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Inclusive VOICES:

stories from the

ZOROASTRIAN LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

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Contents



FEZANA Journal

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2 EDITORIAL

DOLLY DASTOOR

3 MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

ARZAN SAM WADIA

4 FEZANA UPDATES



24 INCLUSIVE VOICES: STORIES FROM THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY



» WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY
CANADA, GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

» HOW SHOULD A GOOD AND MINDFUL
ZOROASTRIAN REACT TO THE LGBTQ+
QUESTION?

» MY LIFE, MY WAY

» ON COMING OUT AND BRINGING
EVERYONE ALONG ON MY JOURNEY

» ACTIONS COUNT, EDUCATION MATTERS

» COURAGE TO SAY YES



» TAKING THE RISK TO BLOSSOM

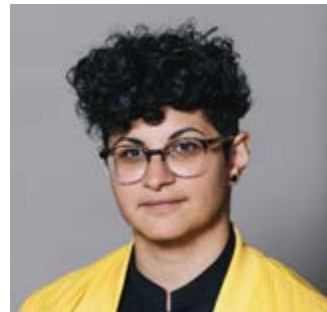
» UNION OF LOVE!

» LOVE IS LOVE

» TWO VOICES, ONE LOVE

» REFLECTION OF A PARENT

» AN INTERVIEW WITH SHARLENE
BAMBOAT



» CHANGING ATTITUDES

» FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION: BEING A
SUPPORTIVE ALLY

59 IN THE NEWS

» WZYC IN LONDON CALLED - WE PICKED
UP

» WZCC GLOBAL CONCLAVE IN LONDON, A
FANTASTIC SUCCESS



» ZOROASTRIAN STUDIES SYMPOSIUM
HONORING DR ERVAD JEHAN BAGLI

» ZAGNY TUERNS 50!!

» HONOR THE PAST, LOOK TO THE FUTURE,
ZAC-CHICAGO CELEBRATES THE 40TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR RUSTAM GUIV
DAR-E-MEHR

» FREYA MOTAFRAM

» JAMSHED KANGA

» DARABSHAW NOSHIRWAN WADIA
(1883-1969)

» ZAH FUNDRAISER FOR DADAR ATHORNAN
& AVABAI PETIT GIRLS HOSTEL

85 PERSONAL PROFILE



87 OBITUARY

88 MILESTONES

90 BETWEEN THE COVERS

91 LIST OF ASSOCIATIONS

92 ORDER FORM



Fall Paiz 1392 AY 3761 Z
Mehr- Avan – Adar 1392 AY (Fasli)
Ardebehesht – Khordad – Tir 1393 AY (Shenhai)
Khordad - Tir – Amordad 1393 AY (Kadimi)

Winter 2023 Guest Editor: Dolly Dastoor & Bakhtavar Desai Parliament of World Religions - Zoroastrian Ethos and contribution of Zoroastrians

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Days are growing shorter and leaves blanket the ground; amidst bad news and disheartening headlines, autumn is here and I feel the urge to give you something positive. During the summer months many exciting events took place in the diaspora of the Zarthushti world. These events are: the ground breaking ceremony for a new “place of worship“ in Oakville, Ontario. Years of patience of the Zarthushtis of Ontario Zoroastrian Cultural Foundation (OZCF) has paid off. Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York celebrated their 50th anniversary with great pomp and fanfare, and the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago celebrated the 40th anniversary of their Dar e Mehr. On September 9th the Institute for Iranian studies of the University of Toronto in collaboration with FEZANA, OZCF and ZSO and Encyclopedia Iranica Foundation presented Zoroastrian Studies Symposium in honour of Ervad Dr Jejan Bagli. The Institute of Iranian studies, University of Toronto announced the establishment of Jehan Bagli Lecture Series in Zoroastrian Studies.

In this issue you will also read about a road trip (ZYNA) the Zoroastrian youth made to visit the six Dar e mehrs of California. The FEZANA participation of young adults at the 8WZYC was well received. The WZCC conclave in London was a fabulous event. Taking advantage of our visit to London, some of us went to visit the lovely ASHA CENTRE run by Zerbanoo Guifford nestled in the peaceful forest of Dean and experienced her gracious hospitality. We also visited the World Zoroastrian Organization, Zoroastrian House on Freddy Mercury Street where we saw the exhibit of wall of Zoroastrian Notables organized by Zerbanoo. We were feted with a delicious Parsi home cooked meal.

The cover story of this issue was chosen with great thought and sensitivity. We have to face the reality as it exists in the community. The articles and testimonials are revealing. We neither endorse them or criticize them, but accept them as a reality of life.

Diversity within genders has existed from the time of recorded history. We know it flourished between both men and women during biblical times. Substantial evidence exists for individuals who lived at least part of their lives, as a different gender than assigned at birth.

Early efforts to understand the range of sexual behaviors came from European doctors in the 19th century who were sympathetic to the concept of genders lived differently. These writings gradually trickled down to men and women, desperate to learn more about those like themselves.

The civil rights movement led to the first American based political demands for fair treatment for gays and lesbians in mental health, public policy and employment. In 1950s and 60s gay men and lesbians were at risk of being locked up in psychiatric wards or in jails, losing jobs or custody of children as courts defined them as sick, criminal or immoral. It was only in 1973 that the American Psychiatric Association removed “homosexuality” as an illness and since then society has evolved in its attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community with visibility and people representation growing.

But this recognition of same sex attraction had a turbulent trajectory during the Aids pandemic but recognition by religious organizations specially by the supportive remarks by Pope Francis (who am I to judge ?) gave hope to people world wide. But there are still 75 countries where “homosexuality” remains illegal. It is punishable by death in 10 mostly Muslim countries.



Education plays a pivotal role in changing hearts and minds. It brings awareness and inclusion where we can cultivate empathy and understanding. And this is what the Journal is attempting to do (see page 29 Making Truth our Teacher)

The Journal congratulates the guest editor and the contributors to this issue for their courage and willingness to write of their experiences. As we reflect on this journey of inclusion and acceptance, we must acknowledge the progress made while recognizing that much work remains. We hope our readers also read the articles and gain new insight and understanding in our reality. We can work together to create a world where diversity is celebrated and everyone is free to live authentically without fear or discrimination.

Wishing you well

Dolly Dastoor Ph.D
Editor in Chief

Message FROM THE PRESIDENT

With days getting shorter Fall is here in North America but a lot has happened since early Summer. Our youth led by ZYNA participated at the 8th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress and you will read more about it in the pages ahead. Over 50% of the attendees were from North America which shows the burgeoning interest in their faith and community. FEZANA and its member associations worked hard to financially incentivize the youth attendance and in many cases the youth raised their own funds to match funds from FEZANA and their local associations.

In summer many of us were in the United Kingdom to attend the WZCC Global Conclave hosted by the UK Chapter of WZCC. The small but experienced team made this one of the most memorable WZCC events ever. They leveraged the star power of London as a tourist destination, the connections of their members to gain access to places of stature and brought out a fantastic array of speakers and panelists.

A few of us were also lucky to be invited to the world famous ASHA Center founded by the indomitable Zerbanoo Gifford. Dolly Dastoor, Katayun Kapadia, Aban Rustomji and myself got to see the ASHA center with their new expansion. We visited WZO House in London, the headquarters of the World Zoroastrian Organization. Romy Sethna, the Chair of WZO and Zerbanoo the current President of WZO along with their Board and other members welcomed us and gave us a glimpse of the work they do. We had a chance to participate in a service project at their local train station a few blocks away.

A couple of weeks after returning from London many of us went to Chicago to attend the Parliament of World's Religions. You will read detailed accounts of it in the Winter special issue of the FEZANA Journal. However one of the highlights for me was the hospitality and participation of the local Zoroastrian Association. Members young and old came out in large numbers to collectively "fly" the Zarathushti flag high at the Parliament.

The University of Toronto held a one day seminar in honour of our own Ervad Dr. Jehan Bagli. At the end of the seminar it was announced that an annual lecture series will be established by the University of Toronto to honour the work of Ervad Bagli.

FEZANA has been working with the North American Mobed Council for the NAMC Liaison Mobed on the boards of local member associations. For more information or to get involved contact Ervad Tehemton Mirza, the President of NAMC at tmirza@execulink.com

At the last AGM FEZANA member associations had voted unanimously for FEZANA to explore the possibility of establishing a Zoroastrian Museum in Houston. At a town hall meeting in early October, FEZANA VP Kayo Sidhwa and I presented the overall vision to the ZAH community along with Aban Rustomji Co-Chair of FIRES and Aderbad Tamboli, the Chair of ZAH. We will continue to work on this in the months ahead. If you would like to know more or get involved in any capacity email museum@fezana.org



The Fall 2023 issue is a pathbreaking one on Inclusivity within our Zoroastrian community. I would like to thank Dolly Dastoor the FEZANA Editor-In-Chief in bringing the issue to the fore and to my dear friend Zavare Tengra, the Guest Editor for doing a fantastic job in presenting the views, hopes and aspirations of the LGBTQ+ folks within our faith community. You will read a diverse range of experiences, opinions, hopes and aspirations. The underlying thread in all the articles is beautifully summed up in the words of the 44th President of the United States Barack Obama "When all humans are treated as equal, no matter who they are or whom they love, we are all more free".

Arzan Sam Wadia, President,
FEZANA

Correction on Page 70 of the Summer journal
The birthdate of Sarosh Collector is 1947.



EMBRACING UNITY AND EXTENDING WELFARE: REFLECTING ON OUR 2023 JOURNEY SO FAR

In the spirit of unity and our unwavering commitment to community welfare, the FEZANA Unity and Welfare Committee is pleased to recount the remarkable milestones we've achieved so far in 2023.

We've had the privilege to extend financial assistance exceeding \$140,000 to various appeals that have come our way. This monumental achievement demonstrates our collective commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of those in need within our community.

These achievements stand as a testament to the strength of our united community, and we're excited to share these highlights without specifying individual names.

Our year commenced with a dedicated focus on extending vital medical support to community members facing a range of health challenges. Our resolute commitment to preserving lives was evident through our substantial financial contributions, particularly for life-saving procedures like kidney transplants. Throughout the year, we continued to assist those grappling with heart failure, undergoing liver transplants, and battling various forms of cancer.

In addition to our support for kidney transplants and cancer treatment, we extended our aid to individuals facing critical health conditions, such as Acute Myeloid Leukemia and premature births requiring NICU care. During these vulnerable moments, our support brought hope, relief, and a sense of community to those contending with these challenging circumstances.

Beyond medical assistance, our committee has been a dependable source of help for those facing financial hardships. Our support goes beyond the financial realm, serving as a beacon of hope for those temporarily facing financial setbacks, helping them regain their financial stability.

One heartwarming aspect of our work in 2023 has been our assistance to individuals who have escaped abusive marriages as well as widowers and single mothers encountering financial difficulties. Our financial aid has empowered these courageous individuals to start afresh and rebuild their lives, providing them with a secure and nurturing environment.

None of our achievements in 2023 would have been possible without the generous donations and unwavering support of our community members. The FEZANA Unity and Welfare Committee takes immense pride in belonging to such a wonderful and compassionate community. The success of our initiatives is a testament to the strength of unity, the power of giving, and the enduring spirit of a community that deeply cares for its members.

In 2023, we celebrate the profound difference a united community can make in brightening the lives of individuals, one person at a time.

Sanaya Master
Hutoxi Contrator
Hosi Mehta





AYATHREM GAHAMBAR CELEBRATION- ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF QUEBEC

At Gahambar time, the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec (ZAQ) gathered to give thanks to Ahura Mazda with a jashan ceremony and to enjoy a meal, sponsored by the trust of the late Dr Firoze Ichhaporla. Year after year, the ZAQ has simultaneously held a food drive to support Moisson Montreal, Canada's largest food bank. Members gave monetary donations and non-perishable food items to help support those in need in the local Montreal community.

Food for thought: If other FEZANA Associations consider holding their own food drives during this time, just imagine what a collective difference we can make!



Photo (left) Zareen Hakim Austin, President ZAQ delivering the food items, (right) Mobed Gev Karkaria (standing) and Mobed Jak Panthaky (sitting) performing the gahambar prayers





Zoroastrian Association of Houston **Z**-Camp 2023

A Conduit for Future Zarathushti Leaders!

Since 2017, ZAH has been in touch with FEZANA regarding our vision to take these Z-Camps to a National level and fill a large void that currently exists for kids aged between 5 to 18 years. Our dear Sarosh Collector, a ZAH and FEZANA icon who recently passed away had this joint vision together with others to host a “national level” North America wide Z-camp periodically for kids from all over North America. The pandemic created some temporary breaks to those plans although we are back on course towards our larger vision.

Introduction

This was the 11th year of Z-Camp and along with it, ZAH was hosting a double header over the weekend which included the North American Mobed Council (NAMC) AGM 2023 and adult lecture series. This year we had some associations/ FEZANA visitors come over to experience the way we go about conducting the Z-camp and hopefully replicate at their local associations. As always, we started our preparations for this gigantic but fun task 3 months in advance.

The ZAH Z-Camp 2023 was held over the weekend from 7 pm on June 23rd to 3:30pm on June 25th and the theme was “Camping under the Stars” with some key activities centered around practicing sustainability and developing business models for non-profits. The Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Center (ZHCC) hosted over 90 kids under 28 yrs. from Greater Houston, Los Angeles, Dallas, Austin, Seattle, and San Diego, each camper was charged \$30 inclusive of everything. We had 15-17 sessions with most conducted and judged by young (25-40 yrs.) Zoroastrian experts in their respective professions.

Day 1 – June 23rd

On a scorching humid Friday, around 7:00 p m, the organizing team along with the helpers got in and were extremely energized to begin what was a culmination of some real hard work for the past 3 months. The first contingent of campers trickled in, the out-of-towners followed and by 8:30 pm almost all were in. Some delectable Indian cuisine from the famous “Aga’s restaurant” was served for dinner and within no time there were just some skeletal remains with most dishes showing the shiny foil tray bottoms. Arzan Wadia, FEZANA President and Tanya Hoshi, FEZANA Chief Social Media Officer were in attendance and conducted a very informative session on the “Return to Roots” program for the Young Adults.

Day 2 – June 24th

Registrations and breakfast started around 9:00 am followed by the official opening of the Z-Camp at 10am sharp. As usual, we began with the invocation by young camper Mobeds and housekeeping announcements for the campers divided into 4 teams with around 18 in each team. After some ice breaker sessions and Scavenger Hunt, it was time for the ever-popular *Iron Chef session*. The campers cooked and prepared some innovative yummy dishes and once the dishes were judged, it was time for a delicious Chinese lunch by Alings’ which the campers enjoyed to the fullest. Once the afternoon sessions got over, the campers got into their teams and attended the session conducted by the WZCC, Houston Chapter. On culmination of the session, the campers were given time to strategize and prepare for their evening presentations. At around 7:30 pm, NAMC members, out of town guests and local folks started to trickle in for the Gala Dinner and we had a scrumptious Tex-Mex dinner with some yummy desserts.

At around 9.00 pm the gathering had their introductions with NAMC President Ervad Tehemton Mirza addressing the crowd followed by FEZANA President Arzan Sam Wadia presenting a token of appreciation memento to the local outgoing FEZANA Secretary, Percy Master. It was time for the presentations by the campers where they displayed and discussed their plans of creating and developing their non-profit organizations keeping in mind the sustainability principles.

One of the highlights of the camp was the *Ushahen Geh BOI ceremony* at 12 midnight at the Atash Kadeh. Before the BOI ceremony, Ervad Adi Sidhwa from NAMC gave a short description of the BOI ceremony and its significance. At around 11:30 pm all made way to the Bhandara Atash Kadeh where 7 of our young Mobeds conducted the BOI ceremony under the guidance of Ervad Zarrir Bhandara from Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC-LA).

Day 3 – June 25th

The final day started at 8:00 am and after a hearty breakfast and the morning invocation, the sessions started at 90 am. Although it was a very hot Sunday morning, the kids were in their usual happy mood with the kiddies’ group having



FEZANA UPDATE

the most fun on the gigantic waterslide. Once the outdoor sessions were completed it was time for the *Impossible Engineering session* where the teams competed against each other with their engineering skills. In parallel the NAMC was conducting the adult lecture series and once both the sessions concluded, all the campers and attendees were treated to a delicious Mediterranean meal with ice-cream to cool everyone down in the treacherous heat that had engulfed Texas.

Wrap Up!

Finally, it was time for *Zoroastrian Family Feud* where not just the campers but also the parents and other guests had a lot of fun. This was followed by the coveted results where the team “Comet SWOOSH” stole the honors and was awarded the first place although for us all the campers

were winners. Most importantly, the Z-Camp allowed kids to acquire new skills and get ready to face challenges in their future endeavors besides making new friends and long-lasting relationships. Finally, thank you to all the donors, young adult volunteers, helpers, mentors, presenters, judges, parents, FEZANA and association guests and most importantly our campers without whom this camp would not be possible. See y’all back in 2024!

Z-Camp 2023 Team (all under 30) – Alyssa Tamboli, Ashtad Boomla, Danielle Dubash, Darius Tamboli, Freya Daroga, Friyana Sidhwa, Katie Master, Kyle Jensen, Natalya Haveliwala, Nerius Mehta, Nikita Engineer, Rayhan Nariman, Rayomand Katrak, Rhea Engineer, Vispi Katrak, Yazad Sidhwa, Zenia Sunavala, Zubin Master.



ZAH Z-Campers of the 11th ZAH Z-Camp at the ZHCC in Houston, TX



Members of the ZAH Z-Camp 2023 Organizing Committee, Mentors, and Helpers



Campers aged 5-10 yrs. in session



Impossible Engineering session



Iron Chef session in progress



Display of the Quilt prepared by the 5-10 ys. group



Various innovative dishes with brilliant decoration ideas prepared by the campers



After dinner presentation by a team



NAMC President Ervad Tehemton Mirza with members



Tug-o-War, one of the Sports activities



Kids having fun on the water slides



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ZOROASTRIAN YOUTH TRAVERSE THE GOLDEN STATE OF CALIFORNIA - VISITING SIX FIRE TEMPLES OVER FOUR DAYS

AARASH CHOTHIA

As the sun-kissed days of late summer made their final stretch between August 31st to September 4th, around 20 youths embarked on their journeys to explore the fire temples, community centers, and downright beauty that California has to offer during the ZYNA (Zoroastrian Youth of North America) Road Trip this summer. The ZYNA team embarked on their journey starting from San Diego driving it all the way up to Sacramento. The four-day trip encompassed visiting 6 of the Zoroastrian Fire Temples along the way in each city. As an attendee, I had the pleasure of meeting with very diverse group of people during the trip. This would mean meeting studio photographers to tech entrepreneurs with business stories and lessons to share with the team. Some of the crew flew in from Toronto, Seattle, Wisconsin, and of course, the local Californians on the trip to get to know their state better and tag along for the ride. Along the way, we were met by the members of the local association who welcomed us with hugs, gifts, and detailed tours of their center. With some centers just opening this year, to some that have been around for more than 30 years, each place had its own flair and unique stories. Here I take you through each center and what I learned on my journey about the place. If you're a local Californian, you can learn something from it too.

CZC - San Diego

Our first stop off the bus was the San Diego Center. When arriving at the center we were greeted by all the locals and shown around the building. Kiyanoosh Kamdar and Farhad Kermani, both board members, walked us through the unique story of the funding of the building. They shared with us about the nearly 20-year quest for the Darbe Meher in San Diego; explaining how they pitched to buy 3 different properties over the years which all fell short due to different reasons including funding, permits, and misaligned city planning. Then proudly announcing, this location, which will officially have its grand opening on November 6th. They also shared with us the way the local community had gotten much closer as they searched for the new center, and how every family, regardless of their financial wealth, contributed what they could on a month-to-month basis. Raising that much money in such a short time is a testament to the continuing dedication and philanthropy that our giving community has towards good causes. Since the place is still new, when we got there it was still being built so the renovation materials were around and I could see how excited people were for the grand opening, and how emotional they were to finally see their dreams come to life. Along with the renovations, they got the painting of Asho Zarathustra painted by a local Zoroastrian artist Mr. Shahram Akhtarkhavari.



Asho Zarathustra Painted by: Mr. Shahram Akhtarkhavari



Road trippers make their first stop in San Deigo



FEZANA UPDATE

CZC Westminster Orange County

Walking into the Westminster California Center, the hall opens to a beautiful stage and grand hall. At the time of our visit, the place was just starting its 7-month, \$500,000 renovation project to change everything from the ceiling to the floors to the stage to modernize the place to meet the ever-evolving needs of the community. The center is home to a grand afarganyu with a fire so beautiful that one could sit there for hours in peaceful meditation. While there, 2 board members, Farshid Ezzati and Jamshid Ourmazdi, spoke to us about the history of the place. They shared with us about how the Zoroastrian community in the 70s would use various locations such as their houses and offices for meetings and activities, before 1979, when six Iranian Zoroastrian ladies formed a committee under the Zoroastrian Association of California which would later go on to become a stand-alone organization on its own as the California Zoroastrian Center. They further shared about the over 35 years of the OC Darbe Meher, and its impact on the community, as well as the legacy Arbab Rustam Guiv in helping secure the place and set the foundation for the center.

On the trip Farzin Avari, ZYNA Co-Chair brought along her 10 year youth empowering project Zubin the Teddy. “Zubin was created for my Sunday school class in 2010. I was teaching a class about the sudreh-khusti and wanted to show the different parts of the sudreh for my students. As we all know representation matters, and so I wanted something beyond a paper hand out to help teach the kids. I brought him on the road trip, because we plan on making a children’s book about what it’s like to grow up as a Zarathushti youth.” When I asked her what’s next for the book she said, “We’re planning on sending the teddy around North America, so kids can see what growing up Zarathushti in North America is like.”

CZC Los Angeles Valley

When arriving at the Los Angeles Darbe Meher, what stands outside the center is an eye-catching statue tying together our Persian history with modern-day Zoroastrianism. This center is home to a grand Cyrus the Great statue that was unveiled on Cyrus the Great Day in 2019 celebrating his founding of the Achaemenid Empire and visionary ruler granting religious freedom throughout his empire of 3 continents and 25 nations; ruling from 559–530 B.C.

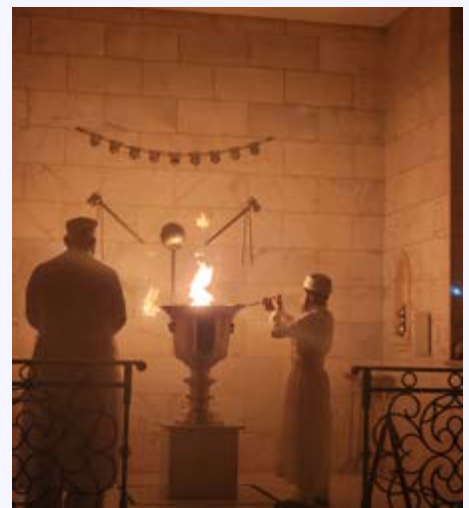
There we met the center’s president Mitra Zartoshty who toured us around the place. What I found fascinating were the various plants growing around the perimeter including lime trees, fennel plants and pomegranates to name a few. When we were inside, Artemis Javanshir FEZANA’s Co-Chair of the Religious Education Committee walked us through the center’s buying history, she said it was bought in June 2010 with the renovations being done in March of 2018. After the presentation, it was great chatting over tea, coffee and breakfast about the place, and the different people who contributed to its building over time.



Zubin the Teddy - created for Sunday school classes, so kids can see what growing up Zarthushti in North America is like.



Road Trippers pose in front of the Cyrus the Great Statue outside of CZC - LA



Ervad Kyan Arzan Lali, who performing the Midnight Boi Ceremony at ZAC



FEZANA UPDATE

Zoroastrian Association of California - ZAC

Arriving at ZAC, we were preparing our appetites for the barbecue and game night with the youths from Los Angeles. Rooky Fitter, the ZAC President showed us around and explained the origins of the center which was bought and opened in July 2010 with the Atash Kadeh later built in 2015. As the night went on, I was talking with some locals discussing ideas on modern Zoroastrianism and community building; discussing potential projects. Those who recently went to the 8th World Zoroastrian Congress in London, UK this summer were sharing their experiences and what they learned from it. The night was leading up to the Midnight Boi Ceremony, performed by 11 year old Ervad Kyan Arzan Lali, who performed in the new Atash Kadeh. The Boi Ceremony is a ritual to feed the sacred fire with fragrance and fuel. A boi ritual is performed over consecrated fires of Ādarān and Atash Behram in each of the five watches of the day. For the Dādgāh fire, the boi ritual is performed at least once a day. Which was a perfect, and peaceful way to end the day.

San Jose Darbe Mehers - PZA & ZANC

Driving into this Darbe Meher, it felt like I was being pulled into a secret part of San Jose where peace and tranquility were at the heart of its creators and the visionaries who originally built the place in 1992. With a wonderful view of the city, this Center is situated on Crothers Rd. on the way to Mount Hamilton high up on the San Jose Hills where most of the external distractions of the bustling city aren't present. I had the pleasure of meeting the caretaker Shirin, who said "I've been taking care of this place for the past 25 years!... This place is my home, the people here are my family." When we arrived, we were shown around the property and recited prayers in their new fire temple.



Selfie in San Jose!

It was here, on Day 4, where I felt the road trippers were becoming more than just physically connected, we were becoming spiritually connected through our prayers. I could hear the prayer patterns and vibrations come into sync together, causing our collective power to strengthen. The prayer ceremony here was so peaceful, I felt one with the place and the hills on which it was situated.

Sacramento Darbe Meher

Walking into the Sacramento Zoroastrian Association (SZA), we met **Khodadad (Khody) Pashutanizadeh**, a well humored guy who gave us a thorough tour of the place, from the storage rooms to the bathrooms. He explained that starting in 2010 SZA was originally established by five Zoroastrian women from Northern California, initially known as the Zoroastrian Women Organization (WZO), later changed to SZA in 2014. Through generous donations and support, SZA was able to purchase a building on the former Mather Air Force Base for \$550,000 and construct a separate Darbe Meher prayer hall with a donation of \$200,000 from



Omid Shahzadi and Cody K. Partovi getting ready for the Hawaiian Themed Party



FEZANA UPDATE

the Zoroastrian Association of Hong Kong. They also undertook a major renovation, funded by a bank loan of \$250,000, to comply with City and County codes for large gatherings. The Center was then officially opened on June 30, 2018.

After prayers, we put our Hawaiian dance hats on and joined the Sacramento locals to a Hawaiian-themed party.

More Than a Pilgrimage

This was the first ever road trip organized by ZYNA, so it's safe to say it set the standards for future road trips to come. Although this trip was about visiting all the centers, we were also exploring California, a state which has the world to offer. Including its beautiful and warm beaches like Laguna Beach and cute little towns like Solvang, and sandwich shops like the Zoroastrian-owned Delirama in Berkeley.

What I learned on this trip was that our centers are safe places to foster important discussions on Zoroastrian history and philosophy. They are places that provide religious instruction for children, conduct religious ceremonies, celebrate Zoroastrian festivals, and promote self-esteem and self-confidence in the Zoroastrian community, particularly among the youth through sports, music, and dance classes.

Above all the knowledge and history that I picked up, my main take away from it was the opportunity to spend four days with Zoroastrians from around North America that I never knew prior to the journey. We traveled, ate, played, prayed, and sang together which fostered the tight bonds among us that I'll cherish forever. I want to thank the ZYNA and FEZANA team for making this trip possible along with every association that let us into their prayer hall and showed us their open arms by treating us like their own.

Written by: Araash Chothia

Images contributed by
Arzan Sam Wadia;
Farah S Noshirwani
Shawhean Kayani
Negan Khosraviani



Enjoying lunch by the beach



Aarash Chothia is studying at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) - Ted Rogers School of Management pursuing a Bachelor of Commerce with a Marketing Major. Araash loves taking walks, reading, and writing. A dedicated member of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario, Araash has been the ZSO Newsletter Editor for the past year where he exercises his passion for quality journalism by shining light on Zoroastrian stories happening locally and globally. He enjoys writing on current events, highlighting businesses and people who are making changes within the community. He wants to share our community's stories to inspire Zoroastrians to start and continue doing great things around the world.



North American Mobeds Council

NAMC Institute of Zoroastrian Studies holds Young Mobeds Training at the Bhandara Atashkadeh in Houston, TX.

NAMC Institute of Zoroastrian Studies is an educational arm of the North American Mobeds Council, dedicated to training Mobeds and educating the general public on Zoroastrianism.



Back Row: L to R:
Rayomand Katrak,
Noshir Khumbatta,
Yazad Sidhwa,
Freyaan Vimadalal,
Porus Pavri. Front
Row: L to R –
Kyan Lali, Kaus
Doctor, Kash Doctor
(youngest of the lot).

10 Young Mobeds aged 11 to 25 from all over North America gathered in person at the Bhandara Atashkadeh in Houston, TX, on July 29th and 30th 2023, for the Young Mobed Training course.

NAMC Institute of Zoroastrian Studies periodically offers training to Young Mobeds to help them serve their communities' religious and spiritual needs.

Following benediction by young Ervad Kyan Lali, Ervad Tehemton Mirza instructed the students on various topics, including:

- Meaning of basic prayers, significance of Jashan, Satum and Afargan rituals, and Obsequies prayers & ceremonies.
- Mobed history beginning from the time of King Jamshed when the society was divided into four parts, one being the Athornan (Mobeds),

till the present.

- Role of Mobeds in ancient Iran during the Zoroastrian dynasties and their role in preserving Zoroastrianism after the fall of the Sassanian empire.

- Influence of Zoroastrianism on succeeding religions.

- Overview of Gathas and meaning of some of the key Gatha verses by Fariborz Rahnmoon.

Senior Mobeds Maneck Sidhwa and Parvez Gonda, resident Mobeds of Bhandara Atashkadeh, instructed the young Mobeds in performing Boi and Jashan ceremonies. Under their supervision, the young Mobeds were given a unique opportunity to offer Boi at the Bhandara Atashkadeh.

Mobed Mehbhad Dastur of the NAMC and Joseph Peterson of www.avesta.org guided the Young Mobeds on ways to source

information and knowledge of Zoroastrianism from reliable sources in cyberspace.

The Young Mobeds discussed the role of Mobeds in North America and their plans to serve their communities in their role as Mobeds.

The Young Mobed took the opportunity to create new friendships and bonds while they were treated to an evening of bowling and a fabulous dinner by the members of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston.

The event ended with a vote of thanks to the management of Bhandara Atashkadeh, the Zoroastrian Association of Houston, and the families who hosted the out-of-town Mobeds.

For free online courses and tax-deductible donations, please visit www.namcmobeds.org



DEDICATION OF YOUNG MOBEDS TO SERVE-

ERVAD KYAN LALI IN CONVERSATION WITH ERVAD BRIG BEHRAM PANTHAKI

1. Was it your choice to become Navar or were you persuaded by your parents or by local community elders?

After I completed my Navjote when I was 7 years old, my dad guided me and explained the significance and value of becoming a Navar. But back then, I didn't really know what it meant to be a Navar.

2. What motivated you further to become Maratab, too?

During my Navar training, I found out that some special rituals, like doing the boi ceremony in the Atash Behram, are only for priests who finish their Maratab training. I really want to learn all these rituals, so that's why I want to become a Maratab.

3. How many years did it take you to get fully prepared?

I began my training in early 2019, and by the middle of 2021, I had memorized all the important prayers from Khordeh Avestā and Yazashne. But, because of the pandemic, we weren't sure when I could start my Nahan in India. So, I kept practicing my prayers and even started learning and practicing the special rituals that are required during Yazashne. This made me feel more confident when it was finally time for my Yazashne ceremony.

4. Did you learn the Yasna prayers from a book with English transliteration? If so which one, and who is the author?

Yes, I learned a lot from the book

called 'Yazashne Bā Nirang Concise' which was transliterated into English and made easier to read by Ervad Jal Noshirvan Panthaky. Besides learning all the rituals from that book, my dad found a really cool website called MUYA (The Multimedia Yasna) at <https://muya.soas.ac.uk/tool/film-multimedia/>. It's great because it shows the video of all rituals for each Hā, and even shows pictures of all the ālāts that are used for that ritual. This helped me a lot because I could look at the video and the book together to understand everything better.

5. Who mentored you and guided you in your preparation?

I have to give this credit first to my dad, Arzan Lali. Thank you, Dad! He did an amazing job and reached out to various sources in our ZAC community who guided him to NAMC and the person who finally mentored me every Sunday was Ervad Jal Panthaky from Toronto. He was super excited to teach me prayers and rituals, and he was really funny and patient too. Every Sunday, we all sat together for a few hours to learn.

But during the rest of the week, it was my dad who helped me practice prayers every single day. He also made specially for me all the ālāts out of cardboard to help me practice rituals. So, it was like a team effort with my dad, Jal uncle, and me. We worked together, and it was awesome!

6. What was the challenge in learning the prayers?



My dad and I started learning from a Gujarati Yazashne book right after my Navjote, but it was kind of tricky because things weren't very clear, and we had lots of questions. Then, my dad talked to Jal uncle, who said we should start by first memorizing all the important prayers from the Khordeh Avestā book by Ervad Kanga and should be able to read fluently certain prayers. So, we spent a lot of time doing that.

Once I finished memorizing those prayers, we moved on to Yazashne prayers. We used the same method, first memorizing all the required important Hā and then the ones that we are supposed to read fluently. But there was a problem - while I was learning Yazashne prayers, I started to forget some of the Khordeh Avestā prayers. It made me worried and sad.

So, Jal uncle and my dad decided I



should change my routine. I started dedicating some days to Khordeh Avestā and some days to Yazashne prayers during the week. It took a bit longer to learn all the prayers this way, but it helped me remember both sets of prayers better. I also had trouble with long words and saying them right, but we broke them down into syllables, which made it easier.

Sometimes, we realized there were mistakes in the Yazashne prayers we had learned. I had already memorized the wrong version, and it was tough to go back and learn the correct one. Few times I found out that the rituals that was in the book didn't match with the one on the website. I had several questions and we all worked together to figure out the right version and later Jal uncle made updates in his book to match them.

7. Tell me about your experience in going through the entire process more so during the Nahan period?

I was so excited for my first Nahan ceremony! My dad helped me get ready for the Bareshnum, so I knew what to expect. The first few days were fun, but then it got a bit boring. The agiary got quiet in the afternoon, and there wasn't much to do. I finished all my prayers in the morning, and then I had free time. So, I read books, did math homework, and even did some drawing.

I had to be careful not to break any rules. I couldn't touch water, wood, fire, metal, or other people. I had to carry a leather mat everywhere to sit on unless I was on my bed, which was also made of leather. I always had to wear my white cap, even at night, and tie a string under my chin to keep it in place. I could only eat food prepared inside the agiary, and before eating, I had to do something

called Baaj and put on white gloves. If I needed to use the restroom, I had to do a different Baaj and change into different white gloves. At first, it was confusing, but after a few days, I got the hang of it.

Some nights were really hot, even though it was December. One night, we lost power, and there was no fan, so it got super-hot. Hormuz uncle, from Vatcha Gandhi agiary, kept me company, but sometimes he had to leave, and it got a bit spooky in the evening and at night. Thankfully, I had Ruksh, the guard dog, with me, so I felt safe. There weren't any kids my age to talk to, so I got a bit bored, but my mom and dad visited me a couple of times a day, which was nice. I loved it when they tied a Paghadi on my head when I came out of my Nahan.

The night before my Yazashne ceremony, I got a little nervous. But everything went well, and lots of my relatives (most of whom I didn't know) came to watch me perform on Amardad Mah and Amardad Roj. I had to stay for 3 more nights after that, and on the fourth morning, I finally got to go home! Overall, it was a great experience.

8. What is it that you enjoyed/liked the most and what was difficult?

I was really surprised that I liked the food during my Nahan. Usually, I'm not a big fan of Parsi food, but Dhunmai aunty (Hormuz uncle's mom) made yummy food that wasn't too spicy, just the way I like it. Every day, she asked me what I wanted to eat. She was so awesome.

To eat my meals, I had to go to her house, which was right next to the agiary. During that time, she usually watched some Indian soap operas. I asked her if we could watch soccer instead because the World Cup was

going on, and I'm a big soccer fan. There were some exciting games that I got to watch live.

The hardest part was feeling really bored. I couldn't talk or play for days, and I was starting to feel a bit sad. I really wished there was another kid my age going through the same thing. It would have been great to have some company.

9. Has becoming Navar brought about any change in your outlook and daily life?

Yes, becoming Navar has brought some changes to my daily life. I do prayers everyday morning and at night, and I need to be careful about being clean before I do them. It's also made me learn more about our religion, and I'm trying to be a good example for others. I feel proud to be a Navar, and it's made me feel closer to our community and our traditions.

10. Apart from learning prayers how important is the study of history, culture, rituals, customs and traditions of our faith?

I believe it's really important to know the basics of our religion, Parsi culture, and even the Gujarati language. I can understand Gujarati, but I find it tricky to speak because I don't practice much. This year, during my Young mobed training in Houston, I got to learn a bit more about our history and traditions.

11. Now that you are a fully ordained mobed, how would you be of service to your local community?

Whenever I can, I do the boi ceremony at my Atash Kadeh in Orange, California. Even though I live in San Diego, we try to go to the ZAC (Zoroastrian Association



of California) as much as we can. I've done a few Jashans and joined in Muktaad this year. I did a midnight boi in Houston Atash Kadeh during my Mobed Training, and I did another one recently when the ZYNA folks visited the ZAC center for their Dare Meher road trip. I want to keep taking part in Gahmbars and Parabs too. After my Navar, Ervad Zarrir & Zerkxis Bhandara have guided me and encouraged me to participate in as many Jashans as I can.

12. What help would you seek/ invite from NAMC to better prepare you in your role as a mobed?

I still have a lot to learn, so any help in understanding why we do certain rituals, how to do them, and what's the best way, as well as having clear rules for making decisions, would be super helpful for young mobeds like me.

13. You are young and very rightly interested in outdoor activities, playing sports, swimming, biking, hiking and exploring space. Do you think you would be able to find time to fulfill your desire to be of help to your community?

I truly believe that one can become a mobed and also do activities that bring joy into their life. It's not necessary to sacrifice your dreams to serve the community. As I continue to grow and mature, I'm confident that I will discover the perfect balance between my hobbies and my priestly

responsibilities. One thing I can promise is that my unwavering faith in my religion will always inspire me to answer the call of duty and serve our community to the best of my abilities.

14. Have you thought about how you would position yourself in your early 20s or 30s to play a leadership role?

I'm 11 years old, and I just started middle school. To be honest, I'm not sure what I want to be when I grow up. But if I have to be a leader, I think I'd like to lead by showing a good example. That means I would try to build trust, listen to what others say, trust my team, follow the rules, and do what I say I'll do.

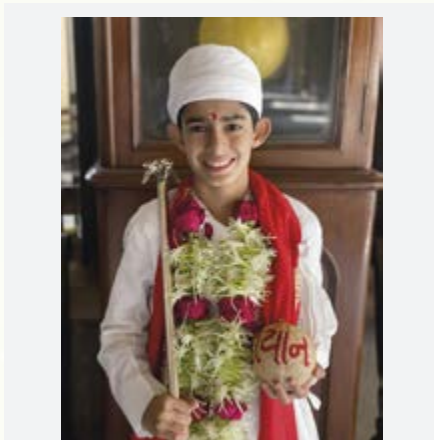
16. And finally, if you were asked to talk about Zoroastrianism in your school, what would be 10 important points you would convey?

If I were asked to talk about Zoroastrianism in a middle school presentation, I would focus on the following 10 important points to provide a basic understanding of my ancient religion:



- Origins: Monotheism Dualistic**
- Beliefs: Sacred Texts, Holy Fire,**
- Ethical Code: Afterlife:**
- Religious Practices: Decline and**
- Diaspora: Modern Times:**

Ervad Brigadier Behram Panthaki graduated from Pune University and was ordained a navar and as a maratab from the M. F. Cama Athornan Institute, Mumbai. In 1994, after 30 years of service in the Indian Army, he took an early retirement to join his family in USA. He has been serving the Zoroastrian community of Washington metropolitan area. He speaks at Universities, at churches and schools in the tristate area to make the Zoroastrian faith better understood. He is also the Zoroastrian faith leader of the Washington Chapter of the Inter Faith Conference.



11 year old Ervad Kyan Arzan Lali completed his Navar at the Vatcha Gandhi Agiary in Mumbai, India, in December 2022. He is currently enrolled in the 6th grade, at Design 39 Campus in San Diego, CA, where he consistently demonstrates his passion for learning and growth. He lives with his parents sharing his life with heir beloved pet dog, Dash, adding joy to their family dynamic.

Kyan thrives in competitive sports and plays soccer, and he thrives in competitive matches. He is dedicated to martial arts and holds a rank of a second-degree Taekwondo black belt. As a boy scout in Troop 1648 he exemplifies his commitment to personal development and community involvement. In his leisure time, Kyan enjoys unwinding with video games, adding a fun and tech-savvy dimension to his diverse range of interests and activities.





NAMC RECOGNIZES TWO SENIOR MOBEDS AT OZCF AND JASHAN, ON SEPTEMBER 24, 2023.

As a general practice, the North American Mobeds Council (NAMC) recognizes Senior Mobeds for their selfless service to the community on special occasions of their respective Zoroastrian Associations.

Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation (OZCF) held a Jashan on September 24, 2023, to celebrate the groundbreaking of their brand new Atashkadeh in Oakville, Ontario. 11 Mobeds and 2 Mobedyars attended the Jashan with a congregation exceeding 300 members. NAMC took this opportunity to recognize two of its senior Members for their community service to OZCF and NAMC.



“Honouring these Mobeds is a profound act, symbolizing our recognition of their dedication and sacrifice. They don’t just lead our religious services; they are there for us in our times of need, offering solace and support when life throws its challenges our way. They are educators, teaching us the values and principles that guide our lives. They are counsellors, lending an empathetic ear and wise counsel when we face difficult decisions.

Above all, they are our spiritual leaders, helping us navigate life’s journey with grace and purpose,” said **Ervad Tehemton Mirza, President of the NAMC and a member of the OZCF. K**

NAMC recognized Ervad Nozer Kotwal with the following words:

“In addition to dedicating his life to serving the OZCF community, Ervad Nozer Kotwal (Nozer uncle) has been an active member of the NAMC and acted as our first Treasurer. He participated in many of our activities and provided guidance since 1990 (over 33 years). He is always present at our meetings to contribute, guide and keep us on the straight and righteous path. You can call him the conscious of the NAMC

We recognize and appreciate your dedication to Zoroastrianism in general and NAMC in particular.” . (Ervad Nozer kotwal on left with Yellow Shawl)

NAMC recognized Ervad Jal Panthaky with the following words:

“Ervad Jal Panthaky (Jal uncle) has dedicated his life to the OZCF community and has been an active NAMC member. We are very fortunate to have him as a member of our OZCF family. His accomplishments are far too many to count. He has trained several Mobeds to prepare for their Navar (initiation ceremony). He has taught prayers to Zoroastrians as an instructor of our NAMC IZS course on Prayer refresher. He has given scholarly lectures at our NAMC events on challenging topics that very few would venture to talk about. He has translated and transliterated our scriptures. The Mobeds that he trained are serving various congregations throughout North America.

We recognize and appreciate your dedication to Zoroastrianism in general and NAMC in particular.” (Ervad Jal Panthaky on right with red shawl)

The Mobeds were recognized with thunderous applause and a standing ovation by more than 300 participants.



INAUGURAL BLESSING CEREMONY

Before the construction of our place of worship begins, we must perform the Inaugural blessings ceremony of the Mother Earth. (Known as *Bhumi Puja*)

What is the inaugural blessing ceremony?

This ceremony is a ritual performed in honour of Goddess Earth (*Spendarmard*), and other natural elements. This worship ritual propitiation to offer devotional homage and prayer to the mother Earth is to eradicate any ill effects in the land. It is recommended before the beginning of the construction of any structure in order to sooth out the process of construction.

Where this prayer should be performed?

The spot for the prayer must be identified, and it must be cleaned in the morning after taking a bath. Few drops of Nirang are used for cleansing and purification purposes. The tradition of offering prayers to the Almighty, Mother Earth and the other forces of Nature before starting construction activities. During the ceremony, the foundation stone should be laid. Thus, the approval of Mother Earth and the Gods are sought before drilling or digging the land, and with the symbolic placement of the foundation stone, the project begins.

Like any other ceremony this ceremony begins with prayers to **Dādār Ahuramazd, Spendārmard, Daham Ameshāspands** and Sarosh Yazad's blessings are invoked to avoid all hurdles that may pose a hindrance to the progress of the project.

Prer to beginning of the prayers, A small portion of the land is dug in advance. After the completion of the ceremony, the foundation stone or brick along with offering of seven metals (*sapta dhatu*), a coconut, some coins, and other items of Sagan to be placed in the dug area by the lead priest.

Like all Jashans, variety of fruits, dry fruits, nuts flowers etc., should be used during the inaugural ceremony,

Reasons and Benefit of this ceremony:

- It is a priority to seek the blessings of Mother Earth prior to the construction of a building or use of land for the **cultivation** purpose.
- This ritualistic ceremony ensures that the land gets free of all the evils and all the **negativities** from the land and it helps to **pacify** all the corners of the Place of Worship to be built.

Read by Ervad Jal Panthaky



October 16th, 2023



“Ahura Mazda’s Atash shall forever radiate its resplendent flame, and at last, the Fire Within shall have its home amid divine surroundings. After 3500 years, our time cometh / our Time is Now.”

Our inaugural Consecration Jashan and Baj ceremonies on September 24th, 2023, were conducted by 16 Mobeds, attended by over 300 and watched worldwide. The OZCF owns a 10 acre parcel of land in the Greater Toronto Area, a hub of immigrant growth and the fastest growing Zoroastrian population in North America. Visit our website www.ozcf.com for more information, pictures, and live construction view. In 2002, OZCF was formed and in 2004, we purchased our 10-acre parcel of land for \$1.5 Million and subsequently built the hall for \$450,000. Today we are debt free! We have already raised an additional CDN \$3.4M to start building Phase 1 of our place of worship. In Phase 2, commencing 2024, we need to raise CDN \$1.7M (US \$1.26M).



Continuity in a New world:

- ❖ As more and more Zoroastrians emigrate to Ontario, Canada, and USA, Atashkadehs offer continuity in the foundation of their religious beliefs from the lands they left. They will continue to celebrate important occasions such as: birthdays, navjotes, weddings and death ceremonies; ghambars; Pateti and Navroz; religious lectures and other social events for Parsis and Iranians alike.
- ❖ Currently, the 10-acre grounds of the Zoroastrian Religious and Cultural Centre is abuzz year-round with cultural, social, and sporting activities for all its members, young and old, Parsis and Iranians. Events are held over 200 days a year in the existing premises, but there is a penchant for a more religious setting.

A Generational Vision:

- ❖ The Atash-e-Adaran will be the cornerstone for maintaining our religious beliefs as waves of Zoroastrians immigrate to North America. The future of Zoroastrianism will indeed depend on how we build the capacity and infrastructure to support our legacy from generation to generation.
- ❖ As the fastest growing Zoroastrian community in the world, the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) boasts the highest number of Zoroastrians outside of Mumbai and Pune, with a population of over 6,000 within a 50km radius.
- ❖ The Atashkadeh and Atash-e-Adaran will support a growing Zoroastrian population of 10,000 in Canada and over 25,000 in the USA. The OZCF works closely with our sister organization the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) with combined events and regular meetings. We are building a true and proper community which will not only have a social centre but will now house a place of worship for members to share sacred communion with the Almighty and provide a recognizable identity for our younger generation to be proud of.
- ❖ Our 10 acres which we own, is close to Toronto, a hub of immigrant growth, the international airport and home to our provincial government.

A Home to Ordain Priests:

The new Atashkadeh will contain facilities to equip our younger generation from across North America to become ordained priests, which will serve our community well in the future as our population grows. It will encourage the development of even more priests, by overcoming the inconvenience of families traveling to India with associated costs. It will be consecrated to enable the performance of the higher liturgical ceremonies, which are so relevant in our religion.

The Future in a New World is ALL OF OURS:

The Atash Behrams and Agiaris of the old country have stood for hundreds of years and were built in large part due to the magnanimity and charity of its donors. And here we stand again at the doorstep of history, so close to fulfilling our objective, but we require your help in bringing this project to its completion and realizing our dreams of having our very own Atashkadeh and Atash-e-Adaran in a new world for future generations.

The Atashkadeh will be the crowning moment for Zoroastrians across the world. With all the pieces set in place for our dream to crystallize into reality, and construction having already started, we encourage you to donate generously. Your donations are tax-free and can be made to FEZANA. Take pride and be part of history. Your philanthropy will contribute to this noble endeavour as we leave a legacy for future generations. To make a donation in USA go to www.fezana.org; in Canada www.ozcf.com

For as Zarathushtra Himself said: *“Seek your happiness in the happiness of all.”*



For Donations from USA:

Click on the [link below](#) and from the drop-down menu on the FEZANA website select OZCF Place Of Worship.

[Donation Portal | FEZANA](#)

OR

Mail to : Xerxes Commissariat **FEZANA Treasurer, 7 Burke, Irvine, CA 92620**

In the memo line of your cheque please write “OZCF Place of Worship”. **A tax receipt will be issued from the U.S. on behalf of FEZANA.**

For Donations from CANADA



Click on the [button above](#) and make a donation on OZCF’s website.

Or you can also mail a cheque payable to : **OZCF**

Mail to: Ontario Zoroastrian Community Centre 1187 Burnhamthorpe Road East Oakville, Ontario L6H 7B3

For more information contact philsidhwa@hotmail.com or marzi@regalpresscanada.com May Ahura Mazda always bless our community.

Phil Sidhwa
Chair, PWAC

Marzi Byramjee
Fundraising Chair, PWAC

Dr. Adil Bhesania
President, OZCF

For picture re the Consecration Jashan and Baj Ceremony right click on link below

<https://app.photobucket.com/u/ozcf/a/a8003879-df3b-4218-a82e-aab3cbbc1915/slideshow?field=TITLE&desc=asc>

Our Dear Zoroastrian Family,

The Ontario Zoroastrian Community Advisory committee is proud to announce that of our Atashkadeh project, in preparation for



Foundation (OZCF) and the Place of Worship we have commenced construction on Phase 1 a future consecrated Atash-e-Adaran fire.



FEZANA UPDATE



INCLUSIVE VOICES:



Zavare Tengra is a Sexual Health Counselor at a local clinic in Toronto. He also worked on several projects for the Alliance of South Asians for AIDS Prevention (ASAAP).

He was part of the trio that ran “Besharam” (bay.shur.um, an Urdu/Hindi/Gujrati word meaning shameless), one of Toronto’s hottest club, events featuring Bollywood music, for over 15 years. The meaning behind the name was to question what should be considered shameless in a society which often turns a blind eye to domestic violence, corruption, racism in order to preach morality about sex. He has also played the role of Phool (flower), a transgender woman, as part of “Meri Kahani”, a show based on vignettes of the many facets of women.

Zavare immigrated to Canada from Pakistan in 1996. He was also active in theatre in Karachi, directing and acting in several plays and Parsi natak. The writer-director pair of Farishta Murzban Dinshaw and Zavare Tengra raised funds for several Zoroastrian charities by putting up popular natak like “Princess Booblita Comes to Town”, “Air Farohar” and “Maneck ni Masi”. Zavare also directed a serious play, “Doongajee House”, and choreographed fashion shows for leading Pakistani fashion designers.

He is best known for his alter ego, “Najamai Lasan” pictured in this article in a white sari. Najamai videos may be viewed on Zavare Tengra’s YouTube channel.

STORIES FROM THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

Guest Editor:
ZAVARE TENGRA

We’re living in a world that’s all about change and progress. But to truly grow as a community, we need to talk about LGBTQ+ issues because understanding these issues isn’t just about tolerance, it’s about respect, love, and building a more inclusive Zoroastrian community.

Last July, I walked the catwalk for Ashdeen Lilaowala’s fashion show in a saree at the 12th World Zoroastrian Congress 2022 in New York City, along with other members of the community. I walked it representing Najamai, a drag character of a typical but exaggerated “Parsi aunty” that I created over a decade ago. Najamai has built up a great following which has brought me connections with great people from across the world via social media. I felt it was the right time for FEZANA to showcase queer Zoroastrians.

I am grateful to Dolly Dastoor and the FEZANA team for taking this step in the right direction in dedicating a FEZANA Journal to educating our community about LGBTQ+ issues. I would also like to thank all the contributors for agreeing to share their stories. It takes courage to be authentic in the face of resistance and kudos to each and every one of you.

We hope our community will become more accepting. Especially for LGBTQ+ youth who might be struggling with discrimination and bullying, support can

make a world of difference. We need to stand up against ignorance and prejudice. When all of us take the time to learn about the unique challenges faced by **LGBTQ+** people, we open the door to being kinder to one another. We realize that **LGBTQ+** people are our friends, family, and neighbors.

Also, educating ourselves means having meaningful conversations with family and community leaders. By sharing knowledge and stories, we can challenge long-held beliefs and work towards a more inclusive environment. This is especially the case right now because of the rhetoric in conservative media in North America.

Even in our community, people forget the teachings of Zarathushtra in the Gathas which are all about acceptance and love, and focus on the homophobic standards from later texts written thousands of years later

and influenced by many other religions and cultures. Many people grow up in environments where they receive little to no education about **LGBTQ+** issues, which can perpetuate stereotypes and misconceptions. In today's digital age, resources for **LGBTQ+** education are at our fingertips. Books, documentaries, community events, and online forums offer endless opportunities to expand our knowledge.

Coming of age in the 70's and 80's, I wish I had seen more open conversations about **LGBTQ+** issues. It would have made my journey a lot easier. But things are changing, and I believe we can be part of that change. When we educate ourselves, we create a more inclusive space for **LGBTQ+** in our community. Let's be the change-makers our community needs and create a world where everyone can truly be themselves.

HISTORY OF THE RAINBOW FLAG

In the photograph of Zavare Tengra, he is standing in front of the "rainbow flag". The rainbow flag is a widely recognized symbol of **LGBTQ+** pride and solidarity. It was created by artist and activist Gilbert Baker. It made its public debut on June 25, 1978, during the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade. It quickly gained popularity and became a symbol of **LGBTQ+** pride, not only in the United States but around the world.

Gilbert Baker designed the flag in response to the need for a unifying symbol for the **LGBTQ+** community. Before the rainbow flag, there were various symbols used to represent gay and queer identities, but there wasn't a single, widely recognized emblem.

The flag colours have their own significance meant to represent different aspects of the **LGBTQ+** experience and community:

- Red: Life
- Orange: Healing
- Yellow: Sunlight
- Green: Nature
- Indigo: Serenity
- Violet: Spirit

Gilbert Baker passed away in 2017, but his legacy lives on through the enduring symbol he created. The rainbow flag is now an international symbol of **LGBTQ+** pride, visibility, and the ongoing struggle for equality.

Source

Rainbow Flag: Color Meanings | Gilbert Baker
<https://gilbertbaker.com/rainbow-flag-color-meanings/>





WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY CANADA, GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

In this issue we have used the term **LGBTQ+** as an acronym for L: Lesbian; G: Gay; B: Bisexual; T: Transgender; Q: Queer; and + as inclusive of people who identify as part of sexual and gender diverse communities, who use additional terminologies. The terminology is continuously evolving. As a result, it is important to note that this list is not exhaustive and these definitions are a starting point to understanding the terms.

Asexual

A person who lacks sexual attraction or interest in sexual expression. An asexual person's sexual and romantic orientations may differ (e.g. biromantic asexual), and they may have sexual and/or romantic partners.

Bisexual/Biromantic

A person who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to two or more genders.

Cisgender

A person who identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Gay

A person who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to people of their same sex or gender identity. Traditionally this identity was reserved for men, but it has been adopted by people of all gender identities.

Gender-fluid

A person whose gender identity varies over time and may include male, female and non-binary gender identities.

Heterosexual/Heteroromantic

A person who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to people of a different gender than themselves.

Homophobia

The fear, hatred, or aversion of people who experience same-sex attraction.

Homosexual (*no longer commonly used in English)

This term is no longer in common use. See "gay" and "lesbian". The term homosexual has fallen out of

favour as it is associated with the historic medical understanding of same-sex attraction as a mental illness. However, equivalents of “homosexual” are commonly used in French and other languages.

Intersex

An umbrella term to capture various types of biological sex differentiation. Intersex people have variations in their sex characteristics, such as sex chromosomes, internal reproductive organs, genitalia, and/or secondary sex characteristics (e.g. muscle mass, breasts) that fall outside of what is typically categorized as male or female.

Lesbian

Typically a woman who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to other women.

Non-Binary

(also ‘genderqueer’). Referring to a person whose gender identity does not align with a binary understanding of gender such as man or woman. It is a gender identity which may include man and woman, androgynous, fluid, multiple, no gender, or a different gender outside of the “woman—man” spectrum.

Pansexual

A person whose choice of sexual or romantic partner is not limited by the other person’s sex, gender identity or gender expression.

Queer

Historically a derogatory term used as a slur against 2SLGBTQI+ people, this term has been reclaimed by many 2SLGBTQI+ people as a positive way to describe themselves, and as a way to include the many diverse identities not covered by common 2SLGBTQI+ acronym.

Questioning

A person who is uncertain about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity; this can be a transitory or a lasting identity.

Gender Dysphoria

A medical diagnosis often required by health providers and/or health insurance plans before prescriptions for hormones or gender affirming surgeries will be provided. It can be understood as discomfort or distress experienced by a person who feels their sense of their gender identity differs from their body, based on societal expectations.

Gender Expression

Gender expression refers to the various ways in which people choose to express their gender identity. For example: clothes, voice, hair, make-up, etc. A person’s gender expression may not align with societal expectations of gender. It is therefore not a reliable indicator of a person’s gender identity.

Gender Identity

Internal and deeply felt sense of being a man or woman, both or neither. A person’s gender identity may or may not align with the gender typically associated with their sex. It may change over the course of one’s lifetime.

Sexual Orientation

Romantic and sexual attraction for people of the same or another sex or gender.

Transgender

(also ‘trans’). A person whose gender identity differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Transphobia

The fear, hatred, or aversion of people whose gender identities differ from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Transsexual (*no longer commonly used)

This term is no longer in common use, though may be more frequently used by transgender individuals of an older cohort. The term defines a person whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth and who has undertaken gender affirming medical and/or surgical interventions. The term has fallen out of favour as it implies that physical transition is necessary in order to claim a trans identity.

Two-Spirit

(also Two Spirit or Two-Spirited). An English term used to broadly capture concepts traditional to many Indigenous cultures. It is a culturally-specific identity used by some Indigenous people to indicate a person whose gender identity, spiritual identity and/or sexual orientation comprises both male and female spirits.

Sources:

How To Use Transgender Vs. Transsexual Vs. Transvestite Correctly

Candace Osmond

Transvestite, transsexual, or transgender are three terms that tend to get mixed up. A transvestite is someone who might dress in clothing that's usually worn by the opposite sex. A transsexual might have used medical procedures to physically change their biological sex. And lastly, a transgender is someone whose gender identity doesn't totally align with the sex they were assigned at birth. Understanding the nuanced differences between them is not just a matter of political correctness; it's essential for respectful and accurate communication. So, I'll break down each term's meaning and usage and give you some sentence examples to refer back to.

A transsexual or transgender is one whose gender identity is distinct from their sex at birth. A transvestite is someone who wears the opposite sex's clothes.

Some dictionaries still consider the terms transgender and transvestite synonymous, but they are not. Transgender is a broader adjective that is more inclusive of the wider community.

A transgender person might be assigned male or female at birth but now identify the opposite. The word is much deeper than transvestite because it's more than the individual's clothes.

If one was assigned female at birth and discovered she identifies as male, he's a transman. If someone was born with male genitalia and knew later on that she's a woman, she's a transwoman.

A transgender person can also identify as a combination of both. It's based on the notion that gender is fluid, and one can change gender identity and expression over time. The correct term for someone who identifies as a combination or neither is a transgender nonbinary person.

Trans people can transform their physical appearance. They can also change their legal gender marker and name to reinforce the gender they identify.

It's also essential to learn that the term transgender is an adjective instead of a noun. **It can be politically incorrect to call someone transgender. Instead, call them a transgender person. In plural form, it's trans people, transgender men, or transgender women.**

A transvestite is another word for someone who cross-dresses. It refers to a person who acts and dresses in the opposite gender but may not necessarily identify as one. A transvestite wears clothing that is conventionally associated with the opposite sex. It comes from the Latin word vestire, which means to dress.

The main difference between transgender and transvestite is that transgender people show gender identity. Meanwhile, a transvestite man can dress like a woman but still identify as a man.

- Women and Gender Equality Canada, Government of Canada
- Candace Osmond, How To Use Transgender Vs. Transsexual Vs. Transvestite Correctly <https://grammarist.com/usage/transgender-transsexual-transvestite/#:~:text=A%20transvestite%20is%20someone%20who,they%20were%20assigned%20at%20birth.>
- For a more detailed glossary, visit PFLAG's website [LGBTQ+ Glossary - PFLAG](#)

MAKING TRUTH OUR TEACHER

DINA G. McINTYRE

If we wish to follow Zarathushtra’s teachings, and worship/celebrate Wisdom (*mazda*- -- an enlightened state of being), we cannot turn a blind eye to prejudices that harm others. This is not something I just made up.

An ancient Pahlavi text says,
“Be of good mind and positive...
Pursue knowledge and advance learning...
overcome prejudice...”
Shahin Bekhradnia translation.

In many ancient cultures, sexual orientation differences were an accepted part of life. In others they were not. What was Zarathushtra’s view? There is nothing in the Gathas, nor any Avestan text *that was written during Avestan times*, that condemns or bans differences in sexual orientation (so far as I am aware). It was first condemned in the *Vendidad*, (written in grammatically corrupt Avestan) which promoted religious control through fear.

Ideas of ‘good or evil’, ‘right or wrong’, vary greatly (between persons, cultures, generations). Zarathushtra doesn’t give us fact specific lists of do-s and dont-s which, as time passes, become embalmed in obsolescence.

Instead, he advocates using our minds/hearts/spirits to search for truth, ongoing -- factual truths, scientific truths, social truths, emotional truths, spiritual truths, -- all the facets of an order of existence that is true (correct, right, good), and includes himself in that search (“... **as long as I shall be able and be strong, so long shall I look in quest of truth. Truth, shall I see thee as I continue to acquire ... good thinking ...** “ Y28: 4 - 5).

Zarathushtra worried about whether people would listen to Wisdom’s teachings; then comforted himself with Wisdom’s response.

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



“...when I was first instructed by your words, painful seemed to me my faith in men [*mashya*- ‘in mortals’] to bring to realization that which ye told me is [*vahishta*- ‘most good’]...” Y43:11 (Insler).

“But then You said to me, *you have come to truth for instruction...*” Y43:12, (my more literal translation). **Coming to truth for instruction**, means wanting truth to be our teacher, wanting to learn from truth -- the on-going search for truth, the desire to comprehend it. A fundament of Wisdom’s teaching.

So, when I come across a question in my own time period, I (try to) make truth my teacher.

Let’s start our search for truth while keeping in mind Zarathushtra’s teaching to think, speak and act in honest, beneficial ways, with friendship, compassion, lovingkindness, being fair -- the most good truths of mind/heart/spirit (*asha*- *vahishta*-); setting aside ways that are contrary to *asha vahishta* -- being ignorant, false, cruel, destructive, prejudiced, hating, harming, victimizing.

Asking truth to be our teacher, requires that we first consult the available science -- factual truth -- which in **LGBTQ+** research currently is incomplete, on-going. We don’t know how many life forms exist on our planet, but according to science, different sexual orientations exist in at least 450 different species. In humans, a study of almost half a million people, published in *Science* in 2019, established that there is no one ‘gay’ gene, or one ‘straight’ gene. Sexual orientation is polygenic, meaning that hundreds or even thousands of genes make tiny contributions to the trait. And polygenic traits can be influenced also by environment.

To illustrate: A person's height -- tall or short -- is polygenic, but a person's height can also be affected by not having enough to eat as a child (environment). In short, our knowledge to date of the causes of sexual orientation, although incomplete, shows that a huge variety of factors contribute to sexual orientation -- multiple genetic factors as well as life experiences.

But one thing is undisputed. The factors that influence LGBTQ+ orientations are largely beyond an individual's control.

In the Gathas (unlike later texts) nothing in nature is described as intrinsically 'bad', or 'evil'. Every description of 'evil' is the product of wrongful choices.

So just as being tall or short, or not having enough to eat, cannot be intrinsically 'wrong', in the same way LGBTQ+ orientations, in and of themselves, cannot be intrinsically 'wrong'. It is the choices we make with our sexual orientations -- whether heterosexual or LGBTQ+ -- that result in 'good' and 'evil', 'right' and 'wrong'. If a person uses his/her sexual orientation to harm, injure, victimize, that would be wrong -- not because s/he is heterosexual or LGBTQ+ in and of itself, but because it is used to harm, injure, victimize, -- conduct that is the opposite of the true (correct), wholly good order of existence (*asha- vahishta-*).

In short, it is the choices we make with our physical traits, that create 'good' and 'evil' -- not the traits themselves. How then can it be 'wrong' for an adult LGBTQ+ couple to live in a good, loving, consensual relationship that harms no one?

On the contrary (based on Zarathushtra's teachings), it would be wrong to make rules that prevent such people from loving each other, living together, and being good, productive members of our communities and societies. It would be wrong to discriminate against them, mock, ostracize, victimize, harm them, because of their sexual orientation.

There is a verse in the Gathas that has been translated as condemning homosexuality. But if we want truth to be our teacher, it is clear that this is not accurate. The applicable Avestan word has not yet been decoded. Linguists differ widely in translating it. But even if we assume (for the sake of argument) that the word refers to LGBTQ+ orientations, the conclusion that its use involves condemnation or mocking *for that reason*, is not in the language or context of the verse. It is an interpretation some linguists have read into the verse -- reflecting certain Pahlavi texts, which reflect such translators' own prejudices. But there is a well recognized traditional authority that sees nothing about sexual orientation in that verse, Neriosangh Dhaval's



Sanskrit translation.

Here is the Gatha verse in question, with the preceding verse for context.

“...which man has been an ally to Zarathushtra Spitama? Which one has taken counsel with truth? With whom is [*spenta- aramaiti-* ‘beneficial embodied truth’] allied? Which man of good thinking has shown himself to be lofty (enough) for the (great) task?” Y51:11.

Each of these qualities -- truth, its beneficial embodiment, its good comprehension -- are qualities of the Divine which we also have (although imperfectly) -- irrespective of sexual orientation.

Zarathushtra concludes, “In no such way did the roguish [*vaepya-*] Kavi satisfy this Zarathushtra Spitama at Earth-bridge [Insler's ft. “Probably a place name”], since he rejected (him who) arrived at that spot, although his two draft animals were trembling from wandering and from cold.” Y51:12.

The Avestan word which Insler has translated as ‘roguish [*vaepya-*]’, other linguists have translated in widely different ways, including ‘trembler, shaker, quaker’, a ‘poison-squirting serpent’, a person who is homosexual, as well as the ruler's sexual partner of the same or opposite sex. So *vaepya-* has not yet been decoded. Zarathushtra's intent may have been to describe a chieftain whose reputation for falsehood and cruelty was as toxic and deadly as a poison-squirting serpent, or whose reputation was that of a man so cruel, that he made people tremble, shake, quake.

But arguing about the meaning of this word misses the point that Zarathushtra was making in these two verses, which is that this powerful chieftain was so opposed to the teachings of Wisdom, (truth, its good comprehension, its beneficial embodiment in thought word and action), that he denied Zarathushtra and his 2 exhausted draft

animals, food and shelter, a warm place to sleep (in bitter cold weather) in a culture that placed a high value on hospitality.

To identify that ruler by name would have been an open insult in that culture (unlike our culture today). But Zarathushtra was describing a specific event for a specific reason (identifying a chieftain so hostile to Wisdom's path of truth). To be credible, Zarathushtra had to identify this person in a way that his listeners would have understood. So, (conforming to the conventions of his time), he identified this chieftain, not by name, but by location and reputation -- a reputation described by the Avestan word *vaepya*- which has not yet been decoded.

In the Gathas, Zarathushtra had the courage to repeatedly speak out against, and condemn, the cruel, tyrannical practices of the priestly and secular establishments of his culture which were causing so much suffering in his society. Here are just two examples,

Priestly: "...the rich Karpan chose the rule of tyrants and deceit rather than truth." Y32:12.

Secular: "Even the Kavis have continually fixed their intentions on capturing and plundering the riches of this world..." Y32:14.

Because of his outspoken criticisms, Zarathushtra was ostracized, persecuted.

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

"Yes, throughout my lifetime, I have been condemned as the greatest defiler, I who try to satisfy the poorly protected...with truth, Wise One..." Y49:1.

He did not mince words. Despite ostracism, despite life threatening persecution, he was an outspoken critic of what he thought was wrong. If he had believed LGBTQ+ orientations were wrong, would he not have openly condemned them?

He doesn't. Not once.

Based on the absence of any clear condemnation of LGBTQ+ orientations in the Gathas (and even, so far as I am aware, in any later Avestan texts *which were written during Avestan times*), and based on the fact that the applicable word has not yet been decoded, it is not reasonable to interpret this Gatha verse (Y51:12) as condemning or mocking the sexual orientation of that un-named chieftain. Yet some modern translators, have

done exactly that.

We all are human, and subject to error. But integrity requires that we guard against infusing into Gatha verses, unsupported interpretations (or worse, unsupported prejudices) whether our own or those of certain schools of much later thought) -- that are inconsistent with the context of a given verse (the micro context), and the song in which the verse appears and the Gathas as a whole (the macro context). Unfortunately, such subjective, inconsistent, interpretations abound in translations of the Gathas (not limited to sexual orientations), even by first class linguists.

Today we have largely forgotten the central role that love plays in Zarathushtra's thought. Whether a person is LGBTQ+ or heterosexual, each one of us is part of the family of all the living, in which each person, each life form, each part of existence, has value.

Each has within it, something of the Divine.

His teachings require that we be good to each other, watch out for each other. Indeed, mutual, loving help is necessary -- a prerequisite -- for each person's spiritual evolution to completeness (*haurvatat*-), non-deathness (*amertat*-) -- the Endless Light(s), an enlightened state of being (which is divine, Wisdom). None of us can make it on our own. To make it, each part of existence (including the Divine) has to both give and receive loving help.

In the almost 4,000 years since Zarathushtra's time period, Zoroastrians have accumulated traditions and ideas from many sources other than the Gathas -- sources that have influenced our mind-sets in ways that have nothing to do with Zarathushtra's teachings, and indeed, often are contrary to them (and to the worship of wisdom/Wisdom). Some of these traditions and ideas have trapped us in obsolescence, in prejudices that harm the innocent.

But Wisdom's teachings enable course corrections. The search for truth -- making truth our teacher -- in all aspects of our existence enables on-going relevance, the recognition of obsolete thinking, the correction of our prejudices, and an evolution towards embodying the true (correct, wholly good) order of existence with each choice in thought, word and action, thereby healing existence by moving it forward to truth personified. So simple. So profound. So beautiful.

Author's Note

All references will be provided on request. All Gatha translations are from Insler 1975 unless otherwise stated. In quotations translated by Insler, words in square brackets are my more literal translation of a given Avestan word. Additional details, references are on my website <https://gathasofzarathushtra.com>

How Should a Good and Mindful Zoroastrian React to the LGBTQ+ Question

ZANE DALAL

Firstly, I'm delighted, on so many levels, to acknowledge and applaud FEZANA for its progressive inclusivity in publishing an LGBTQ+ issue. I know that it could not have been an easy or comfortable internal conversation, but it was undoubtedly the right conversation at the right time. So much of the conflict in our political and social discourse is driven by notions of discomfort and obfuscation. It is these disturbing trend lines that bring us to this moment. I do not think for one moment that anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment, or the racial divide or anti-Semitism comes from lofty arguments and worthy philosophy. To suggest that our baser instincts, our worst notions, biases, and hypocritical social hierarchy can be explained by a forensic examination of Zoroastrianism or of the LGBTQ+

population, is to misunderstand why this conversation is taking place now and to misplace its origins. Throughout our recorded history we see man's unabashed and blatant need to control his fellow man. If that need pervades our society, man will stop at nothing to accomplish it. If one has a good idea and can sell its merits, then two things need to be present. One needs to have excellent skills as an orator and communicator, and one's receiving audience must be intelligent enough to value the intelligence of one's opinion. So, that's obviously the long way round to controlling your fellow man. I mean, you must have a great and powerful idea, and then there are so many people who are just not interested in anything.

What if you didn't have a good idea, in fact, it was just a plainly awful idea, full of holes and injustice, half-baked and fanciful? What if you could dress that argument up in some fine, sexy clothes that would make more people listen to it than would normally look up to acknowledge you? What if you could, relying on the stupidity of a healthy percentage of the population, convince them that what you were saying was in fact a sound and worthy philosophy? What if you could convince these same people that your idea was in some holy text, so it had to be followed? Yes, you could spout the height of nonsense, and if your local religious organization bought into it or preached it – or worse still were the people that initiated it, wouldn't that be so much easier? The thesis would never be debated on its merits, and the populace would be forced to accept, follow, believe, and act upon it because the alternative was death. And besides, this same lot had considerable success with all those other implausible stories, so why not give it a whirl? We are living in strange times! We hear that almost all the time, but if you know and believe only one thing, believe this. The only real constant in human existence is change.

American society is no longer following its instinctual trust in democracy, in which it would comment on its own needs through personal experience and then effect consequential change at the ballot box. No! It is reacting to the worst instincts of divisive politicians, who long gave up the cause of earning each vote, finding it much easier to acquire the mob vote when inciting their constituents to feverish pitch on both sides. It goes hand in hand with a deteriorating education. What else would one expect if half the people, led by their noses, consider a college education to be a liberal, elitist con game? How else would they come to vote in lockstep on single incendiary hot-button issues, almost always posited as 'black and white' so that no one does any thinking? Similarly, Critical Race Theory objections are precisely because thinking is not valued at a premium. As a person who had the privilege of teaching at the university level in this country, I'm appalled at current trends. Really? If you wish to ban books

because you think that you will somehow succeed in banning thoughts, think again! Nor can you succeed in falsely measured comfort, never countenancing any change or open-mindedness. Just as the child who learns the properties of heat, learns a lasting lesson through a little discomfort, there can be no learning of any kind without a certain discomfort. After all the new is uncomfortable, and learning is grappling with the new until it becomes old and comfortable. Therefore, do not look to religious doctrine for how we might behave, because we've been beaten to the punch by hundreds of years of usurpation.

There is only one course left for us. How does our question square with the actual faith proposed by Zarathustra, or for that matter Jesus? As residents of the United States and subject to its laws, it is particularly useful to follow the thought process that fashions those laws through a predominantly Judeo-Christian lens. If we concede that there is a pendulum-like shift in society every fourteen years or so, going right back to the beginning of congregated living, then the only way to remain relevant in that constant change is to dictate the terms of change from on high. It seems that the usurpation of religion became the only ticket in town. We are warned as much in our holy texts. When Zoroaster refers to Angra Mainyu, as the 'destructive spirit, he establishes its opposite as the 'creative spirit' embodied by, Spenta Mainyu. Our thoughts vibrate beyond us with the power to create or destroy, a heavier burden than most are willing to accept.



As Zoroastrians, we are commanded to be co-opters of the Truth, to place a life of ASHA, in ASHA to the benefit of all living souls around us. We are to champion Truth and Righteousness without question. We are commanded to make judicious observations about everything. How does one do that if half the field of knowledge is redacted away from discourse, like some FBI manual that reads only page numbers and the author's name? At least the FBI read the text before redacting. How would that work if redaction was just an arbitrary power play that didn't even require a reading of the text?

This is not supposed to shock anyone. It is where we are. Whereas organized religion as a man-made exigency cannot be trusted to divulge a higher truth about the human condition, or whether one person has more rights than another, one can gain some measure of perspective in the preachings of the prophets. Neither Zarathustra nor Jesus mentioned homosexuality, though with their deep knowledge of the human condition it would be completely

implausible to suggest they did not come across it. It does not appear in the Gathas and it does not appear in the Gospels. In the case of Zarathustra, perhaps the first visionary seer to share universal philosophies that have the power of truth behind them, he too had to go up against a priestly class, who looked to his downfall. Both prophets talk about how faith is an individual responsibility and that your destiny lies with you and your individual decisions. They both talk of a new age of enlightenment that comes from of each man treating his neighbor as himself. The Gathas and Gospels are the only possible texts that we might treat as *'vox Dei'* [the voice of God] rendering everything else superfluous. To suggest that either Zarathustra or Jesus didn't say what they meant, or ran out of time, or would have said something had such and such been available, is not just wishful thinking, it would be blasphemy. It took almost no time after these prophets had passed into history, that men sought to control other men, using religion to their own ends.

Zarathustra was a visionary man, who preached about individual responsibility, care and concern for one another, all living things, and our planet. And above all, we are **commanded to be co-opters of the Truth**. It is our prime directive to gather all information before us, because we must make our own choices as to good and evil with careful consideration, employing *Vohu Mana*, the Good Mind. Here again is that glorious text.

*"Hearken with your ears to these best counsels,
Reflect upon them with illumined judgement.
Let each one, man and woman alike, choose his creed with that
freedom of choice each must have at great events.
-- Ahunavaiti Gatha, Chapter 30, Verse 2*

If still unclear, look to the life of Zarathustra and His preachments to understand what we must do. We are in the archetypal moment to ask WWZD - What Would Zarathustra Do? We may not purposely reduce the pool of knowledge before us, that's for sure. It is in antithesis to Zoroastrian teaching to be judgmental when we have not used the benefits of *Vohu Mana* to be judicious. To see, witness and create ASHA in all things and in all places ask yourselves whether *Vohu Mana* is concerned with hiding, deception, banning books, or making people fearful through a deliberate withholding of knowledge and truth. All these things, present in the current censure of gay people, are incompatible with Zoroastrian teaching.

So, "How should a good and mindful Zoroastrian react to the LGBTQ question?" The answer is surprisingly simple and consistent with the teachings of the Gathas. Our place as Zoroastrians could not be clearer. The question is not whether we include and support LGBTQ+ persons, but whether we can ever pass for good Zoroastrians if we don't!

Zane Dalal is Associate Music Director of the Symphony Orchestra of India, the nation's first fully professional orchestra, established by the NCPA, Mumbai. Zane joined in 2007 serving as Resident conductor for seven years prior to his appointment as AMD. A prolific writer, Zane draws on his many varied interests which include Zoroastrian perspectives, theology and comparative religion, American constitutional law, and medieval European history. He holds Masters degrees from both the University of Oxford and Indiana University, Bloomington.





When I finally realized that I was different, i.e. gay, it was in the late 1970s and at that time in the US I just didn't feel safe coming out. With people all around me talking negatively about the LGBTQ population, the last thing I wanted to do was alienate myself from those around me. Although at my college, part of the City University of New York, there was a gay club, I never felt open enough, either to myself or to others, to join. Instead, I was part of other groups.

My Life, My Way

SOLI PATEL

When I graduated and went on to graduate school, located in Manhattan, I felt more open. One day, while going with a straight friend to a porn store in Queens, I saw this gay magazine and by instinct picked it up and looked through it. I saw so many personal ads for guys who wanted to meet guys and I just had to have it. So, while my friend was looking in another area, I quickly purchased the magazine, and it was through that magazine that I met my first real boyfriend - a Japanese guy a couple of years older than myself. He introduced me to Japanese gay magazines and through those magazines I got acquainted with the gay world in Japan. I also made friends in Japan.

While still in graduate school, my boyfriend and I went on dates to some of the gay bars in New York, however, they were mostly dark and not places we felt comfortable in. At the time many of them were also not that welcoming to minorities – especially Asians. We felt more or less left out and so stopped going.

After graduating, I immigrated to Japan and joined a large Japanese financial firm. My gay friends took me to the gay areas of Tokyo and helped me get acquainted. I felt so free and liberated, although at work I could never come out. People at that time openly talked negatively about gay people, just as they had in the US. No difference. In addition, while I made many gay friends and enjoyed going to the gay dance places, the Japanese gay bars were the same as those in the US - dark and boring.

I remember looking for a boyfriend. In those days one needed to buy a gay magazine (we had five large

ones in Japan), and reply to ads in those magazines. I wrote many letters and got many replies and met many people. Some were good, some were not. Some were super sexy but most were just average people and that was fine.

It was not until just a year before returning to New York to care for my elderly parents that I met my “husband-to-be”. My parents had met my partner on a trip to Tokyo and it was then that I had told them that he would be coming with me to live with us. My father had a very rough time accepting us although my mother was okay with it. However, despite the fact that my father would tell me how disappointed he was that I was not getting “married”, he never told us to leave.

Even though things had improved society-wise, though I worked in both Japanese and US companies in New York, I didn’t feel comfortable coming out. The mood just wasn’t right. I found that while many American companies stated they supported diversity, it was mainly lip service for public relations purposes. The idea that we were “sinning” and that being gay was “a choice” was still prevalent in the US at that time.

When my parents passed on, we decided to return to Japan. We both felt we would be happier back “home”



and so sold off our properties and made the move. That was 12 years ago. Now we are back in Tokyo and, today, things are so different in both countries. I work at a Japanese company and am out. I have never had any problems here. As long as one is not very obvious in Japan’s large cities, no one really cares. Yes, it would depend upon the company and the location, but that is true everywhere. In the US, same-sex marriage is legal and here in Japan we are moving toward that as well.

In Japan, I have been actively working for LGBTQ+ rights for over 35 years. I dare say that so much has changed since I first started getting involved. There have been

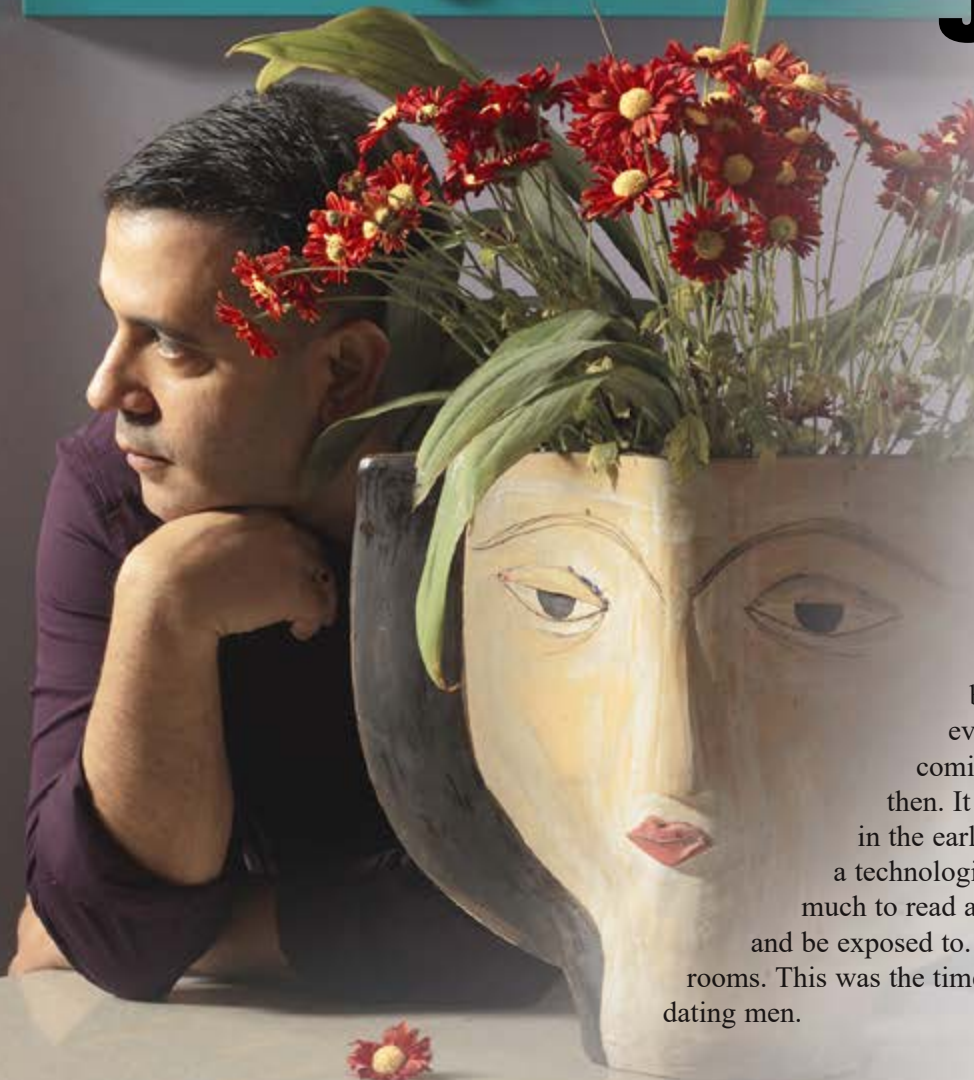
many more improvements. Years ago, life insurance companies would refuse to allow having someone as a beneficiary if they were not related. While being LGBTQ+ was virtually not spoken of when I first arrived, today it is anything but hidden. My partner and I had a lawyer make up our domestic partnership agreement, wills, and living wills, so we have most of the rights of heterosexual couples. We were able to openly buy a condo together. Now in Japan, most local governments recognize same sex couples, and many banks will give housing loans to same-sex couples on the same basis as heterosexual couples.

I am also happy to see so many LGBTQ+-friendly religious associations today, both here in Japan and elsewhere. That said, I believe it would be great to have more inclusion for the LGBTQ+ Parsi community as well. Why should anyone be ostracized for their sexual orientation, which is innate, like being left- or right-handed. There are LGBTQ+-friendly churches, mosques and synagogues, so having LGBTQ+-friendly agaries should not be such a stretch of the imagination. I hope this article will help move things along in that direction.



On Coming Out and Bringing Everyone Along on My Journey

ASHDEEN LILAOWALA



When ^{it has} to do with your identity, you always have an inkling from childhood. I know I did, even as a child, that I was gay. Then a moment of reckoning comes when you want to fully inhabit who you really are. For me, this happened when I was in college. I attended what can be called a liberal design college between 1998 and 2002. However, even in a place like that, the idea of coming out was never discussed back then. It had to wait until after I graduated in the early 2000s. It was also the time of a technological dawn in India. There was so much to read and a whole new world to explore and be exposed to. I visited websites and gay chat rooms. This was the time I also moved to Delhi and started dating men.

By now I was eager to tell my best friend. By the time I mustered the courage to do so, he already knew. He assured me that he was absolutely fine with it and that we'd always be friends. This gave me the confidence to open up to my other friends, most of whom took the news positively. They seemed a little protective of me but always made sure to give me the space to be myself. I remember one friend who didn't take it too well. But that was mostly out of his concern about my safety and whether other people and society around me were ready to accept my sexual orientation. It didn't help that our pop culture, particularly films, at the time furthered only a heteronormative narrative. LGBTQ+ characters were grossly stereotyped and included mostly for laughs. There's also this incorrect notion in India that because one is working in fashion, they're gay or queer. It's just that some industries are more open than others. Thankfully, this is rapidly changing.

Next, I came out to my sisters to whom I am very close. By then, I was seriously dating someone. They were supportive as expected. With them on my side, it was time to confront the biggest challenge which was telling my parents. We were living in different cities and there's never a right time for a confession like this. One day at dinner the right moment presented itself without warning. I blurted it out and instantly it felt like an opening. Like a heavy weight had been lifted off my chest. I felt relieved. My parents weren't jumping with joy but they weren't defensive or angry either for which I am eternally grateful. People take time to come to terms with life changing revelations like this. Over the years their apprehensions eased as I did well in my career and social life. I've realized most parents just want to see their children happy.

When I finally accepted my identity there were no "coming out parties". And since then, upon being myself in social situations, very rarely have I found resistance. My experience has been very liberating and I've found it easier to go on with life being my true self. There's no pretending or second-guessing about who knows, who doesn't know. But it's meeting other gay people that really helped me come into my own. Finding community has been the most helpful thing to have happened in my journey. You draw strength from this community. From time to time, you're able to help somebody. You understand each other's pain. You are there to celebrate each other's joy.

I have two pieces of advice for someone who's thinking of coming out. Firstly, when you come out don't expect your parents to be jumping in excitement with a rainbow flag. Give them time to accept you and your sexuality. Younger parents today are more cued in as they're likely to have queer friends and more experience being around the LGBTQIA+ community. Secondly, always tell both parents. Don't put the burden on one parent and rely on them to inform the other. Seek family counseling if needed because you're also helping your parents come out of the closet. Respect their boundaries. While it's important to have the freedom to be yourself, it's equally important to be conscious of their feelings and emotions.

I want to end with a moving anecdote. I remember this one instance when somebody asked a dear friend of mine behind my back if I was gay and if my friend was okay with it? My friend responded saying, "He is gay and of course, I am okay with it". The person inquiring after me asked, "You're okay because he's your friend. If he was your son, would you be, okay?". To which my friend responded, "Have you seen how much he loves and respects his parents? I'd be delighted to have a child like that." It was so affirming to learn about this exchange from my friend later. I learned that ultimately, it's who you are as a person that really matters to those closest to you.

Ashdeen Z. Lilaowala is a textile designer based in New Delhi, India. His label ASHDEEN specialises in Parsi Gara embroidery, a craft he has researched extensively and revived with a team of over 300 crafts men and women. Ashdeen's work has been exhibited at museums across the world and has been worn by leading Bollywood superstars. He is also the author of "Threads of Continuity", a book on the sacred craft of Kusti weaving.

Photo credit Srinath Rao Photography - The Parsi Contemporary Series - www.pasrp.com

ACTIONS COUNT, EDUCATION MATTERS

Our experiences growing up shaped our views on LGBTQ+ rights and activism and explicitly showed us what still needed to be done to achieve full equality. We were glad to hear that FEZANA has chosen this theme for its current issue because a conversation in our community about LGBTQ+ rights is long overdue. Violence against LGBTQ+ people in this country is on the rise – O’Shea Sibley was murdered at a gas station in Brooklyn, NY last month on Saturday, July 29, for being gay and just a few days ago on August 18, Laura Ann Carlton was shot and killed in front of her store in Cedar Glen, California over the rainbow flags placed in front. It is vital that we identify how these acts of violence do not come out of a vacuum – they are the direct result of the normalization of the hateful rhetoric spreading in our society, and our community cannot see itself as unaffected by such rhetoric. We cannot solely rely on progressive verses from religious texts in order to claim that there is no prejudice or discrimination within our community, as such a claim does immense harm to LGBTQ+ Zoroastrians, brushing very real experiences of prejudice and discrimination under the rug.

How do we reconcile growing up hearing mobeds refuse to recognize gay marriage, or refuse to ever perform a marriage ceremony for two men or two women? What does that mean when, at the same time, there have been concerted widespread efforts to roll back gay marriage? No community, including ours in North America, is necessarily exempt from prejudice, and it is our responsibility to foster the kind of culture we wish to have. Living in the United States and participating in this society means both that widespread anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric affects our community, and that our actions can also have an impact and contribute to the culture, both positive and negative. Growing up, and still to this day, hearing homophobic and transphobic jokes, slurs, and comments was, and is, not uncommon in our personal experience with this community (both young and old), sometimes regardless of the efforts made to directly address this harmful rhetoric. We hear from our queer peers about their families’ negative and hurtful reactions to them coming out, and we cannot separate how such stigma and harmful rhetoric is both the result of and a reinforcer of a national culture of dehumanization against LGBTQ+ people in this country.

So what can we do? We can start by educating ourselves. How our words and actions have meaning, how they can contribute to a larger culture of violence and discrimination against members of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as how many struggles are connected. We need to realize the reality of what is at stake. The next thing we can do is take action. Full equality is achieved when Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian members of the LGBTQ+ community can live their lives free from the fear of violence and marginalization, when they can be their authentic selves and love who they love out in the open. With the concerted political effort to erase LGBTQ+ people at the national, state, and local level, with the banning of books that mention LGBTQ+ people, banning of access to gender affirming care, and ever-rising violence against LGBTQ+ individuals, we are sadly far from this reality. We could say as Zoroastrians we have the responsibility to seek the truth and follow the righteous path, but the thing is, when the existence of LGBTQ+ people is at stake, it goes beyond us, beyond our Zoroastrian identity. We must care about our fellow person, regardless of our faith.

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Gordiya Khademian (she/her), a graduate of New York University with an MA in Near Eastern Studies and a BA in Politics, currently works as a Library Assistant for her local public library system in Maryland. When she isn't reading, she enjoys going for walks and talking to her sister in her free time.



Yasna Khademian (any pronouns) is an emerging actor, writer, and storyteller. She has a BA from McGill University and is currently in training to develop her artistic craft. When not auditioning for plays or working on their own, Yasna can also be found reading or talking with their sister.

Courage to Say YES

My family moved from Mumbai to Canada in 1992, when I was 13 years old. Sex education was essentially non-existent in India in the early 1990s and I had not fully hit puberty, so although I knew about homosexuality, I didn't know that I was gay at the time.

Canada in 1992 was not the welcoming place it arguably is now. Navigating social life in high school was difficult enough without having to address my budding sexuality, and it was quite clear that high school was not a safe place to be gay. Sex education classes were taught by an extremely conservative, Catholic gym teacher; the topic of homosexuality was only briefly addressed, not favourably, and mostly in reference to the ongoing AIDS epidemic. The most common insult thrown around in the halls was "f-g" and that one gay kid got beaten up more times than I can recall. I clearly remember a Grade 12 social studies class where we openly discussed the morality of "the choice" of homosexuality, and most of my fellow students didn't look at it kindly. So, I kept my sexuality repressed from everyone, including myself and tried my best to fit in.

My first year of university was the first time I encountered any openly gay people. I was jealous of them but not ready to be honest with myself or others quite yet. In my third year of university, I went on a student exchange to England and developed strong romantic feelings for one of my roommates. Although that never amounted to anything, it was then that I realized this wasn't a phase, and I couldn't change this part of me.

Returning to Canada was followed by a year of severe depression as I came to terms with this part of myself that I couldn't understand or accept, much less love. One night, the summer after I graduated, one of my friends asked me whether I was gay. Of course, this wasn't the first time the question had come up; most of the people in my close circle of friends had long since figured this out. I am not sure why it was, but this time I had the courage to say "yes". I'm glad I did.

Coming out to my friends was mostly anticlimactic. I don't know what I was expecting, but for most of them, it didn't



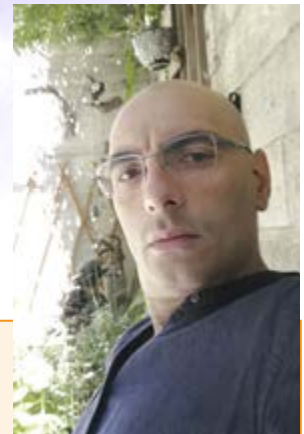
MURAD ANTIA

make any difference. They were simply happy that I was finally being honest with myself. I might have lost a few of them along the way but I don't even remember who those people were any more. When I finally told my mother, I wasn't sure what to expect but she told me she loved me regardless. Of course, she did.

Coming out to myself was a journey that took much longer. Internalized homophobia is a demon many of us deal with. Growing up in the 90's, homosexuality was at best the brunt of jokes and often made you a target of derision and violence. These messages, sometimes subtle and sometimes overt, made a powerful impression on me. It took many years to feel comfortable with this part of myself but I was surrounded by many people who accepted and loved me, and eventually, I learned to accept and love myself as well.

Luckily, being gay has become much less stigmatized now, in Canada and many other parts of the world now too. For that, I am eternally grateful to the generations of gay people who went before me, and fought hard to forge the path that I can walk on. I hope that over the next decades, this will grow and spread across the globe.

For anyone who is struggling with this today, know that you are loved for the person you are, not because of some preconceived notion of who you think you should be. Not everyone will be on this journey with you, but you will be surprised at how many people will support and love you for the courage it takes to be honest with yourself. It may not be easy at first but, I can promise you, it *does* get easier, and it *does* get better. Most importantly, learn to see yourself as a multifaceted person who is capable of loving and being loved. *Because you are.*



Murad Antia is a gay cis-gendered man living in Toronto, on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples.

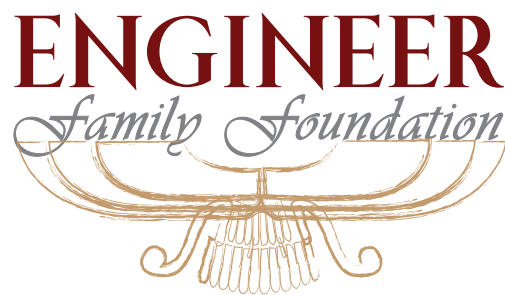
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GOOD THOUGHTS | GOOD WORDS | GOOD DEEDS

TAKING THE RISK TO

Blossom

PHIROOZEH PETIGARA

I came out to my friend on the day I left my marriage to the perfect Parsi man. I did not leave this marriage because I was queer, no. I left because the chasm between how he wanted to live his life and how I wanted to live mine was too wide. At the time, I lived in California, with all my family back in Canada, which is what gave me the courage to go through with the divorce even though the Greek chorus of Parsis who lived in my head sang, “Tsk tsk, Parsis don’t divorce, naughty girl.” My family did not like my decision, to say the least, but luckily the 900 miles and the international border between us gave me the courage to do what I had to do. That scary, surreal day that I left my marriage and came out as queer, I heaved off the giant boulder of Parsi expectation that had sat on my head and my heart and my soul for decades and I never looked back.

I arrived in Oakland, California with a gym bag full of clothes and no plan. I hadn’t been taught how to divorce. But I figured it all out, step by excruciating, exuberant step. Turns out people get divorced, and the world doesn’t actually end. Oakland was a haven for misfits like me - I was surrounded by artists and musicians and self-starters and change makers. It was full of indigenous healers who healed me and showed me how to heal others. I asked myself, what now? The world was mine for the taking. The only rule I had for myself: do what you actually want to, not what you think you should.

I took all the skills I had - yoga teacher, writer, intuitive healer - and began a business that centered QTBIPOC (queer and trans black, indigenous and people of colour). I did private sessions that combined yoga, energy work, and talk therapy. I facilitated healing workshops teaching people to release what was no longer serving and to manifest what they desired. My workshops began to sell out. There was such a need for safe QTBIPOC spaces. The people who came to me were other queer and trans people of color and when they heard snippets of my story, they felt seen. Heard. Validated. Because they, too, had spent much of their lives doing what they “should”, making themselves small just to fit in, to belong, to be accepted. In me, they saw that even when you’re raised in strict, conservative families, you can still live as your true self and thrive. The two don’t have to be mutually exclusive. One young client said to me, “You remind me of my mom, but you feel safe to talk to.” At first, I thought, *God, am I that old?* But I realized in her words was my true path forward.

Phirooze Petigara (she/her) is a writer, authenticity coach and educator. Phi consults internationally on social justice issues that include LGBTQ+ rights, women’s rights, and disability rights. Her work has been published in various anthologies and zines. Follow her on IG: @decolonizingaunty or read more at phirooze.com.



I named my business Decolonizing Aunty Coaching. ‘Decolonizing’ because as BIPOC, we must unlearn our own internalized homophobia, Islamophobia, fatphobia, colorism, anti-Blackness, all of which our oppressors, those who once colonized us, instilled in us. And ‘aunty’ because so many of us grow up with aunts who loved telling us what to do, how much to weigh, who to marry and how many children to have. I show up as an ‘aunty’ who just listens to folks, accepts them exactly as they are, and who helps them live their authentic life.

As an authenticity coach, I work with artists and writers and filmmakers and politicians to find their inner truth and build the strength to speak it. I work with parents of LGBTQ+ children who struggle to accept their children’s queer identity. I speak at universities and teach folks how to identify and release the “shoulds” that trap them, how to live in their truth, one step at a time, whether they are LGBTQ+ or any other marginalized identity.

As a writer, I use my story for social impact. I write about my experiences being queer, immigrant, disabled, so all these identities that we’ve been told to hide, to not talk about (you know the classic, “You can be gay, just don’t talk about it” line) can have a necessary light shone on them. When we speak of all this, we begin to remove the shame and ostracization. We allow everyone to live in their truth.

Two years ago, I met a glorious person at an online event for queer South Asians and I moved back to Canada to be with her. I had come out to my family many years earlier, and they had been accepting. My wife is from a very conservative Ismaili Muslim family and her family, too, has accepted us. The person who shocked me most of all was my 98-year-old Nani. She not only accepted my wife, but I can see that she truly loves her. They are like chudee buddies [like friends from childhood] and when we meet, they hold hands and gab about their teaching careers, politics, and what a bad cook I am, and I sit back and watch with delight and disbelief: how is this my life? How did I get everything I wanted even though it looked so different than anything I’d been brought up to want? The answer lies in the Anais Nin quote I plastered to the walls of my apartment back in Oakland in those early days of divorce and reset: *“and the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.”*



My wife and I host a monthly Kitty Party at my Nani’s house. My wife, her mum and her fui [paternal aunt] join me, my mum and my masi [maternal aunt] at my Nani’s rooftop garden. My wife’s mum brings home-made dokri [Gurati dish made of chickpea flour]. My masi makes fresh fudna ni choi [mint tea], and we all hang out. I watch this scene with awe every time: three generations of women from such conservative backgrounds who have fully accepted their queer daughters. And because they’ve been open and accepting, we all get to bathe in the beams of love and light that connect us all in this new constellation of family.

In this piece, as in all my writing, I share my story with you because the more stories we have of ways of being that are different but equal, different but every bit as valuable and valued, the more possibility can exist for each person to live as they are. And in that possibility lies liberation.

UNION OF LOVE!

LOVE
= is =
LOVE

Armita Jahanian Dalal is a certified wedding officiator and, in March of 2022, was granted the title of Mobedyar. In the '90s, she co-founded the Z4U committee in San Jose, Northern California, helping organize many events involving the youth. She co-founded the Core-Education Committee, a CZC-LA subcommittee in Los Angeles County, CA, for the purpose of establishing standards and curriculum for religious classes. In 2021, Armita co-founded "Doorway to Joy," a non-profit organization inspired by Zoroastrian philosophy. This organization aims to promote the application of these ancient teachings to modern-day living.

ARMITA DALAL

Despite all the controversial issues surrounding same-sex marriages, I was overjoyed and thrilled when I was approached to perform a Zoroastrian wedding for a lesbian couple. I accepted to perform the ceremony for the happy couple because I firmly believe that the celebration of love belongs to all people. Love is universal, and it doesn't belong just to a specific group whose validity is cultural and influenced by the circumstances.

My personal beliefs and religious values, which stem from the teachings of Zarathustra, were my guiding light in deciding to perform this wedding. The joy and love I felt within me while performing this ceremony served as a divine confirmation that I had indeed made the right decision.



Even after 3700 years, the teachings of Zarathushtra continue to be relevant and applicable to the way we live in the present day. Zarathushtra in Yasna 31, Haat 11 in the Ahunavaiti chapter of the Gathas states (translation by Mobed Firoze Azargoshasp):

“Since, O Mazda, from the beginning, Thou didst create soul and body; mental power and knowledge, and since Thou didst place life within the corporeal body and didst bestow to mankind the power to act, speak and guide, you wished that everyone should choose their own faith and path freely.”

These teachings emphasize the importance of individual freedom and the ability to choose one’s own path. They highlight the value of allowing everyone to follow their own faith and embrace love, regardless of societal norms or expectations. As a Zoroastrian, it is my duty to uphold these teachings and promote inclusivity and acceptance.

Performing a same-sex Zoroastrian wedding ceremony does not go against the principles of Asha, which symbolizes truth, righteousness, and the order of the universe. In fact, by celebrating love in all its forms, we are aligning ourselves with the divine plan and contributing to the prosperity and happiness of others.

The controversy surrounding same-sex marriages often stems from cultural and societal biases rather than a true understanding of love, acceptance, and laws of nature. As a spiritual leader promoting Zarathushtra’s teachings, it is my responsibility to challenge these biases and remind people of the universal nature of love. Love does not discriminate based on gender, and neither should we.

The decision to perform a same-sex wedding ceremony challenges traditional norms and opens up a platform for dialogue and understanding. It allows us to question our prejudices and grow as individuals and as a community. By setting aside personal beliefs and embracing the teachings of Zarathushtra, we can create a more inclusive and accepting society.

The rise of the LGBTQ+ movement among Zoroastrians, particularly the youth, is an emerging reality that cannot be ignored. While some may question the scientific facts surrounding different sexual orientations, it is essential to recognize and address our community members’ evolving needs and identities. As our global numbers decline due to various circumstances, we must make a conscientious decision on whether to alienate or accept, nurture, and love our youth as they are.

For Mobeds and Mobedyārs who find themselves grappling with similar decisions, my advice would be to follow their hearts and do what they think is right. However, they must be prepared for criticism from different sides of the spectrum. Change is not immediate or straightforward; it is a gradual and transformative process that requires sensitivity and empathy.

In contemplating this matter, it is crucial to reflect upon the teachings of Zarathushtra. The Ashem Vohu prayer, in particular, serves as a guiding reminder. It emphasizes the importance of following the path of Asha, doing the right thing irrespective of the consequences. By adhering to these principles, we can strive towards enlightened happiness for ourselves, our families, our loved ones, and our society.

By accepting and nurturing our youth as they are, we are not compromising our faith but embodying its true essence of love, compassion, and unity. This does not equate to abandoning our traditions or beliefs but rather evolving with the changing times and needs of our community.

“May we be among those who make this world new and fresh!” Yasna 30.9, Ahunavaiti Gatha



Hormazd Minwalla and Jeff Chou are two doctors united by love. Sons of immigrants, their tale started in medical school with dreams of healing binding them. Jeff, brilliant; Hormazd, social; both set on the same goal. Destiny intertwined their paths, friendship and passion bloomed. Despite medical training's toil, their love grew strong. Now proud doctors, Hormazd Minwalla tells FEZANA Journal their story that shows the power of devotion and fortitude.

UNITED
BY LOVE

HORMAZD MINWALLA

FJ: Tell us about your journey as a couple. How did you meet, and how did your relationship evolve to this point of getting married?

We met during medical school while studying over a cadaver on a late night. Jeff's colour-coded notebook caught Hormazd's eye, and this was the start of many more study sessions to come. This naturally progressed to something more as we realized we share common goals and values. After many ups and downs, we graduated and were fortunate to be matched into residency training programs in the same city. Four years later, Jeff became an anesthesiologist, and Hormazd became a psychiatrist. While enduring a grueling eight years together in one of the most stressful environments our love and commitment for one another grew strong. We have now moved back to our home state of Texas, where we are proud to serve our community and start the next chapter of our lives.

FJ: Were there any challenges you had to overcome as an LGBTQ+ couple planning your wedding? How did you navigate them?

Actually, quite the opposite! Despite living in Texas, all our wedding vendors have been excited to be part of our big day and love how unique we are. Everyone has been welcoming of our same-sex wedding and is excited to celebrate our love.

FJ: Weddings often involve family and friends. How have your loved ones supported you on this journey?

Many LGBTQ+ individuals who come from more traditional Eastern cultures go through this journey with fears of rejection and shame, but we have been fortunate to have experienced not only acceptance but also love. Our friends and family have been extremely supportive of our relationship from the start. We are so grateful to have such a loving and accepting family.

FJ: As you prepare for your wedding, are there any traditions or cultural elements that you're incorporating into your celebration?

We have planned a classic American wedding, but we plan on incorporating some Parsi traditions in our celebration. We will have a modified Madavsaro before the wedding with both our families. And we will be blessed with the Tandorosti prayer during our main wedding ceremony.

FJ: Could you share some advice for other LGBTQ+ couples who may be considering marriage or are just starting their journey together on making a relationship work?

Embrace your unique journey with pride and authenticity. Prioritize open communication to foster trust and understanding. Celebrate each other's individuality and support each other through the good and the bad.

FJ: Lastly, is there anything else you'd like to share with our readers, especially those who may be unfamiliar with LGBTQ+ experiences?

Just like in any marriage, it's all about love, commitment, and building a life together. Just as with heterosexual couples, LGBTQ+ couples meet and fall in love, share experiences, build a life together, and want to legally solidify their bond.



TWO VOICES, ONE LOVE

NILUFER AND MICHELLE MAMA

Mother Nilufer's Story

"No, it is not possible!", "She is beautiful and feminine, how can she be gay?"

I was consumed with these thoughts and for a long while could not concentrate on anything. I did not have the courage to address the matter straight up with Michelle, partly because I did not want to face the reality, if in fact, it was reality.

Our talented, lovely daughter was about 30 years old. She was working in the film and television sector and lived in downtown Toronto after graduating from the University of Toronto. Being a close-knit small family, we saw each other frequently as my husband Danny and I have a warm loving relationship with our two children, Michelle and Darius.

I will never forget the Father's Day weekend in 2005. Michelle and I had just returned from a family friend's bridal shower, and our family was going to celebrate Father's Day at home, with our traditional BBQ. At the bridal shower, the 'aunties' who all loved Michelle were doing their usual bit and asking her when 'her turn' would be...would the next bridal shower be her's? She was getting 'older' and all the young girls in their twenties had relationships and weddings being planned.

I guess this was when the proverbial straw broke the camel's back, and later that evening when we were having a cozy mother-daughter chat, Michelle said she wanted to have a serious talk with me and came right out and told me that she was tired of posturing and could not take the pressure of everyone asking her if she had a boyfriend and "will it be her turn next?"

At that moment, the dreams we had for her life changed dramatically. Our lives did too. With one bold stroke, she let us know that she was going to make her own life choices, different from what our expectations and dreams were. Seeing my expression (and emotional response) my daughter very gently explained her story. She had been struggling with her sexuality and was aware of her attraction from the time she was in her teens. She did have boyfriends, but she knew very quickly that it would not work long-term. She was deeply concerned about the impact of this on both Danny, me, her uncle, aunt, brother and her grandmothers. This is what delayed her coming out, as she was in a deep dilemma and wanted it to be easy for us.

That night was harder for me than any I can remember as I felt like I was plunged into a deep abyss. I did not have the courage to share this with Danny. I got strength from the fact that our son Darius had been Michelle's confidante, and I had him to lean on till I wrapped my head around this disclosure. Something truly died in me that night. And yet, something new was born.



Being an avid reader and researcher, I decided to learn as much as I could about this subject as I had to be strong for myself and for my husband and family. I very quickly joined online parents support groups and met some awesome mothers (including ‘desi’ mothers) who shared their experiences, emotions, and pain, and most importantly how they conquered this and became proud mothers of amazing, successful children.

I shared this with Danny when we were on a business trip and the right moment came along. I came right out and told him our Michelle was gay and we both need to support her as she was emotionally fragile and needed us more than ever. It saddened me to see the pain in his eyes and he was obviously devastated mainly because he feared her life would not be easy or safe, and that she would not be accepted by society at large. He also feared success in her work world would be impacted. However, with my newfound confidence and knowledge I was able to talk to him calmly and rationally, and from that point on he was amazing, and our beloved daughter had unflinching support from us both.

Just two days before her passing, my 93-year-old Mum, Homai Birdie, told me that she was sure Michelle was gay, and that if that was the case, I had to promise her that we would love, support and accept her, and never worry about what people would say as that does not matter. I was truly shocked (and proud) that my elderly weak Mum despite the views of her generation was so accepting and cared deeply for her granddaughter. She wanted to make sure I understood that she was okay with it, and I should be too. It was a humbling experience.

The biggest shift came when Michelle introduced Danny and me to her next partner, Jessica. She was a smart, beautiful woman finishing her law degree at Queen’s University. Her parents were lovely, and the family was small but close. Seeing Michelle and Jess together, taking trips, making plans and building a life gave us a sense of security and peace. The CONCEPT of Michelle’s identity was much more frightening than the reality of these two lovely women choosing to be together. Seeing Michelle happy and partnered gave us the peace we needed to finally be 100% okay with Michelle’s identity.

Today, Michelle is in a committed relationship with Meg, a great girl whom Danny and I adore. She is funny and sweet and devoted to our girl. She even came to the World Zoroastrian Congress in New York City with the whole family last year and had a blast – she was welcomed with open arms by our friends, family, and the many new friends they made.

The biggest message I want to impart to others who also have children who fall on the LGBTQ+ spectrum is that they should approach the situation with empathy, understanding, and the goal of fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment.

It is so important to educate yourself about sexual orientation and gender identity first. Learning about the science, psychology and personal experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals can help dispel misconceptions and biases. Distinguishing between personal values and social prejudices is very important and takes the longest time.



Parents have to put themselves in their child's shoes and imagine the challenges their child might be facing and how their unacceptance might be impacting their child's mental well-being. Create a safe and open space and soon you will realize that effective communication is crucial to build trust.

For some, religious beliefs could be a concern; it helps to seek guidance from open-minded religious leaders who can provide a perspective that aligns with acceptance and inclusion.

It helped when I looked around and observed some **LGBTQ+** individuals who were thriving in various fields and this made me realize that sexual orientation does not define a person's potential, character or success.

Changing one's perspective and beliefs can take time as one works through one's feelings and reactions. It is very important to focus on the importance of family bonds and understanding that acceptance and love are crucial to your child's mental health, overall well-being, happiness, and success.

Parents must understand that being gay is a normal and natural variation of human diversity, and diversity must be embraced in all its forms. This will help shift the mindset towards acceptance of their child's sexual orientation.

The journey is not easy. One needs a clear mind free from societal prejudices, a willingness to learn, and most of all understanding that you and only you have the power to make a positive difference in your child's life.

Love conquers all!

Daughter Michelle's Story

When you're hiding a secret, your brain will do some very strange things to you. I was absolutely convinced that if I told my mum I was queer, she would have a heart attack. It was so clear to me - for years I was visualizing it and panicking and decided that there was no way I could ever tell my parents. And my dad? Forget it. I would have to live a secret life.

That all changed after an intense break-up. I was very upset and unable to hide my distress. Performing as the good straight Parsi girl all afternoon at that shower (and dealing with the meddling, awful questions from the auntie brigade) was the straw that broke the camel's back. I had been living a double life for almost 10 years and I could not take it for one more second. I burst with anger and frustration and finally just came out with it.

Mum was stunned. But calm. She did NOT have a heart attack. Catastrophic thinking is really common for people who are afraid to come out but sometimes, you need to give your parents some credit! Mum needed some processing time. She had to wrap her head around it. My parents grew up in Pakistan and their exposure to anything related to queerness was only negative. Plus, she was really hung up on one thing: "But you're so feminine and pretty! I don't understand!". Our South Asian cultures put such a premium on femininity (Goddesses! Bollywood! Wedding adornment! Billboards for Fair and Lovely!) that it seemed incomprehensible to my Mum that someone who didn't present in a masculine way would be queer. Now that she's been exposed to the community and my partners and friends, she realizes that, today, how you look has nothing to do with it.

After coming out to my mother, I felt some relief and I felt closer to my Mum but there was a lingering fear about what Dad would do and say when she told him. She asked me to wait until she was ready and that she would tell him herself. I respected her wishes and waited. When Mum had armed herself with all of the research and information and had metabolized the news, she was ready to tell Dad. All I know is, by the time I saw him again, he knew I was queer and his head hadn't exploded.

Now he's my girlfriend's best pal - he jokes around with her and they even text without me! I could have never dreamed of how normalized it all is now, all these years later, but I hadn't given my parents enough



credit. Their love is not conditional. They will love me no matter what - and adjust to whatever comes their way. I know I'm extremely lucky in this regard. I've worked with and housed kids whose parents have kicked them out and disowned them for sharing their truth.

I have to say that my parents have been incredible. My mum is now an advocate who privately chats with other parents who are just learning about their kids' identities. She counsels them and helps them through the scary first few days of absorbing news they were not expecting. I am as "out" as I can possibly be now in the community (I even brought my partner Meg to the Zoroastrian Congress last year! She was a hit!) And my Dad? well, he just rolls with it and treats everyone I bring home with the same warmth and hug and "what are you drinking" spirit that Parsis are known for.

The biggest shift was when they met a partner for the first time. The CONCEPT of queerness is much scarier than the reality. When they met my ex, I joked that at least I'm dating a lawyer! They loved Jess and treated her with so much kindness and

love. Because she was lovely and just an ordinary human - no claws or horns - who loved their daughter. And seeing that bond made all the difference. They realized that all they want is for me to have someone to share my life with. Gender is irrelevant. Good people are good people.

I hope that other Parsi families - often being an educated and sophisticated lot - will follow suit and not get bogged down in the "why, arrey - what will people say" nonsense. That is the poison our community loves to drink and it only hurts yourself and your family when you are confronting internal issues.



Nilufer Mama is an award-winning Toronto-based Real Estate Broker; she has helped countless happy clients buying and selling their homes. She has also been in the travel world since 1992 when she started her legacy company Trade Wind Associates, and now is the Executive Vice President of Uniglobe - The Premiere Travel Group. Her passion is designing customized itineraries and escorting groups all over the world with her husband Danny under the brand name "Millenium Tours".

Michelle Mama is an award-winning documentary filmmaker and veteran factual producer/director with over 300 hours of television under her belt and has been nominated twice as a producer and twice as a director for Canadian Screen Awards by the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television.



REFLECTIONS OF A PARENT

FARAH TENGRA



My memory is quite terrible. For the most part I remember being part of a loving, happy family. My traditional upbringing did not make me think I'd grown up to be a typical Parsi wife and mother though. I'm not sure if that is because I wanted something different or just sensed that I was different.

My parents and my sisters doted on me, the youngest. I was led to believe I could do or be anything. This is the way I try to raise my son, with love and adoration. Ask him "What's the best thing that has ever happened to me, and he will point to himself without hesitation (maybe annoyance at having his Roblox or Minecraft game interrupted).

I have many reasons, besides how I was raised, that I am in awe of my child. I was a late bloomer. I accepted that I was a lesbian in my mid 20's, even though in hindsight I've known all my life. I started dating in my late 20's. I got married in my mid 30's. My son, Adrian, was born when I was 36 years old. I never thought I'd marry or be a mom. I also never thought my marriage would end when my child was only five years old.

Honestly, raising Adrian in a gay household did not really affect how we raised him or how we treated him. We live in Upstate New York and are surrounded by liberal friends, both gay and straight. Most importantly, our families accepted our son (her dad was always vocal about wanting a grandchild, my dad immediately tacked him

into his tally of number of boy and girl grandkids).

Adrian saw same-sex and heterosexual parents around him, I'm not sure he thought much of it. When he started nursery school, we may have mentioned that most kids have a mom and a dad, or just a mom or a dad. As he got older and saw people outside the context of just being parents (including his moms eventually), we were mindful of making him aware that people have different sexual orientations and also that gender identity is not just based on physical attributes, but also on what a person is in their heart. He is a very compassionate boy, he accepts that people can be different in many ways, and most importantly, he accepts them.

I don't know if having gay parents has much, if any impact on Adrian. It's just his reality. Unfortunately, his reality also includes being the child of divorced parents. We have done our best to make his transition of sharing his life between two households as smooth as possible, including co-parenting fairly, and even spending time all together as friends. Despite our best efforts though, it seems that having divorced parents far overshadows having gay parents. Again, this is his reality, it is all he knows. In this climate of tolerance and putting kindness ahead of all else, being different has been alright, both for him and for me. No parent or kid has overtly shown prejudice against him. And if they have, he is either oblivious or chooses not to let it bother him. I'd like to think he would tell us if someone said or did something that bothered him.

In my 45 years of existence, being a mom is by far my favorite part of life. Just like for Adrian, being a single mom has far overshadowed being a gay mom, especially in terms of my time and energy. I often don't feel like I have provided enough time, energy, money, entertainment, lessons to Adrian. But I've done my best and will continue to do so. I cannot imagine it is much easier with two parents, straight parents, rich parents. Is it? All a parent can really do is their best, I guess. Between taking care of a house (and yard and pool), working my way up in a healthcare job, and doing my very best to be a good enough mother to Adrian, there is not much left for anything else.

I keep track of social activities at the local gay bars. I follow LGBTQ groups on social media. Every year I "plan" to attend Pride festivities in Syracuse and other neighboring cities. At least at this time in my life I am unwilling to invest myself in much more than an occasional Pride event. I think that if involvement in the gay community was a priority, I'd make the time. In terms of the Parsi community, I have lived outside of the community all my life. First in Sana'a, Yemen, then in Boise, Idaho, and now in Syracuse, New York. I am not sure if it counts as connecting to the community, but for what it's worth, I am an avid reader of Rohinton Mistry and Thirty Umrigar's work. Adrian and I also are big fans of Queen. Perhaps someday I will find a better sense of belonging in the bigger picture. For now, though, I am content with my son, my handful (okay like three!), friends, and my family.

I think it can feel isolating even in a liberal community to be a parent, especially a single, older, gay parent. I am aware of support groups for gay families, and support for the kids and parents. There are also non-party, more low-key get-togethers to get coffee with other queer folks. Weekly crafting groups, writing groups, potlucks. Just knowing they exist is enough support for me, but to other parents (gay or straight), I encourage you to be involved, attend something so your kids can see other families like their own, or so you can be around like-minded people.

Regardless of how different you may think you are from others, you will find that you belong just as you are. Not when you've lost weight, not when you've found a girlfriend or boyfriend, not when you have a better job. You are loved just as you are. Adrian has taught me this, and I hope as he grows up, he too will feel accepted and loved, not just by his family and friends, but also by his community.

Farah Khurshed Tengra lives in Syracuse, New York with her son Adrian Navaz Cardinell-Tengra. Farah's hobbies include baking, exploring nearby waterfalls, making dad-jokes, and complaining about cleaning the pool. Adrian enjoys movies and games involving Harry Potter, Titanic, and all things WWII.

An Interview With **SHARLENE BAMBOAT**

Sharlene Bamboat is a video and installation artist. She has screened and exhibited internationally, including: the International Film Festival Rotterdam (Netherlands), Art of the Real (NYC), Addis Video Art Festival (Ethiopia), the Sharjah Film Platform (U.A.E.), Berlinale: Forum Expanded (Germany), Mantiq of the Mantis (Pakistan), Mercer Union Gallery (Toronto) and Henry Art Gallery (Seattle). She talks to FEZANA Journal about her work.



FJ: What inspired you to become a filmmaker, and how did you get started in your field?

Since I was about 12 or so, I wanted to be an artist/filmmaker, and I was always making things on my own with my friends. I got started through a DIY approach to art practice and filmmaking which still rings through in most of my work today.

FJ: How would you describe your artistic style?

If I were to categorize my art practice it would be experimental documentary film & installation. It is a pretty broad category, and for me, that means that everything I create is based on my experience or the things I see around me, I often work with non-actors, I don't really use scripts, I tend to respond more to the things around me, rather prescribe an idea onto something. I'm also very process-based, which means that how I work, and who I work with is as important as what I work on. The themes that I am most drawn to these days are language and translation - in all its myriad forms, as well as understanding and dismantling the ways in which knowledge is produced and circulated through audio-visual media.

FJ: What are some of the challenges in your chosen career and how do you navigate them? How do you support other LGBTQ+ artists?

Being an artist - especially someone working out of the commercial art world comes with its own precarity, which is challenging to navigate especially as I get older. Also, the usual structural inequities persist in many ways: if you're a woman, trans or gender non-conforming person, Black, Indigenous or racialized

person, classed in a certain way, people tend to exhibit your work less and you get less opportunities. This is true in most sectors in general and is no different in the cultural sector.

I tend to work with a lot of my friends, who are queer and trans artists, writers, cultural practitioners. I often mentor emerging artists and try to provide them with opportunities to work with me on my projects, paying them proper wages, and introducing them to other artists.

FJ: What projects or pieces of art are you currently working on, and what can we expect to see from you in the future?

I'm currently finishing a new film installation which is about solidarity politics and the tensions manifested within that. For that, I am working with a friend of mine who is almost 80 and has been an anti-racist and LGBTQ+ activist his entire life in Toronto. It's almost a bio-pic on his life, but also demonstrates the intergenerational friendship between him and me.

Sharlene's website is sharlenebamboat.com

Photo Credit: Yuula Benivolski

CHANGING ATTITUDES

NAWAZ MERCHANT
(WRITER NEV MARCH)

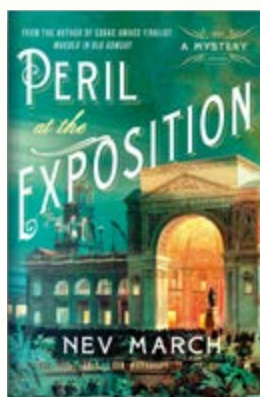


Nawaz Merchant is the first Indian-born author to receive the Minotaur Books/Mystery Writers of America Award. Her books deal with issues of identity, race and moral boundaries. Her debut novel, "Murder in Old Bombay" also won an Audiofile award and was an Edgar and Anthony award finalist. "Peril at the Exposition" describes the 1893 World's Fair during the Gilded Age, when the seeds of today's red-blue political divide were planted. The third book in her series "The Spanish Diplomat's Secret" came out in September 2023. Nawaz teaches creative writing at the Rutgers-Osher Institute. She sits on the NY chapter board of Mystery Writers of America and is Vice President of ZAGNY.

When I arrived in the States in the early 90s, I was probably as homophobic as most Indians of the time. Even though historically, gay, and trans people have always had a role—be it the castrati rockstar singers of 17th century Europe or the court of the Mughal empire—conservative families (including Parsis) shunned any mention of homosexuality. “Coming out” was rare. In the 1980s, the Parsi community didn’t approve of its most famous son, superstar Freddie Mercury.

Over time though, our awareness grew, and our understanding. In 2010, I met Soli (not his real name), a Parsi man who had migrated to Europe. Along with his partner Isaac, Soli had returned to New Jersey to care for his elderly father. After the passing of his father, the couple remained in the States another nine years to care for Soli’s aged mother. The two men lovingly performed the duties of feeding and tending her. My friendship and respect for Soli broadened my thinking.

In 2021, as I wrote my second book, “Peril at the Exposition”, a trans character named Abigail formed in my mind. She appeared complete with mannerisms, a haunted look, and carrying secrets. Now this novel is set in 1893 before the word “transvestite” or “transgender” were even coined. At the time, Paris and Berlin were liberal bohemian cities, but most people in the West were bound by a rigid morality that shunned gay and trans people. It would be over a decade before the first sex change operation would be attempted in Europe. (Watch Eddie Redmayne in “The Danish Girl”, set in 1905 for realistic details.)



Where did my character Abigail come from? Somehow, my subconscious wanted her to join the adventure. I already had a few LGBTQ++ friends, so as I wove the novel’s outline and created Abigail’s role, I put myself in her shoes. What is she hiding? Why is she there? Who sent her? What does she want? When Diana trusts her and gives her a job, how does she feel? Does it impact her ability to spy on Diana? And when she’s exposed, how does that affect her, and how does Diana react?

These were pivotal reveals as my story unfolded.

Before publication, my editor at Macmillan Publishers hired a consultant “authenticity reader” who functioned as a “sensitivity reader.” Their suggestions included consistently using the pronoun “she” and “her” for Abigail, even though the main character Diana is conflicted about how to think about Abigail. When she’s in female dress, Diana tends to think of her as Abigail. When she’s in male dress, Diana thinks of her as “Martin” (the name that Abigail was given at birth.) However, the consultant recommended that I override this story reasoning. I struggled with many of their suggestions. In the 1890s, people would have been far less considerate, even downright brutal toward a transgender person. Should I reflect history and show the trauma that trans individuals would undergo? Would readers understand that this was not my own position, but a historical fact?

A main character’s thoughts and internal point of view often are taken to represent how the author wants the reader to view events, so this is a significant

responsibility. However, writing historical fiction means that one must strive for historical accuracy. Finally, I chose to modify a historically authentic representation for one that was more attuned to today's sensibilities, while retaining the crucial plot twists and reveals. This decision paid off. My readers tell me Abigail is among the most sympathetic and fully-fleshed characters in "Peril at the Exposition". Many have written to me, asking me to write her story and to include her in future novels.

Sadly, most novels, TV series, and movies today are still squarely focused on a (cis-) male perspective. We are so thoroughly programmed that we do not even notice it. We pay attention when men talk and cut off women when they speak. We focus on men's opinions and pass over or ignore women's opinions. Most men take this for granted, but women are also programmed in this way. Add in the intrinsic bias against individuals who do not fit into neat gender categories, and our attitudes are even more restricted. So how can we be mindful that we are giving both women and LGBTQ++ individuals the respect that all individuals should receive?

Our beliefs are colored by what we see and hear in media and entertainment. By 2013, internet culture websites were judging whether Hollywood films represented women by using a simple test, called the Bechdel test. It poses a simple question: Are there at least two named women in the film, who talk about something other than a man? Though shockingly simple, the vast majority of films and novels still fail this test.

Similarly, the Vito Russo Test examines whether an LGBTQ+ character is crucial to the plot. Formed in 1985, Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) also created criteria to analyze how LGBTQ+ characters are included within a film: Is there (1) an LGBTQ+ character who is (2) not solely or predominantly defined by their sexual orientation or gender identity, and (3) is tied to the plot in such a way that the character's removal would have a significant effect? This criterion is a start toward portraying deep, complex LGBTQ+ characters who are fully formed and believable, and not caricatures thrown in for local color.

I did not use any specific standard to develop my character and story trajectory. "Canned" novels are

predictable and preachy, which is something I abhor. Instead, I allowed my story to develop organically, through plot twists and surprises that involve a host of characters of different origins and in different relationships. When Abigail's secret is "found out," she suffers an emotional impact, as well as the other characters. It takes an emotional toll on both Diana and Captain Jim and sets these two main characters at odds. The plot hinges on whether Diana and Abigail can repair their strained relationship and work together to avert disaster.

Walter Mosely said, "*If you don't exist in literature, you are written out of history.*" Perhaps subconsciously that's why I include Parsi characters, characters of different nationalities, races and gay/trans characters in my historical mystery series. This is the world I grew up in, so I want readers to love it as much as I do. I don't just sprinkle in diversity; my very world of characters is diverse. It's my experience, varied, complex, and colorful, that imbues variety and emotion into my novels.

At the World Zoroastrian Congress in New York in July



2022, we heard loud and clear from our Zoroastrian youth. They shared how painful and unfair it is, how heartbreaking and soul-crushing it can be when a family does not accept their gay/trans child's choices. No child, no youth, no person should suffer such unnecessary pain. So, while we are all learning at different rates, let us always operate with compassion. Let us value people for who they are, and measure them by their actions, and not their gender, color, sexual orientation, or anything else.

What's the novel "Peril At The Exposition" about?

What would you do if your husband went missing? How far would you go? This is the question facing young bride Diana Agnihotri at the opening of my historical mystery novel "Peril At The Exposition", set in 1893. Diana is a Parsi woman who's recently migrated from India with her mixed-race husband Captain Jim Agnihotri. When her husband leaves for Chicago and sends no word, she waits. After all, he's a detective on an assignment. He's a boxer. He can handle himself. Then she obtains a letter from him which says: TELL NO ONE. Why doesn't he want his employers to know what he's doing? Do they even know where he is? Troubled, Diana pushes her way into the case.

In fact, Jim is investigating the death of a security guard at the 1893 World's Fair. And his letter reveals that someone is buying explosives. Indian sage Swami Vivekananda attended the first Parliament of World Religions. That summer Chicago also hosted the World Convention of Anarchists! When I read this, the setting was irresistible. – by Nev March

FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION: BEING A SUPPORTIVE ALLY

FARISHTA MURZBAN DINSHAW



Farishta Murzban Dinshaw is an adjunct professor at Toronto Metropolitan University's graduate programs in Immigration and Settlement Studies, and Criminology and Social Justice. She also works at COSTI Immigrant Services to spread awareness about family violence, mental health, and addictions among newcomer communities to encourage help-seeking behaviours. She writes regularly for FEZANA Journal and other community publications on topics related to Zoroastrian heritage and religion.

Often people say “I’m not homophobic. I have a gay friend”. This can be problematic for several reasons. Homophobia/transphobia exists on societal, institutional, and structural levels. Having a gay friend doesn’t address or challenge these broader issues, such as discriminatory laws, unequal access to resources, or the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. Also, focusing solely on one gay friend limits your perspective on LGBTQ+ issues to that one person’s experiences, ignoring the intersectionality of LGBTQ+ identities and their experiences of racism, misogyny, ageism, ableism, and other -isms.

Another reason is that people can hold implicit biases without being consciously aware of them. Having a friend on the LGBTQ+ spectrum doesn’t necessarily mean someone has examined or addressed their own biases and prejudices. You may wish to take the Sexuality and Transgender Implicit Association Tests co-developed by

Dr. Mahzarin Banaji, the Richard Clarke Cabot Professor of Social Ethics in the Department of Psychology at Harvard University and a pioneer in the study of implicit bias. (Search Project Implicit or visit implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html).

While having LGBTQ+ friends can provide valuable personal insights, it should not be used as a sole justification for claiming to be free of homophobia. Some key aspects of being an LGBTQ+ ally include:

Acceptance and Respect

- Allies accept LGBTQ+ individuals for who they are, including their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. They treat them with respect, just as they would anyone else.
- Actively listen to LGBTQ+ people and their stories. Learn from their experiences and perspectives.
- Understand that coming out and living openly as an LGBTQ+ person can be challenging and deeply personal. Be patient, empathetic, and supportive as people navigate their journeys.
- Respect people's chosen names and pronouns and use them correctly. This demonstrates your respect for them. Avoid using derogatory or outdated terminology.
- Don't make assumptions about people based on their gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, or any other characteristic. Recognize that individuals are unique and have their own experiences.
- Everyone has personal boundaries. Be respectful of others' physical and emotional boundaries, and don't pressure them to share more than they're comfortable with.
- If you make a mistake or inadvertently offend someone, apologize sincerely. Use it as an opportunity to learn and grow.

Education and Advocacy

- Take the initiative to educate yourself about LGBTQ+ issues, terminology, and challenges. This includes understanding the differences between sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as the experiences of various LGBTQ+ subgroups.
- As an ally, stand up for LGBTQ+ rights and equality. Advocate for policies and practices that promote inclusivity and combat discrimination, both within your communities and on a broader scale.
- Show your support openly. Being a visible ally can encourage others to do the same and can create a more inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Don't hesitate to speak out against homophobia, transphobia, and any form of discrimination or prejudice when you encounter it. This can include addressing offensive jokes.
- Actively work to create safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals, whether it's in your friends' circles, workplace, or community.

Essentially, being an ally involves consistent, thoughtful, and proactive efforts to support LGBTQ+ rights and challenge harmful beliefs and behaviors in society. It is imagining how it would feel if someone judged or discriminated against you for something you couldn't control, like the colour of your skin or your height or, in this case, sexual orientation, and working from that level of empathy to make the world a welcoming, accepting places for all.

8 WZYC *in London Called* - We Picked Up

The 8th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress (8WZYC) in London, UK began on July 21st with the spirit of meaningful discourse and reigniting connections. With 515 delegates attending from all around the world, these five days were not only special for the delegates attending, but for our Zoroastrian community as a whole. From the delegates, Canada had a profound representation of 20% of the population with around 100 delegates from all over Canada, and through the subsidy program the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) helped send over 40 from Toronto, with the Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation (OZCF) supporting another 17 delegates to London.

The panels and talks covered a wide range of important subject matter. With hot topics discussed like religious conversion, the role of mobeds today, and how we can better



support them. The congress allowed for meaningful debates to take place in search for answers to help contextualize the role of Zoroastrianism in the 21st century. Some of the panelists representing the ZSO included Fravash Chothia, Armaity Homavazir, Tanya Hoshi and Nadia Jam.



Tanya Hoshi's panel on *Zoroastrians in The Media*, included panelists from different aspects of the media industry who came together to discuss what it's like to represent oneself as a Zoroastrian in the media. Ms. Hoshi is a TV producer who moderated the panel wonderfully and spoke alongside Bollywood actor Shreas Pardiwala from India, who spoke about his journey of how difficult and rewarding acting can be in the Bollywood industry acting in big movies like Yaariyan, Sweetiee Weds NRI, and Sanam Re. He also spoke about his recent fame during COVID-19 lockdowns where he quickly became an online sensation by posting

From left Tanya Hoshi, Ava Patel, Jasmine Dotiwala, Shreds Pardiwala





Photo above ZYNA youth at the Guildhall add on event . From left Behram Hathi, Jeh Mory, Parshan Khosravi., Farah Randelia, Tiraza Bhote, Kimiya Shahzadi, Armand Behroozi, Sharmin Mistry, Anita Ostad, Anisa Ostad ,Farzin Avari, Roxanne Unwalla, Tanua Hoshi, Mahfrin Santoke

TikTok and Instagram videos doing parsi bawa/bawi impersonations, which spread like wildfire all over the internet not excluding hundreds of WhatsApp chats - you can check out some of his videos [here](#). Jasmine Dotiwalla and Ava Patel both were TV producers who talked about how young Zoroastrians are able to use modern technology to be exactly who they want to be in the media and in their personal life. They encouraged attendees to use the power of social media to spread more awareness about our religion by posting and creating unique stories about the faith and culture.

A powerful talk was later given by our own Nadia Jam who sat down with Darius Parekh and answered thought provoking questions during her panel Spirituality Fireside Chat with Nadia Jam like “*What is spirituality?*”, “What can we do every day to become more spiritual?” and “How does it relate to us as Zoroastrians?”. Nadia spoke about her journey toward spirituality, and how we can all be in touch with our spirituality as well. A quote that Nadia that stood out from was, “We are not human beings having a spiritual experience but spiritual beings having a human experience”. We asked multiple people on day two what they thought was their favorite talk, and multiple people said Ms. Jam’s talk was the most thought provoking panel they’ve been in.

During day three, delegates had the privilege to purchase add-on tickets to attend the prestigious Guildhall, a place known for its history and beautiful architecture. Here, UK Royals have been hosting house dinners, events, court trials and more since the year 1440 and restored in 1666 after the great fire of London. Today it is used for official functions of the City of London Corporation and is the backdrop of many stately functions. This extraordinary event was filled with glamor, inspiration, entertainment, and an appetizing dinner. We had the honor of having meal prepaed by Cyrus Todiwala, a Michelin Star Parsi Chef who has cooked for the Taj Hotel and the Royal family and has been awarded many honorable cooking awards. The reception was followed by the opening keynote speaker, the HE High Commissioner of India to the UK - Mr. Vikram K. Doraiswami, followed by Lord Karan Billimoria CBE, DL who spoke about how having a strong Zoroastrian community has helped him in his career, and the importance of making strong connections around the world. At the Guildhall, our very own Fravash Chothia, the ZSO Youth Committee Chair, spoke about his journey in building the youth community over the past four years and how taking small leadership roles in the community can change the local organization in unimaginable ways. You can watch the speech on You tube [here](#). His talk was directed to the leaders of tomorrow and those who will be supporting them.

All 3 speeches were filled with inspiration and knowledge. The night ended with performances from Alyza Zack a young classically trained musician living in London and attending the Guildhall University’s junior program for aspiring musicians and Delraaz Bunshah, a Mumbai based musician who has been in musicals such as - The Sound of Music, Sing India Sing and Disney’s Aladdin to name a few. They performed crowd favorites by Adele, Tina Turner , and of course the fan favorite - Freddie Mercury.



From left first row, Farzeen Titina, Tiraza Bhote, Sharmin Mistry, Anaheez Karbhari, Zenia Nejadkay, Khorsheed Gharaee-kermani, Rozmin Irani, Tahsheen Daruwalla, second row Shahin Engineer, Zaal Panthaki, Jennifer Bugli, Farzin Avari, Afshin Yazdgardian Farzad Sarkari.

WOMEN'S PANEL AT THE 8TH WORLD ZOROASTRIAN YOUTH CONGRESS 2023

Authors: Anisa Ostad, Farzin Avari, Kimiya Shahzadi, Shazneen Munshi, Shirin Mehri, and Zeenia Cawasji



From left Shazneen Munshi, Shirin Mehri, Kimiya Shahzadi Anisa Ostad, Zeenia Cawasji, Farzin Avari

Zoroastrian female youth, hailing from around the world (the USA, Pakistan, England, and Australia) gave a dynamic, timely, and engaging speech at the 8th Zoroastrian Youth Conference, held in London, England on July 23rd. Anisa Ostad, Farzin Avari, Kimiya Shahzadi, Shazneen Munshi, Shirin Mehri, and Zeenia Cawasji worked for several weeks, identifying relevant key topic areas, researching, and creating a visually appealing and engaging presentation. The women's research included delving into the accomplishments of various female figures of ancient Persia like Atossa, reading *Naoroji: Pioneer of Indian Nationalism*, by Dinyar Patel, and drawing on previous survey results of the Zoroastrian people on questions like "do you think women should be allowed to be mobeds?"

The speech was conducted in a panel fashion, with Anisa moderating and Farzin, Kimiya, Shazneen, Shirin, and Zeenia speaking on their researched topics. To supplement each discussion point, **Farzin Avari** and **Shirin Mehri** created and utilized a poll/survey to gauge audience thoughts and opinions so that the speakers could intuitively tweak their points on the spot and make their speeches more impactful. Poll questions included hot topics like: “Do you feel that your Zoroastrian community is an equitable space?”, “Do you know of Zoroastrian women in current senior leadership positions in the community?” and “In your opinion, should women be allowed to be a mobed, equivalent to a man?” It is important and heartening to note that out of 88 respondents to the latter question, an overwhelming 86 audience members responded “YES”.

Kimiya Shahzadi followed up by leading a discussion on the matter of equality of opportunity. She introduced it by citing Zarathushtra’s spoken words in the Gathas, where he treats and regards men and women equally. Laying the foundation that our religion and prophet have always stood for equality, the conversation juxtaposed what actually takes place in the modern day, to analyze if women were indeed treated equally en masse by the religion. Kimiya conducted this analysis by ways of a case study: the ability, or rather inability, of women to become mobeds and their acceptance as such by mobed councils and the Zoroastrian people generally. Kimiya explained that women have and do put in the same amount of dedicated work and commitment to understanding our religious texts, thus qualifying to hold such positions. For example, the process to becoming a mobedyar in Iran are similar to the rigor of attaining a PhD degree, which women have completed successfully time and time again. Such processes examine the prospective mobedyar’s understanding of the Zoroastrian texts several times over, ensuring their qualification. It was a step forward knowing that the North American Mobed Council (NAMC) trains female mobedyars. Still, however, a mobed council must be the ones to make strides of equality and allow women to become mobeds (a higher rank of priest than mobedyars) to reach true equality that our Gathas call for.

Zeenia Cawasji and **Shazneen Munshi** delved into the multifaceted challenges faced by Zoroastrian women in their pursuit of gender equity, offering insightful solutions and a vision for a more inclusive future. One of the prominent issues explored during the discourse was the enduring presence of traditional gender roles within the Zoroastrian community. These deeply entrenched roles continue to pose significant obstacles for women seeking equal opportunities and representation.

Another critical issue highlighted was the striking lack of female representation in senior religious positions and the imbalance created by a lack of female role models and leaders within the community. The panelists stressed the importance of diversifying community committees and ensuring equal representation of all genders for a more inclusive decision-making process which would enrich the community with diverse perspectives.

The panelists also tackled traditionally stigmatized topics such as the exclusion of women from religious practices and the label of “impurity” attached to them during menstruation. In particular, they called out the exclusion of a menstruating woman’s name from Tandarosti prayers and the negative impact of such discriminatory practices. Furthermore, the issue of domestic violence survivors encountering a lack of support and victim-blaming was discussed, emphasizing the necessity of providing a safe and empathetic environment for all members of the community.

Men within the Zoroastrian community were called upon to take on the role of allies and foster open, judgment-free conversations about these challenges. Such steps are essential for promoting inclusivity and gender equity within the Zoroastrian community.

The panel was a success, and despite it being the first discussion of the day, the audience remained engaged and thoughtful throughout the hour, not only responding to the virtual poll questions, but asking follow-up questions and suggesting insight from their own research. With the committed audience opening up, the panel quickly became a space fostering thought and open-mindedness, with a rich flow of personal anecdotes on the status of women in Zoroastrian communities and the nuanced struggles they face. Thoughts were shared on the historic equity that Zoroastrianism gave to women and it was mused that these rights, having shifted and become dampened throughout history, ought to return to its original whole, not only out of respect to history, but also our religion. These thoughts were not only generally mentioned, but each speaker ended their section with a specific set of calls to action on the current generation and those to come. Thus, the panel fit nicely with the Congress’s purpose and the recognized need for Zoroastrian youth to congregate and share intellectual ideas.

This Youth Congress was a place where the youth opened up conversations about various modern topics such as mobed pay, religious identity, Zoroastrian scriptures - their interpretations, Zoroastrians in business, and youth leadership - locally and globally. Ervad Sheherazad Pavri, a young Yaozathregar Mobed from Mumbai, India, who completed his priestly training at the Dadar Athornan Institute in 2010 was advocating for better pay for mobeds. He expressed that the Mobeds salaries around the world are either unstable or are not keeping up with modern wages leading to new Mobeds taking up ceremonies only part-time, or not taking up priesthood altogether instead of considering it as a full-time career. Ervad Pavri expressed deep concern over some organizations and people not following the North American Mobed Councils compensation recommendations when it comes to adequately paying their priests. Stating that experienced priests now are giving up their duties in order to make a decent wage to provide for their families. Panels that Ervad. Pavri was on “*Many Voices, One Fire: Zoroastrian, Priesthood in the 21st Century*”, was one of many panels leaving people more curious to understand this when getting back to their local associations.

Armaity Homavazir took the stage alongside ZYNA Co-Chairs Kimiya Shahzadi and Farzin Avari to discuss the importance of the words used in our scriptures and common ancient words we use in our daily life. Some examples being Nowruz or Vohukhshathra. She discussed the FEZANA Glossary and the importance of spelling the words in a uniform way so that the preservation and integrity of the words carry on appropriately through the next generations. During the talk Ms. Homavazir engaged the audience through fun language games to test their knowledge and spelling on some of the most popular words and phrases. You can find the entire glossary on the [FEZANA website](#). With the final night being a traditional night, all the bawas and bawis dressed up in the Dugli’s and Sari’s. With traditional Persian food being served up, the crowd was pleased by the tasty catering. On the dance floor, the DJ booth was taken over by California’s very own 25-year-old Shayan Mehrshahi , and by the crowd’s ardent request played all the Persian favorites along with classic bollywood music and English music to a jam packed dance floor. The night was embellished with calls for Iranian freedom and revolution for their homeland. The 25 Irani youths whose visa got rejected on their request to London were all remembered along with their home country. The two Congress co-chairs Sanaya Khambatta-Heerjee and Sheherazad Kapadia thanked the audience for making this event a real success and thanked all the volunteers who had helped pull off a fantastic 8WZYC. The congress is also a place where youth are exposed to other Zoroastrians across the world, where they gather to talk about their lived experiences as delegates, and can learn from others while building lifelong connections.

Written by: Araash Chothia and Fravash Chothia

Edited by: Tahsheen Daruwala



WZCC

Global Conclave in London

A Fantastic Success

At the end of July 2023 Zarthushtis saw two mega-events in London On the coattails of the 8th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress, the WZCC UK Chapter welcomed over 105 Zarthushtis from all over the world for the 2023 WZCC Global Conclave. Having been postponed multiple times due to the pandemic, the wait was worth it. To say that the four day event was a fantastic success would be an understatement.



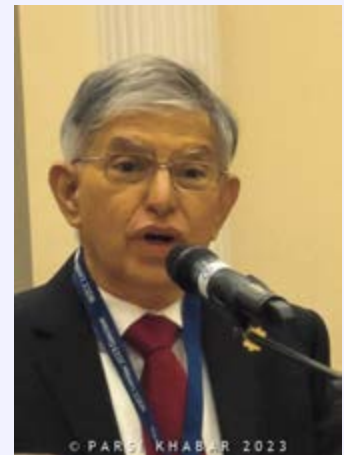
Shernaaz Engineer, Chair of WZCC UK (photo left) welcomed the gathering. Lord Karan Bilimoria, the founding chair of the WZCC UK Chapter was the Guest of Honor and gave an inspiring talk about his work and how the Zoroastrian ethos plays a role in all he does in the business, education or political world.

Advertising giant Sam Balsara, the keynote speaker of the evening, introduced by Dorab Mistry, took us on a journey of his professional life. Sharing the key elements that made him and his firm India's largest ad agency, he was also candid and humble in sharing the "OOPS" in his career. The dinner that evening was a lavish Parsi affair catered by London's own Cyrus and Pervin Todiwala and their team. The entertainment was provided by Dinaz Hira with her melodious singing. The delegates



Appropriately themed "Inspiring Conversations in Inspiring Locations" participants got a chance to hear amazing speakers in world class venues which for many, was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

On Wednesday July 26th delegates gathered at the Zoroastrian House, the home of Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE). Malcolm Deboo, the President of ZTFE and



returned to their hotel in the iconic London Red Double Deckers.

The second day proceedings was at the Sky Room of the Tower Suites. The backdrop of the speakers was the iconic Tower Bridge, the location and view from the Sky room could not have been better. The speakers of the morning were **Zubin Karkaria** CEO VFS Global who spoke with **Javid Canteenwala** discussing **Innovation and Entrepreneurship**. Zubin spoke about growing up in Dadar Parsi Colony, and his reverence for the Rustam Framna Agiary. Being a mobed he spoke about the power of prayers in his personal life. He shared his professional journey and the growth of VFS. This was followed by a panel titled **Women in Business** led by Zarin Patel



From left Mehrnavaz Avari– Area Director UK and General Manager, St. James' Court- Taj Hotel Zarin Patel- Non Executive Director at HM Treasury, with panelists, Behroze Daruwalla – Global Chair, WZCC- Women Entrepreneurs Shernaz Engineer– Founder Director Verity Appointments, Bapsy Dastur– General Counsel, Head- Corporate Risk, Compliance & Legal at VFS Global Shernaz Cama– Associate Professor at Lady Shriram College and Zoroastrian Scholar

The women spoke about the challenges of making their own mark in a very skewed patriarchal society. They shared strategies, lessons and some failures in the various spheres of their work and profession. After the session the delegates got on a Red Double Decker and made their way to the Palace of Westminster, where the British Parliament is located. **Lord Karan Bilimoria** hosted a private reception on the waterfront bank of River Thames at the Palace of Westminster. He invited his friend and colleague in the House of Lords **Lord Simon MacDonald** who spoke about **Global Trade and Industry:- Prospects for World Trade**. A brilliant talk followed by a very

candid Q&A .Lord MacDonald and Lord Bilimoria spoke about world events and their intended and unintended consequences, including the Ukraine war, and India's rise as an economic giant in the years to come.

The participants then had an opportunity to tour both the chambers of the House, which most of us have only seen in the news and on TV. After a historic group photo and a big thank you to Lord Bilimoria for the opportunity, the delegates made their way to the Westminster Piers to board an evening sunset dinner cruise on the Thames.

The third day was again at the Sky Room at the Tower Suites. **Capt. Percy Master** (photo below) The Global Chair of WZCC started the day with a very inspiring talk titled **“From Shipping to Shipping Services and Beyond”** about his life at sea and subsequently setting up of his business and later his philanthropic ventures.



Zar Amroliya Chairman XTX Markets in a conversation with **Javid Canteenwala**, spoke about the complex world of currency trading and how he leveraged his knowledge and talent to continue to push the boundary and think outside the box. He spoke about the faith, and how he is now focusing his energy, time and money towards making long-lasting change and improvement within the faith. He is working with Ervad Dr Ramyar Karanjia and Prof. Almut Hintze to develop a continuing education program for Mobeds in India and Iran. It was inspiring to see social entrepreneurship in action!!

Lord Karan Bilimoria returned to the Conclave and invited his friend **Paul Drechsler** CBE- Chairman International Chamber of Commerce UK. who spoke about the ICC and its various activities and hoped that in the future WZCC and ICC can collaborate on mutual areas of interest.



Post lunch **Perses Sethna**– Global Vice President WZCC MC'd a very interesting panel on **Entrepreneurship, Risk and Wealth Creation**.

Panelists included **Darius Kumana** Co-Founder / Chief Product Officer at Wrisk, **Jehaan Kotwal**– CEO JFK Transporters Pvt. Ltd., **Jeroo Doodhmal**– Founder, Pip & Henry -Sustainable Footwear Brand for Kids, **Navaz Sethna**– Director at Kumon Maths and English Study Centre, **Ruzbeh Bacha**– Founder & CEO, City FALCON – FinTech. All these entrepreneurs spoke about their challenges in setting up their enterprises or in running them over extended periods of time. What was interesting to hear was that in spite of the rough and tumble of entrepreneurship they all said they would do it again and again. A common theme from the talks was the need for mentorship. which they felt they lacked. There was a call out to WZCC to facilitate this in a structured manner, and the WZCC International Board should take a serious look into this.

Post-tea Karishma Koka spoke about **Learning from the Gathas about running a business the Zoroastrian way** and **Edul Daver** shared some findings pertinent to entrepreneurship from the recent results of **GEN Z AND BEYOND : A Survey For Every Generation**.

At the **WZCC Strategy Session** Capt Percy Master along with others on the International Board shared WZCC's strategic plan. Each of the panelists spoke on different aspects of the plan. **Aban Rustomji ended the day** by inviting all to the **18th North American Zoroastrian Congress** to be held in Houston in December 2024.

A smaller group of delegates headed to Cafe Spice Namaste, the restaurant run by Executive Chef Cyrus Todiwala

and his wife Pervin, a short train ride away in the dockland area.

The last day of the Conclave all of the delegates got on another red double decker bus and headed to the hallowed **Lord's Cricket Ground**, the Mecca of cricket. Just as the delegates were settling in, legendary cricketer Farokh Engineer walked into the room to a thunderous applause.

The day's program started with **Sir Rohinton Minoo Kalifa** in conversation with **Javid Canteenwala** on **"My Innings with FinTech, Private Equity and the wonderful world of Payments"**. Ron shared his fascinating story from humble beginnings to his stellar pathbreaking work in the world of payments. What came across in his talk was his humility and a deep connection to the Zarathushti faith and its teachings in daily practice. *(photo left seated fom left Javid Canteenvla, Ron Kalifa, standing Capt Percy Master Dorab Mistry)*



Melwin Mehta- Investor and Fund Manager, Sterling Investment Management spoke about the Do's and Dont's in investing at the individual level.

Executive Chef Cyrus Todiwala (photo right) spoke of **"My journey in the hospitality industry"**. He captivated the audience with his very infectious storytelling style, of his journey from India to the UK along with his wife and partner Pervin.



The delegates were then divided into groups for a docent led tour of Lord's. Participants went to the Media Box, the hallowed Long Room and also saw the original Ashes in the Lords Museum. They saw the plaque celebrating the very first team from India....a complete Parsi team to tour the UK in the late 1800's. A once-in-a-lifetime experience for the attendees!!!

The Gala and Awards Night was held at the Taj St. James with ZTFE Trustee Dorab Mistry OBE, as the MC. He invited the three awardees present in the audience to accept the awards at the hands of **Farokh Engineer**. Outstanding Entrepreneur of the Year Award for 2021 was given to **Zar Amrolia** and the 2022 award to **Sir Ron Kalifa Dr. Shernaz Cama** won the Social Entrepreneur Award for 2022. (For names of 2022 award winner see box on page 68).



The torch for the next Conclave was passed on to the Viraf Deboo WZCC Pune Chapter who made a short presentation welcoming everyone present to Pune from Jan 4-7, 2024 for the next WZCC AGM and Conclave.

(photo left, Capt Percy Master; and Viraf Deboo right)

After a scrumptious dinner of Indian cuisine young soprano Frazaan Kotwal (photo page 68) enthralled the crowd with some amazing songs with his powerful voice . He had the audience on their feet, as they demanded repeated encores.

Shernaaz Engineer, the WZCC UK Chair welcomed on stage her entire team for a vote of thanks. The team of



volunteers truly deserved the gratitude of all present for a wonderful action packed 4 days.

“When WZCC UK shared their first bits of information 6 months ago, I was a bit skeptical as to whether this would be a sightseeing trip or a conventional WZCC networking one. I am happy to say that I was completely wrong and they made this the best of both worlds. It now sets a new paradigm for how these events can be organized in the future. Thank you WZCC UK, you outdid yourselves and the collective gratitude of all the delegates shall remain with you for months and years to come. “ FEZANA President Arzan Sam Wadia

This report is modified from the original report in Parsi Khabar (<https://parsikhabar.net>)

On Sunday a small group of attendees went on a sight seeing tour of Oxford and Windsor Castle. (photo below)



WZCC OUTSTANDING ZARATHUSHTI AWARDS – 2022.

OUTSTANDING ZARATHUSHTI ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR 2022
– SIR RON KALIFA – OBE –

OUTSTANDING ZARATHUSHTI PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR 2022
– MR ROHINTON SURTY –

OUTSTANDING YOUNG ZARATHUSHTI PROFESSIONAL
OF THE YEAR 2022
– DR BAHROM FIROZGARY –

OUTSTANDING ZARATHUSHTI SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR
OF THE YEAR 2022
– MS SHERNAZ CAMA –

ZOROASTRIAN STUDIES SYMPOSIUM HONORING



ERVAD DR JEHAN BAGLI

On Saturday September 9 2023, The Elahe Mir-Djalali Institute of Iranian Studies, University of Toronto, in collaboration with FEZANA, OZCF and ZSO and the Encyclopedia Iranica Foundation, presented the Zoroastrian Studies symposium on honor of Ervad Dr Jehan Bagli at the Isabel Bader Theatre in Toronto.

All three sponsoring organizations were well represented by their members. It was a full program starting at 1:00 pm. and finishing at 6:30 p.m. with lunch and tea breaks. An impressive slate of distinguished speakers were assembled by Prof Mohamad Tavakoli, the inaugural Director of the Iranian Studies Institute

The opening remarks were given by Dr Tavakoli and Dr Dolly Dastoor, Editor in chief of FEZANA Journal and Past President of FEZANA. Arzan Sam Wadia the current President was unable to attend as his plane was not able to take off from New York due to bad weather.

The other speakers were Prof Jamsheed K. Choksy, distinguished Professor of Central Eurasian and Iranian studies, Indiana; Dr Ted Good, Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilization, University of Toronto.; Prof Parvaneh Pourshariati, Associate Prof of History, New York City College of Technology. Nima Jamali, Post Doctoral fellow, at the Institute of Iranian studies University of Toronto, Enrico Raffaelli, Associate Prof of Zoroastrian History, University of Toronto, Pgfah Shahbaz, Research Fellow, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Toronto, Miguel Angel Andres-Toledo, FEZANA Professor of Zoroastrian Languages and Literatures, University of Toronto, Jesse Palsetia, Professor of History . University of Guelph. The closing remarks were made by Homi Gandhi, Past president of FEZANA, Co-Chair. Interfaith Activities Committee, FEZANA. Prof Tavakoli was thanked for the excellent symposium and generous hospitality and arrangements.

It was also announced that the University of Toronto through the Elahe Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute of Iranian studies will be establishing the “*Jehan Bagli Lecture Series in Zoroastrian Studies*”. These series of public lectures would support the dissemination of knowledge with respect to Zoroastrianism and related fields.

Zoroastrian participants :

Miguel Angel Andres-Toledo, Jesse Palsetia , Jansheed Choksey, Dolly Dastoor, Homi Gandhi Mohamad Tavakoli

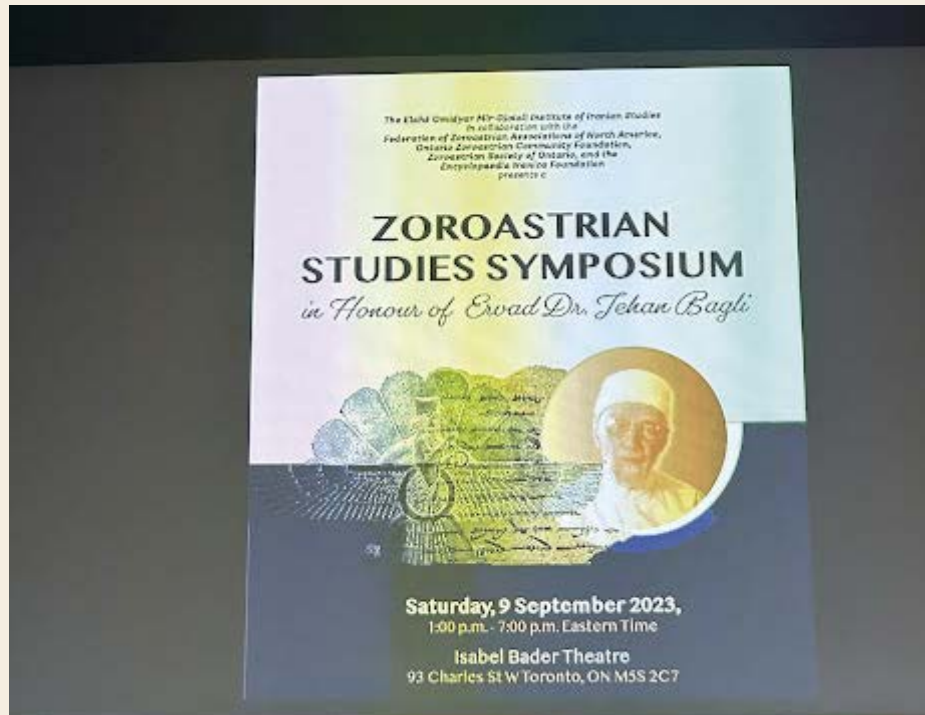


Photo Courtesy Tanya Hoshi
Chief Social Media officer

ZAGNY Turns 50!!



Attendees at ZAGNY's 50th Anniversary Celebration, the largest gathering picture (over 433) in North America.

The Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY), celebrated its 50th Anniversary in a memorable event with class and elegance on Saturday, September 16, 2023.

The beautiful Dar-E-Mehr in Pomona, New York, glistened in the sun as guests gathered for the milestone celebration. Traditional chalk decorations by Dilnaz Nalladaru welcomed over 425 guests as they walked in, resplendent in their gorgeous Garas, Kor-ni-sarees, Daglis, Phetas and Paghris.

After enjoying coffee/the Parsi Chai with Batasas, guests took their seats for the Khushali nu Jashan. ZAGNY head priest, *Ervad Pervez Patel* and fellow *mobeds*, *Ervads Xerxes Antia*, *Adil Masani*, *Adil Antia*, *Jamshed Dastur*, *Adi Sidhwa*, *Jehangir Madon*, *Poruz Khambatta*, and *Porus Pavri* lined up outside ballroom with ZAGNY's youngsters who had recently had their navjotes-- *Kian* and *Zara Darbari*, *Nasha Dastur*, *Asha Gandhi*, *Luke*, and *Ryan Sidhwa* and *Darayus Kalwachwala*. Proudly representing the face of our future Zoroastrian community, these youngsters led the mobeds into the ballroom to the tune of *Khan Ashem Vohu*, played by *Neville Navder Dusaj* on the keyboard. (photo right) The procession walked up on stage to begin the celebration with the recitation of one *Yatha Ahu Vahiryo* and one *Ashem Vohu* by the youth

The Jashan prayers were followed by the *Boi* ceremony in the Prayer room, after which guests were welcomed to a sumptuous spread of appetizers with an open bar.





Khushali nu Jashan performed by ZAGNY mobeds

The afternoon session began with Natasha Navder Dusaj (*photo left*) introducing her mother, Khursheed Phiroze Navder, the ZAGNY’s current and proud 20th and 21st President. Natasha introduced herself as a true product of the amazing ZAGNY community with the Dar-E-Mehr being her second home since her toddler years, saying that in the case of her family it wasn’t just “buy one, get one free” where ZAGNY board member spouses always pitched in but more like “buy one, get three free” where she along with her brother Neville and their dad Shalendra were always happy to be working to support their mom while she served on the ZAGNY Board for the past two decades.



ZAGNY
FIRST RECIPIENT OF
ARBAB RUSTAM & MORVARID GUIV'S GENEROSITY



THANK YOU
ARBAB & MORVARID GUIV!!



New Rochelle Dar-E-Mehr
1977



Pomona Dar-E-Mehr
2001



Pomona New Dar-E-Mehr
2016

Khursheed Navder then welcomed the 425+ guests with shout-outs to visitors from Nairobi-Kenya, Toronto-Canada, visiting parents from India and Pakistan, as well as guests from all over North America. Paying homage to and with endless gratitude to our original benefactors, late Arbab Rustam and Morvarid Guiv, Khursheed presented a pictorial journey through ZAGNY's glorious five decades,

PICTORIAL JOURNEY. Khursheed led the gathering through a walk down memory lane highlighting a few significant events. The pre-ZAGNY days, its incorporation in 1973, the purchase of the New Rochelle Dar-E-Mehr and incorporation of the Dar-E-Mehr Zoroastrian Trust (DMZT) in 1977, the important role played by ZAGNY members in the incorporation of FEZANA and commending ZAGNY members Framroze Patel, Homi Gandhi, and Arzan Sam Wadia who served as FEZANA Presidents, the move to the Pomona and a new Dar-E-Mehr in 2001, hosting the 2012 North America Zoroastrian Congress, honoring Prof. K. D. Irani at his 90th Birthday in 2013, the vision of Edul Daver for a new Dar-E-Mehr building to replace the aging Pomona building, numerous fund raisers that led to the groundbreaking in 2014 followed by the inauguration of this magnificent Dar-E-Mehr in 2016, celebration of Prof. K.D Irani's legacy in 2019, and most recently hosting the 12th World Zoroastrian Congress in New York in 2022. With pictures of annual events, like Navroze, Parsi New Year celebrations, picnics, Ivy Gandhi Summer Camps, Mukta Prayers, New Year Eve galas, Gatha colloquiums and classes, KD Irani lecture series, Jamva Chalaji fundraiser galas, jashans to raise money for B. D Petit Parsee General Hospital (Mumbai), Udvada Atash Behram and Surat Parsi Orphanage and the Revlon and St Juse walks to support noble causes like cancer here at home, the rich and glorious history of ZAGNY shone through and through.

The pictorial journey ended with heartfelt thanks to the community members for their participation and support contributing to ZAGNY's growth over the past five decades. To symbolize a passing of the baton to the next generation Khursheed requested youth under the age of 40 to stand, and called on them to step up to lead us into the next 50 years and beyond.

RECOGNITION AND AWARDS the presentation continued with numerous remembrances and awards. Khursheed began with recognizing all past ZAGNY Presidents not with us today—Founding father Erach Munshi, Faroke Gandhi, Ivy Gandhi and Prof K.D Irani.



ZAGNY Presidents honoured with Presidential Medals: (L to R) Lovji Cama, Framroze Patel, Gev Nentin, Khursheed Navder, Astad Clubwala and Homi Gandhi.

Nina Mistry then took the stage to honor the six ZAGNY Presidents who were present that day and presented them with the Presidential Service Medal (*photo Page 73*) **Visionary Leader Awards**: Nina Mistry then went on to present awards to our four ZAGNY visionary leaders—Edul Daver, Gev Nentin, Astad Clubwala and Arzan Sam Wadia who were responsible for putting ZAGNY on the world map. Their spouses Nilourfer Daver, Aban Nentin, and Behroze Clubwala were also recognized for their unconditional support over the decades.



Lifetime and Outstanding Service Award Recipients join the Presidents and Visionary Award on stage. Sitting front row L to R: Armaity Patel, Mehru Cama, Ervad Pervez Patel, Ervad Adi Unwala, Lovji Cama, Edul Daver, Gev Nentin, Khursheed Navder, Astad Clubwala, Homi Gandhi, Mahrukh Cama, Sheroo Kanga, Vispi Kanga, Minu Dutia. Standing behind L to R: Farrokh Patel, Noshir Langrana, Keki Dadachanji, Behroz Clubwala, Percis Bansal, Arsan Sam Wadia, Ervad Xerxes Antia, Jasely Dukandar, Kerman Dukandar, Jamshed Ghadiali, Nina Mistry, Adil Mistry, Ferzin Patel, Piroja Press, Rusi Press, Behroz Dutia, Shailendra Dusaj, Pam Shroff, Fali Shroff, Sam Shroff, Zarine Shroff.

Khursheed continued by honouring several members with Lifetime Service Awards, Outstanding Service Awards, and shoutouts calling them on stage for a round of applause for their invaluable and tireless service. She recognized in memoriam our beloved *Ervads* Rohinton Madon, Darius Antia, Cyrus Pavri and young Board Members Mayyar Noushi and Cyrus Pavri fondly remembering and thanking them for their unwavering service to ZAGNY



In a special Shout-Out to the next generation of rising stars, two children were recognized—Cyrus and Zara Shroff, for being exemplary role models through their voluntary efforts at ZAGNY.

. She thanked a very special individual Hoshi Karanjia, recognizing him as an “Honorary ZAGNY Member” for always supporting ZAGNY and this time donating and shipping the beautiful diva glass mementos for all attendees. Thanks to Percis Bansal for connecting ZAGNY to Hoshi and making this possible (Photo above)



PRESIDENTIAL CAKE CUTTING

It was a dramatic moment, when a spectacular cake made by our Chef Jehangir Mehta was rolled out on the stage with sparklers, and smoke effects and fanfare! All six Presidents came together for the ceremonial cake cutting with the entire congregation singing “Happy Birthday Dear ZAGNY” echoed through the ballroom.



Khurshed also thanked the Iranian Zoroastrian Association (IZA), World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC), and the DMZT Board Members for their collaborative community spirit as well as her ZAGNY Board members for their service to the community.

Khurshed ended by recognizing Wayne Fabri for his continuous service to ZAGNY as caretaker since 2001,



TIME CAPSULE

To mark this milestone event and preserve a piece of history for future generations, the items for a time capsule were thoughtfully curated. Guests were requested to remain seated while viewing a picture of the contents in the time capsule and watching a live stream of the time capsule placement ceremony in the foyer.

Edul Daver led the six ZAGNY presidents off stage, and Arzan Sam Wadia carried the capsule to the foyer.

A sagan ni tilli was done by Khursheed Navder and a beautiful flower garland was placed on the capsule by Homi Gandiu. Arzan Sam Wadia then broke the ceremonial coconut, after which Gev Nentin and Astad Clubwala lowered the capsule into the cavity in the foyer. The time capsule will be opened 50 years from now in 2073!





LUNCH AND ENTERTAINMENT

Following these festivities, lunch was served sit down family style with guests enjoying a lavish *lagan nu bhonu* **First course:** Rotli, Lagan nu achaar, Murabbo, Saria; **Second Course:** Lamb Sali boti, Tareli Machi, Saag-paneer (V) Nutrela Boti (V) **Third Course:** Chicken Pulao, Veg (Pulao) Masala Daar, Kachumber). The delicious *bhону* was catered by ZAGNY member Mehernosh and Tina Daroowalla of Karma Kafe. During lunch, entertainment coordinated by Piroozi Cooper-Wittlin, rocked the house with musical performances by two professional singers—Ardavan Taraporevala (Toronto), and Shanelle Woods (New York City) (*photo pg 76*) A surprise performances by ZAGNY's oldest and youngest were the highlight of the entertainment. Phil Shroff, our senior performer (*photo above left*) regaled the guests with *Que Sera Sera* on the keyboard with many guests singing along to this all-time favourite melody. The most memorable was a dance performance by our youngest performers Kian and Zara Darbari, brother/sister duo who charmed their way to everyone's heart dancing to Frank Sinatra's *Fly Me to the Moon*. (*photo above right*)

GROUP PICTURE After the entertainment-studded enjoyable lunch, all 433 guests gathered on the front porch steps to capture a group picture for the history books. This we believe is the largest group picture of a Zoroastrian gathering in North America!

THE FABULOUS DESERT BAR:

The icing on the cake, literally was the spectacular, dessert bar assembled by Chef Jehangir Mehta with breathtaking display of fancy treats beneath a blanket of fog, amidst beautiful flower and candle decorations on classy platters, stole the show. The Dessert Bar included Jashan-ni-bhanaili dry fruits, Sagan nu *Sev-Dahi*, (sev by Dilnaz Shroff and dahi by Khursheed Navder) Lagan-nu-Custard, (Khursheed Navder) Falooda and Gulab Jamuns, (by Karma Kafe) assorted exotic cupcakes (by Chef Jehangir Mehta), Macaroons and chocolate-covered nuts (by Rahul and Rohit Bansal) Parsi Dairy Farm's Mawa na penda and cookies accompanied with tea and coffee. A shout-out to Chef Jehangir's enthusiastic youth helpers Zahaan and Xaera Mehta, who assisted in creating this spectacular sweet ending to the magical day!

All-in-all, ZAGNY's 50th Anniversary celebration was yet another classy event with ZAGNY flair and style, that will be recorded in our history! A big Thank You to the 50th Anniversary Team (Percis Bansal, Rushad Cassad, Behroze Clubwalla, Edul Daver, Nina Mistry, Khursheed Navder, Piroja Press, and Arzan Sam Wadia. An event of this magnitude would not have been possible without their dedicated efforts.

Honor the Past, Look to the Future

ZAC - Chicago Celebrates the 40th

Anniversary of their Rustam Guiv Dar-e-Mehr.

Over 200 Zoroastrians and friends, dressed in their gowns and *garas*, *daglis* and bowties, gathered at the Rustam Guiv Dar-e-Mehr, on September 23, 2023, for an evening of feasting and festivities, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the dar-e-mehr in Chicago – the first one to be built from the ground up, in North America. The Gala aimed to honor the past and give thanks for the progression of services offered at the dar-e-mehr over the past 40 years -- to the founding visionaries, dedicated Mobeds, Presidents and Board Members, Religious Education teachers, and volunteers who give of their time, talents and treasures, to make it all happen; and also to look to the future, to meet the needs of the next generation and ensure the perpetuation of the Zoroastrian faith and traditions in N. America.

After the Social Hour with lavish appetizers and drinks, the memorable evening began with an opening procession of Chicago area Mobeds [*photo above*], accompanied by children carrying lighted *divas*; orchestrated by Farida Sharyari; and a benediction by Dastur Dr. Kersey Antia. Community stalwarts Minoo and Zarin Press [*photo right, with family and friends*] were presented with the Lifetime Service Award for their years of unwavering service to the community, and “generosity in establishing the Putla Dara Press Endowment Fund.”



A highlight of the evening was the performance by professional singer Ardavan Taraporewala [*photo left*], who got the audience up, clapping and tapping their feet. Zenobia Damania and Persis Driver [*photo far left*] who are working on an *Oral History project*, showed segments of video interviews by youth, with early Chicago residents.

In his presentation “*Vision to Reality*” Rohinton Rivetna spoke of what the Chicago community had been capable of achieving over the past 40 years, and urged the community to “*Dream Big*” for future projects.

The audience enjoyed a flashback of the dance routine performed by Chicago youth at the Sixth N. A. Zoroastrian Congress in Chicago in 1993, orchestrated by Negin Voss -- this time performed by their children. The audience was then treated to a slide show of the plethora of ZAMC events and activities -- *“Forty Years in Five Minutes Slide Show,”* by Farzin Sharyari and Sheroy Gonda. This complemented the looping slide show of the early years, that was set up, on the *“Memory Table,”* along with other memorabilia, such as original hand-drawn construction drawings.

In the cleverly orchestrated segment on Future Vision, the youth came on stage one by one and expressed their needs and wish-list; and, as the ZAMC Building Committee members were scratching their heads, architect Cyrus Rivetna ‘showed up’ and presented plans for future growth, ending his presentation with *“Let’s get this moving – we can do it.”*



[photo left] The Gala was honored with the presence of founding President Bahram Farahdieh, and every one of the succeeding presidents Rohinton Rivetna, Kayomarsh Mehta, Bomi Damkevala, Pesi Vazifdar, Dilshad Antia, Hosi Mehta, Arnavaz Elavia, Dinaz Weber, Rayomand Ravji, Afshan Barshan, and current president Jamshed Rivetna, who gathered to ceremoniously cut the anniversary Cake.

Jamshed took a toast to *“..... all our generations working together to ensure this community thrives for decades and centuries to come.”* Everyone raised their champagne glasses with resounding *“Hip Hip Hoorays.”*

The grand finale of the program was singing of a vibrant *“Chayye Hame Zarathoshti”* by the ZAC choir, led by Freya Dhunjisha *[photo below]* – with everyone joining in, with true Zarathushti enthusiasm.



Guests then made their way to the grand dinner buffet – a *“lagan-nu-bhonu”* of *rotli, saria, lagan-nu-achar, pullav, dal, patra-ni-machi, Sali-marghi, Parsi stew, lagan-nu-custard* and more *....;*” and danced the night away with DJ Dave.

Freya Motafram

was honored with the Rising Star Award by Women in Financial Markets at their annual gala held in New York City in October 2023. The organization's mission is to connect, elevate and advance women across the global financial market's ecosystem through education, mentorship, and access to a global network of influential women. The award celebrates women in the fifth through fifteenth year of their careers who are making an exceptional impact within their organizations. Nominees are required to be shaping their organizations not only in terms of business success, but also as role models to their peers and colleagues. The inner drive to help other women in addition to stellar professional careers is what characterizes winners of this award.



Freya is a Director within BNP Paribas' Global Markets division and serves as Head of US Rates eDistribution. Her team's mandate is to develop and market the firm's electronic trading franchise across government bonds, interest rate swaps, and inflation products.

Freya's leadership extends to many groups within BNPP – she serves as Co-Chair of Women in Global Markets and is also a senior sponsor on the Global Markets Analyst Training Program Governance Forum.

Prior to BNPP, Freya spent two years at Bloomberg LP and five years at Societe' Generale in various eDistribution roles.

Freya graduated from the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business in 2009. A Wolverine to the core, Freya has led BNPP's recruiting efforts at the University of Michigan for several years and is a sought-after mentor by interns and early career professionals. She is an active volunteer with the New York Junior League serving on various committees and has played a key role in introducing under-privileged children to the performing arts. As an unabashed ballet aficionado she is a member of the American Ballet Theatre's Junior Council.

JAMSHED KANGA, M.D.,



Jamshed Kanga, M.D., was honored by the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation for his decades of service to his patients for 40 years of patient care, service and research.

Jamshed Firoze Kanga was born in Karachi, Pakistan. His grandfather Kaikobad Kanga was a well-known surgeon and ever since he was a little boy Jamshed's dream was to become a doctor like his grandfather. His early education was at BVS Parsi Boys High School followed by Adamjee Science College. He graduated from Dow Medical College in Karachi following which he worked as an intern at Jinnah Post Graduate Medical Center in Karachi. After coming to the US in 1977 he did a pediatric residency at Beth Israel Hospital, N.Y. where he was Chief Resident. While living in New York (at a Navroze function) he met his future wife Zavera (Mama). On completing his residency Zavera and Jamshed moved to New Orleans, where he did a fellowship in Pediatric Pulmonary at Tulane Medical Center. In 1983, Jamshed

joined the faculty at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, Kentucky and was the first Pediatric Pulmonologist in the State of Kentucky and started the pediatric pulmonary and cystic fibrosis program. He is currently Professor of Pediatrics and continues to enjoy his work especially his patients and teaching medical students and residents.

Zavera and Jamshed have two children. Fareesh Hobbs Kanga is an Assistant Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and, her husband Stephen Hobbs is Associate Professor of Cardiothoracic Radiology, both at the University of Kentucky. They have two daughters Ameera (14) and Niya (11). Their son Hormazd is a Senior Diplomat with the US Foreign Service. Along with his wife Saneeya (Ghadijally) and two sons Kai (7) and Dario (2) live in Tunis, Tunisia.

Congratulations Dr Kanga on this recognition for your 40 years service to patient care in the community.

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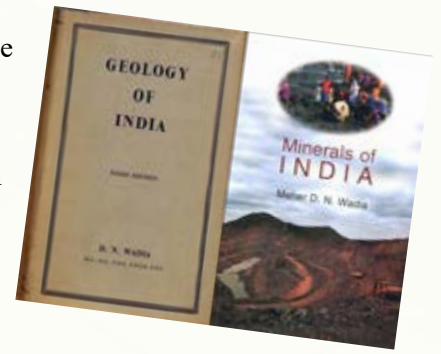




**DARABSHAW
NOSHIRWAN WADIA
(1883-1969):
DOYEN OF INDIAN GEOLOGY**

In 1980 I happened to visit the Kashmir Himalaya from the Pahalgam Valley. I fell in love with the majesty and mystery of the mountains. I wanted to be close to the Himalaya and study geology – to learn how these mountains formed. I soon learned that the University of Jammu had a geology program and that it was founded by a renowned geologist, D. N. Wadia, a Parsi from Gujarat. In 2014, the University of Jammu opened the Wadia Museum of Natural History to the public. In 1907 Wadia, aged 24, was hired by the college as professor of natural science with a salary of Rs. 200. He then established a geology department in the college which still stands today on the same campus. Since there was no suitable textbook on Indian geology for students, Wadia decided to create one. His *Geology of India*, first published in 1919, became so popular that it went through several editions and reprints. Just a few months before his death, Wadia completed the fourth edition of his 500 plus-page textbook published posthumously in 1975. This book has trained generations of geologists in India and is

still informative and useful. I have kept my copy from the student years, and regard the book as a good model for education and writing in regional geology. Even though, geology in India was founded by the British in the mid-19th century, D.N. Wadia was the most prominent Indian geologist who advanced this science in the 20th century.



Left a portrait of D. N. Wadia painted by Setsuko Yoshida, donated by Rasoul Sorkhabi to the Wadia Museum of Natural History in Jammu University.

An Indian Parsi

Darashaw Noshervan Wadia was born on 23rd October 1883 in the port town of Surat in Gujarat.. His father was a station master in the Bombay, Baroda and Central Indian Railway (today called the Western Railway). In 1894 his family moved to Baroda where the teenager Wadia completed high school and entered Baroda College. Aside from his elder brother, Munchershaw Wadia (an educationalist at Baroda), two teachers had great impacts on Wadia’s education: Adarji Meernosji Masani, the college’s principal and professor of natural history; and the Cambridge-educated Aravind Ghosh who later rose to be an eminent Hindu Yogi and philosopher under the name of Sri Aurobindo. Masani also a Parsi who founded a museum of arts and sciences at the college. This museum greatly helped Wadia to study geology because in those days geology was only offered in Calcutta (Kolkata) and Madras (Chennai). Ghosh inspired Wadia’s love for English literature (especially Shakespeare) and influenced his elegant style of prose which is apparent in Wadia’s papers and reports.

Wadia obtained two B.Sc. degrees in 1903 and 1905 and an M.A. in geology in 1906 from Baroda College, and a year later joined the Prince of Wales College. During his fourteen years at Jammu, Wadia spent many vacations in the Himalayas and excelled in geological fieldwork. He also became a close friend of Charles Middlemiss who had worked for the Geological Survey of India in Calcutta for thirty-four years.

In 1984 Indian stamp in celebration of Wadia’s 100th birth anniversary was issued and in 1951 another Indian stamp was issued depicting *Stegodon* – an elephant-like mammal that lived in Kashmir during the Pleistocene ice age; Wadia discovered a long tusk of *Stegodon* in the sedimentary rocks of Jammu; this tusk is now preserved at the Museum of the geology department of the Government Gandhi Memorial Science College, Jammu. The 1951



stamp was issued on the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Geological Survey of India (in Calcutta).

A Pioneering Geologist

The span of Wadia's life included both British India and Independent India. In British India he became a star of Himalayan geology on par with the greatest British geologists of his time such as Charles Middlemiss, John Auden, and William West. In 1921, Wadia joined the Geological Survey in Calcutta, being the first Indian employee who had his degree from an Indian university. His geologic maps and reports of the remote and arduous terrains in Nanga Parbat, Hazara, Gilgit, Kashmir and the Punjab are still valid and valuable. Wadia's first wife (married in 1909) died in northern Kashmir in 1935 while he was on a fieldtrip; her tomb lies in Srinagar.

William D. West, the last British director of the Geological Survey of India, once remarked that "*wherever Wadia traveled in the Himalaya he was successful in throwing significant light on problems of stratigraphy and tectonics which had remained uninvestigated or unexplained.*"

In 1938 Wadia, aged 55, retired from the Survey. Although he had won the highest scientific awards in Britain – the Back Award of the Royal Geographical Society in 1934 and the Lyell Medal of the Geological Society in 1935 – his retirement at the rank of assistant superintendent (the same rank he had been hired seventeen years before) was unfair and unpleasant.

Soon after his retirement, Wadia moved to Colombo and worked as chief mineralogist for the government of Ceylon. In 1940 he married his second wife, Meher G. Medivala, a mineral economist and graduate of the University of Bombay, who taught at institutions in Ahmedabad and Surat. Meher remained Wadia's companion for the rest of his life. (Meher Wadia published *Minerals of India* in 1966.) During his stay in Ceylon, Wadia performed the same excellent job as in India. His contributions were significant and unselfish. In 1942 it was reported to the police in Namunukala, southern Sri Lanka, that a "*lonely khaki-clad figure was silently hitting every stone in the neighborhood.*" It was, of course, the geologist Wadia doing fieldwork and mapping the mountain.

A Science Builder

In 1945 Wadia returned to India to serve as geological advisor for the government of independent India under Jawaharlal Nehru. He designed a mineral policy for India and envisioned that geology would play a critical role in the economic and scientific development of India. Although Wadia continued to publish papers, his main role in independent India was that

of a science builder. He helped establish or presided over a large number of geoscientific institutes, professional societies, and academic journals, a few examples : Indian Bureau of Mines in Delhi, Geological Society of India in Bangalore, National Geophysical Research Institute in Hyderabad, National Institute of Oceanography in Goa, and Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology in Dehra Dun (later named after him). From 1949 until his death, Wadia served as the head of the Atomic Minerals (Division of the Indian Atomic Mineral Commission).

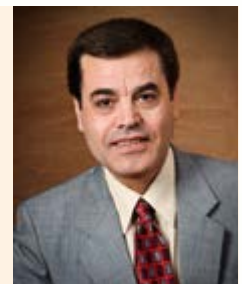
Wadia did not graduate as a PhD but his research work surpassed many PhD dissertations. He was awarded honorary doctorates from the universities of Delhi and Aligarh. In 1958 Wadia was given Padma Bhushan – the third highest civilian award by the government of India. In 1962 he was named National Professor in India.

In 1964 Wadia hosted and presided over the twenty-second International Geological Congress in Delhi – the first ever to be held in Asia. This was a story of success and encouragement for India in its post-independent years. The thirty-sixth international geological congress was held in New Delhi in March 2020 – something that Wadia would have appreciated and enjoyed to attend.

Wadia died on 15th June 1969 in New Delhi while still tirelessly working. He witnessed both World War I and II. His life was not easy but he took every challenge as an opportunity to excel in his work and service to science and society. His publications number close to ninety. He was a native (*swadeshi*) Indian scientist but with an open mind to the outside world.

Wadia's friends have described him as quiet, polite, intelligent, well-read, hardworking, disciplined, and self-made. No doubt, Wadia possessed noble qualities that helped him in life but his success story also testifies to the fact when individuals irrespective of their race, class and creed are given opportunities and respect, they become highly creative.

Rasoul Sorkhabi is a research professor of geology at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, USA. Originally from Iran, Sorkhabi studied BSc (at the Government Gandhi Memorial Science College, formerly called the Prince of Wales College, later part of the University of Jammu) and MSc in geology (standing First Position, Gold Medalist) from the University of Jammu. He did his PhD dissertation on the geology of Ladakh and Zaskar in 1991, and has conducted geologic research in the Himalayas (India and Nepal), Japan, Borneo, Spain, and the USA.



ZAH

Fundraiser for Dadar Athornan

Avabai Petit Girls Hostel



In 2022, our ZAH Youth Natasha and Neville Kanga along with Sabrina and Sanaea Warden, opened a Non-Profit “Center of Giving”. Their aim was to support individuals and communities through charity work.

This year Natasha and Neville took the lead in organizing a fundraiser to support our Dadar Athornan Institute for Boys and the Avabai Petit Girls Hostel. Natasha and Neville under the guidance of Jasmine Mistry organized the fundraiser during the March Navroz Function. The outpouring of support from the ZAH community was overwhelming, and they raised an amount totaling \$4,100. A sum of \$2,500 was donated to the Dadar Athornan Institute and \$1,600 was donated to Bai Avabai Petit Girls Hostel.



Natasha, Neville and Sabrina manning the Fundraiser Booth

Ervad Dr. Ramiyar Karanjia and Mrs. Yasmin Charna were very appreciative of the generous donation received from ZAH and sent them their thank-you note.

Dear members of Zoroastrian Association of Houston,

The Dadar Athornan Institute has received a handsome donation of Rs. 202244.00 (Rupees Two lakhs two thousand two hundred and forty-four) painstakingly collected especially by two youngsters Natasha and Neville Kanga, under the guidance of their parents, for the use of young students of our Institute. This is not the first time that they have done this gesture for our children and their largess has increased over a period of time.

We are grateful to them as well as the ZAH.

Youths like Natasha and Neville are indeed an inspiration to others and a hope for the future of our community.

With best wishes and prayers to Ahura Mazda for health, happiness and prosperity to all.

Ramiyar Karanjia

Dear Natasha and Neville

The Bai Avabai Petit Girls Hostel are very grateful for the kind donation made by Zoroastrian Association of Houston. Special thanks to Natasha and Neville for their thoughtfulness and initiative to support us. The donations will be very valuable to buy supplies for the girls and our hostel. God Bless and best wishes.

Sincerely

Mrs. Yasmin N. Charna



Personal Profile

Profile of

Anne Khademian,

Executive Director of the Universities at Shady Grove and Past President of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, Inc.



By Megan Guenther

Tell me about your journey to becoming Executive Director of the Universities at Shady Grove?

I am a Michigan native and went to college on a running scholarship to Michigan State University. I majored in political science, inspired by my high school government teacher. After college, I enrolled at Michigan State as a political science graduate student. I fell in love, both with my husband, Zarir, and with studying political science. We married and moved to St. Louis, where I earned my PhD in political science from Washington University. After graduating, I worked as a research fellow, professor, and visiting professor before we moved to the Washington, D.C. area and I joined the faculty at Virginia Tech. I worked at Virginia Tech for 17 years, eventually becoming the Director of the School of Public and International Affairs and then a Presidential Fellow in the office of Virginia Tech President Tim Sands. During this time, I became increasingly interested in finding ways to foster equity and diversity in higher education.

About three years ago, I was contacted about applying for the position of Executive Director at the Universities of Shady Grove. As I researched the program, I came to the revelation that this model has potential to be transformative in higher education. This opportunity combined everything I cared about: providing a way to make higher education truly student-centered by making it more accessible, affordable, meaningful, and impactful. At the Universities at Shady Grove, many of our students are first-generation college students and students with family and work responsibilities. We have students during their last two years of undergraduate education. As we support them through their educational journey, we have a unique perspective on where the roadblocks are to meeting their goals. We strive to provide a student-centered, accessible pathway that combines career readiness, academic preparation, and experiential learning.

How did you become involved in the Zoroastrian Community?

My involvement in the Zoroastrian community began with me and Zarir thinking about faith and how we would raise children we may have. Neither of us was raised Zoroastrian. Zarir and I had been reading and learning about Zoroastrianism for several years when we moved to Washington. Here, we became friends with several Zoroastrian families and were invited to ZAMWI's Avesta class. The community was so welcoming that we attended more events. From there, my involvement grew. I taught Avesta class, which helped me learn more about the religion, organized our community Nowruz function for several years, and eventually became a member of the ZAMWI Board and was elected president of ZAMWI.

The ZAMWI community in large part built its prayer room during your presidency; what do you find most fulfilling about that experience?

Helping the community build the prayer room was very special. ZAMWI is a unique community in North America where Parsi and Iranian families worship and participate together. It was so fulfilling to be able to build the

Anne Khademian is the Executive Director of the Universities at Shady Grove in Rockville, Maryland, which seeks to increase access to higher education through a consortium of nine Maryland public universities offering upperlevel coursework in nearly 80 degree programs. Dr. Khademian also served as president of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, Inc. ("ZAMWI") from 2017 to 2021. Dr. Khademian was recently recognized by Bethesda Magazine as one of its "2023 Women Who Inspire."

prayer room drawing on our diverse experiences of Zoroastrianism.

Seeing the prayer room completed and used by the community has given me a chance to reflect on what it means to be a Zoroastrian and the strength that I take from our faith. The design of the prayer room is rooted in traditional Zoroastrian practice, but we recognize that we are not completely recreating what was in India or Iran. We are making something new. Our practices and rituals are going to evolve to help us create a community across our diversity in North America. We are building something together that draws on tradition and millennia of practice but helps us navigate the challenges of our modern world in a meaningful, impactful way.



How does the Zoroastrian ideal of the Good Mind inform your work as an educator?

Our faith speaks directly to the challenges we face in the world today by compelling us to develop the Good Mind. Zarathustra’s message is that it is up to us to make the world a better place. Our job is to use our mind to question, think critically, make choices, and learn from our mistakes—always in the quest to get better. So to me, there is a direct connection between the Good Mind and creating opportunities for students from all walks of life to access a good education. Zoroastrianism teaches that true happiness comes from using the Good Mind to follow the path of righteousness. But for many, barriers such as institutional bias, systemic racism, and inequality stand in the way of fully developing one’s capacity. I can’t think about the Good Mind without also thinking about the barriers many face to getting an education. On this issue, my thinking has been in large part influenced by learning from my daughters, Yasna (who is currently living in Montreal, Canada), and Gordiya (who is currently living in Takoma Park, MD). They have really challenged me to think differently about so many of the issues facing our students and other young people today.

How do you believe the Zoroastrian community can become more inclusive and impactful?

The genius of the faith is that Zarathustra taught that individual responsibility to develop and use the Good Mind is the correct path. There is so much about Zoroastrianism that could be of such a valuable influence on the future but so many barriers to becoming part of the community. There are and will continue to be those who would like to choose the faith. Our faith can have a greater positive impact on the world if we are more open to the experience that others bring to it. Part of being a mature faith is learning and growing by hearing different perspectives.

I feel like I have grown a lot in the religion in recent years. I am more interested in thinking about what the community needs in order to grow and be stronger. For example, ZAMWI could create more welcoming and clear pathways for all Zoroastrians moving to or in the region to become members of the community; ZAMWI could create clear pathways to the community for those choosing the faith; and ZAMWI could be more directly engaged in addressing challenges in the broader region such as providing support for recent immigrants, or taking bold actions to lead by sustainable climate-friendly examples in the design and management of our Dar-e Mehr.

Photo on right: Author Megan Guenther with husband Dr Hormuzd Katki at son Sam’s navjote with Dr Anne Khademian .





MS. JERBANOO (JEROO) DINSHAW IRANI

AUGUST 13, 1936- SEPTEMBER 23, 2023

Jerbanoo, a longtime resident of Montreal, passed away peacefully at the age of 87, surrounded by family and friends on Saturday, September 23rd, 2023 at The Montreal General Hospital in Quebec, Canada. She was the oldest daughter of the late Dinshaw & Banoo Irani and leaves behind her dear brothers Behram & Darayush and sister Dilnavaz. She also leaves behind her loving sisters-in-law Gool & Nilufer, her nephews Kaizad, Kayras, Bezan, and darling niece Roneesha.

Jerbanoo was a lovely, smart, vibrant personality, and treated everyone as if they were close family. She was very well read, a fantastic knitter and scrabble player who loved to travel and enjoyed listening to jazz music. Professionally, she was a Social Worker and mentor and retired after 40 years of service to her clients.

She participated in events at the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec (ZAQ) and she regularly welcomed her friends and neighbors to an annual open house celebration during Nowruz in true Zarthoshti spirit. She ensured that everyone who visited her home was blessed with a sprinkle of rose water, a reflection of themselves in a mirror and the sampling of treats, including homemade Falooda from her Nowruz (haft shen) table.

Jerbanoo donated her body to Science at McGill University to further the advancement of Medicine and therefore, no formal funeral took place, but her final religious rites were performed.



Jerbanoo's family is grateful to the wonderful staff, nurses and doctors that cared for her at Montreal General Hospital in her final weeks,

The Irani family thanks Ervad Gev Karkaria & Ervad Jal Panthaki for conducting Jeroo's final prayers. The family also expresses their deepest gratitude to all the people who have shared their heartfelt condolences with them since Jeroo's passing.

We know how much she was loved by one and all for her generosity of heart and strength of character so we are grateful for all those who were with her by her side in her final days

CHALO GHERAY JAYAY was her favourite phrase when she wanted to go home after a party. Now she is at her final home.

**May her soul rest in eternal peace (Garothman Behesht).
THE BEREAVED IRANI FAMILY (CANADA AND SWITZERLAND)**

BIRTHS

Zavera, a daughter to Aysha Ghadali and Isaac Wohl in Washington, DC on October 18 2023.

NAVJOTES

Alina Gandhi, daughter of Parizad & Viraf Gandhi, sister of Cyrus Gandhi, grandchild of late Dolly and Rusi Gandhi and late Thrity & Kersi Kotwal in Seattle, WA on July 7, 2023.

Evan and Lane Canteenwalla sons of Allison and Pervez Canteenwalla, grandsons of Marezban and Bakhtawar Canteenwalla and Kathleen and Richard Chown, in Ottawa on July 8, 2023. (photo right)

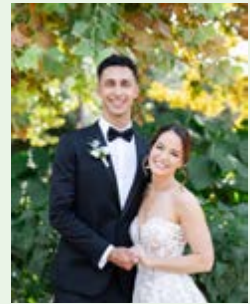
Katie Damkewala, daughter of Nazneen and Jamshed Damkewala, sister to Rhea, granddaughter of Rhoda Vandrewala and late Erach Vandrewala and Daulat Damkewala and late Parvez Damkewala in Kirkland, WA on Sunday, July 23, 2023. (photo right)

Arman and Aiden Shroff, children of Persis and Farhad Shroff, grandchildren of Farida and Rohinton Shroff and Katy and Pheroze Ghandhi, nephews of Khursheed and Yezdi Hormuzdi (Houston, TX), Raina and Nick Blake (IL), Zubin and Courtney Shroff (IL) at the Trinity Farm, Issaquah, WA on July 29, 2023.



Dr. (Ervad) Bahrom Firozgary, son of Mahnaaz & Farrokh Firozgary, grandson of Mobed Mehraban Firozgary of Iran, was married to **Dr. Tara Braun**, daughter of Paula and Dr Joe Braun in Austin, Texas, on September 23, 2023.

Grandfather Mehraban sent a recording of a beautifully recited tandorosti prayer as he was unable to attend in person. (photo right)



DEATHS

Mr. Rostam Bahram Bahrami, husband of Homayoun Babakan; father of Bahram, Behrouz, Bijan, Babak; father-in-law of Mehrangiz, Annaliza, Parisa Maricel, grandfather of Peyman, Saman, Shayan, Chista, Arianna, Melvina and Rohan. on Saturday, June 10, 2023, in North Vancouver, B.C. Canada.

Mrs. Sheraz Behram Bhesania, 80, mother of Delna, Tanya & Anita, her sons-in-law Barry, Carl & Michael, and her six grandchildren Zoe, Zara, Maverick, Liam, Hunter & Finn, in Courtenay, B.C. Canada on June 20, 2023.

Kersasp Jehangir Mehta, husband of Sheroo Mehta, father of Binaifer, Burjis, father-in-law of Neville, grandfather of Jehan, Jennifer, Rohun, Ria on July 11, 2023. (ZSO)

Mr. Farrokh Hormuzd Irani, 76 in Vancouver, B.C. Canada on July 11, 2023 (ZSBC)

Sarosh Collector, husband of Pearlina, father of Rayomand (Sarah), Dina (Ian), Kayaan, grandfather of Sarosh Jr., Asha Lynnea, Armaity, Natalia Shirin, Micah Darius Kuecker on July 23, 2023. (Manashni)

Aspy Jehangir Patel, husband of Freny Patel (nee Khan), father of Kelly and Farida Patel, Hoshang and Arbez Patel, grandfather of Cyra, Xerxes Shroff, Nereus Patel, Zara and Kanesh Lakdawala, Zayne Patel in TX on July 24, 2023.

Dr. Banoo Noshir Mama, wife of late Noshir Zubin Mama, mother of Cyra Kanga (Houston, TX), Delara and Maju Mavalwala, Jubin Noshir Mama, grandmother of Nadine and Daniel Weatherall, Natasha Kanga, Zasheer, Nitash and Miraal Mavalwala, great grandmother of Mila, Julian, and Kai on August 4, 2023 in Karachi.

Khushru Adi Hakim, husband of late Roshan Hakim, son of late Naju and Adi Hakim, father of Friann Hakim (Zubin White), brother of Lovji, Rumi, Changis, Eddie, late Dara, late Eruch, grandfather of Connor, Tinaz, Matthew, Ava on August 12, 2023.

WEDDINGS

Arian Sasani, daughter of Rostam Sasani & Dr. Mehmoosh Shamsi of Coquitlam, British Columbia (B.C.) with **Aurash Yazdgerdian** son of Rustam Yazdgerdian & Firoozeh Atai-Yazdgerdian of Maple Ridge, B.C in Vancouver, B.C. Canada. on Saturday, August 26, 2023

Dina Namirianian, daughter of Mitra Bahrami and Hushang Namirianian to **Alex Bourguignon**, son of Sophie Gervais and Luc Bourguignon in Montreal on September 9, 2023.

MILESTONES

Hirra Sammy Desai, wife of Sammy Desai, mother of Darius and Farhad Desai, mother-in-law of Renata Desai and Kendra Elizabeth Carpenter, grandmother of Iyanah Desai in Toronto, ONT on August 31, 2023.

Stephany “Toni” Ghadially, 70, daughter of late Martin and late Cruetz, wife of Viraf B. Ghadially, mother of Temilyn (Darius) Mehta, Daena Faiman and her partner Michael DeLeone, grandmother of Zane Mehta, Zia Mehta, Sienna Faiman, sister of late Linn Cruetz, and Martin Cruetz Jr. in Freehold Township, NJ on September 8, 2023.

Nari Spitaman Dastur, 87, husband of Dinoo Dastur (nee Daruvala), father of Adil and Armin Dastur, father-in-law of David, grandfather of Roxanne, Donovan, brother of late Hilloo Savak Mogol, late Silloo Sanjana, uncle of Cyrus Mogol, Villy Daruwalla, Spenta Sanjana, Fereshta Dinshaw, Diana Dinshaw in Connecticut, US on September 8, 2023.

Jerbanoo (Jeroo) Dinshaw Irani, 87, daughter of late Dinshaw and Banoo Irani, sister of Behram, Darayush, Dilnavaz, sister-in-law of Gool, Nilufer, aunt of Kaizad, Kayras, Bezan, Roneesha, in Montreal on September 23, 2023.

Mehrban Jahanbakshzadeh husband of Iran, father of Armin Jahanbakshzadeh (Australia) and Abtin

Jahanbakshzadeh, in Montreal, on September 25, 2023 .

Neville Patel 54, husband of Dilshad , father of Azita, Mehreen and Benita , son of Farrokh, brother of Parinaz(Adi) Desai in Folsom, California, on October 21, 2023.

Farida Cawas Daruwalla, daughter of late Cawas and late Khorshed Daruwalla, sister of Paurus (Tenaz) Daruwalla, aunt of Farhad and Cyrus Daruwalla in Toronto, ONT.

Daisy Suderwalla, wife of Rattan Suderwalla, mother of Thrity, Sheila, mother-in-law of Aaron, Aldo, daughter of late Makoo Tata, late Homi Tata, grandmother of Nina, Mayah, sister of late Naval Tata, late Zarine Mehta. (ZSO).

Farkhondeh Timsari, wife of late Jamshid Khodavandi, mother of Mehraban, Mahnaz, and Behram Khodavandi. (ZSO)

Keykhosrow Kalantar, husband of Zahrin Honarmand, father of Aufteen and Nazaneen Kalantar in Toronto, ONT. (ZSO)

Farangis Modarayi (Hormozi), mother of Parviz and Dariush Hormozi, Homa and Kathy Hormuzi. (CZC – LA)

Matrimonials

Female, 36, good-looking program management professional, working in Northern California, interested in meeting an educated professional with good family values who is independent and genuine. Please contact zoromatrimony@gmail.com. [F23.04].

Male, 37, 6’1”, Bachelor of Business. Working in Film, Television and Theatre productions in Australia. Enjoys keeping fit, being out in nature and spending quality time with family. Open to someone who is fun loving, has a positive mindset and is willing to be up for an adventure! Please contact - simplefmz12@gmail.com [M23.12].

Female, 31, 5’5”, Master of Teaching in Early Childhood (Sydney, Australia). She is from India and currently residing in Sydney since the last 4 years. She is loving, caring, well-educated, loves children and is a passionate educator. Fun-loving, hard-working, positive and loves animals. Looking for a loving, understanding, like-minded, well-educated boy from Australia, NZ, USA, Canada, Europe only. Contact delnaaz99@gmail.com. [F23.17]

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THE DEFINITIVE ZOROASTRIAN CRITIQUE OF ISLAM,

BY BY CHRISTIAN SAHNER

Reviewed by Bomi Parakh

Published by Liverpool University Press, 2023

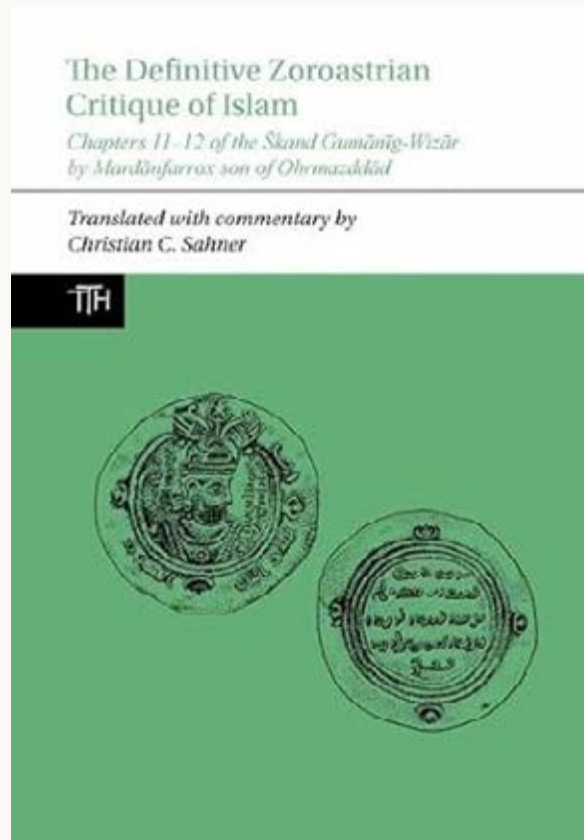
pages: 226, Price on Amazon hard cover \$141

Titled 'The Definitive Zoroastrian Critique of Islam', this book is a translation/interpretation of Chapters 11 and 12 of an ancient Zoroastrian text called 'Skand Gumanig-Wizar' (SGW). The SGW had a total of 16 chapters, which cover arguments in defense of Zoroastrianism by an intellectual named Mardanfarrox, son of Ohrmazddad. The SGW was likely written in the 9th or 10th century, i.e., after the Persian empire had fallen to the caliphates and when Islam was on the verge of radically altering the religious landscape. The SGW was Mardanfarrox's attempt to defend the tenets of the Zoroastrian faith after it had stopped benefiting from being the official religion of the Sasanian state. It was now facing competition from rival monotheistic faiths...not only of the ruling caliphates (Islam), but also Christianity and Judaism... all of whom were successfully challenging Zoroastrian religion and doctrine.

In three chapters, the author (Christian Sahner) transports us to an ancient place and time to help us understand the lay-of-the-land in the waning days of Zoroastrianism in Persia. The SGW mirrors Zoroastrianism's increasingly tenuous relationship with Islam, Christianity and Judaism. ...and how dualism became a defining characteristic in its defense against other monotheistic faiths.

Sahner's book includes a translation/interpretation of Mardanfarrox's critique of Islam in Chapters 11 and 12 of the SGW. Sahner explains why Mardanfarrox's work may be unique within Zoroastrian literature. For one, Mardanfarrox asserts that he was not a priest, and virtually all Zoroastrian texts of that era were written by priests. Also, the SGW was written in a religious debating style (called Kalam) practiced by Muslim intellectuals of Mardanfarrox's time. Finally, the SGW appears to be a rare historical record of how Zoroastrians felt about Islam and other competing religions.

Sahner uses the SGW to explore the identity and motivations of SGW's author, a born-again Zoroastrian named Mardanfarrox who, in hindsight, was making Zoroastrianism's last-stand in Persia. In a larger sense, Sahner's book is a fascinating story of how religion is intertwined with political authority and imperial power, and how and why, in the middle of the 7th century,



Iran transitioned from a predominantly Zoroastrian society to a Muslim one.

It is unclear what impact Mardanfarrox's work had during his lifetime. But one thing is clear... he would be pleasantly surprised by the attention his work is receiving so many centuries later.

Written in a relaxed narrative style, this book is a good example of recent scholarly work on Zoroastrianism ...a must-read for anyone interested in Zoroastrian literature and thought.

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a. Total Number of Copies (<i>Net press run</i>)		451	430
b. Paid Circulation (<i>By Mail and Outside the Mail</i>)	(1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	301	291
	(2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	0	0
	(3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS®	54	54
	(4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail®)	8	8
c. Total Paid Distribution [Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4)]		363	353
d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (<i>By Mail and Outside the Mail</i>)	(1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541	47	40
	(2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541	0	0
	(3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail)	20	20
	(4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (<i>Carriers or other means</i>)	0	0
e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4))		67	63
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)		430	416
g. Copies not Distributed (<i>See Instructions to Publishers #4 (page #3)</i>)		21	14
h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)		451	430
i. Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100)		84.42%	84.85%

* If you are claiming electronic copies, go to line 16 on page 3. If you are not claiming electronic copies, skip to line 17 on page 3.



**Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation
(All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)**

16. Electronic Copy Circulation

	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Paid Electronic Copies	111	121
b. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)	474	474
c. Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)	541	537
d. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) (16b divided by 16c \times 100)	87.61%	88.26%

I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above a nominal price.

17. Publication of Statement of Ownership

If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the Fall 2023 issue of this publication.

Publication not required.

18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner

Jolly Dantor
 Editor-in-chief
 Fesare Journal

Date

October
29/2023

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

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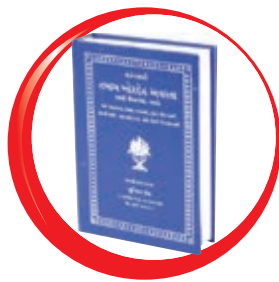


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