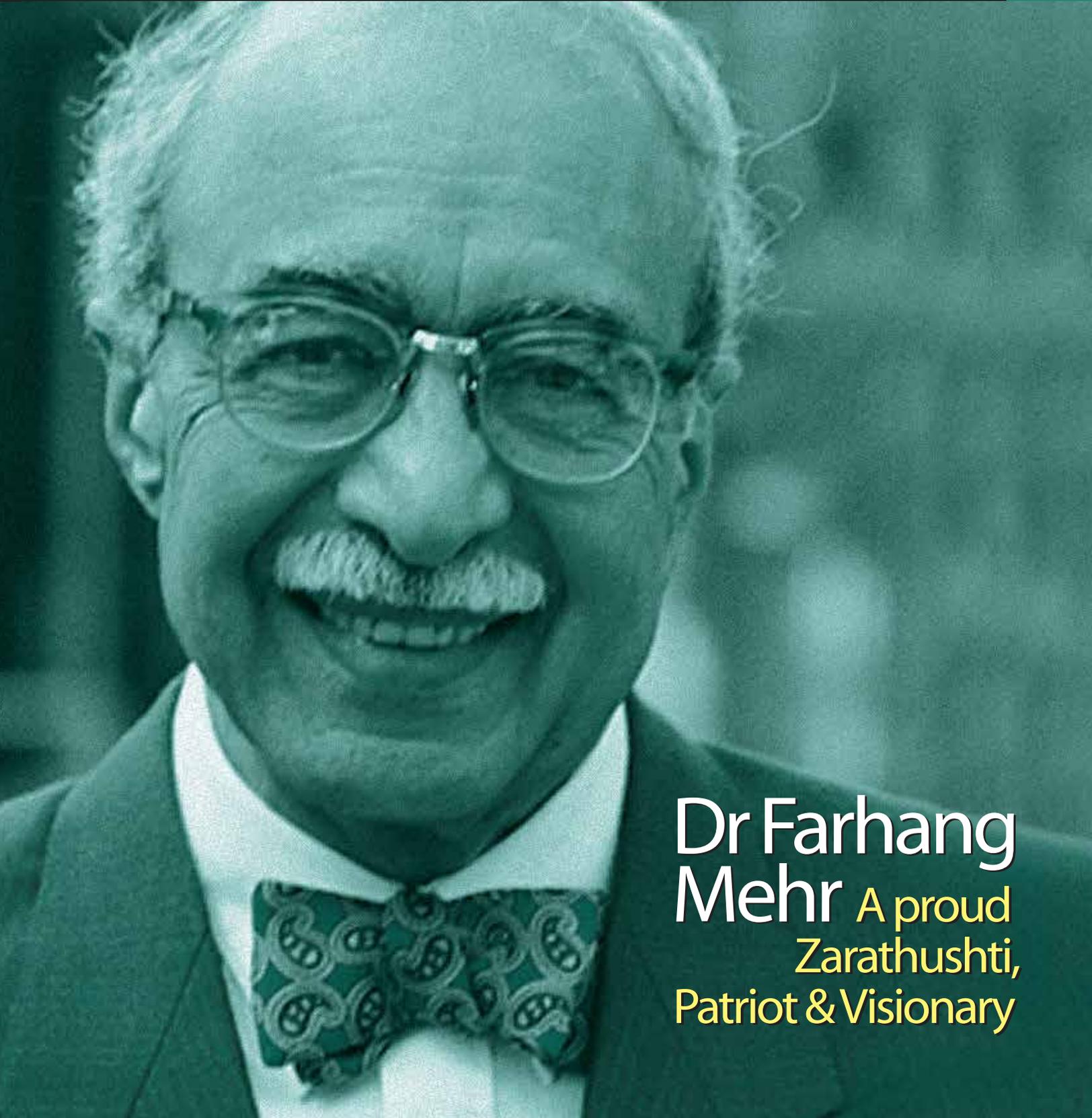


publication of the world zoroastrian organisation

HAMAZOR

2
issue 2018



Dr Farhang
Mehr **A proud
Zarathushti,
Patriot & Visionary**



The Mama Parsi Girls' Secondary School. Photo credit CNC, p40

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Remembering Keki Bhote on his 95th birth anniversary

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From the Editor

No sooner had we paid tribute to our five stalwarts in the last issue, we received news of yet another loss to WZO. Dr Farhang Mehr - one can say, was the Father of WZO, as it was at his suggestion, persuasion and vision that WZO was formed in 1980.

Not only is Farhang's passing away, WZO's loss, but for the whole Zarathushti community. We offer our sincere sympathies to Parichehr and his family.

As we go to press today, we have been informed, Prof John Hinnells passed away on 3 May at the age of 71. He was a devoted scholar to Zoroastrianism, a teacher, author of many essays and publications and an erudite lecturer. Prof Hinnells had contributed a number of times in the Hamazor, despite his ill health. He was held in high esteem for his scholarly work on our community, especially on the UK diaspora and through his efforts restarted the Zoroastrian Studies at SOAS. Our sympathies to his two sons Mark and Duncan and their families.

On a happier note we were proud to learn on 27 April, Mr Ratan Tata was awarded the Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire, one of Britain's highest civilian honours. It was said, "Tata is the only Indian national to be given this particular award since India became a republic in 1950".

7 May, 2018 Our Board Member of years, Rustom Ghadiali of Singapore, has received the Inter-religious Organisation Award in March for his contributions to inter-faith harmony over a span of 30 years. He has been the IRO president three times.

Readers may well wonder why there are a few articles which are not Zoroastrian related. Thinking, since these topics were both interesting and of value, they were requested for, and included.

All members of WZO are requested to read pp 69-72 carefully as it is an important piece of EU legislation to protect individuals. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) comes into effect on 25th May. The GDPR has been included for your information.

Barry Conroy



Celebration of a Good Life

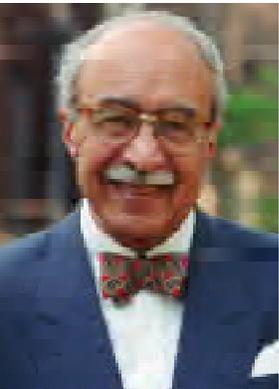


Photo credit: Mehrdad Mehr

Farhang Mehr – A Visionary, Scholar, Statesman & Educator

An esteemed scholar, author, educator, lawyer and economist with an impressive record of governmental and public service, our beloved Dr Farhang Mehr – a founding member of the World Zoroastrian Organisation – passed away on March 3, 2018. His passing is an immense loss for Iranians and Zoroastrians alike.

Farhang was born in Tehran, Iran, in 1923, to Mehraban Mehr, a self-made man who would go on to become the Chief Accountant for Parliament, and Paridokht Barkhordar, a homemaker who was active in the Zoroastrian Women's Association. Academic success came early for Farhang, who attended the Zoroastrian school Jamshid Jam and, at the age of 11, received a prize from Reza Shah Pahlavi for attaining the highest grade in the country on the national examination. He continued his high academic performance at the Zoroastrian high school, Firooz Bahram, and went on to study mechanical engineering at the prestigious Tehran Polytechnic.

As a young man, Farhang was drawn to politics and often watched the Parliamentary sessions from the visitors' gallery. To better understand the nuances of the discussions, he decided to study law and economics. In 1945, he graduated from Tehran University with a degree in mechanical engineering as well as a degree in law. After working at an economic affiliate of the Ministry of Finance, where he was soon promoted to head of the department, Farhang left for England, where he earned his LLM from the London School of Economics at the University of London. In 1957, he obtained his PhD in Economics from the University of Southampton.

Upon returning to Iran, Dr Mehr joined the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) as head of the International and Industrial Relations Department and also served as

an advisor to the Minister of Commerce. In addition, he served as a key member of Iran's negotiating team for the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and as Iran's representative in the OPEC Board of Governors. During this time, he wrote his first book on labour law and social security – a book that became the main reference on the subjects, used in all of the universities and colleges in Iran, and was reprinted seven times.

In 1961, Farhang joined the Ministry of Finance where he served in a variety of positions: Director General of Oil and International Relations, Director General of Economic Affairs and Monopolies, and Vice Minister in charge of finance and economic affairs. As Vice Minister, he was asked to oversee the creation of new tax laws and headed the committee in charge of revising the tax code.

In 1964, Prime Minister Hassan Ali Mansur nominated Dr Mehr to serve as the Minister of Finance. However, Iran's constitutional law forbids a non-Muslim to serve as a minister. Since Mehr, a devoted Zoroastrian, refused to convert to Islam, the Prime Minister created a new position – General Deputy Minister – to allow him to lead the ministry without an official title. Amir Abbas Hoveyda was instead named the Minister of Finance.

When Mansur was assassinated and replaced by Hoveyda, Dr Mehr served as Acting Minister of Finance, a position he soon resigned in protest against Iran's constitutional ban on non-Muslims holding

high political office. Hoveyda responded by offering Farhang the position of Deputy Prime Minister, with all the privileges of a minister except the title. Farhang accepted, becoming the first non-Muslim to hold such a high position in the Iranian government, though he continued to demonstrate his opposition to the laws affecting non-Muslims. He resigned from the position with much publicity after a year in office.

After leaving the political arena, Farhang became Chairman of the Board and the Managing Director of the Bimeh-ye Iran, also known as IIC, the largest insurance company in Iran, while continuing to serve as Iranian Governor for OPEC. Despite initial opposition from Parliament, Dr Mehr created the Central Insurance Agency, a new regulatory agency that would regulate and strengthen private insurance companies in Iran and stop the illegal exit of foreign exchange under the cover of reinsurance. He also established reinsurance pools within the framework of the Regional Corporation for Development (RDC). In order to train managers to work with these reinsurance pools, Farhang and a director of a private insurance company created two new private colleges of insurance, one in Farsi and one in English.

While at IIC, Dr Mehr was asked to oversee the construction of the famous Shah Abbas Hotel in Isfahan, which had been abandoned for seven years after running over budget. He chose to hire the Iranian architect Ibrahimian and various Iranian artisans to design the hotel in the style of the Safavid and Qajar dynasties. In recognition of his work on this monumental project and his contribution to reviving the traditional decorative arts of Iran, Dr Mehr was awarded with a medal by the Pahlavi regime. Artisans who had worked on the hotel called themselves the "Mehr Group" and were commissioned to work on various projects in Iran. In 1977, they were selected to decorate a hall at the Waldorf Astoria hotel in New York. The Shah Abbas Hotel continues to be an attraction in the city of Isfahan, showcasing the arts and architectural style of Safavid and Qajar Iran.

In 1971, Farhang left IIC to become President of the University of Shiraz, then known as the Pahlavi University, where he had an enormous impact on academia in Iran. He created partnerships with foreign universities for shared research and exchanges of information. In recognition of Pahlavi university's achievements in the field of medical education, the World Health Organization named Pahlavi University as the center for training of medical faculty in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Dr Mehr was the longest serving university president in Iran. As a result of fundraising and carefully planned policies, by the time he left the Pahlavi University in 1979, not only had the University's debt been paid but the University had approximately \$30 million in reserves. In recognition of Dr Mehr's accomplishments, the University of Pennsylvania awarded him with an honorary degree in 1975.

For his contributions to academia, the Shah awarded Farhang the prestigious Homayoun medal, first rank with sash – making Dr Mehr the first and only non-Muslim Iranian ever to receive the honour.



US vice-president Nelson and Happy Rockefeller at Farhang's home in Shiraz with his three young children, at his invitation to visit the Pahlavi University.



Farhang & Parichehr with Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother at Shiraz, at the Pahlavi University

Remembering Keki Bhote on his 95th birth anniversary



Highly decorated for services rendered to Iran (1977)

He also received the second rank Taj Medalion, as well as many other prestigious medals for his various services to the country. Farhang's services to the City of Shiraz included including creating the Eram palace (Bageh-Eram) rose garden which boasted more than 400 types of roses, the largest ever gathered in Iran, in celebration of a city known for its flowers, and his opening, with funding from Her Majesty Queen Farah Pahlavi, of the first Natural History Museum in the city of Shiraz, which is still operational today.



Mohammad Reza Pahlavi in conversation with Farhang

Even as he held important positions in Iran's government, Farhang served as part-time professor at Iran's Military Academy, Tehran University, National University of Iran, College of Accounting and the College of Insurance. He also served on the board of trustees of several universities and colleges.

The revolution of 1979, which ushered in the Islamic Republic of Iran, changed life dramatically. While many of his colleagues left the country, Dr Mehr chose to stay to defend his reputation and governmental record. He was soon in danger:

Revolutionary Courts had been established and operatives simply arrested and executed high ranking officials of the Shah's regime, as ordered by the Ayatollah.

According to the order, no trial was required, simple identification of the accused was enough to condemn them to death. Many of Farhang's friends and colleagues, including Prime Minister Hoveyda, were killed. Farhang's property was confiscated, his bank accounts closed and his pension withheld. When young revolutionary militias raided his mother's home, Farhang went into hiding. He eventually escaped Iran with the help of Kurdish people who inhabit the mountains of Iran and Turkey, travelling by foot and on horseback through the mountains bordering Iran and Turkey. A year later, his wife and children escaped through the same route and eventually joined Farhang in Brookline, Massachusetts, where Farhang accepted a position as Professor of International Relations at Boston University. He retired in 1997 as Professor Emeritus.



Farhang in the Royal Court Uniform

Farhang Mehr was the author of 13 books on law, economics, international relations and Zoroastrianism (in both Farsi and English). Among them is *The Zoroastrian Tradition: An Introduction to the Ancient Wisdom of Zarathustra*, the Farsi version of which has been reprinted several times. A prolific writer, Farhang also published more than 90 articles on his professional subjects (in Farsi and English). He travelled widely and gave lectures in America, Europe, Australia, the Soviet Union and China, appearing in television and radio interviews in several countries. In 1997, he founded The Center for Ancient Iranian Studies and co-edited the Center's bilingual scholarly journal, *Humata*.

Farhang was active in the Zoroastrian community worldwide. As a young man, he formed the Zoroastrian youth organization

and in 1949 was elected to the Tehran Anjuman as its youngest member, later serving as the president of the Anjuman for 12 years.

In the 1970s when Iran was experiencing an economic boom, working with the Indian ambassador to Iran, Farhang petitioned the Shah and arranged for skilled Parsi workers, who were struggling in India, to be hired to supplement Iran's workforce. Working with the Minister of Economy, they provided Parsis with special status of "ancient Iranians" and helped them avoid the lengthy wait for work permits and visas that they would have faced as "foreign workers." Dr Mehr saw this as an opportunity to repay Indian Parsis for their role in establishing the Zoroastrian Amelioration Funds in the 1870s, funds established to assist their co-religionists in Iran.

Farhang Mehr was involved in various Zoroastrian organisations, including the Zoroastrian Associations of Greater New York (ZAGNY) and greater Boston (ZAGBA), and the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA). He was a founding member and director of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO), based in London for 20 years. Farhang was deeply committed to creating a close knit community of Iranian and Parsi Zoroastrians that was inclusive of any person who studied and lived according the tenets of Zoroastrianism. In 1988, Dr Mehr was instrumental in the founding of the Zoroastrian Assembly.

Mehr was not only well-versed in several modern languages, but had studied ancient Iranian languages and was committed to contributing to the study of ancient Iran and Zoroastrianism. In 1958, he and Farangis Shahrokh formed the Ancient Iranian Cultural Society, convincing many well-known scholars to participate in studies. During the 1970s, he expanded the Asian Institute, which was led by Professor Richard Frye of Harvard University, with scholars and experts on Pahlavi and Avestan language. In collaboration with Dastur Dr Jamasp-Asa, scholars worked on

the restoration and publication of 52 ancient Zoroastrian manuscripts. In 1996, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance of the Islamic Republic invited Dr Mehr to participate in the World Zoroastrian Congress held that year in Tehran. Despite the risks involved in returning to his homeland, Farhang and his wife, Parichehr, attended.

In recognition of Farhang's contributions to the faith, the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress awarded him a lifetime achievement award. He was one of only six people to have received the award.

Through his hard work, boundless energy and steadfast commitment to helping others, Farhang Mehr improved the lives of many in Iran and abroad. We appreciate his many contributions, the difference he made, and hope that his legacy will inspire future generations to work towards the advancement and betterment of their communities.

Acknowledgement:

Much of the information is from "Triumph Over Discrimination: The Life Story of Dr Farhang Mehr," written by Lylah M Alphonse in 2000.

Farhang Mehr : A Quest for Hamazoori

The idea of a unified Zoroastrian world body was first proposed at the 1960 World Zoroastrian Congress in Tehran by Behram (Bailey) Irani, a member-delegate from the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE). This was the first World Zoroastrian Congress and the few Zoroastrian associations in existence at the time, the Bombay Parsi Panchayat, the Karachi Parsi Anjuman and the Zoroastrian Anjuman of Tehran were in attendance. The idea was unanimously supported, but the leaders of the Zoroastrian community of Tehran could not agree on where the headquarters should be located, and the Bombay Parsi Panchayat was indifferent to any organization being formed outside of Bombay. With no mechanism in place for its implementation, the idea for a unified body was put on hold.

Remembering Keki Bhote on his 95th birth anniversary

In 1978, as Iran was on the cusp of revolution, Dr Farhang Mehr, who had attended the 1960 World Zoroastrian Congress and was interested in the issue, met with ZTFE President Shahpur Captain. Farhang emphasized the urgent need to form a united world body that could speak for the community internationally and protect Zoroastrians, if necessary. At Dr Mehr's urging, the ZTFE assembled a group of Zoroastrian leaders from around the world, as had been mandated by the 1960 Congress. For reasons of accessibility and distance, London was designated as the headquarters for the world body. The group drafted a constitution that was approved by the few Zoroastrian associations in existence at the time and in 1980 the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) was established, with Dr Mehr as one of its founding members.

At the World Zoroastrian Congress of 1983, the ZTFE, Bombay Parsi Panchayat and the growing US Zoroastrian organisations objected to the WZO's headquarters being in London and to the fact that equal voting rights were given to association members and individual members. As a board member, Dr Mehr worked with other notable Zoroastrians, such as Professor Kaikhosrov Irani, to address the objections. In 1993, Farhang Mehr and Adi Davar convinced members of WZO's International Board of Trustees to revise the WZO constitution and adopt an organisational system with two independent groups one for associations and one for the individuals, to represent the community worldwide. The WZO would also have an international board made up of members from both groups. For practical reasons, it was decided that London would remain the location for the headquarters. WZO then sought input from all Zoroastrian associations as well as of Zoroastrian leaders from every country where Zoroastrians lived, taking the views into account as much as possible. Rumi Sethna, who was chairman of the WZO at the time, travelled around the world to discuss this proposal; numerous negotiations took place in North America and India, in many of

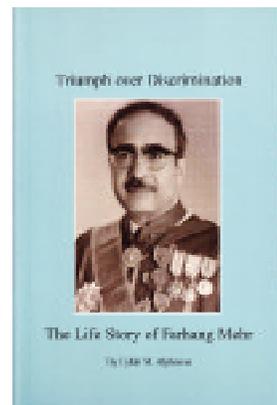
which Kaikhosrov Irani, Farhang Mehr and Adi Davar participated. An immense amount of thought, energy and time was put into the process by all those involved.

A large number of Zoroastrian associations worldwide, including Iranian ones, eventually approved the revised constitution which was adopted by WZO's International Board in 2003. By mid-2004, the concept had changed to include three groups, separately incorporated in three countries, and FEZANA, the UK, Iranian and Indian associations were on board. Unfortunately, just when the solution was to be finalised, the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Associations of India opposed the agreements and the idea of a world body, unifying all Zoroastrian associations did not come to fruition. Farhang was deeply disappointed that as one of the remaining survivors of that first World Zoroastrian Congress, he was not likely to see the creation of a world body of Zoroastrians.

Throughout his life, Farhang played an integral part in the operation and continued success of the WZO. Referring to the WZO, he said, "I pray that the community supports it financially and physically, in the absence of a better substitute. Community progress lies in unity (Hamazoori). Let us not act in a way that will disappoint our future generations."

In 2000, Farhang was honoured with a lifetime achievement award by the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress, making him one of just six people to have received the award. As part of the celebration, Hilda and Rumi Sethna sponsored the publication of his biography through WZO, "Triumph Over Discrimination: The Life Story of Dr Farhang Mehr," written by Lylah M Alphonse, a journalist with whom Farhang shared his hopes and dreams for the future of the Zoroastrian community.

"I dream of creating unity within the Zoroastrian community," Farhang told



Lylah. "In a quest for survival and in an attempt to fight social ills, the Zoroastrian community has split into three distinct ideological groups: Traditionalists, Reformists, and Moderates. The division in and of itself is not a threat to the solidarity of the Zoroastrian community; it is merely a sign of spiritual awakening and religious revival. In the modern, free world no religion is monolithic. Doctorinal diversity is a product of freethinking – a value cherished by Zoroastrians and mandated by Ahura Mazda. Religious understanding is no longer the domain of the priesthood; every individual is entitled to knowledge and has the right to study and make inquiries into religion. It is a personal choice. The threat to community solidarity comes, then, not from freethinking, but from intolerance. ... The right to liberty is so undeniable that Ahura Mazda does not curtail humankind's actions, even in regard to one's choice of religion. Intolerance is not a tradition sanctioned by the Gathas. ... The acceptance of people born to non-Zarathushti parents is not a threat to the survival of the religion. The tradition of non-acceptance is a threat to our very existence."

On the occasion of WZO's 20th Anniversary, 13 prominent Zarathushtis from around the world were awarded a hand painted citation scroll for their exemplary contribution to the growth and success of our organisation. Dr Farhang Mehr was one of the honorees. The WZO regrets that Farhang did not live long enough to witness the opening of the World Zoroastrian House in London later in this year. WZO's journey is only just beginning.



Farhang honoured for his contribution to WZO [2000]

Farhang was the community colossus of our time, a man of vision and courage, who championed for the protection of Zoroastrians, a patriot who loved his country and the community from which he rose to prominence.

Farhang Mehr is survived by his wife Parichehr and his children, Mehrdad, Mehran and Mitra.

May Farhang's soul rest in Eternal Peace in Garothman Behest and may his exemplary life inspire us all. Atha Zamyat, Yatha Afrinami.



L to R : Esfandiar Sorouchyari, son Cyrus, Mitra Mehr Sorouchyari, Mehran, Mehrdad Farhang, Parichehr and Roxana. [The children are Mitra's]

All images courtesy, Mehran Mehr

Understanding the Avesta - Zend

by adi davar

Background:

Most practitioners and scholars of Zoroastrianism believe Avesta-Zend to be its fundamental and holiest scripture. While linked together, they are two separate works.

They took over 400 years to compile. Around 2,000 years ago, one of the last Aracid-Parthian kings, Valaksh (Vologeses I - 51-79 AD), asked his Zoroastrian priests to collate the faith's scriptures, which lay scattered since its birth around 1,700 BC. The founder of the successor Sassanian dynasty, Ardeshir Papekan, ordered his High Dastur Tansar around 253 AD to complete the Parthian work. His compilation was later much enlarged and completed by his successor, High Dastur Kirdar, in the succeeding reign of Shapur I. The final revision to ensure Avesta Zend's orthodox character was made by Adurbad Marezpandan in that of Shapur II (309-379 AD). A revision of the Pahlavi translation was made in that of Kosrow I (531-79 AD).

The Avesta collates scriptures and prayers from Zarathustra's times up to that of the early Sassanian era. Priests used the Avesta for performing prayer ceremonies and rituals. The compilers however intended the Zend, for scholarly use. Hence, it is a collection of explanations and commentaries on various prayers and scriptures, together with writings on customs, history, eschatology, ritual practices, science and even cosmogony and laws. Kirdar carefully selected what went into both compilations, to ensure that the state religion of Zoroastrianism could be used by the regime to control its subjects. It was hardly to give them its prayers or scriptures.

Composed poetically in the Gathic dialect of the Old Avestan language, the surviving 17 of the 21 Gathas composed by Zarathustra,

were his "sermons" aimed at persuading his listeners to abandon their centuries-old belief in and worship of Vedic-based gods, godheads, deities, daevas and elements of nature and instead, espouse his radical-at-the-time teachings, ie, belief in one Supreme Creator, Ahura Mazda – "the Wise Lord", who created everything in the universes through His Infinite Wisdom.

European scholars of Zoroastrianism discovered Avesta-Zend in 18th century AD. Till then, nothing of this magnitude was available to them. So they regarded it as its most 'Holy Scripture'. This perception has since stuck not only among most of them, but most Zoroastrians.

Yet, except for the 17 Gathas, everything else in Avesta-Zend reflects developments subsequent to Zarathustra's times, ie, the evolution of the first monotheistic faith he gave to the world to one that is somewhat distant from the essence of the principles he propounded and taught. Indeed, except for the poetic Gathic dialect of Old Avestan that he used in his Gathas, everything else in Avesta-Zend is in subsequent Iranian languages like Younger Avestan, Pazand and Pahlavi.

It's Contents:

I. Yasna in 72 Chapters (called Haitis or Has):

The Yasnas constitute the main liturgical content of Avesta-Zend, compiled in 3 distinct parts:

(a) The Later Yasnas (Has 1-27) include praises of Ahura Mazda, commentaries on Atha Hu Variyo and Ashem Vohu, as well as prayers to consecrate holy waters

(Zaothra), Baresman twigs (twigs of the tamarask tree used in Vedic rituals and later, due to their unavailability in India, metal rods) and Homa (Vedic worship of the juice of the halogenic Soma plant). Most Zoroastrians seem unaware that Zarathustra had railed against these pre-Zarathustrian beliefs and rituals (Has. 32.14 and 48.10).

Has 52 and 54-72 of the Later Yasnas include praises and offerings of thanksgiving to different Yazats. Even the halogenic Homa plant was elevated into a Yazat and its juice worshipped with a prayer dedicated to it. Although Zoroastrians believe in and worship them with great devotion, Yazats reflect reintroduction into Zoroastrianism, of polytheistic beliefs and ritual worship of renamed Vedic deities, which do not figure in any of Zarathustra's Gathic teachings.

(b) Haptanghaiti Gathas (Has 35-42) reflect the compromises made during the "grand syncretism" which, according to scholars of Zoroastrianism like Mary Boyce, Dasturji Dhalla and others, took place several decades after Zarathustra's demise between his weak successors and the strong cabal of rebellious priests (Kirpans). The latter had increasingly resented his monotheistic teachings, because they deprived them of their income and the influence they used to wield over the laity by persuading them to patronize frequent performance of expensive rituals dedicated to various godheads. The Haptanghaiti Gathas reflect many such compromises in Zarathustra's teachings that were reached at that time.

Zarathustra had taught in his Gathas that besides creating everything in all the universes through His Infinite Wisdom, Ahura Mazda also gave all humans: Minds free to choose, and which they would hopefully always choose, for the pursuit of Truth (Asha) in thoughts, words and deeds in order to progressively perfect both themselves and the world; the realization that He guided them towards doing so through His divine Spenta Mainyu mentality,

by giving them Daena (called "voice of conscience" by subsequent prophets), to guide their free Minds to follow the path of Asha; awareness that Evil (Druj) was not a pre-existing natural force, but was created by humans whenever they used the "bad" aspects of their free Minds by thinking, speaking and acting evilly; and consciousness to always use the "good" aspects of their free Minds to pursue Asha in thoughts, words and deeds, thus progressively perfecting themselves and the world.

On the other hand, the Haptanghaiti Gathas include: the reintroduction of pre-Zarathustrian Vedic-based gods, deities, godheads and supernatural forces; their introduction into the faith under new-named concepts like "Yazats"; and in place of Zarathustra's abstract concept of Daena to guide each person's free mind, the introduction of "Fravashis" or guiding spirits attached at birth to each human's soul, but who return to their supernatural home when that person dies; reintroduction of the pre-Zarathustrian concept of a natural existing Evil (Druj, later referred to as Angre Mainyu), and renamed "Ahriman" in Sassanian times, which humans can hold at bay by pursuing Asha; and replacement of Ahura Mazda's six divine abstract "Mentalities" named by Zarathustra, with six physical things such as fire, earth water etc. - all nominally headed by Ahura Mazda to form yet another non-Zarathustrian concept of the "Heptad" of seven "Spentas", nominally headed by Ahura Mazda. Thus, pre-Zarathustrian concepts and worship of Vedic godheads and physical things were blended into the reformist monotheistic principles taught by the Prophet.

(c) Zarathustra's 17 Gathas which had survived up to the early Sassanian days, were then sandwiched as Has 28-34, 43-51 and 53, in-between the Haptanghaiti Gathas (composed in Gathic prose) and other Yasnas. This was probably done, partly in the hope of giving them authenticity as reflecting Zarathustra's teachings and partly, because the Sassanian compilers of the Avesta-Zend did not fully comprehend

Remembering Keki Bhote on his 95th birth anniversary

the poetic Gathic dialect of the Old Avestan language which had become extinct by that time.

II. Visparat in 22 Chapters (Kardas):

They are additions to the Yasnas. They contain homage to “all the Lords”. Inserted among the various Yasnas, the Visparat are prayers, which are mainly used for performance of rituals. They are specifically recited at the celebration of various Ghambars (seasonal festivals). The Visparats are not composed in the Gathic dialect of the Old Avestan language used by Zarathustra, but in subsequent languages used in the Yasnas.

III. Yashts:

These are 21 hymns of praise dedicated to various Yazats. Different writers, in different languages, wrote them in different ages. Although Zoroastrians today have great faith in and devotion to the Yazats, they are not part of Zarathustra’s monotheistic teachings. As mentioned earlier, they are based on pre-Zarathustrian Vedic beliefs and mythology. Yazats were introduced into Zoroastrianism, along with the concept of the Fravashis, under the Haptanghaiti Gathas, which were composed under the “grand compromise” made well after Zarathustra’s passing.

IV. Khordeh Avesta:

This is a minor liturgical work, essentially written in the Pazand and Pahlavi languages during the Sassanian period. The Khordeh Avesta is handbook of the daily prayers of the laity and includes various gahs, nyashes, afringans and the like. It is much valued by Zoroastrians, because the Khordeh Avesta offered them a means to pray daily for centuries, until meaningful translations of the Gathas became available to them only around mid 1950s. Historically, the Khordeh Avesta was also the only book, in addition to the Vendidad and the Arda Virafr Nameh, which their forefathers brought with them when fleeing their Iranian homeland around 936

AD and first settling on the Portuguese island of Diu and 19 years later in Sanjan on the Indian mainland.

V. Vendidad, in 22 Chapters (Frakarts):

This not a liturgical work. Its composition began in the Parthian times and ended in that of the early Sasanians. The Vendidad includes accounts of Creation, early geography of Zoroastrianism, the legend of King Jamshid, activities in the life of Zarathustra, many myths of pre-Zarathustrian times, the fate of souls after death, various medical treatments and spells to cure diseases, and the laws of purity and cleanliness to be observed by priests. The last item is what most Zoroastrians remember as Vendidad’s content. Despite its varied contents, they believe that the recital of the Vendidad by a team of special-trained mobeds, to be a most holy ritual which will benefit the souls of their beloved ones.

VI. Fragments:

All of them are composed in languages later than the Gathic dialect of the Old Avestan language. This work includes: Nirangistan - the ritual and clerical code; the Aogam Daecha - a sermon on death; the Hadokht - a graphic portrayal of the fate of souls; and the Vispa Humata - the quintessence of Zarathustra’s teachings.

Conclusion:

Avesta Zend scriptures basically offer a kaleidoscope of the transformation of the strictly monotheistic teachings of Zarathustra, into an amalgam of those teachings with new percepts that include pre-Gathic Vedic deities, godheads and rituals which he had rejected because they detracted from his monotheistic philosophy. Yet, the new percepts stemming from the Hapatanghaiti Gathas, are today believed with fervor, and practiced by, most Zoroastrians as the monotheistic faith he gave to the world.



Adi Davar, active in community affairs, internationally, nationally and locally. Researcher, writer and speaker on Zoroastrianism, its history and contemporary issues. Consultant on international economic development. Senior executive in the Tata Group and the World Bank - where he retired as a Director of East Asia & Pacific Region. Degrees in economics and law from Bombay. Masters in international law from Harvard.

Taq Kasra : Wonder of Architecture

- A Documentary Film by Pejman Akbarzadeh -

by sammy bhiwandiwalla



World Premiere in London

On 1 February 2018, SOAS London, held the world premiere of a documentary film TAQ KASRA: WONDER OF ARCHITECTURE, produced by the Persian Dutch Network in Association with Toos Foundation and Supported by Soudavar Memorial Foundation.

Khalili Lecture Theatre at SOAS was full to capacity with English, Iranians, Iraqi's and a sprinkling of Zoroastrians. The event was chaired by Vesta Sarkhosh-Curtis of the British Museum, a scholar of Persian art in Parthian and Sasanian eras. After the screening, she was joined by the Director Pejman Akbarzadeh for a question and answer session.

The ancient Persian city of Ctesiphon, on the banks of Tigris, is located about 35 km southeast of modern Baghdad. Established in the late 120s BC, it was one of the great cities of late ancient Mesopotamia and the largest city in the world from 570 AD, until its fall in 637 AD, during the Muslim conquest. The only surviving structure of Ctesiphon today is the majestic vaulted hall of Taq Kasra, which served as the palace of the Sasanian king Khosrow I, in the late 6th century. The archway is the largest single-span vault of unreinforced brickwork in the world.

Ctesiphon had been superseded by the newly founded city of Baghdad, and Ctesiphon's deserted ruins were used as a quarry for building materials. Subsequent floods destroyed all remaining structures, including Taq Kasra, one third of which was swept away by a flood in 1888. The imposing brick ruin of Taq Kasra is now all that remains above ground of a city that was, for seven centuries the main capital of the Iranian successor dynasties of the Parthians and Sasanids.

With many breath-taking shots of this once magnificent palace taken from the air, Taq Kasra stands in desolate beauty in its surrounding grounds. One can only wonder at the grandeur of such a striking palace in its heyday.

The writer submitted the following questions to the Director Pejman Akbarzadeh on the film project on Taq Kasra.

What fostered your own personal interest in Taq Kasra?

I am originally from Persia so, in general, I am interested in ancient Persian monuments, but in regard of Taq Kasra the story was different. It is a Persian monument, but now it is no longer on Persian soil. It is located in Iraq, a country, which has experienced war and violation since the early 1980s. Even before that date, Iraq's relationship with Persia (Iran) was not very friendly, so very few people from Iran dared to go there to visit the arch. And now almost no one!

During the recent conflict with ISIS in Iraq, I was shocked watching the footage of ISIS attacks to historical monuments and museums in northern Iraq. Some years before hand, the Taliban did the same thing to various sites in Afghanistan. During the Battle of Fallujah in 2016, ISIS came quite close to Taq Kasra, around 60 kms away. So, it became a nightmare for me thinking that a similar attack might happen to this monument as well. I told myself I had to go there and film the arch from various angles before it is destroyed. I could not prevent ISIS, but I could document the arch before destruction. However, fortunately, the Iraqi army defeated ISIS in Fallujah before any destruction occurred.

The attacks on Nimrud and the destruction of the Great Mosque of Al-nuri in Mosul hit the Western media headlines. Do you think the media have been successful in keeping public informed about the situation in Iraq and what is the situation now?

I think the Western media coverage was fantastic. Before that, people knew very little about cultural heritage in Iraq, which is related to ancient Mesopotamia. But reports about the attacks to the historical monuments in northern Iraq, and also museums being looted, informed the public

about the situation in the country and its rich cultural heritage. Currently – as far as I know – various organisations from Europe and the United States are cooperating with Iraqis to restore the sites and museums. A few months ago, a team of Iraqi archaeologists were in London for an intensive training course at the British Museum, and also there is a UK-based charity for the restoration of Basra Museum. There is an ongoing campaign to find looted artefacts of the National Museum as well.

It must have been hard getting permission to film in Iraq. What difficulties did you face?

One of the biggest problems working in Iraq is that it is very difficult to find out which organisation is responsible for what, and also inside Iraq various organisations interfere in each other's areas. In December 2016, when I travelled to Iraq for the first time, even though I had a valid Press Visa from the Embassy of Iraq in The Hague and also permission for filming from 'CMC', my equipment was confiscated upon my arrival at Baghdad Airport. I noticed that some other journalists from Western countries had the same problems. I returned to Amsterdam without having been able to film even one second of film.

But later I was lucky enough to be introduced to Qahtan Al-Abeed, the director of Basra Museum in southern Iraq. He advised me to enter Iraq through Basra, which is much safer than Baghdad, and from there travel to the Ctesiphon area by car, to film the arch. It was because of Qahtan's cooperation that I was able to finish the project.

Did you use a drone camera to obtain the footage of Taq Kasra from above?

Yes. Getting permission to use a drone was very difficult, because ISIS started to drop bombs in Iraq via drones. But I convinced the Iraqi authorities that I was going to use it just to film Taq Kasra, which is located 35 kms outside Baghdad. However, the area (Salman Pak) was / is not safe, and after around 30 minutes, I was told that I had to leave.



Ctesiphon. Below, Taq facade



There are intentions to restore Taq Kasra by the current Iraqi Government. Do you see a more stable future for the site?

In general, Iraqi officials are becoming more active trying to protect the historical monuments and sites in their country. Particularly after the ISIS attacks to the monuments and also the looting of the Iraqi National Museum in Baghdad, I feel they are paying more attention to such issues. In recent years, the Iraqi Ministry of Culture has invited a Czech firm to restore Taq Kasra but I am a little bit surprised why they have assigned this Czech firm. Taq Kasra is an ancient monument and there are Italian teams with more experience of similar missions.

Another issue is registration of Taq Kasra as a World Heritage Site. Up to now five sites in Iraq have been registered but Taq Kasra is not one of them. Some months ago the

Iraqi Ambassador to UNESCO showed me a new list which Iraq is going to propose to UNESCO for registration as World Heritage Sites. Surprisingly Taq Kasra was not among them either.



Pejman informed the Editor on the upcoming event of his documentary which is going to be screened at the Archaeology Museum of the University of Pennsylvania on 21 and 22 April 2018, on the occasion of the reopening their Middle East Gallery. This museum is one of the most important archaeological museums in the United States. Their team actually was one of the first ones who filmed Mesopotamia and Persia in the 1930s. He has used a few seconds of their old footage in his documentary as well.

Readers may go to this link to see a preview of the film. <http://www.taqqasra.com/2016/12/10/documentary-film/>



The Director, Pejman Akbarzadeh

Pejman Akbarzadeh is a Persian-Dutch pianist, journalist, music historian and documentary maker, born in 1980 in Shiraz. He received his first piano lessons at the age of nine from Gholam Loghmani and later from Bahram Nasrollahi.

He continued his piano studies more seriously with Farman Behboud, the former professor at the Tehran Conservatory.

At the age of 15, Pejman started to research the artistic activities of 20th century Persian (Iranian) musicians. In 1998, he finished the first volume of his research on the composers and conductors, which was published in 2000.

In the years 2001-2005, Pejman worked



All images are courtesy of Pejman Akbarzadeh, and under copyright.

with various Persian-language newspapers in Tehran such as the dailies *Yas-e No* and *Shargh*, both of which were banned by the Iranian government. Some of his articles (mostly on music, culture and history) were also published in the US-based *Persian Heritage* magazine, *Payvand News*, etc. He briefly freelanced for the BBC Persian Service.

In the intervening years between 2006 and the present, he has had a distinguished career in journalism, piano recitals in Europe, documentary and film making.

In Summer 2009 following the pro-freedom demonstrations in Persia (Iran) which turned to blood, Pejman joined the solidarity events in Europe with the people of his homeland; performing at Holland's Iranian Artists.

Eve in Amsterdam, "International Solidarity Conference with Iran's Students" at the University of Delft, Human Rights and Press Freedom Conference at Amsterdam's Tropen Theatre and cooperation with UNITED4IRAN demonstrations were among them.

In 2010 he created the Persian Dutch Network to introduce Persian culture in The Netherlands and also make Persians and Dutch people closer to each other.

Currently, Pejman Akbarzadeh contributes to BBC as a TV producer and has completed work on his new documentary film *Taq Kasra: Wonder of Architecture*.



Sammy Bhiwandiwalla with his wife Ursula have always taken an active interest in community matters in the UK and were greatly influenced by the actions and sincere beliefs of individuals such as Noshirwan Cowasjee, Shirinbanoo Kutar, Shahpur Captain and many others, that in a changing world it was necessary to create a more balanced and equitable community within the UK. He joined the WZO Board in 1988, has served in various capacities including Chairman of WZO and presently is president.

Massacre at Variav

Shared by Nauzer Bharucha, Journalist, The Times of India, Mumbai.

The movie *Padmaavat* depicts the ancient practice of 'Jauhar', where Rajput women commit mass self-immolation by jumping into the fire to avoid being captured and humiliated by invading armies. But not many know that around 900 years ago, Parsi women sacrificed their lives in a tiny village called Variav near Surat in Gujarat by jumping in the river Tapi.

The exact date is not recorded in history, but oral tradition says the incident happened towards the end of the 11th Century when Parsis, who had arrived from Iran to escape persecution, had settled in villages in Gujarat. The local Raja had levied a crushing tax and demanded a heavy tribute from the prosperous Parsi settlement in Variav. When they protested, the Raja sent his soldiers but were beaten back and made to retreat. The Raja did not give up and dispatched more troops after sometime. Unfortunately on that day, all the Parsi men had left the village for a feast, leaving the women behind. Instead of fleeing, the brave women put on the armour of their men, tied their hair, covered their faces and rode on horses to fight the army. Such was the ferocity, so the story goes that the Raja's army was on the verge of defeat. But a fatal blow on the helmet, revealed a woman's face. Shocked that they were being beaten by women, the soldiers returned with zeal and fought them. By now weary and tired, the women decided they would never surrender and rushed to the Tapi river and drowned. Subsequently, the army destroyed the entire Parsi settlement in Variav. The battle is popularly known as Jung Variav in Parsi history. The brave martyrs are remembered till today with special prayers and ceremonies held every year in the Zoroastrian month of Farvardin, day Ashishwang, which falls sometime in September.



Ancient practice of Jaujar

When requested for more information, unfortunately Mr Bharucha had no more to share besides what has been written. Bharucha has compiled this from various books including Dastur Mirza's 'Outlines of Parsi History' and a few other sources. To have a full article I did approach a Professor friend versed in Zoroastrianism, who is at the moment based in Norway, but he too could not enlighten further. Of special interest to Cowasjee, which is shared with readers, is, that her great grandfather Cowasjee Variawa as he was known, came to Karachi in the mid 1800s from Variav. - Ed



A further bit of information shared :

One of the most moving stories related to a Commemorative Gahambar, I have come to learn from my mother, Homai Wandrewala: That of the vaal-no-Gahambar, or the Variav behedin-nu-parabh. This is connected with the historic and heroic Jung-e-Variav, or the Battle of Variav, fought sometime during the late 11th Century, or early 12th century AD. The small village of Variav, near Surat, on the banks of the river Tapti, (now part of Greater Surat), had a largely Parsi population. A Rajput prince who had suzerainty over Variav, the Raja of Ratanpur, was enraged with the Parsis of Variav, because they defied him, and refused to pay the unjust, excessive tribute / revenue (mehesul), which he would forcibly collect. In order to enforce his unjust demand, he would send mercenaries,

(called garasias), to claim the mehesul. Generally, these garasias were repulsed by the brave Parsi men of Variav. One day, the menfolk had gone off to a far-off village, for a vaal and toddy party, leaving behind the women and the elderly. It was on that fateful day that the garasias decided to pay another visit to Variav. The women, prewarned of the impending attack from the clouds of dust across the river raised by the horses' hoofs, decided to try and repulse the garasias themselves in the absence of the menfolk. Led by a brave lady named Navaz, the women donned their men's riding attire, put on visors on their faces, and got astride horses with whatever arms they could lay their hands on. Indeed, they fought so bravely, that the garasias were repulsed and started riding back towards the bridge fording the river, when one of them happened to turn around and noticed the earring on the ear of a woman, whose visor had shifted askew during the fight. Realizing that they were being beaten by women, the garasias returned with renewed frenzy. The women, apprehending molestation by the garasias if caught alive, en masse jumped into the river and drowned. The garasias then forcibly collected the mehesul from the elderly folk of Variav, who narrated what had happened to the young men when they returned. It appears that on that day every year thereafter, the men of Variav, to commemorate the bravery of their women, held what they called the vaal-no-gahambar, or the Jung-e-Variav Gahambar, at which only vaal was served. Apparently, this was on roz Ashishvang, mah Farverdeen. There is some uncertainty as to the historical authenticity of this story. Apparently however, there is mention of the Jung-e-Variav in one of the Disa Pothis (Family Death Register) unearthed by Dr Sir Jivanji Mody, during his researches. It appears that most families then kept a Disa Pothi which, apart from giving details and genealogies of individual families, also was a repository of much historical information.

Courtesy Rita J Kapadia – excerpted from <http://www.parsicuisine.com/gahanbar/>



The WZYL F: Notes from a Diary

by shazneen limjerwala

On reading about the World Zoroastrian Youth Leaders Forum (WZYL F), in the Jam-e-Jamshed I was super-excited to participate. I connected with Founder of the ASHA Centre Zerbanoo Gifford who did a quick phone interview and set the ball rolling.



WZYL F organisers, participants & volunteers at Asha Centre

San Diego
USA,
Shazneen
Munshi,
London UK,
Shireen Patel,
Lahore
Pakistan,
Sheherazad
Pavri, Mumbai
India, Cyrus
Rivetna,
Chicago USA,
Arashasp
Shroff, Toronto
Canada,
Benafsha
Shroff, Denver
USA, Cainaz
Vakharia,
Washington
DC, USA,

Arzan Sam Wadia, New York USA.

Background

The World Zoroastrian Youth Leaders Forum (WZYL F) was held at the ASHA Centre in Gloucestershire, England between March 16-25, 2018. It was a transformative experience for the group of 20 next-generation leaders from around the world, all identified as people closely concerned and connected within local, regional and global Zarathushti circles. The participants were Diana Bharucha, Seattle USA, Karl Desai, Sydney Australia, Jim Engineer, Chicago USA, Tanya Hoshi, Toronto Canada, Kayras Irani, Vancouver Canada, Narges Kakalia, New Jersey USA, Tinaz Karbhari, Auckland New Zealand, Jehaan Kotwal, Mumbai India, Shazneen Limjerwala, Mumbai India, Jimmy Madon, Lemington Spa, UK, Sanaya Master, Auckland New Zealand, Layla Mazdayasni,

This forum's aims were tied to using our heads, hearts and hands: to understand the dynamics of sustainable change; to reflect on the global Zarathushti community; to connect with the heart of Zoroastrianism and with one another; and to unite and focus our energies for the betterment of the Zarathushti community.

I felt inspired by the enthusiasm of my co-participants and by the sheer vision and gumption of Zerbanoo Gifford, who envisioned a strong, just, gender-equalized, global Zarathushti community ably led by the youth.

ASHA day 1: Friday, 16th March

We met at London Victoria coach station. Some of us from India, some from Canada,

US, New Zealand and Australia. We introduced ourselves and chatted, and finally got onto the bus. This was after Shazneen (my name sake from London) had put one foot onto the lowest step of the bus to prevent the driver from driving away before all of us had got on. The bus journey was a lot of fun, learning about Zarathushti associations in different parts of the world. We reached Gloucestershire at about 7:30pm and received a warm welcome from Adrian Locher (facilitator), Mark Mazda (facilitator) and Sanaya Master (Organiser of WZYLFF) who had come to receive us.

At the ASHA Centre, we were received by Zerbanoo, with lots of hugs. We began with a beautiful ritual: holding hands in a circle, blessing the food, the chef and the week ahead. Thereafter, we had a hearty meal. Zerbanoo went from table to table, talking to all of us. Later, each of us was shown to our rooms in old English cottages.

Day 2: Saturday, 17th March

Officially Day One of the forum. We began with yoga in the morning, led by co-participant Layla. Then we had a brilliant introduction, where each one of us shared our names, what we were passionate about and where we came from, along-with our birthdates.

Later, we were taken on a tour of the beautiful ASHA Centre. The site abounds in natural beauty, surrounded by forest on one side and meadows on the other. There are pockets of fruit growing trees, vegetable gardens, a stream and a labyrinth.

In the afternoon, we worked on an exercise titled, *Swapping cultures: Questions for the Zoroastrian Forum*: The questions, listed below, explored our relationship with ourselves and with the faith and community.

- What are you most proud of / what is most meaningful to you about Zoroastrianism?
- If you could ask Zarathustra one question, what would it be and why?
- Do you think Zoroastrianism has anything relevant to say to people in the modern world? If so, what?



At the sacred pond in the Forest of Dean

We were brought together in three groups and asked to present the most interesting aspect of the exercise in an art form. As Mark revealed later, the philosophy behind this exercise is,

“When we reveal ourselves, that’s when we can make bonds. When we make bonds, we work together.”

This seemed like a beautiful truism to me, and yet, one that we so often overlook.

What was memorable about this space and experience was that each one of us came together from different places, and the interaction was very humorous and enjoyable.

In the evening, we had a Zoro MasterChef competition. The participants were divided into groups and each prepared one dish. We had so much fun preparing the food. We really bonded over food – and for a change, *cooking* rather than eating it!

Day 3: Sunday, 18th March

We started off with some fun energisers and then Mark led a meditation exercise. This was followed by a visualization, wherein we were invited to envision a flourishing Zarathushti future, that each one of us had contributed to, that was beautiful and ideal.

Remembering Keki Bhote on his 95th birth anniversary

Each one of us created an artwork that depicted our vision. We put all our creations together to create a veritable garden of Hope. We shared the stories behind our creations. Our visions included gardens, people, animals, the sun, light, lighted spaces, and qualities like spontaneity, growth, and sturdiness. In the ensuing reflections, we realized that, 'we can have differences of opinion but not be divided anymore'; 'Our diversity as a community, is our strength'.

After lunch we gathered to discuss our local community initiatives. These included the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC) (Jehan Kotwal), Building the social Infrastructure of the community (Shazneen Limjerwala), Study of fire temples (Cyrus Rivetna), Zarathushti memory project (Arzan Wadia).

In the session hosted by Zerbanoo, there was a discussion on Zarathushtis who were great: either born, or had achieved greatness or had greatness thrust on them. According to her, the first person to be called great was Cyrus the Great – Father of modern human rights and interfaith tolerance. Other Zarathushti Greats included Freddy Mercury, Zubin Mehta, Sohrab Pochkanawala, Frene Ginwalla, JRD Tata, Ratan Tata, Sir Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy, Bapsy Sidhwa, Sohrab Godrej, amongst others.

We had a thoroughly enjoyable evening learning Latin dancing from Jimmy.

Day 4: Monday, 19th March

Today we focused on mapping the challenges, problems and what needs to be healed, in the global Zoroastrian community to create a Zoroastrianism of our highest vision.

We were given some questions to reflect on.

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the global Zarathushti community?
2. How do we achieve unity and a sense of common purpose?

3. How can we achieve sustainable change?

4. How does a younger generation make a difference?

These were laid out diagrammatically on the sides of a circle, and in the centre was a central question,

5. How does Zoroastrianism help us meet these challenges?

Several issues were listed by participants as in need of urgent attention from the community. These included a leadership deficit, the lack of assimilation of Parsis and Iranis, decreasing numbers, lack of understanding of religion, lack of engagement of youth, amongst others.

We took a walk in the Forest of Dean, ably guided by Adrian and Mark. It was beautiful, walking through the forest, sharing stories, bonding, and finally, arriving at a sacred built-in pond. Adrian shared that this was used by Christian monks for years and was very popular, despite not being listed as a picnic spot.

Day 5: Tuesday, 20th March

Driving out of the Forest of Dean, we took a day trip to Oxford. We shared a conversational talk with Prof Yuhan Vevaina, whose interest lies in how Zarathushtis understood their scriptures and pasts. We learnt a lot about our past: for example, that before 1850, our surviving writings were by priests, and therefore, men. In response to our questions, he reminded us that the past is not static, it is dynamic, and therefore a reading of the past needs to be nuanced, and cognizant of the limits of our knowledge and our biases. In scholarly style, his talk underlined that there are hundreds of texts, akin to Big Data, many of which have still not been translated or are languishing in archives waiting to be studied. Understanding them requires time, experience, interpretive skill, and most importantly, even-handedness.

We had a discussion and lunch with Baroness Jan Royall, the principal of Somerville College, Oxford University. In

her engaging interaction, she proudly shared that Cornelia Sorabji, a student of Somerville College, was the first woman to study law at Oxford University, the first Indian national to study at any British university, the first female advocate in India and the first woman to practice law in India and Britain. We explored Oxford by ourselves.

In the night, we had a bonfire. We realized how difficult it was to begin a fire, and keep it going. We bonded over singing, dancing and sharing stories.

Day 6: Wednesday, 21st March

It was a beautiful sunny day. We wished each other Jamshedi Navroze Mubarak.

We organized the workable issues under overarching themes. These included inequality, youth Disenfranchisement, Dwindling numbers, Lack of community engagement, Knowledge deficit, Balance between culture and spirituality; lack of spirituality, lack of leadership – academic, communal, religious, ineffective communication, lack of tolerance, taboos and silencing, poverty and not living the values of Zoroastrianism. Thereafter, each one of us decided on five issues we thought were most important and another five we could contribute to. There was a count of which issues were selected by most participants as requiring urgent attention of the community.

We celebrated Navroze with a beautiful Haft-sheer table set up in the pavilion. The ASHA Centre hosted several distinguished guests for lunch including Prof Alison of

East Anglia University, development workers, practitioners of different faiths and politicians amongst others.

That evening we decked up in our traditional attire (sarees, daglis and formal suits), and had an entertaining talent night. On display was a wide variety of talent: literary writing, dance, mimicry, acting, humour, singing, the works! The volunteers of ASHA were the judges.

Day 7: Thursday, 22nd March

There's something different about ASHA. It's a place where you come close to nature, an almost intimate experience. And yet, some parts of you want to hold on to the familiar. Maybe it's an opportunity to let go, let go of all you know as 'right', so even if momentarily, you can create space for that which is unfamiliar and different. And invariably you come to a different space, don't you? I pause, I wonder.

We engaged in a beautiful game. It involved exploring our typical patterns of response: the tiger (fast and furious), sloth (slow, almost imperceptible movement) and swan (purposeful, mindful movement). Each of us sat on a chair, and then had to move around, so the 'king', who walked in a swanlike fashion would not be able to sit on an empty chair. We needed to keep filling in the empty chairs by moving around. We could run; however, we could not sit back in the same chair. This was an intensely insightful exercise, not just in individual, but group dynamics too. We learnt the importance of strategizing, the role of a leader, and synergy between group members.

In the evening, we were treated to a screening of Tanya's film, 'Turning Tables'.

Day 8: Friday, 23rd March

Today, we met Edul Davar, President, WZCC. He politely asked us questions and encouraged us in our quests for leadership. In his presentation on management and leadership, he shared his experience of



Dressed in traditional attire at the Navroze Talent evening

Remembering Keki Bhote on his 95th birth anniversary

setting up an entrepreneurial venture, and keeping employees on board, even during economically challenging times.

We collectively arrived at ways to achieve our positive goals and to mitigate the negative. So, for example, we set Gender Inclusivity as our goal: and the steps to achieve this were: a support system where women can be heard non-judgementally, representation of women in elected bodies, greater awareness of women's contributions in public life and debate around men and women's roles; also, gender allies across both genders.

In a multi-media presentation, Tinaz beautifully surrounded us with the sights, sounds and smells of a fire temple. She was advocating the Udvada Iranshah project, an initiative that is aimed at collating resources for the maintenance of Pak Iranshah for a relatively long time.

Day 9: Saturday, 24th March

We worked on the Vision and Mission statements and the guiding principles.

Our WZYL F Vision:
A harmonious Zarathushti community flourishing through righteousness.

Our WZYL F Mission:
To connect today's Zoroastrian youth leaders, fostering dialogue, and empowering diverse voices into action.

To usher in a new generation of Zarathushti leadership and work toward a more inclusive future driven by responsible governance.

To start, we adhered to a circular model featuring the cog of our wheel as our state of Frashokereti, the Zoroastrian doctrine of a final renovation of the universe, when evil will be destroyed, and everything else will be in perfect unity with Ahura Mazda.

Surrounding the cog of our wheel are the Vision and Mission statements, and seven interconnected wheels we attributed to the seven Amesha Spentas:

- ASHA Vahishta (Truth & Justice) to live the values of Zoroastrianism;
- Vohu Manah (Good Mind) to improve tolerance and open-mindedness;
- Haurvatat (Wholeness) to encourage greater engagement and participation;
- Ameretat (Immortality) to have a healthy and thriving Zoroastrian population;
- Spenta Armaiti: (Devotion) to achieve greater gender equality in our institutions;
- Kshathra Vairya (Righteous Power) to improve the way we collaborate globally;
- Spenta Mainyu (Spirituality) to cultivate knowledgeable Zoroastrians connected with their religion.

ASHA hosted a few Zarathushtis for lunch: they were supporters, some of them had contributed financially to the forum, personally and through the organizations they represented. These included Prof Zenobia Nadirshaw, Sammy Bhiwandiwalla, Shahin Bekhradnia, Dr Meher Engineer, Thrity Engineer, Rob Mehta.

Over lunch we shared our experiences with them, familiarizing them with our work and local communities. Later, we had a formal presentation at the pavilion. Karl Desai apprised them of the Guiding Principles. I shared the WZYL F journey, taking them through the various processes we had engaged in, including our discussions, the excursions and the projects we wished to contribute to.

The grand finale was the Freddy Mercury singalong at the local pub.

Day 10: Sunday, 25th March

We began with an energiser, and then moved on to deciding the projects we would like to contribute to, including the ones we would like to lead. We then took a walk to the centre of the labyrinth, holding on to what we had gained during the forum, stood in a circle, and then walked back outwards again. All in silence.

When asked, participants and organizers shared their views and feelings about the forum. Zerbanoo shared, 'This unique and over-due forum at the ASHA Centre, I

believe, has brought all of us a collective joy working with other like-minded Zoroastrians’.

As Arzan Wadia, creator of Parsi Khabar, an online news and views service about Zarathushtis worldwide shared, ‘The forum can be a poster child, showing that there is another way to do it. *‘If we spend time listening to each other, not to respond back, but to understand what each person is saying, then we can resolve issues.’*

Personally, I experienced the forum as intensely moving and awakening. I felt held by my co-participants and facilitators, enough to share and contribute. I came away believing, in myself, and my potential to contribute. To make a difference.



Shazneen acknowledges the support given in editing this article by Sanaya Master and Moira Peelo.



Shazneen Limjerwala received her PhD from Lancaster University, UK as a Tata and ORS scholar, and trained at IIM, Ahmedabad. She is a trained Psychotherapist. She actively contributes to the wellbeing of the Zarathushti community by leading workshops, counselling

individuals and networking. More about her on <http://www.linkedin.com/in/ShazneenL>. She can be contacted on dr.shazneen@gmail.com

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What women and men of faith can achieve together

by dolly dastoor

History of the Women's movement

International Women's Day is the story of ordinary women as makers of history. It is rooted in the centuries-old struggle of women to participate in society on an equal footing with men. In ancient Greece, Lysistrata initiated a sexual strike against men in order to end war, during the French Revolution, Parisian women calling for "liberty, equality, fraternity" marched on Versailles to demand women's rights to vote. New Zealand was the first country to give the vote to the women in 1907 but women were not allowed to stand for parliament! 100 years ago women in the UK won the vote and 50 years ago the Women's Liberation Movement began a sustained campaign for equal rights. In Canada till 1929, women were not considered "persons" and hence had no vote. In 1947, on its independence day, India granted equal voting rights to all men and women. However from 1918, with the rest of the United Kingdom, women in India could vote at age 30, with property qualifications or in university constituencies, while men could vote at 21 with no qualification. Switzerland in 1971 was the last country in Europe to give women the vote. It was only in December 2015 that Saudi Arabia gave women the right to vote in Municipal elections only.

Zarthushti women have equal voting rights in the affairs of the community, and have achieved much in all fields which were once considered male bastions. Our women have been in the forefront of all fields, politics, culture, music, sports, arts, science, finance, the military, the navy. Much has been achieved but much needs to be done. Zarthushti women have superficial gender equality but we need to continue to work for acceptance of all women into religious ceremonies irrespective as to whom they are married to.



Statistics

Globally women have come a long way. But has much changed since then? We still face unsurmountable battles.

Women are still demanding equal rights and demanding a life free of violence, rape and sexual abuse at all levels from the highest echelons of government to the lowest village chief. But for many many women and girls across the world violence is a fact of life, violence only because of their gender. Rape and sexual assault has become a weapon of war, there has been no other time in history when there have been more widows as a result of armed conflict. 70 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime, almost 50% were killed by intimate partners or family members, compared to less than six per cent of men killed in the same year.

Of the 1.2 billion people living in poverty worldwide, 70% are women, 80% of the world's 27 million refugees are women. Women do two-thirds of the world's work but receive only 10% of the world's income.

Worldwide, almost 750 million women and girls alive today were married before their 18th birthday. Globally 600 million adolescent girls continue to face huge challenges to education, 130 million girls are still out of school, because of menstruation taboos, and to help with domestic chores in impoverished homes.

United Nations & Activism

The idea of an *International Women's Day* first arose at the turn of the 20th century, which in an industrialized world was a

period of expansion and turbulence, booming population growth and radical ideologies. The first National Women's day was established by a group of socialist women in the United States in 1908. This act inspired an international event.

The United Nations' theme for International Women's Day 2018 is "The Time Is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women's lives."

"Echoing the priority theme of the 62nd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, International Women's Day drew attention to the rights and activism of rural women, who make up over a quarter of the world population, and are being left behind in every measure of development," the UN says in a statement.

We also need to think of how best to advance the 2030 UN Agenda and effectively implement the Sustainable Development Goals – specifically Goal No 5, "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls," and Goal No. 4, "Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning." On way to achieve them is to work through the Parliament of World's Religions.

Parliament of World's Religions

Since its inception in 1893, the Parliament of World Religions has been an advocate for women. The 1993 Parliament endorsed a Global Ethic with four Irrevocable Directives, including the Commitment to a Culture of Equal Rights and Partnership between Men and Women. Women religious and spiritual leaders were featured at the 1893, 1993, 1999, 2004, and 2009 Parliaments, and in 2015, an Inaugural Women's Assembly was held with over 3,500 participants that included the Declaration for the Dignity and Human Rights of Women. The theme of the 2018 Parliament is "***The Promise of Inclusion, the Power of Love***" to be held on November 1-7, 2018, Toronto, Canada, the most diverse city in the world with over 200 different ethnic groups speaking 140

different languages, home to over 100 different religious faiths. And the women's empowerment programme is taking center stage.

Women's Programme

The title for the women's programming is "The Dignity of Women Across the World's Wisdom Traditions and Society." focusing on six foundational themes.

1. Supporting Women's Religious and Spiritual Leadership, Dignity and Equality within the World's Wisdom Traditions

Where religious and spiritual leaders share their vision and wisdom for all women seeking greater voice and authority within their traditions overcoming patriarchal bias in attitudes and practice, mentorship and networking, and building coalitions for change.

2. Empowering Women's Creative Ritual and Artistic Religious and Spiritual Expression

Where artists and creative leaders share how women ritually and artistically express their religious and spiritual lives.

3. Acknowledging and Honouring a Divine Feminine/Sacred Feminine/Feminine Divine within and beyond Religions and Spiritual Movements.

Where the Divine Feminine/ Sacred Feminine/ Feminine Divine are explored within and beyond religions and spiritual movements, including: experiential processes to access and honor a Divine Feminine, understanding the Sacred Feminine across multiple traditions, and sessions that highlight the female/ feminine wisdom within patriarchal traditions.

4. Advancing Women's Equality in Basic Human Dignity and Rights in Society, Particularly Health, Education, Legal and Financial Rights and Protections.

Where leaders and organizations dedicated to improving the health, education, legal and financial rights and protections of women and children. show how religious

Remembering Keki Bhote on his 95th birth anniversary

and spiritual individuals and institutions are helping or hindering this justice work, as well as share a vision for how religious and secular networks can partner to improve the lives of women and children world-wide.

5. Seeking to End All Violence Against Women.

Leaders and organizations dedicated to ending violence against women share how religions are helping or hindering their work, as well as to share their vision for how religious and secular networks can partner to end violence against women.

6. Encouraging Women's Coalitions to Solve Global Problems.

Women's coalitions, to share how they are addressing the largest global problems of today, including climate change, war, hunger, and refugees.

Other initiatives leading up to the Parliament include:

- Developing an International Declaration Against Sexual Violence that all religious dignitaries at the 2018 Parliament will be asked to sign (Co-sponsored with the FaithTrust Institute).
- Creating a poster highlighting teachings about the dignity of women across the world's wisdom traditions.

HOW CAN YOU PARTICIPATE? 1000 WOMEN RELIGIOUS PROJECT

A key initiative leading up to the Parliament is adding 1,000 biographies of women religious and spiritual leaders to Wikipedia to bring attention to women's religious and spiritual leadership world-wide. Women's contributions have been under-recognized in many fields, particularly in world religions. This project seeks to add over 1,000 names and contributions of religious/spiritual/wisdom women to Wikipedia, the largest encyclopedia in the world. You can help us by nominating Zarthushti women for the project (historical and contemporary) who are not already named in Wikipedia. You can submit unlimited nominations at the

[1000 Women Religion Project](#) with the following information to create a Wikipedia entry on individual women:

- Name
- Religious/Spiritual/Wisdom Tradition
- Role
- Location
- Time period
- A minimum of four sentences about their significance and contribution(s). The more information you provide about the importance and notability of your nominee, the easier it will be for Wikipedia editors to create a completed, blue page.
- At least two references that verify the information provided. Again, the more reliable sources you provide, the greater the chance of success. You can send this information to DollyDastoor@sympatico.ca by July 4th, 2018.

As women of faith may we all continue to strive for a better and more peaceful world for our children and grandchildren.



Dolly Dastoor is the past president of Federation of



Zoroastrian Associations of North America, the current editor in chief of the FEZANA Journal and chair, FEZANA Academic Scholarship programme. She was the Governor of District 2 of Zonta International, the International chair of the Status of Women and Service Committees and International Development Committee of the Zonta Foundation. Currently she is on the Board of Trustees and the Vice -Chair of

the Parliament of the World's Religions. She is Asst Prof in Psychiatry and Chair Education Committee, McGill University Research Centre for Studies in Aging.

Artificial Intelligence & Me

by atul pant

On Tuesday, 24th April 2018 World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce, London organised a talk on 'Artificial Intelligence and its Impact' for its members. Here is a synopsis of the talk written by the speaker. The article was made possible through the chair, Shernaz Engineer.

You may not realise it but Artificial Intelligence (AI) is already very much a part of your life. It lives in your email spam filter, it drives Apple's Siri, Amazon's recommendation system, algorithm-based trading, recruitment, targeted advertising, driver-assist technology, and much more.



AI-machine is a computer that can learn by itself. It does so by using Machine Learning, which is different from traditional rule-based programming and uses computers' ability to analyse very large data-sets and decipher patterns in them.

Pedro Domingos, the author of the book *The Master Algorithm*, explains that traditional programming involved inputting data and an algorithm (a sequence of steps or instructions that tell the computer what to do with the data), the computer then processes the data based on the algorithm and outputs the result.

In Machine Learning, big data is input along with sample output and the computer generates the algorithm itself. For example, millions of x-ray images of lungs are input into the computer (big data) and in few tens of thousands of these x-ray images, we indicate the cancerous growth (sample of the desired result). The computer takes both these inputs and creates a 'cancer detection algorithm' itself. If the computer makes a mistake in its diagnosis, ie. fails to identify cancer or identifies a false-positive,

the correction is fed back into the computer and the computer improves its cancer detection algorithm. This iterative correction process is called Recursive Learning and it forms the basis of Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence.

Why should you know about AI? Well, just like you may not know much about how cellular technology works yet you use your mobile phone for communication, information, entertainment, and efficiency, since AI is becoming so pervasive it is in your interest to learn about it and use it to your advantage. To better understand the potential impact of AI let's look at one aspect of our history.

We humans have always tried to augment our muscle power. First, we invented stone and metal tools; then we domesticated animals and used their power to do our work; the discovery of steam led to the First Industrial Revolution and to mechanisation; and, electricity fueled the Second Industrial Revolution, which led to mass customisation.

The point to note here is that whenever we significantly enhanced our muscle power the complexion of the global economy changed. For example, after the First Industrial Revolution, a largely agrarian global economy became a manufacturing economy and after the second Industrial Revolution services sector came to dominate employment. A few decades back, the widespread use of computers and ICT

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led to the Third Industrial Revolution and the global economy became a knowledge-oriented economy. Machines that were so far augmenting our muscle power started augmenting our cognitive abilities as well. Cognitive tasks that were routine and rule-based could be reduced to an algorithm and hence could be done better, faster and cheaper by computers.

Whenever the complexion of the economy changed, from agrarian to manufacturing to services to knowledge-based, people who thrived in the new economy were those who learned new skills. And, people who did not learn new skills not only became unemployed, they became unemployable.

Now, machine-learning is making computers Artificially Intelligent, ie. capable of learning on their own. Intelligent machines can today do high-order, complex, cognitive tasks in real-time, work that thus far we thought was the monopoly of us humans. The digital (eg. ICT), the physical (eg. robotics) and the biological (eg. genetics) are converging. This convergence is being called the Fourth Industrial Revolution and it is changing the fabric of employment and entrepreneurship yet again. *What is the future of work?*

Vending machines, ATMs, self-check-in kiosks at the airports, self-service kiosks in shops, artificially intelligent machines analysing x-ray images better than qualified radiologists, paralegals being replaced by

computers, and robots that automate warehouses – all of these are taking jobs away from humans and this is happening when the Fourth Industrial Revolution is in its infancy! *Will technology kill all the jobs?*

Drone operator, e-sports commentator, social media reporter, content curator, 3D fabricator, Virtual Reality designer, Big Data analyst, Block Chain auditor, Internet of Things strategist, robot

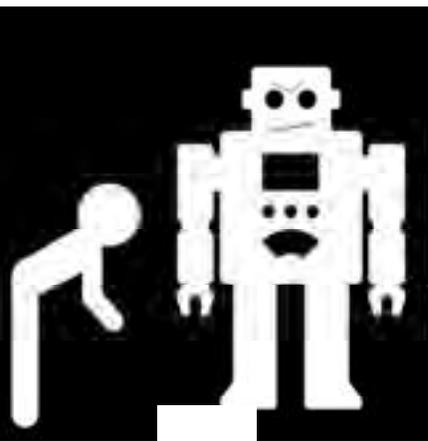
repairman, crypto-currency trader – *will technology create plenty of new and creative jobs?*

Imagine, you are heating water and a young child is looking at the thermometer. As the water heats up the mercury rises: 30°C, 40°C, 50°C, 80°C you ask the child what does she think will happen next? As a first-time observer, she will say that the water will keep getting hotter and hotter. She cannot imagine, or even guess that at 100°C water will turn into steam – a Phase Change – when the state of matter changes and liquid becomes gaseous. In the unfolding future, we are like the little girl who simply cannot tell what will happen next. The future, as they say, is VUCA – Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous.

The Artificial Intelligence we have seen so far is called Weak Artificial Intelligence because it is capable of performing only one well-defined task. For example, in 1996-97 IBM's AI computer, Deep Blue, beat the then chess champion, Gary Kasparov. However, Deep Blue could only play chess really well but it could not do any other task, not even play another game. Most existing AI can only perform one defined task really well for which it has been designed. But now there is talk of Strong AI.

Strong AI or Artificial General Intelligence is, as yet, a hypothetical machine that can think, learn and perform any intellectual task that a human being can perform. Natural Language Processing and Human-like Computer Vision are examples of strong AI.

Famous inventor and futurist, Ray Kurzweil, predicts that exponential increase in computing power will see AI surpassing human intelligence in 2045. He describes this as 'Technological Singularity' because by then, Kurzweil postulates, self-improving machines will think, act and communicate so quickly that normal humans will not even comprehend what is going on, and this will forever change the course of human history. We could also come to a point where AI machines will create even more intelligent



Technical Unemployment.
Will AI & Robots replace humans?

machines themselves – what is described as Artificial Super Intelligence.

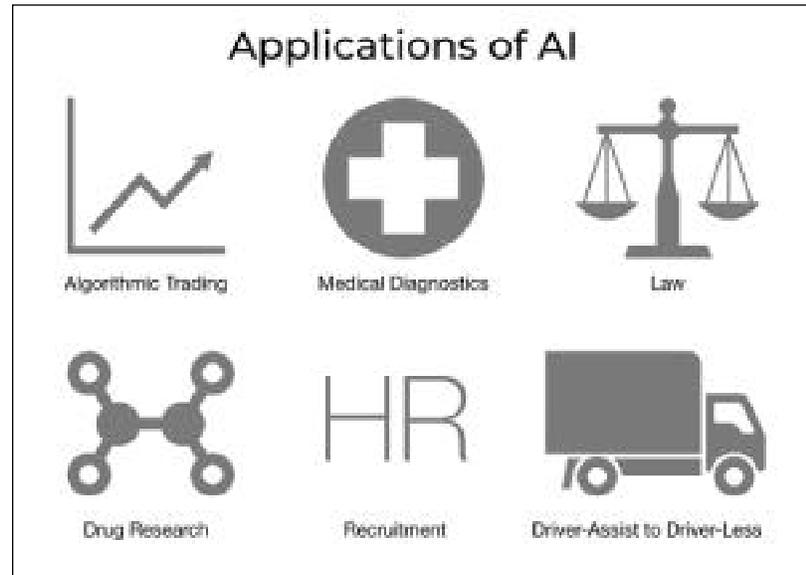
Swedish philosopher, Nick Bostrom, believes that Artificial Super Intelligence poses ‘existential risk’ meaning such machines pose the danger of annihilating humans. Other experts, like Bill Gates and Elon Musk, echo similar concerns and advocate that we put safeguards in place because the ‘makers’ (us humans) will no longer be in charge of such machines.

Whether in the long run, Strong AI poses an existential threat or not, what is certain is that Weak AI itself is disrupting our socio-economic future. Technology is already making it possible for fewer humans to do the same or more amount of work. Thus, we are finding that while manufacturing and farm production is rising, employment in these sectors is falling. This ‘technological unemployment’ is widening the income gap between those who can thrive in a technology-driven world and those who can’t. One person develops an app that can file taxes. That person becomes a millionaire while thousands of tax consultants become unemployed. Technology thus skews the income distribution in what the economists call a ‘winner-takes-all-market’.

In the job market, we are also witnessing a hollowing out effect or what is called ‘job polarisation’. In the jobs spectrum, the low-skilled, low-paying jobs and the high-skilled, high-paying jobs will most likely remain (although AI will change the complexion of the high-paying jobs) but the existing middle-tier jobs may simply disappear

because the mid-tier jobs are usually routine, rule-based, predictable in nature and hence can easily be computerised. As the mid-

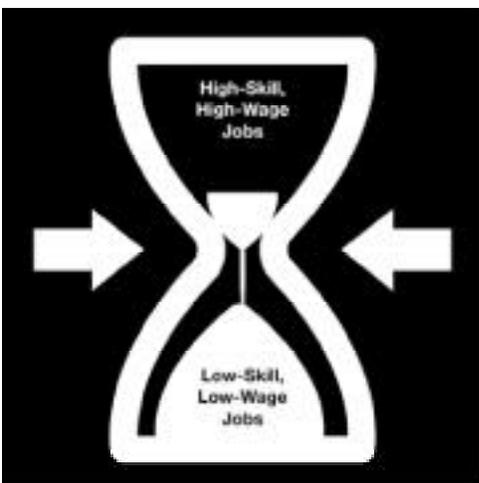
tier jobs disappear, many people doing these jobs are not able to learn new skills and hence they fall towards the bottom, where the low-skill, low-paying jobs reside. The rising supply of workers drives wages even lower and creates more unemployment.



The key to climbing the jobs ladder (and for succeeding as an entrepreneur) is learning, unlearning, and relearning new skills, competencies, and dispositions so that you can constantly reinvent yourself and remain employable for the high-skill, high-paying jobs.

So, what are some of these new skills?

Oxford researchers, Frey and Osborne, consider manual dexterity, high cognitive skills, and social skills as the three ‘bottlenecks’ to computerisation. People who hone these skills will be much sought after in the emerging job market because computers are as yet not good at doing these jobs. People with great manual dexterity, such as master craftsmen and artisans, or graphic designers and animators, or talented artists, musicians and writers will most likely have to get comfortable with the idea of freelancing or what is being called working in the Gig Economy. While Gig Economy offers a lot of flexibility it also implies volatile income, no corporate insurance, and no pension.



Job Polarisation

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With the global population greying, this aging population will need looking after. AI may make medical diagnostics very accurate but doctors will need to be even more empathetic with their patients. Caring and empathy will thus be two skills that will be in great demand.

With the rise of Virtual Reality, the need for authentic experiences will also rise – leading to more jobs in the hospitality and fitness industry. Employment roles that encourage introspection, self-awareness and meditation may also witness a rising demand.

Many of the problems the world faces today – climate change, terrorism, energy crisis, paucity of safe drinking water, lack of quality education ... are complex issues. Hence, complex problem-solving skills, especially skills to solve such problems by combining human and machine intelligence, will be hugely sought-after.

Information literacy so that you can overcome information asymmetry and stay informed of reliable, authentic, and accurate information; digital media literacy so that you can communicate well and be able to use social media effectively; and, financial literacy, knowing how to put your money to work for you, will become essential for success in employment and in entrepreneurship.

Ability to 'create value', be it financial, emotional, entertainment, health or any other type of value will probably be the most important skill. Value Creation is being able to imagine new products, new services, and even new industries then having the ability to commercialise your idea. Think about it, before Airbnb and Facebook did you ever think you needed such services? And now you can't imagine life without them. Uber offers employment possibility to millions but what impact will driverless cars have on Uber? If you can crack such problems, your future is secure!

Bear in mind that while technology is giving us comforts like never before, stress-related

health issues, alcoholism, drug abuse, suicide and other adverse outcomes continue to co-exist. As Victor Frankl puts in his famous book *Man's Search for Meaning*, today "We have the means but no meaning." Juxtapose these adverse outcomes with the fact that advances in health-care and genetics mean that you will most likely live to be 100, and then ponder will it be 100 years of joy or 100 years of misery?

You not only need to learn the right skills to be successful in the age of intelligent machines, you also need to learn to use your innate intelligence to make sure that you are physiologically, psychologically, and emotionally fit for a 100-year life of joy.



Atul Pant runs an educational charity, Timeless Lifeskills, that imparts life skills essential for becoming Future-Ready (employable in the 21st-Century) and Life-Ready (health, well-being, and joyful living) to the less-privileged young people. Timeless Lifeskills is working with 20+ rural schools in

India and with under-served young people in the UK. Atul is the author of two books, Fire Up the Learner Within and Only the Curious Shall Thrive. He lives in London with his wife and 16-year old son. He can be contacted at Atul@TimelessLifeskills.org

Transforming the World of Medical Research – One App at a Time

by **anahita fitter**

In the United States, it takes an average of 12 years and a billion dollars in R&D for an experimental drug to travel from the laboratory to your medicine cabinet. That is, if it makes it. Only five out of 5,000 drugs that enter preclinical testing progress to human testing. One of these five drugs that are tested in people is approved. The chance for a new drug to actually make it to market is only one in 5,000; slim chances to say the least.

The United States National Institutes of Health (NIH) was founded in 1887 as a government initiative to investigate the causes of epidemics and disease, but it wasn't until 1930 when a national laboratory was re-designated as the National Institute of Health and was given \$750,000 to construct two NIH buildings. Over the next few decades, Congress would increase its funding tremendously to the NIH, and various institutes and centers within the NIH were created for specific research programmes.

Although the NIH invests nearly \$32.3 billion annually in medical research, the problem with the traditional research methods is that it is still done on paper and in-person clinical appointments with patients – as it was done back in 1930.

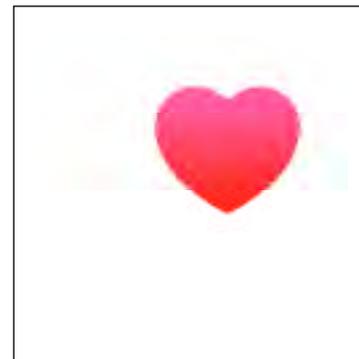
Seeing the challenge, Afshad Mistri who works at Apple headquarters in Healthcare and is credited for Apple's entry into this space, had an 'aha' moment when he came across a Stanford University Hospital flyer – stuck on a wall with tape – on his way back from the gym one day. The flyer was searching patients to join a research study for women that had gone through cancer treatment after a mastectomy and were on active medications. The flyer had a phone number at the bottom for interested parties to tear off to call the researcher.

This was in 2012, when Afshad had lost his mother just two years earlier. She herself

had gone through a radical mastectomy, received treatment at George Town University, and survived cancer. This experience hit him hard, and he started to look into how Stanford University Hospital, one of the leading research hospitals in the world, could streamline this same study, recruit more people, have more insight into patient-reported outcomes – where the data flowed to researchers continuously on a daily basis – simply using an iPhone and an app.

Afshad started to do further research into clinical trials himself by calling leading researchers in the US to learn more. The biggest challenge medical researchers face is recruiting participants. For example, University of Pennsylvania sent out 60,000 letters to breast cancer survivors that netted 305 women to join the study. A dismal connect rate. This one fact was crystal clear to him – if medical research gets easier, understanding disease would accelerate. More participants means more data, leading to more meaningful research and therapy development. To someone who always tried to find a simpler solution, what stood as a healthcare problem now appeared as an innovation opportunity.

He took his idea of creating an application that iPhone users can easily access with a tap on their screen and forward their health information to their care team or researchers – to the Senior Vice President of Engineering at Apple. Within an hour of him pitching his idea, he was given the go-ahead for engineering to start the development of the Health app – now a default app on every iPhone depicted by a red heart on a white background. This would now feed continuous patient-generated data to research apps – if users agree to share their data for medical research.



Remembering Keki Bhote on his 95th birth anniversary

What does the Health app do on an iPhone?

The Health app consolidates health data from iPhone, Apple Watch, and third-party devices that are connected to your iPhone. All the latest health monitors, like blood pressure cuffs, blood glucose meters, insulin-injecting pens, weight scales, rescue inhalers for asthmatics, thermometers – are devices that consumers use in their homes with an associated app connected to their iPhones. All patient-generated health data can now be viewed in one convenient place – on the Health app. And it makes it simpler than ever to move your health metrics forward to your healthcare providers app so that your doctor can remotely view your progress.

Fast forward to June 2, 2014 – Apple announced the Health app at their Developer Conference to thousands of iPhone developers. Once third-party devices like blood pressure cuffs and weight scales started to write apps that shared the data to the Health app (with user permission), then this common-data-repository – the Health app – became more meaningful.

Then on March 9, 2015, Apple introduced ResearchKit, an open source software framework designed for medical and health research, helping doctors and scientists gather data more frequently and more accurately from participants using iPhone apps that IRB (Institutional Review Boards) have approved.

Apple has now enabled world-class research institutions to develop apps using ResearchKit for studies on asthma, breast cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, Parkinson's disease, and more. As privacy is a core value at Apple, users decide if they want to participate in a study and how their data is shared and anonymized by the Health app and ResearchKit.

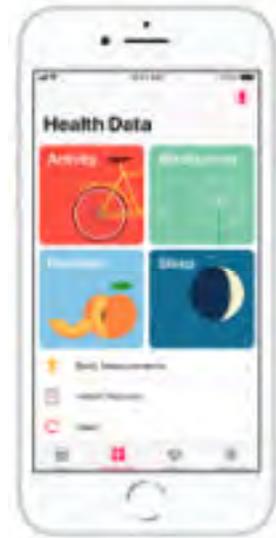
Jeff Williams, Apple's senior vice president of Operations, stated: *"iOS apps already*

help millions of customers track and improve their health. With hundreds of millions of iPhones in use around the world, we saw an opportunity for Apple to have an even greater impact by empowering people to participate in and contribute to medical research. ResearchKit gives the scientific community access to a diverse, global population and more ways to collect data than ever before."

The response from researchers was overwhelming: *"We're excited to use these new ResearchKit tools from Apple to expand participant recruitment and quickly gather even more data through the simple use of an iPhone app. The data it will provide takes us one step closer to developing more personalized care,"* said Patricia Ganz, MD, a professor at the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health and Director of Cancer Prevention & Control Research at UCLA's Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Massachusetts General Hospital developed the GlucoSuccess app to understand how various aspects of a person's life – diet, physical activity, and medications – affect blood glucose levels. The app can also help participants identify how their food choices and activity relate to their best glucose levels, enabling them to see correlations and take more active roles in their own well-being.

The University of Rochester's Parkinson mPower app helps people living with Parkinson's disease track their symptoms by recording activities using sensors in iPhone. These activities include a memory game, finger tapping, speaking and walking. Activity and survey data from your phone are combined with data from many other participants to fuel Parkinson's research at a scale never before possible, making this study the world's largest and most comprehensive study of this disease.



Anahita (Anna) Fitter is a Communications & PR specialist from Orange County, California. As an independent business writer, she works with multi-national firms, professionals, and non-profits as Creative Lead and Web Content Consultant. She actively volunteers her communication skills and advocates for non-profits focused on Child Rights and Medical Research that seeks a cure for neurogenetic disorders in children. She has a BA Economics from University of Bombay, and through Lufthansa, a PGDBA in Business in the German Dual-Academic System with IGTC-AHK, Mumbai. She can be reached at www.fittercopywriting.com

ResearchKit and CareKit platforms are now being used by over five hundred researchers and more than three million participants.

In 2018, Apple launched the Apple Heart Study leveraging ResearchKit and using the Health app. The Apple Heart Study app is an innovative research study that uses data from Apple Watch to identify irregular heart rhythms, including those with potentially serious heart conditions such as Atrial Fibrillation (AFib). This study is being conducted in collaboration with Stanford Medicine to accelerate discovery in heart science.

Afshad Mistri was awarded a patent with some senior members from Apple for ResearchKit by the US and European Patent Office in March 2018.

With growing excitement about the future of healthcare and the role of technology in research and personalized medicine, he hopes that this invention and the opportunity that Apple has provided will help future generations of entrepreneurs stand on some of his work to reach even greater heights in science and technology.



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Afshad Mino Mistri is the worldwide Healthcare Product Marketing lead for Apple in Cupertino, California. He plays a key role in Apple’s focus and market strategy for healthcare and consumer health by working closely with engineering and the sales teams to drive adoption of Apple technologies, including HealthKit and ResearchKit. He has a BS in Computer Science from the University of Houston, Texas, and lives in Mountain View, California with his family.

Pakistan Honours Aban Marker Kabraji with prestigious Tamgha-i-Imtiaz award

by rukhsana lawyer

On 23 March 2018, Aban Marker Kabraji’s determination, perseverance and excellence were recognised by the State of Pakistan, which awarded her the prestigious *Tamgha-i-Imtiaz* (Medal of Excellence) for her outstanding services in the field of environment.

Foreign nationals may receive the *Tamgha-i-Imtiaz*, but while Aban is a self-described expatriate and was born in Bombay, Quetta is where her family is from, and where her roots are. She loves returning home to Karachi, the city of her youth, likening herself to a fish returning to a familiar pond.



Early life

Aban grew up in Quetta, in a business family that worked in pharmaceuticals. That naturally engendered an interest in biology, which she went on to study, first at Karachi University and subsequently at the University of London, after which she joined the family business. Her leadership prowess can be attributed to this. Moreover, the wild, rugged landscape of Quetta also nurtured her love for animals, especially dogs.

When she got married and moved to Karachi, she started looking for a job in conservation and found it in the Wildlife Department, in a project conserving sea turtles. This in turn led her to an association with conservation organisations like WWF and later IUCN, where she has spent the rest of her career.

Professional life

In 1980, Aban finally had the opportunity to truly immerse herself in turtle conservation. She became a Principal Research Officer

Remembering Keki Bhote on his 95th birth anniversary



with the Marine Turtle Project under the Sindh Wildlife Management Board, and was one of the only women working in the field at the time. According to her colleagues, Aban could be found at the beach by 9 PM every other day, where she would remain until the small hours of the morning, studying the sea turtles that came ashore to lay their eggs. As the Sindh Regional Director for WWF Pakistan, she used the information she had gathered as part of her research to highlight the threats faced by green turtles in Pakistan, and was a staunch champion for their conservation.

Five years after her work with turtles began, Aban established the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s first office in Pakistan. She was the sole staff member and, at 32 years of age was the youngest country representative in IUCN history. Over the next 14 years, and under her guidance and leadership, IUCN Pakistan grew from a one-person office into the largest country programme in the Asia region.

Having taken a leading role in the development of Pakistan's National Conservation Strategy, Aban was counted among the country's environmental pioneers. The Strategy paved the way for governments, corporations, and civil society to weave environmental considerations into the fabric of their economic and social decisions, and was succeeded by similar strategies at the provincial and district level.

In 1994, she received the Order of the Golden Ark, a Dutch award bestowed on major contributors to the field of conservation, whose other notable recipients include the late Roger Tory Peterson, Jane Goodall, Sylvia Earle and Ravindra Kumar Sinha.

After building IUCN Pakistan from scratch, Aban then moved on to the Asia region which, when she was handed charge, was a motley collection of project offices. Twenty years on, the Asia region now boasts nearly 300 staff, and a portfolio that encompasses approximately 70 initiatives and projects. Aban oversees 23 countries, 13 of which are home to IUCN Secretariat offices; the remaining host IUCN members and commissions. Undeniably, her greatest skill is her ability to bring together a nationally, ethnically and culturally diverse group of people to work towards a common cause, in a group of countries which, collectively, are home to half the world's population.

In her capacity as Regional Director, she has twice – once in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2004, and then in Jeju, South Korea, in 2012 – had the honour of hosting the World Conservation Congress, IUCN's largest event, which draws 8-10 thousand participants from all over the world every four years. She currently serves as the co-chair for IUCN and UNDP's joint Mangroves for the Future (MFF) programme, which prioritises long-term sustainable coastal ecosystem management, is a member of the Advisory Committee of the United Nations Centre for Regional Development, and chaired the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network (TRAFFIC) strategic alliance of IUCN and WWF until 2017.

In addition to these responsibilities, and her new responsibilities as Director of the IUCN Regional Hub for Asia-Oceania, Aban also finds the time to champion causes that are close to her heart. Vultures, which are critical to the ecological well-being of the regions they inhabit, are on the verge of extinction in South Asia; Aban co-chairs the Regional Steering Committee of the South Asian Vulture Recovery Programme to try to

bring them back from the brink. In 2005, she was instrumental in the translocation of Leo, an orphaned baby snow leopard, from his original home in Pakistan's Nalter Valley to New York's Bronx Zoo; Leo has since become a father himself, in a remarkable story of international conservation collaboration. She also co-chaired the Mekong Water Dialogues Regional Advisory Group, an initiative to improve water governance in the Mekong Region by facilitating transparent and inclusive decision-making.

Academia

Aban is a member of the External Advisory Board for the Yale Global Institute of Sustainable Forestry and used to sit on the Governing Board for the International Institute for Sustainable Development. She is a McCluskey Fellow, a visiting Professor with the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, and a sought-after lecturer worldwide. In 2013, she lectured at Oklahoma University on the Value of Sustainability and Visioning a Roadmap for a Sustainable World as part of a course she taught on "Managing Dilemmas: Political Economy, Technological Innovation, and Values." In July 2016, she delivered the public talk "Working for People and Nature: IUCN's Programme in Asia", at the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Wisconsin.

Social development

Aban's contributions to society go beyond the realm of sustainable development, and encompass issues not necessarily based in conservation. On her return to Pakistan after university, she worked closely with like-minded women to sow the seeds of the feminist movement in Pakistan, and in the wider South Asian context. She is an ardent advocate for women and was instrumental in the creation of Shirkat Gah, an organisation that promotes gender equality and equal rights for women in Pakistan. As the movement took root and gained momentum, she was forced to make a choice between her twin passions

– women's rights and the environment. Or so it seemed. In choosing the latter, where she felt the need at the time was greater and where her interests primarily lay, she has been able to combine these interests into sustainable development practices that recognise the unequal pressure environmental degradation puts on women, and prioritises their needs and interests.

With politics informed by compassion, Aban is also a feminist in a deeply practical sense, and is always available to women who need assistance from all walks of life. Aban has been an active member of the Zoroastrian community, and has brought her vast expertise and leadership experience to bear in support of the community's youth. Since 2013, she has co-chaired the Zoroastrian Return to Roots programme, an initiative which gives young people in the diaspora a meaningful and transformative experience by taking them on guided tours of their ancestral homelands in India.

Aban has become something of a mentor to a number of young people who have sought her advice when it comes to choosing a career path. She has made sure, whenever possible, to give youngsters the opportunities they need to become proactive members of the workforce, whichever sector or industry they choose to pursue.

Personal life

An ardent animal lover since childhood, Aban has a penchant for adopting animals in need of assistance or a home. The most famous amongst these, perhaps, is the dog Ekamai, so named because that was the name of the street where he was found in busy Bangkok. Aban eventually had him brought to Karachi, where he became, as dogs often do a part of the family. Aban has also rescued a variety of other animals over the years, including two injured donkeys (one of whom was found at Sandspit), and a couple of kites, who had the pleasure of temporarily residing on her house terrace.



Rukhsana Lawyer works as Manager, IUCN Regional Director's Office, Asia. For 20 years, she has had a ringside view of Aban's tireless efforts and dedication to conservation work in Asia and in the Oceania region. Before IUCN, Rukhsana served 10 years with Shell Pakistan Ltd's Human Resources and Operations departments. She likes music, travelling and relaxing with family and friends.

Aban attributes her success to her family, without whose stalwart support she maintains she would not have been able to pursue such a travel-heavy career and connect with everyone from ministers, presidents and representatives of the UN to the indigenous communities striving to protect their resources. With her husband, a brother and sister, two sons, a daughter, and two grandchildren all scattered across the globe, it would be easy for someone who travels as much as Aban to lose touch with her family. She explains that when her children were younger, she would try to get them to join her whenever she travelled abroad. Now that they are grown, she tries to ensure that their paths cross every few months, and that they talk regularly. "We have phenomenal phone / internet bills," she jokes, "but it's worth it to keep in touch."

Being Director of the IUCN Asia Regional Office and Asia-Oceania Regional Hub, chair and co-chair of multiple programmes, philanthropist, activist, and family woman leaves Aban little free time to pursue her most personal interests. So when those moments of quiet present themselves, she is keen to take advantage of them. "I like to read and swim, when I have a spare moment. It gives me a chance to clear my head and reflect on where I've been, and where I still intend to go."

Aspirations

"I think I'd like to write," says Aban, when asked about her plans for the future. When asked about which topics she'd like to write about, conservation and development in Asia crop up, but she also touches upon identity. In fact, the notion of identity, and its fragmentation and multiplicity in today's globalized world, are what underpin the Return to Roots programme.

Aban is a powerhouse whose vision, passion, and humanity have for decades been felt throughout the largest continent in the world, and long may it continue.

Adopt an Island

by tarun nanda & debayani panja

Adopt an Island is a unique citizen-led project to solve India's water pollution woes once and for all; starting with the clean-up of Hauz Khas lake in Delhi. In a public private partnership EVOLVE Engineering, the Delhi Development Authority, corporations and members of the public are coming together to bring life to a major public lake in the heart of India's capital city.

Hauz Khas Lake

Built by Sultan Ala-ud-din Khilji in the 13th century, Hauz Khas means "noble tank", and its reservoir once covered 28 hectares. Today it is six hectares and still a beautiful place to be, thronged by birds and surrounded by parkland. Alongside it are the ruins of Feroz Shah's 14th century madrassas and tomb.

The tank was kept full with rainwater but now water from a sewage treatment plant is used. The nutrients in this water cause toxic algae blooms and give the water a distinctive green colour. Overhanging trees, birds and fish also add to the organic waste that causes an overload of nutrients. Bacteria in the water and the algae pose a serious health risk to anyone encountering it and impurities in the water cause a smell that reaches into the surrounding neighbourhoods. The lack of oxygen in the water and the presence of toxic algae makes it impossible to introduce more fish species in the lake.

This type of water pollution in India is widespread and no engineering solution has emerged as offering a possible solution. The conventional model of managing wastewater in urban areas using a drainage network and sewage treatment, plants face a number of challenges in growing urban centres such as Delhi. These include the unregulated discharge of sewage from growing residential and industrial areas,



lack of leadership, power cuts resulting in the release of untreated wastewater and the high cost of building new drainage lines and sewage treatment plants.

This makes it impossible for India to follow what has been done in other countries and an innovative engineering approach is needed in order to solve the water pollution crisis we now face. It is highly unlikely that this solution will come from the government and foreign companies are not familiar with the Indian situation and so their engineering solutions fail.

Tarun Sebastian Nanda is a civil and environmental engineer who returned to his roots seven years ago after being born and brought up in the UK. As a child he used to visit his grandparents in India and witnessed first-hand the state of India's environment. "There used to be garbage everywhere and sewage flowed freely through open drains into lakes and rivers and I used to wonder why nobody is cleaning them up".

After he had completed his degree and started working as a civil and environmental engineer in the UK, he came for another visit to India and even after 10 years nothing had changed. The water bodies were still polluted and full of garbage, but now, as an experienced engineer, he knew there was no reason for them to remain in that state. So, in 2010 he decided to move to India from England and began working on cleaning up lakes and ponds and building suitable sewage treatment infrastructure using his knowledge and expertise and by collaborating with various local NGOs.

Operating as EVOLVE Engineering he has already built systems to treat the wastewater generated in two slums in Delhi and at farmhouses in Delhi, Jaipur and Nagpur. The big difference is these systems use no electricity, no chemicals and no machinery to purify the water. Using just wetland plants, fish and even earthworms along with other natural processes, sewage can be treated and recycled so that the

water and nutrients in the sewage aren't wasted or end up polluting the environment. Known as constructed wetlands, they are an example of phytoremediation and rely wholly on natural processes such as microbes, physical filtration, adsorption and the uptake of nutrients by wetlands plants to purify water. There are no machinery, chemical or electricity requirements and operating costs are negligible compared to a sewage treatment plant.

The plants can also be grown on floating platforms which can be placed inside lakes and rivers and will clean the water they sit in. Based on the same principles as constructed wetlands these floating islands help to break down pollutants in the lake, take up excess nutrients and the roots hang in the water acting as a filter.

Constructed and floating wetlands offer a way to turn existing drains, streams, rivers and lakes into water purifying eco-systems that not only tackle water pollution but create large areas of wildlife habitat in urban areas and help to reduce air pollution. By constructing the wetlands inside existing drains and waterbodies there are no additional land requirements and attractive recreational areas as well as natural habitats for wildlife can be created across the city.

Wetlands provide a safe habitat for birds, fish and insects in urban areas where space is at a premium. By combining water treatment with wildlife habitat creation, multiple stakeholders are incentivised to support the scheme and local authorities are able to give the space to allow the wetlands to be created.

The Plan

The government has yet to show that it can clean up any of our lakes or rivers and nearly all of them remain polluted. This project is all about what would happen if instead of waiting for our politicians to fulfil their duty we took responsibility for our waste and did the work that needs to be done.

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Working with the Delhi Development Authority EVOLVE Engineering came up with a plan on how to use constructed and floating wetlands to bring life to Hauz Khas Lake using an innovative funding approach based on public participation. By running workshops, an education programme and a crowdfunding campaign, it is hoped that the public and corporations will engage, fund and learn how to clean up a water body themselves.

There are two existing channels located adjacent to the lake that make ideal examples of how we can transform existing drains into lush, water-purifying wetland ecosystems. One of these channels currently serves as the inlet for incoming water that keeps the lake full throughout the year. By installing constructed wetlands at these locations, incoming water will be treated and the existing water inside the lake can be circulated on a continuous basis through the wetlands in order to speed up and ensure full treatment of the total water body.

The project will involve building more than two acres of wetlands in Hauz Khas Lake with over 45,000 plants. Not only will it clean 30,000 litres of water from an existing sewage treatment plant a day but it will also provide 10,500 square metres of wildlife habitat and save 30 Mwh electricity a year. Moreover, the 45,000 plants will also help to reduce air pollution in the area and remove the excess nutrients in the lake which are causing toxic and suffocating algae blooms. Work has already begun on the constructed wetlands in the channels and 24 floating islands have been adopted by a mixture of private citizens, schools and businesses. These islands now sit on the lake and adopters can witness as their plants and flowers grow and blossom and contribute to the cleaning of the lake. Over sixty citizens and 600 school children now possess the knowledge of how to clean up their local waterbodies.

Working to a very tight budget has meant innovating on the use of materials and relying on a lot of volunteers to help carry

out the work. Surprisingly a lot of the work gets done by local children who live in slums around the area and are more than a little curious about the work we are doing. Old plastic bottles are also used to provide the floatation for the floating islands and waste construction rubble for the base of the constructed wetlands.

No longer alone in carrying out this work Tarun has been joined by Debayani Panja who used to volunteer but has now become a partner in a new NGO, *Evolutionary*, they have set up to replicate this approach to cleaning up our lakes and rivers across the country.

Even with no funding it seems the project continues by the duo able to get their hands on materials, volunteers and even some paid labour now and then. It is certainly a unique way of undertaking a large public infrastructure engineering project that relies on the kindness and generosity of Delhi citizens. They believe that a better India can only come from our own efforts as responsible people. If we were all to contribute, we need not wait any longer for all our lakes and rivers to be clean. But it remains to be seen if we, as a people, have the will to shoulder this responsibility.

www.IndiaEvolves.com

www.evolutionaryngo.org

www.ketto.org/adoptanisland



Tarun Sebastian Nanda is a Civil and Environmental Engineer who returned to his roots from the UK seven years ago. He has focused on developing systems to tackle pollution and providing sustainable infrastructure. Operating as EVOLVE Engineering he has already designed and built wetlands to treat the wastewater generated in two slums in Delhi and at farmhouses in Delhi, Jaipur and Nagpur. He is currently working with the Delhi Development Authority and leading a citizen initiative to clean up and build wetlands to keep Hauz Khas Lake clean. seb@IndiaEvolves.com



Debayani Panja is researching in areas related to water and sanitation and waste management. She is a Btech graduate in electronics and communications. She is currently working with EVOLVE Engineering as Programme Manager to clean up and build wetlands to keep Hauz Khas Lake clean. deb@IndiaEvolves.com

Readers may wonder how this article links with Zoroastrians. It has been included as most individuals are concerned with the destruction of the environment. It is up to us all to save our Earth from pollution and garbage by assisting any way we can. - Ed.



Before and after showing work at a slum in Delhi [2014]



Constructed wetland to treat wastewater from a slum in Delhi



Two of the five floating islands adopted by Pathways School Noida, Delhi



Floating islands at installation in Delhi [2016]



Floating island adopted by private citizen in Hauz Khas Lake, Delhi [2018]



An extra large floating island adopted by private citizen in Hauz Khas Lake



Volunteers helping clean out the inlet

100 Sedulous Years of Quality Education - The Mama Parsi Girls' Secondary School, Karachi, Pakistan

by pouruchisty sidhwa

'Let Humility, Charity, Faith and Labour Light our Path'



The Mama Parsi Girls' Secondary School. Photo credit CNC

My Alma Mater celebrated 100 glorious years of responsible, good quality learning that armed us with

capabilities required to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being. The School promoted the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of young ladies who went on to become homemakers and professionals.

History & Heritage

It all started in the nineteenth century when the Parsi Balak Shala was established in

1858 at Karachi, imparting religious education and knowledge of Gujarati to Parsi children. In 1870 Shahpurji Hormusji Soparivala donated his home to house the same Balak Shala and named it Parsi Virbaiji School (PVS). In 1875 with the introduction of the English language PVS became the Bai Virbaiji Soparivala Parsi Anglo-Vernacular School. The community's rapid development and liberal reform led to more and more Parsi families wishing to educate their daughters finally culminating in the establishment of a separate girls' school – The Mama Parsi Girls' School in the year 1918. We salute and bless the noble souls of our benefactors Seth Nowrojee Nusserwanjee Pochaji, Seth Edulji Dinshaw, Khan Bahadur Ardeshir



Cameos on the facade of the school. Photo credit: CNC
Cyrus Nader Cowasjee

Seth Nowrojee Nusserwanjee Pochaji

Khan Bahadur Ardeshir Mama

Seth Edulji Dinshaw, CIE

Hormusjee Mama, Nusserwanji Mehta, Nadirshaw Edulji Dinshaw. We praise the acumen and foresight of Jamshed Nusserwanji Mehta and the expert guidance of Khan Bahadur Sheriarji Contractor who were instrumental in the establishment of a girls' school in many ways. The sandstone edifice that houses the School today on M A Jinnah Road was established on April 1, 1925 and was intended to accommodate 250 girls. It included the Pochaji assembly hall and the Edulji Dinshaw Girls Hostel. Our Principals, Mr Cowashah Anklesaria and Miss Mary C Boardman nurtured the nascent institution, setting standards for the future. We thank Miss Iris Thompson, Miss Goola Shroff, Miss Mani Contractor and Miss Zarine Mavalvala for giving their whole life to the service of the Mama School first as teachers and then Principals.

10 years in the school. As I walked through those familiar gates I went back in time wearing black polished shoes, the white uniform decorated with badges and Gold or Silver Star lapels on my chest. Like always I felt the urge to run and reach the parlour – yes the grand entrance of the Mama School where the girls were never allowed to run! Ah – I could smell that familiar scent of the parlour. The statues of Khan Sahib Hormusjee Mama and Bai Homlibai Mama beckoned me inside and brought back memories of the time when we girls used to muse that one day our busts will be used for statues when we become glorious and grand. Such a day has yet not come!

The building had been decorated with lights and flowers and adorned by the national flag, the Mama School honor and the flags of the four houses, Dinshaw, Contractor, Mama and Pochaji. The grand gold staircase welcomed us with flowers and posters earmarking the centenary year. I felt the urge to run up those “forbidden” grand stairs and make sure that I made the “chhun chhun” noise that was the trademark of a girl either running up or down the stairs. How I used to run up and down those stairs after school hours when I stayed back for the band class. I would always gloat about how “only I” was allowed to use that staircase albeit after school hours. Similarly the school bell seemed to beckon me. Wish I wasn't considered a responsible well-heeled woman today, I'd have rung that bell

Let the Celebrations begin ...

A vibe was definitely in the air before The 100 Year Celebration event kicked off on April 01, 2018. News

about the festive preparations at the school had been filtering since weeks. This was one event I wasn't going to miss. Not for the glamour of the event or the speeches and felicitations but just to be able to enter the school through the front gate and re-live my



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wildly. We were then led to the Pochaji Hall where the girls of the Mama School literally grew up. From the early morning prayers to all the meetings and speeches and test and exam result announcements, the hall indeed reminded me of the many talent shows, elocutions and debating competitions that were held there. Its' walls adorned the same picture frames, the same house results year after year. I even pictured late Ervad Godrej Sidhwa propagating "As is the will of the Lord so are his Chiefs" ... week after week reminding us of our Zoroastrian tenets. As is customary with all celebrations, the day had begun by thanking Ahura Mazda for his blessings. A Jashan and a Meelad were held in the School which was attended by the entire student and teacher body. A good number of invited guests graced the occasion by their presence.



Above: Jashan in the Pochaji Hall. Below : Meelad in the courtyard

I felt so happy to be in School. Stood listening to the school band feeling sorry for the girls belting out tune after tune in the heat. Then quickly reminded myself that we did the same and the heat never bothered us. All we cared about was to project our prowess on the instruments. The band played 'Shores of Tripoli'. I couldn't contain my tears ... it was a tune I had played in the band 35 years ago. Where is that flute now? Yes in my cupboard at mums. She's kept it safe.



The School Band

So much had changed ... some for the better and some could have been better. However rules, regulations and discipline remain deeply entrenched in what are the ethos of the Mama School. I looked around to find my teachers and could only find 2 of them. I had passed the annals of the school 35 years ago What did I expect? What pleased me though was that the present young teacher body of the school was all dressed up in their finery and gaiety befitting the occasion.

We all settled for a table near the stage and waited for the chief guest Mr Mohammad Zubair Umer the Governor of Sindh. I became 15 years old that day taking pictures of just about everything. I wanted to go and visit every class, lab and library. We were seated on the throw ball court, the one below Miss Contractor's room. No game would be complete without screaming and hooting and we'd suddenly become dead quiet when she came on the window. Was I petrified of my Principals? Of course I was. Everybody was. But we adored and

respected them to bits then, and love them to tatters now.

The school band played its signature welcome march and the Chief Guest was ushered in flanked by Mrs Fureengez Tampal the current Principal of the School. The National Anthem followed by the School Song brought everyone to their feet. The Girls of the Mama School sang lustily proving to each other how we remembered every verse. Felicitation speeches by the Chairperson of the school Dr Banu Mama, Principal Fureengez Tampal and the Chief Guest Mohammad Zubair Umer all spoke about the good and glorious years of the Mama School and how it has continued to be the school of choice for young girls – a feat to reckon with.

Flashback

Dr Mama in her speech reminded us of the school's 100 year journey. On 1st April 1925 the student body of 70 girls moved from Mama Mansions into the School's purpose-built premises that was built to house 250 girl students. The School's student population rose steadily over the first 25 years of its existence, approximating 200 girls in 1943. That same year the House system was adopted to honour the School's founders, creating Mama, Pochaji, Dinshaw, and Contractor Houses. From the beginning there was a strong sense of identity among the School's pupils and deep ties of loyalty and affection binding them together. The Old Girls' Association was established in 1925 to accommodate the many alumni wishing to maintain ties with their alma mater. With the creation of Pakistan in 1947, at Mohammad Ali Jinnah's request The Mama School gave up parochial status and admitted pupils purely on merit irrespective of religious or communal background, a practice that continues today. By 1964 the student body numbered 500 and a second floor was added to the school building. The following decade saw the establishment of the Afternoon Shift in 1975 and in 1976, introduced a Commerce curriculum in addition to its established Science and Humanities curricula.

Responding to the changing professional aspirations of women and to give students a greater choice of options The Cambridge International Examinations system ('O' Levels) was introduced in 1985, giving students the chance to acquire a prestigious international school-leaving qualification, enhancing their opportunities for further study.

We Remember You

A 100-year journey is never complete without a string of felicitations. Thunderous clapping ensued when teachers who have been the pillars of the Mama School were called upon and given gold plated coins embedded in beautiful silver boxes. All of us rooted for our favorites ... wish all of them were able bodied enough to grace the momentous evening. The ever dedicated and long serving ayahs and pattewallas (peons) received adoring looks when they came up on stage. Our dear Gul Zaman looked old ... it could not be ... he was always the young and swift Gul Zaman who ran in the races on Sports Day and always won a prize. I clapped like crazy; reliving ever moment.



Presentation boxes



Gul Zaman with the Governor

No birthday celebrations go without a cake. Simple and sedate, a cake in white and blue, and flowers for every student



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house was cut marking the day. The centenary Logo beautifully engraved on giveaways and on the stage back-drop was resplendent in all its glory.

Sitting in the audience we mused about every prank, every mimicry and every disobedience that went unpunished. Rules, Rules and Rules were and are in the DNA of the Mama School. We hated them then, understand them now. These rules have built character, strength, governance, focus, grit, resilience and discipline in our lives. We will find a Mamaian in every profession and walk of life today and that is a testament of what the school has done in terms of character building and professional development.



The centre room. The stained glass window from Ardeshir Mama's residence is now hanging in the school. Presented by the family of Khorshed & Feroze Kanga, grandson of Ardeshir, on the occasion of the Centenary year.

All photos besides mentioned, courtesy of the Mama School



Centre - Governor of Sindh with the Managing Committee of The Mama School



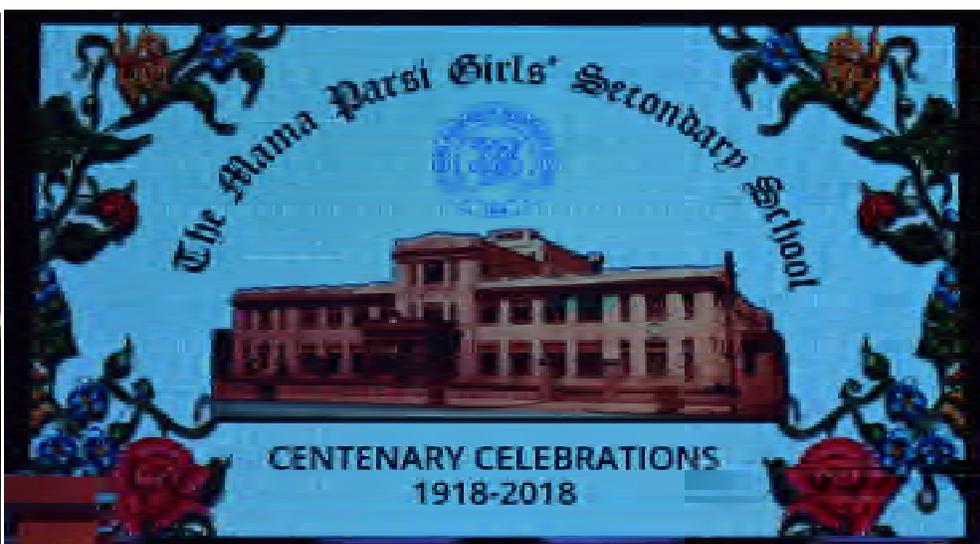
The guests seated in the Throwball court during the presentations and speeches



The 'Parlour' or foyer with original Carrara marble floors & Art Deco doors



The school floodlit



Banner on the Gala Night arranged by the OGA. Photo - Pouru Sidhwa

Selfies Galore

With every detail in place from mementos to speeches, birthday cake, table centers, balloons, party poppers, birthday song, beautiful visuals during the school song and of the flag flying high at the sound of the National Anthem, The Old Girls Association of the Mama School (OGA) celebrated 100 years of the School with full pomp and show.

The Gala Night on April 7th was overbooked adding to the euphoria of the event. Girls introduced themselves using their maiden names and year of passing. There were sounds of "OMG is that You", "You haven't changed a bit" and "I could not have guessed it was You" rang loudly in the lawns of KPI that day. The chatterboxes of the Mama School were in full rhythm. The evening started with the customary introductions, speeches by the President of the OGA, Hufriah Baria-Shroff and the Principal Furengeez Tampal. Miss Zarine Mavalvala however reflected her life in school as a student. It gave us great relief to know that she too was late to school sometimes and played several pranks and was reprimanded by Miss Thompson etc. All of a sudden she became one of us! We empathized and clapped.

A segment to celebrate successful journeys and lives was part of the evening to show

case what the girls of the Mama School had achieved in life thus far. A bevy of 16 ladies came up to share their stories. Some artists, professionals, teachers, entrepreneurs, doctors, lawyers, coffee artists came up and shared their stories of success. Each of them highlighted what attribute of the school they carried with them in their lives and what helped them in their journeys. Some anecdotes, some funny stories and some revelations brought smiles and laughs in the

audience.

The eldest alumni of the school Miss Hutoxi Khambatta aged 91 years and the youngest Alumni were invited to cut the cake along with the OGA Committee. It suddenly dawned on us that the School is certainly 100 years Young!

The evening had lots of other activities like the photo booth, the memento corner and of course SELFIES. Every girl was busy taking selfies with her group of friends or with her teachers. From the stage where I was standing, it seemed that the crowd was continuously moving here and there like in a fun fair. As the MC I didn't feel like I was in control at all. But who wanted to be in control? Everybody was having fun meeting, greeting, laughing and some young girls not containing their hysteria screaming in delight and that is what the OGA wanted this evening to be. After the sumptuous dinner, the concert started with a few toe tapping numbers and then went on to a full blown hip swinging concert with a huge group of girls dancing, singing and standing right near the stage applauding and encouraging the singers. The older Mamaians called it a night slowly and gradually but the youngsters went wild singing into the wee hours.

The evening came to an end with lots of wild happiness, frenzy and positivity on



Facebook. Pictures were posted, comments were made and connections were renewed. The Centenary Year is not over. There are many activities planned throughout the year. Exhibitions, Melas and Alumni Meets will follow what has begun as A Great Celebration.

'God Bless our Teachers
God Bless our Leaders
God Lead us Onwards
Be ever at our side.'



Happenings so far

- ◆ Inter School Art & Craft Competition held on 10th April at The Mama School for students to show their creative ideas using the drawing of a parrot and assorted materials given. 15 schools took part in the competition. The winners were PECHS Girls' School – Bisma Farooq, Fatmiyah Girls' High School – Syeda Ume Habiba – the runner up and special mention was Happy Home O Level School – Syeda Maham Khanam. [Taken place]
- ◆ Silver plated commemorative coins available with various individuals in Karachi as well as from the school, for PakRs2000. Also available with Nancy Yazdani, Dallas, USA.
- ◆ OGA Alumni Day – 28th July at the Mama School.
- ◆ Inter-school Throwball Tournament, August 2018.
- ◆ Inter-School English Debate, September 2018.
- ◆ Coffee table book commemorating 100 years of the Mama School to be launched in September.
- ◆ North American Alumni Reunion, Dallas , TX, 5th - 7th October 2018. Contact Nancy Yazdani - nmyazdani@technical-advisors.com or + 1-214-384-1662. Cost US\$250 for 3 days.
- ◆ Grand Exhibition, November 2018
- ◆ Grand Concert, January 2019

The First Indian Lady Composer

by mira pawar

In the early thirties when women couldn't even think of making a choice in education or anything pertaining to their life, a remarkable Parsi girl did something out of the box although her community was totally against it. This girl, born in 1912 as Khursheed Manchersh Minocher-Homji had a great liking for music and wanted to pursue her career in music come what may. The Parsi community may have been against her but fortunately Khursheed had full supported from her father in every way. He also sent her to Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande who specialized in *Dhrupad* and *Dhamar* style of singing. Later, Khursheed joined Lord Morris College at Lucknow and studied music as her subject.

Khursheed Manchersh Minocher-Homji was born in a well to do Parsi family. Her father was an affluent businessman and a prominent figure of the community in Bombay. When the radio station in Bombay was set up in 1920, Khursheed along with her sister Manek gave musical performances regularly once every month on radio. This programme was known as the Homji Sisters programme and was very popular with the listeners. The songs were accompanied with musical instruments like sitar, dilruba and organ.

Around this time, the founder of Bombay Talkies, Himansu Rai who was looking for a good classical singer for his movies, heard the Homji sisters on radio and invited Khursheed to his studio. She was shown the music room and asked to take care of the music department and compose music for his movies. Khursheed immediately accepted the offer and took it up as a challenge. Her sister Manek in the meanwhile developed fascination for acting and started doing character roles in films.

The Parsis continued to protest against the Homji sisters and demanded they leave the



movie industry as girls from affluent families were not supposed to participate in activities related to cinema. Khursheed and Manek however stood their ground and refused to let anything dissuade them from their goal. The Bombay Talkies was a public company and had four of its board of directors from the Parsi community who wanted the Parsi girls out. At this time, it was the brave effort of Himansu Rai who defended the sisters and to conceal their identity, Khursheed was given the name Saraswati Devi and

Manek appeared in titles as Chandraprabha.

Saraswati Devi's first assignment was for the movie *Jawani Ki Hawa* in 1935 starring Himansu Rai's actress wife Devika Rani and Najmul Husain. She had a tough time making the actors sing and had to simplify the tunes and cover some areas with music instead of song as they were no singers and play back was still not introduced.

Jawani Ki Hawa was followed by her first hit movie *Achut Kanya* in 1936. Ashok Kumar who was a lab technician at the Bombay Talkies and Devika Rani played the lead roles. Chandraprabha was performing a character role and was assigned to sing a song "Kit gaye ho Khewan haar" as actors had to sing their own songs then. But the day the song was to be shot, Chandraprabha suffered a sore throat and was unable to sing. Himansu Rai suggested Saraswati Devi sang from behind the curtain and asked Chandraprabha to lip-sync. The first playback was thus recorded

successfully at Bombay Talkies. The only other person who attempted this before Saraswati Devi was R C Borral (male) of New Theaters, Calcutta.

Saraswati Devi worked with Kavi Pradeep – lyricist who penned a large number of her songs and also rendered few songs, prominent being *Piyu Piyu Bol* and *Mere Bichde Hue Saathi*. Her association with Mumtaz Ali – Actor / Dance Director (Father of Mehmood) for her songs related to dance, is note worthy.

After leaving Bombay Talkies in 1945, Saraswati Devi started working independently. The most notable amongst them was *Aamrapali* which had some good songs by Amir Bai Karnataki . With the changing trend in music and public taste, her popularity started declining. One of her last few movies was

Usha Haran in 1949 which had 12 songs out of which two were rendered by Lata Mangeshkar. This was followed by *Bachelor Husband* in 1950 with Muhammed Ibrahim.

After a break of nearly five years Saraswati Devi scored another movie titled *Inaam* in 1955 with her old time student S N Tripathi but her contribution was only one song for the movie. Her last movie was *Babasa Ri Laadi* in 1961 which was for children. Thereafter she started teaching music. †

In the early fifties, Saraswati Devi along with Naushad Sahib was appointed judge for a music competition conducted by HMV. The winner of the competition was Habib Wali Muhammed. After the competition, Saraswati Devi was engaged to compose two ghazals for Habib Wali Muhammed. These ghazals became very popular and helped Habib Wali Muhammed to earn a big name as a ghazal singer. These songs were *Lagta nahein hai jee mere uday diyar mein* and *Yeh na thi hamari kismet ke visal-e-yar hota*. Some of the songs tuned by this Parsi lady became the rage of the country. One of her melodies was revered as a national song that was sung at Congress Prabhat Pheres, after permission from Gandhiji's Secretary Mahadev. The song was *Chal*

chal re nau jawan written by Kavi Pradeep, tuned by Saraswati Devi and sung by Ashok Kumar.

Kishor Kumar and R D Burman seem to have copied her composition from *Jeevan Naiya* made in 1936 and reproduced with alteration in the movie *Jhoomroo* made in 1961. The music was composed by Kishor Kumar. The song was *Koi humdum na raha* which was sung by Kishor Kumar. Another composition of Saraswati Devi from *Jhoola* was adapted by R D Burman in the movie *Padosan* and the lyrics of this song was *Ek Chatoor Naar*.

Saraswati Devi never married. Having lost the family members in quick succession, she adopted a Maharashtrian family of six children. She educated them well and helped find jobs for a couple of them. It is believed that during her later life, she was living all alone in an apartment. Sometimes life gets tough and problems come hurling like a boomerang. Misfortune also seemed to have fallen in love with Saraswati Devi's music composition and the effect of this came in the form of an accident. She fell down from a bus and fractured her hip. The only help she got was from her neighbours but no one from the film fraternity came forward to help her.

She passed away in 1980 at the age of 68 and leaves behind her exquisite achievements for us to enjoy. She was an inspiration to many music composers and this reflects in the present day compositions which have been influenced by her work.



Mira Pawar is a freelance writer with an extensive writing experience. She worked for Gulf News Paper from Dubai, N Magazine and Hans India News Paper from Hyderabad, India. She has contributed to the Chicken Soup Series and has also written for a book called "How the Phoenix Rose". She is an avid traveller and loves writing travelogues.



Michelle Mama -

In Conversation with the Editor of Hamazor

Michelle please introduce yourself briefly to Hamazor's readers.

For the last two decades, I've been a filmmaker, director, writer and television producer. Born and raised in Toronto, I now divide my time working between Toronto and New York.

How and when were you attracted to work in the media?

I was deeply involved in theatre as a teenager (was working with a theatre company doing professional productions at 17!) but was still sure I was going to be a lawyer. At the University of Toronto, I started taking Cinema Studies courses, I got hooked, and there was no going back!

Did you initially work for a TV network or branch out on your own from the beginning?

This work is always freelance – we go from project to project as independent contractors.

Do share what subject has excited you most as you developed in this profession?

My passion is documentary. I've produced scripted projects as well but there is no greater high than capturing real life as it happens and going on journeys of discovery with subjects. As they say "The truth is stranger than fiction!"

If not mistaken, you are a champion for women. Through your productions are you concentrating on the hardships of women?

As a woman of colour, I will always have a vested interest in telling stories about the female perspective. Outsiders, people looking in from the margins, are always the best observers with

the most important and unique perspectives. It's about balancing the scales. White men have always been at the centre of culture but women and people of colour are ascendant and I can't wait for all of the fresh perspectives – the world is thirsty for them!

With this in mind, do you feel with the visual word something is being achieved?

The world has become increasingly visual – so many people don't even read anymore! For this reason, it's so important to make sure that we are still telling smart stories that people want to consume, that are visually appealing, and that deliver an important message. A spoon full of sugar helps the medicine – and the message – go down.

You have over 250 hours of television under your belt. These must be diverse subjects. Will you share some of the most rewarding ones please?

I've been so fortunate to be able to work all over the world with so many incredible people – it's hard to narrow it down. I loved shooting Bollywood Star in Bombay, I'm a car freak so shooting automobile design studios in Frankfurt was a dream, I profiled a painter in Kuala Lumpur, I directed travel show in Berlin, Paris, Amsterdam and all over Mexico was dreamy ... so many shows and so many stories!

One can image the challenges you face, especially in third world countries. Any instances that stand out in your mind?

When we were shooting my documentary feature, 21 Days to Nawroz, the hotel we were originally booked at got attacked by a suicide bomber. At the last moment, we had switched hotels for a bigger room. I hadn't told my family about the switch and I worried that they would see it on CNN, so I called my Mum to say "Don't worry about the bombing! We're fine!" The news hadn't covered the story (because they didn't want to show any sign that the American-supported Kurdish territory in Iraq was unstable) so my Mum had no idea

what I was talking about and I ended up freaking her out for no reason!

Are you the face behind the camera?

I don't shoot video professionally but I am a hobby photographer. I work with incredible camerawomen and men on my various projects.

I do both directing and producing. The director is more of a creative position. They are the one on location, asking the questions and creating the film. The producer is the one who handles the details, gets things happening, deals with networks and basically pulls all the strings behind the scenes.

Coming to your award winning documentary feature film – 21 Days to Nawroz. When was this filmed and how many months were you in Kurdistan?

I was there for exactly one month in 2009. The only way I was able to make it so quickly is that I had support on the ground from my brilliant and resourceful cousin Sherizaan Minwalla, who was working for an NGO at the time. She was really the one helping set everything up for us before we arrived and she was an integral part to making it happen.

Did you find hostility while you were filming?

The opposite, actually. When they found out that Sherizaan and I were Zoroastrian, they welcomed us with open arms! That region was originally part of the Persian empire and we were actually filming in Erbil, a city that was the scene of King Darius' last fatal battle with Alexander. We stood at the steps of a mosque in the citadel that was originally a Zoroastrian fire temple! The Kurds are very fond of Zoroastrians. They know their history and lots of them yearn to put Islam aside and discover their roots.

In the film noticeably majority of the women are in burkhas, yet the more educated are in Western attire. Did you feel the women were at liberty to dress as they wished?

Remembering Keki Bhote on his 95th birth anniversary

Kurdistan is the most “western” part of Iraq, and Kurds are not generally as orthodox as the rest of the country. That said, there are areas that are much more strict – like Erbil – and then areas that are more relaxed – like Sulaymaniyah.

There is so much grief shared by the women of this war torn area. Do you feel through your efforts of portraying their story on film it will make even a little difference to the way politicians react / feel?

One of the biggest joys of my entire career came as a result of this film. One of the subjects portrayed is a young, independent-minded woman who wants desperately to study and become a lawyer. Her family treated her like a slave and made her life hell. She was so depressed that she threatened to kill herself and her brother basically handed her matches and told her that the family would be better off. She attempted suicide with a can of gasoline and failed. She burned the majority of her body and when we met her, she was telling us that life was even worse than before – now she couldn't even be married off so she was totally useless to her family and more miserable than ever. After seeing the film, one woman was so moved that she took it upon herself to contact me and get in touch with the woman. She pledged to help her in any way she could. The story has a very happy ending – this woman put the girl through school and she became a lawyer after all!

The woman in bondage, is a strong image in your film. Is there a statue which you have photographed?

It was a wonderful statue that we just came across and found it so incredibly apt!

Though your documentary was made in 2009, it is now that we are coming to hear of it. Please give the reasoning behind this.

The film has been on the film festival circuit and then was being exclusively distributed by the production company (it was only available on google after you paid a fee to see it!).

What happened last month (March) is that I got the rights to the film reverted back to me and set up a site to host the film for free to the public for the first time.

At the moment you are show running a primetime documentary series for CBC. Will you share with our readers what this is about?

It's an as-yet-unnamed documentary series about artists: eight half-hour episodes, each about a different artist – dancers, singers, composers, painters – who are on a journey or about to meet a moment in their professional careers. We have shot all over Canada as well as New York, LA, Paris, Delhi, Lisbon and Venice. It's been a wild ride so far!

What else do you have in the pipeline?

I have a scripted series in development and a few documentary features I'm chatting with people about for the future.

Obviously you are aiming for the stars! Being a highly competitive industry, what are your dreams in your profession?

I want to be able to affect change by shining a light on subjects or situations and using my skills as a storyteller to make things better, in big ways or small!

Thank you for taking time out to share your experiences with our readers. Michelle you do our community proud, and we wish you endless success in all you produce.

Thank YOU!



The film has won the following awards:

PLATINUM REMI – BEST DOCUMENTARY – World Fest Houston

BEST INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY – Baghdad International Film Festival

SILVER PALM – BEST DOCUMENTARY – Mexico International Film Festival

GOLDEN EAGLE – BEST DOCUMENTARY – CINE International, Los Angeles

BEST IN SHOW – DOCUMENTARY – Accolade Competition, Los Angeles



Do go on this link to see or download the full documentary 21 Days to Nawroz which explores the lives of three very different Kurdish women. It is factual, sad and enlightening. - Ed.
<http://21daystonawroz.com/>

Michelle shares shots from her documentary.



Like sugar in milk - a visual documentation of the Parsi community

In his own words Majlend Bramo writes how he came to publish his book on Parsis

My name is Majlend Bramo, I'm a documentary photographer.

After working for a newspaper in Florence (Italy) for six years I decided that it was time to get more concerned about the photography I was producing; the main factor for me was timing. I realized that every work I was creating was quite limited in time; as they say in the newsroom, the picture has to be ready by *yesterday*. This became a limitation for me and I decided that it was time to do some work with much more care and dedication, something that wasn't done on a constant rush rather a deep journey focused on a topic that I really cared.

The topic of the *Parsis* came by chance. I was reading "Un Altro Giro di Giostra" (One More Ride on the Merry-Go-Round) by Tiziano Terzani, a book gifted by a colleague journalist.

While voraciously reading the book I came across the paragraph, "... in what now is Iran a man lived, of whom very little is known. His name was Zarathushtra and he was the founder, or maybe he had just brought back to life, a religion that has fire at its core: the fire that purifies whilst still remaining pure ..."

My curiosity piqued with that name Zarathushtra. Zarathushtra ... Zarathushtra ...

Who was he? Then it came to me. "Thus Spoke Zarathustra", by Friedrich Nietzsche. I'd studied it in high school and had some vague memories of that book. Something about the *Urbemensch* and the need to become who you are. I took out my smartphone and googled for more clarity. This is when the story really

began. I started reading and discovering that Zarathushtra was a real prophet of a real religion, teaching his wisdom approximately 1200 years before Christ. I thought, 'No way!' Zoroastrianism, one of the most ancient, monotheistic religions on earth, perhaps the oldest? A religion that inspired Christianity, Islam and Judaism. 'Could that be?' My mind was racing to read and comprehend more. I wanted to know everything about the epic journey of a small group of people who fled eastward when Persia was invaded by the Arabs and reached Gujarat (India). After 1200 years they are still alive, bearing all their ancient traditions and religion. 'Is that even possible?' I then came across various news articles about the subject: "The curious case of the vanishing Parsis", "Why is India's wealthy Parsi community vanishing?", "Dwindling numbers worry Parsis". That was it! I had my story.

It was only a matter of time before I linked all the pieces to make sense of it. That story resonated inside me and I felt I had to tell it. Because, in the end, this is what I do, I just tell stories.

I got a sign right at the beginning of this project: I was looking for an accommodation in Mumbai and decided to give a try on Couchsurfing.com since I knew it is a great way to meet local people. Among the emails I sent, one young girl replied saying she was a Parsi and willing to help me with this work!

She was the first Parsi I met and meeting her allowed me to get in touch with so many other people.

Then I came across something unexpected. While trying to enter a fire temple in Mumbai I got stopped by the guardian saying I



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Available : Parsiana
Bookstore, Mumbai.
<http://www.parsiana.com/bookclub/book-club.aspx>
or from Majlend Bramo's
website <https://www.majlendbramo.com/>

wasn't allowed because I wasn't a Parsi. I hadn't got to know this peculiar way to treat non-Parsis from my research back in Italy so it was something that made the work a bit more mind-bending.

Luckily I met Ramiyar Karanja the principle of the Dadar Athornan Institute, a public charitable Institution dedicated to the cause of providing religious as well as secular education to children of the priestly class and train them to be ideal priests who can be spiritual guides to the Parsi community. He allowed me to shoot inside the school where a mock up of a fire-temple's altar is there.

While shooting this story I got to know this community; they are funny people with an open mind towards life. The religion they practice, Zoroastrianism, is such an old world heritage that is in danger of disappearing along with the community itself. According to India's last census the Parsis are numbered at 57,000.

It is half the population of 50 years ago. There is a real possibility for the community to disappear according to the government of India that has created a scheme (Jiyo Parsi) to help the community to increase in numbers. They will give financial support to those couples seeking medical help as well as advocacy and awareness.

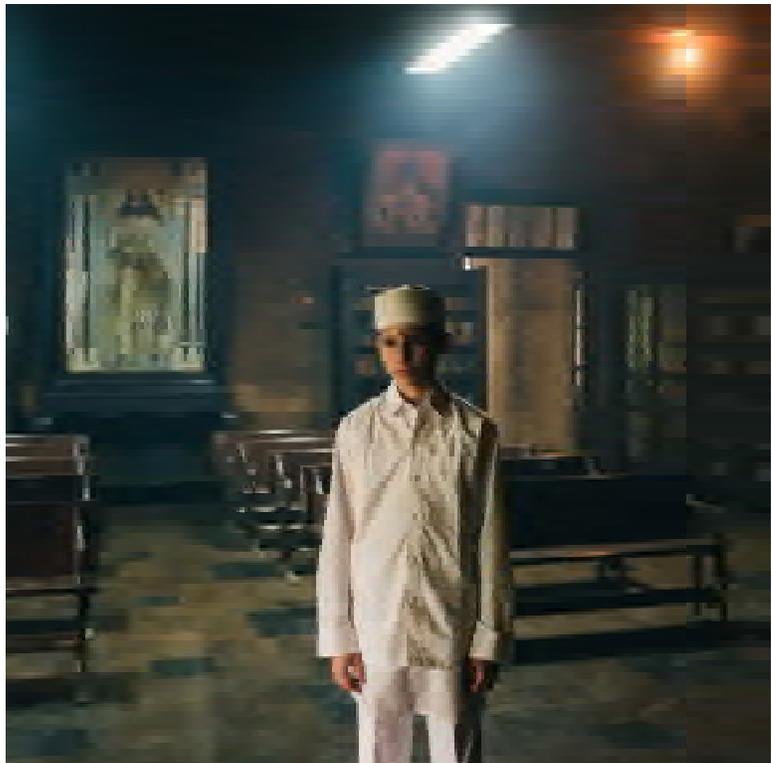
After a while I understood why this subject got my attention. I was born in Albania, a small country near Greece. At the age of two my family and I moved to Florence. I lived all my life with an unconscious sense of loss. Something in me was missing. Something related to the roots, to the sense of belonging to a place. I think I found a little bit of my personal story in the story of the Parsis.

Another interesting thing about this story is that it is an example of great integration of a culture into another. When they arrived in Gujarat they were refugees in the same way we see refugees nowadays seeking shelter in Europe coming from Africa and Middle East. Indians were wise enough to let them find a place in their society allowing them to

flourish and eventually give a massive contribute to India and Mumbai.

I hope we can take this story as a good example and do the same in Europe.

Some images shared by Majlend which appear in his book.



A portrait of Rooyintan the only student remaining at one of the two existing religious Zoroastrian schools in Mumbai, the Andheri Madressa Institute.



A view over some Mumbai buildings. In a city with an estimated population of 20 million people, it portrays the Parsis as a drop in the ocean. According to India regulation, the Parsi will risk in the near future to be categorized as a "tribe".

Remembering Keki Bhote on his 95th birth anniversary



Mr Kaizad holding his baby. The decline of the Parsi population sees every year an approximate drop of 400 units: in fact only 200 babies are born and 600 people die. Back in 1961 the population was about 100,000, this means that in 50 years the number has dropped almost half.



A moment of the wedding of Arnaz. When the Parsis first arrived to the coast of India back in the 8th century CE, they agreed with the local king Jativ Rana certain rules to be respected. One of these was not to get married before sunset. After 1200 years they are still keeping their word.



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View over the Cusrow Baug. "Baug" means garden in Farsi language, it is an housing complex reserved only for Parsis in Mumbai. There are 20 other colonies in Mumbai. Half of the Parsi population lives inside a Baug or Colony.



Majlend Bramo is a documentary photographer based in Italy, travelling worldwide to document social issues. He has been working with agency Massimo Sestini News Pictures for six years in the News photography field, covering the major events in Italy and publishing with the main newspapers and magazines such as *The New York Times*, *Le Figaro*, *L'Espresso*, *Il Corriere della Sera*, *Oggi*, *La Stampa*, *The Sunday Times*. In the same agency he has worked as photoeditor and coordinator of the agency's photographers. In 2011 he joined Italy's National Order of Journalists. Unsatisfied by the evanescence of news, he is now working on long term projects as a documentary photographer.



Danny - The youngest member of our 'bageecha' gang

by sheeraz wania

The moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease forever to be able to do it'. This line from Peter Pan, quoted in Danny Khursigara's new book *Inside/Out – 8 Success Keys to help Millennials Thrive*, caught my attention and made me think of how a lot of us don't realize our real potential and give up on our true calling due to mere self-doubt. Danny has not only managed to find his own authentic 'purpose' in life, but is also doing a creditable job of helping others around him, find theirs.

When I was approached, to do a piece on my childhood friend's achievements, and the launch of his new book, my mind wandered off to all the wonderful times we had as kids growing up in the Parsi Colony in Karachi. I had seen on social media, pictures of Danny's ever smiling face on huge billboards on Times Square. When Zareer Divecha, a good friend to the Khursigara family says, that when he saw a picture of his dear friend, oozing confidence and charm, dapper as ever with an ever-present boyish smile, looking down from the giant Jumbo Tron over Times Square, that made him feel proud. He is surely mirroring what a lot of us felt. Hence, when I started to think how to approach this piece, I could not see myself doing a formal article or interview on Danny, and decided to go with a more personal point of view and also that of some of the other friends.

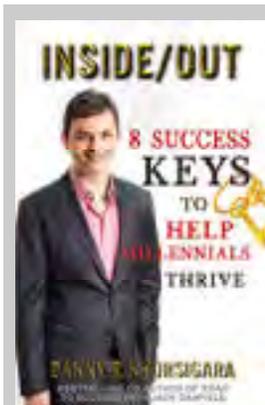
Inside/Out – 8 Success Keys to help Millennials Thrive is Danny's second book, that was launched on March 26th at Times Square, in New York. This coincided with over a dozen leaders and industry insiders in cryptocurrency gathering in New York, for the Crypto Business Forum; a roundtable discussion to uncover what lies ahead for the future of blockchain. Danny was one of the speakers at this forum held at the Nasdaq boardroom. His first book was an Amazon bestseller 'Road to Success' which



Danny smiling over Times Square

he co-authored with the renowned Jack Canfield (from Chicken Soup for the Soul Series). Additionally, Danny has personally trained and mentored with Jack Canfield (America's #1 Success Coach) in the Success Principles™ and conducts private coaching sessions, public speaking, corporate trainings, business transformation and 'mindfulness' workshops internationally.

This book is in memory of his dad Rustom, fondly called Chum by all who knew him. If you ever had the chance to meet Danny's lovely parents, Roshan and Chum, you would know that the term 'the apple doesn't fall far from the tree' is accurate. As Zareer remembers, 'a few of us were regulars at the Khursigara household and were always welcomed with open arms by Roshan and Chummy, wonderful people themselves'. I remember both of them as always involved with the community and being there to help



Title: Inside/Out: 8 Success Keys to Help Millennials Thrive
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 Publisher: Self-published
 Book Length: 106 pages
 Currently available on Amazon as a Kindle edition [price \$7.77]
 Also available as hard copy in select book shops over the world.

Remembering Keki Bhote on his 95th birth anniversary

any and every one. Naushad Mehta, talking about what a true friend Danny has always been, also speaks of his days spent at the Khursigara residence, and calls it the 'the good old carefree days made up of casual *gup shup*, nights of never ending monopoly sessions, early morning badminton, cycling and volleyball at the 'bageecha'.

The garden, 'BAGEECHA' as we called it then, was the nucleus of our colony and a meeting place for us kids then. We would meet daily, to play baseball in the summer holidays or volley ball in the evenings or mostly to simply sit and chat. Looking back, I wonder what we talked about for hours at end. Danny at the time was the youngest member of our 'bageecha gang', who came with his elder brother Cyrus. Reminiscing, Farah Patel is so right when she says that he never saw that as a drawback, but always as a plus point and with his winning smile and warm mannerisms he found his way in everyone's hearts. Farah goes on to share an incident that happened at the time. This was probably the summer of 1981 and summers were always baseball season for us. On one occasion during batting, Farah, who was still in the process of mastering her swing, swung the bat so hard it slipped out of her hand and hit Danny's leg ferociously. He immediately fell to the ground in pain. She went over to apologise for his injury, and expected him to be angry; instead, he looked up at her with a smile, said it was an honest mistake and took it in his stride. This was Danny at the young age of 11 or 12. So it comes as no surprise that he, out of all of us, is the one who is helping others with his wisdom and practical approach, to align one's passion and purpose from a young age. All this he does by being a wonderful guide and mentor for how to be happier individuals, as Shivany Gonell mentions in her testimonial of the book.

His book *Inside/Out – 8 Success Keys to help Millennials Thrive* wants to help you think big, find your purpose and teach life skills that can help you to thrive and not just survive. In their article of April 19, 2018, Influence Magazine, interviewed Danny to 'share the human story behind his success'.

In this interview, he talks about finding fulfilment in life and how that goes beyond just success. His book is all about tapping into your inside world, which is primarily your thoughts and feelings to realize your impact and your 'external reality'. He feels that we are conditioned to allow our external environment to determine who we are and how we perceive ourselves and that limits us and we lose sight of our deeper purpose and that compelling vision that can lead us to a more fulfilled life. 'You can't expect to drive a car looking in the rear view mirror the whole way', he says.

He also believes that our educational system has largely contributed to this set way of thinking. He hopes that his book will help the millennial generation find their true calling and have careers and futures that align with who they are and their passions, giving them a well-defined road map to reach their destination. On a deeper level, he hopes that his ideas expressed in this book and otherwise, will eventually revolutionize the education system, especially in Asia.

Danny goes on to advice that instead of just engaging in being busy, and focussing on the 'how' aspect of our lives, we need to ask more relevant questions and show increased commitment to the 'what' and 'why' of what we do and let our reasons and the answers we get be our guide. *'Each of us have something really profound to offer so I encourage you to dream big, take inspired action and always doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith.'*

Today, Danny Khursigara is the Founder of FreedomOne International that specializes in Executive Coaching and Business Transformation based in Hong Kong, after a 19-year stint in banking. Besides being a life coach and author of two best-selling books, he has been selected as TOP 100 Authority by Influence Magazine for 2017 as one of the highly sought-after success coaches in Asia. He has also appeared on TEDx in 2016 – 'Living with Purpose' and has co-produced the regional Emmy Nominated documentary film 'Soul of Success'.

Danny's goal is to impact 50,000 people in the next five years. We wish you all the best!



Sheeraz Y Wania is a graphic designer and design educator, with a master's degree in Education from the University of London, UK. Having lived and taught internationally, for many years, she now resides in Toronto and teaches courses related to design, culture and technology, at OCAD University, Sheridan College and George Brown College.

The Saga of the Shahanshahs by Adi Merchant

reviewed by naheed malbari

Persia has long been regarded as the land of legends, and of poets and philosophers. It can boast of a rich cultural heritage of antiquity and medieval might. Its magnificent ruins offer an understanding of a past that fascinates scholars and reminds the world of the majesty and might of an empire that once conquered and ruled a large part of the world.

Within that spectrum of splendor, were literary writers whose works marveled the world and some became a part of the cultural heritage of that nation, with a belief that the grand narratives, in poetic form, was indeed history and the stories were the unbiased truth.

One such epic, written by the poet par excellence Firdausi, (940-1020) has undoubtedly embraced the psyche of Iranians both medieval and modern and his couplets are oft quoted and shared in books, magazines, films, music and even as graffiti chalked on the walls of many Iranian cities.

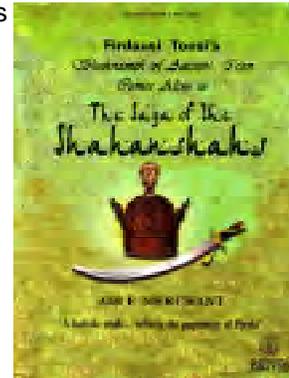
Composed over a 1000 years ago by Abolqasem Firdausi for Mahmud of Ghaznavi, who apparently promised the poet, (as the legend goes) one golden dinar for every couplet completed, 'The Shahnamah' relates the wonders of prehistoric and historic Iran before its conquest by the Arabs. The 50,000 couplets took over 33 years to complete and according to folklore, Firdausi never received the compensation as promised by his King.

The Shahnameh is divided into three sections—the mythical period, the heroic age and the historical period. The Mythical Age gives the story of God creating the Earth and the advent of man in the Middle East. The Heroic Age deals with the Persian Empire's conquests, the battles and triumphs and life details of its heroes. Lastly the Historical Age narrates the history of the

Sasanid Empire and the exploits of its rulers till the Muslim invasion. Thus, the Shahnameh chronicles the reigns and the triumphs and deeds of the earliest Persian kings, over fifty of them, in four dynasties - the Pishdadians, Kayanians, Ashkanians, and Sasanians. Written in modern Persian, the Shahnameh is a complex work of poetry, folklore, and historiography with great emphasis on the cultural uniqueness of the Persians.

The Shahnameh is not just a poem about the trials and tribulations of its leaders and heroes but is replete with meanings, morals, and invaluable messages told by Firdausi and his different spokespersons be they kings or queens, birds or trees, mountains or the sky. It teaches and preaches to the young and old, moral lessons and in poetic form, informs the reader, the path to righteousness. It deals with umpteen binaries – love and hate, war and peace, friend and foe, life and death, the human and the inhuman, the reality and the dream, paradise and purgatory, prehistory and history, the phantasmagoric and the realistic and many more such binaries. It's a saga about the fight between the path of good and evil and Firdausi admonishes from time to time, leaders and heroes who subject themselves to their own inner demons. It is a treasure trove of wisdom and philosophical maxims and informs the reader periodically that avarice and hubris lead to disaster and death and ultimate humiliation.

Translated numerous times into the English language by Atkinson, Robinson, Zimmerman, Levy, Rogers and others, the first major translation of Firdausi's complete works in English was undertaken by Warner and Warner in nine volumes. Lately, Dick Davis too rendered his translation into the English Language in 2006 which is highly recommended.



Publishers:
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan
website:
<http://www.bhavans.info>
Pp: 250
Price: IRs675

In India, the Parsi community, whose heritage links to pre-Islamic Iran, are equally fascinated by the Shahnameh. In 2017 Adi F Merchant's translation titled 'Firdausi Toosi's Shahnameh of Ancient Iran Comes Alive in The Saga of the Shahanshahs' was completed after 15 years as stated by the author.

Merchant's translation starts with the life history of Firdausi. He has divided the translation into 42 chapters mostly with a Kings name with a summary title and each chapter subdivided into sections with titles as perceived by the translator. Merchant's easy to read translation will hopefully develop the interest of the youth both in India and abroad for the Shahnameh. This translation is meant to invoke in the young mind a hunger for the epic and to understand the many trials humans face. The translation includes illustrations with the Portrait of Firdausi and 36 other pictures/miniatures/images, a few in colour and the rest in black and white. The images give the reader a pictographic context to the characters in this translation. Available also on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) this book is an affordable gift for many a reader.

It is an extremely simplistic version of a very complex work. Merchant unfortunately gives from time to time his own perception of the text and does not allow the young reader to decide for themselves the analysis of the binaries and an understanding of the subtle messages given by Firdausi. The youth needs to be allowed to think and make choices and evaluate on their own as to what knowledge Firdausi was trying to impart and what messages the poet wanted to convey.

In the introduction, conflict of material is discernable due to the different texts, used by the author, regarding Firdausi's life and times. The section in the introduction, when Mr Merchant gives reference to Daqiqi/Dakiki's death, (the author of the first thousand verses preserved in the Shahnameh by Firdausi) two conflicting reasonings are given which is understandable, though the idea needed to

be clarified. Merchant, in one section states that Daqiqi was assassinated by his own slave, whilst in the authors' own note, Daqiqi died due to an illness. Such discrepancies need to be elaborated and explained.

More emphasis has been given, in this translation, to the mythical and the heroic age and only about 30 odd pages have been given to the historic period. Of these, eight pages have been allocated to the role of Sikandar/Alexander with more emphasis given to the rise of Sikandar rather than his rule, the latter which is both intriguing and enlightening. Twenty-two pages have been devoted to the entire Ashkanian/Sasanid period, both of which have been heavily edited. Thus, the reader is left bereft of a deeper understanding of the tragedy of the historical period and downfall of the Persian Empire and the intricacies and tragic collapse of the house of Sassan that Firdausi stressed on.

Yet, for readers of the Epic, this translation provides the platform to a more intensive understanding of the Shahnameh. Merchant ends 'The Saga' with a few of Firdausi's philosophical and ethical gems on 'Khired' or wisdom. My favourite as always is Firdausi's view of his own immortality as translated by Merchant.

*'haram kas ke darad hosh, rae va din,
Pas az marg bar man kunad afrin.
Na miram azin pas ke man zende am,
Ke tuxhme sukham ra par a gande am.'*

("Everyone who has intelligence, judgement and religion shall bless me after my death. Hereafter, I shall not die for I am alive, as I laid the seeds of poetry") pg. 246.



Naheed P Malbari living in Karachi, is a researcher and author on leadership and sociology. She completed her PhD in 2015. Working as a consultant instructor in sociology in a number of institutions, she is also currently working on two books and a research paper.

My Mother's Persian Stories by Saeid Shammass and Shaunie Shammass

reviewed by zehra bharucha

Ancient populations and forgotten cultures often leave enduring signatures in the cultural traditions of their descendants, as well as in their genes and languages. Oral histories, myths and legends have always been regarded as a rich context in which to explore these legacies and the tellers of these stories have a special place in the hearts of their listeners. Storytellers have existed since prehistory and the simple act of bedtime storytelling has been the prerogative of hundreds of generations of parents around the world. From ghost stories to fairy tales to animal fables, these stories are beloved by people of all ages in all cultures.

My Mother's Persian Stories is a collection of bedtime stories told to her children by Saeid Shammass' mother. The book is bilingual, with the first half in English and the second half in Persian. There are some delightful stories here, full of beautiful princesses, evil witches, wise kings, jealous siblings and all the wonderful and varied creatures that make the best stories come alive. The authors have used elements of both Eastern and Western storytelling, yet the book has a very Eastern flavour and one that will be instantly familiar to those who have read Iranian folk tales or the exploits of Mulla Nasruddin.

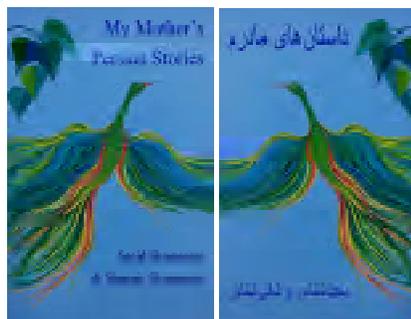
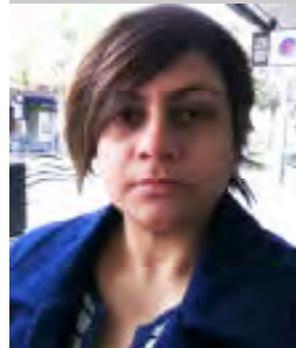
There are 30 stories in the collection, some shorter than others, but the common thread in them is the simplicity of their subjects and the fact that, like folk tales everywhere, they contain a moral. The morals strive to inform listeners of important life lessons and ways to behave. Thus the heroine of Green Robe pays dearly for her disobedience, while the clever Beebee Chaghzeh outsmarts a wicked witch with her intelligence. The clever pure hearted prince in The Citron Princess wins the love of the beautiful princess with his courage and the nagging mother in law in The Mother in Law and the

Snake is annoying enough to cause a fearsome snake to disappear. All the stories contain defining characteristics of fairy/folk tales, include a typical beginning and ending, magical elements, good and evil characters, enchanted settings, fantastical creatures and an explicit problem that eventually gets resolved. These key elements are blended in the story to impart an enduring lesson to the readers.

There is also a good reason why the book is bi-lingual. As Shaunie Shammass, the co-author says, *"We changed wording and story elements so that both western and eastern readers would find the stories accessible. So, it's really not a translation from one language to the other but a collaborative effort in actually creating each story from scratch. We tried to capture both western and eastern storytelling. For example, our opening line is a combination of how Persian stories open – once upon a day under the purple dome – and how English stories open – once upon a time. We open with – once upon a day, and once upon a time under the purple dome of the skyWe tried to keep elements that exist in both kinds of cultures and omit those that only occur in one."*

They have succeeded admirably. This is a lovely book and would be a wonderful addition to any library. ■■■■

Originally from Karachi, Zehra Bharucha has lived in Sydney, Australia for the last 17 years. When not working as an editor in the legal publishing business she can usually be found reading or cooking elaborate banquet style feasts for family and friends.



Co-authors : Saeid & Shaunie Shammass

Illustrations : Saeid Shammass
Publishers : Kotarim International Publishers

350 pp (including both the English and Persian stories)

Paperback : US\$20, or £14.67

Available at : <https://www.amazon.com/My-Mothers-Persian-Stories-English/dp/9657238307>

Barnes and Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/my-mothers-persian-stories-saeid-shammass/1128174931?ean=9789657238301>

The Parsis of Singapore - History, Culture, Cuisine by Suna Kanga & Subina Khaneja

reviewed by ava khullar

At this critical juncture we Parsis find ourselves in, when our dismal demographic picture points towards our ultimate disappearance from the face of the Earth, any attempt to record Parsi history is welcome. Wherever they may settle in India and across the globe it is most essential to ensure that our presence and contribution to our respective homeland is not lost to history. For a minuscule community, which in spite of its insignificant numbers, has made its name in all fields of human endeavor, - industry, trade, business, the professions, law, medicine, accountancy, hospitality, IT Industry etc. it would be a pity to see history obliterate the Parsi contribution due to our negligence and lack of interest and effort.

Considered in this light, the publication of the study of the Parsis of Singapore by Suna Kanga and Subina Khaneja is welcome. Hopefully it could become a trendsetter for similar studies of the various communities in the Parsi diaspora.

A background to Suna's effort in writing this history may be of interest to readers. Suna, a journalist by profession, accompanied her husband, Captain Rustom Kanga of Singapore Airlines to Singapore in 1974. She continued her profession and over the years established herself as travel and lifestyle writer, giving accounts of her extensive travels to exotic places, most of them sponsored by her travel and hospitality clients, as well as covering beautiful homes of the stylish elite of Singapore and elsewhere. Her writings became regular features in the Singapore Straits Times, the Tatler, Wine and Dine and many foreign publications.

Her happy and successful lifestyle was rudely shaken by the discovery that she

was suffering a fatal illness. However the brave heart that she was, she took a promise from her husband and two children, Nazneen and Cyrus to keep this information from everyone else. She wanted to live life to the full, doing what she loved best, write and travel without pity. By hindsight it appears she felt a growing desire, during the last couple of years, to go back to the places of her early childhood; she made visits to her hometown Nagpur twice where her cousins also joined for a happy reunion, the author being one of them, made semi pilgrimage visits to Zoroastrian places like Navsari, the "dharma ni tekri", where she visited the Meherji Rana Library, orphanages the Vada Daremeher, etc, and Udvada the home to Iranshah. She, with cousins, planned a trip to Iran, which sadly she was unable to take and finally her decision to record the history of Parsis of Singapore in a book. It seemed she was reaching out to her familial and Zoroastrian roots which perhaps gave her satisfaction and solace in her last days.

She started her research for the proposed book and when a supporting grant from the National Heritage Foundation of Singapore was received, the work took on momentum. Since the British kept detailed historical record in their colonies through their periodic gazetteers, Suna was able to gather information about the early Parsi settlers in Singapore.

The Singapore story goes back to the 19th century, when adventurous Parsi traders started looking for opportunities towards the East, with South East Asia and China, and set forth in sailing ships, often owned by Parsis, laden with cotton, textiles and opium and brought back tea, silk, porcelain and many other items. The real impetus was the trade in opium which the British had of



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necessity introduced with its trade with China. While importing the very popular tea, which was in great demand in England, and silk from China the British had no attractive item to trade and had to pay in hard gold which hurt its economy. Thus the plan to export opium, which though illegal, was very much in demand by the Chinese. It was clandestinely brought into China by the British. However not wanting to get the stigma of dealing in what was considered a harmful substance, the "Christian" British produced the opium in India but allowed the Parsis and Marwadis to trade, thus putting the odium of guilt on them, while profiteering from the trade. This aspect was cleverly obliterated by British historians while recording the history of that period. In that respect, the work of the famous novelist Amitav Ghosh's *The Ibis Trilogy* brings out the story of this nefarious trade in opium. As Parsis were majorly involved in this trade, Parsi characters feature prominently in his narrative. The redeeming aspect, from the Parsi perspective was, that while tremendous fortunes were made in opium by the great Parsi sethias, the wealth so acquired was used munificently for developmental charity in India by building educational institutions, hospitals, art colleges, art galleries, libraries for the benefit of all.

Since Singapore was en route to the Far East and served as a gateway for England's trade with China, Parsi men were sent to Singapore to work with the shipping and trading companies. The well known firm of Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy and Sons, among other Parsi companies had interest in Macao, Canton and Hongkong.

The early records show several Muncherjees, Cursetjees, Framjees, Burjorjees, and Jamsetjees. Remember surnames became mandatory later when the British made it a requirement and so names based on the town or village of habitation or trade or profession being followed were added later to the Muncherjees and Cursetjees. For example Billimoria, Bharucha, Surti or Merchant, Mistry, Lawyer and even the ludicrous Sodawaterbottleopenerwalla!

An amazing record shows several convicts, even 18 accused in a murder plot among the early Parsis in Singapore. In fact the first recorded Parsi, a Muncherjee was a convict brought to Singapore which had become the British Penal colony. He settled in Singapore after his jail term got over and to him goes the credit for the establishment of the first community infrastructure, a burial ground. He felt seriously ill and died. An Armenian friend Aristarchus Sarkies, persuaded the Parsis to buy a piece of land for a burial ground. As Parsi traders spread in Singapore, Macau, Canton, and Shanghai, in 1822 a trust was formed in Macau and the infrastructure necessary for community living got slowly established. In Singapore adjoining the burial ground, a Parsi rest house called Parsi Lodge was built which acted as a Dharamshala for Parsi men passing through Singapore and also served as a venue for social gatherings and religious ceremonies for the slowly growing population of the Parsis of Singapore. All these Parsi landmarks have slowly disappeared, though Parsi Road is still there.

Going back to the Parsi convicts, I would like to mention an interesting episode revealed at a recent talk the author attended by a British scholar researching on Parsi theatre in Malaysia. She talked about an incident involving Dossabhai Hathram, the father of the famous photographer Homai Vyarawalla, (about whom Parzor Foundation has brought out a biography). He was a prominent lead actor in the Victoria Parsee Theatrical Company which visited Malaysia often. He was charged with the murder of a beautiful female actress in the troupe, over a love affair gone wrong but was finally pardoned by the British. Surprisingly Sabeena Gadihoke, the author of the book on Homai, who was present at this meeting, was as surprised as the rest of us, and it appears even Homai was not privy to this information! So there goes our pride in being a law-abiding community! History of the early Parsis throws up men who prospered, made a name for themselves and were known for their philanthropic efforts in Singapore. There

was Framjee Muncherjee who was allotted a piece of land in 1820 by Raffles, and another Cursetjee Muncherjee Moosh, a merchant trader and ship owner who had a profitable business acquiring old ship wrecks out of which he made a fortune but later lost it after getting embroiled in a legal battle with a brokerage firm of Jeejeebhoy Dadabhoy and Sons in 1851 over nonpayment of mortgage to that firm. The story of Cursetjee Framjee, a philanthropist and the only non-European shareholder in the Singapore Institution Library started by Raffles, added a human touch to the Singapore story. He married Maryanne Scott, an English girl and had three children Sorab, Rustom and Isabella. After Maryanne's early death the children were brought up by their maternal grandparents in Liverpool. Decades later, in 1990s, Isabella's granddaughter Mary Clemmay came searching for her father's Parsi roots and discovered her Parsi connection in Singapore.

Though the history of the early Parsis is important, what Suna's narratives brings out much more clearly is the later settlers who migrated in the 20th and 21st century, whose decedents are proud members of the current Parsi community of Singapore. Detailed interviews with them, most of them good friends of the author, brought out the remarkable hard work, business and professional acumen that made these families prosper and contribute to the development of Singapore. This is the really interesting part of the story entitled PEOPLE WITH HEART.

Foremost among them was the bachelor Nowroji Mistry who started the Phoenix Aerated Water Factory in 1925 supplying soft drinks to the British and Indian Armed forces. Nowroji's philanthropy setup the children's ward at the Singapore General Hospital (SGH). This was a spontaneous gesture on finding children lying in the corridors of SGH because of lack of facilities for children. A cheque of \$950,000 was donated and the children's ward named Mistry Wing was inaugurated in 1956. Three generations of Mistry's have completed a

hundred years in Singapore, during which time they have given back to Singapore in humanitarian acts and social service in return for the good life the nation has given them.

Then there was Percy Davar, a cousin of Nowroji who channeled his successful earnings into education as a benefactor of scholarships for needy Singaporeans. His munificence has resulted in an annual donation of \$150,000 to 200,000 towards education and charitable purposes since 1980, in perpetuity, from his estate worth four to five million dollars. A simple self-effacing bachelor, few knew about Pesi. Suna's book gives him the much-deserved recognition.

The Manekshas were early pioneers in Malaysia, running rubber plantations and other profitable trades. Again three generations of Maneksha family are now spread across Malaysia and Singapore as successful professionals in medicine and law. During the Japanese occupation the Manekshas had their belongings stolen, among them a white wedding sari with a silver border. After the war a vegetable seller was spotted donning the sari and was persuaded to sell it back and so incredibly it came back to the family, was dyed red and Nelly Maneksha, wore it to her daughter's wedding. Several such anecdotes make the narrative interesting.

In the field of education and medical health Dr Pesi and Piloo Chacha have made notable contribution, as not only practicing doctors, but as teachers and researchers, winning several international awards. Young Homiyar Vasania, an investment banker and his wife Vidhya were the latest among the Parsis to give to the community, at a dollar a month rent, a property for the religious, social and administrative use of the Parsis. Known as Zoroastrian House it serves as a meeting place for the Parsis. This came as a gesture of thanks to the Parsis who came to his help when his father, visiting from India, suddenly passed away.

The list of worthy families goes much further, of men and women who are leaving

their stamp on the history of the Parsis of Singapore. This includes, besides others, Dr Jimmy Daruwalla and his wife who championed the cause of Dyslexia and founded the Dyslexia Association of Singapore. Rusi Ghadiali who is actively involved in inter-religious activities, Keki and Nargis Medora who were very active in social welfare, Soli and Behroze Sethna, who helped Parsis settle in Singapore, Phiroze Medora an authority on insurance matters and Kai Nargolwala who held high positions with international banks and financial institutions and has helped many charitable causes in education and health. Later chapters deal with art and culture, the gara and tanchoi, Parsi theatre which was popular in Malaysia under the chapter Wayang Parsi and finally a collection of favorite Parsi recipes donated by the ladies of Singapore.

It can truly be said of the Parsis of Singapore that they have given back to their country of residence, in good measure, for the wonderful life it has offered them. Suna's book is itself a homage to this great nation of hope and opportunity.



Suna & Rusi Kanga, Sabena Khaneja



Jehangir & Perin Manecksha



Nelly (Manecksha) Doctor in family vintage sari rescued from the vegetable seller



An exquisite gara - each of the scenes are different

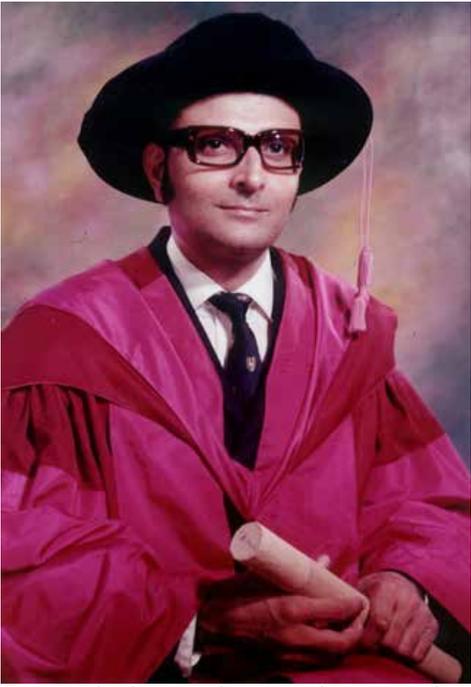


The Mistri family with bust of Navroji

Remembering Keki Bhote on his 95th birth anniversary

Rustom Kanga acknowledges Subina Khaneha's immense contribution in completing Suna's book and her valuable research for the Parsi Theatre, Gara & Thanchoi chapters.

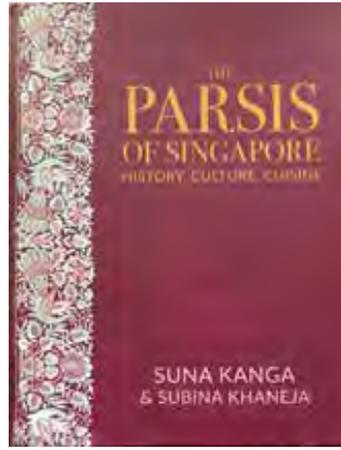
The book is to be honoured on May 27th at the Gourmand World Awards as one of the three Best Indian Cuisine books in the World. It is among the finalists.



Dr Pesji Chacha contributor to education and medical health



Parsi Road - the last of the Parsi landmarks in Singapore



Garas galore

Zoroastrian House given for use, by the Vasania family - on the right

Zenobia Mistri : Teacher Par Excellence by Shireen Isal

a review by sherna gandhy

The old lady lying in her bed in her sea-facing flat in Mumbai seemed tired of life and did not know what was going on around her. Till one of her visitors spoke to her in French. Immediately there was a change. 95-year-old Zenobia Mistri suddenly perked up and burst into a rendition of the French national anthem!

Shireen Isal begins her tribute to her French teacher Zenobia Mistri nee Bamboat with this evocative scene, which encapsulates her teacher's life-long love for the language and her commitment to teaching it to generations of Mumbai students who had to learn the language in the 40s, 50s 60s and 70s, mostly to get through their school or college exams.

The author was one of those pupils, but for her, French became more than just a subject she had to pass in college; it was a language she grew to love and that had an impact on her later life. She attributes much of her success to her remarkable teacher, who was also a remarkable human being. 'It is difficult to adequately convey what I owe her, for here was someone who taught me all the French I know,' Isal writes. When destiny led her to live in France, it was the rigour of Zenobia Mistri's teaching which allowed her to speak the language with 'ease and fluidity' and gave her easy access into French society.

Hence the quest to document as much of her teacher's life as she could, researching in three continents and interviewing a number of past students.

The really interesting part about Zenobia Mistri's life, though, were her early years. Speaking French may have been a desirable accomplishment in a young lady brought up in the early years of the 20th century, but almost no young lady of that period was so passionate about it that she ended up studying it, first at the prestigious St Xavier's College in Bombay, and then at the awesome Sorbonne in Paris, travelling there by boat in

1931 all on her own, after securing a scholarship to do so.

By the 1920s India had a sizeable minority of women collegians, but only a handful ventured overseas to study, usually in England.

Though Xavier's had begun admitting women since 1912, the boys heavily outnumbered the girls and college education for girls was rarely a means in itself and more of a preparation for their lives as mothers and wives.

Zenobia Bamboat was an exception in this too. She pursued her studies with fervour and was clearly seen as a prize pupil by her professors, foremost among them Fathers Fell and Duhr, doyens of Jesuit education in Bombay.

In letters of recommendation her professors wrote for her, both for admission to the Sorbonne university in Paris and later for a job as teacher in India, they praised both her intellectual capabilities and her personal sincerity and integrity. And these twin aspects are what Shireen Isal emphasises too throughout her book.

In 1928, after graduating from St Xavier's, Zenobia taught at the Alexandria Institution for Girls for two years before her cherished plan of post-graduate study at the Sorbonne finally fructified. And on May 9, 1931, with a Tata scholarship of Rs 8000 for two years – modest even at that time – the intrepid Ms Bamboat set sail on board the Italian ship *Here* for French shores.

She actually studied at the Institut de Civilisation Indienne, which had a seat at the Sorbonne. One of her professors there was the distinguished Indologist Sylvain Levi, and the subject of her thesis was French Travellers in India in the 17th and 18th Centuries.



Zenobia in 1948. Photo credit: The Mistri Family [p77]

Remembering Keki Bhote on his 95th birth anniversary

Isal gives some interesting facts about Indo-French relations at the time and the contributions made by Indians such as the Maharaja of Baroda, and the N M Wadia Foundation in terms of financial assistance and material for the library of the Institut. There were also intellectual exchanges: visits to the Sorbonne by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya of the Benaras Hindu University and renowned physicist C V Raman among others.

Zenobia completed her thesis, which was published in Paris in 1933 (and in the US in 1972) and returned to India.

It is unfortunate that there is almost no material on Zenobia's life in Paris, how she lived, who were her friends, how she spent her time in this most culturally vibrant of capitals. This is probably because newsy letters from her were not available for research, if she ever wrote them. A young Indian woman from a conservative background living on her own in the Paris of the 1930s would have made for interesting reading.

The second part of the book is about Zenobia's teaching career in India, first at the Sardar Dastur Noshirwan Girls High School in Poona. It obviously suited her and she lived a quiet, simple life in what was then the pretty little cantonment town just 120 km from Bombay where she made a few close friends and enjoyed the experience of mentoring young girl students, a recurring interest throughout her life.

Then in 1945, this quiet existence was interrupted by a momentous event – her announcement to her close friends that she was to be married to Pirojsha Mistry, secretary to the Sir Ratan Tata Trustees, a widower with four children, the eldest of whom was Zenobia's age. The low key, dedicated, always sari-clad Ms Bamboat could certainly throw some surprising punches, undeterred by what anyone would think or say.

It seems by her own account to have been a successful marriage since she describes it as 'the sixteen golden years of my life.'

It entailed a return to Bombay and the beginning of several decades teaching the

young in that city the finer nuances of the French tongue. She also devoted her life to her new family and the activities of various Tata trusts, particularly involved in helping and empowering women like the Sir Ratan Tata Institute.

The private tuitions went on for 40 years. Isal has talked to former pupils who recall reciting verb conjugations at breakneck speed but who also recall a teacher who could be appreciative of good work and very encouraging.

In fact this is a portrait of a strong-minded and humane woman who charted her own course quietly and confidently and who had a strong attachment to family and friends. We often hear of the extraordinary things that ordinary people have done and wish that someone would write about them. Shirin Isal has done just that and if the tone is sometimes a little too eulogistic, that's fine – eulogising a good teacher and a good human being (instead of a worthless politician) is entirely acceptable.



Dastur School teachers in 1944. Zenobia seated left of central figure, the principal, Miss Churchill. 'The Centennial' magazine, 1993. Photo credit: The Sardar Dastur Noshirwan Girls High School. P 64



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Ten Life Lessons from Eggs

by perzen patel

Dear Son,

Today I am writing to you about a strange topic. Eggs. After all, what kind of a Parsi caterer would I be if I didn't try to squeeze in our favourite 'Eedu' into just about any conversation possible.

Right now the only kind of eggs you have tried is in a tomato omelette but I am hoping that your Parsi genes will awaken and soon you will want to try every kind of eggs possible. So here is a list of 10 different kinds of eggs you must try and also life lessons you can learn from them (I am a parent now so it is my prerogative to teach you something at any given point of time even though it may seem totally random and meaningless at the time).

1. Sunny Side Up — When cooked perfectly, this egg is crispy and firm at the edges but the yolk is soft and runny. Similarly learn to be firm and stick to your decisions once you make them but also still stay fluid to change and filled with warmth at your center.

2. Parsi Akoori — Nothing beats a good morsel of creamy Akoori served on top of Brun pav. However, take the same ingredients and overcook it and you will not get Akoori but Bhurji which tastes rubbery and dry. Similarly, if you overthink a decision for too long you are going to ruin it. Instead, remember to combine what knowledge you have, think over it a bit and then just take action!

3. Poached Eggs — While a lot of people like eating poached eggs, many are scared of cooking them because you have to be so gentle with it. Don't be scared to be gentle and tread lightly when the situation demands it son because the rewards are always proportionate to the risk taken.

4. Salli per Eedu — I make Sali per Eedu the same way for you as my mummy

did and she uses the same recipe her mummy did. There is value in experience and doing things the traditional way. In a world that is fast changing it is easy to discount tradition for ancient ideas but remember to question yourself on the reason why someone is still doing it the way they were 50 years ago before you go ahead and change for the sake of it.

5. Cheesy Omelette — Did you know the first word you spoke was not Maa or Daa, but 'Cheesh' (I was so proud). A good cheese omelette needs only two things — cheese and eggs. Most days if you use a salted cheese you won't even need seasoning! Remember, that the good things in life don't need to be overly complicated. On most occasions if you have love and honesty by your side, you are sorted.

6. Tarkari per Eedu — We Parsis have an innate ability to take any leftover vegetable, add an egg on top and turn it into an entire new dish. Be versatile like this dish because there are many different versions of the 'perfect you' and if you can keep tweaking and adjusting to what's needed, you will always be in fashion.

7. Baked Eggs with Truffle Oil — Sometimes all you need is a small quantity of something special to make a common dish spectacular. Try to be this 'Truffle Oil' in life which adds a sparkle to the everyday hustle. All you need to do for this is think a little out of the box (and of course then go ahead and implement it).

8. Egg Curry — I am not a big fan of egg curry but your Mamaiji has spoken to me of many days as a child when her parents couldn't afford meat and so dinner would be egg curry. Above I spoke of taking adding small amounts of 'something special' but sometimes even that is not needed and just a humble egg can also make an ordinary meal special. So, while fancy is great you don't always have to wait for inspiration to strike, simple can also be good enough.

Remembering Keki Bhote on his 95th birth anniversary

9. Mayonnaise — There are two secret ingredients in a good mayo fresh eggs and lots of patience while the eggs emulsify with the oil and work their magic to create a creamy sauce. I know you may think me hypocritical by telling you not to overthink yet preaching patience. It's important to not mix the two. Good things take time and if you have a dream you deserve to give your dream the benefit of time to come true.

10. Chutney Eeda Pattice — When you're old and in a job with kids of your own you may feel on occasion that life has become boring and mundane. At those times remember that you don't need to make big changes but just add small elements of surprise. Just like finding a yummy piece of boiled egg inside a chutney pattice can spark a smile, spending some quality time with your kids outside the house or saying a few kind words to your wife may make a big difference. So before you go all out, just try a small surprise first.

That's all the gyaan (advice) I have for you today. I hope when you grow up you appreciate how difficult it is to write an entire letter on life lessons based on eggs and love your mom more for it. Until then, I part for today with the wise words of BawaTips, "When in doubt, break an Eedu on it".



This post is part of the annual #BlogChatterA2Z Challenge. When my son was born I promised myself I'd write him love letters as often as I could as this challenge is part of that promise. E is for Eggs and the Life Lessons they Impart. Do follow P for Parenting for more articles in this series.

<https://medium.com/p-for-parenting/10-life-lessons-from-eggs-1d842387b75e>

Links:

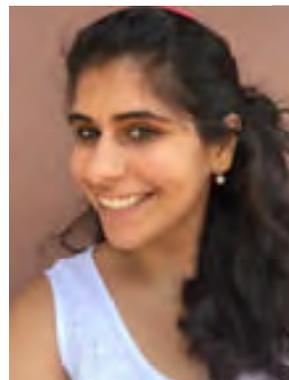
Parsi Blog - www.bawibride.com

Parsi Catering Kitchen - www.bawibride.kitchen

Parenting Blog - www.medium.com/p-for-parenting



This image, courtesy Niloufer Mavalvala



Perzen Patel is the Bawi Bride. She started her award-winning Parsi Food blog as a new bride in 2013 when she realised she didn't know how to cook any Parsi food. Perzen's passion for making Parsi food more accessible saw her starting Bawi Bride Kitchen, a gourmet Parsi food delivery company early 2014 and has now expanded into catering for other cuisines as well. When she is not cooking and playing mother to her 19 month old son, Perzen loves to write about food, travel and now her motherhood journey. This is why she also started another blog, P for Parenting.



Dear WZO Members, Donors, Friends & Volunteers

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a European Regulation coming into effect on 25 May 2018 and applies to all organisations.

Please read the essential information on GDPR brief given below which will affect our entire Organisation and all the Trustees and Directors along with paid and unpaid volunteers.

WZO has been working to comply with the regulations and has streamlined its Website and upgraded its IT Services substantially (i.e. Business Hosting, Enhanced Website & Domain Security, Professional Secured Communication, Secured Online Storage, Secured Online Backup, Online Cloud Database, Bulk Email, etc)

Further segregation of our main services has removed interdependency and uptime of vital services is much improved. Security issues have been strengthened to provide a reliable and compliant working environment

Our Chairman and President have officially asked each committee-member to read the GDPR brief and raise any such issues of non-compliance. Please raise kindly in confidence any work process for or on behalf of WZO carried out which you may think currently does not comply or adhere with GDPR regulations.

All professionals, members, volunteers, friends including those who use their own devices for WZO work and communication should use recognised security systems for adequate protection and encryption purpose with strong password access.

The European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was adopted in April 2016 by the UK and will go into effect on May 25, 2018. The GDPR elevates the protection of personal data to a top legal compliance and strategic priority for companies/charities that work with the personal data of European residents and individuals around the world.

WZO holds minimal personal data on our members which was provided on your membership application form. All membership Data are kept securely for records on our cloud based new database. This data is secured and can only be handled by authorised personnel of WZO. Any electronic or bulk communication will be carried out on secured and encrypted communication channels directly to yourself according to your choice.

For Family membership

Primary member of the family please note that we hold data supplied by you (primary member) of your family (Opted In) members on our current WZO database. According to GDPR Regulation we are legally bound to let each and every individual of 13 years and above know of the data which we hold on them. Please kindly request consent-form for your opted in family members or kindly inform us if they do not have any electronic way to communicate to us.

Important Note: WZO is a Paid Membership Organization where members fill in our official membership form and provide necessary personal information themselves.

Remembering Keki Bhote on his 95th birth anniversary

WZO does not share, buy/sell or collect such personal information through their website or through any other online data services. WZO is duty bound to keep all the personal information securely and continue to officially communicate and update its members and others (friends & donors) on our current database through our official channels securely.

For GDPR Compliance I have officially requested each Committee Member, Director and Trustee of our Organization to make sure that we treat All WZO oriented personal data of ourselves and of our members, community and everyone else with utmost respect and privacy.

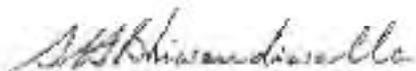
WZO will keep Private Policy link updated as per its operational obligation, need and compliance basis. Please kindly check and note the link for your referral.

<https://www.w-z-o.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GDPR-and-WZO-Privacy-Policy-270318-updated.pdf>

WZO appreciates your help and cooperation in helping us to abide by the stringent GDPR Consent Requirement by 25th May 2018.

If you have any further questions, please contact Sammy Bhiwandiwala at president@w-z-o.org

Yours sincerely,



President (On Behalf of our Chairman)

GDPR Brief

The main intent of the GDPR is to give individuals more control over their personal data, impose stricter rules to companies handling it and make sure companies embrace new technology to process the influx of data produced. This new European directive has clearly been created acknowledging that people produce much more sensitive data than they have ever before. Managing data on a large scale can be risky for organisations if they do not plan out an appropriate strategy and update their systems to handle the influx. This kind of negligence can lead to data breaches or leaks.

Here are the major changes that are mentioned in this new legislation [In a Nutshell](#)

[For GDPR details kindly refer to the ICO website <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/key-definitions/>]

Expanded territorial reach

Companies that are based outside of the EU, but targeting customers that are in the EU will be subject to the GDPR which is not the case now.

Consent

Consent of personal data must be freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous. Consent is not freely given if a person is unable to freely refuse consent without detriment.

Accountability and privacy by default

The GDPR has placed great emphasis on the accountability for data controllers to demonstrate data compliance. They will be required to maintain certain documentation, conduct impact assessment reports for riskier processing and employ data protection practices by default – such as data minimisation, secured essential archives & backups

Notification of a data breach

Data controllers must notify the Data Protection Authorities as quickly as possible, where applicable within 72 hours of the data breach discovery.

Sanctions

This new legislation allows the Data protection Authorities to impose higher fines – up to 4% of annual worldwide turnover. The maximum fines can be applied for discrepancies related to international data transfers or breach of processing principles, such as conditions for consent. Other violations can be fined up to 2% of annual worldwide turnover.

Role of data processors

Data processors will now have direct obligations to implement technical and organisation measures to ensure data protection, this could include appointing a Data Protection Officer if needed.

One stop shop

This legislation will be applicable in all EU states without the need of implementing national legislation. Having a single set of rules will benefit businesses as they will not need to comply with multiple authorities, streamlining the process and saving an estimate of €2.3 billion a year.

Removal of notification requirement

Some data controllers will be glad to hear that the requirement of notifying or seeking approval from a Data Protection Authority is going to be removed in many circumstances. This decision is made to save funds and time. Instead of notification the new directive requires data controllers to put in place appropriate practices for large scale processing in the form of new technology.

Right to be forgotten

This change is one of the most useful changes for the average person managing their data protection risks. A person will be able to require their data to be deleted when there is no legitimate reason for an organisation to retain it. Following this request the organisation must also take appropriate steps to inform any third party that might have any links or copies of the data and request them to delete it.



“ ... We shall be
Thy envoys
forever.”

Yasna 49.8
Inslar translation



The World Zoroastrian Organisation