID-19. Some airlines cancelled flights within parts of Asia, but besides that, there were no real hiccups with the preplanning process and definitely nothing substantial enough to warrant cancellation of the program entirely.

As an RTR alumni, I volunteer with on-ground logistics along with medical oversight for those who attend, and this year more than ever the health and safety of everyone was paramount. No matter how many safeguards were in place in previous trips, there were always some who got ill. Most of the cases were delegates with gastrointestinal upset, fevers, dehydration and even

physical injuries from falls. But this emerging pandemic was a new ball game altogether. Infection prevention was the ultimate priority. No matter how many medical supplies like hand sanitizers, surgical masks, N95 masks, gloves and other medical equipment I purchased, nothing could prepare for an outbreak amongst the group, therefore, preventive education was key.

A week before the start of the program, all participants were connected through a WhatsApp chat group and could communicate about anything trip related. This was the initial way of communicating important and relevant health and safety tips to ease concerns. Day one of the program felt like the first day of preschool. They all received a mundane, but essential lesson on proper hand hygiene and coughing and sneezing etiquette. They received regular reminders to not touch their faces and were educated on when, where, and how to properly wear a mask. Throughout the duration of the trip, I usually had two shoulder bags and one backpack full of essential medical supplies and an arsenal of hand sanitizers. For our ten-day long road trip by bus, everyone boarding would be greeted by me with a spray of antibacterial hand foam. At certain points during the trip, a few participants began to feel the exhaustion and even burnout from the long road trips and my job would be to check in with them and address their needs, and also wipe down commonly touched surfaces of the bus before the start of a day's journey.

All of this was honestly the easy part, but the one new challenge that this pandemic brought to RTR was the wellbeing of everyone's mental health. Personally, over five

programs, RTR has never been much of a worrisome experience for participants, except for a few who were concerned about traveler's diarrhea. But on this trip, I felt the biggest support I could offer was the reassurance that they were going to make it through the trip healthy and safely.

The last week of RTR, participants were getting word that global borders were closing with little to no warning. The situation was evolving rapidly and it began when two participants had to leave the program abruptly. This was followed by at least nine more folks from Pakistan that needed to be home by March 20 or their border would be closed to them. And then things got serious when one participant from Dubai was informed that the United Arab Emirates was closed indefinitely.

Each day of the last week of RTR became more and more stressful for the participants, and I found

myself to be more of a counselor than a paramedic. When things became unpredictable, I had to remember to remain calm, even when my chances of returning home to Canada were jeopardized. Despite everything that was happening with flights being canceled, borders closing, and even the RTR program being cut short by a day, I still had hope, and I really had to encourage others to believe the same.

As a medic, people tell me that "you have a tough job," or "you must see some horrible things". I always try to lead off with the best parts about my career and shed some positivity on the job, give people an insight into the good aspects of it. During RTR, I had to remain positive and calm throughout the whole trip and spread it to others around me. When there is chaos in a crisis, it does not help the situation if trained medical professionals begin to panic. Confidence is lost almost immediately,

and I did my best to ensure that people did not lose hope.

With RTR 6 concluding on March 20, the program was definitely the most memorable to-date. The day the Janta (Public) Curfew in India was unexpectedly extended past 9:00 pm on March 22, I successfully commuted to the airport, even after being screened by police at two barricades before reaching Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport terminal. After going through security and being in the last line for an international flight out of Mumbai, tensions were certainly high amongst a few passengers. But all in all, I touched down on Canadian soil safely. Unfortunately, three RTR participants are still stuck in India but with some hope, repatriation flights will be taking place for them fairly soon.

Despite some unforeseen circumstances, I am grateful that people made it through the program and



The RTR group picking up trash from the roads in Udvada village with representatives from the Green and Clean initiative.

stayed mostly healthy throughout it all.

And no matter what little training I had in responding to a crisis like a pandemic; tips on staying calm, staying optimistic and being proactive paid off, and that is the advice I will always value, utilize and encourage all to instill in themselves. *

Kayras Irani is a paramedic with the British Columbia Ambulance Service. He also volunteers with the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia. Kayras has volunteered and/or been a speaker at eight different congresses from 2009-2019.

"THANK YOU, KAYRAS"

Watch the video on the Return to Roots website

<https://zororoots.org/thank-you-kayras/>



Arzan Wadia (RTR Program Director) and other participants recorded messages of good wishes and thanks to Kayras for his dedication beyond the call of duty.

It was put together by Leea Contractor (RTR 6 participant) and Zubin Gheesta (RTR alumni/organizer).

MANAGING ANXIETY

For many of us, it is difficult to avoid being anxious at the uncertainty that surrounds COVID-19. The topic dominates the news, social media, and daily conversations. Emotions can easily spiral into panic. Although there are many things out of our control in this situation, there are some universal ways to manage anxiety for those who do not wish to do meditation or yoga (they are immensely beneficial though).

1. Stick to credible sources of information such as the CDC, the World Health Organization, and your local public health authorities. Don't get your news from WhatsApp forwards - your neighbour's cousin's hairdresser is not an expert. Also, limit how often you check for updates.
2. Stay connected with friends and family, but don't let coronavirus be the focus of every conversation. Gossiping about Harry's and Meghan's break with the Royal Family may actually be good for you at this time.
3. Try and maintain a routine as close to your "normal" day as possible. Be extra careful about making sure you sleep on time and getting enough of it. Binge-watching "Ozark" all night will not only throw off your circadian rhythm, but also increase anxiety levels for all kinds of other reasons.
4. If possible, go out in Nature even if it is lazing in the backyard or walking around the neighbourhood. The produce aisle at the supermarket counts if it relaxes you. It goes without saying that we should keep six feet apart while in shared space outside our homes.
5. Be aware and careful about "eating your emotions" or medicating anxiety with alcohol or pills. "The COVID-19" could easily end up referring to the extra weight we put on during the pandemic.
6. Be kind to yourself and others. Don't hold yourself to expectations of productivity and achievement that are unrealistic. Reach out to neighbours, particularly seniors. If you are able, donate to a charity whose cause you believe in.
7. Reach out to professionals for help if you find that your anxiety levels are difficult to manage on your own. Taking care of your emotional health at this time is as important as taking care of your physical health.

F.M.Dinshaw

AN ECHO PANDEMIC

What can parents do?

By Mehreen Bhajiwala

The world changed in March 2020 and millions of families were thrust into chaos with an expectation to continue “business as usual”. As a working parent of two small boys, I am now a 24-hour caregiver, teacher, cook and magical healer of big and small boo-boos on top of the work expectations for a cherished job that I feel terribly guilty about not meeting. Frankly, it is overwhelming and it has become exceedingly apparent that the beliefs about productivity during the pandemic and its aftermath are outdated, unsustainable and unattainable. Also, I totally believe that you can either have a good day, or teach math to your 3rd grader. You cannot have both!

Not surprisingly, there has been an increase in the prevalence of mental health issues. A recent report by Canadian Mental Health Association reports that 45% Ontarians are experiencing a significant deterioration in their current mental health status. Typically, one in five US adult experience mental health issues and about 8% of individuals report at least one major depressive disorder. The expected onslaught of mental health issues, as a result of prolonged social isolation and pandemic-related anxieties, is being referred to as an “echo pandemic”. Many mental health experts are ar-

guing that stress-related psycho-somatic disorders that are supposed to ‘echo’ once isolation is over, are not around the corner, but are, in fact, already here. The constant looming threat of COVID-19 is the monster that can strike at any time and the panic and persistent uncertainty is a sure-shot recipe for disaster. The thought of anyone getting sick in my family keeps me up at night and compound that with the upheaval of carefully cultivated routines, is anxiety provoking and panic-inducing to say the least. While the perception of stress is

an entirely subjective experience, the elements contributing to stress perception can be broken down according to the NUTS model :
N: novelty, something you have not experienced before e.g. a new job, moving to a new city.
U: unpredictability, when we do not know the outcome e.g. results of an exam, a job interview.
T: threat to the ego and sense of competence, when competence is threatened in front of friends or colleagues.
S: losing your sense of control over a situation, e.g. an illness.



These variables can predict why a situation can be perceived as stressful by an individual. Dr. Lupien, a world renowned stress researcher and the creator of the paradigm also posits that parental stress is contagious so when a parent is stressed, their offspring are stressed. So what do we do? How do we ‘de-stress’ ourselves and our families? Now, you could rationally adopt the rigorously tested scientific route of using the NUTS paradigm to recognize when you are stressed or you could read my anecdotal list.

1. Vocalize your stress: Happy parents = happy children

Recognizing which of the four NUTS characteristics is causing your stress is key to determining the root of your stress and help you regulate better. For example, I am not shy at vocalizing that I hate math and also acknowledging my need to drive my child to perform. So I’m working on easing up and not letting multiplications ruin my day.

2. Appropriate screen time is a unicorn.

Seriously, don’t feel guilty about screen time during quarantine. It is a tool to help you survive and no, your child will not go blind or stupid no matter how much YouTube they watch.

3. Work with your children

This one can be so frustrating! Especially since we all have expectations of how they should be reacting. Remind yourself that they are people, not dogs. My son does not want to go out. And I mean not at all. His anxiety was through the roof so we started with small steps. I’m happy to say we have

progressed to occasional walks around the neighborhood when the weather cooperates.

4. Enough with the comparisons!

Do not and I mean do not compare your selves to the families baking bread together or creating works of art and definitely ignore the sickening “bonding” posts on Instagram. If your circumstances are not conducive to basket weaving, then so be it. You keeping the rug rats alive is achievement enough.

5. Find your sanctuary

Virtually, with a group of friends, in the bathroom, hiding under your desk while scarfing down chips... parenting during a pandemic is difficult. Taking care of yourself doesn’t mean you are a selfish parent.

6. Forgive yourself

If and when you go nuclear momzilla (or dadzilla), please know that it is a reaction to your own unmet needs. Take that as sign from the universe that you need a break. Have a cathartic ugly cry or consume a huge bag of chips that you jealously guard and protect like your third child (yes, I see the pattern. Don’t judge me!)

7. Eliminate the SHOULD from your vocabulary.

I should be exercising, I should be baking my own bread, I should do some science or crafts... you get the drift. Seriously, just let it be. Not worth the time or effort. You can *carpe diem* when you are not concerned about a global pandemic destroying life as you know it.

8. Recognize and nurture your meaningful connections

Connect to whomever you want to and disconnect with those who don’t matter. If you don’t want to communicate with someone, especially now, that is pretty good clue that they don’t belong in your life. So, bye Felicia!


We will get through this, parents! In the meanwhile, let’s make ourselves another cup of tea, eat some delicious *bhaktas* (donut-like cookie) , and we can talk about the weight gain on another day.*

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Mehereen Bhajjiwala acquired her PHD in developmental neuroscience and is now a research and policy analyst with the City of Toronto, where she provides an evidenced-based lens to addressing shelter and support needs of the most vulnerable in the city. She lives in Mississauga with her understanding husband Aamir, and their two beautiful boys, Mikail and Rafayel.



Teaching's Moved Online

By Farahad Dastoor

One of the most rewarding occupations I can think of is being a faculty member at a university. I find it exciting that every day I am exposed to new ideas, able to revisit old ideas, develop new theories, and help young scholars develop. While the university is an exciting place where people strive for new knowledge, each one has its own particular rhythm. For me, our fall and spring semester are quite different from each other. At the University of Maine, we welcome a couple thousand new students each fall. These students bring an air of confusion as they start to navigate a new environment while being encouraged to think in new ways. The spring semester, on the other hand, is made up almost exclusively of returning students and is usually a calmer semester. Spring break introduces an air of excitement and seniors are getting excited for imminent graduation and onward prospects.

Spring semester 2020 was quite a change from our routine. On March 16, the Governor of Maine issued work-from-home restrictions

for all non-essential activities. Immediately afterwards, the Chancellor of the University of Maine System decreed that all students were not to return to the university after spring break, with all courses to be delivered online moving forward. For many of us this was new territory.

I have taught online before. Teaching online requires a lot of upfront work as learning goals need to be identified and then instruction can be tailored to those and then delivered using a virtual mechanism. Effective online instruction is usually much more complicated than in a face-to-face setting. Lectures, labs, and assessments need to be delivered electronically and need to respect the asynchrony introduced by the location of our national and international students.

An additional burden during this online transition is that none of us chose to teach or learn in an online environment. So many students found themselves in situations where they did not have access to the Internet – either they live in

areas poorly served by Internet providers or they did not have the resources to pay for this service or buy the equipment required. Some faculty have found themselves in the same situation. Many students also chose a face-to-face learning environment because they prefer it to the online options.

As a lecturer and director of the School of Biology and Ecology I had several challenges to overcome in a very short period of time (hundreds of classes went online within 10 days). I had to convert the class I was teaching (Biology of Organisms with lab) to an online platform, assist my School's faculty to do the same with their courses (some of whom had never taught online previously), assist all our students with whatever challenges they were having at home, and also assist all the staff to move their work from offices and labs to their homes.

The challenges for some of our students are tremendous. Some of my students contacted me before spring break to ask if they could

stay on campus; they either had no homes to return to or they did not feel safe back home. As I came to realize, quite a few of our students are not from middle-class backgrounds with stable homes to which they can return. We worked with university administrators to provide housing and meals on campus to these students. However, their existence must be quite isolating as students are spread out to maximize physical distancing and all meals are served through a no-touch pick up system. Other students phoned me to say they have no Internet in their homes and no way to drive to a hotspot to connect to the Internet. For these students, I mail them lessons and ask that they mail them back to me. These students have to phone me to find out how they scored on their assignments and probably for their final grades. I have one student who has had to stop his school work because when he returned home he discovered both his parents were COVID-19 positive, had lost their jobs as a result, so he had to be the main money maker for the family (by being employed to do something that was possible for a student as well as someone who could not get close to other people for risk of infecting them). The hardships faced by many students were not ones I would have anticipated from my own middle class upbringing.

I am also hearing from students that they will not return to the university in the fall if instruction continues online. They would rather work and return when in-person instruction is guaranteed. We are learning that online instruction works in some situations, but cannot be universally applied.

While we were immediately focused on the students, there was also all the regular work that had to occur in the background: ongoing

annual faculty and staff evaluations, reappointments of graduate students, graduate student thesis defenses, laboratory renovations, preparing our budget for the next fiscal year, what to do with all the live specimens we had in teaching and research labs, and preparing for a summer field research season (given travel and distancing guidelines). Working together with my teaching, research, and office staff was difficult, but we worked through difficult options and arrived at the best solutions possible. I am constantly humbled by the dedication to the mission shown by everyone, especially our undergraduate and graduate students.

Some faculty are teaching their classes as if they were live. Students log onto our university's web platform and engage with the class via live video and audio feed. Other classes have become 100% asynchronous with pre-recorded lectures or uploaded slides. Others are using a combination of both. Classes with labs or performance have proven more challenging. The class I teach is an introductory biology course that has labs where students were working in groups to investigate various topics in biology. My students have accepted the new challenge and are completing labs in their own homes. Labs are not as high-tech anymore, but hopefully the learning objectives are still being met.

Moving a class online has required all of us to re-visit what the key elements of our courses were: key pedagogical elements of the course content must still be presented to students. Transitioning labs to online was onerous and probably not as effective as it could have been. The way I approached the transition to online was to focus on the essential educational element of the lab and come up with some way that students all over the world,

without instruments, could similarly focus on this learning element. Students can communicate with their lab mates and with me via email, telephone, or zoom conferencing.

We know that many students will be moving around the country for various post-COVID-19 reasons and many students who chose alternative grading schemes will be applying to graduate and professional programs. Therefore, we have been working with other universities across the USA to come to an understanding of what we will all accept as "new normal temporary" grading standards and transfer standards.

Four weeks into our remote instruction strategy, an interesting perception is being received by faculty, students, and our administrators. We all miss the daily interaction with other people and we are all really looking forward to returning to in-person instruction and meetings.*



Farahad Dastoor has been a faculty member at the University of Maine since 2006 and is currently the Director of the School of Biology and Ecology at the university. He has a PhD in Microbiology from the University of British Columbia and now focuses mostly on researching the pedagogy of biology students across the USA. He lives with his wife, Dr. Jean MacRae.



Experiences of ONLINE LEARNING

Jehan Dastoor
Roxanna Irani
Zane Dastoor
Rushad Austin
Shiraz Austin

Shut Down at the University

University can be an exciting and terrifying time for all students. For most people, university is a time for change, when you begin your journey towards who you are going to be. This seems daunting to most people, yet happens somewhat naturally for all of us. Unfortunately, the current situation has slowed down this process for many of us and left us with an air of uncertainty. For many who were supposed to graduate, the current economic situation has left them with little room to breathe. However, McGill University, Montreal, has tried to reduce our worry as much as possible.

During the initial stage of the pandemic, McGill aimed to keep

us informed and update us of their progress as they began the gradual process of shifting classes online. During this process, the university awarded all students and research faculty two weeks off. Sadly, this involved shutting down extracurricular activities and closing the gym, adding to the stress that many students already felt. As I currently live in an apartment with three other students, we took this time to relax and enjoy ourselves, meanwhile the number of cases in Montreal began to worsen. Some students at McGill began to take the necessary precautions and tried to stay home as much as possible, while other students frantically looked for flights to travel back home before the predicted travel ban began. Majority of my friends went back home before the first weekend was over.

At the end of the two weeks, McGill announced that classes would

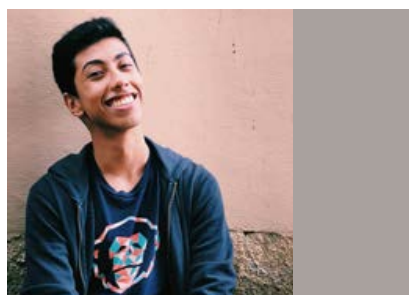
be held online using Zoom and that all in-person finals would now become coursework or take home exams held in a format of the professors choosing; either timed from the moment you opened the paper or being given a fixed period of time between which to complete the paper and upload your solutions. Furthermore, McGill along with a few other universities announced that all students could use their Pass/Fail option on all of their courses (even for credit), normally only allowed once per semester for elective classes, such that if one received a poor grade due to the current situation, they could write it off and not have it affect their GPA. Notably, many students took advantage of this and chose to relax till the end of the semester knowing that if any exam went awry, they had the option of it not affecting their GPA. However, even when trying to attend every online lecture and study for the

final exams, I struggled due to the lack of a productive work environment at home. Students tended to take advantage of the library's 24 hour service during exam season and the library being closed meant a lot of people struggled to stay motivated.

In addition, I found it quite frustrating how I, along with countless other students, had planned an internship over the summer to gain work experience and now most of these opportunities had been put on hold, if not cancelled, or in lucky circumstances became remote. The initial uncertainty regarding the situation meant that students did not know what was going to happen to these opportunities and few ended up deciding not to travel back home in the hopes that the situation would blow over and they would be in the country for their work experience. Unfortunately, the situation in Montreal progressively got worse (where Quebec is now the world's 7th deadliest COVID-19 epicenter) and this left students stranded with no way to travel home. Moreover, May 1st is widely considered to be move out day for students, where students in the university residences and surrounding McGill area leases expire and they either move into a new apartment, or wait till September. Social distancing made it quite hard for my roommates and I to move into our new apartment. We decided to make daily midnight trips, to minimize contact with other people, where we would walk our household items to our next apartment and leave them there. Keep in mind that this was also during the same time we were taking final exams!

As a second year student, I felt that I had largely adapted to the ways

of adult life. I had moved into my first apartment, lived over two years on my own, opened my own bank account. Yet, I had never expected to experience something of this magnitude. I can only imagine what first year students who have only just left the nest must be feeling as this virus prevails. I am lucky to have had 3 close friends who I lived with that helped me get through this, but I know that for many others these past few weeks have been much more difficult and I extend my thoughts and prayers to everyone at this time. Always be careful and remember: health comes first. *



Jehan Dastoor, *Second Year Student, Physics and Economics, McGill University, Montreal, QC.*

High School Amid a Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly blindsided all of us. Truly, not a single person has been spared from the chaos that has ensued due to this unprecedented situation. For students, this chaos looks slightly different.

In mid-March, students left school excited to enjoy their one week Spring Break. Many had the knowledge of the virus that was sweeping the globe, but, as many

Americans do, they had the habit of thinking that the United States is invincible. We never went back to school.

The cancellation of in-person learning posed many significant challenges for students, teachers, and administrators. The process of switching to remote learning began by teachers uploading all of their remaining coursework onto our existing online learning system, Canvas. This allows teachers to organize learning resources, post discussion boards, host live conferences, and run exams. Because this system is already utilized by many school districts, transitioning to remote learning was relatively simple. The problems arose on the student end.

Although Canvas works very well in ensuring most students are still learning, what happens to the students who do not own a device that can access the Internet? Or the students whose houses do not have reliable WiFi? These are issues that our school administrators had to solve somewhat quickly. Schools in our school district all have a few Google Chromebook Laptop carts. Each of these carts holds about 40 laptops. To ensure that each student had the equal opportunity to learn, our administrators rented these laptops out to students who did not have a device to learn on. For students without WiFi, many local networks came together and generously provided free Internet services in and around our city. This generosity guaranteed that every student, no matter their situation, had access to materials and could continue to learn.

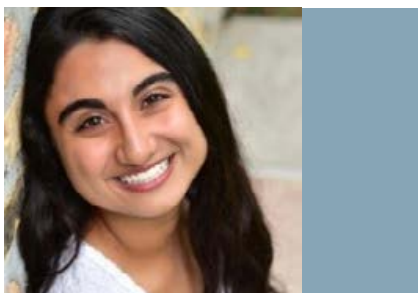
As a senior in high school, my daily remote learning schedule looks slightly different from, not only the younger students, but it is also very

different from university students. Seeing as it was getting close to the end of the school year, many of my teachers had already begun lightening their course load, and many of them focused on exam preparation instead. This meant that I was able to log into Canvas at my own convenience to complete my work. Besides the occasional quiz to make sure we were participating, most of my learning had to be done on my own, with minimum instruction. This is not an issue for seniors. We are preparing to leave for college where independent learning is expected of us.

Although the education portion of my senior year remained strong and intact, the COVID-19 pandemic ripped away my senior year. For us, high school seniors, we have seen nearly all of our landmark “senior year” events canceled or reorganized in such ways that they lose most of the value that they were supposed to have to us. Among these events are graduation, state and national competitions for sports and organizations, and prom. There are few events that are truly “once-in-a-lifetime,” and high school graduation and prom certainly qualify. To have events with as much weight as these be canceled abruptly and without warning has been extremely difficult for many students to come to terms with, despite it being a necessity.

This all being said, each version of remote schooling and senior year looks very different all over the world. There are students with learning disabilities, who simply cannot learn on a computer. There are students who have a sick family member that they must care for. There are students who have essential jobs, who are forced to work extra hours through this pandemic.

My having parents that are doctors who are going to work at a hospital every day, I understand the insignificance of my high school prom at a time like this. Doctors, nurses, and essential workers are on the frontlines every single day. They are risking their lives and their family member’s lives to ensure that we all make it through this pandemic. I watch my parents come home from work, stressed and exhausted, only to go back the next day without complaining. They are truly heroes. I, personally and sincerely, thank every member of the medical community for their unwavering dedication and perseverance.*



Roxanna Irani, age 18, Grade 12,
The Woodlands, TX.

The Virtues of Virtual Learning

For the past month my high-school has transitioned towards online learning. This shift has brought about quite a few changes to everyone’s lifestyle, some for the better, and, of course, some potential areas for improvement. Overall, there have been some commonly agreed upon advantages and disadvantages that I have ascertained and would be delighted to share.

For those who are natural learners, curious and ambitious this time has

been most helpful. I found myself picking up hobbies I always had an inclining towards, but just lacked the time in my usual jam-packed day. Now is the time to acquire those skills you always wanted to learn and try out new activities that enticed you. I began sewing and reading novels from new authors. But that is just the tip of the iceberg with the possibility of what can be done in this time. Picking up a new language, improving your physical fitness, catching up on pop culture. In fact, many world renowned institutions, including Harvard and Stanford provide online courses, with some even being free of charge. There are countless opportunities present to harvest new knowledge and to remain relevant in the ever-changing economic environment. Those who will truly be successful in this unimaginable time will be those who are hungry and passionate about learning, and, fortunately, I find that to be the case for the majority of young adults. There is truly no excuse for remaining bored or being too disheartened by this quarantine period.

I expected most teenagers to be able to fathom the severity of the current situation and realize the greater good that will result from just staying at home. I was most definitely dispirited when I witnessed remarks from friends on social media grumbling about missing school events and having to stay home. When have teenagers ever complained about not going to school? Additionally, staying home genuinely is impactful and will impede the transmission of COVID-19, potentially saving millions of lives. Now is definitely not a time to be selfish and egocentric, and I hope social distancing is taken seriously.

The actual schooling online is definitely not as effective as in-person, but it is definitely manageable. Ma-



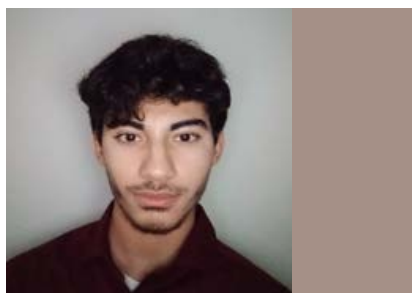
jority of my school's resources have always been online, which makes at-home learning quite convenient. Teachers are able to easily transfer documents, worksheets and even provide tests for students. Of course, there will be downsides to all of this, but it is still an extremely feasible temporary solution.

The main downside is that students will not be held accountable to do their classwork and homework. Reluctantly, I will admit that throughout one or two of my own classes I was text messaging my friends and I was able to find the answers to any worksheets online, which prevented me from having to do any work in the designated class time. My final examinations had been cancelled and so revision worksheets seemed quite pointless. Since the teachers cannot physically observe every student, each individual needs to hold themselves accountable and value their class time and education. Additionally, testing although possible is not ideal. Teachers

definitely need to be more aware of the ease of academic dishonesty in an online test and ensure that they use software or websites which aid in prevention of this. I only had one online assessment as the majority of my schooling finished before my school went online, but the cheating prevention measures were just not adequate. A possible solution is to be aware that students will find a way around the majority of online measures and make assessments open-book. This past month has been a learning opportunity for schools to try and make quick adjustments, which hopefully they do. For younger students,

they most likely have not taken school seriously, potentially due to immaturity, their lack of value for school, or their understanding that these few months of school will most likely be consequential in the future.

Undoubtedly, this current situation is unparalleled to anything many of us have encountered in our lifetime, yet, not managing to capitalize on the additional free-time seems witless. There are different activities that we can undertake to further ourselves and jolt ourselves towards being better and more intelligent people.*



Zane Dastoor, age 18, Grade12, Singapore

A Transformational Event!

In the early days of COVID-19, when I first received the email advising us that school was suspended for the next two weeks, I let out a cry of joy so loud the neighbors heard it.

It wasn't long before I was assigned lots of work, which made this "holiday" more of a reality check on the status of this pandemic. A few days into the week, I received a subsequent email stating we would not be going back to school and that online classes would become obligatory. A transformational event! This would mean I could stay home for the remainder of the academic year. I would now be able to sleep more than seven hours a night and grow to my desired height of 6'3" (I am currently 5'10 ½" so I think it's possible). Best of all, dressing-down from my usual school uniform of shirt and tie to wearing my sudreh to virtual class means I may never think of school-wear the same way again!

As the events of COVID-19 pandemic unfold in my neighborhood and around the world, I am struck by the sheer intensity of new discovery before me. Although I miss seeing my friends in person, I've embraced new ways to stay connected. I was able to do ZAGNY's and ZSO's (Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York and Zoroastrian Society of Ontario) religious classes online. It was so cool seeing other Parsi kids like me. I've also witnessed firsthand my parents at work, not just doing what they do, but how they do it under these new circumstances.

Adaptation is everywhere around me. And while we've all grown through these sometimes dramatic changes, it has exposed some of my weaknesses in organization (not that there are many).

While staying at home, I've mastered the art of baking sugar cookies with my sister...sorta. I've also refined my mountain bike skills on the local hills and forests. A previously rundown dirt jump park is now my go-to place to divert myself and my fellow MTB riders. I think this pandemic has really made me stop and embrace the world I live in. It has allowed me to really appreciate the opportunities I have and the love I receive from my family.

My thoughts and prayers are with those affected by COVID-19.*



Rushad Austin, age 14, Grade 8,
Beaconsfield, QC.

Positives of the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is really having a negative impact on so many things like families, schools and businesses. It's very shocking for everyone, but we're making the best of it. Since I usually go to school every week, learn and see my friends, it's pretty difficult to work at home. However, my teach-

er plans calls and homework for us to complete. I really miss going to school every morning, but it's fun to do activities in our house and in the neighborhood.

Some of the activities I participated in were an awesome babysitting course and a drawing class online, and I got to meet other people around my age all across the world. What was really great is that I attended a ZSO (Zoroastrian Society of Ontario) Zoroastrian class taught by Afreed Mistry and her sister Della Dastur. I was able to attend one from ZAGNY (Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York) too, which was also fun! It's amazing to be able to attend these classes online from so far away - it brings us closer in a way, even though we're apart.

My brother and I have been also been getting closer to each other and getting to know our interests and personalities more. We've been going outside way more often than usual, so we've been getting closer to Nature. There are many animals in our backyard to observe. We see rabbits relaxing, birds flying around, and squirrels chasing each other. We have a whole wildlife ecosystem here!

Even during this crisis, I'm still busy because I'm taking online ballet classes with my school. I participate in five classes a week with different teachers. It's been a little strange doing classes at home rather than in the studio, but I feel lucky to be able to do this type of activity. I never thought I would dance in this particular way at home. All of our performances that we worked very hard on are canceled due to this pandemic, which is disappointing, but I understand that we need to practice physical distancing, so that people

don't catch the virus.

Something else I've been doing is baking, including colourful cakes and my famous "cloud chip" cookies! Speaking of food, my mother has been preparing delicious meals for the whole family. I am so grateful for this food because I know others dealing with COVID-19 are starving and have nothing to eat. However, we will be donating food to the ones in need.

In conclusion, this pandemic has really tested my independence, self-discipline and effort to keep my days as productive as possible. I guess these are skills that will train me for the future. I hope the COVID-19 comes to an end soon, so that we can get back to our daily routines and lifestyle and that everyone can feel safe again. I'm thankful to all the wonderful people, workers, doctors and nurses who have been taking care of everyone during this time.*



Shiraz Austin, age 12, Grade 6,
Beaconsfield, QC.

Our rapidly moving, information-based society badly needs people who know how to find facts rather than memorize them, and who know how to cope with change in creative ways.

— Wendy Priesnitz



THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

The Impact of COVID-19 on the Travel Industry

By Nilufer Mama

We entered the New Year with a swing in our step as bookings into 2020 looked promising. The phones were ringing off the hook, and our leisure department was busy. January is usually when we gauge the volume of our business for the year and it all seemed positive. I was personally engaged with putting finishing touches to an 18-day tour of South Africa, which I would be escorting with 30 guests.

Rumblings of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, started swirling around in January and initially seemed localized to the epicenter in Wuhan, China. I had some “what if” moments when I heard news of the spread in South Korea, Italy, and Spain, but we continued with bookings right through 2020. I buried the buzz in my subconscious and carried on with business as usual.

My first inkling about the gravity of the situation was in the last week of February whilst I was driving home listening to the car radio. There were ominous reports about the rapid spread of COVID-19 in many countries and it being a pos-

sible pandemic! Loud alarm bells sounded and I could not wait to get home and make some important calls. This was the moment when I knew that the world would change dramatically, and this would possibly devastate the travel industry, at least in the short term. It was time to be proactive, and we started calling clients who had imminent travel plans. Most of the travelers were concerned and wanted to know their options, but quite a few did not understand the magnitude of the situation and hesitated to address the issue.

Unfortunately, by early March I had to accept that fact that my South Africa tour would not begin on May 5 due to the worsening situation and soon thereafter international borders shut down and flights were suspended. Our work at the office was frantic as we were working round the clock, except this time around instead of booking flights we were dealing with cancellations, refunds, and future travel credits for our disappointed clients. This meant long waiting times on the phone, and most importantly arranging flights

to bring folks home. Management had to make some tough decisions! This was the time to be nimble and organize a reduced work force, while maintaining efficiencies and protecting the company from this unforeseen event. We all started working from home by mid-March and are thankfully equipped to do so efficiently.

ALL HANDS ON DECK

At this moment, corporate and leisure travel business is virtually at a standstill, but despite the lock down and this unprecedented crisis, travelers don't stop dreaming! With a lot of time to spare our clients are researching their bucket lists and planning travel in 2021. We are receiving queries for future travel which is encouraging, and reflects the resiliency of this industry. Travel advisors are taking advantage of this ‘pause’ by participating in travel webinars and learning the way business will be conducted in the post-COVID-19 world.

Travel suppliers are doing their part and offering maximum flexibility for future bookings by offering

a re-booking window of up to 24 months in most cases. The message is loud and clear “Postpone - don’t cancel”. This is encouraging travelers to think positively and re-schedule their plans. My guess is that leisure travel will cautiously recover in late- summer and fall. We will see people getting into their cars and travelling locally, mainly to open areas for vacations; this will be the first spike for the hotel industry.

By late fall we will see short-haul air travel moving again, followed by business travel. Group travel will be slow to start as the physical distancing stigma will remain with us for a while.

If the COVID-19 situation is under control by the fall, small group and multi-generational travel will gain momentum. The thrill of seeing new places, soaking in its customs and traditions is hard to resist for too long, especially for those who have bucket lists and are travel enthusiasts. Also, after such a long pause there will be a pent-up demand to re-unite with family and friends.

AIR TRAVEL, CRUISES, AND HOTEL SEGMENT RECOVERY

We all recall when air travel changed dramatically after 9/11 and this crisis will also result in a new normal. At that time travelers had no choice but to embrace the unusual elevated security regimes, which exists to this day. However, air travel gained full momentum by the end of 2011.

This time around the hard-hit **air-line industry** will respond in different ways by introducing a hygiene focused ‘new normal’ to make people comfortable getting on a plane. This will include mandatory masks, gloves, and personnel in protective gear and longer check-in times. Immunity passports, temperature checks, blocked seats, and longer turnaround times due to enhanced cabin cleaning procedures are steps airlines will have to initially take to regain customer confidence. Major international airlines will have a harder time recovering as big corporate spending will take a while to bounce back.

Despite the impact of the coronavirus on the **cruise industry**, this

travel segment will turnaround faster as it has a loyal customer base. Initially, there will be a greater appetite for river and small ship cruising due to fewer passengers on board, but the popular larger cruise lines will recover once customer confidence is regained and the threat of in-cruise quarantine starts to fade.

For the **hotel industry** to recover from this pandemic outbreak, there will be innovative ways to bring customers back with social distancing. New standards of hygiene and best practices in rooms, lobbies, spas, and restaurants will have to be re-assessed along with a myriad of technology solutions for the customer’s safety and security.

One important segment in the travel space which is neglected by most travelers is the value of **travel insurance**. We foresee this business will grow dramatically as COVID-19 has established that a crisis such as this comes with no warning, and it is prudent to protect one’s travel investment and book in the future with confidence.

The economic fallout from COVID will result in consolidation of all travel segments. Smaller agencies



Scenic view onn top of Table Mountain, South Africa; the tour group take camel rides in the Sahara desert, Morocco.

will be bought out; independent hotel operators will look at buy-outs from larger players; airline industry will unfortunately see bankruptcies and where viable we will see consolidation and merger of carriers.

SILVER LININGS

Whilst self-booking travel online seems easy enough, it is times like this that professional travel advisors are truly valued. The “Do-It-Yourselfers” have been calling for help as they are frustrated and unable to get through to the on-line portals they booked with, and may stand to lose their money. In all of this there is a silver lining. Hopefully the travelling public (both corporate and leisure) will realize the value professional travel advisors bring. They are this industry’s

‘front line workers’! They will also be the ones who will instill confidence to book travel again and advise you to get adequate travel insurance.

It is hoped that humanity at large will appreciate the Earth more and be mindful of the way it is healing and emerging as a fresher, cleaner planet. This, hopefully, we will maintain.

The post COVID-19 world will be a game-changer for the travel industry. News, social media and government announcements will determine when this industry will really start moving again. It is a reminder that after every difficulty, there will be ease, and this is a phase in the cycle of life.

“However long the day, the evening will come” (Irish proverb).

Let’s continue to dream about travel in a kinder world.*



Nilufer Mama is a leader in the tourism industry. She has been in the travel world since 1992 when she started her legacy company, Trade Wind Associates Canada Inc. Nilufer now heads the leisure department at Uniglobe - The Premiere Travel Group. Her passion is creating customized itineraries and personally escorting groups all over the world under the brand ‘Millenium Tours’.

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ROAD TO RECOVERY FOR REAL ESTATE

It is no secret that the real estate market has taken a hit during the pandemic. Moving forward, there are some trends being predicted. According to Forbes (Lisa Chamoff, April 27, 2020), outdoor space, balconies, terraces, and private roof decks as well as home offices will become a hot commodity. Fezana Journal asked an American and a Canadian professional in the sector to share the current situation and predictions for the future.



Kevin Ghaswala, a realtor with My Home Group, LLC, shared his experience. He is known for his extensive market knowledge of the Phoenix metro market, Arizona. Kevin's success is based almost exclusively on positive referral because he works tirelessly on his clients' behalf and offers them sage market advice.

FJ: What is the current situation in Arizona?

KG: The Arizona real estate market has faced many obstacles in the past, but nothing compared to what we are facing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Arizona, so far, has been less affected than several of the other markets; there has been a little bit of decrease in supply, but demand has not fallen proportionately. Typically, real estate is a lag indicator of the market as the average

time to close on a property is about 45 days. So as the pandemic was first starting the homes that were already in contract, for late March and April closing, still closed as scheduled. As a result, the April home sale numbers for 2020 were similar to the sales numbers of April 2019. However, as those deals closed, we noticed that the May sales numbers had dropped 20% from the month before and 27% from the May 2019 numbers. Additionally, inventory for both new and existing homes started slowing down in May as builders stopped construction and the people who had considered selling decided to postpone listing their properties. Demand, on the other hand, has slowed slightly, but not as much as the decrease in supply side. Average Days on the market has dropped to 51 days in April 2020 as compared to 69 days in April 2019. As a result of this demand, and because of the significantly lower supply, the Arizona real estate market has continued to rise in home prices. Average home prices In April were up 8.5% from April 2019.

To further increase the demand for housing are the historically low mortgage rates. The 30 year fixed mortgage rates have fallen to an average of 3.35% while 15 year mortgage rates have fallen to 2.7% in May. We are expecting to see a slight decrease in home prices in May, June & July as this pandemic continues on and more inventory hits the market. New home builders are back to the jobsite and people will eventually begin listing their homes again with new hand sanitizing and social distancing rules for Realtors. This added inventory will help with the higher demand and

help slow down the bidding wars that are becoming more common.

FJ: What were some of the tough decisions you had to make?

KG: I am working with a few elderly clients who are at higher risk of COVID-19 complications. Some are understandably a bit hesitant to have people coming to their homes right now. My older buyers are nervous to tour somebody else's home. As a result we, as realtors, have had to adapt to showing homes through virtual video conferencing.

FJ: What are you thinking in terms of the future?

KG: Arizona's real estate market has historically been strong since the last housing crash. We rebounded quicker than several other large markets. For the last decade, Arizona has seen an influx of people moving here from other states. Last year, it was estimated that over 200,000 people moved to Arizona. Metro Phoenix area boasts nearly 300 new people moving here per day. As the Phoenix metro area continues to grow with new companies moving here, so are additional people moving here looking for better job opportunities.

Demand, in Arizona, has increased steadily for the last several years and new home builders have not been able to keep up with the increased demand year over year. This lack of supply and steady demand has turned Phoenix into a hot housing market. Although we are expecting further bumps in the road due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Arizona's unemployment rates are still below the national average.

In the next several months, many who are still unemployed might be forced into a distressed sale of their home. However, many experts believe that there is still enough demand to absorb those distressed properties without causing a significant decline in the sale prices.

FJ: Has there been a silver lining to the situation?

KG: These last several months have proven to be a trying time for everyone; however, the demand for homes has not slowed as much as might have been expected. Many colleagues and I have been surprisingly busy. The last purchase offer I wrote for a client on a property received seven offers within 48 hours of being listed, all above list price. As we adapt to this "new normal" way of showing homes and listing homes, we are still extremely busy and continue finding ourselves

in bidding wars.

Rayo Irani, a sales representative with RE/MAX Realty



Specialists Inc., shared his point of view. As an experienced real estate professional in Mississauga, Canada, he believes that putting his clients and their requirements first, paves the way in executing the very best service. He takes pride in keeping himself approachable,

being a good communicator and listener, and responding to clients' needs promptly.

FJ: What were the first inklings that things were about to change dramatically?

RI: Initially, in late February and early March of 2020, I did not think it would affect us at all, as we were seeing a lot of homes sell with multiple offers, and more than asking prices.

However as soon as I heard that Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario, had announced a lock down, I knew we would have loss of employment in many market segments, and this will impact us for several months. In the second and third week of March, stock market volatility spiked and it was tumbling downwards. The stock market is always the first indicator of times to come and then the COVID's impact rolled over into real estate. Showings of homes dropped, homes selling in a bidding war barely had a few people come to look at them.

FJ: What were some of the tough decisions you had to make?

RI: Initially, I did not meet sellers and buyers face-to-face. Instead, I was meeting them over Facetime and then Zoom meetings. Selling real estate is all about viewing the property; no open houses leads to less exposure of the homes we are selling. We cut back on some of the marketing to manage the shortfall.

FJ: What are you thinking in terms of the future?

RI: There are a lot of unknowns. "Will there be a relapse? Will there be a second lock down?" Sellers don't want to sell because they are not sure of the mar-

ket conditions, and many first time buyers are looking for deals, but there is less inventory in the market. The rental condo market is oversupplied with fewer tenants to rent. I think for the market to completely recover, many companies have to re-hire their staff, which will lead into mortgage approvals and the return of buying power and market confidence. This cycle could take us into 2021 spring or summer months.

Another aspect of the road to recovery will be the return of travel and socializing. The pandemic has affected short-term rentals like Airbnb. Due to a lack of demand for Airbnb, the long term rental supply of condos have gone up as some owners are selling their Airbnb properties.

FJ: Has there been a silver lining to the situation?

RI: Sure. We still have few great months of summer coming up with a pent up demand from first-time buyers who could not afford homes earlier, and will be able to now that mortgage rates are slightly lower. Time will tell. *

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POST PANDEMIC TRENDS IN REAL ESTATE

BUYERS WILL UPSIZE

After being cooped up in small apartments, buyers will likely be looking to size up - whether sizing up in square footage, light, outdoor space, view, or amenities.

CONSTRUCTION PRICES WILL RISE

More than 30 percent of construction materials come from overseas, from countries such as China, Italy, Brazil and India, which are facing their own challenges with COVID-19.

INCREASE IN RENTALS

The related job losses are expected to decrease rents, along with stricter home buying standards from lenders, as city housing stock tends more toward rental than ownership.

HOME OFFICES WILL BECOME POPULAR

For multi-family projects in the planning stages, developers are reconsidering layouts to accommodate tenants working from home.

DEMAND FOR OUTDOOR SPACES

Balconies, terraces and private roof decks will become prized amenities for any prospective buyer.

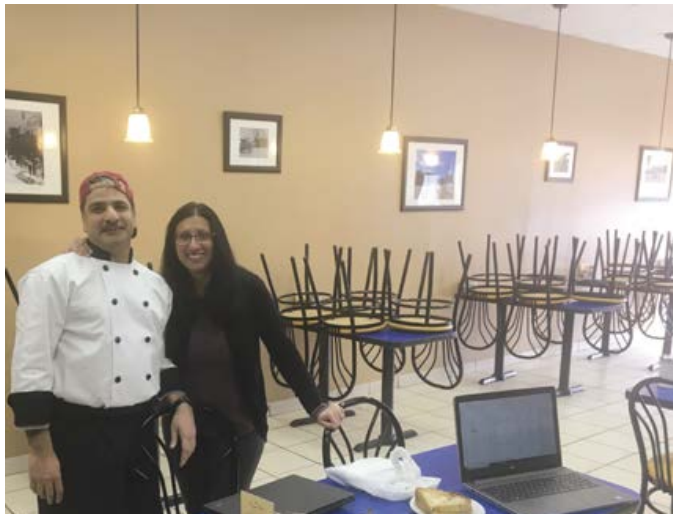
(From *Here Are The Top 5 Predictions For Real Estate Once The Pandemic Subsides* by Lisa Chamoff, Forbes, April 27, 2020)

The Sun Hasn't Set On The "SUNRISE GRILL"

By Rooshad Golwalla



Sunrise Grill in busier times.



Rooshad with his wife Zhaleh during the restaurant closure.

The beginning of 2020 started off great as we were two years into our small "Mom and Pop" breakfast restaurant called, "Sunrise Grill" with an established customer base that spread the good word and allowed for our business to see growth. By February 2020, we finally felt comfortable enough to invest in new kitchen equipment as we knew we would be able to pay off the business debt before year's end. We even took an increase to rent within stride. The restaurant is in a township called Milton, Ontario, which has been declared a city, but still has a community feel. Miltonians are extremely supportive of small businesses like

ours against the big chain giants like Sunset Grill, McDonalds, and Eggsmart. And it is our loyal customers that have kept us afloat thus far.

By the end of February, there were rumblings about a coronavirus, but our restaurant continued to stay busy. In speaking with our customers, it was merely another flu season. Conversations revolved around the media blowing it out of proportion when more died of the regular influenza and pneumonia! Did we not all survive the SARs and the H1N1? Mind you, 75% of our customer-base are seniors. But they too were of the opinion that if WHO (World Health Organization) is not calling it a pandemic then it just is not that serious. We heard that from our politicians as well so it must just be an over exaggeration, right? Wrong!

On March 11, WHO turned around and announced COVID-19 as a pandemic. Right away, Premier Doug Ford announced that schools would be closed for two weeks following March break and in the next breath he also asked families to travel and have fun. Two days later, March 14, the Federal Government urged Canadian travelers to return home as new restrictions may be imposed at the borders. This was great! With Canadians home and not traveling we thought our business would boom. So we prepared for a busy few weeks. Two days later, March

16, the province further recommended the closure of schools, daycare, restaurants, bars and even churches. I am embarrassed to say that is when we honestly realized how serious this was getting, but our chairs were still down and we were inviting guests. Seeing it as just a recommendation by Premier Ford, maybe we could still stay open? Nope. The very next day Ford declared a “state of emergency” and ordered restaurants, among other businesses, to be closed. We sent texts to our staff of three servers and two cooks to stay home until further notice, thinking that the closure may be for two weeks. My wife works for a corporation and like many in North America, she was asked to work from home. As you can see this shutdown came down so suddenly that we did not have time to prepare.

So how long would this last? Two weeks? Maybe the end of March? Surely the government cannot keep this going. What would happen to our little business? Should we stay closed for the two weeks? Luckily we were in the middle of signing up with UberEats, so we were online just in time. It was a time of uncertainty where we were not sure how to put a positive twist to the situation. Our business practically died right away. Fortunately, we still had a few regulars that never left our side and continued to encourage us. But April was fast

approaching. We heard on the news that mortgages were being deferred so we asked our landlord to defer our rent. Our landlord is a private, wealthy family that owns LaRose bakery right beside us within our plaza. They agreed to defer just half the rent till July. OK, so we bought some time. Things would certainly get back to normal quick? Nope, by March 31, Ford declared schools would remain closed till at least May 31. Covid-19 cases continued to rise at an alarming rate. By the end of March we were certain this was going to be long term and requested a further deferral of May’s rent, which was again granted.

Our business continued to be slow but we still needed some groceries here and there. Standing in queues after sitting and waiting for customers from 8:00 am to 1:00pm was depressing at best. Bread was hard to come by! We reduced our business hours. But we just had to keep going. We started using social media to advertise to our Miltonian customers and received some love and support. By April, we had signed on with SkipTheDishes with the hopes of getting some added business. It did not perform as expected.

By April 6 we applied for Canada Emergency Relief Benefit (CERB) and received a retroactive payment from mid-March, which helped a

bit. When the Federal government first announced the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) funding to small businesses in the amount of \$40,000 on March 27 we were extremely disappointed for not qualifying due to payroll requirements. However, we were not alone and after much noise the government changed that ruling and so by April 16 many small businesses qualified for the \$25 billion relief. By mid-April state of emergency was extended for another four weeks.

Our most loyal customers are our staff and their families who buy breakfast at least once a week. The silver lining amid this terrible time is that my teenage daughter, Tatiana, has truly stepped up and helped us as she comes in throughout the week to help in the front. My wife does her job from the back table of the restaurant to give moral support and she helps in the front throughout the weekends. Our family has never been closer. We feel truly blessed. We continue to stay positive in the hopes that this too shall pass! *

Rooshad Golwalla is the owner and operator of a small breakfast restaurant called *Sunrise Grill*. He quit his job at the *Fairmont Royal York* after 22 years to pursue his dream of owning a restaurant.

Is it safe to order take-out?

One of the ways we can support local restaurants during these uncertain times is to order take-out or delivery. But is it safe to eat the food, specially if the handler may be infected? Benjamin Chapman, who is a professor and food safety specialist at North Carolina State University, recommends you use gloves to pick up any take-out or delivery packages. You then remove the food from the external packaging, properly dispose or recycle it. Then after disposing of the gloves, wash or sanitize your hands before sitting down to eat. The good news is that even if you do eat food with the virus, there are not many receptors in the digestive track for the virus to cling to, so swallowing the virus would not likely lead to contracting the illness. (Source: Mallory Simon, CNN).



The Little Business that Could

By Naomi Mobed

The sun was shining and waves on the Delaware River sparkled like gemstones...I was driving through beautiful Bucks County-Pennsylvania earlier today to pick up savory scones and spiced nuts from a jam maker-turned-caterer, who I have known since I started Le Bon Magot® five years ago. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, his wholesale business disappeared overnight, and he needed to make ends meet. Recognizing the value in delivering prepared foods to friends and family, he started posting daily menus on social media. His circle of customers widened, including my family. In return, we share with him our culinary efforts and his favorite jar of *Tomato and White Sultana Chutney with Ginger & Garam Masala*. As I passed throngs of families and friends walking, eating, drinking on Bridge Street, it was clear that for many, COVID-19 seemed like a distant memory. However, for those of us who participate in the \$1.77 trillion food economy, no matter the size of the business, COVID-19 virus is all too real and present.

The unfortunate outbreak of COVID-19 has impacted Le Bon Magot, just as it has every player in the specialty food, hospitality and food service industries. Some, especially those lacking in either capital, sufficient space, or available staff, have been forced to close down permanently. Others have shuttered temporarily with a view to open in some form as restrictions are lifted and new protocols

for interacting in public spaces are put in place. While Le Bon Magot has been challenged by the adverse economic impact of prolonged, but altogether necessary, social distancing measures, we have continued to operate and are doing all we can to keep our business going during these times. Our customers are vital to our company's well-being, and we want to ensure the best possible service without interruption. It was also imperative for our small but increasingly known brand to have a positive impact on the supply chain: we wanted all of our stakeholders – distributors, retailers, employees, brokers and consumers – to know they could count on us.

So, how were we, a small specialty food producer of African, Middle Eastern and South Asian-inspired condiments and culinary ingredients that operated out of the greater New York City area, the epicenter of the pandemic, going to keep our doors open? The cornerstone of our approach is treating the safety of our staff and their families as sacrosanct. Not wanting to expose them to undue risk, we diligently follow the evolving scientific research. Without shareholders or a board of directors, along with our diminutive size means that we could take swift action. We do not carry any major debt on our books, and first quarter sales were up by

approximately 25% from the same period in 2019 so cash continues to trickle-in.

As media reports about a possible lock down circulated, we took two vital steps that would help us survive: we temporarily halted the production of our condiments, jams and sauces; and, we canceled in-store demos as well as our attendance at trade shows and industry events. Both these actions, reduced our costs substantially, allowing us to divert additional cash resources to staff payroll and supplier payments. Staff worked from home and/or came in shifts, so they were not sharing areas or workspaces. Cleaning protocols were put in place and a mandatory mask policy was implemented as/when social distancing was not possible.

The respite from production and sales (to brick-and-mortar outlets) enabled us to correctly position ourselves to meet the growing



demand of online customers. We took the opportunity to expand our digital footprint and e-commerce capabilities. In addition to building our Amazon storefront, we partnered with a number of online distributors and updated our website (www.lebonmagot.com). Above and beyond selling online, we are participating in virtual trade shows and forums to ensure that our brand stays in the “hearts and minds” of buyers and consumers. We have stepped up communications with customers to remind them that we are present.

Shuttered stores are one challenge, but the abrupt and indefinite end to in-store demos and sampling also poses a risk for unproven brands like ours. Le Bon Magot products are housed within the specialty area of a grocery; this means that we benefit from cross-merchandising with cheese and charcuterie. Consumers are not only schooled on the various uses of our chutneys and *achaars* (spicy condiments), but they are encouraged to sample them. Often times, the average consumer is not familiar with the spices we use; or, flavor combinations and ingredients, such as *doodhi* (white pumpkin), are new to them. Once they taste

the product, most embrace the flavors and value the quality of our ingredients – for instance, single origin double AA grade Madagascar vanilla; sustainably sourced turmeric from a small farm in India; and, Afghan saffron from a B-Certified Corporation started by military personnel stationed in Afghanistan, working with family-owned farms to cultivate and export their exquisite saffron. A collaboration with an Israeli chef, who is also a master spice blender and trader, has led to the re-imagining of such traditional blends as *Ras al-Hanout* and sweet *Garam Masala*. This combined with fresh, organic produce (rather than the standard use of canned, frozen or commercially sourced purees fruits and vegetables in pantry products), offers consumers tastes and textures that depart significantly from other jarred products. Sampling enables customers to recognize the value of our creations and therefore be prepared to pay a higher price than they would for our competitors’ products.

With the changes in store protocols – i.e. eliminating samples and ushering customers through stores quickly – and, more consumers

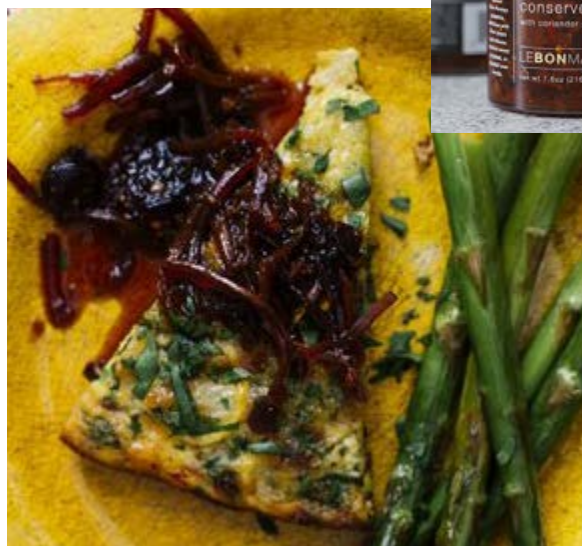


purchasing their groceries online, we will likely lose the less adventurous customers. Our online descriptions will need to be vivid enough for the consumer to evoke the same sensations of tasting the products.

Under the shroud of uncertainty, consumers are seeking comfort in the familiar while still wanting to treat themselves. Sales of alcohol, especially wine, pantry staples and chocolate/biscuits have all risen. Condiments and sauces are also seeing a rise. Consumers, especially millennials, who developed their taste buds eating out, often in ethnic restaurants, will be seeking to replicate the same flavors at home. At a time when people are fixated to their geographies, Le Bon Magot’s unique flavors incorporating spice blends and single origin spices offer culinary adventure. Our use of fresh produce, heritage recipes and classical methods are authentically artisanal and have straight-out-of-the-kitchen appeal, offering the comfort of a less complicated time. Le Bon Magot’s shelf-stable products are the ideal pantry choice – they can put a new spin on a tried-and-tested savory dish, reinvent a sandwich, add flavor to a sauce or be used as a stew base. Also, a treat to be relished, our creations can be paired with cheeses and charcuterie; incorporated into baked goods; or, drizzled into ice creams – our creations are the perfect indulgence.

We are cautiously optimistic about Le Bon Magot’s future. But, for now, the second half of this year remains hazy. How long will the pandemic last, and how will consumers behave when it does end?

Naomi J. Mobed is a culinary entrepreneur who started Le Bon Magot®, a line of inspired condiments in 2015. The ethos of Le Bon Magot is to create products from heritage recipes using high-quality seasonal produce, custom-blended aromatics and no preservatives. Their *Brinjal Caponata* was awarded first place at the 2019 Artisan Flave Awards.



PERSONAL MUSINGS



HAS TIME SLOWED DOWN?

A Personal Perception of 'Coronatime'

By Sheeraz Wania

'You can divide your money between things like clothes, a new car, or a fancy dinner, but you can spend your time on only one thing at a time', says Jean Paul Zogby in "The Power of Time Perception" (Time Lighthouse Publishing, 2017).

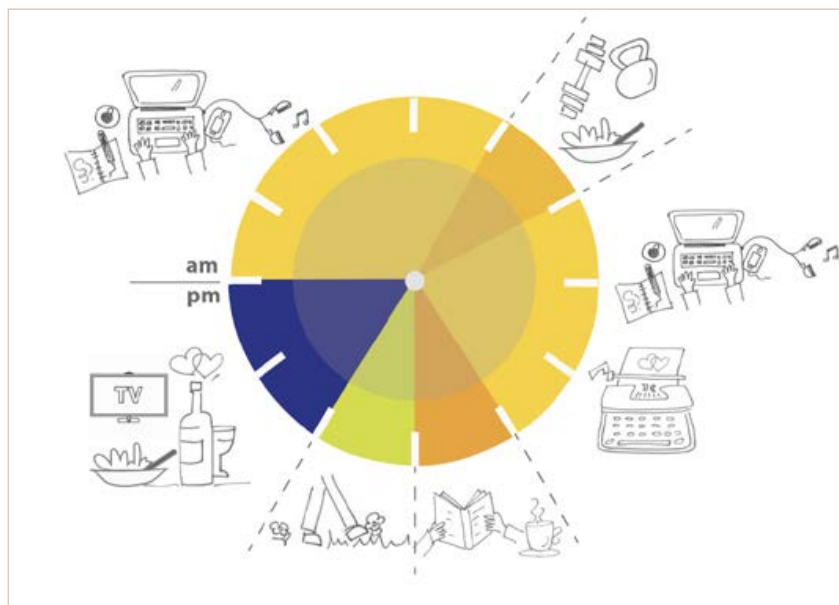
Time's fluidity has perplexed and inspired thinkers for thousands of years. We have twenty-four hours in a day, any day, no more no less. Yet we all perceive time in varied ways as individuals. How many times have we heard someone say "I need more than 24 hours in a day to get all this done" or on the

flip side, "My day goes by so slowly, it seems like an eternity". We have all noticed that one minute of doing push ups seems like forever, but that same sixty seconds chatting with a friend fly by in a jiffy.

For some time now, I have been very interested (from an academic perspective mostly) to see how time is measured and perceived by each of us, under different circumstances. Time is objective, but how we perceive time is subjective in its nature. Interestingly, a scientific definition of time as "a the progression of events from the past to the present into the future. Basically, if a

system is unchanging, it is timeless. Time can be considered to be the fourth dimension of reality, used to describe events in three-dimensional space. It is not something we can see, touch, or taste, but we can measure its passage." (ThoughtCo. com, Anne Marie Helmenstine, November 26, 2019).

When 'physical distancing' [social distancing] was put in action, after the first week I did a sketch of sorts to determine how I was spending my day. I doodled and then mapped the doodles out to show a visual representation. I did this merely for fun.



Once I was done, I realized that I had also mapped my hours in January, in the midst of a very chaotic academic term I was dealing with at the time. The mapping at the time looked different from my latest doodles. It looked a bit complex and all over the place, probably how I felt at that point.

After seeing the two diverse representations, the question I ask is if we distinctly perceive our

day on lock down as longer or shorter? Research says that time slows down when we make a drastic change. Going into lock down was extreme in every way, for most people. What was interesting for me to note was not just how I spent my time then and now, which is kind of obvious, from my perspective, more time on hand due to reduced commute and one-on-one office interactions as a start.

MEASURING TIME

The ancient Sumerian civilisation (3300-2000 BC) in what is now southern Iraq, laid the foundations for mathematics, and developed a way of dividing a circle into 6 equal segments. Later, the Babylonian civilisation adopted this sexagesimal system and divided the 6 segments further, into 60 smaller segments, creating the 360 'degrees' in total that are used to divide circles today. It seems likely the Babylonians also invented the first sundial, and from there, the dividing up of an hour into 60 individual segments was born. Interestingly, the Sumerians also created the 7-day week, first mentioned in the Gilgamesh epic.

It was the ancient Egyptians who first established the solar year of 365 1/4 days, dividing it into 12 months. The figure 12 was used to match the Egyptians' observations of the stars, but also of the rhythm of the Nile - the Egyptian farmers had 3 'seasons' a year lasting approximately 4 months each - one for planting, one for flooding, and one for harvesting.

(Peter Etherington, *The Guardian*)

What was more interesting for me, as a graphic designer, was how I had decided to map it out – the same person but at different times. The kind of contrasting visual language I has chosen to depict it with, at these very different phases of my life, was a compelling realization. The current depiction is less structured, more casual and less ordered; more in the moment. The mapping done two months back was more rigid, rather stiff and also punitive and makes me wonder if that's how my mind 'perceived' time at that moment in comparison. *

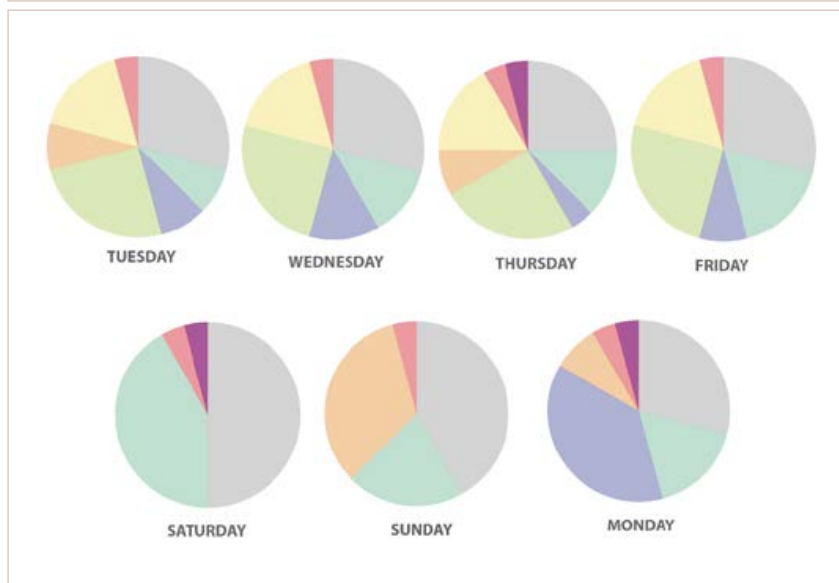
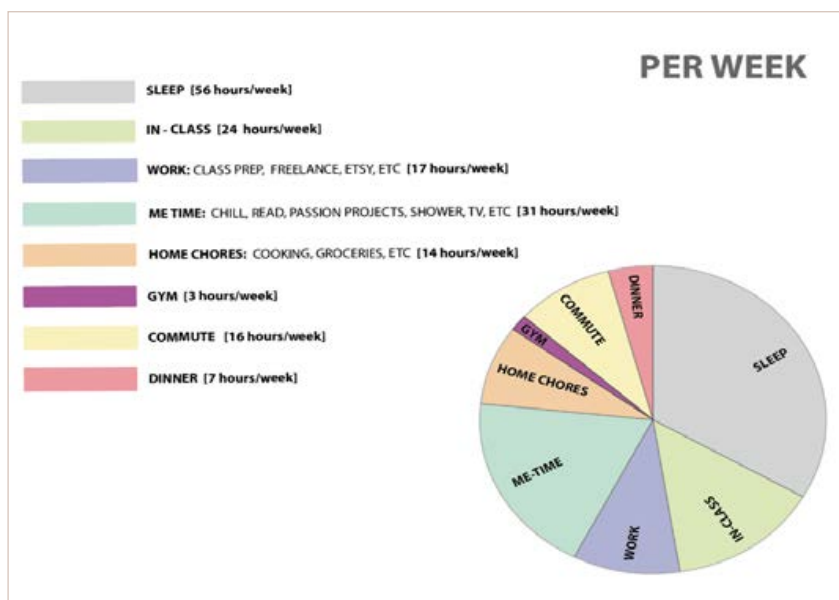


Sheeraz Y. Wania is a graphic designer and design educator with a MA in Education from the University of London, U.K. Having lived, worked and taught internationally for many years, she now resides in Toronto and teaches courses related to design, culture and technology.

Follow her @sheerazwania on Instagram

We must use time wisely and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right.

- Nelson Mandela



THE INEQUALITY OF MASKS

By Deenaz Coachbuilder

The first facial mask was invented in England, during the 18th century by Madame Rowley, for women to preserve their complexion. Even the ancient Egyptians, conscious of keeping skin moist under the burning sun, kept serum in their tombs to ease their journey into the next world. Virginia Woolf wished for women to have “a room of one’s own”, a space that no one could invade, where one could, if one desired, exfoliate to one’s heart’s content. Being naturally oily of skin, I follow in their footsteps by using a charcoal mask once a week, luxuriating under its cool touch upon my skin, as an aroma of lavender hovers around me, lying in bed so the liquid does not drip into my collar, reading, for twenty peaceful moments. My grandmother kept sachets of dry lavender flowers among her linen. When we spent summers with her as children, I would bury my nose into the pillow on my bed, and waft away in its fragrance.

In order to stay as far away as possible from the COVID-19, I remain at home, do not visit grocery stores as advised, nor socialize with friends. My son and husband secure some of our provisions. Necessity is the mother...so I have learned to order online via Instacart, a most useful service, or the grocery stores’ delivery systems.

Where we live in Riverside, California, masks are mandatory when stepping outdoors, no matter the purpose. I have a white mask, light, soft, easy to wear, it hooks over my ear. My husband Pheroze’s is



black. I keep mine in a plastic bag. The only time I wear this mask is when the two of us take our daily walk. We step onto Breckenridge Avenue, a quiet cul-de-sac. Turn left onto Overlook Boulevard. The street is tree lined: crepe myrtles, eucalypti and oaks. The landscape winds around walkways decorated with rock rose and Indian hawthorn bushes bordered by violet colored society garlic.

My mask covers my nose and mouth. I hardly notice it as we walk downhill. Uphill is different, as my breathing becomes strained. When I approach the upper bend that turns right towards home, I slip the mask a bit lower, allowing the air to flow into my impatient nostrils, my heart thumping.

Our mid-morning walk is often a solitary one, only Sundays brings out the venturesome. The sound of an occasional car as it saunters uphill breaks this serenity.

Our physician friends work in Riverside Community Hospital, about six miles away, and other local settings. One is assigned to San Bernardino County Hospital,

in Colton. He has a severe upper respiratory problem. They are present when ambulances wail, working with loved ones, parents and grandparents—the keepers of our memory, our youth, our children. They speak of the pain and hubbub surrounding them. We worry and pray for their safety. As we shelter in place, I find myself texting and making more phone calls than ever before. “Are you wearing your mask?”

“Why not have the grocery stores deliver” I suggest. First responders hook on their masks as they step outside their door in the early morning, until their return at night.

Pheroze’s and my masks are worn for a short half-hour. As we walk, the fragrance of newly awakened buds is everywhere, Mary Oliver’s “wild high music of smell...” *



Deenaz P. Coachbuilder is a writer, educator, artist, and environmental advocate. Her books of poems, “*Metal Horse and Shadows: A Soul’s Journey and Imperfect Fragments*”, have been received with critical acclaim in the U.S. and abroad. Deenaz is the recipient of several awards, including President Obama’s “Volunteer Service Award”.

NOWHERE TO RUSH TO ANYMORE

By Tanaz Mody

Parents always tell you, “be careful what you wish for, it might come true”. My husband, and I work full time, and always said we wished we could spend more time with our three daughters - seven-year-old, five-year-old, one-year-old - and dog. We are near New York City, a COVID-19 epicenter.

When we went into shelter-in-place, we thought a few weeks might be fun. We set up desks for home school and did activities that we’ve always wanted to do around the house. A few weeks have turned into months, and work was getting done at odd hours and exhaustion set in - we came off our high and the stress set in. We needed to continue to manage work and kids and not let either be sacrificed. Our kids need an education, we are lucky to still have our jobs, and want to continue to excel.

Managing education, entertainment, meals, and two full time jobs created a tremendous amount of

work. We’ve seen some of our friends come up with strict schedules and others go with whatever way the wind blows. I believe in a balanced approach to things in life, so we start the morning with a light schedule.

For afternoons, we go with the flow, as we balance the needs of our kids and the requirements of our jobs. The dog is thrilled to have us around all the time, even if that means she’s missing her naps with the constant noise. The success of our day is measured by how capable we are of context switching, from math and phonics drills to company meetings.

Our old way of living has been rocked, so we’re coming up with new traditions to spend our time and keep us happy. Now that we have more time on school day mornings, the kids have time to call their great-mamaji (great grandmother) in Mumbai. We go for a family “pack walk” at 5:00pm, rain

or shine, signaling we’re headed into the evening. Every Friday evening, we light the firepit and roast marshmallows. Saturday mornings we make a list of things we can do together around the house. For example, the kids make a lot of art-work in home school and wanted to showcase it. After a few weeks of putting together masterpieces, we had a social distancing art show in our front yard for our neighbors.

Another weekend, the kids wanted to go to the beach. We made lemonade, set up an umbrella, beach chairs and pretended to be at the beach. The girls have dance and gymnastics class at home via Zoom. Yes, we try to limit screen time when the weather is nice, but when it rains we embrace it and have movie days.

When we slow down, we start to appreciate the simple things. The stress has now become manageable and we’re enjoying the time we have together. We are finding joy in building new traditions and new simple norms. We are using this time to rest more, to stop and watch the sunset, we’re slowing down because there’s nowhere to rush to anymore. *

Tanaz Gustad Mody lives in New Jersey. She is the Vice-President, People Operations at Mechanism Ventures.



LIFE in a BUBBLE

By Farida Master



Who would have thought that a tiny virus that is invisible to the naked eye would turn out to be such a deadly assassin that killed thousands and robbed millions of their livelihood? It threw us into social isolation and had us lock our homes and wipe every surface squeaky clean.

Strange as it may sound, when you ask most Zoros in Auckland, New Zealand about life in a bubble in lock down, the answer comes as a total surprise. Practically everyone sheepishly admits they were secretly happy! It may have something to do with NZ's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern's clear and consistent response to the virus, which was to 'go hard and go early' so that the Land of the Long White Cloud could recover and rebuild the economy quickly.

Daily press briefings, Facebook live chats, and emergency alert messages minimized the potentially devastating impact of the virus with the death toll limited to 21. The lock down according to most, (non-stop party people included) was 'a silent

retreat' from the crazy treadmill of life. "We had forgotten that we don't need to do so much to enjoy the simple pleasures of life," is the common refrain. Even as New Zealand moved to Alert Level 2, which equates to life getting back to normal with stringent hygiene practices in place, most mortals say they are a bit sad they are going back to the grind.

Ashish Mehta, who hosted a series of online meditation and prayer group meetings thrice a week through lock down, even called the coronavirus an invisible "being that created a shift in consciousness... it made us aware of the unseen divine force behind the whole cosmos. We needed a virus to teach us that."

The spirited Benifer Irani who loves getting people together 'Zoom'ed in on the entertainment as she hosted weekly Housie sessions through lock down with chocolates as prizes that she left behind in people's letterboxes. Getting everyone together on Zoom to play Antakshri on Sunday is another initiative that Benifer happily took on.

On Mondays, it was humbandagis on Zoom, also a nice way for people to connect after prayers. That's where you got your Parsi *khavar* (news) on *bawas* (slang for Parsis) who arrived on rescue flights from India or news updates about a couple in quarantine after their long journey from Iran.

Making sure the young adults had a chance to reconnect was Ferzeen Dadabhoy who hosted a fun quiz and online games evening with people from as far as Canada participating in it.

More than anything, the catch-ups

helped people to deal with social isolation and connected them in a way that has never happened before. Like the *bawa* pot luck group on Zoom where everyone gets to eat their own pot of food while they say cheers with their glass of wine. And if you are lucky, one of the good Samaritans from the group may even pack a *dabba* (box) and leave it at your doorstep.

Kaiwan Mevawalla, Benafshe Spencer, and Navzad Cooverjee birthdays were celebrated with cake-cutting and lots of singing. Except, we never got to taste the cake on Zoom. We've taken a rain check that will be encashed soon now that our PM who did an exemplary job of leading a team of five million through the crisis, said we can meet up to groups of ten.

And while I write this, the next invite to the pot luck party is waiting to be accepted. Also, a post about WZCC, NZ invite to a facebook Live session on impact of Covid-19 and its flow-on effects to the future of retail and commerce—has popped up. Talk about a hectic social calendar on Zoom.*



Farida Master is the deputy editor of the *Times* newspaper in Auckland and the author of "*Zerbanoo Gifford: An Uncensored Life*" and "*The Making of a Legend: Biography of Dr K. B. Grant*".

WORKING *our way through* the PANDEMIC

By Lylah M. Alphonse



My kids are calling this time “our gourmet quarantine.” Cooking and baking help me manage stress – I like to say that, for me, cooking is cheaper than therapy – so pots are bubbling, we’ve been eating dinner as a family frequently, and there are more baked goods on the counter than usual. We’ll exercise away the extra pounds later!

Finding ways to pass time hasn’t really been an issue for us during this crisis. Everyone in our household is working in some way, which means there’s little time for boredom. (Also: It’s spring and we usually plant a large garden, so there’s plenty of outdoor work if anyone claims to be bored!)

My husband and I are both grateful to be working full-time. My husband works for a university, and there is plenty to do to support the faculty and researchers. He has

taken over one corner of the living room and my father, who has been staying with us since the pandemic hit, has created a little office for himself in the opposite corner and “commutes” to the TV room to watch the news. I’m a journalist who works in communications and crisis management, and was already accustomed to working remotely when the pandemic hit. My home office is still the same, but these few months are the longest I’ve gone without a business trip in nearly 10 years. I wonder how the pandemic will change the way we all work in the future.

Our oldest kids are adults living on their own, hundreds of miles away from us, but video calls keep us connected and allow us to nag them about wearing masks and social distancing. Our teenagers at home are now busy with online classes, homework, and projects, but when the lockdown began, they had three weeks of no formal school work. We let them adjust to this new normal, and encouraged them to learn on their own about things they’ve been interested in but couldn’t delve deeply into at

school. Our 15-year-old immersed herself in painting and virtual tours of museums, and our 13-year-old son started online guitar lessons. Their spring basketball teams and tournaments are on indefinite hold, but my daughter’s coach schedules mandatory drills conducted over video conferencing, and my son has created a mini gym in the corner of his room so he can work out. And of course they spend plenty of time texting with their friends, playing with their friends and their cousins over Xbox, and watching their favorite shows and movies, sometimes with a friend or two watching from their own homes at the same time.

History reminds us that we’ve got a lot to be grateful for, from modern medicine to modern technology. Coping with self-quarantine would have been much more difficult just a few decades ago.



Lylah M. Alphonse is Senior Vice President of *Laurel Strategies*, a global communications firm.

CHOOSING to PAUSE

By Trity Pourbahrami & Peter Capak

An evening a few weeks ago one of the adults in our family found themselves “watering” one of the adolescents with cold water so they could “cool off” after a heated argument. This was a physical indication of our need to pause, get our bearings, and realize we are all in this together with COVID-19. Last December we choose to take advantage of a unique career opportunity and move to Silicon Valley. We anticipated some challenges with the move, but could not have even imagined our current situation. Our family had only been living in our new city for two-and-a-half months, barely enough time to get used to our new jobs and schools, when the COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders came into effect. Now the kids’ schools and our offices are closed, therefore we are spending close to 24 hours a day under the same roof with few anchors in the broader community. This forced togetherness has increased the tension and friction in our household and amplified the children’s desire to go back to the “way things were.” More often than not it gets so intense that we all need to pause and cool off.

Whether it is a forced pause to cool off or an intentional pause to be grateful and show appreciation after a tough day, choosing to pause has been extremely helpful in our family. When we moved, we anticipated excitement and activity on many fronts, not a lot of pauses. We imagined the girls would be getting used to their new school, making new friends, and starting their extracurricular

activities. As the adults we would explore our new work environments, meet new people, and establish routines. Since the shelter-in-place order came into effect we have had to pause and re-imagine many of these plans. How do you make new friends when you are in virtual classrooms and on zoom work calls? How do you keep physically and mentally fit while socially distancing? We start by acknowledging that it is challenging and take long hug-pauses. After the hug has taken effect, we try to make suggestions. How about reaching-out to a classmate via Google classroom and asking about an assignment? How about joining me on a walk around the block? We pause to think about how the other people on our block are doing. Is there a safe way we can reach out to the senior citizen who lives alone? It looks like that family with young children is struggling, do you want to offer them virtual babysitting?

While we know several families, who have lost loved ones to COVID-19 and are financially struggling because of the economic consequences of the pandemic, so far we have been extremely fortunate. We intentionally pause to not take this for granted. We make an extra effort to reach-out and show our appreciation to our loved ones.

Finally, we pause to think about the good that has and can come out of this new normal. On the 50th anniversary of earth day we celebrate



the many ways shelter-in-place has been good for our environment. This experience has also reminded us that as a human race we are resilient. We are here because many generations before us, without the medical and technological advances that we have today, survived diseases and outbreaks. Let’s pause together and ask what have we learned and how can we use it to thrive in a post-COVID19 world? *

Trity Pourbahrami is the science communications officer for the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. **Peter Capak** is the architect of perception systems for the Oculus division of Facebook. They are new to the Bay Area community.

Trusting Fortune's Wind

By Porus P. Cooper

The opening scene in Aeschylus' "Persians" is set in a square in Susa, a capital of the Achaemenids. Here, Queen Atossa (Hutokhshi), widow of the great Darius, is waiting to hear from a messenger about the fate of her son Xerxes' expedition to Greece.

She has had forebodings, and indeed the news turns out to be bad. The mighty Persian naval force was scattered in the Battle of Salamis by an adversary Xerxes underestimated. Survivors found no mercy, the messenger relates. The king of kings, who watched the slaughter from a vantage point, tore his garments in anguish as he retreated toward his homeland.

I was reading this play – the oldest surviving work of the Greek tragedian who was a participant in the 480 BC battle – fortuitously just as the present worldwide calamity began to unfold.

Our modern-day predicament – we are set back on our heels by a mere virus – strangely parallels the surprising setback suffered by the greatest empire of the ancient world. Every now and then, it seems, Nature reminds us that we have not entirely tamed it and underestimate it at our peril. It warns against our hubris. So, we have fled back into our homes, to lick our wounds and plot our return. At least those of us who have homes where we can shelter from this invisible storm.

The plight of those less fortunate at home and around the world,

beamed into our televisions and streamed onto our laptop screens, is a daily reminder of the fragility of life and the capriciousness of circumstance: Nursing homes that have become killing fields; the dead warehoused in makeshift morgues; families unable to attend last rites; homeless people turned away from city subways. I cannot get out of my mind the Indian day laborer who trekked 1,200 miles from the city back to his home village. Sometimes he hitch-hiked with truckers and sometimes he walked for miles after the government abruptly enforced a shutdown and his work and income disappeared. Hundreds of thousands of desperate ones have set off on similar grueling and sometimes

death-dealing journeys.

There. but for the grace of God...

Nothing so heroic required of me. Dwelling in the comfort of suburbia, I've put the time in forced sequestration toward a house cleanup. Decades of accumulated paper (books, bank statements, and even old issues of the FEZANA Journal, sorry) are being shown the door. Weeks into the shutdown in New Jersey, a dent is visible in the heap, finally.

My wife Hutokhshi continues in her day job, from home. She is a school social worker, and her work has migrated from the classroom to computers and cell phones. A new word has entered her vocabulary –



"The Ghost of Darius Appearing to Atossa", drawing by George Romney.

Zoom. Sons, Burjis and Malcolm, and their respective girlfriends, Caty and Liz, help keep us provisioned. My trips to the grocery store are infrequent, just as the authorities counseled. A retiree, I am deemed to be in an especially vulnerable age group.

Two friends came down with the virus, providing an opportunity – unwelcome though it was, given the context – to join a food chain to assist the couple as they recovered at home. Through another friend’s friend, we acquired a small store of surgical masks. They are now de rigueur outdoors.

Suddenly, also, it is no longer a waste of time to simply stand and stare out the window. I have surprised myself by how easily I am able to shed the psychological imperative of a lifetime of seeing virtue in keeping busy and vice in idleness. The early May temperatures have begun to warm up, and the pin oaks have sprouted their seasonal coats of green. The red azaleas are emerging from their buds, the whites show promise of following.

Out there, also, to quote a lyric, “all the sounds of the earth are like music”. A child’s cry of “Dad!!” The chirping and cooing of the variety of birds that a suburban New Jersey landscape is home to. The gusts of wind in the trees that give an ocean-front effect. And even the hypnotic drone of the neighbor’s lawn mower. For all of it speaks to what is almost lost and might be regained.

As May turns to June, there is another sudden cloudburst of woes, this time stemming from a shocking instance of man’s inhumanity to man. It has pushed the pandemic mostly off our TV screens, even

as a gradually relaxed quarantine continues. The epicenter was Minneapolis, but the fallout from this incident of police callousness, seen on video by millions and protested by tens of thousands in city streets, has engulfed the entire United States. It has even spilled over to places abroad. As these lines are written, how it ends is anybody’s guess.

From the past, we get a lesson for the future. Amidst her lamentations, old Queen Atossa finds a sliver of hope.

“Good friends,
Whoever lives learns by experience,
That when a wave of evils crests and breaks, it’s natural for humankind
to be afraid of everything,
but when the deathless Power flows calm,
to trust
that Fortune’s wind will always
blow fair.” *



Porus P. Cooper is a veteran journalist based in New Jersey. He started his professional career as a trainee at *The Times of India*, and ended it at *The Philadelphia Inquirer* as a senior editor. He has contributed to *Parsiana* magazine and to the *FEZANA Journal*, among other publications.

PROTESTS & THE PANDEMIC

I have a theory about why so many people of diverse racial backgrounds have been galvanized to protest the killing of George Floyd. Yes, everyone could see this repulsive act in a video. Only a hard-hearted person wouldn’t be shocked. But there have been previous videos of police callousness in America. Many of those victims, like Mr. Floyd, were Black fellow Americans. Those didn’t spark weeks of giant protests. Those did not send waves of soul-searching through American institutions about systemic bias. CEOs and editors were not toppled like so many Confederate statues. It seemed adequate to express dismay and move on.

My theory for why this time our reaction is different: This outrage came in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic. The public health crisis has made millions of us prisoners of our fears, confined to our homes, and objects of suspicion as potential disease carriers when we venture out. In other words, many of us have experienced, for the first time, what it means to be helpless victims of a capricious fate. Easier to relate to a George Floyd. Easier, also, to appreciate complaints of the softer variety of bias that permeates many of our institutions.

I recall it was a shock to Parsis in the 1980s when one of our own, Navroze Mody, was killed in New Jersey by racist hoodlums. His death shattered the sense of security we had as well-settled, law-abiding professionals. If it could happen to him, it could happen to any of us.

It seems to be human nature to relate to someone else’s woe when it feels personal.

Porus Cooper

TIME WELL SPENT

Keeping Busy During the Pandemic

By Nazneen Vimadalal

It's easy to feel overwhelmed with the COVID-19 pandemic, but there are so many positives that have emerged out of this experience that I am strangely loving this time, which I have never experienced in life. Personally, my "normal" life has been so consumed with work, travel and being crazy busy, that these last few weeks have strangely switched things around.

Working from Home

We respect each other's space. During the day it is all work, and the evenings are for family time.

Family Time

We spend a lot of time at the dinner table as a family. With my two daughters being away at college or living separately, our family dinners were limited to special occasions. Now that everyone is home, we spend time having dinner together and discussing topics that can get very heated...or make one laugh.

24-Hour Kitchen

Our lives center on food and "What's for lunch?" and "What's for dinner?". We either share responsibilities for preparing meals or do it collectively. We have started to experiment with new dishes and have themes that make mealtimes interesting.



Ella with Noshir Eduljee, Peri and Farah Vimadalal

Games

When the kids were young, we as parents gathered everyone and, yes, sometimes forced the kids to play family games. Times have changed. The kids are now suggesting we play games and things have become very easy with the ample choices we have for online games. Loving it!

Zoom

Wow, this is mode of connecting with people, whether it your family or friends, has just become so pervasive and taken over our lives. We have Zoom calls with families, college friends, our local ZAGBA (Zoroastrian Association of the Greater Boston Area) community events and it's just so much fun to see everyone and connect with folks that we have not seen in such

a long time. Establishing these connections has been awesome. I hope this stays even after we all get back to whatever we call "normal".

Projects

We've started to settle things in the closet or rooms. Never got the time to do it and now we are catching up on the never-ending list.

Exercise Challenge

I'm involved in an exercise challenge with my daughter, Farah.

Getting a Pet

Since we lost our dog, Max, eighteen months ago, we figured this would be the right time to get a puppy since everyone is home. We have a new addition to the family! Ella is a seven-month-old rescue puppy from Arkansas.

Tolerance

With everyone home 24/7, we have learned to adjust to our new lives and become more tolerant of each other.*

Nazneen Vimadalal *currently serves as the Vice-President of ZAGBA. She has held several senior level positions in strategy and product in the financial services. She is the President of a startup, Impexent.com, a website featuring food and beauty products from around the world, that she and a partner started last year.*

A BOX OF PAPER BAGS

How COVID-19 Helped Me Understand My Mom

By Diana Dinshaw

My mom was a hoarder. She would save every string, rubber band, and pin that came into the house. Her famous line when we would tell her to throw away these things was, “Is it asking you for food? Let it be.”

One time, when the roof to my mom’s bedroom needed to be repaired, my sister Farishta, who lives in Toronto, volunteered to go down to Karachi and help her move to the lower level of the house, move all the “stuff” out of her bedroom and the adjoining storeroom, and resettle her back after the roof was fixed.

When the time came to move my mom’s things back into her bedroom and storeroom, Anila, my mom’s assistant, volunteered to help my sister as she was familiar with where to place all the belongings. They came across a box that was filled to the brim with paper bags from the grocery store. My sister told Anila to throw away the box. Anila protested, saying that my mom would be upset, but my sister insisted, countering that she wouldn’t even notice the missing box among all the other things.

After the room was all set up, my mom walked into the storeroom, looked around, and asked, “Where is my box with the paper bags?” When my sister told her that she had thrown it away, my mom became upset and Anila calmed her down and told her that



she had hidden the box from my sister and had not really thrown it away. The box with the paper bags was promptly reinstated to the storeroom.

After my mom died, my cousins, my sister, and I would sit around telling stories about my mom and laugh at our fond memories. How she had embarrassed my unmarried cousin who had taken her to the dentist by asking him if he was single; how when she saw a celebrity on TV who she thought was gay and asked, “Is he still under the cupboard?”, and other classic “Mummy/Arni masi stories”. The story of the box with paper bags became one of our favorite stories to retell and laugh over, remembering her with warm affection.

Born in 1936, my mom was 11-years-old during the upheaval of the Partition of British India, and witnessed the mass exodus of over 10 million people between India and Pakistan. She lived through the 1965 war between India and

Pakistan, and then the civil war between East and West Pakistan in 1971. Maybe it was the scarcity and rationing during these historical times in her life that made her treasure every little object, not knowing when she would need something. Maybe what we saw as “hoarding” was really her way of protecting herself and her family against uncertainty.

Because of her penchant for hoarding, I tend to buy and keep only the minimum. Two months ago, at the beginning of the pandemic when fear was overtaking people’s shopping style, I went to Costco. I chose not to buy the big container of refill liquid hand soap because I still had a little left at home, deciding that I would get it the next time. Little did I know that the next time I would go to the stores, the shelves would be empty. I wonder when this is over and stores are well stocked again if I will still only buy what I need at that moment or if I, too, will have a box in my garage filled with paper bags from the grocery store. After all, it is not asking me for food.*

Diana Dinshaw works as a Software Developer at The Better Education Company in Arizona. She is studying the art of storytelling and during this pandemic has done a series of virtual storytelling events for adults and a series for children, “Storytelling with Diana masi”.

THIS, TOO, SHALL PASS

Reminiscences of a Silent Generation

By Rusi Sorabji

Pandemics are not a novelty; they have, for better or for worse, shaped economies and societies throughout the course of human history. The Black Death, bubonic plague, for instance, returned time and time again over the course of nearly four centuries, refashioning Europe's feudal society, trade patterns, and labor markets, and disrupting life as it was known then. Nor is social isolation a new phenomenon, strange and alien though it seems in a world where we thrive on connectivity.

But, as we face the persistent waves of uncertainty that have plagued the last three months, the question remains – how do we adapt to the new norm? With social distancing firmly in place for the foreseeable future, how do we cope with fear and isolation in ways that are constructive to ourselves and those around us? Staying active, digging up an old hobby, or simply spending time reflecting are all good options, especially for those who've seen plenty of winters (and I count myself among that lucky number). Those whose memories stretch back to the mid-1900s may find that today's atmosphere of fear and isolation brings about an unpleasant sense of *déjà vu*. Here, I'd like to reflect on some of the trials and tribulations of our generation.

The first time I heard the word “pandemic” was in relation to my

grandparents. Striking in the late 1890s, the Bombay Plague left my father, barely a toddler at the time, an orphan. By the time my siblings and I approached our teenage years, we would experience, first-hand, the horror and desolation brought on by the beginning of the Second World War. While not quite isolated to the degree we find ourselves today, the war years were among the most dreadful for our family.

The financial hardships of wartime notwithstanding, we lost my grandfather, Jal D.J.B. Irani, a WW1 Veteran, in 1940. The following year, our aunt was shipped off to England as part of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, and our uncle, upon receipt

of the viceroy's commission, was sent to Africa; we did not see him again for nearly two decades.

The year 1942 dawned with food and fuel rationing, and our household helper, Unus Massey, joining the army. The badminton courts and playgrounds in front of our house, those few places of freedom remaining to us, were requisitioned for a company making army tents. By 1943, frequent air raid sirens in Delhi had us scrambling for cover. No more pitching our *charpais* (string beds) under the stars while our parents recounted stories as we dozed off – we moved our beds under the jacaranda and gulmohor trees, hoping it would be enough to avoid the unwelcome eyes of the



*Indian women training for air raid precautions duties in Bombay, 1942.
Photo by No 9 Army Film & Photographic Unit.*

Japanese pilots overhead.

I remember my mother in those days, on the verge of crying whenever a telegram arrived, fearing the worst for her siblings, and for our devoted Unus. While our 2,203-day lock down was not quite as similar to today's stringent physical isolation, it did mar the best part of our youth, those days that ought to have been characterized by an innocence and carefree abandon that we would never be able to reclaim.

The end of the war was not the end of our generation's troubles. Within two years, the Indian subcontinent suffered through the agony and turmoil that accompanied partition and the departure of the British. The first inkling we had of it in Delhi were the shots fired outside our house the day after Khordad Saal. The next morning marked the beginning of another nightmarish 21-day lock down, as the sound of gunfire on our way to school (and the shocking reality of bullets pinging off the tar road ahead of

us) sent my brother and I pelting the 300-yards back home in double-time, all boyish fantasies of playing at "Cowboys and Indians" forgotten. Elsewhere in the city, the Parsis who had gathered to watch the free film at New Delhi's Plaza Cinema were sent home mid-interval.

With food shortages threatening our already precarious livelihood, there came a point where we were down to a meagre supply of tea, *rotli* (flat bread), *achaar* (spicy condiment), and sugar. It was time to go hunting along the uninhabited farmlands south of the railway line and behind Gulabi Bagh, my father armed with a long steel rod, myself with an air gun loaded with half-inch nails. I would not say that we were particularly scrupulous about private property rights at the time – desperation has a way of brushing the inconvenience of such scruples discreetly under the carpet. We took what we found: anything from the half-ripe papayas in the trees on an abandoned farm, to the plantains we found on another. Our wanderings took us as far afield as the Delhi Biscuit Factory, where a rupee bought us four pounds of assorted biscuits (all suitably ill-shaped or broken enough that they could not be packaged and sold).

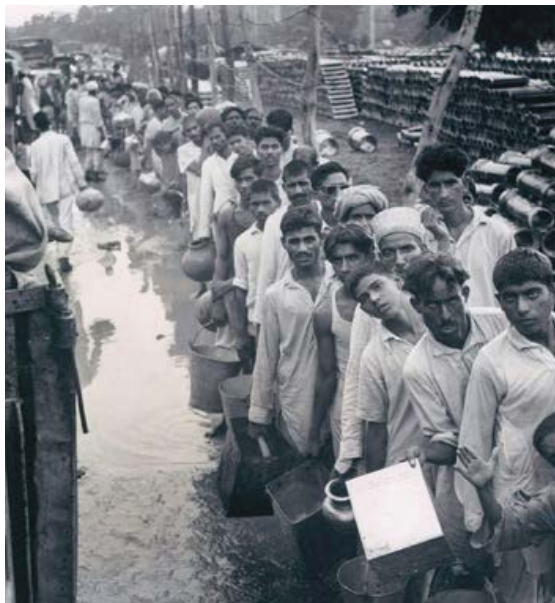
Our 21-day lock down ended on a happier note than we could have hoped for. Late that morning, our beloved Unus appeared at our door carrying a bag of sugar, the front of his shirt concealing more provisions. Unus worked

for our family for nearly 70 years, and looked after four generations of the Sorabji clan, including my grandson.

While my childhood recollections, and those etched into the collective memory of a generation, are inextricably linked to the horror and hardship of those years, I can still look back with a sense of gratitude for the fact that those hardships were not borne alone. The constant companionship of family, the support of our community, and the unexpected kindness of strangers made life bearable. As I see our world grapple yet again with unpredictability – our children unable to go to school, our livelihoods thrown into limbo, and all the seemingly insignificant yet comforting routines and rituals of daily life that have ground to a halt – I can offer only these words of comfort: if life has taught me anything, it is that this, too, shall pass.*



Rusi Ruttonshaw Sorabji is an active nonogenarian. He is an economist turned engineer, with a career spanning 47-years of varied professional and management experience in fields as diversified as refrigeration, refineries and petro-chemicals, palaces, airports, power generation, and off-shore hydro-carbon services.



Refugees lining up in camps in Delhi, 1947.

COVID 19 Looking at the Bright Side

Fezana Journal asked Zarathushtis from around the world, including a famous author or two, how they were spending their time during the pandemic, and what has been a silver lining in their experience.

Aazeen Irani, Montreal, QC, Canada

As a nurse, the most challenging part of working at the hospital during this pandemic has been watching the patients suffer all alone. Personally, that has been the hardest thing for me. We try our best to be there for them and to answer any questions that the family may have over the phone. It's tough on the patients and the family members.

I think there is more than one silver lining. I have noticed recently is that the general public now understands the importance of correctly using hospital resources such as the Emergency Department. With COVID-19, the emergency rooms have seen a decline in non-emergency cases which would have otherwise clogged up the Emergency Department. Appreciating the connectedness with others has been another silver lining. Reach out to each other! The pandemic has affected our mental health as much as physical health. Stay connected, even if it is just a five minute phone call or a text message. It can do wonders!



Aban Rustomji Houston, TX, USAI

have spent my time grappling with the enormity of what is happening in our world and my emotions run the gamut, sometimes all within the course of a single hour. I live in two realities; the safe bubble inside my home and the reality of what I see on the news coverage. I have learnt to recognize our everyday heroes. I have learned to value my "outside time" be it a walk with my dog or gardening. But the most important thing that I have learned is that freedom in all its forms is priceless.

Almitra Mavalvala, Sydney, Australia

I am using the self-isolation as taking some much needed "me" time. I've given self-care a lot of time; to

heal, to grow. I continue working on my music and writing content that is free of deadlines, reflecting on what's really important, and taking better care of my health. It has been wonderful connecting with friends I haven't seen in a while and keeping in touch with family back in Pakistan.

The silver lining in this enforced time has been learning to cook and discovering a love for plants too. I decorated my new place, and learnt how important it is to cleanse your home of clutter, to be a minimalist, which is hard when you're a hoarder and have moved countries.

Anosh Irani, Mumbai, India

As a writer, I'm used to working from home for several hours at a stretch. So I have regular work hours just like I used to before. Plus there are writers that I have always wanted to read, and never managed to find the time to do so. So I'm catching up on Russian literature and then I watch dance videos on Instagram to lighten the mood set by the Russians... First of all, I must acknowledge the thousands of people in India who are stranded, hungry, and struggling to survive. It has been heart breaking to see this. So I consider myself fortunate to be able to reflect on something positive that has emerged. If I can choose one

thing, it would be that I am part of a screenwriting group called Spiral Bound led by Boman Irani on Zoom. Every single day, about 70 of us meet and learn the craft of screenwriting. And get inspired by some classic films.

Bahman Noruziaan, Winnipeg, MB, Canada

For me, the difference has been where and how I do my work and deliver my tasks. Being in academia, I was fortunate to keep my job while being at home. I certainly miss my colleagues at work and missed the last two months of interacting with my students. I hope one positive that comes out of this experience is that more people around the world appreciate the importance of knowledge, science, truth, and flow of factual information.

Bapsi Sidhwa, Houston, TX, USA

I pass my time reading, attending occasionally to my mail, doing some physiotherapy exercises, trying to walk around in the house a little, and eating heartily. I get exhausted easily because I have been ill recently. I am content and happy to stay at home.

On the positive side; the amazing kindness of the doctors and nurses who went beyond the call of duty to attend to the patients: often at the cost of their own lives.

I think the pandemic is Nature's way of warning us to take more care of our planet's precious resources. To see the selfless and valorous service of the doctors and nurses in caring for patients - often at the cost of their lives - gives us a glimpse of the humanity that still exists in our endangered species.

Bella Tata, West Vancouver, BC, Canada

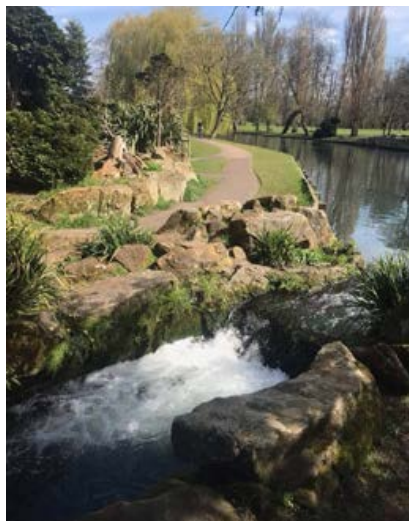
I am cleaning up places at home that need attention and working on various projects requiring computer input, etc. From my experience, a silver lining has been that I believe people seem to be more aware of others and how they can lend a hand, even if the offer is made from a distance.

Danny Birdie, Brampton, ON, Canada

The pandemic makes everything else seem unimportant. We, humans, are all in this together. Put aside differences and bickering about race, religion, colour, caste, and creed. Be kind to everyone, especially the animal kingdom. We all need each other for survival. Help others without a thought, whenever you can.

Dinaz Engineer, South London, UK

We are semi-retired so not much has changed for us. We've been self-isolating before the actual lockdown happened. Finding places to visit quite a distance away, green space and parks where we can explore the pretty nooks and crannies that Nature has to offer. We've discovered woods and wooded paths that we would otherwise never bother with. It has been



quite a beautiful experience, seeing glorious trees and wild flowers, not to mention the wildlife and all sorts of birds chirping away and breaking the silence. It is only when you are forced to stay away from your fellow humans that you seek out Nature and its offerings and nothing compares to its bounty. I'd happily live in a forest with my loved ones with just a few necessities.

I have certainly learned gratitude in a big way. We have it all, but haven't realized it until now. We should only buy and seek out only what is necessary. I also learnt to make my provisions last longer, not throw anything away and make creative dishes with what I have in my pantry instead of rushing out for things I have to have just because.

Farida Major, Davie, FL, USA

Well, the lockdown is drawing to a close at this point, with everything slowly opening up. However, we have been working remotely since March, so it wasn't a question of finding things to keep busy at all, because we were busy alright. In fact, from 9 to 5, it was like any normal working day. I work in the courthouse and it was business as usual, all hearings were conducted by my Judge via Zoom.

As regards to what positive thing has come out of this pandemic, first and foremost, I'd say the stark realization of how temporary this life is, and next, that it's given us a time to reflect, to just sit back and appreciate every opportunity given to us and gratitude to have our health.

Feroza Jussawalla, Albuquerque, NM, USA

COVID-19 has returned many blessings. Quiet mornings, reconnection with Nature, but, most of

all, more intensive connections with Zarathustis worldwide! So many wonderful new connections. I have learned new prayers and practices, participated in humbandedagis. *Chaye hame Zarathushti!*

Fariba Pirghaibi, Costa Mesa, CA, USA

I work in healthcare (an acute care hospital) and as a result I didn't experience much at-home time. I still go to work and come home so my routine has varied only slightly. A noticeable change for me has been to figure what and how much I can do without leaving the house. I am finding time to read all the books I didn't have time for before or the recipe I put aside and said I will try making this sometime.

The positive change I have observed is that people around me have become less electronics-dependent. Neighborhood families go for a walk together (we live near a walking trail) and no one plays with their phone. They actually look like they are grateful to be outside. They look happy and attentive and engaged in their environment compared to before when I saw people distracted and looking bored like they were just doing an obligatory walk to get the duty done - exercise or walk a pet.

It is the first time my daughters are actually living at home as adults rather than as students visiting between terms, and this has brought our family closer. Yes, daily irritations, disagreements, and clashes which have nothing to do with COVID-19, are still there, but knowing that you can't run away from it has made us all cooperate and communicate our needs and wants better. It is the first time in a very long time that we can actually sit and eat a meal or watch a TV program together, and have

meaningful conversations. This is priceless for me as I know at this age and stage of my children's life the likelihood of all of us being together under one roof will not come back again.

Jer Tata, Thornhill, ON, Canada

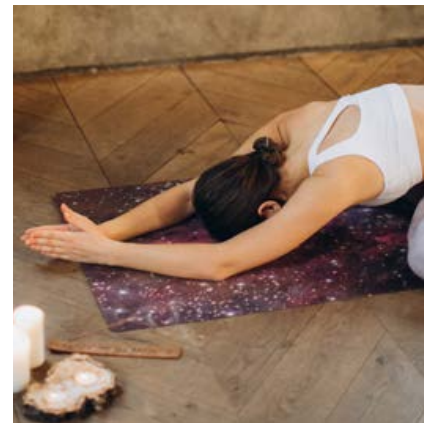
Kantalo avi gayo! (I am fed up). Our assisted living facility [for seniors] has been in complete lockdown for over three months. We are not allowed to leave our apartments, except to go down for a walk in the garden, where we have to walk or sit six-feet apart from others. I almost did not recognize a friend recently because we have to wear masks. I only recognized her by her hair. There is no one to talk to except the Personal Support Worker who comes for a brief time to help me with my personal care, the nurses who come to take temperature twice a day, and the people who deliver the food. It is very depressing.

I lived through a calamity like World War II, but it was not like this. I was ten when it broke out, but schools didn't close, though when we were in class, Air Raid sirens used to go off suddenly so that we would learn to be prepared. There was curfew at night, but things were open during the day. There was food rationing, and each family had to line up to receive wheat flour, rice, *daal*, sugar. We took the rations even if we didn't need it so we could give it to those who lived in *kohlis* (huts). The sugar used to be so dirty, the water would become cloudy when you mixed some into it. Travel was limited, especially air travel, because transport planes were requisitioned by the military. We were safe in Bombay [Mumbai], but Calcutta was bombed by the Japanese. And Burma. Thousands of refugees

walked from Burma to India, including a Parsi lady, Roshan Rustonjee, and her two daughters. Our management is three steps ahead of the government in keeping us safe, which we have to be thankful for as seniors are vulnerable.

Keshwar Irani, Toronto, ON, Canada

I am trying to stay mindful so that fear and anxiety do not take over by meditating and doing yoga. A fearful, fretful emotional state has been certified by the world's immunologists as a "systemic issue," meaning that it can lead to body-wide immunological weakness.



I think of this story:

A merchant meets the plague on his way. He looks at the plague and asks, "Where are you going?" "Baghdad," says the plague.

"How many people will you kill?" asks the merchant.

"Not many, only 5000 people," replies the plague.

Time passes and the merchant meets the plague again. He has heard that 60,000 people have died in Baghdad because of the plague.

"You told me you'll kill 5,000 people! Yet you took 60,000 lives," the angry man tells the plague. The plague responds calmly, "I killed 5,000 people. The others died of fear."

The silver lining is also the basis of my frustration and anxiety. My two tween children are at home 24/7 so interspersed with loving hugs and wonky snacks made for Mummy and Daddy is breaking up bickering kids and trying to keep them motivated about their studies. Salute to the teachers. They, too, are unsung heroes that we forget in our “normal” lives.

Kourush Aryana, Oslo, Norway

Watching TV to keep ourselves updated with latest news about pandemic and what the government plan is for this period. Watching movies. Doing exercise at home. Online communication with friends and family members. Online book reading. Learning more about COVID-19 and how to protect ourselves. Helping neighbors if they need it. Helping kids with their online study. The silver linings are to appreciate the life we had before the pandemic and social life and friendships — to appreciate our family, to pay more attention to our health, to value the rest of our life at a higher level, to understand how great it is to spend time in Nature and to avoid polluting it.

Mahsa Alizade, Manchester, UK

Ever since I immigrated to England as a student, I have had lots of assignments and university projects, as well as the challenge of a new culture and a new life style. I seemed to have forgotten about myself. This mandatory quarantine was a perfect opportunity for me to think about my life, to enjoy myself, to walk every day in Nature and enjoy its beauty. Today, the contemporary human being has less bonding time with Nature than in the past. As Zarathushtra says, human life is tied to Nature, and



what's interesting is that the feeling of abandonment and being far from family decreases a lot through closeness to Nature. Furthermore, it was an opportunity to think about the past and about those who I have upset and to forgive myself and not blame myself. In addition, this time has provided me an opportunity to start learning the piano through the Internet.

Mah-Zarin & Pervaiz Taraporewala, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

For Pervaiz and myself, it's work as usual. Pervaiz goes to office daily as banks come under essential services. For me, I am working from home, and after that it's the normal housework, cooking, and cleaning. I am grateful that I can continue to find the time to pursue my hobbies, various art and crafts, and catering. So, on this front, not much has changed for us. However, families with children are trying to overcome challenges. For one, home-teaching is a very new concept out here, and parents are slowly getting geared into this new shift. Most important, families are getting to spend more time together, and there is more love, patience and bonding.

UAE is a multicultural society and we are blessed to see people coming to everyone's aid, irrespective of caste or color. People are

finding the time (or out of necessity) to reach out to God or whomever they consider the highest entity. So, more prayers, global affirmations, and meditations to heal the world. The entire Universe has got together fighting for just one cause. We are all in the same storm, praying and waiting for it to pass.

Meher Amalsad, Westminster, CA, USA

I firmly believe that in life, we always have a choice to remain open, even when doors are closed. As a result, I did not feel that I was under any shelter or lock down. My focus was on recognizing that the virus may be on the outside, but I do not have to invite it on the inside. With that Consciousness of Wellness, I was careful, but not fearful, and I remained fearless without becoming careless.

When people would ask me, “Meher, how are you doing?”, my reflective response would be, “I am having more fun than I can handle and you can imagine because I am too Blessed to be Stressed.” And with those blessed vibrations, I devoted time in reaching out to my family, community and human at a global level, by sharing inspirational messages and transformational prayers to lift, shift and uplift their lives. That helped to build a “Spiritual Immunity in Me”. With this Consciousness of Oneness... Don't Allow the Outside Noise to Become Your Inside Voice.

I can clearly see that:

- a New US has emerged from this new VirUS;
- a New US who will focus on the attitude of gratitude with dignity and humility for all of humanity;
- a New US that will be more conscious of the Power of Love, Light, Grace, Joy and Peace in Life.

This experience has further strengthened my conviction that it doesn't matter how long I live, what truly matters is how I live.

Natasha Vakil, Hamburg, Germany

During the lock down I did a lot of gardening, crafting, and cleaning to keep me busy. I tried something new. I upcycled some old boards and built garden benches and a stool. I did it by hand; had to saw a lot. It took me about a week. It was great fun.

Life isn't so hectic anymore. You have to slow down. I think that's really nice.

Parizad Edulbehran, Edmonds, WA, USA

I've been busy being a grandmother to a brand new pandemic baby boy, Cyrus Cady. It was an interesting time for my daughter to give birth at this time. Only one visitor was allowed in the hospital and my daughter was sent home the next day after delivery. The first two visits with Cyrus's pediatrician were through telemedicine; he will, however, get his two-month vaccinations soon. It's been difficult to take the baby out for fresh air. I converted a large part of the yard to grow food, at least, for the summer. We planted a raised bed garden so that when Cyrus starts eating solid food the peas and carrots will come from his own yard!

The most positive thing for my family (beside the new addition) is the exchange of expertise and learning new skills. I've been teaching gardening for food to my kids, and they have been teaching me how to bake - I'm trying out new recipes every day.

Parsa Shirkhani, Stavanger, Norway

I work at the airport, but due to the lock down all international flights are suspended, with just a few domestic flights remaining. We spent our time at home with family and watch movies. Sometimes, we take a nature walk. We keep in touch with friends via WhatsApp and social media. The epidemic is under control in Norway, and the Government has compensated the losses to affected people and companies.

Parviz Tehrani, Reston, VA, USA

The pandemic has not changed the way I live. My time is very occupied on work days as I am an IT Project Manager supporting a federal client. I work remotely from 7:00 am -3:30 pm, then I go for long walk for an hour-and-a-half. I am studying to become Certified Information Systems Auditor-certified so I study till 9:00 pm, and then go to bed. Weekends are taken up with laundry, grocery shopping, walking, and studying. The change has maybe been that I have become a bit aware of people's awkward behaviors, and their feeling of helplessness. I worry about the Iranian people and my family.

Purveen Kharas, Rome, Italy

The Italians, as you know, have been under a very strict lock down the longest. They followed gov-

ernment instructions assiduously. Throughout the shutdown, even in the darkest moments, they had a positive outlook and were the first ones to gather together to sustain the morale of the people working on COVID-19, whether directly or indirectly. However, the Italians, unlike the Spaniards, New Yorkers, or the British, weren't consistent in their enthusiasm and so stopped after a few weeks whilst the others continued.

Creativity soared; some lovely videos have been made, music recorded and widely circulated. Cultural events have been made available free of cost to the public, whether through visits to archaeological sites, museums and art galleries, or appointments at the opera. Also it has made people (1) communicate and assist each other more, (2) become more nationalistic and (3) search for a leader to follow. In Italy, the Pope was the leader who has the most following and who provided the most guidance, comfort and solace. His morning and evening masses were followed by millions. The Italians also love their food so new recipes were constantly tried and swapped.

One positive aspect to be drawn from this pandemic is to note how quickly animal and plant kingdoms have revived. This surely should make humans reflect about the destruction caused by humans and what we can do to lessen our negative impact on the Universe.

Another positive is that the pace of life has slowed down and people have found pleasure in what surrounds them and are not necessarily ready to return to their former hectic pace. Old values and traits are slowly returning with more communication with friends and



family.

Rubina Patel, Silver Spring, MD, USA

I have been keeping busy with mundane necessities of daily living – attending weekly personal and community prayers, virtual ZAM-WI (Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc.) and Avesta Class events, filing tax returns, completing projects that have needed attention, reading, writing, keeping in touch with friends, and, at times, simply sitting in the park and enjoying the sunshine.

Some of the positives that have come out of the pandemic are less consumerism, less traffic on the roads, slower pace (not having to fit several errands and events into any given day), fewer commitments, and more time to reflect and plan for what needs to be accomplished in the days ahead.

Tanaz Divecha, Mississauga, ON, Canada

We are moving my mother-in-law to our place so we spend most of our non-working hours purging the contents of the home in which she has lived for nearly two decades. The lock down has been a challenge because donation centers were closed till recently as were moving companies.

Also, there have been a spate of tragic deaths, both COVID-19 and accident-related, amongst friends and former classmates, which has cast a gloom.

A blessing has been video-conferencing, without which we could not have managed to work and maintain contact with friends and colleagues to preserve our sanity.

Saraosha Engineer and Cyrus Kaikobad, New Jersey, USA

Spending more time around each other has been great. We are working from home so we have used this time to set up a home office. We are first time gardeners and thanks to YouTube videos, our mint, tomatoes, carrots, sweet basil, sunflowers, gardenias, and marigolds are thriving. We cook/bake together and challenge ourselves with new recipes. Sometimes, one takes over for a week and the other one rests. We try at least two-three new dishes every week. We enjoy grilling in our backyard when the weather permits. We go on long drives and enjoy visiting secluded beaches in New York, where we take our own snacks and relax. We play games at home, watching shows together, and have connected with old friends via video calls and taken up some DIY projects around the house here and there, which keeps us busy and mentally stimulated. We declutter every two weeks, which has been a good mental exercise for us. We are grateful for getting this time to pause and reflect.

Sheri Jeddy, Bowmanville, ON, Canada

My husband and I help out our older neighbours so they don't have to leave the house. I start the day early by taking a neighbor's dog for a walk. As I work from home, it keeps me connected to people. I am an avid cook and like trying new recipes from around the world.

Toxy Cowasjee, Karachi, Pakistan

My husband and I decided to self-isolate ourselves by mid-March. Being a nonagenarian and octogenarian respectively, we could not take any risks. For me,

these last few months have not felt frustrating or boring. A challenge? Yes, but taken in full stride. Initially, coping on our own without additional help was difficult, mainly because of having to go up and down a flight of 23 steps throughout the day for one reason or the other. But, as in everything in life, one gets used to it and we are doing well.

As in most homes during this lock down, cooking has become the main activity. Having cooked our meals for most of our married life this is nothing new, but I am having fun making varied meals. Normally, at night I love to settle down to read, but, strangely, from the first day of isolation I have had no desire to pick up a book. Instead, I downloaded a word game onto my iPad and am totally hooked on it. It's challenging, yet frustrating, as one can't go to the next game till all



words are finished.

The highlight of the lock down has been to have my husband 24/7 at home as, normally, he still goes to his office daily. Our outings into our garden have also become a cherished pleasure. The flowering trees are in full bloom, the variegated plants and shrubs are green and lush, and with a variety of birds singing away, our garden is a peaceful oasis amidst the chaos.*

CULTURE & HUMOR



Power of LOVE, Power of MUSIC

The video of “Power of Love”, performed by Zarathushti youth, became an overnight sensation. You know something has gone truly viral when you receive it from multiple people on WhatsApp, and it is shared widely on social media platforms.

An international, multi-award winning entrepreneur and musician, Shayan Italia is the spearhead behind “The Global Lockdown Choir” initiative. In 2018, he was named “Global Indian of the Year” for immortalising the Indian National Anthem. His version is an ode to his late mother, and stands as the most viewed National Anthem in history garnering over 100 million views on YouTube. As a philanthropist, he’s privately helped raise enormous sums of money since his parents

passing away when he was just a teenager. When not under lockdown, Shayan travels to a different country each month in search of inspiration. The viral video can be seen on Shayan’s Facebook page. Fezana Journal spoke with Shayan to find out more about “The Power of Love” and his future projects.

FJ: How did the idea for this come about? How did you meet Delraaz Bunshah?

SI: I got introduced to Delraaz Bunshah through a friend of mine, Abhishek Patil, at Sony Music. From there I reached out and she came over to meet me at my place in Bandra West, Mumbai and we went through a few of the songs I had written, in particular one, I had recently written for six lead

vocalists. I wanted to know if she could touch the high note in the track. We then met a second time with her brother Zervaan, who is great fun, and I’ve been meaning to work with her since. “The Power of Love” seemed the right song for her tone of voice and when I suggested it, she was excited to do it. She ended up being the perfect fit. There were challenges though to record her voice correctly due to the lockdown. We had to get creative!

FJ: How many people formed the choir? How is it a global affair?

SI: Fifty-six people formed the choir, from across India, UK, France, Germany, Italy, parts of Europe and the USA. Many of the performers are away from their

loved ones during the lock down and so I just decided to name them “The Global Lockdown Choir”. Simple and apt. Most of these singers also didn’t want to be credited. I can relate to this. There have been many initiatives and philanthropic projects that I’ve been part of globally where I didn’t want my name mentioned, simply because its “about the initiative”, which is bigger than a single person.

FJ: What has been your major highlight of this venture? Any major challenges?

SI: With everything I do there has to be a higher purpose, a goal, a sense of change; be it with a single person, a community, a country, or ripples of the same globally. But the starting nucleus has to be pure in intention and purpose. The Power of Love brought that sense of purity as a concept to these trying times of ours stemmed from our community; a project people needed to experience and I can only hope it brightened their lives in some small way.

The response has been overwhelming. I was stunned when, within 24 hours, it seemed the entire Parsi community the world over had watched it! My cousins were texting me, “Oh man, this has gone so viral, it’s crazy”. Delraaz called me saying “What is happening? My entire family are getting calls non-stop. It’s madness”. I didn’t share it personally with anyone till the buzz died down and when I did, even on my school group, the response was “Mate, you’re so late,

it’s everywhere”.

With regards to the challenges, this was not easy to do at all. Half the time during the recording sessions my Internet would drop as I experienced a fibre cut in my area. So I had to use my mobile hotspot to conduct multiple people across many Zoom sessions. It was not ideal at all. Then, Delraaz’s mic didn’t work and her computer packed up in between. So we had to get that up and running and also guide her on how to record her vocals remotely –she’s a quick and enterprising learner! All these posed challenges to the

point of me wanting to pull my hair out at times. But we pressed on silently, without complaining, knowing this is bigger than us all and is something important to us all. I can only hope the end result justified the journey getting there. Many of the vocalists didn’t even have microphones or recording equipment so we had to get their vocal parts through various mobile apps, export them to cloud storage and then clean the files individually and mix them in. The session was massive to mix.

FJ: Is this something you will consider continuing even after the pandemic?

SI: Music is a large part of my life. I started to write songs after losing my parents at a young age. I’ve never released a song till date and my catalogue stands at over 100 songs, at least the really good ones! My first commercial song “#Sh-LaLaLa” launches post-lockdown when normality returns. It’s a huge project, a breath-taking audio-visual experience for both the Indian and international markets. You can watch a teaser trailer of the same on my official website at ShayanItalia.com

FJ: You are a successful entrepreneur. Are you working on any new ventures?

SI: Right now my entire focus is on my one-of-a-kind wellness app called START® which launches across India in about three months. I believe this has massive potential to help many people. START® is the first one-stop holistic wellness app that helps increase your energy, focus, immunity and reduces stress by 2X in just 7 days with no change to diet or exercise.



Working at a cellular level, it optimizes your work and personal life empowering you to achieve all that you set out to achieve. START® simplifies the science and opens up an enormous EcoSystem helping you and your family save money every month. It is very pertinent for the trying times we are in.

FJ: Celebrities like Karan Johar follow you on Instagram. Does that mean you've arrived?

SI: I tend to avoid social media, but I figured that with START®

and #ShaLaLaLa, I have to get on it. I've just joined Instagram and my handle is @shayan.italia – it's my official account. Yes, Karan and I speak on and off. He's of course a super busy individual, a lovely soul and lives near me in Bandra. The videos he posts of Yash and Roohi make my day. I feel very happy when I see others happy. It's an emotion I wouldn't trade for anyone. I have never felt jealousy as an emotion. I'm very content with the small life I live and the people in it. Also with celebrities,

they're just people at the end of the day, and should be treated with respect and kindness as you would do anyone else.

FJ: How can we learn more about your future ventures?

SI: I've just updated my official website at ShayanItalia.com – that will have all the latest news and projects listed there both current and in the pipeline. There's much work to be done. It's a very busy time. *

A Kitchen with a View

By Niloufer Mavalvala

Eating is a given, pandemic or not. Only a few rules have changed; food needs to be cooked in your home kitchen and its frequency has stepped up. Eating great food is the order of the day.

Could the COVID-19 “stay at home” enforcement possibly have any positives to look back on and will we ever reminisce about 2020 once we are back to the rat race of life? The tragedy will remain apparent for the countless loss of lives and financial instability, going down in history as one of the dark periods of the last hundred years.

For the fortunate ones, who could stay home and survive it all, a different story unfolds. Many turned to cooking by experimenting and testing out their culinary skills. In

fact, we heard that yeast and flour flew off the shelves as everyone decided to start baking their own breads. While I can imagine the wonderful aromas wafting out of open windows, of buns and breads, *rotlis*, *naans*, *parathas* and focaccia, it still baffles me why bread was the first choice for so many. Nowruz and Easter and much later Eid brought on an upsurge of even more baking. Suddenly, sweets and savouries, cakes and pastries, an assortment from every type of cuisine around the world was being tried and tested. Not surprising, given these are traditional feasting dates, with or without company to share the treats. Social media pages overflowed with pictures, recipes flew around the internet, and everything edible was on top of search engines confirming that food was

everyone's favourite pastime.

Yes, my kitchen was no different. The music played while the stove tops cooked up a storm. My oven baking a variety of comfort foods and goodies. The kettle whistling insistently. But I was missing something – people. I yearned for the friends and family who often visit our home and frequently stay to share a meal. I missed my cookery luncheons where we cook and eat together, sharing our kitchen anecdotes. The need of the hour was to go online. Cookery demonstrations via Zoom were set up. Initial technical challenges resolved, a group of eager learners quickly formed. The overwhelming response put aside any fear of the unknown. It was a delight. I got to meet wonderful new people on

almost a daily basis, who allowed me to chat away about something I am passionate about. I could cook and share as often as I pleased, the crowd simply awaiting an invite to be Zoomed in. Each session brought on new ideas for the next, all in the warmth and familiarity of my very own kitchen.

Like any education there is always great learning in teaching others. This was no different, for which I feel blessed. While many could already cook fairly well, there was a greater desire to try something new, or to become better cooks, to take an opportunity to try their hand at old Parsi recipes that many had only heard about from their parents and grandparents. They were excited and most appreciative. My reward in all of this was far greater than theirs - the ability to revive an ancient cuisine. And the kind thank you notes with pictures of their dishes, prepared proudly, were always appreciated. Wonderful heritage recipes like *chaapat* (crepes) and *kumas* (a cake) taught to a new generation. Chatty exchanges of various *batasa* and *bhakra* (types of cookies) recipes. *Malido*, *murumbo*, *ravo* and *daar ni pori* are just a few sweet dishes that we happily shared virtually. But mostly, I cherished this as a series of proud moments for Parsi food and Parsi cooking.

It is obvious from this crisis that human beings adapt to situations when necessary. This has been

Mother Nature's healer, uniting us from every corner of the earth. The disciplined learned to listen and staying in under orders brought on a sense of safety that helped rid the initial days of fear, allowing positivity to prevail. Making the best of the situation, many families grew together. Perhaps there was also a hint of new regard for domestic help that was taken for granted over the years. The front line and medical workers finally earned higher respect than the favorite sportsman or actor!

While I don't claim to be an expert of any sort, I do sense a competitive spirit creeping in. A good sign that the human desire to excel has not been broken by this virus, but proved quite the opposite in the face of adversity. A stronger resolve to come out on the other side with grace and gratitude.

While sharing food is the oldest art of socialising, I think the road

ahead for sometime is going to take on a different path. It will be important to keep both our feet firmly on the ground by cooking simply, using local produce in a familial style - exactly what Parsi cooking is all about. Let me assure you there is plenty of warmth in simplicity at any dinner party with close friends and family. The only ingredient that truly matters in cooking is love, which always manages to clearly shine through whatever we may choose to serve. Let us focus on the wonderful days ahead with prayers to Ahura Mazda for His blessings upon us and to share once again with our dear ones, in good health.

Ushta te`.*

PARSI STEW

Serves 6

Vegetables

2 tbsp oil
3 potatoes peeled and cubed in ½" squares
¼ kg/½ lb yams peeled and cubed in ½" squares
3 carrots peeled and cubed in ½" squares
2 peeled small sweet potatoes cubed in ½" squares
1 small aubergine cubed ½" in squares
½/1lb kg green peas, shelled
½ kg/1lb green beans, in pieces

The Mixture

1 tbsp oil
3 large onions finely chopped
1 ½ tsp ground ginger
1 ½ tsp ground garlic
1 tsp red chilli powder
6 green chillies finely chopped
3 large tomatoes peeled and finely chopped
½ cup cilantro leaves chopped
Salt to taste
3 tbsp vinegar



2 tbsp brown sugar
Optionally, substitute the sugar with 18 small dried apricots

Method

Traditionally in a Parsi Stew each vegetable is individually fried until soft and cooked. Sprinkled with salt and piled high before adding it to the prepared mixture. This can be tedious and time consuming. My alternate is to roast them instead in a preheated oven of 325F /160C for 45 minutes. Toss all the prepared vegetables with oil and the salt. Lay it out on a large cookie sheet lined with parchment paper.

Prepare the mixture by heating a tbsp of oil, add the onions, ginger and garlic pastes, red and green chillies, tomatoes, cilantro leaves and 1/2 tsp of salt. Adding the vinegar and either the dried apricots or the sugar. Allow it to simmer on a low heat for 30 minutes until it gets a good sheen.

While you can skip this step

altogether, to help get the authentic flavour pan fry the roasted vegetables (in three batches) in a deep wok, on a high flame, adding it to the pot with the prepared mixture. Toss it properly, return to heat and cook on a low flame for 10 minutes. Add vinegar and sugar simmering for another 15 minutes. Taste for salt, and the balance of sweet and sour.

Serve with warm *rotlis*.

TIPS

- The extra step of pan frying can be done very quickly. It allows the vegetables to separate and caramelise without having to wait patiently for them to cook through over a stove.
- While fresh vegetables do taste best, I often use a mix of frozen and fresh. It is best to use the potatoes, aubergines, green beans and yams that are fresh and frozen peas and carrots do fine.
- Red pumpkin was part of the

original recipe. Yams are good replacements.

- Persian dried apricots referred to here have kernels in them which can only be removed once the fruit is cooked. Using small Persian dried figs is also acceptable.



Niloufer Mavalvala started to bake when she was eight-years-old. Decades of teaching cooking prompted her to write a blog www.NiloufersKitchen.com and compile cookbooks. With two published cookbooks on Parsi cuisine, she continues her passion of reviving our ancient cuisine.

FUNDRAISING MESSAGE FROM NILOUFER MAVALVALA

Appealing to all members to support the fundraising efforts by NiloufersKitchen.com by buying a copy of this cookbook from www.amazon.com. They will donate 50% to **World Central Kitchen**, an amazing and deserving project run by Chef Jose` Andres. This organization helps feed the world thousands of meals on a daily basis.

Together we can make this project successful and make our community proud.

Please join in by ordering a copy today for yourself and to gift.

Thank you for your kind generosity.



Finding the good in self-isolation.

By Vera Dinshaw Springett

As fears of the COVID-19 virus set in and numbers rose, I focused on finding good words, channeling good thoughts and doing good deeds. “Good words” meant comforting friends and family members who were experiencing emotional and/or financial difficulties.

“Good thoughts” meant remembering the positives and being thankful every day for what we had — even when it was the hardest thing to do in a time when everything from social media and the news to the empty streets surrounding us were only a constant reminder of the crisis we were experiencing.

“Good deeds” meant helping others in need during these tough times. We donated to some local food banks, had food delivered to local hospitals for our weary and scared healthcare front liners, and even kept in touch with elderly neighbors who needed food or just someone to chat with.

I also dove into supporting the members of my online Facebook group, Parsis Exchange Recipes (PER). It’s a group of over 10,000 members, Parsi and non-Parsi, who share recipes, food ideas, pictures and, occasionally, some pretty strong opinions — nothing like a good old fashioned Parsi debate about *ravo* (semolina pudding) with eggs versus egg-less to raise some eyebrows and voices.

From weekly challenges to check-ins with our Facebook foodie community, PER has continued to thrive and be an outlet for people

to share their love of food, now more than ever. The group inspired me to try out some new recipes myself — one of the best being *nankhatai*. One of our members, Sandra Master, shared a fabulous recipe for it, my friend, Charis Wania, who somehow always finds the best version of a recipe, guided me to create the perfect *nankhatai*. Eating this beloved sweet treat from back home, provided some much-needed joy and relief in an otherwise solemn outlook for the days ahead of us.

We’ve all survived some pretty rough months. But in the midst of it all, we’ve found plenty to feel good about and be thankful for, like watching communities come together, COVID-19 numbers declining in Chicago, and most of all, seeing our four-year-old daughter evolve in front of our eyes. Perhaps, my best moment of “finding good” was seeing her love and appreciation for the *nankhatais* I enjoyed while growing up as well.*



Vera Dinshaw Springett is Associate Creative Director for UX (Use Experience) Content for University of Phoenix, with almost 20 years of combined ad agency and in-house branding experience.



NANKHATAI

Makes approximately 65 small *nankhatais*.

Ingredients

4 cups all-purpose flour
1.25 cups or 10oz of sugar
4 sticks unsalted butter
8 tbs or 1/2 cup semolina (sooji)
1.5 tbs vanilla essence
1.5 tbs cardamom
1.5 tbs nutmeg
A pinch of salt

Method

Preheat oven to 350.
Cream butter and sugar in mixer until very light.
Add cardamom, nutmeg and salt.
Add vanilla, semolina, and flour, beating constantly till dough is light and fluffy.
Roll lightly into balls and place on cookie sheet fairly apart as the mixture will spread.
Bake in the oven for 20-25 minutes.

How Cursetji Cured Corona

By Berjis Desai

Illustration by Farzana Cooper

“Why is there a shortage, Tehmi?”, asked Cursetji, 108, to his wife, 42 years his junior, “I see plenty of ventilations in all the homes, and I am sure a good carpenter can make one in no time!”

He dunked a massive Surat bakery *batasa* in his milky tea and walloped it.

“Medical ventilators, darling, the ones they use in ICUs to make patients breathe. There is a highly contagious virus called Corona which is causing havoc in the world, requiring many of these ventilators.”

“Oh!” said the gentleman, adjusting his thin *kusti* on the *sudreh*, “and why is our dear Shobha not to be seen since so many days. She really sweeps the floor well.”

“There is a lock down, dear, everyone has to stay indoors to prevent the spread of this virus. Maids are not permitted.”

“Is it like HIV, darling?”

“Not exactly, even virgins can get infected.”

“Oh! how unfair is that? Does aspirin kill it?”

“The best researchers are working night and day to find a cure, Cursetji. How can aspirin work? My Gujarati friend from Kalbadevi has suggested a chutney of ginger, garlic, tamarind, jeera, cardamom, cinnamon and cloves. Shall I make it for you?”

“Arre, Tehmi, no wonder it will work. It is aapro Dhansak no masalo.”

“And also drinking hot lemon water and washing



your hand with alcohol based sanitizers.”

“Why waste alcohol washing hands. Just double my peg of brandy. I shall also gargle with it.”

“My cousin, Daulat has suggested homeopathy. Shall I get it?”

“No way, Tehmi, if you want to eat sweets, just get some from our Parsi Dairy Farm at Dhobitalao.”

“You know darling you can die at your age if you get infected”, said a worried Tehmi.

“What are its symptoms?” asked the nonagenarian nonchalantly.

“Apart from fever and dry cough, one experiences a profound loss of smell and taste.”

“I can smell the *akuri* on the breakfast table from my easy chair; and I can taste my single malt perfectly.”

Cursetji, being a humanitarian, decided to discover a cure for the virus. He declared his preliminary observations to his wife.

“No virus can kill any Parsi who wears *sadro kusti* 24-hours and performs prayers every time he uses the washroom. Look at me, due to my prostate, I do the *kusti* every 15 minutes. *Ahura Mazda Khodai* specifically refers to a virus being destroyed. And do *Ardibehesht Yasht Nirang* in the morning and *Vanant Yasht Nirang* after sunset. Virus will not infect anyone in our entire building including that *juddin* Rosie married to that Pesu downstairs,” said Cursetji

confidently.

"Where do you get these energy levels?" asked his wife in exasperation.

"Tehmi dearest, how do you think I can still somersault with you every afternoon? Power of the Parsi!"

"By the way, earlier you used to say you have a headache, now you say we have to practice social distancing! Stop all this worrying. And yes, please tell our dear Shobha to resume immediately if you must insist on this social distancing nonsense!"

Cursetji always fancied himself to be an inventor, so he decided to find a cure for this dreaded disease which was upsetting his lifestyle. After all, he had been a compounder of the doctor at Princess Street for nearly 65 years. From his analysis of all the funerals in the JameJamshed, the community newspaper, he computed the life expectancy of Parsis in Mumbai to be 77.5 years, as against the national average of 66 years. The secret lay in the Parsi way of life. He decided to invent a vaccine made out of all the things which Parsis ate, drank and applied.

In the blender which his great-grandson had sent from Toronto, Cursetji decided to mix eggs, trotter juice, whiskey, sugar, a dash of consecrated *nirang* from the fire temple believed to have potent purificatory power, eau de cologne, *vasanu* made in pure *ghee* from Udva, *Kolah nu Lagan nu acchar* and fish oil. The resultant concoction, which smelt like unwashed socks, immediately cleared Tehmi's blocked sinuses.

Cursetji then wrote down the protocol for taking his vaccine. For optimal effect, heap the choicest Dadar Parsi Colony abuse on the coronavirus; swallow it with a large brandy.

"There is a decent chance that I may be awarded the Nobel Prize for medicine next year," declared the proud inventor. "We shall start the clinical human trials on you and your brothers from tomorrow."

"No way," protested Tehmi, "my brothers are not guinea pigs!"

"I don't know about the guinea part," replied Cursetji.

Finally, it was decided that in the best interest of the community, Cursetji's oral vaccine ought to be administered first to the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat, considering that they were the prize asset of our fold.*

Guest Editor's Note: The Food and Drug Administration, USA, has not approved Cursetji's oral vaccine for human use. You can try it at your own risk.

Berjis Desai is the author of 'Oh! Those Parsis - A to Z of the Parsi Way of life' and 'The Bawaji - Chronicles of a Vanishing Community'. He occasionally practices law in Mumbai.

Farzana Cooper loves her life with melted cheese on top. She make up stories, collects hearts in a jar, and makes pictures for living. *



GLOSSARY

Aapro - Our

Ahuramazda Khodai - Zarathushti prayer

Akuri - Spicy egg dish in Parsi cuisine

Ardibehesht Yasht Nirang - Zarathushti prayer for healing

Arre - Exclamation

Batasa - A tea-time cookie

Chutney - Spicy mint and herbal condiment

Dhansak no masalo - spices used to make Dhansak

Jeera - cumin

Juddin - non-Parsi

Kolah nu Lagan nu acchar - well-known brand of traditional pickle in Parsi cuisine

Kusti - Zarathushti sacred girdle tied around the waist

Nirang - consecrated albino bull urine

Sudreh or Sadro - Zarathushti sacred vest

Vanant Yasht Nirang - Zarathushti prayer for health

Vasanu - a traditional Parsi delicacy eaten in winter as a health and energy booster

QUARANTINE COMEDY



Betty Sue - Southern Laughter

By Teenaz Javat

Earlier this month I was introduced to “Betty Sue” by way of Mumbai. My cousin posted a sketch comedy on our family chat.

Betty Sue is a character played by New York-based, Mumbai-born actor Zenobia Shroff. I was blown away by the sketch, the whip-smart writing and the politics woven into comedy. I wanted to get to know the person behind Betty Sue and sought her out on Facebook. We arranged a time to talk and here is a snapshot of our conversation.

“The pandemic created Betty Sue,” says Shroff who lives in the heart of New York City. Living near a hospital, Shroff would wake up

to the scene of refrigerated trucks right outside her window, waiting to collect dead bodies from one of NYC’s largest hospital. “Seeing U-haul trucks containing dead bodies leaking fluids, the stench and misery right outside my building weighed me down. It was like a scene right of *The Walking Dead*.”

It didn’t help that Shroff was living right in the middle of one of the worst hit areas in the United States. “And in the midst of this morbidity, just as I was watching the news on TV, a White woman comes screaming across the screen shouting about her right to go to the beauty parlour.”

Shroff was stumped. And that is the moment when the disaster that was COVID-19 in the USA hit her. “The total lack of leadership, the knee jerk statements by our politicians and the shocking response of some of our citizens...I was incensed and appalled and Betty Sue was born.”

As of writing this feature, Shroff has created and posted five sketches of Betty Sue. “I write about what bothers me the most. Everything about the COVID-19 response irritated me.”

The fact that poor racialized minorities, living in inner cities across the country were hardest hit, didn’t

escape her. “Race is the anvil on which America turns, and the combination of expressing my politics and my creativity became the entity that is Betty Sue.”

Shroff believes all art is political, and she doesn’t, even for a moment, shy away from the politics. “The combination of my politics and my creativity, using it to make a statement against what I think is a miserable failure of leadership in America, is expressed in my comedy. The first case of COVID-19 was reported in South Korea and in the USA on the same day in January and look where we are - 100,000 deaths and counting.’

Betty Sue personifies White privilege, anger, politics and ignorance, and is likely to offend some. “Part of my job as an artist is to use my talent to say serious things lightly so people can hear the message. But it is a tough time and people want to laugh. On the way a few people

will be offended. Sometimes, in comedy, if you haven’t offended a few people, then you’ve not done a good job.”

Shroff has been writing characters as part of sketch comedy for many years. She has created and written about 30 sketches in her one woman show called, *How To Succeed As An Ethnically Ambiguous Actor*.

When she posted her first comedy sketch of Betty Sue, “Mah right to go the beauty shop!!!”, she did not anticipate the popularity of her creation. Five sketches later, Betty Sue has her own Facebook page.

Shroff says there is more to come. “Betty Sue writes herself. She is what we term a ‘Karen.’ She is so entitled; she doesn’t even know she has White privilege. So I’m sure in the times we live there will be more to come.” *



Teenaz Javat works as a senior writer at Canada’s public broadcaster, the CBC. She writes headlines for a living. She is also part of a Toronto artist collective called “The Shoe Project”, where immigrant women document their stories of arrival, through the lens of their shoes.

You can find Betty Sue’s videos on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/Betty-Sue-113201077037731>



“...[the Governor of Texas] said there are more important things to life than living. OK? And I agree with him. I certainly do. And you know what’s more important? Mah right to go to the beauty parlor.”

Betty Sue



Najamai - our own “Parsi aunty”

By Mahrukh Behrana

I have known Zavare since he was a young boy in Karachi. However, today he is better known for his alter ego, “Najamai Lasan”, who has been featured in six videos on YouTube so far. I have been fortunate to play Naaj’s friend, Dinaz, in four of them.

Zavare was always interested in drama, and starred in and directed many *nataks* (Parsi plays) in Karachi to raise funds for several charitable ventures. He first appeared in drag as Princess Booblita in the *natak*, “Princess Booblita Comes to Town”. After moving to Toronto, he was instrumental in setting up Besharam, Toronto’s first Bollywood nightclub party that provided a safe space for straight and LGBTQ South Asians to mingle together.

He also has a serious side. He works as a Sexual Health Counselor providing counseling, health promotion, and training. He also appeared as a *hijra* (hermaphrodite) in the “Meri Kahani: My Story”, a drama initiative that brought to light violence against women and transgender individuals in the South Asian community. Najamai, or “Naaj” as she is also known, has become a social media sensation with thousands of views and devoted fans. Najamai’s recent “quarantine videos” are being passed around on WhatsApp at the speed of light. I recently interviewed Zavare to get a little insight into the creation of Najamai.



1. How did Najamai come into being?

The first video with Najamai was created for the centenary celebration of Mama Parsi Girls’ Secondary School in Karachi. She was supposed to be an alumna. Many of the jokes were school-specific so non-Mamaians did not get them. The second video, “Shit Parsi Women Say” was more general and is the most popular one. It cemented Naaj’s reputation as the eccentric, bigoted “Parsi aunty”. Some people get offended by her crassness, and others because she is irreverent about Parsi culture and rituals, but comedy, especially satire, has always pushed the envelope. What surprises me in the comments is that people get offended because she gossips during the *paidus* (funeral) or holds the Khordeh Avesta upside down, but not when she is racist or



homophobic.

2. What has been some of the challenges in creating her videos?

It is challenging to come up with ideas for crazy scenarios which will showcase her idiosyncrasies and hypocrisy. The pandemic has provided some new ideas for Najamai to share her antics. Another challenge is finding someone to film the videos. A couple of times, I have asked non-Parsis to film them, but they do not understand the Parsi-ness of her character. I have been very fortunate to have friends like Danny Birdie, Frayan Mama, Ratanshaw Makujina, and Tanya Hoshi volunteer their time to film and edit the videos for free!

3. What have been some of the highlights of creating these videos?

On top of my list would be con-



necting with Parsis and other Gujarati-speaking people from all over who enjoy my skits, and getting to know the interesting lives they lead. Strangers have approached me at navjotes and *lagans* and quoted lines from the videos. I have heard people say, "That's so Naaj" to refer to someone doing something clueless. Naaj was featured in a meme by the Instagram account

Authentic Parsi. That was flattering too. It's a big thrill to know you are making people laugh.

4. How have you kept her relevant during the pandemic?

I did a few solo selfie-style videos of her dealing with the quarantine that I uploaded on my Facebook page. They're less than a minute long and have no production value, but, surprisingly, they have been extremely popular. I am guessing people need *koila* (silly) humor to see them through these times

5. To end, can you tell us about what's in store for Najamai in the future?

I think I would like to make Najamai more stylish, like a better wig and make up, maybe an elegant sari. That said, it might take away from her character, but I would like to fancy her up for one skit.

Hopefully, she is invited to a *lagan* (wedding) soon. And, who knows, maybe a new romance! Never say never. *



Mahrukh Behrana is an Executive Assistant and Office Administrator at Redpath Sugar, Toronto, with over 35-years' experience in office administration and management. She has been involved on several social committees, including with the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario, and served as President of the Distinguished Secretaries Society of Pakistan for two consecutive years.



Najamai was featured in a meme about Parsi Aunties by the @authenticparsis Instagram account that showcases 'Bawa Culture & Memes'.



Laughter is God's hand on the shoulder of a troubled world.

Bettenell Huntznicker

With wishes to all
for health and happiness
from Dinoo and Nari Dastur and family

LOOKING AHEAD



COULD THE DEADLY CORONAVIRUS ACTUALLY BE OUR SAVIOUR?

By Coomi S. Vevaina

Come to the edge.
We might fall.
Come to the edge.
It's too high!
COME TO THE
EDGE.
And they came.
and he pushed.
and they flew

*Christopher Logue "Come
to the Edge" from Ode to
the Dodo.*

By rendering us helpless and at our wit's end by its brute force and seeming insanity, is the COVID-19 compelling us to come to the edge only to 'fly' and leave behind the deeply flawed world we humans have created? The 'lifeless' virus need not be regarded as a manifestation of Nature's wrath, but, surely, we could learn something from it going forward!

In a bizarre manner, the virus is exactly mimicking the way we humans live. It is 'careless' in its choice of victims and, by crossing national borders with ease, and eluding the 'gods' of technology, it seems to be making a mockery of the glitzy concepts of 'globaliza-

tion' and 'surveillance capitalism' (Shoshana Zuboff). We humans fancy ourselves to be 'civilized', 'technologically advanced', and the lords and masters of all sentient beings on the planet but underneath the thin patina of our bravado, we are pathetically vulnerable and dependent on other forms of life.

The brutality of the virus can barely be contested for, besides causing pain, suffering and even death, everything withers at its touch. Are we humans any different from it? Have we not destroyed everything we have touched? We touched the land and desecrated it; we touched the air, water and outer space and polluted them; we have

rendered thousands of species of animals, plants, fish and reptiles, extinct and, with our insatiable lust for power, destroyed our fellow humans, in millions.

Our fiercely individualistic Self-versus-Other consciousness spawned, institutionalized, and caused us to internalize oppression on the basis of gender, race, colour, language, class, caste, age and ability, to name only a few. The virus mirrors us to the letter! This time round, one wonders if we are likely to respond intelligently to the 'wake-up call' and mend our ways and BE the change that we so obsessively talk about. If the virus helps us change our current disharmonious, dystopia (as prophesied by Orwell and Atwood among several other writers) in which we have 'normalized' greed, inequality, stress, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding and hatred, then it could, despite the casualties and suffering it has caused, emerge as the savior of the human race.

Unfortunately, we humans do not have a good track record when it comes to learning from our 'mis-takes'. However, though the scenario is grim, all is not lost for while we humans are capable of stupidity and wickedness, we are also capable of greatness and nobility. When we witness the 'power-full' crush the 'power-less' under the "scarlet heels of their ... buckled shoes", we regard humans as "the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth» (Jonathan Swift Gulliver's Travels) but at other times when we witness generosity, kindness and selflessness which we humans are also capable of, we tend to agree with Hamlet who, though disillusioned with life, con-

tinues to retain optimism. "What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world".

The purpose of this part of the discussion is to indicate that the future of the human race depends completely on the choices we make, here and now. "We have all the power we need to create all the changes we choose" (Gregg Braden). By turning our backs on our irrational ways of living, we could choose to create a socially just utopia or an even more horrifying dystopia in which technology could easily trump humanity.



In 2015, the United Nations constituted 17 Sustainable Development Goals to be realized before 2030. These goals are carefully thought out and are vital to the survival of the majority of the world's population but can any of them be achieved if we continue to operate from our current Self-versus-Other mindset?

Way back in 1975, one of the greatest thinkers of India, Jiddu Krishnamurti called for "a revolution in consciousness" to bring lasting peace. By this he meant a careful understanding of "how man's mind works ... the understanding of ourselves as a total process." ("Insights into Education").

More recently, the historian Yuval Noah Harari in his book "21 Lessons for the 21st Century", likewise insists that a change in consciousness is more necessary now than ever before and that for every dollar spent on developing technology, the next dollar should be spent on changing consciousness. Neuroscience informs us that we humans are hardwired for connection, not for competition. To ensure our survival as a species, the change in consciousness must be from a Self-versus-Other to a Self-and-Other to an All is Self consciousness. True to the Self-versus-Other mindset, Albert Einstein believed that we are essentially passive observers living in a universe already in place. In contrast to Einstein's perspective, the father of quantum theory,

Max Plank, described a universal field of energy that connects everything in creation. Furthermore, based on experiments, Einstein's colleague John Wheeler showed how simply looking at something changes its physical properties. The old word observer is replaced by the new word participator, thereby valorizing the Self-and-Other consciousness. Before his death in 1992, David Bohm came up with a near holistic view of the universe and our role in it. According to Bohm, the things we see and touch and that appears separate in our world are examples of the explicate order however, they are linked in a

deeper reality which constitutes the implicate order. Bohm's findings reveal the presence of the Divine Matrix which can be apprehended only by the All is Self consciousness which makes us think in terms of Oneness.

It is easy to look askance, wryly smile and label this necessary change in consciousness as both 'impossible' and 'idealistic' but the truth is that amidst the exponential changes we are (and will continue) experiencing, we must change our consciousness and 'Shape up' or 'Ship Out'.

Twenty years after his death, Einstein's daughter Lieserl released a letter which her father wrote in 1938. He had asked her to withhold it because he felt that humanity was not ready for his message yet. The message was: "if we want our species to survive, if we are to find meaning in life, if we want to save the world and every sentient being that inhabits it, LOVE is the one and only answer" as it is the most powerful force in the universe that governs all other forces. COVID-19 virus has separated us

with authorities mandating 'social distancing' but it has also caused the upsurge of compassion and love. We may wonder how we could continue to operate with this powerful love energy after the crisis has blown over. The way forward could be easier than imagined. None of us can be good at everything but every single one of us is good at something and it is that 'gift' which makes us unique. If we operate in ethical ways from



Unity Consciousness, the 'work' we do in alignment with our gift gives

us joy and we get into a state of 'flow', ready to give it our hundred percent. 'Follow your bliss' is the advice of one of the world's greatest mythologists, Joseph Campbell, for while we lovingly and selflessly share our gift with the world, joy, peace and abundance of every kind flows into our lives. By realizing that we do not 'give' love but that we 'are' love, we place for ourselves and for the generations to come. *



Dr. Coomi S. Vevaina (Ph.D. Literature & Ph.D. Education) retired as Professor and Head of the Department of English, University of Mumbai, India and is now the Founder Director of Centre for Connection Education and Management. She is an Education Futurist, TEDx Speaker, Internationally acclaimed Educator, writer, workshop leader and storyteller

Guest Editor's Note: As mentioned in this article, in 2015, the United Nations constituted 17 Sustainable Developmental Goals to be realized before 2030. Fezana Journal's Fall 2020 issue will focus on them, but we can use this time during the period of reflection imposed upon us by the pandemic to evaluate where we wish to go once we are free from the lock down. The underlying concept of Frashokereti is of 'healing' or 'renovation' or "making [the world] wonderful/excellent". It is the time to repair damage.

As gaiaeducation.org states, "Sustainability is not an end point in a journey; it is a community-centred process of learning how to live sustainably and regeneratively in a particular locality with its ecological and cultural uniqueness. Everyone in that place can take the leadership to start or participate...We are faced with the challenge of collectively re-designing the human presence on Earth. NOW is the time for transforming humanity's planetary impact from predominantly degenerative to regenerative!"

Keki Dadachanji's article (page 14) offers practical tips that we can take going forward that corresponds with our obligation as Zarathushtis to "renew the world".

A Time for Reflection, **A CHANCE TO BREAK FREE**

By Havovie Bomanji

2020 will forever be remembered as the year when, for a few months, for the vast majority of people, time stood still. A time that has given the privileged amongst us, the opportunity to undergo a degree of personal reflection and contemplation that only an enforced hibernation such as this could offer. I say privileged because for so many of us, it resembled more of a staycation at home than a hardship to be endured.

A SHIFT TO ACKNOWLEDGMENT

For me, it will also be remembered as the year that the underpaid, overworked and underappreciated 'working class' were finally recognized for their outstanding work ethic and hailed as the true heroes of the COVID-19 pandemic alongside our exceptional health professionals. At a time when many were urged and able to safely isolate at home, their dedication to their roles forced our governments to facilitate the long overdue metamorphosis of society's label shifting from an overlooked 'unskilled worker' to a respected 'essential worker'.

A SHIFT TO RESILIENCE

However, this pandemic has brought untimely death, struggle and sorrow to many families. Many, many lives tainted by sudden loss and thrust on the journey of processing their grief. Yet, it is

so often through loss and struggle that the human spirit has developed a resilience that has seen us evolve and adapt throughout the millennia.

These last few months has been offering us the chance of a quietness where we could honestly ponder, question and evaluate not only our own lives, but examine aspects of life that perhaps are now inefficient, obsolete and unfair to many.

A SHIFT TO AWARENESS

This state of quarantine has allowed for universal consciousness shifts to reach new and higher levels of awareness. A sense of camaraderie and selflessness has begun to penetrate the collective consciousness in a way that we have not seen in some time now. Service to others on all levels has become the prevailing need of the day. Understanding that what one does for another, never comes from a personal supply of ideas, energy, love or abundance, but rather flows through us from an infinite (God) Source within that can never run dry.

Present times are calling for more awareness, deeper understanding and a serious contemplation of how one will continue living their life. "Will I grudgingly go back to the same old, same old that I have outgrown or will I have the courage to pursue something that makes my heart sing?"



This pandemic is a world reset. We have a chance to change the world. What it has proven is no matter what your politics, no matter what your religion, no matter what your job status. Human kindness has come out in so many ways. Can't buy a mask, people make it for you. Don't have food, let me drop some off at your porch. Love is all around you. All you have to do is look. Let's have that as the new rule in this world reset.

Johnny Corn

A SHIFT TO ACCEPTANCE

This time of reflection has actually exposed many shadow truths, truths that have been hidden behind denial and a happy outer facade. Living lives that are often not in true alignment with their soul's calling, trapped in unfulfilling jobs or locked into some service that they did not consciously choose or want. With jobs being lost, businesses folding and an air of uncertainty in the ether this is where fear can jump in and say that you must go back to what you know or you will suffer lack and limitation. As a result, feelings of anger, resentment and fear may surface, and that is only human. Once those emotions have surfaced and made themselves known, they can be harnessed to facilitate positive change and soul growth. Never forget humans are, at their core, master creators. What better time to silently nurture one's dreams until they are ready to be birthed into a reality, a reality of your own creating.

Of course, returning to what we know is a viable and comforting option (as well as a necessary one) for many. For some people, change can be exciting and revitalizing - a chance to break free from the current status quo. Yet for many others, it can be deeply uncomfortable and induce a paralyzing fear that can put life on hold for weeks, months or even years. For those currently suffering from depression, anxiety or other mental health issues, external factors such as socializing and being outside of the confinements of one's own immediate environment regularly have often acted as a coping mechanism upon which to rely and aid in the task of distracting oneself. Having our devices for sanity taken

away from us has most definitely triggered a collective loss of normality, as well as the exacerbation of various demons. It is so important to acknowledge how one has coped during this period. Accept the wins no matter how small or insignificant and trust in the knowing that 'this too will pass'

A SHIFT TO MINDFULNESS

Sometimes, it is simply about being in a state of mindfulness. Being able to sit in the silence and just be. All the fervent prayers and rituals mean nothing if it is not backed up by strong, abiding faith.



You do not need to leave your room. Remain sitting at your table and listen. Do not even listen. Simply wait, be quiet, still and solitary. The world will freely offer itself to you, to be unmasked, it has no choice. It will roll in ecstasy at your feet.

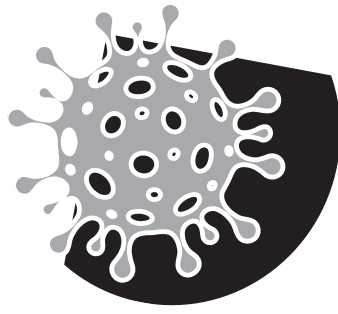
Franz Kafka

For it is our faith and belief that allows for the manifestation of what we ask for. Those well versed in meditation are fully aware that it is in prayer that we ask and through meditation that we receive answers. This reset is unveiling dynamic new paradigms ousting the old, unworkable ones and offering us a chance to move forward with a stronger unified integrity. An integrity that is no longer some wishful point on the distant horizon, but one that has its seeds firmly planted on our freshly renewed Earth.

I feel, once again that it is important to reiterate that this article originates from a 'privileged' stance of being able to stay at home during this period of hibernation and reflect on new ways of living and being. For those who do not have the privilege, to our pandemic heroes on the front line, we offer our heartfelt gratitude. *



Havovie Bomanji is a radically unconventional Mama who is not afraid to push boundaries, break outdated paradigms and speak up about the controversies and taboos that still plague society today. An Intuitive Healer, Spiritual Mentor and Sex/Intimacy/Life Coach. A free-spirit who understands that conformity can be the ruin of visionary thinking.



MOVING FORWARD

By Ruxshin Dinshaw

Hopefully, by the time you are reading this, we've finally begun to see that elusive silver lining we've been keeping a weather eye out for. Back in March, a friend suggested that world governments ought to collectively agree to "stop the calendar", and restart it when the pandemic ends in order to write-off the lost time and economic impact of COVID-19. (I'm almost certain he was joking). The logistical nightmare of trying to implement such reform notwithstanding, it's worth pausing to consider that time is, still, incontrovertibly, money - the Asian Development Bank projects a loss of \$5.8 - 8.8 trillion to the global economy. Nevertheless, wishing to turn back the clock is as unhelpful as it is impractical. Contemplating what we've gained instead, and how these collective experiences may serve us in the future, might be a better use of time.

PEOPLE MATTER

We're collectively succeeding in creating a new normal - one where we are more mindful of how our actions affect others and proving that neighbourly concern never goes out of style, even in North America's inherently individualistic society. As Havovie Bomanji has pointed out in this issue, our perception of those we consider "unskilled" has shifted. However, moving forward, this newfound

recognition of essential workers remains perfunctory at best until we reform how we reward them in the long run.

And, if the current social unrest about race-related police brutality indicates anything it's that as a community, and as individuals, we have an opportunity to make long-awaited changes.

SELF MATTERS

Those who've been forced to either change their work pattern or give up work altogether have, hopefully, found that self-discipline is rewarding, that the inclination to learn a new skill is independent of age, and that this pause has allowed us to connect with family, or perhaps make a fresh career start. Our achievements, big and small, are a cause for celebration.

LIVE LOCAL

With mall crawls and international holidays on hold, we've begun supporting neighbourhood businesses, and turning to Nature for a change of scenery. In upcoming days, we have to be more proactive about supporting local economies, and advocating for conservation of our Natural resources.

ARTS ARE IMPORTANT

We've collectively logged in to

enjoy and appreciate the efforts of artists and musicians who've given freely of their time and talent - a profound reminder that the arts, too, are essential. In the post-pandemic world, we need to find ways to encourage arts in schools, and support artists, majority of whom have precarious livelihoods.

The pandemic has forced us out of our comfort zone. We can mourn the change or heed a wise, literary character from "The Fellowship of the Ring" (J.R.R. Tolkien): "All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us." *



Ruxshin Dinshaw currently resides in Canada, where she moved in 2019. She holds a Bachelor's in International Development from the London School of Economics, and has previously worked for the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Reference:

Asian Development Bank. (15 May 2020) COVID-19 Economic Impact Could Reach \$8.8 Trillion Globally (www.adb.org)

The North American Zoroastrian community is pleased to pay a special tribute to Khushroo Poacha for his humanitarian services, which showcase the tenets of the Zarathushti faith in practice. FEZANA Journal requested Darius Captain, who was born and grew up in Nagpur, to interview Khushroo.

Railways when I was 18 years old. I finished my graduation though studies never interested me. I used to stay in a Railway Colony meant for employees but after my father's death our family had to move. The Nagpur Anjuman provided us with accommodation in their community blocks and various members of the community helped me to hone my organizational skills by encouraging me to

Khushroo Poacha: A Model of Selfless Service

The Parsis of Nagpur, a city in central India, have amongst them a remarkable individual who almost single handedly has created a charitable movement that is the talk of the whole of India.

He has shown how an average person from a middle class family, with no help from the government or other NGOs, without taking money, can achieve so much to help a country of over a billion people.

While working full time in the office of the Indian Railways, he first created a website where he can match blood donors to needy patients from anywhere in the country. Then he also branched out to a more difficult project of feeding the poor on a daily basis. Over 6,000 families are provided with food and needed materials on a regular basis, without even having a bank account for people to donate!

He himself went through difficult times while growing up and with hardly any financial support, this angel of a man achieved something that other business students and leaders said could not be done without a proper business plan to follow.

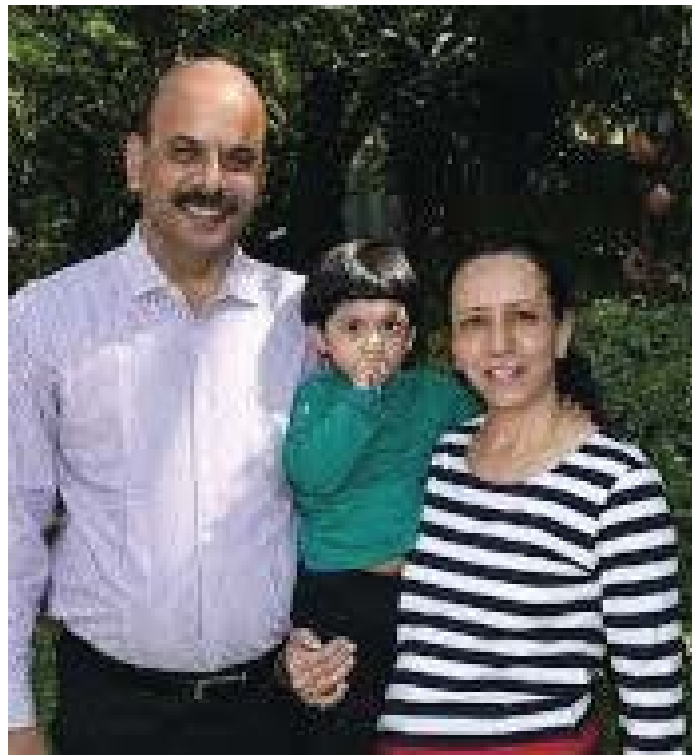
Can you tell me something about your early life - childhood, education and what inspired you to go into service for others?

I lost my father at age 16 years and my younger brother Faroukh was just 8. My late mother Mrs Katie Poacha brought us up the hard way. I started working when I was just 16 years old to sustain the family. I joined a bakery in Nagpur and then joined Garden Silk Mills as an office clerk, I was studying and working. I joined the Indian

actively participate in community events such as ghambars, cooking and religious rituals.

Did you have any role models who influenced you to go into this kind of work. What motivated you to serve others?

Well to be honest, my late mother Mrs Katie Adi Poacha was a role model for me. She always motivated me to help others and reach out to people in need.



Did Zarathushti religious principles help you or influence you to do the kind of work you are doing?

Actually, Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds is in our DNA. As a kid I used to see my grandfather the Late Cawas Faramroze Poacha keep a box of coins in the drawing room on a side table. Anybody who came at his door for help, he would always help them out. So children learn by what they see. My daughter Tunisha who is 6 years old was never taught to give. But she has learnt by what we as parents do. Last year during a Festival of Giving she raised 5000 school bags for children in flood hit areas in India.

How did you start in this journey of dedication? Can you say something about this blood bank project.

It was an incident in September 1994 when my Grandmother was admitted in the hospital that I saw a patient dying for want of blood. The relatives of the patient were manhandling a resident doctor. I intervened and asked them what had happened. The doctor told me that he had asked the patient's relative to get a unit of blood. They could not get it as they were from a village and had no donors. The patient eventually had a cardiac arrest and passed away. This incident triggered something in me. In 1999 another incident where a Zarthosti needed blood for an employee and the patient passed away due to want of blood. This motivated me to start www.indianblooddonors.com, the first helpline in the world which connected needy patients to voluntary blood donors.

In 2014, when my mother was admitted for a surgery in a hospital, I saw relatives of patients going hungry for days on end as they were poor and were far from their villages. I shared this with my mother while she was in the hospital. She asked me to feed them and that the people of the world would help me. She passed away in October 2014. And I kept my promise to her and thus was born *Seva Kitchen* (www.sevakitchen.org) which started with 25 meals in one hospital being cooked at my place. And now we cater to almost 20 hospitals across nine Indian cities.

How do you finance your charity work? Do you ask for donations or do people just come forward to donate in cash and food products?

I have a unique way of doing work. Neither do I accept money nor does *Seva Kitchen* have a bank account. We crowdsource food and products through crowdsourcing websites. Donors pay on the website and we get the food. We also installed "fridges of kindness" (*Neki ka Pitara*) in hospitals and have groups of people filling up the fridges with juice, milk, fruits etc. These fridges are sponsored by

donors. We also make small groups of people who cook and serve food every week. During the existing "Covid Relief Work", with donors in India, as of May 17, 2020 we have raised material worth 7.8 million rupees. The Zoroastrian Community from around the world and specially Zoroastrians of Abu Dhabi have stood by me in these tough times.

I am a soul entrepreneur not a social entrepreneur. I have always walked a different path. I have never formed a formal organization nor an NGO. All my initiatives are volunteer driven.

An incident in 2000 made me walk on this difficult path. I had exhausted all my resources when I built www.indianblooddonors.com. After the Gujarat Earthquake our initiative was noticed as it helped people with blood who were air lifted from Bhuj to AFMC Pune. BBC World did a small documentary on our work. A few corporations approached me saying that they would sponsor our work. I just needed Rs 2000/- every month. But they expected me to share the data of my donors, so that they could exploit it. I refused. One of the sponsors told me, "Mr Poacha you cannot do Good Work without money." I don't know what got over me. I immediately told him, "Sir, I will prove to you and to the People of the World that Good Work can be done without Money" and to date I don't accept money. Many students of Business Schools of India like IIM Ahmedabad told me that I would not succeed without a Revenue model. I proved them all wrong. I ask them, did Mother Teresa have a revenue model to run Missionaries of Charity. Did Lord Zarathustra have a revenue model. No.... Like them I look skyward when I need help and it comes pouring.

How did you get other people or groups to help you? How much of your time is devoted to the service of others?

I lead by example. As I don't accept money, people trust me and my work. I motivate people to serve and experience Good Karma. People who join me at *Seva Kitchen* never leave. They experience the Joy of Giving. I devote at least 2 hours daily. But my mind is on 24x7 of how I can make a difference to the people of the world and help others do it.

Have you been recognized by any other groups and organizations and have any of them supported you in your passion to help others?

Yes. I have been recognized by a lot of organizations. The Honorable President of India invited me for a dinner in 2017. I shared my journey with people from across

the world in the Festival of Innovation. I spoke on my Frugal innovations there. The Chief Minister of Maharashtra called me last April to appreciate my work. Our Initiative www.indianbloooddonors.com won the Ashoka Changemakers award a few years back. There was a 10,000 Dollars award with it.

My recognition is the love of the people and His Blessings. That means a lot to me than anything else.

What kind of support have you receive from your family, relatives, friends and the Parsi and other communities?

Well, you cannot do anything without the support of your family. All credit to my wife Fermin who has stood by me in tough times. My brother Faroukh and sister in law Mehernaz have been a great support. I am preparing the next gen in the family to be soul entrepreneurs - my daughter Tunisha, my niece Kiara and nephew Kian. The Nagpur

Parsees mean a lot to me. They have always stood by me in my good times and bad.

Khushroo Poacha at 52, continues to work full time to provide for his family also. His remarkable journey of selfless service for thousands of people on a daily basis, continues to earn him deserving fame from all over the country and outside. May he be blessed with renewed strength to expand his good work for the poor and impoverished people of India.*

Darius Captain, originally from Nagpur, came to Michigan in 1969 for post-graduate studies. He Started working with IBM in Chicago and worked in the Information Technology field for 40 years. He served on the Board of Zoroastrian Association of Chicago, and currently resides in Sacramento.

A BOX OF KINDNESS

Although Seva Kitchen started off by making meals accessible to relatives of patients in hospital, the term Seva Kitchen continues to cover a broader ambit of addressing hunger needs. Towards this guiding principle is the belief that every kitchen, in every town, village or city is a Seva Kitchen. The provider of succor to those who are hungry, because every meal counts.

The *Neki ka Pitara* (Box of Kindness) are refrigerators, or Whizicoolers that one sees in stores for storing ice creams and cold drinks. They have been installed in several hospitals with the aim to provide some nutrition to patients and their caretakers. Each fridge has about 30 volunteers. When the assigned social worker from the hospital posts the picture of the empty fridge on the WhatsApp group, the next person in line fills up the fridge. Since Khushroo Poacha has a strict rule regarding non-acceptance of money, these volunteers from other cities and countries contribute by donating fridges or buying meals through forums like www.donatekart.com, where in collaboration with NGOs, Seva Kitchen runs campaigns to feed people. Interested donors can buy their preferred number of meals on the website and once the target is reached, the meals are distributed among the people.

(From *This 'Neki ka Pitara' helps feed thousands of needy people* by Sushreeta Mohapatra January 10, 2018. www.ipositive.in /Seva Kitchen website and Facebook page).



AMERICAN NUCLEAR SOCIETY NAMES **PAREEZ GOLUB** WINNER OF H.M. HASHEMIAN AWARD



The American Nuclear Society's Human Factors Instrumentation & Controls Division (ANS HFICD) has named Pareez Golub of Sargent & Lundy, the recipient of its 2020 H. M. Hashemian Mid-Career Award.

Pareez Golub is a senior manager for Sargent & Lundy's

nuclear power business. This award recognizes her outstanding and sustaining achievements in the commercial nuclear power industry.

One of the award nomination letters cited that Pareez "...has made extraordinary contributions to the broader digital modernization initiatives including support of multiple utilities, EPRI and Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI). The value she brings to the table is of inestimable value to the industry."

In an industry that is 95% male dominated, this is a tre-

mendous achievement for Pareez. This award is given to individuals who have been in the nuclear power industry for 15-25 years of their career.

Pareez was born in Mumbai and immigrated to the US with her parents in 1970. She grew up in the San Francisco bay area and then the Philadelphia area.

Pareez has a Bachelor of Science in electrical and computer engineering from Drexel University. She has been in the nuclear industry for 25 years.

In an increasingly digital world, Sargent & Lundy is at the forefront of nuclear advancement. Experts like Pareez have expanded the firm's technical and strategic offerings. Through this year's Hashemian Award, the ANS has affirmed Sargent & Lundy's ability to deliver modern, innovative, and complex consulting solutions.

Pareez is the daughter of Fatima and Erach Patel, of ZAPANJ and she lives in Malvern with her husband Michael and sons Eric and Sam.

Congratulations the community is very proud of your achievements and we wish you greater success. Ed. Dolly Dastoor

In the News: <https://sargentlundy.com/in-the-news/ans-golub-hashemian-award/>

ARMENE MODI AWARDED THE ALBERT SCHWEITZER MEDAL FOR HER ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND EXTENSIVE SERVICE IN EDUCATION AND LITERACY.

Armene Modi, the founder of *Ashta No Kai*, a non-profit organization that aims to educate and empower rural women and girls in 10 villages in Pune District, India, was recognized by the World Literacy Foundation with the Albert Schweitzer Medal in April 2020. The award is named after Albert Schweitzer, the famous Austrian theologian, writer, physician, philosopher, and humanist who came to Oxford University in 1922, and is presented to an individual for their academic excellence and extensive service in education and literacy. Since 1998, Armene's exceptional efforts towards empowering rural women in India have helped to improve the educational outcomes of hundreds of adolescent girls over the years.

Today, 770 million people cannot read a single word, while another 2 billion people struggle to read a full sentence.

Illiteracy is a global crisis, and the World Literacy Foundation aims to educate people on the benefit of acquiring even basic literacy skills.

In her acceptance speech Armene mentioned that her journey began when she had a wake up call on reading a shocking statistic in India's 1991 Census, that 61 percent of Indian women, more than four decades after independence, were still illiterate. She gave up a successful teaching career in Japan to return to India, as she firmly believed that issues of illiteracy and poverty are not only problems of the poor and marginalized but universal issues that concern us all. She decided to take up the challenge of making a dent, however small in improving literacy levels for women in rural areas where the illiteracy rate was the highest. But she stated that "Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined that my attempt to promote literacy would help to transform and make a positive difference in the lives of thousands of marginalized women and girls in rural India." She was gratified that women had gained a significant voice in their homes and their communities, and had become change agents actively participating in solving their own problems at the village level. Thanks to *Ashta No Kai's* work, rural women who had never stepped outside their homes except to fetch water, began to participate in village assemblies, demand their rights and work together to resolve problems of alcoholism and domestic violence.

As more girls were able to continue their schooling, the age of child marriages in those villages rose from 13-years to 19-years. Education gave these young girls wings to dream and pursue careers in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering, and information technology, to name a few. According to Armene, "These were opportunities that their mothers and grandmothers could never have availed of, as they did not have the chance to break free from the shackles of their poverty, powerlessness, and illiteracy". She concluded by saying "I have never regretted the decision to retire from teaching and reinvent myself as a social activist. It has been a rich journey of discovery and learning and I am very grateful to those who have guided me along the way."

In 2017, Armene was selected as an Echidna Scholar by the Brookings Institution in Washington DC, which was a Visiting Fellowship to research the *Ashta No Kai* project. In 2018, at the age of 70, she graduated with a second Master's degree in International Relations from Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and is very grateful to FEZANA for supporting her Masters' program with a scholarship. She was also conferred an honorary Doctorate in Education from J. F. Oberlin University in Tokyo, Japan, in March 2018, "in recognition of your extraordinary achievements through *Ashta No Kai* in pursuit of educating and empowering rural women and girls in villages in India; and of the significant differences you have made in improving these women's lives, their communities and those who were inspired by your efforts to establish human rights and gender equality."

Armene Modi richly deserves this prestigious recognition for her over 25 years of social activism to promote literacy and human rights. The community is proud of you and wishes you greater success in your life's mission.*



DR. PHERUZA TARAPORE GRANTED A US PATENT FOR “THERAPEUTIC STRATEGIES FOR OVARIAN CANCER”



is difficult. Dr Tarapore was looking for a way to accurately deliver cargo to silence expression of these genes in ovarian cancer cells.

Her colleague, Dr. Shuk-Mei Ho and Phiruzza have isolated a unique RNA-based sequence

Dr Pheruza Tarapore lives in Cincinnati with her husband Jimmy Antia and son Arish, She is an assistant Professor in the Department of Environment and Public Health Sciences at the University of Cincinnati, Ohio. Her specific research interests are on developing RNA therapeutics for cancer treatment; and studying the effects of environmental pollutants on increased risk to male infertility and cancer.

Dr. Tarapore grew up in Mumbai, India, and though both her parents, Pheroze and Tannaz Tarapore are Chartered Accountants, she decided that her calling was in science after visiting her sick uncle at the Tata Memorial hospital. Shocked at the plight of the other cancer patients there, she decided to make cancer research the main focus of her career. She came to the US in 1989 after finishing her Master's in Microbiology in Mumbai and then completed her doctorate in Molecular Genetics from the University of Cincinnati

Ovarian cancer is a lethal disease which is difficult to treat because it is usually diagnosed at advanced stages. In the initial stages the tumors do respond to therapy, but some of them become resistant to treatment, and most recurrent ovarian cancer is currently almost incurable. Scientists have identified genes which can accelerate tumor aggressiveness. However, targeting these genes only in ovarian cancer cells, and not in other organs and tissues,

(called aptamer) which binds to a receptor AMHR2 present only on ovarian tumors. With this aptamer, they intend to specifically target genes involved in ovarian tumor growth and spread. The aptamer can also be used to deliver medicines to directly attack cancer cells thereby mitigating the toxic side effects of traditional chemotherapy. Moreover, the aptamer has the potential to improve diagnostics, prognostics, and molecular imaging for ovarian cancers.

A US Patent No 10,633,663 entitled “Therapeutic strategies for ovarian cancer: AMHR2-RNA aptamer” was granted to Drs. Tarapore and Ho, University of Cincinnati, USA, on April 28, 2020. The patent deals with a strategy to allow precise targeting of ovarian cancer cells, including metastasized cells.

The community is very proud of you and we wish you many more successes in your research. Ed. Fezana Journal, Dolly Dastoor

Ovarian cancer ranks fifth in cancer deaths among women, accounting for more deaths than any other cancer of the female reproductive system.

Ovarian cancer has a 46% five-year survival rate. Early detection is key.

(The American Cancer Society)



INTRODUCTION TO SHORT STORY WINNERS 2020

Under the sponsorship and support of Ms. Catherine Linka, author of "A Clawed and Feathered Spell" about a Zoroastrian boy named Paridun, and her new book, "What I Want You to See", through collaboration from our judges, the 2020 Short Story Contest was organized. It is a pleasure to announce this years' Essay and Short Story Contest top three entries.

Our greatest gratitude to our sponsors for their support, our wonderful judges who gave their time and care in evaluating the essays and short stories. Mr. Parviz Manoochehri, our web master, Ms. Parmida Behmardi for designing our flyer, and all the wonderful teachers and Zoroastrian organizations who helped in supporting this contest.

Six wonderfully written stories were received, each one a winner. The top three stories are being printed through support of FEZANA Journal for your enjoyment.

The 2020 Short Story Contest Topic: Write a story in which a Zoroastrian relies upon the teachings of the faith to help them resolve a challenging situation or achieve a goal.

Age group: 13-18 years of age

Endorsed by: California Zoroastrian Center in Los Angeles

Supported by: *Chehreh Nana* magazine and FEZANA Journal

TOP THREE ENTRIES

First Place: Ms. Azadeh Hormozdiari from Tarzana, CA with the short story title: *The Bumpy Road to Happiness* - \$300 plus a signed copy of "A Clawed and Feathered spell".

Second Place: Ms. Farnaz Behdinan from Northridge, CA with the short story title: *Writing Destiny* - \$200 plus a signed copy of "A Clawed and Feathered spell".

Third Place: Mr. Pouya Monokchian from Corona, CA with the short story title: *Cyrus and the Greedy Leader* - \$100 plus a signed copy of "A Clawed and Feathered spell".

The story awarded First Place is printed in this issue, and the two stories awarded Second and Third Place will be published in the Fall issue of Fezana Journal.

2021 CONTEST

Looking forward to the 2021 Short Story Contest, designed for youth 13 -18 years old, with the topic: "*Spenta Mainyu*, progressive mentality is promoting spiritual and/or material improvement at a personal, family, community, or global level. This can be achieved by one or many individuals. Write a story centered around the main character or characters using *Spenta Mainyu*".

Visit our website: www.czc.org/contest



Artemis Javanshir is the Essay/Short Story Contests organizer, member of Core Education Committee at CZC-LA, and the co-chair of FEZANA Education, Conference and Scholarship (Religious Education) Committee. She is a strong believer in the strength of our youth and involving community members in shaping a strong and prosperous global Zoroastrian fellowship.

THE BUMPY ROAD TO HAPPINESS

Diing! The sound of the doorbell drifted to his ears waking him up even from four floors above, the melodic sound brought with it new treasurer every time. "Vanessa!" he exclaimed from the fourth floor, "go sign off the package!" Throwing his tall legs over the California King bed, he pulled on a white robe – the Versace logo seemingly visible from miles away. Slipping on matching slides he walked out to the balcony, a smile creeping over his face, it must be the new chandelier he had ordered the night before. Hands on the railing he looked out in front of him, as far as the eye could see was his property. The basketball court adorned with hoops NBA players wish they could dunk on, a garden Queen Elizabeth II had once complimented, tennis courts, a pool, each amenity as luxurious as the last. Breathing in the Beverly Glen air and admiring his home, he glanced at his watch, realizing he needed to be at the office within an hour.

He calmly walked back inside, going through his morning routine and finally changing into his Tuesday black Armani suit. Pulling his tie into place, he glanced in the mirror – his dark brown locks were cut in a professional manner, beard freshly shaven with only a bit of stubble remaining in a way that framed his sharp jawline. He glanced in the mirror one last time, his fingers tracing over the golden *faravahar* (religious symbol) looped around his neck, his gaze remained fixated on the symbol. "Mr. Jamshid Javanmard breakfast is prepared!" Vanessa exclaimed snapping him out of his daze. He tucked the *faravahar* under his white collared shirt heading down the spiral staircase to start another day.

After eating, he stood in the garage, making the hardest decision he had to face every day – what car to take out. His golden-brown eyes glossed over the matte black G-Wagon, silver Bentley coupe, white BMW and finally landed on



the Rolls Royce.

As he drove bumper to bumper with others, running late, the GPS gleamed "–take a shorter route to avoid traffic?" Enthusiastically he clicked yes – changing direction to a part of town he had not visited since originally leaving California for Yale University fifteen years ago. Minutes away from pulling into the Deloitte Firm parking lot, to the left he noticed a sight he had not seen in ages, he saw folks he had grown up with, attending classes with every Sunday walking into the golden doors of the California Zoroastrian Center. A wave of nostalgia hit him as he felt a hole open inside of him, he brushed it off by reassuring himself he now had what they all wish they did. After all, here he was, all the riches he could've wished for; sitting in a Rolls Royce wearing an Armani suit, on his way to his job at the largest law firm in the country.

Pulling into Deloitte his momentary crisis had now been completely forgotten, but the hole in his heart remained, it had been there since he left for Yale fifteen years ago, since he left his old life behind, the hole still remained, eating away at him. Nonetheless, it was a feeling he had grown used to, he had found shoving expensive products into the emptiness he felt was an effective way to reach happiness, even if it was momentary. Pushing his dark thoughts away the best he could, he walked through the double glass doors labeled Javanmard to his office, the natural light beaming and filling up the spacious white room. A singular desk sat in the heart of his room, right behind it a window with views of the city just as spectacular as those in his home. "Mr. Javanmard your mail is on your desk!" shouted his secretary Julia from the receptionist desk right outside. As he came to a seat at his desk, he glanced at the stack of what seemed like hundreds of letters. Tearing open one envelope it read, "Thank you for defending Ezra

Yates, he's my favorite artist and it's an abomination that this is happening to him!" The next wrote "I know Ezra didn't do it because he has you defending him! Thank you for being someone we can always count on!" All the letters spoke to something similar, all fan mail on behalf of his newest client Ezra Yates.

Ezra was the perfect client, from his millions of followers, sold out worldwide tour concerts, tens of Grammys, spotless record and persona as the most loved celebrity by the public. Truly, he was yet to meet a person that didn't adore Ezra and his sweet wholesome demeanor, hell, even the democrats and republicans would put aside their fighting for this man. Ezra was not only the perfect client to defend in the abstract, but also one of his closest friends since Jamshid himself had also gained fame. Even the accusation Ezra was facing of murdering his wife hadn't tainted his public perception, not a single person believed it, and it was Jamshid's job to keep it that way. The trial was tomorrow morning but Jamshid had already finished all he needed, all that was left to do was celebrate with Ezra for the essentially guaranteed innocent verdict.

Lunch time arrived and he left to do exactly that, walking into the private room at Nobu in Malibu he had paid a hundred grand to book, the two good friends sat for a sushi lunch. The conversation was light and unserious, until Jamshid's mind began to wander, jokingly he asked Ezra the question you should never ask a client. He smiled as he looked up, "Well Ezra, did you do it?" he remarked playfully. "What? Like killed my wife?" Ezra said as his light blue eyes cut into Jamshid's soul. "Yeah," Jamshid remarked still chuckling at the joke of a question. Ezra suddenly burst into laughter, a cold genuine laughter that lasted too long for comfort. The hairs on Jamshid's neck stood up as Ezra's eyes pierced into him, his voice turning cold, "J, of all people I thought you would've seen through my mask. Of course, I did it. Seeing her blood drip down my hands and the life flutter out of her eyes was euphoria." He paused and began laughing again, the warmth returning to his eyes "But not a single person would believe I did! Isn't this great?" Jamshid couldn't remember quite what he said after that, but he stayed for lunch and left frantically after. As he drove back home, he passed the Zoroastrian center again, this time the eyes of the statue of Zartosht cut into him, seemingly in deep pain.

He arrived home, trying to sleep for the big trial tomorrow, but every time he closed his eyes, Zartosht's eyes would appear, refusing to let him get a second of rest. He tossed and turned for hours, finally swallowing a melatonin to fall asleep. As he slept, he dreamt for the first time in years. He was back at the Zoroastrian center on a Sunday morning, sitting in class. Around him sat his childhood friends, Kamran, Rostam and Shireen, they all chanted the *Ashem Vohu* prayer "*Ashem vohu, vahishtem, asti, ushta, asti, ushta, ahmayi, hyat ashai, vah hishtayi, ash-em*" The teacher, Mrs. Dahnesh asked for someone to

share the English translation, unwillingly Jamshid's mouth began to move, his voice as it was when he was fifteen years old began to speak "righteousness is the best virtue, it is happiness, happiness comes to the one who is righteous for the sake of righteousness alone." As his friends looked at him with warm smiles, he began to realize, he may now have riches, cars, houses and luxury; but the one thing he couldn't retrieve now, which he had fifteen years ago, was the emotion his fifteen-year-old self was feeling in the dream. Genuine happiness. His realization faded, alongside the feeling of genuine

happiness, as the dark thoughts of what he had done to his life replaced it, the words "Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds" written from wall to wall, seemed to be written in red ink, the blood of his friends' wife, the phrases closing in on him, the walls getting tighter and the words screaming.

He woke up in a cold sweat to the sound of his alarm. He rushed to get ready, brushing away the thoughts that remained from his dream last night, "It's all religious nonsense, I am happy now, they just use it as a way to cope because I have what they wish they did." He mumbles to himself as he put on his suit, slicked back his hair and got ready for the big day. As he sat at the mirror, glancing at himself almost ready to leave, he once again tucked the faravahar he wore under his collared shirt. He ran down the spiral staircase once again, slipped in the Rolls Royce and headed to the trial.

The prosecutor finished presenting his case, it was nonsensical and lacking evidence, Jamshid didn't think winning

A wave of nostalgia hit him as he felt a hole open inside of him, he brushed it off by reassuring himself he now had what they all wish they did. After all, here he was, all the riches he could've wished for; sitting in a Rolls Royce wearing an Armani suit, on his way to his job at the largest law firm in the country.

this trial would've been this easy. As he stood up, ready to end the trial briefly and return to his home, maybe even go for a swim in his pool, his faravahar seemed to press into his chest, with every step he took closer to the stand it seemed to press harder, seemingly ready to cut into his soul. Before he spoke his first words, three phrases once again appeared in his mind, "Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds." Replaying in his mind, almost haunting him, was the voices of his childhood friends as they recited the *Ashem Vohu*. He blinked twice, then three times, shaking it off – he looked to the judge, closed the folder he had taken up with him and said to the surprise of everybody, "Actually, I have something new I would like to introduce into evidence." The room went dead silent as all eyes turned to the judge, waiting for a verdict, "sustained, you may do so" she remarked. Jamshid walked up to the stand, plugged his phone into the speaker and pressed play. Out came the last words everyone thought they would hear, Ezra's cold voice remarking, "J, of all people I thought you would've seen through my mask. Of course, I did it. Seeing her blood drip down my hands and the life flutter out of her eyes was euphoria. But not a single person would believe I did! Isn't this great?"

Looking back at Ezra on the witness table, Jamshid realized something. He wouldn't be remembered as the hero in this story. The public would find a way to spin the decision, accuse him of faking audio, call him a liar, a cheat. In the public eye he was the villain. Ezra could kill him now and no one would mourn. They would all dance and sing on his grave. But, looking to the camera broadcasting this on national television, he smiled to himself, realizing it didn't matter how the public saw him, he knew he had done the right thing, he had told the truth. He slipped his *faravahar* out from the inside of his shirt, to the outside, then turned his back on the courtroom as he headed home.

As he walked into his house, he received a phone call. His hands shook as he answered, "You've been fired from Deloitte. Your behavior today in court was inexcusable. We don't feel as though we can trust you as a lawyer anymore, your things will be sent away. Don't bother looking for an-

other job, we have more influence than you could imagine in this industry and we will ensure it's not an option for you." The voice on the other line quickly hung up, not waiting for a response.

He walked out of his home into the cold air of the night, wrapping his jacket around him as he started to walk. The icy wind blowing in his face, a million thoughts racing through his mind about what would happen next and what he had done to his life – he knew he would soon lose his large home and his cars absent a steady form of income, he had been delegated to the middle class life. His feet,

seemingly on autopilot, continued walking down a path Jamshid was unaware of the destination of. Half an hour later he arrived, despite not being here in fifteen years, he knew exactly what today was – *Gahanbar*. He slowly walked through the golden doors as a wave of warmth hit him. His teacher from when he used to come on Sundays was the first to see him, she wrapped her arms around him as she said, "We are happy to have you back Jamshid *jaan*, We're so proud of you." Her genuine and loving embrace stirred an emotion he hadn't felt in fifteen years – belonging. Kamran, Rostam and Shireen all walked

up to him, wrapping their arms around him sharing similar sentiments. "Enough with the sentimental and emotional stuff, Jamshid come have some ash," Mrs. Dahmash said. As he sat and swallowed the stew, a feeling washed over him, with every spoon he felt the hole in his heart being filled. The ash was more than just a stew, but a representation of the community to which he was proud to belong. The people around him recited the *Ashem Vohu* one more time. He chuckled to himself as he realized they were right, only righteousness can bring true happiness. He had lost his riches, his home, his cars and his job – but those were all worthless and distracting him from what really mattered – he had gained something priceless that made it all more than worth it, genuine happiness.*

Azadeh Hormozdiari is currently a junior at Chaminade high school. She has been attending Zoroastrian classes since elementary school and still consistently does. Outside of school and classes she is involved with her school's debate team.

Replaying in his mind, almost haunting him, was the voices of his childhood friends as they recited the *Ashem Vohu*. He blinked twice, then three times, shaking it off – he looked to the judge, closed the folder he had taken up with him and said to the surprise of everybody, "Actually, I have something new I would like to introduce into evidence."

BIRTHS

Zal Minocherhomjee, a boy, to Adil and Rhea Minocherhomjee, grandson to Hootoxi and Arda-e-Viraf Minocherhomjee (La Jolla, CA), Sherali and Kurush Contractor (Singapore) in Salt Lake, UT on April 10, 2020.

Aayden Sudhir Pargaonkar, a boy, to Afreen (Kayani) and Sudhir Pargaonkar, brother to Saloni on April 27, 2020. (Manashni)

NAVJOTES

Darien Vimadalal, son of Parynaz & Ervad Khushroo Vimadalal, brother of Ervad Freyaan Vimadalal, grandson of Firdosh & Maharukh Mehta (New Jersey) and late Ervad Dinyar & Kashmira Vimadalal (Mumbai), on December 25, 2019, in Mumbai, India.

Emma and Ethan Godiwalla, children of Delna and Boman Godiwalla, grandchildren of Soonu Jal Godiwalla (Carrollton, TX) and Diana and Ardeshtir Elavia (Irvine, CA) in Coppell, TX on December 28, 2019.

100th BIRTHDAY



Guess who has reached the 100 years milestone? Of course, none other than our **Keki Pirojshah Illava**, (of Mississauga, Ontario, Canada) lovingly known by all the friends as Keki Pappa (father of Aspi, father-in-law of Tanaz and grandfather of Sherezad and Nekzad), was born in

Mumbai (then Bombay) on June 7th 1920. He moved to London, UK permanently at the age of 45 working at the Heathrow Airport for over 37 years. After retiring in 2002, he moved to Canada to be with his son and family.

He is and will always will be a typical Parsi Bawaji – *khaavoo, piyo ne majah karo*. (eat, drink and be merry) He eats his favourite British breakfast of eggs and bacon every day and loves his Parsi *bhonu* of *marghi* (chicken) and *gosh* (meat). Come October and he will ask “Khariya with a question mark”. Try to give him some vegetable dish without meat or chicken and the first

thing he will ask is “*Aay su ghas pus? Bota kah che?*” (what is this grass, where is the meat?), His favorite drink is “Old Monk” rum and Champagne; favorite desert, mango icecream, and favorite pass time is reading all available newspapers (ask him anything on current affairs), solving crosswords, and watching wrestling on the TV with sparkles in his eyes. He loves English poems and couplets and when in mood, he will very sweetly tell some beautiful verses in your ears.

He is a perfect example of Strong Will Power - at the age of 98 in spite of having a very bad back he traveled the gruelling journey to Mumbai India to attend his grandson Nekzad's Martab. He refuses to use a walker and likes to be independent.

This young at heart and full of life Keki Pappa has seen everything, gone through 10 decades, 36,500 days and has a whole century worth of memories to share.

Let us all join together to wish our dearest keki pappa

A very happy 100th birthday

May every minute of your 100th birthday be filled with everlasting joy and pleasure

May Ahura Mazda shower you with choicest blessings for a healthy and happy life with your loving family and friends

Happy birthday Keki daddy / Pappa / uncle

You are a very special man who has always been thought of in the warmest way WE ALL LOVE YOU VERY MUCH

(Submitted by Meher Jal Panthaky, Toronto, ON, Canada)

DEATHS

Fali Captain, husband of Irene Captain, father of Purvez Captain in Houston, TX, on March 3, 2020. (Manashni)

Soli Faramroz Fanibanda, son of late Hirabai and Faramroz Fanibanda, husband of Bakhtawar, brother of late Eruch, Minoo, Nariman, Homi Dinshaw, Kersi, late Kety Nariman Elavia and late Jaloo Jal Bacha, brother-in-law of Aloo, Roshan, Goola and late Homai in Las Vegas, NV on March 6, 2020.

Tehmina Mistry Alphonse, wife of Dr. Gerard A. Alphonse, mother of Lylah (Michael Saunders) Navroze (Ashley Alphonse), Cyrus (Beth Humphries-Alphonse), sister of Nauzer H. Mistry, grandmother of Dylan, Eden, Cameron, Mason, Holden, Savannah, Athena, Gavin, Alanna, Orion, Sawyer and Rowan, in Philadelphia, PA, on March 10, 2020.

Irene Captain, wife of (late) Fali Captain, mother of Purvez Captain, in Houston, TX, on March 14, 2020. (Manashni)

Scylla Vatcha, wife of late Rusi Vatcha, mother of Sorab

Vatcha (Mountain View, CA), mother-in-law of Persis Vatcha, grandmother of Amy and Sam, aunt of Roshan Rivetna, in Mumbai, on March 17, 2020.

Ervad Sohrabji Mogal, father of Farhad and Mahrukh Mogal, grandfather of Parizad in Palos Hills, IL on March 24, 2020.

Mobed Manouchehr Shahzadi, husband of Katy Spenta, father of Neil Spenta, son of late Mobed Sohrab and late Golestan Shahzadi, brother of Mobed Fariborz and Mehrbanoo Shahzadi in Orange County, CA on March 26, 2020.

Fred Eulji Morris, 83, husband of Zahver Morris (Setna), father of Kurush (Lori from Jacksonville, FL) Morris, Murzban (Amy from Pittsburgh, PA) Morris, Bezan (Kimberly from Oklahoma City, OK) Morris, grandfather to Michelle, Brandon, Bridget, Ellie, Shayan, Devon, Bradley in Fort Worth, TX on April 1, 2020.

Sam Minocher Patel, husband of late Maryanne Patel, father of Scott (Wanetta) Patel, brother of Roy (Nergish) Patel and Zarin Patel, uncle of Naozad and Narius Patel, Natasha and Kime Mellise in Indiana, IN on April 2, 2020.

Viraf Darukhanawalla, 77, husband of Viloo Darukhanawalla, father of Mahazabeen (Ariz) Master, brother of Sam (Hilda) Darukhanawalla (Mumbai, India), Maharukh (Darius) Patel, grandfather of Nazneen, Kamron on April 3, 2020. (ZA-Chi)

Govhar Khodamorad Aidun-Mehrafshani, mother of Fariborz, Giti, Mehranguiz, grandmother of Pune, Shilla, Kambiz, Cyrus on April 3, 2020.

Homai Gazdar, mother of Adil (Prochi) Gazdar, grandmother of Rohaan, Cyrus in Mississauga, ONT on April 4, 2020.

Ervad Adi Meherji Ghadiali, brother to Goolcher Bastani, uncle of Dinyar Irani, Yasmin Tafti, Mona Antia on April 8, 2020. (ZSO)

Hooshang Behrooz, 92, uncle of Mitra (Chris), Hormoz (Cecile), Cyrus (Tom), Michelle (Todd), Teri (Bob), Dara (Mehrbanoo), Robin in New York City, NY on April 16, 2020.

Pesi Bavaadam, husband of Daulat Bavaadam, father of Armin (Jehangir), Hutokshi (Shawn), grandfather of Pervez (Jesal), Zareen and Shireen on April 20, 2020. (ZAGNY)

Peshotan "Pesho" Sohrab Kotval, 77, husband of Daulat Kotval, father of Xerxes Kotval, Anahaita Kotval (Zubeen Shroff), grandfather of Zal Kotval Shroff, Kaivan Kotval Shroff, Tinaz Kotval, Mehr Kotval on April 23, 2020. (ZAGNY)

Mehroo Chothia, wife of Rohinton Chothia, daughter of Dhun (Yasmin) Bhaya, mother of Firuza (Rob), Rayomand (Sandra), grandmother of Ethan, Lukas, Kalen, Aiden, Nathan, Jacob in Newmarket, ONT on April 27, 2020.

Freni Minocher Kharas, wife of late Minocher Kharas, mother

of Goher (Kharas) Mobed, late Meherjee Kharas, grandmother of Cyra, Darius, Natasha in Clewiston, FL on April 29, 2020.

Farhad Khurshed Minwalla, husband of late Sheila (Ayesha) and late Naseem Jamall, father of Sherizaan Minwalla and Alan Attoof, Omar, Ljiljana and Shama Minwalla, grandfather of Imaan Yasmine Minwalla, brother of Feramerz Minwalla, late Zarin Balsara, late Minoo Minwalla and late Jimmy Minwalla in Los Angeles, CA on May 5, 2020. (Karachi Obituary)

Alloo Jimi Pavri, wife of Jimi Pavri, mother of Cyrus (Yasmin) Pavri, Hilla Pavri, grandmother of Farhah, Porus in Mumbai, India on May 6, 2020. (ZAGNY)

Boman Behram Boatwalla, husband of Roshan Boatwalla, father of Vera and Dinar Boatwalla, brother of Roda Boatwalla and late Phiroz Boatwalla in Canada on May 7, 2020.

Cawas Jamshed Daruwalla, husband of Farida Daruwalla, father of Shiraz Billimoria (ZAPANJ) and Spitam Daruwalla, father-in-law of Cyrus Billimoria, grandfather of Alizeh, Priyana and Armaan Billimoria in Albuquerque, NM on May 13, 2020.

Pervaze Rabadi, husband of Roshan Rabadi, father of Neville (Vera) Rabadi, brother of Camal Fouzdar and late Feroze Rabadi, grandfather of Yazdan, Yasna, Delnaz in Toronto, ONT on May 15, 2020.

Hooman Fereidoon Kamyar, husband of Paridokht, father of Farzad (Manijeh), grandfather of Sam and Arya on May 15, 2020.

Ardeshtir Pourdehghan, husband of Mahrokh Pourdehghan, father of Mehran, Mehrbod, father-in-law of Azita, Armita, grandfather of Arshia, Shanaya, Armin, Abtin on May 16, 2020. (CZC-LA)

Tehmul Rusi Mistry, 60, husband of Dilmeher, in Gaithersburg, MD on May 17, 2020.

Phiruze Framroze Ogra, sister of Nusserwanji and Mazdiyar Ogra (Karachi, Pakistan) aunt of Rovenia (Ogra) Davar, CT, Soli Ogra (OH), Ferozshaw Ogra, Toronto, ONT on May 22, 2020. *Phiruze was one of the passengers on the ill-fated PIA flight from Lahore to Karachi.*

Darius Ferzandi (of Byculla Restaurant), father of Mahnaz (Yezdi) Turner (Montreal) and Jehanbux Ferzandi (Vancouver) in Mumbai on May 23, 2020.

Behnaz Marzban, wife of Shahriar, mother of Pirooz and Parinaz, grandmother of Meenu, Neema, Doreen on May 24, 2020.

Bijan Zare-Parsi, 80, husband of Katayoun Aidun, father of Kaykhosrow, Moojan, father-in-law of Arash Behziz, grandfather of Roya, Andysheh, brother of Pouran and Fariborz in Leesburg, VA on May 26, 2020.

Khurshid Rumwalla Hintz, 93, wife of late William Hintz, sister for Dhun Shroff, (New York), and Noshir Rumwalla, (England) in Vancouver, Washington State, on May 28, 2020.

Rustom Vania, husband of late Gulzarine Vania, father of Minoo, Sorab, Farhad, father-in-law of Marsha and Bekka, grandfather of Lola and Darius, brother of Luke, Hormuz, and Kamal Tengra in Florida on May 31, 2020.

Farangiss Zohrabian-Mohabat, mother of Cyrus, Seema, Sohail and Susan Mohabat, sister of Banoo Zohrabian-Kamran, Golrokh Zohrabian-Modegari, Mahin Zohrabian-Namiri, grandmother of Anahita, Armaan, Kamyaa, Kamal, in Potomac, Maryland, on May 19th 2020. (ZAMWI).

Arastoo Ghandeharizadeh, 86, husband of Mehrangiz Jamzadeh; father of Shahryar, Shahram, Koorosh, Kambiz; grandfather of Mitra, Aria, Shideh, August, Aria in California on May 30, 2020.

Cyrus Kharas, 69, in Karachi, June 5, 2020. **Thrity Kharas**, 66, in Karachi on June 18, 2020. Parents of Nadia (Jamshid) Mistry (Redlands, CA) and Nasha (Roy) Colabawala of UK; grandchildren Ushain, Arman and Maya. Cyrus was the brother of Yazdi Kharas, and Dhun Mehta.



Thrity was the sister of Nergesh Daruwalla. Cyrus and Thrity lived in Santa Clara, California. They were visiting Karachi (their original home) and were unable to return to the USA due to the pandemic. Cyrus succumbed to burns after an accident, and Thrity due to COVID-19.

Rostam Mandegarian 89, husband of Sharokhdokht Zereh-Poush, father of the late Bakhtawar Garshasbi, Mera Cavyan (Irani), Roshan Mondegarian, grandfather of Ashkan, Tina, Sharmeen, Danesh and Dilshad in Chicago, Illinois, on June 6, 2020

Iraj Jahanian, 83, son of Ardeshtir Jahanian and Sarvar Sarfeh-Jahanian, husband of late Homa Hormozdi, father of Mondana and granddaughter of Anaram, brother of Irandokht, Dariush, Parichehr, Fariborz in Springfield, Missouri, on June 7, 2020

Katy Shekhdar, wife of (late) Dadabhoy Shekhdar, mother of Kersasp Shekhdar and Vera (Shekhdar) Hankins (Dallas), in Karachi, on June 9, 2020..

Roshan Dinshaw Bharucha, 85, wife of late Dinshaw Bharucha, daughter of Goolcher and Manchershah Maneckji Bharucha, sister of Dolly (Phiroz) Dastoor; (Montreal) Bomi (Mumbai), Jimmy (Roshan) Bharucha, (Philadelphia /Florida) loving aunt of Farahad (Jean) Dastoor, (Maine) Ervad Zubin (Jasmine) Dastoor (Singapore); Natasha (Adel) Irani; Zena (Jhangir) Irani, Philadelphia; Neville (Jclyn) Bharucha, (Philadelphia), in Mumbai, on June 10, 2020.

Yasmin Bahman Dalal, sister of Rashna Daroga (Toronto) and Vera Dinshaw (Karachi) in Houston, on June 11, 2020.

Jamshed Jam, 87, husband of Parvin, father of Manochehr, Bahram, and Mandana, grandfather of Nadia, Tara, Roxana, Yasmin, Sam. Tina, Arya and Kourosh, in Toronto on June 20, 2020.

Katie N Kabraji, 90, wife of (late) Nadershaw Kabraji, mother of Kairas (Aban Marker) Kabraji, Zerophie (Zal) Noshirwani, Gulnar (Aspy) Bhathena, sister of (late) Ardeshtir Dalal, Phiroze Dalal (Los Angeles, CA) and Roshan Hormusji, in Karachi, on 24 June 2020.

In the Spring 2020 issue, p92, the name of Burjor Dastur of Bay Area, was inadvertently omitted from the obituary and death announcement of his father Furrokh Dastur. Fezana Journal regrets the error.

*To those who mourn, peace;
To those who despair, hope;
And to the broken-hearted,
consolation.*



OBITUARY: TEHMINA ALPHONSE JANUARY 16, 1947 - MARCH 10, 2020



Tehmina Mistry Alphonse -- known as "Tammie" to her friends and family -- died at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia on March 10, 2020. She was 73.

The daughter of Shri Homi Mistry and Smt. Roda Mistry -- a former Member of Parliament and Minister

of Women's Welfare and Tourism in India -- Tammie grew up steeped in academics and politics. She was born in Hyderabad, India, the same year India liberated itself from British rule. She went to Nazareth Convent school -- a boarding school in Ooti, Tamil Nadu -- when she was just 5, skipping three grades and graduating at 15. She earned her Bachelors at Nizam College in Hyderabad by 19 and, at 21, graduated with a Masters in International Relations from what was then The University of Bombay before moving to the U.S. to earn a second Masters degree from Ohio University. She didn't complete it; instead, she met Dr. Gerard Alphonse, an electrical engineer and physicist from Haiti, and married him in 1971 in an enormous party at the Indian Consulate in New York.

She taught cooking classes, had her own catering service, baked bread for several restaurants in and around her adopted hometown of Princeton, N.J., and owned and operated Curries & Spice, an Indian restaurant in Kingston, N.J., in the 1980s -- all while raising three children with her husband. She traveled to India by herself with three kids under the age of five, including multiple layovers in foreign countries with active toddlers, and lived to tell the tale. She named her German Shepherd "Mephistoph-

eles" when she was a teenager, loved to travel, told crazy stories, held grudges, fought her own demons and sometimes won.

After the restaurant closed in the late 1980s, she worked as a real estate agent, a bank teller, a homemaker, and a loving and supportive wife to a world-renown scientist. She wore caftans and big rings long after the 1970s were over, watched pretty much every daytime soap opera ever created and quite a few of the nighttime ones as well, read voraciously, rarely wore black, and did the New York Times crossword puzzle nearly every day, always in pen.

She was proud of her Parsi heritage and insisted that her children be taught the proper prayers and celebrate their Navjotes in India. She wore a sari to every single formal occasion and did not own any Western-style evening gowns, but had dozens of fancy evening bags and shared her own mother's love of jewelry and shoes. She spoke several Indian languages, dabbled in French, Spanish, and Italian, collected too much stuff, and loved her family, her kids and grandkids, more than anything else in this world.

She passed away on March 10 after battling several ailments, the last and worst of which was cancer. She is survived by her husband of nearly 50 years, Gerard Alphonse; her brother and sister-in-law, Nauzer Mistry and Kathleen Davey-Mistry; her children and children-in-law, Lylah Alphonse and Mike Saunders, Navroze Alphonse and Ashley Alphonse, and Cyrus Alphonse and Beth Humphries-Alphonse; and 12 grandchildren.

Services to be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation in her name to the American Cancer Society.

Lylah M. Alphonse, Tehmina's daughter, is a journalist and senior vice president at Laurel Strategies, is the Consultant Editor for FEZANA JOURNAL. Lylah M. Alphonse <http://www.LylahMAlphonse.com> and @Write-EditRepeat

Our condolences to her husband Gerald, her children and their families, Lylah Alphonse and Mike Saunders, Navroze Alphonse and Ashley Alphonse, and Cyrus Alphonse and Beth Humphries-Alphonse. Ed. Fezana Journal, Dolly Dastoor.

OBITUARY: SCYLLA R. VATCHA MAY 22, 1923 - MARCH 17, 2020



Scylla was born Scylla Jungalwalla in Maymyo, Burma on May 23, 1923. Her family moved to India during WW2. She married Rusi Vatcha in 1947. She died in Mumbai on March 17, 2020 at age 96.

It was 30 years ago in 1990 that Bachi and I were blessed to have met Scylla at a social function at the residence of the late Thrity and Homi J. H. Taleyarkhan

at Mumbai. It was the same year when the two of us had started to conceptualize the establishment of a Public Charity Trust to support poor Zoroastrians (mainly agrarians) residing in the villages of South Gujarat who lived in abject poverty. Our meeting with Scylla was a red-letter day in our lives and, by extension, to many other community members having diverse needs.

When the World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust became operational in 1991, we depended substantially on Scylla's largess, receiving appeals for assistance, carrying out due diligence and recommending amounts that would provide relief from medical or educational expenses, poverty, assistance to poor farmers, or critical humanitarian needs. Her responses were always with alacrity and generosity. Interacting and working closely with her was an education. It was through our regular meetings and exchange of ideas that we learned from her example that philanthropy was not all about money, but about feeling the pain of others and caring enough about their needs to help them.

Her generous and substantial support of the WZO Trusts included continuing support for various major projects:

- The Athornan Mandal - WZO Trust Funds Young Full Time Mobeds Scheme was founded with her donation of Rs.90,00,000 (Rupees ninety lakhs) in 1995-1996. Seventy-five Mobeds continue to receive support from the Fund.

- The WZO Trust Fund's 'Self-Employment Scheme'

was jointly conceptualised and annually funded by her Rs.100,00,000 (Rupees one crore) for the years 1995 through 1999 and were conditioned that 'interest free financial support' should be extended to Zoroastrians wishing to be gainfully self-employed and that their loan repayments would be reinvested in the Scheme. To date, 1,156 Zoroastrians from over 123 rural and urban locations have received the Fund's support and have successfully kick started their businesses. As of March 2019, Rs.500,00,000 have been recycled to Rs.208,611,543 and been instrumental in changing the lives of many.

- The WZO Trust Fund's Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy Senior Citizens Centre at Navsari was started in January 1998 because of her vision. All Centre expenses, including the purchase of property, construction, and furnishings were covered by her. The institution has evolved into a leading community centre where 55 mobile senior citizens reside, spending the evening of their lives in a vibrant atmosphere, free from stress,
- Many Navsari Zoroastrians donate their ancestral houses to The WZO Trust Funds, which are subsequently demolished.

- The Sanatorium at Sanjan was funded by a munificent donation from the WZO Trust Funds from Scylla of Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy Deed of Settlement Fund. The Sanatorium became operational in 2001 and has become a popular retreat for community members. It is a palatial bungalow with comfortable rooms, a huge front yard, and magnificent eco-friendly landscaping throughout. Scylla was a visionary who believed that philanthropy lies at the heart of human greatness. Her generosity was the outward expression of her inner attitude of compassion and loving kindness towards economically and physically challenged and elderly people.

Being meticulous and forward thinking, Scylla, though no longer physically in our midst, had planned that her philanthropic work should continue uninterrupted. Persis, her daughter-in-law, worked very closely with Scylla and has enabled the transition to be smooth, seamless, continuing, and effective.

Scylla will always be remembered by the thousands of those whose lives she touched so brilliantly. Heroes get remembered, but legends never die.

Dinshaw K. Tamboly, Scylla's friend and colleague, is the Chairman, World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust & WZO Trust Funds.

Our condolences to her son Sorab Vatcha of Mt. View, California, daughter-in law Persis and grand-children Amy and Sam. Ed. Fezana Journal, Dolly Dastoor,

MATRIMONIALS SUMMER 2020

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

Female, 41. Well respected Parsi family of Mumbai seeks a suitable match for their daughter, 1978 born (41). Blessed with good looks and an exceptionally wonderful nature, highly educated, financially secure, having independent residence, she lacks nothing but a soul mate to enjoy life with. Interested parties should send bio data with photograph to lylastodd@aol.com. [F20.1].

Male, 26. 6' tall, Bachelor's in Economics and Accounting from UCLA, admitted to MBA program at Duke University, currently working as a Financial Analyst at a tech company in San Francisco. Born and brought up in Southern California. Smart, caring, sensitive and fun-loving, enjoys working out at the gym, reading, music, hiking, traveling and sports. Interested in meeting a professionally educated girl with similar interests. Contact (951) 202-4868. [M20.5].

Male, 35. 5' 9", Master of Science in Computer Science, software manager in Texas. Enjoys reading non-fiction

about ancient history, civilizations, philosophy, travel, wild life and colonial era biographies. Also enjoy keeping up with world economics and follow the trend in technology and startups. Contact (682) 444-6951. [M20.10].

Female, 28. 5' 6", Chartered Accountant (CA) and LLB Law degree, serving as Investment Professional, in Mumbai, from well-placed, family. Pleasant personality, likes to travel and dine out, essentially a good human being who respects the outlook of others, grateful for what Almighty has provided and values Parsi heritage. Interested in a good-natured Parsi boy preferably from Mumbai. Contact mjpalia@yahoo.co.in, Mobile 99 6918 5410. [F20.13].



**A Perfect Match!
Woman with
hand-sanitizer,
looking for man
with toilet paper.**

Female, 30. 5' 5", Solicitor (Family Law) working in London, UK. Contact natashab777@aol.com. [F20.15].

Male, 60. MBA, working as university tennis coach and director of tennis at a country club. Residing in New Orleans with family home in New Jersey. Financially well-settled, athletic and fit. Enjoys music, sports, theater, traveling, reading. Contact bkanga@uno.edu. [M20.19].



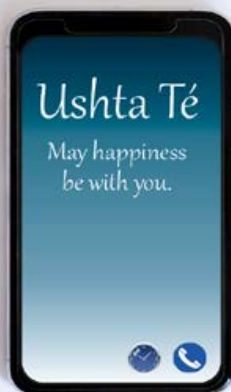
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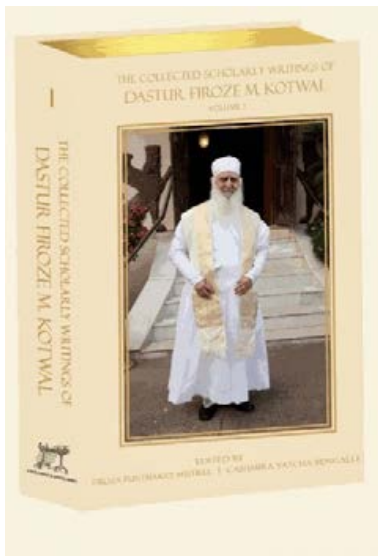
Between the Covers

Collected Works of Dastur Kotwal

The Collected Scholarly Works of Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal, Vol. 1

Firoza P. Mistree and Cashmira V. Bengalli, eds., (New Delhi and Mumbai: Parzor Foundation, 2018), 726 pp. including 87 color and 34 black and white photographs, 2 appendices, glossary, bibliography, and index. Indian Rs.3500 (US \$46). ISBN is 978-81-910957-3-9.

Review by Jamsheed K. Choksy, Distinguished Professor, Chair, Department of Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University.



Dastur Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal served as the high priest of the Wadia Atash Behram in Mumbai from 1977 to 1998. In 2019 he returned to that duty, once again providing appropriate guidance and clarifying insights to the athornan or priestly and the behdin or laity members of the

Parsi Zoroastrian community in India and around the globe. For many decades, Dastur Kotwal has served as a beacon for the religious-minded within the Parsi community, traveling to many countries to engage his co-religionists as a deeply-learned high magus. He is also an equally deeply-learned scholar of Zoroastrianism and of the Parsi community, having earned a doctorate (PhD) from the University of Bombay, St. Xavier's College, under the guidance of Dastur Dr. Hormazdiyar Mirza in 1966. He subsequently conducted postdoctoral studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, with Professor Mary Boyce. Over the decades that followed, Dr. Kotwal conducted

pioneering research on his own and in collaboration with fellow scholars of Zoroastrianism including Professor James W. Boyd at Colorado State University and with me at Indiana University. He was appointed a Fellow of the Center for World Religions at Harvard University as well.

I had the distinct honor of editing and contributing to a festschrift or collection of articles by twenty-five scholars in tribute of Kotwal as both Dastur and Dr., titled *Gifts to a Magus: Indo-Iranian Studies Honoring Firoze Kotwal*, co-edited with Jennifer Dubeansky (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2013). In the preface to that volume, page 11, I wrote:

"Treasure a wise man," recommended Adurbad i Maraspandan, the esteemed Zoroastrian high priest of the fourth century CE. That medieval magus' advice is easy to follow with Dastur Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal.

I first met Dastur Dr. Kotwal during the summer of 1984 when, as an undergraduate student on a research grant from Columbia University, I began studying the purity codes and purification rites of the Parsi community in Bombay (now Mumbai). Each morning after Firoze finished his prayers and ritual activities as dastur or high priest of the Wadia Atash Bahram, he would share with me the generations of profound knowledge about Zoroastrianism to which he was heir. Seated at a round table in the great entry hall of that fire temple, as breezes from the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean spread the scents of frankincense and sandalwood, the mysteries of the magi were gradually revealed in all splendor by a most distinguished descendant of a venerable and highly esteemed priestly lineage.

In the years since, Firoze honored me by co-authoring research articles as our scholarly collaboration deepened. A profound friendship has bound us as well, from India to the USA. So, it is with much delight that I edited this collection of articles to a mentor, scholar, and noble individual whose brilliance has reshaped the study of Zoroastrianism and whose leadership has guided a community for many decades.

Now I am delighted to see collected together and reprinted, in a splendid first volume, a portion of Dastur Dr. Kotwal's exceptionally insightful scholarly corpus; a second volume of collected publications is scheduled to be issued as well. This first volume, which I will review briefly here, is a hefty tome indeed. The Collected Scholarly Works of Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal, volume 1, is de facto divided into two parts. The first part is biographical, the second part reproduces his articles. The table of Contents is provided here so that readers of this journal can see the fullness of the intellectual feast that awaits them within the volume itself.

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The first part of volume 1 offers readers glimpses into the life, times, training, and career of an esteemed cleric. It is not merely edifying through detailing his education, dedication, triumphs; it is illuminating about an age so different from modern Navsari and Mumbai. Biographical and hagiographical in equal measure, the "Life and Times" sections recount a priestly genealogy—stretching back to the famous Neryosangh Dhaval in the twelfth century CE—that ritually connects those two urban centers of Parsi Zoroastrian life and faith. It is an account of parental loss, penury, and perseverance—which led to the Cama Athornan Institute at Andheri where Kotwal rose from student to house master and principal. His early adult years also included serving as head priest at the Tata Agiary in Bandra. Those sections recount his ascent to dasturship at the Wadia Atash Behram, his guidance of the ritual mobeds there, and conflicts

which arose from that high fire temple's trustees. Eventually vacating his exalted religious post, Kotwal would devote even more mental attention to much-needed scholarship, including finishing the editing and translating of *Herbedestan ud Nerangestan*, "Priestly and Ritual Codes," in four volumes published between 1992 and 2009. As a staunch defender of orthodoxy, the Dastur has experienced his share of controversy as more liberal winds have blown through Parsis in India and around the world. All the time, his wife Navaz has stood resolute by his side, often traveling with him especially to the United States as he distanced from priestly duties to conduct research with colleagues. Personally, I must add that both Firoze and Navaz have been the most splendid of guests—graciously sharing their knowledge, friendship, and warmth on several occasions with me.

The second part of volume 1 contains reprints of nineteen thoughtful articles dealing with Zoroastrian rituals, some solely authored by Dr. Kotwal, others co-authored with fellow scholars. These writings range from the Paragna which precedes the Yasna or main "Worship, Sacrifice" ritual and the Afrinagan or "Blessing" service to the Stum or Staomi in which departed souls are praised and the Nirangdin or consecration rite. His writings cover as well the history of initiation into the priesthood, the tending and transportation of holy fires, and the construction and dedication of dakhmas or funerary towers. Other articles that are reprinted discuss ritual terms, texts such as Visperad or "(Prayers to) All the (Spiritual) Chiefs," and the importance of prayer.

The Collected Scholarly Works of Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal, vol. 1, and each of its sequels, is worthy of a privileged place not just within academic and community libraries but in the homes of every Zoroastrian so that knowledge and insight of the religion and its communities can be derived from a sage with priestly and scholarly education rather than from lesser-learned, inaccurately-opinionated writers. To that goal, I urge the editors and publisher to place the electronic text of this materially-splendid and intellectually-magnificent volume on-line, sans any charge to readers, so the learned articles therein can be freely accessed around the world.*

Encounters of Yankees & Parsis

Between Boston and Bombay: Cultural and Commercial Encounters of Yankees and Parsis, 1771-1865.

By Jenny Rose. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pgs 238
ISBN 978-3-030-25204-5

Review by Jesse S. Palsetia, Professor, History, University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada

Between Boston and Bombay examines the commercial ties between American and Parsi traders and the resulting, broader cultural connections and understandings. The author notes, although British and Parsi commercial and cultural interactions are well documented, her book elucidates a largely unknown and scantily studied aspect of Parsi and American history: the ties between northeastern American traders and the Parsis of India. The book provides a captivating look into the two cultures' contacts, their respective perceptions, and community and national identities.

The chronologically organized book begins with the American translation of Zoroastrian texts in 1771 and the kindling of American interest in Zoroastrianism and the Parsis, which was mirrored by increasing Parsi interest in the wider world. The book culminates shortly after Lincoln's death in 1865. It provides thematic parallels, allusions, and constructions that interweave the histories and values of the two cultures. *Between Boston and Bombay* follows the Americans as they gain a sense of national identity following their independence from Britain, and the Parsis emergence as major traders under British colonial rule.

Chapter One posits that Parsi immigrants to India and Puritan settlers in New England had much in common, including founding legends, such as those of the Parsis of India as documented in "Qesse-ye Sanjan" (Story of Sanjan) and the early Americans in Of Plymouth Plantation. Rose notes their religious ethos and moral values became the foundation of their respective prosperity and historical renown. The chapter traces the Parsis' settlement in India and their early contact with Europeans; it also discusses the early engagement of Parsis with the newly founded America via trade with India.

Chapter Two notes the growing American awareness of the Parsis and Zoroastrianism from sources including the French translation and publication of Avestan, Middle Persian Zoroastrian texts by the French scholar A.H.

Anquetil-Duperron, and from independent scholarship by American philosophers such as Benjamin Franklin.

Over time, American librarians and antiquarians

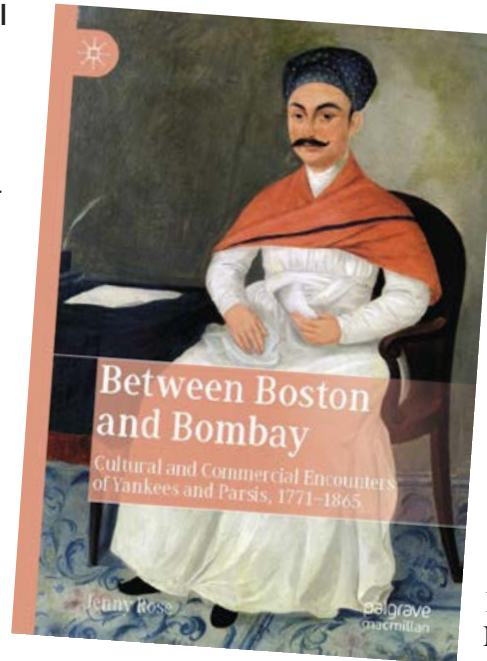
acquired translations and copies of Zoroastrian materials, libraries across eastern American circulated "Indological" and "Orientalist" works, and a magazine press popularized tales of the East.

This chapter further explores early American trade with the East, beginning in 1784, and how American traders, like Benjamin Joy and Elias H. Derby demonstrated the Americans ability destiny on the world

to shape their own stage. The chapter purposely meanders between noting American lives and careers and Parsi ones, as it proceeds to detail how early American traders established commercial ties to Parsis, including members of the Wadia family. For example, Nusserwanjee Maneckji Wadia was one of the first Parsis to be in touch with prominent New England merchants such as Elias Derby, Ichabod Nichols, Henry Elkins, and influential American officials. In 1795, Pestonji Bomanji Wadia is purported to be the first Parsi to advertise in the Bombay press the sell of goods in Bombay from American shippers. The Parsi role as intermediary between Americans, Indians, and British in Bombay forged an opening for American trade in India. Indeed, the book contends a network of Parsi and Indian contacts led to American goods being traded across western India.

Chapter Three examines the cultural connections between America and India and the role of the Parsis in this. A gift handkerchief from Nusserwanji Maneckji to Ichabod Nichols' son George demonstrates how commercial relations developed into personal bonds between merchants and led to the spread of goods and cultural knowledge. Personal gifts and portraits are part of the treasures of the East that the East India Maritime Society (EIMS) of Salem that Ichabod Nichols co-founded in 1799. Among the items are shawls and a portrait of Nusserwanji, including clothing belonging to him.

Chapter Four traces the arrival of American missionar-



ies in Bombay. It explores the writings of Nusserwanji Maneckji and his meetings with American traders in Bombay, like Captain John Johnson, who was the first American to describe Parsi hospitality. Moreover, we learn how Johnson and Nusserwanji discussed Zoroastrianism and Parsi traditions. The details of Zoroastrianism, as described by the Parsis to Johnson and other Americans, preceded the arrival of American missionaries in Bombay. American missionaries benefited from the revocation of the EIC charter in 1813, which prohibited foreign missionary presence in India. The chapter covers early American missionary efforts in India. China trade is discussed and includes the Parsi and American involvement in the opium trade. The chapter concludes by noting that HMS *Minden* was built at the Parsi-run Bombay Drydock. It played a role in the War of 1812 when, on September 13, 1813, Francis Scott Key, held prisoner on the *Minden*, wrote the poem "The Defence of Fort McHenry," which was later set to music as the US anthem "Star-Spangled Banner."

Chapter Five covers the parallel rise of the great Parsi merchant princes and the Boston Brahmins; it discusses the community influence Parsi traders gained as leaders of the community on the Parsi Panchayat (communal body) because of their wealth and contacts with influential traders and officials.

Chapter Six examines diverse subjects from the 1830s to the 1850s, such as the incorporation of Salem township in 1836, and its tribute to the East in its motto (*Divitis Indiae usque ad ultimum sinnum* [To the farthest port of the rich Indies]), to the first journey of the famous Wadia cousins, Hirjibhoy Merwanji and Jehangir Nowroji, and Ardashir Cursetji to Britain during 1838-1841. Post-1840 the Parsis were emerging as a highly educated and socially progressive community dedicated to safeguarding its orthodox faith.

The chapter notes how technological advancements and ties between Parsis and Americans were strengthened by the establishment of ice trade between Boston and Bombay by the Frederic Tudor of Boston and Parsis who subscribed to the construction of the first Ice House in Bombay in 1843 at Marine Street (presently, the K.R. Cama Institute).

Chapter Seven details the joining of Parsi hospitality and diplomacy by noting Dossabhoy Merwanji Wadia. As a testament to American trust in the Parsi relationship, in 1852 Dr. Edward Ely, U.S. Consul to Bombay, advised President Fillmore to appoint Dossabhoy Merwanjee as acting U.S. Consul. Parsis continued to arrive in America

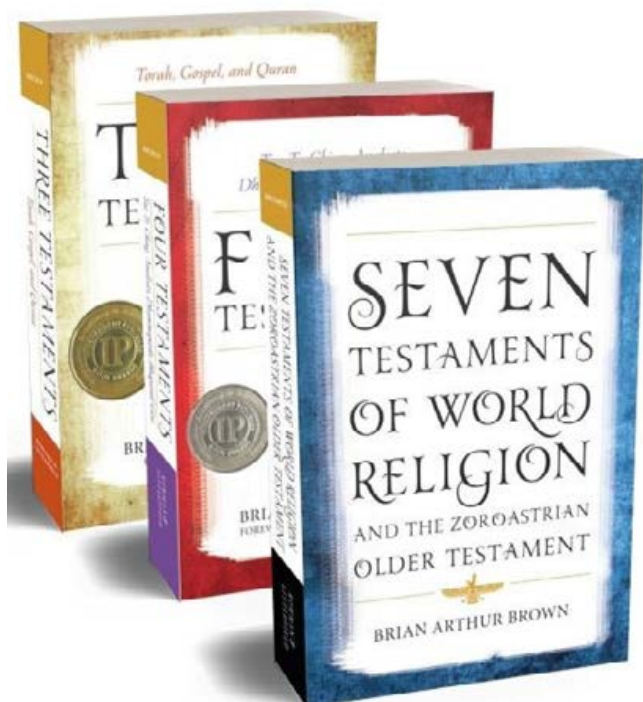
through the onset of the American Civil War. It notes Rustomji Hirjibhoy Wadia's stay in America and how the Wadia and other Parsis' trade was greatly affected by the War. The book ends with the death of Abraham Lincoln. The Parsi Dossabhoy Franji Muncherji Cama was in the United States and had heard Lincoln speak in 1862. Following Lincoln's death, Cama reminisced about his time in the United States and, in a letter of 23 July 1865, spoke of his amazement at the "energy, accomplishments and civilization of America," and his "warm interest in the welfare of the United States," a fitting tribute to the connections between Boston and Bombay.

Jenny Rose's book is a major academic contribution to Parsi history and provides a cornucopia of fascinating insights into East and West encounters. It brilliantly adds to the corpus of Parsi experiences and early contacts with America. Between Boston and Bombay is a trove of first-hand accounts, documentary sources never fully researched, and adds many colorful, interesting insights and vignettes into early American and Parsi interactions. The book is a major undertaking of primary source research. Rose is to be commended for her painstaking research, principally at the Peabody Essex Museum, on the Wadia letters. Where others have researched the Jejeebhoy papers, Naoroji and Mehta papers, and the Cornelia Sorabji papers, *Between Boston and Bombay* provides invaluable insights into various Wadia individuals.

The book is packed with details, and grouped together in at times disparate historical, religious, intellectual, social and cultural subheadings in each chapter, which at times overwhelms the reader with information and a twisting narrative. To take account of the detail, the author has chosen a chronological narrative when a chronological thematic narrative might better suffice. Parsi and American early encounters, economic ties, intellectual and religious openings, and technology, and diplomatic relations might better be better presented in thematic or topical chapters. This would also allow the author to further elucidate her subtle and clever theme of parallel histories and the mutuality of values and experiences that formed American-Parsi relations. The book is intended for both non-academic and academic readers interested in Parsi history and early America. The book largely focuses on Parsis and their exploits, hence the photo of Nusserwanji Maneckji Wadia on its cover, but its presentation tone, intention, and title appear to suggest the focus is a history of American contacts, knowledge, and identity; and the two concentrations as presently organized may confuse some readers as to the clear focus of the work. Albeit, *Between Boston and Bombay* is a major contribution to Parsi studies, American history, and global encounters.*

Seven Testaments

Full Scriptural Texts of Western Monotheism, Eastern Monism, Plus Commentary on The Dead Zee Scrolls



Seven Testaments Of World Religion And The Zoroastrian Older Testament

By Brian Arthur Brown, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers (Nov. 15 2019), 362 pages
ISBN-10: 1538127865
ISBN-13: 978-1538127865

Review by Dr. Neville Gustad Panthaki, Ph.D, who completed a Tri-Program Collaborative Ph.D. in Social Justice Education, Comparative International Development, and South Asian Studies. Neville also completed Ph.D.(ABD) work in History, earned his M.A, B.Ed., and B.A. The Asha Vahishta Initiative (AVI) was his attempt to promote the re-conceptualization of Zoroastrian identity and belonging in diaspora.

Works concerning Zoroastrianism generally stir Zoroastrian excitement. The subject of these works usually fall into two categories: what was, or what is. Therefore, Zoroastrian appreciation for these books arises from feelings of pride pertaining to: historical legacy, and non-Zoroastrian acknowledgment.

There are comparatively few works regarding the future of Zoroastrianism. I mean from a theological perspective, concerning relevant and vibrant faith of the individual within contemporary society. The Zoroastrian community continues to be satisfied with receiving narrative accounts about its past, rather than projecting new narratives about its future. In doing so, the Zoroastrian community remains a passive bystander as its present faith and fellowship is increasingly transformed into a pedantic academic battle over history. Without recourse, a stale and uninspiring proceduralism and legalism, will likely continue to identify the character of Zoroastrianism's future.

Brian Arthur Brown's *Seven Testaments of World Religion and the Zoroastrian Older Testament* (hereafter, "7+Z") gives Zoroastrians the opportunity to note how their histories may have influenced another seven global religious traditions and their creation/apocalyptic stories. Comparisons between Zoroastrianism and other traditions have previously been made, but not in quite the broad based and extensive manner of Brown. Some of Brown's connections between the legacy of Zoroastrianism within the other faith traditions, are debatable. Then there are unique speculations which Brown makes, such as a claim

"In *Seven Testaments of World Religions* Brian Arthur Brown and his 'sacred circle' have succeeded – with rigorous scholarship, tender devotion and divine insight– in presenting humanity's greatest treasures as now becoming a universal legacy." Rev. James T. Christie, Dean of Theology, University of Winnipeg and G20 Global Consultant in Multifaith Dialogue and Religious Liberty.

Jewish scholarship in the book contributes to our common understanding. Appreciation of an Islamic "final testament" is made possible, and a Christian "new evangelism" is aimed partly at themselves. Confucianists, Hindus, Buddhists, Taoists are affirmed as academic & spiritual partners.

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For more information please visit the author www.BrianArthurBrown.com

to have located Zarathustra's tomb. However, what is noteworthy about 7+Z is that it offers Zoroastrians the opportunity not only to believe 'we gave the world and were the first in such-and-such', but to also observe the potential breadth and depth of Zoroastrian history, traditions, scriptural interpretations, and most importantly capacity to remain vibrant, dynamic, and relevant.

7+Z (2020) is a follow up to *Three Testaments: Torah, Gospel, and Quran* (2012), and *Four Testaments: Tao Te Ching, Analects, Dhammapada, Bhagavad Gita* (2016). 7+Z contains sections from Brown's previous works (2012, 2016), linking those "Seven Testaments" (3 Western + 4 Eastern) with Zoroastrianism. 7+Z also includes a hypothesis about the location of Zarathustra's tomb.

Brown's aim for 7+Z is to reflect upon the "Axial Age", the term identifying 800 - 200 BCE as a period for the development of great intellectual and spiritual philosophies across Eurasia (the 3 Western + 4 Eastern Testament traditions). The concept of there being an Axial Age itself, not Brown's idea but that of Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), is problematic. This is because, Jaspers' initial observations about co-constructed religious ideas and syncretic evolution through cross-cultural conversations over time, morphed into racial/cultural supremacist assertions by those who sought to identify a 'single' source of inspiration. Undoubtedly, the identification of Aryan origins for Europeans, and the co-opting of Iran into "Western" history, took place at this time. Zoroastrian-ISM was also constructed alongside this project, by which I mean the advocacy (both Western academic, and Parsi) that Daena Mazdayasni fit into a systemic pattern where doctrine, practice, and belief, were determined in the mold of Western traditions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam): prophet-centered, revealed and immutable tradition by God, text-centered legalistic and procedural preoccupation.

In 7+Z, Brown posits that the Gathas and Zoroastrian philosophies, are prime instigators if not the origins for Axial Age developments among the other 7 (3 Western + 4 Eastern) traditions. Indeed, Brown also posits that one can discern the existence of the lost chapters of the Yasna (assumed to be and termed chapters 6-27), which he terms "the Dead Zee Scrolls", within the textual sources of the other 7 traditions. Brown seeks to illustrate the interplay of shared concepts, and therefore shared histories. The project of 7+Z, along with his previous works, is hence, to promote collaboration between faith communities in the spirit of the Axial Age.

Returning to my introductory thought regarding scholarship surrounding Zoroastrianism, I find Brown's work valuable insofar as its subtle undercurrent seems to urge Zoroastrians and other religious communities, to become

aware of how religion is a fluid and constant re-imagining of faith through the interrogation of identity and belonging. I do question some of Brown's statements surrounding causation (how and what happened, who/what influenced who/what). But the accuracy of his historicism matters less to me, because the conclusion remains that cross-cultural dialogue and intellectual syncretism between ethnocultural communities OCCURRED. Certainly, historic accuracy is important, but we have seemingly become obsessed and unidimensional in our approach to understanding and living a relevant contemporary faith. I would go so far as to say, that it seems at times as if history, has become the false idol of our worship. If Zoroastrianism is constructed and maintained solely based on, what we don't exactly know it was, then is it truly a living faith, or simply the battleground for academics and aspiring scholars?

What 7+Z does irrefutably, is illustrate that interfaith dialogue and collaborative thinking regarding ways of being and ways of knowing (religious formation), occurred...What is however true, and should be the Zoroastrian takeaway from 7+Z, is that interactions don't occur in a vacuum, and neither are they one sided.

What 7+Z does irrefutably, is illustrate that interfaith dialogue and collaborative thinking regarding ways of being and ways of knowing (religious formation), occurred. I therefore, hope, that the Zoroastrian takeaway from 7+Z is not arrogance, a feeling of validation that there are Zoroastrian origins for all other Eurasian faiths. I'm not quite certain about that, at least to the degree Brown claims. What is however true, and should be the Zoroastrian takeaway from 7+Z, is that interactions don't occur in a vacuum, and neither are they one sided. Meaning, that there was also acceptance of non-Iranian (as in ethnoculturally diverse) concepts, values, symbols, myths, meanings and philosophies, which regularly contributed to the formation (as in evolution and changing) of Zoroastrianism over time. If the Magi (wisdom keepers, officiants, teachers) and Sogdians (Central Asian Iranic peoples) served as transmitters of Persian/Zoroastrian culture, how can we disbelieve that there was also a reciprocal receiving of non-Iranic/non-Zoroastrian ideas? If Zoroastrianism and Iranic peoples were the conduit between East and West (along the silk road etc), then how can we deny that Iranians/Zoroastrians remained unchanged, rigidly dogmatic, in a self-contained cultural fortress unaffected by the world

around them?

Brown's interpretation of 'finding' that the "Dead Zee Scrolls" within the liturgical sources of the other 7 Testaments, likewise with his statements about the Magi, Sogdians, Zoroastrians, and Iranian peoples in general being a conduit of transmission, seems undeniable. Again, I resist the academic urge to critique issues of the extent of his claims. For a religious community, ours or any, what needs to be absorbed and embraced is the processes of how peoples, cultures, philosophies, ideas, are created. That there definitely were interactions of peoples/ideas that contributed to spiritual formation, is the main point which Brown makes, and that I endorse. Brown's locating of Zoroastrian precepts within other non-Zoroastrian scriptures, conversely must encourage us to locate the precepts of the other 7 Testaments within the Zoroastrian canon. As Brown notes, listening to and reading the wisdom literature of others, renders alternative or additional

perspective to one's own, concerning spiritual questions. This should not be feared, for in the process one is likely to discover hidden aspects within the boundaries of one's own faith.

Zoroastrian readers may conclude after reading 7+Z, that faith and fellowship cannot be exclusively sustained by history, but through a constant reaffirming of spiritual values. Daena Mazdayasni seems to me more in line with global indigenous traditions, "a wisdom of interdependence and a worship of reciprocity", maintained by active faith exercised via Vohu Manu in accordance with our comprehension of Asha which is under constant scrutiny. A non-Zoroastrian, Brown, is to be given credit for identifying

Zoroastrianism as such: collaborative, innovative, expansive, multidimensional. Something which many of our anjumans (organizations) and religious leaders fail to recognize.*

BOOK TRIVIA

The Story of *Vividha Vaani* and the Bubonic Plague in Bombay

The current COVID-19 pandemic has revived an interest in home cooked food, which recalls another epidemic over a hundred years ago and a seminal cookbook, *Vividha Vaani*. Meherbai Jamsetjee Wahadia wrote and self-published a Gujarati book of recipes, *Vividha Vaani*, subtitled *Pakwan Banavavnu Pustak* (An Assortment of Culinary Dishes) in 1894. Written in the Parsi-Gujrati, the book contained 1248 recipes. Since they are listed alphabetically and not by genre, you can have a curry recipe on one page followed by custard recipe. The book contains staples of Parsi cuisine like *akuri* and *paatiyo*, but there are also Bohri, Goan and Madras recipes.

Two years later, bubonic plague swept through Bombay. The Bombay Parsi Panchayat set aside funds for the Parsi Fever Hospital under the stewardship of Dr Kaikhusru N Bahadurji, a prominent doctor. Meherbai was one of the patients, and in spite of stellar care by Dr. Bahadurji, Dr Manek Turkhud (the first woman to obtain a medical degree in Bombay in 1892) and the future nationalist, Bhikai Cama, who volunteered her services as a nurse, Meherbai died.

As a tribute, Meherbai's mother Pirojabai revised the book to include over 1,500 recipes and the second edition was published in 1901. It was dedicated to Dr. Bahadurji. Pirojabai continued to expand the book, and the fourth and final edition was published in 1926. It was over 1,500 pages long and listed 2,180 recipes. "A Gujarati cookbook thus came to symbolise love and gratitude during the bubonic plague which raged for over a decade in Mumbai from 1896," writes Murali Ranganathan.

(From "How a Gujarati cookbook came to symbolise love and gratitude during the bubonic plague in Bombay" by Murali Ranganathan, June 13, 2020. Scroll.in)



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www.fezana.org

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Vice-President: Ervad Kayomarz Yezdi
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 Land TX. 77438 Tel: 1 (832) 802-3036
kaysid@hotmail.com

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treasurer@fezana.org

Secretary: Percy Master
 11414 English Rose Trl, Missouri City,
 TX 77459. Tel: 281-778-0506
PercyMMaster@gmail.com

Asst. Secretary: Xerxes Commissariat,
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 Tel 949-278-2344
Xc1207@hotmail.com

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zaacalgary@gmail.com
<http://www.zaab.ca>
 ZAA Rep Pervin Daruwalla
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Zoroastrian Society of British
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 BC V5B 2R5, Tel: 604-420-3500,
 President : Dineyar Buhariwala
dineyar@gmail.com

Ontario Zoroastrian Community
Foundation (OZCF): 1187
 Burnhamthorpe Road, East, Oakville, ON
 L6H 7B3, President Neville Patrawqalla
president@ozcf.com

Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO):
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 Mashya Amroliwalla president@zso.org
[Tel 416-302-4101](tel:416-302-4101)

Zoroastrian Association of Quebec
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 H9W 6G7 514-505-3087
z_creation@hotmail.com
 Rep Farhad Fereydoonad
farhad.fereydoonad@hotmail.com

California Zoroastrian Center (CZC):
 8952 Hazard Avenue, Westminster, CA
 92683, Tel: 714-893-4737 info@czc.org

President: Fereshteh Yazdani Khatibi;
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 Rep Ali Makki doctormakki@gmail.com

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bvhrm.santake@verizon.net tel 714-963-
 1301

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 CA 95136, Tel 408-264-4395
president@zanc.org

Zoroastrian Association of California
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committee@zacra.org
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Persian Zoroastrian Organization
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 8969, President Saman Niknam
sniknam@gmail.com tel707-439-3849

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dariuscaptain@gmail.com ; 916-791-
 1249)

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 Verahrami Tel 301-355-8460
sverahrami@yahoo.com

Zoroastrian Association of Florida
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jmdubash@hotmail.com;
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bfdesai@aol.com www.zakoi.org

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 Sherman Street, Belmont, MA 02478
 Tel: 978-857-5946, zubin@talavia.net

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York City Area) (IZA): 106 Pomona
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 2104, President :Shirin Khosravi, Tel:
 212-757-1679,
sherrykiamane@hotmail.com

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fcama101@gmail.com
 Rep Sarosh Sepai, Tel 724-234-2228

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president.zant@gmail.com

Zoroastrian Association of Houston
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 Dungor nozerd@hotmail.com I 832-758-
 8331

Zoroastrian Society of Washington
State (ZSWS): www.zsws.org
 President: Dariush Shahgoshtasbi
D_shahgoshtasbi@yahoo.com
 Fezana rep Mahrugh Motafram
mahrughm83@gmail.com

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 Bhatena tel 902-476-0495
bhatena@gmail.com

Zoroastrians of London Ontario
 Fezana rep Zahin Khatow, 788 Oak
 Crossing Road, London, ON N6H 5V9
 Tel 226-927-5144
zahinkhatow@gmail.com

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 Chair: Hoshang Khambatta, Tel: 858-
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Cleveland Zoroastrian Community:
 Chair: Kamal Mehta, Tel: 440-944-1181,
knmkersi@aol.com

Zoroastrian Contact in Austin Texas:
 Ketty & Aspi Wadia, Tel: 512-263-3131,
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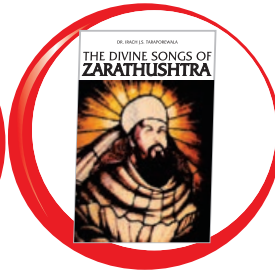


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