

# JOURNAL

Dae-Behman-Spendarmad 1389 AY (Fasli) • Amordad-Shehrever-Meher 1390 AY (Shenshai) • Shehrever-Meher-Avan 1390 AY (Kadimi)



**How Zarathustis  
Contribute to the  
Food and Beverage  
Sector**



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



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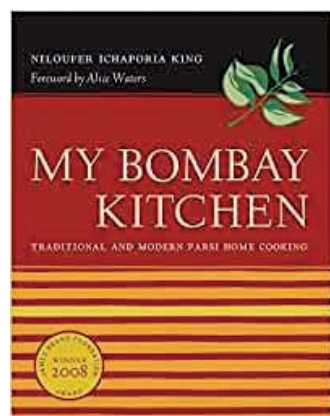
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**SUMMER 2021 Guest Editor Mehrborzin and Viraf Soroushian**  
**Persecution and Discrimination of Zoroastrians in Persia/Iran over the past centuries**

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Dae -Behman - Spendarmad 1389- AY (Fasli)  
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## SPRING 2021

## ZARATHUSHTRA'S GATHAS IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD. GUEST EDITORS KEKI DADACHANJI & JAMSHID GOSHTASBI

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**By** the time you read this issue we would have completed almost 12 months of the deadly virus ravaging the world, 12 months of social distancing which became for some a recipe for loneliness, anxiety, depression, and economic hardship. But people, young and old rose to the occasion by reaching out and helping neighbours and community members by running food kitchens and distributing food packages. Most complied with the guidelines from the health authorities, but some openly defied them. Hopefully we are now seeing a light, however faint, at the end of the Covid tunnel. Vaccines are now available and hopefully people will avail of these opportunities.

Through all this, our North American Zarthushti community has managed to hold together, support each other, and keep in touch, through different internet platforms, the FEZANA talks, the successful ZAGNY fund-raising event, jashans and boi ceremonies in different parts of the worlds and we continue to publish the FEZANA Journal. To give you relief from all the heavy duty issues of the Summer and Fall, the Winter issue, is a light issue visually attractive to satisfy your taste buds. It is very artistically curated by Farishta Dinshaw on the theme of ***Zoroastrians in the Food and Beverage*** sector. It will be heartening to read of the achievements of so many young entrepreneurs in such diverse fields all over the world. And we have a young Zarthushti lady, P.T. Bhandara, who is doing ground-breaking work in the field of cultivating meat which is identical to the meat we buy in stores except it is produced in a way that is better for people, animals and the world. We even have a sommelier in the prestigious trendy rotating hotel at CN tower in Toronto, who received the Top 30 under 30 award

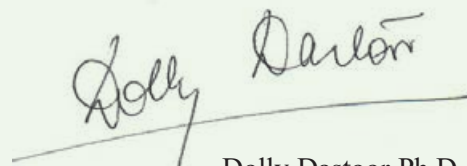
This issue also highlights outstanding Zarthushtis: Zubin Sethna was invited to join the World Economic Forum, Zara Patel pioneered ground breaking research for olfactory deficits, Khushroo Shroff, leadership on R & D research team of PFIZER who has brought us the COVID vaccine, Truzaar Dordi a young Canadian, 30 under 30 sustainability leader and Firdaus Dordi as the California Superior Court judge for the county of Los



Angeles.

The North American Mobeds Council has established the Institute of Religious studies to train mobeds and to impart religious knowledge through monthly lectures on Zoom starting in December. Outstanding mobed awards were given to Ervads Cawas Desai; Gustad Panthaki, Adi Unwala, all well deserved.

Big events to look forward to as we move ahead to 2021 and beyond. Preparations are progressing for the World Congress in 2022 in New York and the 8<sup>th</sup> World Youth Congress in London, England in 2023 with hopefully the pandemic behind us. I thank all who contributed to the different issues of the 2020 journals and I wish you all a very safe and healthy holiday season and a year ahead with an ardent wish that we all resume our normal everyday life.



Dolly Dastoor Ph.D

**CORRECTION** On page 101 FJ Vol 34, No 3 the name of the author of the obituary should be Dario Dhabhar, the error in spelling is regretted

## Greetings

As 2020 draws to an end, we will all look back at this milestone year for the rest of our lives. With the availability of vaccines to fight COVID-19, the world looks to come back to a new normal in 2021. The last quarter of this year was a busy one for FEZANA and its member associations in North America. The FEZANA Scholarship cycle ended and dozens of students in North America were the proud recipients of various FEZANA scholarships in a wide ranging field of studies. It is time to revamp the FEZANA Scholarship mechanism and I am happy to announce a taskforce that shall be headed by Dolly Dastoor and Dinsha Mistree. They along with a team will study the entire process of scholarships, from endowments, to applications, judging, awarding and sustained follow up in the years to come. The taskforce will work towards putting the new process in place for the 2021 cycle.



FEZANA continues to pursue its long cherished dream of a Professorship in Zoroastrian Studies at the University of Toronto. We are at about 80% of our fundraising target, and our hope is that the largesse and philanthropy of Zarathushtis in North America will get us to the finish line by the deadline of April 30, 2021.

I would also like to thank the hundreds of community members who have stepped up to the plate to donate to medical appeals and welfare and critical assistance causes right through 2020, especially when the pandemic was wreaking havoc all over the world.

The formation of the North American Institute of Zoroastrian Studies under the aegis of the North American Mobed Council is a celebratory milestone. FEZANA congratulates everyone who has been involved in this, and we look forward to our continued collaboration with our Mobeds; the keepers of our faith here in North America and all over the world.

This FEZANA issue is a celebration of food and everything that surrounds it. I am a firm believer that good food is the catalyst to good times....be it with family or friends and hence it plays such an important part of our collective memory. I am sure you will find this themed issue a worthy keepsake. As you try new recipes or get inspired to recreate old forgotten ones; make the time to share them with family and friends, especially our non-Zarathushti friends. Food helps explain culture and by association religion like nothing else.

May the community bloom and flourish in 2021, in a post-pandemic world. Let us keep the lessons we learnt from the months of lock down and find new ways of doing things in the new year.

From my family to yours; I wish you all a Happy and Healthy 2021.

Arzan Sam Wadia,  
President





## Committee Reports

### AN APPEAL FROM THE FEZANA UNITY AND WELFARE COMMITTEE

**Our** Zarathushti religion is a religion of eternal optimism. We know that the sun will rise after the dark night. We know that truth and righteousness will eventually prevail. We believe in Hope instead of Fear. So, we know that the challenging times we are going through will turn around soon.

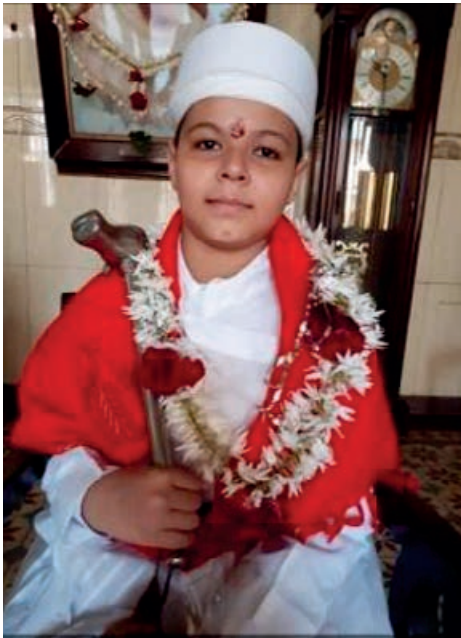
We are aware that we are a minuscule minority in the population of the world and so every life is even more important for us.

Among our small community, we have a very small group who serves us for our priestly needs. We need to treasure them and do whatever possible to enhance their safety and well-being. They have kept our religion alive through their dedication and service, and we as a community owe it to them to maintain and enhance

their safety, good health and livelihood.



*Our Mobeds performing a jashaan in Chicago*



*Ervad Zahaan Turel*

Recently we've had the unfortunate incident of a 14-year-old priest, Ervad Zahaan Turel, whose *jamo* caught fire whilst he was giving *boi*. Sadly, he has suffered over 40 percent burns on his young frame. In March, there was another incident of a 71-year old priest, Mobed Nozer Vajifdar who lost his life due to extensive burns. This cannot just be accepted as a professional hazard.

As a community we need to incorporate fire safety training along with their routine priestly training, to bring awareness on how to respond and take precautions to minimize the damage. We need to promote research in making fabrics that are fire-resistant and practical to wear for daily use in different climates. We need to use wood that does not splinter and throw out sparks that are dangerous; have fire-retardant carpet and blankets in close proximity so that priests and laity are trained to use in case of a fire emergency.

We have enough expertise in our community, with specialists in textiles and safety who can get together with some *Mobeds* to come up with a training program which could be part of becoming a *Navar*, *Martab* or *Mobediar*. Helping the person recover physically, mentally and financially is important. But prevention is better than cure and we

need to have a group that can study and come up with before and after strategies to take care of this challenge.

We cannot afford to lose a single person anymore! Let us take this challenge up actively to eradicate this problem. We have the capacity to do it. Do we have the will to do it?

We recently shared an appeal for burn victim Ervad Zahaan Turel. Let us help him in his long recovery with your donations. You can donate online on [FEZANA's website](http://FEZANA's website) or you can send a check to Rooky Fitter, FEZANA Treasurer, PO BOX 266, SUNSET BEACH, CA 90742. A tax receipt will be issued from the US on behalf of FEZANA. Note, if the need is met and funds are left over, they will be used for other similar welfare needs.

**UPDATE :** *Ervad Zahan has been discharged and now starts the rehabilitation process where the donated funds will be used. The family is most grateful for the timely help and prayers from FEZANA*

*The FEZANA Unity and Welfare Committee:*  
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## RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION COMMITTEE FEZANA

*Dinyar Patel & Kersi Shroff, Co-Chairs,  
FEZANA, Research and Preservation Committee*

### ABSTRACT OF THE REPORT PRESENTED AT FEZANA AGM 2020

#### RESTORATION OF AN OLD AVESTAN MANUSCRIPT

During 2019, the committee allocated funds from its budget to support manuscript preservation projects for three parties:

- Alberto Cantera, professor and director, Institut für Iranistik, Freie Universität Berlin, for a color publication of an Avestan manuscript.
- Almut Hintze, Zarthoshty Brothers Professor of Zoroastrianism, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, for the preservation of a manuscript from Dasturji JamaspAsa's collection
- Aban Rustomji, chair, FIRES, for the preservation or digitization of a manuscript in FIRES' collection.

#### FEZANA COLLABORATES WITH SOAS

A number of centuries-old Avestan paper manuscripts are in greatly deteriorating conditions, requiring expert and costly efforts to conserve them for research and to keep them available for the benefit of future generations of Zoroastrians. In 2019, FEZANA made a grant of \$ 800 for the restoration of a manuscript to Dr. Almut Hinze, Professor, School of Oriental and African Studies (London), in the Shapoorji Pallonji Institute of Zoroastrian Studies (SPIZS). Dr. Hinze selected ms. J6, of the Yasna Sada belonging to the family collection of Dasturji Jamasp Asa, which bears the stamp of "Jamaspji Minocherji Dastur". J6 is one of the older manuscripts of the Yasna from the 17th century and was selected on account of its "terrible condition" and as it was "not safe to use".

Manuscripts that contain only Avestan text, are called sâda "pure" (Encyclopedia Iranica). Other manuscripts also contain a Pahlavi or Sanskrit translation. The manuscripts are Iranian or Indian in origin. The manuscript J6 has now been restored and photographed. And the next step, "is to prepare a facsimile edition of the manuscript so that the images are made available to the wider public." The donation and support of FEZANA to Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, was acknowledged by prof Almut Hinze

In notifying FEZANA of the completion of the conservation, Dr. Hintze wrote: "I am delighted to report that thanks to your kind donation and the support of the Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, the manuscript J6 has now been restored and photographed." The next step, "is to prepare a facsimile edition of the manuscript so that the images are made available to the wider public."

In 2018, FEZANA had collected funds from several individuals to support the work carried out by the team of archaeologists, headed by Dr. Andrey Omelchenko, from the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia.

In August 2019, Kersi Shroff made a personal visit to Paikend, Uzbekistan, and volunteered at an archaeological site of a Sasanian fire temple and was able to note the additional excavation work resulting from the donation. Dr. Omelchenko conveyed his gratitude to FEZANA and expressed hopes of achieving the designation of Paikend as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. FEZANA's donation has been acknowledged in the expedition's annual report.



## UN-NGO COMMITTEE

### Amplifying Women's Voices at CSW 65

Dec. 7, 2020 New York, NY Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) will be participating at the 65th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) conference to be held in March 2021 hosted by the United Nations Headquarters in New York, USA. This year's theme will encompass the overarching theme of women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development with a focus on women's full and effective participation in public life, the elimination of violence, and the path towards gender equality. The team representing FEZANA is comprised of a diverse group of individuals from USA, Canada, and England.



Adina Mistry (New York, USA) is an undergraduate student at Cornell University, majoring in Biological Sciences with a concentration in Neurobiology and Behavior. She serves on the Executive Board for Cornell University's Emergency Medical Services and is a COVID Ambassador on campus. She is an active member of the Zoroastrian

Association of Greater New York and has served as a delegate for FEZANA's UN NGO committee since 2015.



Ana Verahrami (Colorado, USA) earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Cornell University in 2017 and is now completing her Masters in Ecology at Colorado State University with a focus in conservation biology. She is the Co-Chair of the FEZANA Zarathushti Youth Without Borders

Committee, a Zoroastrian Return to Roots Fellow and has served as a delegate for the FEZANA UN NGO committee since 2017.



Anisa Ostad (Northern Virginia, USA) is an undergraduate student at George Mason University where she is majoring in Legal Studies and serving as the institution's Student Government Secretary of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, among her involvement in other organizations on campus. She is keen on continuing to support

people of all backgrounds and their goals. She is also involved in her Zoroastrian community, having served as a chair of the Z Games Committee.

Dr. Ayesha Rabadi-Raol (Ed.D) (Toronto, Canada) is an experienced early childhood educator and teacher educator.



She has 18+ years of teaching experience in Mumbai, New York, and Toronto. She is developing DiversiThink: An online platform for early childhood teachers and young children to engage in conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion. Ayesha has

earned many prestigious scholarships and fellowships and is grateful to her Zoroastrian community for the support towards her higher education.



Sheherazad Kapadia (London, England) is training towards becoming an Occupational Therapist, and her academic research focuses on health equity. Currently, Sheherazad serves as the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) Young

Zoroastrian President and she works alongside national interfaith organizations to improve the dialogue on social justice within faith and belief institutions.



Tenaz Sunavala (Texas, USA) was the owner of a successful business, later went the corporate route, and is currently an author. Tenaz was a presenter at the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce - Houston Chapter for Houston Women Entrepreneurs.

She currently serves as a community volunteer for NGO- DAYA- Houston as an advocate for women's empowerment. Tenaz's book – discussing how to balance your physical and spiritual realities and empowering yourself from within is the key to leading a life of contentment – is set to be released early 2021!





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



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

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## FEZANA COMMITTEE CHAIRS 2020-2022

### Zoroastrian Youth without borders



Ana Verahrami earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Cornell University in 2017 and is now completing her Masters in Ecology at Colorado State University with a focus in conservation biology. 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. She is the Co-Chair of the FEZANA Zoroastrian Youth Without Borders Committee, a Zoroastrian Return to Roots Fellow, and has served as a delegate for the FEZANA UN NGO committee since 2017.

### UNITY AND WELFARE COMMITTEE

Sanaya Master is an Internal Communications Specialist originally from New Zealand, now living in Vancouver, Canada. She is part of

the Program Committee for the 2022 World Zoroastrian Congress, in New York. Sanaya organized the first World Zoroastrian Youth Leaders Forum at the ASHA Centre in the UK in March 2018. She has been a speaker at global and local Zoroastrian events including the 7th



World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in LA and the Jamshed K Pavri Seminar in Vancouver.

In August 2019, Sanaya attended the 68th UN Civil Society Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah and compiled the Rapporteurs Report on behalf of FEZANA, was also a Panelist and Moderator at the 64th UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) Conference in March 2020. Due to the pandemic, the presentation was recorded and shared online. As the newest Co-Chair of the Unity and Welfare Committee, Sanaya looks forward to reaching out to those in need and doing her bit to contribute towards the welfare of the community.

### ZOROASTRIAN YOUTH OF NORTH AMERICA (ZYNA)



Parshan Khosravi is the chair of ZYNA and the immediate past Chair of the 7th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress. He is a double alum of the University of California, having received his undergraduate degree from UC Irvine and his Master's Degree in Public Policy from UCLA. His policy focus areas include voting rights, higher education, and immigration. In his professional life, Parshan serves as the Government Relations Director for the University of California Student Association, where he leads the organization's state and national advocacy efforts in Sacramento and Washington DC. Parshan believes that one of the key elements to the preservation of the Zoroastrian faith and way of life is by establishing an active and unified presence of Zoroastrians in the sociopolitical global landscape, and he has set it his mission to create and preserve a voice for Zoroastrians and especially Zarthushti youth across the nation and abroad."

## ADAR POONAWALLA THE VACCINE KING OF INDIA NAMED WITH SIX OTHERS “ASIANS OF THE YEAR”



*Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits Adar Poonawalla and family*

Adar Poonawalla, the CEO of the world's largest vaccine manufacturer - Serum Institute of India (SII) has been named as one among six people cited as “*Asians of the Year*” by Singapore's leading daily, The Straits Times, for their work in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to The Straits Times, these six people have spent 2020 tirelessly seeking a way out of the greatest crisis of this era. Collectively referred to as “the virus busters”, they are heroes of a kind, having devoted themselves to the pressing cause of resolving the coronavirus pandemic, each in their own capacity, the daily said.

Pune-based SII has collaborated with the University of Oxford and the British-Swedish pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca for making the COVID-19 vaccine, ‘Covidshield’, and is conducting trials in India. Serum Institute is manufacturing 50-60 million doses per month but after January it will go up to 100 million doses.

Poonawalla poured \$300 million of his own money into the bid to prepare the vaccines fast — enduring criticism and skepticism, even from within his own family. The Serum Institute also received \$150 million US from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation [through a collaboration](#) with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to boost manufacturing capacity for up to 200 million doses to improve global access to the vaccine.

The company has decided it will sell half of all the doses it produces to lower- and middle-income countries for only \$3 a dose, with the other half reserved for India, which Poonawalla has promised will get priority.

PM Narendra Modi visited the SII spending over an hour interacting with top scientists.





## Gratitude Initiative in Arizona

By Gulnar Bhagwagar

Never underestimate the power of a sincere thank you. In these trying times, we have so many people to thank; all the essential workers that are risking their own lives to help us stay safe and live our lives as normally as possible- the workers in healthcare, delivery, restaurant, grocery, sanitation and the list goes on and on.

The Zoroastrian Association of Arizona (ZAAZ) thought it would be a great time to spread positivity and smiles by conducting a gratitude initiative to thank the COVID heroes in our community. We reached out to our members and asked them to create handmade cards, with words from the heart, that could be distributed to people that we all wish to thank. As a community that is known for its large heart, we were not disappointed. The response was totally unexpected: our members not only wanted to make the cards, but also contributed cash towards buying treats to be delivered with the cards. The ZAAZ Committee collected over 200 handmade cards and \$2,500.00. The idea was to touch as many of our frontline workers as we could. Nothing extravagant or fancy- just heartfelt gratitude.

For the first phase of this drive we identified units in three local hospitals where we delivered meals and the thank you cards. We also delivered meals and cards to three local fire stations. We supported and partnered with local family-owned businesses to order and deliver the meals. The feedback we received was absolutely remarkable. Nurses, clinical technicians, janitorial staff, firefighters, all were personally touched by the cards with the messages of thanks, hand written by our members ranging in age from 5 to 85 years old! We were told that it brought a smile to their faces, they pinned the cards to their workstations to help them get through tough days. They were truly appreciative and so happy. One of the hospital supervisors emailed us saying: *"Our staff enjoyed the delicious lunch and also really loved the hand written cards. Those cards had me choke up, so nice and caring -thank-you!"*

## NAMC Institute of Zoroastrian Studies

The North American Institute of Zoroastrian Studies is establishing a virtual learning center, and NAMC vice president Ervad Tehemton Mirza has been tasked to set up this organization, create a curriculum and manage its operations. Trained at the M. F. Cama Athornan Institute in Bombay and ordained as a navar and maratab at the Iranshah, Ervad Mirza is a certified public accountant in Ontario. He has been volunteering religious and spiritual services in South Western Ontario and Michigan, including the training of mobedyars, both males and females.

As an educational arm of NAMC, the Institute will have two tracks: "To train and ordain mobeds to serve the North American community; and to teach Zoroastrianism at an academic level. This is considered an important milestone for Zoroastrians in North America, marking our coming of age and taking our rightful place as an established religion, among others, in North America."

Funds for the Institute will be raised and administered



by NAMC which is a registered charity in Canada and USA. A capital fund-raising committee headed by NAMC president Ervad Arda-e-viraf Minocherhomjee is working hard to raise funds for the Institute noted Ervad Mirza.

The idea to construct an athornan institute to serve the North American Community was first conceived



in 1981. As more dar-e-mehers were established in North America a need was felt for second generation, locally trained and initiated mobeds to service these religious centers. This project got a boost at the 2018 annual general meeting (AGM) of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) when then president Homi Gandhi, Ervad Minocherhomjee and Mobed Zarir Bhandara requested Rohinton Rivetna to develop a charter for the proposed institute with close ties between NAMC and FEZANA. Work on developing a charter started in 2020 when Ervad Minocherhomjee pursued it relentlessly and the NAMC resolved to take the project under its wing at the AGM in September 2020. An advisory board consisting of senior mobeds, academics and respected community members will manage the affairs of the Institute.

In keeping with its commitment to provide religious guidance to the community and train future mobeds, currently 15 young priests are trained by the NAMC under its Young Mobeds Training Program, three youngsters from North America are studying the Avesta language, and two candidates are under training for their initiation as mobeds in North America.

The Institute is developing a training course for mobeds leading to their initiation and training them for inner and outer liturgical Zoroastrian ceremonies in the North American setting.

With the Institute providing a cadre of well-trained

mobeds to serve the religious and ministerial needs of our communities, it is envisioned that in time, several North American Zoroastrian associations will engage the services of full-time professional mobeds.

In conjunction with a group of Zoroastrians from Chicago, the Institute has initiated a discourse with a Catholic Theological Seminary to deliver a credit course on Zoroastrianism in the summer of 2021. There are plans to reach out to other seminaries and universities to provide similar educational courses on Zoroastrianism to academics and to members of all faiths. Meanwhile the Institute is crafting curriculums for certificate courses on various Zoroastrian topics.

**PUBLIC LECTURE SERIES** The Institute has initiated monthly virtual lecture series (on Zoom), presented by learned senior mobeds, on various Zoroastrian topics for the general public. The first one started on Sunday, December 20<sup>th</sup>. at 2 PM EST

The lecture series with the short Bios of the presenter and a short summary of the lecture can be found by clicking the following website link. Please visit <http://namcmobeds.org/wp-content/uploads/NAMC-Institute-Lecture-Series.pdf> for more information.

*The North American Mobeds Council (NAMC) is a consortium of Mobeds of North America dedicated to service the Religious and Spiritual needs of the North American Zoroastrian Community.*

## NAMC DISTINGUISHED SCHOLARS FOR 2019

### ERVAD ADI UNWALLA

Ervad Adi Unwalla received his priestly education in the Dadar Athornan Institute and the Cama Athornan Institute and was initiated as a Navar and Maratab in Udvada Iranshah Atash Behram. After undergoing a SAMEL Ceremony, which includes a prayer recital test conducted by the Udvada Anjuman Priests and Dasturs, Adi underwent another Bareshnum and performed 4 days of high liturgical ceremonies to complete the requisites for performing the Boi and other inner liturgical ceremonies in the Atash Behram.

Adi graduated as a Civil Engineer from B. M. S. Engineering Collage in Bangalore, India and served as a







priest in the Agiyari over the weekends while studying. In 1969 he migrated to the US after having worked in Bombay for 10 years as a civil engineer.

In the early 1970s Adi was instrumental in forming a group of local Zoroastrians to give religious education to young children during monthly informal gatherings. And in 1979 this grew into the Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey (ZAPANJ) which continues to conduct monthly religion classes to educate both children and adults. Adi, with the enthusiastic and knowledgeable help from Cawas Desai, Noshir Karanjia, Porus Cooper and others conducts the adult religion classes. Er Adi Unwalla has been a coauthor of several books with Er. Jehan Bagli (NAMC Distinguished Scholar, 2018) which have been published by NAMC including Understanding & Practice of Jashan Ceremony, Obsequies, Navjote and Wedding Ceremonies, Concise Navar Ceremony. Er. Adi Unwalla was awarded the NAMC Distinguished Scholar Award in 2019.

## ERVAD CAWAS DESAI



Ervad Cawas Desai was born in Bombay. Cawas' family hails from Navsari, where the "Polia" Desai's are ex-officio trustees and "Akabar's" of the Navsari Bhagarsath Anjuman where he was initiated as a Navar in the "Vadi Dare Meher", the oldest existing fire temple in India.

Ervad Cawas Desai graduated from the University of Bombay with degrees in Commerce & Economics and Law and was a practicing Chartered Accountant before migrating to the United States in 1968.

Cawas was the Founding President of the Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey (ZAPANJ) and continues to actively participate in their monthly adult religion classes. Cawas was one of the first Office Bearers of the North American Mobeds Council and has presented papers at NAMC seminars and at North American congresses.

Cawas is a student of the Zarthoshti religion, particularly its history and evolution. Er. Cawas Desai was awarded the NAMC Distinguished Scholar Award in 2019.

## ERVAD GUSTAD PANTHAKI

Ervad Gustad Panthaki was born in Udvada in 1940. He has the proud privilege of being ordained as a Navar at the Iranshah in 1952. After obtaining his electrical engineering diploma from Pune, he migrated to Canada in 1967 where he worked for Enersource Missisagua Hydro for over three decades till his retirement in 2005. When Gustad was called upon to perform the role of a mobed in Canada, he channelized his energy towards a self-study of not just the Zoroastrian religion but other faiths as well. After his retirement Gustad has immersed himself in Zoroastrian study to enhance his understanding of the faith. A voracious reader, he has vast knowledge of our religion, its history, culture, customs and traditions. In addition, he has vast knowledge of contemporary religions, especially Hinduism. Because of his interest in interpreting our scriptures, he is currently learning the Avesta language through self study. His other passion is chess. He is one of the first generation mobeds in Ontario. Ervad Panthaki was awarded the NAMC Distinguished Scholar Award in 2019.



## 8<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Youth Congress: London is calling!

### Spotlight on Youth Organisers

#### Venue Co-ordinator — Shazneen Munshi

With the 8<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Youth Congress (8WZYC) 2023 being hosted by the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) in the United Kingdom (UK) in Summer 2023, a dedicated team of youth volunteers have already commenced early groundwork to start planning and organising this momentous event. As part of a series of articles, we will be sharing the insights and visions of our 8WZYC organising team.

For those of you who may not know me, my name is Shazneen Munshi. Having graduated with a Law LLB degree from King's College London, I work as a Policy Adviser to the CEO and Chairman of the Financial Ombudsman Service, an alternative dispute resolution organisation based in London's Canary Wharf. In my spare time, I enjoy dancing from ballet to salsa, playing the piano and singing in a choir!

As the youngest member on the ZTFE Managing Committee, I have been running our monthly Extra Young Zoroastrian (XYZ) Fun Club religious education classes for children for the past six years, led in my role as Young Zoroastrian Chair for five years and continue to assist in the day to day running of the organisation.

My main passion in life is making a positive difference to our treasured Zoroastrian community by engaging and bringing together our youth. Growing up in the diaspora naturally brings its own challenges as first- and second-generation migrants. However, our community has grown from strength to strength in the UK over decades due to the hard work and commitment of all those who have dedicated their service. I am extremely proud to be a Young Zoroastrian in the UK today and being part of our vibrant community, with its indomitable spirit (and colourful characters!) fills me with a strong sense of belonging and joy. It is an absolute pleasure and a privilege to be involved in the 8WZYC in the hope that we can carry forward the Zoroastrian flame for future generations to come!

My first experience of a congress was at the 6<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in New Zealand in 2015 where I was so proud to represent the UK Youth as a Speaker on the topic on how today's youth inculcate a sense of pride about being Zoroastrian. Most recently in July 2019, I was invited to speak on the Women's panel and Community Service panel at the 7th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in Los Angeles. This also saw me being followed by the BBC for a World Service radio documentary which was a great experience!

Having now attended two youth congresses, I can truly say living, eating and being with 500 fellow Zarathushti youth was indeed a very surreal and special experience that I will treasure for my lifetime – almost like Hogwarts but for Young Zoroastrians! It's definitely "A Kind of Magic" in Freddie's words. As part of the experience, the host







country also shared its culture and heritage with us from learning the Hakka in New Zealand to celebrating the 4<sup>th</sup> of July in Los Angeles.

For the 8WZYC in the UK, our vision is to build strong lasting global friendships, nurture worldwide communal initiatives and build on the future of our religion. As the Venue Lead for the 8WZYC, my role is to find the best environment and space to achieve our vision and create this strong legacy! Our key criteria for a venue include being close to the airport, accommodation and conference facilities for up to 500 delegates, dining and leisure facilities, and ensuring that the venue uses environmentally friendly and sustainable resources. We are keen to find a venue that is quintessentially English – we would love for our participants to experience the natural beauty, architecture and ancient history that our country has to offer!

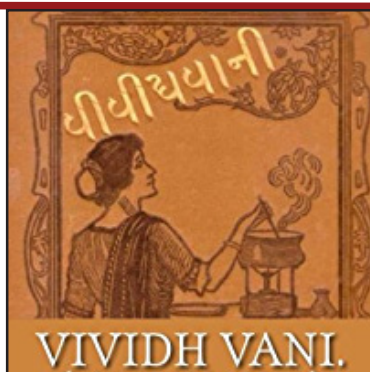
*Photo below UK young Zoroastrians ASHA Centre*



The search began with researching potential venues from hotels to university campuses (and even Buckingham Palace!), sending letters to explain who we are and what we are looking for, obtaining relevant quotes and then presenting my findings to my fellow committee members. Progress has been good so far and we are now at the stage of visiting prospective venues with a view to negotiating rates. As past Young Zoroastrian Chair, my fantastic team and I organised a wide range of fun activities, regular events and trips for our youth as well as for the wider community. I have drawn on my experience and skills in the search for our venue – from leadership and event organisation skills to negotiation and building strong relationships with key contacts.

Another consideration that is linked to our venue search is catering. Food is very important to all Zoroastrians as we all know! We will be working closely with the venue as well as external caterers to make sure our delegates experience traditional delicacies, and that everyone is well fed!

Searching for our congress venue has been a wonderful experience which I am thoroughly enjoying. Being part of the congress committee is a once in a lifetime opportunity and I am very excited to work together with our lovely team of volunteers to make the Congress an amazing experience for everyone! See you all in 2023 - London Baby!



## Guest Editorial

# Contribution of Zarathushtis in the Food & Beverage Sector

By Farishta Murzban Dinshaw

It all started in the kitchen. From chefs to bakers to meringue makers, many of the contributors to this issue on Zarathushtis in the food and beverage sector talk about how their interest began as children hanging out in their home kitchens, drawn in because of a beloved adult. These food-related memories have left a lasting impression on them and, in some ways, their work is a means to fleetingly recapture the security, the happiness, the heart of the home. Blunt & Varley found that the kitchen was often representative of ‘memory and nostalgia for the past, everyday life in the present, and future dreams’ (2004, pg 3).

Nostalgia has been a recurring theme for Zarathushtis who write about food too. Whether you have books in print

like Niloufer Ichaporia King, Niloufer Mavalvala, and Rita Kapadia or blog online like Perzen Patel and Perinaz Avari, the thread that binds them is sharing traditions, building bonds, preserving the past for the future. And in some cases, it extends beyond one’s own kitchen to that of another’s. Shireen Kavasji’s “Armeen’s” in Canada and Naushad Mehta’s “Cillie’s” in the US own cake-and-bake stores that are built on the legacy of their mothers’ home-based confectionery businesses in Karachi. Their multi-generation clients come to their stores to recreate their own memories of cakes they had in another country in another era.

As much as the past is a recurring theme, the present reality of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic is

also reflected in the articles. Some businesses have benefited from serving those who are forced to eat at home and have returned to the kitchen, sometimes with results that make them opt for ready-made dishes, while others have faced closures and dwindling customers, challenges that have helped them showcase their resilience and resourcefulness. As psychologists have started acknowledging cooking and baking as a therapeutic tool to help people dealing with isolation, stress, and anxiety, many members of the Zarathushti community have embraced the meditative quality of kneading, rolling, and mixing. Social distancing has also increased an interest in online opportunities, whether it is exchanging recipes and cooking tips on Facebook, listening to food-related podcasts and

attending webinars, or joining cooking classes. Several of the contributors are currently hosting Zoom events, demonstrating how to make Parsi staples and treats. Once again, cooking is creating bonds as people share kitchen experiences with others around the world from within the confines of their own four walls.

While the pandemic has disrupted our day-to-day lives, it has also brought to the forefront our fragile claim to invincibility, and provided us an opportunity to reconsider where we are in life and whether this is where we want to be. It has given some the incentive to follow their passion; in the past few months, several contributors such as Julia Maglietta who bakes roll cakes with flavored fillings, and Dilshad Nanji who makes dessert liqueurs have launched or expanded their home-based businesses.

The pandemic has also seen a dramatic decrease in industrial activities, tourism and travel, which may be bad news for those working in the affected sectors, but it has proved to be good news for the environment. The byproduct of the COVID-19 lock down has resulted in a significant reduction in greenhouse gas and other air, water and land pollutants. As with personal reflection, the current crisis provides us an opportunity to reconsider our relationship with our environment so that we place less burden on our planet.

We can use this time to pause and think about the future. This includes the way we cultivate and consume foods. Some contributors have explored this change in consumer behavior. “Clean labels” are becoming an important feature of research and development, and branding and marketing of food products, with consumers looking for icons that read “Organic” or “Non-GMO” when using their purchasing power. Nearly half

of consumers look for verification of “real ingredients” in frozen foods; 38% seek no artificial ingredients; 35%, all natural; 28%, made/grown in the USA; and 24%, non-GMO. (American Frozen Food Institute, 2019).

Zero-waste cooking, hyper-local, house-made items, and “clean menus” are among the top five hot culinary concepts for 2019 (National Restaurant Association, 2018).

**“The Gathas advocate a free, peaceful, prudent, and progressive society, both in spirit and matter. Spirituality makes people realize the divine in creation, and ...Materiality teaches them the philosophy of living and letting others live, and of living in harmony with nature.”**

(A. Jafarey, 2004)

These are not new concepts. In our “home countries” of Iran, India and Pakistan, this was the norm just a few generations ago. Nadia Jam explores the lessons she’s learned about green consumption and waste reduction from her Persian grandparents.

What is a foreign concept is the idea of “cultivated meat” (sometimes called “lab-grown meat” although scientists do not prefer this term as it is unnecessarily prejudicial). P. T. Bhandara takes readers on a personal journey towards the next frontier in ethical eating, explaining cultivated meat as a viable option for people concerned for their health, the environment, and animal rights. It corresponds with the Zarathushti concept of *fresho-kereti*, “continuous

refreshing, renewing and modernizing keeps the good order up-to-date, in fact up-to-minute.” (Ali Jafarey, 2004).

As Zarathushtis, our scriptures and heritage have always encouraged us toward reflection and action for a better world. “The Gathas advocate a free, peaceful, prudent, and progressive society, both in spirit and matter. Spirituality makes people realize the divine in creation, and...Materiality teaches them the philosophy of living and letting others live, and of living in harmony with nature” (A. Jafarey, 2004). We are now at a moment in history when we have the time to reflect and take action towards a refreshed 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 in Toronto in 2019.*

*Photos on the previous page:*

*Vividh Vani, the first Gujarati cookbook written by a woman in 1894.*

*Ardeshir's, the earliest soda company, established in 1884, still in production.*

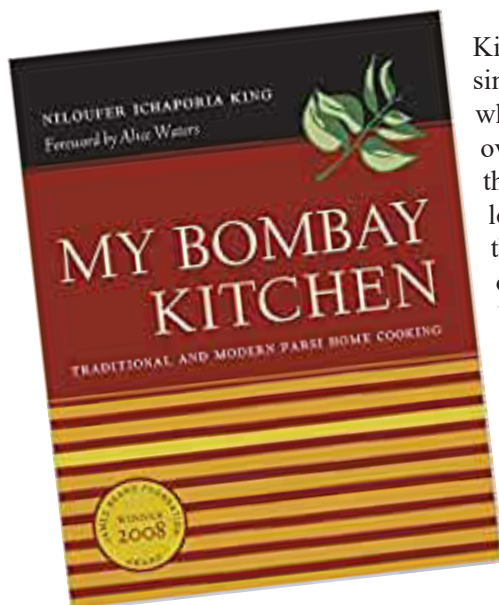




## Fond Memories

# Three Bombay Kitchens

By Niloufer Ichaporia King



*Some of this material appeared earlier in the author's "My Bombay Kitchen: Traditional and Modern Parsi Home Cooking", Berkeley, University of California Press, 2007.*

Kitchens in India have changed a lot since my grandparents' generation, when they were smoky places ruled over by the family cook. Even now, the average Indian kitchen would look primitive to American eyes. Yet the quality of the food that comes out of these kitchens on a daily basis is nothing short of astounding. It really doesn't take more than three bricks and a fire to cook a meal, a sobering reminder that it's the individual who makes the food, not the equipment. Indian family cooks I've known have been ingenious in finding ways to meet their needs. Faced with my aunt's shrinking appetite, her cook devised a method for making tiny amounts of food: he used an empty sardine tin with a coat-hanger wire wrapped around it to make a handle. As a spatula and mini-whisk, he used a chicken wing feather. Another

young cook devised the perfect garlic crusher—a beautiful, rough beach pebble that fits his hand exactly. It's interesting to look at what my maternal grandmother in her day and my mother in hers thought essential for getting food onto the table. For both of them, the key elements were a well-trained kitchen and table staff. They themselves did not go into the kitchen and took care to keep children out of it. Today's kitchens are well-equipped playpens for family and friends, not places far removed from the goings on of family life as the kitchens of my childhood used to be.

### My Grandmother's Kitchen

This is what my maternal grandmother Meherbai Noshirwan Dubash (née Khan) probably thought essential for feeding her large family of five daughters, plus her sister and her

term guests, not to mention a large household staff:

- A cook, known and addressed as *mistri* (cooks in Parsi households were mostly Goan).
- A cook's helper, sometimes known as the matey, a British nautical term.
- A bearer or butler in a starched white uniform for serving. Extra bearers were called in or borrowed from friends for large parties.
- Tinned copper vessels of varying sizes and depths, with lids like dinner plates to hold water or coals, or flat ones, depending on what was being cooked. Tinning was and still is done by wandering *kallai wallas*, tinsmiths, who can set up shop in a 3-foot-square space with a fire, bellows and some tin.
- *Khumchas*, tinned copper or German silver circular trays with straight sides for working doughs and for other purposes.
- Various tongs for lifting lids, turning chapatis; perforated spoons, usually metal.
- A cast-iron *lohri* or *tava*, a lens-shaped griddle about a foot across, for cooking chapatis or dry-roasting anything.
- Frying pans like woks, *karhais*, in sizes geared to the household (cast-iron, tinned copper, possibly aluminum, in diameters ranging from 8 to 16 inches).
- A grinding stone, *masala no patthar*—slab and roller, the surface to be roughened from time to time by an itinerant worker, the *tankiwali*, who went from house to house announcing her presence.
- A large domed aluminum steamer (on the bottom, Queen Mary in profile) for a sweet called *sandhna*.
- A tea kettle.
- Mortar and pestle, heavy brass.
- Knives to suit the cooks.
- A rotary egg beater (although egg whites and cream could be

whipped up with a fork in a soup plate, too).

- Miscellaneous work bowls and plates, moulds for desserts, baking dishes.
- Large Chinese storage urns for grains; brass canisters, tins and glass jars for storing other staples.
- An icebox, later a refrigerator.
- A perforated vessel for *paneer*-making.
- Strainers and colanders of various sizes.

**The big change came in the 1950s, with the pressure cooker, which was supposed to change life completely by saving time and fuel. I don't know a single Indian urban household now that doesn't have a pressure cooker put to constant use.**

- A *daal* masher made of wood.
- A slender wooden rolling pin and circular board for chapatis and puris.
- A wood- or charcoal-burning cast-iron range with an oven and later, a gas stove.
- A *sigri*, a portable cylindrical grill about 18 inches high for grilling or for an extra heat source.
- A kerosene stove (for emergencies or an extra heat source).
- A hand-cranked meat grinder.
- A household balance and various weights and measures for grains and liquids. These would be in various systems, Indian and Imperial. Also popular and handy, an empty cigarette tin, known as a *tipri*, about 8 fluid ounces.
- A *matla*, an unglazed earthenware

vessel used for storing boiled drinking water.

## My Mother's Kitchen

My mother's (Shireen Minocher Ichaporia's) kitchen essentials included:

A cook and a bearer. Things proceeded fairly much as they did in my grandmother's time until the Gulf states opened up a market for Indian labour and changed the domestic worker scene forever. My mother's cook made a beeline to the Gulf and my mother spent the next two decades waiting for him to ask for his job back. This never happened. Her ancient bearer retired to his *gaam* (village) in Gujarat and left an unfillable vacuum.

Her batterie de cuisine incorporated most of what my grandmother had, especially the *tava*, the *masala* stone, the mortar and pestle, and the rolling pin. In addition to the old tinned copper vessels, there were aluminum and stainless steel pots made in traditional Parsi shapes. The big change came in the 1950s, with the pressure cooker, which was supposed to change life completely by saving time and fuel. I don't know a single Indian urban household now that doesn't have a pressure cooker put to constant use.

My mother's generation ushered in an era of electrical appliances—refrigerators were already a given, as were toasters but mixers and blenders tended to be kept off-limits to the kitchen staff and as a result, often rusted from disuse. In the sixties, a new kitchen essential came to the fore, the mixer-grinder, popularly known as a "mixie", which could do the job of a *masala* stone, something the Western blender failed to do. The first and best of these was invented by a devoted engineering genius so that his wife could continue making first-rate Indian food in Germany, where they happened to be posted. Powerful

they happened to be posted. Powerful grinders like this have become standard equipment in urban Indian kitchens where the roar of electric motors is now replacing the music of the *masala* stone. My mother did not have one. Everyone agrees that the stone ground *masalas* are superior, but fewer and fewer people want to make the effort.

## My Kitchen

Kitchen supply stores make fortunes on our current love for specialized equipment, but you can make decent Parsi food with pretty much what you have on hand plus a visit to a supermarket, an Indian grocery, or the Internet, which now brings anything to our doors.

My kitchen here in California is an amalgam of my maternal grandmother's and my mother's, plus a battery of pots, pans and tools accumulated over 58 years of cooking in the United States and poking through markets everywhere.

I began my cooking life in Baltimore. *Kothmir* (coriander), green chillies and ginger (forget *limbus*, Indian lemons) were very hard to find in Baltimore of the early 60s. I'd drive to Washington DC to get a bunch of coriander or a chunk of fresh ginger and think nothing of it, but constantly felt that the Parsi food I cooked was a compromise. Oddly, fresh coconut was easily found at Baltimore's Lexington Market where there was a stall with a large machine for grating fresh coconut destined for pie.

The next stage was in the Midwest. Madison is a university town, so there was some provision for other than standard American cooking. A small market run by a scholarly Chinese man catered to those of us, Indians and others, who needed fresh coriander, ginger, fresh green chillies, rice that wasn't the supermarket variety

(*basmati* at last!) and various basic pulses. Grinding *masalas* was still a challenge and a compromise.

The early 70s brought a dazzling change in my kitchen life. I came to California and discovered an ever-burgeoning variety of long-missed vegetables. Coriander and ginger were supermarket items, and Berkeley had easily accessible Indian groceries. Thanks to two large-scale greengrocers whose owners

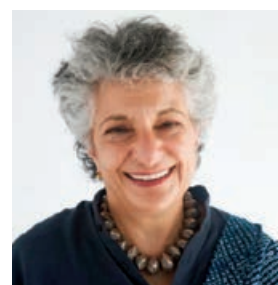
**Powerful grinders like [the "mixie"] have become standard equipment in urban Indian kitchens where the roar of electric motors is now replacing the music of the *masala* stone...Everyone agrees that the stone ground *masalas* are superior, but fewer and fewer people want to make the effort.**

rejoiced in expanding our fruit and vegetable universe, there seemed to be everything any Indian cook might need, except curry leaves. It was when curry leaves began to appear in the mid-late seventies that one could make Parsi food taste as it should.

From the eighties on, which coincided with meeting and marrying my blue-eyed husband with his tropical soul and an Amazon parrot who rules over us, the ability to make Parsi food expanded with my discovery of San Francisco's Alemany Farmers Market close to us where every year brings some new missed ingredient to the fore, thanks to the South East Asian and Filipino growers who keep their Indian customers in mind. Mixer-grinders no longer have to be

lugged back from India along with transformers, so *masalas* and chutneys now have the correct, ungritty texture, so that dishes like *patra ni machhi* (fish in banana leaves) can be made without a nagging sense of things not being quite right.

The handsome tinned vessels I've lugged across the country are now ornamental because there's nobody to tin them. My mother's winnowing tray, her *supru*, in the same category because rice now comes free of pebbles and chaff. Her *masala* stone now sits on our front steps because even though I know the *masala* would be better hand ground, I'm too lazy and impatient to get accustomed to it, and there's no *tankiwali* to resurface it. My grandmother's giant *sandhna* steamer, mother's iron *tavas* and heavy brass *khalbatto* (mortar and pestle), her rolling pin and board, her old *paneer*-maker, my aunt's battered colander and Mickey Mouse mould from the forties, are all constant kitchen friends along with wildly assorted paraphernalia picked up from here and there, far and wide. A Bombay kitchen can be anywhere in the world. All you need is an insatiable curiosity about food and a love for sharing it.\*



**Niloufer Ichaporia King** is an anthropologist, a kitchen botanist, a one-of-a-kind cook, and a writer. Originally from Bombay India, she now lives in San Francisco.

Photo: Niloufer Ichaporia King's portrait by Christopher Hirsheimer

Photo on page 16: *Masala no pathar* (grinding stone) by Xerxes Commissariat



# A Glimpse into the Past

By K. E. Eduljee

As children growing up during the 1950s in Pune, India, we didn't call them carbonated drinks (too many syllables) or sodas (a soda is what dad had with his evening Scotch). We called them soft drinks or by their brand names—and the one name that comes to mind is Fram's. The exception to the soda label was Fram's famed Ice Cream Soda. Another Zarathushti name associated with soft drinks in Poona is Ardeshir's started by Ardeshir Irani who I read established his plant in 1884. They have a shop not far from the Komra ni Agiary (place of worship).

When thinking about Poona (as Pune was once known) and soft drinks, the image that comes to my mind is that of the Fram's old bullock-cart delivery driver wearing his white 'Nehru' cap (otherwise called a "Congress cap") 'driving' his sideless flat cart around the Camp area of Poona with a load of Fram's soft drinks and huge blocks of ice covered with gunny sack jute fabric layered with saw dust—all to keep the ice from melting too fast. The cart was ultra-modern for its time since it had pneumatic tires. The manufacture of soft drinks in Poona Camp invariably involved the

manufacture of ice blocks. On the way back to the Fram's ice factory, the old man would often fall asleep and the bullock knew where to go as if on automatic pilot. My father would tell us stories from his childhood when he and a group of friends full of mischief would gently lead the bullock to turn around and head in the opposite direction. What happened when the driver woke up is another story not suitable for a general audience.

I am going to take a guess here, but I think the initial motivator to set up a soft drink and ice manufacturing plant was to supply these items to the British and other Europeans bedeviled by India's heat from which they would seek any respite—and a ice cold drink would hit the spot. This may have been the case when the founders of Poona's Pudumjee family started their ice factory. The Pudumjees were Poona's first private industrialists (the only factory in Poona built before theirs was the government's ammunition factory). The Pudumjee's factory of note was not the ice factory but the Deccan Paper Mills built in 1885 where the equipment was brought to the factory site drawn by elephants. The Pudumjees started

their business ventures by supplying goods to the British in the early 1800s and then at some point built their ice factory. The latter may have preceded the manufacture of carbonated drinks in Poona or the advent of refrigerators.

Writing this article has brought back some old and fond memories. One of them is sitting on the verandahs of friends' homes sipping on chilled soft drinks and eating Kayani's Shrewsbury biscuits. \*



**K. E. Eduljee** is author of the Zoroastrian Heritage website at [www.zoroastrianheritage.com](http://www.zoroastrianheritage.com) and blog at [zoroastrianheritage.blogspot.com](http://zoroastrianheritage.blogspot.com). He hosts Facebook's Zoroastrian Heritage group and has written several monographs. He is a past director of the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia and a founding trustee of the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr trust for British Columbia.

Ardeshir Khodadad Irani fled religious persecution in Yazd, Iran, settled in Pune, India, and launched "Ardeshir's" a carbonated "soda water" business in the Pune Cantonment area in 1884. The British soldiers needed soda for their whiskey so demand rose. Ardeshir Irani expanded his business by renting a barrack-like premise as a factory located at the aptly-named Sharbatwala Chowk. It's where the Ardeshir's soft drinks - which come in 10 different flavors including the super-popular Raspberry - are made and bottled to this day.

In a drama-worthy twist, the founder's eldest son Framroze did not see eye to eye with his father and set up his own cola business, the now-defunct "Frams". He did ensure his father's work didn't fizzle out though, by letting one of his sons, Gilani Irani, look after Ardeshir's. Gilani's son, Marzban Irani, is the fourth generation to run the business.

Source: Reshmi Chakraborty. (13 March 2019). "How A Drink That's Older Than Coca Cola Is Banking On Nostalgia." [www.thequint.com](http://www.thequint.com)

# The Fizzy Nostalgia of Raspberry Soda

By Dinyar Patel

Electric red in colour, and syrupy sweet to the taste, Pallonji's raspberry soda is a beloved cultural icon of India's fast-disappearing Parsi community. Over the past two centuries, Parsis were instrumental in popularizing and producing carbonated beverages in India, laying the foundations for what is today an eight billion dollar industry.

Soda had become a popular beverage in London by the early 1800s. Companies such as Schweppes sold plain carbonated water, advertising it as a health elixir. Other firms experimented with flavored variants such as lemon, orange, and raspberry. Inevitably, soda found its way to India, where it was a luxury item for Britons in the subcontinent. Parsis sensed a commercial opportunity in the new fizzy drinks consumed by their colonial masters. Many were already involved in businesses that catered to Britons, as commissaries to the army or owners of hotels and "Europe shops" in cities. They added soda to their inventories. According to community lore, the first Parsi to settle in Ahmednagar - a dusty army outpost in the Deccan - arrived in town with a soda-making apparatus strapped to a mule, with which he slaked the thirst of British soldiers.

By 1913, Bombay boasted more than 150 licensed soda factories. Parsis played a commanding role in this trade, as is evidenced by the surnames they adopted: Sodawaterwala, Sodawaterbottlewala, and even Sodawaterbottleopenerwala.

As carbonated beverages grew more popular, Parsi soda empires flourished. Many even pre-dated western firms



like Coca Cola (incorporated in 1892) and Pepsi (1902): Pallonji's, for example, was established in 1865. Two decades later, Dinshawji Pandole founded Duke's, which he named after the brand of cricket ball he used while touring England with a Parsi cricket team. Duke's raspberry soda became particularly famous, selling for a princely 12 annas per dozen bottles in 1907 (about \$0.01 today). Even Rogers, the most established western Indian brand, was bought out by Parsi investors around 1915.

But Parsi soda enterprises were not just limited to Mumbai. Community members manufactured aerated water across India, from Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) to Calicut. Some even set up shop well beyond the subcontinent. From the 1920s onward, Singapore had two competing brands of Parsi soda - Framroz and Phoenix - which jostled for market dominance through advertisements in Chinese and Malay. Most of these companies were small-scale. Business margins were thin, and tastes and brand loyalty were hyper-localized.

Fierce competition pushed many Parsi soda companies out of business from the 1950s, and then multinationals

completely changed the game. After the Indian market liberalization in 1992, Coca Cola and Pepsi began taking over from homegrown drinks.

So, is this the end of the line for raspberry soda? PV Solanki, the current owner of Pallonji's, is optimistic. While the traditional Parsi customer base is diminishing, he has seen a surge of interest from outside of the community. "A lot of newcomers consider this a retro drink," he claims, citing orders from a proliferation of Irani café-themed restaurants in India. The demand for raspberry soda has, in fact, come full circle from its colonial roots: Pallonji's is now sold in London, where it has been introduced into trendy restaurants like "Dishoom." Pallonji's raspberry still seems to have enough vim left in its ancient glass bottle.\*



**Dinyar Patel** is Assistant Professor of Liberal Arts at the S.P. Jain Institute of Management and Research in Mumbai, India. From 2015 to 2020, he was Assistant Professor of History at the University of South Carolina, where he received Fulbright and National Endowment for the Humanities fellowships.

*This material appeared earlier in the author's more detailed article, "How Parsis shaped India's taste for soft drinks." (22 March 2020). BBC News, India. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-51942067>.*

*Photo from Pallonji's Facebook page.*

# The Tradition of Irani Cafes

There are two fundamental traditions connected with the quintessential Zarathushti-Irani cafés of India—an ancient tradition and a modern one.

The ancient tradition stretches to that distant part of pre-history when Iranians established the trade roads that have now come to be known as the Silk Roads—a tradition that is sadly in the process of being appropriated by the Chinese who had nothing whatsoever to do with the establishment and building of the roads. That tradition was one of welcoming weary traders and travelers with a warm cup of tea and comfort food. The legacy of this tradition can be still be seen in the *chai-khanas* (tea houses) of Iran, Central Asia and elsewhere along the old trade roads — and of course in India.

The modern tradition of the Irani cafés of India dates to the murderous rule of the Islamic-Turkic Qajar dynasty (1794 - 1925 CE) of Iran and their renewed persecution of Irani Zarathushtis. That persecution was accompanied by the abduction of young girls, rape, murder and a reduction of the Zarathushtis to abject poverty. With the help of the Parsis of India, a number of Zarathushtis from Yazd and Kerman fled the oppression by migrating to India. Once in India, many of the migrants worked hard to be self-supporting and independent by establishing bakeries as well as *chai-khanas* that have come to be known as Irani cafés. Their clients were invariably individuals of modest means for whom the cafés provided a place to drop-in for a cup of tea, wholesome snacks, an inexpensive meal, or just to meet friends and socialize. “*Brun-maska and chai*” (crusty bread with butter, and tea) or “*Bun-maska and chai*” (bun and butter, and tea) have become part of the everyday lexicon so emblematic of the Irani café. While places to buy a cup of tea are commonplace in India, what made the Irani cafés special is that they provided a modicum of décor with their bentwood chairs and marble or glass topped tables — as well as trustworthy food served in a relatively clean environment. By welcoming everyone as did the *chai-khanas* of old, the Irani cafés have created a micro environment that is classless and casteless — free from societal and religious distinctions and divisions. Some café owners post signs saying “all castes welcome”.

We can only hope that while authentic Irani cafés are now growing fewer in number, others will not try to capitalize on the stellar reputation built over a couple of centuries by Irani Zarathushti in yet another example of an appropriation of Zarathushti heritage.\*

By K. E. Eduljee



An Irani cafe. Photo: Paramvir Singh, theuntourists.com



The quintessential “bun maska”.



# MEMORIES OF MY BOMAS AND HIS BROTHERS IN THE “CAFE LINE”

By Dilshad Chowna

My grandfather, Behram Boman Najmi, and his brothers ventured out to “Hind” many mountains away from their homes in Yazd, Iran. In the 1930s, they reached India heading straight to Bombay, a city where money floated in the busy air, the right kind of magnet would help you to bring it into your wallet it was said.

Bomas (as the Persian/Dari speaking diasporas tend to address their grandfathers) first trained as a tailor of men’s clothing but as that wasn’t for him, he swapped to the “cafe line”. Climbing one rung at a time, the brothers pooled their efforts and money, working tirelessly with their eyes on the prize, to own a cafe in Bombay, “Cafe London”, named after the capital city of the then rulers of British India. Most Irani businesses had anglicized names, deliberately to attract the Western populace that still called India home, like “Britannia and Co”; others were named in honor of cities they had idolized, “Paris Bakery”; or after Lords or Viceroy’s like “Alfred” and “Lord Irwin”.

The cafes, Irani bars/bottle shops, bakeries, were and will always remain a second home for majority of the Irani men, their *raison d’etre*, their



*Behram Boman Najmi (sitting left in a black suit) with his brother, Faridoon, behind him, and his other friends.*

identity. They held court from within their domain of a few square feet of the *gullah* (cash counter), which was as iconic as the thrones of the Persian kings’ courts. While older boys of the family stood guard at the *gullah* after school, young ladies, however, were expected to stay clear of the cafe, a solicitous nod from their fathers or uncles as a greeting on their way to and fro from school. This very

male club of cafe owners networked, they were members of business liaisons and kept an eye on young apprentices who could be prospective business partners or sons-in-law, like my Dad!

My Bomas’ Cafe was in the Fort area of Mumbai, catering to men from different echelons of life, mill workers, labor from the docks, ‘Brown sahibs’ and a mix of men from all castes and creeds discernible by their head wear. They flocked to this familiar hub before work, after shifts, for a rendezvous, simply to sit and read the newspaper, or even have heated political debates. Starbucks, Gloria Jean’s get in line! Coffee not so much, the cafe’s served endless cups of tea, a unique brew that came from the tea leaves and bubbled steadily in a samovar. Mum swears by a secret spice mix that continues to remain elusive to this day. The little cups of liquid sunshine were

accompanied by soft brioche-like buns with a slim brick of slightly salty butter, the famous “Bun Maska”. Alternatively, you could order “Brun Maska” which was crunchier, and if you were an early bird you would be able to relish a warmer version where the union of the melted butter and crunchy crust made for a magical breakfast. There was other fare like

biscuits too, transferred from sixteen kilo tins that came from well-known Irani bakeries, of course. Some staffer was particularly adept at arranging the biscuits into scrumptious spirals along the glass jars which adorned the *gullah*. Broken pieces were sent home to disappointed children who longed to eat one well-formed cookie!

The Iranis followed a frugal business model, kept overheads down and prices low, the furniture was colonial, time-tested, and the decor simple (pictures of the prophet, the royals, mirrors), a menu, some rules, and chequered table cloths. With the advent of the South Indian Udipi restaurants serving delicious idlis, dosas and puri bhaji, the popularity of the Irani cafes waned. While some have had trendy makeovers others continued to trudge along like wizened old men from Iran, still in love with the new world they came to all those decades ago.

But for Bomas and his brothers it was time to reinvent. Having tested the waters they ventured into the “canteen line” taking up the running of the canteens in the “cinema houses”. No British titles or European capital cities, the Irani men now worked for establishments each of which had unique names, fantastic, fictional, filmy – “Ambar Oscar”, “Huma Hina”, “Milan”, “Badal Bijli”. They were older now so Bomas and his brothers took turns manning the canteen at intervals for the matinee, evening and night shows. Life was relaxed with walks back home for lunch and siestas before the shows. This time the young ladies, most of whom were either married or eligible bachelorettes, finally won the lotto!

They could put a request for movie tickets and a *manas* (staff member) delivered them home. Chaperoned by their mums and aunts, the young women enjoyed Bollywood and, of course, snacks at the interval. There is a factual story of how one legendary Irani businessman was responsible for changing the fortunes of a *samosa* (snack) vendor; he ordered fresh

tycoon drank the water with lemon from the finger bowl given at the end of the meal to clean his fingers and Bomas, who was the host, had to follow suit as not to offend him.

My self-taught stalwart of a grandfather who had spent a lifetime learning and achieving ceaselessly made everything seem so natural and effortless to a child of six who would sit on the bar stools at Oasis before business hours and eat a bowl of chilled cherries and slurp syrup.

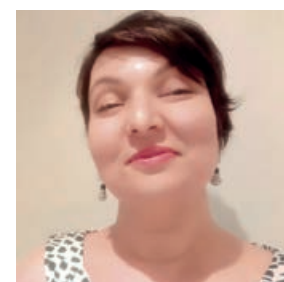
As a grown woman in a new land, I feel a deep need to acknowledge the struggles of grandfathers and fathers who spent decades applying themselves with such passion and vigor, be it to a Irani cafe, canteen, bar, bakery, bottle shop or restaurant, leaving their descendants with at least one bowlful of something delicious to remember, something wholesome, and a whole lot of gratitude.\*



An example of Irani cafe decor, Brabourne Cafe, Mumbai, established 1932.

*samosas* and timed the supply for the intervals. Win! Win!

Surprisingly the most iconic movie, “Sholay” didn’t do any favors to the snack sales – when patrons watched Gabbar Singh lop of Thakur’s arms, they simply lost their appetite and no one wanted to eat popcorn or drink Goldspot during the interval! The enterprise and gumption of this breed of men was second to none, Bomas and his much respected cohort of *shariqs* (partners), with some young blood added to the mix, took up the opportunity to start a swanky restaurant called “Oasis”, which was a watering hole for the rich and thirsty, with a Chinese chef, a cocktail bar, continental food, air-conditioning, bearers in vests, and an opulent ambiance. Bomas recounted an incident when a Indian business



**Dilshad (Dilly) Chowna nee Faroodi** is a teacher at the Montessori Academy in Sydney, Australia. She grew up in Mumbai, India and lived in Karachi after her marriage. She has a BA in Psychology and a MA in Literature, but her passion is supporting young children to be happy and independent.



## Concept to Completion

# “Icecreamwalla” (Ice Cream Seller)

By Narges Kakalia

*This summer, eleven-year-old Zane Merriweather started his own business. Unlike most pre-teens, he went beyond the traditional lemonade stand and started selling home-made ice cream. His mother, Narges Kakalia, interviewed him for Fezana Journal.*

*Narges: Tell us about the business you started not too long ago?*

*Zane: I started an ice cream business called, “Rise and Shine”. I make breakfast cereal-flavored ice cream.*

*Narges: I bet the readers want to know more about that. What is cereal-flavored ice cream?*

*Zane: The flavors are of delicious sugary cereals. “Cinnamon Toast Crunch”, “Cocoa Pebbles”, and “Fruity Pebbles”. And also mango.*

*Narges: How does mango fit in with the breakfast theme?*

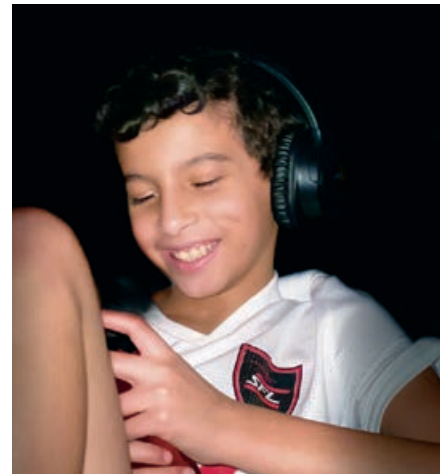
*Zane: It doesn’t. [giggle]*

*Narges: So why mango then?*

*Zane: Because that was the first flavor of ice cream I made, and I thought it was so good. So even though it doesn’t go with the cereal-flavored theme, I decided to keep it as an option, because the taste is what matters most.*

*Narges: These are unusual flavors. What inspired you?*

*Zane: Well, it started one evening in the summer. I wanted dessert and decided to make ice cream. The perfect summer dessert. First, I made mango ice cream and we thought it was really good. Then, I wanted to make a different flavor. For Father’s Day, you found that ice cream place to take Dad to called “Milk and Cream*



*Bar”, remember? And they had all these cereal-flavored ice creams and they were so good. So, I decided that for my next flavor, I would try making “Fruity Pebble” at home myself. And then later, I decided to make “Cocoa Pebble”.*



*Narges: And how did “Cinnamon Toast Crunch” come about?*

Zane: Well, the ice cream was so good, and you had the idea that others would like it, and you suggested I sell it. I thought it was a good idea. But I wanted to come up with one more flavor in the cereal-flavored theme. I didn’t want to pick chocolate or fruity flavors since I had those covered. I didn’t want something bland either. So, that’s when I thought of “Cinnamon Toast Crunch”. And it came out good. So, then I launched a business and told everyone in town that I was selling ice cream. You told your friends on Facebook, and then I created an Instagram account for “Rise and Shine” (@rise\_and\_shine\_icecream, in case people are interested), and I got lots of orders that way from people who live in our town.

*Narges: What’s the most ice cream you sold in a week?*

Zane: 48 pints in one week.

*Narges: That is a lot of ice cream. Did you have help?*

Zane: Umm yes. You helped me make

vanilla chocolate chip, cotton candy, cookie dough, and dairy-free, sugar-free strawberry banana. I also made mango and rose *kulfi* (South Asian creamy frozen dessert).

*Narges: Did any of the flavors turn out better than expected?*

Zane: Yes. Mint, strawberry, and cookie dough turned out much better than expected. And Cocoa Pebbles.

*Narges: And which flavors did you think didn’t turn out okay?*

Zane: Cotton Candy. The flavoring wasn’t great and I added too much of it. Yuck.

*Narges: Does “Rise and Shine” make anything other than ice cream?*

Zane: No, not really. I did make some really good gluten-free ice cream sandwiches once, and then for my cousin’s birthday I made an ice cream pie. But it’s all ice cream related.

*Narges: If we hadn’t been in quarantine because of COVID, do you think you would have started an ice cream business?*

*Narges: Do you feel like your business venture was successful?*

Zane: Definitely. The Instagram advertising really helped. And a lot of people here, including my friends and their parents, wanted to support me so they bought a lot of ice cream. And they liked it and ended up ordering more. So I had a lot of business. I made a lot of money, and I like the fact that people really liked something I made.

*Narges: Did you learn how to actually run a business?*

Zane: In a sense. I had to calculate how much everything costs, and based on that, how much I could charge. I had to figure out how to track all the orders I got and learn to keep accounts. And to figure out how much of an ingredient I needed, when I needed it, how to plan the grocery shopping and ice cream making in a way that we wouldn’t run out of fridge space for the raw materials, or freezer space for the finished pints. But I still only made small amounts. I don’t know how to run a business in the sense of having employees and making a really large amount of ice cream.

*Narges: Fair enough. Will you make ice cream again next summer?*

Zane: Probably. I think so. Definitely.\*



some pints. And Dad drove me all over town to deliver the pints.

*Narges: Have you tried making any other flavors?*

Zane: Yes, a bunch of times. I made “Cap’n Crunch” ice cream, peanut butter, strawberry, mint chocolate chip,

Zane: Nope. If I hadn’t been in quarantine, I would have been in camp all summer and would have had a lot less time. I usually have other activities in the summer, but they all got canceled. So I ended up having a lot of free time to make ice cream.

**Narges Kakalia** has been practicing law in New York for almost two decades. She and her husband Marc have two boys – Cyrus (15) and Zane (11, and ice cream-maker extraordinaire!), as well as a dog, Cocoa. She enjoys cooking, amateur photography, and reading.

# The Reawakening of the Forgotten Cookie

By Roozbeh Behrana

The humble meringue, also known as the forgotten cookie, has found a new lease on life in the San Francisco Bay Area thanks to Azarmeen Pavri who founded Délice Glacé in late 2016.



Azarmeen became obsessed with mastering meringues when her first attempt, at the age of 12, resulted in a gooey mess in her family's kitchen in Karachi. After decades of refining her recipe and mastering these notoriously tricky confections, she opened a home based bakery specializing in meringues and meringue desserts. For the first two years of its inception, Délice Glacé was exclusively a custom order bakery and confectionery where their signature frozen meringue cakes, crafted entirely without flour became popular. Since then, they have expanded their product line to include a range of naturally gluten free meringue confections. "Our products are naturally gluten free



and our meringues are also fat free and dairy free. We have adapted our recipes to suit various dietary lifestyles, which is important in the San Francisco Bay Area. Demand for our products grew steadily through word of mouth and with the help of our customers who give us rave reviews on Yelp and Google," says Azarmeen.

Due to the popularity of their products Délice Glacé was invited to host a series of pop up shops in retailers like Williams Sonoma. A turning point in the business occurred during the holiday season of 2018. After being invited to open a pop-up shop at a prestigious national retailer, Azarmeen was asked to close up shop after less than half an hour of operating. "Our products were so popular, that in those short few minutes, we started crushing their holiday candy sales. This national giant feared competition from my humble meringues. That incident, right there, was proof that my concept and my products were ready to be taken to the next level."

At the beginning, Azarmeen decided to only concentrate on offering the most shelf stable of the whole line of products, the French meringues, to local retailers. This year they have started offering French marshmallows at select stores. The vision for next year is to bring a version of their

popular meringue desserts to the freezer section of local stores and to ship their French meringues to more stores outside the Bay Area. Délice Glacé's products are visually attractive, so it is vitally important that customers are able to see the product. Most of this year was spent in perfecting the type of packaging that was going to be used for products that are being shipped outside the Bay Area. As French meringues are incredibly fragile it is of critical importance for the customer to receive the product exactly in the state in which it leaves the production facility.

When it comes to packaging, small companies are definitely at a disadvantage because they cannot avail of the same economies of scale that larger companies can enjoy. Azarmeen finds that it is important to strike a balance when it comes to spending on packaging. While product packaging is extremely important, she cautions against investing in customized packaging without having some assurance of demand because most custom packaging options have outsized minimums. There are multiple ways in which generic packaging can be personalized and she encourages new businesses to try to use those options in their infancy.

Azarmeen's advice to home-based food businesses that are considering expanding, is firstly to ensure that you create a proper business entity, adhere to all local and state health



codes and licensing laws and get properly insured. Online platforms like LegalZoom are able to help and local health departments are also a ready source of advice. Azarmeen has advanced degrees in food safety and infectious disease control, so very early on she created plans and policies to mitigate risks in her business and ensure product safety. These are not essential by any means but they do help in setting and maintaining standards for a food business and she is now finding out that these policies are required by larger retailers with whom she hopes to partner.

Azarmeen would also advise any home-based food business not to overlook rent and labor costs when pricing their products. Within three weeks of wholesaling, Azarmeen had outgrown her home kitchen. Had she not factored in the additional costs of rental and labor, the price she had quoted her retailers would have barely covered the additional overheads incurred in moving operations to a commercial kitchen.



Despite the demand, Délice Glacé's meringues are entirely handcrafted in small batches from start to finish. In an average week, at least 5,000 pieces of meringues are crafted and piped by hand in their state licensed facility in Redwood City, California. Délice Glacé bakes its meringues without preservatives or stabilizers and hand pipes them, which makes them light and airy. Real fruit, chocolate and natural flavors are used to create unique, unforgettable and attractive treats. The Bulgarian Rose meringues and Birthday Confetti Crunch Meringues are Délice Glacé's best selling meringues.

Their meringues and marshmallows are packaged and can be found in stores around the San Francisco Bay Area, on Savuer du Jour, an online shop for fine French inspired products and can be purchased online at [www.deliceglace.com](http://www.deliceglace.com) where Délice Glacé is offering flat rate \$10 shipping on all orders. "The meringue is indeed a forgotten treat, not only because it

takes ages to bake in the oven (hence given the moniker forgotten) but also because it is dismissed by many Americans who haven't experienced the evanescent mouth-feel of a real French Meringue," states Azarmeen. Délice Glacé's mission is to make the world fall in love with the forgotten cookie.

Yelpers laud Azarmeen's confections and describe them as "addicting" but while they are delicious eats they are also attractive, affordable and unique artisanal food gifts that are perfect for friends, Moms, hostesses and everyone in between. \*



**Roozbeh Behrana** is originally from Karachi and is settled in England since 1994. She is married with two grown-up children. She keeps herself busy teaching English to ethnic minority groups and supporting young adults with learning challenges. She loves audiobooks, experimenting with recipes, and has a serious Pinterest addiction.

You can visit [www.deliceglace.com](http://www.deliceglace.com) to order online.



The cover photo features "Délice Glacé" products in a grazing tray prepared by "Feast & Floral" to showcase the bounties of the season. Yalda is celebrated on 21 December. Family and friends gather to spend the longest and darkest night of the year, eating sweets, fruits, and nuts, and telling stories and reciting poetry. The pomegranate signifies the crimson glow of dawn, representing the light that will defeat the darkness. (See Fezana Journal Fall 2015, Vol 29, #3 for more details about the Yalda festival).

"Feast & Floral" was founded in 2019 by Bay Area native sisters Ashley Higashi and Kim Cassingham. They are the first Silicon Valley grazing table business offering boutique floral design. Their work has resulted in hundreds of cheeseboards and flower arrangements, which they offer through safe contactless delivery.



# LIQUID DESSERTS

By Dilshad S. Nanji

## The Idea

My husband was introduced to cream liqueur during a trip to Goa with friends. He absolutely loved it! Not the price so much.

Months later, he requested me to make liqueur at home as his birthday gift this year. That day, we spent all afternoon trying to make this in our kitchen, combining recipes we found. I was in my second trimester of pregnancy at the time and couldn't taste anything because of the alcohol. I had no idea how it was turning out! My husband willingly tasted every batch, giving me feedback. By the end of the day, he was happily stuffing the bottles into the refrigerator. At the time, the thought of selling this didn't even cross our minds. In the following weeks, a very happy and proud hubby showed off our liqueur bottles to friends who came to visit and insisted they try some too. They all loved it. The entrepreneur in him came to life and he declared that we must try and make a thing of this!

## The Experimentation

It wasn't as simple as it sounded. Even during the lockdown, we were working from home. I, a very-pregnant colorist grading from one room, him an employee of a multinational corporation working out of another. We managed to make the time, decided on a few flavors and over the next few months perfected our recipes, got them tasted, received feedback, and improved the product. We finalized the labels, the bottles,

brought home the ingredients for our first batch of "serious" production. However, before we could put out an advert, our baby was born and everything was put on hold.

## The Product

Two-months into her birth, our first poster was out. It was just sent to friends and family via Whatsapp. We didn't really know what to expect.



This is, after all, a niche product. We picked a price point, keeping in mind the average consumer of such a product, and also making sure that it is more accessible and affordable for those who would like to try it for the first time. It really is a fraction of the cost of popular brands and just as delicious. The response has been overwhelmingly positive.

We are fortunate that everyone who has tried our home-made liqueurs has loved them! Every one of our three flavors - "Classic", "Peanut Butter", and "Caramel" - have been very well received. We're already working on

more flavors for the holiday season.

If you would like to try our liqueurs, I would be happy to answer any questions regarding the flavors, price and delivery, and we can confirm the order of how many bottles per flavor that you would like. We make a fresh batch every Friday and Saturday and dispatch the bottles over the weekend. Depending on the delivery address, we either try to personally deliver nearby or use a courier service, which is an extra charge.

## The Future

We will also be launching our Facebook & Instagram accounts soon. We are grateful to everyone who had faith in us and tried out our creamy liquid desserts. Our focus is to be as consistent as possible and deliver a quality product. These bottles make for the tasteful (and tasty) gift - they satisfy your sweet tooth and you also get that lovely warmth from the whiskey. Our glass bottles can easily be re-purposed after use too. Now that's a win-win!

**Dilshad S. Nanji** is an in house Colorist at Coolab Media, a boutique post-production facility in Mumbai. She is an alumna of Bai A. F. Petit Girl's High School and St. Xavier's College with a BA in Animation and Visual Effects. She is currently on maternity leave and sharing her home made liqueur with the world!

Contact Dilshad via WhatsApp at +91 9619430050 to order the liqueurs in Mumbai, India. Currently, they are unable to ship overseas.

# Launching “Dolly Mumma”

By Perzen Patel

## What inspired you to turn your love of Indian food into a business?

Before moving to New Zealand in 2019, I lived in India where I had my own catering business. While I loved serving food, I grew frustrated with the business model I had inadvertently created as it is very hard to scale a catering business. I knew that the next time I ventured into business, I wanted to have a product and I wanted it to be something that had a larger potential audience.

Upon moving to New Zealand, I realized that despite the New Zealand food scene having matured and a range of cuisines now being available, the same could not be said about Indian food. I kept encountering the same conversations with my new friends - “Oh you’re from Mumbai? I love having curry”. Or, “I love *daal*, but sadly I can never get it right”. Or, “I bought curry powder at the Indian shop but my curry didn’t taste anything like the one I usually order”.

It clicked that if I wanted my friends and those around me to experience the true taste of India, I had to do more than talk about it. I had to bring those flavors into their kitchen. I had to show them that not only could they be used to make a great curry, but that they could also be incredibly versatile and be used in their everyday cooking as well.

## How did you select which products to launch?

Generally speaking, I am an ideas person. While I knew that I wanted my business to be called ‘Dolly Mumma’, it took a while to choose the business model that would work for us and



also finalize the products. I toyed with selling grilled cheese sandwiches with various Indian chutneys, selling *vada pav* at farmers’ markets, making Indian-style fried chicken (*farcha*) or even just doing catering for classic Indian food. At each stage, I’d keep looping it back to what my key objective was, which was to create a scalable business that highlighted the depth and versatility of Indian flavors. Even on the product side it was hard sticking to our guns and not going for the tried and tested ‘Butter Chicken’ or ‘Tikka Masala’. Instead, we introduced our Indian Everyday which is like a basic blend of Indian spices - a *bhuna masala*, if you will - as well as a *ghee tadka* and then a *curry masala*. All of them have been runaway hits.

Our next goal is to create something that works with salads and barbecues as we enter the NZ summer.

## Where did you get your recipes?

The recipes I use are my grandmother, Dolly Mumma’s recipes and also ones I originally received from my friends’ grandmothers. I have done more research, tested and tweaked them to create three products that we are happy with. Originally, I created these pastes to help make my life as a working mum easier. I’d meal plan and have a variety of pastes always stocked in my freezer for weeknights when I need to cook something in a hurry. It’s only after months of using them myself that I finalized our initial product range.

## Where do you make your products?

We make all our products in our licensed home kitchen where I follow a number of safety processes to ensure that the food produced meets our standards. In the medium term, once we start doing more markets or receive our first supermarket contract, we will rent a commercial kitchen. I am lucky to have been part of The Kitchen Project, which is a food business incubator that provides long term subsidized access to a commercial kitchen that’s fitted out with all the latest equipment. In the long term, I want to research how we can utilize the untapped potential of many Indian ladies in NZ who are unable to get a job and would like a flexible role to help us with production and see if we can partner with agencies like the New Zealand Food Bowl.

## Is it shelf ready or you take orders?

Currently we make everything fresh to order. We ship products within 3 - 5 days of receiving them. This is mainly because we are still figuring out the processes and regulations around making the product shelf stable. I

don't want to end up adding too many unnatural preservatives or stabilizers to the product so we will be carefully evaluating whether this step makes sense for us. Currently, we have tested that our products are shelf stable for at least 15 days, which means they are fine while we ship them across NZ. We do ask customers to store them in the refrigerator where they are good for at least 30 days, if not more.

### What were the licensing requirements?

Unlike India where you can just get started and then find an agent to help you out, getting a license to make and sell food in NZ is hard! It took me two months just to figure out which specific license I had to apply for and then it's a 125 page template you need to fill out and implement. Once this is done, you formally register the business and you then get four weeks to get your kitchen verified, which is where an inspector comes and checks you're doing everything correctly.

While it is a tedious process, I have learned so much about preserving and packing food, about what kinds of records I need to manage as a business and about food safety in general. It's been a steep learning curve!

### How involved were you in creating labels/logo?

When it came to creating our brand identity I wanted to create something that told my story, but also resonated with my customers. I knew I wanted it illustrated and I knew that I wanted something that conveyed happiness and family. I naturally gravitated towards working with US-based Delzin Choksey who runs Crispy Doodles. We worked together over the course of a month. I gave her an old photo I had of my Dolly Mumma, which she used as a starting point for her illustration. There's details in our logo like the bangles or the 'gown' that Dolly is wearing that resonate with my Parsi roots and yet we kept



it modern by going with the mortar/pestle and a 'kiwi' looking girl. We wanted to highlight that bond a grandparent shares with a grandchild and the passing down of oral traditions and I think we managed to do that!

When it comes to the packaging on the bottles itself, that's still a work in progress. For now we've gone with the lean approach of using hanging tags but early next year Delzin and I will work on creating a bottle label that holds its own and stands out on the supermarket shelf.

### What have you learned this year?

My key piece of advice always is to just start. That's the only way you will know whether you want to pursue it and also whether it is worth pursuing. Without action, it will always just be an idea you had.

My biggest inspiration this year has been reading "The One Thing" by Gary Keller. The flip side of being a great ideas person is that it's very hard to focus. Reading this book helped me learn how to set one objective for the year and then work backwards from that to a weekly level. Another book I highly recommend to all business owners is "Fix This Next" by Mike Michalowicz. He lays out a framework for how to go identify the next big problem in your business and gives a framework you can use to fix it.

### What is it like juggling everything?

In one sentence - with a lot of struggle. What helps is time-blocking. I keep set times in my calendar in the evening and weekends for working on both my podcast and my business. At the start of the week, I also identify just one critical thing I need to get achieved in each area and then spend my week just completing that. It's amazing just how much you can chip away by doing one small thing at a time.

### What next for Dolly Mumma?

Next for Dolly Mumma is a year of putting our head down and just getting to work. We only just got our kitchen registration so now we plan on getting into as many farmers' markets as possible so that we can get real-time feedback about our product and create some sales. We are also parallel building our website, social media channels and sorting out other operational details. In early 2021, we are also looking at doing some crowd funding to help raise seed capital for some key operational expenses.\*



**Perzen Patel** is a Communications Adviser at the University of Auckland and in her free time works on "Dolly Mumma" and podcasts, "Kiwi Foodcast" and "Not Just Dhansak". She is popularly known as the "Bawi Bride", a moniker referring to her food blog and the catering business she had in India.

Find Dolly Mumma on Instagram, Direct Message the 'No more Butter Chicken' hotline for advice about cooking Indian at home and buy the spice paste online.



# Cobra: The Beer that Goes with Curry

By Lord Karan Bilimoria

*Lord Karan Bilimoria is the founder of Cobra Beer, Chairman of the Cobra Beer Partnership Limited, a Joint Venture with Molson Coors, and Chairman of Molson Coors Cobra India. In 2006, he was appointed the Lord Bilimoria of Chelsea, making him the first Zarathushti Parsi to sit in the House of Lords. In 2008, he was awarded the Pravasi Bharti Samman by the President of India. He tells Fezana Journal the story of his success.*

I came from India to the UK as a 19-year-old student having already graduated with a degree in commerce. It was while I was at Cambridge studying Law that I had to make a career choice - was I going to become an investment banker, revert to accountancy or become a barrister? I ended up doing none of these because I came up with the idea for Cobra beer!

I discovered that I did not like the fizzy lagers either on their own or with food including with curry and Indian food as I found them bloating. On the other hand, I took an instant liking to ales, which I found smooth but they were impossible to drink with food of any kind as the ales were too heavy and too bitter to accompany food. This is when my idea for Cobra beer emerged - why not produce a beer which would have the refreshment of

a lager and the smoothness of an ale combined? A beer that would have a globally appealing taste? A beer that would be the best accompaniment to all food including Indian food and curry?

After I finished my studies, I teamed up with Arjun Reddy, a childhood friend from India. Starting at the kitchen table of a friend's house where I was renting a room, Arjun and I started in business in 1989. Through our mentor, Arjun's uncle, Wing Commander Keshow Reddy, we had a chance introduction to Mysore Breweries in Bangalore, the largest independent brewer in India at that time, who also had India's finest brew master, Dr. Cariapa. Together with Dr. Cariapa, we

recreated the complex recipe of Cobra beer - malted barley, yeast, water, rice, maize, wheat and three varieties of hops, giving Cobra the less gassy and extra smooth taste, making it 'brewed smooth for all food'!

We imported the beer from Bangalore to the UK for seven years, from 1990 - 1997. We started by selling and delivering the beer ourselves, in our battered Citron 2CV, which we had bought for £295. We sold to the restaurants serving Indian food, who were and always will be our base and foundation. I will always be grateful to the restaurateurs for the support they gave us in our early days and for so much that they taught me including always putting their customers

first. Throughout my journey I have remembered this and there have been many decisions that I have had to make, which have involved asking the consumer before going ahead.

Building a business is not easy, having started with no money and having student debts of £20,000. We had to raise every penny along the way through a variety of sources including banks, angel investors,



debtor finance, trade finance and private equity. From 1997 onwards, we brewed Cobra in the UK and today the Cobra beer range is brewed in two locations in the UK, in Belgium, and in Holland. We have always had a culture of non-stop innovation and, over the years, have expanded the varieties of Cobra beer from the original premium beer to include Cobra Zero, our alcohol-free beer, gluten-free Cobra; King Cobra, which like champagne is double fermented in the bottle; and Malabar Blond IPA. My mission from day one has been 'to brew the finest ever Indian beer and make it a global beer brand'. I am proud to say that today Cobra is one of the most award-winning beers in the world, having won 121 Gold Medals

in the Monde selection World Quality Awards.

I have nearly lost my business three times, each time for completely unpredictable and different reasons. However, the three things that enabled me to survive were having a strong brand, the support of my loyal team and family, including my wife who I met a year after I started Cobra beer, and always behaving with integrity. Success is not a destination, but a journey. It is not just good enough to be the best in the world; you also have to be the best for the world. From the beginning we put back into the community, including donating millions of pounds worth of beer for charitable events. In 2005, we

established the Cobra Foundation, which in partnership with Belu water, sells a special water bottle, where we donate 100% of our profits to Water Aid, providing clean water and sanitation, saving lives in South Asia.

Our Cobra brand has shown tremendous resilience, including during the pandemic this year. Entrepreneurs have guts - the guts to start a business in the first place, but even more importantly the guts to stick with it when others would give up. Our vision at Cobra beer is to aspire and achieve against all odds with integrity. In many ways we have only just started! \*

## Lord Bilimoria's 10 Ps for Building a Successful Business

1. **Product:** We have a super-premium product.
2. **Price:** Being a premium product we are relatively expensive.
3. **Place:** Cobra is now distributed in restaurants – Indian / curry, Chinese, Thai, Turkish, Lebanese, gastro pubs, casual dining, wine shops, cash and carries, supermarkets, pubs and hotels; it is exported to over 40 countries around the world.
4. **Promotion:** Starting with one flimsily green-and-black printed table tent card for the restaurants (we could not afford full color printing nor even a branded beer glass!), we now have an integrated marketing program including advertising, social media, public relations and point of sale.
5. **People:** The most important thing in any business whether you are business-to-business, business-to-consumer, manufacturing or services - we have always had a People First approach.
6. **'Phinance':** Raising money, particularly in the early days, was one of our biggest challenges;
7. **Passion:** You have to love what you do. Follow your passion, not your pension.
8. **Partnership:** Partner with all of your stake holders – suppliers, customers, advisors and investors.
9. **Principles:** It is better to fail doing the right thing than to succeed doing the wrong thing.
10. **Profit:** You may make losses in your early years, but you eventually have to make a profit.

# Designing a *Dabba*

## An Experiment in Packaging

By Sheeraz Y. Wania

### THE QUINTESSENTIAL PARSİ BISCUIT TIN

We Parsis love our tea-time. *Choi* (tea) and biscuits (cookies), be it *batasa* (Parsi tea cookie), *bhakra* (sweet fried dough), *nan-khatai* (shortbread) or butter puff, has been a part of who we are ever since I can remember. In my home growing up, there was always a *banni* (earthen jar) that we could dig into. Today, I still always have one sitting on my kitchen counter, ever ready for us and the guests who pop in for a cuppa. Collecting and re-purposing empty tins is also a huge feature of Parsi *panu* (being Parsi). Every household typically has an old chocolate tin, usually Cadbury or Quality Street, to store everything from teatime goodies, stationary, to, most popularly, *soi doro* (needle and thread).

When I, a *pukka* Parsi and a graphic designer by profession, was approached by this issue's guest editor, Farishta Dinshaw, to explain packaging design using a quintessential Parsi *dabba* (box) for biscuits, I knew that it just had to be a tin, which could sit on the kitchen counter, look pretty, be intrinsically embedded in our culture, and also fulfill all the key purposes of packaging.

### PACKAGING DESIGN

In regards to the technicalities of design, package design refers to the design of the exterior of a product. It includes material, which is relevant to the design of the core product, as well the applied design, which refers to the graphics, typography, colors. Your choices decide shape, structure, and visual message of the package.

In the industry, there are four main purposes of a package design - protection, convenience, image, and sustainability. In my design, at its core, the air-tight tin will protect the contents from going stale, it is non-breakable and light, and most importantly reusable, and sustainable as tin is one of the most environmentally friendly packaging materials because it is recyclable and doesn't contribute to the further depletion of natural resources.

### APPLIED DESIGN

On the applied design side, like any good design, the package should tell a story set within an aesthetically pleasing backdrop. For my design, I decided to use the 'fish' and the 'pomegranate' as my lead characters, and the 'Art Nouveau' style as the setting.

#### The Fish

The 'fish' in Zarathushti heritage is a symbol of transformation and creation. A bowl of live goldfish is placed for good luck on our Haft-Sheen, a special Nowruz table, at our spring festival. *Sagan ni macchi* (auspicious fish) is a part our celebratory occasions like weddings and birthdays, be it *Mava ni Boi* (a sweet made in the shape of a fish) or the ever favorite *patra ni macchi* (fish cooked in banana leaves). Fish as a symbolic representation is documented as way back as the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE in Iran. In a bas relief of Cyrus the Great at Pasargadae, his crown is adorned with fish. And a relief from the same region and era in the Louvre museum, Paris, shows a woman spinning wool with a food container of fish in front of her.



#### The Pomegranate

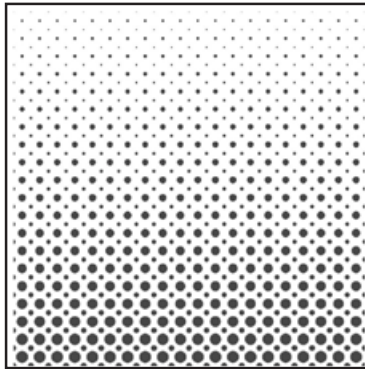
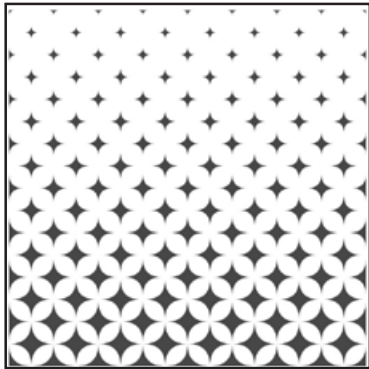
The pomegranate is said to have originated in Iran and Afghanistan. For Zarathushtis, the fruit symbolizes the soul's immortality and the perfection of the natural world. The multiple seeds in a single fruit have come to stand for prosperity and good fortune. Pomegranates also symbolize fertility,





beauty and eternal life, in Greek and Persian mythology. In Persepolis, a relief shows a pomegranate flower (*gulnar*) in the hand of priests on the stone carvings.

## ART NOUVEAU



While determining my art direction for this project, I decided to work with the Art Nouveau style of design that flourished between 1890 and 1910. This “new art” influenced furniture, fabrics, wallpaper, architecture, and objets d’art.

My reasons for opting for Art Nouveau as a base style were multiple and rigorous. Most importantly, this particular style is best known for taking natural forms and flattening them into abstracted and elegant patterns, which I thought would work well for the project at hand, not making it clichéd and

yet giving it the needed character. Secondly, the movement’s proponents advocated a greater coordination of art and design and from its historical perspective and context, Art Nouveau was deeply rooted in a mix of aesthetics and ethics, a balance I like to strike in my own practice as a designer. The movement gave an equal importance to art and craft, at a time when craft was looked down on. William Morris, one of the movement’s more famous advocates, defined its main goals: “To give people pleasure in the things they must perforce use, that is one great office of decoration; to give people pleasure in the things they must perforce make, that is the other use of it.” With the advent of this movement and its technological progress design became mainstream and took on an important role. \*



**Sheeraz Y. Wania** is a graphic designer and educator with a Master’s degree in Design 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. She also has a global design practice based out of Toronto and Karachi.

# Read the Fine Print

By Homa Dashtaki

If you are contemplating starting a business that you have been incubating during the quarantine, let me tell you about how I set up a yogurt business after being laid off after the housing bubble crash of 2009. It took me some time, but I ended up starting a yogurt business called “White Moustache”. In 2011, my father (the inspiration for the name with his glorious moustache) and I started selling two gallons of yogurt per-weekend at a southern California farmers’ market. We weren’t interested in starting a formal business, just a weekend activity. I wanted to make a product that was in the same lineage as what I grew up eating in Iran and flavoring them with familiar Iranian flavors like dates and quince. My father and I concentrated on creating a recipe that honored our Zarathushti ancestors. Those early months were not very profitable, but we had so much fun. Slowly but surely we built a following.



Just three months after our launch, it all came crashing down when California state government told us we had to shut down operations. Even though we were selling small scale at local farmers’ markets, with all the required local and city health permits, they said that our company was in violation of state level health

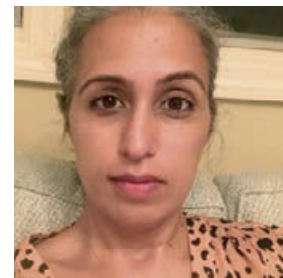
codes and that we needed to take industrial food safety measures and operate out of a formal dairy facility. None of that made any sense, since we were making yogurt in a commercial kitchen using milk we were buying from the grocery store. What was meant to be a protection for the people, was in reality a barrier of access for small business. What sets our yogurt apart was exactly what the law was designed to quash. The day they shut us down, I cried my heart out. And then I hunkered down to fight.

The two years that followed were a torrent of advocacy, legal work, and bureaucratic fighting. We submitted pH lab results and obtained pro bono counsel. We went to Sacramento and met with politicians. I wrote a plea to “The Economist” to save my business and they ran an earnest article in response. This got us a call from Kate Brown, the Secretary of State of Oregon (later Governor Kate Brown), inviting us to move our operation to Portland. But, ultimately, even that most liberal and food-friendly of cities couldn’t help us get into business. I wanted to make yogurt the Iranian way, even though at the time, I knew absolutely nothing about running a business. We searched the world for a home, from other states in America to Tanzania to Mexico. Eventually, in 2013, our dreams of making yogurt for a living were revived in New York City, where the laws were the same as in California, but the attitude was more open to accommodating a handmade process. They were willing to work with us so we didn’t have

to compromise our traditions, while satisfying regulations.

Since our inception in 2014, we have not only proved that a small batch local yogurt is delicious and healthy—we have shown that it is profitable. With a firm commitment to the whey we strain from our yogurt, we are a leader in preventing food waste, we are also setting a whole new example of what growing businesses can look like in America. We show a different kind of ambition, one that can be true to ourselves as well as to the environment.

So my advice to you is mainly, that no matter what obstacle will inevitably face you—make sure to be working on something you believe in deeply in order to find the conviction to keep going. And also, maybe make sure to read all the rules and regulations “before” starting out.\*



**Homa Dashtaki** started “White Moustache”, an all-natural, handmade yogurt company, with her father based on the recipes her family was using for generations. Prior to that she studied law at Cornell University and worked in top law firms in New York City.

# Marketing on a Shoestring Budget

By Farhad K. Wadia

In a career of over 30 years in helping clients and brands meet their communication needs via effective and, sometimes unorthodox, media vehicles like events and brand activations, targeted direct marketing, digital marketing and other non-mass media traditional avenues like print, television, radio, I have worked with all types of budgets. For young entrepreneurs launching your own businesses and finding yourself with non-existent or extremely frugal ad

digital team in-house, the best way to do this is by researching what keywords and images are used by your competitors who show up in the top five hits when you search the offered product or service on the Internet. This is a painstaking and time consuming process, but getting it right is 50% of the battle to success.

The next step is harnessing the power of social media to drive traffic to your website by using platforms

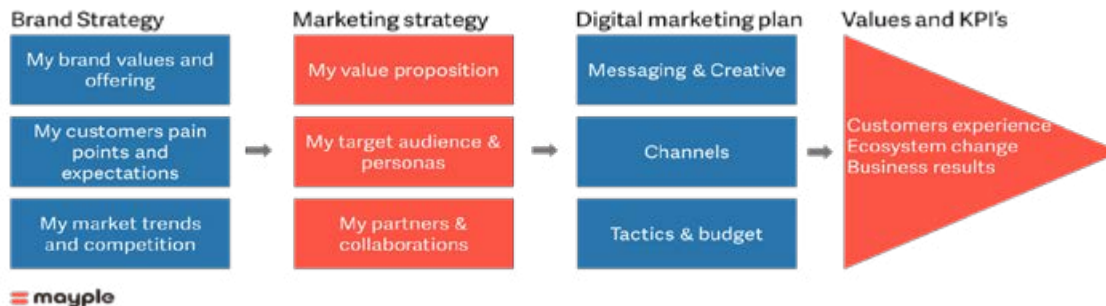
Owned Media are the keys to a reduced marketing cost of Paid Media. Many brands like Kyliecosmetics.com, the billion dollar business owned by Social Media queen Kylie Jenner have been built from the ground up with almost a Zero Dollar spend on bought media, and sales have been generated purely via earned and owned media channels. In the food sector, it is almost impossible to find any Mom and Pop food brand to emulate this success and trajectory. Most successful

food brands are owned or acquired by multi-national corporations and they have deep pockets and use Traditional Mass Media and clever point of sale promotions to spur their growth. These are beyond the grasp of most startup

budgets, I recommend you follow the process from “Story to Glory” as in the graphic here.

In today’s Digital Age, the best bang for buck on a minimal advertising/communication budget is undoubtedly via a robust digital/social media approach. To do that I encourage you to build a unique website with a clean user interface and relevant, detailed content about your product or service offering, and the correct keywords in the content section. Your web page’s ranking i.e. where your website shows up when someone searches a word or descriptor for your offered product or service will mean the difference between success and failure of your business. Unless one has deep pockets and an experienced

## From story to glory



mayple

like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, to name a few. “The Digital Marketing Mix” graphic shows that the smart leveraging of Earned and

entrepreneurs. The only business that came close is Chobani yogurt. It’s tough to make yogurt appealing on social media, especially when your

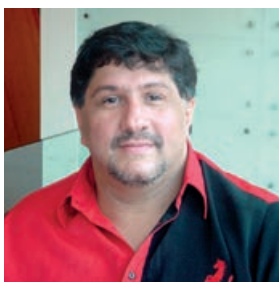
## THE DIGITAL MARKETING MIX





feeds are flooded by soda, beer, and fast food brands. But Chobani expertly uses Instagram to showcase appreciation for the healthy treat and build a community around its products. Before Chobani even joined the platform in 2011, it saw that people were posting pictures of “artfully arranged breakfasts and cleverly smoothie concoctions.” The brand realized there was an opportunity to be part of this conversation. Chobani now uses Instagram to share high-quality images of product-inspired meals and recipes. This strategy positions yogurt as versatile ingredient and healthy substitute in treats like chip dip and pancakes. However, Chobani is a giant corporation.

That said, most home-based businesses have modest aspirations and you can achieve success by positioning the product or service that you want to sell as a quality product or premium service. A consumer’s delight is the key ingredient that drives success. Always remember, “The gap between what’s expected and what you deliver is where the magic happens, in business and in life!” \*



**Farhad K. Wadia** is the founder of *Tower Of Power*, an Omni-Channel Retail, Brand, Media, Entertainment, and Experiential Marketing Consultancy Service, Austin, Texas. He has worked in Executive Leadership positions in India, UAE, and the USA. He is also an avid musician with multi-platinum album credits in India.



## An Insider’s Guide to a Trade Show

By Naomi J. Mobed

*Lights, camera, action!...* And, you are on! Exhibiting at a trade show is a performance. Capped with excitement at the start and exhaustion at the end, the show carries with it its own pulse beating with hope that your business and products/services are validated by an international audience of your peers, industry professionals and consumers.

I am the owner of Le Bon Magot®, a small specialty food brand, producing traditional condiments from Africa, Middle East and South Asia – achaars (pickles) chutneys, conserves, preserves, among them – re-invented for the modern palate. Since the inception of my company five years ago and prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we participated in numerous food-industry shows large or small – the Fancy Food Show, Good Food Mercantile, National Restaurant Association, Natural Expo Products – East, to name but a few. Although not the silver bullet for growth, trade shows can be a valuable element of every company’s marketing

mix. They can help you generate leads, find new distribution channels, rub shoulders with industry players, gain media visibility, capture competitive intelligence, and even meet potential partners. If planned well, not only will you be able to sell products or services, but learn from a cadre of experts about key trends, and new technologies, among an array of topics addressed in workshops, breakout sessions, and speaker presentations. It is a big investment of time, money and effort, but used strategically a small-medium size business can be uplifted from a small local seller to a nation-wide brand.

My favorite time of the show is the start, when exhibitors set up their booths. As you enter the subterranean maze of the docks at large exhibition facilities to empty your van brimming with cartons, you wait with other small-scale exhibitors; we commiserate over costs, delays and the need for coffee at the early hour of the morning. It’s the last relaxed moment in the onslaught of activity that is

staged to occur for the next several days. Once our number is called, our cargo is weighed, and we proceed to our booth, which at this point is a bare frame. We unpack amid a floor filling up with people, the humming of freezers and ovens (interrupted by an expletive or two from a disgruntled exhibitor), and vibrant displays coming to life. Hefty cranes lift and position larger-than-life installations – e.g., colorful food trucks and ice cream vans that hang like mobiles suspended over a booth. Entire kitchens are constructed within hours, and the floor becomes awash with color. Baskets overflow with colorfully wrapped samples, as brochureware and iPads are poised in readiness. We start to prepare our samples and work to arrange them in a way that helps to sell the product being sampled. The air becomes thick with aromas – caramel, smoked charcuterie, sizzling sausages, freshly baked croissants, chocolate – a heady mix.

Large brands invest sizable sums of money at trade show. They are able to secure vast amounts of booth space in optimal traffic areas. Their brand identity, nomenclature, and messaging are slick, sales pitches well rehearsed; technology proliferates their booths. The smaller companies, while raw in representing themselves, are forced to be more innovative. Smaller budgets may necessitate booth-sharing, cross-marketing and creative design. Often nestled into less visible locations of the exhibition floor, it's critical for a small brand to have an eye-catching booth with strong marketing materials and special giveaways to ensure the prospective customer remembers you long after they go back to their offices.

The booth, messaging, brochureware and even giveaways do not simply happen off the cuff. The success or value of a trade show depends on the quality of pre-show planning supported and post-show sales

strategy. Whether large or small brand, the preparation process is the same: identify the purpose of attending the show, define goals that are easy to measure, and maintain a clear vision of success. The next step is putting the pieces in place to ensure goals are met. For those of us who are new to the industry, scheduling meetings with buyers or media in advance of the show may not be viable. So, it is worth being on the look-out for opportunities provided by the show organizers to invite decision makers and influencers of all types to your booth.

What happens after the lights dim on the show? How do you realize its benefits for your business? Leads or prospects generated at the show may know what you have to offer, but after walking through thousands of booths, a reminder can always help. However, with numerous competitive products all bombarding buyers for placement, timely and effective post show communications about your brand and products is imperative. A follow-up needs to be within one to three business days of the event. Data collection is notoriously dirty following a trade show which can become a nightmare for a CRM system and for the sales team that is supposed to execute on this data. The leads should be tagged with a naming convention which is easily trackable and helps you get a tangible return on investment (ROI) of the leads coming through from the show. Serious prospects are contacted, and samples sent, resulting in purchase orders.

Follow-ups have become even more critical today with trade shows being canceled due to pandemic. The business models of experiential food and beverage companies, like Le Bon Magot® rely on these shows, and we have been forced to pivot quickly and decisively. The last in-person trade show we attended was the International Restaurant & Food

Service Show in New York, March 2020, on the cusp of the COVID-19 lockdown in the Northeast USA. Attendees had already begun to thin (60% fewer attendees than 2019). As the rate of infection spikes in Europe and US (at the time of publication), trade associations have begun to organize virtual exhibitions or shows. Buyers and sellers participate online, via Zoom or other similar web applications that enable interactive discussions.

Our success from these online shows has been mixed, nonetheless, until we are able to meet with our customers in-person, the e-trade shows continue to provide a useful sales forum at a significantly reduced price. Virtual events can be targeted. Buyers and sellers are better aligned or matched – perhaps by region, product category or other relevant classifications for the industry. Buyers are able to transact with suppliers at the click of a button and without other expenses – food & beverage, transportation, and travel. I am fortunate that the move from in-person to virtual trade shows has been positive for my business. While in-person shows are expected to return as the risk around COVID-19 is mitigated, virtual shows are trending and will continue to help the budget-conscious small business.\*



**Naomi J. Mobed** is a culinary entrepreneur who started Le Bon Magot®, a line of inspired condiments in 2015. Their Brinjal Caponata was awarded first place at the 2019 Artisan Flave Awards.



## Sweets & Savories

# Mousse 'n More

## A Father and Son Bonding Experience

By Sheriar Hirjikaka

On one particularly boring and depressing day during the lockdown, I decided to cheer up the spirits of my family by revisiting a recipe that I had not made for over 18 years. Back in Karachi, Pakistan, I used to make mousses and mousse cakes for family and friends. Making specialty desserts was unfortunately one of the things that fell by the wayside when we moved to Canada. My daughter, Daena, had vague memories of these amazing desserts that I would make back when she was little. She and my niece had been asking me to recreate those desserts, and I was hesitant to try my hand at it after so long, because, as everyone knows, gelatin-based desserts are finicky and fickle. So,



when I found myself trying to find ways to cheer up my family in the middle of a pandemic, I thought of the mousse desserts that were always a hit with everyone who tried them. A mousse is an airy and light dessert made with whipped cream and eggs. I tried to recreate the recipes as best as I could and to my surprise it worked quite well. Like everyone else I was bored silly, so I experimented with a variety of flavors. The pistachio was disastrous with a sickly green pallor.

My family dubbed it, “the Pakola mousse” (Pakola being a bright green-colored soda available in Pakistan), and ordered me never to make it again. The only person who seemed to like it was my nephew who ended up with a bowlful all to himself! The chocolate mousse and different

variations of chocolate mousse seemed to be a favorite across the board. The mandarin orange was a hit and so was the luscious lemon, whiskey-vanilla, and espresso with hints of Kahlua and Tia Maria.

Now that I was making large quantities of mousse every other day in the middle of a pandemic with no access to the gym, my daughter and wife, Daleara, decided that it was in



the family's best interest to find other avenues for these desserts.

One evening, my wife set up a website and my daughter created a social media account for "Mousse 'n More: Fine Foods and Desserts" and, before I knew it, we were in business. We make delectable mousse desserts, including mousse tarts and mousse cakes. Customers can select from chocolate brandy, chocolate mint, chocolate orange, chocolate hazelnut, luscious lemon, mandarin orange, aromatic espresso, monsoon mango, whiskey-vanilla to name a



few. Mousse desserts are offered in both spiked and virgin varieties. We make the desserts to order, usually a day before to give the flavors a chance to settle. Classic mousse desserts are gluten free, which is a blessing for many people who cannot have flour-based desserts. We make individual cups, shareable containers, and party packs to suit a variety of occasions. Currently, we are only open for customers to pick up their orders, and we usually ask customers to bring an ice box, especially in the summer when temperatures in Toronto can spike up to 38 degrees Celsius (100 degrees Fahrenheit). The mousse needs to chill in the refrigerator for 15-30 minutes before serving for the best taste.

Special occasions called for special themed desserts, so on Canada

Day we offered the "O' Canada Maple Whiskey Mousse" a smooth whisky mousse proudly made by using Canadian ingredients like local whiskey and 100% pure maple syrup. And, in the summer, I created the "Monsoon Mango Mousse" reminiscent of the mango desserts that we would enjoy growing up back home. In the fall, I started experimenting with cakes and cake crumbles, which is the "in thing" these days. The ones that are most popular are the chocolate hazelnut mousse cake or cake crumble, and the many fruit-based mousse cakes that I make



with a homemade fruit-based jelly layer in the middle and topped with a silky-smooth mirror glaze. A layered mousse is more time consuming to make as each layer must set before you add the next layer on top.

The best part of this business is that my son, Iyaneh, is into the preparation of these desserts. Iyaneh is 18-years-old and he has autism, so we were trying to find something to channelize his interest in cooking. This offered an amazing prospect for father-son bonding and a great opportunity for my son to learn hard work and patience. In addition to the mousse desserts and cakes, I am teaching my son to make *muramba*, *paneer* (cottage cheese), *lagaan nu custard* (egg-rich custard traditionally served at Parsi weddings), *pahwa* (milk and rice creamy pudding) and *mithu dahi*

(sweetened yogurt). Besides classic *mithu dahi* we also make it in rose and saffron flavors. The old Parsi recipes of our childhood deserve to be preserved and shared with the younger generation (who seems to enjoy them as much as we did). My favorite is a hybrid that I call a *muramkaliya*, which is a fusion between a *keri muramba* (sweet and sour mango preserve) and an *ambakaliyo* (sweet and spicy mango sauce).

The pandemic has changed the world, but in some small ways it has provided people like me with the time



and ability to try something new and wonderful that can cheer the spirits of friends, family and everyone else who enjoys good food.\*



**Sheriar Hirjikaka** is an international medical graduate and has worked in clinical research in Canada. He enjoys experimenting with different cuisines from around the world and loves to cook for family and friends.

Please visit [www.moussenmore.com](http://www.moussenmore.com) to find details for ordering mousse desserts.

# Cakes and Cookies

By Armita Bastanizadeh

When I was a nine-year-old growing up in Tehran, Iran, I started making some sweets like *halva* (flour-based sweet confection) for my dad. He encouraged me to cook them more often and I enjoyed making them, so I bought baking books and magazines to bake cakes and cookies for my family and it became a hobby.

Later, I decided to follow this art professionally, and I enrolled in a culinary college, Gardesh Garan Bonyad, in Iran. I also did several specialist certificate courses in pastries and appetizers, bread-making, sauce preparation, and Italian cuisine. After graduation, I started a small business. I got orders for celebrations and

funerals. My business was doing well when we decided to immigrate. After arriving in America in 2016, I completed a baking and cooking certificate from the Academy of Culinary Education and began my work of selling Iranian cookies and cupcakes in three Persian supermarkets in Orange County, California. I expanded my business by taking orders for custom-made cake and cookies for special occasions like baby showers, birthdays, holidays like the “skull cake” for Halloween. These days, customers often order numeral and alphabet cakes. I make all decorative items on the cake like macarons, flowers, and chocolates.

I want to satisfy all my customers. One of the things I have noticed is that in Iranian baking most of the cookies are made of small pieces and have cardamom and rose water flavors, but other people don't like this flavor. Also, Americans prefer donuts and cake in larger sizes. To expand my base of customers, I am now researching low-sugar and gluten-free cookie recipes for people who have dietary needs or allergies.

After many years of working in different bakeries, I have learned that bakers can work a lot to get experience, but they also need academic education. Right now, I work from home and my permit only allows me to sell in Orange County, but my dream is to open my own bakery and train people that are interested in this art.

I am thankful to my father Arastoo, my husband Manoochehr, and my daughters Pegah and Saina who encouraged me to follow my hobby and turn it into a profession.\*



At first, I only worked for the Zarathushti and Persian communities, but now I attract customers from different cultures and nations. This is interesting for me as I need to provide cookies that suit every taste. I do this because



**Armita Bastanizadeh** was born in Iran and moved to the USA in 2016. She runs Armita Bakery and lives with her family in Irvine, California. She can be reached at 949-880-6296 for orders. Instagram: @armitabakery





# From Karachi to Canada

By Shireen Kavassji



Armeen's cakes was started in 1979 by my mother, Armin Kavassji, in Karachi as a home-based business. Her most popular cake was Caramel Crumble. By the time

I was twelve, she had roped me into helping her in the business in some form or the other. After I trained as a pastry chef in Switzerland, we introduced mousse cakes and fondant cakes. I continued my mother's legacy in Canada.

Armeen's Cake and Bake shop has been operating in Mississauga for just over four years and offers a variety of baked goods, ranging from cookies and pastries, sandwiches and patties to highly specialized custom cakes for

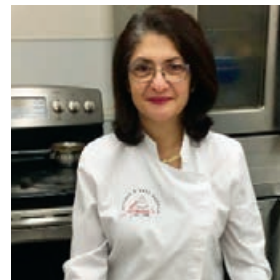
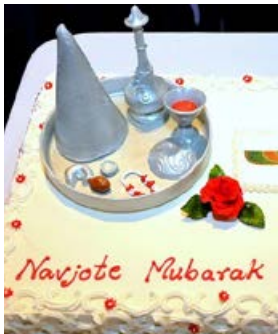
weddings, birthdays, baby showers, corporate events and more.

It has not been an easy journey. Statistics show that eight out of 10 small businesses in Canada pack up and this was before the COVID-19 pandemic. Dealing with construction to business permits, from bankers to scammers (yes, we've had our fair share) was an exhausting struggle. But it has also been rewarding. As the word got out that Armeen's had opened, people who knew us from Karachi came by. It is wonderful to have a customer reminisce about how they used to come to our house to get their cakes and how excited they are to be able to get their Caramel Crumble and Pineapple cakes here. Their kids who didn't actually grow up having "Armeen's cakes" have become

recurring customers. Real satisfaction set in, however, when people from different backgrounds started to try our products and love them.

For any small business to succeed, it is important to know one's limitations as it is to know one's strengths. Customers expect bang for their buck and are constantly bringing us new designs and ideas to execute. We research them and attempt them only if we feel we can do them justice.

After four years of 14- to 16-hour days of struggle and sacrifice, our business had started to take off when COVID-19 hit the world! It was disheartening, to say the least, when the government ordered a shut down in March. Although we were allowed to operate, we didn't know if it would be worthwhile to keep the shop open, especially as our products have a short shelf life. After many conversations with friends and family who are successful business people (I thank them most sincerely), we decided not to close our doors even temporarily. This turned out to be one of the best decisions we have ever made. We offered home delivery, touchless curbside pickup, Uber Eats delivery, pretty much anything to keep the customers happy. Since other bakeries closed temporarily, we got more business than we expected and were able to get through the worst period. This has given us a boost to keep looking forward. Someday soon, we hope to have more than just one branch of Armeen's Cake and Bake shop.\*



**Shireen Kavassji** studied to be a pastry chef at Ecole Les Roches, Switzerland and is the owner of Armeen's Cake and Bake shop in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. Information about her shop and products is available at [Armeenscakes.com](http://Armeenscakes.com) and on Facebook and Instagram @armeenscakes



# A Spoonful of Delicious

By Julia Maglietta

Ever since I was young, I've loved being in the kitchen. I found joy in watching my grandmother cook and learning from her skills honed from years of experience. In 2017, I started culinary school at George Brown College and, after a few years of working in restaurants, cafes, and catering companies, I decided to start my own catering company, "Spoonful of Julia" in August 2020.

It is small scale at the moment due to the ongoing pandemic. At the moment, I concentrate on cakes, but in the past I have also made charcuterie boards and hors d'oeuvres - my favorites have been smoked salmon crostinis, and baked figs stuffed with herbed goat cheese, drizzled with honey. Independently, I've catered events ranging from five - 50 people.

As I am an informal small business, I work out of my home kitchen. I am Food Handler Certified and have worked in the industry for over three years, so I am well educated on safety protocols. My clients' safety and health is of utmost importance, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am constantly cleaning my kitchen before, during, and after baking. A big adjustment I had to make from home cooking and cooking for business is ensuring that I keep my workspace completely free of any allergens so there is no cross contamination. I always ask my clients if they have any allergies or food sensitivities when they order.

"Spoonful of Julia" specializes in roll cakes – sponge cakes that are then rolled with flavor-infused whipped

cream in the middle. I offer unique, premium flavored cakes including earl grey lavender, matcha, cookie butter, rose water and cardamom, and mocha. I am constantly experimenting with new flavors. My inspiration usually comes from family or friends who have shared ideas with me and have asked me to experiment. I also love using Pinterest for recipe development, as well as for artistic creativity. One of my flavors – the rose

roll cake with cardamom whipped cream and pistachios – is a family and friends' favorite. This flavor was inspired by Iranian pastries and desserts, and as many of my clients are Iranian Zarathushtis this cake flavor is highly popular.

spoonful  
of julia

Majority of my clients at the moment are from word of mouth. I use a business profile on Instagram to do my marketing (@spoonfulofjulia) and I also do client relations through direct messaging on Instagram. My friends have been supportive and share my posts with their contacts, which has definitely helped grow my business. I offer delivery within a small radius in Vaughan where I am located, but most of my clients have been happy to pick up their orders. Since I specialize in roll cakes, there is not a lot of competition in my area. I am hoping to build on that to turn "Spoonful of Julia" into a larger brand, with a storefront location in Toronto serving as a café and bakery. \*



*Rose, Cardamom, Pistachio Roll Cake*



*Matcha and Strawberry Roll Cake*



**Julia Maglietta** is the owner of a catering company, "Spoonful of Julia" in Toronto, Canada. She graduated from the Culinary Management program at George Brown College in 2019, and is currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Commerce program.

# My Memorable Cakes

By Farah Ardeshir

I, like many women, play a lot of roles in life, like that of being a daughter, sister, wife, mother, career woman, but I am writing this article as a baker. I studied Hospitality Management, but unfortunately baking wasn't a part of my course. I am self-taught and now have a certified home based business called "M5 Bakes" in Milton, Ontario, Canada. I chose the name "M5 Bakes" for my business as in our family we call ourselves M5 for short (M is for Manekshaw, my married surname and 5 because we are five people in the family). I added Bakes because I make both sweet treats and savory finger foods. However, cakes and desserts make it to the top of my list because I like anything sweet so I am always interested in creating what I love to eat.



From all the cakes I have baked so far, including a birthday cake for a Keki Illava, a Canadian Zarathushti, for his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday this year, my top three memorable ones are described below.

## The Chocolate Shoe

The cake that is my top favorite and very dear to me is the chocolate shoe which can be filled with various desserts and treats. I made this in the memory of my younger sister who had given me this mold as a Christmas gift two days before she passed over into Heaven. I used white chocolate to make the shoe to represent the color of purity and filled it with cupcakes decorated with the beauty of red and white to symbolize love.

## The Rolex Watch

I made the Rolex watch dial on my husband's birthday because I was un-



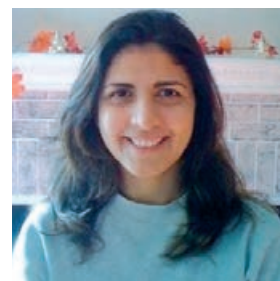
able to provide him with a real Rolex watch and with his affinity for watches, this was the closest and the best I could give him. This was a lemon cream cake with an edible image of the dial garnished with sliced almonds.

## A Wedding Cake

I enjoyed making this strawberry cream cake with edible gold pearls and French macarons flowing down from the top to the side of the cake. What made it memorable was that in the summer heat it had to travel an hour-and-a-half with its two tall tiers assembled with no one to monitor, hold, or carry it while transporting it. I had put in extra supports for the long drive as I wanted it to reach whole and undamaged. I was hoping that the person driving it was careful as I wasn't going to be on site to fix it if anything went wrong. The cake reached as



created and the bride and guests said it was perfect and delicious.\*



**Farah Ardeshir** is currently a Certified Consulting Hypnotist from the National Guild of Hypnotists, USA and has a holistic and wellness business called *Spark the Light Within*. She also works as an insurance agent at Desjardins. Hypnotherapy is her calling, baking is her passion, and being an insurance agent is her job. Her website is [www.m5bakes.com](http://www.m5bakes.com)





Owning a baking business, Cillie's Cakes, in Houston, Texas, has been an exciting, but challenging experience. Why choose the name Cillie's? Cillie's is actually a cake business started by my Mom, Shireen Mehta, affectionately known as Cillie, in Karachi. She was the first to introduce fresh cream cakes and till today Cillie's is operating in Karachi, but on a smaller scale. The day I opened my doors in Houston, the phones started ringing with ex-Karachiites asking whether we were the same Cillie's as back home.

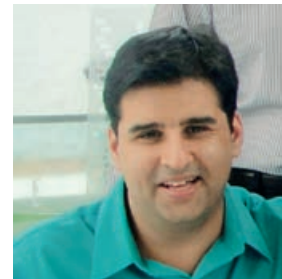
I opened the store in 1995 in a busy Indo-Pakistani shopping strip. I started my days early in the morning and wore multiple hats throughout the day - baker, cake decorator, front-end sales, dishwasher, and floor-mopper. I used to come home at 11 pm or even midnight. This went on for a year till I finally got one part-time helper. In 2015, once my son, Nerius, and daughter, Natalya, were more independent, I decided to expand the business and moved to another location. Currently, we are a team of 12 full and part-time staff.

We focus on custom cakes for all occasions. We use fondant instead of marzipan (almond icing) as many people have nut allergies. All cakes have layers and fillings of the customer's choice. The hand-made decorations are labor intensive so we require at least 10-days' notice, though we have accommodated last minute orders in the past. Along with cakes, we offer a variety of party platters of appetizers and mini-desserts. A go-to favorite for parties and at the store are our "puff pattice" full of our Signature Savory fillings such as *nihari* (slow-cooked spicy beef), *kheema* (ground beef), chicken jalapeno, green chutney chicken jalapeno, chicken *masala* (spicy chicken), mild chicken, and spicy vegetables.

In the early months of the pandemic, we saw a big drop in sales, but we kept open throughout and, slowly and steadily, business picked up. In the food business we have to be flexible, so in April I started a WhatsApp group, "Naushad Bhai's Meals to Go". I would send out a menu on Sunday with orders to be picked up the following Saturday. There was a

tremendous response and it was fun, but once the store picked up, I decided to put a halt on it as I could not keep up with both baking and catering.

This year as we celebrate 25 years and, looking back, I cannot imagine how I did it. Our success has been blessed by the support of my parents, our community, and loyal customers, and I am sincerely grateful to them. \*



**Naushad Mehta** is the owner of Cillie's Cakes in Houston, Texas. He did his Bachelors in Hospitality Industry in Switzerland. After immigrating to the USA in 1990, he worked as a chef in hotels before starting his custom cakes business. His handiwork can be seen on [Cilliescakes.com](http://Cilliescakes.com) and the Facebook page Cillie's Cakes of Houston.





# Fresh Burger's First Franchisee

By Armaan Divecha

## The Idea

When I was at University, I had a number of jobs so when I graduated I knew that I wanted to do something where I was more independent, less corporate 9-to-5. In one of my jobs, the office was close to a burger joint, "Fresh Burger". I went over quite often so the owner and I would chat. He was thinking about expanding the business so I asked him if I could work for him for six months to get an idea of the business, and then possibly become his first franchisee, and he agreed. I started as a cashier and then into the kitchen. By the end of it, I knew that this was something I enjoyed doing.

## The Experience

We opened in February 2018. My work now is different; I do most of the behind the scenes work like book keeping, ordering, marketing. The pandemic hit us exactly two years after we started, just when we were getting a regular crowd. In the initial few months there were skip in sales, days when hardly anyone came in, but we stuck it out and slowly the business picked up as we attracted a new base of customers who had nowhere else to go to get a good meal. Now, we are doing well as our regulars have also started trickling in. It's still up and down though, depending on the stage of lock down and what numbers the media is reporting. People don't think about going out for burgers when the news tells them that the daily count in infections is 1,000.

## The Advice

For those who are thinking of starting a food business, I would recommend



buying a franchise because there is a framework in place. You do not have to start from scratch. I benefited from having someone guide me through the legal process, the fire permits, safety issues. Since I am the first franchisee, it is in my best interest to go above and beyond with my own marketing, designing of posters, social media posts rather than rely solely on the franchisor. If you have an established franchise like McDonalds or Tim Horton's, you get name recognition as well as the branding strategy.

You also have to realize that although you get the independence, you also get the responsibility. I am "on the job" from the moment I wake up till late at night. I could be the kind of owner that works from "opening to closing" but then I would have to take shortcuts and the quality of the service would be affected.

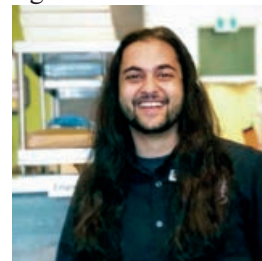
## The Good and the Bad

My favorite part of the job is grilling. It is the most exciting and the most fun part of the job to create a perfectly made burger patty. A good burger has to have a great ratio of fat and meat and it must be FRESH, never frozen meat. A good burger is simple with minimal toppings so you can really taste the flavor of the meat.

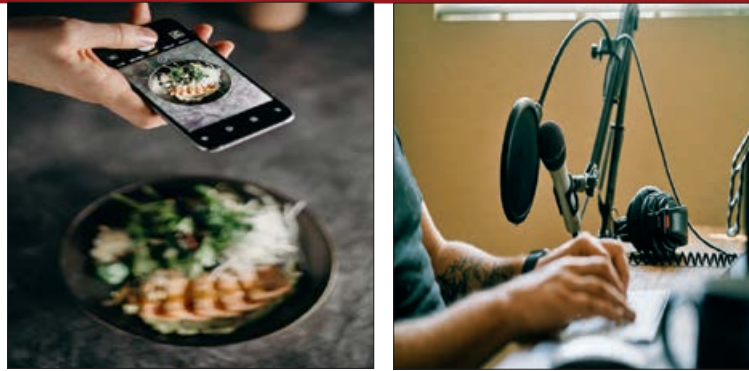
The best part of the experience is when customers come and tell you that it is the greatest burger they've ever had and how they love the entire atmosphere of the store. The worst part of the job is having to fire someone. I've had to do it a couple of times for bad attitude or low productivity.

## The Future

I would like to expand Fresh Burger to two more locations, then sell off the business, and use the money to start something of my own. I don't know what that is just yet, and I'm still learning and happy to be where I am right now.\*



*Armaan Divecha is the owner of Fresh Burger, Vaughan, Ontario, home of handcrafted hamburgers made fresh to order. He opened his franchise at the age of 23 and is continuing to grow business so that he may advance into other ventures and restaurants. He has a Bachelor of Arts from Wilfrid Laurier University.*



## Online Foodies

# Facebook PER Food Goup

By Vera Dinshaw Springett

Social media has changed the way we communicate, share ideas and news, and even how businesses build their client base. What my co-founder, Arbez Shroff Patel, and I started in 2016 as an informal Facebook group to exchange recipes among friends and acquaintances has exploded into a full-scale platform for supporting small Parsi-owned food and catering businesses across the globe. This group, Parsis Exchange Recipes, or PER as it is popularly called, currently has over 15,600 members worldwide. It's logo was designed by Rovina Ghadially, inspired by the love of Parsis for all things *per eedu*.

Positioned as “a repository for recipes, food videos, food stories; some Parsi, some not; some quick and easy, others involved and challenging”, the group sees posts on anything and everything food-related, including heated views



on whether ravo (semolina pudding) should be made with or without eggs! One of our members' favorite aspects of the group is the PER Weekly Cover Image Challenge. Early on, Niloufer Mavalvala, author, culinary instructor and active member, suggested we allow members to pick the cover image every week. This gave members a sense of ownership and every week we worked with the winner to select the next week's cover image. Over time, we've evolved the concept into a variety of fun contests like the very popular Junior Chef Cover Challenge,

which encourages our young, budding members to showcase their talents.

During COVID-19, we have ramped up activities to keep people entertained with an outlet to share their love of food. We've been pleasantly surprised to see the uptick in activity, recipe-sharing and participation. In fact, we've noticed many men take to the kitchen and discover that they not only enjoy cooking, but have a hidden talent for it.

PER was recently invited by FEZANA to moderate a Zoom session in their popular series: The Fezana Talks. Arbez and I moderated a fun conversation with culinary experts Naomi Mobed, Jehangir Mehta and Niloufer Mavalvala on September 19, 2020. The topic was, “Food, Sustainability, Creativity and Conservation in the time of

COVID-19". Participation reached well over a hundred participants and we shared some unique views on how our Zarathushti faith and culture have prepared us to conserve and cook foods seasonally through the centuries, and how it has served us well during these challenging times.

What's more, PER is likely the only Zarathushti group on Facebook that actively seeks to promote small entrepreneurs and caters for free: "DO post pictures of food items you are selling as a business, but kindly write For Sale, so our members can contact you directly to purchase your items, and NOT request your recipes. PER is proud to encourage, support and respect the Parsi community's small business entrepreneurship." Arbez and I never thought when we started PER that one small gesture on our part



Arbez Shroff Patel

to allow members to publicize their services, businesses, and blogs would drive sales and build readership. It's been a joy to read many personal notes of thanks from caterers for giving them this free platform to promote their culinary businesses, big and small. We're proud to know we're helping our community members do what they do best. After all, it is the Zarathushti thing to do.\*



**Vera Dinshaw Springgett** 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. She lives in Chicago with her husband and daughter, and is the administrator of Parsis Exchange Recipes (PER).

*Note: Parsis Exchange Recipes is a private group and posts are only visible to members.*

## PER POLL

What three kitchen essentials would you take with you if you knew you were going to be stranded on a deserted island?

### Saroasha Engineer, USA

A huge deep frying pan, a stainless steel flipping spatula/utensil and a mug. If I'd have to hunt food and cook a frying pan would do the job, it could boil stuff if I need be and cook almost everything I guess and the spatula to mix/turn when cooking - mug to drink in with ease. In that case I'm guessing I could directly eat from the pan using my hands (beggars can't be choosers type of a situation).

### Kes Irani, Canada

Sharp knife because it can be used for hunting and chopping and also as a fork. A deep skillet for braising, cooking and boiling and to use like a plate or to drink water from. Unlimited supply of Tabasco sauce to add flavor (can get salt from the sea but would choke on *fiku* (bland) food after a while) and can use as a mosquito repellent!!

### Zenia Rabadi, Pakistan

A flint to light the fire, a knife to cut the island's bounty, and a narrow thin lipped pan to cook as well as to boil water.

### Dimple Panthaki, USA

Frying pan, flipper, and knife. For obvious reasons. Something to cook in, something to stir/ flip, and a knife to cut.

### Zavare Tengra, Canada

An endless supply of drinking water because it is essential for survival. A magnifying glass or a mirror to start a fire, feel warm and be able to cook. A Swiss army knife to prepare food, protect myself and build a shelter.

### Dinaz Wadia, India

A cook, book and hook.

### Shireen Kanga, USA

I would take salt, fresh water, and a vessel. If I could sneak in one more item it would be tea! Wood can be found, sticks can be sharpened to make a cutting device and my husband with his scouts training and skills can light a fire!

### Anahita Ghista, Singapore

A knife to clean/cut  
A pan as a food holder  
Tabasco to help swallow the raw fish!

### Xerxes Wania, Canada

*Charee! Charee! Charee!*  
(Knife! Knife! Knife!)  
Need one for *naryal* (coconut), second for sushi, and third for carving the days on the island.

### Lyla Todywala, USA

1. My dry *masalas* in my *masala* tin with 8 separate compartments.
2. My non stick pot with lid.
3. The commercial size packet or tub of crispy fried onions.



# Spice Ladle: Passion for Food

By Perinaz Avari

One warm summer evening in 2011, at a cozy Mexican restaurant in downtown Fort Worth, Texas, my family and I were enjoying crunchy tortilla chips and a divine guacamole. That's where the idea for Peri's Spice Ladle was born.

Brought up in a family of five, with a working mom and dad, our dinner table was laden with genuine, wholesome food, and our tiny kitchen was filled with laughter and friends. The premise for the blog came from this place in my heart, and stays true to this day. Peri's Spice Ladle creates simple Indian and Parsi food tailored to the global palate; something any home cook can put together, using my recipes and tips.



Saas ni Macchi (Fish in Sauce)

## Early Learnings

My professional journey started with India's Taj Hotels in the early 90s right after hospitality school. I've had the pleasure of managing events of every scale, from Head of State visits to global CEOs, celebrities and four-day weddings held at sports complexes. I remember an incident from the early days serving lunch to the CEO of an international bank. As I swooped

with a flourish to lay a plate of fish meuniere before him, the buttery fillet slipped right off the plate into his lap while his entire team watched in horror. What happened next reveals the true character of people in positions of power. He laughed out loud and put the fish back on his plate. My profuse apologies were met with 'these are life's experiences, young lady, you'll laugh at it someday'. And I certainly did.

## Travel Tales

I once spent a month in Shanghai promoting Indian food, an experience that increased my respect for India's smorgasbord of cuisines. Professional and personal travels to interesting food cities like Barcelona, Bangkok, Kyoto, Seattle, Jodhpur, and Hyderabad, to name a few, help expand my scope of food creation, and adhere to the promise of offering global inspirations in my cooking.



Orange Spice Chapat (Orange Spice Crepes)

## The Ladle Journey

Naming the blog 'Peri's Spice Ladle' was an easy choice. The ladle appears often as a kitchen tool in many Indian homes, representing food served with love. As I say, the hand that holds

the ladle, rocks the food. The word 'spice', on the other hand, is grossly misunderstood in America; this is my attempt to highlight an essential element of flavor.

Spice Ladle has now gone through a series of beautiful transformations, from being the name of my catering company for four years, to lending itself to my classes, writings and cookbooks inspired by recipes on the blog.

## Onward and Upward

Underlying everything I have done over the years is a passion for food, and I hope to keep it that way. It's time to start passing on my knowledge, skills and wisdom on a larger platform. I call this my 'Yoda' phase! I'm ready to change the dialogue on food, whether it's in the professional food industry or at home with our young ones, where all lifestyle habits take root.\*

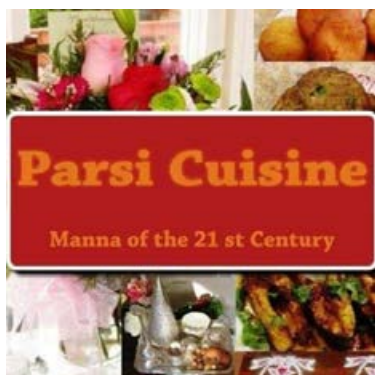


**Perinaz Avari** is a food consultant, author and blogger at Peri's Spice Ladle based in the San Francisco Bay Area. She runs cooking classes and courses, drawing on decades of skills and knowledge gained in the professional food industry, from India's Taj Hotels to founding a catering business in Silicon Valley.

# Preserving Parsi Cuisine

By Rita Jamshed Kapadia

Living in suburbs of Boston, we would frequently invite our New England friends for dinner and serve Parsi food. They would ask many questions: What spices were used in making in *dhansak dal*? How did the brown rice come out so fluffy and flavorful? What is the secret behind the creamy *Lagan nu custard*? What goes in this chutney? This was the seed of the idea to share Parsi cuisine with my fellow Americans and the rest of the world, till it becomes a household word.



After leaving IBM, I started my web design company. I learned HTML and Web Development at Northeastern University and got the “ParsiCuisine.com” domain registered for the website in 1999. The first recipe was *akuri*. I called it “spicy scrambled eggs” for non-Parsis.

The rest is history. I wear many hats now. Since then, I’ve published “Parsi Cuisine Manna of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” and 11 other books in the Parsi Cuisine Series on Amazon, manage a Facebook Page, and recently launched a YouTube channel. So far, there are videos on making *mawa* cakes (Parsi sponge cake) and *kummas* (spice cake) with *dhansak*, cutlets, chicken puffs, *malido* (sweet made of mixed grains)

and more coming. Making videos is more of creating a film. Video lets me teach the dish step-by-step and teach the history behind it. For instance, *mawa* cakes originated from the famous Irani B Meherwan and Kayani Bakeries.

COVID-19 pandemic has led me to giving live cooking demonstration classes online via Zoom for ZAGNY (Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York) and ZAGBA (Zoroastrian



Association of Greater Boston Area). They are a delight to do from my kitchen. Mind you, the live ZOOM video classes are work. On the night before class, I get busy taking out the ingredients, and the serving and cooking utensils. I get up early, excited to lay out the kitchen for the demo. I introduce the zoom class by doing a small 10 - 15 minute slideshow presentation. Zoom classes are “live” and “in the moment” so they allow others to participate and cook-along. It is a joy to see people cook along and taste the food right away. I also prefer the Zoom classes because I can charge the registrants and make a little income which I donate to a charity. Sharing recipes, stories, and tips was never so enjoyable!

I manage all of the logistics like invitation and registration for the classes, the camera work. My husband Jamshed, daughter Roshni and son Cherag are very supportive and provide knowledge about the equipment.

I am also translating the Gujarati cookbook *Vividh Vani* (Meherbai Jamshedji Wadia, 1867) into English, one recipe at a time. This cookbook is an antique and many Zarathushti Parsis including myself hold it dearly as a family heirloom. My original two-volumes are now falling apart like a cracker paper and is kept in sealed plastic bags. I made a handwritten index in English so I could search recipes and then read the Gujarati text and cook for my family here in USA. Through scanning software and Amazon services, I have managed to reprint it on high quality paper and it is available on Amazon. My aim is to maintain and preserve our recipes and traditions for the youth of the next generation.\*



**Rita Jamshed Kapadia** is the Founder and Owner of ParsiCuisine.com, a website with over 400 free recipes, and its affiliated social media sites on Facebook and YouTube. She is also the author of “Parsi Cuisine Manna of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” and other recipe books available on Amazon.

# YOUR DESTINATION FOR PRODUCTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

By Nazneen Vimadalal

## Starting a Start Up

I have been toying with the idea of starting my business as far back as I remember, but never ventured out on my own as I actually enjoyed working for several large corporations. I would not hesitate to make tough decisions or take risks as part of my work, but strangely when it came to starting my business, I hesitated to take that personal and financial risk. I finally took the plunge with my business partner, who is based in UK, and manages a successful business. Given his years of experience in the food industry and my marketing and management background, we developed a model to start an e-commerce business focused on unique foods from all over the world. We created Impex Enterprise (Impexent.com) so you can find those unique things in one place, things that are different. Our passion is to bring the highest quality products for our customers. We started off with food items as our core, but we are continuously evolving our strategy and expanding to other categories to provide a broader choice to our consumers such as health and beauty, and seasonal surprises. My partner in the UK sources some of the products that we import and I handle all aspects of the management here in the USA. We currently source products from the UK, Spain, and Turkey. Some of the brands we carry are unique and not sold in any of the retail stores in our domestic market. Flavour Boat is our flagship brand and we are exclusive distributors for this product.

They are directly manufactured for us in Thailand, using recipes that are authentic, using fresh ingredients giving it that rich flavorful taste.

## Impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 has really changed many things, but it certainly has changed the e-commerce landscape.



During this phase of isolation and uncertainty, there is a significant way how consumers are shopping. Online shopping growth was already rising before COVID-19 hit us, but with the pandemic it got a tremendous boost. The only negative impact to our business was missing large international food conferences to see what is new in the market and have the ability to taste the food products all under one roof.

## Highlights and Challenges

I love the flexibility and the potential to take the business to whatever level we want to take it to. Our company is still very young and we have a long way to go and I am continuously learning. I learned the different

aspects of the supply chain and how it works. I had no idea of how to import products and work with shipping brokers. Having my partner to bounce ideas and lean on his expertise is a tremendous help. Between my business, my management consulting firm, and being a mom (the kids are back home during COVID) I know for sure that time is my only challenge!

## Past and Future

We are still a young start-up, but hope to continue to grow. Learning from the past is important. There are many things I would do differently – put more thought to technology and the platform we use for our online store. Engage sooner on the social media aspect – it's critical for brand awareness. Find the right talent for the right tasks! But we keep going and we don't settle!



**Nazneen Vimadalal** is the President of a startup, Impexent.com, an e-commerce company, in addition to managing a consulting practice. She has held several senior leadership positions in strategy and product in the financial services industry. She currently serves as the Vice-President of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston Area.





## The Specialists

# Caterer: The Godiwala Legend

By Teenaz Javat

Just as most celebrations around the world are defined by the food served determined by their cultural practices, a Parsi *lagan* or *navjote* is not any different. However, what is different among the Parsis of Mumbai is not as much as what the menu will be, but rather who is catering the function of the day. A typical lunch *bhonu* would comprise *sagan-ni-sev* (vermicelli), *mithoo dahi* (sweet yogurt), *dhun-dar* (lentils and rice) and shrimp or fish *paatio*, *sali-murghi* (chicken with potato straws) and *rotli* (flat bread) served on a banana leaf. A dinner menu would be the usual suspects - *gajjar-mewa noo achaar* (carrot pickle), *saria* (crackers), *rotli*, *patra* or *saas ni machchi* (fish cooked in banana leaves or fish sauce), chicken *farcha* (fried chicken) and *masala-dar* (spicy lentils) on a *papeta-gos-no-pulao* (rice with meat and potatoes), also served on a banana leaf. However, the edge to this meal would be if it was catered

to by the king and queen of Mumbai Parsi caterers, Freny and Rohinton Godiwala. I grew up in the Mumbai of the 70s and 80s and the Godiwala menu was a staple at most Parsi celebrations. I was thrilled to have them cater my wedding. Twenty-seven years later, the Godiwala banner is still going strong.

I recall having met my then future in-laws in Karachi in the summer of 1993, and leaving aside the more important *lagan-ni waat-cheet* (wedding discussions), all they requested at our wedding, which was to take place in Mumbai, was that the feast be catered by the Godiwalas. My *kaka* (paternal uncle) was dispatched to book the *baug* (garden) and once the date and venue were nailed, my parents made the all-important phone call to Mrs. Godiwala, requesting she agree to cater at our wedding. A mini-celebration followed once she

let us know she was available because our wedding was on a Thursday. A weekend would have made it near impossible.

As we made our way to her nondescript office in an old building on Grant Road, we met this most sought out caterer sitting at a small wooden desk, littered with papers, making notes in a rather rough looking school note book. On learning that the groom was from Karachi, she quipped that the best *surmai* fish (mackerel) and shrimp are harvested in the waters off Karachi, and that if he would supply her with the fish, she would cook a tasty meal. This bit of key information was relayed as accurately as possible via trunk call to my in-laws. The idea did catch my husband-to-be's imagination, but better sense prevailed and it was promptly vetoed by his parents.

Now as I write this piece over a quarter century later, their daughter Tanaz has continued in the legacy of her parents. Her sister decided to move away from the family business, and after the death of her brother, Neville, Tanaz has single-handedly out-performed her parents. She caters approximately 150 *lagans* and *navjotes* in December alone and has the capacity to handle up to five functions per evening at the peak of the wedding season. While she maintains a core full-time staff of just 20, their numbers bloat to up to 300 in the wedding season.

If in Mumbai during the *lagan nu* season (wedding season), I would not

miss a chance to attend a function catered by the legendary Godiwala, who through sheer hard work and attention to detail has taken the *lagan-nu-bhonu* to great heights. The secret to her signature taste is that even though the ingredients are marinated and prepared in one place, the food is cooked on the premises of the event in an open-air kitchen on wood fires. The logistics of managing such a business comes from years of fine-honed routines. It is no wonder that, generations later, she still remains, the undisputed Queen of Parsi catering in Mumbai and, may be, in all of India.\*



**Teenaz Javat** is a senior writer at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canada's national public broadcaster for both radio and television. 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.



The author's family eating Godiwala's famous lagan nu bhonu at her wedding.



Tanaz Godiwala (Facebook photo)

### What is it that makes Tanaz Godiwala the most-favored Parsi caterer in Mumbai?

Tanaz said in an interview with Priya Pathiyan (June 24, 2001; Times of India), "I stand for quality. I never curb on the ordering even when the ingredients become very expensive... No secret recipes or anything like that, I'm afraid. The difference between us and other caterers is that we cook fresh and do not reheat food. My father started the practice of cooking in the evenings, whereas other caterers finish the cooking in the morning and reheat in the evenings. My parents were my idols, I try my best to be as dedicated and aggressive as them."

She told Khushnuma Jabulee (July 30, 2016; The Free Press Journal), "Yes, the pupil did sort of outdo the masters, but I think the masters would be happy about this. I think I maintained the quality and tastes, and I have also been adapting to different trends and changes. Where my parents used to systematically cater for far bigger numbers because at that time that was the trend, now there are more of what we call 'full vanis' where the *patra* (menu) is longer, richer, fuller. People want to taste three desserts, they want more trimmings. The size of the functions are smaller."

# Author: The Art of Writing a Cookbook

By Niloufer Mavalvala



Any project of the magnitude like producing a cookbook is a culmination of listening to and learning from others. My father used to say, “Success always comes when you are ready to listen and learn. Make it your own, but pick up on what others try to teach you.”

Like any good recipe, writing an award-winning cookbook also has key ingredients and clear steps.

## Choosing the Theme

With a market flooded with cookbooks, it is important that the theme is a cut above the rest. A book with a difference. Enticing enough to remember. It also has to be something you are knowledgeable about for it to ring true. Denise Landis, the editor of “The Cook’s Cook”, with whom I was

corresponding about publishing some Parsi recipes, told me that I must write a book about Parsi food because it is my own cuisine, my own expertise, and that I should create an interest in the market for people like herself who did not know about this ancient cuisine.

## Picking Your Layout

Know your own style because everything else - font, color palette, types of photography, hard or soft cover – will follow. Knowing what you like and want is the very essence of envisioning the end product.

I wanted to capture the essence of my childhood, the moments in my mother’s and aunt’s kitchens. I knew that I wanted elements of our culture in the photographs, a *katori* (bowl) or a *kumcha* (tray) for instance, *paatlās* (low stools), backgrounds of white marble reminiscent of the old kitchen tables.

Zara Nadeer Contractor, the designer, taught me that every photo in the book should showcase the same style. There was a photograph of *copra na* pancake (coconut filled pancakes)

which I loved, but Zara would not accept it. She said, “I love the photo, but it’s in the wrong book.” It took me a while to understand that it reflected a traditional style with lace and embellishments rather than the clean modern style chosen.

## Selecting the Photographs

The driving point and the selling point of a cook book rests on the photographs. Anyone who wants to write a cookbook, needs to know at least the basics of food photography. Look at the competition on Instagram.



I took three courses with British food photographer, William Reavell, who also took some photos for the book. While selecting photographs is a joyful process it can be long and laborious. As a relatively new food photographer, I often sifted through 300 or more photos per recipe to pick the best three from them!



## Publishing

The decision to offer your work to a publisher or to self-publish is one of the toughest you will face. The advantage of publishers is that they give an unknown author a platform to be recognized. They sell your books for you. While not everyone has a choice to be published by a company of repute, if chosen be prepared to face up to the harshest reality of earning pittance as it is always the publisher that makes the bucks.

Self-publishing brings its own joys. It can be more financially viable as the controls of your destiny are at your own feet. But one needs big bucks upfront to invest in this venture. Also, it is more time consuming as you have to take every decision yourself and do all the work. At best, you can find support to help you put the book together - a creative artist, a kind printer, a friend who will be an honest critic, but definitely not a naysayer – but it starts and ends with you. On the bright side, working tirelessly can make your rewards more fruitful.

If the process of self-publishing or finding a publisher is not feasible for you, an idea is to create e-books like I did at the start of my adventure, on platforms like Kindle Direct Publishing or Smashwords.

## Marketing Strategies

For a self-publisher, marketing may possibly be the hardest part. There is never much money to advertise until one has recovered the hefty investment. Therefore, social media is important - a website, a Facebook page and an Instagram account are currently the three most important. It's also time consuming – maintaining frequency without being boring, keeping posts diverse without missing the point, and personally connecting with potential buyers without getting personal.

I aimed my book to introduce a new cuisine to a North American audience, but I haven't managed to reach large numbers. Surprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has driven up interest in India as households are forced to do their own cooking during lockdown in the absence of domestic help. Many of the amateur cooks have been reaching for my cookbook as they are often stepping into the kitchen for the first time!

Writing a book is just the first step. Authors have to do other things to build interest, such as teach classes,



write a blog, set up pop up kitchens, actively seek out opportunities to be guest on shows or podcasts.

## Rewards and Challenges

The rewards are multiple - a good review, a pleasant email acknowledging your hard work, a kind word of appreciation, an inquiry from an ardent fan. A nod from a mentor, a warm hug from a good friend, a genuine smile edging on to a broad grin of pride from your spouse, your children, your parents, your sibling.

The food world is changing constantly. There are more foodies, food photographers, aspiring chefs, authors, and home cooks than ever before. It is more challenging to stand out among

the crowd on social media and yet simpler to catch the eye of the massive audience it has generated.

The biggest challenge by far was styling and taking the photographs. I never doubted the quality of the tried and tested family recipes, but I knew the book depended on the photos. When William was photographing the *murghi papayto* (chicken with potatoes) the result came out looking like a brown blob. He finally suggested that I reheat the chicken and lift the lid. He captured the photograph as the steam was rising with one click and that's the only photograph we have.

There is no dearth of good recipes online, but fortunately there are plenty who still love a good cookbook so if cooking is your passion, you want to share it with others, and you are prepared to work hard to realize your dream, then my advice is go for it. The rewards far outweigh the challenges.\*



*Niloufer Mavalvala was born and raised in Karachi, Pakistan. She started to bake when she was eight-years-old. Decades of teaching cooking prompted her to write a blog [www.NiloufersKitchen.com](http://www.NiloufersKitchen.com) and compile cookbooks. With two published cookbooks on Parsi cuisine, she continues her passion of reviving our ancient cuisine.*

*What makes cookbooks interesting is to find out about the people and the culture that invented the food.*  
Vincent Schiavelli



# Food Services Professional: Designing Commercial Kitchens



By Ruxshin Dinshaw

*While many of us enjoy the experience of eating out, we rarely consider what goes on behind the scenes of our favorite eateries, or what it takes to get them up and running. Cyrus Dinshaw has over 25 years of experience as a food services professional in Pakistan, planning large-scale kitchen facilities for commercial and institutional clients. Here, he talks about how he started out and how his projects have changed over the years.*

## **What does a food services professional do?**

A food services professional is someone who, for a defined scope of work, liaises with the architect's office and advises their client on the best way to translate their vision of the kitchen facility they want to build into a working reality, given existing resources and limitations.

## **Tell us a little about the projects you started out working on, and some you've taken on more recently.**

I've worked in a number of different environments. The first project I

ever did was a consultancy study for building a hospital kitchen, which I subsequently designed. I did a number of private clubs, bakeries, student hostels, and an office cafeteria. I think my favorite was one of the clubs, because it involved completely overhauling a kitchen from the British era. I've done a couple of restaurants and delis recently, which wasn't something I'd initially thought I'd get into. It was interesting, understanding the restaurant's concept and menu and then designing the facility around

it – every project is different. A first for me was planning retail points for bakery and deli products for a local supermarket chain.

## **How did you start out in this field?**

After graduating in Hotel and Catering Administration, I worked in hotels and a hospital, and then started my own business. I never really had any formal education as a food services planning professional. I know most consultants in the field usually come from an engineering or catering background, but I was largely self-taught. There was an old Parsi architect in Karachi, (late) Dadi Surti, who I'd go and sit with, and who made my transition into this field easier. Of course, the process has changed quite a bit now – no more messing around at drawing boards the size of my dining table! Now, I outsource my drawing to a CAD operator, who produces the same thing more efficiently at his laptop, and without the inky fingers to boot. I miss the creativity of the process, but I don't miss the long hours! And the new process makes for a more accurate drawing.



**What's the difference between a commercial kitchen and a home kitchen, apart from the scale?**

Commercial and home kitchens are worlds apart. A commercial kitchen requires different, heavier duty equipment, for a start, which is why generally, in Pakistan, clients ask their equipment suppliers to design their kitchens for them. But they're slowly realizing that the amount they invest in getting a food services professional to design and streamline kitchens and the facilities they serve is offset by massive savings later on. Design should be guided by food municipal codes. Then you need to think about things like firefighting systems, emergency exits, and garbage disposal systems, none of which you really consider for home kitchens.

More recently, with newer standards like the ISO certifications becoming increasingly important, you need someone with very specific knowledge in the field to be able to translate those standards onto the floor.

**What would you suggest to someone who wants to start in this particular field?**

I can only speak from my experience. I'd say the best way to understand the workings of a commercial kitchen is to go and work in one. I learnt my trade at the Tara Hotel in Kensington, London, and later at Novotel in Abu Dhabi. As you progress, you get to mingle with other professionals in the field, attend trade fairs, and see the advances in equipment and processes. It's a rewarding job at the end of the

day, whatever scale you operate on. It's really satisfying seeing the new place open and do well for itself. \*



**Ruxshin Dinshaw** currently resides in Canada, where she moved in 2019. She is a Project Management Professional with a Bachelor's in International Development from the London School of Economics, and has previously worked at the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

# Food Scientist: Keeping Food Safe

By Ardeshir Mistry

I have worked in research departments in the US food processing industry for many years. I started at a winery while studying for my degree and then joined plants manufacturing ice cream, frozen yogurt, ice cream inclusions (e.g. chocolate coated nuts, brownies and candies, cookie dough, oil-coated brownies), salad dressings, mayonnaise, soups, pie fillings, sauces and salsas, dips and jams.

While developing products for customers, we look at how they will be consumed and packaged, their approximate shelf life and if they will be kept at ambient, refrigeration or frozen temperatures. With this information, we develop products for our customer. A food's sensory impact – how it looks visually, its aroma, texture, and flavor - is particularly important.

Often customers have recipes which we convert to large-scale production formulas using myriad tools at our disposal, making the recipe safer and increasing shelf life of the food produced.

Keeping food safe is this industry's primary emphasis. Foods, except



those with extremely low water content, are susceptible to microbial spoilage. Water (in liquid form) in foods can also promote undesirable chemical spoilage reactions like fats going rancid. Reducing water increases shelf life of foods. Techniques to prevent spoilage include freezing, refrigeration, dehydration, evaporation, canning, using preservatives, high pressure processing, aseptic packaging, modified atmosphere packaging, fermentation, increasing acidity, increasing solids (e.g., sugars) to bind free water and adding salt. Controlling temperature and increasing acidity deters organisms like *Listeria*, and *E. coli*. and adding salt and sugars at higher levels ruptures microbial cell walls through osmosis. We use antioxidants like extracts of rosemary and oregano to prevent rancidity in



high-fat-containing foods and starches and gums to thicken products and preventing separation during the shelf life of our products.

Food scientists are always working with new ingredients and processing techniques. Natural food colors are available with improved resistance to fading from exposure to light, acid, and heat. Natural flavors can mimic flavors of nearly any food (e.g., grilled onions, fried chicken, aged asiago cheese, orange peel). Natural preservatives, derived from sugars, milk and whey, fruits, and vinegar, have been developed through fermentation techniques. To thicken sauces, starches from corn, wheat, tapioca, potato, etc. and gums from plant exudates and seaweed are available. Nearly all foods manufactured for sale must have ingredient breakdowns and Nutrition Facts panels on the label. Knowledge of nutrition is necessary when setting up food labels. I have been setting up food labels for many years working with the legal modifications that FDA constantly makes. The newest version of the Nutrition Facts panel (see attached example) has a category for 'Added Sugars,' which is sugar processors add to the food during its formulation. This is beyond the natural sugars present in many foods and can tell

consumers if there is too much sugar in the product. Processed foods often contain sweeteners (sugar, corn syrup), salt and fats. We can reduce salt and sugars and replace high fructose corn syrup. Natural flavor enhancers contribute brothy, meaty flavors creating a mouthwatering sensation in savory products thus allowing salt

reduction.

We use sensory panels to find preferences and preferable attributes (e.g., color or flavor) of various foods. I have trained small panels of 10 to 20 people and have set up 500-person consumer tests with untrained panelists. The number of panelists is dependent on whether they are trained or not. This is important for accurate statistical analyses of the collected data.

A lot of people suffer from food allergies which can cause anaphylactic shock and even death in some people. Allergen labeling is a major requirement for all foods in the US and Canada. The FDA requires labeling eight allergens – eggs, fish, milk, nuts, peanuts, shellfish, soy, and wheat. In addition to these eight, Canada requires mustard and sesame. Sulfites, over a certain amount, also require labeling. Allergen labeling must



be accurate as incorrect labeling is one of the major causes for food recalls. We are always very diligent segregating allergens in the plant. Formula changeovers on each line are carefully undertaken to prevent allergen cross-contamination. All our formulas clearly denote the allergens they contain so proper separation steps can be taken on each production line.

"Clean label" products are requested a lot. There

is no definition for this term and its interpretation depends on the customer. We may start with a product that contains natural flavors, colors, starches, gums, preservatives, and antioxidants as needed. Organic ingredients are clean label. It must be noted that organic foods fall into one of three levels of organic labeling

depending on the quantity of organic ingredients present.

Independent

certifying agencies inspect plants and provide organic certification, allowing use of their logo on organic food labels (see logo). Starting in 2021, the bioengineered (genetically modified organisms or GMO) status of foods will also need to be on food product labels if they are derived from GMOs or contain identifiable DNA from them (see logos).

Food scientists and chefs have collaborated in designing foods for large-scale manufacturing. I have had the opportunity of working with many chefs and appreciate their creativity and culinary expertise. This chef-scientist collaboration is mutually beneficial as food scientists realize how chefs enhance food, making it more appetizing and delicious, while chefs understand the science behind interactions that occur to produce wonderful flavors, aromas, and textures.

Food will always be a necessity and making it tasty, nutritious, convenient, and affordable is always a great achievement for me and other food scientists.\*



**Ardeshir Mistry** is an R&D Director at Heritage Family Foods, Dallas. He has B.Sc. (Honours) and M.Sc. degrees in Applied Chemistry (University of Karachi) and M.S. (Food Technology) and Ph.D. degrees (Food & Nutrition) from Texas Tech University.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)	
Amount per serving	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>230</b>
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 57g	<b>13%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>14%</b>
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	<b>20%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	<b>10%</b>
Calcium 260mg	<b>20%</b>
Iron 8mg	<b>45%</b>
Potassium 235mg	<b>6%</b>

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.



Zarnak Sidhwa is a TV celebrity chef and chocolatier on Pakistani cooking channel, Hum Masala TV. She hosts “Food Diaries”. Her show airs on weekdays, live at 3.30 pm and repeats at 12 midnight and 9.30 am PST. Some of the special shows are pre-recorded. She has been affiliated with Masala TV from February 2010 when she was invited to make paneer and dhansak on a show hosted by Shireen Anwer, a famous Pakistani chef. She returned to make chocolates on the show and was offered a job with the channel. She worked in the content department for a while helping chefs develop shows and recipes. “In July 2011, I did a show called “Chocoholics”, which was the first chocolate-based dessert show on TV. It was a great hit. I have a sweet tooth, I am a true chocoholic! I love gooey walnut chocolate brownies with a scoop of vanilla ice cream, topped with hot fudge sauce and a cherry! After that, Masala TV offered me a live show called “Food Diaries”, which I have been doing for the past nine years now.” The format of the show includes live calls and

commercial breaks so within an hour Zarnak demonstrates a savoury and a dessert. Every year, on both Nowruz’s, she demonstrates Parsi dishes. “I’ve covered almost everything I can think of. Okay, not vasanu or malido as yet!”

There is intense behind the scenes preparation for each episode. “Due to limited time, as we start recipes from scratch and have to finish them during the hour, I am

limited in my choice. I can’t do advanced baking and lengthy recipes. We plan our recipes two months in advance to make sure none of the live shows on that day have clashes or duplicate dishes. Lots of planning goes into making the shows as we have to do the groceries accordingly and take all ingredients to the sets. If there are any brands that are being endorsed, we develop recipes accordingly to incorporate them. However, live shows means anything can happen in spite of the planning. At times a blender won’t work or the electric connection is loose or some such things which we fix in the breaks. Once I was baking and the lights went off. When we got our generator going we restarted the filming. Unfortunately,



everyone forgot to switch the electric oven on and we were waiting and waiting for the cake to bake. Luckily, it was a recorded show. In live shows, things break or maybe spill. I have smiled through such mishaps, telling my viewers, “This happens in your kitchen too, doesn’t it?””

Some of her favorite episodes include anniversary shows. “My favorite memories are doing Live Expos where hundreds of thousands of people attend over a period of two days and we [the team of Masala TV chefs] do live cooking and meet and greet our fans. So far, we’ve done it in Karachi and Lahore. We hold cooking classes in various cities of Pakistan, also in Dubai. Interacting with fans and viewers and live callers is the best part. I can also be as creative and imaginative as I want to be. I enjoy it so much I don’t even think of it as a ‘job’ and I find it therapeutic as well. The one drawback is that we have to be live even on holidays when family is home and we cannot miss special days and events and occasions. We have to work our way around it!”

Criticism comes as part of the job as every viewer has an opinion. “Some people find it highly offensive, but I take it well! It helps one to grow and to improve. However, the

tone is what matters. Also, it should not be personal but related to food. I don’t interfere with other chefs’ choices. I give suggestions, but everyone has their own style, which should be respected. I am not very fond of ‘East meets West’ recipes. I do not like *desi* Chinese - one should stick to either *desi* or the original version of a recipe. Why add your own fusion and confuse the person eating it?”

Zarnak says the best thing about being a TV personality is getting recognized by fans. “People shower a lot of love on you. They respect you. Many young people have learnt from me and gone on to opening small businesses from home, made pages on Facebook, and are earning at home, supplementing their fathers’ or husbands’ incomes by just replicating our recipes. It brings me great happiness.” The role has made her more confident and has honed her ability to speak publicly without a script. “I used to talk much less on screen previously,” she laughs. “I had always cooked, but never faced a camera. I wasn’t nervous on camera, but I didn’t know how to talk to the live callers. Now, I can talk extempore!”\*

By F. M. Dinshaw

## 20 Qs WITH CHEF DELZAD

*Delzad Khurshad Avari is a Le Cordon Bleu Chef having completed Le Grand Diplome in Cuisine and Patisserie, London. He has worked in sunny climes around the world from the Taj Mahal Palace and Towers in Mumbai to Dubai, the Maldives, and Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean. He currently runs a home based chef business called “Del’z Kitchen”. Fezana Journal did a rapid fire round with him to get to know him a little better.*

### 1. What was the first dish you ever cooked?

I’ve been cooking eggs since I was in the 6<sup>th</sup> standard, but I guess the first complex dish I ever made as a student was a lasagna Florentine



### 2. What inspired you to become a chef?

A few things actually, primarily being born into a Parsi family of not only foodies, but very good cooks. My grandfather’s stories of when he used to import all sorts of foreign food stuff and alcohol for his shop in Aden. Also, his first business in Aden was a small restaurant serving breakfast!

### 3. Is cooking a natural talent or is it something anyone can learn?

While cooking is something anyone can learn, one needs to have a knack for cooking or a basic interest in the craft before they want to learn it. To become a chef is a whole different story though. For that, one has to be



passionate about food and food preparations; basic interest is not enough because it is very hard work.

#### 4. What's the best part of your current job?

The satisfaction I get out of positive feedback from my customers.

#### 5. How would you describe your style of cooking?

Fresh, clean, tasty, innovative, international.

#### 6. What is your guilty food pleasure?

Salted caramel brownies with ice cream.

#### 7. Is there a food that you dislike?

I don't think there is anything I dislike per se, but like the true Parsi I am, not a fan of vegetables.

#### 8. What's your signature dish?

My slow cooked barbecue pulled pork. Over time, the art of slow cooking and braising has interested me. What makes it my signature dish is my BBQ sauce which I make from scratch.

#### 9. Is there a particular dish (or ingredient like brain) that you haven't been able to master as yet?

There's plenty of dishes I might not have even heard of yet, leave mastering. Food preparation is a process of constant learning. But a few techniques I would really like to master at making would be sushi. It takes seven years of rigorous training to master though.

#### 10. Do you curse in the kitchen when you're working? (If yes, Bawa or Gordon Ramsay style?)

Yes. A commercial kitchen is a very high pressure place, both physical and mental. It's natural to curse. As for Bawa or Gordon Ramsay style, it really depends on my mood.

#### 11. What's been one of your most memorable moments as a chef?

The first time I smoked a perfect beef brisket during my time at The Hilton, Trinidad.

#### 12. What are five kitchen essentials (tools, utensils, ingredients) every cook should have at home?

1. A very sharp set of knives. 2. A weighing scale. 3. A temperature probe. 4. A well-seasoned cast iron pan. 5. A stand mixer.

#### 13. Which/where is the best restaurant you've ever eaten in?

That's a very difficult question to answer. I would have a different one for different cuisines:

1. "Foo", Mumbai – the truffle edamame dumplings and the soft-shell crab sushi.
2. "Texas De Brazil Churrasceria", Trinidad/Dubai – their meat selections are superlative, especially their 18-hour slow cooked beef ribs.
3. "Jai Hind", Mumbai – Great Malwani food; ask for their catch of the day and get it cooked two ways.
4. "O22" at The Trident, BKC, Mumbai – their sugar free tira misu is to die for.



#### 14. Which celebrity would you like to cook for and what would you serve?

I would like to cook for Jennifer Lawrence, the American actress who starred as Katniss in "The Hunger Games". She is one of those celebrities who does not believe in restricting her diet. I would love to serve her a nice 'Parsi Bhonu' comprising chicken *farcha* (fried chicken), *patra ni machhi* (fish cooked in banana leaves) and mutton *pulao daar* (rice with meat served with lentils).

#### 15. What are three things you have in your freezer at home right now?

1. Lots of bacon. 2. Buffalo tenderloin. 3. Mutton.

#### 16. What's the next ethnic food trend?

Latin American, Middle Eastern.

#### 17. What do you do when you have a day off?

Unwind, have a drink and binge watch my favorite shows, read up on anything about food I find interesting.

#### 18. Which talent would you most like to have that you don't possess?

Playing the ukulele/ guitar.

#### 19. If you were not a chef, what would you have been?

A pilot.

#### 20. And finally, fish *dhansak* - innovation or travesty?

I personally feel *dhansak*, preferably with mutton on the bone, should be left alone. However, I have experimented doing a pork overload *dhansak* with bacon brown rice, and it was delicious.\*



## Green Food

# Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds...and Good Food

By P. T. Bhandara

Ever since I was a young girl I had a fire inside of me to do something good, something great. When asked what I wanted to do when I grew up, I responded, “I want to change the world.” When considering various career paths, I always tried to quantify the “good” I could achieve by the number of lives helped. I admired doctors, attorneys, and others who helped hundreds or thousands of lives. But as a young idealist, I dreamed even bigger – how could I help hundreds of thousands, or dare I say millions or billions of lives? To do this, I set out to understand: 1) the biggest problems facing our generation, and 2) the most effective ways to solve them.

To my surprise, this journey led me to learn about how meat is produced today. What I learned shook me to my

core and radically changed how I see the world. I am confident saying that the way we currently produce meat is the biggest problem of our time. This might sound like hyperbole I know, but join me in taking a deep and honest look at the far-reaching harms caused by industrial meat production, and you may just agree with me.

### Climate Change

United Nations scientists state that raising animals for food is “one of the major causes of the world’s most pressing environmental problems, including global warming, land degradation, air and water pollution, and loss of biodiversity.”

A few statistics below help illustrate this:

- 18% of global anthropogenic

greenhouse gas emissions stem from livestock farming. By contrast, global transportation accounts for 13%. In other words, meat production is a bigger polluter than our cars, trains, and planes all combined.

- Producing 1 pound of beef requires 1,840 gallons of water and results in 8 pounds of manure.
- Cattle ranching is the largest driver of deforestation in the Amazon rain forest, with 5 - 8% annual expansion.

### Animal Welfare

When learning about the meat industry, I saw mother cows continuously forced into pregnancy only to have their babies immediately ripped away from them after birth. I learned about the unending pain of

innocent pigs who are constricted by metal bars on all sides, unable to lie down comfortably or even turn around the majority of their lives. I watched videos of animals living in horrific conditions, forced into an inescapable life of physical, mental and emotional suffering. And while they feel pain just as we do, countless animals endure mutilations such as debeaking, dehorning, and castration without painkillers. This is not the exception, it's the norm. I learned that over 99% of these animals have virtually no federal laws protecting them. Finally, the numbers: approximately 120,000,000,000 animals are slaughtered every year, *which is more than the number of humans who have ever lived on Earth.*

## Human Health

Current factory farming methods have serious consequences for human health: Approximately 70% of antibiotics produced in the USA are given to farm animals. This steady stream of antibiotics contributes to the development of antibiotic-resistant superbugs that cannot be killed by standard antibiotics. Some reports predict that these superbugs could cause an unprecedented pandemic in the near future.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), tens of millions of Americans get sick every year and thousands die from eating meat contaminated with pathogens like Salmonella, Listeria, Botulism, Swine Flu and Bird Flu. Unsanitary and overcrowded factory farms are ideal breeding grounds for these pathogens.

## Cultivated Meat is the Solution

After educating myself on the matter, I thought to myself that there has to be a better way. I then came across

the idea of cultivated meat – real meat, without the animal, which is the idea of farming or cultivating meat from animal cells rather than raising animals. Cultivated meat utilizes the same processes animals use inside their body to make meat, but the process takes place in cultivators that mimic the animal's body. This cutting edge industry is thought to have the potential to impact more lives than any other technology in our century, garnering investments from Bill Gates, Tyson Foods, Richard Branson, Kimble Musk, Cargill, and more.

The benefits of cultivated meat include:

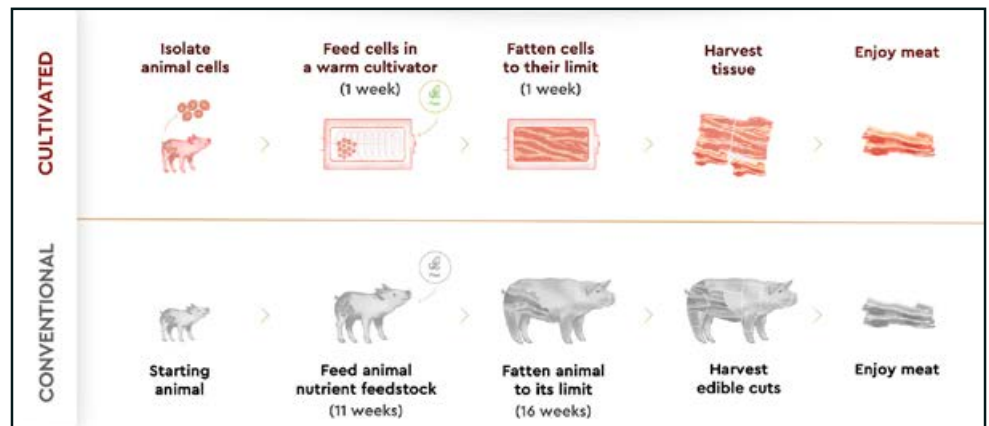
- A fraction of the natural resources are required (80% less land, 76% fewer greenhouse gas emissions, 94% less water).
- No animal slaughter required.
- The process is free from antibiotics and other harmful contaminants/pathogens.
- As soon as I learned about cultivated meat my entire life changed. I knew this was my calling, my life's work. I earned a degree in Biochemistry and

shortly after found myself joining a Silicon Valley startup determined to make cultivated meat a reality. I remember my first few days well; I had this feeling that I was given the opportunity of a lifetime, to pioneer a new industry that could revolutionize Earth as we know it. To be at the forefront, to leave a legacy, to make history.

## A Better Way to Make Meat

Before describing the process of producing cultivated meat, I'll take a step back and explain what meat is. Meat is primarily composed of muscle tissue and fat tissue. These tissues contain muscle cells and fat cells that come together to form the tissues we recognize as meat. I explain this to highlight that all meat grows from cells, both cultivated and conventional.

The process of making cultivated meat begins by sourcing cells from a healthy farm animal and placing them in a warm cultivator which mimics the animal's body facilitating the same biological process that happens inside an animal by providing warmth and the basic elements needed for growth:



Cultivated sausage, bacon, and chicken breast.





Future Cultivated Meat Facility (Exterior). Photo: The Cellular Agriculture Society



Future Cultivated Meat Facility (Interior). Photo: The Cellular Agriculture Society

water, proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals. After the cells complete their growth phase the meat is harvested and enjoyed. The end product is *identical* to the meat we eat today, but it is produced in a way that is better for people, animals, and the world.

### The Zarathushti Perspective

Advancing the food system is not new for Zarathushtis. Archaeological and scriptural evidence shows that the transformation from hunter-gatherers to crop cultivators in the late Neolithic period can be attributed to Zarathustra's vision as documented by Mary Settegast in her book "When Zarathustra Spoke." In the Vendidad, Zarathustra asks Ahura Mazda,

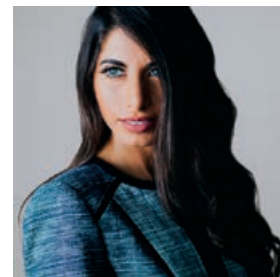
"What is the way of furthering the Mazdayasni religion?" Ahura Mazda replies "Incessant cultivation of grain, O Zarathustra. One who cultivates grain cultivates righteousness." This move to crop cultivation was revolutionary for our food system, just as cultivated meat can be for the modern era.

My Zarathushti upbringing inspired me to turn good thoughts into good deeds, into a life dedicated to "changing the world", fighting injustice and making the world a kinder place for all living beings. Changing the status quo is always difficult, but our religion has taught me that we are not here to seek ease, but to seek righteousness for the sake

of righteousness. As Zarathustra said "May we be those who better the world."

Zarathustra preached that righting the world applied not just to humans, but all living beings as he forbade animal cruelty and sacrifice. In Yasna 29, Zarathustra speaks in the voice of an ox, "For whom did ye fashion me? Who created me? Violence, rapine, and savagery has oppressed me. I have no other herdsman than you; prepare for me then the blessings of pasture."

Here Zarathustra shows empathy for the ox and his inescapable life of physical, mental and emotional suffering. Zarathustra also teaches that we must choose compassion for the ox, and all animals, so they may live a life free of unnecessary suffering. It is now our work to follow through on Zarathustra's teachings and create a kinder world for all life inspired by good thoughts, good words and good deeds.\*



**P. T. Bhandara** is the Head of Strategic Partnerships at a leading Cultivated Meat company in the Bay Area. Previously, she worked as a Cellular Agriculture Research Associate at JUST. She is happy to connect with others who are interested in partnering, volunteering, investing, or more. Please reach out at [P.T.Bhandara@gmail.com](mailto:P.T.Bhandara@gmail.com).

Zarathushti references in the article are from "When Zarathustra Spoke", *The Reformation of Neolithic Culture and Religion*, by Mary Settegast, 2005, Mazda Publishers, Costa Mesa, CA 92628.



# Pure and Pristine Water

Aava, India's only naturally alkaline mineral water originating from the Aravalli range and with a natural pH of 8+, is the brainchild of Behram Mehta. He created the premium pristine water brand in 2005, promoting bottled water which is naturally pure and does not need to be put through any chemical processes, UV radiation or Reverse Osmosis.

Every drop of Aava is naturally purified with great patience, drop by drop, for 20 years, Aava trickles down from the catchment area to their deep underground reservoirs. Along the way, it is purified as it passes through layers of alluvium and clay that act as natural filters.

"Aava is an aquifer water [underground spring] which is completely protected from natural and as well as human contamination. It goes through 77 different tests before being bottled to ensure that it is free from harmful chemicals or microbiological organisms," said Mehta. "It has a natural mineral composition that is beneficial to health and is absolutely safe to drink." Latest research shows that the fluorides in the tap water are toxic for the human body. "Fluorides in ...Aava contains 0.2 [maximum permissible limit is 1.0] which clearly shows that Aava is safer, especially for children." In a long list of awards, Aava Natural Mineral Water was awarded 2 gold stars and the Superior Taste Award 2017 honor by the International Taste & Quality Institute in Brussels, Belgium.



Aava is bottled in a fully automatic, washable, hygienic and air-conditioned water plant, untouched by human hands at all points. The company has also focused on hygiene in the packaging design, the first bottle of its kind in the world with the cup cap so that people can avoid contact with the mouth of the bottle. Mehta observed, "Aava is women and children-friendly. It is a well-known fact that women don't like to drink straight from the bottle therefore the unique cup-cap is a great companion while on the move."

The company adheres to International Environmental Quality Standards to ensure all their practices are eco-friendly. Not a single drop of Aava is rejected or wasted. The company is 100% plastic neutral as they recycled more PET than produced with 38 million bottles recycled till March 2020. They also have an effective buy-back policy for PET containers. Behram Mehta also gives credit to the fantastic ecosystem of rag pickers and recyclers, which has achieved a world record in PET plastic recycling rate in India. Their recently introduced glass bottles are also 100% eco-friendly.

Looking to the future, the company is setting up another bottling unit in Gujarat and is planning to launch flavoured water as well as energy drinks. With an aim to give back to nature what it takes from it according to Zarathushti principles, Aava has contributed to the State Government of Gujarat towards the construction of a check-dam in a tribal area.\*

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# WALNUTS IN THE FREEZER

## Lessons in Green Consumption

By Nadia Jam

Walnuts and dates in the freezer. Fava beans for the quintessential Nowruz *baghali polo* (dill rice) and a medley of herbs for the renowned *ghormeh sabzi* dish can all be found in the freezer as well. *Barbari*, *lavash*, and *sangak* (types of bread) sit next to yogurt tubs, filled with something other than yogurt, that are also chilling in negative zero temperature. In the fridge, you can find slivered almonds & pistachios, rose petals, strips of tangerine zest, gold-rimmed saffron tin cans, and a plethora of seeds & grains in various sized glass jars, which are recycled and reused just like the yogurt tubs. If there was a word to describe the amount and nature of the goods in the typical Persian kitchen that would simultaneously reflect the character of the Persian cook, resourceful would be it.

### Food Storage

Long before the invention of electricity, around the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the ancient Persians, who lived in arid climates, came up with a way to store food and ice with what is known as the *yakhchāl* (ice-pit). Its development and design is a stunning example of how the people of the Middle East have contributed to civilization and how an understanding of their environment and its natural resources

inspired such innovation. The exterior architecture of the *yakhchāl* is dome-shaped and was sustainably built from whatever heat-resistant raw materials were available, mainly that of sand, clay, egg whites, and even goat hair. The underground rooms inside the dome further exhibit the structure's sustainable engineering as they consisted of an evaporative cooling system that worked by using wind-catchers and water brought from nearby springs. It is interesting to see that when faced with the problem of probable food spoilage and shortage amid the scorching summers, the ancient Persian's figured out how



to overcome this by using the resources in their natural surroundings. I highlight this advancement in human history to not only illustrate the Persians' resourcefulness of their desert habitat but also to showcase the resilience of our ancestors that has been passed down generations and has ultimately helped us Zarathushtis preserve ourselves even in the direst of circumstances. As we are all facing this global crisis (but obviously experiencing it in different ways), I think it is meaningful and important to see what our Zarathushti forbearers would have done by learning about what they actually did when dealing with their own kinds of food-related uncertainties. In other words, you have to know the past in order to understand your present and to create your future.

Accordingly, I hypothesize that the reason for why

Persians, particularly of the older generation, make such peculiar use out of the modern-day *yakhchāl* is because of an instinct to preserve what they have, and to use what they have to their full capacity. Our modern behavior is powerfully influenced by our ancestral minds, as Charles Darwin noted, "In the long history of humankind, those who learned to collaborate and improvise most

effectively have prevailed". The fact that Zarathushtis have survived and quite frankly, thrived, after thousands of years of massacres, persecution, violent conversion, discrimination, and oppression is enough to show that we must have done something right to have 'prevailed'. When we put walnuts and dates in the freezer, we ensure they stay fresh for up to one and five years, respectively. By reusing a tub of yogurt for *aush* (thick soup), we are giving the plastic tub a new purpose rather than disposing of it. Instead of throwing out a perfectly intact jar of tomato paste, we are keeping a good material in



motion by filling it up with sunflower seeds. When we eat tangerines, we save the peels to be dehydrated, cut, and refrigerated to be used in *shirin polo* (sweet rice pilaf) at a later time. If I may humorously revise the proverb; one's person's trash is another Persian's treasure. How much treasure can be found in your fridge?

These aforementioned quirks of using things to their fullest extent adds a certain element of green consumption, albeit unintentional, in the way Persians flow through the world of food. Is there something worth learning from the habits of the elders? And how can we add intentionality to this subconscious environmentally friendly behavior?

Given that Persians are inclined to make food last beyond their "best-before date" (which is the correct way of reading and following that label), they also seem to purchase less; once again attesting to their sustainable consumer behavior. Despite the habit of freezing and refrigerating a myriad of unusual things, it is generally known that it is rare to find a disturbingly overfull *yakhchal* in a Persian household. Even during a quarantine, Persians don't seem to be overbuying because of how effective and ingrained their previous habits of storing and preserving food are, especially the staples like rice, onions, potatoes and legumes.

### Managing Waste

Another possible reason for a Persian's intuitive sustainable consumer behavior is their innate dislike for waste. So whether they buy in bulk or in more slight amounts, they still make sure to use it all to their full potential. My grandparents didn't come from the wealthiest of backgrounds, so to emotionally and economically counterbalance this sense

of deprivation, they lived modestly. Even though they had no choice but to live below their means, they still understood the value of basic necessities and would not dare take them for granted. This sort of upbringing may also explain why Persian parents typically don't let their kids leave the dining table without eating every last crumb on their plate. They are taught that an unfinished meal is both insulting to the person who made it and inconsiderate of all the resources and effort it took to get that food to their plate, from the use of land and water to the farm labor and so forth. I don't necessarily agree with this idea of

forcing your children to eat past the point of fullness, but I do agree with the importance of instilling this concept of responsible and mindful consumption and educating people to reflect on the sacrifices made in the complex food system, especially during this crisis.

The present day globalized, pandemic-stricken food system, which involves the "growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, consumption, and disposal of food and food-related items" is currently upending. Perishable foods are rotting on an unfathomable scale in the cultivation fields due to a shortage of migrant workers and to the sudden changes of sales outlets, from restaurants, theme parks, cruise ships, stadiums, hotels, and schools to retail. "The New York Times" has a heartbreaking yet eye-opening article on this subject titled, "Dumped Milk, Smashes Eggs, Plowed Vegetables: Food Waste of the Pandemic", which I highly recommend for a more detailed look into the food industry side of things.

While there are tens of millions of pounds of food going to waste at the agricultural level, household food waste isn't doing any better. According to the "National Geographic", even "In the best of times, the United States wastes 40 percent of its food annually, amounting to about 63 million tons", and with people cooking more at home, curbside

collection of food waste has only gone up, as seen in San Francisco and New York municipalities. So individuals truly play a crucial role in improving global food security, to quote the chief economist of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, "Individuals should only buy what they need to avoid food waste".



### Buying What You Need

If we all learned to buy out of necessity, rather than out of irrational fear, we would not only be making our planet and wallets happier, but we would also be putting our minds and spirits at greater ease. Our Zarathushti ancestors had many reasons to be nervous about not having enough for themselves and their families, but they had the skills and attitude to make do. In contrast, the scarcity mindset, a belief that results in actions and thoughts that stem from a place of lack, that is plaguing (no pun intended) today's apocalyptic-like era is shifting purchasing habits to the detriment of the food system. As consumers respond to the fear and anticipation of a food

shortage, they are prompted to panic buy and hoard. Panic buying is a type of herd behavior and quite ironically, has led to a self-fulfilling prophecy. When a consumer perceives the risk of depleted supermarket shelves, they are manifesting and confirming this expectation because of the instinct to follow the crowd and think something along the lines of, "Oh my goodness, if everyone else is rushing to stockpile on flour, dried beans and pretzels, then I also have to buy flour, dried beans and pretzels before they run out!". This idea that there isn't enough to go around is both hurtful to our psyche and the Earth, and as Zarathushtis, we are encouraged to progress the former and protect the latter. Hence, nurturing an abundance mindset is key to reducing a variety of anxieties and changing disadvantageous consumer behavior. This can be done by practicing gratitude, avoiding social comparisons, limiting exposure to news and social media, organizing your home and life, and sharing what you have with others.



In essence, the optimal way of interacting with food, as I have witnessed and learned, is less about seeking more of it, and more about making the most out of what you already have. Whether it is your socioeconomic context or pro-environmental concern driving your consumer behavior, it is a great time to revisit the way you maintain everything you buy. The collective consciousness of the Zarathushti community is more palpable than ever, as our shared beliefs and moral attitudes towards how we consume, preserve, and discard food unify us, despite our

physical separation, in our pursuit of a more sustainable world. All this to say, if you want to give food the respect it deserves all while honoring the resourceful ways of our ancestors, learn how to store your goods because odds are, you can put it in the freezer.\*



**Nadia Jam** leads the international sub-community, Zarathushti LGBTQ+-Straight Alliance, online. With a B.A. in Political Science in French Immersion from the University of Ottawa, she will be continuing her education with a Masters in Counseling Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies in pursuit of a career in psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy.

#### End Notes

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*Guest Editor's Note: The underlying concept of Frashokereti is of 'healing' or 'renovation' or "making [the world] wonderful/excellent". The pandemic has allowed us the time to reflect about taking action 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!"*



# Arashasp Shroff: Gastronomer & Cork Excavator



*On March 28, 2019, Arashasp Shroff, Toronto-based beverage manager and sommelier at the CN Tower, was awarded Ontario Hospitality Institute's "Top 30 Under 30 Award", 2019, recognizing him for excellence not just within his profession, but also for his voluntary work in mentoring youth and commitment to improving the industry. He was selected from over 150 nominations across the Canadian province. In this interview for Fezana Journal, Arashasp shares his inspiration and aspirations with Farishta Murzban Dinshaw.*

## 1. What inspired you to become a sommelier?

It was a combination of circumstances. I have always been interested in the world of beverage, but found my true passion for Operations and Beverage Management while studying at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), Hyde Park, New York. It was during my last semester that I accepted the opportunity to move to Napa Valley, California, to apprentice under two Master Sommeliers, Christie Dufault and Robert Bath. It was here, spending time in the vineyards, visiting wineries, and experiencing the vinification process that I realized I wanted to pursue Beverage Management as a career. It also doesn't hurt that I get to wear a suit and tie, and 'taste' wine every day.

## 2. What is the role of a sommelier in your opinion?

A sommelier is more or less a guide and caretaker; we guide guests, based on their existing preferences to something we feel they would fall in love with or at the very least, enjoy with their meal. A caretaker in the sense, we spend countless hours taking care of the wine program, usually stocking the wine storage or cellar, working out our targeted beverage cost and editing the wine list.



*Arashasp's workspace at the CN Tower restaurant.*



You don't need a special background, although it does help if you have studied wine before. Most importantly, good sommeliers have an understanding that the job requires having to work long hours, being guest forward, and having to smile... a lot!

### **3. How do you work with the chefs and kitchen to marry wines/drinks and their creations? What are your tips for menu pairing?**

The Executive Chef and I have a very strong relationship, as in pairings, one won't work without the other. In general, wine pairings can go two ways, complement or contrast. When you complement a dish, you ideally, would like the wine to highlight the main components and flavours of that particular dish. For instance, with braised lamb shank with a rosemary, black garlic sauce and creamy polenta with glazed heirloom carrots, I would pair a 2014 Brunello di Montalcino, young enough to still have strength but old enough for the tannins not to overwhelm your palate. Open this bottle a few hours before drinking and you're sitting golden for the rest of the meal. For this example, the body of the wine will *complement* the body of the dish, lamb, creamy polenta, matched with this big body, heavier red wine. Contrasting something is slightly trickier, but essentially, you would contradict the main item. For instance, with greasy cheese and peperoni pizza or mozzarella sticks, you would pair a high acid white wine. In this case, the acidity would *contrast* the richer components of the pizza.

### **4. How do you keep your work and having wine for pleasure separate? If you could only have one white wine and one red wine for rest of life what would they be and where would they come from?**

When I am drinking wine for your work, it usually involves 'tasting', which is entirely different than enjoying a bottle of wine at home. Tasting usually, involves sitting with a supplier who has about 5-8 bottles with him/her, my notebook, a spittoon (to discard the wine), a water cup, and a pen. This is usually happening before service, so not to say it's rushed, but I try to keep the conversations short and precise, usually asking about technical details, price, and volume. Drinking at home or for pleasure on the other hand, usually involves me, in my comfortable clothes, sprawled on the sofa with a pizza and Netflix on the TV.

My choice for a white wine would be a German Riesling, a nice balance of fruit, minerality, sweetness and acidity. Usually low in alcohol, it can be enjoyed on its own or with food. For a red, I would choose a big, bold, bodacious California Cabernet Sauvignon, something with massive tannins and high to level my gums, exhaust my palate, and high in alcohol to probably get me a decent level of tipsy.

### **7. Please tell FJ about the youth mentorship networking program that you would like to set up.**

Imagine the WZCC (World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce), but geared towards high school and college students. You would have a two tiered system, one for high school students (juniors and seniors) and one for college students. You would essentially create chapters, to help students navigate the college admission process and give them the tools necessary to succeed with their applications, mentorship, networking, financial aid resources, mental health resources, scholarships.

For college students it would be slightly the same, but expanded into the helping soon-to-be graduates finding jobs (WZCC actually has a great initiative called "jobs for everyone", which could be linked with this as well), resume assistance, mentorship for young adults. Basically, setting people up for success post academia.

As someone who had a hard time in college, coping with the stress of academia and being away from home for the first time, I wish I had a group of Zarathushtis around my age to turn to for help. I was lucky that the CIA had a mentorship program, which helped me navigate through classes. Now that I have graduated and working alongside George Brown College on the professional advisory committee, I try to mentor soon-to-be graduates and shorten the learning curve as they enter the industry.

### **8. What trends are you seeing for the future? How do you see wine styles developing?**

Right now, wines on tap and canned wines are really emerging. These are perfect for young adults to want to enjoy a little something in the park or outdoors, but don't want to commit to a full bottle. Additionally, as most public parks ban glass bottles, aluminum is increasingly becoming more cost effective for wineries and easier to

consume for the clients. Vegan and more health conscience wines are also emerging, low sugar, organic, etc.

As a new generation of wine drinkers begins to emerge and start demanding products, some wineries that don't already have an established brand or client base, will most likely have to pivot into the demands of the consumer. Younger age wine drinkers also tend to lean towards sweeter styles of wines, (ice wines, Moscato). As a sommelier, I've seen our Moscato d Asti sales increase month to month, with little to no intervention on my part.

**9. Robert Louis Stevenson famously wrote that wine is bottled poetry. Can you describe a great wine experience that you have had?**



*Arashasp holding a 6L Bottle of Champagne in the world's highest wine cellar.*

I am a fiend for Champagne or any bubbles really, Prosecco, Asti. I visited France during the summer of 2017, and had the privilege of touring and tasting at one of the most iconic, legendary Champagne houses ever, Champagne Bollinger. To this day, my palate still salivates at the thought of drinking it. In fact, the more I think about it right now, the more I drool. I met with their Marketing Director and we talked about strategies they were implementing at a global level, some of the challenges they had with the current vintage, when the next Vintage Champagne would hopefully happen. It was during this lunch that a bottle of Bollinger 1970 RD Extra Brut was popped and drunk. OH MY GOD! This was the most delicious, toasty, bready, bottle of bubbles I had ever consumed in my life. I was honestly depressed when the bottle was over. The greatest wine experience actually followed that lunch as I was touring the cellars of Bollinger. Cold, dark and damp...these are the perfect storage places for this iconic wine. I walked what seemed to be miles, just looking at bottles, trying not to open a bottle right there and then.

**10. On March 28, 2019, you were awarded Ontario Hospitality Institute's 'Top 30 Under 30 Award', 2019. What are you aiming to achieve next?**

I never really focused on achieving awards. That's never a motivating factor for me. However, it is always a wonderful feeling to be recognized by my peers for doing what I was born to do – make people feel special and loved through food and beverage. As crazy as this year has been, I want to be more involved with giving back to the Zarathushti community through hospitality and am currently looking into other avenues of doing so. If I had to pick one award, I'd like to receive, it would be the "Outstanding Young Zarathushti Professional of the Year". So if anyone from the WZCC Selection Committee is reading this, I am ready to submit my profile and portfolio immediately. Haha... but really! \*



*Arashasp holding his OHI Top 30 Under 30 Award, with his father, Vistasp Shroff.*



### Judge Firdaus Dordi

Judge Firdaus Dordi was born in Mumbai, India. His family emigrated to New York when he was eight years old. The family moved to California a year later. He received his B.A. from the University of California, Santa Barbara and his J.D. from Law School in Los Angeles. As a new attorney, he served briefly in private practice before serving as a judicial law clerk in both state and federal courts. He then spent nearly fourteen years as a Deputy Federal Public Defender in the Central District of California. During his tenure in that office, Judge Dordi served as an Appellate Deputy, a Trial Deputy, a Supervisor, and



ultimately as Chief of the Trial Unit. In his position as Chief, he oversaw a team of over one hundred lawyers, investigators, paralegals, and other staff. In 2014, he left the office to help found DORDI WILLIAMS COHEN, LLP, (now COHEN WILLIAMS LLP) a boutique law firm emphasizing federal criminal and white collar defense and complex litigation. In December 2016, California Governor, Edmund Gerald "Jerry" Brown, Jr. appointed him to the position of Judge of the California Superior Court for the County of Los Angeles. He has served in various capacities on the bench. Currently, he presides over a Family Law courtroom in the Van Nuys Courthouse.

### CONGRATULATIONS ! TEAM PFIZER VICTORY ON THE VACCINE FRONT

Khushroo Eruch Shroff a former Student President of the Dadar Parsee Youths Assembly High School in Mumbai and subsequent graduate of the well known Haffkine Institute, India, has worked on the leadership team at Pfizer Vaccine R&D, in Pearl River, New York for making the first successful vaccine against the virus that is responsible for the on-going pandemic. This amazing and historic effort that was undertaken starting in March, after a brave decision was made by the CEO of Pfizer Inc, Albert Bourla, and the Head of Vaccine R&D (VRD), Dr. Kathrin Jansen to partner with their German collaborator BioNtech to try a totally new technology that uses messenger RNA - "mRNA". Dr. Shroff is a mucosal immunologist and worked on the research faculty at the University of Pennsylvania prior to joining Pfizer Inc. At



Pfizer, he is responsible for the overall Quality and Compliance for Laboratory and Clinical Operations for the Vaccine group. He described the period of the past eight months as being an "exhausting but exciting time". The VRD team at Pearl River, NY., worked brilliantly, assisted by several Pfizer colleagues

world-wide to complete the pre-clinical assessment and then plan and execute clinical trials in US and abroad to achieve what has never been accomplished in the past.... making a vaccine from start to approval in less than nine months achieving a 95% efficacy result. In Dr. Shroff's own words.. "This accomplishment will definitely be the highlight of my career in science and I am very grateful to so many great teachers, colleagues, friends and my family who all helped me along the way to get here. The past eight months have been exhausting and exciting",

Dr Khushroo Shroff lives in New Jersey with his wife Niloufer, and his children. The family have been members of ZAPANJ and very heavily involved with the community. Nilufer was the past Treasurer of FEZANA.

*Congratulations to the Shroff family.  
the community is proud of you.*



## ZOROASTRIANS IMPACTING THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

It is with great pleasure and pride that FEZANA reports there that our friend and colleague from across the pond, Zubin Sethna, was recently invited to join the prestigious World Economic Forum (in Davos) as an *Expert in Entrepreneurship, The Future of Consumption, and Family Business*. Here are the reasons why this is an excellent choice!

Zubin Sethna is a born and bred Londoner - Wimbledon in fact - and this is from where he learnt his earliest lesson in consumer behaviour. Each year he would watch the crowds gather in summer heat to buy tickets to watch the tennis. So one year, as an 11 year old, he decided to sell ice-cold cans of a famous cola drink to the waiting crowds for £3 a can! But growing up in a single-parent family following a traumatic parental divorce, Zubin suffered greatly through school and didn't achieve the qualifications he should have. On the day he left, his Latin teacher uttered the immortal words *"You were always a failure Sethna, and you will always be a failure – now get out!"*.

Professor (Dr) Zubin Sethna, as he is now known, is a Professor of Entrepreneurial Marketing and Consumer Behaviour at Regent's University London and a Visiting Professor at The Indian School of Management and Entrepreneurship (Mumbai, India). He occasionally thinks about that Latin teacher - as a wry smile comes to his face when he has cause to look at the number of letters after his name (PhD DipM FCIM FRSA FAMS FGMN PGCHE MSc MAM SFHEA FCMI, Chartered Marketer, Chartered Manager).

Zubin has worked in the higher education sector in the UK and Europe for the past 21 years and is currently the Head of Postgraduate Programmes for MSc Marketing Psychology and MA Enterprise – both of which are his brainchild.

As an avid proponent of 'practice what you preach', Professor Sethna is a qualified marketing practitioner as well as an entrepreneur. He has successfully launched six businesses (one of which won a UK National Award). As Managing Consultant at Baresman Consulting, he has integrated entrepreneurial marketing/consumer behavioural strategy with management consultancy for numerous organisations internationally (Maritime, Health Care, Professional Services, Music, Travel, Manufacturing, Retail, IT, and Education).

Zubin has written and published 3 best-selling books on Entrepreneurial Marketing and Consumer Behaviour, and contributed to 5 more books with key chapters. His new book 'Entrepreneurial Marketing: Theory and Practice' will be out in September 2021.

Professor Sethna is the Editor-in-Chief of the prestigious Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship. His own research interests lie at the interface of entrepreneurship, marketing and ethnicity. Professor Sethna has conducted research in the UK, Europe, India and China. His most recent study has been looking at transgender entrepreneurs in the UK and USA.

He is Co-Chair of the Academy of Marketing's Special Interest Group on 'Entrepreneurial and Small Business Marketing' and has conducted keynote lectures at HE institutions in the UK, EU, China, India, and America (Babson!).

His passion for community projects has not faltered. Zubin is actively involved with the WZCC as an International Director, and also is a founder member of the CZC (Care in the Zoroastrian Community); an initiative to alleviate loneliness and isolation by providing telephone support to over 70 older Zoroastrians in the U.K..

As if that isn't enough, Zubin is also training to become a Drone Pilot and can often be found practicing his manoeuvres in North London where he lives with his wife Navaz, and three children, Mahya, Kai and Kaus.



# ZARA M. PATEL, MD, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DIRECTOR OF ENDOSCOPIC SKULL BASE SURGERY, STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE



**Zara** Patel, a Rhinologist, a sub-specialist within the field of otolaryngology (ENT) is the Director of Endoscopic Skull Base Surgery and runs the center for Olfactory Disorders at the Stanford University School of Medicine

She obtained her medical degree in 2005 from Oregon Health and Science University, did her internship and residency at Mt Sinai School of Medicine in New York and her fellowship at Stanford University in Endoscopic Sinus and Skull Base surgery. She had her first job as an attending surgeon in Atlanta, GA, and was then recruited back to Stanford.

In Rhinology, she operates on sinus and skull base tumors and infections, and also sees patients with olfactory dysfunction, who are often desperate for help because of how impactful the loss or alteration is on their quality of life. She notes this is a field which has suffered from a lack of understanding and empathy until recently, with the COVID-19 pandemic bringing smell dysfunction to millions of people around the world, and a new global appreciation for what this sense means in terms of safety, social interaction, and quality of life.

When she first came out of training, there was nothing to offer these patients, and according to Dr Patel “it was the worst feeling having to tell someone, that even after all my years of training, that there was nothing I could do to help them.” But skill and knowledge have evolved in the past 10 years, partly due to her own research and also due to research performed by others all around the world, and new therapies are available to help some of these patients. She is extremely proud of her contribution to this field as it has had a large impact in her ability to help these patients.

Dr. Patel is the author of 2 best-selling textbooks, 64 peer reviewed articles, 19 book chapters and invited articles, and numerous prestigious awards in her specialty.

Born in St. Louis, MO to Marzban, a dentist and Shireen Patel, a Montessori school Directress, she grew up there with her sister and best friend, Cheherazade. Both parents come from Cusrow Baug and the family would visit Mumbai every 2-3 years where the girls imbibed the Zoroastrian culture, visiting fire temples and the extended family. In St Louis they attended monthly Zoroastrian meetings of the small community with their parents.

“The pride my parents instilled within me in being a Zoroastrian allowed me to celebrate the ways in which I was unique and different from all my other classmates, instead of wishing to be more like them – a trait that served me well in the suburban Midwest, where I was, indeed, very different from most of my peers. Being a woman in the male-dominated field of sub-specialized surgery has brought plenty of challenges with it, but because of my background I am no stranger to being the only “other” in a field of same, and I have no difficulty ignoring anyone who tells me there is anything I cannot do.”

Zara is married to André Rivard, her supportive husband, and they dote on their puppy Luna Noodles! They love to travel, hike, eat delicious food and explore new places!

Congratulations Zara Patel, the community is proud of your achievements.

## 30 UNDER 30 SUSTAINABILITY LEADER, CORPORATE KNIGHTS ENERGY COUNCIL OF CANADA (WISE) RESEARCH FELLOW VP COMMUNICATIONS, CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS



**T**ruzaar Dordi born in New Delhi, India, in 1991 to Burjis and Zarine Dordi spent his formative years in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. In 2001 his family immigrated to Toronto, Canada, where he completed his schooling. He was in the Toronto Zoroastrian Scouts group and completed Religious classes at the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario. In 2009, he joined the University of Waterloo, where he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees. At present, he is a Ph.D. Candidate in Sustainability Management with his *Thesis*: "Finance and Canada's Low-carbon Transition."

Truzaar is a multiple award-winning scholar in sustainability management, climate finance, and energy transitions. "Canada contends with an irreconcilable choice, caught between its Paris Agreement commitments and its role as a major exporter of emissions-intensive oil sands." His research examines how delayed action on climate change threatens the stability of the financial system and increases the socio-economic vulnerability of all Canadians.

Beyond research, Truzaar has demonstrated a clear dedication to climate change and youth advocacy. He has sat on several executive committees including Sustainable Youth Canada and Sierra Youth, and has been an ardent advocate for carbon neutral policies for the University of Waterloo's investments. He is currently the Vice President of Communications for the Canadian Society for Ecological Economics (CANSEE), where he works to build stronger partnerships between practitioners and academics. CANSEE is a non-profit organization that promotes the understanding of ecological economics; the principle that economies are embedded in & dependent upon the

ecosphere. He asserts that being actively involved in his community has been foundational in his ability to be a more conscientious researcher.

Consequently, his work has earned him numerous accolades, including the Energy Council of Canada Energy Policy Research Fellowship and a Best Paper Award in Social Responsibility from the Administrative Science Association of Canada. This year, Truzaar was recognized as one of the "Top 30 Under 30 Canadian Sustainability Leaders" by Corporate Knights.

Truzaar says "We are undergoing an unprecedented global energy transition. Future generations will look back at us like we look back at the industrial revolution. We have the potential to fundamentally reshape our world and our collective futures. I maintain that climate action is the financially prudent choice rather than solely a moral obligation."

On his most recent accolade, Truzaar remarks, "I am deeply honoured to be recognized as one of this year's 30 Under 30 Sustainability Leaders, alongside the many other young Canadians I admire. As a scholar, I am thankful for the University of Waterloo for the freedom to pursue the research I am truly passionate about and for providing a platform for me to share my work. Likewise, I am thankful for Corporate Knights for amplifying the voices of youth and believing that the work we do is important."

Zarine and Burjis have been active members of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario and Zarine is a member of the Entertainment committee, the Helping Hands committee, and Muktaad committee.

**CONGRATULATIONS TRUZAAR , THE COMMUNITY IS PROUD OF YOU AND WISH YOU GREATER SUCCESS.**



## Keep Buzzing

Buzzing around everywhere they go  
Just like water goes with the flow.  
All the noise makes me crazy  
As the bees fly from daisy to daisy.  
They reside in a hive  
Where they survive and thrive.  
Seeing a bee makes me feel weird  
I just want them to disappear!  
But then the bees help make people pleased...  
Fields of flowers of all different colors  
Seen throughout all the summers.  
Bees go around pollinating the flowers  
Like they have superpowers.  
They help give us our colorful gifts  
By transferring nectar to flowers in shifts.  
Flowers make many joyful  
We should appreciate those bees by being thankful!

Natasha N. Dungor, 13 Years Grade: 8th Houston

### Looking for a Soul Mate?

Also try these matrimonial sites and services:

[www.ParsiShaadi.com](http://www.ParsiShaadi.com). This initiative of the Jiyo Parsi program is now available as the "Parsi Shaadi" app.

[www.zoroastrianmatrimony.com](http://www.zoroastrianmatrimony.com)

[www.chaalokaajkariye.com](http://www.chaalokaajkariye.com)

[www.Matrimonial.Zoroastrianism.com](http://www.Matrimonial.Zoroastrianism.com)

[www.zoroastrians.net](http://www.zoroastrians.net)

[www.TheParsiMatch.com](http://www.TheParsiMatch.com)

[www.shaadi.com](http://www.shaadi.com)

[www.ParsiMatrimony.com](http://www.ParsiMatrimony.com)

[www.MatrimonialParsiZoroastrianism.com](http://www.MatrimonialParsiZoroastrianism.com)

Mrs. Gool Banaji, Parel, Mumbai, [goolpesi@gmail.com](mailto:goolpesi@gmail.com), tel: 91-22-2416 6120.

## Matrimonial

Female, 27, 5' 3", beautiful, M.B.A. in Finance (Mumbai University), working as finance executive, inviting proposals from well-educated, professionally well-settled family residing in Mumbai or Canada (Toronto). Contact [vaid68@yahoo.co.in](mailto:vaid68@yahoo.co.in). [F20.40]

Female, 27, Medical degree MbCHB (MBBS equivalent), working as Medical doctor in Kenya within a Teaching and Referral hospital, planning to pursue masters in Pediatrics. Born and brought up in Nairobi. Willing to relocate. Contact [vahistas@gmail.com](mailto:vahistas@gmail.com). [F20.46]

Female, 56, 5' 1", Master of Science in Vocational and Technical Education from SUNY at Oswego, and diploma in cosmetology. Taught high school; currently working as a hair stylist in Seattle, WA. Enjoys Indian music and films. Hobbies include sewing and cooking. Loves to socialize with friends in India and USA. Contact [kashulid1@gmail.com](mailto:kashulid1@gmail.com). [F20.48].

Male, 38, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from California State University. Working, in Los Angeles, as paralegal for the government. Enjoys movies, traveling, hiking or just spending time together. Contact: +1 (714) 317 6735. [M20.50].

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](mailto:roshanrivetna@gmail.com).

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### BIRTHS

**Zara Malcolm Irani**, a girl, to Naomi and Malcolm Irani, granddaughter to Ken and Villi Bhappu, Khodi and Parinaz Irani on October 27, 2020. (Manashni)

### NAVJOTE

**Cody and Emily Bredlau**, children of Mark and Katie Bredlau, brother and sister to Casey, grandchildren to Ken and Dinaz Weber and Patrick and Cathy Bredlau on September 5, 2020. (ZA-Chi)

### DEATHS

**Marazban (Mally) Faramroze Virji**, 91, son of late Hilla and Faramroze Virji, husband of Linda, father of Fram and Maya, brother of late Khurshed, Dadi, Hoshang, Edul, Bakhtavar Homi Amra, Shireen Minoo Shroff, Pervin Behram Billimoria in Los Angeles, CA on September 20, 2020.

**Firoz Mehta**, husband of Freny Mehta, father of Aniheets (Kersi), Nina (Keki), Sharook (Nina), grandfather of Neville, Xerxes, Kayaan, Karl, Cyrus, Shanaya, Shaun on September 21, 2020. (OZCF)

**Perwin Irani**, mother of Niloufer Irani, Navazar Irani (Mumbai, India), mother-in-law of late Jamshed (Jumbo) Irani, Sanobar Irani (Mumbai, India), grandmother of Natasha, Karl, Cyrus, Elsa, great grandmother of Zain, Zaahan, Mackenzie, Stirling in Mississauga, ONT on October 9, 2020.

**Thrity Madon**, wife of late Russy Madon, mother of Khurshed (Sharon) Madon, Hutokshi Madon, Kermin (Marzi) Byramjee, sister of Asaad Talati, late Freni, late Keki, late Purvez, grandmother of Maleena, Sofia, Miah, Oliver, Farrah, Leo, Arun in Oakville, ONT on October 9, 2020.

**Houshang Mehin**, husband of Parvindokht, father of Nazanin (Hooman), Ramin (Shabnam), Afshin (Vahishta), Brother of Kourosh, Manouchehr, Rashid, grandfather of Arman, Nicole, Asha, Parsa, Nikan on October 11, 2020. (ZSBC)

**Beman Khosraviani** in Tehran, Iran on October 22, 2020. (ZSO)

**Kyoumars Azargoshasbi**, husband of Mahnaz Faradi, father of Atoosa Azargoshasbi, father-in-law of Shahryar Mehrazar, grandfather to Nikita, son-in-law of Freny Farhadi (Behmoodi) on October 25, 2020. (ZSO)

**Bapsy Aspi Cooper**, wife of late Aspi Dossabhoy Cooper, mother of Dilshad (Jimmy) Kershaw, Rashna (Ripple) Marfatia, sister of Farrokh Mistry, Dara Mistry, grandmother of Jenai, Trisha, Rhea in Richmond Hill, ONT on October 31, 2020.

**Neville Homi Kotwal**, son of Homi and Altaf Kotwal, brother of Zarine, brother-in-law of Michael Meyer, uncle of Zubin, Zahan, fiancé of Monique Toby on November 9, 2020. (ZAPANJ)

**Nader Darabshah Ghadially**, husband of Homai Ghadially, father of Tushna and Kaikobad Kakalia, grandfather of Katy, uncle of Hufriz Mavalvala (Vancouver, BC) in London on November 13, 2020.

**Farangis Mehrabani-Aidun**, mother of Rashid Aidun, mother-in-law of Gita Mehrabani, in Montreal, on Friday, November 27, 2020. (ZA-Quebec)

**Manouchehr Dinyar Iranpour**, husband of Mahnaz Kianan, father of Arya Iranpour, brother of Shahin, Simin. (ZSBC)

**Shahpur Captain**, 91, husband of Jilloo Chinoy and Inderjit Chhabra, father of late Xerxes and Armaity Bedford, brother of Savak and Nargis (Marker) in Kent, England, on December 1, 2020.

**Dinyar Hodiwala**, 69, husband of Meher, father of Mehvar and Adel, father-in-law of Melissa and Pearl, grandfather of Jackson and Naasha, in North Brunswick, NJ, December 9, 2020 (ZAGNY)

**Astad Deboo**, 73, son of Roda and Adarbad, brother of Kamal and Gulshan in Mumbai, December 10, 2020.

**Manoucher Shidfar** 90, husband of late Roudabeh Molaei, father of Soheila Shidfar and Sima Shidfar, grandfather of Vahishta Katrak, Sarishta Katrak and Jasmin Varjavand, and greatgrandfather of Nikan Mehin in California, December 12, 2020.

**Noshirwan Jehangirji Katrak**, 92, husband of Arnavaz Katrak, father of Mahrukh (Feroze) Motafram (Seattle, WA), Jehangir and Cyrus Katrak, grandfather of Freya and Jamsheed Motafram in Mumbai, India December 25, 2020.

**Sammy H Bhiwandiwalla**, 81 husband of Ursula, father of Cyrus (Christine), Nicola (David), grandfather of Chloe-Rose, Marcus, Reubens, Lara, Rhea and Thomas, in England, on December 27, 2020

**Naju Gustad Nanavati**, wife of late Gustad, mother/grandmother of Shiraz, Hosedar, Cyrus, Anaheeta Minwalla, Tanaz Sunavala, in Silver Springs, December 31, 2020.

**Goolcher Dinshaw Joshi**, wife of Dinshaw Joshi, mother of Shehernaz (Farhad), grandmother of Ana and Roksana, in Maryland, January 2, 2021



# Obituary

## ASTAD DEBOO July 13, 1947- December 10, 2020

Contemporary Indian dancer Astad Deboo, renowned for marrying Kathak and Kathakali into a unique contemporary dance form

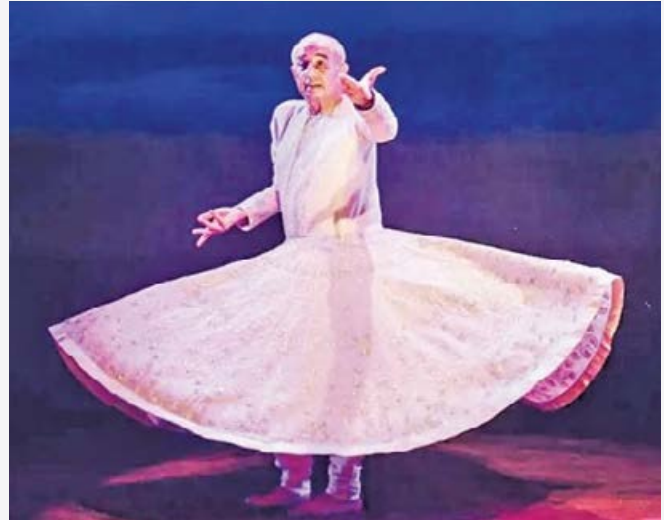
On December 10, 2020, the famous modern and contemporary dancer, Astad Deboo, passed away in Mumbai aged 73. He was recently diagnosed with pre-Hodgkin's lymphoma, had his first round of chemotherapy a couple of weeks ago, his second round was stopped as it was traumatic. He deteriorated rapidly and passed away in Shapur Baug, Grant Road, Mumbai.

Astad's dance career spanned over 50 glorious years, with performances in over 72 countries, including solo, group and collaborative choreography with performing artists on national and international platforms

He started learning Kathak dance form from the age of six, from the late Indra Kumar Mohanty and the late Prahlad Das. He was known for marriage of Kathakali Kathak and folk tradition with modern dance, as Bharatanatyam dancer said "a true face of contemporary dancer rooted in the indigenous techniques of India."

Apart from his unique vocabulary of fusion dance, he was a very generous soul who left an indelible mark on artists and friends. He worked extensively in bringing Manipur artists to the limelight. In 2002 he founded the Astad Deboo Dance Foundation with the aim of providing opportunity and creative training to marginalized street children and also to provide artistic development for deaf children. In January 2005, Astad along with a troupe of 12 young women with hearing impairment (as part of the Astad Deboo Dance Foundation), performed at the 20th Annual Deaf Olympics, at Melbourne, Australia. He also choreographed the 2004 Hindi film, by painter M.F. Hussain, Meenaxi: A Tale of Three Cities. In the early months of the pandemic he created "Boundaries" a virtual collaborative piece indicated to migrant labourers. He is the absolute example of dancers using the medium of art to question and address various social issues. His passing is an end of an era.

He received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1995 and the Padma Shri in 2007. A couple of years ago, he was given the 'Yagnaraman Living Legend Award' by the Sri Krishna Gana Sabha in Chennai, one of India's most powerful and reputed keepers of Indian classical dance and music. On February 27, 2017, Astad was introduced to Her Majesty the Queen at Buckingham Palace for the launch of UK - India Year of Culture.



Our condolences to the artistic community and to his sisters Kamal and Gulshan. May Astad's soul rest in peace.

Dolly Dastoor, Editor in Chief  
FEZANA JOURNAL

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## **SHAHPUR CAPTAIN NOV 1 1929 - DECEMBER 1, 2020 A TIRELESS WORKER AND VISIONARY FOR THE COMMUNITY TILL HIS 91st BIRTHDAY.**



**A** bold and courageous individual with a vision and conviction who leaves behind a remarkable legacy that few in our community will ever achieve. May his life inspire others to dedicate themselves to serving the community with a smile.

Born in Karachi in 1929 to Framroze and Khorshed Captain, Shahpur was the second of three children. He attended Bai Virbaiji Soparivala Parsi High School, Karachi, and studied accountancy and law in India. He came to the UK in 1956 to study Chartered Accountancy at Glasgow University. His first marriage was to Jilloo Chinoy which resulted in two children Armaity and son Xerxes who died in a tragic accident. He then married Inderjit Chhabra.

Shahpur's long career of service to the Zoroastrian community started in 1959. Malcolm Deboo, the current president of ZTFE, informs us, "Shahpur served the the Zoroastrian community in the UK and globally for over 60 years. He was elected to the ZTFE Managing Committee in 1961 during the presidency of Jehangirji D Moos. As a practicing Chartered Accountant, Shahpur was appointed (Hon) Treasurer - youngest Treasurer of the ZTFE. And in 1977, he was elected President of ZTFE after Dr (Mrs) Shirinbanoo S Kutar stepped down. Prior to him being elected President, he held various positions including (Hon) Secretary and Vice President". In 1986 he stepped down as ZTFE President because of a difference of opinion as to who should be allowed to attend prayers. Shahpur believed that religion is a matter of choice, and anybody who believed in Zarathustra had a right to attend the prayers.

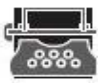
In 1980 the World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO) was formed to be able to present a united front for helping our Iranian brethren facing political and social hardships in Iran. Shahpur was the driving force for the formation of WZO, and the initial committee was like a "Who's Who" from the worldwide community. He served as Vice -president from 1980-1985 and then President from 1985-1990. He was chairman from 1995-1999 and then again from September 2013-July 2020. The library at the WZOH has been dedicated to honor his late son Dr Xerxes Captain. He stepped down in July 2020 because of a fall from which he did not recover well. He died in December 2020 having worked till his 91st birthday!!

Shahpur was instrumental in organizing and executing many social programs for helping the impoverished Zarthushti farmers in the villages of Gujarat. Dinshaw Tamboly writes, "It was Shahpur's vision that WZO undertake community welfare work in India, and it was solely due to his enthusiasm, support, and guidance that we took the first tentative steps to establish the WZO Trusts in India... He regularly visited India once every year till 2007 to visit with us, villages in Gujarat, meet beneficiaries, and view the transformation taking place in their lives. The humble Parsi farmers remember Shahpur even at present and consider him to be one of their benefactors".

Shahpur will be remembered as a passionate benefactor of his community.

Our deepest condolences to his wife Inderjit, his daughter Armaity, niece Persis and her husband, Jamshed Limbuwalla.

Dolly Dastoor, FEZANA Journal



# Between the Covers

## MURDER IN OLD BOMBAY by Nev March (Nawaz Merchant)

Published by Minotaur Books  
Oct 2020, pages 389, price  
\$26.99

Reviewed by Boman Desai

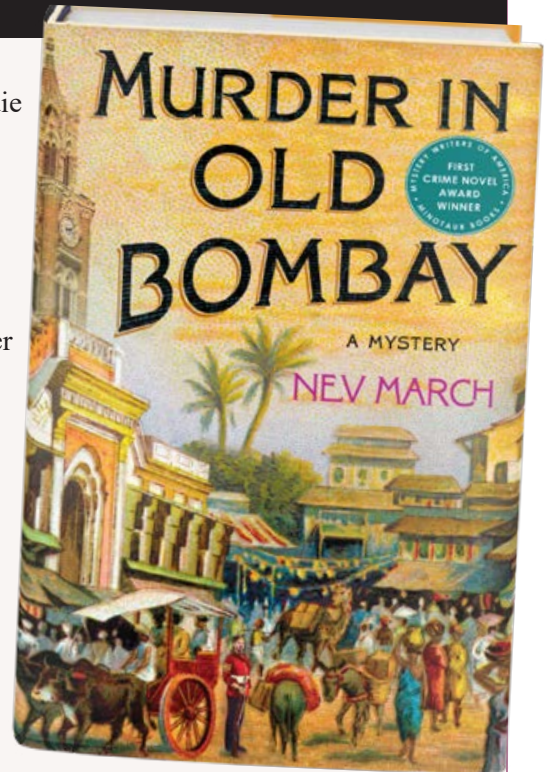
Nev March reveals in her Acknowledgments that when she was a child, “Mum read us stories by Conan Doyle, ‘The Red-Headed League,’ ‘The Speckled Band’” – and without Conan Doyle at the helm *Murder in Old Bombay* might well have taken a different turn. Captain James Agnihotri, an Anglo-Indian in British India toward the close of the Nineteenth Century, finds himself hospitalized, victim of an Afghan war which he survived with just two others. A sentence from a letter in the newspaper catches his attention: *They are gone but I remain*. The letter, signed Adi Framji, refers to Adi’s wife Bacha and sister Pilloo, both alleged suicides, who supposedly jumped from Bombay’s Rajabai Tower. Adi contests the conclusion and requests the editors to stop fueling foolish rumors. Both women were young, had much to live for, neither was prone to melancholia.

Echoing his own pain, the sentence takes Jim by storm, “for my brothers-in arms were gone, yet I remained.” A friend brings him *The Sign of the Four* (1890), the Sherlock Holmes craze then in its infancy and sweeping the imagination of the reading public like a brushfire, not least that of Jim Agnihotri: “The details don’t line up. They didn’t fall from the

clock tower at the same time but minutes apart. If they planned to die together, wouldn’t they have leapt from the clock tower together?”

Released from the hospital, Jim joins the *Chronicle of India* as a journalist – but turns detective when Adi Framji offers him greater compensation than the newspaper, and puts Holmes’s theories to work: “The singular, or unusual features of a crime can help explain it”; “We mustn’t theorize before we have all the evidence – [it] biases the judgement”; “When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.”

The pages fly fast, but I felt continually I was reaching the end of the mystery when a plot twist would have me wondering again where I was headed. The book satisfies all the requirements of a detective story, but to call it a detective story is to call a swan a goose. *MIOB* is twice the size of the detective novels of my youth (Doyle, Christie, Stout, Carr), and before he’s finished Jim dons many hats in addition to Holmes’s deerstalker, among them James Bond’s trilby and Mother Teresa’s cowl. This is an adventure story, a story of maturation, social consciousness, history, Zoroastrian culture, and a love story – a genre novel that transcends its genre, though I must say Ms. March punishes poor Jim mercilessly. Even



after the debris seems to have been swept clear he must still endure a grueling boxing match – on the heels of his hospital experience, a trek of 150 miles from Lahore to Simla, another visit to Afghanistan, not to mention a poignant encounter with four abandoned children and a baby, one of whom became my favorite character. You will know who when you read the book. This is also a lyrical novel (“A waterfall of bells sang the half hour,” “My heartbeat [was] a train blasting through my chest”), but moves at such breakneck speed a neck brace would not be out of the question. No surprise, the book won the Minotaur Books/Mystery Writers of America First Crime Novel Award. How is Ms. March going to top this?!!

*Boman Desai is an amateur musician, a song writer and a celebrated award winning author famous among his books are The Memory of Elephants, Trio and Dancing about Architecture. He lives in Chicago.*

## WHAT PESI DID: A SURGEON'S STORY

BY AZMY BIRDI;

PPS: 308; PRICE: \$10

ISBN: 978-81-948149-0-0

REVIEWED BY YASMIN PAVRI

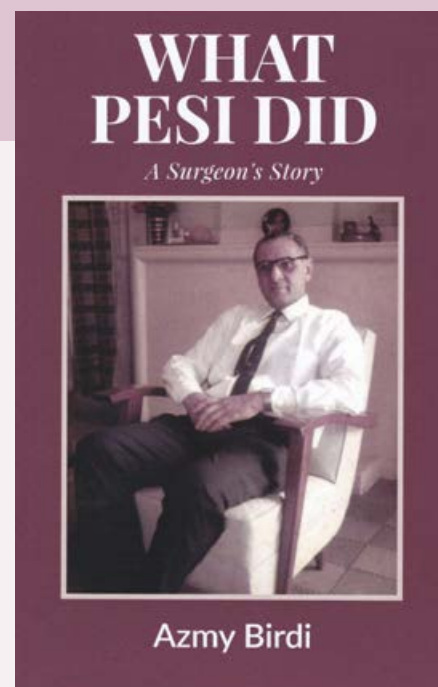
**UK** based Azmy Birdi has been a post-graduate medical educator for 17 years and trains and educates other doctors in the field of post-reproductive women's health. She has authored a book on the life and work of her father, Dr. Pesi Bharucha. However, the book is not merely a recounting of his life. In the author's words: "I think the book is a tribute to the Tata group, to the Parsi doctors of those days for whom medicine was a calling and not a business and for anyone interested in medicine, history and India." It is filled with anecdotes on the medical skills of Dr. Pesi Bharucha; but more than that, it illustrates his generosity of spirit, his empathy towards the least of his brethren, and his dedication to the tenets of his religion to do good. Dr. Bharucha trained in the UK and was hired by the Tata Company to take care of their employees in Jamshedpur. To those of us who have connections to Jamshedpur, the book provides a retrospective on the evolution of the town with the growth of TISCO (Tata Iron and Steel Company) and TELCO (Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company). It has many images that evoke pleasant memories of the 60's and 70's but it also does not gloss over the terrors of the Hindu Muslim riots that shook the peaceful town to its core.

Over the many years Dr. Bharucha worked in Jamshedpur he

transformed the small Tata Main Hospital into the Jehangir Ghandy Memorial Hospital, a large, state-of-the-art, multi specialty hospital. As the company doctor, Dr. Bharucha often had to treat workers who, despite safety measures, were victims of serious accidents in the plants. The book describes his surgical prowess including successful treatment of burns for which he became famous throughout India. He was also known for his skill at attaching severed thumbs and tendon transplants in the decades before the use of micro surgical implements.

The book devotes a chapter to the fight to eradicate smallpox. In 1974, previously smallpox-free areas began to show outbreaks in and around Jamshedpur. The World Health Organization (WHO), which had the eradication of smallpox as its goal, was concerned about this breakout. With the help of funds and resources provided by the Tata group, Dr. Bharucha and his colleagues spent countless days in remote places to fight this scourge. In June 1975 the WHO declared India free from smallpox and by May 1980, smallpox was eradicated from the world.

We are introduced to Dr. Noshir Piroshaw, a dentist and periodontist, who moved to Jamshedpur in early 1961. The two doctors had had similar life experiences and bonded immediately. Dr. Piroshaw earned the epithet "Paagal (Mad) Piroshaw"



because of his insistence on using disposable syringes and needles, initially at his own expense. Dr. Bharucha supported him in his quest for excellence at the hospital.

While Dr. Bharucha worked long hours, he was not a loner. He was a beloved member of the thriving Parsi community in Jamshedpur. In fact, Dr. Bharucha was Jamshedpur's most eligible bachelor for many years but resisted all attempts at matchmaking, saying he would know when he found the right partner. In 1960 Gool Andhyarujina came to visit her sister Khorshed who had recently moved to Jamshedpur. Gool was a qualified lawyer and a beautiful lady. They met at a dinner hosted by Sir Ghandhy and Pesi was instantly smitten. She was the ideal wife for him, who supported him in all his endeavors in Jamshedpur, and later in Mumbai.

This quote from William A. Ward before Chapter 6 truly describes Dr. Bharucha's legacy:

*The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.* Dr. Bharucha's life inspires.



## Sugar in Milk by Thrity Umrigar, illustrated by:

*Khoa Lo*

Price US \$17.77 in USA Can

\$22.99 pps 48 Trade hard cover

ISBN 978-09-7624-9519-1

Running Press Kids Ages 4-8 .PK-

Grade 3 Hechette Book Group

First edition October 2020

Thrity Umrigar was born and brought up in India, and her writing features many of her life experiences, stories she grew up with, and her culture. Simply written and beautifully illustrated, *Sugar in Milk* by Thrity Umrigar is a delightful children's book with a message so apt for our time. Thrity has done a masterful job of conveying so much with just a sentence on most pages!

This is a story about a young girl who is taken to another country by her aunt and uncle. She is lonely, has no friends, she misses her home and all that was familiar to her. Her aunt and uncle provide everything for her and take really good care of her, but she is not happy. One day her aunt takes her for a walk and tells her a legend about a group of Persians who had to flee their country for safety.

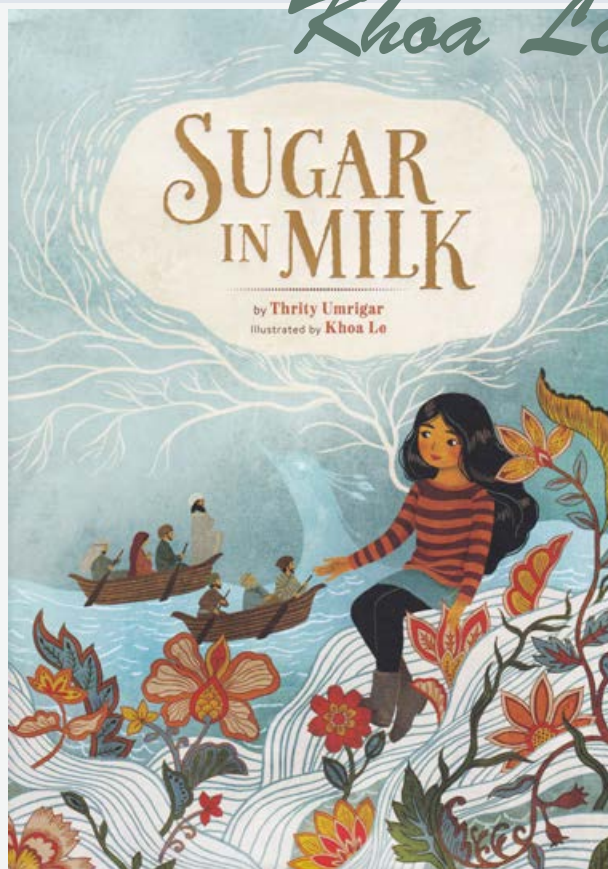
She retells the myth about the Persians landing on the shores of Gujarat as refugees and being asked to leave by the local ruler. The aunt describes how the leader of the Persians took a fistful of sugar and dropped it into an almost overflowing cup of milk, held by the king. As the milk dissolved in the sugar, the leader illustrated to the king how his people would mingle with the existing culture, sweetening the milk without harming or diluting it. The aunt tells her how the Persians were

thereby able to settle in their new surroundings. She describes for the little girl the difficulties they faced, the challenges they met, and the wisdom with which their leader helped them adjust. This story offers the little girl a new perspective and she begins to see her new life from a totally different point of view. From then on, the little girl began to smile at people she passed and they responded by smiling back. She became more cheerful and wondered how she could have thought her new home was not a "welcoming place".

The illustrations are beautiful. The choice of color and patterns showcase the emotions felt as the young girl experiences loneliness, the travelers in the legend go from experiencing a terrible storm to

living in harmony with their hosts, and the young girl begins to enjoy her new surroundings. Khoa Lo's knowledge of other cultures and experience with illustrating children's books is apparent from the simplicity and clarity of her artwork in this book.

It is a thought-provoking story about diversity, acceptance, and change. It conveys a timeless message of tolerance, cooperation, and adjustment. A pack of sugar in her pocket became a symbol, reminding the young girl that she had it in her power to "make things sweeter" wherever she went. A great read for children of all ages and a simple reminder to all adults. Once again, a wonderful read by best-selling author Thrity Umrigar.



*Nina Kalianivala is a middle school teacher and a religious class teacher. She was born in India and came to the US about thirty-five years ago. She lives in Texas with her family and she loves to read, cook, and spend time with friends.*

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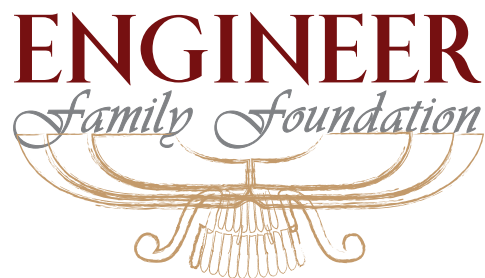
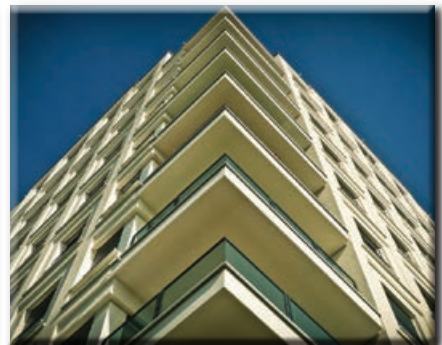
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