

# JOURNAL

Fravadin – Ardibehesht – Khordad 1388 AY (Fasli) • Avan – Adar – Dae 1388 AY (Shenshai) • Adar – Dae – Behman 1388 AY (Kadimi)

*Norooz Pirooz Bad* ❧ *Norooz Mubarak*

## NEW MODEL OF MOBEDI IN NORTH AMERICA



**PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA**

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### SPECIAL ISSUE

THE BHANDARA ATASH  
KADEH

JOINT PUBLICATION  
FEZANA JOURNAL AND  
FIRES

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Cover design: Feroza Fitch of Lexicongraphics  
See page 61 for names of the three young Ervads



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# EDITORIAL



martab in Houston. We welcome Erv. Kurush Dastoor, the new mobed for the Kamran Dar e Mehr in Boyds, Maryland, serving Metropolitan Washington, D.C.

For several years we have been hearing of the paucity of Mobeds in India and the dilapidated conditions of the agiaries due to dwindling population in small towns outside Mumbai. There are 148 agiaries all over India of which only 30% are self sufficient; of the 50 agiaries in Mumbai 40% are self sufficient. From the demographics collected on 427 mobeds in India, 167 are over 65years, 230 are married with no children, which reduces further the pool of potential future mobeds. With an aging pool of mobeds with very low rate of replacement something needed to be done. Given this background Dinshaw Tamboly, of the WZO Trust Funds Mobed Welfare scheme with the Athornan Mandal, organized “Empowering Mobeds” Workshop in Mumbai, aimed at developing leadership and counselling skills, to bring the young and older mobeds closer to the laity.(pg 62).The WZO Trust funds Navsari, felicitated all the mobeds of Navsari with a cash gift ranging from Rs 50,000 to Rs 5,000. ( pg 66)

In this issue we also celebrate the achievements of all the FEZANA scholarship winners, the Fali Chothia and Vakashoori scholarship winners. We applaud the Morvord Guiv Foundation for establishing a Graduate Fellowship in Zoroastrian studies at Pourdavoud Centre for the Study of the Iranian world at UCLA. And we mourn the loss of Prof Stanley Insler, a Gathic scholar and a devoted friend of the Zarathushti community. Prof Kaikhosrov and Piroja Irani donated their entire estate of \$2.6 million to the Zarthushti community (pg 7) At that event, history was made when three young navars aged 12 and 14 performed the Boi ceremony by themselves at the Dar e Mehr, ZAGNY. (see cover).

The summer issue will feature the combined WZCC and FEZANA AGM’s in Orlando, Florida which has brought a heightened sense of collaboration in the North American diaspora; we look forward to sharing presentations by young entrepreneurs. I end by wishing all of you the very best in health, happiness and strength to move towards frashokereti, as we celebrate Nowruz.3757 Z.

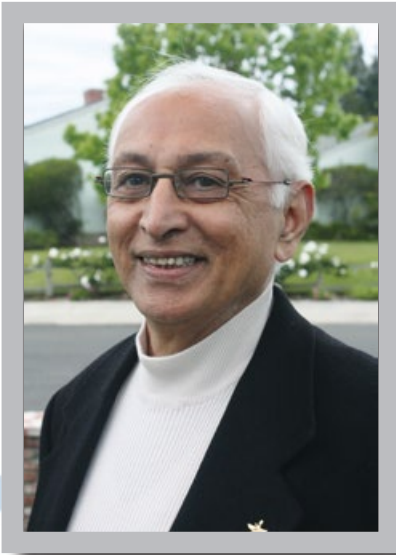
Spring 2019

This issue of the Journal is dedicated to the hardworking Mobeds around the world, but specially the 200+ Mobeds and Mobedyars in North America, their amazing volunteer spirit, their dedication and knowledge, and their selfless services to the community. The community applauds and respects you all.

At the Global Working Group (GWG) meeting in Mumbai in December 2017, the deteriorating situation with the mobeds in India was discussed, their poor remuneration, the bleak future of maintaining mobeds and agiaries with few young boys going into training for mobedi. The GWG decided to undertake a survey to get objective data of the situation to be able to correct it. Sam Balsara, Dinshaw Tamboly and Dastur Khurshed Dastoor were given the responsibility of the survey.

At the 2018 FEZANA AGM in Los Angeles, NAMC president Mobed Arda-e-viraf Minocherhomji made a presentation on Paradigm Shift in the model of delivering priestly services to the community. He elaborated on the the priestly services as delivered in India and the reason why it is not working at the present time, and what we in North America can do to avoid the same mistakes. This is the background of the cover story of this issue. The lead article by NAMC president Arda-viraf Minocherhomji presenting the new model, innovative idea, thinking outside the box, is followed by scholarly articles outlining the history of priesthood by Ervads Cawas Desai, Mehraban Firouzgary, Soli Dastur, Tehemton Mirza, Jal Birdy with the rear brought up by our budding young mobeds: Burzin Balsara, Adil Minocherhomji, Rustum Chhor, Fareidun Dadachanji. We also celebrate the three young men who have been ordained as navar and one as

Homi Gandhi, President



# EDITORIAL

## PARTNER WITH FEZANA TO CREATE A MAGNIFICENT LEGACY *for our Community*

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, [people] can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”*

--Margaret Mead

Over the past six decades, the North American Zarathushti community has firmly planted its roots on the North American continent. I am proud to acknowledge the work of many individuals that has allowed FEZANA to achieve most of the objectives for which it was set up thirty-two years ago. FEZANA continues to work on initiatives that support our community in different ways. One such initiative that FEZANA is now exploring is the establishment of an academic program within a North American university dedicated to the advanced study of Zoroastrianism. I am writing to invite you to partner with FEZANA to work towards the creation of such a legacy for our community.

We envision a program that serves a pivotal role in catalyzing research, providing education, and publish-

ing its work on Zoroastrianism in North America and globally. This program would offer opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students to study ancient Zoroastrian sacred texts, manuscripts, religion and history in their original languages, namely, Avestan, Pahlavi, Persian and Gujarati. It would also foster public engagement activities that strengthen our relationship with the diasporic Zoroastrian communities, both locally and globally.

Most importantly, we envision a program that advances the understanding and appreciation of our ancient religion, its history, culture, languages and people to the benefit of our own community: to arm our children with knowledge of our noble faith that allows them to feel pride in continuing to practice it. Such a program would nurture the next generation of scholars and leaders in the field and in our North American Zoroastrian community. As such, FEZANA is exploring the establishment of a program of dedicated Zoroastrian scholarship on this continent, similar to the Chair of Zoroastrian Studies recently established at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.

We know generous persons in our

community will willingly contribute to this cause. But a crucial need for this project is the support of Zarathushtis who are able to make large legacy donations to invest in an endowment that protects and support this program in perpetuity for the benefit of our Zarathushti community.

**Mark Twain -“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you did not do than by the ones you do.”** As such, I invite your committed involvement in this endeavor.

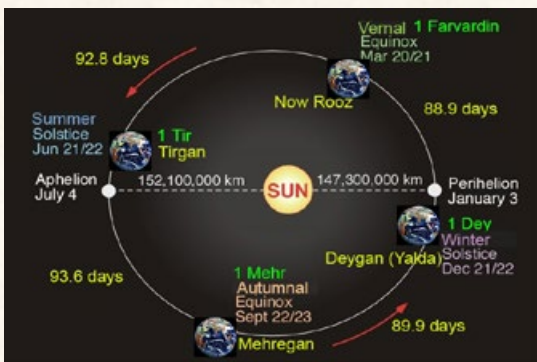
We dare to aspire to this challenge because we know our community is one that chooses to live a good life “inspired by love and guided by knowledge.” I am grateful to you all for considering how you can be a meaningful part of this endeavor.

Persian New Year At Spring Vernal Equinox, Is The Beacon Of Hope & Reconciliations, Forgiveness & Love, And The Yearnings For Liberty, Dignity, Fraternity, Equality, Tranquility, Justice & Peace!



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Reckoning *EPOCH* Wednesday 20 March 2019 (1398 AH, 2628 ZO) at 5:58:27 pm in New York time zone



The flower buds of yellow, violet, red and white crocuses of the saffron bulbs, interspersed with the blossoming daffodils, hyacinths, tulips and the Persian violets, herald the arrival of *Nowruz* in Iran and the broader neighboring region. The Persian New Year, signaling the rebirth, rejuvenation and reconciliation, aptly arrives at the spring *vernal equinox*. Spring in Iran and the wider region is the harbinger of harmonious jubilation for the earth and the sun, with pristine streams percolating down the snowcapped mountains, the greening of the prairies and the pastures, the flowering of fruit trees and the herbs, and the luscious green seedling and germinating of staple crops. *Nowruz* has not only been revered on the Iranian Plateau stretching between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf, and Indus to Tigris Rivers, but also in Mesopotamia, the Caucasus, and central and west Asia. *Nowruz* is prominently praised in the mythological story of King *Jamshid*, credited as the first *Nowruz* celebrant of the *Kiyanian* *Dynasty*, and as cited in (*Paradiso*) *Ferdowsi's Shahnameh*.

*Nowruz* (زورون نشج) aka *Norooz*, *Navroz*, *NowRooz*, etc. (variation in dialectic and vernacular pronunciations) in Persian *lingua franca* literally translates as the first day [of the New Year]. It is the most prominent seasonal celebration of the solar calendar since the prehistoric era. It was conceived by the agricultural people just north of the Tropic of Cancer who revered the sun (*Sol Invictus*), fire, light and enlightenment ever since. *Nowruz* is preceded by *Purim*, the Jewish celebration of bounties as in the *Torah* that also began in Iran when Queen *Esther* married the Persian

# FEZANA Update

King Ahasuerus. This contrasts with lunar calendars as followed by the southern and western neighbors to Iran, who used the lunar skies and traversed through the arid hot deserts at nights. In addition to Iran, *Nowruz* as a national holiday transcending class, color, creed, ethnicity, race, religion, or national origin, is currently commemorated by well over a dozen countries of nearly five hundred million inhabitants in central, south and west Asia, northwestern China, Asia Minor, and the Caucasus.

In fact, the commoners and serfs in Europe and later the pilgrims landing on Plymouth Rock in the US in today's Massachusetts also observed a New Year starting at the beginning of spring until the mid-18th century. This jubilee holiday was acknowledged in the Gregorian calendar as well; the month of March coincides with the first month of the Julian calendar when Europe was still under the influence of Persian Mithraism from the 1<sup>st</sup> through the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. *Nowruz*, according to the Zoroastrian Mazdayasni calendar is at 3758. *Nowruz* commences with the prelude festival of *Chaharshanbe Suri* on the last Tuesday night of the exiting year. At this Zoroastrian fire ritual, everyone jumps over fire, singing a Middle Persian poem that translates as



“O’ sacred Fire, take away my yellow sickness and give me in return your healthy red color!”

The most symbolic manifestation showcased at *Nowruz* is the *sofreh haft-seen*. Adorned on a table covered with an



*The Haft-Seen spread at the annual Nowruz gathering in Mahwah, New Jersey hosted by Mehrangiz and Isfandiar Sayadi.*

antique hand-woven *termeh* silk cloth are laid the seven plant-derived items whose Persian names begin with the letter “S”: *sabzeh*- wheat and lentil germinations symbolizing rebirth; *senjed*- the dried oleaster fruit, a close family member to olives symbolizing love; *seer*-garlic symbolizing medicine; *seeb*-apples symbolizing beauty and earth; *somaqh*-sumac berries symbolizing sunrise; *samanu*- cooked germinated wheat for affluence, and *serkeh*-vinegar symbolizing ripeness, longevity, and perseverance. A round, ticking classical clock, signifying the passage of time, a fishbowl with two gold fish (added later, due to influences from China) signifying companionship and life, decorated eggs for fertility which found their ways into Easter, and a saucer of coins from the five continents to reflect prosperity are also on display. The haft-seen table is completed with daffodils, tulips and hyacinths, a triple flag of Iran’s colors green, white, and red, flickering candelabra, the Holy Avesta and an ancient book of poems, Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh* the Persian epic book of the Kings, Rumi’s *Mathnawi*, Divan Hafez, or the Omar Khayyam’s *Quatrains* from which the poem *The Persian Nightingale Bemoans* is well known in the west.

All over the world, presidents and Prime Ministers release annual *Nowruz* best wishes message and in recent years an all-day extravagant *Nowruz* celebration that concludes with Persian music and dance, and exquisite Persian food

# FEZANA *Update*

has been hosted at the White House (Obama, Bush and Clinton era). UNESCO has placed it on the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and the UN has for some time declared the International Day of *Nowruz*, and celebrated it at its headquarters with a large festival of Persian foods and pastries. Spring vernal equinox 2018 was also declared as International Forest Day which we trust it will continue!

The celebration of *Nowruz* that was instituted by the 25,000 Iranians residing abroad back in 1979 is now commemorated by 8 million Iranians in diaspora, with hundreds of *Nowruz* congregations in every major city as in New York, each with up to over a 1000 guests. Among the several congregations we have attended each year for decades, the grand one with 600 guests and organized and hosted by Mehrangiz and Isfandiar Sayadi in northern New Jersey with its most exquisitely expansive *sofreh haft-seen* and highly inclusive dance and music has remained our most favorite!!

Anchored on a trilogy of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, everyone reaffirms their commitment to volunteerism, altruism, philanthropy, benevolence and above all, to advancing humanism as the pinnacles of life. The belief in the golden rule of “*treating others as you would expect to be treated*” anchored on the tripartite pedestal of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, conjures up in mind with the acclaimed Persian poem by the 13<sup>th</sup> century Sa’adi: Every family spends the full day outdoor in parks, crop fields, or the orchards, when they play, sing, dance, eat and drink.

*All humans are members of one frame,  
Since all at first, from the same essence, came.  
When by hard fortune one limb is oppressed,  
The other members lose their desired rest.  
If thou feel'st not for others' misery,  
A human is no name for thee!*



A *Nowruz* holiday cycle is concluded at the Sizdah Bedar Picnic, which falls on the 13<sup>th</sup> day, *aka* April fool's Day.

Unmarried celebrants tie knots with grass blades to wish for a soulmate; the elders nostalgically compare this *Nowruz* with those past while remembering the deceased, and the children look forward restlessly to many more *Nowruz* celebrations to follow.



*Davood N. Rahni, was raised in Shemiran (Evin) north of Tehran and graduated in chemistry from the National University of Iran. Following his Ph.D./post-doctoral stint in New Mexico and New Orleans, was a professor of (bio-electro-analytical) chemistry at Pace University in New York, as well as an adjunct professor environmental law and dermatology. He was Fulbright senior research scholar in Denmark with visiting professorships at the Universities of Oxford, Florence and Rome. He has written prolifically on history and archaeology, arts and sciences, poetry and prose, and culture of Iran and southwest Asia. Rahni's extensive scientific published scholarships is typified by his book Bioimaging in Neuordegneration, that is well cited by peers.*



*Photos Farhang Found, An earlier abridged excerpt of this essay was published in National Geog. Magazine, under D. Rahni Copyright © 2019*

***Nowruz Piruz, Harruz Nowruz va Khojasteh va Shad Bad!***



## Professor Kaikhosrov and Piroja Irani donate their entire estate to Zarathusti Organizations - A life unsurpassed and a legacy that is exceptional.



Professor Emeritus Dr. Kaikhosrov D. Irani's intellect, wisdom, vision and extraordinary ability to share his knowledge of the Zarathusti religion remains forever unsurpassed, unforgettable and incomparable. He was a world renowned philosopher, a mentor to many, a teacher, a writer, a thinker and above all a true Zarathushti. His life was an example of what he taught. His wife Piroja Irani's intelligence, charm, gentleness and sharp acumen were always at his side. They were a formidable couple.

Fondly known to many as KD, he came to the United States in 1947. He taught the Philosophy of Science at the City University of New York for 41 years having got this first job, at a higher rate than normal, after a recommendation by Albert Einstein whom he met at Princeton University. He retired from teaching at the age of 90. His father, Dinshaw J. Irani had translated The Gathas, hymns composed by Zarathustra. KD reprinted this translation in 1998 in New York, which carried an introduction by Rabindranath Tagore. On February 23, 2019, The Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY), his home Association, hosted



an event to announce the distribution of their assets. Framroze K Patel, as Trustee and his dear friend, made the announcement of the distribution of \$2.6 million: 50% to the Zarathushtrian Assembly based in Anaheim, California 20% to ZAGNY in Pomona, New York; 20% to the World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO), US Region Ltd. II., and; 10% to the Federation of Zoroastrian Association of North America (FEZANA). In addition, special donations of \$25,000 each were allocated to the Surat Parsi Seth Rustomji M. Kooka Boys Orphanage in Surat and the Bai Avabai F. Petit Girls Orphanage in Mumbai. He also left generous amounts of money to his and Piroja's health aides.



Framroze K Patel, (photo left) emotional, but eloquent and poised, dignified and faithful, recognized his best friend and mentor Kaikhosrov "as an academician, an educator of distinction and an esteemed, venerated and much cherished scholar of the Zarathushti religion, who lived by the principles, tenets and teaching of the Prophet." He said that "Professor was a universal human-being. He had no use for so called doctrinal or theological restrictions as to who can and cannot follow the timeless message of the good religion. Kaikhosrov, had the qualities of tolerance, both religious and personal. He was so reluctant to judge people." As a Trustee of their estate since 2007, Framroze delivered that responsibility with humility and recommended that the beneficiary organizations keep in an endowment account the bequests and use only the interest to perpetuate Kaikhosrov and Piroja's legacy to "educate, particularly towards the promotion and advancement of the religion

of Zarathushtra.” He added, “It is my duty to remind you that Piroja and Kaikhosrov believed that the message of the Prophet is universal and a Zarathusti is one who declares herself or himself to be a follower of Zarathushtra.” The entire Zarathushti community is indebted to Framroze for undertaking this mission with diligence, discretion, style, panache and dignity. Framroze also acknowledged KD’s special friends, the late Eruch Munshi, Dinshaw Joshi and Khorshed Jungalwalla, as well as Lovji Cama and Ness Lakdawala.

KD and Piroja were smiling down at us on February 23, . The event at the Dar-e-Mehr, in Pomona, New York, which Professor Irani had inaugurated on 26 March 2016, began with a historic event - a Boi ceremony and an Atash Nyash prayed by our three youngest Ervads at ZAGNY. Porus Pavri, Cyrus Dadina, both 14 years old and Zal Mody 12 years old, prayed loudly, without any lead senior Mobed. Our hearts swelled with pride and joy. *(photo right : Cyrus Dadina, Zal Mody, Porus Pavri)*



Astad J. Clubwala, President of ZAGNY, welcomed Framroze K Patel as Trustee of their estate and his wife Armaity, the beneficiaries, Darius Irani and Sima Shidfar from the Zarathushtrian Assembly and Homi Gandhi, President of FEZANA. Kayomarsh Mehta from WZO, US Region, who could not be present. He also introduced Alicia Klat Ragusa, lawyer and counsellor to KD and Piroja for over 20 years, their investment advisers Laura Abadsantos and Henry Saint Surin. Astad added that his personal takeaway from KD was the “simplicity of his thought. He could share the message of Zarathustra with any audience – from children to adults, in world audiences, with academicians and students. The Professor has taught us to do the right thing for the right reasons and inspired us all to live with justice and compassion.”

Displayed were memorabilia from KD and Piroja’s home, an antique trunk with a list of items it had carried, a rare red fetah, made in England by Battersby Hats for Chinoy Brothers in Mumbai (the iconic phagri makers of Mumbai), his tuxedo jacket and waist coat, a special photograph of KD when he was barely 2-3 years old being taught prayers by his father Dinshaw J Irani, together with silver ware from their home, with one exquisite ornate piece engraved “To Mr. Dinsha Irani From Sir Cowasji Jheangir, March 27, 1936.”



A short film on the life of Professor Irani, developed by Ferzin Patel with her son Davin Patel, drawn mainly from an interview he had given in recent years left the audience feeling inspired by their lives.

A formal presentation was made by Framroze to Darius Irani for the Zarathustrian Assembly, Homi Gandhi for FEZANA and Astad Clubwala for ZAGNY. Darius Irani expressed profound gratitude for KD’s generosity. He recalled discussions with KD from 1983 until 1990 when the Zarathushtrian Assembly was established. He pledged the Assembly’s continuing efforts towards “making the religion available to the entire world.” He committed the Assembly to continue the Professor’s vision and to deliver the message of Zarathushtra that began 3757 years ago. Homi Gandhi recalled that KD was present at the time of the creation of FEZANA and committed to focus on education about the religion. FEZANA has appointed an Ad-hoc Committee of Scholars to review proposals for the use of their bequest. FIRES, that works under the auspices of FEZANA, will “preserve, protect and perpetuate Kaikhosrov and Piroja’s legacy by preserving all the writing and texts that Professor Irani had left behind for FEZANA. Astad Clubwala stated

that ZAGNY would establish an endowment fund and the proceeds would be used to spread the knowledge of the religion. An annual KD lecture series will be held inviting world-wide prominent speakers. In addition scholarships will be established to fund Zoroastrian studies. A group of Zoroastrian scholars will also be established to visit Universities to further spread the knowledge of our religion.

Zarine Weil, niece of Professor Irani could not be present, but sent a letter that was read to the gathering by Armaiti Patel thanking Framroze for his dedicated role as a Trustee. May the esteemed souls of Kaikhosrov and Piroja sing for eternity. His father's hope for him was that "he would be a good servant of his people" and KD fulfilled his hope – and even more.

The event concluded with the presentation of a token of appreciation to Keki Dadachandji, a frame to Framroze Patel, engraved "With Gratitude from ZAGNY" with a photograph of KD and Framroze from the Inauguration Day of our new Dar-e-Mehr and a bouquet of roses for Armaiti. The room full of ZAGNY members and guests were counting their blessings to have benefitted from KD and Piroja's generosity and to have known Kaikhosrov and Piroja.

Hama Zor Hama Asho baad..... May we be united in strength and in righteousness as we perpetuate the legacy of Kaikhosrov and Piroja Irani.



*Behroze Astad Clubwala lives in Hawthorne, New Jersey and is an active member of ZAGNY. She retired from the United Nations Development Programme as a Human Resources Advisor after a 30+year career with them.*

## JASHAN-E- NOUROOZ

We reaffirm our commitment to the following virtues such as, volunteerism, altruism, philanthropy, benevolence and above all to advancing humanism as the pinnacles of life.

The belief in the GOLDEN RULE of treating others as you would expect to be treated by them, on rule of NOBLE thoughts, KIND words and COMPASSIONATE deeds, conjures up in mind the words of an acclaimed poem by the 13th century Persian poet Sa'adi :

All humans are members of one family,  
Since all at first, from the same essence, came.

When by hard fortune one limb is oppressed,  
The other members lose their desired rest.

If thou feel not for others' misery,  
A Human is no name for thee.

Firdosh Mehta , Vancouver, BC

## KEKI DADACHANDJI GIVES A KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE EVENT HOSTED BY ZAGNY ON FEBRUARY 23, 2019 TO ANNOUNCE THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE \$2.6 MILLION ASSETS OF PROF EMERITUS KAIKHOSROV AND PIROJA IRANI.

The keynote speaker, Keki Dadachandji, spoke on “*The Religion of Zarathustra: From Vision to Practice.*” Keki recalled that on March 5, 2017, Kaikhosrov spoke at ZAGNY about Zarathustra’s Vision and Zoroastrianism Today. Keki said “The presentation was the clearest, most concise and lucid that he had ever heard. Therefore, it was a fitting tribute to summarize that vision today and explore how it can guide our daily living.”

### Highlights of his message were:

- Ahura Mazda conceived of an ideal creation. The totality of that vision is called Asha, generally rendered in English as truth and righteousness. Asha postulates an ideal form of existence where there is perfect harmony. However, in the material world in which we live this harmony may be disrupted.
- The first Gatha Ahunavaiti, Yasna 29 Verse 1, opens with Mother Earth seeking help. “For whom did thou create me and who so fashioned me. None have I to protect me save Thee.” In today’s world we see destruction of natural resources. The gap between the rich and poor is increasing. This is not the harmonious universe Ahura Mazda had imagined. Zarathustra is chosen in the remainder of Yasna 29, as the savior.
- To enable us to move towards this ideal vision Ahura Mazda has given all of us *Vohu Manah*, the good mind. It is not the mind in the ordinary sense of the term, it is not intellect, it is a natural intuition that enables us to grasp what is right and wrong. Once the wrong is recognized, we are expected to correct it. This is what is called the practice of “good thoughts, good words and good deeds.”
- Acceptance of this vision and this

way of life is an individual, not a collective decision. Each of us makes this choice and lives with the consequences of that choice.

- If we all possess *Vohu Manah*, why are we unable to distinguish between right and wrong? Zarathustra asked this of his father who was a priest. He said, “*because my son, our inner intuition is clouded by tendencies such as greed, fear, anger and hatred. If we purged our minds of all these selfish tendencies, Vohu Manah will unfailingly tell us what is right.*”



- This in summary is Zarathustra’s vision
- How can we get from vision to practice? Just as physical laws govern the universe, natural laws govern the spiritual world. Physical laws, e.g. Gravity, exist whether we believe in it or not. If we jump, we fall. Spiritual laws exist but the results are not as easy to perceive.
- The first expression of the Natural Law is “*Unity of Life*”, the claim that all life is one. The essential

quality to cultivate is compassion. Being kind and compassionate is the sum and substance of living in harmony with the Unity of Life.

- The second expression of the Natural Laws is the *Law of Karma*. *Karma* is closely related to what happens after life. This says that at the end of our life there is an evaluation not just of our deeds, but also of our thoughts and intentions.
- The practical application of the Law of Karma can be summed up in a three part formula: First, choose the right goal; Second, choose the right means; and Third, if the results of your efforts turn out differently, accept the limits of your control and offer up the outcome to Ahura Mazda. This way it is possible to be at peace with yourself and move forward. So, this links to the Zarathushti concepts of *good thoughts and good deeds*.
- Good words: a starting point to cultivating right speech is to learn when to be silent and to listen with complete attention and respect to others, especially when what we are told is not what we want to hear.
- When we speak, the word of the mouth should go through three gates:
- In rare cases when there is genuine conflict between truth and kindness, kindness should take precedence.

- Is it true?
- Is it kind?
- Is it necessary?

- Our journey on our spiritual paths begins when we come across great teachers – and Professor Kaikhosrov Irani was one of mine.

*Reported by Behroze Clubwala*

## ZAMWI'S AVESTA PERFORMERS AT THE INTERFAITH COUNCIL CONCERT *celebrating our faith and culture through the arts, bringing generations of Zoroastrians together through song, dance, art, poetry.*



*From left Ervad Kurush Dastur, Shawdi Keshavarz, Bita Khadivi, Behnoosh Sethna, Dinaz Campbell, Arya Cyrousi, Varjavand Ariaban, Jamshid Parsinejad*



The annual holiday concert organized by the InterFaith Council of Metropolitan Washington was the perfect venue for the Avesta Performers of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, Inc. (ZAMWI) to welcome Ervad Kurush Dastur as our full time mobed, and to share the beautiful song, “*BE GOOD: Sing Ashem Vohu - DO GOOD for the sake of Goodness,*” with the Metropolitan Washington community.



Directed by Farzad Aidun, with musical accompaniment and direction by Meherji Madan, the performance opened with Mr. Kersi Shroff carrying the afarganyu toward Ervad Kurush Dastur followed by the lighting of all the performers’ candles from one to another, joining together for the *Ashem Vohu* and *Yatha Ahu* prayers led by Ervad Dastur.(photo alongside) The song, “*BE GOOD,*” written and arranged by *Khaikhosrow Zartoshty*, with lyrics by *Khosro Mehrfar*; filled the Washington Hebrew Congregation auditorium as some of our youngest community members danced, while students and adults of all ages sang as a chorus and solo. Parnis Khosravi choreographed the artistic dance, Kersy Dastur served as stage director for the performance, and Mina Aidun, Zenobia Sribnick, and Navroz Gandhi provided essential coordination throughout rehearsals. The joyful performance was a collective effort, and everyone enjoyed the rehearsals and practices as much as the exciting performance itself.

A recent anonymous gift to ZAMWI of \$40,000 to establish an endowment in support of arts and performances, has focused the commitment to celebrating our faith and our culture through the arts, and bringing generations of Zoroastrians together through song, dance, art, poetry, and more. ZAMWI’s new Arts and Performance Council will draw upon the endowment income each year to foster community participation in the arts, and to lift up the talents and energy of Zoroastrians in our community, and across North America.

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*REPORT by Anne Khademian Ph.D. President , ZAMWI*

*Participants: Manijeh Aidun; Mina Aidun; Mojgan Ariaban; Varjavand Ariaban; Dinaz Campbell; Arya Cyrousi; Jimmy Dholoo; Shahdokht Dholoo ; Perinaaz Gandhi; Navroz Gandhi; Mehrdad Izadyar; Parisa Izadyar Anne Khademian; Bita Khadivi; Gulrukh Khadivi; Mehran Khadivi; Parnis Khosravi; Toofan Khosraviani; Jamshid Parsinejad; Pouya Parsinejad; Behram Pastakia, Behnoosh Sethna; Zenobia Sribnick; Armin Soroosh; Bahram Soroosh; Zenobia Taraporewala; Shahrzad Yazdani*

*Dancers: Pourochista Izadyar; Rashni Katki; Roumina Parsinejad; Katayoun Parsinejad; Shawdi Keshavarz*

*Stage Crew:*

*Kersy Dastur; David Campbell; Feroz Campbell; Ethan Sribnick; Kaizad Sribnick*

## ZAMWI Turns 40

The Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, Inc. (ZAMWI) turns 40 this year, and the ZAMWI Board of Trustees is organizing a series of events to celebrate our religious, cultural and organizational history. On April 20th, ZAMWI will host *Mosaics of a Zoroastrian Landscape*, an afternoon of oral histories, music, dance and community building. In addition to our ZAMWI community, we are inviting our neighbors across Boyds, Maryland, home to the Kamran Dar-e Mehr, to learn more about our community, traditions and faith. Rep Jamie Raskin (D) 8th District of Maryland will grace the occasion. A large celebration including prayer ceremonies, celebrations, and special recognitions will take place in early September. We hope to have our prayer room in the Kamran Dar-e Mehr completed by the September celebrations, along with the upgrades to our kitchen and external enhancements and will welcome the North American Zoroastrian community to join us.



Our first community gathering of 2019 was the celebration of Jashne Sadeh. Ervad Kurush Dastur led the Cherag-No-Nemaskar prayer for the Homage to Light Ceremony. (photo left). We introduced two FEZANA scholarship winners, Negin Forouzesh, a doctoral student at Virginia Tech, and Keana Kianian, an undergraduate student at George Washington University, and the new ZAMWI Council for Arts and Performances. The youngest Avesta Performers danced, (photo below left) and Meherzan Gai performed on the piano. Bahar Boroumand Rad was the MC for the evening, sharing the story of Houshang Shah and the discovery of fire. An abundant and delicious potluck meal followed.

. (photo below, right, President Anne Khademian presenting the FEZANA scholarship to Negin Forouzesh)

We have much to celebrate in our 40 years, from the opening of the Kamran Dar-e Mehr in 2014 to our growing engagement with the interfaith community of Washington, DC Metropolitan area; the dedication and commitment of our religious leaders and the installation of a full time mobed in 2019; our long standing Avesta Classes and dedicated coordinators and teachers who bring our children together to learn and to build lifelong friendships; our Gathas Study Group and the progressive intellectual leadership of our



community members; and the leadership among our youth to take on the challenges all around us and to boldly explore the meaning and practice of Zoroastrianism today. Looking forward, to embarking on a major fundraising effort to complete our prayer room and establish sustainable resources for our Dar-e Mehr. Many of the young adults and youth of our community are focused on hosting the 2020 Z Games, and our new arts and performance endowment is an inspiration to develop the arts and opportunities to perform in our community and to celebrate and lift up the arts of our Zoroastrian heritage into the future. We look forward to the next 40 years working with our fellow associations across North America and the world.



Report by Anne Khademian, Ph.D. President, ZAMWI

## ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN (ZAOM) HOLDS THEIR FIRST EVER ZOROASTRIAN FILM FESTIVAL

The Zoroastrian Association of Michigan (ZAOM) organized their first ever Zoroastrian Film Festival on Sunday August 5, 2018 at the Farmington Public Library Main Auditorium. Doors opened at 1:15PM. After a quick setup and a brief introduction, the first movie was screened. It was **“Not Just Milk & Sugar”** a short documentary that throws light on the Parsis, their religion, beliefs & customs, their contributions to the fabric of modern India and the problems they face due to a dwindling population. Beautifully narrated through the bedtime ritual between grandfather and grandson, it stars Bollywood film star Boman Irani & Rustom Tirandaz. It was streamed live from YouTube. Running time 16 mins.



There was a quick intermission during which we introduced Meherji Madan, the producer of the next film **“On Wings of Fire”** who gave a brief recap about his experience producing the film. The main feature film screened was the digitally remastered version of **“On Wings Of Fire”** Zubin Mehta’s search for his religion and his people, a film odyssey that spans 3,500 years!! Running time 90 mins.

Then there was a longer intermission during which mint tea & light refreshments were served.

The last film screened was called **“Keepers of the Flame”** which highlighted the role early Parsi pioneers, the Tatas played in building India’s industrial landscape and how they had to fight the British bureaucratic system that was stacked against them. Running time 60 mins.

The film festival was advertised as an interfaith event and had a great turnout with good representation from the Metro Detroit Interfaith community and the Iranian American community.

We are extremely grateful to Meherji Madan, who flew to Detroit specially to be with us for this premier event. We had organized a social event on Saturday evening so he could meet our local Zarthushtis and share his experiences during the making of the film **“On Wings of Fire.”**

This was a free event. All the films were very well received and drew great compliments from the attendees. Many requested copies of **“On Wings of Fire”** for their personal collections.

We think this is a great way to educate our local communities about our religion, our history, customs & traditions and its relevance in today’s modern world. We hope other associations and small groups pick up on the idea and run with it.

*Contributed by Ardeshir N Irani,  
Zoroastrian Association Of Michigan (ZAOM)*



## BLESSINGS IN A BAG

A COMMUNITY PROJECT INITIATED BY THE CHILDREN OF THE ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF FLORIDA (ZAF)

In October and November 2018, the children of the Zoroastrian Association of Florida (ZAF) participated in two community projects. Ariana and Anisa Deboo spearheaded the Blessings in A Bag project. Members of ZAF

contributed items like soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, socks, energy bars, water, tissues and filled the bags with these items which were then distributed to the Homeless in Dade, Broward and Palm Beach Counties. Over 100 Blessings in a Bag were put together and distributed by the children and their parents.



The second project involved making "No Sew" Baby Blankets. The ZAF children and their families cut, knotted and put together over 25 Baby Blankets which were donated to the Child Counseling Center in Boca Raton. Some blankets were donated to children who attend the Center who come from low socio economic situations and to group of

teenaged moms and their babies. Tyne Potgeiter a representative from the Center joined in making the Blankets and delivering them to the Center.

Both projects could not have been possible if not for our fabulous ZAF kids and their families. Kudos and thanks to everyone!

*Report by Hoves Shroff, Ph.D, Delray Beach, Florida*





## A PROPOSED NEW MODEL FOR MOBEDI: ZOROASTRIAN PRIESTLY SERVICES IN NORTH AMERICA

Guest editorial

Mobed Arda-e-viraf M. Minocherhomjee

*This article describes the roles of the North American Mobeds Council (NAMC) and North American Zoroastrian Associations/Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and proposes a sustainable alternative to the current practices.*

**Abstract: The purpose of this analysis is to understand what worked for us in India (India in this article represents the whole sub-continent including India, Pakistan, and Ceylon), what did not, prevent making the same mistakes, and help understand the similarities and differences between the Indian and North American models. Recommended changes should then allow us to build organizational structures, and religious and cultural institutions relevant to 21<sup>st</sup> century North America (NA).**



### INTRODUCTION

NAMC is an independent organization consisting of Mobeds from North America, and its executives are elected by its members. Its mission is two-fold—to promote the understanding, practice, and perpetuation of the Zarathushtri religion in North America, and to promote the interests, welfare, and professionalism (including education) of Mobeds in North America.

In North America there are approximately 200 Mobeds and 19 Mobedyars (assistant Mobeds) who serve over 20,000 Zarathushtris belonging to 25 Zoroastrian Associations based primarily in major cities. Additionally, there are 14 Corresponding Members of FEZANA based in the smaller cities. Larger cities have Dar-e-Mehers/Atash Kadehs and Mobeds to provide services in those areas. NAMC started the Mobedyar program to serve the needs of communities where Mobeds are not readily available.

Presently, Mobeds in North America perform most religious ceremonies including Navjotes, Ashirvaad ceremonies, Jashans, and Gahambar prayers, as well as, Parabh Jashans, Mukhtad prayers, Vendidad, and Fareshta. NAMC membership is fortunate to have senior Mobed members who have written articles in this publication and who are knowledgeable about the history, culture, and doctrines of our religion. Many of them have been published extensively and conducted seminars in various cities in the United States and Canada. Of the 200 Mobeds in North America, we estimate that less than half practice Mobedi on a regular basis. We do not have any full-time Mobeds in North America, and many Mobeds provide their services on a volunteer basis.

### THE ROLE OF NAMC

There are several issues facing NAMC and our community that need to be jointly addressed on a near-term basis. It is imperative that NAMC and FEZANA Associations formulate a long-term strategy that addresses the rapidly changing religious and cultural environment in North America. The two key near-term issues facing our community are:

- The ageing of several senior Mobeds/scholars and
- The changing religious and spiritual needs of the younger Zarathushtris—both Mobeds (the service providers) and Behdins/Ostas (the clients) of these services.

The older generation of Zarathushtris from India focus on ceremonies and Farajyat (obligatory) prayers, whereas the younger generation is more interested in understanding the meaning of our prayers, the religious doctrine, and how to make the religion relevant to their daily lives.

NAMC is addressing these issues through lecture series, video conferences, and weekly quotations with the translation of our prayers to better help our community understand the key concepts in our scriptures. Complete information on our organization and programs are available at [www.namcmobeds.org](http://www.namcmobeds.org).

Last year, NAMC offered fellowships to 10 young Mobeds to attend a continuing education course in California with a goal to transfer the extensive knowledge base from our senior Mobeds/scholars to the younger Mobeds through seminars and religious courses. We believe that the younger Mobeds will be able to more effectively communicate our scriptures to their peers based on common experiences and life styles.

Although both NAMC and the Associations are trying to address these issues, we need to evaluate if we have the appropriate organizational structures and resources to address the rapidly changing environment of the 21st century. For example, as a private equity investor, one of the first things I do is an onboarding evaluation—a review of the financial and organizational structure of the company to make sure that it is well capitalized and positioned for future growth.

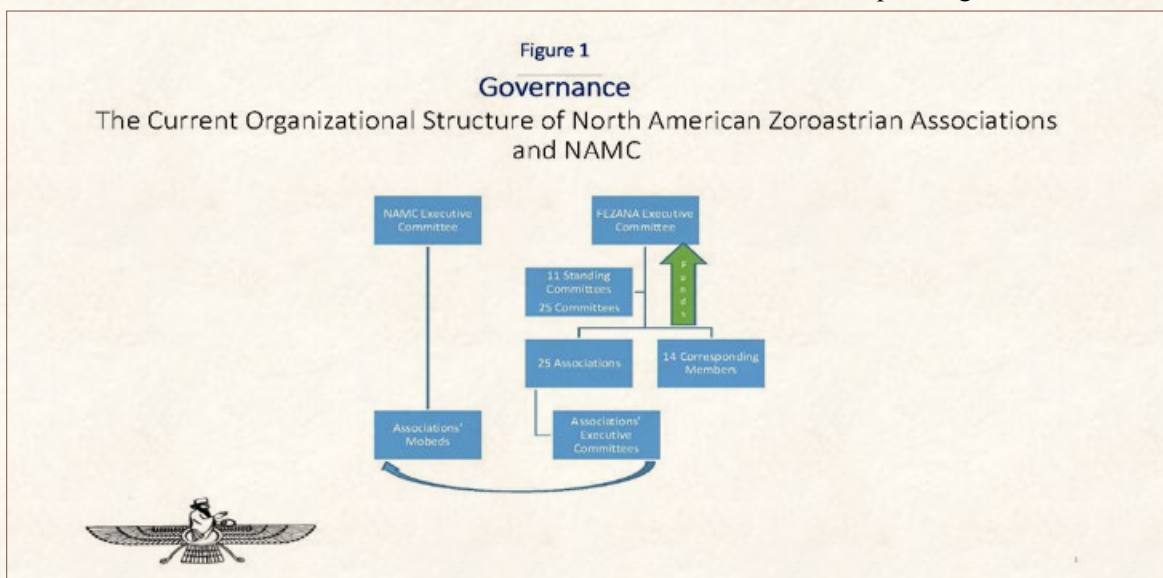
## GOVERNANCE

Governance plays an important role in determining how organizations function. It is typically the processes, structures, and organizational traditions that determine how power is exercised, how the stakeholders have their say, how decisions are made, and how decision makers are held to account. (*Building Effective Approaches to Governance* by Mel Gill, *The Nonprofit Quarterly*.) There are many factors that contribute to good governance including strategic vision, effectiveness/efficiency, and transparency.

Given the rather tumultuous history of Mobedi in 20th century India, it is important that we appreciate factors (including organizational structure) that have contributed to the precipitous decline in the income and, consequently, the number of Mobeds in India. We, in North America, must strive to not repeat the same mistakes. The volunteer model practiced here is not sustainable and, therefore, cannot continue for the long-term—all organized religions have full-time paid priests and have well-defined organizational/reporting structures.

Figure 1 shows the current organizational structure of the North American Zoroastrian Associations in relation to FEZANA and NAMC. There are 25 North American Zoroastrian Associations and 14 Corresponding Members

Associations under the FEZANA umbrella. Both the associations and FEZANA have their own executives. The associations' executives are responsible for oversight, administration, and programs (including fund raising and community outreach), as well as the maintenance of



the Atash Kadehs. The religious function seems to be “outsourced” to Mobeds who, in some cases, essentially report to the Executive Committee/Board. NAMC provides guidelines to the Mobeds and associations on religious issues, but each association is run autonomously having its own charter/constitution and by-laws. It is noteworthy that most Zoroastrian Associations and Corresponding Members that receive tax exempt status from their respective governments provide funds to FEZANA—but not NAMC—North America’s only Zoroastrian religious organization.

Figure 2 suggests that in North America the associations have tried to emulate the India organizational structure (model). Further, the model currently implemented in India is different than the one originally practiced in Iran. As mentioned by Mobed Cawas Desai, Parsees, primarily Behdins, were fortunate under the British rule to start businesses and thereby accumulate wealth. Many benevolent Parsee families engaged in businesses started great philanthropic organizations. Some also started Atash Adarans and Atash Behrams. During this time the governance framework transitioned from Mobeds who were responsible for religious matters to mostly Behdin boards/trustees who were appointed by the founders of their institutions.

The model worked well for the first few decades, however that has not been the case over the last 50 to 70 years. Many factors contributed to the exodus of practicing Mobeds over the past few decades; the primary reason being poor compensation.

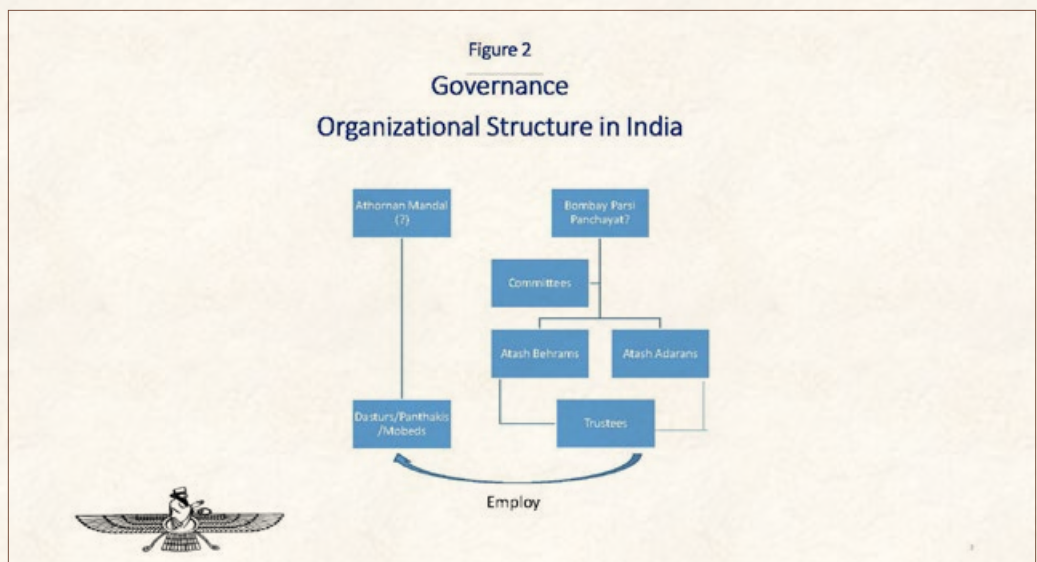
Pricing (compensation) pressure, at that time, could be attributed to several factors including the excess supply of Mobeds relative to the number of Behdins, who were declining at a faster rate due to lower birth rates and inter-marriages—and their religiosity was also on the decline in big cities. Further, trust funds did not keep pace with inflation and Mobeds had no ability to negotiate their compensation as it was determined by the board/trustees. This may explain why pricing is still under pressure in India when the supply of Mobeds has now declined significantly in comparison to the demand. It is unclear why price/cost increases could not be passed on to the users of their services whose compensation mostly increased with inflation. The process is not transparent and somewhat ambiguous.

These factors led to a brain drain of educated Mobeds into other professions. A conclusion that could be drawn is that the decline in Mobedi in India was partly a result of the loss of Mobed empowerment, Mobeds losing control over their destiny, and the clients of these services not being proactive in addressing the situation. In general, the organizational structure is highly decentralized with no central Mobed body, and the management style may be characterized as *laissez faire*.

## THE NORTH AMERICAN ENVIRONMENT

The North American environment is in many ways quite different from that in India, in that Mobeds in all age cohorts are often highly educated professionals or business persons and are leaders. They are doctors, lawyers, investment professionals, engineers, etc. They have run departments of multinational organizations and managed small and large businesses.

The users of the religious services (Behdins/Ostas) could be divided into two broad age cohorts—the older generation mostly immigrants from India, and the younger generation born in North America. The religious/spiritual needs of the immigrants have stayed roughly the same and they started the same organizational structures in North America. Those born in North America have different religious/spiritual needs. The rapid changes at the macro- and



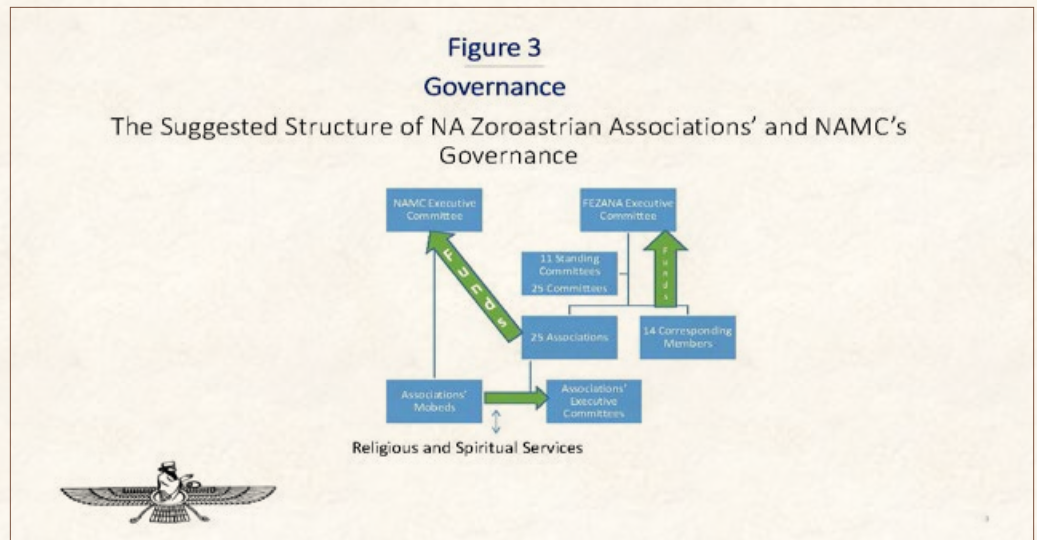
micro-levels behoove us to make at least some changes to our organizational structures. Building on a failing model and expecting a different outcome is unrealistic.

The current North American associations' model is fraught with elements of potential conflicts and difficulties, as well as lack of strategic focus and planning. In general, focus seems to be more on cultural than religious activities. The amount of funds spent for religious vs. cultural activities is neither clearly identified, nor defined. Religious policies and procedures are sometimes set by Boards that can lead to politicization of religious issues. Since Boards can change every two to four years, Mobeds could potentially face new rules/procedures frequently. On occasion, some members/Boards try to usurp authority from the Mobeds/NAMC whenever there is a disagreement with Mobeds. Associations, their members should try to avoid opinion shopping in matters relating to the practice of our religion in North America. Many of these issues arise because decision making is highly decentralized, and the lines between religious and cultural activities and responsibilities are not well delineated.

## NAMC RECOMMENDATIONS

*Those who do not remember their past are condemned to repeat it.*  
—George Santayana.

I was taught a slight variation of the quote from Mobed Tehmtom Mirza in his article. When I left India 42 years ago my dad told me to practice the three As—Adopt, Adapt, and Adept to survive and prosper in the new continent, and to always get an A for Attitude. NAMC is recommending that we adopt/adapt to the new environment/circumstances. Figure 3 proposes:



## Separation of Atash Kadeh and State

In this case, Atash Kadeh would be represented by NAMC/Mobeds of the local Atash Kadehs, and the State would be represented by the Associations/FEZANA executives. NAMC/Mobeds should oversee all religious activities, and associations/FEZANA should be responsible for all cultural activities. This would be like what is practiced in our **Adopted** home countries of the USA and Canada, commonly referred to as separation of Church and the State.

## Direct Financial Support

Associations should contribute \$1 to \$2 per member per annum directly to NAMC in addition to contributing to FEZANA—**Adapt** to changes in the new environment/purpose. We need to provide Fellowships to young Mobeds to enhance their education. While FEZANA does fundraising for charitable causes and scholarships, most of their other activities are cultural.

## Invest in your Clergy

If we want our next generation of Mobeds to be **Adept** and excel in performing ceremonies, preaching, and become community leaders we must start investing in them today.

## NAMC PROPOSAL

I proposed these concepts at the last FEZANA meeting in Orange County, CA, in 2018 and, not surprisingly, there was an immediate push back. Part of it is understandable because NAMC/Mobeds are asking for more autonomy from the association's executive committees. But what was even more surprising was that some presidents wanted business and marketing plans for contributing this small amount to NAMC.

I believe it is reasonable to disagree with our proposals but contributing \$1-2/member/year, which is less than the cost of half a cup of latte, does not in my humble opinion, require a business or marketing plan. It requires a change in Attitude towards contributing for religious activities/Mobeds. It may also suggest apathy towards religious causes.

NAMC continues to evolve. We are instituting better governance. For example, on any major issue we try to build consensus, and if that is not possible, we look for a super-majority vote. We believe in a system of checks and balances both within our organization and with those we serve (Associations). We are a service organization and will treat the users of the services (Behdins and Ostas) with utmost respect and as if they were our only and best client.

Our guiding principles and mission will remain unchanged regardless of whether associations contribute or not. NAMC and Mobeds will continue to provide free services to anyone who cannot afford to pay for any service. With Ahura Mazda's blessings four associations and several benevolent Behdins and Ervads have contributed towards our cause of educating young Mobeds and educational seminars. However, if we do not institutionalize our funding activities, our religious survival and/or growth may be in peril. A possible alternative could be direct contributions to NAMC by Association members (vs. boards). The vast majority of Behdins and Ostas treat their Mobeds with utmost respect.

## CONCLUSION

NAMC needs help and support from all knowledgeable mobeds (conservative or liberals), Mobedyars, Ostas, Behdins and non-Zarathushtri scholars to further our cause. To become more efficient and effective, we must establish institutions and form organizational structures that will best position us for growth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There must be some chain of command.

Respect is earned not given, but mutual respect is key to success in any organization. We are Zarathushtri first and Behdin/Osta/Mobed second.

Our religion can survive and prosper in North America based on our ability to continually adapt and work as a team and become adept at doing that. We could disagree on some issues, but we must never be disagreeable.

NAMC's commitment to our community is steadfast and unconditional. We just hope that our community can reciprocate this.

Lastly, I recall what late Dasturji Navroze D. Minocheher- Homji said to me many times:

Any problem big or small can be solved when women and men with two key attributes come together—Asneh Kheradi (innate wisdom), and Gosho Sruteh Kheradi (wisdom acquired through knowledge).

—from *Doa Naam Setaayeshne*.

I hope that such men and women from our community can come together for the furtherance of our religion, and prosperity of all Zarathushtris.

*Dr. Arda-e-viraf Minocher Minocherhomjee is a Founding and Managing Partner of Chicago Growth Partners, a private equity firm managing \$1.2 billion in assets. Prior to founding CGP, he was a Managing Director of William Blair Capital Partners and Head of William Blair's Health Care Research and was involved in IPO/secondary offerings. He was a Wall Street Journal All Star Analyst in both the medical device and the pharmaceutical sectors. Arda received a M.Sc. in Pharmacology from the University of Toronto and a Ph.D./M.B.A. from University of British Columbia and was a post-doctoral fellow in pharmacology at the University of Washington Medical School. He was the recipient of several scholarships including Tata, Connaught Laboratories, and Canadian Heart Foundation.*

*Arda-e-viraf was ordained Navar and Maratab in Navsari. Arda is serving as the President of the North American Mobeds Council and provides volunteer priestly services to Zoroastrians in the US and Western Canada.*

## THE ROLE OF ZOROASTRIAN PRIESTS AND THE DELIVERY OF PRIESTLY SERVICES FROM ACHAEMENIAN TIMES TO PRESENT DAY INDIA

Mobed CAWAS DESAI

The history of the Zoroastrian priesthood prior to the Achaemenian Dynasty is shrouded in mystery since no information exists other than what appears in the Shah Nameh or from our Yashts. During the Peshdadian Dynasty, Priest-Kings ruled the nation and Shahs Jamshed and Faredoon are household names. During the Kayanian Dynasty, it is said that Zarathushtra endowed Peshotan, son of Shah Gushtasp with all religious knowledge, and we remember Dastur Peshotan in our prayers.



In our scriptures, Zarathushtra is sometimes referred to as a Maghavan. In the Rig Veda, Indra is invoked as bestowing “magha” and stating, “I am a Maghavan.” In the Avesta, Ahura Mazda and Shah Gushtasp are referred to as possessors of *magha* and therefore, being Maghavan. It seems that the term Maghavan later became associated with Magoi and then Magus and Magi. Zarathushtra is thought to have been a Magus. After Zarathushtra, Magian priests headed Zoroastrianism, and the greatest of them was Saena, after whom the Saen Baj, performed for 52 consecutive days to avert and protect against calamities, is named. We invoke the name of Saena son of Ahum Satud when we recite his name in our Afringan prayers and pray “May we be united with the Farohar of Saena son of Ahum Satud.”

Several millennia after the establishment of Zoroastrianism, the Medes conquered Chaldea in 2458 BCE. During this period, Zoroastrianism heavily influenced the Median tribes who had moved eastwards around the Caspian Sea and settled in the valleys of the Zagros Mountains. History makes no further mention of Zoroastrianism or the Magi till we come to the 9th century BC, when we find Zoroastrianism flourishing in the Median Kingdom.

The word *Magus* appears in Old Persian, Elamite, Akkadian, Aramaic, Parthian, and Sassanian documents as well as in texts of classical antiquity. According to Herodotus, the Magi were one of six Median tribes and formed the hereditary priestly clan. However, some scholars have suggested that it was “an aboriginal addition to Median society.” Other scholars contend that the term *magu* signified a member of a particular social class in the proto-Iranian language and preserved that meaning also in the Avesta, and the Magi became the priestly class in Media. In the Avesta, *Maghavan* denotes liturgical purity. Be that as it may, it should be noted that the Avesta does not reference the Magi as priests, as priests are referred to as *Athravans*.

There are differing opinions as to when the Magi adopted Zoroastrianism. Some scholars consider that the Magi were the original followers of Zarathushtra, whereas others believe that it is highly likely that the Magi became Zoroastrians much later and that the supreme state god of the Medes was Mithra, not Ahura Mazda. Still others contend that at the beginning of their activities the Magi were not representatives of any religion but experts in rituals and professional priests who served the cult of any Iranian gods for pay. Thus, they became principal authors of the religious syncretism that was Mazdaism. In any event, it is possible that they constituted a hereditary priesthood, like the Levites in ancient Israel, and formed the sacerdotal group in Media.

The earliest mention of a Magus is in the trilingual inscriptions of Darius the Great at Behistun, according to which, in 522 BCE, Gaumata, a *magu*, claimed to be Bardiya son of Cyrus and usurped the royal power. Herodotus mentions this individual under the name Smerdis, calling him a *magos*. According to Herodotus, Cambyses had installed him as steward of his household. Later, when Cambyses was in Egypt, this Smerdis impersonated Cyrus’ son who bore the same name, but who had already been murdered secretly by the order of Cambyses. Thus, he usurped the throne of the Persian kings.

Pliny the Elder is quoted by Professor A.V.W. Jackson that “The Magi hold the fortress of Pasargadae in which is the

tomb of Cyrus and that the Magians were hereditary guardians of the tomb, dwelling near it, and offering a sheep a day, and a horse each month, as sacrifice.” Herodotus adds that no sacrifices could be offered by the Persians without the presence of a Magus who performed the appropriate rites and chanted hymns of the birth of the gods.

From the time of Darius I, the Magi were the official priests of the Achaemenid kings and played an important role at the royal court and enjoyed great influence. Along with their religious functions, they were also engaged in administrative and economic activities. Xenophon writes that the kings followed their instructions in religious matters. The Magi were not only expert performers of worship rites but also tutors and teachers of the sons of the Persian kings and took part in the coronation ceremonies of each new king. When the Persian soldiers carried the sacred flame on silver altars in front of the troops, the Magi proceeded behind them singing ancient hymns. Xerxes did not undertake any important decisions without preliminary advice of the Magi. They interpreted his dreams and gave him prophecies; they also accompanied the Persian army on campaigns with the sacred fire. Upon orders of Xerxes, they also performed libations to the sea in the Hellespont, brought 1,000 oxen as an offering to the “heroes,” and sacrificed white horses to the Scamander River for good omens.

Apart from their priestly duties, the Magi were also known to practice medicine. The physicians were divided into three groups: surgeons, physicians who worked with herbal medicine, and physicians who treated with holy words. These physicians were selected from Zoroastrian priests and included some of the first psychiatrists in history. Xenophon relates that the Greek soldiers who served under Cyrus found sufficient numbers of physicians in Babylonian villages to treat the wounded warriors. Texts describe how physicians used medicine and prayers in order to restore the invalid to health.



The Babylonian scholar-priest Berosus, records that Artaxerxes II (Mnemon 404 – 359 BCE) was the first to make cult statues of divinities and had them placed in temples in many of the major cities of the empire. Berosus also substantiated Herodotus when the latter says the Persians knew of no images of gods until Artaxerxes II erected those images. On the means of sacrifice, Herodotus adds “they raise no altar, light no fire, pour no libations. What altars there were, were in the open, mostly on hill tops.” Influenced by the Magi, the iconography of the Zoroastrian religion began to change. Altars with wood-burning fires appeared within the confines of temples. Such altars and services at which libations are poured began to be developed in the 5th century BC and are clearly identifiable with modern Zoroastrian rituals.

In their role as official priests the Magi appear not only in Persepolis itself, but also throughout all southwestern Iran. Images of the Magi are seen on seal impressions on clay tablets from Persepolis. These seals show two priests, under the emblem of the *Farohar*, holding a mortar and pestle before a fire altar. A fire altar with two attending Magi is depicted on a relief from the 5th century BC found in Daskyleion, the capital of Phrygia, in Asia Minor, where they appear dressed in tunic and trousers, covering noses and mouths.

The names of some of the Magi may be of interest. One of them is named Yazata, while another magus by the name

Irdazana bears the title *pirramasda*, meaning “outstanding memorizer.” In all probability, this title designated the Magi who knew religious hymns by heart. The Magus Ukpish was issued twelve measures of grain, three for cultic libations and three each for the worship of Mithra, as well as for a mountain and for a river . This same Ukpish is referred to as *haturmaksha*, which means “one who makes good treatment,” referencing a physician.

During the Achaemenian period, some Magi migrated westward, settling in Greece and then Italy. When Mithraism became the most prominent and single largest religion in the Roman Empire, the Magi were heavily involved in its practice. In the Old Testament Book of Jeremiah, the chief magus was called *rab mag*. It is believed that the Jewish prophet Daniel was rab mag and entrusted with a messianic vision to be announced as a star to a secret sect of the Magi.

In 330 BCE, Alexander the Macedonian brought down the curtain on the Achaemenian Empire which, at its height, encompassed the Greek Islands, Libya, Egypt, and Sudan; all the lands east of the Danube (corrupted from the Persian *Danae Aab*, Waters of the Danae) in Hungary; to those lands west of the Indus River in Pakistan; and to the lands west of Mongolia, including Kirgizstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan. The Magi played a key role in the administration of this vast empire, which was not equaled until the British established their empire some 2,000 years later. Alexander attempted to destroy Persian culture through the forcible mass marriages of Persian women to Greek soldiers, but it is the attempted destruction of the Zoroastrian religion, its clergy, and its writings that earned him the sobriquet, “The Accursed” a title shared only with Ahriman.

After the Greek Interregnum, the extension of the activities of the Magi to Chorasmia, Bactria, and other regions of Central Asia is known during the Parthian period. According to Strabo, who called the Magi *pyraethi* (fire-keepers), the fire cult of the Magi was widespread in Cappadocia. It is believed that due to the difficulty of maintaining a perpetual hearth fire in the home, Zoroastrian communities developed community fire houses that housed an ever-burning flame tended at all hours by the Magi or fire keepers. Whenever needed, homeowners would light their house fires from the central community fire. In later times, these fire houses were called *Atash-gahs* and the fire keepers called *athravans*, a task that became part of the Magi’s profession. Strabo further writes that their fire altars were in sacred places inside enclosures where the Magi kept the fire ever burning. During the service they held before the fire bundles of rods and wore high turbans over their heads.

Except for sporadic references, the Zoroastrian priesthood and the Magi disappeared from history until the three Magi are seen at the birth of Christ.



History records that during the five centuries of Parthian rule there were a variety of religious sects and practices concerning the worship of several deities with Greco-Iranian features and nomenclature, most famous being Verethragna-Heracles, Tir-Apollo, and Anahita-Athena. The early Parthians followed a policy of tolerance toward all sects and creeds and the religious customs of their citizens. The Magi reappear during the rule of Vologeses (Valaksh I CE 51 to 80), when the scattered Avestan texts began to be gathered and recompiled. In the first two centuries CE, there is a noticeable change on the part of the Parthian monarchy in favoring Zoroastrianism. In any event, long before the Parthian Dynasty gave way to the Sassanians, in fact, at the time of the birth of Christ, Zoroastrianism, in one form or another, was the most prevalent religion in the then known world.



From the time that the Atash-gahs were established, they became community meeting places where the priests became familiar with the community's problems. In time, the priests were called upon to mediate disputes, which gave rise to the Magi acting as Judges and the title of *Dastur* (judge) evolved.

With the founding of the Sassanian dynasty by Ardeshir Papakan in CE 224, the Magi once again gained prominence. The priesthood of the Magi, which supported the Royal authority, constituted a powerful estate of Iranian society. They introduced the concept of *Mobed Shaahi*, the coalition of Kings and Mobeds, whereby the priestly class managed all religious affairs including the recovery and editing of lost Zoroastrian scriptures, building Fire Temples, prescribing calendars and managing the overall affairs of religious practices and their propagation. They exerted considerable influence over the Royal Courts and the general affairs of the country. The Magi had their own lands in Media and were exempt from paying the head tax. Zoroastrian priests taught at the Academy of Gundeshapur, established by Shapur I, which became the intellectual center of the Sassanian Empire, and which had a teaching hospital and a center of higher learning.

The three most famous of our fires were enthroned in fire-temples during this era. The most famous was Atash Burzin Meher, said to have been brought by Zarathushtra from Ahura Mazda, followed by Atash Farnbag, the fire of the priestly estate, and Atash Gushnasp, the fire of the warriors.

For the first time, the title of *Herbad* appears among the Magi. Ardeshir I had sought the aid of Tansar, a Magian Herbad, to legitimize his claim to the throne, and thereafter bestowed on him the title of *Mobed* or High Priest. It was Tansar who finally collated the scattered Avestan fragments and compiled the Avesta as we know it today.

Tansar was followed by his disciple and student Kartir, who was given the title of *Mobed-e-Mobedan* or Chief Priest by Shapur I. Kartir tried to establish militant Zoroastrian orthodoxy as the state church of Iran and spread it among the Hellenized Magi in Asia Minor. He also struggled against other religious doctrines. He is the only priest who had his image carved on the rock reliefs at Naksh-e-Rajab.



Two other personages who lived during the Sassanian Era are worthy of note. Arda Viraf was said to have undertaken an out-of-body journey into the afterlife and described Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory on his return. It has been debated by scholars if the Book of Arda Viraf was the basis for Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

Adarbad Marespand was the *Mobed-e-Mobedan* during the reign of Shapur II (CE 325–379) and his prime minister. The compilation of our prayers into the Pazand language is attributed to him. It is said that to refute the rising influence of militant Byzantine Christianity and to prove the authenticity of his work, Adarbad had molten metal poured on his chest, from which he emerged unscathed. The names of both Arda Viraf and Adarbad Marespand are remembered in our prayers.

The Arab conquest of Iran in CE 651 led to the decline of Zoroastrianism. To impose Islam, the old culture and religion had to be destroyed and the first targets were the libraries. When the Arab commander, Saad ibn-e Abi Vaghas, faced the library of Ctesiphon, he wrote to Omar, "What should be done about the books?" Omar wrote back,

“If the books contradict the Koran, they are blasphemous and on the other hand if they are in agreement with the text of the Koran, then they are not needed, as for us only the Koran is sufficient. Destroy them!”<sup>6</sup> By the order of another Arab ruler, Ghotaibeh ibn-e Moslem, those who were literate, all historians, writers, and mobeds were massacred and their books burned so that after one generation the people were illiterate. Consequently, very little information about the Zoroastrians and their priesthood survives.

To safeguard the religion, a group of Zoroastrians left their motherland of Iran for India. The exodus from Iran probably took place in the 9th century, the exact date being subject to much speculation and debate. A group of Iranians moved from Nishapur to the island of Hormuz. After three years' preparation, about 18,000 Zoroastrians set sail landing on the island of Diu. They stayed there for 19 years before gaining refuge in a village in Gujarat in AD 839, which they named Sanjan after the Fort of the same name in Khorrasan. There were several priests in the group of refugees, one of whom, according to oral tradition, was a lady named Testar. However, the three best known were Mobed Shapur son of Mobed Sheriar, Mobed Hormazdiar son of Ervad Ramyar, and the leader, Dastur Nairyosangh Dhaval, all whose names are revered in our prayers. These priests established the Iranshah fire about five years after coming to Sanjan, and all of today's Parsi priests claim descent from one of these three. “Following upon this noteworthy event, for a period of seven centuries, the History of the Parsees remains a complete and pathetic blank”<sup>7</sup>.

In the mid-sixteenth century, Dastur Azar Kaiwan an Iranian priest and mystic came to India to teach spiritual progress and salvation to his chosen disciples. It is said that the Emperor Akbar himself visited him. One of his most advanced disciples was Dastur (Mahiyar) Meherji Vatcha, son of Rana Jesung.

Meherji was invited to the court of Akbar where he expounded on the Zoroastrian religion, which influenced Akbar's religious doctrine of *Din-e-Ilahi* and thereafter Akbar charged Abul Fazl, his Prime Minister, to ensure that a fire was kept perpetually burning in the Court in Fatehpur Sikri.

After returning to Navsari, Meherji was unanimously elected as the Dastur and Head Priest of the Parsis in India and adopted the name Meherji Rana.

As the Parsi population increased and shifted to nearby villages, the need for priests followed. One of these places was the village of Nagamandal, later changed to Navsari by the Parsi inhabitants. When Sanjan was attacked by the Muslim army the Iranshah fire was shifted to the caves near the Fort of Barhad till Changa Asa of Navsari persuaded the Sanjana priests to bring the Iranshah to Navsari in 1416 CE. Thereafter, Navsari became the religious nerve center of the Parsi priesthood.

As the workload of the Priests increased, the Bhagaria priests who had previously divided their work amongst the five Navsari priestly families entered into an agreement with the three Sanjana families who had accompanied Iranshah, that the right to perform all ceremonies except the “Boi” of Iranshah was the exclusive domain of the Bhagaria priests. After 200 years, as the size of the Sanjana priests increased, they found it difficult to sustain themselves merely on the income of the Boi ceremony of Iranshah. They broke the agreement with the Bhagaria priests and started performing other ceremonies, which eventually resulted in Iranshah being brought to Udvada in 1742 CE.

Since that time there has not been any priest recognized as the Head Priest of the Parsis in India.

Following the establishment of trading centers by the Portuguese and British, Parsis began to move away from their pastoral lives and migrated to the towns and cities. In time, the Parsis became traders and amassed large fortunes principally in the opium trade with China. As their wealth grew, they established fire temples and sent for priests to attend them. This was the heyday of the Parsi priesthood.

A pious priest of the late 18th century, was fondly known as Dastur Pesuji. It is said that the Nawab of Surat had asked many physicians and holy men to cure his daughter, who was possessed by evil forces and had become very violent. All had failed and as a final resort, the Nawab sought the aid of Dastur Pesuji. When the Nawab's daughter was cured, the Nawab became very favorably disposed toward the Parsis of Surat.

The model of delivering priestly services underwent a paradigm shift from the mid-19th century. As urbanization increased, the number of priests in the cities grew to such an extent that their financial livelihood began to be adversely affected. Amongst the generation of Parsis of that time, the priesthood was not looked upon as a prestigious vocation, and with very few exceptions, it was the sons of the poorest families, and the least educated, who were inducted into the priesthood. Consequently, religious knowledge in the priesthood began to erode. The community has since then consistently refused to look upon priests as the elders of society and just as consistently refused to pay them adequately for their services. A situation for which the Parsi community was and still is entirely to blame. The laity has no compunction in spending obscene amounts of money for decoration and food on Navjotes and weddings, but when it comes to giving the *ashodad* to the performing priests, money becomes tight! As a staffer for the recently instituted Parsi Resource Group put it, “we’ve paid priests a peon’s wage and we want them to deliver what a CEO does.”

An incident from the mid-1950s will give you an idea how the community turned its back on the priesthood. When the Bhagarsath Anjuman Trust was executed in the early 1700s, the stipend of Meherji Rana was fixed at Rs. 300 a month which included Rs. 100 per month for the maintenance of the *Varasia*, a princely sum in those days. However, that stipend had not increased in over 200 years. Meherji Rana approached the Trustees and they unanimously agreed that the stipend should be raised as did the Charity Commissioner. However, to legalize the increase, it had to be advertised in the local papers. One individual, who would later become a Trustee of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat, objected and the increase fell through. Undeterred, the Trustees raised the maintenance of the *Varasia* to Rs. 1,500 a month, and since this amount was not “locked in” by the Trust, it was implemented. The Charity Commissioner, a Bengali gentleman, remarked that the community placed a higher value on the bull than on its High Priest!

With the purse strings being controlled by a laity, which is more and more devoid of religious knowledge, the underpaid priests have been forced to accede to the wishes and whims of the laity. The Bombay Parsi Panchayat, arguably the apex body in India, has seen fit to indulge in expensive litigation and behavior which has brought disgrace and ridicule to a once proud community. With no hierarchy in the priesthood, there is no unanimity among the Head Priests, leading to sometimes contrary pronouncements.

In conclusion, the words of the late John Hinnels, “Any Parsi who thinks his faith is not facing a terrific threat is just blind. It is not just the decrease in numbers, it is the problems of urbanization... A secular state is a much greater threat to any religion than persecution.”

(Endnotes)

- 1 American Journal of Psychiatry March 2012.
- 2 Erich Friedrich Schmidt, “Persepolis: Contents of the Treasury and Other Discoveries”.
- 3 Mary Boyce, “A History of Zoroastrianism”.
- 4 Ilya Gershevitch, “The Cambridge History of Iran”.
- 5 Hallock, Persepolis Foundation Tablet 1955.
- 6 Gergie Zeidan, “History of Islamic Civilization, Persian translation of Kashf el Zonoun- Eben-e Khaldoun, by Haj Khalifeh”.
- 7 Rustom Paymaster, “Early History of the Parsees in India”.

*Cawas Desai was the Founding President of the Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey (ZAPANJ) and continues to actively participate in their monthly adult religion classes. Cawas was one of the first Office Bearers of the North American Mobeds Council and has presented papers at NAMC seminars and at North American congresses. Although born in Bombay, Cawas’ family hails from Navsari, where the Polia Desai’s are ex-officio trustees and Akabar’s of the Navsari Bhagarsath Anjuman and where he was initiated as a Navar in the Vadi Dare Meher, the oldest existing fire temple in India. Cawas is a student of the Zarthoshti religion, particularly its history and evolution.*

## THE ROLE OF ZOROASTRIAN PRIESTS AND THE DELIVERY OF PRIESTLY SERVICES IN IRAN AFTER THE ARAB CONQUEST

**D**r. Mehraban Pouladi of Tehran, Iran notes an event in the year 193 YZ (CE 724), during which the city of Yazd had become a place of refuge for the Zarthoshtis. Dastoor Bondaar was one of the senior priests there. He and two of his co-workers had been arrested and threatened to convert to Islam with their followers. After much pleading and explaining that they were serving a pious religion that believed in One God but, at the same time, declaring that their lives were free to be taken but not their religion—the three were cut into pieces.

Another incident describes the events when a group of Zarthoshtis, along with their priests, were taken to the court of King Mahmoud Gaznavi and ordered to convert, *en masse* to Islam. The senior priests explained the merits of our religion as one of Righteousness, introduced by God's Messenger Zarathushtra, its main aim being to bring happiness and progress to this world. It occurred to Sultan Mahmoud to find a just way out and he demanded that they prove that they could be saved by a miracle. In a secluded garden, facilities for the performance of a Yazasne ritual were provided. Under the watchful eyes of the Royal Court and the Arab army, the Yazasne was performed and impressed the onlookers. However, two days and nights passed without any miracle and the Zarthoshtis became panicky. Then at dawn, when the

eight Yazasnegar priests had started the Yazasne, a miracle took place soon after sunrise. A dense black cloud covered the sky and the entire area was covered in darkness. The panicked priests started to search for the cause. The Sraoshaverez, the Chief Priest, found a hair from the beard of the Zaotar on the Mahrui which held the Baresman. This blunder was soon remedied and the Yazasne restarted. The dark cloud soon disappeared, and sunshine beamed. This respect for purity, cleanliness, and our honouring of contracts and loyalty to king and country convinced the King that we should be allowed to live in peace and keep our religion.

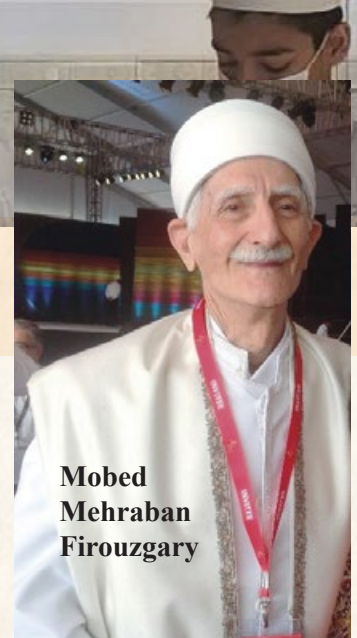
Other learned Iranian priests have devoutly and meticulously preserved our religion and its cultural values as close to the teachings of Prophet Zarathushtra as possible. They have refrained from imposing, or demanding, a fixed share of Behdins' income for their personal or religious use. In the old days they were content with the *Ashodad*, or payment in kind, which they received, and even now the payment that they receive constitutes a miserly amount when compared to the sums that are lavished in entertaining the invitees. They have ensured that our Fire Temples and other pilgrimage places are devoid of glittering and wasteful decoration while remaining spiritually uplifting.

After the Arab conquest

till the advent of Maneckji Hataria Limji, our priestly class had neither the power nor court support or the courage to dictate anything to the laity. Amongst themselves they had their seniors, the learned and learners who memorized our scriptures, preserving and rewriting manuscripts. Despite dire consequences, the priests found ways and means of travelling to India to impart religious knowledge to the Parsees and finance the writing of the "*Rivayats*."

After Maneckji Hataria brought the attention of our religion to the royal courts, a Community Representative to the Royal Courts was allowed for presenting complaints. The chosen Dastur had no access to the Royal Court but only to local governors and senior mullahs. Our Mobeds now had the opportunity to travel to India to better their prospects.

During the Pahlavi regime the pressure over minorities began to diminish. Eventually, religious leaders were invited to the Royal Court for coronations and annual festive celebrations. It was then that the title of Mobed-e-Mobedan and a dress code, appropriate for the Royal Court was instituted. The dress code that evolved was reminiscent of the Sassanid court. A ceremonial shawl, like the ones donned by the Parsee High Priests was also used. Until the 1979 Islamic revolution, this dress code was restricted to the Mobed-e-Mobedan and was worn only on high profile formal



**Mobed  
Mehraban  
Firouzgary**

occasions.

With the appointment of a Mobed-e-Mobedan, all priestly and community problems and disputes were settled by an elected body of priests, called "*Kankash*" and later on "*Anjoman-e-Mobedan*." All edicts, disputes and their resolution were announced only through the Mobed who had been elected as the President of the Anjoman-e-Mobedan. After the passing away of the last Mobed-e-Mobedan, Jehangir Oshidary, that title was abolished.

*Mobed Mehraban Frouzgary, is the head Mobed of the Tehran Anjuman and is a member of the Board of Directors (Managing committee) of the Tehran Anjuman e Mobedan having been elected repeatedly for over 30 years. He has been authorized by the Iranian ministry of justice as the sole Zarthushti marriage license issuing authority in Tehran.. Born in Yazd, he received his Electronic degree from St. Xavier's Technical Institute in Mumbai and worked at J.N.Marshall in India and IBM, Honeywell as medical instrument distributor and as consultants to several glass manufacturing plants in Iran.*

## A NEW MODEL OF DELIVERING PRIESTLY SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY *MOBEDI (ZOROASTRIAN PRIESTLY SERVICES) IN NORTH AMERICA THROUGH THE EYES OF AN OLD MOBED*

**MOBED SOLI P. DASTUR**

### **SOME PERSONAL BACKGROUND AS A MOBED IN NORTH AMERICA**

I was born and raised in an Udvada Dastur family in Tarapore, Maharashtra State, India. My father, Mobed Pirojshah Kawasji Dastoor, was the village Panthaki for almost 100 Parsi families. I attended M.F. Cama Athornan Institute and was ordained as a full-fledged Mobed with Navar, Martab, and Samel in the Udvada Iranshah Atash Behram.

After SSC (high school), two years in St. Xavier College in Mumbai, and four years in Chemical Engineering in University Department of Chemical Technology in Matunga, Mumbai, I came to the United States in September 1960 to attend Graduate School in Northwestern University, Evanston, IL. During my four years in Evanston, I knew only two other Parsis and some families in Chicago who graciously invited me for a Parsi dinner during our Nowruz celebrations.

In 1964, I joined the Procter & Gamble Co. (P&G) in Cincinnati, Ohio, as a Research Chemical Engineer. I met Jo Ann on a blind date and we married in 1966. Our marriage was not well-received by my Mobed family in India, but it softened when we visited them in 1967. In Cincinnati, at that time, I heard about one Parsi lady but never met her. Our twin daughters, Shirin and Anahita, were born in 1968 and we visited our family in India with them in 1972. The twins were a hit with my family and most of them accepted us with open arms.

During the 1980s, a few Parsi families settled in Cincinnati and we had a few gatherings to celebrate Nowruz. I never publicized my Mobed background and most of our Parsi friends in Cincinnati did not know that I was a full-fledged Mobed. The first occasion for me to perform a ceremony was in 1975 when my dear eldest brother's family was visiting us in Cincinnati and my brother passed away due to a massive heart attack. I performed his *Geh Saarnaa* (Funeral Service) ceremony.

I participated in my first Jashan ceremony in North America (Toronto) during 1986 by celebrating the wedding of my dear brother Mobed Palanji's sister-in-law's son. Then, one of our Parsi family's friends learned that I am a Mobed and requested me to perform their first daughter's Navjote in Cincinnati, which I did with my brother Palanji. The word spread and I performed a few Jashan and Navjote ceremonies in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Lexington, Kentucky.

P&G transferred me for three years to Brussels, Belgium in 1990. During these years, I had no Zarathushtris to communicate with except my first cousin in Basel, Switzerland, and I did no Mobedi during those years. On



return to the U.S. in 1993, I was assigned to our office in Fayetteville, Arkansas, to work with our biggest customer, Walmart. In July of that year, my brother Palanji's son died of a massive stroke in Boca Raton, Florida; Jo Ann and I went there and I performed his *Geh Saarnaa* with Mobed Darabshah Unwalla. This was the start of my contacts as a Mobed with our South Florida Humdins. The same year, P&G offered their first ever "Golden Hand Shake" (retirement package), as I accepted the retirement and moved to Sarasota, Florida, where we built our Hira Villa home. While there, I joined the Partnering Group as a Partner for five years as a consultant to grocery chains and mass merchandisers.

After having left India 34 years ago, my Mobedi started in earnest in 1994 in South Florida, where I served the Tampa Bay, Orlando, and Miami/Ft. Lauderdale/Boca Raton areas. Many of my Mobed friends came to large North American metropolitan areas like New York, Toronto, Chicago, and Houston where there were already many Zarathushtri families—they immediately started their North American Mobedi.

### **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDI MODEL**

During 1960–1994, many Parsis/Iranis came to North America from India, Pakistan, and Iran and started Zoroastrian associations in the largest cities. Thanks to the outstanding generosity of Arbab Guiv and his wife, Moravarid, Dar-e-Mehers were started in New

York, Toronto, Chicago, and other large cities. Most of them were in houses or old churches/synagogues, but Chicago, under the able leadership of Rohinton and Roshan Rivetna, built the first North American Dar-e-Meher from scratch, which was quite an achievement. All these Dar-e-Mehers have small Daadgaahs (Sanctum Sanctorum) with large halls adjacent to them for ceremonies and social gatherings. This is remarkably different from the Dar-e-Mehers in India/Pakistan/Iran where the entire building is the Dar-e-Meher. **For the miniscule North American Zoroastrian community, this was quite an achievement.**

Most of the Mobeds in North America at that time were graduates of Andheri Cama or Dadar Athornan Institutes and were, generally, full-fledged Mobeds. They came to North America from India and Pakistan for higher education after a minimum bachelor's degree and, after graduation, became gainfully employed professionals in their own field (engineers, Doctors, accountants, etc.) and most of them did not need money to perform ceremonies for Behdins, but performed Mobedi **as their bounden duty.**

Behdins requested Mobeds to perform ceremonies like Jashans, Navjotes, weddings usually in their homes, if possible, or for large gatherings, they were performed in Dar-e-Mehers, hotels, parks, or similar venues.

## **THERE WAS NO FORMAL MODEL FOR MOBEDI IN NORTH AMERICA**

Most of the Behdins generously gave Ashodad (monetary or other rewards for the prayers) to Mobeds for conducting the ceremonies. Some Mobeds respectfully declined it, a few accepted it but would donate it to their own preferred charities, usually Zoroastrian. Others would accept the remuneration as they needed it for their own benefit. If a senior Mobed forewent Ashodad, then all other Mobeds felt awkward in accepting it. This was not necessarily good for those Mobeds who needed Ashodad.

There was no set scale or rule for how much to give to the Mobeds for their services. Most Mobeds felt awkward about asking for a specific amount of money for their services and most of the Behdins had no idea of how much to give.

For me, an extreme case happened when a friend's friend requested me to perform a Jashan in his home. Jo Ann and I had to drive 7+ hours one way to get to his home with all the Jashan paraphernalia and for Ashodad, he gave me an envelope with \$50—which did not even cover the gas both ways for our car!

Some Mobeds spelled out what was expected for performing ceremonies out of town, to which many Behdins

complained that the amounts were a little too much.

Around the '90s, the first generation of North American Mobeds' sons wanted to become Mobeds. The only way that could happen was to take them to Mumbai, usually spending four to six weeks under the tutelage of a Panthaki Saheb to learn to read a few Yasna Has and become Navar in Panthaki's Atashkadeh. This model is still followed for the sons of North American Mobeds because, currently, there are no facilities in North America to ordain a Navar. On their return, these young Navars participate in the ceremonies with our experienced Mobeds who coach them in prayers, ceremonies, and rituals.

Approximately three years ago, Chicago Mobeds created an Ashodad scale for performing various ceremonies and ZAC Chicago Executives and Anjuman accepted it. At the 2018 NAMC AGM in Washington D.C., this Ashodad scale was revised and additional inner and outer liturgical rates were added. This scale is available on the NAMC website (<http://namcmobeds.org/>).

**It is a suggested scale and is not mandatory** and some Behdin families may not be able to afford these fees, especially if more than two Mobeds participate in the ceremonies. NAMC and FEZANA have distributed this scale to all North American Associations.

## **NAMC MOBEDIYAR PROGRAM**

Distribution of Mobeds throughout North America is spotty. In large metropolitan areas like Toronto, there are over 40 Mobeds; whereas in some remoter areas, like Seattle or Vancouver, British Columbia, no Mobeds are available. During the '90s, some Humdins and their Zoroastrian Associations approached NAMC with a request to learn and perform some outer Zoroastrian ceremonies like Jashans and obsequies—**in the absence of any Mobeds.**

NAMC started a *Mobedyar* (a Mobed's helper) program to train a Behdin (or a Mobed family Humdin) volunteer in a community that does not have a Mobed available to perform specific ceremonies like Jashan and obsequies. A program was put together by Mobeds Jehan Bagli, Adi Unwalla, and Behram Panthaki and they trained three or four Behdin volunteers to be Mobedyars.

At the 2008 NAMC AGM, a motion was made and passed to also train women Humdins to be Mobedyars. Many men and women volunteers from many NA associations came forward to become Mobedyars, some from Associations that already had practising Mobeds.

## **THIS WAS NOT THE ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF THE NAMC MOBEDIYAR PROGRAM.**

So, NAMC created an official Mobedyar Program

Manual, which was unanimously passed at its 2011 AGM. Pursuant to the manual, if a local FEZANA Association determines there is a need to have a Mobedyar approved due to the unavailability of a Mobed and they have a suitable volunteer, the local Association's president may formally request the NAMC president in writing for permission to train their volunteer as a Mobedyar. NAMC will then evaluate the request and, if it meets the NAMC Mobedyar Manual guidelines, selects an NAMC Mobed to train the Mobedyar candidate.

The last two Mobedyars were from ZSWS, Seattle, Washington, and ZAMWI, Washington D.C. and were trained by Mobed Soli P. Dastur via video conferencing. As required by the NAMC Mobedyar Manual, another NAMC Mobed examined these Mobedyars when they were ready and passed them as Mobedyars. Their official initiation per the NAMC Mobedyar Manual were performed in their respective home Associations.

## **THESE TWO MOBEDIYARS HAVE BEEN TRUE MODELS AND ARE SERVING THEIR ASSOCIATIONS VERY WELL.**

### **Consecrated Atashkadeh in North America**

OZCF, Toronto, and ZAH, Houston, are in the process of building a consecrated Atashkadeh, which will house a facility for performing Barashnum and the ordination of a Mobed's young son to be a Navar. How long it will take to do so and which Mobeds will be able to perform these ceremonies have yet to be seen. Such a North American facility will be very helpful to the Mobed families who want their sons to be Navar here without taking them to Mumbai. NAMC is deeply involved in this endeavor. The consecrated Atashkadeh will also require a full-time Mobed to perform Boi and Baj ceremonies. The local Association must provide a decent salary and boarding to the full-time Mobed. Other inner liturgies like Yasna and Vendidad will require at least two Mobeds.

This initiative will be a great first step for future Mobedi practice in North America. (*The Bhandara Atash Kadeh in Houston was inaugurated on March 21, 2019, ED. note*)

### **Resident Mobed Initiative**

ZAMWI, Washington, D.C. has a resident Mobed since January 2019. As mentioned above, the local Association must provide a decent salary and boarding to such a full-time Mobed. (*See page 39*)

### **CURRENT MOBEDI MODEL IN NA**

#### **In truth, there is no current Mobedi Model in North America.**

Currently, there are 26 Zoroastrian Associations in NA; 11 of them have a Dar-e-Meher that is managed by the Association, except ZSO, Toronto, and ZAGNY, New York, which are managed by a separate group of Trustees. There are Mobeds all over North America in many places. There are Behdins all over North America who want some prayers and ceremonies to be performed and for Mobeds to perform those ceremonies, if available. Most of the Behdins generously reward Mobeds with Ashodad for their prayers. This is a short-term, as-needed, Mobedi Model.

However, for the long run, all Associations should donate to NAMC for the training of young Mobeds and for the education of Behdins and Mobeds. Without donations, the future of North American Mobedi is in jeopardy.

The North American Mobeds may be classified in three groups: The First-Generation North American Mobeds (FGNAM) who came during the '60s and '70s, the Second-Generation (SGNAM) who came during the '80s and '90s, and the Third-Generation (TGNAM) who became Mobeds after 2000 that were usually born in North America and went to India to become Navar.

FGNAM are usually graduates from Andheri or Dadar Athornan Institutes and are mostly full-fledged Mobeds. SGNAM were born in India, some are full-fledged, but most of them are Navars. TGNAM are usually only Navars.

In 10–20 years, no FGNAM will be alive and the other two generations of Mobeds will be left to continue the Mobedi profession in North America.

***It is time that NAMC and North American Zoroastrian Associations think seriously about these issues and establish a workable North American Mobedi Model for the future.***

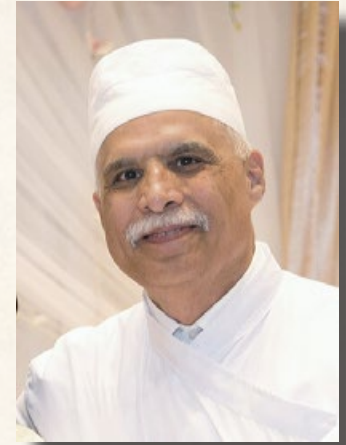
*Soli P. Dastur was the last of 11 children born in Tarapore, a small village in India, to a priestly family from Udwada. Soli was admitted to the M. F. Cama Athornan Institute boarding school where he completed his priestly studies, as well as his high school and S.S.C. examination. During his nine years at the boarding school, Soli completed all the requirements for becoming Navar and Martab and was initiated as a priest in the Holy Iranshah Atash Behram in Udwada. He passed the final examination of Saamel required by all initiated priests from Udwada to perform all inner and outer liturgies.*

*Soli is retired and lives with Jo Ann, his wife of 52 years, in Bradenton, Florida. He has performed religious ceremonies throughout Florida and the U.S. when requested. He is an avid tennis player and dabbles with the computer in his free time.*

## MOBEDS OF THE FUTURE

### A NEW MODEL OF MOBED SERVICES IN NORTH AMERICA

Mobed Tehemton F. Mirza



#### CHANGE IS THE BASIC LAW OF NATURE.

*It is not the most intellectual of the species that survives; it is not the strongest that survives; but the species that survives is the one that is able to adapt to and to adjust best to the changing environment in which it finds itself...*

—Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species*

Applying this concept to us, as Zoroastrians, we can state that our survival depends on our ability to adapt to the changing physical, social, political, moral, and spiritual environment in which we find ourselves. As the practice of Zoroastrianism changes to keep up with times, so should the model of its Mobeds.

#### CHANGING ROLE OF MOBEDS:

Clergy's role in all religious communities have changed, and will continue to change, as human intellect increases, and as secular governments get more involved in the role of communal social welfare. Once a preserve of clergy and religious institutions, secular institutions have assumed the responsibility for social welfare; including education, interpretation of law, dispensation of justice, and caring for the needy. Though the functions of modern clergy remain relevant and essential, they are now restricted largely to presiding over specific rituals, providing leadership on religious matters, studying and teaching religious doctrines, preserving cultural practices, and providing pastoral care to parishioners.

As Zoroastrians from various parts of the world settled in North America, our early settlers wisely decided to shed our regional identifiers (Parsee, Irani, Kurdish etc.) in favour of uniting in our practice of Zoroastrianism under a single banner of "Zarathushtris." Whether we conform to the melting pot approach or we prefer a multi-cultural approach, our traditions, customs, and practices from our country of origin follow us and they need to be recognized, celebrated, and accepted in our new unified Zoroastrian practices. As we unite as Zarthushtis, so should our Mobeds to provide *a single source service* to all North American Zoroastrians.

In addition to the traditional role of recitation of prayers and performance of ceremonies, the new generation of Zoroastrians expect their Mobeds to preach, give sermons, explain the meaning and relevance of our prayers, provide pastoral services, and serve as community leaders. *A tall order for a part-time, largely voluntary Mobed force.*

Thus, delivery of Mobed services should recognize and embrace these new realities. It is essential that Mobeds be an integral part, if not the leaders in establishment of Zoroastrianism in North America by setting the groundwork and leading the necessary change to preserve and propagate Zoroastrianism.

Following fundamental changes are necessary to achieve these objectives:

#### UNIVERSAL PRIESTHOOD:

To be born in an Athornan family is a privilege and a responsibility.. Responsibility of preserving and promoting religion was believed to have been assigned to Athornans (Mobeds) since pre-Zoroastrian times of King Jamshed. Throughout history, Mobeds and their families have considered it an honour to carry out their responsibility and have also suffered its consequences; from their massacre during Alexander's invasion of Iran in 330BCE, to being slaughtered in Iran's post Arab invasion for refusing to convert to Islam, to protecting Iranshah in Bahrot caves in early 1400CE to serving the Zoroastrian community and its institutions during favourable and demanding times. Despite these challenges, the Mobeds and their families remained steadfast in their inherent responsibility. However, in the early to mid 1900s, for various reasons, the young of the then Mobeds were encouraged by their elders to be initiated as Mobeds but to pursue other careers and professions. Though this resulted in a shortage of Mobeds, it generated an unexpected benefit to Zoroastrianism. Highly educated and enterprising young Mobeds settled in North America following their secular studies and founded the Mobed base for the benefit of North American Zoroastrians.

While we promote and celebrate achievements of members of our Mobeds in professions, careers, and businesses of their choice, there should be no reason to not encourage and promote the members of the Behdin (laity)—regardless of their gender, ancestry or background—to take their place in preserving and promoting Zoroastrianism as Mobeds or Mobedyars. If members of Mobed families can be successful in secular careers, Behdins can be equally successful and



effective Mobeds. Zoroastrianism will benefit out of self inspired and dedicated Mobeds and Mobedyars; regardless of their family affiliations. Universal Priesthood, a concept revived by Martin Luther in 1520s, is a necessity for our survival.

A profession is a paid occupation, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification. A calling is a strong urge from the divine or from within oneself towards a way of life to serve others. As it relates to Mobeds, they are not mutually exclusive and could easily overlap. However, calling to serve one's co-religionists should not be exclusive to the hereditary Mobeds. Let any Zoroastrian who is inspired to serve his or her co-religionists and who meets the necessary prerequisites be given equal opportunity to do so.

## **SPECIALIZATION AMONGST MOBEDS:**

The Zoroastrian community expects various services from its Mobeds. It will be efficient to train Mobeds for their specific responsibilities and specialization as the community needs them.

### ***Professional mobeds for inner liturgical ceremonies:***

As North America witnesses the spread of Zoroastrianism and as Atashkadehs and other Zoroastrian places of worship are constructed in various cities, a demand for Mobeds is bound to rise. Zoroastrians' desire to establish consecrated Atashkadehs (*Atash Aderan*) will require full time specialized Yozdathrager Mobeds that are qualified to perform inner liturgical ceremonies like Yazashne, Vendidad, Baj, and regular Boi ceremonies and to attend to the Sacred fire in a prescribed manner. Such Mobeds would need specialized training and higher degree of initiation (*Martab*) to perform their functions. Correspondingly, as Zoroastrians, we should commit resources necessary to train and compensate home grown or imported Mobeds for this role.

### ***"... and a Mobed" for outer liturgical ceremonies:***

Despite their achievements in secular professions (Medicine, Engineering, Accounting, Business, Law, etc.) it is noteworthy that today's Mobeds have provided selfless (often voluntary) services to their community whenever called upon. Encouragement and promotion of this "*professional in his or her field ... and a Mobed*" model will produce religiously dedicated Zoroastrian leadership, while contributing to the betterment of our secular society; a model of which Zarathushtra would be proud. Faced with a severe shortage of clergy in general, many other religions have experimented with this concept and have found significant success.

... and a Mobed is and will continue to be an essential resource for outer liturgical ceremonies (Navjotes, Sudreh Pushi, Wedding, end of life, Pastoral services, etc.). Particularly in remote parts of our country where the Zoroastrian population is very thin, at the best, ... and a Mobed will continue to be a valuable resource for the delivery of essential Zoroastrian services.

### ***Mobedyars as helpers or substitutes:***

NAMC has successfully instituted a Mobedyar program wherein non-Mobeds, regardless of their gender, are trained and initiated to perform certain basic outer liturgical ceremonies as an assistant to or in the absence of a Mobed. Zoroastrian communities, particularly those without Mobeds are well-served by Mobedyars. Mobedyars have proven themselves to be dedicated and committed in their field. Their value could be enhanced by further training and expanding their role in their respective communities.

### ***Academic Mobeds for study, learning and teaching:***

Academically inclined mobeds should be encouraged and supported in their study and research of Zoroastrianism, the interpretation of scriptures, answering religious questions, engaging in interfaith dialogues, and representing Zoroastrianism on national and international stages.

These specializations need not be mutually exclusive and should, in fact, overlap. Academic mobeds, for example, should remain active in their craft by providing religious services to their congregation and remain grounded in basic functions of a mobed.

## **PREPARATION FOR INITIATION:**

The current system of preparation for Mobed initiation involves memorization of certain basic prayers and *Haas* (chapters) of Yazashne to go through the initiation process. Once initiated, most of these prayers and Haas are never used by the Mobed (unless a Professional Mobed performs Yazashne ceremony). Yet, they are taught nothing of our history, meanings of our prayers, how to *lead* outer liturgical ceremonies, and how to teach Zoroastrian doctrines and practices and pastoral services. In other words, they are required to memorize prayers that they never use post initiation and are expected to learn the more relevant and practical aspects "on the job." As North America prepares to initiate its own Mobeds, a more relevant and practical training process needs to be developed. The time of segregation during the two Barashnums should be productively used to further train the initiand. Let technology alleviate memorization where and when appropriate and channel their energy in training them in more practical aspects of their future responsibilities

as a Mobed.

NAMC has pioneered and refined a training program that has been successfully implemented to train Mobedyars. A similar but more rigorous and extensive program would be necessary to train Mobeds for initiation in North America. Skills, knowledge and wisdom of our senior Mobeds (particularly those who were trained in Athornan schools in their youth) is a priceless resource that can be employed for this Mobed training.

### **BENEFIT FROM TECHNOLOGY:**

Information Technology revolution is of significant benefit to clergy in general. In addition to their academic, communication, and administrative functions, Mobeds should be encouraged to use IT for distance learning, dissemination of religious information and periodic religious teachings to Zoroastrians. Prayer books will have to be replaced in favour of apps. A short daily prayer on one's communication device will instantly reach a large population base and keep them connected to Zoroastrianism.

Technology should also be used for leading religious services remotely in areas that are under serviced by Mobeds or Mobedyars.

### **CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

We expect our Mobeds to be educated, both in a general sense and in ways specific to their calling. Like any other profession, continuing professional development programs for Mobeds are necessary to maintain their competence and enhance their abilities. NAMC has successfully conducted "Young Mobeds Training Program" and allocated financial and other resources for this purpose. However, a study or educational program for our not so young Mobeds and Mobedyars is necessary for them to remain competent and relevant throughout their career. Under the stewardship of NAMC, online learning and self study programs could be a good start. Academic Mobeds could use their religious and ritual knowledge to keep their fellow Mobeds current with periodic educational seminars.

### **FUNDING AND REMUNERATION:**

A competitive compensation package is essential to attract and retain competent and efficient Mobeds. Professional Mobeds, who devote all their time and energy to their local congregation should be compensated based on the industry survey of compensation of clergy (survey of clergy compensation in North America). Though most of the "... and a Mobed" provide voluntary service, it should be a moral duty of the recipients of such services to offer, to the extent affordable, "*Ashodad*" or "*Kadr-Dani*" to the Mobeds, based on the "Rates for priestly services" published and periodically updated by NAMC (<http://namcmobeds.org/ratesforpriestlyservices/>) while keeping in mind that the most precious reward to a Mobed is intangible: "*Respect*."

NAMC is an autonomous organization, primarily funded by its membership fees and member donations. Among its functions, NAMC has dedicated significant resources (human and financial) toward continuing training and education of Mobeds; particularly our young Mobeds, training and initiation of Mobedyars, and for hosting educational seminars for the public at various associations throughout North America. Our senior Mobeds are enthusiastically participating in imparting their knowledge and experience to the next generation of Zoroastrians in general and our Mobeds in particular. Continued financial commitment from Zoroastrian Associations is vital for this endeavour. NAMC has proposed to institutionalize its funding of a certain nominal amount per member from each North American Zoroastrian Association to continue its activities while preserving its autonomy. Community support of this financing initiative will be a test of our commitment to our Mobeds.

### **Delivery of Communal Mobed services:**

Mobeds are integral in satisfying the primary objective of all Zoroastrian Associations in North America; nurturing, advancing, and promoting religious aspects of Zoroastrianism. Communal religious ceremonies and observances are essential for this objective. The community will be better served by investing exclusive responsibility and authority of religious functions to a representative of the local Mobeds on each association's executive body.

### **A TWO-WAY STREET:**

Preservation and promotion of Zoroastrianism need interdependence of dedicated Mobeds and a committed community. It is time for all of us to pause, evaluate, and re-commit to this vision. As we embark on a new model of Mobed services, let us also revisit the role of our community as it relates to our Mobeds.

- Mobeds have their own views.  
Some are orthodox, some liberals, and some in-between.  
*Get to know their reasoning and respect their views.*
- Often soft-spoken and unassuming, Mobeds are by and large highly educated, knowledgeable and wise.  
*Seek their guidance and benefit from their wisdom.*
-

- Support them in their work.  
*Show up at religious ceremonies and preaching. Learn from them.*
- Turn to them in your time of need; be it joy or sorrow.  
*Mobeds are committed to helping you.*
- Mobeds are people too.  
*Words of appreciation and thanks are always appreciated.*

Most importantly:

### **Respect your Mobeds.**

*They are there for you not because they must; but **because they want to.***

*Let us all adapt to new realities for the benefit of Zoroastrianism.*

*Following rigorous religious training at the M.F. Cama Athornan Institute, **Tehemton Mirza** was ordained Navar and Martab at Udvada Ateshbehram. His professional carrier took him from Mumbai to Iran to Indonesia and he finally settled in London, Ontario, Canada, where he and his wife Zenobia own and operate a CPA practice. As a Mobed, Tehemton volunteers religious and spiritual services to Zoroastrians in South Western Ontario and Michigan. Tehemton has published articles on Zoroastrianism in North American publications and spoken on Zoroastrian topics at Zoroastrian associations throughout North America. Tehemton currently serves as Vice President of North American Mobeds Council.*

## **FEZANA'S GIFT TO NEWLY ORDAINED NAVARS AND MARTABS.**

The Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America, FEZANA is committed to supporting our priests who give of themselves in a spirit of selfless service to our community.

As a token of appreciation of the dedication and devotion required to complete the necessary studies and the invaluable support and encouragement provided by the parents of young initiates into the priesthood, FEZANA gifts a copy of the Book, *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra*, by Irach J.S. Taraporewala, 3rd Edition, Translation of the Gathas into English, (Reprint 2014), to all newly ordained NAVARS and MARTABS.

In keeping with our collaborative relations and partnership, copies of the translation of the Gathas into English by I.J.S. Taraporewala have been provided in bulk to past and current presidents of the North American Mobeds Council, NAMC, in Canada and the USA.

Parents of newly ordained **NAVARS and MARTABS** may contact the NAMC, to ensure that their children get a copy of the book, which should serve each one of them as a reference, for the rest of their lives. Copies of the book have also been made available in bulk to Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastur of Udvada Atash Behram, so that newly ordained priests are presented with a copy of the book at their investiture into the priesthood, in India.

Behram Pastakia, Metropolitan Washington DC (e-mail: bpastakia (@) aol.com).

## FUTURE OF PARSI PRIESTHOOD IN NORTH AMERICA

As the first generation of North American Parsi priests (Mobeds) age, they are becoming concerned about how future generations of Mobeds are being prepared to serve their community as selflessly as they have done. It is not as if these older Mobeds have not tried to do their best to impart the training they received back home. Organizations such as the North American Mobeds Council (NAMC), as well as individual Mobeds in their own cities have spent a lot of time and energy to bring future generations of Mobeds together and train them on the performance of liturgical ceremonies and other priestly duties. But, will that be enough to give future Mobeds the incentive to function on their own in the future and will it impart the religious fervor their parents and grandparents had back home? That's a tough one and I am not sure if it is even possible.

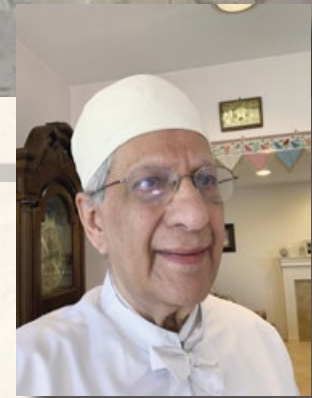
On the question of training future Mobeds, we hear many first generation Parsis from the sub-continent, young and old, voicing these common observations and complaints: Training imparted to future generation of Mobeds must ensure that they continue the same practices that our ancestors followed on the sub-continent. Here [in North America], we see Mobeds taking great care and effort to perform religious ceremonies correctly and, at the same time, we also see non-Zoroastrians taking part in our sacred ceremonies, such as putting sukhar-loban at the end on the celebrated fire, taking the Rakhia (ashes) after Bui ceremonies, and partaking in the Chasni. This vitiates the environment of ritualistic purity that the Mobeds and the congregation participating in the spiritual experience must preserve to realize the effects of the ritual. We find this practice so objectionable that we do not feel like entering our own fire temples. If only the Mobeds, backed up by their Associations, could explain to the congregation that the religious ceremonies are meant only for Zoroastrians, you will find non-Zoroastrians willingly refraining from taking part. Unfortunately, the problem is, that we see Zoroastrians encouraging non-Zoroastrians to get involved, which

is so regrettable. We want so much to participate in our religious ceremonies, but we are constrained from doing so because of such practices. Isn't this a shame?

These complaints are genuine and must be addressed since it causes so many staunch Zoroastrians to be excluded from our pious ceremonies. It is not something new that they are asking for; they only seek that our traditional practices be followed. Rules for participation in religious ceremonies should be put in place so that the most deserving members of our community are not excluded or offended. This can easily be achieved by having a notice board at the entrance of the Darbe Meher enumerating all the rules. If this injustice can be corrected, then both Mobeds and the entire Zoroastrian community can celebrate harmoniously.

At the last count, there were 212 Mobeds in North America, which includes local youngsters who have undergone basic Navar/Martab ceremonies in India at the behest of their parents. Of these, only a tiny fraction break from their daily routine to involve themselves in religious service. These few are the ones who have developed a sense of responsibility towards serving their community. This sense of responsibility is their only incentive; there is little else, monetarily or otherwise. A larger number may turn up at Jashans held on annual gatherings, but when called upon to officiate at funeral prayers, Parabhs, Gahambars, religious classes, or other incidental ceremonies, they are not available due to their daytime responsibilities—invariably, the burden falls on the dedicated few. Furthermore, the distances one must travel on this continent is another impediment. So, what can be done to entice young North American Mobeds to take a greater interest in religious activities in the future? Let us first look at the scope of religious activities the Mobeds currently perform at the Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC) Darbe Meher in Southern California:

1. Monthly Parabh Jashans: Usually takes place in the morning on weekdays, about 25-30 adults attend.
2. Six Gahambar Jashans: Usually



privately sponsored events in the evening on weekends, about 30-40 adults attend.

3. Jashans on special days like Farvardian, Zarathosht-no-Diso, etc.: As 1. above.
4. Ten days of Muktaf: Comprising Afargan, Farokshi, Satum, Baj, and Boi at four different times each day, about 20 adults attend daily for each event.
5. Boi-Maachi on special days and individual requests.
6. Fareshta prayers on special days and individual requests.
7. Four-day funeral prayers comprising Geh Sarna, Sarosh, Uthamnas (in the evening and at dawn), and the Chaharum prayers. There were eight funerals to-date during 2018 in ZAC.
8. Navjotes and weddings on individual requests.
9. Prepare children for Navjote.
10. Hum Bandagi and short lectures on Sunday mornings, about 25 adults attend.
11. Visit people in homes and hospitals to provide them with comfort and support.

Most of us will agree that this a formidable list of duties. However, the dedicated father and son team of Ervad Zarrir and Ervad Zerkxis Bhandara have performed these services at their home for many years and in the new Darbe Meher for the past two years. Zarrir works from home and serves on a part time basis while his son Zerkxis has just completed his bachelor's in religious studies from UC Santa Barbara. Zerkxis is tremendously motivated and hopes to continue to be involved. This is all due to the family environment in which he grew up. Both father and son have chosen to donate their services voluntarily.

The reason for mentioning the above is to show that the work involved is arduous and amounts to at least one Mobed being available almost full time, particularly

to officiate at the increasing number of funeral ceremonies due to our ageing population. If Mobeds received an annual salary of, say, \$50,000 (approx. \$18/hr.), the total annual funding required would be \$1 million (growing at 5% pa), which would be contributed by the community. Most associations would not be able to afford this expense, although I believe some Iranian associations have a full time Mobed to serve them. In any case, unless a Mobed has extreme devotion and desire to serve, this relatively paltry remuneration would be insufficient to entice a young Mobed with a family to this full-time vocation when better opportunities are available outside.

Another option that has been suggested and can be used is to reimburse the Mobeds from a fund collected from about 100 members who are most interested in receiving the benefit of religious services; they would need to contribute about \$20-\$50 per month, which would barely cover the Mobed's services. Alternatively, member fees could be increased to generate a fund for religious services. The following could serve as a suitable model for the future generation of Mobeds:

1. Seek one or two local Mobeds who are willing to commit to being involved in religious activities. Impress upon them that, while it is considered their duty to do so, they will also derive the satisfaction of serving their community. Let them know that they will be paid according to a fixed scale set by the Association, plus reimbursement for travel and expenses.
2. If Mobeds are not willing or able to serve the community, then dedicated Mobedyars should be trained at the NAMC or elsewhere. It is worth noting that in Southern California we have Ervad Zarrir (trained by Dasturji Firoze Kotwal, who has more than four decades of experience as a practicing Mobed) trained six youngsters who have undergone the Navar and Martab ceremonies in India at the behest of their parents. Of these, only his son Zerkxis has shown any inclination to serve on a regular basis. Zarrir has also trained several Mobedyars who have shown an interest in serving the community and

who have proved very useful.

3. It should be recognized that although the Association pays the Mobed/Mobedyar (Mobed), he cannot be coerced into doing something he feels is unethical or goes against the community norms or his own conscience.
4. The Mobeds should be fully conversant with the basic prayers of Farajiyat, as well as, the rituals of Afargans, Afrins, Farokshi, Satum, and Geh Sarna. They should be able to recite them by heart or read them fluently.
5. Mobeds should always perform their Kusti and the Farajiyat prayers prior to joining a religious ceremony.
6. Mobeds could be required to attend NAMC Webinars held at their annual meetings and any other relevant meetings to remain abreast of goings on in NA.
7. Mobeds could be encouraged to attend public speaking classes and seminars. Travel and expenses should be borne by the Associations.
8. Limit all activities to weekends as far as possible. However, note that it is most efficacious if a religious ceremony is performed on the actual day it is supposed to be performed. If Muktdads cannot be held on all days, hold them on one or two weekends during the Farvardegan days.
9. NAMC or other entity should be encouraged to produce professional quality videos on religious topics that are appealing to both adults and children. Associations should jointly fund the expenses. Topics should range from the very basic to moderately advanced. Basic prayers should be in such a form that children can easily learn to recite by heart. Short prayers and Nirangs that help in everyday life should also be included. Mobeds should use these videos in weekly religious classes and other gatherings.
10. The goal of religious classes should be to impart basic knowledge about the religion, its tenets and history—not to turn everyone into religious scholars.

11. Smaller Associations should participate with larger associations in nearby time zones via video or webinars, thereby enabling the smaller to benefit.
12. Ours is a thriving community and if a proper system is set up and explained, then community members will donate generously to make it successful.
13. When growing up on the sub-continent, the Agiary and its sacred Fire were our religious focal points. Teach the children to bow to the Fire and through it ask for Ahura Mazda's blessings to gain happiness and success in daily life. Encourage them to create a prayer corner in their homes where the family can pray together before starting the day. Children follow their parents and learn from them. Religious fervor should be inculcated in the children from a very young age. The parents should be made to feel it is their responsibility and it will require effort on their part.

In conclusion, nothing is achieved without effort. If the Mobeds and Mobedyars are prepared to give their time and dedication, if the Associations are ready to support the Mobeds, if NAMC or other interested individuals are prepared to help the Associations in training, if the parents are prepared to inculcate religious fervor and awareness in their children and create an affection to belong to their community, the future can indeed begin to look bright for our survival in North America.

*Ervad Jal N. Birdy was born in Nagpur, India, in 1936, where he finished his basic schooling. He received his religious training at home from his grandfather and was ordained a navar at the age of eleven and a martab a year later at the Vadi Dar-e-Meher in Navsari. He graduated from the University of Jabalpur in civil/structural engineering and did post graduate studies at the Imperial College, London. He has worked as a professional structural engineer in London, Houston and Los Angeles also serving the Zoroastrian communities there. Jal has a daughter and two grandchildren. His wife Soonu recently passed away.*

## BEYOND RECITATION: HOW OUR GATHIC PRAYERS WILL GUIDE THE FUTURE OF ZOROASTRIANISM IN NORTH AMERICA

By Burzin Balsara, Rustum Chhor, Faridun Dadachanji, and Adil Minocherhomjee

### INTRODUCTION

Today’s Zoroastrian youth outside of the “old world” composed of Iran, India, or Pakistan are in a unique predicament that the community has not faced for nearly a millennium.

As the Parsis emigrated from Iran to India and Pakistan in the 8–10th centuries due to persecution, many of our great-grandparents, grandparents, or parents immigrated to North America in the 19–20th centuries for better opportunities. However, unlike the Parsi youth of the 8th century, compared to today’s, who had the opportunity to grow up around a community of like-minded people with a strong and successful culture in India and Pakistan, the North American experience has a new set of challenges.

As Zoroastrians born in North America, we lack that same connection to the community outside of the semi-frequently held local events and the annual Congress events. The Iranian and Parsi Zoroastrian youth in North America spend most of their life interfacing with friends of different religions and cultures without the opportunity of being around others with our faith. Given this predicament, it is not surprising that today’s young Zoroastrians have

drifted from our religion’s historic traditions, rituals, and recitations that are at the core of our beliefs.

As mobeds who also grew up in North America, we understand how the difficulties of keeping in contact with the original practices and the general concern about preserving these practices. While the interpretations and practice of our religion have been adapted in America, the underlying Zoroastrian beliefs remain unchanged. As members of the North American Mobed Council, we were asked to provide our thoughts regarding how to bring Zoroastrian practices and messages to today’s youth.

While attending a recent seminar sponsored by the NAMC, we agreed to join as a team and discuss how what we learned at the meeting could be applied to our North American community. Part of that seminar was learning the meanings behind the prayers and putting them in context of the greater meaning of what it means to be a Zoroastrian.

We chose four of our most important Gathic prayers and put a perspective on how they could be applied in the North American context.

### Ahuna Vairya

<p><i>Yathaa ahû vairiyô athaa ratush ashaatcît hachaa Vanghêush dazdaa Mananghô shyaothananaam anghêush Mazdaai khshathremchaa Ahuraai aa ým drigubyô dadat vaastaarem!</i></p>	<p>Just as an elected leader acts according to her/his will, so does a religious leader due to her/his righteousness. The gift of Vohu Mana—Good Mind—is for those working for Ahura Mazda in this world; He who acts to be the protector and nourisher of the poor, accepts Ahura Mazda as the sovereign ruler.</p>
<p>Translated by Ervad Kavasji Eduljee Kanga—English Translation of his Gujarati Khordeh Avesta—Page 3</p>	

The Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer is as relevant today as when Zarathustra recited it during the Bronze Age, thousands of years ago.

This most fundamental prayer states that life and humanity’s purpose is to help others, specifically the poor. In this era of massive income inequality, we Zoroastrians should try to make sure that everyone within our community has equal opportunity to be successful in their field.

Young mobeds should not only be completing jashans and conveying religious doctrine but should also encourage altruism and community spirit by sharing their thoughts as to how we can make the world better. This can be done by holding community service events in conjunction with social events; the goal being to enable all members of the community to become as successful as possible. A companion activity during these events would be to pull up members of our community whenever they are down.

## ASHEM VOHU

*Ashem vohû vahishtem astî  
ushtaa astî  
ushtaa ahmaai  
hyat ashaai vahishtaai ashem*

Righteousness is the best good  
and it is happiness.  
Happiness is to her/him who is righteous  
for the sake of the best righteousness.

Translated by Ervad Kawasji Eduljee Kanga—English Translation of his Gujarati Khordeh Avesta—Page 1

Ashem Vohu focuses on doing good for its own sake, which is a core tenet of Zoroastrianism. Ashem Vohu, as a prayer, is inherently non-dogmatic and ambiguous as it leaves the interpretation of what is good to the prayer's reciter. The nature of this is something that we can learn from in North America as what works for us here may not work for people in the old country and vice versa.

Additionally, elements of what is good and what is bad are constantly evolving and require us as mobeds to discuss these difficult areas with members of our community. We are facing many questions here that need to be addressed; such as, "Is intermarriage acceptable?" and "Can others be around when we pray?" There are elements of this that may be better for one region of the world and not so for other regions. These are ideas that need to be discussed as a community; mobeds can help facilitate these ideas within each of their communities around the world.

## YENGHE HATAM

*Yenghê haataam aa-at yesne paitî vanghō Mazdao  
Ahurō vaêthaa ashaat hachaa ýaaonghaamchaa  
taanschaa taaoschaa ýazamaide.*

We praise those men and women from amongst the living,  
whose actions are good and whose goodness is judged by  
righteous Ahura Mazda.

Translated by Tehmurasp R. Sethna—Khordeh Avesta—Page 19

*Yenghe Hātām* stands unique amongst other Zoroastrian prayers in that it was one of the original sacred verses of Prophet Zarathushtra, found in Yasna Hā XXI paragraph 1. However, while it is extremely ancient, Yenghe Hātām conveys a timeless and important message that was not common in Zarathustra's time: gender equality.

Zarathushtra explains that, in our religion, women and men are treated as equals. Additionally, he delves deeper into the topic by explaining that we also revere each person, based on their individual knowledge and virtuosity, at the same level. During Zarathustra's time (and in many parts of this world even today), this ideology was extremely unpopular as gender roles were clear cut, but even today this issue prevails as contemporary society struggles with equal pay, gender rights, gender discrimination, and many more gender issues.

Based on this fundamental daily prayer, it is vital that as tomorrow's Zarathushti community continues to grow, we should continually revere knowledge and wisdom, while maintaining that women and men are equals.

## AA AIRYEMA ISHYO

*Aa airyēmaa ishyō rafedhraai jañtû  
nerebyaschaa naairibyaschaa Zarathushtrahê*

*Vanghêush rafedhraai Mananghō  
ýaa daēnaa vairîm hanaat mîzhdem  
ashahyaa ýaasaa ashîm ýaam ishyaam  
Ahurō masataa Mazdao.*

May the much-desired Brotherhood come hither for our  
rejoicing,

For the men and for the maidens of Zarathushtra,  
for the fulfilment of Vohu Mano (good mind);  
Whosoever Inner-self earns the precious reward.  
I will pray to Asha (righteousness) for the blessing,  
Which greatly to be desired, Ahura Mazda hath meant for us.

Translated by Dr. Irach J. S. Taraporewala—The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra—Page 858

Our goal as a community is clearly stated at the Gathas' conclusion.

"*Â airyēmâ ishyō rafedhrâi jañtû*" alludes to the pleasant conclusion where everyone in the community is working together to strive for a common end goal: righteousness for its own sake at each level of the community. As mobeds, we refer to this prayer in the marriage ceremony; however, its relevance extends beyond the partnership of two people.

We want to encourage the community to work towards that common goal of living a righteous life to bring out the best in each other and other Zoroastrians. There are many ways that individuals can get involved in doing this, for example, making sure we lend a helping hand to another person who needs help and by instilling these values in our community. As North American mobeds, we shall strive to expand our services to the community and proactively facilitate better lives for our communities and its members through the teachings of Zarathustra.

## CONCLUSION

Zoroastrianism provides a practical philosophical message that transcends space and time. As with any religion, we need to understand which elements are the most important and relevant today. Many of the lessons from the Gathic prayers remain relevant—we need to continue to explore and benefit from those ideas.

Many young people in North America are asking for more from their religion beyond the recitation and rituals. As North American mobeds, we would like to see our roles evolve to at least fill these needs by helping people apply the lessons of the prayers to their everyday life in North America as we continue our traditions in the U.S. With a religion like ours, young people will be more interested in attending religious services, and hopefully we see Zoroastrian ideals thrive for the next millennium and beyond.

North American mobeds will require additional training and reading to further understand the concepts behind the prayers before they can share these ideals with the community. Once we have more mobeds with this knowledge, a time and space should be dedicated for discussing these religious ideals for people close to their religious centers akin to an adult religious class. For people farther away from the centers, young mobeds can help live-stream discussions along with other types of content that can be distributed through various channels. As mobeds, we would like to facilitate this renaissance and we will need support from our community to do so.



*Rustum Chhor was born and raised in Fremont California and is currently a sophomore at UC Berkeley studying computer science and statistics. In keeping with his family's line of dastoors, Rustum completed his navar when he was nine years old and has been participating in local ceremonies ever since. As a practicing ervad, Rustum has been able to work closely with Ervad Kobad Jamshed as his Raspi in performing the yearly Gahambar, Navroz, and Gatha jashans. Currently, Rustum continues to pursue his degrees and projects at UC Berkeley while trying his best to serve the Zoroastrian community.*



*Burzin Balsara, 19, is a Freshman at the University of Texas at Austin studying Mechanical Engineering in the Cockrell School of Engineering's Engineering Honors Program.. Regardless of where he settles down one day, he is fully dedicated to continuing to serve the Zarathushti community as a priest and active member. He also hopes that his peers will continue with him in preserving Zoroastrianism throughout the west, as their time to rise and fill the elders' shoes will be coming soon.*



*Adil Minocherhomjee is a mobed living in Salt Lake City, UT. Professionally, he is a consultant for Fortune 500 companies. He has an MBA from UCLA and a MS in Info Systems from Indiana University Bloomington.*

*Faridun Dadachanji currently lives in San Diego, CA and works as a Finance Manager of Business Development at United Technologies. He is the Chairman of the Southern California chapter of WZCC (World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce). Faridun studied Economics at UCSD and obtained his MBA at the USC, Marshall School of Business. He is an ordained Navar and Martab from the Navsari Atash Behram*





## ZAMWI WELCOMES ERVAD KURUSH DASTUR

The Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, Inc. (ZAMWI) welcomed **Ervad Kurush Dastur** as the community's first full-time mobed January, 2019. In a recent interview, Ervad Dastur noted, *"I'm grateful for being a part of ZAMWI, and I'm looking forward with great enthusiasm toward serving my community."*

Ervad Dastur is a 2006 graduate of the Dadar Athornan Institute in Mumbai, and a graduate of Mumbai University majoring in business. In 2018 he completed a graduate degree in accounting with Texas A&M University, and Kurush plans to specialize in taxation as his accounting career advances. He is also an avid student of *The Shahnameh*, and hopes to work with the ZAMWI community to start a *Shahnameh* discussion group. For the year ahead, Kurush will be focused on serving the religious and spiritual needs of the ZAMWI community. "With the new year comes refueled motivation toward sharing my knowledge about Zoroastrianism and bringing the ZAMWI community together. It is one of my most important goals." Kurush will also participate in interfaith community events, FEZANA activities, and meetings of the North American Mobed Council (NAMC); he currently serves as the Secretary of the Board of the NAMC.

Ervad Dastur will lead the prayers for specified ZAMWI events and ceremonies, Avesta Classes, and will be available on a scheduled basis for religious ceremonies for ZAMWI member families and the broader Zoroastrian community. When asked what motivates him to serve, Kurush noted, "We are most happy when we are most focused on serving the Almighty together. The Almighty didn't add another day in your life because you need it. He

gave it because someone out there needs you."

The ZAMWI Board extends a special thanks to several individuals who have made it possible for Kurush to join our community. Khorzad Mehta provided his legal expertise in developing and guiding the application for a R1 visa, responding to questions from USCIS, and supporting both ZAMWI and Kurush. Navroz

Gandhi initiated and shepherded this effort during his time as ZAMWI Board President, and continued to work closely with Khorzad to complete the process. Brig.

Ervad Behram Panthaki who provided the vision of a full time Mobed and support for a Mobed Development Fund, serves as a mentor and guide for Kurush, provides spiritual leadership and tireless dedication, and has provided guidance and insight to the Board.

As vice president of the previous board, Zarir Khademan worked closely with Ervad Panthaki and Zenobia Panthaki to formalize the Mobed Development Fund, established in their names. Many

others have supported this effort through additional legal expertise, generous donations, support and encouragement. ZAMWI is truly fortunate to have Ervad Behram Panthaki, Ervad Kurush Dastur, Mobediar Hormuzd Katki, and Mobediar Zen Pandy now in service to the community.

Ervad Dastur is most grateful to his family and the teachers and mentors of the Dadar Athornan Institute for the support and education to serve as a full time mobed in the United States, today. *"Atha Zamyet Yatha Afrinami, may it be so as we wish."*

Report by Dr Anne Khademan  
President ZAMWI





# Fezana Scholarships

FEZANA ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS (2019-2020)

Applications are invited for the

ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIPS AND SIX FEZANA ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS  
MEHRABAN AND MORVORID KHERADI (MMK) ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP  
FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE - THE FEZANA SCHOLAR.  
FEZANA 25th ANNIVERSARY ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP  
MORVARID GUIV ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIPS  
PURVEZ AND ABAN RUSTOMJI ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP  
YASMIN AND SHAPUR PAVRI ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP  
VILLY AND HOMI GANDHI ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP  
JERRY AND CELESTE 30TH ANNIVERSARY ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP  
BANOObAI AND MANECKSHAW KAPADIA (BMK) ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIPS  
DR MINOCHER RUSTOM AND DOWLAT MINOCHER VESUNA, WZO CANADA ENDOWMENT  
SCHOLARSHIPS  
SHEROO DARABSHA KOLSAVALA ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP  
ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIP

THE NAMES OF SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS WILL BE PUBLISHED ON FEZANA.ORG, IN THE FEZANA JOURNAL, AND WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR ONLINE ACCESS.

All scholarships are open to Zarathushti applicants who have obtained admission for attendance at institutions of higher learning (accredited degree-granting colleges or universities) in USA or Canada.

#### SCHOLARSHIPS:

Will be awarded in September 2019.

#### AWARD CRITERIA:

Applicants will be rated on Scholastic Achievement (40%), Financial Need (40%), Extra-curricular Activities (10%) and Community Service (10%).

#### ELIGIBILITY:

Applicants must complete the application form and provide documentation for:

- (1) proof of USA or Canadian citizenship. (For non citizens a minimum of one year or two semesters residency in USA or Canadian academic institution is required)
- (2) past academic records and accomplishments (attach documentation of the past four years only)
- (3) program of study
- (4) annual financial need including assistance already pledged by other funds, charitable institutions or the institution of choice
- (5) other financial assistance available from family and friends
- (6) community service including contributions to Zarathushti functions and organizations
- (7) two reference letters (one preferably from an association nearest to you).

The Mehraban and Morvorid Kheradi Endowed Scholarship of \$5000 and The 25th Anniversary FEZANA Scholarship \$3000 for post-graduate students.

Purvez and Aban Rustomji Endowed Scholarship and Yasmin and Shapur Pavri Endowed Scholarship of \$5000 awarded to undergraduate students who demonstrates financial need and academic achievement.

The Morvarid Guiv Endowed Scholarships of \$1000 for one graduate and one undergraduate student who demonstrates financial need together with academic excellence.

The Banoobai and Maneckshaw Kapadia Endowed Scholarship of \$2000 to an undergraduate student with good academic standing who demonstrates financial need.

Dr Minocher Rustom Vesuna and Dowlat Minocher Vesuna WZO Canada Endowed Scholarships to a graduate and an undergraduate student with good academic standing who demonstrates financial need.

The Sheroo Darabsha Kolsavala Endowed Scholarship of \$1000 to an undergraduate student with demonstrated financial need and good academic standing.

The Villy and Homi Gandhi Endowed scholarship of \$1000 to an undergraduate student with good academic standing and demonstrated financial need.

The Jerry and Celeste Kheradi 30th anniversary Endowed scholarship of \$1000, to a graduate student with good academic standing.

APPLICATION: Forms are available on the FEZANA website at [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org)

COMPLETED FORMS SHOULD BE SENT ELECTRONICALLY BY JULY 1, 2019 (11.59 EST) to [academicscholarship@fezana.org](mailto:academicscholarship@fezana.org)



# FEZANA Scholarships

## FEZANA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS—2018

**Dolly Dastoor PhD**

Chair, FEZANA Academic Scholarship Program

*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world*

*Nelson Mandela*

Education and training continue to fuel the engine of social mobility and contribute to social cohesion and integration in our ever more diverse societies and cultures. The benefits of education go beyond the economic returns—contributing also to better health, citizenship, and lower crime rates. In the words of JFK “The goal of education is the advancement of knowledge and the dissemination of truth.”

Investment in our youth is an investment in the future of the Zarathushti community. The future belongs to those who give the next generation reason to hope. You have given hope to our youth by your donations. Your faith and trust in the FEZANA Academic Scholarship Program—as demonstrated by your support and endowments—are appreciated by your committee and the recipients. Thank you.

This year we have received three new endowed scholarship, Yasmin and Shapur Pavri Endowed scholarship of \$5000 to an undergraduate student, the Villy and Homi Gandhi endowed scholarship for \$1000, designated for an undergraduate student who has great financial need, the Jerry and Celeste Kheradi 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary scholarship for \$1000. We are grateful to the donors for the trust placed in FEZANA scholarship program. And yet the need increases each year as we received 78 applications in 2017-18 academic year of which we were only able to award the scholarships to 19 students.

Your continued financial support and your encouragement is of the utmost importance to maintain this program and sustain the hope of the next generation.



### **MEHRABAN AND MORVORID KHERADI ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP THE FEZANA SCHOLAR (\$5,000)**

**SHAYAN BHATHENA, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, TX, First Year**

My name is Shayan Bhathena and am a first-year medical student at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas. I am grateful and humbled to have received the Mehraban and Morvorid **Kheradi** Endowment Scholarship for Academic Excellence this year. Although I am undecided as to which specialty I want to pursue, I hope to treat the underserved in my community. The scholarship will greatly help ease my financial burden, allowing me to focus on coursework, shadowing, and volunteering experiences that will enrich my medical education. My past accomplishments include the Gold Award (2013), the Congress 2000 Legacy Award (2013), the Gregory & Brenda Hemphill Endowed Scholarship (2016), and the Vakhshoori Scholarship (2018). In my

academic career, I recently co-authored a paper in the Journal of the American Pharmacists Association (JAPhA) entitled “Pharmacist Documentation of Gaps in Care Identified During Diabetes Coaching,” which I worked on during my gap year as a research assistant at the University of Texas at Austin.

Concurrently with my medical school studies, I hope to continue giving back to the Houston Zoroastrian community that helped support and raise me as I grew into the person I am today. My vision for the Zoroastrian community is to encourage the exchange of ideas between Zoroastrians of all ages, cultures, and backgrounds so that we may all grow to appreciate the rich diversity that exists within our faith.



# FEZANA Scholarships

## FEZANA 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE (\$3,000)



### NEGIN FOROUZESH, Ph.D Candidate at Virginia Tech, in Computer Sciences, Bioinformatics, and Computational Biology

Negin Forouzesh is a Ph.D. candidate majoring in Computer Science at Virginia Tech. Her research interests are in Bioinformatics and Computational Biology, which address critical challenges related to life science and human health. She has been an active member of the Zoroastrian Student Association, also known as Kanoon, in Iran. During the past four years, she has attended several Zoroastrian events and made Zartoshti friends in the United States. Negin believes what glues Zoroastrians around the world into a united society is our prophet Ashu Zarathushtra. Learning and implementing His instructions in our daily lives is impossible unless we commit ourselves to hold and attend religious events and festivals. To this end, Negin plans to join a Zoroastrian organization after graduation and serve the community. Undoubtedly, her FEZANA scholarship paved the way and is a great impetus for her in the pursuit of academic and social service advancements.

## MORVARID GUIV ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE (\$1,000)

### NATASHA IRANI, Teachers College, Columbia University, Ed M. Clinical Mental Health Counselling



Born and brought up in Mumbai, India. I pursued my undergraduate degree with a major in Psychology from Jai Hind College. During these three years, I began volunteering at SPJ Sadhana School for the developmentally challenged children. My passion for psychology inspired me to take on a leadership role in Jai Hind College's first inter-collegiate psychological festival, 'Psych Insight.' As part of the organization committee, I was responsible for the planning and execution of the festival that saw participating teams from more than 50 different colleges across Mumbai. I was awarded the certificate of honor for my overall performance in my undergraduate coursework from The Zoroastrian Student- Teacher Association. I also received a Diploma from Trinity College London in Public Speaking. My volunteering experience at Sadhana, coupled with the intellectual curiosity I garnered, led me to pursue a Masters Degree in Clinical Psychology from SNDT University, Mumbai. Working across four different Government hospitals in Mumbai, opened my eyes to the reality of mental healthcare in India. Mental health is unfortunately not accorded the same importance as physical health. These experiences led me to further pursue a Masters of Education degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Teachers College Columbia University. My vision for the community is to

help raise awareness that mental health is not just the mere absence of mental disorder but a state of well being, whereby individuals become aware of their potential, are able to cope with daily stresses of life, and make a contribution to their communities.

## FEZANA SCHOLARS (\$2000) GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS

### SHAUN MALBARI, Wayne State University, Electrical Engineering



I am a graduate student at WSU, majoring in Electrical Engineering. Being a power engineering geek, it is fun and exciting to gain experience at a Michigan power utility working on projects such as making plans to restore electrical services to people who experience power outages during major storms or unforeseen circumstances. Keeping a 4.0 throughout, I am on the Dean's honor list and a member of the Tau Beta Pi, an Engineering honor society.

Looking back in time, I came to US in 2017 and started as a student assistant in a Biomedical lab where I developed software from scratch—programming it solo was not a piece of cake.

I actively participated in the Karachi Zarthoshti Banu Mandal (KZBM) activities, participated every year in sports events organized by Pakistan Parsi Collegiate Association (PPCA), and volunteered as a swimming coach at the Karachi Parsi Institute for kids in our community. I look forward for opportunities to actively serve our community by encouraging harmony.



# FEZANA Scholarships

## **HOSHEDAR BAMJI, Northwestern University Graduate in Digital Media with Interactive Design**

I am a graduate student at Northeastern University pursuing my master's degree in Digital Media with Interactive Design as the chosen concentration. My field of study specializes and focuses on the research and designing of digital products, systems, and services and how they interact and behave with humans.



Recently, I was chosen to give a talk at the prestigious UXPA (User Experience Professionals Association) Boston 2018 conference May 2018, for their "Students Talk" category, where I presented "Brand in the Age of UX" to leading professionals in Boston's UX industry. I am proud to have achieved this in my first seven months in the US.

As an international student, I am grateful for this scholarship as it allows me to focus on my studies and reduces the financial burden associated with gaining a higher education. Our tenets of Manashni/Gavashni/Kunashni have driven me and helped me perform well in all areas of life. I would like to carry them forward and help build a supportive and

collaborative ecosystem for Zoroastrians around the world.

## **SHIRIN ASGARI, Marshall B. Kitchum University, Southern California College of Optometry, Optometric Intern**



I am currently a second year Doctor of Optometry (O.D.) student at Marshall B. Ketchum University in California. I was born in Tehran, Iran, and came to the United States when I was 14 years old. I attended high school in San Diego, California, and was admitted to a four-year university in 2012. I received my Bachelor of Science degree in biological sciences from University of California, Irvine in 2016. As an undergraduate, I also did an independent research study in the Developmental and Cell Biology field.

I am an active member of the Southern California Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity (SVOSH). Recently, I volunteered at the Anaheim Annual Health Fair in Orange County and Glendale Annual Health Fair in Los Angeles with a faculty member and several other optometry students and provided vision services to those in need. I also went on two mission trips to Mexico, one in Tecate and one in Tijuana to help underprivileged people.

In my undergraduate studies, I was an active member of my community and was one of the cofounders of the Zoroastrian Student Association at UC Irvine. Additionally, I have been an active member of our SCZC by participating in religious and community services. In summer 2017, I was one of the counselors at the Zoroastrian Youth Camping event in Santa Barbara hosted by the Southern California Zoroastrian Center (SCZC) to help our Zoroastrian youth to

have a positive experience.

Upon graduation, I plan to pursue post-doctoral clinical training in Ocular Diseases Residency Program. In the immediate future, I plan to have my own practice to serve my community in Orange County and travel overseas to help poor communities.

## **ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIP (\$1,000)**

### **SEEMA IRANI, University of Texas, at Austin, Ph.D. Candidate, Chemical Engineering**



I am deeply honored and extremely grateful for receiving this scholarship from the FEZANA Academic Scholarship program. I graduated with a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from the Institute of Chemical Technology (ICT), Mumbai, after which I joined the University of Texas at Austin for my graduate studies. My current research is focused on understanding transcription regulation by using biochemistry and molecular biology techniques.

The financial support provided by this scholarship is invaluable in helping me focus on my research, explore more into the science with efficacy and efficiency, and provide fruitful results in all fronts. My goal in life is to get the best possible education and then teach as a professor in a university, where I could enhance the quality of education provided to future researchers and members of our Zoroastrian community.



# FEZANA Scholarships

## **WZO CANADA-SAM MINOCHER VESUNA ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP DR MINOCHER RUSTOM VESUNA WZO/ CANADA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP (\$3,000) ERVAD RAYOMAND KATRAK, Texas A&M Health Science Center**



I am a first-year medical student at the Texas A&M Health Science Center. As a young boy, I always dreamt of becoming a doctor. Now that I am in medical school my dream gets closer and closer to reality. I went to Baylor University for my undergraduate degree and was on the Dean's List; a member of Order of Omega, an honor society for the top 3% of Greek scholars; a member of Alpha Epsilon Delta, an honor society for pre-med students; a member of Delta Epsilon Psi Fraternity Inc.; and a member of the Indian Subcontinent Student Association. I was awarded Outstanding Service Coordinator my sophomore year by Baylor University in recognition of my hard work and coordinating more than 1,000 hours of volunteering opportunities for Baylor students. I held numerous officer positions at Baylor, including President of the Indian Subcontinent Student Association my senior year. Growing up in Houston, the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) was an integral part of my life. I was an active member of our youth group and was class president during my senior year of high school. As an Ervad, I have participated in numerous jashans and participate in Muktd prayers every year.

Winning this scholarship allows me to get one step closer to achieving my dream of being a doctor! I look forward to continuing serving my community as an Ervad and as a future physician!

## **UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS PURVEZ AND ABAN RUSTOMJI ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP (\$5,000)**

### **ERVAD BURZIN BALSARA, University of Texas, at Austin, Mechanical Engineering**



Burzin Balsara, 19, is a freshman at the University of Texas at Austin studying Mechanical Engineering in the Cockrell School of Engineering's Engineering Honors Program. He is honored to receive the Purvez and Aban Rustomji Endowed Scholarship and plans on using it towards his education to ultimately give back to the community. In high school, his accomplishments were many, including competing at national speech and debate tournaments to first and best of category at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair. At college, he helped lead his team to winning the Phillips 66 Case Competition hosted by the Student Engineering Council. The scholarship will likely go towards purchasing basic college necessities like textbooks and various course-related materials. He plans to join the Naval Officer Training Corps at UT Austin and become a pilot after college. Regardless of where he settles down one day, he is fully dedicated to serving the Zarathushti community as a priest and active member. He hopes that his peers will continue with him in preserving Zoroastrianism in the west, as their time to rise and fill their elders' shoes will be coming soon.

## **YASMIN AND SHAPUR PAVRI ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP (\$5,000)**

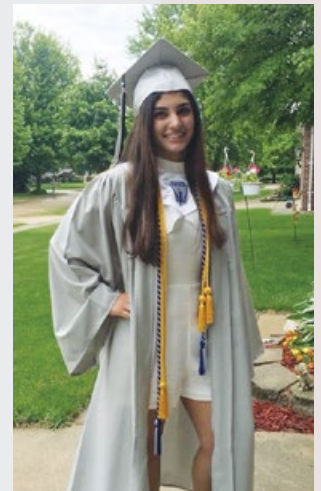
*This scholarship is to honor the memory of their mothers, Shahrnaz N. Tata and Banoo E. Pavri, who dedicated their lives to educating generations of children.*

### **AFRITI CHINOY, Case Western Reserve University, Pre-Professional Scholar Dental Program (Nutritional Biochemistry)**

Combining my interests in healthcare and business, I chose to pursue a career in dentistry. I currently attend Case Western Reserve University as a member of their seven-year Pre-Professional Scholar dental program. For my undergraduate degree, I am majoring in Nutritional Biochemistry, I will specialize in orthodontics after dental school.

I sincerely thank the Zoroastrian community for their support and guidance by practicing what we preach: good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. My future goals include demonstrating greater leadership within the Zoroastrian community by visiting Indian roots, teaching more about Zoroastrianism to our youth, meeting other educators and Parsis around the world, and performing research and presentations on the Zoroastrian faith.

This scholarship gives me the very opportunity to achieve these endeavors. Through this scholarship I will continue my education and promise to positively impact others.





# FEZANA Scholarships

## **KAPADIA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND ACADEMIC STANDING FOR AN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT (\$2000)**

### **MONAZ MISTRY, Harvard University, Pre-Med**

My name is Monaz Mistry and I am currently pursuing premedical studies at Harvard University. As a veteran and a nurse, I have worked towards helping people feel better during the worst times of their lives. While working in the hospital with the sickest of patients, I discovered my passion for service and helping others during their most vulnerable moments. Being awarded the Banoobai and Maneckshaw Kapadia Endowment Scholarship for academic achievement has really helped me focus on my goal of becoming a surgeon. This scholarship has provided me with financial assistance toward my education, which has allowed me to focus on my higher education and acquire the skills needed to become a contributing and resourceful member of the Zoroastrian community. My goal in medicine is to work towards becoming a burn surgeon who can help acid attack victims. I believe that this is my life's mission and how I am meant to contribute to my community. Once I have achieved my goal of becoming a successful surgeon, I would like to mentor younger Zoroastrians interested in pursuing medicine. I will continue to contribute to the Zoroastrian community by mentoring younger Zoroastrians who are interested in science and medicine and mentor them to achieve success in our community.



## **MORVARID GUIV ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP (\$1,000)**

### **DARIUS CHINOY, Georgia Tech, Business Administration**

I am an undergraduate at Georgia tech in the Business Administration Program. I appreciate the scholarship. This scholarship means a lot to me coming from your organization because it shows that the Zoroastrian community values my accomplishments and my achievements. To have the financial backing from members in my own religion is something that I am eternally grateful for. Some of my achievements include receiving the Dean's Scholarship and Zell Miller Scholarship from my school Georgia Tech. Additionally, I started my own business in college called Haircuts by D. Clips which is a mobile haircutting business. I have touched the lives of many Georgia Tech students here by giving them confidence in themselves with clean haircuts. These accomplishments, and a high GPA, enabled me to join KPMG as a consultant after I graduate. Once again, thank you to the FEZANA Organization. Many thanks. All the best in the future.



## **WZO CANADA-SAM MINOCHER VESUNA ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP DOWLAT MINOCHER VESUNA SCHOLARSHIP (\$3,000)**

### **ASHISH CHAKRABORTY, The University of Texas at Austin, Biomedical Engineering and Biochemistry**

I am a freshman attending the University of Texas at Austin studying biomedical engineering and biochemistry. In high school, I was a captain of the Science Olympiad team, president of the Biology Olympiad club, and earned national-level awards in both. I also participated in research internships at Michigan State University and the University of Houston. As a violinist, I was a two-year Texas All-State Orchestra member and earned a Texas State Solo Ensemble Contest Outstanding Performer award. Furthermore, I was involved in Boy Scouts and earned the rank of Eagle Scout. Currently at UT, I am a member of the Student Engineering Council, the Engineering Chamber Orchestra, and the Science Olympiad Alumni Association.

Originally from Houston, I am a member of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH). I am truly honored to have received the Dowlat Minocher Vesuna-WZO Canada endowed scholarship. It is an investment in my future and will make my education more affordable and achievable, especially considering that I am interested in post-graduate studies. As always, I am proud to represent my Zoroastrian community here in Austin.





# FEZANA Scholarships

## **SHEROO DARABSHA KOLSAWALLA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP (\$1,000)**

**JEH MORAY, University of Michigan, Math and Economics.**



I have keen interests in quizzing, reading, and current affairs. Experiences during my youth in India and the United States (seven and more than ten years, respectively) profoundly impacted how I perceive the world and my countries' places in it. I am currently a freshman studying Math and Economics at the University of Michigan.

Aside from multiple awards and scholarships in high school for academics (at Campion and the Cathedral and John Connon School), I earned a year-long creative writing internship with Laugh Out Loud Ventures, a start-up that creates humorous educational content for Indian schoolchildren, by winning a national essay contest having about twenty-five thousand entries. I vigorously participated in the Bombay quiz circuit for about five years, winning multiple annual city-level quiz competitions and occasionally appearing in nationally televised events. I also served in the Secretariat of the Cathedral Model United Nations in 2016 and 2017 (the oldest such event in India), and enjoyed participating in my schools' basketball teams and

choirs. Additionally, I played active leadership roles in both schools as a House Captain and Vice-Captain, respectively, and helped construct two toilet blocks for the residents of Jawhar, a village in rural Maharashtra, and participated in a cultural exchange with the inhabitants.

This scholarship would represent a substantial acknowledgement of my accomplishments by my community and is highly cherished. I recognize the sense of belonging afforded by a community and am highly committed to retaining and enhancing this connection as I embark on the next chapter of my life in the United States.

## **JERRY AND CELESTE KHERADI 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP (\$1,000)**

**YASAMAN LORKALANTAR, University of California, Irvine, Biological Sciences**



I am currently a freshman majoring in biological sciences at UC Irvine. I am part of UCI's Campus-wide Honors Program and a recent recipient of the Dr. Houshang Khatibi Scholarship.

I hope to attend medical school after I obtain my bachelors, specializing in pediatrics or genetics. Research is important for me, specifically research on how genetics affect antibiotic resistance in bacteria. Throughout high school I was part of a club that empowers girls to go into STEM fields, which I plan to continue in college. This scholarship means a lot to me. It will help me attend school with one less worry and allow me to focus on my studies. My vision for the community is that if we begin thinking more about our faith and asking more questions, it can become even more strong, thoughtful, and compassionate.

## **THE VILLY AND HOMI GANDHI ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP (\$1000)**

**KEANA KIANIAN, The George Washington University, International Affairs and Economics**

My name is Keana Kianian, I was born in California. I am a sophomore at The George Washington University studying International Affairs and Economics. I am currently a digital advocacy intern at Human Rights First and working on a lawsuit against the Trump Administration and their asylum ban. I am passionate about traveling and spent two months volunteering in Panama and Nicaragua. The Zoroastrian Community has been a focus of my life and in determining my values. In the future I hope to create lesson plans for Zoroastrian Temples and Sunday Schools. This scholarship will contribute to my university education and enable me to pursue my career.







# FEZANA Scholarships

## FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS - UNDERGRADUATES (\$2,000)

### **RYAN MARAWALA, University of California, Berkeley, Double Major in Neurobiology and Music**



My name is Ryan Marawala and am a junior transfer starting my first year at UC Berkeley. I've chosen to double major in neurobiology and music. I hope to use my time at Berkeley to learn more about the brain, the most complex (and arguably most fascinating) organ in our body—while keeping in touch with my artistic side.

Aside from this scholarship, I have also received three modest academic scholarships from Los Medanos College over the past two years. This year, I also received the title of “Honors Scholar” from the LMC Honors Program and was given the Cal Alumni Association Leadership Award.

When in high school, I received an academic scholarship from the College and Career Center, and the Louis Armstrong Award from the music department for being actively involved in the jazz program.

To receive this scholarship means the world to me, for having my community put its faith in my future is a constant motivation for succeeding in my academic endeavors. I also feel fortunate that this organization supports our generation’s educational goals through the implementation of these scholarships. I look forward to seeing my community continue to educate itself, create the change we long for this world to make, and embody the idea of “good thoughts, good words, and good deeds.”

### **ZARIUS DUBASH, Babson College, MA; Technology, Entrepreneurship and Design**

Zarius Dubash is a second-year undergraduate student at Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts, studying Technology, Entrepreneurship, and Design. He is the vice president of eTower, a nationally recognized entrepreneurship community, and is also taking in-depth design courses at the Olin College of Engineering.

The FEZANA scholarship will enable Zarius to focus more on his studies and entrepreneurial prospects; he is grateful for the assistance provided by FEZANA’s scholarship program. He is proud to be a Zoroastrian and strives to embody the core values of Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds throughout his life.



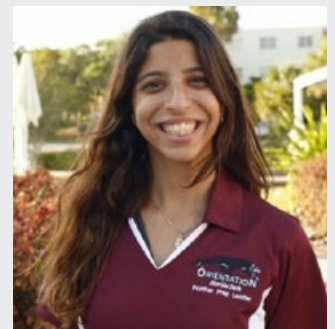
He envisions the next generation Zoroastrian community to be better connected than ever before, allowing community members around the globe to help one another through scholarships, networking, education and employment opportunities, and personal and professional development through mentorships and workshops. He looks forward to be a part of creating, fostering, and growing this community.

### **NASHAITA PATRAWALLA, Florida Institute of Technology, Astrobiology**

I am a college senior pursuing my bachelor’s degree in Astrobiology at Florida Institute of Technology. I was always fascinated by space and had a strong aptitude in biology. Combining space sciences and biology, my mother and I searched “*Astrobiology*” and applied to Florida Institute of Technology, the only university offering a bachelor’s degree in Astrobiology. This was a bold decision considering how new the field is, as well as my family’s financial situation and moving to a different country at the age of seventeen, but it has led to the most terrific journey of my life.

My career goal is to test transferable mechanisms for radiation resistance and incorporating them into human cells. I am researching how to overcome the damage caused by radiation by genetic engineering to protect human DNA. Eventually, I intend to pursue a PhD in Bioengineering. My research projects include analyzing polar winds on Saturn, strength testing, surface imaging for a mission to asteroid HO3, study of algal motility. I was awarded RA Rookie of the Year by Residence Life. I joined the Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society, and named Outstanding Student of the Year 2017. My other interests are triathlon athlete in India, a first-degree black belt in Karate, and have completed seven grades of piano from Trinity College of Music, London.

The Fezana scholarship has been of fundamental assistance to afford the education I desire, and such an honor to be recognized for my efforts and contribution towards my field of study and my community. Every Zoroastrian youth must strive to become a pioneer in their field. Zoroastrians are known to be intelligent, truthful, and generous. The next generation should strive to make the community proud and make the world a better place through Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds.





# Fezana Scholarships

## AWARDEES FOR 2018 PERFORMING & CREATIVE ARTS SCHOLARSHIP



### **RAMIN AKHAVIJAN**

Iran -born composer & musician Ramin is a graduate student of composition at Carnegie Mellon University currently focusing on microtonal & electronic sounds and the interrelation between sounds and composition, which he is investigating as an inter-disciplinary project.

Currently he is working on an opera “*Language machine*” being produced by the Pittsburgh Opera to be performed by the Carnegie Mellon’s New Music Ensemble in April 2019. He is the recipient of various awards from around the world for his music compositions. He was also commissioned by the WZO, Canada in 2017 to write music to accompany verses from the Gathas.

### **SANAYA MISTRY**

Sanaya is working towards a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance, with a concentration in performance and choreography. She participates in summer intensive course in Dance and is planning on a summer intensive course in Italy training in folk, ballet and baroque dance.

After graduation she hopes to be able to join a Dance company, to help her develop her talents and make her ambition a reality. She is grateful to Fezana for this scholarship which will help her summer intern work in Italy.



### **FARZAD SARKARI**

Farzad has been studying math and science at Oberlin College, where he became interested in Dance as a medium for expression. Besides his regular studies, he has taken up Dance and Ballet studies, which has enabled him to inter-act and inter-connect with people and given him a new perspective on what dance really is and can do for his physical mindfulness.

**Applications are invited FOR FEZANA PERFORMING AND CREATIVE ARTS SCHOLARSHIP FOR THE YEAR 2019.**

**Applicants should be involved in any Performing or Creative Art study and plan to follow this as a major career choice, though not exclusively. This scholarship should help enable the recipient to study with experts in their field.**

**For Applications go to [www.fezana.org/scholarships](http://www.fezana.org/scholarships).**

**For more information: Nazneen Spliedt- [nazehler@aol.com](mailto:nazehler@aol.com)**



# FEZANA Scholarships

## FEZANA EXCELLENCE IN SPORTS SCHOLARSHIP (EXISS) FUND FOR YOUNG ZARATHUSHTIS

The FEZANA Excellence in Sports Scholarship (EXISS) fund was established to provide financial support to young Zarathushtis who have performed exceptionally well in a sport and have become recognized as such. The Fund's purpose is to provide financial scholarships to enable the recipients to get world-class training and/or study with experts in their field; thereby fine tuning and enhancing their talents and capabilities.

**2019 APPLICATIONS ARE DUE AUGUST 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2019**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

VISIT <https://fezana.org/scholarships/sports/>

### FARZAD SARKARI

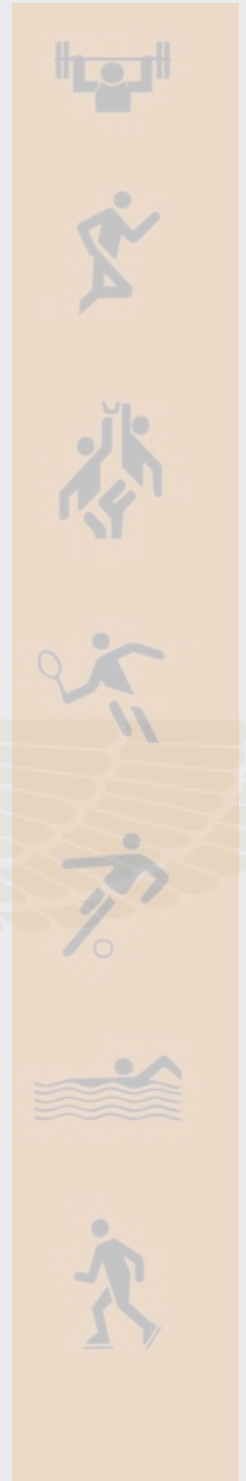
Each year, FEZANA's Excellence in Sports Scholarship (EXISS) Fund awards a scholarship to those who have shown an extraordinary commitment to athletics while at the same time dedicating time to advance the principles of the Zoroastrian community. The 2018 scholarship was awarded to Farzad Sarkari of Sugarland, Texas.

During his first season at Oberlin College, Farzad was the second highest scorer on the Men's team and garnered the school's Newcomer of the Year Award. His coach attests that Farzad could always be counted on to demonstrate a strong work ethic and positive attitude. He showed perseverance and persistence regardless of what events he was swimming or how challenging the competition was. He also maintained a high grade point average while pursuing college coursework in math and sciences. Farzad spent his free time charitable events such as MS150 (a yearly biking event for Multiple Sclerosis research) and is a recruiter for iEducateUSA, helping recruit students to tutor elementary school and foster interest in math and science.

Farzad enjoyed the unique opportunity to visit ancient Zoroastrian sites in India, including Udvada, Navsari, Surat and Bombay. The experiences showed him the value of bringing awareness of the Zoroastrian identity to others his age, to ensure the legacy of our ancient faith does not disappear. His lifelong commitment to spearhead a group to bring forth awareness of our identity and find ways to revive the ancient Atash Behrams in India.

We congratulate Farzad on his athletic accomplishments and commitment towards bettering our community. We appreciate the high goals he has and look to him as a champion of unifying through sport. We look forward to celebrating his achievements in the years to come and hope he will always be ready to serve our community both with his time and involvement specifically the Z-Games.

The EXISS Fund strives to seek those youth who have a strong interest and success in sports, but are also able to find time to progress the community and their education. We encourage those with similar stories as Farzad to apply for the 2019 scholarship, which will be due in August. For more information visit <https://fezana.org/scholarships/sports/>.





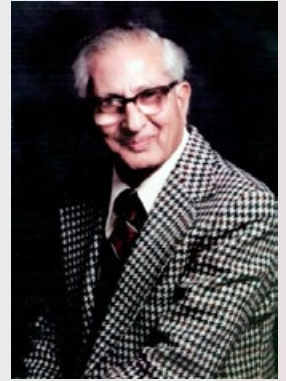
# FEZANA Scholarships

## FALI CHOTHIA CHARITABLE TRUST FUND

The **Fali Chothia Charitable Trust** was established in 1988 to help provide scholarships to needy Zarathushti students. Awards are based on financial need, educational achievement, and community service. The trust is established under the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc. (ZAMWI), and makes awards to students from all parts of the US and Canada.

The US Chapter of the World Zoroastrian Organization supports the Fali Chothia Trust's scholarship program by contributing to this worthy cause. Donations made to the trust are tax exempt and go directly toward the corpus of the fund. Members of the Board of Trustees absorb all administrative, mailing, and other fund-raising costs.

**If you wish to donate to this worthy cause, please send a check made payable to "ZAMWI/Fali Chothia Charitable Trust" and mail it to ZAMWI/Fali Chothia Charitable Trust, 10300 Farnham Drive, Bethesda MD 20814.**



## CHOTHIA WINNERS 2019

**Hoshedar Bamji** is working toward a Masters in Digital Media, Interactive Design at Northeastern University. He hopes to become a director of UX design and apply his knowledge and skills in reshaping modern health care technologies. Currently he works at a company that designs digital solutions for the health care industry, focusing on clinical trials.

**Natasha Irani** is working toward an Ed. M. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Columbia University. She has had extensive internship experience at four government hospitals in India, as well as an impressive background in social service. She sees a dire need for expanded facilities, and increased recognition and support for the mental well-being of her fellow humans in this fast paced world.

**Dilshad Patel** is working toward an MS in Exercise and Health Science at the University of Houston, Texas. Her experience as a classical Indian dance teacher led her to pursue dance as a means of therapy and healing. She has invented movement therapy methods to help professional athletes, as well as patients in medical rehabilitation.

**Raeka Patel** is working toward an MS in Pharmaceutical Sciences at Northeastern University. She has been a top-ranking student in all her previous educational pursuits and is eager to graduate from this program and fulfill her ambition of researching formulations of novel drug delivery systems. Raeka hails from Dahnu, where her father has been a practicing mobed for the past 40 years.

**Shahzad Patel** is working toward a Masters of Science in Electrical and Computer Engineering at Stony Brook University. He is an ordained priest in Udvada, and looks forward to helping the Zoroastrian community in North America. In addition to having an outstanding academic record, Shahzad has held several internships which have reinforced his passion for his chosen field, and he is committed to working towards the goal of being an inventor of multi-functional devices.

**Nashaita Patrawalla** is finishing up her Bachelors in Astrobiology at Florida Institute of Technology, and intends to pursue a PhD in Bioengineering and Biophysics. Nashaita is working three jobs to support her education and living expenses while concurrently carrying a full academic load. Her ultimate goal is to establish an Astrobiology study center in India. She has extensive community service experience and is an active volunteer in a myriad of organizations.

**Farah Randelia**, in her last year of obtaining a dual degree at Rutgers University, lost her dad suddenly this year. She hopes to combine her knowledge in her chosen disciplines of Public Health and Psychology to combat infectious diseases on a global level. She has been an active leader and volunteer in institutions which combat hunger and homelessness.

**Friya Randelia**, Farah's twin sister, in her last year of obtaining a degree in Accounting, also lost her dad suddenly this year. Friya hopes to become a forensic accountant. She is involved in community service at Rutgers and has been an active member of the Zoroastrian youth community in New York.



# FEZANA Scholarships

Vakhshoori Foundation  
Promoting leadership among Zoroastrian youth in  
Academia, Public life, and the Arts



## VAKSHOORI SCHOLARSHIPS 2018-2019 AWARD WINNERS

ANNOUNCING VAKSHOORI SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS FOR THE ACADemic Year 2018-2019.

This year's winners are:

- Mr. Rustum Chhor: \$6,000
  - BS Computer Science/Statistics, UC Berkeley, California, USA
- Ms. Shayan Bhatena: \$3,000
  - Doctor of Medicine, Baylor College of Medicine, Texas, USA
- Ms. Shroff Tvisha: \$3,000
  - PhD in Law, University of Cambridge, England
- Ms. Rosheen Birdie: \$2000
  - Graduate Studies in Public Health, University of Washington, Washington, USA
- Ms. Mitra Khodadadi: \$2000
  - B.M. in Music, McGill University, Canada

Each winner has shown exceptional leadership in his or her respective academic field, community, and life in general. We invite you to visit [www.vakhshoori.org](http://www.vakhshoori.org) to view short video clips that some of the winners have provided detailing their personal views, life experiences and pledges.

## VAKSHOORI SCHOLARSHIPS 2019-2020 CALL FOR APPLICANTS

The Vakhshoori Foundation invites young Zoroastrians to apply for scholarships for the academic year of 2019-2020. These awards ranging between \$10,000 and \$1,000. For more details and application form please visit the foundation web site at [www.vakhshoori.org](http://www.vakhshoori.org).

*Koorosh Vakhshoori  
Member of the board of directors  
Vakhshoori scholarship*

## VAKSHOORI WINNERS



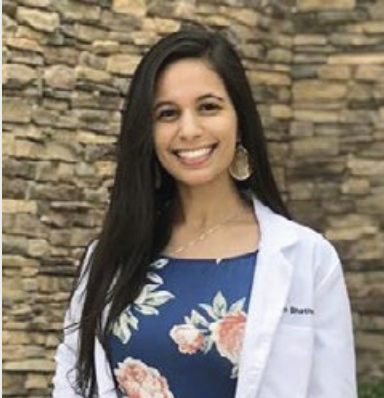
**Rustum Chhor** born and raised in Fremont California is currently a sophomore at UC Berkeley studying computer science and statistics. From early age, Rustum used to watch the jashans at the San Jose Dar-e-mehr and aimed to be able to lead a congregation in the same way.

In keeping with his family tradition Rustum completed his navar at age nine and has been participating in local ceremonies ever since. He has been working closely with Ervad Kobad Jamshed as his Raspi in performing the Gahambar, Nowroz, and Gatha jashans and was awarded "Volunteer of the Year" award his local association ZANC (Zarthoshti Anjuman of Northern California) community. In spring of 2017, Rustum performed for the Ojashan for the opening of the Sacramento Dar-e-mehr alongside his grandfather. He was also selected to attend the North American Mohbed Council's annual conference where he delved deeper into the Zoroastrian religion and the meaning, significance, and origins of its ceremonies and prayers.

In his undergraduate studies, he joined the Iranian Student Organization at Berkeley and is currently its Vice President. He helps organize events like Nowrooz which attracts hundreds of guests yearly. He is an integral member of the Pars Business Network, a business organization which builds professional networks within the Iranian community. As captain of his robotics team and founder of a drone club in high school, Rustum was able to learn much about engineering and technology. Currently, Rustum continues to pursue his degrees and projects at UC Berkeley while trying his best to serve the Zoroastrian community. Rustum was a FEZANA scholar in 2017



# FEZANA Scholarships



**Shayan Bhatena** born and raised in Houston, Texas. the Zoroastrian Association of Houston played an important role in her life and made her realize that the most effective leaders are those who strive to understand and learn from, rather than ostracize, those who are different from them.

Using these values, at the University of Texas at Austin, she began volunteering at a student-run free clinic in downtown Austin which primarily serves homeless individuals. At her senior year of college, her experiences at the free clinic inspired an idea for her undergraduate honors thesis, to investigate the barriers the homeless face in navigating Austin's health care system. Through listening to their diverse stories, she came to see that these patients as more than "patients," and more than simply "homeless." Each is a unique individual trying to navigate a complicated health care system, while simultaneously struggling to meet their basic needs of food and shelter.

After graduating from UT Austin in 2017, Shayan spent one year continuing her research at the free clinic while also assisting in an investigation of medical case management strategies for homeless individuals. After interviewing 48 homeless patients, she presented her research at the UT Austin's Research Day, and has submitted a manuscript for publication in the Journal of Student-Run Clinics which is pending review.

In July 2018, Shayan began medical school at Baylor College of Medicine where she seeks to not only learn about the biomedical components of medicine, but also the psychosocial aspects. At medical school Shayan plans to take the Care for the Underserved Track, where she hopes to research unique challenges and barriers to health care faced by underserved patients in Houston. Shayan believes that, by applying a social services perspective to medicine, she will be better equipped to lead a health care team in serving patients. She hopes one day to translate what she has learned about the complexities of navigating the health care system into her medical practice by ensuring that the advice she gives her patients is both efficacious and practical.

***Shayan Bhatena is the 2018 Mehraban and Morvorid Kheradi FEZANA SCHOLAR. of the year***

**Tvisha Shroff** is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge where her research focuses on the relationship between labour law and human development. Tvisha was born and brought up in Mumbai, India she studied law at Pune University. Upon graduating she served as a Law Clerk at the Supreme Court of India in New Delhi, where she worked on a number of constitutional and human rights law cases. In Delhi she was an active member of the Zoroastrian community through the activities of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman. She received her Masters degree from Georgetown University Law Centre, Washington DC, where she was awarded the Dorothy M. Mayer Award for academic achievement and contribution to the legal profession. After working on human rights issues at the national level, she went to work at the International Labour Office (ILO) in Geneva, Switzerland managing a program of legal research on the regulation of the employment relationship across nineteen jurisdictions. Tvisha's research interest lies in the overlap between the law and issues of socio-economic development, particularly how market regulation in areas such as labour, land and trade law can support human development.



**Rosheen Birdie**, born in Karachi, Pakistan, came to the US at age 17 with her family. She graduated from the University of California, Berkeley in 2015 with degrees in Public Health and Molecular & Cellular Biology. As an undergraduate student, Rosheen participated in the 2015 International Emory Global Health Case Competition as Team Captain for UC Berkeley team and created the first chapter of Partners In Health Engage, at Berkeley. After graduating, Rosheen worked on health systems research at the National Academy of Medicine in Washington, D.C. and worked as an ORISE Fellow with the Department of Health and Human Services - Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA) on a team responsible for collecting, analyzing and translating data gathered from HRSA-funded health centers throughout the nation.





# FEZANA Scholarships

Over the past four years, Rosheen volunteered as a Patient Advocate with the Rare Genomics Institute, where she works on eliminating barriers to care for patients with rare diseases and ensure that their care preferences are met. From September 2015 – January 2018 she was a direct service volunteer with HIPS, the public health nonprofit, where she conducted micro-counseling sessions via an anonymous hotline, distributed reproductive health resources, and assisted with the administration of a syringe services program. Rosheen's experiences in public health thus far have been rooted in social justice and equitable healthcare access and she hopes to build on this in her future career.



**Mitra Khodadadim** born in Tehran, Iran is currently a freshman student at Schulich School of Music at McGill University and studies piano performance. Mitra started learning piano at age 4 and was always passionate to become a pianist and started playing seriously from age 13, participating in competitions.

Mitra continued her studies in high school, in mathematics, and took private piano lessons at the same time. In high school Mitra participated in artistic competitions and attained second place in play-reading. She acquired a high GPA in high school and then changed her field of study to Arts to be more concentrated on theory lessons. Even in pre-university, Mitra acquired a high GPA. She then decided to apply to the McGill Scholl of Music and was admitted to the Music Performance program.

Mitra participated in charity programs from 2011 to 2017 performing in Mahak Hall for children suffering with cancer. From an early age of 16 she started teaching piano to children and from 2013-16 she was a swimming coach

Mitra has always been engaged with her Zoroastrian community. As a teenager, she attended the Zoroastrian cultural and social events actively, performing in Zoroastrian music festivals in an orchestra or as a soloist and has stood first several times. Mitra has participated in Jam-e-Janbakhtegan Sports Competition since 2008, always standing first in swimming.

## Call for Participants: 68th DPI NGO Civil Society Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, August 26-28, 2019.

The FEZANA UN-NGO Committee is looking for participants to attend the 68th DPI NGO Civil Society Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah from August 26-28, 2019. Individuals interested in attending the conference, are requested to send their resume and letter of intent by May 24, 2019. Please send the e-mail to both individuals below:

Behram Pastakia (bpastakia@aol.com)      Afreed Mistry (mistry.afreed@gmail.com)

While FEZANA, as an NGO in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council [ECOSOC] and the Department of Public Information (DPI), will facilitate registration to the Conference, the selected participants are expected to make their own financial arrangements regarding visas, tickets, accommodation, food, and transportation in the city. Details about the vision, mission and activities of the United Nations can be accessed at [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

Afreed Mistry; Behram Pastakia.  
Co-Chairs, FEZANA UN-NGO Committee.



## FEZANA SUPPORTS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 16 OF THE UNITED NATIONS

*Social justice is the equal access to wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.*

The concept of Social Justice arose during the Industrial Revolution and subsequent civil revolutions throughout Europe, which aimed to create more egalitarian societies and remedy capitalistic exploitation of human labor. But by mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the concept expanded to include other spheres of social life viz environment, race, gender and other causes and manifestations of inequality and today it encompasses a universal human dimension.

## Personal Statements on Social Justice

(posted here in no particular order)

The desire for social justice is one of the guiding principles of the Sikh faith. From the times of Guru Nanak to the present day, Sikhs have been dedicated towards defending the rights of all in society, including those from other faith communities. The concept of the langar, the free communal kitchen in all gurdwaras, encapsulates this idea of equality transcending difference, where the poor and the rich sit side by side as equals. In the immortal words of the 10<sup>th</sup> Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, we should “*Recognise the whole of humankind as one*”.

Jasvir Singh OBE



Our belief in tikkun olam (repairing the world) affects everything we do – how we interact with the world and each other. Our responses to local and global issues, and the actions we take, are guided by our commitment to tikkun olam.

Liberal Judaism teaches that we should not only learn but also do; we should go out and actively seek to make the world a better place. We are guided by the idea that: “*You are not required to complete the work, yet you are not allowed to desist from it*”

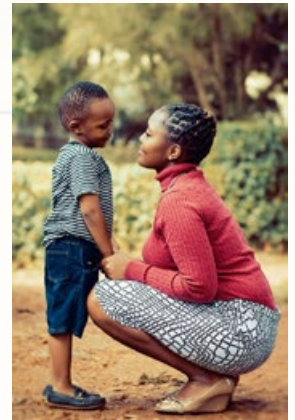
Dr. Stephen Herman



# In The News

Language of hate is permeating through societies around the world. It is wholly destructive and feeds a mind-set shaped by bigotry and prejudice as evidenced in the Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide, ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, and genocide in Bosnia. I believe that this can be overturned through Faith. Faith leaders and Teachers of all religions have it within their power to draw on their religious texts, their theology and their philosophy to create a language that preaches against hatred and transforms it, through courage, into love.

Heather Wells Christian



End of the cold war, globalisation and digital technology have brought tremendous benefits, but increased the gap between the have and the have not's the world over! The Brandt Report foresaw the upheavals and population migration from poorer nations to richer nations in the anticipation of better opportunities, creating alienation and strife. To ensure stability there must be social justice to prevent the disenfranchised venturing to extremist terrorist ideology. Zoroastrianism fully supports social justice. It advocates generating wealth the

right way, but also decrees excess wealth must be put to good use by assisting others to be self-sufficient.

Malcolm Deboo

Unlike money, which diminishes when we give it away, the more human dignity we give to others the more we have for us all. Each one of us can start right where we are, giving dignity and respect to all those we encounter. This is the heart and the start of social justice, and this applied heart intelligence will give birth to new structures in society that reflect and hold that radiance for humanity and produce a new way of working in the world that works better for all.



Sheva Carr Heart Ambassadors

Social Justice underpins all aspects of a Sikh person's individual and community life because of the belief in 'One God and One humanity' with 'Sarbat da bhala', Good for all humans and other life-forms. Social justice is made visible in the Free kitchen (Guru ka Langar) in every Sikh place of worship (Gurdwara) worldwide, ensuring equality for all human-beings regardless of gender, age, race, religious, ethnicity, culture, language, economic circumstance (rich/poor) or disability through selfless service. Sikhs undertake Social justice campaigns for removing barriers that people face and by promoting development and human

dignity across the globe.

Charanjit K Ajit Singh

The glue that binds humanity together is social justice. Every person, regardless of their multiple identities and socioeconomic circumstances wants to be treated justly and fairly. It is imperative for those who find themselves in secure and comfortable circumstances to assist and help to improve the conditions of those who are poor, hungry, homeless and unsafe. Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught Muslims, "None of you can be a faithful believer until you love for your brother/sister what you love for yourself." He encouraged the feeding of the poor, caring for orphans and widows, visiting the sick and helping those in debt.



Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra

# In The News



The Hindu Forum of Britain (HFB) believes that a cohesive society is one where people belonging to different backgrounds, race, faith and class are able to interact with each other with a feeling of mutual respect and belonging. Different communities in a cohesive society are able to respect the law, uphold each other's rights, and share a commitment to the local community and to the wider society. Along with strategic national and regional participation, local participation is one of the most important ingredients for communities to coexist in harmony.

Mrs Trupti Patel



Social justice can only exist in a society where the body politic has evolved an advanced core set of values based on right and wrong. The participants within that community share a heightened awareness of conscience operating inside each person's mind – Zoroastrians call that an awareness of Ahura Mazda. We see that Society functions harmoniously through the upkeep of law and a common morality - in a Zoroastrian universe that basic common morality is enshrined in the concept of keeping your promise, and being honest- the antithesis of lying and deceiving, this creates a social contract which delivers social justice.

Managing committee of the World Zoroastrian Organisation



Unitarians place the highest value on the inherent worth of every person and on the interdependent web of existence. Our individual aspirations for fulfilment are therefore held in tension with those of the community; local, national or global. The pursuit of social justice means challenging those who seek to hijack society for their own interests. Unitarians recognise, that power is unequally distributed and can be abused. We work to address issues of injustice in practical ways but this is not enough; political action may be required to address the underlying causes.

Derek McAuley  
Chief Officer

Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

For all of humanity's material advances, our failures are chronic. The scale of poverty, disease, rootlessness and insecurity in the world is alarming, as is the extent of war, environmental degradation, unethical profiteering and consumption. Underlying this downward spiral is our 'spiritual poverty'. We have created vast spiritual deserts, invisible to the eye. Yet, wherever there is a richness of inward spiritual virtues, our poverty, one finds, evaporates and diminishes. Indeed, such virtues take us beyond the horizons of social justice and lead us also to summon up forgiveness. Forgiveness requires immense spiritual courage, yet it can turn the key for lasting reconciliation and peace.

Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia



Society is put together by each of us; only together can we promote social justice.

Jehangir Sarosh  
World Council for Peace

Compiled by Jehangir Sarosh



# In The News

**“THINK EQUAL, BUILD SMART, INNOVATE FOR CHANGE”.**

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY -MARCH 8, 2019**

**FARISHTA MURZBAN DINSHAW**



**International  
Women's  
Day 3/8/19**

The theme for International Women’s Day 2019 is “*Think equal, build smart, innovate for change.*” The theme focuses on innovative ways in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women, particularly focusing on innovation and technology. Trends show that women are under-represented in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, mathematics). Currently, women hold only 18 percent of undergraduate computer science degrees and make up just 25 percent of the digital industries’ workforce (UN Women, 2017). If women are to compete successfully for ‘new collar’ jobs, we have to encourage changes at a community level as well as within the family.



## **NO DIFFERENCES IN ABILITY**

Research shows there is little to no difference in boys’ and girls’ average ability at STEM subjects when you factor in gender equality within society. Luigi Guiso and colleagues (2008) found that in Turkey, boys outperform girls by 22.6 points while in Iceland the gender difference is reversed: girls outperform boys by 14.5 points. Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a worldwide study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 67 nations. Every three years, OECD tests 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics and science. PISA shows that gender gaps in academic performance are not determined by innate differences in ability.

## **TACKLE STEREOTYPES AND ENCOURAGE ROLE MODELS**

Zarathushtis are fortunate not to have faith-based or cultural barriers to higher education for women. However, there are still structural barriers to overcome. It is not enough for individual women to prosper. This means that in order to attract more girls to study STEM subjects at university and enter STEM careers, we need to tackle the stereotypes they are exposed to in everyday life.

Within the family, parents need to counter everyday stereotypes in social media, TV, advertising and entertainment, which focus on popularity, beauty and size, rather than intellectual or athletic ability as a way to measure success. One way to counter this is for parents to encourage children to look up to role models in the STEM subjects. They do not have to be Zarathushti role models, but we have some dynamic women that should be celebrated. The most lauded globally is *Nergis Mavalvala*, quantum astrophysicist, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She was among the team of scientists who, for the first time, observed ripples in the fabric of space-time called gravitational waves. In the USA, *Huban Gowadia* is the Deputy Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration. She has a Ph.D. in mechanical engineering from Pennsylvania State where she specialized in fluid mechanics and heat and mass transfer. In Canada, *Dr. Dhun Noria*, was presented with the Order of Ontario for her work in pathology as Chief of Laboratory Medicine and Medical Director of Laboratories at The Scarborough Hospital.

## **PARENTAL SUPPORT**

Parents need to reflect on their gender biases. For example, discouraging a girl from yelling during play as “*unladylike*”, while dismissing rowdy behavior among boys with, “*boys will be boys*”. Parents are more likely to give

# In The News

toy vehicles, action figures, and sports equipment for their sons and are more likely to give dolls, kitchen sets, and dress-up toys to their daughters. Children also see how housework is divided – who does the cooking, who mows the lawn, who pays the bills, and who programs the new TV.) Being exposed to these kinds of messages again and again, and in interactions with different people, instils a sense of what boys and girls ‘should’ be like, and what are ‘gender appropriate’ attitudes, opinions and behaviour. Upholding or supporting such gender stereotypes can potentially hamper both girls’ and boys’ development and inadvertently shape their later career prospects (Fulcher, 2015).

Another way is for parents to give equal support and encouragement to daughters and sons. “PISA results show that this doesn’t always happen. In all countries and economies that surveyed the parents of students who sat the PISA test, parents were more likely to expect their sons, rather than their daughters, to work in a science, technology, engineering or mathematics field – even when their 15-year-old boys and girls perform at the same level in mathematics.” (OECD, 2015)

## EDUCATION INITIATIVES

The education system also needs to actively reflect on institutional biases. Research shows that in schools girls are praised for being neat, quiet, and calm, whereas boys are encouraged to think independently, be active and speak up. Other forms of gender bias includes boys being more likely to be called up to the front of the room to do a science demonstration, and teachers more likely to offer boys specific feedback on their work, including praise, criticism and remediation. “Teachers can help by becoming more aware of their own gender biases that may affect how they award marks to students...In addition, teachers can use teaching strategies that demand more of their students, since students, and particularly girls, tend to perform better in mathematics when their teachers ask them to try to solve mathematics problems independently.” (OECD, 2015)

Within our community, FEZANA and other trusts and foundations should proactively create and award scholarships for young women who want to study STEM subjects. This may seem a type of ‘affirmative action’, but this is where we need to promote gender equity rather than gender equality. \*\*

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*Farishta Murzban Dinshaw is an Adjunct Professor with the graduate programs in Immigration and Settlement, and Criminology and Social Justice at Ryerson University, Toronto. She also works with newcomer and ethno-linguistic communities in Ontario to raise awareness about family violence, addictions, and mental health. She is a regular contributor to Zarathushti community journals and is the author of “Discovering Ashavan”, a young adult novella set in ancient Iran about a young boy befriended by Zarathushtra.*

# In The News



THE PARLIAMENT IS YOUR PARTNER IN



World Interfaith  
Harmony Week

UN Official Observance - 1<sup>st</sup> Week of February

## ANNUAL WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK WAS CELEBRATED IN FEBRUARY, 2019 AT SURREY, BC

Acharya S.P.Dwivedi

All over the world interfaith organizations, faith institutions, educational establishments and private groups have been celebrating, the first week of February, as *World Interfaith Harmony Week* since 2011. HM King Abdullah II of Jordan first proposed it in UN, September 2010 and later in December 2010 it was unanimously passed by UNO. This year Interfaith breakfasts were held in Toronto, New York and Chicago.



Interfaith dialogue refers to cooperative, constructive, and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions and spiritual beliefs or humanistic beliefs, at both the individual and institutional levels. Interfaith is not an 'alternative faith' or new religion but it is basically aimed to promote respect, understanding, foster inter religious - cross cultural dialogue and encourage social cohesion. Violence, hatred, greed and selfishness created enormous problems in this world; and we do have to strengthen our common religious values- 'love for neighbor', 'kindness and compassion' and 'respect and service to others' to create peaceful environment through our interfaith dialogue. We should not forget that 'we belong to one race- human race' and all are equal.

The first initiative of interfaith dialogue was carried by **Parliament of the World's Religions at the World Columbian Expositions, Chicago 1893** and since then, many organizations have been formed to nurture interfaith. The Global Clergy Association of Canada has been celebrating it since 2012 and this year it was celebrated on February 2, 2019 in collaboration with Northwood United Church, who hosted the event. A conference was arranged with devotional songs, prayers; and Acharya S.P.Dwivedi coordinated and emceed the program. Rev.Scott Turnbrook of the host church welcomed the guests and Connie Waterman read the blessings on behalf of Wendy Bonazew of the First Nations.

The theme of the conference was '*How Do We Counter Hatred in an Interfaith World?*' and Dr. J. Das (Kabir Panth), Dr. Suresh Kurl (Hindu Dharma), Dr. Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan (Judaism), Rev.Scott Turnbrook (Christianity) and Imam Tariq Azeem (Islam) reflected on the basis of their faiths. All the speakers agreed upon the need for serious inter religious dialogue to overcome hatred and enmity which are created by intolerant and misguided religious leaders. They thoroughly prepared the topic and cited the scriptural verses to buttress their arguments which was appreciated by the people. Anand Jain (Jain Dharna), Connie Waterman (Bahai) and Firdosh Mehta (Zoroastrian) recited the peace prayers. The young and talented students of Naad Foundation and devotees of ISKON presented devotional songs and chants that created immense spiritual vibrations.

The speakers, as a token of appreciation, were honored by Acharya Dwivedi and Arun Chatterjee (VP of GCA). Arun thanked the speakers, spiritual leaders, students and their parents, Northwood United Church for hospitality and guests. The closing prayer was offered by Rev. Scott Turnbrook and all were entertained, at the end, with refreshment.

*Report forwarded by Firdosh Mehta, FEZANA INTERFAITH COMMITTEE.*

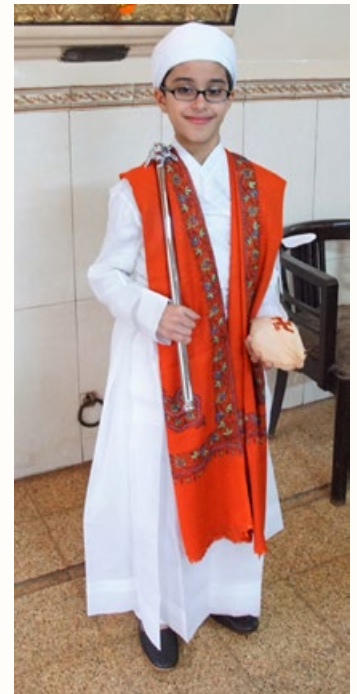
# In The News

## New Eryads *In The Community*

**HOUSTON (ZAH) HAS A NEW MARTAB!**

### **ERVAD NEVILLE KANGA**

**E**ravad Neville Kanga, son of Shahrugh and Kermeen Kanga and twin brother of Natasha, was ordained as a MARTAB on Thursday, January 3, 2019 (Roj Behram, Mah Amardad, 1388 Y.Z.) at the Vaccha Gandhi Agiary in Mumbai. It was a proud moment for the family, especially his grand parents, Perviz and Adi Kanga, and Aloo and Dadi Bharthania. Neville learned his Martab prayers from Eryad Peshotan Unwalla in Houston, Texas. The Martab ceremony was performed under the guidance of Eryad Aspandiar Dadachanji and Eryad Adil Bhesania. Neville is currently in the 7th grade. He is a percussionist and loves to play soccer.



### **ERVAD : FREYAAN K. VIMADALAL (ZAH)**

**E**ravad Freyaan Vimadalal son of Khushru and Parynaz Vimadalal was ordained as a priest on Sunday, 13th January 2019 (roj Aneran, mah Amardad, 1388 Y. Z.). The Navar ceremony was performed by Eryad Aspandiar R. Dadachanji and Eryad Adil Bhesania at Vatcha Gandhi Agiary, Mumbai. Freyaan was taught his Navar prayers by Eryad Peshotan Unwala.

Freyaan continues in the priestly lineage for three generations on both his Bapawaji (Paternal grandfather) and Bapajiji's (Paternal grandmother) side. His father Khushroo is a priest and was an active board member of ZAGNY in New York and his uncle Nauzar is an active priest at ZAGBA in Boston.

Eryad Freyaan was born in New Jersey USA and lived there till he and his family relocated to Houston a year and a half ago.

With Freyaan as an inspiration, we look forward to his younger brother Darian following in his footsteps in

the years to come.

### **ERVAD: DARIUS BARJOR DASTUR (ZAH)**

**E**ravad Darius B. Dastur, was ordained as a Navar on December 24 (Roj Ava Mah Amardad Y.Z.1388) at Rustom Faramna Agiary in Dadar Parsee Colony, Dadar, Mumbai.

Darius is the son of Eryad Barjor M. Dastur and Austi Khursheed B. Dastur, brother of Austi Mahtab B. Dastur, grandson of late Osta Mehernosh B. Dastur and late Osti Nargesh M. Dastur and Eryad Hoshang J. Buchia and Osti Perin H. Buchia.

Under the guidance of **Eryad Peshotan J Unwalla** and his parents, Darius learnt his Navar prayers in Houston, Texas. **The Navar ceremony was performed by Eryad Aspi Katila and Eryad Jehan Darbari.**



Darius is in the 4th grade and is an avid sports player. He is fond of drama and enjoys playing chess.

# In The News

## **ERVAD ZAL DARIUS MODY (ZAGNY, New Yourk)**

**E**rvad Zal Darius Mody was ordained as Navar on December 20, 2018, Roj Khordad, Mah Amardad, in memory of his grand uncle Ervad Sorab Hormusji Mody. Zal was taught his Navar prayers by his grandfather Ervad Keki H. Mody and guided and mentored for his Navar initiation by Ervad Keki Ravji at the Cama Baug Agiary in Mumbai.

Zal is the son of proud parents Tinaz and Darius Mody, brother of Jehan Mody and beloved grandson of Rupy and Lovji Hakim of New York and Diane and Ervad Keki Mody of Connecticut.

Zal thoroughly enjoyed his experiences both culturally and spiritually on his first trip to India.

Eleven years old Zal attends Chapman Elementary School in Cheshire, Connecticut.

Zal and his parents and grandparents are members of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY)



**THE FEZANA JOURNAL CONGRATULATES THESE FINE YOUNG MEN AND WISH THEM GOOD HEALTH , JOY, SUCCESS, HAPPINESS TO KEEP THE FIRES OF OUR FAITH BURNING AND STRENGTH TO SERVE THE COMMUNITY FOR YEARS TO COME**

**THE COVER** The Three Ervads performing the Boi are

***Ervad Porus Pavri (14 years) ordained navar*** Dec 18, 2016

at Bai Motlibai Wadia Adaran, Jogeshwari, Mumbai . Ceremony conducted by: Ervad Kekobad D. Panthaki, Ervad Eric J. Dastur and Ervad Khushroo D. Kanga

Parents: Ervad Cyrus Pavri and Yasmin Pavri , Sister: Farah

***Ervad Cyrus Dadina (14 Years) ordained navar*** Dec 24, 2017

at Vatcha Gandhi Agiary, Mumbai Ceremony conducted by: Ervad Aspandar Dadachanjee and Ervad Adil Bhesania

Parents: Ervad Rohinton Dadina and Navaz Katki, Sister: Shirin

***Ervad Zal Mody (12 Years) Navar Ceremony:*** Dec 20, 2018 at Cama Bag Agiary, Mumbai  
Ceremony conducted by: Ervad Keki Ravji, Ervad Hormazd Ravji and Ervad Farzad Ravji.

Parents: Darius Mody and Tinaz Mody Brother: Jehan.

# In The News

## EMPOWERING MOBEDS

### BINAIFER SAHUKAR

In psychotherapeutic practice, one common thread discovered in the therapeutic dialogues, as well as casual conversations with mobeds was, that their profession had very unique challenges. Our mobeds are incredibly bright and it is a shame that they are at the periphery of our community, instead of being the focal point as leaders. Another point to be noted is that during times of sickness and death of loved ones, people in pain turn to counsellors and doctors and also seek spiritual succour from priests. It is therefore, imperative for priests to handle sensitive dialogues.

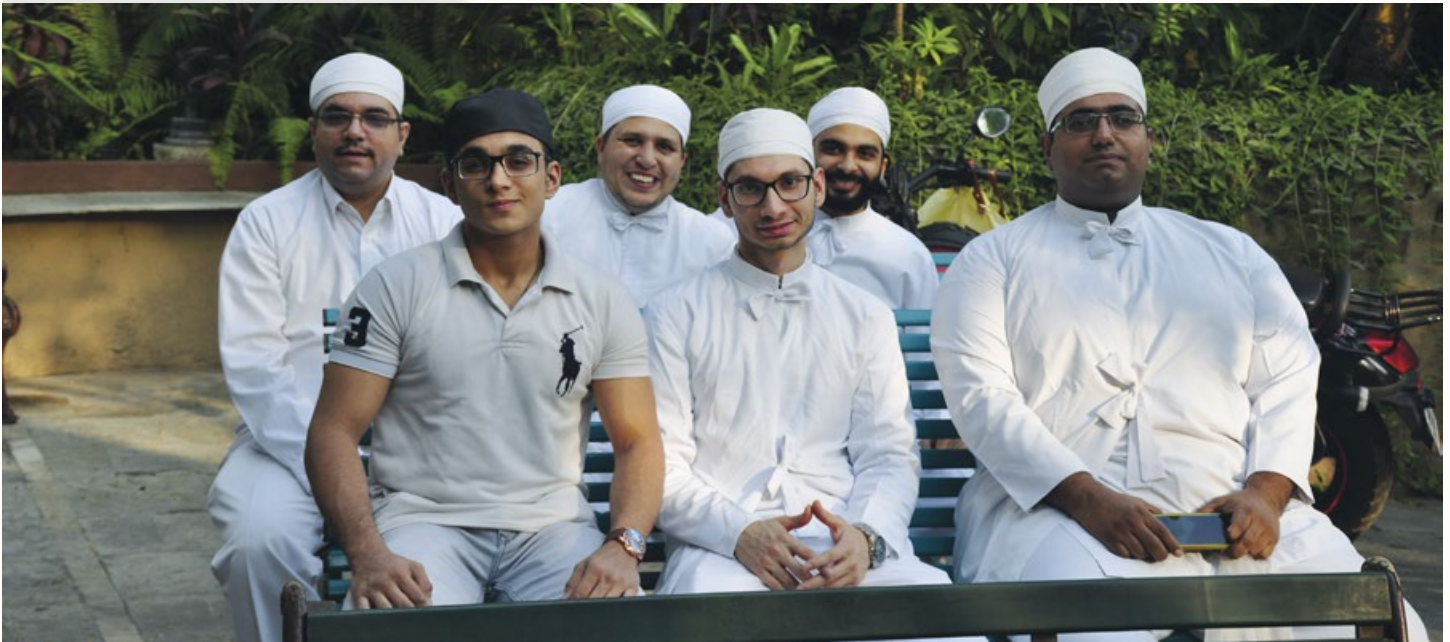


The WZO trust fund for Mobeds is the only organization in India which has been actively and consistently supporting Mobeds, in need of financial assistance, since 1996. When I bounced off the idea of developing leadership and basic counselling skills for priests with Dinshaw Tamboly, Chairman of the WZO Trust Fund, he readily agreed. It has been his dream to restore the glory of priesthood. He, in turn liaised with Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastur, the president of the Athornan Mandal. Dasturji Khurshed has always expressed the need for increasing interaction between the priests and laity. Thus, **Empowering Mobeds** was formed under the umbrella of the Athornan Mandal and the WZO Trust Fund for Mobeds. *(photo above from left Dinshaw Tamboly, Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastur, Dasturji Firoze Kotwal and Ervad Aspandiyar Dadachanji)*

In 2017, it was a bi annual program in which psychologists and psychiatrists conducted soft skills training sessions. 2018 program was absolutely action packed .



# In The News



(Photo above some of the young mobds who participated).

Advertisements were placed in print and social media. All mobeds who responded to the advertisement had to fill the on line registration form that required their background information and motive for learning. All the 14 mpbeds who applied were accepted.

The work done so far:

- In May, mental health experts, media professionals and priests conducted sessions to make priests digitally savvy. The impact of language to influence thoughts and feelings was emphasized.

An intensive follow up workshop, for the core team of 16 members was later conducted in a corporate set up.



# In The News

This resulted in some Punthaks establishing a Whatsapp group for their agiary worshippers and also spiking the followers for their agiary facebook page. Agiary event notifications for these priests are now digital, instead of the old notice board.

- In August, stress management for priests during the hectic Muktad days was conducted. Living religious encyclopedia Dasturji Firoze Kotwal spoke about the significance of Muktads, his 60 minute lecture can be viewed on You Tube. Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastur and Er Aspandiyar Dadachanji gave simple doable tips for staying calm and maintaining a healthy work life balance. .
- After the training session, shy 25 year old Er Jehan Darbari, had the confidence to share a slice of his life and talk about our program at the monthly jashan at the Bhika Behram kua (well)
- In collaboration with XYZ ( Extremely Young Zoroastrians), our priests conducted learning sessions on religion through fun and games for approximately 300 children in two Bombay schools. Serving Malido papri and chocolates ensured that little ones returned home happy.
- Our young mobeds led a heritage trail walk for the senior residential boys of the Athornan Institute (*photo page 63*) and residential girls of the Avabai Petit school. By weaving narratives around the statues and monuments of South Bombay, our children were made aware of our rich heritage. Feeding them with chocolate ganache and Mc Donald happy meals ensured their energy levels stayed buoyant.
- On December 30<sup>th</sup> the Return to Roots group under the dynamic leadership of their coordinator Arzan Wadia had an interaction with team **Empowering Mobeds**. After serious discussions on the best practises followed abroad and that done in India, fun ice breaker games were played along with serving Parsi delicacies like Vasanu, bhakras, Malido and kebabs.

On February 15 and 16 2019 the first off-site training programme was conducted at Bai Maneckbai P.B. Jeejebhoy Sanatorium in Sanjan. with the aim of imparting basic counselling skills to young priests and help them develop a strong connect to the laity. Mr Dinshaw Tamboly was present to support and participate in the sessions conducted by Mrs Binaifer Sahukar, Mrs Kashmiria Kakalia and Ms Delphi Wadia.

Initially the group was split in pairs with Kashmiria Kakalia, conducting a session on narrative therapy, the importance of listening and asking the right questions. Er Hormuz Dadachanji shared his experience and stressed on how a Mobed should be professional and serve the fire with diligence and dedication. Mr Tamboly gave a short inspirational talk on what it takes to be successful. The Mobeds were encouraged to give their best in every walk of life, to keep learning for a lifetime and to lead by example.

The session on self awareness and basic psychotherapy was initiated by Binaifer Sahukar, where, common cognitive distortions were highlighted with active inputs from the participants, on how to understand the other person's perceptions by being an active listener and asking quality questions.

The final session on 'Understanding Mindsets and Personalities' was conducted by Delphi Wadia. This was to facilitate a healthy work place environment while dealing with different personalities. The participants shared insights into their own personalities. An interesting activity involving how to revive a crumbling agiary was undertaken, with active participation from mobeds ranging in age from 17 to 50+ adults

Please visit our public Empowering Mobeds Facebook page. We would love to hear your thoughts.

*Binaifer Sahukar practices psychotherapy with individuals, couples and family. She is the co ordinator of Empowering Mobeds Programme*

# In The News

## MOBEDS FELICITATION IN NAVSARI

BINAIFER SAHUKAR

Most people only lament about the community problems but there are a select few who actually do something about it. People who dig deep into their pockets to help their brethren deserve praise. However, even more important than writing out a cheque is the giving of time and leg work for community service. Since three decades, one such power couple quietly and consistently helping the community members crawls out towards the sunbeam are Bachi and Dinshaw Tamboly. Dinshaw Tamboly believes that the survival of the community depends on its pillars, our mobeds. Yet, very little is done to appreciate their services. To fill this gap, the local committee of the WZO Trust Funds, Navsari, felicitated mobeds at their 16th annual prize distribution on January 19, 2019, at the Seervai plot, Bai Dossibai Kotwal Parsi orphanage in which more than 200 students from Nursery class to post graduation got awards.

All Mobeds from Navsari were felicitated.—7 full time Mobeds with over 25 years of service (age range 92-55 years) received a memento plus Rs.50,000 each; 7 full time Mobeds with service less than 25 years (age range 84-27 years) received a memento plus Rs.25,000 each, 14 part time Mobeds (age range 65-24 years) received Rs.15,000 each, the three new young mobeds received Rs 5000 In total 36 Mobeds including 3 new Mobeds received a total of Rs 825,035. The list of Mobeds was supplied by Trustees of Navsari Bhagarsath Anjuman. (photo below, mobeds with Dinshaw Tamboly and Ervad Aspandiar Dadachanji)



Mr Tamboly hopes this will set a trend all over India for local resident groups to similarly appreciate and take care of their priests. The Global Working Group (GWG) comprising of the Zoroastrian Diaspora has entrusted WZO TRUST Funds with Rs 1 crore to disburse to mobeds over 65 years of age, widows of mobeds, and some full time mobeds. WZO Trust Funds has been involved with mobed amelioration schemes, since 1996. It has now partnered with the Athornan Mandal and founded the **Empowering Mobed initiative** to develop leadership skills amongst the priests.

President of the Dossibai Kotwal orphanage, Ervad Khurshed Desai, Dasturji Meherji Rana, WZO Trust Funds Chairman Mr Tamboly and chief guest Ervad Aspandiyar Dadachanji released the Navsari Directory with a listing of 2,136 names. Mr Marazban Giara was credited for helping compile this huge data. Some interesting trivia- the most common name for women was Zarine and for men Rohinton. The most common surnames were Patel and Kasad.

Ervad Khurshed Desai's introduction of speaker Ervad Aspandiyar Dadachanji was an eye opener. The quiet professional demeanour of Ervad Aspandiyar, totally belies his daredevil spirit which has made him participate in global car rallies in his vintage Morris. His impressive body of work comprises over 36 years of service at Vatcha Gandhi agiary, performing 74 nirangdins, giving ritual demonstrations in Perth, Hong Kong and Singapore, assisting in shifting the fire from Tavri village to Bombay and giving a demonstration of serving the Atash to Queen Elizabeth.

# In The News



*Photo above Marazban Giara, second from left with shawl holding the newly released Navsari Directory).*

Ervad Dadachanji emphasized the need to respect and care for the priests and was thankful to Mr Dinshaw Tamboly for the support to mobeds . Mobeds were also urged to conduct themselves with dignity.

Historically society comprised of four sects *Athornan ( Priests ) , Ratheshtaran ( Warriors), Vastriyokshan ( Farmers ) and Hutoxan (Craftsmen)*. Behram Yasht, Khordad Yasht, 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of Farvardin Yasht and 12<sup>th</sup> Karda of Hormazd Yasht mentions priests . Performing the boi ceremony is tough. We laity get fatigued reciting the Atash Niyash just once a day, but our priests have to recite it multiple times a day, during each boi while facing the hot smoking fire. *(photo left, Ervad Aspandiar Dadachanji with Dinshaw Tamboly)*

As an observer in the audience, one noticed the cheering with great joy as the awardees ranging from the 80 year old priests shuffling towards the stage to the younger priests sprinting forth to receive their awards. The icing on the cake was the 3 navarias who along with their regular school work have already begun their priestly studies. A prayer in our heart for them is that these young lads are blessed with many more such opportunities for the prestigious shawl to be wrapped reverentially around their young shoulders.



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# In The News

## THE COLLECTED SCHOLARLY WRITINGS OF DASTUR KOTWAL, VOLUME 1

### ADVANCE NOTICE

The Collected Scholarly Writings of Dastur Kotwal, Volume 1 will be available the end of this month.

The volume is in two parts and consists of 19 selected articles written by Dasturji, accompanied by his biography which is interesting, as it traces Dasturji's early life, his rise as a high priest, as well as the many controversies that plagued the community and Dasturji's role in it.

The 726-page volume has 87 colour images and 34 black and white images with a detailed Glossary, Bibliography and Index. It is a wonderful resource for anyone interested in our religion and the community.

## Jasmine Boucley,

of Montreal, daughter of Kathy Zendeabad and Roger Boucley, participated in the 2019 Canada Winter Games as part of the Quebec Squash Girls Team. This national event took place during the week of February 24<sup>th</sup> in the city of Red Deer, Alberta host to over 3500 junior athletes representing 13 provinces/territories in 19 different sports. In addition there were more than 20000 parents and other visitors coming together from all over Canada. Quebec Squash Girls Team finished in the 4<sup>th</sup> place, after Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta.

Congratulations Jasmine on your hard work and contribution to team Quebec for this achievement.



# In The News

## OUTSTANDING YOUNG SCIENTIST *Burzin Balsara* HAS A PLANET NAMED AFTER HIM

In the Summer 2018 Journal, Vol 32, No 2 (page 67) we reported the singular achievement of Burzin Balsara and his partner Malav Shah of winning awards at the 2018 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) in Pittsburgh, PA. At the same competition they also received a gold medal and top scholarship for innovative technology in real world problems. This high stakes competition included over 1,800 students from over 75 participating countries. Their award-winning project involved using electrooculography to provide mobility to quadriplegics by using eye movements to steer an electric wheelchair.

In recognition of Burzin's achievements at the 2018 Intel ISEF, a minor planet (34599) discovered by the Lincoln Near-Earth Asteroid Research (LINEAR) program at the MIT Lincoln Labs is now named after him (see below).

Planets are named to recognize all the top award winners at the fair.

*Congratulations BURZIN. The community salutes you for your achievements not only in the scientific field but also for your moped contribution to your community.*

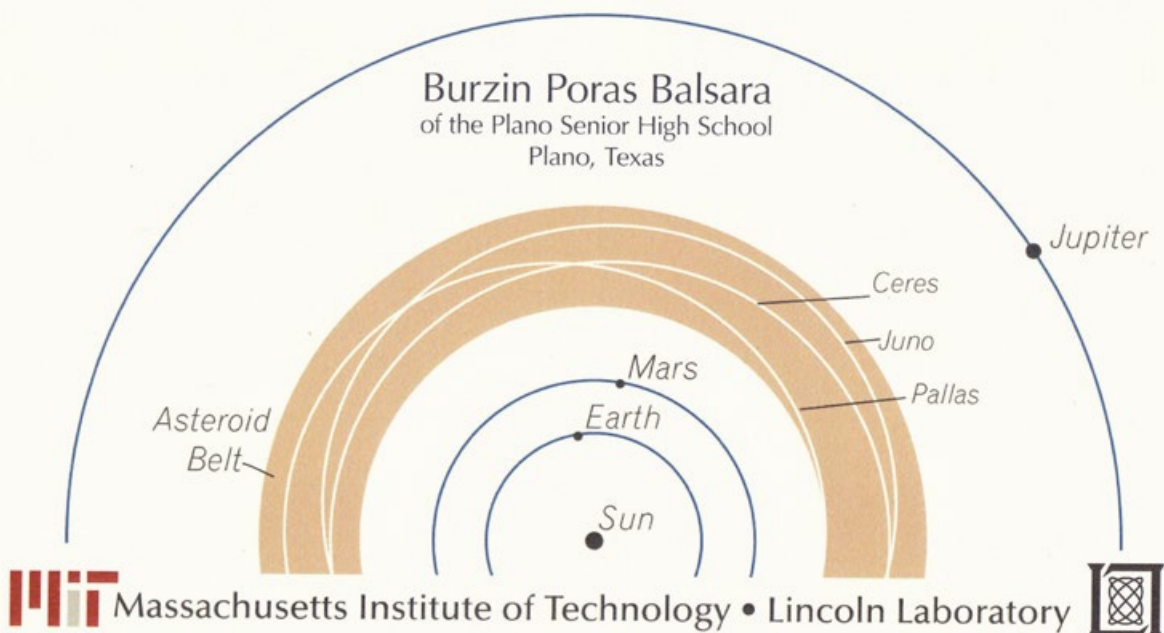


**BURZIN IS THE WINNER OF THE 2018 FEZANA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP OF PURVEZ AND ABAN RUSTOMJI. (SEE PAGE 44)**

In recognition of achievement as a top award winner in the 2018 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, a high school science competition of the Society for Science & the Public and Intel Foundation,

### Minor Planet (34599) Burzinbalsara

discovered by the LINEAR Program of MIT Lincoln Laboratory is named for



## PLEDGE 101 - RECLAIMING FREDDY REQUIRES REIMAGINING FARROKH

Dr. Neville Gustad Panthaki: [Ashavahishtainitiative@Gmail.Com](mailto:Ashavahishtainitiative@Gmail.Com)

Creator/Director: The Asha Vahishta Initiative (AVI) and Its 101 Inspirations

A Project To Re-Imagine Faith And Re-Claim Fellowship Of Daena Mazdayasni

In Diaspora

<https://Sites.Google.Com/site/ashavahishtainitiative/>



*Farrokh Bulsara: Diasporic Parsi*

**B**ohemian Rhapsody, the adapted biopic about Freddy Mercury (Farrokh Bulsara) and the band Queen, released in North American theatres on Srosh roj and Ava mah (Fasli). Watching the film, I felt ashamed, and then enraged. Not about Freddy, but on behalf of Farrokh.

Our collective faith/fellowship mentality is that of the promoter (Ray Foster), who rejects the song Bohemian Rhapsody. He criticizes diasporic reimagining because it doesn't conform to prescribed forms. It seems to him, an inter-caste marriage of genres. Instead of promoting vision, one that reclaims fellowship by making it relevant, lived, and emotive, he thinks intransigence ensures preservation. Farrokh remains unclaimed or made ambiguous by us, while Freddy is valorized by the world as an immensely

charismatic talent, incidentally Zoroastrian, who moved an entire planet in ceremonial support (jashan) for African famine relief through the inspiration of his songs (gatha). Was it coincidence that the film released on the auspicious commemorative day (roj) of the Yazata of the Daena (faith-awareness, Consciousness), Protector of the Living, Guide/Witness of Souls, Guardian of the Chinvat Bridge; in the month (mah) of Water Immaculate source of Life, Anahita daughter of Ahura Mazda, Nurturing Strength of Love? Brian May laments in the song Who Wants to Live Forever?

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Jtpf8N5IDE&start\\_radio=1&list=RD\\_Jtpf8N5IDE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Jtpf8N5IDE&start_radio=1&list=RD_Jtpf8N5IDE)

“There’s **no time** for us, there’s **no place** for us.

What is this thing that **builds our dreams**

**yet slips away from us?**

Who wants to live forever?”

One can read this as a question from diasporic Zoroastrians to their faith/fellowship leadership.

Re-claiming Freddy (what we believe and desire our faith aspires to), requires re-imagining Farrokh (diasporic articulation of lived faith/fellowship). We have no right to claim or be proud of Freddy’s achievements, unless we articulate and project Daena Mazdayasni in a manner which would have welcomed Farrokh.

This is not a question about sanctioning actions taken by an individual. This is a question of not limiting participation based on legislative, procedural and prescriptive notions, while choosing to ignore the covenantal (relational) obligations that form the basis of our indigenous ways of knowing and being.

But this requires a vision document that articulates a lived “mission statement” and “operating system” for



# Personal Profile

Daena Mazdayasni in diaspora (terms from AVI project, referencing 101 Inspirations). It requires an attitudinal shift in thinking about identity, belonging, faith, fellowship, creation and divinity. Not new content as in making things up; rather, a conscious effort of emphasis in order to project the future we want. It requires an internalization that Daena Mazdayasni is a “Wisdom of Interdependence and a Worship of Reciprocity” (the logo emblazing reconceptualized Faravahar of the AVI project).

Without such occurrences, I believe it sheer fallacy and disingenuous to proclaim within interfaith and international conferences that Zoroastrianism is a universal message of social justice, empathy, and tolerance, while doing nothing to prevent the operation of xenophobia, bigotry, and injustice within our anjumans. And it must also be reiterated that while this requires education, the imperative is a requirement for persistent, outspoken, and repeated statements/actions from faith/fellowship leadership. Without leadership, education can't be fully transformative. Words don't change things by themselves, actions supported by words change things.

Watching Bohemian Rhapsody, provides 7 insights regarding some of the necessary elements of this re-imagining and re-claiming process.

- 1) Forgiveness and redemption are acts recognizing human frailty. We should not arrogantly assume that we know everything about our nature and Divinity. Change in actions or attitudes is an admission of such humility. Comprehension is directly proportional to one's ability to transcend the limitations of your own boundaries. Wisdom is an aggregate sum.
- 2) “Formulas are boring”. They are unimaginative, tend towards dogmatic interpretation, constraining of participation, and are un-emotive devices for communicating either information or inspiring action.
- 3) Multiplicity and syncretism are realities of Creation and Divinity. Re-imagining is a form of re-claiming, personalizing and sustaining.
- 4) Repression breeds excessive loss of self that manifests in excesses, as one attempts to seek out acceptance, love, and connectedness, while combating pain.

- 5) Love is the motivating essence of truth, faith, and fellowship.
- 6) Sustainable, vibrant, and dynamic faith, and fellowship, are relevant lived expressions.
- 7) ‘Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds’, is disconnected trope without articulation and action.

Also, re-imagining and re-claiming doesn't require time. It requires an act of testimony from the anjuman.

Freddy's reply to Brian throughout the song *Who Wants to Live Forever?* may be read as a Zoroastrian testimony regarding the nature of immortality (Ameratat), love and devotion (Spenta Armaity), and righteous leadership (Khshatra Variya). Freddy's refrain is: “we can have forever, forever is our today”. The AVI and its 101 Inspirations (Pledge 101) seeks to make forever **actionable today**. Anjuman advocacy, acknowledging itself as a legitimate change agent in all matters of faith and fellowship is required for concretization.

Testifying in support of the 101 Inspirations would truly be a meaningful tribute towards reclaiming Freddy by



Freddy Mercury: Faravahar for the World

Still Shot from Video of “Who Wants to Live Forever?”

projecting the faith/fellowship we believe universal.

For example:

- #25) There are no restrictions of ethnicity, language, gender, age, sexual orientation, or origin, which prohibit the ceremony of Navjote, Marriage, Nahn, Blessing, Funeral, Commemoration, or any other performative participatory aspect of Daena Mazdayasni and any of its associated cultural traditions or observances.

### BIRTHS

**Everett Eric Hansotia**, a boy to Eric and Nicole Galanek Chase, grandson to Marilyn and Phiroz Hansotia, in Atlanta, GA, on June 12, 2018.

**Kayden Devin Chohan**, a boy, to Devin and Gillian Chohan, grandson to Benifer and Anupam Chohan in Ottawa, ONT on October 31, 2018.

**Ryan Eric Engineer**, a boy, to Thrity and Eric Engineer (Austin, TX), grandson to Yasmin and Rustom Engineer (Sugarland, TX) and Roshan Bharucha (Quetta, Pakistan), brother to Aaron in Austin, TX on November 6, 2018.

**Ronin Zain Turner**, a girl, to Karina and Dr Zain, sister to Zailyn granddaughter to Mahnaz and Dr Yazdi Turner (Montreal) and Gulshan and Khushroo Tarapore (Toronto) in Montreal, on Nov. 7, 2018.

**Shireen Noushin Italia**, a girl, to Noushin and Neville Italia, sister to Kasra, granddaughter to Homi Italia and late Maneck Italia (Burnaby, BC) and Rohinton and Homa Khushrushahi (Dubai) in Vancouver, BC on December 22, 2018.

**Olivia Divecha**, a girl, to Andrea and Zain Divecha, granddaughter to Kemul and Darayus Divecha, Dominique and Francisco Lucar, great granddaughter to Mani Divecha and Piroja Engineer in Toronto, ONT on December 29, 2018.

**Emmett James Sielski**, a boy, to Jerita Dubash and Matt Sielski, grandson to Mari Jo and Jimmy Dubash (Palm Beach, FL) and Deb and Tom Sielski (Millerville, PA), brother to Sam Mathew Sielski in Blacksburg, VA on January 21, 2019.

**Natalia Shirin Kuecker** girl to Dina and Ian Kuecker, grand daughter

to Sarosh & Pearline Collector and Michael Kuecker, in League City, TX on February 19, 2019.

### NAVJOTE

**Ara Riley & Torin Behram**, children of Brandon and Roshan Kelly and grandchildren of Farrokh and Gool Patel, in New York on July 21, 2018.

### WEDDINGS

**Anita Rashidi**, daughter of Parviz and Farkhondeh Rashidi (North Vancouver, BC) to **Braden Kline**, son of Phil and Sue Kline in Summerland, BC on September 1, 2018.

**Delna Madon**, daughter of Sheroo and Parvez Madon (Montreal) to **Aspandiar Jijina**, son of Aloo and late Minoo Jijina, (Los Angeles) in Mumbai, on December 29, 2018.

### DEATHS

**Homi Phirozshah Bhappoo** (88) husband of Nergish, father of Dilnavaz Mirza, late Maharukh Marshall, Zenobia Hansen and Mehernaz Zarolia. Grandfather of Zarin, Zal, Arzan, Kainaz and Arish in New York on March 15, 2018. (ZAGNY)

**Iraj Yektashenas**, founder of IZA, on March 18, 2018. (ZAGNY)

**Darius Bejon Kandawalla**, husband of Spenta, on June 26, 2018 (ZAGNY)

**Dr. Firoz Dara Mistry** (79) husband of Piloo Mistry, son of the late Tehmi and Dara Mistry, brother of Khorshed (Sheetal), brother-in-law of Suresh Deshpande, on September 6, 2018. (ZAGNY)

**Walter Schenck** father of Adam Schenck and Spenta Cama, grandfather to Feroze and Zahra, on September 6, 2018. (ZAGNY)

**Sahrokh Sorooshi**, husband of Paridokht, father of Mitra, Atousa, Homa, brother of Parichehr, Keikhosrow, father-in-law of Jamshid, Peyman, Shervon, grandfather of Amitis and Amanda Khorsandi, Shayan and Shawna Naderi, Noosha Shahriari, great grandfather of Brooks Ormiston in North Vancouver, BC on October 28, 2018.

**Keki Bunshah**, husband of Kuku Bunshah, father of Freny (Burgess) Jokhi and Dina Bunshah, grandfather of Jessica and Michael Jokhi in Greater Atlanta, GA on December 2, 2018.

**Rostam Dinyar Sheshbaradaran**, father of Ardeshir and Bahram Sheshbaradaran in Bel Air, MD on December 13, 2018.

**Villoo P. Madon**, 95, born in Karachi, Pakistan, daughter of Mehera and Dinshaw Khory, wife of late Phiroze Madon, mother of Dinshaw (Tracey) Madon, Dina (PT) Tengra, grandmother of Xerxes and Zahra Tengra, aunt of Adil (Fehmida) Khory, (Karachi, Pakistan), Roshni (Arthur) Hebert, (FL), Kavita Khory, (MA) in UK on December 31, 2018.

**Ramesh Thakarar**, 77, husband of Gool Thakarar, father of Ajay, Sanjiv, Dina, father-in-law of Allyson, grandfather of Eva, Audrey, Annika in Larchmont, NY on January 4, 2019.

**Diber Behram Irani**, mother of Pervin Wadia in India on January 6, 2019. (ZANT)

**Farhad Ardeshir** on January 7, 2019. (Manashni - ZAH)

**Hormozdiar Yazdani Bioki**, husband of Mahvash Yazdani Khosravi, father of Rostam, Manijeh, Maryem Yazdani in Bowie, MD on January 9, 2019.

**Shehshagiri Rao**, 94, father of Murali Rao, father-in-law of Mani Rao

# MILESTONES

in Bolingbrook, IL on January 11, 2019.

**Homi Behram Gazdar**, husband of Homai Gazder, father of Adil, father-in-law of Prochi, grandfather of Rohaan, Cyrus in Mississauga, ONT on January 12, 2019.

**Manijeh Behram Deboo**, 84, wife of Ervad Behram Deboo, mother of Farzad Farouhmand, Cyrus and Kuma Deboo in Mission Viejo, CA on January 18, 2019.

**Cyrus Faramroze Italia**, 66, husband of Bakhtavar, father of Khushchehr and Kurush Italia (Palm Harbor, FL), brother of Parvin in Mumbai, India on January 19, 2019.

**Indrasen Dusaj**, father of Shailendra, father-in-law of Khurshed Navdar, grandfather of Neville and Natasha in Delhi, India on February 4, 2019. (ZAGNY)

**Rusi Darabshaw Khan (Ross Dinshaw)**, husband of Thrity Ross Dinshaw, father of Marzi, Adil, and Noshirwan Dinshaw, brother of Freny Aspy Patel (USA), Vera Hoshang Sidhwa, Bapsy Soli Patel, Khurshed Fali Khursigara (Montreal), late Dolly Filli Wania (UK) in Toronto, ONT on February 10, 2019.

**Dolly Pesi Jagus**, 92, wife of late Pesi Jijibhoy Jagus, mother of Havovi Mehta Belaire, grandmother of Vahishta Mehta on February 12, 2019. (ZSO)

**Dolly Filli Wania**, wife of Filli Lovji Wania (UK), mother of Naomi & Rupinder Singh and Lisa & Cyrus Wania; Grandmother of Jasmine, Zane and Harry, Sister of Late Rusi (Ross) Dinshaw (Canada); Freny Aspy Patel (USA), Vera Hoshang Sidhwa, Bapsy Soli Patel, Khurshed Fali Khursigara (Montreal,) in London, UK on February 18, 2019.

**Aloo Naval Desai**, 87, wife of late Ervad (Dr) Naval Fardoonji Desai; daughter of Dinamai and

Kaikhushroo Dhabhar; mother of Vira (Burjor) Santoke and Faredoon (Bakhtavar) Desai; grand-mother of Hanoz, Mahfrin, Shireen, Havovi and Farah in Huntington Beach, California, on February 19, 2019. (ZAC)

**Mehrangiz Firouzgary**, 88, wife of Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary (Tehran), mother of Mehrdad, grandmother of Jasmin in Tehran on Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019.

**Freany Kawas (KALI) Khumbatta**, 85, wife of Kali Minocher Khumbatta, mother of Kershaw (Nazneen) and Farah Khumbatta, grand mother of Mitra and Noshir, sister of (late) Noshir, (late) Homi Dossabhoy Billimoria (UK), (late) Goolu Phiroze Bharucha and Perin Homi Dubash (UK), in Houston, TX on February 24, 2019. (ZAH)

**Keroo (Kay) Polishvala**, sister of Jini Pestonji and Minnie Chesson and cousin of Dr. Dhun Noria, Freny Pavri and Soli Pestonji, in Toronto, on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019 (OZCF)

**Soshiro Masuda**, husband of Noriko, father of Hideki and Mikiyo (Cyrus) Gazdar, and grandfather of Nina (Mississauga) in Chiyoda, Japan on February 28, 2019. (OZCF)

**Goola Cavas Shroff**, wife of (Late) CAVAS SHROFF, mother of Yasmin (Ron) Kharas and Avan Shroff, grandmother of Vera and Zain Kharas, in Toronto, March 1, 2019. (OZCF)

**Sohrab Rustom Mirza**, 76, husband of Yasmin Mirza, son of late Gulbanoo and Rustomji Mirza, father of Cyrus, Shaun (Shaun Khandawalla), grand father of Riah and Zane, in Irvine, CA, on March 2, 2019.

**Banoo Bharucha**, wife of Sammy Bharucha, mother of Zarina Bharucha, grandmother of Rushad, Shirina, Arish. (ZSO)

**Farhad Shavak Ardeshir**, brother of Baktavar Dinshaw Mehta (Toronto, ONT), uncle of Jamsheed Vesuna, Zal Vesuna, Xerxes Vesuna (Toronto, ONT & Ottawa, ONT) in Houston, TX. (ZSO)

**Firoza Jussawalla**, wife of Malcolm Jussawalla, mother of Zarina and Samira, in ONT. (ZSO)

**Banoo Manijeh Farkhondeh Salamat**. (ZAMWI)

**Farhad Fereydooni**. (PZO)

**Bahram Mehraban Partovi**, father of Behzad, Behnam, Elham. (CZCLA)

**Parviz Kyumarsi**, (CZC)

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## Matrimonial

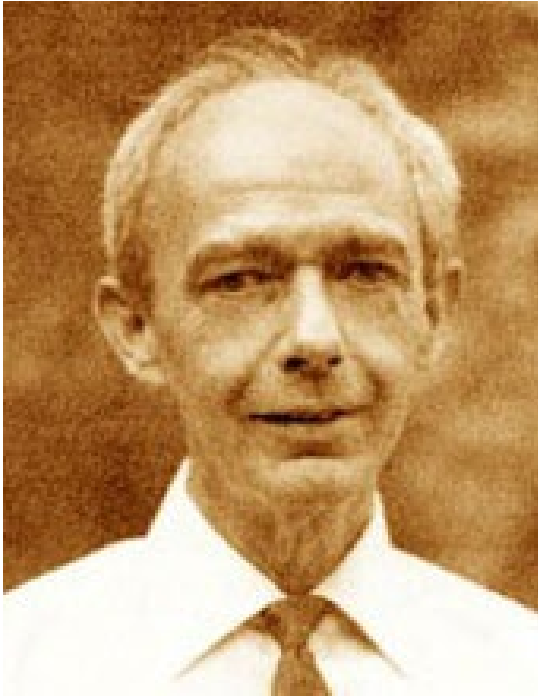
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Dina G. McIntyre



Professor Stanley Insler, a giant in the field of Gatha studies (among other fields), departed this life on January 4, 2019. His life is worth celebrating. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Columbia University (1957), did postgraduate studies at the University of Tübingen (1960--1962), did research at the University of Madras, and received his Ph.D. from Yale University (1963) at which time he became a member of the faculty. He later became the Salisbury Professor of Sanskrit & Comparative Philology in Yale's Department of Classics; chaired the Yale Department of Linguistics (1978 --1989); and retired as Professor Emeritus of Linguistics in 2012. Professor Insler was a world renowned scholar of ancient Indo--Iranian languages and texts, and in fact, one of his insights is enshrined in Indo--Iranian linguistics as "Insler's Law". He was widely published, and was a member of many professional societies.

But for Zoroastrians, his life is a celebration for additional reasons. His 1975 translation of the Gathas -- widely recognized as a modern standard -- opened up a whole new universe of Zarathushtra's ideas, like

fireworks in the mind. For this, I will always be grateful to him. His translation decisively counters those (academicians) who expressed the opinion that so 'primitive' a society could not have produced such lofty thoughts.

Professor Insler had a great sense of humor, was often kind, and was generous with his knowledge of Zarathushtra's teachings, which he shared by lecturing at the invitation of Zoroastrian communities throughout the USA, India, and Europe.

In a middle aged search for my roots, I tried to learn Zarathushtra's teachings by reading available literature. I was struck by the wide diversity of views -- so much of it simply expressing opinions, unsupported by evidence.

Yet we are so lucky! We are among the few religions of the world, who have our founder's own words.

Professor Insler's translation of the Gathas brings us Zarathushtra's own words. His translation is both insightful, and linguistically up to date. When we read a "free" translation, we are stuck at the level of understanding of the translator. It is only when we read as literal a translation as possible, that we begin to glimpse Zarathushtra's own thoughts. True, any translation of the Gathas is bound to have some interpretation in it, because the Avestan language itself has inherent ambiguities, and has not yet been decoded 100%. And I do not always agree with some of Professor Insler's interpretations. Yet, despite our disagreements, he freely allowed me to use his translation. That showed a rare generosity of spirit. Without his translation I would never have discovered Zarathushtra's amazing and beautiful thoughts.

We Zoroastrians like to point out that Cyrus the Great freed the Jews from captivity in Babylon, allowing them to return to their own country. And Darius the Great gave them gifts of money to help rebuild their Temple. Well those ancient gifts of freedom, and help in rebuilding their Temple, have now been abundantly returned to us by their descendent, Professor Insler, who has brought us the gift of Zarathushtra's own words. Rabindranath Tagore said: "Death is not the end. It is putting out the candle because the dawn has come." Somehow Rest in Peace does not seem to fit Professor Insler's personality. So let us wish him joy in the dawn of whatever new adventures are ahead of him.

## Surviving Myself

Dina Pestonji with Erin McCann

Pp 350 available at Amazon.com (paper back and e book)

Publisher: Tellwell Talent

Price: CDN\$ 21.97, US\$ 16.99 [paperback], CDN\$ 6.55 [Kindle Edition]

ISBN: 978-1-77370-839-3 [paperback]

978 1-77370-841-6 [eBook]

Reviewed by: Sheeraz Wania

**S**urviving Myself, by Dina Pestonji is a memoir; a true story based on Dina's extraordinary life experiences.

The book starts with Dina at age ten and her struggle with 'fitting in' and fighting voices in her head that call her 'fat', 'pathetic' and 'worthless'. In the first chapter - Hungry, on page one, while Dina contemplates the best way to take her life, she writes that

*'When I get to heaven, I will be able to eat anything I want in total silence. No judgement, no voices telling me I am a disgusting pig'.*

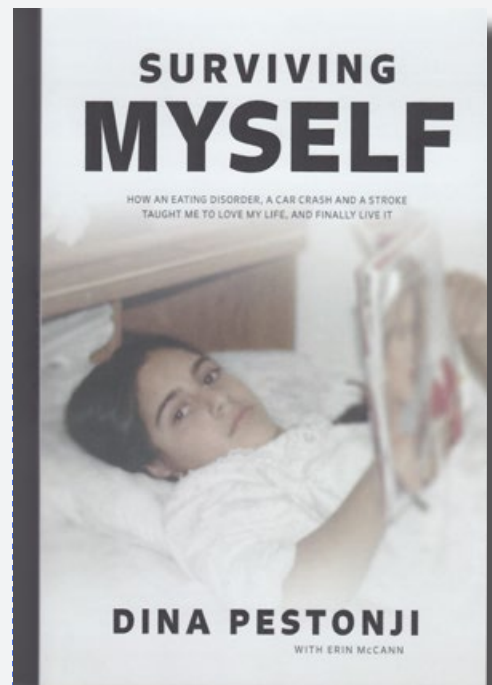
In this chapter, Dina walks us through her struggles with an eating disorder throughout her teen years, her constantly feeling different from her peers, where she sees herself as a brown girl in a sea of white. Throughout this phase of her life, Dina unceasingly hopes that a change of school, going into grade 6, going to summer camp etc. will help her fit in better, and be more accepted.

The part in this chapter where she finds out about her mother having cancer was heart-rending as she writes about being 'grateful' for this news, since it has made her love her more and how this tragedy has helped distract her, albeit for a short time, from her own distressing self

and take her mind off school and the whole notion of 'fitting in'. This is the part where as a reader I realized, how deeply immersed she was as a young child, in her own self-loathing and suffering. The chapter ends with Dina, finally seeking some help and a statement in the last pages of this section *'I'm in a huge hole filled with darkness. I don't know if I will ever be able to climb out of that hole and see sunshine and be happy'* is very powerful and poignant and makes you feel for this young girl who is staring down an abyss of dejection.

Chapter two is positioned 10 years later. Just when outwardly Dina seems to be having it all; a great university acceptance, followed a super start on her career in New York, ultimately business school in London and Paris, running marathons for a great cause, and eventually moving to Napa Valley, while still inwardly struggling with her demons of self-doubt, self-acceptance and finding inner peace. That's when the near fatal crash happens at the age of 28. With the help and support of her family she gets over this trauma, and is on her way to complete recovery. And yet again fate has other plans for Dina.

It is the third and final chapter of the book, 'The Stroke' is where her story and her struggles, in my opinion, get most remarkable and inspiring. It



was as if the first two chapters were just setting the stage for this final epilogue. At this young age, Dina fights off not one, not two, but three brushes with death, and that too all before she turns 30. What is moving is that it took all that and more to give her back her self-worth and get her out of the self-destructive turmoil she was trapped in. No amount of love and support of her family could help her. Throughout the book Dina emphasises the care, warmth and affection of her entire family, specially her parents who dote on her and are pillars of strength for her every step of

# Books & ARTS

the way and her sister who is always there for her in her times of need.

This book is a recommended read. It is over all compelling and charged with emotion. It will move you and maybe even resonate with many- relating to the notions of feeling lost, frustrations with life, feelings of fear and despair and hearing loud voices of negativity – thus making it easier to empathize and connect with the writer.

Over all I enjoyed the casual style of writing but at times I found the book a bit of a tedious read due to many events being mentioned but with not enough grip in terms of plot. Also, the use of the Gujarati language, with translations that followed was to some degree unmerited for me. Out of the three chapters the last one – ‘The Stroke’ was from my standpoint perhaps the strongest as that is where the narrative becomes most gripping and persuasive in what it sets out to achieve.

What I appreciated most about this book was the vulnerability with which it is written and how Dina has opened up and shared her inner most experiences with her readers, not only her troubled times and her deepest fears but also her moments of joy and peace.

*Sheeraz Y. Wania is a graphic designer and design educator with a master's degree in education from the University of London, U.K. Having lived, worked and taught internationally, for many years, she now resides in Toronto and teaches courses related to design, culture and technology. Sheeraz feels that her inspiration and imagination is the best way to share her soul with the world. She is a visual story teller, who can't live without books, an urban explorer and travel addict.*

## NEW WEBSITE ON TEACHINGS OF ZARATHUSHTRA By DINA G. MCINTYRE

A new website on the teachings of Zarathushtra, authored by Dina G. McIntyre includes the basics, as well as more in--depth information. You may access it at:

<https://gathasofzarathushtra.com>

This is a work in progress. The chapters under the following Tabs are done.

General Overview; Part One: The Basics; Part Two: Puzzles & Paradigms; as well as Abbreviations; Bibliography; and About the Author.

The other Tabs have some chapters that are done, and many that are being completed/, Chapters will be uploaded periodically, as they are completed.

If you are interested only in the Basics, start with the General Introduction (under the General Overview Tab). Then in Part One: The Basics, read whatever interests you (you may prefer to skip chapters 1.3 through 1.10 which are more detailed).

Browse at will. Enjoy.

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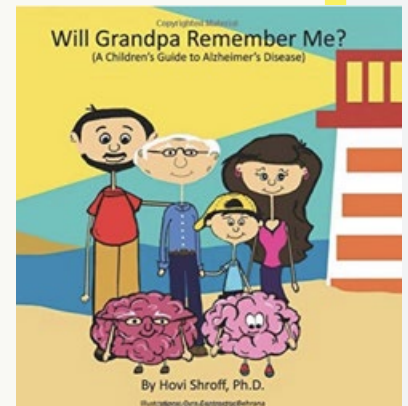
Number of pages 36

Cost is \$19.95

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# FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

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