

publication of the world zoroastrian organisation

HAMAZOR

1
issue 2019



World Zoroastrian House, UK

Opens its doors



Early photograph of late Mr & Mrs Abtin Sassanfar, p11

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COVER

Photo credit : Sammy Bhiwandiwalla

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From the Editor

Those of you who really read the Hamazor, must be pondering where has Issue 1 gone to as its now April? It was deliberately delayed as our WZO House was opening its doors for the first time on 17th March as a soft-opening, followed by NowRooz being celebrated at our own premises. And since the Hamazor would now be published in April, the opening of the first Atash Kadeh outside the subcontinent in Houston warranted this timely inclusion.

Issue 1 of 2019, will be my last issue as editor of Hamazor. There are many reasons for this decision, the main one being too many years – 17 to be precise – for a person to produce a publication without it going stale. I will be 80 this year and its time to call it a day. No doubt I will be totally bored, but new ideas with younger people has to take place otherwise how can progress be made. Unfortunately no replacement has been determined, therefore for the time being further issues of Hamazor will not be published.

It has been a wonderful experience producing the Hamazor, learning all the way, 'meeting' remarkable people through their contributions to this publication. A List of Acknowledgements at the end many of whom are / were outstanding individuals, will make anyone sit up with astonishment, including myself! My very sincere thanks to each one of them and feel privileged they even considered writing for Hamazor.

9 April, 2019 Acknowledgement is due to WZO's four chairmans whom I have worked with: Rumi Sethna, Sammy Bhiwandiwalla, Darayus Motivala & Shahpur Captain, all of whom have given me a free hand to do as I please to produce the Hamazor, without any suggestion, making the post of editor so much simpler. Thank you my dear friends.

Finally, the amazing and eye-catching covers done quarter after quarter by Tannaz Minwalla, pro bono for WZO, we thank you.

This issue covers possibly every aspect of our Zarathushti being, it's a hefty one but hopefully will be a good read for all. As my final effort, it is satisfactory!

Thank you and wish each one a happy, healthy and constructive life.

Ray Curajee



Open Day at The World Zoroastrian House, Feltham



sammy bhiwandiwalla writes ...

I am delighted to report on our Open Day held on 17th March at WZO House. Thankfully the weather was dry and after spending the morning in freezing weather putting up direction signs to the site, wherever possible, we awaited our first guests. You see we are surrounded by what is a building site because of the regeneration of Feltham town centre. To make matters worse they had closed Feltham Railway station on the day and I could see myself devouring endless sandwiches for the rest of the day.

Thankfully the first few faces that materialised were a joy to see. Some 110 or so attended by the end of the day. They were greeted by our committee members as they arrived and chaperoned around the building for about two hours. Committee members explained how the three floors were to be utilised with the ground floor as a hall or auditorium, to be used for seminars / lectures and social functions as well as for rent to other communities, for their own events thereby generating an income for WZO. The capacity of the hall is 120 persons, for social events and 170 theatre style. In the refurbishment of the building, sadly we had to sacrifice considerable space due to heating ducts, lift installation etc.

The first floor comprises of a Setayash Gah which is commemorated in the name of Dr Mrs Shirinbanoo and Dasturji Dr Sohrabji Kutar the past High Priest of UK. There is also an office and



Hall or auditorium



The Setayash Gah - The new afargan ordered in India & donated by Ursula Bhiwandiwalla. Photo credit Shahin Bekhradnia.



Future Reference Library

committee meeting room for WZO's use and a caretaker's flat. Soon we will have a small reference library housing the collection of books that our beloved Farrokh Vajifdar had collected during his lifetime. It will be commemorated in the memory of Dr Xerxes S Captain, Shahpur's son who passed away at a very young age. A section of the first floor will be available for rent to suitable tenants. The second floor is open plan and also available for rent. This in the future will give us an income to manage the building and assist towards our charitable activities.

Of course the project is still not complete and it will take another few years to fully implement. How do you get rid of antiquated plumbing and a leaky roof in an old building with limited resources?

Visitors were permitted to visit all three floors so that they could appreciate the renovation and hard work that had been undertaken.

Clearly our guests were delighted to see what we had done and the extent of this project. They expressed their thanks and gratitude for opening up a centre which would facilitate a community centre, education for the young in our religion, a play area under supervision as the building sits in a park-like setting.

At 3pm we held our first *Boi* ceremony in the Setayash Gah which was very well received and appreciated by all the guests. A brief aside for those who may not know. The *Boi* ceremony is performed by ordained Zoroastrian priests in each of the five *Geh* or watch of a day of twenty four hours. The Persian term for the ceremony is *Bui daadan* which means to ritually offer 'fragrance'. As part of a ritual tradition, priests always stand up while offering the *Atash Niyایش*, which is a litany to the fire.

This was followed by a welcome speech from the Chairman, Mr Shahpur F Captain, in the main hall. Mr Captain thanked the audience for being present in such large numbers and informed that WZ House would be open to all Zoroastrians and their

Sponsored by the World Zarathushtrian Trust Fund

families and to those who shared and believed in the Zoroastrian way of life. He thanked Mrs Benafsha Engineer Mulla and her husband Mohammad Mulla for the very generous donation of food and refreshments that was served on the Open Day. He also praised both Armaity Engineer and Benafsha for working ceaselessly for weeks, burning the midnight oil, preparing WZ House for this day.

Sammy's profile on page 13

A Jashan followed, performed by Ervad's Jimmy Madon, Zubin Writer, Phiroze Motafram and Zal Motafram. After the Jashan, Ervad Madon gave a brief explanation on the significance of the Jashan ceremony to the audience, which was well appreciated.

Finally Shahpur Captain invited committee members Sammy Bhiwandiwalla, Darayus Motivala, Armaity Engineer and Mino Mistry to come forward thanking them for playing a central part in the development of WZ House.

The afternoon ended with the happy guests mingling and making further visits in the premises and Setayash Gah to offer their prayers.



First Boi Ceremony in the Setayash Gah



The Chairman welcoming the community



The Meeting or Board Room



The Jashan being performed in the auditorium



The Reception and Bar



L to R: Er Jimmy Madon, Sammy, Shahpur & Noshir Avari, ex Trustee of ZTFE



L to R : Er Jimmy Madon, Sammy, Shahpur, Ers Zal Motafram, Zubin Writer, Phiroze Motafram & Darayus Motivala, Hon Secretary



L to R : Sammy (President) & Ursula Bhiwandiwalla, Inderjit & Shahpur Captain (Chairman)



The World Zoroastrian Organisation

View from the WZ House which faces the common & pond. Parking area in the front.

Chahar Shanbeh Soori celebrated at WZ House

by shahin bekhradnia

Chahar Shanbeh Soori (festive or red Wednesday) is not exclusively celebrated by Zoroastrians in Iran, but by a large swathe of the general Iranian population who are nominally Muslim. A quick look at the entry in Wikipedia informs us that nearby countries also have a similar celebration using a recognisably similar name.

Chahar Shambeh Soori was not celebrated in Yazd by Zoroastrians in its present form until the middle of the last century – possibly a revival of an ancient custom from a safer era or in fact an adoption of the custom practised by non Zoroastrian Iranians. It could be associated with the pre-Nowruz Panjeh (5 days) gahambar when rooftop fires were lit which was practised in Yazd until recently. The festival falls on the nearest Tuesday evening to the equinox, even though confusingly its name evokes a Wednesday. This jolly festivity of jumping over a small fire while reciting a couple of set lines (*Zardi ye man be to, sorkhi ye to be man*: take the yellow wan pallor from my cheeks, and give me your rosy hues) is also enthusiastically celebrated by most Iranians, not just Zoroastrians, and provides an opportunity for singing, dancing, and community solidarity and reaffirmation.

The typical meal for Chahar Shambeh Soori is eating Osh e reshteh with kashk, followed by saffron Tafteh was prepared and donated by two Yazdi ladies, Negar Namiranian and Azita Bastani for the evening of 19th March.

The new WZ house provided a pleasant venue for an experimental evening to celebrate this festival of fun. Around 40 Iranian Zoroastrians (informed by word of mouth) drifted in on Tuesday evening and enjoyed catching up with family and community news. Some even brought their backgammon sets to benefit from a bit of

fun with a compatriot. The typical meal of osh and tafteh was further enhanced by a contribution of salad Olivier, white cheese, walnuts, coriander, Ajil (dried nuts & fruit), with contributions of wine and other drinks.

After the food, a cake to mark the 15th birthday of Negar's daughter was served and then all generations rose to their feet and danced in her honour to pre-recorded Persian music. There were no specific themes or decorations in the hall but despite this, the dancing was embraced by everyone and a very warm and friendly ambiance was created.

Meanwhile as the final star event of the evening, in the outside BBQ back garden area of WZHouse, three one-time use braziers from BBQs were positioned off the ground (on bricks) to deliver the chance to would-be jumpers. Discreetly placed out of sight of nearby residents, I honestly think everyone who came to the event had a jump over the fire, holding hands with others if they needed a bit of encouragement! Spirits were raised by the beating of the Arabooneh (large tambourine) and singing Yazdi Dari songs. For the finale some very safe but colourful table fireworks were let off outside, thoroughly enjoyed by all.

As it was already past the planned end time of 9:30pm, people were encouraged to leave and because of the forethought and generosity of Negar and Azita, everyone was given a container of Osh and Tafteh to take home.

Nobody had to pay to attend because it was thought that by charging, attendance might be discouraged. Instead a few sponsors took on the task of financing this modest event in the hope that by their example others will follow in the future and not force the organizers to ask for contributions which are rarely forthcoming.

Conclusion: a thoroughly enjoyable experimental evening which can be opened up to more next year. BUT the distribution of labour and responsibilities must be better delegated so that the same people don't end up doing the cooking, the setting up, and the significant clearing away and cleaning up in the kitchen till late at night.



From top, clockwise : singing, dancing, jumping over the fire, whole group, feasting.
Centre, getting ready to jump over the fire.

Shahin's profile on page 19

The First Now rooz celebrations at World Zoroastrian House

from our president, sammy bhiwandiwalla

WZO has been celebrating the ancient Iranian Zoroastrian festival of Jamshedi NowRooz on the spring equinox for 39 years. On 23rd March thanks to our committee member Shahin Bekhradnia and our social secretary Armaity Engineer the hall was packed with Iranian and Parsi guests to celebrate this happy occasion.

The Setayash Geh was open to all to offer their prayers during the evening and this was followed by a dinner-dance commencing at 7:30 pm. The Haft Sheen table prepared by our Iranian Zoroastrian members was on display at the entrance and our guests were greeted by Shahin Bekhradnia as they entered the reception room.

The main hall was set up beautifully by Armaity and daughter Benafsha with their team of helpers with table settings and floral arrangements to provide a glitzy atmosphere to the celebrations. For most of the guests this was their first visit to WZ House and they were delighted to see the facilities on offer. The band with space for a small dance floor was soon put to use as the evening progressed.

The Guests of Honour invited by Shahin Bekhradnia were Yassamane Shahrokh Sassanfar and her daughter Afsaneh who had travelled from Paris to appreciate the generosity and financial contribution of their parents Mehrafzoun and Abtin Sassanfar towards the building of World Zoroastrian House.

Chairman Shahpur Captain welcomed all the guests as they settled down to dinner and thanked them for supporting WZO. Dinner was a buffet with an amazing array of dishes with starters Mirza Ghasemi, Hummus, Boorani-Te-Esfenaj , Olviyez followed by the main course Chelow Kebab, Koobideh Joojeh Kebab, Subzi

Polowmurch, Khoresh-E-Gheimeh Badenjan and Khoresh-E-Bamieh. To cap it all we finished with Iranian Cham Cham and Gajar Kalakand.

After dinner Sammy Bhiwandiwalla invited Yassamane Shahrokh Sassanfar and her daughter Afsaneh to unveil the portrait of Mehrafzoun and Abtin Sassanfar. This had been planned for quite some time and the search for a suitable portrait was eventually accomplished from a photograph found by Mandana Sassanfar, the sister of Yassamane who resides in USA.

Yassamane thanked the Chairman and Shahin for arranging this most unexpected and happy occasion, as well as all the guests, for the wonderful reception she and her daughter had both received.

Chairman Shahpur Captain invited Armaity Engineer to the stage and thanked her for her stupendous effort to make this celebration of NowRooz a truly memorable event.

The evening continued late into the night with dancing to the tunes of the band "Outback".

Our sincere thanks to our committee members Shahin Bekhradnia, Armaity and Benafsha Engineer, Darayus Motivala, Minoo Mistry and all those who helped make this day a big success.



Post Script : Sammy omits his own name in the part he has played, not only for this celebration, but every event WZO has been holding for countless years. As a board member of WZO and Editor of Hamazor, on behalf of the managing committee, we thank him for everything he has quietly done for this organisation and is still doing despite his current ill-health. A very sincere 'thank you' Sammy from all of us.



L to R : Afsaneh, Shahin & Yassamane

Gohar Keshavarzi, Shahin Bekhradnia, Farah Kaviani dressed in traditional clothes* to welcome guests at the Haft Sheen table.



Early photograph of late Mr & Mrs Abtin Sassanfar

Unveiling of the portrait. L to R : Afsaneh Shahrokh, Sammy, Armaity Engineer, Yassamane Shahrokh Sassanfar



On the left:
Yassamane &
Afsaneh, mother
and daughter.
On the right :
Armaity being
thanked by
Shahpur



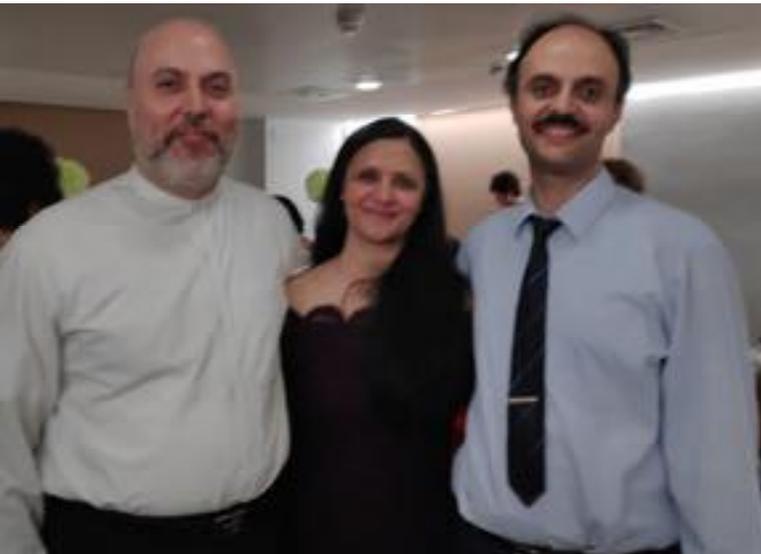
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L to R: Avan & Tehmasp Engineer, Filli Vapivala, Ursula Bhiwandiwalla & Gody Irani



L to R: Hanna, Caspian, Sophia, Mehrdad Nadershahi



L to R: Malcolm Deboo, President ZTFE, Mahzaver Mistry Freddy Deboo.
Photo credit Mino Mistry



L to r: Ashraf Falahati, Parvaneh, with brother Mehraban Khosravi



Above : Friends together. Right Mahzaver & Mino Mistry





Sammy & Ursula Yadgar Marker

Sammy Bhiwandiwalla together with his wife Ursula started their own company in 1970 and after 35 years in business they decided to call it a day. Both 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 and since then has served in various capacities including Chairman of WZO, presently being the President.

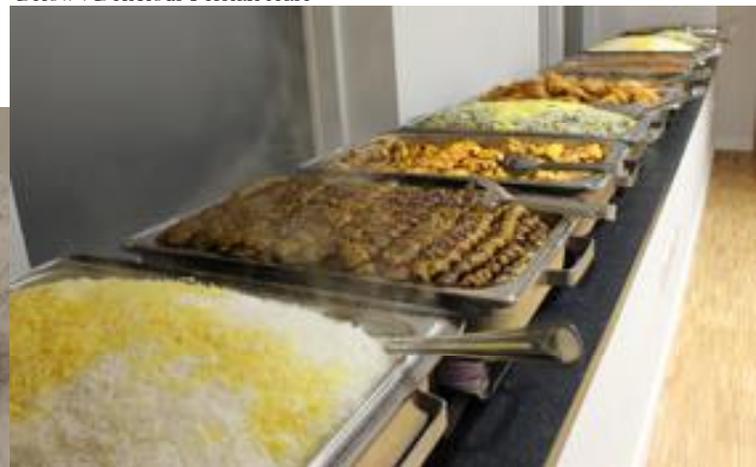
l to r: Dr Farnaz Ostavari & Mojdeh Kaviani who choreographed the dance



Fun & Frolic. Photo credit Mino Mistry

Left : Hooman & Pariya Namiranian, Kurosh with their baby, recently arrived from Yazd

Below : Delicious Persian feast



WZO - alendar of Events

World Zoroastrian House, Hanworth Road, Feltham TW13 5AF
All events will be held at our new premises unless specified.

Sunday 17th March 2019 : Open Day at WZH with a Jashan at 3:00pm – Already held
Please note this is not the Centre's official Inauguration day. This will be held later.

Saturday 23rd March 2019 : Noruz Dinner - Dance – Already held

Thursday 30th May 2019 : The 22nd Dasturji Dr Sohrabji H. Kutar Memorial Lecture

Time : 6:00pm

Venue : Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS, Russell Sq, London

Lecturer : Dr Salmoueh Gholami, University of Frankfurt, on "Endangered Zoroastrian Heritage of Iran
: New insights from recently discovered manuscripts"

Sunday 9th June 2019 : Seminar on Zoroastrian Religion, History and Culture

In collaboration with The Firuz Madon Foundation

Venue : WZH, Feltham

10:00am : Registration

Speakers : Kerman Daruwalla on the Journey of Young Priestly Initiates

Ervad Jimmy Madon on Zoroastrianism : A Way of Life

Fariborz Rahnmoon on the History of the Teachings of Zarathushtra

Sunday 7th or 14th July 2019 : Annual BBQ

From 12 noon. Date and venue to be confirmed later.

Saturday 10th or 24th August 2019 : Shahenshahi Navroze Dinner - Dance

From 7:00pm. Further details to be confirmed

Sunday 22nd September 2019 : Annual General Meeting

From 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm – Details will be sent with the Annual Report



Directions to World Zoroastrian House available through Google Maps.

Search for 'WZO Feltham' or 'WZO TW13 5AF'.

Access to WZH and car park is off Hanworth Road via Crendon Court.

The area is called 'Bridge House Pond' Hanworth Road, Walkway Entrance.

WZH is behind the Pond.

Professor Stanley Insler - 19 -2019

Professor Stanley Insler departed this life on January 4, 2019. He received his BA from Columbia University (1957), did postgraduate studies at the University of Tübingen (1960-1962), researched at the University of Madras, and received his PhD from Yale University (1963) at which time he became a member of the faculty. He later became the Salisbury Professor of Sanskrit & Comparative Philology in Yale's Department of Classics; chaired the Yale Department of Linguistics (1978 -1989); and became Professor Emeritus of Linguistics upon his retirement in 2012.

Professor Insler was a world renowned scholar of ancient Indo-Iranian languages and texts, (including Avestan), and in fact, one of his insights is enshrined in Indo-Iranian linguistics as "Insler's Law". He was widely published, and was a member of the Societe Asiatique, the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, the Philological Society, Deutsche Morgenlandische Gesellschaft, the American Oriental Society (President 1997-98), and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, among others. He will be greatly missed by his many friends and colleagues.

celebrating Stanley Insler's Life

by dina mcintyre

Professor Stanley Insler, was a giant in the field of Gatha studies (among other fields). For his professional colleagues, his life is worth celebrating because of his awesome linguistic credentials which enabled pioneering contributions in understanding Indo-European languages, including Avestan.

For Zoroastrians, his life is worth celebrating for other reasons as well. His 1975 translation of the Gathas – widely recognized as a modern standard – opened up for me a whole new universe of Zarathushtra's ideas, like fireworks in the mind, for which I will always be grateful to him. His translation decisively counters those (academicians) who expressed the opinion that so 'primitive' a society could not have produced such lofty thoughts.

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

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

Professor Insler's translation of the Gathas brings us Zarathushtra's own words. His translation was linguistically up to date, and often insightful. When we read a "free" translation, we are stuck at the level of understanding of the translator. It is only when we read as literal a translation as possible, then we begin to glimpse Zarathushtra's own thoughts. True, any translation of the Gathas is bound to have some



Photo credit, Sam Polad, Houston 2011

interpretation in it, because the Avestan language itself has inherent ambiguities, and has not yet been decoded 100%. And sometimes I do not agree with some of Professor Insler's interpretations. But despite our disagreements, he freely allowed me to use his translation in my writings and on my website. That showed a rare generosity of spirit. And without his translation I would never have discovered Zarathushtra's amazing and beautiful thoughts.

Professor Insler had a great sense of humour. He was often kind, and generous with his knowledge which he shared with Zoroastrian communities by lecturing on Zarathushtra's teachings, throughout the USA, India, and Europe. He spoke at the First Gatha Colloquium in 1993, held by the WZO in England, and later at many of the WZO's Summer Seminars, during which he traded jokes with Farrokh Vajifdar, and developed a warm friendship with officers and members of WZO. At WZO's 25th Anniversary Celebrations, Professor Insler was awarded the honour of being made a **Fellow of the World Zoroastrian Organization** for his extensive and on-going contributions to the knowledge and understanding of Zarathushtra's teachings.

Sammy Bhiwandiwalla, President of WZO has this to say:
"Stanley was a very modest, unassuming man, easy going, friendly, with no airs, always remembered faces and names and spoke with ease to most as if he was a long-time friend. Perhaps his greatest skill was to explain in simple language to many an ill-informed audience about Zarathushtra and Zoroastrianism with a mixture of humour and wit. His lectures were more like odes to Zarathushtra's teachings. They made me feel a swell of pride by the time I finished listening. He spoke extempore at many of his lectures which left many of us frustrated because he never produced his lectures as a written piece of work and even at the 1st Gatha Colloquium there is unfortunately no record or hard copy of what was delivered by him on that

occasion. His translations of Zarathushtra's Gathas brought out the real meanings underlying our Prophets teachings and ethical philosophies. So do many of his articles and lectures on Zoroastrianism.

He has given a new dimension to Zarathushtra's Gathas and brought its beauty and meanings within the grasp of all who choose to know them. Professor Insler, while devoted to the faith in which he was born, has chosen to live by the principles of Vohu Mano and Asha that are embedded in Zoroastrianism."

Shahpur Captain, Chairman of WZO has this to say:

"From our first meeting, we two just clicked, and I found Stanley to be friendly and affable. A very nice person, and very much attached to the WZO and its concept. He was always very willing to come to London and give his wisdom about our religion, at our seminars. On one occasion, I requested him to give talks on each of the five Gathas. My intention was to print these lectures in memory of my beloved son Xerxes. I therefore asked him to write up these talks. Unfortunately, he did not do so. But the talks were excellent."

Toxy Cowasjee, Editor of Hamazor, WZO has this to say:

"I was introduced to Stanley in 1993 at the 1st Gatha Colloquium, when there was an instant bonding. In 2002 I was requested to take over the editorship of Hamazor, when my young friend and designer, Tannaz Minwalla (who designs the covers of Hamazor) said, 'why don't you put something meaningful on the back cover for each issue.' I could think of nothing more appropriate than quoting various Yasnas translated by Stanley Insler. With his permission and the assistance of Dina who sent me Stanley's translations, this has been the on-going practice. A kind and generous individual, Prof Insler a short while ago, took the time to thank me for using his translations for each Hamazor cover! Not many would do this. Readers I am sure must have read with appreciation Prof Insler's articles which many a time appeared in the Hamazor."

Zoroastrians like to point out that Cyrus the Great freed the Jews from captivity in Babylon, and allowed them to return to their own country. And Darius the Great gifted them the funds to help rebuild their Temple. Well, Zarathushtra teaches that what goes around comes around. And those ancient gifts of freedom, and help in rebuilding their house of worship, have been abundantly returned to us by their descendent, Professor Insler who has brought to us the gift of Zarathushtra's own words.

Rabindranath Tagore said: "Death is not the end. It is putting out the candle because the dawn has come." Somehow *Rest in Peace* does not seem to fit Professor Insler's personality. So let us wish him joy in the dawn of whatever new adventures are ahead of him.



Dina G McIntyre, is a Zoroastrian, born in India and came to USA in 1956. She earned a law degree from the University of Pittsburgh, School of Law and practiced law in the United States, since 1964. Prior to her retirement she was a member of the bar of all federal and state courts in Pennsylvania, and the United States Supreme Court. She has been a student of the teachings of Zarathushtra since the early 1980s, and was the Editor of a 12-lesson course on the Gathas called An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra, which she distributed world-wide in 1989-90. She has lectured on the teachings of Zarathushtra at various conferences and seminars in the US, Canada, England and India. Her writings on the teachings of Zarathushtra appear on these websites: www.vohuman.org www.zarathushtra.com and www.gathasofzarathushtra.com

How Stanley Insler Touched my Life

by shahin bekhradnia

It is sad that I have lost another precious friend in Stanley's recent passing. I remember that the first time Stanley came into my orbit was when I had only recently begun my own post graduate research on Iranian Zoroastrian identity in the late 1980's at Oxford university. I used to turn up at most events I could find relating to Zoroastrianism and was relatively naive and uninformed about the stars in the Zoroastrian firmament. However, at a grand gala dance held by WZO after a seminar in London about 25 years ago where Stanley was chief guest of honour, (having flown in from New York), and was given a scroll to commemorate this occasion, he simply grabbed my hand after all the formal proceedings and we hit the dance floor having such a fun time together. Before then I had not had any chance to just chat informally and only knew of him and his reputation as the world specialist on the Gathas whom everyone honoured and looked up to, as he delivered his pearls of wisdom and knowledge at the lectern.

What I realised straight away from that experience of dancing with him, was that Stanley loved having a good time, and disliked stiff and starchy, obsequious or stuffy individuals around him. Luckily for me, I was possibly overly unaware of his dazzling brilliance and therefore had no predisposition to revere him nor to be overawed by him. I can only think that possibly for Stanley, I represented the novelty of an Iranian Zoroastrian without the overlay of the clawing politeness (known as *ta'arof*) which invariably came with those he had met previously. I spoke my mind on many matters, political and religious, while he expressed his, and we seemed to be on the same wave length.



Photograph sent by Stanley to the Editor in Dec 2012

In the hours that followed that initial dance and the several others that continued throughout the evening, a friendship blossomed as we chatted between bouts of “letting it all hang out”. Over the years Stanley was very loyal in maintaining contact though he was pretty useless at communicating through emails.

Of course he had his professional academic friends all over the world, and so whenever he came to Europe (which for a while seemed to be every year), he would stop over in London, and occasionally in Oxford, where I once went to a seminar he was giving for the faculty of comparative philology. It was fascinating to see him at work in his professional milieu with such a lot of respect for the depth of his knowledge and understanding from his peers.

He twice came to stay a couple of nights with me in the Cotswolds near Oxford. We went out and about, and I introduced him to many of my unconventional local friends. One outing I think he enjoyed particularly was a visit to our local brewery at Hook Norton, ***organised by my local History society! He was also intrigued by my very gifted but eccentric artist friend, who had convinced herself and then set about trying to convince Stanley that she had worked out the key to Indo-European languages through her geometric patterning.

What was so nice about Stanley is that he did not rubbish her ideas (given his speciality) but actually gave her the time of

day to discuss her mad theories. Later on when she asked me how I knew Stanley and I told her, she was thrilled that he had been so charming with her and had made her feel special. He was just as engaging and engaged when chatting with my good farmer friend – no airs and graces and at ease, enjoying the banter and a few drinks.

We had a particularly fun time in Paris, when the founder of the Paris Zoroastrian cultural centre, Mr Abtine Sassanfar, asked me to invite Stanley to give a talk there on the next occasion when I knew he would be coming over to Europe. This I did, not expecting that Stanley should insist I accompany him. Nevertheless, Mr Sassanfar (who was a great admirer of Stanley’s translation of the Gathas over and above all the others which he had studied at length), graciously acceded to his request on two occasions. So on these two trips we spent some wonderful times in the Musée Guimet (just near Trocadero close to the Zoroastrian centre) where Stanley was a very informative and enthusiastic guide when it came to the collection from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia. Given his interest in my several trips to Tajikistan in pursuit of Zoroastrian research and in general about my Iranian heritage, along with my youth visits to Afghanistan and the Kalasha lands of the NWFP, it was a very happy coincidence of interests.

And we also frequented a number of stylish old world Parisian Salon de The, in one of which I took a great photo of Stanley in his beany hat and college scarf. Sadly it’s on an old Nokia dinosaur of a phone and I have not managed to transfer the photos. However, it was such a good one of Stanley that I kept showing it to friends asking them to guess Stanley’s age. He was well into his 60’s at that point, but almost all friends suggested he was in his late 20s/early 30’s, such was his *joie de vivre* which radiated throughout his being!

Because of our friendship, I was very lucky to be able to talk to him about anything and everything, including, music, films, relationships etc. It was therefore an

enormous pleasure to have an excuse to delve a little more into his background when the ever-resourceful editor of Hamazor asked me to do an interview with him for the WZO publication a few years ago. During the several conversations that we had which informed my interview article, and during which he kept up his incessant smoking, I heard of Stanley's exceptional talent on the piano – something of which I had no inkling – it was so impressive that he first came across his first piano at the home of a friend when he was eight years old, and that by the age of 19 he had to decide whether he wanted to become a career concert pianist or an academic. There were many other things that I loved about him which came up during the interviews but one that made a deep impression was that he had bought a motorbike in India when studying Sanskrit in his early 20's and visited a wide area of the sub-continent where he experienced all manner of strange and wonderful things. Adventure, discovery, intellectual stimulation and fun – that is what Stanley represented for me and he showed that it's ok not to take yourself too seriously, however important the rest of the world may think you are!



Shahin Bekhradnia, a Zoroastrian of the Yazdi Iranian tradition, is a teacher of ancient history and classical civilisation, a Justice of the Peace and a legal consultant. Her academic background is from Oxford university where she graduated in Russian & French, and then completed a postgraduate thesis in anthropology on issues of Zoroastrian identity in the 20th century. She has published several articles and

given talks on Zoroastrianism, and is active in inter-faith movements and organisations. She is the Jt Secretary of WZO.

Celebrating the Life and Memory of

Stanley Insler

1937-2019

Edward E. Salisbury Professor Emeritus of
Sanskrit and Comparative Philology at Yale
University

Saturday April 13th, 2019
Quinnipiac Club
221 Church Street,
New Haven, Connecticut

Preceded by half an hour of music the memorial
service
will begin at 4:00 p.m. at the Centennial Room of
the Quinnipiac Club and be followed by a
reception.

The Love of Truth in Ancient Iran

by stanley insler

[Published in "An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra", a series of articles edited by Dina McIntyre in 1989-90. This article is no. 7, April 1990]

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Herodotus, the Greek historian who was a contemporary of the great King Darius of ancient Iran, wrote in his remarkable history that the Persians esteemed the truth above all things. He went on to say, speaking with great respect, that the Persians hold it unlawful to speak of anything which is unlawful to do, and according to their thinking, the most disgraceful thing in the world is to tell a lie. This veneration of the truth among the ancient Iranians was indeed their most noteworthy feature, and throughout the history of the land, there was not a single foreigner who came to visit or to live among them who was not strikingly impressed by the love and respect of truth in that country. Through the passage of centuries, in the works of Greeks, Chinese, Indians and Arabs, this love and respect for the truth is mentioned endless times as perhaps the remarkable trait of all Iranians.

What these foreign visitors wrote was no myth, no embroidery upon hearsay or rumour, no pipe dream of their own arising from the lack of ethic or moral principles in their own countries. Recent evidence has shown us that truth was indeed associated with the spirit and life of the ancient Persians in such an intimate fashion that we ourselves today must take serious note of the honoured and important role it played in their world. I am referring here to the archaeological records unearthed during the past few decades in the excavations at Persepolis in Iran.

These records are naturally of great interest to the economic and political scholar because they represent the accounts of the different sorts of wares and products stored at the treasury and fortress of the Achaemenid kings, those royal rulers who

founded and maintained a vast and powerful empire through the Near East that endured from the 6th through the 4th century BC. But, to cultural and religious scholars these records from Persepolis offer equal fascination, chiefly because the tablets containing these economic records are also accompanied by the names of the officials who were in charge of these inventories and their distribution. There are some 1,500 such names contained in the tablets – names not of kings or princes, nor priests and judges: simply names of minor officials and clerks who oversaw the wares in the storehouses. Herein lies their importance: they give us a glimpse into the social constituency of the common people, much as the names contained in the old records of towns and villages allow us to see the composition and character of the society of early communities.

Remarkably, more than 75 of these names contain the word truth. We encounter men called 'Protector of truth' (*artapana*), 'Lover of truth' (*artakama*), 'Truth-minded' (*artamanah*), 'Possessing the splendour of truth' (*artafarnah*), 'Delighting in truth' (*artazusta*), 'Pillar of truth' (*artastuna*), 'Prospering the truth' (*artafrada*), 'Having the nobility of truth' (*artahunara*), in addition to a variety of others of similar composition. When we look further and find other fellows are named 'Strong as a horse' (*aspaugra*), 'Sweet smelling' (*hubaodi*), 'Little hero' (*viraka*), 'Having good fame' (*usavah*), 'Winning a good prize' (*humizda*), and the like, we realize at once how singular are the names containing the work truth.

By this I intend the following. If the majority of other names are built with elements signifying horses, heroes, fame, wealth, prizes, good fortune and all those other

desirable things which parents wish for their children when they are born, then the great many truth-names show us that there were many parents who believed it was more important for their children to love the truth, uphold the truth, prosper the truth, delight in the truth, and so forth, rather than to simply seek after material benefits in this world.

The name chosen by parents for their children often expresses a wish, and the predominance of truth-names among the Old Persian Officials reveals how deep-seated was the wish and respect for truth over all things even among families of humble origins.

But it was not only the common man who so dearly esteemed the truth among the ancient Persians. It was also the great Achaemenid kings themselves who expressed their love and admiration for the truth and their thorough despise of lie and deceit, exactly as Herodotus informs us. On the great inscription of Bisotun, the magnificent King Darius incised the following words with imposing solemnity:

“The Lie made these provinces rebellious, so that they deceived the people. But afterwards *Ahura Mazda* placed them into my hand ... Thou who shalt be king hereafter, protect thyself vigorously from Deceit. Punish well the man who shall lie and deceive, if thou shalt hope to keep the country secure ... Know that I did this by the favour of *Ahura Mazda*, who bore me assistance because I was not aggressive, because I was not a follower of deceit, because I was not a doer of wrong – neither I nor my family. I conducted myself as befits the truth. Neither to the weaker nor to the powerful did I do wrong ... Thou who shalt be king hereafter, do not be a friend to the follower of deceit nor to the doer of wrong. Punish them well.”

Similarly on another of his inscriptions stand these noble words:

“By the grace of *Ahura Mazda* I delight in what is right; I do not delight in what is false. It is not my desire that the weak

should be mistreated by the mighty, nor that the mighty be treated wrongly by the weak. What is right and truthful is my desire.”

Lastly, let us quote the following statement in an inscription of King Xerxes:

“If you wish to be happy when living and blessed when dead, have respect for the law established by *Ahura Mazda* and worship him and truth reverently. The man who has respect for the law established by *Ahura Mazda* and worships him and the truth reverently, such a man becomes happy while living and blessed when he is dead.”

These solemn words of the Old Persian kings are but an echo of the teachings of the more ancient prophet Zarathushtra. In his stirring works called the Gathas, we find the important thought that

“If a man be rich or poor, he should be a friend to the truthful person but an enemy to the follower of deceit and lies.” (Y47.4)

There too we learn that heavenliness and immortality shall be the future possession of those who support the truthful in this world, but that a lifetime of darkness and a woeful existence shall be the final reward of the deceitful person. Further, Zarathushtra tells us, that a man who is good to the truthful person and serves the laws of *Ahura Mazda* shall himself reach the pastures of truth and good thinking, and save his family and his village and his country from destruction. In fact, when we read through the great words of the prophet, we realize that truth lies at the center of his whole moral and ethical system, so it therefore seems necessary to briefly describe the position of truth in Zarathushtra’s teachings.

First and foremost we see in the prophet’s work that there is an intimate relationship between god and truth. Not only does *Ahura Mazda* dwell in the heights of truth and in the paths which follow the straight ways of truth, but he is also of the same temperament as truth, sharing the same likes and dislikes. But the relationship

between god and truth is deeper – so Zarathushtra informs us – because *Ahura Mazda* is both the creator and companion of truth. Further, we are told, that the spirit of god himself, the *spenta mainyu*, became beneficent and virtuous through the effects of truth and that *Ahura Mazda* learned to distinguish between what is just and unjust through the help of truth. Truth, then, according to the prophet's view, is the most essential component in the world of god because it motivated him to create what is salutary and good, and it taught him to discern between right and wrong. It is through truth, therefore, that god achieved his nobility and his higher wisdom which characterize his very name *Ahura Mazda*, the Wise Lord.

Similarly, truth plays a dominant role in the life of man. It is truth which prospers the creatures and makes the plants and waters increase. It is through the quest for truth that good understanding arises in the spirit of man, an understanding that teaches him to further the principles of god in good thoughts, in good words and in good actions. It is truth which also teaches man to discern between what is right and wrong. It is man's adherence to truth which gives full meaning to the existence of god and grants strength and enduring life to him as well. Can the ethical principles God created have any life of their own if they find no support in the world of mankind?

Herein lies one of the great contributions of the prophet Zarathushtra. By placing truth at the center of existence of both god and man, he taught us that a meaningful life is not possible without truth, because truth is the ultimate source of all good insight, all good action, all good discernment and all good achievement.

To know is essential to act correctly and justly, and the origin of all correct knowledge derives from the grasp of the truth. This is an astonishing doctrine in terms of the early intellectual history of the world, but it is a doctrine that is so powerful and persuasive, so vigorous and positive, that it became the central idea of all early

Iranian thought. It is not possible to think of the history of old Iran without thinking of the veneration of truth among its people, and it is Zarathushtra who first conceived and formulated the central role which truth holds in all existence.

But we may well ask why Zarathushtra was so preoccupied with the position of truth in the life of both god and man. He lived in a very remote age, long before there was a settled society in any modern sense of the term, and certainly long before the development of rich and powerful kingdoms where priests or philosophers could gather in peace and quiet in order to discuss the chief questions of existence and the nature of both god and man.

To find an answer to this question we must once again look into the works of the prophet and search his own words for clues to the problems Zarathushtra himself faced, problems which caused him to meditate upon the nature of human behaviour and its results upon the human condition. Once we do this, we find certain disturbing facts about the times in which he lived.

First, let us note, that Zarathushtra informs us that some of the nobles have been stealing the possessions of the true inheritors, and that in their greed, some of the priests have assisted them in this deceitful and dishonest activity. He informs us as well that even the old gods have ordained and hence permitted their followers to perform actions that result in dismal consequences for the rest of mankind. They have been destroying the pasture lands of the truthful persons, they have threatened them as well, and there has arisen a rift among the peoples, one which has caused strife and destruction in family, clans and provinces. In short, the world seems to be torn in two by conflicting forces, and deceit and destruction seem rampant.

It is exactly under such troubled circumstances, when the world seems to be caught in the upheaval of contrary forces, when the past seems unfortunate and the

future ever so dim, that a man of great insight like Zarathushtra wonders about what is right and wrong, what is just and unjust, and how the way to salvation might occur. It is exactly under such vexing conditions that he saw that the way for mankind to survive and create a good kingdom here on earth was to follow the principles which *Ahura Mazda*, in his higher wisdom, had created in harmony with truth. Although millennia separate us today from the time of the prophet Zarathushtra, the problems of existence still persist. We are torn each day by conflict, sometimes in our family, sometimes in our profession, sometimes in our country and sometimes in the world at large.

We see deception, theft, pointless destruction present all over the face of the globe. Which way should we act? we often ask, looking for the way to resolve the problem, to end the anguish. What should we believe? we also ask, looking for guidance in the face of trouble and woes. Sometimes the answer lies within our power; most often there is no solution available to us on an individual basis. Nonetheless, we should follow the teachings of Zarathushtra and strive after the truth, giving life to it through our good thoughts, our good words and our good actions. Even though immediate solutions may elude us, the force of truth must persist. For one day the truth shall certainly prevail.

Thus in conclusion, I would like to paraphrase the words of Zarathushtra. What the prophet stated some 3,000 years ago is equally appropriate for all of us today.

“Do persevere, for he shall grant to you the firm foundation of good thinking and the alliance of truth and wisdom. Come to terms with your reason, and bring to realization the most virtuous and blessed acts. If you are truthful to the truthful, the Wise Lord shall grant to you the sun-like gain of good thinking for your whole lifetime. I tell these words to you: bear them in mind. Through the

correct conception acquire for yourselves and your people an existence of good thinking. Let each of you try to win the other with truth, for this shall be of good gain for each of you.” (Y53.3-5)



Professor Stanley Insler - 2008 [Hamazor archives]



Gathas of Zarathushtra □ a new website

There is a new website on the teachings of Zarathushtra, authored by Dina G McIntyre. It includes the basics, as well as more in-depth information. You may access it at: <https://gathasofzarathushtra>

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

- General Overview;
- Part One: The Basics;
- Part Two: Puzzles & Paradigms;
- Abbreviations;
- Bibliography;
- About the Author

The other Tabs have some chapters that are done, and many that remain to be done, which will be uploaded periodically, as they are completed.

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

Browse at will. Enjoy.

Journey to the Land of Ancient Fires, Azerbaijan

by kersi shroff and galina woodova

It was on September 24, **1925**, that Sir Jivanji J Modi, the great Parsi Priest, Scholar and World Traveller, arrived in Baku, Azerbaijan, and upon seeing the Caspian Sea, which he referred to as Vourukash, wrote in his diary:

"In all my lifelong prayers of Afringan, I have made Hamazor many a time with this sea, reciting ... To celebrate this momentous occasion, I did my Kusti and daily morning ... prayers and recited Avan Ardvisur Nyayesh and paid homage to this sea with many thanks to Ahura Mazda ..."*
**"Hamajor zareh varkash", meaning "Hamazor with Vourukash Sea!"*¹

It may interest readers of *Hamazor* to learn of the happy coincidence that on September 24, **2018**, ninety-three years to the day from the start of Dr Modi's journey, a group of five Zoroastrians, along with two scholars, found themselves in Baku, Azerbaijan. Not that we had timed our visit on the anniversary, but in our own way, we too were in "search of clues about Zoroastrian civilization", as Dr Modi wrote of his visit.

Familiar Names in Azerbaijan

The name of Azerbaijan and the prayer recited by Dr Modi begin to give clues to the Zoroastrian antecedents of the country that sits astride East & West – a modern and proudly independent nation, but in which "the religion, culture and traditions of Zoroastrianism remain highly respected."² Under several theories, the name Azerbaijan is either derived from Adar or Atash, or its former name Athroathena, is based on the Avestan *athravan*, meaning one tending a fire. The continued burning of ancient ever-burning fires, fed by natural gases, could possibly have made the country "the flaming center" of Zoroastrianism, while another writer considered it "the papal area of Zoroastrianism" (Yampolskiy).³ The place of

an atashgah close to Baku, called **Surakhana**, is also redolent of Dr Modi's prayer recited to Avan Ardvisur. Among other related names, there are at least three villages named *Zarat*, and two *Girdiman* Rivers, one of which we were to come across.

As to fires fed by natural gases, Dr Modi also mentions the prayer *Apaam Naptaarem Yazamaide*, meaning the veneration of *Naptaar Aatash*, in which *Naptaar* is the root of the word Naphtha, the gas which keeps the fires ever burning.

Our Journey

This is an account of our three-week journey through the length and breadth of Azerbaijan, involving travel by trains, domestic airlines, a comfortable 12-seater van, and four-wheel drive Russian *Nivas* and *Ladas* for navigating rough mountainous terrains. The account focuses on the Zarthosti aspects of the journey.

Our group invited a guide, Dr Galina Woodova, PhD, a Czech, who has lived in Azerbaijan for eight years and researched the culture of the Lahij people. Gali-Ji, as we began to endearingly call her, amazed us with her melodious rendering of Avestan prayers. She also firmly established the ritual of a benediction given by Ervad Kobad Zarolia, of Toronto, each time we broke bread. This Avestan picture was enhanced many a night when our other scholar-companion, Benedikt Thomas Peschl, a German PhD student in Zoroastrian studies at SOAS, London, gave us lessons and handouts on the ancient script and grammar. Benedikt was also the 'official' photographer. The other Zoroastrians in our group were Soonu Engineer from London, an adventurer and a melodious singer of Gujarati monajats and songs, who had fortuitously recruited Benedikt for the tour; Dr Mahvash Agvald, from Maryland, USA,

who achieved a doctorate from Sorbonne University, Paris, on the political and social history of Iran, including Azerbaijan, which was Iranian territory until the Russo-Persian wars, 1804-1828; Ardeshir Dehmobed ("Golden Eddy") of Toronto, a staunch Zarthosti who took many an opportunity to inform Azeris of his Iranian roots; and, Kersi Shroff, a retired attorney, devoted to discovering ancient Zoroastrian traces and committed to interfaith dialog, who brought the group together and organized the tour. The number in our group thus reached the revered *haft* (seven).

The atashgah in Surakhana, 15 kms from Baku, has ancient origins as affirmed by Farrouk Jorat, an enterprising Zoroastrian who greeted us in Baku (more about him later), along with a young, radiant, and generous Zoroastrian lady, Irade:

*"Earliest mention of the Zoroastrian worship of fire in Suraxane belongs to the Sasanid era. Armenian chroniclers in the description of Bhagavan (Baku) in the Paytakaran province on the Caspian coast mentioned "Seven sacred fire holes" and establishment of fire temples by Shah Ardashir I (227-241). In 1683 a German traveler Kaempfer has visited Baku. He noted that there are seven fire holes in Suraxane, revered by descendants of the ancient Persians who migrated to India."*⁴

This contradicts Dr Modi's conclusion that "it is without a doubt clear that this building is not a Parsee Aatash Kadeh."⁵ We can only confirm that Surakhana has a modern overlay from the 17th - 18th centuries when Hindu merchants from the Punjab connected with the then abandoned structure and added several features, including an inscription in Sanskrit. Among the merchants are said to have been several hundred Zoroastrians from Multan. The Atashgah has retained the Iranian architectural style of *chahar tagi* four arches. In 1975, it was restored and opened to the public. A fire is kept burning during the daytime and the Atashgah is both a place of worship and a museum, making it a popular site for tourists. The President of

Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliev, started the European Olympic games hosted in Baku by a torch lit from the Surakhana Atashgah.



Surkhana Atashgah, Er Kobad reciting the Atash Niyash

For an auspicious start to our journey, Ervad Kobad solemnly recited the Atash Niyash before the flaming fire. The Surakhana museum houses items, such as, an ancient fire holder and implements, and a Sudreh and Kusti. The Zoroastrian exposition was organized by Farrouk Jorat. During our visit, young Azeris in colourful costumes and musicians playing the national instrument *tar* were being televised for a cultural programme.

Maiden's Tower

Another structure of greater significance to Zoroastrians is in the heart of the old city (Icheri Sheher) of Baku, called the Maiden's Tower. It is possible that despite its name it was an Aatash Kadeh, considered by Dr Modi to be one of the ancient temples of fire. In describing the seven-story tower, we can do no better than to recall Dr Modi's impressions:

"This is an ancient Iranian building and it is an Aatash Kadeh. It is not a common Aatash Kadeh with its fire maintained by burning wood by its priests. But it is an

Aatash Kadeh fed by the natural gases, Naphtha, (apaam Napaat). Haft or seven is a very holy number in Zoroastrian religion and hence there are seven story's or stages in it. At each storey, in one corner, there is an escape hole for the natural gas Naphtha which when lit created a fire ball."

We observed that each of the seven floors has a niche where burned the "eternal" fires. The tower is built in such a way that at Novruz, the light enters directly through its narrow openings on each floor.

Other scholars, too, have claimed that the Tower was "once a temple with an eternal fire burning on its rooftop" and that the fire was "fed with gas or liquid petroleum supplied via pipes."⁶ It is further noted that a tower-shaped temple with eternal fire on its rooftop was also found in Iran.

As if to confirm these findings, in 1964 two archaeologists, O Ismizade and Jiddi, excavated an almost preserved fire altar in front of the Tower, which unfortunately was soon destroyed. The altar had a three-tiered octagonal base and a column at the top of which was a shallow bowl in which were found traces of oil and fire. The altar was of the type found on Sasanian coins.

At a lecture given to local scholars at the Archaeological Society, and in a meeting



Baku, Maiden's Tower, our group

with the President of Azerbaijan, Dr Modi emphasized the importance of the Tower's Aatash Kadeh and implored them to take good care for its preservation. We were happy to see

that the restored building is indeed well preserved.

It is no surprise that UNESCO has declared the inner city to be of Outstanding Universal Value, one selection criterion of which is: "The Walled City of Baku represents an outstanding and rare example of an historic urban ensemble and architecture with influence from Zoroastrian, Sasanian, Arabic, Persian, Shirvani, Ottoman, and Russian cultures."⁷

Historical sources also note that in the environs of Baku, people venerated flames that burned by themselves. The poet Nizami Gyanjevi tells in his verses of a place where a fire is burning amid rocks and people called it *khud-suz*. Sources also explain that in areas where natural fuel was available, it was used to feed the eternal fire, while in its absence, firewood was used. Additionally, a special combustible liquid of sandal oil was also used, stored in small jars identified by archaeologists.⁸

Westwards and more

After Baku, we branched off towards the Caucasus mountain range of Niyal Dag, for the culturally historical region of Lahij, whose ancient customs have been explored by Galina Woodova's immersive fieldwork.⁹ Lahij is an ethnic minority region, incorporating *Gennet Bag*, a garden of paradise, and has breathtaking rock formations through which flows the previously mentioned Girdiman River. The Lahij people have preserved an ancient Iranian southwest Tat language branching out of Pahlavi,¹⁰ and a traditional way of life, including rituals and a daily use of blessings.¹¹ Though they are Shia Muslim there is a strong Zoroastrian undercurrent in their traditions. Their chief identity marker is the celebration of Novruz.¹² The Lahij name for the swallow, 'Parstek', an auspicious bird that brings spring, reveals their ethnic roots.

Our host, a



Branches of juniper being delivered



Map showing Nakhchivan & Girdiman River

high school teacher in Lahij, who holds a title of the best teacher of Azerbaijan, opened his comfortable house and welcomed us with a bonfire of flaming branches of juniper which were delivered on horseback. The smells and sparks of the fire were enhanced by two musicians dressed in festive green traditional clothing, playing and singing in the *mugam* folk style in Azeri, Farsi and Lahiji languages. The host family also prepared a candle lit Novruz *khoncha* tray, with special baked delicacies shaped as heavenly lights symbolic of the cosmic change of seasons. We found the host, Dadash Muellim, interesting to talk to in English as he was curious about practicing Zoroastrians that he met for the first time. He is researching the folklore of ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan for a PhD thesis.

On the way to the town of Sheki, we stopped at a Caucasus Albanian ancient *Udi* church and discovered an *afringanan*-like dish hidden at the back. The Caucasus Albanians (no relation to the country by that name) adopted Apostolic Christianity and it became a state religion in the early 4th century CE (Common Era). The church was situated in a “Maflar Muhalla”, a name derived from ‘Magian’, referring to Zoroastrian priests. We found another church in the village of Kish, this one being the oldest messianic Caucasus Albanian church, preserved by locals. A large poster on display describing the “History of Caucasian Albania” stated: “It’d be appropriate to note that Albania was a country of various beliefs [including] Zoroastrianism.” Another poster mentioned the existence of fire temple complexes during the 4th century BCE to 3rd century CE.



Dadash Muellim, our host

After visiting the Sheki Palace, reminiscent of Shiraz and Isfahan, we were invited to an orchard, where locals were baking bread in a clay oven. They heartily shared their produce and cheese in front of their burning home fire, allowing us to achieve *hamazor* with an Azeri family. In another typical Zoroastrian way, we got to feed stray dogs on the platform of the Zaqatala train station.



Hamazor with an Azeri family

An overnight train ride, the first of two that we experienced, in a rattling but comfortable Soviet-era train, allowing us to sleep in twin-birth compartments supplied with fresh linen and morning tea made in an old-fashioned samovar, brought us back to Baku. Our return to the Capital was necessitated in order to travel north to the scarcely populated Shah Dag mountains, on the border with Russia. There we were to achieve a highly anticipated part of our journey, the planning for which took the longest as we had to obtain official permission to visit a military controlled area. Farrouk Jorat had made the complicated arrangements for us to visit the Atashgah.

A few words about Farrouk who has previously contributed to *Hamazor* and is an aeronautics engineer, but has a passion for the early history of Azerbaijan. He willingly agreed to get us a special permit from the border guards to visit an atashgah in Khinaliq, hugging the Russian Republic of Dagestan. It was Farrouk who initiated the restoration of the everlasting fire there, with the support of the World Zoroastrian Organization, and drew authentic architectural plans for the *Chahar tagi* temple structure. Without his help we would have missed what turned out to be the highlight of the visit.



Dakhma, Sukut Kala

The world's highest mountain Atashgah

On the way to Khinaliq we detoured to visit a *Dakhma, Sukut Kala*, meaning a 'tower of silence' in Azeri, above *Budug* village in Shah Dag Mountains. We took dirt roads and even worse terrain on vehicles that were constantly overheating. With the absolute mastery of the Khinaliq drivers, we reached a

point from which the walls of the *dakhma* became visible. Benedikt and Farrouk, the fittest among us, made the rugged climb

close to the disused structure, but the rest of us were satisfied with viewing it on the horizon against the blue sky, providing stone-solid evidence of the once presence of a Zoroastrian population.¹³

It was past sunset that we could go through the border controls and reached a steep mountain peak from where we saw flames underneath us of the Khinaliq atashgah. Under a full moon the stone *Chahar tagi* temple presented a spiritual scene that could

be centuries old. We surrounded the warm lapping flames while Ervad Kobad Zarolia recited the Atash Niyaaesh.



Atashgah rebuilt by WZO at Khinaliq We felt privileged to experience a now rarely frequented high atashgah, where for



WZO plaque at Khinaliq Atashgah

thousands of years Zoroastrian pilgrims must have come to worship. We were amazed to learn that a Muslim family

voluntarily tended the atashgah throughout the year.

A few days later, at dawn, near the town of Agstafa, we were fascinated by a burning water spring at Yanar Daag Bulak. The slight touch



Burning water spring at Yanar Daag Bulak



Ervad Kobad reciting Avestan prayers

of a flame spectacularly set the running water ablaze. The phenomenon lasted for several minutes, creating a sacred moment

for Ervad Kobad to recite Avestan prayers. Later, near the coastal town of Nabran, after a dip in the waters we could be said to have achieved *hamazor with the Vourukash Sea!*

A flight from Baku brought us to the western province of Nakhchivan, on the borders with Iran and Armenia. It is recorded to have had *dakhmas* in Kharaba Gilan, and a formerly Zoroastrian village named Kodam. Unfortunately, the village is presently under military control and barred to visitors. In a local museum, there was a photo of a now destroyed *dakhma* and a thick encyclopedia on Nakhchivan recorded that the Sasanian King Yazdegard (632-652 CE) built a fortress known as Torpaggala in the southeast of the province. In an earlier period, in the town of Ordubad, coins were minted in the name of King Hormuz IV (579-590 CE). The town of Julfa afforded us a view of close by Iran, and out of the windows of the van, Mahvash and Eddy were even able to touch the luxuriantly green juniper trees of their native land.

To end this account, we remind readers that the 100th anniversary of Dr Modi's journey to Baku will fall on September 24, 2025. Will anyone mark the centenary with a pilgrimage to the land of revered ancient fires?

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Each year since 2013, Kersi B. Shroff has explored countries in Central Asia, Russia, and Azerbaijan. In the lands mentioned in the Avesta, the traces of early Zoroastrianism or Mazdayasnm are manifestly evident. In planning the tour, Kersi greatly relied on Galina Woodova's knowledge and experience acquired through fieldwork and extended residence in Azerbaijan.



Galina Woodova, grew up in Czechoslovakia, and is married and blessed with four children. She has lived and worked in the Siberian Altai, the Caucasus, and now in Kyrgyzstan. In Azerbaijan, she carried out research at a remotely located 'mountain sanctuary,' and, having read Mary Boyce's books on Zoroastrianism, she discovered that the Iranian speaking Lahijans have strong Zoroastrian roots. In the last seven years she has explored the living Zoroastrian heritage, including taking a journey through Gujarat, India, and explored historical links to Central Asia and Altai of Avestan thought and ethics. She considers it a great privilege to have been a guide on the journey to the land of ancient fires with likeminded Kersi Shroff.



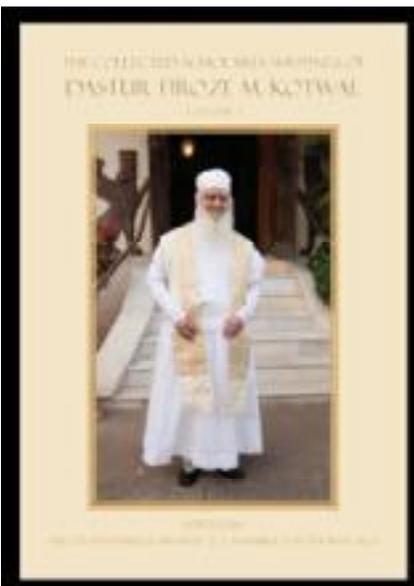
The Collected Scholarly Writings of Dastur Firoze M Kotwal Volume 1

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zerbaijan - a treasure trove of little-known languages

by benedikt peschl

Our trip to Azerbaijan in September 2018 provided us with a rich insight into the country's multifaceted history and culture. As a complement to Kersi Shroff's and Galina Woodova's travelogue, this short article is designed to highlight one particular aspect of Azerbaijan's diversity, namely the number of languages spoken there in a relatively confined space. Complementing the use of four different languages within the travel group (English, Gujarati, Persian, German) and that of Avestan as a language of prayer, the trip brought us into contact with no less than seven further languages, all of which are currently spoken in Azerbaijan. Some of them are hardly well-known, so a brief description of each may be of interest to the reader.

Azeri is spoken by the majority of Azerbaijan's population as their native language. Virtually all members of ethnic minorities speak it as well due to its status as the dominant language in public life and the main language of education. Without our guide, Galina's impressive command of Azeri, our journey surely would have presented us with far more difficulties! I am sure that at least one Azeri phrase will forever be stuck in each traveller's mind, as it is so abundantly used in everyday life: *cox sagol* ("many thanks")! Besides Azeri we found that a basic command of **Russian**, too, is still widespread throughout the country, contrary to the claim in a recent guidebook on Azerbaijan that knowledge of Russian is in decline. Indeed, we observed how in certain situations the locals like to switch acrobatically between Azeri and Russian as if it were a game.

In the ancient village of Lahij in Azerbaijan's Ismaili District, we encountered the **Lahiji** language, today spoken by perhaps 1400 people. Lahiji is a distinct member of a group of South-Western Iranian, spoken in North-Eastern Azerbaijan which are often

collectively referred to as Tat. The classification as "South-Western Iranian" implies a close historical relationship to Persian and suggests that some of the speakers' ancestors ultimately originated from South-Western Iran. Until recently, no written form of Lahiji existed, but Dadash Muellim, the highly respected teacher of Lahij, showed us a recent printed collection of the village's traditional folk tales in Lahiji.

While staying in **Khinaliq**, a village high up in the mountains of North-Eastern Azerbaijan, we could hear the inhabitants speak the village's unique and isolate Caucasus language, likewise called Khinaliq. Although no more than 1000 speakers of Khinaliq remain, our host at this marvellous place, surrounded by green hills and snowy mountain tops, assured us that the villagers are determined to preserve their language, not least because it provides such a useful means of secret communication when tourists are around. During a stop on the way back from Khinaliq, we also caught some words of **Jek**, one more language that is exclusive to a single village. Together with some closely related dialects spoken in surrounding villages, the number of its speakers amounts to about 10,000 overall. While visiting the town of Qusar, we were able to hear people converse in **Lezgi**, the native language of the Lezgi people, who inhabit the North-Eastern corner of Azerbaijan and the Dagestan province of neighbouring Russia. It is used by a comparatively large number of about 600 000 speakers. Finally, although we did not get a chance to hear its spoken form, our visit to the church in a town named Nij allowed us to look at some books written in **Udi**. Remotely related to Lezgi, Jek and Xinaliq, Udi is the traditional language of the Caucasian Albanian Church and is still spoken by the Udis, an ethnic minority of about 5000 people, in the area of Nij.

Due to my personal interest in linguistics, I found it intriguing to gain some first-hand

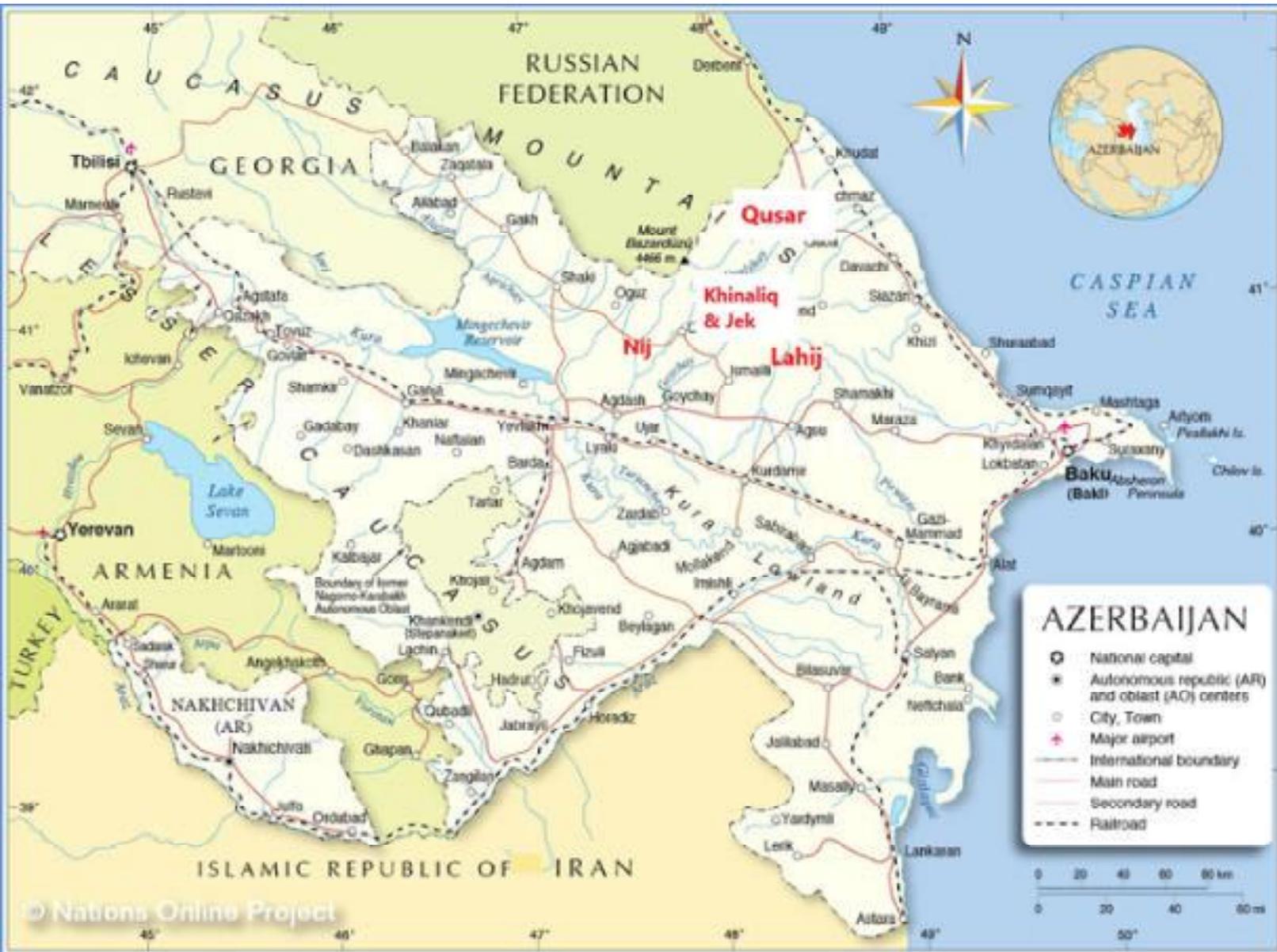


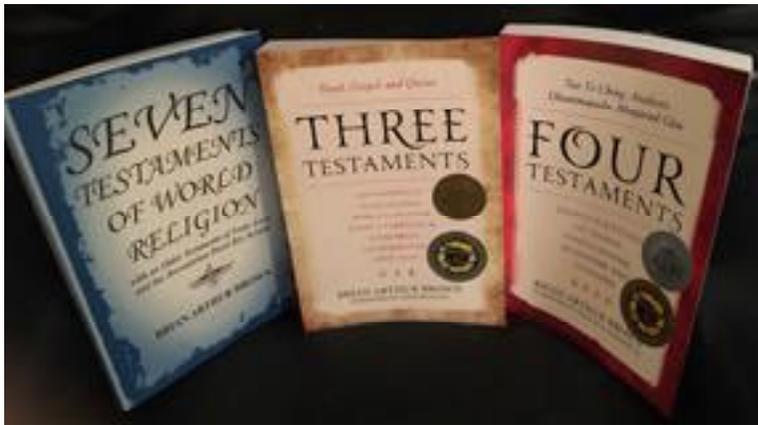
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information about the little-known languages mentioned. As to be expected, Lahiji (Tat), Khinaliq, Jek and Udi are all classified as “severely endangered” by the *Unesco Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger* <http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/>. Bearing this background in mind, the communities’ awareness of their distinct identity was clearly visible, as were their efforts to preserve their unique languages. Our stays in Lahij and Khinaliq in particular, and the interaction with the local population, remain among the lasting impressions the journey left on me. ■■■

Benedikt Peschl is currently doing research for a PhD in Zoroastrian Studies (Avesta/Pahlavi) at SOAS University of London. He holds a BA in General and Indo-European linguistics and has previously worked as a research associate at the linguistics department of the University of Munich.



Seven Testaments of World Religions



REV DR BRIAN ARTHUR BROWN of Niagara Falls, New York, writes:

Last year, the readers of Hamazor were introduced to my book on *THREE TESTAMENTS: Torah, Gospel and Quran*, detailing the debt owed by the scriptures of Western monotheism to the Zoroastrian Avesta. A sequel came out since then as *FOUR TESTAMENTS: Tao Te Ching, Analects, Dhammapada, Bhagavad Gita*, showing a similar debt by Eastern monism in the scriptures of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and the essential Hindu text, Bhagavad Gita. The publishers, Rowman and Littlefield, have again contracted with me for what will be published as Volume One of a trilogy in early 2020.

SEVEN TESTAMENTS OF WORLD RELIGIONS: with a Vedic Older Testament and the Zoroastrian Dead Zee Scrolls will have a focus on the parts of the Avesta which went missing under Alexander the Great in Persia, the advent of Islam throughout the Middle East later, and finally during the An Lushan Rebellion in China. Referring to the missing portions as "The Dead Zee Scrolls" I am building a case for the likelihood of twenty-first-century archaeology unearthing precious Avesta material which may have been hidden or simply lost.

In a series of speeches for the Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism in Chicago in October 2018, I presented an argument that much of what we are looking for can now be dug up from where it is buried within the seven main texts of world religions.

Evidence for this realization will be represented cogently again in the new book with assistance from Zoroastrian and other scholars who are part of an exciting new worldwide awareness of the contribution Zoroastrianism has made to the spiritual life of the world. Meanwhile, those who appreciated *THREE TESTAMENTS* might prepare for what's ahead by acquiring *FOUR TESTAMENTS* or borrowing a copy from any nearby library.



The article Rev Brown shares with us overleaf, will be of great interest to all Zoroastrians. Its going to be an exciting 2020! - Ed.

Identifying the Tomb of Zoroaster

by brian arthur brown



Crypt of Zoroaster under the Blue Mosque Tomb of Hazrat Ali - Shutterstock Image. Property of Rev Brian Arthur Brown

The original crypt beneath the Blue Mosque in Afghanistan, dates to over a thousand years before Imam Ali, who locals believe to be buried there. There is only one local candidate of sufficient celebrity from that earlier era to give the site its ancient name, *The Tomb of the Exalted* or “Mazar-i-Sharif.” The name of the first occupant is revealed in the image of the “radiant camel” or “zarath - ustra,” which, according to legend, carried thither the body of Imam Ali. The pronouncement on which this legend is based thus re-established the splendid grandeur of Zoroaster’s tomb, set now to become more important to all religions.

Current scholarship is divided on the dates of the life of Zoroaster, but traditional Persian, ancient Hebrew and early Christian sources agree that the Persian prophet died in 551 BCE during prayers in the chapel at Balkh, then the only city of importance in the Persian province of Bactria. If so, according to his teachings, his remains would not have been “exposed” to the elements inside the community of Balkh and buried there.

The Greek historian Herodotus, writing in the fifth century BCE, described the use of “high places” by Zoroastrians from their

earliest period. “It is not their custom to make and set up statues and temples and altars but they offer sacrifices on the high places of the mountains.”¹ Over the course of time these natural sacred sites were elaborated and simple shrines were built for the bones of those whose bodies had been exposed to nature. These mountain mausolea became the focus of the Zoroastrian pilgrimage tradition, as compared with the later fire temples of the cities and villages.

So Zoroaster’s family and followers would have looked to the nearest “high point” of significance within walking distance, the

place we call Mazar-i-Sharif, fifteen kilometers to the east, accessible but high enough to honor the most important prophet of that age and location. Similar such ancient high points remain unchanged near Yazd in Iran, near Petra in Jordan and elsewhere. We call the one in question Mazar-i-Sharif, which translates as *Tomb of the Exalted*, a name it acquired only after the building of a mausoleum there. That site is identified by its current name only after mid-sixth-century BCE as a memorial for the countless pilgrims then wishing to honor the life and ministry of the spiritual leader who had turned religious life upside-down from one end of the Silk Route to the other. They might just as easily called it The City of the Tomb, but that is how the community of Mazar-i-Sharif got its name as a settlement grew around the site on the cusp of an era described by the Economist magazine. "Societies became recognizably "modern" in the mid-first millennium BC, during the so-called "Axial Age," the period in which figures such as Plato, Buddha and Zoroaster appeared on the scene, promulgating their moralizing ideologies."² This observation, with sixth century dates increasingly accepted for him in the twenty-first century, sets the search for Zoroaster's tomb right into the context of this book which identifies him as the father of the Axial Age.

A tomb might be named after a person or after a place, but for a city to be named after a tomb the person buried there must be exceptionally famous. Through all time there is simply no candidate in that region for such an honour other than Zoroaster. It was identified as Mazar-i-Sharif more than a thousand years before the next significant burial in that mausoleum, that of Hazrat Ali, when it was appropriately expanded again on the earlier Zoroastrian foundations. However, it was following the time of the first burial there that the settled area of Balkh began to stretch beyond the geographic Bactrian plain to a "capital" area which grew to become the more important center.³ This fact is a key element in our contention that Zoroaster could not have died in the eleventh century BCE or earlier,

since there was no such identifiable center as Mazar-i-Sharif for another five hundred years.

In his authoritative book on architecture in Afghanistan, the University of Edinburgh's distinguished archaeologist Warwick Ball comments on the Blue Mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif. "There are many non-Islamic practices associated with this shrine, such as the raising of a pole at Nauruz on March 21 each year when Mazar-i-Sharif becomes the main centre of the annual Nauruz (New Year) festivities. It might be that the shrine represents an Islamization of a much older, pre-Islamic cult that was focussed on this site, perhaps even of Zoroaster himself, who is traditionally supposed to be buried in the Balkh region."⁴

Because the city is named after the tomb, it is only common sense that the tomb was there first. The community came into being and was settled in the sixth century BCE, co-incident with the burial of obviously the most famous person who ever lived in that area, whose tomb became the name of the city which grew up around it. In fact, from that day until this there has never been any personage other than Zoroaster of such import functioning out of that region and buried there, with the possible exception of Ali, a thousand years later, and he was brought there from elsewhere.

We may, or may not soon find missing pieces of the Zoroastrian Avesta (the "Dead Zee Scrolls") a feature of this book, but increasing evidence identifying Zoroaster's tomb provides at least a measure of increased familiarity and some intimacy with this prophet who, in certain respects, was the first to articulate a path to redemption for the world and its people. Moses and Homer are profoundly significant, at least to Western culture, like a Zoroaster who might have lived and died back in the mists of time. A Zoroaster of the sixth century relates to us like well-known figures of the Axial Age: Hebrew prophets, Greek philosophers, eastern mystics of popular religion. Identifying *The Tomb of the Exalted* as Zoroaster's resting place connects him

directly with Parsees and other Zoroastrians today, and with devotees and practitioners of the seven religions whose testaments are the subject of this study.

This book identifies Zoroaster's tomb as being beneath the Blue Mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif, one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. Our identification of the tomb of Zoroaster fits the Islamic pattern of multiple burials in a single site, since he is regarded by Muslims as among the prophets of The People of the Book. Given the paucity of other possible candidates as occupant of a crypt beneath the tomb of Hazrat Ali, who could the original inhabitant of the mausoleum be except Zoroaster? It simply remains for experts with twenty-first century high-tech equipment to prove that somebody was buried there at a lower level, somebody important enough to have the city named after his mausoleum. We will get to that, but first let us become more aware of the whole story of the Blue Mosque and its connections to Zoroaster.

Canadian journalist Terry Glavin (*National Post* and *Ottawa Citizen*) described this location in a column after a visit to the site in Afghanistan. "For centuries, Mazar's glorious Shrine of Hazrat Ali has been the journey's end for Shia pilgrims from afar, and an everyday refuge of gardens and esplanades for the local Sunni majority. The Blue Mosque, where everyone prays together, is also a fountainhead of Sufi cosmopolitanism. It is a marvel of classic Islamic architecture built in the grand Timurid style on deep Zoroastrian foundations."⁵ The latter point is information he picked up on site as part of the local, but unofficial lore.

Why does it matter where Zoroaster is buried? Discovery of the tomb of Zoroaster would be of great importance to Zoroastrians today as they assume a significant role in interfaith discussions based partly on facts at last, rather than legends about Zoroaster's dates and the importance of his teachings in the world of the Silk Route. Because of their interface in Babylon, this relationship is of interest to

Jews who may wish to know if the connection with Zoroaster is direct or distant. Christians increasingly identify Jesus as the Savior of the World, the Saoshyant or "Redeemer" of Zoroastrianism, rather than merely the one who would restore the throne of David for the Jews of the early church. The location of the tomb in Afghanistan and its date also fits with self-identification of the four world religions further east and others, as the Zoroastrian Avesta and the Dead Zee Scrolls begin to function as the Rosetta Stone of religion described in Part Two of this book. This may be a starting point in one of the most critical discussions in the shrinking world of the twenty-first century, namely the place of religion as part of the problem or part of the solution to problems of divisions and relationships in our time.

Local Muslim residents of Mazar-i-Sharif appear to have no objections to identification of this site with Zoroaster. To the contrary, guides and tour books often refer to the legend that the Blue Mosque sits on an earlier Zoroastrian foundation. Our presentation of additional evidence in this regard at the 2018 Parliament of the World's Religions was greeted as big news, and it may be regarded by some as "the big reveal" of this book, though we are only presenting additional pieces of the puzzle, synthesizing them and making obvious inferences from them. It is our intention to move from legend and speculation to history and fact. In doing so it may also be possible to finally settle the long-standing debate over the dates of Zoroaster's birth, life and death.

This shrine is considered locally to be first and foremost the tomb of Hazrat Ali, the cousin, son-in-law and an eventual successor of Muhammad, even though most Muslims elsewhere in the world recognize Ali's tomb as being at the Imam Ali Mosque at Najaf in Iraq. Local Muslim devotees and tour guides in Mazar-i-Sharif have maintained the legend which says that the body of Ali was carried here on the back of a white (or "shining") camel," secretly, long years after his earlier burial in Najaf.

Books, brochures and tour guides recount the story of Ali being buried at Mazar-i-Sharif in a grave which had already been known for centuries previous as *The Tomb of the Exalted*, though the antiquity of the name has not been realized until quite recently.

In Sanskrit and related languages, the word "Zarah," is often rendered as golden, shining or white in various traditions, though linguists are unanimous in lexicons that the very best translation is "radiant." In Sanskrit, as adopted in Arabic, Persian, old Avestan and cognate languages, "camel" is *ustra* (or *ushtra*). The obvious, but only now articulated, meaning of the legend is that this memorial to Ali is mounted on Zarathustra, whose full name is usually translated as Golden Camel, though radiant or white camel works just as well in most languages.

The original crypt beneath the Blue Mosque in Afghanistan, dates to over a thousand years before Imam Ali, who locals still believe is buried there. The pronouncement on which this legend is based re-purposed the apparent splendour of Zoroaster's more ancient mausoleum, the "*Tomb of the Exalted*." Over time this phrase has been assumed to refer to Ali ibn Abu Talib, but the problem assuming that the title refers to Ali is confirmed by documentary evidence. There is wide agreement with Dr Ahmad Hasan Dani, a leading epigraphist and archaeologist of the Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad, that the city was named the *Tomb of the Exalted* since 138 CE at the very least, half a millennium before Ali. "This more ancient date is witnessed by the *Mazar-i-Sharif Inscription*, clearly dated from the time of Veka, a local Shahi Ruler long centuries before Ali's death in 661 CE and his second burial in the year 701 CE."⁶ The only prophet of note from that area was obviously buried sometime before 138 CE but no earlier than the era soon after 550 BCE when the capital of Bactria was moved from Balkh to the newly established community which became Mazar-i-Sharif, surrounding the tomb of "the exalted," a highly respected persona, one deserving of a mausoleum apparently like no other.⁷

The eventual attribution of the Mazar tomb to Imam Ali was perhaps understandable since it is known that Ali travelled in Afghanistan, where his "footprints" are preserved in stone memorials in two other cities. Mazar-i-Sharif was "revealed" or decreed to be the burial place of Ali by Harrun Al Rashid some 40 years after Ali died in 661. Harrun was the fifth Abbasid Caliph, who ruled in Baghdad 786 to 809. The fictional book *One Thousand and One Nights* is set in Harun's magnificent court and some of its stories involve Harun himself, a figure of great imagination. He considered moving his court to the east, and eventually did move it to Syria for safety, but appears to have considered Afghanistan first.

Since there was already a mausoleum of a prophet in Afghanistan at the place called Mazar-i-Sharif, the *Tomb of the Exalted*, a tomb even then of interest to pilgrims, it suited his purpose for Harun to declare it to be also the tomb of Ali. He did so at the request of Ja'far as-Sadiq, who later became the sixth Imam in the Shia tradition and was seeking to establish a Shia stronghold in Afghanistan. Ja'far was a descendant of Ali on the side of his father, Muhammad al-Baqir, and his story was eagerly accepted by the local population of Mazar-i-Sharif, largely Shia at the time, even if rejected by many other Muslims. It is as if these holy men were looking for a ready-made shrine, popular among pilgrims. There were no such Jewish, Christian or Muslim sites that far east, but there was that mausoleum so impressive that the now substantial city was named for it, and the occupant was the prophet associated with the People of the Book named as Magian in the Holy Quran. Whether they brought the remains of Ali there physically or spiritually, the announcement had the desired effect of turning this shrine into a Muslim mosque.

It is possible that the remains of Ali were transferred there at a time when some could not remember who first was buried in the mausoleum. Others may have wished to deny that the prominent shrine tomb belonged to a non-Muslim persona, though

as we have seen, burial above any prophet from among the People of the Book was an established practice. The “Chamber of Commerce” would have encouraged the recognition of further enhancement of the site following the declaration also ascribing the tomb to Ali to this location.

The grave was then domed and greatly enhanced. Sultan Ahmed Sanjar of the Seljug dynasty expanded the main structure to something even greater, resembling present proportions, some three hundred years after the purported re-interment of Ali. It was desecrated and then partially hidden under earthen embankment for protection during the invasion of Genghis Khan around 1220 CE. In the 15th century CE, Sultan Husayn Mirza Baygarah repaired and extended the superstructure in an outstanding example of the Timurid architectural style. It has been well maintained ever since as the priority budget item in the city, province and nation. The latest addition is a monument to the national hero Ahmad Shah Massoud, a Mujahadin leader, who fought both the Soviets and the Taliban, before his assassination in 2001.

The structure appears to be almost floating, a trick of this particular style of Islamic architecture, partially facilitated by intricately painted clay tiles, produced in a studio on site. Two square feet of tiling needs to be replaced every day, having been damaged by the elements or stolen by pilgrims as religious mementos. A site plan of the foundations made by engineers early in the twentieth century showed that there had earlier been a crypt in the smaller walled precinct under the original mosque, razed later but with portals still remaining as gateways for the current shrine.

No carbon dating has yet been undertaken, though current techniques of archaeological investigation are equally effective. LiDAR scans from space, as described by Richard Freund in *Four Testaments*, can reveal much about the original site, and close up Electrical Resistive Tomography and Ground Penetrating-Radar (ERT & GPR) scans are able to flesh out the story of this

mosque and its sacred precinct as presented by Freund and his team at the 2020 Dead Zee Scrolls conference in Niagara Falls. The team includes Harry Jol, an anthropologist at the University of Wisconsin, who literally “wrote the book” on *Ground Penetrating Radar Theory and Applications*.⁸

Richard Freund is one of the world’s leading archaeologists. Since he and I write for the same publisher, Rowman & Littlefield, he had been asked to vet the portions of this book which pertain to archaeology prior to publication. Though he had heard unsubstantiated rumours about the burial of Zoroaster, it was when he reviewed the list of hints, clues and evidence listed below that he knew our theory about the tomb of Zoroaster was now more than speculation, and he got involved. Televised and written reports of the archaeological expedition to verify this identification of what lies beneath the Mazar-i-Sharif are available under the title *The Tomb of the Exalted*. Previous hints and clues about Zoroaster’s bones in repose in a crypt beneath the Blue Mosque had been rejected by scholars as mere speculation when considered individually. In this summary of the evidence, we precis the support for our model into twelve categories, which move from speculation and conjecture to an absolutely compelling concept when taken together.

- Cartography (lay of the land within walking distance of Balkh)
- Geography (zeroing in on the appropriate high point)
- Migration (population from the Bactrian plain moving east)
- Nomenclature (re the name of the city and the tomb for which it was named)
- Common Sense (re significance of tomb existing before city)
- Local folklore (then and now)
- Muslim practice (assembling prophets’ bones in sites already identified as holy)
- Linguistics (identifying Zoroaster as the “Zarah-ustra” in radiant camel legend)
- Politics (the theocratic mix of government and religion by early caliphs)
- History (facts about Ali in Afghanistan and

- other data re dates and personas)
- Architectural (reviews of structural engineering issues over the last century)
 - Archaeological (verification by respected experts of the twenty-first century)

This much evidence and advance information from the site were enough for Freund to proclaim confidence that the proof is simply waiting to be announced at the launch conference for this book in Niagara Falls, May 29-31, 2020. The core of the shrine does contain a tomb chamber and an antechamber for prayer and worship, the starting point for high-tech investigations, untried heretofore. A question which remains is whether other members of Zoroaster's family were also interred there subsequently, while the reputation of the mausoleum grew, long years before its expansion early in the Muslim era. If so, are there any artifacts, and could this be even the repository of the written materials for which Zoroaster was most famous. Missing portions of the Avesta found here may be the first cache of what we call *The Dead Zee Scrolls*, a motherlode of the missing Chapters 6 to 27, thought by scholars like Mary Boyce, to have been composed by Zoroaster himself. Such a tremendous possibility will be revealed in the future if the investigation by Professor Freund's 2020 team is able to indicate that there is more there than just the bones of Zoroaster.

At this point we get to the Indiana Jones style speculation that some undergraduate students may enjoy, or the Dan Brown portion of the story for public library and congregational book clubs, except that some of all of it could well be proven true. The week-long expedition is set to proceed under the on-site administration of financial manager Arthur Brown. The earth penetrating radar equipment is set up at sixty predetermined target locations identified by Dr Harry Jol through preliminary scanning. Richard Freund's practiced eye looks down one visual shaft after another. John Bedel videotapes the sequential moments for the TV networks.

Interviewer David Bruce keeps asking "What do you see, Dr Freund?" When the

EPR cameras detect anything promising (bone, wood, even crypt-shape stones) at a depth of up to forty feet, Freund exclaims, "This could be it." A discreet two-inch steel tube then extracts material from the level under consideration for identification and carbon dating. This all takes place under government permits granted to Dr Omar Sharifi of Boston University and the American Institute of Afghanistan Studies in Kabul, and under the watchful supervision of environmental technician Sarah Brown, trained for this at Seneca College in Toronto and present to insure absolute structural integrity, with no disturbance whatsoever in any part of the Blue Mosque itself.

At least that is the way things have been scheduled to unfold by Jenny Sutacriti, my wife and research associate, who described the historic opportunity to her professional grandchildren, Arthur and Sarah, and persuaded them to dedicate their professional talents to the financial and environmental concerns. It is Jenny who envisioned the aspirational moment as David Bruce again asks, "What do you see?" and Dr Freund's replies, "I see a stone structure that appears to be a crypt, with a human skeleton, and some objects which could be scrolls on either side of the bones."

At this point, in real life, Freund would interject. "Hold on, everybody. It is true that Brian Brown's evidence is enough for us to be sure that if there is anything that far down there, it is likely from 2500 years ago rather than 1500 years ago. In that case we can presume that it is related to Zoroaster, and that he was buried around 551 rather than much earlier. But we are not going to find the *Dead Zee Scrolls* just like that. We'll find something, but much analysis remains to be done, and if its results are more specific, we still need Afghan government approval to actually excavate to the level which proves that in burying Ali here and others since that time, the custodians of this sacred precinct did indeed honour the memory and the earlier prophetic ministry of Zoroaster. This is very exciting, and may indeed verify the site as Zoroaster's tomb,

but there is much work yet to be done.” This may be closer to the report we will receive at the Niagara conference following the expedition. Watch for it as a TV documentary or a new book from Rowman and Littlefield.

Tombs of varying dimensions were added to the Blue Mosque for a number of Afghan political and religious leaders over the years, which has led to the development of irregular dimensions which have done nothing except enhance the beautiful structure. The Blue Mosque is already a magnificent attraction for pilgrims and visitors, and its current recognition as being also the tomb of Zoroaster will increase the worldwide interest in this shrine. It already has national status similar to Westminster Abbey in the United Kingdom and Notre Dame in France or Wat Arun in Thailand and the Taj Mahal in India.

The Blue Mosque is one of the most beautiful edifices on the planet, but following the verifications by the archaeological team under the leadership of Professor Freund, this multi-layered shrine may attain world status more like that attributed to the Vatican in Rome and the Kaaba in Mecca. This will assist in the current quest to gain a better understanding of the story of Zoroaster, the dates of his life, and where he was buried.

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The Ancient Art of Kusti Weaving

Compiled from Ashdeen Lilaowala's book *Threads of Continuity*, published by The Parzor Foundation in 2013.

Reproduced with permission of Ashdeen.

The Sudreh and Kusti have become universal symbols of the Zoroastrian faith. While there are no written records of when the kusti originated and it is not certain who wove or wore the first kusti, it is clear that it is a part of the Indo-Aryan sacred tradition. It is seen in the janoi of the Hindu tradition and in the cord worn over priestly garments in the Orthodox Church.

Sacred Armour

The Avestan word for the sacred thread is *aiwyaonghana*, meaning to gird around. It originates from the *yasna* ceremony where a strip of the date palm is used to tie the Barsam twigs, in a ritual of uniting creation. The *yasna*, like the *yagna*, is a Bronze Age Aryan ritual which nurtures creation. The priest recites the ‘Yatha Hu Vairyo Mantra’, and whenever he utters the word *Shyaothnanam*, to act or of action, he ties the date palm cord into a reef knot. This is the reef knot which is tied when the word *Shyaothnanam* is uttered in the kusti ritual.

So the girding of the kusti becomes symbolic of the Zoroastrian girding himself each morning in sacred Armour, the sudreh and kusti, to become a warrior defending Spenta or Holy Creation. Some legends state that Zarathustra initiated the kusti ritual, but according to the *Dadestan-I-Denig* and the *Sad Dar*, these symbols have been worn since the time of King Jamshed. Wearing the kusti is like performing *Hama Zor* and *Hama Asho*, uniting to perform good works and remaining connected with the sacred world.

Zoroastrian children learn that when Zarathustra's father asked his son what he wanted as he left on his quest for Truth, Zarathustra asked only for the blessing of the sacred cord.



Canadian author Rev Dr Brian Arthur Brown was the theme speaker at the 2018 conference of the Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism in Chicago. He is best known for THREE TESTAMENTS: Torah, Gospel and Quran, published by Roman & Littlefield in 2012 and launched at Ground Zero in NYC and at the Canadian Embassy in Washington in the aftermath of the burning of the Quran. It was followed by FOUR TESTAMENTS: Tao Te Ching, Analects, Dhammapada, Bhagavad Gita in 2016. SEVEN TESTAMENTS OF WORLD RELIGION and the Zoroastrian Older Testament in 2020 will complete the trilogy. Brian and Jenny Sutacriti Brown live within earshot of the thunderous Niagara Falls.



Linguistically, the word kusti has various derivations. It can be derived from Pahlavi, kust meaning direction or side, thus coming to mean, That which shows the proper direction or path. Sudreh, literally, the good path and kusti the direction finder, tells a Zoroastrian how to lead his life. From another derivation, kusti may mean a badge distinguishing those who are on the kust or side of Zoroastrianism.

A kusti is made up of lamb's wool or camel's white hair representing the animal world. This white wool is considered to be an emblem of innocence and purity.

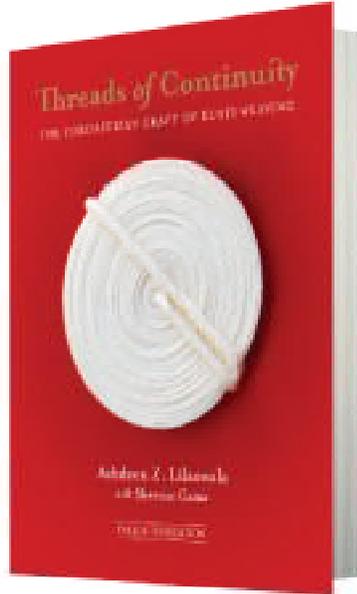
According to oral tradition, the 72 strands, from which the kusti is woven, represent the 72 chapters of the Yasna. So, a Zoroastrian who ties his kusti with piety is said to have acquired the merit of performing the yasna ritual. In the Hormazd Yasht, 72 names of God are recited; the ritual then also becomes equivalent to its recitation.

Earth And Sky

Technically, the kusti is a cream-coloured thread made of wool. It is a narrow, long, hollow tube with tassels at both the ends. The length of the kusti varies from three yards to about six yards. The average kusti is of four and half yards and is known as mapni kusti. The hollow tube is representative of the two layers, the sky and the earth. The hollow part in the middle is symbolic of the atmosphere in between, meaning that the wearer should always please and protect all clean and pure things, which exist between the sky and the earth.

Currently, Parsi women in several parts of India practise kusti weaving. Earlier women from the priestly class alone wove the kustis. Due to the diminishing boundaries between the Athornans or priestly class, and Behdins or laity, women of the laity have also started weaving kustis for economic benefit. Once considered a

domestic skill necessary for every young girl and taught in all Parsi schools, kusti making has today become a specialised craft practised mainly by elderly women. Kusti-making is an art that takes years to master and due to poor returns, very few women take it up as a profession.



Warp And Weft

Oon kantwanu or spinning is the first step in the making of a kusti. Most women start the process with a little prayer. The wool is spun into fine yarn with the help of a chaaterdi or drop spindle. Two spindles of single yarn are then twisted to form a strong and uniform yarn known as durry which is used for weaving. This process of double plying is known as *Val*

dewanu and is done on a bigger spindle or *chaaterdo*.

A walk in the Parsi Vads of Navsari shows women effortlessly spinning on their verandahs with their chaaterdis and chaaterdos and chatting with their neighbours.

Some women only specialise in spinning the yarn and provide the spun yarn to the weavers. According to an admirable age-old custom, the spinner gives the weaver enough yarn for two kustis. The weaver, in turn, weaves one for the spinner and one for herself. While no money is exchanged, it is an equitable barter.



Tehmina Jokhi of Navsari weaving the kusti on the jantar. She has been weaving kustis all her life for family and friends.

The actual process of kusti weaving is carried out on the jantar or loom. This small wooden, folding loom consists of a simple framework of shafts and pulleys. The jantar is specially designed for weaving the kusti, which is a narrow and tubular textile.

Weaving on the jantar is very flexible. Since the loom is light, it can be easily carried from room to room and even while travelling. Most weavers believe that this loom must have originated in Navsari around the 1930s.

After the kusti is woven, it is taken off the loom in a complete loop. It is now handed over to the priest to be cut and consecrated. The kusti is now turned inside out with the help of a needle. In this process, all the loose ends are taken throughout the length of the woven kusti. If the kusti has not been woven properly and if any thread is loose and gets entangled with the needle, then the whole kusti is spoilt and has to be discarded. Most women breathe a sigh of relief when they see the needle come out of the other end. The kusti is now complete.

Symbolically, the difficult process is to remind us that we have come to this physical world for the sake of advancing into the spiritual world. It is not an easy task to grow spiritually and requires focused concentration.

The loose thread at the ends of the kusti, lars, are divided into nine parts and plaited to form a fine tubular finish. This process is known as lar guthvanu and is done on both ends of the kusti.

Consecrating The Thread

Now the making of the kusti is complete but the cord has to be further treated before it is used. After a thorough wash, it is placed on a muslin cloth with a small vessel containing burning coal. A pinch of sulphur is added on the smouldering coal. The kusti and sulphur vessel is quickly covered with a larger circular vessel for 10 to 15 minutes. This process of bleaching is known as dhupvanu. Earlier, priests in the fire temple did this while consecrating the kusti.

Images, courtesy of Ashdeen

An interesting feature of kusti weaving is that the jantar, being a foldable loom, does not occupy a fixed space. Even while weaving, the whole warp can be removed from the loom and transferred to another. Whenever the weaver wishes to weave, the loom can again be stretched and the warp placed on it.

When women are menstruating and cannot weave, they generally fold the warp and place it aside. Very few looms in the world have this capacity in which a warp can be removed mid weaving.

Symbols Of Faith

Zoroastrians had regarded the sudreh and kusti as integral symbols of faith. When one studies and understands the intricate craft technique and its equally intricate symbolism, the true significance of this ritual becomes apparent. One hopes that this daily practice of the kusti ritual continues with a new respect born out of understanding, for the weavers and priests who so quietly have woven together this warp and weft of the Zoroastrian community.



A priest praying at the Desai Atash-Behram, Navsari.



Ashdeen Z Lilaowala is a Textile Designer specialising in the traditional art of Parsi Gara embroidery through contemporary fashion creations under the label ASHDEEN. Ashdeen retails his creations through his flagship store in New Delhi. His saris have been worn by Oprah Winfrey and Bollywood superstars Madhuri Dixit and Sonam Kapoor Ahuja. He regularly researches and writes on the subject, and is the author of *Threads of Continuity*, on the tradition of the Kusti sacred threads in the Parsi community.

Professor K Irani's Legacy

by arzan wadia

Through their words, actions and deeds people leave behind their legacies when they move onwards to the next realm. There are very few that leave behind all their material wealth entirely as a legacy for the generations to come. Professor Kaikhosrov Dinsha Irani was one such rare individual. Prof K D Irani came to the United States in 1945. Over the next 62 years he excelled in two fields where he became a giant in his understanding of these fields. One was philosophy and the other was the study of the Zoroastrian religion.

His understanding of the religious texts and their interpretation in modern day society made him one of the leading scholars of the last few decades and in his loss the community at large lost one of its greatest visionaries.

On his passing away, the trustees of the estate of Prof K D and Piroja Irani informed four Zoroastrian associations that they were the beneficiaries of practically his entire estate. To commemorate this magnanimous act, the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York organized an event on Saturday February 23, 2019; befitting one of its greatest member and to celebrate his legacy.

The programme started with what may probably be the first of its kind in North America. Three young mobeds – Ervad Porus Pavri (15), Ervad Cyrus Dadina (14) and Ervad Zal Mody (12) – performed the Atash Nyaesh and a Boi ceremony in the Atash Gah of the Arbab Rustam Guiv Dar-e-Mehr. Praying beautifully these three young initiates, started what will hopefully become the transition of the older generation of mobeds passing on the baton to the younger.

At the end of the prayers ZAGNY President Astad J Clubwala thanked each of the three mobeds and also thanked their parents and grandparents who were present in the audience that day.

The formal part of the function began with a welcome by Prof K D Irani's dearest friend Framroze K Patel who was also the executor of his estate. Framroze announced that the beneficiaries of the estate were Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY), Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA), Zoroastrian Assembly, and World Zoroastrian Organization.

Framroze spoke ...
" Ervad Porus Pavri, Ervad Cyrus Dadina, Ervad Zal Mody, friends of Piroja and Kaikhosrov.

*May you be blessed by
the joy of the right and
the peace of the just*

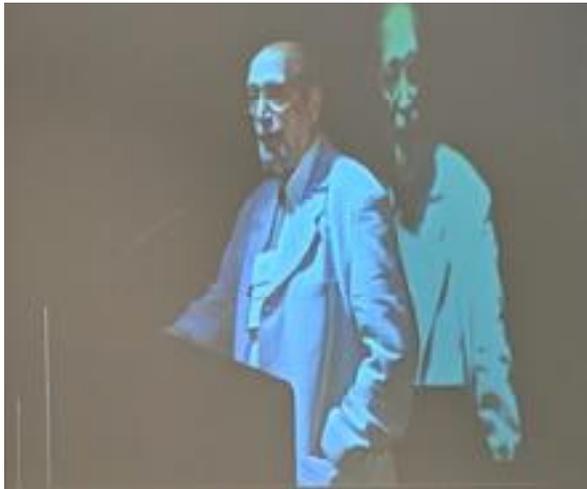
A Blessing given by Professor K D Irani

"In 2007 Kaikhosrov asked me to act as a trustee, of his estate. Today, I am trying to fulfill the responsibility.

"Let me state with humility (the proper Gujarati word is *gurav*) that four Zarathusti organizations, domiciled in the USA, are the beneficiaries of Piroja and Kaikhosrov's estate. They are: ZAGNY, FEZANA, WZO (US region), and The Zarathushtrian Assembly. The only individuals who received cash payments were the ladies who looked after them for more than fifteen years.

"I remember very well, the thought-provoking words, spoken by a young Zarathusti lawyer during her daughter's initiation ceremony. She said, 'that my husband did not have to say yes, but he did.' Kaikhosrov could have given his assets to any number of charities. He did not have to give his entire estate to Zarathusti organizations, but he did.

“Kaikhosrov was an academician and an educator of distinction, as acknowledged by his students and all those who knew him. Kaikhosrov, an esteemed, venerated and much cherished scholar of the Zarathusti religion lived by the principles, tenets, and teachings of the Prophet.



Kaikhosrov projected on the wall throughout the proceedings

“He lived by it in his daily life. He was a universal human-being. He had no use for so called doctrinal or theological restrictions as to who can and cannot follow the timeless message of the Good Religion.

“Another praiseworthy quality of Kaikhosrov was tolerance, religious and personal. He never believed that ‘what I say and know is true; and others are wrong’. He justly believed that ‘like a bee gathering honey from different flowers, the wise one accepts the essence of different scriptures, and sees only the good in all religions.’

“Kaikhosrov was not a Zarathusti high-priest, he was not a pramukh-swami, he was not vada-mullaji, and he was not a bishop or a cardinal, or a patriarch of a dynasty. Like Pope Francis he used to say. ‘who am to judge?’ He was very reluctant to judge people. To perpetuate his memory, one must turn to what he enjoyed most – his passion and ability to ‘educate’.

“In his infinite wisdom he left to the Vohu Manah of the beneficiary organizations, as to how their legacy should be used for the furtherance of the ethical and moral principles of good and evil, freedom of choice, and responsibility for one’s actions. He time and again stressed, accentuated and emphasized that one should ‘hearken with your best counsel, contemplate with your best judgment’.

“As a trustee, I am suggesting that an amount of Piroja and Kaikhosrov’s bequest to your organization be kept in an endowment account, and accrued income be used wisely to perpetuate their legacy.

“I urge the beneficiaries to support causes that

they believed in, particularly towards the promotion and advancement of the religion of Zarathustra. It was the wish of the donors that their gift should not be used for general administrative, operating expenses, and maintenance of property.

“It is my duty to remind you that Piroja and Kaikhosrov believed that the message of the Prophet is universal and a Zarathusti is one who declares herself or himself to be a follower of Zarathustra. In keeping with their dearly held belief, beneficiaries of the funds may be anyone who makes a conscious and enlightened decision to understand the message of Zarathustra, regardless of the beneficiaries’ spiritual identity and religious orientation.

“You have various options which, in my opinion, are worth initiating and pursuing, such as -

- Organize Prof Kaikhosrov D Irani Memorial Lectures.
- Organize educational events for laities and scholars of all persuasion and affiliation to enlighten them of the message of the Prophet Zarathushtra.
- Support efforts to digitize and archive Kaikhosrov’s personal and scholarly papers for public access by academicians and others. As well as conserve personal artifacts that reflect Zarathusti heritage and the American Zarathusti experience.
- Promote and encourage scholarship programmes to study and promote the Zarathusti religion, and provide

educational assistance, at graduate and post-graduate level, for science, philosophy, and law (a subject dear to Piroja).

- Allocate some funds for Critical Assistance Fund, and
- Support Zarathusti studies in partnership with an institute of higher learning.

“You as a beneficiary organization have a moral and fiduciary responsibility to preserve and protect their legacy.”

Distribution made to the beneficiary organizations on this day were :

Zarathushtrian Assembly -	US\$1,090,000
ZAGNY	US\$ 436,000
WZO (USA Region)	US\$ 436,000
FEZANA	US\$ 218,000
Total:	US\$2,180,000

This was a partial distribution: 75.0% of total estimated estate. Rest will be distributed as and when the New York State Attorney General authorizes final distribution later this year.

Each of the recipient organizations were invited to say a few words.

Daryoush Irani of the Zoroastrian Assembly spoke about how he had met Piroja and Kaikhosrov the first time and how Kaikhosrov had guided him in the formation of the Zoroastrian Assembly and continued to be a mentor till his last days.

Homi D Gandhi, President of FEZANA reminisced about the time Prof Irani brought forth a proposal to form a Federation in North America. This proposal was tabled at a ZAGNY Board meeting, and later saw light of the day as FEZANA in 1987. Homi mentioned that since its inception, Prof Irani was a constant mentor and guide to FEZANA and his wisdom will be missed.

Astad J Clubwala, President of ZAGNY spoke of Prof Irani’s impact on all things at ZAGNY. Besides having served as the President of ZAGNY for a term, Prof Irani led from the front in conducting world class

seminars, workshops and congresses at ZAGNY. One of the favourite things that Prof Irani enjoyed doing was speaking to kids and coming to the summer camps that ZAGNY hosted and speaking about Zarathushtra’s teachings.

WZO USA President Kayomارش Mehta could not attend the function but sent in his good wishes and thanks to the trustees of Prof Irani’s estate. In a message that was read out, WZO thanked Piroja and Kaikhosrov for their guidance in its formation and for serving on the WZO in various capacities over the years.

On this occasion, Dr Keki Dadachanji, a ZAGNY member delivered a keynote address titled The Religion of Zarathushtra: From Vision to Practice.

Keki spoke ...

“There is a tale of a man who found on the road a large stone bearing the words, ‘Under me lies a great truth.’ The man strained to turn the stone over, and finally succeeded. On the bottom was written, ‘Why do you want a new truth when you do not practice what you already know?’

“In November of 2016, the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York organized an event around the theme of Zarathushtra’s Vision and Zoroastrian Community. Five distinguished speakers presented their thoughts. Professor Kaikhosrov Irani was one of the speakers. His presentation of Zarathushtra’s vision was the clearest, most concise, and lucid I had heard. Today I would like to summarize that vision, and explore how it can guide our daily living.

“Ahura Mazda conceived of an ideal creation. The totality of that vision of ideal creation is called *Asha*. *Asha* is an untranslatable word generally rendered in English as *Truth or Righteousness*. *Asha* postulates an ideal form of existence where all its constituents are in perfect harmony. In practical language, this means that no one prospers at the expense of someone else. This vision was then actualized in the

material world. In the material world, in which we live, it is possible that *Asha* may not be realized, that is, the harmony may be disrupted; that the world may go out of balance.”

Full text of Keki’s talk shall be available on www.zagny.org in the coming weeks.

ZAGNY had also set up a small exhibit of Prof Irani’s artifacts, including the original steamer trunk he brought with him on his maiden voyage in 1945, and many other relics from his estate that will find a new home at FIRES (FEZANA Information Research Education System) in Houston and at ZAGNY.

ZAGNY president Astad J Clubwala proposed a vote of thanks to all who had gathered at the event.



Arzan Sam Wadia is an architect and urban designer, practicing in New York City. He is a core coordinator of the Return To Roots programme and serves on the Board of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY). He is the current Vice-President of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of

North America (FEZANA) and is the founder of Parsi Khabar, the oldest Parsi news aggregator on the internet. Riding a motorbike daily brings a smile to his face like nothing else.



L to R : Framroze K Patel, Daryoush Irani, Homi D Gandhi & Astad J Clubwala



The three young mobeds - Ervad Porus Pavri, Ervad Cyrus Dadina, Ervad Zal Mody



Proud family members with their mobed sons

The Bhandara tash Kadeh - may its fire burn for eternity

by behroze clubwala

The spiritual

traditional ceremonies that were held by the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) from 21 to 24 March inaugurated the first continuous wood burning Atash outside Asia in the Bhandara Atash Kadeh in Houston, Texas. The events will be etched in history forever. There was a sense of pride in the air. We are blessed. As our parents and grandparents would say ...
"Khodaiji na haazaaro upkar"

(thousands of thanks to God). The four days of events had 250+ attendees at most events, while there were 650 at the Grand Gala Celebration.

21 March 2019: Thanks to the vision and generosity of Feroze and Shernaz Bhandara, the Atash Kadeh, meaning a house of fire, became a reality. The evening began with an *Atash Niyayaesh*, a *Baj* ceremony, followed by a *Humbandagi*. Seven *Ervads*, using sandalwood collected from the Houston community the day before chanted loudly our Avesta prayers. Many had travelled from California, Chicago, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York,



Pennsylvania and San Diego in the US; London, UK and Toronto, Canada. Ladies in their embroidered and traditional *mathabanoos*, *garas* and *kor ni sarees*, children in their *navjote finery* and special *topies*, young and old, were all present to see history unfold and witness this extraordinary event. As you looked around the prayer

room, for a fleeting moment, you would have thought that you were in an *Agyari* or *Atash Behram*. Some swayed from side to side as they prayed, others prayed from the roman script *Kordeh Avesta* seated, and others just closed their eyes and wanted to absorb the smell of sandalwood and *loban*. Others smiled at the fire blazing. The lady next to me said, "I am 90 years old. I asked my daughter, Nazneen Vimadalal to bring me from Boston. *"Ajeh ketloh special deevas cheh."* (Today is such a special day)." The *Baj* ceremony with the *"darams"* in the shining *thali* and all the traditional symbols were moving to witness. The fire in the *Afarghanyu* rose even higher as if to

proclaim this special moment. The heavens were smiling down on the Zarathushti community of North America. A *Maachi* was performed that evening at the prayer room in the Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Center (ZHCC). The congregation lined the path from the ZHCC to the new Atash Kadeh, with battery operated tea lights in their hands as the Ervads present took turns in pairs to carry a small Afarghanyu holding the ash from ZHCC's prayer room to the new Atash Kadeh. There was not one person present witnessing this ceremony that did not feel their hearts burst with joy. The day was perfect with the sun shining above and clear blue skies. All present followed the Afarghanyu into the Atash Kadeh. "*Habiro Shabash Shabash*" was the loud chant, as we entered the new Atash Kadeh, from all the Zarathushtis from Iran, a chant used by them on any happy occasion. A new era had dawned for Zarathushtis in North America. Onwards and forward was the prayer in each one's heart. May the Zarathushti Kom flourish for generations to come in North America. The sentiment of the moment is best reflected in the words, "*Hama Zor, Hama Asho Bad*", - may we all be united in strength and righteousness.

"Happy Nowruz" was the welcome greeting from ZAH Chair, Nozer Dangol at the evening dinner. "I welcome you to the dawn of a new chapter in Houston. About 40 years ago we created ZAH, some 20 years ago ZHCC and today we are proud to add the Atash Kadeh as our new spiritual center." While thanking the entire community in Houston for lending its blessings and support to the creation of this center, particularly the generous donation of the Bhandaras, he specifically thanked Rohintan Deputy, Aderbad Tamboli, Arzi Natalia and Kaiyos Sidhwa for their tireless efforts and dedication. The North American Congress Legacy Scholarships and the Danesh Desai Scholarships were handed out that evening to several children from ZAH.

Vada Dasturji (High Priest) Khurshed K Dastoor, of the Pak Iranshah Atash Behram in Udvada was invited to bless and honour the events. Addressing the audience that

evening he said, "Today is Roj Amardad, meaning perfection, a perfect day for the community to launch the new Bhandara Atash Kadeh. It is important for us to create a spiritual center where we could bow our heads in praise of Ahura Mazda and his son Zarathustra whom we revere through fire. I bring blessings of the Iranshah to the Bhandara family and this center which will house the first perpetual fire outside Asia." He went on to add that "if one's thoughts are good, then your action and deeds will also be successful." He called upon future generations to treat this legacy with respect and to connect to Ahura Mazda. "The place has been created with perfection. The fire will burn and Mr and Mrs Bhandara have done their duty. It is now your challenge to recharge yourself in this spiritual center. The fire is your friend, philosopher and guide, as we say in the *Atash Niyayesh*. The fire will protect you, but it is your duty to protect the fire. Go step by step as you move into this new era and generation." He added "When Zarathustra was alive, he kept what was good and reformed what was not good. Our duty is to keep our traditions or we will be lost. Take the center path, think with your good mind, lead and inculcate the knowledge of our religion and pass it on to the next generation. India has eight Atash Behrams and 100s of Agyaries, some of which are difficult to maintain today, so cherish this Atash Kadeh and ensure that the fire burns forever. Each and every one of you is responsible to see that this Atash Kadeh is passed on to the next generation. This fire will bring peace and harmony amongst our community. My head always bows to the Zarathushtis who stayed in Iran and followed their religion. We are all Zarathushtis, not Parsis and Iranis. Participate fully. Do Jashans on Behram roj and special days, pray together, a community that prays together, stays together. May the fire of this Atash Kadeh burn forever." There was a long silence in the room – as the members present contemplated their inheritance, followed by a thunderous applause.

The evening ended with a delicious dinner prepared by apro Naushad Mehta of

Houston. Appetizers, *Dhan Dar* and Shrimp *Patio* with *Lagan nu* Custard, chai and coffee. The dinner was generously hosted by Khushroo and Parynaz Vimadalal in celebration of their eldest son Freyaan's navar ceremony in Mumbai in January 2019.

Friday 22 March 2019: The *Vendidad* prayers began at 2:00 am with seven Ervads praying uninterruptedly till 6:30 am. A small group filled the prayer room for the entire ceremony thinking, like me and my husband Astad that such an opportunity might not present itself soon in North America. The spirituality of the ceremony was surreal. As the early morning progressed, more members joined the *Vendidad* ceremony. Clearly, there were many *many* more when chai, *Malido*, *Ravo* and *Pora Bun Pau* with *makhan* and jam complete was announced that early morning! Again, exceptional hospitality from the Houston community, a hallmark of them as hosts always.

The evening took us "Down Memory Lane" with an exhibit by FIRES – the FEZANA Information, Research and Education System. Aban Rustomji has worked with passion on this project for years securing many antiques, photographs and books that reflect our Zarathushti culture and heritage. It is a unique collection from around the world, permanently housed in ZHCC. While preserving our heritage, Aban creates a world of the past that is alive with reality for the current and next generations. The commitment, zeal, knowledge and energy that Aban offers to this project is unparalleled. Thanks to Aban and her team in Houston, an outstanding exhibit of a collection of old garas, embroidered *kors*, beaded *torans*, rocking chairs, an old price list of *kastis*, *sudrehs*, *diva na kakras* (wicks used to light our oil divas), *sukhar* (sandalwood), *loban* (incense), a price list of goodies like *batasas* and *khatais*, old photographs, a copy of the famed Jam-e-Jamshed newspaper, and several Persian antiques filled the room. Many were intrigued by the kerosene stove and the large pressure cooker on it. To many of us,

these were nostalgic reminders of what we have seen in our parents and grandparents' homes. The most interesting was the kusti weaving demonstration. The recent addition includes items from late Professor Kaikhosrov and Piroja Irani's home in New York, a rare red pheta made in England for Prof Irani's father Dinshaw J Irani, a silver bowl, and Dinshawji's briefcase with its contents.

The evening began with a benediction by the two youngest Ervads in Houston.

Welcoming the more than 300+ guests present, Aban Rustomji invited FEZANA President Homi Gandhi to the podium. Homi said, "Houston, we have landed. (The audience broke into a loud and long applause.) In this new diaspora, the gift from the Bhandara family is priceless. Two centuries ahead, the next generations will stand before your Atash Kadeh and thank you for your vision."

The highlight of the evening was the presence of apri Bapsi Sidhwa, the famed storyteller and accomplished, award winning novelist from Lahore, Pakistan. I remember meeting Bapsi when she received the Reader's Digest Lila Wallace Writer's Award in the New York public library in 1994. She took the stage now to share "Words of Wisdom" as indicated in the programme. At 80, feeble but her eyes twinkling, she told us a fascinating story captivating the entire audience. "Today I am going to tell you about my little brother Feroze Bhandara. (The audience gasped.) We were with my parents in Colaba, Bombay when my mother complained of nausea. We thought it was perhaps the sea air in Bombay, but after a few days of these symptoms and wondering aloud if it was menopause, my relative, who was a doctor, did a thorough medical exam and told my mother she was four months pregnant. My mother, Tehmina, was in disbelief. I remember then being in school in Pakistan when the driver who picked me up months later informed me that I had a baby brother. I still remember seeing Feroze, (Bapsi was then 15 years old) and noting that he had

such a perfect baby face with his features so well defined, although I am not sure that one might say that now. He was mischievous and disobedient as a child and a challenge for my young widowed mother. He was sent to a boarding school in Lahore and had a difficult time, but I am sure he has forgiven my mother now. I recall my father talking to Feroze in Gujarati and asking him, Baba, when you grow up will you be a doctor, lawyer or a shopkeeper like me. Our maternal grandfather Ardeshir Mama built the Mama School in Karachi and was the Mayor of Karachi. At the time of the partition riots in Pakistan, my father Peshotan bought shares for the Murree Brewery and then took over its management as the British left at the time of independence. Feroze went to study at the University of Wisconsin, USA and on returning with his MBA said in Gujarati to me “*maharu mohnu dookkesh English bolta aakho vakhat*” (my jaws hurt speaking in English all the time); I want to marry a Parsi girl. I introduced Feroze to my husband Noshir’s niece Shernaz Cowasji. Feroze had a very difficult time navigating that courtship as Shernaz’s father and brother were very orthodox. I wonder if they even kissed once during that courtship. (The crowd is in spells of laughter.) Clearly it was a match made in heaven, as told by Nazneen Khumbatta, in her recent interview with Feroze and Shernaz. Feroze was lucky with successful business ventures first in San Jose, California, and then in Houston. We bless and thank you Shernaz and Feroze for this beautiful Atash Kadeh.” The audience gave her a standing ovation.

The younger children of ZAH, as always, inspired and directed by their religious class teacher Veshista Kaikobad did an amazing performance of two songs – set to popular English Tunes - “*Vada Dasturji thamri meherbani, Houston veer aviya ... we thank you.*” And “as Good Zarathushtis we will do our best, with Humata, Hukata and Hvrashtra we will respect the words of Zarathustra”. Bravo to the children. Well done.

Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor was the keynote speaker. Addressing the audience

with humour, saying that he had brought up the Menu to present for the evening as he was not sure the audience would appreciate hearing from him again, he spoke effortlessly sharing with us his wisdom on “The Zarathushti Way of Life in Today’s World.” His thoughts were deep, his ideas simple and sound, his philosophy drew on what we know, but his words were powerful. In summary he said: “Our religion is summed up neatly in three concepts of good thoughts, good words and good deeds. Can you ask yourself each day what is my good thought, word and deed for the day? Ahura Mazda has given you Vohu Manah, the good mind. A simple way of living a Zarathushti life therefore would be to demonstrate humanity, show brotherhood and practice tolerance and acceptance. It is important for us today to agree to disagree. We cannot and should not pull each other down. The time is right now to be united, have a vision like our forefathers and leave legacies. Feroze and Shernaz Bhandara have served the community and given us this precious Atash Kadeh. It is now your responsibility to cherish it and pass it to future generations. Controversies and problems will arise, but remember, if you have a will, and a will to survive, you will.” He reminded us that in creating a fire for an Agyari or Atash Behram, 16 types of fires are united to create the fire, so in the same way we should strive to unite and create universal brotherhood. He recited the Ashem Vohu, Yatha Ahu Vairyo and a part of the Hosbam prayer and their translations and reminded us that our prayers constantly give us the advice we need to live a Zarathushti life. “Be true to yourself. It is the easiest way to live a Zarathushti life.” He also addressed the issue of organ donation – a controversial issue among the community. “The choice” he said “depended on each individual person. For me, “I think it is our duty to donate. If we can receive organ donations, why can we not donate?” Concluding, he reminded us that “Whatever is good, truthful and righteous is Zarathushti.” Quoting the former President of India, His Excellency Abdul Karam he stated, “For great men religion is a way of making friends, small

people make religion a fighting tool.” The challenge was up to us now to use our religion and its teachings to create a true Zarathushti life in North America.

Feroze Bhandara closed the evening by honouring and presenting a plaque to all those who had contributed to the making of the Atash Kadeh a reality – Members of ZAH: Arderbad Tamboli who had worked tirelessly but always ensured good results, Rohinton Deputy who led the efforts to get the Afarghanyus crafted, Rustom Engineer, Sarosh Contractor and many many others, the Architect – Cyrus Rivetna, the entire team of engineers, contractors and accountants. He also thanked Edul Daver for his guidance from experiences with the NY Dar-e-Mehr for ZAGNY. Gratitude was also expressed to the 25 Ervads from Houston, New York and London who had prayed to bless and launch this Atash Kadeh.

Rustom Engineer presented closing remarks for the evening which concluded with a sumptuous Persian Dinner of *Kashke Badamjan* (eggplant dip), *Koobideh*, Beef and Chicken Kabobs, Rice and Herbs, *Gheymeh Badamjan* (split beans), nan, salad, Herbs and Feta Cheese and Jalebis.

I was able to take Feroze Bhandara away from all the excitement, cameras and TV interviewers to have a brief chat with me and my husband Astad. Feroze is quiet, deep, gentle and unassuming. His wife Shernaz, always at his side and smiling, was his “anchor.” Both were clearly the driving force that had brought us to this historical moment. Through every event, they radiated simplicity, purity of thought and a “zen” personality. Both had put their hearts and souls into the creation of this amazing spiritual center but there was never a moment of “gloating” about the fact that they had totally funded this landmark Atash Kadeh, the first of its kind in North America. I asked Feroze to describe his journey to this day. In a soft but firm voice, introspectively contemplating he said: “I wanted to do something worth doing. I built on the experiences I had here in Houston,

(where he had also made a generous contribution in memory of his mother Tehmina Bhandara to ZHCC) and on different experiences as President of the Zarathushti Anjuman in Northern California (ZANC) and the development of the Center there together with the Persian Zoroastrian Organization (PZO) in 1991. In 2012, Kobad Zarolia, former president of the North American Mobed Council (NAMC) and Sarosh Collector of Houston approached me saying we need to consider our second and third generations here and have a spiritual space so they can experience the same kind of Agyaris that we have in India and Pakistan. I agreed at this point to fund the project. It was important to us that the place be inclusive and Sarosh suggested that the plan be presented to the ZAH community, comprising about 250 families, with an anonymous donor. 87% of the vote was positive to build the Atash Kadeh. We looked at several architects and newly built centers in Dallas, California and New York. From a ZAH Team, to several project teams, to Nitin Desai our Engineer and Cyrus Rivetna our Architect, in 1.5 years we broke ground and here we are today.”

What were some of the challenges, I asked. “Well”, he said, “there were endless meetings, discussions and recommendations. Fortunately, I was able to steer the process to completion as the donor. I had learnt a lot from my previous experiences and drawing from the philanthropic endeavors of my maternal grandparents, and my mother, we pioneered on. Our challenge is now going forward to create the Atash Kadeh Management Committee which can generate a structure to keep the flame alive for the next generations, to create incentives for young dynamic Mobeds to serve here and to build a fund for the maintenance of this place, set up a fee structure for ceremonies and strategize on how to make this Atash Kadeh serve the needs of our young emerging Ervads and the Zarathushti community in North America.” The dinner that night invited pledges and raised close to \$90,000 for the Atash Kadeh Management Committee.

Just to help you put Feroze into the context of the man he really is So genuine and courteous, never haughty or arrogant about this historical event. He was beyond gracious to meet me past midnight on 22 March. As we concluded, he said, "let us walk over to the Atash Kadeh so I can help Shernaz for tomorrow's events." He was tired and exhausted, but never let me feel I was imposing on him. Always at his side, through all the events, were his entire family, Shernaz, their children and their families. Stay blessed, Feroze and Shernaz with your family. The community will always cherish your Atash Kadeh.

I also had a chance to sit down and chat with the architect, Cyrus Rivetna. Young, beaming with a sense of a major accomplishment, Cyrus recalled how Zarathushtis who came early in the 60's focused on a place to just meet and share camaraderie and *dhansak*. He said "Prayer rooms soon were added to these cultural centers, but having spent time in India and Iran studying Agyaris, Atash Behrams and Zarathushti architecture, I was influenced to design a place that would add the 'spiritual' dimensions. Religion for this generation needs spirituality. "There are many aspects that I thought about and implemented for this design" said Cyrus. "Three of the most important were, first, the prayer hall is, as seen in Sasanian architecture and times. Second, I wanted it to be a North American contemporary building and third, I focused on the details – columns as in front of many Agyaris and Atash Behrams in India, cornices as seen in Yazd, Iran, but all these details represented here are in a modern simplified version." Cyrus went on to say that he wanted the building to be practical, yet have traditional elements, *kusti* rooms for men and women were created, special attention was given to a place to be seated to remove your shoes, while at the same time providing shoe slots for neatness, with a place to wash your hands and cleanse yourself before starting your *kusti*. He said "I ensured that like in most Agyaris there was a NE-SW axis that natural light filtered in, so I added seven long windows near the

Prayer Room where ceremonies will be performed representing the seven Amesha Spentas. The nine skylights above the prayer room area where the congregation is seated were included. The south wall of the Afarghanyu in the Kebla had to be solid." Cyrus clearly incorporated myriad details to ensure that this first Atash Kadeh in North America was well designed. The sandstone sculptures that greet you as you enter the main doors of the Atash Kadeh are stunning, bringing old Persian reliefs into this spiritual space. When Cyrus took the podium, he humorously thanked his parents, the well know Roshan and Rohinton Rivetna, icons in North America, for their unsolicited and continuous advice!

23 March 2019: The Jashan ceremony by 25 Ervads was special, each one praying, it seemed, louder and louder outside the new Kebla (Sanctum Santorum). Two father and son Ervads were a part of this historic ceremony. The gleaming new traditionally shaped Afarghanyu's fire was ablaze and rising high when the first *Boi* ceremony in the *Kebla* was performed. History was written. The happiness felt in the room was unbelievable. The community felt confident that it will certainly light and fuel the next steps needed in North America for the Zarathushti religion to grow and flourish. *Chasni* and chai were enjoyed by all.

The evening took us into the Grand Gala Celebration Dinner. 650 members were present, some accommodated in a tent outside. Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor's address was again inspiring. Walking us through the various Dynasties: Pishdadian, Kayanian, Achaemenid, Parthian and Sasanian he talked about the Zarathushtis coming to India in the 7th century to Diu, near Ahmedabad, and then moving to Sanjan where the Sugar in the Milk proverbial story is frequently referenced. While the Iranshah Atash had moved from Navsari to Udvada, it has been there now for the last 1297 years. He referenced stalwarts from the community in India, Field Marshal Sam Maneckshaw, the Tatas, Godrejs, Wadias, and Petits and many others reminding us that they had all served

our community and that we should learn from them. "While India doesn't want more children, they want more Parsis. The JIYO Parsee Scheme had added 150 Parsi children to our community. We must work together and progress together." He reminded us of the special support the community receives in India from its Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The evening was graced by local authorities who presented a Proclamation to the Bhandara family, by the Consul General of India and other dignitaries from within the community. A delicious feast of Indian food satiated every appetite that evening.

24 March 2019: The events concluded with a pious Jashan ceremony led by Vada Dasturji for *Avan nu Parabh*, *Avan roj* and *Avan mahino*. With this *Parabh* we show reverence to water and the oceans. This was followed by delicious *Chasni*, chai and *Dar-ni-Pori* made by our own Sillie Mehta. She and her husband Jehabux made close to 80+ *dar-ni-poris* for this event, a labour of love so appreciated by the entire community.

Four memorable days will eternally remain in the hearts of all who attended and put Houston on the map forever. "Yatha Jamiyad, Yatha Afrinami – May it be so."

All images courtesy of Astad Clubwala



The Bhandara Atash Kadeh, Houston



In the moonlight, the night of the Vendidad prayers



The Inner Sanctum



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



A Note from Ed : An amazing description of a momentous event has been shared by Behroze, making the reader part of the celebrations. I thank her for doing this in the shortest span of time. This article hopefully will be part of the archives in the ZAH Library.

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Procession from Prayer Room to Atash Kadeh



Vada Dastur Khurshed officiating

Shernaz & Feroze Bhandara cutting the ribbon



Shernaz & Feroze with Vada Dastur Khurshed Dastoor

*25 Ervads with the High Priest of Iranshah performing the Jashan

Images with * credit to Yezdi Engineer, Percy Katrik & Percy Behramsha, of ZAH



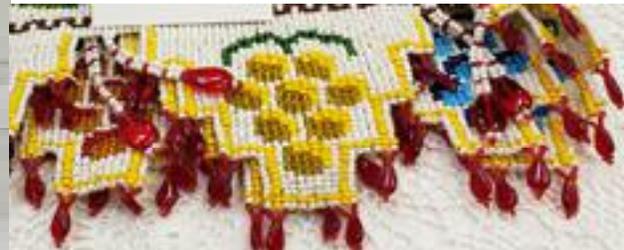
Baj Ceremony. Right after Boi Ceremony



The Vendidad Cermony

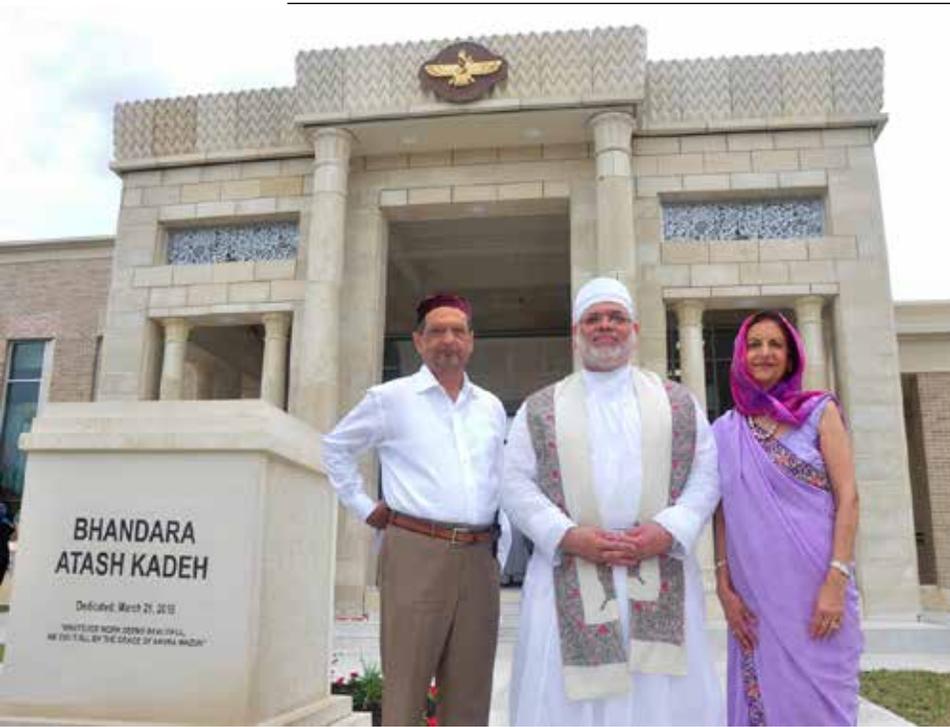


Down Memory Lane Kusti weaving. Below, Toran



*Our Honourable Priests

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*The Bhandaras with the High Priest



Cyrus Rivetna, the Architect



*ZAH Community at the ATash Kadeh opening



*Apri Bapsi Sidhwa

Mumbai's Save Our Atash Behrams Movement's MMRCL - The Complete Saga

report compiled by anahita subedar, editor, parsi times at the request of editor, hamazor

What started out as a welcome relief to Mumbai's bludgeoning traffic and congestion – the plan of building an underground Metro – turned out to be nothing short of heartache and disaster for most of Mumbai's Parsi / Irani Zoroastrian community, as it resulted in the spiritual and structural desecration of two of our holiest and oldest Atash Behrams – The 188-year-old H B Wadiaji Atash Behram (on Princess Street) and the 122-year-old Anjuman Atash Behram (near Marine Lines Station), with potential effects on the water table of Bhikhaji Behram well.

It started back in July 2017, when the ongoing Metro III (Colaba-Bandra-SEEPZ) work at DN Road in South Mumbai started affecting the structure of one of the city's oldest libraries, JN Petit Library, which was experiencing tremors due to the ongoing work, and had to ultimately move the High Court – tired of false assurances, un-kept promises and negligence on the part of Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Limited (MMRCL – a joint venture between the State and Central governments, building Mumbai Metro Line 3 that would connect Colaba in South Mumbai via Bandra to Seepz, a Special Economic Zone in the Northern part of the city), which resulted in a 119-year-old ornamental limestone finial collapsing and getting destroyed in August, 2017. The court asked for a new 'three member committee' to be set up to consider the appeal as an earlier survey carried out was nullified and the new committee would decide whether more protection and structural support was essential as well as recommendations on how to protect it.

By October 2017, the Parsi community was rattled as the ongoing drilling and construction work carried out by the MMRCL was posing great structural and

spiritual threat, as the metro lines were allegedly passing under the kebla of the Wadiaji Atash Behram, raising alarm bells. A petition, garnering comprehensive support from Zoroastrians in Mumbai as well as other cities, was addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, asking for his timely intervention to stop the construction, highlighting the grievances caused to Wadiaji Atash Behram and Anjuman Atash Behram at Dhobi Talao (Girgaum), as well as raising concern regarding Dadyseth Agiary (at Hutatma Chowk) and the Bhikha Behram Well (near Azad Maidan), which could be affected by MMRCL's Metro III line.

Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor, High Priest of Iranshah (Udvada), and member of the National Commission for Minorities sought an appointment with Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Limited (MMRCL) and visited the site office of MMRCL on 28th October, 2017, in a move to study the actual facts. Later, MMRCL sent out a Press Statement stating they had provided data about the tunnel alignment not coming in the way of the well or the sanctum sanctorums of the Atash Behrams. Expressing a sense of misplaced agitation, some community members took to social media, stating their disappointment and also maligning some of the leaders of the community, including Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor.

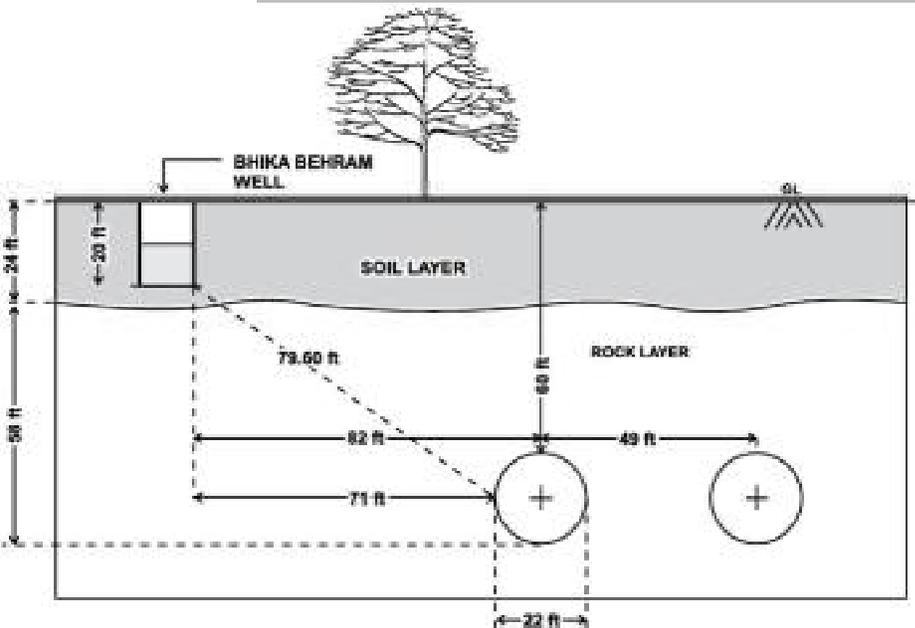
Things became extremely confusing for the community with various false reports doing the rounds of social media.

Staying true to its Mission Statement, 'The Truth. Delivered Weekly', Parsi Times, undertook an independent investigation alongside professional engineers to provide readers the absolute and comprehensive facts about the issue – in an issue stating all the structural facts about the three structures (Anjuman and Wadiaji Atash

Behrams and the Bhikha Behram Well), and their proximity to and potential consequence by the Metro 3 Alignment.

The 33.5km metro line, stretching across Colaba-Bandra-Seepez, is being managed by Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Ltd, and is broken down into seven packages or phases. The following is a representation of the basic facts covered. Parsi Times got in touch with Subodh Gupta – Director MMRC, Projects, and procured the blue-prints of the constructions of these areas and discussed with him our community’s concerns, for each of these three monuments, as under:

BHIKHA BEHRAM WELL



Note : The underground area is divided into two layers – Soil Layer and Rock layer. The tunnels are 22 ft in diameter. The calculations of each facet of our places is based on the ‘Nearest Point of the Closest Tunnel’ (for greater precision). The depth and soil structure underground is measured by MMRC with the help of a bore well. The dimensions taken by MMRC of various facets of our religious places are direct or indicative.

Understanding The Specific

- The ground under the well consists of 24 feet of soil layer; the rest is rock layer.
- The depth of Bhikha Behram Well is 20 feet, which is approximately the same area where the soil-level finishes and the rock-level begins.
- The distance between the top-most point of the closest tunnel and the ground surface where we stand and pray is 60 feet.
- The distance between the base end of our Bhikha Behram Well and the point of the tunnel is 36 feet.
- In the map, as one can see, the tunnel is not passing below the well and hence, the horizontal distance between the closest point of the tunnel and the base end of Bhikha Behram well is 71 feet.
- Hence, the diagonal distance formed between the closest point of the tunnel and the very base of our well is 79.60 feet.

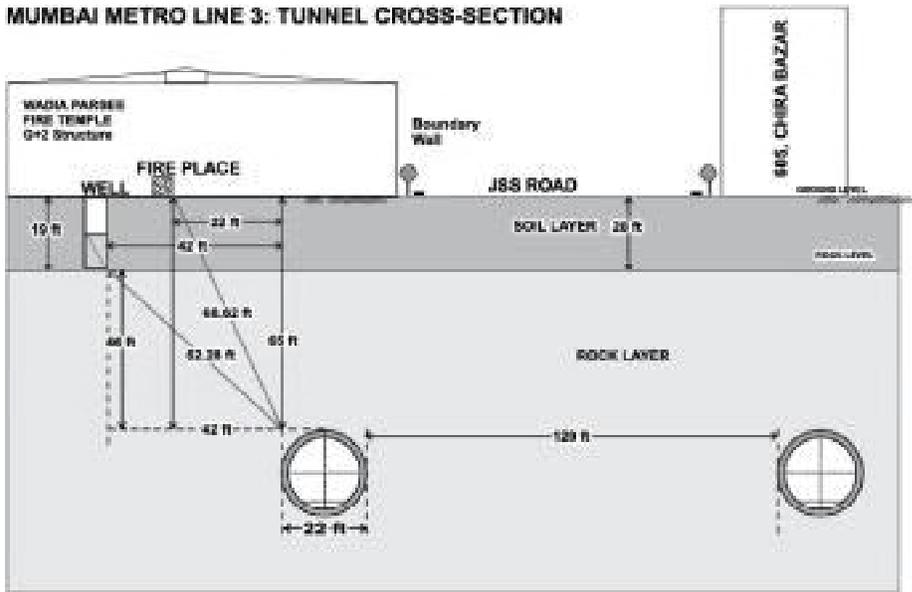
Addressing the main concern as regards would the water table of the Bhikha Behram Well be affected, Mr Gupta replied, “The water table is 20 feet deep. It is understandable that your ancestors who dug up the well did so only till the soil layer existed, which is what draws water. Any digging beyond into rock layer is futile. We are digging 36 feet into the rock layer and 70 feet away from the well, so in no way will the water table or its flow get affected.”

WADIAJI ATASH BEHRAM

Understanding The Specifics:

- The ground underneath consists of 20 feet of soil layer, the rest is rock layer.
- Calculating from the boundary wall of Wadiaji Atash Behram, the tunnel is passing 11 feet (horizontally) underneath, which is roughly the ‘ladies kusti room area’.
- The depth of the well of our Wadiaji Atash Behram is 19 feet (a similar understanding that shows the soil level concluding at 20 feet.)
- The tunnel to be dug is ‘46 feet’ into the rock layer, after the well base concludes. The horizontal distance between the base of the well and the closest point of the tunnel is 42 feet. Hence, the diagonal

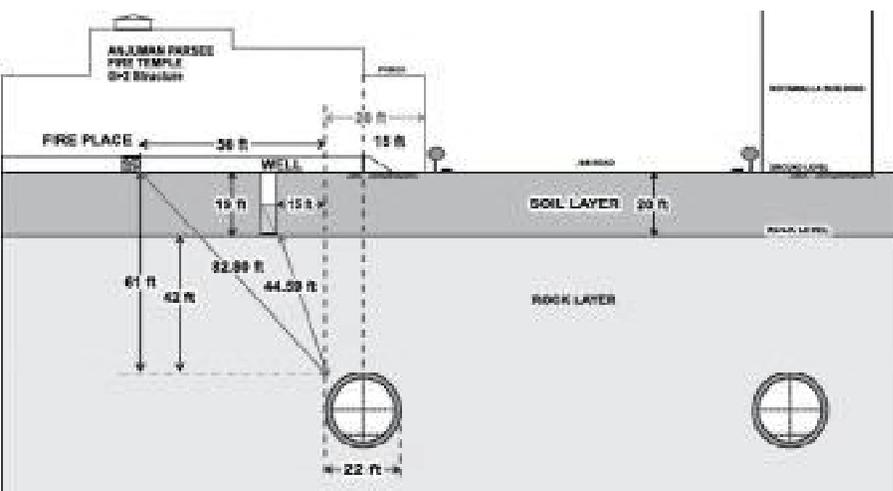
MUMBAI METRO LINE 3: TUNNEL CROSS-SECTION



- distance formed between the closest point of the tunnel to the very base of our well is 62.28 feet.
- Our Kebla (sanctum sanctorum) is situated '22 feet' away from the closest point of the nearest tunnel.
- The depth of the tunnel from our ground area is '65 feet', which includes 20 feet soil-layer + 46 feet rock-layer.
- According to this understanding, the tunnel is not passing underneath our sanctum sanctorum, thereby the diagonal distance formed between the closest point of the tunnel to the point of kebla is 68.62 feet.

Addressing the main concern as regards the Wadiaji Atash Behram structure getting affected due to the vibrations when the tunnel construction begins, Mr Gupta said, "Firstly, I would like to mention that your structure, apart from being a heritage site, is the strongest in the area" compared to all the other buildings. It is in extremely good condition with its low weight, wooden rafter roofs and other components. Structures such as religious places, important infrastructures and heritage sites are termed as 'sensitive areas' by us and we follow a very stringent criteria with regard to its impact, while carrying out the process. We put strong limitations and even slow down the tunnel digging, which takes place along with the concrete steel shield, created as a result of a collaborative process. This slowing down of digging is done to contain the vibrations. As far as our last reading of vibrations are concerned, we have measured 2mm/sec vibrations, while the permissible limit allowed at any heritage site is 5mm/sec."

ANJUMAN ATASH BEHRAM



Understanding The Specifics:

- The ground underneath consists of 20 feet soil layer, the rest is rock layer.
- Calculating from the footpath of Anjuman Atash Behram, the tunnel is passing 26 feet (horizontally) underneath, which is the Atash Behram's porch area, considering the staircases, too.
- Well: The depth of the Atash Behram's well is 19 feet (a similar understanding that shows the soil level concluding at 20 feet)
- The tunnel to be dug is 42 feet into the rock layer, after the well base concludes.

The horizontal distance between the base of the well to the closest point of the tunnel is 15 feet. Hence, the diagonal distance formed between the closest point of the tunnel to the very base of our well is 44.59 feet.

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- Sanctum Sanctorum: The distance between the Kebla to the closest point of the nearest tunnel is 56 feet. The depth of the tunnel from our ground area is 61 feet, which includes 20 feet soil-layer plus 41 feet rock-layer.
- According to this understanding, the tunnel is *not passing underneath our sanctum sanctorum*, thereby the diagonal distance formed between the closest point of the tunnel to the point of kebla is 82.80 feet.

Addressing the main concern as regards the Anjuman Atash Behram structure, Mr Gupta said, “*We are going to follow the exact same strict limitations and criteria for Anjuman Atash Behram as we are doing for Wadiaji Atash Behram, so the vibrations will be extremely low and well within the permissible limit.*”

The legal teams representing the cause of the safety of Atash Behrams decided to approach the Supreme Court to continue fighting for the cause of protecting the community’s integral Atash Behrams, with legal luminaries - Fali Nariman and Zerick Dastur appearing on behalf of the Petitioners. Unfortunately, after hearings, in December the Supreme Court rejected the demand by the four Parsi petitioners to stop construction work of the Mumbai underground metro on religious grounds, adding, “*Two high priests of your community have said that construction will not impact on the fire temple ... the MMRCL is maintaining distance from the wells ... which could be contaminated.*”

Even so, in keeping with the constant efforts of our community, in January 2019, the MMRCL informed the Supreme Court that it would shift the Kalbadevi Metro III station 20 metres away from the nearest boundary wall of the Wadiaji Atash Behram, bringing a partial sense of relief to the Parsis. Speaking to Parsi Times, Jamshed Sukhadwala said, “*The legal battle, which was the last resort, lasted for eight long months, started in May 2018... It has united the community like never before, which is a very positive sign. I believe that this partial victory is thanks to the selfless efforts of a number of people who definitely deserve to be mentioned including Sr Counsel Fali Nariman; Adv and Solicitor Bakhtawar Karbhari; Adv Zerick Dastur, Adv Ryan Karanjawala & Co (Delhi); architect Hafiz Contractor and his team; as also the entire legal and technical teams, the Co-petitioners and all the community members for their wholehearted support.*”



However, just before Jamshedi Navroze, in March 2019, the community was disheartened and vexed to read news reports that the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) had realigned Metro 2B near Bandra-Kurla-Complex due to security concerns for Shiv Sena (political party) Chief Uddhav Thackeray’s residence ‘Matoshree’. Speaking with the media, Jamshed Sukhadwala said, “*They have violated our religious sentiments. They destroyed the sanctity and desecrated our ancient and holy*

fire temples. They considered realignment for a particular family’s safety. We have no objection to that. But, it shows that the planning was never perfect. All such issues should have been taken into consideration while planning and preparing the estimate of the project. This also means that the authorities can consider the suggestions selectively, if they want to.”

The move has been considered blatantly biased and has hurt the sentiments of the Parsi community. Voicing the general sentiment of the Parsi community, BPP Trustee and the community’s leading visionary, Kersi Randeria, shared, “*Our Community’s prime concern went unaddressed, leaving us disappointed, as the non-responsive Government machinery failed to accede to the extremely reasonable request of a minority community, known for its unparalleled contributions to the city and the nation.*” ■■■■



Bombay-based Editor of the leading community weekly, Parsi Times, Anahita Subedar is a seasoned media professional with two decades of rich experience in the field of Media, Communications and Coaching. An MBA in Marketing and a Life/Corporate Coach, she completed her Masters in Communications from the reputed Xavier College of Communications and shares her expertise as a Journalist, Public Relations & Brand Consultant, Coach and Educator. She’s the recipient of numerous literary and professional awards and is an ardent dog-lover.

Mr Fali Nariman - a living legend

by feroza jassawala

There are some great minds that create an indelible mark of genius in their life and career. Fali Sam Nariman is one such personality. Over the decades, he has attained the iconic status of a pre-eminent jurist and is a Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court since 1971. Fali Nariman is also an internationally known jurist in International Arbitration. His views are not only heard in the corridors of power – both judicial and political, but also greatly revered and respected.

Fali was born to Sam and Banoo Nariman in Rangoon, Burma in 1929. He grew up a single child and described his childhood as a “cloudlessly happy one,” until Japan declared War on the Allied Powers in 1941 and then targeted Rangoon in air attacks.

When Rangoon was seized, the Nariman family was forced to embark on a long overland journey to India, which lasted 21 days – through forests by bullock cart, by country boat and up and down mountainous terrain by foot. When they arrived at a refugee camp in Imphal, they were informed that Rangoon was captured by the Japanese Army. “There was no going back now,” recalls Nariman wistfully.

From Dimapur to Calcutta and then to Delhi – marked the first turning point in young Nariman’s life, landing as a refugee from Burma, uprooted from hearth and home. He enrolled at the Bishop Cotton School in Shimla in 1942, in the Junior Cambridge class and then completed a BA Hons Degree in History & Economics from St Xavier’s College, Bombay. “Since there were few options for a second class Arts students, I joined the Government Law College in Bombay in 1948,” he recalls.

The next turning point in Mr Nariman’s life was when he joined the Bombay Bar in November 1950. “During my early days at

the Bar, I came to know and learnt a great deal from professional jurists just by listening to them and watching them perform,” he reveals.

After practicing in Bombay for nearly 22 years, Fali Nariman moved to Delhi in May 1972 as Additional Solicitor General of India for a term of three years. He, however, resigned from the post on 27 June 1975 in protest when Internal Emergency was imposed by Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. He was the only Government Official to do so.

After his resignation as Additional Solicitor General of India, international recognition came his way. Mr Nariman was elected as a member of the International Commission of Jurists, Geneva and later in 1989, he was appointed as Vice Chairman of the International Chamber of Commerce Court of International Arbitration, Paris. He was re-appointed for four successive terms till he voluntarily retired from the Court in December 2005.

He was also elected Chairman of the International Council for Commercial Arbitration in 1994, re-elected for another four years and attended meetings in Stockholm and several cities around the world. Fali Nariman was Chairman of the Executive Committee of Jurists, from 1995-97 and Co-Chairman of Human Rights Institute of the International Bar Association from 2001-2004. As Vice President (1979-85) and President (1985-87) of LAW ASIA, Mr Nariman visited many parts of Asia, particularly the Philippines.



"In life, there are no unmixed blessings. With international recognition, there also came International criticism for my assuming the role of lead advocate for Union Carbide Corporation in the civil litigation arising out of the Bhopal Gas tragedy," confesses the legal luminary.

In 1998, when Gujarat witnessed many incidents of Church burning, Mr Fali Nariman was then handling the "Narmada Water disputes," matter in the Supreme Court for the State of Gujarat. He called upon the Additional Secretary of the State of Gujarat twice to stop burning of Churches and to protect Christians. When there was no response to his plea, he returned the brief for the State of Gujarat in which he was regularly appearing for more than six years. He further helped this matter evolve into a case in the Supreme Court of India.

Fali Nariman is the author of several books. He has written numerous newspaper articles and made television appearances defending Constitutional and Minority issues over the last 50 years. He fought for the Fundamental Rights of the Jehovah's Witnesses before the Supreme Court of India to protect their rights and readmit children to schools from where they had been expelled for non-joining in singing the National Anthem.

Mr Nariman has regularly appeared for Muslim and Christian minority educational institutions to protect their autonomous and educational rights. He has championed secular values all his life. Fali Nariman also enjoys the position of India's most distinguished Constitutional Lawyer and has argued several leading cases.

Internationally acclaimed as a "Living Legend," Mr Fali Nariman has been conferred the Padma Bhushan (1991), Padma Vibhushan (2007) Awards and the Gruber Prize for Justice. He was nominated by the President of India to the Rajya Sabha from 1999-2005.

More recently, he was awarded the 19th Lal Bahadur Shastri National Award for Excellence in Public Administration. He was presented the Award by Vice President of India, Venkaiah Naidu at a function in New

Delhi on 14 November 2018. Mr Naidu hailed Mr Nariman's humility, courage and integrity which defined the true spirit of this Award. The Lal Bahadur Shastri National Award was instituted in 1999 by the Lal Bahadur Shastri Institute of Management in memory of India's



second Prime Minister. It is awarded annually to an Indian who is an exceptionally outstanding and distinguished business leader and management administrator, for his sustained individual contribution and achievements in the Public domain. The Award consists of a cash award of Rs500,000, a citation and plaque of honour.

Mr Nariman is best known for his sense of humour and great contributions to the Indian Law system. He is an eloquent speaker known for his positive attitude, ready wit and smiling personality which has endeared him to audiences worldwide.

In his personal life, Fali Nariman married Bapsi Contractor from Bombay in October 1955. "Bapsi Nariman has supported me through thick and thin. If I have made something of my life it is entirely due to her," he confesses sincerely. Mrs Nariman, is an excellent chef, publisher of eight cookbooks, a dedicated social worker and President Emeritus of the Delhi Commonwealth Women's Association. She is also the greatest support and backbone of the Nariman family.

Bapsi Nariman brought up their son, Rohinton and daughter Anaheeta when they were young, and insisted that Fali Nariman

accept the nomination to the Upper House of Parliament, of which he was reluctant. "She exerted every nerve to see that we bought the house we now happily live in," he adds.

The Nariman family comprises of son Rohinton who is an ordained Zoroastrian priest, former Solicitor General of India and is presently serving as a Judge in the Supreme Court of India. Daughter-in-Law Sanaya, is a writer for Indiccana Learning formerly Encyclopedia Britannica, Science Textbooks and espouses social causes. Mr Nariman's daughter Anaheeta, works at the Hinduja Hospital, Mumbai and assists children with special needs in schools.

Mr & Mrs Nariman have two granddaughters, Nina and Khursheed Nariman. Nina is married to Rohan Alva and practices law. The Narimans are also doting great-grandparents to Zarina, aged two years and Cyrus, aged seven months.



Fali & Bapsy Nariman with their family

He celebrated his 90th birthday in January this year, when Fali Nariman mentioned, "Our sense of humour has become zero today. Also our sense of fun!" This best sums up his positive attitude towards life that keeps him fit and active.

"The essential thing in life is not conquering but fighting well. After 67 years at the Bar, I have come to realize that justice is elusive, sometimes unpredictable and often unsatisfying," concludes the iconic personality. ■■■■

Zarathushti Knight of the Round Table

by zerbanoo gifford

One of the joys of growing older and being semi-retired is that you can choose what you do. These days I seldom accept invitations to speak at gatherings, yet I am still intrigued to attend functions at places that catch my historical imagination. So, when I was asked to be the guest speaker at the Guinevere dinner to an audience of the Knights of the Round Table at the Worshipful Company of Barber Surgeons in the City of London, even I was tempted. The Society of the Knights of the Round Table is a three-hundred-year-old organisation founded by Prince Frederick, the son of George I and the father of George II of England. The exclusive Society was set up to follow the chivalry of the knights of old with emphasis on (courtesy, mercy, faith, generosity and hospitality) as their model following in the footsteps of the legendary King Arthur and his knights. The Society's Coat of Arms; a shield depicting the Grail Cup, a helmet, crest and the Society's motto "Non Nobis Solum Sed Toto Mundi Nati" – 'Not for us alone but for the whole world created'. In 2003, following the sudden death of the then Knight President, Patrick, Earl of Limerick, the Society, hitherto an all-male club, elected to welcome lady knights. Sylvia, Countess of Limerick became the first lady knight. The succeeding Knight Presidents have been The Earl of Athlone followed sequentially by Lord Sempill, Simon, Earl of Dalhousie, Major General Douglas Kendrew, Lord Marshall of Leeds, General Sir Edward Burgess, Major General Mike Walsh, Patrick, Earl of Limerick to the present President, Admiral Lord West of Spithead.

I was drawn to the knights from the time I was a young girl. I was enchanted with the famous knights of old, their heroic deeds and the glamour of Camelot. Also, many of the more prestigious knights, including Dickens, Lord Tennyson and the founder of the scouting movement, Lord Baden Powell as well as many distinguished members of



Arms of the Society



President King Arthur and Admiral Lord West of Spithead greeting Zerbanoo

the Royal Houses of Europe. All campaigners for truth and social progress. I shall never forget that evening in the Barber Surgeon Hall when I was the guest of honour at the annual Guinevere dinner. I was welcomed by the knights and ushered into the grand hall. The evening was full of wit and I sparkled because my audience were the most receptive, delightful knights who were interested in everything from A to Z, from the Advancement of women to my Zoroastrian heritage.

The Barber Surgeons are one of the original Guilds in Medieval Europe. Unbelievably, barbers and surgeons had overlapped their duties for many years, largely because in the thirteenth century Pope Honorarius III had prohibited all persons in holy orders from practicing medicine in any form. So the barbers who used to shave the priests' beards used to also sharpen their knives and venture into surgery and elementary dentistry. This was the beginning of one of the most powerful livery companies and has changed the way that I now look at surgeons!

Some weeks after that memorable evening, I was asked whether I would be interested in joining the Society of the Round table as one of their few women knights. I was

wooed. I was told that I had been asked on account of my globally recognised work in the field of human rights and the founding the ASHA Centre in the Forest of Dean for the young. The work of ASHA reflected the charitable work undertaken by the Society of Knights to ensure talented young people from the diverse fields of arts, music, law and medicine were given financial support to undertake their studies.

I was ceremoniously knighted in November by the present President and acting 'King Arthur,' the Admiral Lord West of Spithead, at a fabulous event, worthy of Camelot, at the Armourers' Hall in London. Yet another one of the ancient livery companies of the City of London. Attending with me was my husband Richard and my own personal knight, our youngest son, play-writer Alex; and the director of the ASHA Centre, Adrian Locher. Both Alex and Adrian escorted me to the knighting ceremony as ancient symbols of my two squires who then presented me to King Arthur.



L to R : Adrian Locher, play-writer Alex (Zerbanoo's younger son), Zerbanoo and Richard (her husband)

The present Knights, all with outstanding credentials in the fields of politics, business, the arts and the armed forces, were fascinated by my explanation of Zoroastrianism as they have never had a Zoroastrian Knight grace their society. Interestingly, a knight takes an oath to stay with their religion and do good among their own people and the global community. Everything the knights stand for is what we Zoroastrians have a deep understanding and respect for. Philanthropy, compassion for the weaker members of society, fighting corruption and greed and doing good deeds. All basic tenets of our Zoroastrian faith.

At the evening of my investiture, the guest speaker was the extraordinary Cressida Dick, the first woman head of the London Metropolitan Police. For me it was the most auspicious of evenings, as it was exactly 100 years to that day that women were given the vote. So much of my life had been involved in ensuring women take their rightful place in political life. In a century woman seem to have caught up very quickly in Britain. The Prime Minister is a woman, as are the leaders of the Scottish and Northern Ireland Parliaments and the House of Lords. The leaders of the Trade Union Movement, Confederation of British Industry, the Post Office and the London Fire Brigade are also women. Even the BBC's new Dr Who has become a woman as well as the age-old bastion of male knighthood has now welcomed a woman, - a Zoroastrian one at that!



The Honourable Society of Knights of the Round Table, also known as The Knights of the Round Table Club, is a British society which exists to perpetuate the name and fame of King Arthur and the ideals for which he stood. It meets at the Lansdowne Club, Mayfair.

The society was formed at the Fountain Coffee House in 1720, the site of the former Savoy Palace on London's Strand. Its membership was drawn from authors, actors, artists, and their patrons. Famous members included David Garrick, who was a member from 1761 to 1776, and Charles Dickens.

The Zoroastrian Principles of an Environmental NGO

by kitayun rustom

It is ironic that every Zoroastrian espouses the three basic tenets of the religion namely "Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds". However, when it comes to understanding and practicing "Good Deeds" there is a loss of clarity. They forget that the main duty of Zoroastrians is to care for nature and its Seven Bounteous Creations viz the sky, water, earth, plants, animals, man and fire! Though repeatedly taught in our religion, we rarely protect our planet by taking the right actions. Zoroastrians need to understand that man's very survival is dependent on nature and hence, take care of every element of nature.

Good Deeds to protect the environment has been the guiding light for the Centre for Environmental Research and Education (CERE), a Mumbai-based not-for-profit organization founded by two dynamic Parsi women in 2002. Unlike other organisations that worked mainly for wildlife conservation at the turn of the century, CERE was clear that nothing was wrong with the Seven Bounteous Creations of nature and its ecosystems, but rather the problem lay in human beings and their destructive interactions with the planet be it in terms of deforestation, pollution, unplanned urbanization and loss of wildlife habitats. We humans had moved into lifestyles and consumption patterns that are beyond the carrying capacity of our planet. It is this lack of 'Good Deeds' and ability to live in harmony with nature that has steadily destroyed our planet.

Dr (Ms) Rashneh N Pardiwala, who had returned to India armed with a PhD on Climate Change from the University of Edinburgh, UK, founded CERE with a paltry sum of Rs1,000, and joining Rashneh in her mission was Kitayun Rustom who had spent 18 years of her life in various court battles to save the environment from illegal



L to R : Kitayun Rustom & Rashneh Pardiwala

development projects. Both women were uncertain of the road ahead for CERE but they knew the organisation would stay true to its identity and always be different in three distinct ways:

The First Difference – their focus would be on ‘humans’ and to help them take the right actions for nature and learn to live in harmony with all other species. Therefore, the key focus of CERE is to promote environmental sustainability through formal education, government

partnerships, corporate collaborations, grass-root level projects and awareness campaigns.

The Second Difference – no more court cases as litigation is a tedious short-term approach while awareness and education is the path forward. We need to change the mindsets of the population, including policy makers, business heads, political leaders and entire communities to bring about change. People are the problem so only people can be the solution and education would be the tool. However, unfortunately most education today is restricted to book knowledge with no practical skills. At CERE, the concept of “Action to Knowledge” is promoted because actions are more important than mere knowledge. We need to walk the talk. Based on this vision, CERE has undertaken numerous turnkey projects such as ‘Schools for Solar’ wherein CERE installs rooftop solar panels for electrification on low income schools and conducts educational sessions for the students so that :

(a) the school adopts renewable energy and draws less from the main grid supplying electricity from mainly coal based thermal power plants,

(b) students learn about environmental issues, undertake carbon footprints, energy audits of the school and become Climate Change Ambassadors, and
(c) savings from solar power are channelized back in the school to help improve the infrastructure and teaching programmes. All the educational material that CERE develops is primarily activity based and provides experiential learning.

A case in point is the SP Native Biodiversity Garden at Alibaug, developed by CERE as a Learning Resource Centre where biology books come alive and students learn about biodiversity conservation through observation and interaction. CERE has developed educational material for other outdoor experiential learning centres across India like the Toyota Eco-Park in Bidadi and the Wipro Wetland Park in Bangalore.

CERE has also developed the learning programme for NCERT, India’s nodal educational agency where the programme would reach over 50 lakh secondary school teachers. CERE believes that we need add one more “R” to literacy which till now is - **Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic** - but now we should add ‘**Resource literacy**’ as the fourth ‘R’. Without *resource literacy* our children and grandchildren will inherit a depleted and unsustainable planet.

The Third Difference – focus on the polluters, the manufacturers, large scale consumers of natural resources and the creators of the environmental problems. Work closely with this segment of society and show them the solutions by creating models of a green economy because business cannot flourish on a dead planet. Environmental sustainability cannot be promoted as an ideology but instead has to be accepted as an economic imperative. CERE has been working for the past 10 years to help companies green their systems and processes.

Based on these three main principles, CERE has innovatively created and designed a slew of projects in the field of environmental sustainability. Foremost

amongst them is the *Carbon Map & Cap Program* wherein CERE undertakes carbon mitigation for large multinationals to reduce their carbon footprint. Furthermore, promotes carbon offset through their *Urban Afforestation Project* in which CERE has grown over 50,000 large, native trees in cities across India such as Mumbai, Delhi, Gurgaon, Pune, Jaipur, Nashik and Bikaner. This project has helped sequester or absorb over 11,283 Metric Tones of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and helped create natural habitats for flora and fauna. In fact, most of the afforestation sites have now become homes for a host of birds, insects, reptiles and small mammals. CERE has also planted over 3000 trees at the Parsi Doongerwadi (Tower of Silence) in Mumbai since 2015. CERE plantation sites serve as small islands of biodiversity and the endeavour is to green our concrete jungles, slowly but surely.

Like the Zoroastrian Farohar that holds a ring in the centre which symbolises the eternity of the soul, CERE works in a circular manner with a 360 degree approach, creating values for everyone involved. Last year CERE developed Mumbai's largest Rainwater Harvesting System in partnership with the Mumbai Police where each monsoon season, over 38.8 million litres of water is harvested. The project was envisaged for the purpose of augmenting the water supply for the entire police precinct housing over 2500 families of the constabulary. However, besides conserving water, the project also helped prevent flooding in the entire neighbourhood.

Recently, the US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) which runs the USPACOM's Environmental Security Program, approached CERE for executing sustainability training programmes. "We were impressed by your organization's creativity and successful track record, so hope we are able to move forward with partnering," wrote Lynda Arakelian one of USPACOM's sustainability partners.

CERE's unique ability to innovate in the space of environmental education and

sustainability has made it a pioneer in this space. CERE has developed several e-learning programmes and has published 28 titles to-date. CERE's English Reader Series entitled '*A Wisdom of Words*' is being used as prescribed curriculum text books by many prominent and progressive schools of India. These readers prove how social and environmental messages are best learnt through the medium of stories. CERE has created short films and e-learning modules on topics ranging from biodiversity to a green office. It has developed the award-winning, first green Financial Literacy Course aptly titled *Dhan Gyan* which has been used by over 50,000 learners from every state and union territory of India. Another award winning project of CERE has been creating the first solar forest in the form of an outdoor educational art installation called *Surya Aranya* or 'Forest of the Sun' that lights up the garden lights of an office campus in Mumbai. CERE has designed the first solar powered ATM machine for a bank which has spurred a revolution in the banking sector.

Over the years, CERE has grown from strength to strength from humble beginnings – the organization was bravely started with just a hope in our hearts and the conviction to do meaningful work. We fondly remember how kind-hearted individuals supported our endeavours while we found our feet, who encouraged us at every step of the way – one of whom sponsored the first rainwater harvesting project of CERE at Malcom Baug in Jogeshwari, Mumbai.

With sheer hard work and unwavering resolve to be true to the guiding principles of the organization, rooted in the tenants of Zoroastrianism, CERE has now progressed to large impact rural and urban projects and finally, the efforts of CERE has gained wide spread recognition. Members of CERE have served and are on the board of numerous governmental and non-governmental bodies, such as MMR-EIS, BMC – Gardens Committee, Dahanu Regional Planning Authority, Human Rights Law Network, Board of Studies of St Xavier's College and many others. In 2005, Rashneh and Katy

Sponsored by the World Zarathushtrian Trust Fund

were both recognized as 'Social Entrepreneur for Change' and awarded the Ashoka Fellowship in 2005. In 2009 Dr Pardiwala was selected as one of Asia's 21 Young Leaders in Tokyo and became an Asia Society Fellow. In 2011, Rashneh was selected by the Svenska Institute in Stockholm for an exchange programme on Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability. In 2013, Dr Pardiwala was awarded the Ford Fellowship to Columbia University, New York.

CERE hopes more and more communities and individuals will join hands to protect nature. We hope we can convince more Zoroastrians that Good Deeds is about living in harmony on this planet and conserving precious resources by taking the right actions for a better future.



Experiential Learning at the SP Biodiversity Gardens. Check <http://www.spbiodiversitygardens.com/>



Rainwater Harvesting Inauguration by Police Commissioner



Snakeweed flowers



Dancing Girl Ginger Orchid at SP Biodiversity Garden



Schools on Solar



Asian Wasp Moth at the SP Biodiversity Garden

Domestic Violence - What can I do about it

by benaifer bhandari

The Gathas say *“You, who have given your heart to good thought, reject anger and resist injustice. And in this way spread the doctrine of justice to join the forces of right-minded companions ...”*

I have changed the word *“righteousness”* to *“justice”* because then this phrase means so much more to me – as a woman, as a minority woman and as a warrior against injustice in my own small way.

The nature of my work has me mentoring front line advocates who support Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) women in the heart of London who, with the most complex of barriers and needs, find themselves in extreme isolation and deprivation and facing domestic violence. They have no one to turn to, as often those who are physically closest to them are part of the problem. Many have left their family and support structure back home in Bangladesh or Somalia and are alone facing the anger and injustice that our Gathas refer to.

Perhaps we believe that domestic violence isn't that big a deal? Two million adults a year experience domestic abuse in the UK. Women are twice as likely to be victims as men. It's a big deal. It's a huge deal. In 2005 it was nine million. So if you or I are not in a position to help, someone is because the number is dropping. Of course, these crimes are never recorded accurately anyway and nowhere more so than in the Asian community. With our strange morals around protecting family members no matter what, the way our women fear what others may say and therefore be ostracised and left to fend for themselves, reporting becomes even less likely. In addition, in a predominantly white country one may fear not being dealt with fairly by the police who are meant to protect.

A study conducted in India in 2005 found that of those in relationships, 33% of

women were likely to be victims of domestic violence. Let me repeat that – a third of women in India are abused. Think of all the women you know who are really close to you and imagine a third of them living in abject fear. That's the reality in India. She is not always hidden.

She may be the one we walk past, or sit next to on public transport. Maybe we see her in the store, or begging as a homeless person. Perhaps she's sitting opposite us, decked out in beautiful clothes and jewels at a dinner party. We see the sadness in her eyes and every bit of us knows something is not right. What do we do?

Mostly? Nothing. We do nothing. Because to do something would mean risking the wrath of someone who already looks unstable. Secondly, reaching out challenges us and the time constraints we conveniently place all around us – oh the good we could do if only we had the time – time. And lastly, making an actual connection would make that woman a mirror and in facing her difficulties, we would have to look at ours. Our own barriers are high as a self protection mechanism.

This self protection has to be moderated – it has become a 'thing' in its own right, a barricade over which we peer every now and then. We can justify this barrier in so many righteous ways I have a career which means I'm too busy, my children's education takes all of my attention etc, etc. The list is endless because these are much easier challenges to deal with than to connect with a woman who is in urgent need of support.

Here are some questions; what is the point in having a career and success at the expense of suffering around us; what is the point in focussing on our children's academic education whilst modelling that it's ok to ignore a fellow sister in need; and why pray

every day, profess to be a Zoroastrian and not practice good deeds by actually reaching out to someone who is desperate?



I'm not suggesting for a minute that we all stop what we are doing, put our lives on hold to become counsellors for everyone in need. Actually, that is *exactly* what I am not saying. When did helping someone become separate from our every day

lives, instead of an integral part of our existence? In a simpler time, when we lived in villages and small towns, a woman in need would have been supported by the women around her. The village's daily rhythm would not have missed a beat, yet in our nuclear family model we have become weaker and somehow unable to reach out without envisioning great disruption in our personal existence.

One of the most beautiful things in Islam is the system of Ramadan, to remind us to think viscerally of those who have so much less than us. The system is so progressive that it also has a fall back caveat for those who really cannot fast. They can do it another time in the year or give something in return – money or service.

Arguably, in Zoroastrian-ism we have it *much* harder. With our emphasis on free will through the support of the Great Spirit of Wisdom we all are born with, we have to create our own systems with our own caveats. We have to make the choice every day, and the point of daily prayer is to remind us of that responsibility we have, to protect our environment – including our vulnerable members of society. Perhaps if we really can't do so because of other pressures we put on ourselves, we can take inspiration from our Muslim sisters and brothers, who give so much to charity from every pay-packet whether in Ramadan or not. We can look for a support service for

vulnerable women and see what we can do to help them do the work of reaching out to women who face violence, supporting them in their great need to be safe and help them find a brighter future.

My charity, Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre, is one of many such vital services around the country and around the world. I am sure in your closest town there will be a Women's Refuge of some kind where those facing violence can have sanctuary. You may not be able to find the contact details easily – to protect these vulnerable women from those who may be looking for them. But if we make it part of our responsibility to be good Zoroastrians, we can always find a way to make a donation, or pass on our children's clothes, or leave a food parcel.

Imagine the example we would be setting our children if we talked about domestic violence, why it happens and, what as a Zoroastrian, we can do about that. Those discussions would be so valuable in raising conscious children who can see their worth to society beyond academic distinctions. That is what the Gathas ask of us. Nowhere does it say go get the best education always and have a good job that earns lots of money, eat good food and then die. What being a Zoroastrian demands of us is much richer, has much more depth and is definitely much more challenging than all of that.

The question is, are we up for that challenge of auditing our way of life? Are we up for critically appraising how we spend our waking hours and our hard earned money? Can we prioritise in our lives one of the main principles of being a Zoroastrian and choose the one path that is goodness because goodness is happiness which belong to one who wants goodness only for goodness's sake? This is what we pray for with every *Ashem Vohu* we utter, we're half way there – all we need to do is to action these utterances.

In a world with such extreme deprivation and suffering, I ask you to consider an action – even if that action is actually just a thought – towards women in this world who

Benaifer Bhandari is the CEO of Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre, London, supporting many including those facing domestic violence, isolation, and an uncertain future – helping help them see that there is hope beyond suffering. Her work is an integral part of her life as she and her family strive to live the constantly challenging principles of Zoroastrianism with every word and action. www.hopscotchawc.org.uk

suffer at the hands of those who should be loving and honouring them. Find that nearest refuge or women's centre and make a donation, or actually reach out with a loving word to someone you know is silently suffering. She needs an ally and you, as a Zoroastrian and warrior for peace, can be that ally.



Parsi Cyclists and Their Global Expeditions

by anoop babani

After three decades of hectic work-life, I moved from the maddening megapolis of Mumbai to idyllic coastal state of Goa – once a favourite abode of flower-children and hippies, and now home to some insanely-rich Indians and yuppies. Few years after moving to Goa, I took to cycling. I have never been a cyclist; it's impossible to be one in Mumbai. I came to cycling rather late, in my sixties, and unexpectedly – a chance meeting with a neighbourly duo of passionate and professional peddlers whose inspiration eventually worked the magic.

I took to cycling almost instantly, discovering not only did I adore it but was good at it. Riding solo on hills and through thick, green cover – amidst bird songs, crisp air and morning light filtering through trees – soon became, and has remained, a singularly spiritual experience. Once addicted, you can never cease to be a cyclist.

In late 2017, I fell off my bike, badly injuring rib cage. 'No surgery, no medication, only rest' was the medical mantra. Barred from cycling for weeks, I chose to read about it. This curiosity about my predecessors gradually unveiled that it were well-to-do Indians, mainly in Bombay and Calcutta, who took to cycling in 1890s inspired by their British peers. The cycles were predominantly imported, British-made and heavy on pocket – used for leisure, sports, fitness and even global journeys!

Global journeys on cycles! That sounded incredulous and unrealistic. Digging deeper,

I was amazed to discover that a group of six cyclists – all of them Parsis from Bombay and in their mid-twenties – had actually ventured on such an incredible journey way back in 1923 and three of them did complete it over next four and half years.

This trio – Adi B Hakim, Jal P Bapasola, and Rustom B Bhumgara – became first Indian globetrotters to undertake most arduous journey of their lives, peddling 71,000 kms – at times in 60 C, for days without food and some days without water, across pirate-infested territories and in swamp lands, through dense jungles and “up 6,600 ft amongst the terrible solitudes of the Alps”.

On returning to Bombay on March 18, 1928, Hakim, Bapasola and Bhumgara recalled being “surrounded by people who had come to receive us ... and garlanded till we were buried in flowers,” and hoped that “the public of Bombay will not fail to extend (“unique welcome”) to another son of Mother India – Scouter F J Davar, who is shortly due in Bombay on the conclusion of a similar enterprise.”

'So, they weren't the only ones, then', I was astounded once again! Three months after Super Six had commenced their ride in October 1923, Framroze J Davar – another Parsi from Bombay and a sports-journalist – embarked upon similar expedition in January 1924. His was the most adventurous, lengthier and in-part, a solitary journey. The 30-year-old Davar initially peddled more than 5,000 km entirely on his own, till he reached Austria 11 months later.

peddle 110,000 km across 52 countries and five continents, over next seven years!

Davar returned to India in October 1931. Eighteen months later, in April 1933, yet another trio of Parsi cyclists from Bombay — Keki J Kharas, Rustam D Ghandhi and Rutton D Shroff – decided to girdle the globe on their humble bikes. They rode for almost nine years and traversed 84,000 km spanning five continents, before returning home in January 1942.

Despite these grueling and perilous journeys, the cyclists maintained meticulous diaries and shot awesome photographs. All of this makes a story of human ingenuity and courage, penned and pictured by those who rode streets of the world in 1920s and 1930s – through a Europe devastated by First World War, newly-emerging America, strife-torn East Asia, deserts of Sahara and Mesopotamia, jungles of Amazon and mountains of Alps and Andes!

An avid cyclist myself, I couldn't resist telling these completely unknown stories about India's 'Unsung Heroes'. So, I decided to do research and work on a book about these sensational cyclists on their exciting expeditions. While their chronicles are a fascinating and insightful read, they don't reveal much about the cyclists themselves. Who were they? What inspired them to take on these dangerous and impossible expeditions? How did they finance their journeys? What was their post-glory life? Were they recognized by their country and/or community? Or, did they die as 'unsung heroes'?

To find answers, I needed to track down their families, friends and relatives. In the last one and a half years, I have been able to trace some of them, scattered within and outside India. They have been extremely kind and supportive, narrating interesting stories about their fathers, grandfathers or grand-uncles, as the case may be.

For instance, the first group of six cyclists, all of them Parsis in their twenties and members of erstwhile Bombay Weightlifting

Club — Adi B Hakim, Gustad G Hathiram, Jal P Bapasola, Keki D Pochkhanawala, Nariman B Kapadia and Rustom B Bhumgara – left on their global expeditions with Rs 2,000 each. "They were all working boys and had dug into their savings", reveals 78-year-old Rohinton Bhumgara, only child of Rustom Bhumgara. He also cites a public lecture at Bombay's Oval Maidan in 1920 by a French man "who had walked from Europe to India, and my father and his buddies were so impressed by his experiences that they decided to see the world on their bikes." On the other hand, according to Jasmine Marshall, granddaughter of Adi Hakim: "There was an extraordinary zeal of adventure in my granddad. 'Nothing is impossible', he would always tell me. A passion, I am sure, shared by all his cycle-mates."

Or this awe-inspiring story about Framroze Davar, narrated to me by Homi Bhabha, 75, a retired pharmaceutical industry executive. Bhabha was nine years old when he first met Framroze Davar in 1952. Davar was then 58 and completely blind. "In those days, I remember two cyclists Kersi Vajifdar and Adi Mistry used to organize cycling trips of Parsi boys from central Bombay to Tansa Lake or Taloja, a distance of 100 kms each way. Even though Framroze Davar was blind, he would cycle all the way, guided by Kersi and Adi on his either side. This scene is etched in my memory forever," reveals Homi Bhabha.

While I was interviewing and building oral histories, our Goa-based film club, Saxtti Films, had joined hands with Ravindra Bhavan Margao to organize an international sports Film Festival on twin-theme of Running and Cycling in December 2018. So in the interim, I decided to work on an exhibition of photographs that I had acquired from families and friends, so as to showcase it during the Film Festival.

The first edition of this photo exhibition comprises 30 photographs and is titled '**Our Saddles, Our Butts, Their World: Global Rides on Humble Bikes by Indians in 1920s**'. It was inaugurated by India's best-

known sports-person and athlete P T Usha and was visited by over 1,000 persons during its 5-day-long display at Ravindra Bhavan Margao, in Goa, India.

Currently, my task of tracking down families of a few cyclists, and taking the photo exhibition to other cities — to propagate these extraordinary global bicycling expeditions — continues. The time is opportune as cycling is gradually but surely making a comeback — on the back of rising concerns about environment, health and fitness, particularly among urban communities all over the world.

To tell these stories to younger generation, preserve them for future and to perpetuate memories of global cyclists, I have taken upon myself to (a) approach a Parsi business house to build a museum in Mumbai dedicated to these cyclists and (b) to canvass and persuade Indian government to confer national awards on these 'Unsung Heroes' of India, posthumously.



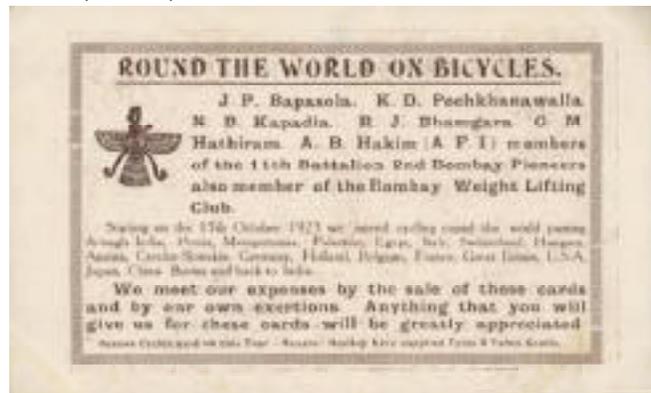
Hakim, Bapasola and Bhungara



Adi Hakim, Jal Bapasola and Rustom Bhungara return to Bombay after 5 years



Hakim Trio in Shanghai



Donations Cards Sold by Cyclists to Raise Funds

Sponsored by the World Zarathushtrian Trust Fund



F. J. Davar - Agadez 30/12
after crossing Sahara

Framroze Davar after Crossing Sahara Desert



Framroze and Gustav in Nigeria



Framroze and Gustav atop Andes Mountains



Keki Kharas, Rustam Gandhi and Rutton Shroff in New York, USA

HEADLINES

3 Parsee Cyclists here from Bombay

3 ,000 Miles on Bicycle, 13,000 by Train or Ship, Since Leaving India in 1933

To spend 2 weeks in city

They Plan to See New England and Canada, the West, China, Japan and Australia

Published in The New York Times, May 14 1938



Former Mumbai-based journalist and now an avid cyclist, Anoop Babani lives in Goa, India. He and his writer-painter wife, Savia Viegas, manage Saxtti Films. In April 2018, Saxtti Films and Ravindra Bhavan Margao organized Reels-on-Wheels, India's First-ever International Festival of Films on Cycling which was inaugurated by Olympic Gold Medalist in Cycling Alexi Grewal. In December 2018, Ravindra Bhavan Margao and Saxtti Films organized Reels-on-Heels, once again India's first-ever International Festival of Films on Running which was inaugurated by P T Usha. Anoop, who is working on the book about Parsi cyclists, will be grateful for any help in contacting families of last trio of cyclists, Keki J Kharas, Rustam D Gandhi and Rutton D Shroff. His contact is saxttifilms@gmail.com

Symphony Orchestra of India on Tour - United Kingdom, 2019

by averell desouza

The SOI tour of the UK was the most ambitious one we have undertaken so far since we started touring in 2010; six concerts in five cities covering the entire UK and all this in a span of seven days. Yes; we have come a long way from performing a lone concert in Moscow in 2010 and a three concert tour in Switzerland in 2016. The detailed planning of every aspect of the tour by the NCPA in conjunction with our tour manager IMG Artistes led to a smooth run of things, from airport transfers to hotel check-ins to the actual concert performances. We covered the length and breadth of the UK right from London to Cardiff to Edinburgh. Travelling by coach to the different concert venues afforded us a view of some beautiful English countryside and rolling Scottish highlands dotted with lap dogs, shaggy ponies and fleecy sheep. I didn't spot any shepherds though.



Zane Dalal – Associate Music Director and Conductor - leading the Symphony Orchestra of India.

Playing as a tightly knit group for close to 13 years I think the SOI, a diverse talent comprised of almost 26 different nationalities, cultures and musical entities has metamorphosed into a highly sophisticated

ensemble to showcase a challenging and varied repertoire. We had in our bags the Symphonic suite *Scheherazade* by Rimsky-Korsakov, the violin concerti by Max Bruch and Camille Saint-Saens performed by our music director and violin virtuoso Marat Bisengaliev, a couple of delightful overtures, Weber's *Oberon* and Berlioz' *Roman Carnival* and the expansive, romantic and fiendishly difficult *Symphony No 2* by Serge Rachmaninoff. Conducting duties for the tour were to be shared by our Associate Music Director Zane Dalal and English National Opera Director Martyn Brabbins. The *piece de resistance* though was PESHKAR, a tabla concerto specially commissioned by the SOI, composed and performed by celebrated world music exponent and Indian percussionist Zakir Hussain. We had performed the entire tour repertoire in our spring season at the NCPA, Mumbai, and so were all in fine fettle. Braving the extreme English climate and overcoming a different time zone travel, I was raring to go. As it turned out, we brought summer weather with us, and this unusually clement weather followed us on tour. An augur of good things to come.

I was keen to see how the British music connoisseurs, concert going public and the press



would react to PESHKAR, a very inventive and innovative amalgamation of two great music traditions. We had premiered the work in 2015 in Mumbai and showcased it in our Swiss tour to critical acclaim, under the directorship of Maestro Dalal. A point worth noting was that Scheherezade, a work that was to be repeated as much as five times on the tour, was to be conducted by both conductors. Now each conductor has his own method of treating different musical subjects according to their sense and sensibilities, a different interpretative approach, a different baton technique and for me the challenge was reacting and responding correctly to their every nuance so that the desired result was achieved. Maestro Dalal's reading of the account was intense, yet placid, boisterous yet stately – creating a kaleidoscope of oriental landscapes, a tyrant Sultan and an innocently sweet but tenacious Scheherezade.



Zane Dalal directs applause - and joins the orchestra in congratulatory sentiments - towards concertmaster Adelina Hassani - following a performance of Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade marked by exquisite violin solos.

For me it was about adapting my playing technique to suit the “surround sound” so to say. I had to constantly listen to my section and of course train my focus of attention on the concert master and conductor. In this regard I reminded myself of what Maestro Dalal said about trusting our sound and so to refrain from overplaying, rather strive to achieve a beautiful tone. The acoustics at Guildford had a lovely resonance that gave the entire sound an altogether new dimension. Usher Hall in Edinburgh with its multi tiered seating was equally lush and responsive.

What threw further challenges at me were the acoustical conditions in the different concert halls. The 3300 seat auditorium in Birmingham was huge, such a cavernous space with a multi tier stage. Cadogan Hall in London and in hindsight my favourite performing venue because of its warm intimacy and delicate ambient lighting, had a different acoustic. Suddenly I could find hearing myself so clearly in one hall while in another hall my sound was just simply washed away by the sheer brutish strength of the brass section. My seating on stage was not the same depending on the layout of the stage and so my proximity to the concertmaster Adelina Hassani changed with every performing space. We just had around two hours of rehearsal time – nothing more than a soundcheck in each concert venue – to familiarize ourselves with the acoustics.



What struck me about St David's Hall Cardiff was the bottle green upholstered seating that encircled a wide stage. Here too the “user friendly” acoustics offered us that impetus to play our natural selves. To me it was like being seated in a beautiful garden of sound, basking in a warm glowing orchestral soundscape. St David's Hall is where Marat Bisengaliev made his UK debut with the SOI. In fine form and total command, Marat gave a soul stirring account of the Saint-Saens Violin concerto. The second movement, a love song – was so pure, and refined and the 3rd movement was a highly charged rendering. Maestro Bisengaliev gave three superlative performances of the evergreen Max Bruch violin concerto – in Guildford's G-Live, Edinburgh's Usher Hall, and

back at London's Cadogan Hall. The Bruch concerto was played by him during the SOI inaugural season way back in 2006. He played it – then and now – with the supreme artistry and impeccable showmanship that is the hallmark of this great violinist.

We opened with performances of Hussain's *PESHKAR* in the two opening concerts of the tour, in Birmingham and London. Maestro Hussain used the work as a vehicle to display his stunning virtuosity and dexterity of fingers. The intricate percussion rhythms and particularly his cadenza was a treat to watch. The orchestration at the start was rather sparse with wisps of melodies played by woodwind and brass. There were a couple of *jugalbandhi* spots; an interaction between tabla and solo violin in which Hussain and the concertmaster Adelina Hassani matched each other note for note and stroke for stroke. The concerto picks up pace in the middle section with the orchestra becoming more present in the accompaniment. As it nears the end, the orchestra becomes a virtual juggernaut – playing huge complex rhythmic sections in unison together with Hussain at a frenetic tempo, leading inexorably to the final note. It was sheer 'edge-of-the-seat' excitement and I had to maintain an absolute cool and use every ounce of concentration so as to not miss a note. The concerto came to its dramatic finish with a flamboyant throw of the arms by Hussain, synchronized with the closing flourish from Maestro Dalal, which brought the house down. Maestro Dalal, who had led the *world* and *euro* premiere's in 2015/16 and had conducted the work six times in concert prior to the tour – had a complete mastery of the score and safely guided the orchestra through the work, especially in the moments where we had off-beat entries, with his deft stick work and animated body movement. He shared a tremendous rapport with Hussain on stage and the infectious energy and dynamism so fluidly transferred to the orchestra. We had scored 5 stars in Birmingham on the 19th and were to repeat the magic again in Cadogan Hall, London on the 20th.

And it was magic indeed that Martyn Brabbins worked on the SOI in a dramatic rendering of the Rachmaninoff Symphony in our last concert at Cadogan Hall, 25th February. I was a bit apprehensive about playing the Rachmaninoff after a gap of 20 days. The travel across continents and up and down the UK and dedication of all my energies into playing the other music of the tour repertoire, all this in six days did take a minor toll on me. I barely had any time at all to revise the work. I voiced my apprehension to our Chairman Mr Suntook in the Cadogan Hall lobby prior to the concert. Mr Ed Smith, former Chief Executive of the CBSO seconded my opinion that perhaps we should have had another performance in between. Touring with any orchestra – no matter the planning – there is almost always a hiccup concerning repertoire and dates. However, we needn't have worried and we were well prepared. Martyn Brabbins crafted a sensational performance.

At the start of the concert, in an unusual step, Maestro Dalal joined the orchestra on stage – to accept on their behalf, a baton and a portrait of the great maestro, the late Sir Georg Solti – presented to the orchestra in recognition of their successful UK debut by Lady Valerie Solti, the conductor's widow, who was in attendance. We played our hearts out that evening, the whole orchestra seizing the special moment, playing to an ever enthusiastic audience, aware that in our own little way, we had made history.

We made a big impact on the British audiences and got several good reviews in the major newspapers from the otherwise 'stiff upper lipped' British. I noticed several Indians in attendance in Birmingham and London which was so heartwarming. My two aunts were able to attend and were absolutely delighted to see their nephew on stage. The SOI tour was an 'out and out' success. I am positive there'll be more in the future. ■■■■

Averell DeSouza holds a position with the Symphony Orchestra of India – playing in the first violins. He has held this position since the orchestra's inception and is one of the uniquely gifted Indian violinists who contributes professionally to the orchestra. A musician and teacher of considerable accomplishment – Averell has won several competitions and performed in concert from the United States to the Far East. He has many varied interests including writing, traveling and current affairs. This piece is written and submitted expressly for the current edition of HAMAZOR – offering a first-hand musician's account of the recent and highly acclaimed tour of the United Kingdom undertaken by the Symphony Orchestra of India this February, 2019.



Kuzana Ogg

by zerbanoo gifford

There is a belief that you ask the higher beings to allow you to be born into a certain family to experience life that will help in your evolutionary growth. You are allowed to choose your ancestors, your parents and environment. You are also permitted to write your own obituary. In other words what you would like to achieve in your lifetime.

I chose my ancestors and community with great care. But next time, if there is a next time, I would like to be an artist. I would like to use my love of beauty to change lives by inspiring people with my originality, sensitivity, sheer mastery of colour and subtle movement to help them see their lives in a different perspective and also in a kinder and more joyful way.

Recently, I opened my emails and saw the inspirational paintings by the artist Kuzana Ogg. I felt moved. I even contemplated taking up art even at this 'ancient' age to allow myself the chance to express my own creativity. I also knew I had to let other people know about Kuzana's dynamic art.

Kuzana comes from a long line of strong Zoroastrian women involved in social change. Her great aunt is one of my heroines, the extraordinary Mrs Cama, whose portrait hangs in the Indian Parliament, the Lok Sabha, in Delhi. Bhikhajji Cama was from a wealthy Zoroastrian family but was also a freedom fighter who took on the British Empire and demanded home rule for India. She made history by defiantly unfurling the first Indian flag at the Socialist meeting in Stuttgart, Germany in 1907. Bhikhajji's life offers the ultimate example of social commitment and explodes the blinkered class mythology that only working-class heroes can be of true worth to the causes of the masses. She died in Bombay despondent and lonely, but she did help change the course of our shared history.

One of Kuzana's grandmothers, Naju Pandole, actively worked with Rajmohan Gandhi in the Initiatives of Change International (former MRA). The other grandmother, Tehmina Cama, was the first woman driver in India.

I still remember my own grandmother tell me of all the Parsi women. The most alluring were the Cama girls, who were famed for their beauty. One even caught the eye of Queen Victoria's son, the Prince of Wales, later to become King Edward VII.

Kuzana comes from a line of great beauties also blessed with the rare spirit bestowed on visionary pioneers.

When I asked Kuzana's mother Ketayun, another beauty, to sum up her gifted daughter, she said "My daughter's art like her character is clear, strong and authentic. She sees and shows the diamond in a lump of coal! She is a visionary."

Kuzana was born in Bombay in 1971. As she says so poetically, her parents brought her home from the hospital on the back of their motorcycle, and she was a new born mango nesting in her mother's arms.

The first years of her charmed life were divided between the ancestral home of her distinguished grandfather on the famous Altamont Road, which I still remember visiting as a teenager, surrounded by a spectacular garden and her grandmother's exquisite Worli sea face residence.

Kuzana's earliest memories are of temperate weather, fragrant jasmine blossoms and cascading layers of colour. In time, Kuzana and her infant sister joined their newly immigrated parents in England. The setting changed from streets crammed with disorderly traffic and cows to cars neatly parked in rows, but not surprisingly Kuzana preferred the crumbling palatial

structures that still lived in her mind to the net curtains and tidy brick homes. The new plastic toys at her feet became the rude complement of those of tin and copper that lay beside them. Her tiffin tucked in her luggage, Kuzana shuttled in trains, cars and planes to boarding schools in Cornwall, Surrey, and further afield to Kodaikanal.

At the age of 10, she and her family settled in New York. It was as an art student at SUNY that Kuzana met her husband and, in love, began painting the glorious gardens of her childhood. They married after their graduation in 1995, and moved to South Korea, spending the next six years teaching English in historic Kyung Ju.

Returning to the United States in 2001, they lived first in New Mexico, migrated to California's Central Valley ten years later, and then returned to Santa Fe, New Mexico in 2017.



At her studio in Santa Fe

She has participated in three artistic residencies: in Minnesota, Sri Lanka and China. In 2018, Kuzana was the Cromarty Arts Trust's international artist in residence in Scotland. Kuzana's extensive works now grace many private collectors' homes, corporate buildings, museums, boutique hotels and embassies.

Although she has lived, worked and experienced life in lines, colour and

fragrances in so many places across the world, I feel her essence is bound up with the vitality of her rich Zoroastrian heritage.

Kuzana puts it so movingly. "My early years in India were flooded with noise, colour, and fragrance. My grandparents' home in Altamont Road in Bombay was somewhat buffered from the outside chaos of people and cars by lush gardens. This paradise of quietly growing coconut trees, exotic lilies and always newly turned wet red earth was invaded hourly by squalling parrots and barbarous crows. Their cries filtered through the foliage as though they were the softened echoes of the havoc on the streets.

"Going anywhere in Bombay requires infinite patience and time. A simple errand devolves into an all-day affair involving epic traffic jams. Even as a child I was distracted by the lurid Bollywood billboards rushing past the car window.

"Bombay is steeped in perfume from yards of jasmine and roses garlanding doors, to sandalwood burning at the fire temple, to a hundred different lunches cooking at the same time. There is always fragrance in the air. It might be ordinary, like freshly watered concrete walls or the starched muslin saris or, like the scent of raw silk stored in the recesses of a teak wardrobe. The fragrance occupies a stratum deeper than sight or sound. Even deeper a "majesty" is also hidden beneath the surface of things, and majesty is an anchor that restrains and balances the chaos of experience. The general pandemonium of Bombay in the early 1970s served me as a visual alphabet. Through my travels and migrations, this alphabet continues to recombine, developing into a painterly language. In any form of communication, I have found the principles of restraint and balance to be the most formidable and eloquent."

I asked Kuzana which artists she loved. Interestingly we are both inspired by the work of Matisse, whose colour and shapes and sensuality are so compelling.



Author, human rights campaigner and founder of the ASHA Centre, a charity. Zerbanoo holds the International Woman of the Year Award 2006 for her humanitarian work, which spans fifty years of grassroots and global activism. Presented the Nehru Centenary Award, she is a pioneer for Asian Women in politics. Zerbanoo made history being elected as the first Liberal ethnic woman councillor. She has chaired commissions, advised the British Home Secretary. Director of Anti-Slavery International, she was given the Freedom of Lincoln, Nebraska, for combating modern slavery. Author of seven books, her own biography 'An Uncensored Life' by Farida Master is published by Harper Collins.

Sponsored by the World Zarathushtrian Trust Fund

Years ago, at a posh dinner party, I was emphatically told that art lovers are divided up into two distinct groups, those that love Picasso and those that love Matisse. Like Kuzana, I love the latter. I find Picasso too overpowering, masculine and definite. I find Matisse like the work of Kuzana, more magical and able to engage all your senses in a deep connection with a more vibrant understanding of life. Like Matisse's timeless paintings, Kuzana's art is enchanting and makes one observe life in a more thoughtful, hopeful and joyous way. ■■■■



Shukatunda



Suchi



Tarjani



Vayu

Tannaz Minwalla □ *creativity is her signature*

by jubin mama

Readers of Hamazor cannot fail to have been impressed each quarter when they received WZO's quarterly with its imaginative and professional covers these past 17 years. The editor felt it was time for the readers to know who Tannaz Minwalla is and with that in mind I was approached to write.

Tannaz, is the General Manager and Creative Director of Creative Unit Pvt Ltd. The establishment is amongst Pakistan's pre-eminent graphic design houses, possibly the most prestigious. She has worked on innumerable projects for both Pakistani and international clients in diverse sectors: Media; History Arts & Culture; Education; Pharmaceuticals; Finance; Manufacturing; Telecommunications; Government and NGOs.

She exemplifies a small cadre of strong, progressive Pakistani Parsi women, at the top of their profession in Pakistan, standing their ground and succeeding in positions of leadership in an overwhelmingly male dominated business environment. In doing so, they have gained the respect and admiration of their peers, male and female, providing role models for other women to aspire to; and playing a key role in gender equality crucial to progress and success in human development in the emerging economies of the developing world.

Tannaz has that hallmark of success: remaining faithful to her true calling rather than following the herd and in doing so breaking through and smashing glass ceilings.

Following a conventional education at the Convent of Jesus & Mary School in Karachi, she emerged with the basic "O Level" examination. Since then, there has been nothing ordinary or mundane about her! Initially she qualified in Fine Arts, followed

by marriage, possibly a pathway expected by the nuns at her school, but Tannaz was going to prove to all – she was going to be exceptional in her field. She enrolled for a four-year diploma in Graphic Design, the only woman in her class and emerged with a First Class First position, receiving the Medal of Excellence Award, from the Sindh Board of Technical Education. She was also awarded a Certificate of Appreciation from UNICEF for her thesis completed on concluding the diploma.

She began professional life in 1982 as a visualizer with International Advertising Ltd., in Karachi, where she was part of the team that won the contract for a complete redesign of Pakistan International Airline's advertisements, logo, tickets and menus; repatriating the national airline's design business back to Pakistan from a Singapore based agency.

A year later she moved from IAL to the Creative Department, Dawn Group of Newspapers, Pakistan's oldest and most prestigious broadsheet Newspaper. Whilst visualizer at the Creative Department from 1983-87, moving swiftly upwards, she was responsible for a radical redesign and layout of the Dawn Group's Herald News magazine, winning accolades for it. She was instrumental for leading and structuring Pakistan's first ever Graphic Design Exhibition to publicise the Creative Department's work winning international awards.

In October 1987, the Dawn Group hived off the Creative Department and set up the independent Creative Unit Ltd., appointing Tannaz, Creative Director and General Manager where she has remained at the helm for over 30 years, leading and managing the highly specialised team of



visualizers, desktop designers, photographers and illustrators. They work as a team on national and international projects in the multitude of sectors highlighted earlier.

Tannaz is a woman heading a highly successful all male team, bringing a refreshing leadership style of working that is characterised by hard work, tight deadlines and targets – with much laughter, hilarity and enjoyment engendered by Tannaz’s irrepressible nature. Whilst the fun may never let up, the serious work and professionalism never falters, a testament to Tannaz’s unique personality and leadership style. Though her stamp of approval and exacting standards are applied across the board, the small tightly knit team are given the latitude they need from Tannaz to thrive and develop.

She is straightforward and down to earth, with a raucous sense of humour, which is most definitely Parsi in transcending all population groups, making her instantly likeable, relatable and a bundle of energy to work with. She is unselfconsciously Zoroastrian when it comes to good deeds and has undertaken numerous pro bono charitable projects from breath taking beautiful artistic coffee table books to Annual Reports, brochures etc., for the Sindh Institute of Urology, the Lady Dufferin Hospital Foundation, the Layton Rehmatullah Benevolent Trust for the Blind and the Marie Stopes Society; as well as the covers of Hamazor, amongst others.

Her personal pro bono contributions to design education in Pakistan, includes serving on the Board of Studies, the Academic Board, the Executive Board, and the Continuing Education Board of Studies at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture till 2018. She personally mentors, tutors and develops students of graphic design, as well as giving them internship opportunities at the Creative Unit.

While Tannaz’s expertise steers the Creative Unit’s work across a myriad of sectors, it is the Unit’s work of expertise

that has been most influential in the design of Hamazor’s radically and contemporary covers which will be always timeless.

Tannaz is married to Asfandyar, her partner in crime and life for over 30 years, and together are proud parents to Taimur who is supported by them in all he chooses to do.

She lives in a home overflowing with an eclectic collection of art curated with impeccable taste and a visionary eye.



Jubin Mama has known Tannaz Minwalla since they were teenagers in Karachi. He lives in London but visits Karachi regularly and no visit is complete without meeting Tannaz. He has recently collaborated with Tannaz on a book commemorating the centenary of the Mama Parsi Girls Secondary School.



Tannaz is a very special friend and at the same time like a daughter to me. I have known her since birth, in and out of our home during her childhood, blossoming into an exceptional human being. Kind and generous to a fault, outspoken – sometimes a bit too much – but that is Tannaz! Anyone having her as a friend is fortunate, as those who know her will endorse. She is an example of what one can achieve if given the right encouragement and appreciation. The school system leaves much to be desired, it can make or break a person. It is fine for those who are academically tuned, they will do well even without teachers. It is where the student is average or hasn’t found their footing, that expertise is needed to nurture the hidden potentials. I write this, knowing how despondent Tannaz was during her school academic life, as so many others have felt and still do. The article written by Jubin, her friend since their youth, is a testament of hope and encouragement for those who cannot see the silver lining in their future. Tannaz is an inspiration for all. With admiration and grateful thanks for all you do Tannaz with grace and perfection. - Toxy Cowasjee

Shernaz Engineer on the List of 100 Women on the Mayor of London's 'Hidden Credits Campaign'

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, to mark the centenary of the first women in the UK winning the right to vote, has launched a year long women's equality campaign titled 'Behind Every Great City'. He wants to showcase women who have contributed in their own way to making London a great world city.

The Mayor said "women make extraordinary contributions to their communities and the city we live in, but they are not always recognised. That's why we created the Hidden Credits Campaign. We asked Londoners to tell us about a woman in their local community who makes this city great, so that we can shine the spotlight on them and give them the recognition they deserve".

Shernaz Engineer is one of those 100 women to be recognised. She is also the only Zarathushti lady on this



list. Shernaz is on many charitable boards including Asian Women's Resource Centre that helps women experiencing domestic violence and forced marriage. She is a Trustee of Tamasha Theatre a touring theatre company which showcases South Asian contemporary life in the UK. She is Vice-Chair of Learning for Life which assists schools in remote areas of Nepal, India and Bangladesh. She is a founder member and Freeman of the Guild of Entrepreneurs and chairs their new membership committee. These Guilds are an ancient institution which go back 1000 years and were vital to the success of the City of London.

Shernaz chairs the UK Chapter of the World Zarthushti Chamber of Commerce and is also a judge of the Women of the Future Awards in the UK and Southeast Asia.

Full information available on : <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/mayor-london/behindeverygreatcity>



Professor Zenobia Nadirshaw MBE

Prof (Dr) Zenobia Nadirshaw MBE is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist with a 44 year track record of working in the National Health Service in Britain for people with Learning Disabilities and for people with mental health problems. She has contributed at national, international and European level regarding the Double discrimination suffered by people with learning disabilities as well as people with mental health problems coming from black and ethnic minority backgrounds. She has spoken vociferously about the need for the psychology profession and its discipline to move away from its overwhelming white, western bias to a more culturally appropriate service. Through the understanding of the needs of vulnerable groups, Dr Nadirshaw has also made a significant contribution in the training of psychologists and other related mental health professionals. She also acts as an external examiner for four university courses in Clinical and Counselling psychology. Dr Nadirshaw has won several Awards over the course of the years with a City of London Award in 2016 and the latest one being the Member of the British Empire (MBE) in Her Majesty, The Queen's New Year's Honours List for 2019. WZO is proud to have her on the Managing Committee and for her attributes given to society. ■■■



Burzin Balsara □ Student, Navar & Cyclist in Training

Burzin Balsara a 19-year old, is a Freshman at the University of Texas at Austin studying Mechanical Engineering in the Cockrell School of Engineering's Engineering Honors Program.



In high school, his accomplishments were vast from competing at national speech and debate tournaments to first and best of category at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), which yielded multiple awards, including the naming of a minor planet (34599) "Burzinbalsara" in his honour. He and his partner, Malav Shah, created an electric wheelchair system that used a concept known as electrooculography to translate a user's eye movement to wheelchair control. This enables severely disabled individuals to have independent mobility.

Additionally, he is a member of the Longhorn SAE Formula One Racing team and a rider in training for Texas 4000, the longest annual charity bike ride from Austin, Texas to Anchorage, Alaska. He is riding in honour of the science fair teacher that first took him to Intel ISEF and continues to support him, all the while battling an aggressive form of lung cancer. He aims to ride from Texas to Alaska in solidarity with her fight. He rides for HOPE for a cancer free world, CHARITY to fund research, and the dissemination of KNOWLEDGE of life-saving cancer prevention information.

Burzin has been in fundraising for the ride since the beginning of this year and will begin training in the fall for this arduous and challenging ride as it entails 4000+ miles in 70 days. The ride will begin on June 1, 2020, and end in Anchorage, Alaska on August 9th. Do go to his page bit.ly/burzin2alaska and further information on the ride is available on <https://www.texas4000.org/rider/2020/unassigned/burzin-balsara/> Readers and friends may wish to donate any sum towards this worthy

cause. Please do share this campaign with as many people, as he could use all the support of the community.

Burzin though still young, is an achiever both academically and athletically, but this has not been enough for him. He decided to become a Navar through choice, in 2008, at the Vachha Gandhi Agiary in Mumbai. When asked why he decided to go down this path, he wrote: "My primary reason for becoming a Navar was not out of duty, rather that performing ceremonies and being a mobed will give me a greater sense of spirituality that is fulfilling. Naturally, the consequence of becoming a Navar gave me the opportunity to serve my community in ways my peers could not, and I feel it is my duty to do so, continuing till my last breath."

As of now, Burzin plans on joining the Naval Officer Training Corps at UT Austin to become, hopefully, an aviator after college.

Regardless of where he settles down one day, he is fully dedicated to continuing to serve the Zarathushti community as a priest and an active member. He also hopes that his peers will continue with him in preserving Zoroastrian-ism throughout the West, as its time for the youth to rise and fill their elders' shoes.

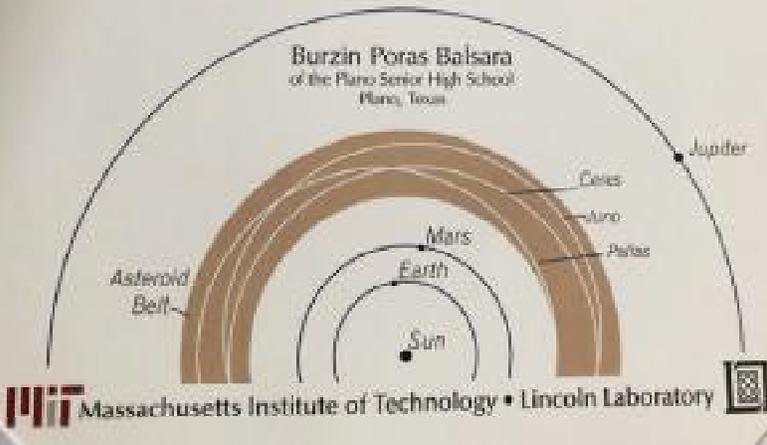


Electric wheelchair using electrooculography

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

Minor Planet (34599) Burzinbalsara

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



Minor planet (34599) Burzinbalsara in the stratosphere



rashasp Shroff - a rising star

On March 28, 2019, Arashasp Shroff was awarded the Ontario Hospitality Institute's Top 30 Under 30 award. This year's Top 30 Under 30 class, featured over 150 nominations from rising stars across the province, where winners are individuals from all segments of the hospitality and foodservice industry who exemplify excellence and represent its future. Leaders in their fields, these individuals go out of their way to be the 'best of the best' not only within their profession, but through their work in education, mentoring and volunteering their time to improving the industry.

Arashasp is currently a restaurant manager and sommelier at the CN Tower, overseeing the beverage programme and restaurant operations. He moved to Toronto, where he established himself as a leader in the industry, graduating top of his Advanced Beverage Management program, and accepting the Wines of Spain award.

Shroff on ticker tape on CN Tower

This young man has also played a vital role in the re-creation of the WZCC Toronto Chapter which will be hosting their third meeting on April 12th this year. Arashasp is the Secretary of the Chapter. In addition to this, he sits on the Professional Advisory Committee for the Advanced Wine and Beverage Program at George Brown and is working on establishing a mentorship and networking group for young hospitality professionals. ■■■



L to R: Katrin Zeuner, incoming president, Arashasp, Bruce McAdams current president of OHI.



dil S Nargolwala - The Marathon Man

by feroza jassawala

“You will never know your limits until you push them” begins Adil S. Nargolwala, 49-year-old Gurgaon Corporate Executive who has the unique distinction of being the first person from India to finish Marathons on all seven Continents of the World, run all the six marathon majors as well as finish an Ironman 70.3 triathlon. What is even more remarkable is that he ran the last two races – Punta Arenas in Chile and the White Continent Marathon in Antarctica in January 2019, back to back in a span of three days, with a broken left hand.

“I didn’t run much in the first six years from January 2009,” reveals the Marathon man. “My story of scheduled running began in 2015 when I visited New York to run the New York marathon my first big international major. At the marathon EXPO I realized there were five others (Boston, Chicago, London, Berlin & Tokyo) – it was a series. On my return with my wife I excitedly began planning to participate in all of them. My interest in running increased and I also ran

many local runs in Delhi and across India in cities like Lucknow, Amritsar, Kathgodam, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Shillong, Poona, Alibaug, Goa, Pondicherry, Madras, Bangalore, Ramnagara, Shimla, Ladakh, Spiti. Today I have finished over 250 events in 10 years which include cycling and triathlons too,” he adds with pride.

The dedicated runner also holds the Limca Book of Records distinction for having run the maximum number of events in a year – 60 runs in 52 weeks in 2017-18. These include an Ultra marathon, marathons, half marathons etc.

Adil is a “Triple Randonneur”. He has cycled 200, 300, 400, 600 kms every year for three years. This honour was bestowed on him by the Cycling Club of Paris, France. Having achieved the International rank of “Ironman 70.3” for swimming 1.9 kms, cycling 90 kms, running 21.1 kms in 8.5 hours in 2017 in Turkey, Adil is now undergoing training to compete in the Ironman 140.6 challenge in Sweden in August 2019.

After summiting Mt Kilimanjaro Marathon in Tanzania, Adil completed the Kilimanjaro marathon in Moshi, Tanzania and the Gold Coast Marathon in Australia in 2018. Expectedly, the event in Antarctica was his biggest running challenge yet!

About 51 participants took part in this marathon and all completed successfully. For Adil it was paramount to complete, despite all odds, rather than concentrating on gaining a good time and place.

“I used to swim in cold water during the coldest time of the day, but the harsh conditions of freezing temperatures in Antarctica was impossible to prepare for,” confesses Adil. To prepare myself to be mentally strong, I spoke to marathoners to gain from their experiences,” he adds.

The runner suffered a broken hand five days before he was to depart for the Antarctica race, putting his entire plan in jeopardy. But, keeping in mind the training, planning and financial commitment he had already made for the attempt, he left on the tough journey to Antarctica, nevertheless. After a bout of illness following his 60-hour



During his meeting with PM Modi, Adil showed his 6 major certificate and medal

journey to Punto Arenas, the southernmost point of South America, the organisers of the run took the group on a chartered flight to the White Continent. On landing, the group had to walk 3kms to the starting point and immediately begin the race.



At Antarctica

“The infection, fever, congested lungs made running and breathing very difficult. Then it began to snow. At subzero temperatures, overall 2200 feet of elevation and rocky gravel, running was a real challenge,” he explains.

Just three days after this exhausting run, Adil ran his second marathon – the final of seven continents in Punta Arenas, Chile.

“You need to keep pushing yourself, or you stagnate. So, this was the next big challenge for me,” he states as a matter of fact.

The running scene in India has undergone a sea change in the last few years. Runs are happening throughout the country even in small towns. Promoters who organize large sponsored events in India are professional in the execution of marathons and organize a good race with all facilities like water and nutrition stations,

timing, course control. Nevertheless, our races still don’t compare to the world majors especially in city and crowd support.

“Running abroad is expensive. One must also adjust to the time difference and surroundings, weather etc.,” explains the accomplished athlete.

Running is an effort of the training you put in. You learn to regiment your lifestyle, nutrition and maintain discipline. To raise his level of endurance and training recently, Adil began a training schedule with his coach in Australia and monitored by his trainers in Gurgaon. The schedule consists of running, cycling, swimming and gym training for around 20 hours every week. This schedule will increase as he prepares for the Ironman 140.6 challenge in August 2019.

Nargolwala is equally passionate about his work career. He heads the Talent Acquisition function at WNS Global services Pvt Ltd, a large BPM company headquartered in Mumbai with offices across the globe. “My job is to hire 12,000+ people, so I travel 15-20 days in a month. But I never miss my training sessions, even if it means training from 4am and then rushing to the airport at 7am!” he reveals, candidly.



L to R : Son Shaun, Adil, Rinchen, Son Jahan

Adil Nargolwala was born in Delhi on 31 August, 1969 to Shiavax and Nergish Nargolwala. Shiavax Nargolwala was a distinguished ICS officer of his time who retired as Finance Secretary. He was the President of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman for 26 years and was instrumental in consecrating the Shirinbai Kattrak Dar-e-Meher (Fire temple) which serves the Parsi community even today.

“Adil is mentally very strong. He fulfills whatever goals he sets out to achieve with grit and determination,” reveals Rinchen Nargolwala, Adil’s wife of 29 years. She shares her husband’s passion for travelling and running and first introduced Adil to marathon running. “We make a holiday of each running event Our Runacation of 10-15 days included drives across the US, Germany, Australia etc. We try to mix running and holidaying,” say the couple enthusiastically.

Adil is a passionate family man. He confirms it is Rinchen’s support which enables him to pursue his goals. Though he has limited time with the family, he tries to ensure Sunday is an activity day with sons, Jahan and Shaun. While Jahan after finishing his Masters degree is a marketing and branding executive with branding company Yaap in Delhi, younger son Shaun is an under graduate student.

Shaun shares his parents’ love for adventure and the outdoors, and partners his father in running half-marathons in Delhi. He is one of India’s youngest “Super Randonneur” at 17 years of age.

Adil steadfastly continues his family’s tradition for community service. He is currently the Vice President of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman, where he has actively served as a Trustee for 27 years.

“I have been blessed to be able to serve our community in Delhi where for the past 40+ years we have lived harmoniously and been progressive in our outlook,” concludes the hardworking capitalist who is actually in heart a socialist, revealing a passion not just for sport but also for the community.



Feroza Cushrow Jassawala holds a Masters Degree in Business Economics from her hometown, University of Madras. She began her career as a Publisher of Children’s books. Currently based in New Delhi, she has been a successful fundraiser and event organizer for the Delhi Parsi Anjuman since 2015. Feroza enjoys writing for Publications, covering events and personalities in Delhi.

Novy Kapadia - The Football Guru

by feroza jassawala

“Sports in general and football in particular have been a passionate and integral part of my life, right from my childhood,” begins the ever-affable Novy Kapadia, football guru, Sports commentator-analyst and author, acknowledged as Asia’s leading football expert.

Born in Delhi on 2 April, 1952 to Soona and Minoo Kapadia, Novy’s early life was spent in the comfortable environs of the Kapadia joint family in, Chabigunj near Kashmere Gate in Old Delhi. The area had vast open fields where the young student first began playing football with the local boys.

Novy schooled at the prestigious St Colomba’s School and completed his BA English Honours degree in 1973, MA English in 1975 and MPhil in Literature thereafter from St Stephen’s College, Delhi. Concurrently, he played in the Delhi Football Association League, starting with Union Football Club as a fourteen year old and scoring his first league goal in 1967 at the age of 15 years, President’s Estate and later Young Bengal Association (YBA) in his student years. He was captain of YBA in 1974-75 and was also Captain of the St Stephen’s College Football team and played for Delhi XI and the Delhi University teams.

Novy launched his own Football club – Ashoka Football Club in 1971 and began coaching young players for the Delhi League. The club was based in New Rajinder Nagar where the family had shifted in 1969. It was initially a colony based club but gradually young players from all over West Delhi joined this club, which earned a reputation as a nursery for developing young talent. He also coached the Delhi Sub Junior Football Team in 1984-85 and the Delhi University football team in 1980-81.

In 1977, Novy began his teaching career in SGTB Khalsa College, Delhi University. He

retired as Associate Professor and Convener of the Department of English of the college after a distinguished career of 40 years in April 2017. The academician undertook several University and College Administrative duties during his tenure with the Delhi University. Most notably, he was the Deputy Proctor, University of Delhi from 2003-2010; Member of the Apex Committee of Delhi University for Prevention of Sexual Harassment from 2006-2009; Councillor for Admissions to Delhi University 2003-2016 and Member of the University’s Central Placement Cell 2008-2017. He was also a Member of the Sports Board of Delhi University from 2010 and member of the Sports committee of his College for nearly 40 years.

Kapadia’s career in sports journalism and commentary began in 1980. However this got accelerated during the 1982 Asian Games in Delhi when commentators were required for various sports events which were being conducted. Initially Novy Kapadia was a regular football and hockey commentator on All India Radio. However in the summer of 1982 he was trained at the National Institute of Sports, Patiala on the background and rules of several Olympic sports. Trial commentaries were also held there and this workshop added to his repertoire and reputation. He did commentary for several sports in the 9th Asian Games in Delhi in 1982.

In 1980 he was in Calcutta as a commentator for the Federation Cup football tournament. After the semi final match between East Bengal and Punjab Police, Novy went to the ground to speak to Manjit Singh, former captain of India, who he knew personally and had played against in university matches. Ajay Kumar deputy editor of Sportsworld magazine of the Ananda Bazar group, Calcutta, spotted this and next day traced which hotel where Novy was staying and asked him to come to

the ABP office at Prafulla Sarkar Street. Ajay was also from St Stephens College and knew of Novy's passion for football. Ajay made Novy write a profile on Manjit Singh, with focus on the conversation they had at the ground (Eden Gardens stadium). This article launched Novy's successful career as a Sports Journalist. Later when the ABP group launched their English daily The Telegraph, Ajay and the editor MJ Akbar asked Novy to work as a stringer from Delhi.

So from 1982 onward Novy worked as both a lecturer at SGTB Khalsa College, University of Delhi and in the evenings as a sports journalist with The Telegraph and Sportsworld magazine (which was then edited by the late Nawab of Pataudi). He worked as Sports Correspondent for The Telegraph from 1982 -2005 and for Sportsworld from 1980-2000 (when the magazine closed down). His journalism career took off from 1982 onward. In 1983 he became Editor of the Durrand Annual, India's only statistical Football journal. "Working 12-14 hours a day – as an academic during the mornings and early afternoon till about 3pm and journalist and commentator later in the day, left me no time for socializing", comments soft spoken Kapadia, whose smile is characteristic of his persona. "Maybe this is the reason I remained unmarried as I devoted my life and time in my youth to enjoying my sport – playing, commentating and writing on it," he further confesses.

With the coming of satellite TV to India in the 1990s, Novy became a regular TV commentator with Star Sports and ESPN, mainly on football and also continued to work for Doordarshan and AIR. He soon became a sought after bi-lingual (Hindi and English) studio expert on sports shows of NDTV, CNN-IBN (now CNN-News 18), Headlines Today (now India Today TV), Zee News, Zee Sports, Lok Sabha TV and several other channels.

At present, Novy is a football and sports columnist with The Asian Age, The Week, Deccan Chronicle, The Sportstar and

consultant to the Limca Book of Records. He won the Wills Award for Excellence in Sports Journalism in 1986 for his article *The Other Side of the Medal* published in October 1984 in the Business Standard (business newspaper of the ABP group) and later in The Telegraph.

Novy has commentated and covered several reputed international sports events including the World Cup in 1982 in Spain, Italy 1990, USA 1994, France 1998, Korea-Japan in 2002, Germany 2006, South Africa 2010, Brazil 2014 and Russia 2018 all the European Championships from 1992 onward, Asian Games from 1982-2018, Olympic Games 2000, 2008, and 2012, Commonwealth Games from 1998-2018, World Cup Hockey Tournaments, SAF Games and the Champions Trophy Hockey tournaments. He is also a studio expert on the popular Kick-off and Football Extra shows on the Sony Ten network in India. Novy was a member of the Monitoring committee of the Union Ministry for Sports and Youth Affairs in 2014 and 2018 to select candidates for the Dronacharya and Dhyan Chand awards for National Sports Coaches.

As an avid reader of autobiographies, history, sports and fiction, the author reveals another hobby. "From my young days, I have read 10-12 newspapers daily. Earlier I used to travel to the British Council at least once a week, to read the British newspapers but now I read them on my computer," he adds. Novy is the author of over 36 research papers in Literature printed in reputed journals. Some of his scholarly articles on football have been published abroad. The most renowned is *Triumphs and Disasters: The Story of Indian Football, 1889-2000* published in Soccer In South Asia Empire, Nation, Diaspora, edited by Dr Paul Dimeo and Dr James Mills, Frank Cass, London, September 2001, p 15-41.

Since 2014 he has written three books on football. His book *Barefoot to Boots – The Many Lives of Indian Football* published by Penguin was released by the President of FIFA, Gianni Infantino in Kolkata during the U-17 World Cup in October 2017. This is

the first book in India to deal with the legacy of Indian football from 1888-2017. His earlier books, *The Football Fanatic's Essential Guide, A History of the World Cup 1930-2014*; reprinted with additional chapters as *The Football Fanatic's Essential Guide to the 2018 World Cup*; *Enduring Legacy – Parsis of the 20th century - Volume 4 - Sports and Cricket (2006)*; *Sporting Legacies in India: Mohun Bagan's 1911 Football Victory vs Olympic Hockey Medals (2015)* are considered classics in the field of Sports literature.

"Writing books in literature was the demand of my teaching profession," explains Kapadia. So besides publishing scholarly articles he wrote and edited books on Parsi literature. As he said, "Parsi poets like Keki Daruwalla; novelists like Bapsi Sidhwa, Dina Mehta, Nergis Dalal, Firdaus Kanga and Rohinton Mistry have greatly influenced me to specialize in Parsi literature."

Kapadia's significant works in this category are novels of Bapsi Sidhwa (1996), *The Parsis Madyan to Sanjan - An Appraisal of Ethnic Anxieties reflected in Literature (1997)*; Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man: A Workbook (2000)*, *Parsi Fiction Volumes 1 and 2 (2001)* and a Foreword in *Parsi Community and the Challenges of Modernity, a Reading of Rohinton Mistry's Fiction* by Vibhuti Wadhawan (2014). His latest research article *Love and Politics in Dina Mehta's And Some Take a Lover* was published in a Sahitya Akademi publication *Parsi Contribution to Indian Literature* edited by Dr Coomi Vevaina of Mumbai University and released in February 2019.

Interest in Parsi literature led to philosophic questions about the Zoroastrian religion. "Our Zoroastrian religion is very fascinating. The ideas of choice, positive thinking, doing charitable deeds, ethical philanthropy – all stems from our unique faith," professes Kapadia.

"Journalism helps to build oneself. One has to adhere to a deadline, create self-discipline and engage with words," reveals the maverick writer and commentator. "One

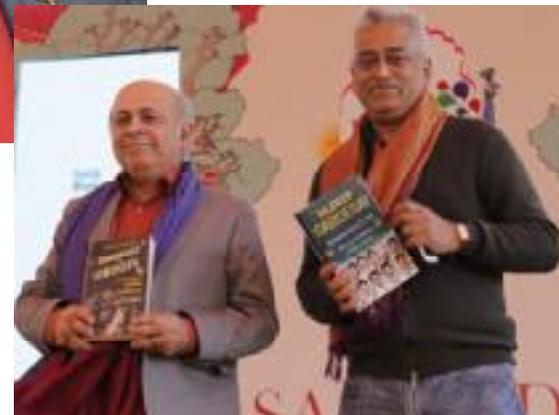
also begins to think with clarity and improve vocabulary and expression," he specifies. Highlighting the difference between radio and TV commentary, Kapadia explains, "Radio is descriptive, while on television one comments on what is on vision on the screen and you add to the picture. The new trends in commentary are to provide latest information, judicious comparisons, expert opinion and analysis."

The energetic 67-year-old footballer shows no signs of slowing down. "My future plans are to do commentary in English and Hindi on TV Channels, football shows on TV, help chronicle the history of Parsis in North India for a book being brought out by the Delhi Parsi Anjuman and give lectures and attend seminars on sports, literature and journalism."

"My passion for training and experience in sports and journalism, my good memory to remember lesser known facts and statistics, to read and remember about players and the sport, my special analysis with humorous anecdotes and historical references to make strong connections, give me an added edge in my profession," concludes Novy Kapadia with pride. ■■■■



Novy Kapadia



Novy Kapadia and Rajdeep Sardesai displaying their football and cricket books respectively at Jaipur Literature Festival 2018.

Feroza Jasawala's profile is on p 88

n End-Note to the Pan m i ac ing Incident

Readers of Hamazor have previously been informed of the courageous lifesaving acts of the members of the Karachi Parsi community in the heroic handling of the Pan Am hijacking incident and the brutal murder of Pan Am Aviation Mechanic, Meherjee Kharas (*Hamazor*, Issue 2/2016, pp33-39; Issue 3/2016, pp38-39).

There is yet another Parsi whose critical participation in the rescue mission remains to be revealed.

Soon after the hijacking, Cawas Daruwalla, a Supervisor of Telephone Services at the US Consulate in Karachi, was hauled early from his bed and pressed into service by Consulate officials. His complex assignment was to immediately establish three secret Hot Lines of communications between the Consulate, the Pakistan Government in distant Islamabad, and Karachi Airport. He sprang into action and worked closely with the Inspector General of Telecommunications in Islamabad, after obtaining a direct Order from the President of Pakistan. Despite the lack of an up to date telecommunications infrastructure in Pakistan and an antiquated telephone system in the Consulate, Cawas and his staff miraculously patched together a triangulated network by 8:15 am that morning. Cawas' highly technical handiwork done under the urgency of the grave situation provided important communications channels utilized during the attempts to resolve the hijacking situation.

Highly impressed by his work, within a week of the incident a high US official who had arrived from Washington DC offered Cawas the opportunity to migrate to the US and take up a job there. Cawas could not then avail of the offer, but later after 31 years of service he arrived in the country under the sponsorship of the US Government. Cawas now lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with his wife Farida, and their children and grandchildren are spread out in other parts of the country.

Cawas was awarded meritorious service and cash awards from the US Consulate, which noted that he supervised a staff of eight telephone specialists. A Group Meritorious Honor Award given to Cawas referred to "his sustained performance ... under most trying conditions." In that Award, the US Ambassador to Pakistan, William B Milam, stated: "I strongly recommend that [Cawas] and his family be given an SIV [Special Immigration Visa] as soon as possible."

Hamazor is pleased to reproduce below a Letter of Commendation received by Cawas from the US Department of State, Washington DC, regarding his "critical role" in the hijacking incident. ■■■■

United States Department of State
Washington D.C. 20520
September 23, 1986

Mr. Cawas Daruwalla
Telephone Supervisor
American Consulate General
Karachi, Pakistan

Dear Mr. Daruwalla:

Ms. Florence has provide me with a full accounting of the critical role that you and your staff played during the PanAm hijacking incident in Karachi. Your work with the PTT in arranging direct lines to both the airport and to the Embassy in Islamabad on such short notice was extremely impressive. According to Ms. Florence you always seemed to be available when needed. Clearly your dedication set a tone for the whole section which willingly worked long hours. Thank you for your invaluable cooperation and efficiency at a time when it was much needed.

Sincerely,
(signed)

Robert C. Ribera,
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Communications

cc: CPO - Ms. Florence

Cawas was interviewed by Kersi Shroff of Derwood, Maryland, USA in February of this year for Hamazor.

The World of Parsi Cooking Food Across Borders

a review by dinshaw patel

The delight of perusing a good cookbook is that it takes one beyond the mere recipe instructions and into the realm of culinary history and ethnography. Niloufer Mavalvala's second cookbook, 'The World of Parsi Cooking: Food Across Borders', encompasses all these qualities, and hence, it is a definitive Parsi reference cookbook for both gastronomy buffs and food anthropologists alike.

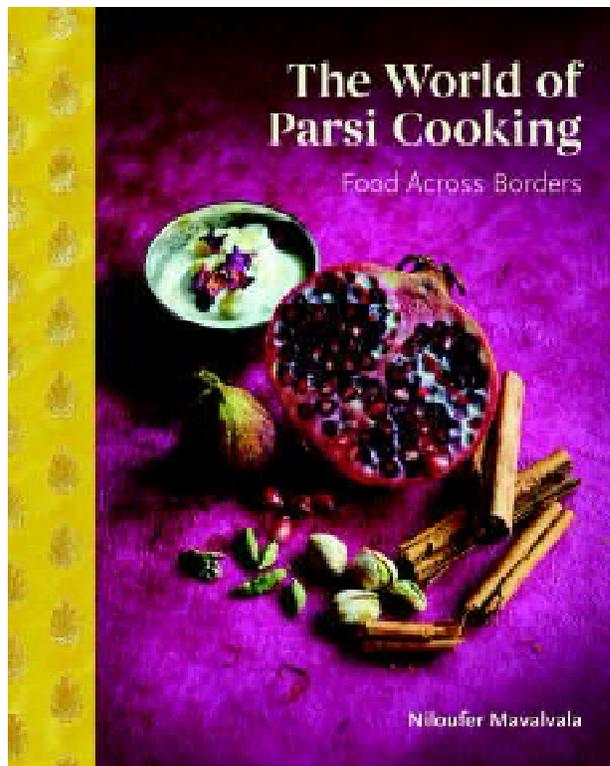
The book is meticulously put together with an array of high resolution photographs complementing the written recipes. The instructions on how to prepare are detailed yet written in simple and understandable language that even the most timid home cook would be able to master. Plus, the 'Tips' on the unique nuances in preparing each item are very useful. This is presented in tandem with a visual glossary of ingredients, the preparation process in a series of images, followed finally by the picture(s) of the completed and garnished, 'ready to serve' item. Hence, 'The World of Parsi Cooking: Food Across Borders' would be of much value in the kitchens of professional chefs as well as amateur gastronomic hobbyists.

Yet, what makes this book truly interesting is that each recipe is prefaced with an explanation of the Parsi cultural practices associated with the food, many a time its

nutritional value and its origin, often tracing the recipe's journey from its birth in Persia to the Indian Subcontinent.

Similar to the French, the Parsis too are a food-focused people. There is a menu for every occasion, and an occasion for every menu. While mere eating is an

indispensable human activity, feasting on a sumptuous meal prepared in the most exacting way is a cultural trait. Ordinarily, and in celebrations, Parsis are known for devouring lavish breakfasts, lunches and dinners. In a way, the Parsi culinary culture reflects the industry and prosperity this small community has enjoyed for centuries on the Subcontinent, ever since they landed on its shores as refugees from Persia.



To highlight the gastronomic ethos of the Parsi community, Niloufer, in the 'The World of Parsi Cooking: Food Across Borders', has thematically grouped the chapters, starting with 'Mamaiji nu Pinjru ~ Grandma's Pantry'. The recipes in this section are rarely found in other cookbooks for they are more like family heirlooms that have orally come down from one generation to the next. However, with mass exodus of Parsis from the Subcontinent to the Gulf countries, Europe, North America and Australasia, these uniquely Parsi culinary foods are gradually heading towards extinction.

'Mamaiji nu Pinjru' revives these endangered foods which are mainly accompaniments, such as uniquely Parsi style preserves, pickles, chutneys and spreads. And without these condiments, no traditional Parsi meal would feel complete.

For instance, 'Murumbo – Sweet White Gourd Preserve,' though a staple spoonful companion with several Parsi dishes, is slowly disappearing for those who have migrated from the Subcontinent. Although, at first glance, items from 'Mamaiji nu Pinjru' may seem a bit intimidating by the sheer traditional aura surrounding their names, following Niloufer's cooking instructions makes this preserve easy to prepare and still as deliciously authentic as from Grandma's Pantry.

Similarly, there are several recipes under each of the other groupings, such as 'Mithhu Mohnu ~ To Sweeten the Palate', 'Tarkari nay Daar ~Vegetables and Pulses', 'Jhinga Machi ~ Seafood' and 'Murghi anay Gos ~ Chicken and Meat.'

There is much in the book to satisfy all diets, including lacto-ovo-pescatarian and vegan. Moreover, in the introduction, Niloufer often cites the nutritional value of the particular food.

'The World of Parsi Cooking: Food Across Borders' soars on the quality and quantity of its recipes. Niloufer, in every recipe, emphasizes the importance of attaining the perfect sweet and savory blend to fully gratify the receptors of the traditional Parsi palate. As she herself aptly puts it; "Tikkhu-Khattu-Mitthu" (Spicy-Sour-Sweet) is considered the Holy Trinity of Parsi cooking, and perfecting its balance is the

key between mediocrity and perfection in any Parsi dish.

Niloufer Mavalvala, (nee Wania) was born and raised in the cosmopolitan port city of Karachi, which offered a mosaic of ethnic cuisines cooked with fresh ingredients and meats easily available from both land and sea. Moreover, she grew up in a household with expert cooks. Her mother was her primary guide and inspiration towards her early culinary education;

"My mum Shireen in her own right is an outstanding chef who only believes in perfection ... It is with her infinite knowledge and nurturing that I am able to do what I do best."

Another influence in the Wania household was her aunt, Villie Mehta. As an expert on Parsi cuisine, she was very instrumental in "... popularising the food of the Parsis at Victory Stall, the Time & Talents Club." In Niloufer's own words; "She (Aunt Villie) has been my inspiration. Sharing our passion for food, teaching and experimenting with new ingredients, she has helped me in so many ways."

Niloufer sums up the influence her two culinary mentors had on helping her to excel in her career in gastronomy; "My mother and my Aunt Villie have been the two greatest influences. Mum for teaching

me the finer points of cooking with exacting measurements and always pushing me toward excellence. My aunt teaching me the importance of not wasting any part of the fruit, vegetable or meat and being able to create through the mind's palate."



Photographs appearing in the book by William Reavell

<https://www.williamreavell.com/>

And at her parent's home lavish lunch and dinner parties were a norm for, as she mentions;

"No one ever left our home without sharing a meal... . A perfect hostess (Niloufer's mother), she loved to entertain and always created different menus for every dinner party she ever had."

From an early age Niloufer took keen interest in cooking. It was her passion to shadow her elders in the kitchen while they prepared exquisite meals, working their hands in precision with the skills they had acquired from their seniors.

Hence, Niloufer's culinary training and workshop were in her own home kitchen and it is here through her natural talent, an innate passion for gastronomy, and sheer perseverance, that she became a truly autodidact chef.

Under the vigilant supervision of her elders, Niloufer, by her mid-teens, had mastered all the necessary cooking skills and knowledge to comfortably perform at all levels of her kitchen's 'brigade de cuisine.' By the age of seventeen, she had become sufficiently proficient in culinary skills to independently hold her first cooking class.

Although 'The World of Parsi Cooking: Food Across Borders' exclusively focuses on Parsi cuisine, Niloufer's culinary repertoire extends far beyond the periphery of Parsi or Indian foods. From childhood, Niloufer has travelled extensively around the world and, in the midst, her keen interest in gastronomy has led her to understand and learn about food cultures from various regions of the world. Hence, it is not surprising that several of her cookbooks, recipe blogs and cooking demonstrations have an international flare to them. Viewing some of the titles of e-books (for example - Persian Fusion, Moroccan, French Bistro, Spanish Tapas, Winter - A party menu, Soups, Autumn - A fun menu, Gluten Free, etc.), it becomes evident that her expertise in food culture extends far beyond the borders of the Subcontinent. Even her experiential cooking classes offered from

her own home kitchen takes one on a global journey, such as, Chicken in mustard and balsamic, Mussels in a smoked salmon cream sauce, Harira soup, hors d'oeuvre tidbits and much more from all corners of the world. In addition, she frequently writes on gastronomy for the Huffington Post and other magazines. Niloufer also maintains much presence on social media with food related articles and recipes which has a following of over half a million readers internationally. She has appeared on several television food shows and recently gave a cooking class to "forty enthusiastic foodies" at the prestigious Le Cordon Bleu, in the UK.

With all this knowledge and experience, Niloufer Mavalvala has become a celebrated chef and an authority on Parsi cuisine.

Her first cookbook, 'The Art of Parsi Cooking; reviving an ancient cuisine' (2016), was extremely well received with excellent reviews and continues to remain in print. Between the two books no recipes are replicated and, while 'The World of Parsi Cooking: Food Across Borders' focusses on recipes for special occasions, her first book has mainly recipes on what Parsis eat on a daily basis.

Both, 'The Art of Parsi Cooking; reviving an ancient cuisine' (2016) and 'The World of Parsi Cooking: Food Across Borders' (2019) complement each other and, if Niloufer Mavalvala in the future decides to combine the two books and arrange them alphabetically into one, it would truly be the first encyclopedic compendium of Parsi recipes, beginning with 'Akuri' from the first book and ending with 'Zereshk Berry Palau' from the second book.

'The World of Parsi Cooking: Food Across Borders' is sold for USD 30. For further information on retail outlets selling the book, visit Niloufer Mavalvala's web page; <http://www.nilouferskitchen.com>



Dinshaw Homi Patel was born in Karachi in 1957. He moved to Toronto in 1974 and studied literature and philosophy at University of Toronto. For twenty-five years he worked in the corporate world and since 2001 has owned an art gallery. He is the author of "Prison Notebook" – a fiction on existential nihilism. For more information, visit his blog; www.dinshawpatel.blogspot.com



publication of the world zoroastrian organization
HAMAZOR

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“Do persevere, ...
He shall grant to you the firm
foundation of good thinking
and the alliance of truth and wisdom. ...
Let each of you try to win the other with truth,
for this shall be of good gain for each of you.”

Yasna 53.3-5

Inslar translation



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