

# JOURNAL

Mehr–Avan–Adar 1389 AY (Fasli) • Ardebehesht–Khordad–Tir 1390 AY (Shenshai) • Khordad–Tir–Amرداد 1390 AY (Kadimi)

## 75th Anniversary of the United Nations FEZANA SUPPORTS THE SDGS OF THE UN





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

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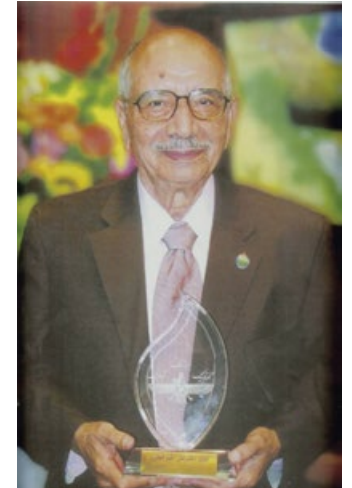
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## The Year of Reflections and New Beginnings

The year 2020 will be remembered for the Covid 19 pandemic and how we emerge out of this. Our responses will determine how fast the world recovers, whether we achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN, or how we handle pressing challenges of climate crisis, gender violence, racial violence, economic disparity, etc. But it will also be remembered for the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 and for the 5th anniversary of the implementation of the Sustainable Developmental Goals of the UN adopted on September 25, 2015.

The principles on which the UN was formed after WW 2, calling for collective action for peace and hope to end wars, and those in 2015 for the Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) adopted by the UN to bring about a healthy, peaceful equitable future for all has been called into question by this pandemic which does not discriminate and knows no borders. It has exposed deep fissures in our world wide community, of inequalities in wealth, in economics, in health services, in climate change, and placed the environmental sustainability for the future of the planet in question as to whether we can maintain our current levels of human activity on the environment. From pollution of our air and contamination of our water, to land degradation, climate change, and biodiversity loss without destroying the biological systems that sustain life. COVID-19 is derailing the efforts on the implementations of the SDGs and threatening the achievements already made in many areas.

However we are pleased to report in this issue that FEZANA through its members, young and old has been supporting the SDGs much before the pandemic started. These young adults are working towards zero hunger (#2), good health and well-being (#3), quality education (#4) gender equality, (#5), clean water and sanitation, (#6); industry, innovation and infrastructure (#9); reduced inequalities (#10); sustainable cities (#11); responsible communities and production (#12); Climate Action (#13), peace, justice and strong institutions (#16). We also have an insiders view from Bruce Knott, who was on the planning committee for developing the SDGs, and finally David Korten, former faculty of the Harvard graduate school, who challenges us to think critically in his article on Unsustainable SDGs whether the well-being of people and of our world should supersede the growing of GDP and the financial assets of the rich.

Narges Kakalia has written an informative article on the 75th anniversary of the UN by drawing the parallel between the Cyrus Cylinder and the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Audrey Kitagawa, the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Parliament of World's Religions has contributed an article on the UN and its importance of faith based organization in supporting the global agenda. Zenobia Panthaki gives an insider's view on the working of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).



COVID 19 has unleashed the power of technology and brought us together in spirit. The FEZANA AGM was conducted virtually with a record number of 70 participants attending. A new young team is leading FEZANA together with new positions of Chief Social Media officer and Communications Officer we also have a new series on Zoom, FEZANA TALKS. The Zoroastrian Association of Houston conducted its annual youth camp virtually with 74 attendees from the US and Canada, and one from Pakistan!

Zoroastrian high achievers in many diverse fields like nuclear astrophysics, architecture, naval command, aviation medicine, neuroscience, hydrometeorology, mapping of the Zoroastrian-Parsi Genetic genome and publishing a prize winning novel are recognized.

For the past 75 years, royals, presidents, prime ministers and other world leaders have been coming together at the UN General Assembly every year in New York to discuss and attempt to peacefully resolve the planet's gravest challenges. This year, for the first time since the end of the Second World War, they will stay at home. But the conversation and cooperation should and will carry on to make a better sustainable world for this and all future generations.

Dolly Dastoor Ph.D

### APOLOGY

In the article by Marzban Giara, "Contributions Beyond Compare (Fezana Journal, Summer 2020, page 53) it was inadvertently stated that Dr. Kaikhushru Nusserwanjee Bahadurji was the first Parsi and Indian to pass the medical exam in London instead of the MD exam. The error is regretted. Ed. FJ.

# Message FROM THE PRESIDENT

A little over three months ago the new FEZANA Executive took over. The COVID-19 pandemic hit the pause button on our planet. The frailty of human life and the systems of our modern times were exposed to their full extent. However out of adversity, arose opportunity. And our community here in North America and all around the world has played its part magnificently.

For the first time in 33 years, FEZANA cancelled the AGM in person. In its place we had our very first virtual AGM. Many of our 27 member associations did the same. Religion classes for kids went online. Dozens of new initiatives were now on “zoom” with everything from Gatha Classes, quiz contests to cooking classes and so much more. While the first few months of the pandemic were reactionary, the next few months were evolutionary. We learnt to do things with the tools we had in our midst. However, what became apparent, is, that nothing can replace the human need to interact in person.

For the first time our agiaries and atashbehrams in India, Pakistan and North America went empty during Muktaad. Our amazing mobeds went beyond the call of duty, risked their own health, and conducted the Muktaad ceremonies like they do every year. At FEZANA Associations for the second time in less than 6 months, our new year functions were cancelled. Auspicious days when the community throngs to Dar-e-Mehrs to celebrate had to be cancelled. In July, the collective FEZANA community grieved the loss of life of Mobed Arash Kasravi who was murdered while on a visit back home to Iran. Mobed Kasravi was a continually active and integral member of the Southern California community and his loss is felt by the thousands who knew him.

Over the past few months, the FEZANA Talks have welcomed hundreds of participants from all over the world. We welcomed Tanya Hoshi our very first Chief Social Media Officer and Jim Engineer our very first Chief Communication Officer to enhance FEZANA’s communication and engagement with the whole wide world primarily over digital platforms.

FEZANA also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Toronto towards our long-cherished dream of setting up the FEZANA Professorship in Zoroastrian Literature and Languages. We must collectively reach the US\$ 1.1M mark by April 2021. And our fundraising efforts, despite the pandemic; have brought us at the 80% mark. We are extremely close to achieving this aspirational milestone. Come help us make it a reality.

The new decade of the 20’s at FEZANA will be one of generational transformation. Our youth and young adults are ready to step up to the plate with opportunity, the right support and guidance. And with our founding generation still active, we cannot ask for better advisors. At FEZANA we continue to appoint young adults as co-chairs of committees and I would urge our member associations to bring in more young adults on their Boards.

Over the next two years FEZANA would like to further enhance our relations with the North American Mobed Council and seek their involvement in guiding the faith in religious matters in North America. FEZANA joined hands with WZCC to set up the Zarathushti Entrepreneurship Development Foundation.. A 501c(3) charitable organization, it will help Zarathushti youth in North America to start and expand businesses.

2020 marks the 75th Anniversary of one of the most egalitarian organizations of modern times. FEZANA, FEZANA is the only Zoroastrian association of note as a UN-NGO partner and we continue to provide opportunity to our youth to showcase themselves on the global platform.

FEZANA and I want to hear from you. Let us know how we can serve you better.

Arzan Sam Wadia  
president@fezana.org

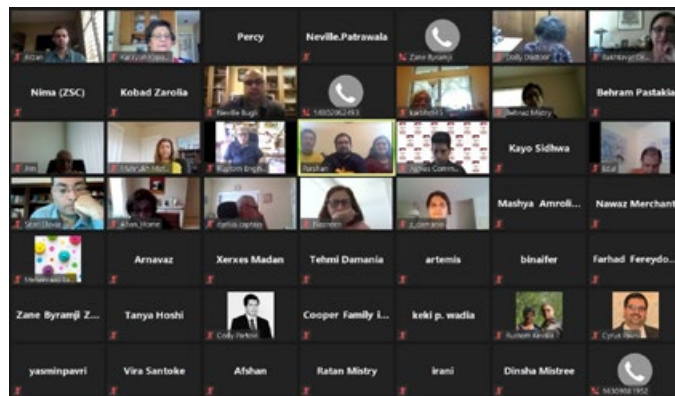
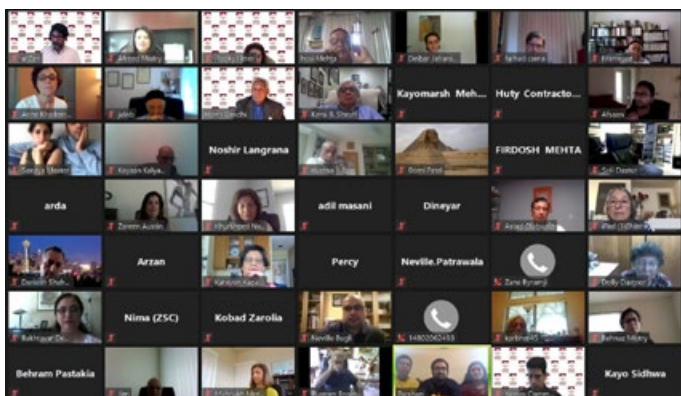


## 33<sup>rd</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOR FEZANA

AFREED MISTRY

The FEZANA AGM was to be hosted by the Sacramento Zoroastrian Association from May 1 – 3, 2020, but due to COVID-19, it was postponed to a virtual Zoom meeting on June 30th, 2020. This was the first virtual AGM that FEZANA organized. It was attended by 80 participants, including 7 Past FEZANA Presidents, 21 Association Presidents, 2 Corresponding Members/ Small Groups and 20 Committee Chairs and Co-Chairs. This was a record high number of participants. Many Presidents acknowledged that this was their first FEZANA AGM and that they would not have been able to attend in person so they were glad the AGM was online.

This was also an emotional AGM as goodbyes were said to outgoing President, Homi Gandhi. Homi served 2 terms as FEZANA President from 2016 - 2020. He was thanked with a short video summary of his 4 years as FEZANA President and with a standing ovation from the FEZANA members on the call.



### FEZANA Year in Review

FEZANA added a new Association from Arizona, USA, which was previously a Corresponding/Small Group of FEZANA, bringing the total to 27 Associations in the Federation.

**The Funds and Finance Committee** raised funds for the FEZANA Professorship of Zoroastrian Languages and Literature at the University of Toronto.

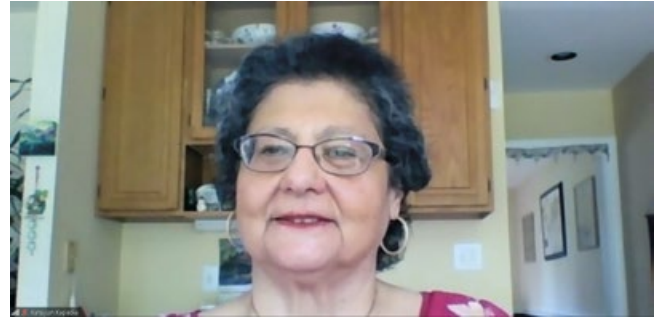
**The Zarathushti Entrepreneurial Development Fund** was created in partnership with WZCC which will facilitate the availability of loans to Zarathushti entrepreneurs in North America.

There were 53 applications (26 undergraduates and 27 graduates) received for **Academic Scholarships** of which 21 were awarded. FEZANA disbursed \$12,000 from the general funds for 6 scholarships in addition to the 13 endowed scholarships. A new scholarship, “25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Scholarship” will be awarded in the future as the “25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Fund” grows to \$50,000.

There were 2 Sports Scholarships awarded this past year of \$2,000 each. There were 4 Performing and Creative Arts Scholarships awarded of \$1,000 each. A new **Bapsy B. Irani Scholarship** for the Culinary and Fine Arts was started and awarded to 2 students out of 4 applications. The **Moobed Faridoon Zardoshty Religion**



**Education Scholarship** was awarded to one individual who is pursuing a Ph.D. at SOAS.



**Mahrukh Motafram and Katayun Kapadia, Co-Chairs of the FEZANA Congress Committee presenting at the Virtual FEZANA AGM.**

**The World Zoroastrian Youth Congress** was hosted by the California Zoroastrian Association with help from FEZANA in July 2019. 400 Zoroastrian youth from 12 countries attended. The congress held the first ever “Zoroastrian Shark Tank”, thought provoking panels, women in leadership roles panel, LGBTQ panel and environmental discussions. All the sessions were posted on FEZANA’s YouTube Channel. FEZANA, along with a number of local Zoroastrian Associations gave out 120 congress subsidies to the youth totalling \$12,000. The next World Zoroastrian Youth Congress will be held in London, UK in 2023.



**L-R: Khodarahm Cody Partovi, Parshan Khosravi, Anahita Hormozdyari from the World Zoroastrian Youth Congress, presenting at the Virtual FEZANA AGM.**



Zoroastrian Association of Houston presented the current status of the **North American Zoroastrian Congress** which was to be held in December 2020. This congress was postponed due to COVID-19. There are numerous other large events happening from 2021 onwards, so it was voted on to move this congress to 2024 and the majority agreed. Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York presented their upcoming **World Zoroastrian Congress** which will take place July 1 – 4, 2022. The venue will be the New York Hilton, Midtown NYC. For more information: <https://wzc2022.nyc>

The **FEZANA Journal** improved its readability by reducing its pages to 60 – 88 and also has a digital option. There are now 60-72 e-subscribers of the Journal and 467–520 print subscribers.

**FIRES (FEZANA Information Research Education System)**, located in Houston, now has 1,761 books in their library. In the past year, FIRES hosted 3 events:

- The Video of the Houston Atash Kadeh Inauguration
- The SSZ Conference, “Yesterday’s Gifts... Tomorrow’s Assets”, featuring Dr. Almut Hinze, Kersi Shroff and a panel of young mobeds



- The lecture, “Advent of Zarathushtra as Paigambar and his revelation of monotheistic teachings and Zoroastrianism - A Way of Life” by Parvez Bajan.

**Information Receiving and Dissemination Committee** has been gathering an informal “Friends of FEZANA” group of individuals, both Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian, who have in a special way strengthened the Federation through donation of their time and talent. For example, Eileen Moncouer from PartnersAsia, helped design, pay for and ship the FEZANA exhibit displayed at the 68<sup>th</sup> UN Civil Society Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah in August 2019. Arzan Sam Wadia in his President’s speech at the AGM has confirmed to make “Friends of FEZANA” official.

**The Information Technology Committee** put their communication system to maximum use and sent out direct and targeted email campaigns with over 7,000 emails!

Past issues of the FEZANA Journals are now available in digital format on the FEZANA Website.

The **Zoroastrian Shop** has been setup as a Pilot Project. Items such as sudrehs, kushtis, books, topis, divas, kakras, ses items, Farohar jewelry are all stored at Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAMC) and can be ordered online through the FEZANA website.

The **Interfaith Committee** in co-sponsorship with ZAMC had a Nowruz celebration event at the Oriental Institute of Chicago. It was attended by 200 people. The attendees enjoyed a “*haft-seen*” table, the Persian tea house, learning about Nowruz and history of Persia, and a film, “The Spirit of Nowruz”, along with many other museum activities.

The **Religious Education Committee** conducted a survey/questionnaire to all FEZANA Associations regarding their religious studies curriculum. The committee was interested in finding out what subjects are taught and to find commonalities and unique differences in subject matters taught. A report on the questionnaire is available.

FEZANA contributed a Grant of \$800 to the preservation of a manuscript from Dasturji JamaspAsa’s collection which was completed in May 2020 by Dr. Almut Hintze, Zarthoshty Brothers Professor of Zoroastrianism, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. The next step is to prepare an edition of this manuscript for the public.

The **Unity, Welfare, Critical Assistance, and Disaster Relief Committee** worked on 25 different requests from individuals and organizations this past year.

FEZANA attended the UN Civil Society Conference in Salt Lake City. There were 9 participants from FEZANA and a panel presentation about how entrepreneurship brings value by studying the example of the HRDC in Banepa, Nepal, which has provided life transforming surgeries for over 90,000 indigent children for over three decades.

The **FEZANA UN-NGO Committee** members could not take a trip to New York during the time of the UN Commission on the Status of Women Conference due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. FEZANA presented a virtual panel workshop on, “Empowering Women through Health, Education and Enhancement in the Workplace”, covering five of the Sustainable Development Goals. This can be viewed on FEZANA’s YouTube Channel.

**Zarathushti Youth Without Borders** supported a FEZANA member to travel to Central Africa for the study of Wild Elephants in their natural habitat.





## FEZANA Executive

The following people were elected unopposed to their positions:

**Arzan Sam Wadia**, nominated by ZAGNY for President, 2020-2022 term.

**Mahrukh “Rooky” Fitter**, nominated by ZAC-LA for Treasurer, 2020-2022 term.

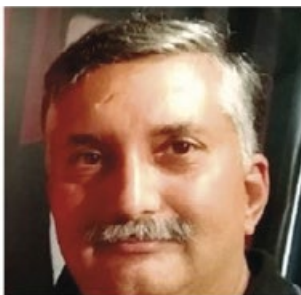
**Xerxes Commissariat**, nominated by ZAC-LA for Assistant Secretary, 2020-2022 term.



The position of interim Vice President for 2020-2021 was opened for election and contested by three candidates: Kayomarz Sidhwa from Houston, Mitra Jam from Toronto and Pervin Talyarkhan from Chicago, of which **Kayomarz Sidhwa** won the majority of votes.

**Percy M. Master** remains as FEZANA Secretary as his term ends in 2021.

**Kayomarz Sidhwa, FEZANA Vice-President**



**Percy Master**  
Secretary



**Rooky Fitter**  
Treasurer



**Xerxes Commissariat**  
Asst Secretary

The next FEZANA AGM in 2021 will be hosted by the Sacramento Zoroastrian Association in the last weekend in April. The 2022 FEZANA AGM will be hosted by the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago.



## NEW APPOINTMENTS

### *Tanya Hoshi* AS THE CHIEF SOCIAL MEDIA OFFICER



Tanya Hoshi is a Zarathushti youth leader from Toronto . Tanya brings extensive experience as an award-winning film producer, with her films about Zoroastrians available to view at [Path of Asha](#), a new initiative she is launching to highlight global Zoroastrian stories. Tanya is a storyteller by profession and recently produced the film *Turning Tables* which was acquired from her team by CNN’s Great Big Story. Tanya is also a producer at Shopify, an entrepreneur, and a reserves officer in the Canadian Forces. Tanya’s focus will be to exercise FEZANA’s vision to engage, energize and empower Zoroastrian youth through social media. You may follow FEZANA on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and our [website](#) to stay up to date with our news and events.

### *Jim Engineer* AS THE CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER



Jim will serve FEZANA by articulating principled position statements on issues, events and crises concerning FEZANA. Jim will work closely with the FEZANA executive team, its committee chairs and other stakeholders to provide: strategic communications counsel and issues management; writing news releases and position statements; guest moderating the new *FEZANA Talks* podcast; occasionally authoring articles in the *FEZANA Journal*; coordinating media relations initiatives; and helping shape and influence FEZANA’s reputation in print, video and online media.

Jim has twice-served as FEZANA’s Public Relations Chair or Co-Chair; and will continue to serve as the co-chair He was a founding administrator of the popular NextGenNow group on Facebook; participated in the 2018 World Zoroastrian Youth Leaders Forum at the Asha Centre in England; reported from the 2018 Parliament of the World’s Religions in Toronto; promoted the 2016 Zoroastrian Games in Chicago.

We look forward to Jim’s many contributions to help elevate FEZANA’s awareness and reputation across the North American diaspora and around the world, based on his years of dedication and frontline communications experience on behalf of the North American Zarathushti community.

### OTHER APPOINTMENTS *Each of these appointees will be featured in the winter issue.*

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>ANA VERAHRAMI</b>    | <b>Co-Chair of ZYWB</b> (Zoroastrian Youth Without Borders)   |
| <b>PARSHAN KHOSRAVI</b> | <b>Chair of ZYNA</b> (Zoroastrian Youth of North America)   |
| <b>SANAYA MASTER</b>    | <b>Co-Chair FEZANA Unity and Welfare Committee</b>  |
| <b>HOMI D. GANDHI</b>   | <b>Co-Chair of FEZANA Interfaith Activities Committee.</b>  |
| <b>FREYAZ SHROFF</b>    | <b>FEZANA Ambassador to India.</b> We welcome Freyaz in this first of a kind role.of this new initiative. |



## INTERNATIONAL EQUAL PAY DAY CALL TO ACTION

The 18<sup>th</sup> September 2020 marked the first International Equal Pay Day. The Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) held a virtual call to action, which sought to encourage labour market actors across the world to work towards the agenda of equal pay (United Nations, 2020).

On behalf of FEZANA, I was able to unite with a global audience and together we listened and discussed how to close the gender pay gap. The take home message from this call to action is that greater efforts need to be taken on every level, if we are to reach true gender equality.

Panellists were quick to highlight that equal pay for men and women is by no means a threat to men. In fact, it was consistently reinforced that women bring unparalleled and numerous benefits to the workplace and the wider economy.

The infographic outlines some key findings from the event and ways in which everyone can work towards closing the gender pay gap.

UN Women, EPIC2023 and #EqualPayDay are all social media handles that can be followed on Twitter to find out more about achieving equal pay and gender equality.

The virtual event was moderated by **Nazipho Tshabalala** and the panel consisted of:

**Nadia Soubat**, Executive Bureau Member from CDT, Morocco

**Thorsteinn Viglundsoon**, Former Minister of Social Affairs and Equality, Iceland

**Megan Rapinoe**, Captain of US National Women's Soccer team

**Samira Ahmed**, BBC journalist

**Kristin Skogen Lund**, CEO of Schibsted ASA Norway

**Iris Bohnet**, Harvard Kennedy, School Professor and Academic Dean

With remarks given by the EPIC Secretariat:

**Angel Gurria**, Secretary-general OECD

**Guy Rider**, Director General, ILO

**Asa Regner**, UN Women

**CLOSING THE GENDER PAY GAP**  
18TH SEPTEMBER MARKED THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL #EQUALPAYDAY  
OUTLINED BELOW IS A SYNOPSIS FROM THE EQUAL PAY INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION (EPIC) PANEL EVENT

**EQUAL PAY**  
Equal Pay is...  
1. The right to achieve equal remuneration for work of equal value.  
2. A prerequisite to achieving gender equality in the world of work and a fairer, more inclusive world in general.  
(UN-Women)

**THE STATS**  
Facts from the discussion...  
1. On average women are paid 16% less than men.  
2. There is not a single country in the world that has closed the gender pay gap.  
(UN Women)

**AND-AND APPROACH**  
We can't just do one thing to close the gender pay gap. We need to work socially, politically and legislatively in order to close the gap. Building awareness around the issue of equal pay and encouraging wage transparency from employers is imperative.

**THE PANDEMIC**  
The Covid-19 pandemic has disproportionately disrupted the lives of women. From having more women on the front line to women having to stop work in order to take up child and elderly care responsibilities.

**OUR ROLE**  
Things we can do to help close the pay gap  
1. Bring awareness to the issue  
2. Support sectors that are predominately female (care/education) to lobby for increased pay  
3. Help women develop skills for leadership/senior roles

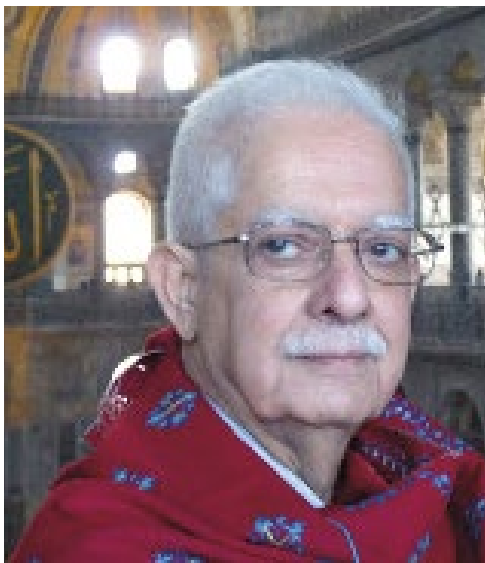
LEARN MORE AT UN WOMEN & EPIC 2020 (SF KAPADIA, SEPT. 2020)

Contributor:  
**Sheherazad F. Kapadia**  
Young Zoroastrian President (UK)  
FEZANA UN-NGO Committee



## THE THREE PRESIDENTS OF FEZANA, ALL PRODUCTS OF ZAGNY !!

KHURSHEED NAVDER, President of ZAGNY



**Framroze Patel**  
1998- 2002



**Homi Gandhi**  
2016-2020



**Arzan Sam Wadia**  
2020-

**AS** ZAGNY President, my pride and joy is boundless as I welcome and congratulate ZAGNY member, Arzan Sam Wadia, as he takes on the baton from outgoing president Homi Gandhi, yes, another ZAGNY member. Some of you may not know that Arzan is actually the 3<sup>rd</sup> ZAGNY member to head our parent organization.

Framroze Patel was our first ZAGNY member who served as the President of FEZANA and his distinctive 2<sup>nd</sup> two-year term ended in 2002....and may I add, that at 85 years young, Framroze is still *actively* involved with ZAGNY. He just celebrated his 85<sup>th</sup> Birthday milestone a couple of days ago...so Happy Birthday Framroze and wishing you many, many more in good health!

Homi , thank you for your exemplary, selfless service. I would like to add that, yours truly started her community service and came on the ZAGNY Board as secretary when Homi was then President back in 2006. "*Leading by example*" was his leadership style back then and has continued to be his motto in his two term FEZANA presidency. Yes Homi, as you just said, the winds of change are blowing and we know that you will continue to keep working on behalf of FEZANA and will stay involved.

And now Arzan, as you take the helm as the youngest President of FEZANA, ZAGNY is ever so proud and we wish you well. Folks as you know, Arzan has been very heavily involved with FEZANA as Vice President and even before he held any official position. At first it was difficult for us on the ZAGNY board to share him and his expertise with others, but we had to come soon to grips that his energy and vision could not be contained to ZAGNY, and that he was destined we have no doubt he will raise the bar yet even higher as President of FEZANA. Good Luck Arzan, we know that you will continue to do ZAGNY proud.



## *We Are Here For You!*

*A message from the FEZANA Welfare Committee*

**S**heep are known to be humble and mild-mannered, and when their wool is woven into threads it still retains its essence. The Kushti that we tie around our waist is woven with seventy-two of those threads. The unity of the threads makes it strong enough to last for years. The case in point being, a sense of strong unity in our community contributes to its strength and welfare, more so, in the unprecedented times, we are living in.

This year we've had to face the unusual challenge of living through the pandemic, add to it the socio-political turmoil of the Black Lives Matter movement which has underlined the discrimination of how people of colour are treated, along with a strongly polarized political atmosphere.

The pandemic has changed our lives by 360 degrees and some of us have had a hard time adapting to it. Being cooped up at home can create a toxic environment for some. This could play a negative role in how we feel, our health and our attitude towards our loved ones and others.

We live in a culture that always looks for cures, for solutions and we spend a ridiculous amount of resources and wealth to research that. If we spend a fraction of our time on prevention and instead take care of the miracle that has been gifted to us, our body, by doing things in moderation and exercising...it would make a huge difference. Importantly, we need to take care of our thoughts by conditioning our thinking and watching our thoughts.

The very premise of our religion rests on the tenets of Humata, Hukta, Huvrashta—a golden ticket to happiness. It all starts with good, righteous, positive thoughts, followed by similar words and deeds. For our own wellness, we need to work on those basic principles to live a fuller, contented and enhanced life.

Some in our community have lost jobs, businesses and even lives.

Our community is here to help in whatever way we can. There are lots of caring and large-hearted people who can help, so please reach out to the Fezana Welfare Committee if there is anything we can do to make life a little easier during these challenging times. In the past, we have worked with folks to assist with resources /financial aid/disaster relief and even helped those involved in domestic violence. We are here to serve.

Strangely, we are taught to give but somehow, but it is taboo to ask for help. Most think of it as a weakness, a shortcoming or consider themselves as a failure. It's time to change that perspective as a community.

And as for the resourceful Zoroastrians in our community who can help, we will reach out to you for your assistance in your field of expertise for advice and direction.

For those with a generosity of spirit, who can help financially, you can donate to FEZANA welfare fund and/or set up an endowment fund in your/loved one's name.

Let us keep working to bring our community together and to enhance each other's lives.

The rising tide raises all boats.

### **WELFARE COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS**

*Houtoxi Contractor Phone 412 445 1533*

*Hosi Mehta Phone 630 988 1952*

*Sanaya Master Phone 778 814 5737*



## REPORT OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMMITTEE

LOVJI CAMA, Ph.D & ARTEMIS JAVANSHIR

In 2018, FEZANA Religion Education Committee (REC) emailed a questionnaire to its member associations to inquire what each member association finds important to teach its youth, how the students are divided into different classes, how often the classes meet and for how long, and the problems faced by teachers in their classes. We also asked what kind of support the FEZANA REC could offer the religion teachers. In 2019, a summary of the gathered information was emailed to all those who participated and it will soon be available on our webpage through [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org).

A general summary of the responses to the questionnaire is as follows. Curriculum in most organizations covers Najvot/Sedreh Pooshi prayers, topics on the Zoroastrian religion, and ceremonies. Some organizations in addition to the mentioned topics, teach comparative religion, Shahnameh and ancient Persian history. Organizations have students ranging in age between 4-18 years of age, although there are organizations that do not have high school students attending. The main problem the teachers are facing is inconsistent attendance of students, mainly due to some families favoring other activities over religion classes. The support teachers would like from REC is the availability of age appropriate lesson plans with interactive and simulating activity ideas for each lesson.

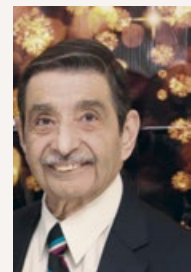
In response to the information received through the questionnaire, FEZANA REC launched a group effort to address the support requested of this committee.

We also added a new category, teacher's guide. The purpose of this category is to give guidance to teachers as how to interact and enhance the learning experience of youth in different age groups.

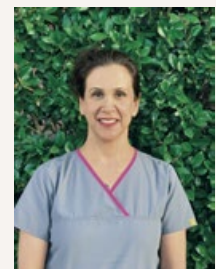
REC sent out an email to member associations asking those teachers interested to take the lead of one of the mentioned categories to contact us. Many responded and thanks to each of them. Each of the groups has 1-3 leads and the first lesson plan has been submitted by most groups. This is a project that can't be rushed, and we not only depend on the expertise of our religion teachers, but we will use the help of our accredited teachers to finetune the lesson plans.

Although we anticipate that the project will take up to summer of 2022 we should be able to post the lesson plans to FEZANA REC website as the plans are developed. This project is a group effort and we welcome comments, questions, and help from all our member associations so please don't hesitate to contact us. Our email address can be found at FEZANA website [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org)

*Dr. Lovji D. Cama holds a B.Sc and a B.Sc. (Technology) from the University of Bombay, and a Doctorate in Chemistry from Columbia University in New York. He is a retired research scientist from Merck and Co, Lovji is a founding member of ZAGNY (Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York), its first secretary and then the President and the longest serving trustee of the Dar-e-Mehr (Temple) (26 years). He has been in charge of the Religious Education classes of ZAGNY since its inception in 1974 and the youth camps for 15 years and is chair of FEZANA Religious Education Committee. He lectures on Zoroastrianism in North America, UK and India and contributed to the text book "Good Life".*



*Artemis Javanshir is co-chair of FEZANA Religion Education Committee and a member of Core Education Committee of California Zoroastrian Center in Los Angeles (CZC-LA) where she teaches religion, Persian history and Persian language classes to youth of different age groups. With technical support of CZC, and of contest judges, she organizes essay, short story, and drawing contests for youth. She has a bachelor in Electrical Engineering and a bachelor in Dental Hygiene.*





## The FEZANA Talks – A New Online Series for Zoroastrians

**CANCELLED.** I knew I was going to see that word sooner or later, but it still upset me to see the message in my phone that the 2nd World Zoroastrian Youth Forum had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. It was yet another event in my year I was looking forward to that was taken away.

What made the Zoroastrian Youth Forum special is that it provides an avenue for Zoroastrian Youth from around the world to discuss topics that were important to us - especially topics which would be considered taboo by a large portion of Zoroastrians.

It was a month later that I was appointed Chief Social Media Officer of FEZANA, after which I immediately began several chats with Arzan Sam Wadia (Fezana President) about the need to create a series of online events which engage Zoroastrian youth during the pandemic. It was through these discussions that The Fezana Talks came to fruition.

The FEZANA Talks is a new digital initiative Fezana launched in July 2020 to engage the Zoroastrian community, with our youth in particular, in order for us to discuss topics pertaining to our religion, our diverse culture, and our community. Since the pandemic prevented us from being able to meet at our local associations, this new initiative allowed us to continue to have important discussions, while having the benefit of providing Zoroastrians worldwide the ability to attend. The Fezana Talks is a place for open-minded discussion, and an avenue for Zoroastrians to engage in discussion with the goal of learning and making our community a place where everyone can feel welcome and encouraged to practice their faith.

### FEZANA TALKS SESSION - CAN ZOROASTRIANS SOLVE CLIMATE CHANGE?

An alumnus from the UN FEZANA representation, **Ervad Karl Desai**, originally from Sydney, Australia, currently residing in London, UK, was the moderator for the first FEZANA Talks titled, “Can Zoroastrianism Solve Climate Change?” held on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

This new initiative, **FEZANA TALKS** facilitated by the newly elected executive, promises to provide a broad platform for Zarathushtis to share their thoughts in wider civil society on a range of diverse topics that impacts our global community.

The panel of speakers, on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, Farzad Sunavala, Hanoz Suntoke, Karl Desai, Reanna Unwalla and Shahan Engineer shared their personal experiences with Climate Change amid the COVID-19 crisis in an interactive dialogue with 50 attendees.

Some take aways from the discussion:

- What is your current carbon footprint? Take the assessment: <https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/#/>





- Little changes each person chooses to make can add up. Some suggestions: do not waste water or electricity, carpool or use public transportation when you can, use reusable shopping bags, don't buy plastic water bottles, eliminate all single use plastics.
- Recycling plastic or cloth is not easy. It takes more energy to recycle than to create new articles from raw materials. So eliminating or reducing the use of an item makes for a more pronounced impact. Hence, in order of priority: *Reduce, Reuse and then Recycle*.
- *Dokhmenashini* is not practiced outside of India. Cremation has an adverse effect on energy consumption and releases chemicals and additional pollutants. Hence, consider burial in a shroud instead of a coffin. An innovative solution mentioned: one can be buried in a biodegradable egg shell that is connected to the growth of a new tree. To read more: <https://cnn.it/2O65RmM>
- The Zoroastrian Society of Ontario has switched to using plant based cutlery and cups along with paper plates. So all the food waste, cutlery and cups are put in a compost bin and paper plates in the recycling bin. This way there is no "garbage" created. All Zoroastrian Associations can learn from this example and consider switching to biodegradable essentials to become more environmentally friendly, first at their places of congregational worship, and then in their own homes.
- In Canada, milk bags cannot be recycled, so **Armaity Anandasagar** from OZCF (Girl Guide Leader) has been training the Girl Guides in upcycling them and making sleeping mats for developing countries. The OZCF Seniors, OZCF Scouts and some companies have also made these sleeping mats a few times.
- Being at home all day with COVID-19, individuals are using fewer clothes; wearing the same clothes over again. Do we really need so many clothes stashed in our wardrobes?

**HOW ZOROASTRIANS CAN TACKLE DISCRIMINATION**

Join this moderated discussion and bring your questions to this insightful conversation open to all!

**Fri, August 7th**  
 9am PDT / 12pm EDT / 5pm BST / 9pm PKT / 9:30pm IST  
 Zoom Meeting ID: 992 2461 6111 Password: FEZANA

**The FEZANA Talks**

### Report by Afreed Mistry

#### Fezana Talks Session - How Zoroastrians Can Tackle Discrimination

When Fezana announced that it was hosting a session called "How Zoroastrians Can Tackle Discrimination", the flyer for the event was shared far and wide. One excited attendee even wrote on their Facebook that they have been "waiting decades" for a Zoroastrian institution to discuss discrimination that exists within our own community members towards

others.

The session's presenter was Mobedyar Khushroo Mirza, from Oakville, Canada, who regularly teaches religion classes and hosts fireside chats with Zoroastrian youth. I reached out to Khushroo after attending a talk hosted by the OZCF called "Pride and Prejudice", in which Mobedyar Khushroo discussed what we as Zoroastrians can draw from our scriptures at a personal and societal level to address discrimination in Zoroastrianism. The discussion had roughly 30 OZCF youth members in attendance who were engaged throughout, asking questions which are normally considered taboo - topics such as intermarriages, LGBTQ+ Zoroastrians, Gender inequality, and





more. I invited Khushroo to be a Fezana Talks presenter in order for us to open up this important discussion with the community at large.

The session “How Zoroastrians Can Tackle Discrimination” had over 200 attendees who engaged in active discussion throughout the presentation. Attendees were made to reflect on how we can focus our energies to come up with creative solutions for the betterment of our community. The session was a step in normalizing conversations about inequity, discrimination, racism, and injustice that hurts not only members in our own community but the world at large.

Mobedyar Khushroo’s main point in his session was that it is through education that we as Zoroastrians can tackle discrimination. He reminded us that we have a responsibility to call-in members of our community into critical conversations and we need to focus on holding each person accountable for the impact of their words and actions. When it came to referring to our scriptures, he showed us how in the Gathas, our Prophet Zarathustra only distinguished between people who followed the path of righteousness and those who didn’t. It didn’t matter the colour of their skin, the land they lived in, or their origin. This was an indirect statement on the problematic stance some Zoroastrians take against conversions (people with non-Zoroastrian parents doing their Navjote) and intermarriages (A Zoroastrian marrying a non-Zoroastrian or someone who isn’t Parsi) in the Zoroastrian community.

Mobedyar Khushroo reminded attendees that discrimination arises from personal prejudice. Personal prejudice comes from ignorance, and ignorance creates a false sense of pride. “This is a dangerous path” he said, and “this is where most conflict takes place”.

A Facebook Group called “Worldwide Zoroastrians”, which boasts over 14,000 members, emerged during the pandemic. In this group, Zoroastrians are welcome to ask questions, share their thoughts about their religion and culture, and share events and news pertaining to Zoroastrianism. The largest group in recent history online, the group also has its fair share of problematic posts which ignite debate amongst the most orthodox Zoroastrians and the most liberal Zoroastrians. One topic which was brought up to Mobedyar Khushroo was the concept of Zoroastrianism and purity of race. Can one be a pure Zoroastrian because they are born to a Zoroastrian mother and father? He quickly shut down that belief, arguing that “purity of race” is manmade and that the concept exists for one race to have superiority over another. “In our scriptures, it’s all about inclusivity”, he reiterated. “We’re supposed to treat each other with respect because we’re all creations of Ahura Mazda”. He stressed the importance of letting go of the idea of purity of race, and that fixation will only create further divide and conflict in our community.

When it comes to Discrimination, there’s many things we can talk about but we have to start somewhere. Fezana wants to eventually expand through multiple sessions with different speakers as well. Discrimination against Zoroastrians and Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour in the diaspora is real. Before we focus on looking out, we have to first look inwards at ourselves and our community and the discrimination that exists within. Mobedyar Khushroo Mirza did an excellent job starting this critical discussion, in the hopes of creating a community that defaults to inclusivity, instead of prejudice and discrimination.

**Report Tanya Hoshi**

## **FEZANA TALKS SESSION - DISCRIMINATION AND PERSECUTION OF IRANIAN ZOROASTRIANS**

**Discrimination and persecution of Iranian Zoroastrians and how Maneckji Limji Hataria contributed to saving the community Presented by Viraf Soroushian and Mehrbourzin Soroushian**

After the fall of the Sassanian Empire, the Zoroastrian population of Persia suffered through many instances of systematic persecution, discrimination, and mass extermination. Zoroastrians were deemed to be “kefirs” (non-



believers or heretics) by the ensuing Muslim rulers and many coercive methods were employed to subjugate and convert them. Enactment of inheritance laws and the jizyeh (religious taxes) alongside restrictions on occupation and formal education increased the financial burden on Zoroastrians and pushed the community into poverty and illiteracy. The destruction of libraries, temples, and religious books meant much of the religion would be lost forever. Severe restrictions were placed on where Zoroastrians could live and how they could dress and interact in public. Crimes against Zoroastrians as a rule went unpunished and women were so vulnerable to rapes, kidnappings, and forced marriages that many would blacken their teeth and rub dirt on their faces to mask their physical appearance before leaving the house. These, of course, were the conditions for the lucky ones: those who survived the numerous massacres catalyzed by the ruling establishment.


The situation became so dire, that between 1600 and 1850, the Zoroastrian population in Persia declined by 98% to ~7,000. On the state of the community, the French Ambassador to Persia would say “only a miracle may save them from extinction.”

That miracle would be delivered between 1854 – 1890 in the form of humanitarian support from Maneckji Limji Hataria. Bankrolled by the wealthy Parsi community in British India through the Parsi Amelioration Society, Hataria—a merchant and public servant by trade with a strong passion for his Persian heritage—would work tirelessly for almost 40 years to lift the community out of poverty and despair and set them up for wealth and prosperity in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Among the many accomplishments he and the Persian Amelioration Society achieved were:

- Elimination of the Jizyeh (religious tax)
- End to the ban on formal education for Zoroastrians and the establishment of a dozen schools providing education on par with that of Parsis in British India
- End to the ban on the Zoroastrians’ right to organize and the establishment of associations (Anjumans) in Yazd and Kerman
- Construction and restoration of fire temples, dakhmes (towers of silence), religious pilgrimage sites, an orphanage, and a hostel
- Payment of dowries for poor and orphaned women, resulting in over 100 marriages
- Support for Iranian Zoroastrians to travel to India to be apprenticed and trained by the Parsi community
- Encouragement for Zoroastrians to relocate to the capital city, Tehran, where they would be in a better positioned to benefit from growth and prosperity of the nation
- Renewal of interest in Persia’s pre-Islamic past among the Iranian intelligentsia

The outcome of his work was an educated and organized community well-positioned to benefit from a modernizing and prospering Iran and play an outsized role in shaping its economy, government, and cultural identity.

**Report Viraf Soroushian**




## Discrimination and Persecution of Iranian Zoroastrians

*How Maneckji Limji Hataria contributed to saving the community*

**Sun. Aug 30**

9am PST / 12pm EST / 5pm BST  
9pm PKT / 9:30pm IST

Zoom Meeting ID: 956 2661 2390  
Password: FEZANA



**FEZANA**

# The FEZANA Talks



## NEW Boards of FEZANA Member Associations 2020-2021

### ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF GREATER NEW YORK (ZAGNY)



President	Khursheed Navder
Vice President	Kerman .N Dukander
Treasurer	Cyrus J Pavri
Secretary	Kayomarz Khambatta
Jt Secretary	Navaz Lopinto

### ONTARIO ZOROASTRIAN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION (OZCF)

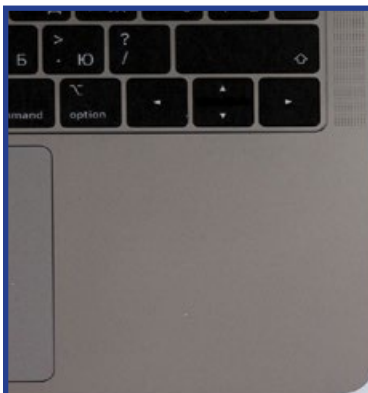


President	Xerxes Madon
Vice president	Dr Adil Bhesania
Treasurer	Ruzbeh Rohinton
Secretary	Kushi Doctor

### ZOROASTRIAN SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA ( ZSBC)



President	Firdosh Mehta
Vice president	Mrs Anahita Kaviani
Treasurer	Dinyar Buhariwala
Secretary	Sanaya Khajotia
Directors	Dr Pouran Rostamian
	Kayras Irani, Aubtin Yazdgrduian



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## *We Did It!*

The New Darbe Mehr Steering Committee of the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia has great pleasure in announcing the acquisition of the property at 1841 Moore Avenue, Burnaby, BC. This property is adjacent to our current Darbe Mehr. This acquisition will hopefully allow us to build a bigger and better Darbe Mehr to serve the Zoroastrian community in BC and be a place all community members can be proud owners of.

We are really excited that the first step of this massive project is complete and now depend on all community members to assist in the fundraising process so we can see this project to completion. Please open your hearts and wallets and generously donate toward this cause so we can make our dream come true.

We are truly appreciative of the membership's confidence in us and for giving us this mandate to go ahead with the project, and we would like to thank all the donors who have already come forward with their generous contributions.

We would also like to acknowledge the Arbab Rustam Guiv Trust and The Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia for their large financial contribution toward the acquisition of this property and for their assistance at every step along the way in making this purchase possible.

Thank you,

*Bella Tata and Shervin Shahriari, Co-chairs*

### New Darbe Mehr Steering Committee Members

Shirin Abadi, Piroj Amrolia, Sam Behramfram, Dineyar Buhariwala, Azita Dehmobed, Jamshed Gustavsp, Homi Italia, Perviz Madon, Farrokh Namdaran, Fariborz Rahnamoon, Shervin Shahriari, Kashmira Suraliwalla, Bella Tata, Rostam Yazdani, Aurash Yazdgerdian





## ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF HOUSTON Z-CAMP 2020

### FIRST EVER VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE!

We all agree, 2020 is the most unique year ever in our lifetime although adversity brings innovation and adaptation with it. We did the same at ZAH and decided to have the first ever completely virtual Z-Camp for a day on July 26<sup>th</sup>. Partnering with FEZANA and our fellow associations we invited everyone from across North America for a true nation-wide experience and it turned out to be a very successful event. We had 74 attendees (incl. 1 from Karachi, Pak) from 24 cities across the US and Canada in total with 25 campers from Houston. We had 11 sessions of which 7 were conducted by under-30 Young Adults.

Our online registration setup allowed every attendee in North America to register and attend at a nominal fee of \$10 (which was returned after the camp as gift cards). After weeks of virtual preparations, we came up with some very creative and innovative sessions and sent the attendees a comprehensive 8-page preparation document a week prior, as we realized that preparations from the attendees in a virtual setting was equally important to make it a success. We began around 9.30am with our pre-checks and the kids logging in from their own homes. The Z-camp started promptly at 10am with a benediction by our young Ervads. We formed 4 teams making sure that they were from different cities, no siblings were together, each age group was properly represented, and the teams were well balanced. The names they gave were Appetizers, Brilliant Bawas, Cookie Monsters, Divo.

The morning sessions included the Z Workout session which energized all the attendees. It was then time for the Iron Chef session

where the kids got the opportunity to show off their culinary skills. The 7-14 yrs. old were requested to keep ingredients ready to make a sandwich or a wrap and the 15-18 yrs. old were asked to keep ingredients ready for making a pizza of their choice. They were sent to different breakout rooms by team (so no other team can copy their ideas) where they used their own ovens to bake their pizzas and prepared their sandwiches/wraps in front of their laptops/iPads for all to view and eventually present for judging. The theme was to depict ***“How would their school cafeteria look like when the kids return after the lockdown” as a team.***

As usual the creativity, innovation and presentations included unique shapes of food representing the theme, social distancing, masks, sanitization, healthy foods, etc. An Ice-cream making demo followed as the kids were relishing their own creations with a couple of them finishing their food even before they were judged 😊. The team mentors played a crucial role in keeping their groups motivated, on track and making sure that everyone was included in the discussions.

The afternoon sessions after a short lunch break included topics like “The New Normal – COVID-19 pandemic” educating the attendees regarding importance of following the guidelines, social distancing, etc. followed by a live session of Ultrasound demonstrations of various organs like heart, etc. The health sessions were followed by a virtual tour of the Atash Kadeh in Houston and a Boi ceremony by our young Ervads.

The sessions that followed were on the importance of water and its heritage to the world through

Zoroastrian culture and tracing our roots from “Big Bang” to the present times. While those sessions were going on in ZOOM room 1, in ZOOM room 2 the 15-18 yrs. old were treated to some exciting debate-style topics like Cultural Humility, Home, Mental Health and Happiness and a Trivia session at the end.

They had a quick break for 15 minutes after which began the combined evening sessions on topics like Classroom to ZOOM room which included students and educators who threw light on the new norm of virtual teaching /learning, sharing best practices, tips and tricks. We concluded the Z-Camp with a very interactive, fun and enjoyable BINGO session followed by announcement of points secured by each team at around 5pm.

All attendees were focused, cooperative and thoroughly enjoyed the camp. Most importantly, everyone made new friends and long-lasting relationships. We thoroughly enjoyed conducting the camp and see you all back in 2021.

#### ZAH Z-Camp 2020 Team

*Vehishta Kaikobad, Khursheed Dastur, Yasmin Medhora, Lyla Daroga and Kayo Sidhwa*

#### Here are a couple of quotes from a camper and a parent:

*“Thank you for organizing an amazing day for me and my brother yesterday. You all asked for feedback so here were some of my favorite moments of the class. I really appreciated the support that was available in the breakout sessions. The session on online studies was really engaging and it is really nice to get a summary of what the teachers are looking for during*

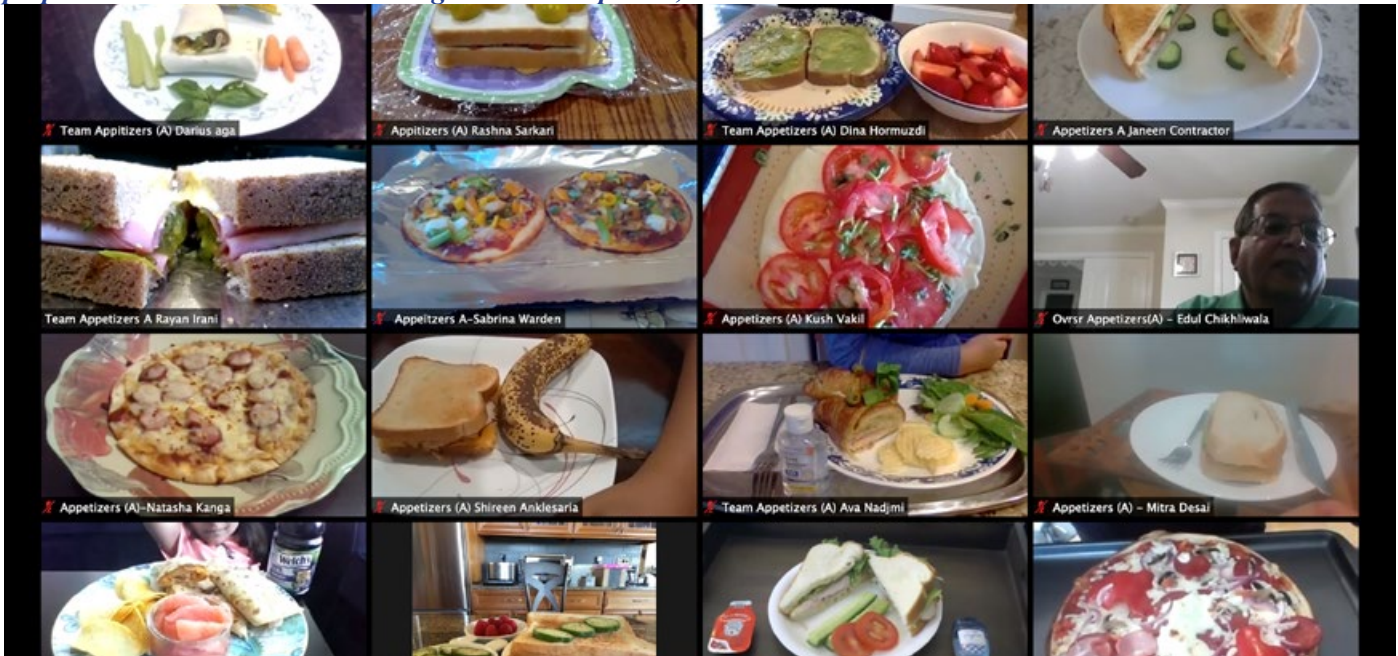


# FEZANA UPDATE

*the school year. The food competition was also really cool because we had to use our minds to come up with a good plan to impress the judges. Overall, the Z Camp was super fun and so appreciated by us all. It is going to be a fun memory of summer 2020” – A Z-Camper*

*“We have been through several camps this summer, all virtual. We had a few months of school from one of the largest school districts in the country. This stands out as exceptional compared to all others. The preparation showed incredible thought and anticipation,*

*resulting in great attention to detail. The result was, it made for a better experience for the kids, but also for the parents that knew how and when to be prepared and around to supervise. With that said, the supervision was minimal, largely because of how well it was seemed to be run. The kid’s attention was held, breaks were planned, movement included. All in all, the team that executed this should be incredibly proud of what they pulled off. Thank you so much!” – A Z-camper’s Parent.*





# FEZANA UPDATE

A screenshot of a Zoom meeting grid showing 25 participants in a 5x5 layout. The participants are labeled with their names and team names, such as Team A Shireen Aniklesaria, Team A Saloni Pargaonkar, Team B Armaan Yektale, Mentor Team B Nikita, Team B Zinara Dubash, TEAM D Aban Mir, Team C Zara Italia, Team A Yekta Hormozdian, Team B Serena Elavia, Team B Mahtab B. Dastur, Team A Aaryan Yektale, Team C Spenta Kadkhodayan, TEAM D CYRUS MEHTA, Team D Kiyan Commissariat, Team A Kush Vakil, Team B Asha gandhi, Team D Zarina Godwalla, team b Sanaya Irani, Team D Sascha Shroff, Team D Anahita Shahabadi, Team A Rashna Sarkari, Mentor Team C Yazad Sidhwa, Team C Hormuz Buhariwalla, Mentor Team C Zenia Sunavala, and Team D Zal Italia. The Zoom interface includes controls for Unmute, Start Video, Participants (89), Chat, Share Screen, Record, Reactions, and a Leave button.

A screenshot of a Zoom meeting grid showing 25 participants in a 5x5 layout. The participants are labeled with their names and team names, such as Sascha Shroff, MENTOR Appetizers (A) Rayha..., DIVO D Kiyan Commissariat, Aryana Mehrkhodavandi, manjehrustomji@gmail.com, Clarissa, Zara Italia, Team A Appetizers Dina Hor..., Mentor Divo D Priyana Sidhwa, Appetizers (A) Rashna Sarkari, OVERSEER Vehishta Kalkobad, Divo Iyanah Jamula, Overseer Farzana Soltwa, Appetizers (A) Shireen Aniklesaria, BrilliantBawas Anahita Shahab..., BrilliantBawas Veera Satha, Overseer - Lyla Daroga, Cookie Monsters Shayyan Gan..., Team C Cookie Monsters Zaal..., Overseer Khurshid Dastur, Team C Cookie Monster Dari..., Divo D - Ryan Mehin Mehrkh..., BrilliantBawas Aarish, Appetizers(A)-Yekta Hormozd..., and Mentor Appetizers (A)-Katie M... The Zoom interface includes controls for Unmute, Stop Video, Security, Participants (79), Chat, Share Screen, Record, Reactions, and a Leave button.



## HOUSTON YOUTH GROUP FOOD DRIVE

**FEZANA supports the SDGs of the UN**

### “NON PERISHABLE ITEMS FOR KIDS INC.”

**ZARA ITALIA**

Earlier this year, in May, my younger brother, Zal and I initiated a Houston Food Bank Drive, in Houston, Texas. Due to the COVID- 19 Pandemic lots of Houstonians had lost their job. We knew that there were millions of others going through this and that we were fortunate to have food on our plate everyday. At this time, we knew we wanted to help, but couldn't physically. We found that the Houston Food Bank was accepting donations and that \$1 helped contribute to three meals. Zal and I began to contact the Youth Group, Executive Committee and the ZAH Community. With

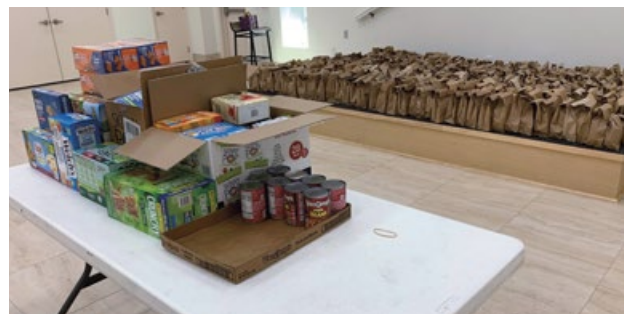
The brown paper bags consisted of 4 groups of non perishable food items (canned food e.g. tuna can, juice box, canned fruit, chip bag or granola bars). These brown paper bags will be given to individual kids at Kids Meals Inc. Kids will be able to open and eat the items, when they receive them after school. These meals are served to children, who go to elementary schools and don't have access to meals after school. We made 393 bags, with multiple other items leftover to donate.

This drive gave us an appreciation for what are the true essentials in life and not to take things for granted. There was really no target set in mind and we wanted to collect as much as we could. This would not have been possible without the many adult volunteers who planned this initiative, Ms. Persis Behramsha, Ms. Khursheed Dastur and Ms. Arzin Italia, Mr. Edul Chikhliwala, Mrs. Tanaaz Chikhliwala and Mr. Aderbad Tamboli. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic the adults made arrangements to deliver the food items. Since 2006, the volunteers at Kids Meals Inc deliver healthy meals directly to kids. We have made a small effort in trying to help them achieve much success.



the support of our community, we collected a total of \$9,327, in the three weeks our initiative was active. This amount was later triple matched by Sysco Food Systems.

I am the current President of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston Youth Group. Since the Houston Food Bank Initiative was so successful we decided to organize a Non Perishables and Canned Food Drive. Ms Persis Behramsha had contacted the Youth in the past with this initiative. She was aware of an organization called Kids Meals INC. We decided to host this drive during Mukhtad. This is our first year volunteering with this organization. Kids Meals currently delivers 7,000 meals a day, to 43 Houston-area zip codes. Currently, youth volunteers, (from left in picture above) Cyrus Surveyor, Neville Kanga, Natasha Kanga, Natasha Dungor, Mahtab Dastur, Zara Italia, Zal Italia, Darius Dastur, Nerijs Mehta, (Not in picture) Roshni Chikhliwala, Diana Sabawala, volunteered and helped by decorating lunch bags, sorting the food items, and packaging them into bags.



*Zara Italia is a senior at Memorial High School in Houston, her younger brother Zal is a sophomore in high school Her favorite subjects are health sciences, anatomy and physiology, and biology, and her favorite hobbies are sketching with pens and pencils. She is thankful to her parents for instilling Zoroastrian values*





## COVID-19 UPDATE

Fezana Journal's Summer 2020 issue focused on the pandemic that has created a "new normal" for our world. Fezana Journal will continue to publish updates from science, stories of heroism, association activities, and perspectives from Zarathushtis around the world on how they are coping with the pandemic and learning to look at the bright side of things.



## OUR FRONTLINE HEROES

### ZAMWI ON THE FRONTLINE AND VOLUNTEERING IN SUPPORT OF COMMUNITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

Anne Khademian

Community members of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, Inc. (ZAMWI) are on the frontline across the Washington, DC region, and across the nation in service to our communities during the pandemic. ZAMWI community members are also working in support of their neighbors, family, friends, and people serving on the frontline.

We are proud of their service and inspired by their dedication, and honor everyone working selflessly to care for and support individuals, families and communities that have been devastated by the virus COVID 19.

Many community physicians, nurses and physicians' assistants are on the frontline, such as Pashna Munshi, Shirin Engineer, Rohinton Farahifar, Sima Sekhavat, Sima Bastani, Nasha Elavia, Jimmy Daruwalla, Behram Pastakia, and Zarir Khademian.

**Zal Damkevala**, administrator for MedStar Health Urgent Care in the Greater DC region, is on the frontline daily with his team implementing the screening of patients for COVID 19 and incorporating evaluation and testing for COVID 19 into their protocols. Several innovations such as drive-through tent testing, e-visit evaluations prior to testing, rapid testing, and centralized call centers have set the standard for managing the pandemic in the region.

ZAMWI's researchers and scientists are working on regulation, such as **Zenobia Taraporewala**, an NIH-trained molecular virologist now working at the FDA on regulation and review of therapeutics and vaccines for COVID.

**Hormuzd Katki**, a cancer prevention researcher, is collaborating to figure out how to do cancer screening during the pandemic. Once a public repository of chest CT images is available, he will be collaborating to develop statistical and AI algorithms to automatically diagnose the extent of COVID disease on chest CT images and predict prognosis for patients.

Currently **Garshasb Soroosh**, **Ariya Mobaraki**, **Avan Antia**, and **Arshom Foroutan** are working their way through medical school to serve humanity in the future. **Vartamehr Ariaban** is working in a clinic in Chicago, and **Vivian Cooper Harvey** is currently a Family Medicine Resident Physician in the Chicagoland area and has spent the last few months taking care of COVID patients at MacNeal Hospital as well as in their clinic. Others are finding ways to support the frontline in communities hit hard by the pandemic. **Nancy Tengra**, a nurse in the step-down unit at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) Medical Center, deployed for 5 weeks to Tséhootsooi Medical Center in Fort Defiance, Arizona in the Navajo Nation to serve a community with a critical shortage of qualified medical providers due to COVID 19 exposure, and increase in patient population and acuity.

**Dr. Kourosh Kianpour** and his wife **Dr Mojgan Partovi** provide emergency dental care at great risk to themselves during the pandemic.

ZAMWI members like **Tahmineh Jamaspian**, **Mahnaz Marolia**, and **Mojgan Ariaban** are caring for neighbors and friends, day in and day out, and others like **Brig. Ervad Behram Panthaki** and **Zenobia Panthaki** are looking out for those harmed by the economic collapse. **Sanaya** and **Zara Mistry** have baked cookies for healthcare workers on the frontline, to bring a smile to their faces. Many others are donating and sharing masks, caring for community members who are ill, and supporting community members who have struggled with the impact of COVID 19.

## California Zoroastrian Center (CZC) Board of Directors



After the shelter in place order in March, CZC canceled all programs, Niyayeshgah, and on-site office and the office staff were asked to work from home.

- CZC with help from professional volunteers, provided useful information about government assistance programs via weekly newsletter and created COVID page in CZC website (<https://www.czc.org/covid-19>)
- A special phone number was dedicated for community members who were in need of financial assistance caused by covid-19.
- The online religious class graduation was held by SD CZC on Aug 22.

To bring the community together, a number of virtual classes have been organized via zoom which are run by volunteers. Video of some of these are archived in (<https://www.czc.org/video-archive-2020>) Zoroastrian 101, by Moobed Fariborz Shahzadi, and Din-dabireh with Dr. Nooshin Jahangiri alternating Saturdays 9:30am; <https://www.czc.org/dindabireh>

- Shahnameh by Dr Chaichi ,Saturdays 10:30 am -12 noon; <https://www.czc.org/shahnameh>
- Delicious Parenting by Fereshteh Mazdianasni, psychotherapist, third Saturday of every month from 2-3pm
- Balance Mind and Body Series with Taichi & Yoga & Meditation by Dr. Behkish Sundays 9:45am.
- Prayer with Mobed Ashkan Bastani Sundays from 12:00-12:30 pm Summer Farsi class for kids by Arezou Bahrami, Tuesday and Thursday 3 to 4 pm every week
- CZC has been hosting the “meydiyu-shahem and meydiyu-zarem gah” gahanbar and “porseh Tirgan” virtually.
- Virtual Ashtad Izad celebrations included prayer, music, meditation and medical advice.
- Virtual Pir-sabz pilgrimage program included entertainment and videos via live Facebook by the LA CZC
- Farsi and religious classes will be starting in September by LA, OC and SD CZCAs the California governor issued an ease on shelter in place the Atashkadeh was opened to visitors on an appointment basis. Scarfs, prayer books, candles were removed and visitors were asked to bring their own.
- CZC has also created a “Hamvari “ Telegram group to brainstorm and hear community suggestions on ways to strengthen the community in these challenging times.
- CZC initiated meetings with other Zoroastrian organizations (ZAC, PZO, SACZA) to collaborate on ways to bring the community together.
- The CZC Board of Directors is planning more virtual classes for the future and is open to hear any constructive suggestions and feedback.

## SILVER LININGS

### Roshan and Rohinton Rivetna, Chicago, Illinois, USA

We're actually grateful to COVID-19 for giving us the opportunity to catch up on things that have been on our “to-do” list for years (sometimes decades!) such as organizing and cataloging our library of books, mostly on Zoroastrianism; organizing our records of ZAC-Chicago, FEZANA, WZCC, Coming Together Round Table and Global Working Group, Congresses, Conferences; cleaning out the “stuff” in our closets and garage. I'm also busy making cloth masks or face coverings for our community members, a service project coordinated by our ZAC and WZCC-Chicago Women's Wing, detailed in Fezana Journal Summer 2020 issue, page 57.

The pandemic has given us a new perspective on life and time to rethink our priorities and values, and to appreciate and be grateful for all the things we took for granted pre-COVID-19. Another positive is that it has given the opportunity for relatives, friends and groups to “come together” albeit virtually, from across the world, via ZOOM. For example, our WZCC-Chicago meeting, which would normally have drawn only members from the Chicago area, now attracted participants from around the world (even though no lunch or high tea was offered!) (**CONT ON PAGE 76**)



## NAMC AVESTA SCHOLARSHIP FOR YOUNG MOBEDS



In 2020 an Avesta scholarship program has been set up for training young Mobeds in Avesta language in North America. Applications were solicited from young actively practicing mobeds with references from their Association President and three Mobeds with whom they had performed rituals and ceremonies. The students will be tutored by Dr. Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia, Principal of the Dadar Athornan Madressa over weekends for a 4-5 year period. From the several applications received three young mobeds were selected, \$47,000 had been raised for these three scholarships.

*Ervad Zerkxis Bhandara of California and Ervad Nekzad Elava and Ervad Kamran Panthaki from Toronto*

*Ervad Arda-e-viraf Minocherhomjee, President NAMC*

## INDIVIDUAL VS COMMUNAL VOICE

**Synopsis: A quarterly series of articles, reporting on the volunteers of the 2023 8th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress (8WZYC) to be held in London.**

This series of articles aims to provide an insight into the profiles of the individuals who will be organising the 2023 8th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress (8WZYC). Each article will detail how the organisers are trying to inspire and motivate the future generation of young Zoroastrians. We hope that these profiles will provide our readers with an insightful perspective into the lives and visions of the 2023 8WZYC organising volunteers.

This first article highlights the journey of the two congress Co-Chairs and how they use their voice to represent the community and add value to bring about progressive change through a communal voice.

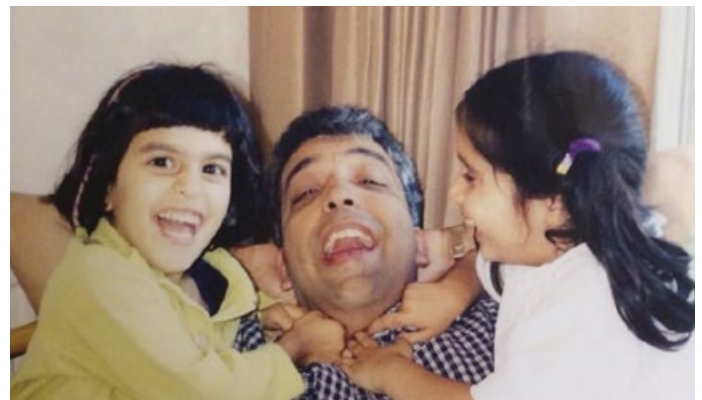
### INTRODUCTION

Sheherazad F Kapadia and Sanaya Khambatta are both from London, England and are together chairing the 2023 8WZYC. In 2019, they started serving the UK Young Zoroastrian (YZ) committee as Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively; and are committed to representing the voice and views of young Zoroastrians in the UK.

Both Sheherazad and Sanaya come from Zoroastrian families who have been strongly involved in serving their Zoroastrian communities. In the past, Sheherazad's father was the Treasurer in the 1997

2WZYC and her mother was a teacher for the UK Zoroastrian Children's Fun Club. Sanaya's family has been prominent in the Delhi Parsi community and several charitable causes. As a result of their family's extensive communal involvement, Sheherazad and Sanaya have both been actively involved in the Zoroastrian community, from a very young age.

In this article, they hope to shine a light on their journey in representing the YZ community and planning the 2023 8WZYC.



*Sheherazad and Sanaya aged 5, with Sheherazad's Dad*

## Why do you wish to be involved in the community?

**Sheherazad** - At age 10, my family and I moved to the Middle East, which seemed like a scary decision at the time. We never thought we would find a Zoroastrian community as vibrant and loving as our London group. However, looking back, it may have been the best choice my parents ever made! Within the first month of moving, my family and I were introduced to a group of expatriate Zoroastrians who called themselves, the 'Abu Dhabi Bawa Gang'. From then on, we enjoyed communal weekly dinners, outings and celebrations. The Bawa Gang taught me a lot – most importantly that no matter where I go, what I do, or how scared I become of the future, our Zoroastrian community and faith will always be there for me.

The moment I returned to London for higher studies, I felt a sense of responsibility to give back to my Zoroastrian roots and so I joined the YZ committee. Beyond that, I truly hope that through the 8WZYC, I can provide a platform for our Zoroastrian youth across the globe, to build a sense of belonging, empathy and a voice. After all, a community that cares, is a community that makes for a brighter tomorrow.

**Sanaya** - Growing up, my family always ensured that I had a strong sense of community and try to follow the three tenants of the religion- Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds. As a result, I always had Zoroastrian friends and engaged with them socially on a regular basis as well as attended Zoroastrian classes from an early age to learn about my religion and these tenants. Through this, I felt an innate sense of belonging which helped to shape my identity and allowed me to understand more about our religion overall. I have always been a proud Zoroastrian and my motivation for my involvement with the main YZs is that I want others to feel the same way I did growing up. I want them to have a sense of community, to meet other like-minded individuals and make and share experiences with them and to follow the religion, not because they have to but because they want to.

## What do you think you can bring to the table in terms of co-chairing the 2023 8WZYC in United Kingdom?

**Sanaya** - Both Sheherazad and I come from different backgrounds - whether that be career, academic or our

extra-curricular activities we participate in. However, it is this differentiating outlook that will benefit us greatly as we embark upon our journey in co-chairing the 2023 8WZYC in United Kingdom. We both examine a problem or task from a unique perspective and work on collaborating together to provide the best course of action that benefits our community, peers and the project at hand. We have grown up together and over the years have come to mutually understand how the other thinks, their strengths and we plan on using these attributes to our full advantage when working with others and each other. We are confident where our area of expertise lies and understand when to delegate or ask for help from each other if faced with something that we are unsure about. We both believe communication and transparency is key in working with one another and a passion for what we are doing - which we have in abundance!

## How do you overcome representing a community and not just your own viewpoint?

**Sheherazad** – For us, having a communal voice is essential to good leadership. Often today, we see world leaders who bring their personal agenda in politics- which tends to only create more divide. Having a communal voice does not just mean representing the views of others, it means accepting that sometimes your ideas or opinions will not be followed and you will have to implement a different ideology. Whilst at times this can seem hard, we always remind ourselves of the wider goal that we are working towards and that by listening and considering other points of views, we can create a more inclusive and empowered community.



Sheherazad & Sanaya at Sanaya's 18th Birthday



Sanaya and I have both always been guided to show kindness in our actions. We both believe that when taking on a role of leadership, whether it be; captaining your high school sports team or starting up an enterprise, being openminded and respecting the opinions of all those around you, especially those who you represent will always be a huge asset towards the success of your endeavours.

## What is the value of having a female based committee and acting co-chairs?

**Sheherazad** - The young Zoroastrian community in the UK has a vibrant atmosphere, and I am both proud and grateful to say that having women in leadership positions is not a rare occurrence in the UK YZ community. I truly feel that having a congress committee that is made up of so many wonderful and accomplished young women is essential and will showcase how we are paving the way to a more equitable society. Sanaya and I firmly believe that with the equality and empowerment of women, we will achieve a stronger future for our community as well as our religion.

## What do we hope the Zoroastrian youth will look like on a global scale?

**Sanaya** - Looking to the future of the global Zoroastrian youth, we hope that individuals will continue wanting to follow the Zoroastrian faith and be part of the global Zoroastrian community - through attendance at events such as youth congresses and world congresses.

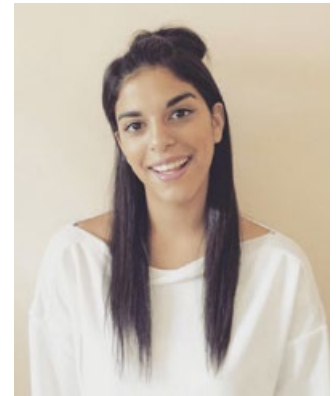
This can develop one's spiritual and emotional connection with the religion as well as their peers, and allow individuals to see us as a unified global community rather than simply a religion that they 'have' to follow. We wish for the YZ community to advance and slowly start tackling progressive issues that we face, not only within the religion, but in society too and to evolve to be respectful and inclusive of all.

## Closing paragraph

We hope our answers have provided you with an insight into us as individuals, as well as our views for the progression of the 2023 8WZYC in London, UK. If you have any questions to be addressed in future articles please email them to [8WZYC@ztf.com](mailto:8WZYC@ztf.com) and we will be happy to respond.

## Authors

**Sheherazd F. Kapadia**  
Chair - Young Zoroastrian's of the UK,  
Co-Chair - 2023 8th Zoroastrian World Youth Congress (London, United Kingdom). Occupational Therapy Student/Assistant Therapist



**Sanaya Khambatta**  
Vice Chair - Young Zoroastrian's of the UK  
Co-Chair - 2023 8th Zoroastrian World Youth Congress (London, United Kingdom) Technical Consultant at IBM



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# 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF UN & SDG

## Statement for FEZANA Journal

ABAN MARKER KABRAJI, Regional Director, Asia, Director – Regional Hub for Asia-Oceania

### Greetings!

*In* 2015, the United Nations, along with its member states, set 17 ambitious goals, which are collectively known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals and targets are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all — as they are designed to tackle most, if not all, of the societal challenges we face.

These 17 targets are commitments by the global community to address issues related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. The SDGs are to be achieved around the world, and by all UN member states, by 2030 – which means that all states are called upon equally to play their part in finding shared solutions to the world’s urgent challenges.

UN expects countries to mainstream these goals in their development plans and projects. So much value has been attached to the SDGs that these goals now serve as a yardstick for any development programs designed to address any of the 17 core issues identified by the UN.

At IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, we are working mainly towards the achievement of Goal 13 – Climate Action, Goal 14 – Life below Water and Goal 15 – Life on Land. But indirectly we are also contributing to the other SDGs through our programmatic approach to nature conservation.

Having worked for over 30 years in nature conservation, I have had the opportunity to create and lead

sustainable development programs in the region, and in the process, helped instill a respect and appreciation of nature, in our stakeholders, communities and governments we work with, across the 11 countries we have our presence, in Asia.

I get to appreciate the painstaking process of developing standards and scientific instruments to aid decision-making, planning and implementation of initiatives, which have in turn improved our environment and the quality of lives of the people that are beneficiaries of such initiatives. The SDGs have given IUCN a solid direction, guiding the development of our projects and making sure that our interventions are relevant to both nature and people.

IUCN’s goals and objectives are perfectly aligned with the SDGs. As the oldest and the leading nature conservation organization in the world, IUCN stands ready to assist various stakeholders on valuing and conserving nature, ensuring fair and just use of nature and in transforming business practices into sustainable ones. We harness the experience, resources and reach of our members and experts, and provide conservation data, assessments and analysis towards the SDGs.

IUCN champions nature’s role in achieving the SDGs, and serves as an official agency monitoring progress towards biodiversity-related targets. As the SDGs get translated into programs and projects, we will continue to work with governments, civil society and communities. We also add value by way of our ongoing discussions on how to improve strategies to contribute to the attainment of the SDGs.



One of the breakthroughs in terms of nature conservation is the development of Nature-based Solutions (NbS), which are primarily actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural and modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively, while simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits.

While the world continues to change rapidly, we need to step back and rethink our relationship with nature – especially in the wake of the current pandemic, which is a stark reminder of our dysfunctional relationship with nature, given that it is likely that the COVID 19 virus, as so many before it (SARS, MERS, H1N1) jumped from wild animals to humans, when their habitat was destroyed through human interaction, and as a result of the wildlife trade.

We need to embrace the idea that our very existence is connected with the health of the environment around us. As stewards of this earth, we owe it to the next generation to live sustainably in harmony with nature.

# AN ANCIENT BILL OF RIGHTS AND ITS PROGENY

The previous century's World Wars were the worst man-led disasters the modern world has experienced. The cost of World War II alone was staggering. Tens of millions of people were tortured, over 70 million lives were cruelly destroyed, and at least as many families were torn apart during a deliberate campaign of massacre and genocide. In addition, the financial cost of the war was unprecedented. The United States alone incurred costs of over \$4.1 trillion (in today's dollar values) in World War II. Compare that to the approximately \$3 trillion that the United States has since spent on its longest war (in Afghanistan) to date, and it becomes clear that the fiscal cost of World War II was staggering and has yet to be exceeded.

Upon emerging from the death, destruction and shattered economies of World War II, the world resolved to do better. In June 1945, to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind" and to "reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights," the countries of the world chose to come together to promote peace and justice. A few months later, on October 24, 1945,



Narges Kakalia

fifty-one countries ratified the United Nations Charter, thereby creating the United Nations – the first truly global coalition of nations in the modern world, all focused on one lofty goal: to prevent another World War. This year, the United Nations celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

A few years after its founding, the United Nations promulgated its Universal Declaration of Human Rights or UDHR. As with the organization from which it emerged, the UDHR was drafted in response to the "barbarous acts which [...] outraged the conscience of mankind" during the Second World War. The UDHR comprises a set of thirty principles that are meant to protect the fundamental rights of all human beings throughout the world, irrespective of race, sex, caste, creed, religion, skin color or any other characteristic. Although it is not a legally binding document, the principles set forth within it have been incorporated into the constitutions and domestic laws of many new nations, and has served as the bedrock of many international treaty obligations.

The UDHR is unique and has been considered groundbreaking in several respects. It is a comprehensive bill of human rights, ranging from the right to life, liberty and freedom of expression to the right to education for all people, the right to dignity, the right to be free of torture, and the right to seek asylum. And it is the first and only set of principles on which almost every nation in the world has agreed. The universality of UDHR is evident from the fact that it is the world's most frequently translated document, with nearly 525 official translations in existence today.



As is clear, not all the rights enshrined in the UDHR are unique to it. They all come from somewhere and are influenced by its drafters, a diverse group of men and women from the United States, Soviet Union, Lebanon, Australia, India and China. Former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt of the United States was one of the main drafters of the UDHR, and most Americans will recognize her influence in the rights to life, liberty and freedom of expression as reminiscent of their own Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights. Where it made sense, the drafters also took note of the need to depart from the prejudices of older doctrines. For example, the first draft of the UDHR included a reference to all men being created equal (also reminiscent of the United States's founding principles), but that was later changed, at the suggestion of women's rights advocate Hansa Mehta of India, to state that all *human beings* are created equal.

What may not be quite as self-evident to most people – other than perhaps to some readers of this publication – is that the concept of the UDHR, as well as many of its principles, were inspired by an ancient doctrine that many in the West have never heard of before. One so old, in fact, that it was documented on a clay cylinder, which now resides in the British Museum. That's right! The principles that inspired and informed today's Universal Declaration of Human Rights were those inscribed on the Cyrus Cylinder in around 538 BCE.

The Cyrus Cylinder was excavated from modern Iraq, in the region once known as Babylon, which Cyrus the Great conquered in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. It has been hailed variously as the first known declaration of human rights, and

(perhaps more accurately) the first successful state model of government informed by diversity, inclusion and tolerance. As Neil MacGregor, the director of the British Museum has said, “What [the Cyrus Cylinder] represents is the first recognition that if you’re going to run a society with different languages [and] different beliefs, you cannot impose by force one system.” What was true for Cyrus’s principles of government is even more true for the United Nations’s principles for *all* governments.

The Cyrus Cylinder is inscribed in Babylonian cuneiform script with a series of principles by which Cyrus had announced that he intended to govern his subjects. While all of these principles were forward thinking for their time (for example, the freedom of religion and the freedom to openly disagree with one’s government or king, without consequence), many are breathtakingly progressive even by modern standards. For example, millennia before the modern state outlawed slavery, the Cyrus Cylinder proclaimed in the sixth century BCE, that Cyrus would “prevent slavery” and his “governors and subordinates are obliged to prohibit exchanging men and women as slaves within their own ruling domains.” As history teaches us, Cyrus did in fact act on the principle of anti-slavery and freed the Jewish slaves imprisoned by his predecessor Nebuchadnezzar. The anti-slavery principle finds expression in Article 4 of the UDHR, that everyone has the right to be free from slavery and also from unpaid or forced labor.



In similar vein, and once again millennia before the modern state would once again adopt similar principles of economic rights, the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE Cyrus Cylinder proclaimed that no person could be deprived of the ownership of personal property or land without compensation. This principle is echoed in Article 17 of the UDHR, on the arbitrary deprivation of property. Similarly, Cyrus proclaimed that all people would have freedom of movement and could settle and live anywhere they wished, another principle echoed in the UDHR at Article 13.

Cyrus the Great’s principles of government were meant to apply to a single state only, albeit a vast and far-flung one. The UDHR is applicable to all humans. But even in Cyrus’s proclamations we see glimmers of the universality that the UDHR would eventually be designed to cover. For example, when addressing the prohibition on slavery, Cyrus announced his belief that “[s]uch a tradition should be exterminated the world over.” Thus, despite being separated by thousands of years and vast geographies, the Cyrus Cylinder was a clear predecessor of a bill of rights that would one day be acknowledged by all the nations of the world.

That Cyrus the Great’s principles of government influenced the UDHR seems clear. The Cylinder has been translated into all 6 official UN languages, a replica of the cylinder is displayed at UN headquarters in New York, and former Secretary General U Thant, among others, have remarked on the Cyrus Cylinder’s significant influence on universal human rights. What is not clear, however, is *how* these principles came to be enshrined in the UDHR. And so what follows here is an exercise in conjecture. Cyrus the Great influenced philosophical thinking among his relative contemporaries. Xenophon, a student of Socrates, wrote a partially-fictional biography of Cyrus the Great, called the *Cyropaedia*, which among other things outlined Cyrus’s principles of government. Notable Western leaders, including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, owned copies of the *Cyropaedia* (Jefferson owned two), as did many other European and American thinkers of the Enlightenment. Jefferson in particular was greatly influenced by the *Cyropaedia* and its state model of governing diverse cultures without imposing a single dominant religion. Jefferson famously advised his grandson that as soon as he learned to read Greek, he should focus on learning about Cyrus the Great from the *Cyropaedia*. (Ironic, then, that Jefferson is nevertheless the most notable of American founding fathers to have owned slaves!)

Against this backdrop it is unsurprising that the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights derives so heavily from the principles of Cyrus the Great. Eleanor Roosevelt was greatly influenced by the history and philosophy of the American founding fathers. And for all we know, perhaps she too was a devotee of the *Cyropaedia* (or perhaps that is just wishful thinking by this author). Regardless of how it came to be, it seems reasonably clear that the philosophy and thought of Cyrus the Great has influenced the creation and strictures of the world’s only truly universal declaration of human rights, the UDHR. So this year when we wish the United Nations a happy 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, we also should acknowledge our ancestors’ contributions to the UN’s ability to fulfil its promise of human rights and peace.

*Narges Kakalia is a Pakistani American living in South Orange, NJ. She and her husband Marc have two boys – Cyrus (named after – yes, indeed! – Cyrus the Great) and Zane, as well as a dog, Cocoa. Narges has been a practicing lawyer for almost two decades, and also loves cooking, amateur photography and reading in all the time she can spare from mothering, lawyering and hanging out with her active family.*



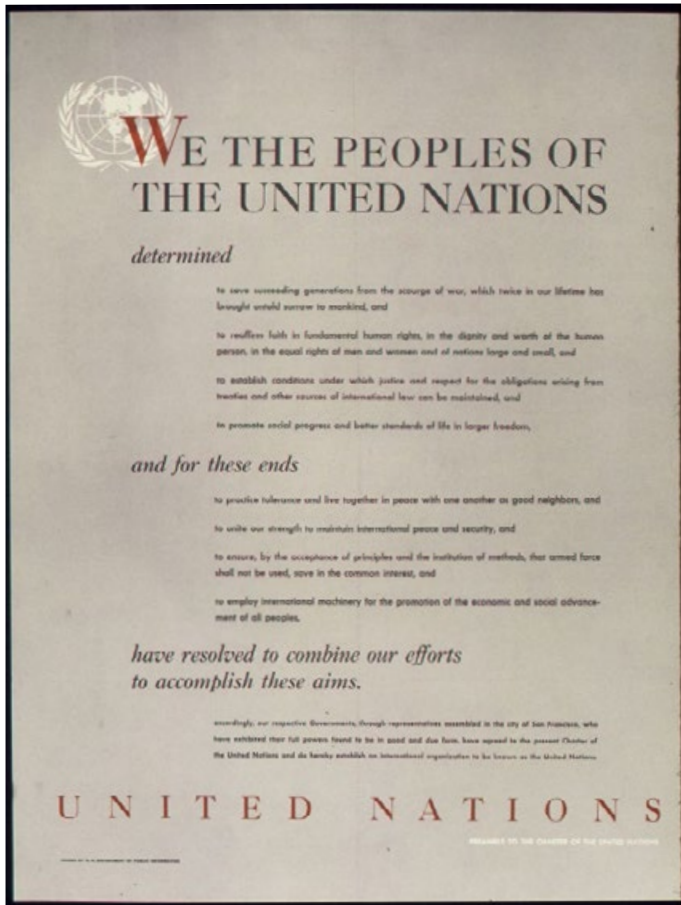
## Celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations, And The Importance of Faith Based Organizations In Supporting Its Global Agenda

As we celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations it is fitting that we begin with remembering the Preamble to the UN Charter. This document expresses the deep aspirations of the founders of the UN to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men

facilitate the practice of tolerance and living together in peace with one another as good neighbors. It is this uniting of the collective strength of these different constituencies that will maintain international peace and security.



Audrey E. Kitagawa



and women and of nations large and small. Importantly, it begins with “We the Peoples of the United Nations.” These important words signify a recognition of the collective will of the people speaking as one voice, and working together.

It also recognizes the importance of different constituencies engaging in multilateral processes that

The rule of law and honoring our commitments and obligations are also expressed in the Preamble when it set forth the establishment of “conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained.”



The aspect of democracy and economic and social justice are also expressed in the preamble where the intention of promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom are also set forth.

Though Faith Based Organizations (FBO) have been present throughout the 75 year history of the UN, it is in relatively recent years that the UN has, in a more focused manner, recognized the importance of engaging with FBO as true partners to support and implement the work of the UN.

UNICEF was one of the first UN agencies to understand the value of working with FBO to implement their immunization programs and delivering needed food to malnourished and underserved children around the world. With over 80% of the world’s population being adherents of some faith tradition, these community based religious and faith groups have in place the infrastructure and manpower to assist in delivery of needed services.

The World Bank also recognized the importance of working with FBO, and in 2014, revitalized its

engagement with them. The World Bank saw that faith-based and religious organizations were doing critical work on the ground combatting poverty, delivering essential services to communities in need, and helping to relieve suffering. This has historically been the important role which religious organizations have provided throughout the world.

Member States passed Resolutions that took on greater recognition of religious and faith traditions when they passed International Day of Vesak, (recognition of Lord Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death), World Interfaith Harmony Week, International Yoga Day, Promotion of Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding and Cooperation for Peace, Enlightenment and Religious Tolerance, International Day for Victims of Violence Based on Religion or Belief, and others.

The prominence of FBO in the work of the UN became more focused with the creation in 2010 of the UN Interagency Task Force (UN IATF) on Religion and Development. As of 2019, the UN departments and agencies that comprise this task force are:

- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA): Chair/Convener
- Joint United Nations Program on HIV/ AIDS (UNAIDS)
- United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
- United Nations Department of Public Information and Non-Governmental Organizations (UN DPI NGO)
- United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UN DPPA)
- United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN Habitat)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations International Labor Organization (UN ILO)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR)
- United Nations Office of Special Adviser for Prevention of Genocide (UN OSAPG)
- The United Nations Volunteers (UNV)
- United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)
- World Bank (WB)
- The World Food Program (WFP)

- The World Health Organization (WHO)

In 2018, the UN Multi-faith Advisory Council, (UN MFAC) comprised of approximately 40 CEOs, selected by members of the UN Interagency Task Force, came together around a commitment to “uphold multilateralism and international human rights through multi-faith collaboration around/for Agenda 2030.”

MFAC



MULTIFAITH ADVISORY COUNCIL  
To the United Nations  
Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development

The members of the UN MFAC are:

- ACT Alliance
- Adventist Development and Relief Agency
- Al-Azhar University:
- Centre for Population Studies
- Arigatou
- Baha'i International Community
- Buhmi Project at Oxford Center for Hindu Studies
- Caritas Internationalis
- Church of Latter Day Saints/LDS
- Church of Sweden
- Finn Church Aid/FCA
- GIWA (Global Interfaith WASH Alliance)
- Global One
- GreenFaith
- International Network of

Religious Leaders Living With and Impacted by HIV and AIDS (INERELA)

- Islamic Relief
- Jewish Theological Seminary, USA
- Joint Learning Initiative
- KAICIID Dialogue Centre
- Musawah
- Muslims for Progressive Values (MPV)
- Nahdatul Ulama
- Parliament of the World's Religion
- Religions for Peace
- Sant'Egidio
- Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society
- Tanenbaum
- The Archbishop of Canterbury
- The Focolare Movement
- The Interfaith Center of Sustainable Development
- The International Center for Religion and Diplomacy
- The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers
- Tzu Chi Buddhist Foundation
- United Religions Initiative
- World Council of Churches
- World Evangelical Alliance
- World Evangelical Alliance Sustainability Center
- World Jewish Congress
- World WYCA
- World Vision

The role of the UN MFAC is to provide advice and support to the UN IATF on the following thematic areas: 1. environment, 2. migration and displacement, 3. gender justice, 4. financing for development, 5. peacemaking and security, and 6. health, including a response to the COVID 19 pandemic.

The creation of the UN MFAC recognizes the significance of religious communities and religious leaders in raising awareness wherever issues of economic injustice, extreme poverty and inequality are the norm, and need the powerful voices of advocacy, and the moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions which religious and faith communities can provide to create societal transformation.

With the current COVID 19 pandemic sweeping across the globe with unprecedented impact, a global pledge for action by religious actors and FBO to address the COVID 19 pandemic, in collaboration with the UN, issued a call for solidarity, compassion and unity. This global pledge for action sets forth several planks for action that addresses among them, countering COVID-19 related hate speech, the prevention of incitement to violence that could lead to atrocity crimes, and a plan of action to safeguard religious sites.

In July, 2019, the UN MFAC, together with certain departments of the UN IATF participated in the Kofi Annan Briefings at the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at the Ford Foundation Center for Social Justice in New York City. Four panels were constituted to present on the following topic areas which had selected speakers representing the UN IATF, as well as the UN MFAC. Links to view these videotaped panels are also included, below:

#### **Opening Remarks and Keynotes:**

Link: <https://bit.ly/2Kca323>

**Panel 1:** Role of multi-faith collaboration in strengthening the means of implementation and

revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development;

Link: <https://bit.ly/2JMtOyb>

**Panel 2:** Intergenerational Gender dialogue: realizing equality now, leaving no one behind

Link: <https://bit.ly/30OdYss>

**Panel 3:** Mutli-Religious Perspectives on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Link: <https://bit.ly/2yjY5xJ>

**Panel 4:** Role of Multi-Faith Partnerships to Combat Climate Change and its Impacts

Link: <https://bit.ly/2KhZCiu>

Summation: Advisory Council Chair Address: “What can my Organization Commit to Doing in Partnership with other Faith NGOs and the UN?”

Link: <https://bit.ly/2LOmDaS>

The UN MFAC has been meeting on a regular basis to plan a UN 75th Anniversary global event which will be launched on September 8, 2020, and livestreamed. A 10 minute video showing the role of FBO in the work of the UN will also be played during this global event.

The work of FBO, enhanced by the creation of the UN MFAC, presents an opportunity to speak as one voice on the engagement of many religious and faith communities from around the world, to model the UN Preamble to the UN Charter, “We The Peoples.” United, and demonstrating cooperative engagement, religious communities can address solutions for the betterment of humanity. This is the unique work of religious communities, to fully live up to and manifest the Golden Rule: treat others as you would like to be treated. Now more than ever, the role of FBO to solidify its important work with the UN, a global guiding institution, has been actualized in this, the 75th year since its inception. This is a cause for celebration.

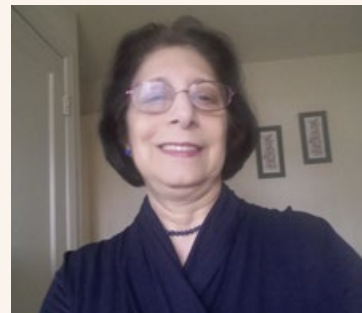
*Audrey E. Kitagawa, JD, is the Chair of Board of Trustees of the Parliament of the World's Religions, President of the Light of Awareness International Spiritual Family, President/Founder of the International Academy for Transcultural Cooperation, and the former Advisor to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict at the United Nations.*

*She is a United Nations Representative for the United Religions Initiative, and Chair Emerita of the NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns, A Committee of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations. Recipient of the Spirit of the UN Award given to outstanding individuals who have demonstrated the vision and spirit of the United Nations as expressed through the UN Charter, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

*She has been listed in Who's Who Of American Law, Who's Who Of American Women, Who's Who In America, Who's Who In The World, and Prominent People of Hawaii.*

## THE WORLD BANK AND THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND : AN INSIDE VIEW

The Bretton Woods Institutions --- the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), more commonly known as The World Bank --- were set up in July 1944 as a follow-up to the Bretton Woods Conference in which 44 nations participated. While the IMF was mandated to ensure stability of international monetary and financial systems, the Bank focused initially on the reconstruction of Europe post WWII and later pivoted to reducing poverty through development projects. This has often led some to say that the Fund (IMF) is in fact a Bank and the Bank (IBRD) is a Fund!



Zenobia Panthaki

Its 189 member countries, donor and recipient alike own the bank. Initial investment capital came from 22 nations and has grown over the years. In a display of exemplary global partnership, borrowing countries pay interest while rich donor nations forego dividends. The administrative budget comes partly from returns on invested capital and partly from earnings and service charges on loans, paid by borrowing countries.

Since the US is the largest Donor, the President of the World Bank has always been American while the Managing Director of the IMF has always been European, at least so far. Both serve 5-year renewable terms, and both appointments need to be approved by their respective Governing Boards. The Boards comprise of Executive Directors (EDs) who are representatives of member countries, appointed by their respective governments for 3-5-year terms. Their votes carry weightage in proportion to their country's contribution. To keep the size of the Board manageable, countries are sometimes clustered, e.g. one ED represents the Caribbean Islands or e.g. in South Asia, the ED is always Indian, while the deputy, by rotation, is from Bangladesh, Bhutan and Sri Lanka.



THE MAIN COMPLEX, WORLD BANK BUILDING ON LEFT AND THE IMF BUILDING ON THE RIGHT, They are a block from the White House along 19th street in downtown Washington , DC

To facilitate operations, the Bank is organized into six regions: East Asia and the Pacific, South Asia, Middle East and N. Africa, East Europe and Central Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. There are central departments that are responsible for Operations Policy, Development Economics, Treasury Operations, etc The Bank has offices in the capital cities of most recipient countries as it works primarily with Central Governments' Ministries of Finance, channeling funding to the respective States and to the project authority. On the other hand, the International Finance Corporation is the group within the Bank that works with the Private Sector.

The Bank disburses two kinds of funds: 'IDA Credits', sourced by the International Development Agency, are 'soft loans', more like interest free grants, given to the poorest countries while 'IBRD Loans' are given to middle-income countries. These loans and credits are denominated in 'standard dollar rates' (SDRs) that remain fixed for the duration of the project's term.

The World Bank and the recipient government agree initially on a Project Concept, which outlines the scope, beneficiaries, milestones for delivery. These projects dovetail within the Bank's Country Partnership Framework. After several modifications and visits to the site, a project is appraised before it gets 'negotiated' with the signing of a Legal Agreement by both parties. The project is then ready for presentation to the Board, where it is discussed and generally

gets approved. On rare occasions, if there are legitimate concerns, e.g. over riparian issues between countries, an ED or a group of EDs refuse to sign-off and the project needs amendments. The life of a project can span up to 10 years during which time it is supervised biannually, and funds disbursed retroactively. Each project undergoes a Mid-Term Review that can result in restructuring, i.e. course correction, to meet its development objectives. The Bank's less frequently used 'instrument' is a Structural Adjustment Loan, which is a financial loan to nations on the brink of bankruptcy. These loans are given in tranches, contingent on implementation of agreed macro-economic reforms.

In early years, key areas of development that the Bank focused on were infrastructure and industry. In the late '60s, under President McNamara, the focus shifted to agriculture and in the mid '80s, under President Wolfensohn, to the social sectors - health and education. The Bank has displayed remarkable agility in responding to demands from shareholders, NGOs and civil society to ensure projects are sustainable, do not degrade the environment, support gender equality, promote clean energy and work towards mitigating climate change. More recently the Bank has specially designed projects for fragile states in conflict zones.

During my 36 years at the Bank I have come across about 30 Zoroastrians, some in positions of eminence from Vice Presidents to Country Directors (equivalent in protocol to an Ambassador). The Bank's intellectual capital is astounding for it brings together a host of PhDs and Post Doctorates in varied fields of development, from all corners of the world. The diversity of its staff is what makes this institution unique.

I joined the World Bank's New Delhi Country Office in 1984 and worked for a large, decentralized Agriculture Unit, transferring to its HQ in Washington DC in 1994. The Delhi office gave me an opportunity to work closely with the client and be aware of the nuanced balance between 'advocating' rather than 'advising', for while we bring international expertise and provide financial aid, the sovereignty of the nation must always be respected. In lighter vein, the bonhomie between the expatriate and local staff in Delhi was remarkable and resulted in some memorable incidents that would probably not hold water in today's world of political correctness. Our Division Chief, Richard (Dick) X, was a pukka British gentleman. One afternoon, the Chief Secretary, Government of Uttar Pradesh, came to see him. His assistant, from her work station, announced the arrival, 'Dick, Mr. Dikshit is here to see you.' "Who?" bellowed Dick from inside his room, "What a bloody awful name to have", taking the name to be 'dig s\_\_t!' Without getting frazzled, his secretary smiled at the Chief Secretary, walked into Dick's office and hissed, "He's right outside your door and he heard you. By the way, he's *Dikshit* with a 'k' and just in case you've forgotten, your name is no better!" and she waltzed out, leaving Dick to handle the fiasco!

A few years later we were wading through the turbulent waters of the Narmada Sagar Project. The governments of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh (MP) went into dispute over the building of the Sardar Sarovar dam on the River Narmada. The states were ruled by opposing political parties, making it impossible for the Bank to negotiate a settlement. Concerns regarding environmental degradation and displacement of tribal populations were amplified by NGOs. Our Division Chief was a tough Australian who would take an overnight train to Baroda, the railhead for the project, to save the Bank airfare! On one of his trips, activist Medha Patkar and her NGOs surrounded his car for four hours, shouting anti-Bank slogans and shaking the vehicle! The incident made headline news. The next day he returned to the office and when the staff asked what he did for the four hours, he replied nonchalantly that he completed writing his 'Back-to-Office Report' and produced it with a flourish! He had given the NGOs short shrift, depriving them of the pleasure of seeing a panicked official! Most staff is far from 'development Czars' they are often slandered to be. But yes, we definitely have some mavericks! Recently an expat took it a notch too far when he began wearing an eclectic collection of dhotis (loincloths) to work, supposedly to blend in, even though suits are standard attire for Indians! That resulted in some unmentionable situations that had to be salvaged.

To circle back, the Bank does impose intellectual rigor on projects. Each project has Development Objectives and once completed, an Independent Evaluation Group that reports directly to the Board measures it against these for effectiveness. In 1993, in response to concerns from NGOs and project-affected communities, an Inspection Panel was set up to conduct 'sting operations' in response to tip-offs on corruption. An Institutional Integrity Department was created in 2001 to ensure transparency and accountability. The benchmark for fiduciary compliance is very high. Reputed firms have been blacklisted and debarred from bidding on Bank projects if any of our procurement procedures are flouted. Projects have been terminated mid-stream for reasons of corruption or non-adherence to Bank policies or if a change in government results in changed priorities and loss of client focus. Alleviating poverty will always be work in progress, but along the way, millions of lives have improved thanks to the Bank's initiatives and the sincerity of its staff. This is what makes working for this organization a satisfying and fulfilling experience.

*Zenobia Panthaki worked for the World Bank's Delhi Office from 1984-1994 and then at their HQ in Washington DC till her retirement in 2012, mainly in the area of Resource Management. She now consults for the Operations Policy & Country Services Vice Presidency at the Bank.*



FEZANA supports the UN SDGs



Farishta Murzban  
Dinshaw

On the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations, it is imperative that we look to its list of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for an equitable world for all including Goal 5 which states, “Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.”

At a Democratic presidential debate in 2007, the candidates faced questions on Pakistan, trade policy, and merit pay for teachers. And at the end of the night, Hillary Clinton was asked, “Do you prefer diamonds or pearls?”

Senator Clinton responded with a laugh, “I want both.”

Maria Luisa Parra-Sandoval, the audience member who asked the question, later said that CNN pressured her to ask that question. CNN defended its decision on the grounds that they wanted to end on a lighter note after an intense two hours of debate. The justification for a fluff question may be justified, but it could have been gender neutral – favourite vacation spot, last book you’ve read, coffee or tea – but it wasn’t. It highlighted the sexism in the corridors of power, that male and female politicians are seen differently, treated differently.

Sarah Palin, the Republican choice for Vice President in the same campaign, did not fare better. She was scrutinized for her parenting skills and her children’s choices, which male candidates are spared. In an if-you-can’t-beat-the-join-them strategy, she positioned herself as a “hockey mom”, a strong woman with perseverance of a bulldog with lipstick.

Most women who seek executive offices in North America are white and heterosexual. Women of color who aspire to such positions additionally face racial and sexual attacks. “The Squad”, an informal name for a group of four young women of color elected in the 2018 United States House of Representatives elections (Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts, and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan) have been questioned about their birthright and citizenship (three of the four are American-born and Omar became a naturalized citizen in her youth) insinuating that because they are of color they cannot be American. In July 2019, President Donald Trump tweeted that the members of the Squad should “go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came. Then come back and show us how it is done”. The next day, the four women responded in a press conference, saying “We are here to stay.” In July 2020, Florida Rep. Ted Yoho called Ocasio-Cortez “disgusting” and “a f\*\*king bitch” in front of

reporters on the Capitol steps over her assertion that poverty and crime are related. House Majority leader Steny Hoyer called it bullying and asked for an apology. Yoho’s apology for “the misunderstanding” was so insincere that it would not have been accepted in a school playground altercation. There is no doubt that Yoho’s comments were sexist. He didn’t use research or policy arguments to counter Ocasio-Cortez; he demeaned her with personal insults. And as Representative Dean Phillips tweeted, “Like@aoc, I believe poverty to be a root cause of crime. Wonder why Rep. Yoho hasn’t accosted me on the Capitol steps with the same sentiment?”

Gender/race-based vitriol is likely to get more vicious now that Senator Kamala Harris is the Democratic candidate for Vice President in the 2020 election. Keeping in form, Donald Tramp has already raised questions about her birthright citizenship.

## BENEFITS OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

This outright disdain for women in power in the United States is surprising given that countless studies have shown that there are positive outcomes when women have equitable representation in government.

In India, research on panchayats (local councils) showed that women’s representation in local governments can make a difference - the number of drinking water projects in areas with women-led councils was 62 per cent higher than in those with men-led councils. In Norway, direct causal relationship was found between the presence of women in municipal councils and childcare coverage for families. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) figures show that the increased number of women cabinet ministers across many countries translates into a rise in public health spending.

In the current pandemic era, a Forbes article title said it all. “*What Do Countries With The Best Coronavirus Responses Have In Common? Women Leaders*”. The author Avivah Wittenberg-Cox writes, “Looking for examples of true leadership in a crisis? From Iceland to Taiwan and from Germany to New Zealand, women are stepping up to show the world how to manage a messy patch for our human family. Add in Finland, Iceland and Denmark, and this pandemic is revealing that women have what it takes when the heat rises in our Houses of State. These leaders are

gifting us an attractive alternative way of wielding power.”

OECD, an international organisation that works to build better policies for better lives, states that gender equality is crucial for sound government. *“Empowering and encouraging women to participate more fully in the public sphere is essential. Gender diversity in public institutions is particularly crucial, given that these decision making bodies create the rules that affect people’s rights, behaviours and life choices. An increase of women in public life results in lower levels of inequality and increased confidence in national governments. Figures show that the increased presence of women cabinet ministers is associated with a rise in public health spending across many countries. Ensuring that governments reflect the diversity of the societies they represent guarantees a balanced perspective which enables an inclusive approach to policy making and service delivery.”*

When Justin Trudeau became Prime Minister of Canada for the first time, he deliberately fashioned his cabinet to give half the portfolios to women. When a reporter asked why having a cabinet with an equal number of men and women was important to him, he famously replied, “Because it’s 2015”. Hopefully, this November’s elections in the USA will pave the way for a more diverse group of leaders in the Whitehouse, the Congress, and the Senate. Because it’s 2020.

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#### UN building in New York



# ZOROASTRIANS IN NORTH AMERICA NEED TO CONFRONT ANTI-BLACK RACISM



DEENA GUZDER

We are living in a moment of national reckoning over race and racism. Protests against police brutality and systemic racism continue in cities and towns across the U.S. and around the world. As a human rights journalist, I spend my days interviewing brave, anti-racist protesters of myriad backgrounds – young and old, Black and White -- who have taken to the streets to speak out against injustice despite the great risk to their own lives. One of these protesters, Diaz Love, was deliberately hit by a car when nonviolently demonstrating and is currently undergoing surgeries; another, Brandon Saenz, lost his eye after police shot him with a “less lethal” projectile; and, a third Derrick Sanderlin was shot in the groin with a rubber-coated steel ball bullet that burst his testicle.

When I spoke to Mr. Sanderlin, he told me he and his partner were discussing trying to have a child just before he attended the protest where the police shot him in the groin, neutering that hope. Yet, he doesn't regret participating in the protests and, instead, prays they will continue. Sanderlin told me, “As I see the protests and how they are unfolding, it brings me such pride and joy. Watching my city [protest] is watching my entire tribe bringing out a shovel to dig us out of this pain.”

The Parsee community in North America is long overdue for its own reckoning over anti-Black racism. We must decide as individuals and as a collective if we're going to pick up our shovels and help our compatriots dig, or if we're going to heap dirt on them and bury them further. Most young Parsees learn very early in life that older Parsees have almost no Black friends but endless unfounded opinions about Black people. These aunties and uncles are full of prejudice, which manifests both in thoughtless comments – “he's Black *but* a very nice man” –and more toxic insults – “the Blacks are lazy”. When my childhood friend married a handsome, intelligent, and kind man with dark skin, I remember sitting next to an auntie at her wedding who snickered, “Why would such a beautiful Parsee woman marry someone so *ugly*? What's the matter with her? Couldn't she find anyone better?” This auntie's comments were, sadly, not surprising but none the less infuriating. She didn't see a compassionate, hardworking man but only his skin. She didn't see that people of all colors are beautiful and ugly as well as good and bad. She didn't recognize that the shame fell on her, not the happy bride.

From the time I remember, I grew up hearing that light, or “fair”, skin is synonymous with beauty and dark skin with ugliness, if not worse: bad character and bad luck. Those of us who grew up in the United States are tired of explaining to the older generation that anti-Black racism and prejudice must end now. Now is the time to confront anti-Black racism within our ranks even if it leads to uncomfortable conversations. It's not enough for the older generation to say, “Aray, I don't support the police killing an unarmed Black man”, although some Parsees won't even say that much, always assuming the worse of the victim in a way they never would of their own loved ones. Now is the time to be pro-actively anti-racist.

We must educate, organize, and participate in every effort to confront racism. By educate, I mean reading anti-racist books that teach us about our country's brutal historical sins: trans-Atlantic slavery and auctioning human as cattle; raping slaves and disowning progeny; accumulating wealth through pillage and capitalizing on misery; memorializing marauders and murderers in statues; failing to provide reparations for slavery so stolen wealth remains in the hands of the robber barons; instituting Jim Crow policies that segregated races and created false hierarchies; perpetuating unscrupulous lending practices such as denying conventional mortgage loans to Blacks at rates far higher than their white counterparts across the country; and, waging psychological warfare against every new generation of Black Americans to make them feel inferior. By organize, I mean using our community spaces and resources to uplift the Black Lives Matter movement and educate ourselves on being “upstanders” – not bystanders – when confronted with racism, prejudice and discrimination whether inside or outside our community. And, by participate I mean showing our support at local protests and pro-actively confronting racism in all its ugly forms, including that thoughtless auntie who saw skin not character.

My father once told me that my grandfather fell in love with my grandmother because she was a Parsee woman who wore a khadi sari in support of Gandhi-ji and his nonviolent movement against British imperialism in India. The story fills me with pride. I recently learned about the late, great Parsee freedom fighter Bhikaiji Cama who also supported Gandhi and the Indian independence movement as did many other Parsees. I am heartened to



hear about Parsees who stood on the right side of history, but am saddened that they were in the minority. Why did more of our elders not join this fight? Is it because they were given preferential treatment by the British? Or because they looked down on the very people who gave them refuge, their fellow Indians, as “lazy” or worse? Today, I feel a similar sense of wonder: why don’t more of the older-generation of Parsees in North America stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matter? Is it because they feel they have benefited as model minorities in their adopted homeland and care only about themselves rather than those suffering under the yoke of intergenerational trauma and modern-day discrimination? The Indian intellectual leader B. R. Ambedkar wrote to the Black intellectual leader W. E. B. Du Bois in 1946, “There is so much similarity between the position of the untouchables in India and of the position of the Negroes in America.” Whether in India or North America, we Zoroastrians must put our religious beliefs into practice and denounce racism and prejudice in all its vicious forms. As Zoroastrians, we must heed the call of the sacred prayer the *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* and help those who are suffering. At the very least, we must each engage in the uncomfortable work of calling out racism in our own ranks and insisting on a more compassionate society.

*Deena Guzder has reported on human rights across the globe. Her work has appeared in Time, Mother Jones, Common Dreams, National Geographic, Washington Post, Ms. Magazine, and elsewhere. She holds a BA in Peace & Conflict Studies from Oberlin College as well as advanced degrees in journalism and international affairs from Columbia University. She is the author of the book Divine Rebels, which profiles the Religious Left in the United States. In 2010, she traveled with the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader, His Eminence Shyalpa Rinpoche, across Nepal and Bhutan while editing his collection of oral teachings, Living Fully. And, she previously assisted Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Chris Hedges with research for his book, Death of the Liberal Class.*

UN building in Vienna



# DECOLONIZING ZOROASTRIANISM: AN ANTI-RACIST APPROACH TO LEARNING OUR HISTORY

Gordiya Khademian, Yasna Khademian Anaheed Mobaraki

The time is long overdue for those of us who are not Black in the Zoroastrian community to be honest. Many of us were taught by parents – or by mobeds and mobedyars – what the self-described “correct” teachings of our religion were; however, few of us have taken the time to question and criticize what we have been taught as fact. We were taught that Zoroastrians seek out the truth for ourselves. However, when it comes to discussions of race,



Photo credit Behram Pastakia M.D

accountability, and our own conceptions of our identities, there is resistance to any self-reflection. We cannot continue to repeat colonial narratives that have been passed down for generations, and we must be open to taking criticism, learning, and admitting when we are wrong.

Starting with ourselves, we began to research and scrutinize some of the false narratives that we have been taught. Subsequently, we formed a collective, titled “Decolonizing Zoroastrianism,” where we break down Zoroastrian theory, history, and culture across Iran and India through the lens of the colonial influence that has shaped those histories. Our work examines the roots of anti-Black, anti-Arab, anti-Muslim, and anti-Indigenous speech and practice that is rampant across our community. We publish educational content on social media, and we host virtual meetings for Zoroastrian youth to discuss a variety of topics relating to race, history, and anti-oppression.

## Ways Our Community Perpetuates Harm

For many of us in our community, it is natural to look to our faith for guidance and inspiration. However, what comes out of this inspiration, what actions are taken because of it, and what behavior is formed, is dependent on ourselves. How can we address racism and discrimination when we find ourselves in such a feedback loop, only looking to the Gathas or other religious texts to “prove” how much better we are (i.e., how inherently less racist Zoroastrianism is)? Such a practice is motivated by a belief that our religion is intrinsically better than any other religion. This belief then allows for stereotyping and prejudice against other groups of people, sometimes subconsciously. We are

just as good and bad as any other group of people, and our religious text, just like any other, can be used to justify violence and discrimination. Ultimately, this practice is harmful because it centers our own identities rather than actively defending those who are being harmed by oppressive systems, and who we are purporting to support. This is not truly addressing and dismantling racism; this is yet another facet of white supremacy. It provides social capital and a positive reputation to the self-described “activist,” centering themselves and their own feelings of comfort over actual change.

We need to look inward at our own histories of anti-Black racism and colorism – promoting lighter skin as “better” and criminalizing and marginalizing those who are darker-skinned. The common narrative that Persians and Parsis are descendants of a race of “Aryans” is false and based in pseudo-scientific racism – a result of British imperialism and European conceptions of race. Zoroastrianism is often used to justify this underlying sentiment, by positing that our religion is purely monotheistic and inherently “logical,” implying that we are more “civilized” and “better” than non-Zoroastrians. This sentiment also enforces the colonial binary of “civilized” and “uncivilized” peoples, by using any form of proximity to whiteness in order to gain European acceptance, at the expense of marginalizing and viewing other racialized groups of people as inferior. Our community’s praise of Gandhi is also complicit in anti-Black narratives, as he himself espoused extremely anti-Black views. We cannot simultaneously posit ourselves as supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement while disregarding our community’s vast history of anti-Black racism and refusal to listen to Black people. Without the efforts of the Civil Rights movement, many of us wouldn’t be able to immigrate to the United States in the first place.



Photo credit Behram Pastakia M.D

We have often heard among non-Indigenous Zoroastrians generalizations and romanticization of Indigenous history and culture on Turtle Island (what we currently call North America), as well as the drawing of parallels to Zoroastrian history in Iran. Genocide against Indigenous peoples and ongoing settler-colonialism are in no way comparable to the Arab invasion of Iran. Settler colonization is a system of genocide, displacement, repression, and exploitation, and the foundation of the United States. Prior to the passing of the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act, it was legal for the federal government to criminalize and persecute Indigenous people for holding ceremonies and rites and to push and coerce Indigenous communities into conversion to Christianity. As many Indigenous people have expressed, such as in the *Smithsonian* article, “Native Perspectives on the 40th Anniversary of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act,” this act and its subsequent 1994 amendments are far from enough, as Indigenous people are still prohibited from accessing sacred land on federal property, and land and water are threatened by pipelines.

This type of rhetoric, which seeks to draw comparisons between our histories and circumstances, is harmful – for the majority of us in the Zoroastrian community who are not Indigenous and whose ancestors were not forcibly taken from their homes and enslaved on Turtle Island, we are complicit in violent, centuries-old histories of occupation of Indigenous lands. We pray, celebrate, and live on stolen land. Attempting to establish some nonexistent connection between Persians or Parsis and Indigenous peoples is actively harmful, as it attempts to erase or lessen the historical and continuing violence perpetrated against Indigenous communities. We have a responsibility to support Indigenous communities’ calls for sovereignty and environmental and racial justice.

## The Need for Self Reflection and Decentering

It is time to seek out the truth about Zoroastrian history and embrace it. By living in denial of reality, we as non-Black and non-Indigenous Zoroastrians are also denying the experiences of marginalized communities who have been further oppressed by our words and actions. Young or old, immigrant or American-born, we are complicit – and it is time to accept that. We must engage ourselves in a steady process of unlearning, while listening to and elevating the voices of Black people who advocate for themselves and their communities. It is incredibly wrong to dictate what is best for these communities while holding a more privileged position. Why would we claim to be experts on or give advice to people about their direct lived experience? Would we ever accept that from someone outside the Zoroastrian community? Ask yourself these questions, and continue to hold yourself accountable for your words, thoughts, and deeds. No matter how much discomfort the process of accountability may bring, recognize that it will never compare to the racism and violence that Black people face every day.

We could not do this work or write what we have written without reading and listening to writers and activists like Patsisse Cullors, co-founder of Black Lives Matter, whose activism calls for elevating Black voices and providing Black people with the platforms to educate others; Kimberlé Crenshaw, whose theory of intersectionality has helped us to think about our place within the United States as a racialized community that is still complicit within white supremacist society; Audre Lorde, whose critical essays have inspired us to think deeply about how to do the necessary work to unlearn colonial narratives; Angela Davis, whose lived experience with the criminal legal system and empowering writings have prompted us to remember the role of history in shaping the racist practices and institutions of today; Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, whose scholarship on Iranian nationalists’ use of European pseudo-scientific racism has been crucial in our understanding of the Aryan myth; and Neda Maghbouleh, whose research on race in the context of the United States and its impacts on the Iranian community have been instrumental for our understanding of the use of the Aryan myth and its implications.

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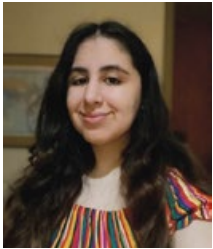
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*Gordiya Khademian is the Administrative and Communications Assistant at the Middle East Studies Association in Washington, DC. She received her BA in Politics with minors in Anthropology and Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies from NYU in 2017 and an MA in Near Eastern Studies from NYU's Hagop Kevorkian Center in 2019.*



*Yasna Khademian is a returning undergraduate student pursuing a B.A. in International Development Studies, with minors in Persian and Arabic, at McGill University in Montreal. She has worked at her student publication, The McGill Daily, for the past two years as a news editor and as a culture editor. She plans to apply for graduate school after completing her B.A.*



## **International Day of Non-Violence- 2 October**

The United Nations has declared 2 October, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, as the International Day of Non Violence.

His quest for non violent means to seek social justice, are reflected with the idea of *nidhasnatheshem*, which Zarathushtis recite in their daily kusti prayers.

Mahatma Gandhi used, on occasion, to have *Yasna Ha 34.15 - Gatha Ahunavad* recited during daily evening ashram prayer sessions.

### **The translation of this verse is:**

*Ahura Mazda, you teach me the noblest words and deeds  
by which I may fulfill my earnest desire of my prayers,  
achieving it through the good mind and righteousness.  
O Mazda, through your power regenerate my life as you wish it true.*

### **Editor's Note:**

*We are grateful to Brig Erv Behram Panthaki, to bring this verse from the Gathas, recited at Gandhi's ashram, to our attention.*

### **TO THE READER:**

*"I would like to say to the diligent reader of my writings and to others who are interested in them that I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as I am in age, I have no feeling that I have ceased to grow inwardly or that my growth will stop at the dissolution of the flesh. What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of Truth, my God, from moment to moment, and therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he still has faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject."*

M .K. GANDHI *Harijan*, 29-3-1933, page 2.

# HOW WE GOT THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND WHY THEY'RE IMPORTANT

Like many of the rest of us, I try to manage my weight and my money. I don't always perfectly attain my goals for both weight and savings, but having goals certainly helps me improve.

In 2000 the 189 member states of the United Nations agreed to the 8 Millennium Development Goals to ensure that developing nations made significant progress in 1. Eradicating Extreme Poverty, 2. Universal Primary Education, 3. Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women, 4. Reduce Child Mortality, 5. Improve Maternal Health, 6. Combat HIV/AIDS Malaria and other diseases, 7. Ensure Environmental Sustainability, 8. Global Partnership for Development.

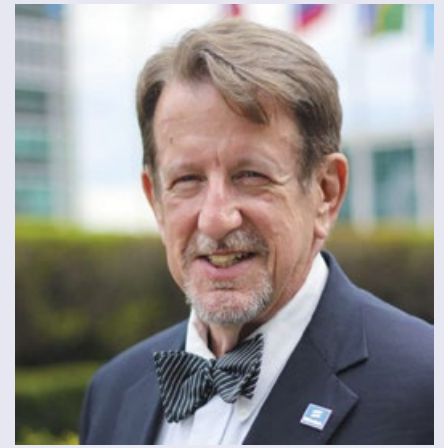
By 2015, we saw that these goals really worked. We saw the goals achieved or nearly achieved within 15 years. So the 193 member states of the United Nations in 2015 decided to expand the number of goals to 17 and to apply them to the entire world. There is greater emphasis on climate change and human rights in the new 2015-2030 Sustainable Development Goals. All 193 member states have agreed to achieve these goals, and there is accountability and a certain amount of health competition to achieve these goals. I learned that past midnight on the last night before the final Sustainable Development Goal plan was completed that the G-7, Russia and China, the most powerful countries reduced or removed some of the accountability mechanisms. Unfortunately, this is standard practice at the UN. The G-7 are: The USA, UK, Germany,

Japan France, Canada, Italy.

The 17 goals are: 1. No Poverty, 2. Zero Hunger, 3. Good Health and Well-Being, 4. Quality Education, 5. Gender Equality, 6. Clean Water and Sanitation, 7. Affordable and Clean Energy, 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth, 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, 10. Reduced Inequalities, 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities, 12. Responsible Consumption and Production, 13. Climate Action, 14. Life Below Water, 15. Life On Land, 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, 17. Partnership for the Goals.

This is a shorthand list. Each Goal is described in detail and each have a number of targets and indicators. I worked mostly on goal 4, Quality Education and 4.7 (that is goal 4, target 7) Education for Global Citizenship and goal 10, Reducing Inequalities.

One critical issue is how do you measure success? There needs to be accurate data collection and data needs to disaggregate data to make sure that no one is left behind. I argued vigorously for explicit inclusion of sexual orientation/gender identity human rights. I got a standing ovation for my speech. The meeting was chaired by the Permanent Representatives of Mexico and Hungary. The Mexican permanent representative congratulated me on my speech and said that they would not be able to achieve consensus of the 193 member states to include sexual orientation/gender identity human rights. I said that, "If you don't count us, we don't exist." For example, if you don't



**BRUCE KNOTTS**

count the number of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students that receive quality education, you won't know if students are included or excluded based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Immediately after my speech, the advocates for people with disabilities came to me and said the same applied to their community. If you don't count people with disabilities, they don't exist, and you can't be assured that the goals are applied to them as they are to others. We made common cause and worked together. In the end, goal 10 did not include language explicitly mentioning sexual orientation and gender identity. The framers of the goal tried to assure me that the language that is in the goal is inclusive enough to include everyone regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. I had no choice but to accept these assurances. I was happy that our allies working for the rights of people with disabilities were explicitly mentioned in goal 10.

Goal 4.7 which calls for education for global citizenship remains an important goal for many NGOs at the UN and especially for several governments who support it. UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific

and Cultural Organization) has an excellent Global Citizenship Education curriculum. The idea is for a student to learn his/her own background, history, religion, culture, etc. and come to embrace it and understand it and then to learn everyone else's background, history, religion, culture, etc. and understand and appreciate them as well without making judgements as to one being "better" and another.

We have 10 years to achieve the 17 goals and we are in the midst of a pandemic. The UN is concerned that we may not reach these 17 goals. However, all 193 member states are working together to achieve these global goals. It is important for you to know these goals and to let your governments know how important it is for us to work together as a global community to reach these goals, or at least to try our best.

**Bruce Knotts** a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ethiopia, worked for Raytheon in Saudi Arabia (1976-80) and on a World Bank contract in Somalia (1982-84). He joined the Department of State as a U.S. diplomat in 1984 with diplomatic assignments in Greece, Zambia, India, Pakistan, Kenya, Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire and in Gambia, he served as Deputy Chief of Mission, in Cote d'Ivoire, Bruce served as the U.S. Government's Regional Refugee Coordinator for West Africa. and observed UN peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone from 2000-2003. He retired in 2007 from Foreign service and began directing the Unitarian Universalist United Nations office (UU-UNO) in 2008.

At the UN Bruce is co-chair of the NGO Committee on Human Rights, the chair of the NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security, a member of the NGO UN Security Council Working Group, serves on the Board of the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development and chaired the NGO/DPI Executive Committee (2015-19) which represents 1,400 DPI affiliated NGOs at the United Nations. Bruce is a trustee of the Parliament of the World's Religions and a Commissioner for the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation. In 2006, Bruce and Isaac Humphrie were wed in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Isaac works internationally as a venue manager for New York Fashion Week, event environmentalist, photographer and social media consultant.

## CAWAS J MODY ELECTED SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE ON THE CALIFORNIA STATE COURT BENCH

Cawas J. Mody was elected as a Judge of the Superior Court of San Diego on March 3, 2020 and will be sworn in as a Judge on January 4, 2021, becoming the first Judge of Indian descent on the San Diego Superior Court Bench and only the second Zoroastrian Superior Court Judge on the California State Court Bench.

Cawas has been a deputy district attorney for 17 years, spending his first 2 years with the Riverside District Attorney's Office and the last 15 with the San Diego DA's Office. He has spent the last 13 years with the Family Protection Division, prosecuting homicide, domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, and child pornography cases, and has been a supervisor for the last 5 years.

Born in Bombay, Cawas attended the Cathedral and John Cannon School until he was 12 years old. In 1987, Cawas immigrated to the United States with his parents, Avi and Jehangir Mody, and brother, Neville, to San Diego, California. He attributes his unyielding sense of ethics, integrity, and dedication to his work and family to his upbringing.

Cawas feels that "our faith and belief requires us to fight for what is good and righteous and follow our credo: good thoughts, good words, and good deeds". His sense of values has been formed by Zarathushtra's teachings on good purpose, moral state of mind, truth, righteousness, and justice, which have influenced his desire to serve his community, help protect the society in which he lives, and have molded the way he lives his personal and professional life.

Cawas and his wife Katalin, who works for a global medical technology company, live in La Jolla with their two daughters.

CONGRATULATIONS CAWAS MODY, THE COMMUNITY IS PROUD OF YOU.



# SUNMOKSHA: EMPOWERING LIVES, CATALYZING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Ashok Das and Farrokh Mistree

## Preamble

“We are resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want to heal and secure our planet. We are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path. As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets which we are announcing today demonstrate the scale and ambition of this new Universal Agenda.”<sup>1</sup>

SunMoksha is a social enterprise established to improve the quality of life of people at the bottom of the socioeconomic pyramid (BOP) by developing Smart Villages based on “PURA”, Provisioning Urban Amenities for Rural Areas, a model proposed by Late Dr. APJ Kalam<sup>2</sup>. A *Smart PURA Village* moves the villagers up the value chain to improve the socioeconomic status of its citizens leading to ‘Gram Swaraj’<sup>3</sup> or ‘Sustainable Communities’. In response to the ‘Universal Agenda’, SunMoksha has created solutions to foster development that is anchored in the three pillars of sustainable development, namely, People, Planet and Profit/Progress. In this article, we highlight a systematic and organized deployment of SDGs to ensure that the interventions move a BOP community up the value chain to achieve *Gram Swaraj*.

## 1. Sustainable Development and Zoroastrianism<sup>4</sup>

The great strength of the Zoroastrian faith is that it enjoins the caring of the physical world not merely to seek spiritual salvation, but because human beings, as the purposeful creation of Ahura Mazda, are seen as the natural motivators or overseers of the Seven Creations, namely, sky, water, earth, plants, animals, humans and fire. As the only conscious creation, humans have the ultimate task of caring for the universe. The faith endorses the caring of Seven Creations, as part of a symbiotic relationship. Zoroastrianism sees the physical world as a natural matrix of Seven Creations in which life and growth are interdependent if harmony and perfection are to be the final goal. This goal is to be achieved by recreating the primeval unity of a perfect world, unpolluted and unsullied, as was first conceived by Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord. *Empowering Lives and Catalyzing Sustainable Development* is one small effort at interdependent and sustainable development.

## 2. The Sustainable Development Goals for Communities at the BOP

In 2015, the United Nations Member States adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to be achieved by 2030 (**Figure 1**). The attainment of the 17 SDGs, collectively are expected to end poverty and other deprivations through strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth. Effort around the world has been invested in achieving SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 10 (**Figure 1**) through the adoption of interventions that are short-term and not sustainable in the long term.

SunMoksha is a social enterprise focused on improving the quality of life of people at the BOP. It has taken a systematic and organized approach to addressing the SDG, as summarized in **Figure 2**. It has devised a strategic plan and a systematic and organized method that others can emulate. *SDG-8, Decent Work and Economic Growth*, is adopted as the primary goal for SunMoksha’s Value Propositions. *Value Propositions* are sustainable solutions (or intelligent assets) to create opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship for the community’s economic growth. Once people gain economic strength, they can take care of their basic needs such as food, water, education, and health. The outcome of implementing *SDG-8* directly affects *SDG-1* and *SDG-2*. Since poverty is one of the main reasons for poor health and education, *SDG-3* and *SDG-4* are achieved in succession, once people have achieved a minimum level of economic strength. As SunMoksha’s interventions are inclusive, and targeted to provide economic opportunities for the community at large, the inequities are reduced (*SDG-10*). Attention is paid to ensure reduction in the gender gap (*SDG-5*) by creating opportunities for women empowerment. The outcomes eventually lead, over the years, to development of sustainable communities (*SDG-11*) and brings peace and justice in the society (*SDG-16*).



Figure 1: United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals<sup>5</sup>



Figure 2: SunMoksha's Development Strategy Anchored in SDGs

### 3. SunMoksha's Value Propositions for Rural Development

India's rural economy revolves around agriculture. However, this often does not provide enough income to people at the BOP. Significant effort is required to move the farmers up the value chain from farm to fork, or, pre- to post-harvesting, to bring about economic growth (SDG-8), as shown in **Figure 3**. The agricultural economy, in turn, revolves around the nexus of food, water, and energy. SunMoksha has developed smart solutions, or value propositions,

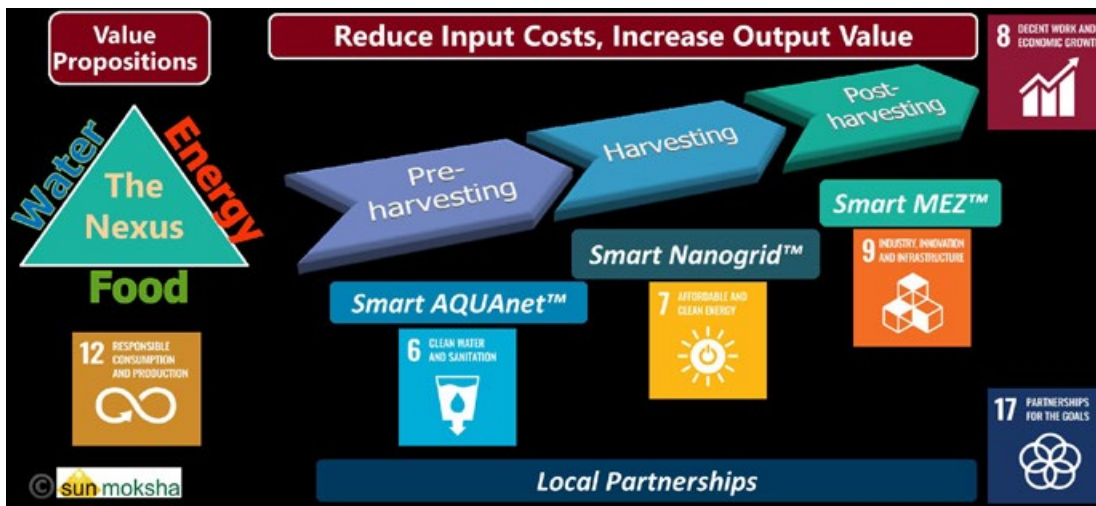


Figure 3: Smart Solutions to Move the Farmers up the Value Chain



in energy and water that ‘aid’ in addressing ‘food’ production, as well as, interventions that provide livelihood and economic strength to the farmers. It enables sustainable food production (SDG-12) by aiding the entire value chain from pre- to post-harvesting, to reduce input costs and increase output value, and move the farmers up the value chain. SunMoksha’s solutions, *Smart AQUAnet™* for sustainable water, *Smart Nanogrid™* for sustainable energy and *Smart Micro-Economic Zone (Smart MEZ™)* for sustainable rural livelihood are anchored in SDG-5, 6 and 9 respectively. Over time, it continues to develop new solutions and assets as the development starts to bring in changes and creates new demands by the communities, such as food processing units, cold rooms, retail outlets, etc.

SunMoksha’s *Smart Nanogrid™* provides ‘energy’ through renewable and sustainable energy solutions associated with *SDG-7*. Its *Smart AQUAnet™* interjects an intelligent solution into the community to address water utilization and conservation efficiently, especially by improving agricultural irrigation systems. Water is a key resource and a daunting challenge for sustainable development, directly connecting *SDG-6* to community development. SunMoksha’s initiative to develop ‘*Smart Micro-Economic Zone (MEZ)*’ helps achieve *SDG-9* in a community by building the required infrastructure to support sustainable growth and provide opportunities to innovate solutions that work in the real world. SunMoksha’s rules of engagement are anchored in *SDG-17*. It develops partnerships with the local organizations and stakeholder, and engages with the local community and civic bodies to ensure long-term impact of the value propositions developed for the community.

#### 4. The $E^3 - P^3 - VP$ Construct for Sustainable Socioeconomic Development.

SunMoksha’s approach to sustainable socioeconomic development is shown in **Figure 4**. Its development strategy is anchored in three principles ( $E^3$ ) – Entrepreneurship (employment), Education (skills) and Empowerment (of individuals and communities), with available local resources as inputs. Education here includes skills and knowledge necessary for the people to take care of their needs. Employment and Education, together with SunMoksha’s *Value Propositions (SDG-8)*, leads to Empowerment of the communities to self-learn and create jobs on their own. The value propositions developed and deployed take into account the three drivers of sustainable development ( $P^3$ ), namely, environment (planet), economics (profit/progress) and society (people), that are anchored in *SDG-13, 14 and 15*. SunMoksha creates an ecosystem of interventions that empower the communities to move forward on the development path bringing peace in the society.

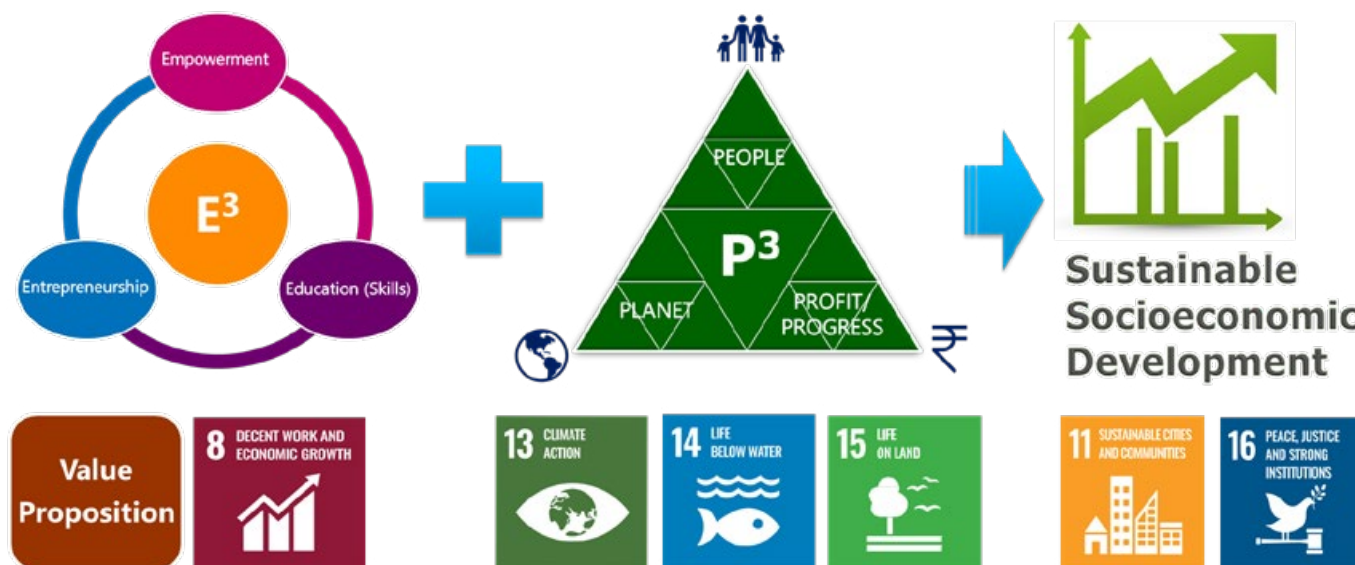
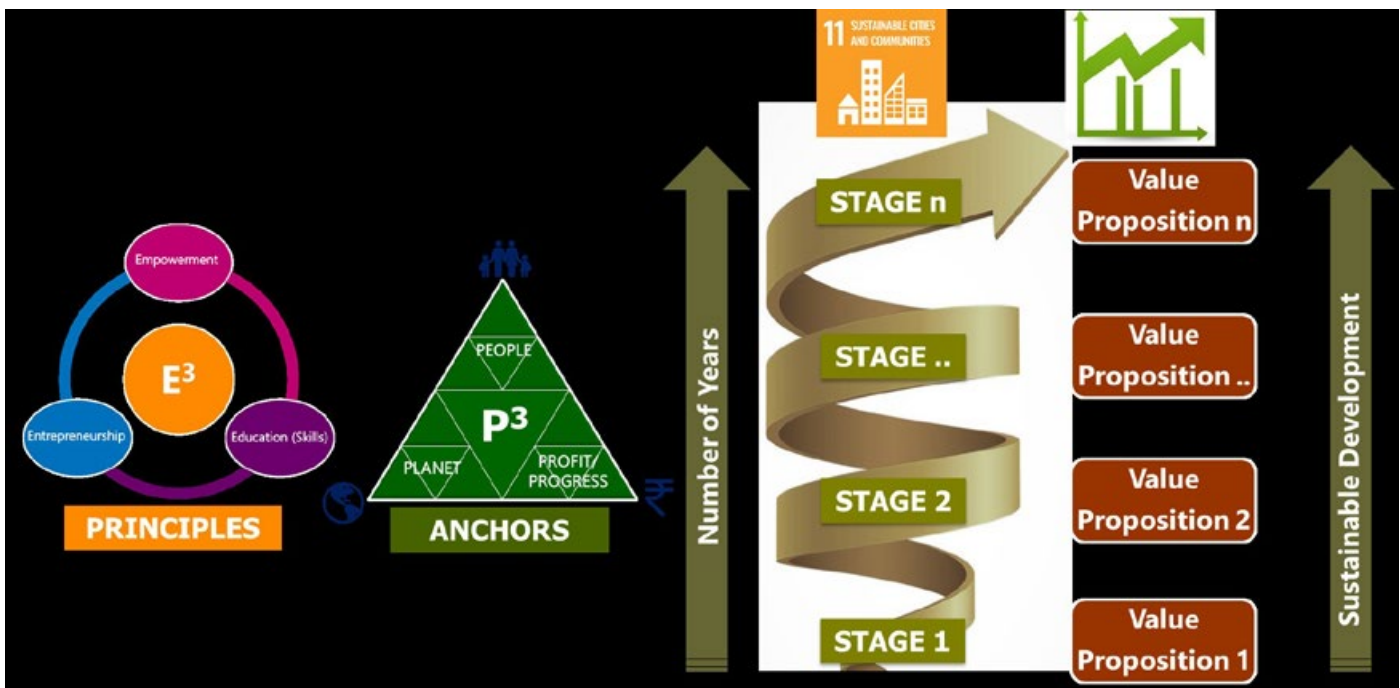


Figure 4: The  $E^3 - P^3$  Construct for Sustainable Socioeconomic Development.

SunMoksha's development model is a multistage process as shown in **Figure 5**. It begins with identifying value propositions or interventions through smart technologies and assets that provide access to essential services and create livelihood opportunities. By embracing the concept of sustainability, sustainable value propositions are developed that are robust technical solutions and business models that can be rapidly deployed and scaled up in the villages, especially for the under-served and un-served communities. These value propositions are anchored in the E<sup>3</sup>-P<sup>3</sup> construct. The creation of livelihood and enterprise activities through sustainable resources, in turn, creates an ecosystem for development for improved quality of life. At the initial stages, the rate of employment and skills they learn is low when compared to higher stages. The interventions and smart solutions change as the community moves up the value chain. The development takes place over several years, or even over a few generations. At some stage the community becomes sustainable as in *Gram Swaraj*.

## 5. Closing Remarks

SunMoksha's goal as a social enterprise is to improve the quality of life of people at the BOP. Its principles and constructs are anchored in socioeconomic progress (SGD8) to empower the rural community to take care of their basic needs (SDG-1-4), that helps reduce inequalities in the community (SDG-5,10). It has developed value propositions and intelligent energy and water solutions (SGD-6,7,9) to catalyze economic growth within the Food-Water-Energy Nexus. It is not only targeted to increase food production with reduced input costs, but also add value to the produce to increase the income of the farmers. It partners with the local community and stakeholders (SDG-17) to ensure



**Figure 5: The E<sup>3</sup>-P<sup>3</sup>-VP Construct for Sustainable Socioeconomic Development Resulting in Sustainable Communities.**

long-term sustainable development. SunMoksha's value propositions have been developed within the within the E<sup>3</sup>-P<sup>3</sup> construct, keeping people, planet and progress (SGD-13-16) and women-centric opportunities (SGD-5) that leads to sustainable socioeconomic development of communities (SDG-11) and brings peace and justice in the society (SDG-16). SunMoksha's approach to *Empowering Lives and Catalyzing Sustainable Development* in invoking the 17 SDGs in a systematic and organized manner is illustrated in **Figure 6**. SunMoksha's value propositions, or smart solutions, are anchored in the P<sup>3</sup> construct, to catalyze economic development. This, in turn, empowers the community to take care of their basic needs such as food, water, education, and health, and reduces inequalities. The cycle repeats as the community moves up the value chain in a systematic and organized manner, eventually leading to development of sustainable communities. For details, please visit <https://sunmoksha.com>.



Figure 6: Empowering Lives and Catalysing Sustainable Development the SunMoksha Way

### Acknowledgement

We happily recognize our mentee Vishnu Vardhan Reddy Kamala's involvement in developing the material presented in this article.

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#### Ashok K. Das, PhD [das@sumnoksha.com]

Ashok is the founder CEO of SunMoksha, a company focused on access to energy for socioeconomic development of rural hinterland. He has hands-on experience in working on rural socioeconomic development with state-of-the-art technology interventions, such as smart microgrids, IoT, renewable energy, smart irrigation, that have received several awards and accolades. Prior to founding SunMoksha, Ashok worked for semiconductor equipment manufacturer Applied Materials in the Bay Area, California, for a decade, then the India Operations of a fab automation start-up Aquest Systems in Bangalore and Bay Area. Ashok has a B.Tech. from IIT Kanpur and Ph.D. from University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

#### Farrokh Mistree, PhD [farrokh.mistree@ou.edu]

Farrokh holds the L.A. Comp chair at the University of Oklahoma, He has co-authored two textbooks, four research monographs and more than 400 technical papers dealing with the integrated realization of systems. Farrokh was named the ASME Ruth and Joel Spira Outstanding Engineering Design Educator in 2011. In 2012 he was recognized as a Distinguished Alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, India. In 2012, he received the Life Time Achievement Award from the International Society for Agile Manufacturing, Lafayette, Louisiana. Since 2016, Ashok and Farrokh have taught together, mentored students and co-authored several papers. Farrokh is a member of SunMoksha's Advisory Board.





## THE FUTURE WE WANT SDG 4

Fezana supports the SDG # 4 of the UN

KEHKASHAN BASU

It was bitterly cold and damp that New Year's Day in 2018 in no man's land on the border of Syria and Lebanon. Huddled against the cold, inside a makeshift structure were fifty children some as young as six, staring at me with glazed eyes that still had traces of fear and shock in them. It was an unusual day for them because for the first time in a year, since they had to flee from their bombed-out village in Syria, they would attend class. I was at a camp for displaced persons of the Syrian conflict, located in Bekaa Valley in Lebanon, that more than 5000 refugees called home. If anyone wanted a visual representation of misery this camp exemplified it.



The Syrian refugee camp workshop was conducted inside a tent -- it was a temporary structure made of plastic sheets and rods. It was below freezing while we were there. They don't have a single permanent structure, forget buildings :)--- for miles around as it is in no man's land . On our way in we were able to take one photo on my phone. This is the only photo I could take of the outside (photo above left)

A cluster of plastic tents, without heating and sanitation provided these hapless souls the only refuge against the elements. Yet at least they were alive, albeit not knowing where their next meal would come from. Over the next couple of days, my Green Hope team, engaged 600 children, some of them girls as young as 12 who carried their babies to our workshops, teaching them about the various aspects of sustainability through art, music and dance. I was a bit apprehensive whether sustainability issues of climate change, biodiversity conservation and environmental degradation would appeal to these children who were struggling for survival. To my utter surprise they demonstrated the same instinctive positivity to mitigating these challenges as children who attended our workshops in Manhattan. This vindicated my belief that children, irrespective of their situation, genuinely care about the environment.

Twelve months later, during Christmas, we were in Kutupalong, a beautifully lyrical name for the world's largest refugee camp for Rohingya refugees on the border of Bangladesh and Myanmar. Another camp, in another country thousands of kilometers away but the same story of deprivation, hunger and disease.



A sea of more than a million Rohingya refugees live in these camps, cramped in about 30,000 ramshackle huts and plastic structures, spread across the hilly terrain. Sanitation and hygiene do not exist. It's an unbelievably moving sight which no words or pictures can describe. After the initial media hysteria, the world has forgotten them and moved on to more newsworthy stories that are palatable to the western taste while the suffering of these people plumb new depths. Every day 50 children are born in this camp - many unable to survive beyond the first week. Abuse, exploitation and trafficking add to the pangs of hunger and disease at every moment.

An unsteady bamboo structure serves as a community center and this is where my Green Hope team conducted environmental workshops for two thousand Rohingya children teaching them about the ***Sustainable Development Goals***. You cannot imagine how unstable and uncomfortable it was inside, in the harsh weather conditions, without any toilets. The structure was set up on stilts and wobbled every time we moved. The fear of it collapsing while we were inside was always on the back of our minds. We were specifically asked not to take any photos outside. Our focus was just educating the children and that is why we got permission.

We spent the week singing and dancing with the children, teaching them about the environment, to avoid plastics, to wash their hands and to conserve water. We sat together and drew our dreams of a clean, green planet. None of these children had ever been to school and their smiles and joyous laughter were the best Christmas gifts that we could have asked for. Since we did not speak their language, we used art and music to teach them about environmental conservation. These children had no idea what the future held for them, yet they pledged to take actions to protect the environment. 8-year old Noor Fatima pledged to avoid plastic bags. 9-year old Akramulau drew a picture of a child planting trees. Every day after our workshop, we spent the afternoons planting over hundred saplings in an open area behind their huts.

These children are a part of the 165 million young people globally who have no access to education and with

every pandemic, war and climate disaster their numbers continue to rise. It is the greatest unacknowledged irony of our times that the impacts of environmental degradation are felt most by people and communities who are least responsible for it. It is this climate injustice that I have been working to redress through my social innovation enterprise, **Green Hope Foundation**, using education for sustainable development (SDG 4) as a transformative tool to provide them with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors to think and act for a sustainable future. As we commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations, we need to ask ourselves why we have regressed in terms of social justice, poverty, freedom, equality, biodiversity and peace. The general apathy of civil society and the attitude that these are global problems for someone else to solve are reasons for the current state of affairs.

As a young person, I am of the firm belief that my generation is the last one that has the opportunity to redress our past mistakes before it is too late. This is the mantra that drives us at Green Hope. We believe that every action counts and therefore, instead of protesting on the streets we try and bring change, one child at a time. Having been involved in the adoption process of the SDGs since Rio+20, I am convinced these 17 goals and 169 targets provide the only pathway for creating a just, equitable and sustainable world. One must also realize that all the goals and targets are inter-linked and none are more important than the other. The Covid19 pandemic has exposed the gross fragilities of our social systems and infrastructure and brought the mightiest of economies to their knees. Had nations taken the implementation of the SDGs a bit more seriously, the impacts of this pandemic would have been far less devastating. It is critical that at least now, all stakeholders use the SDGs as the blueprint for building back better. This might indeed be our last chance, before it is too late.

*Green Hope Foundation is a global social innovation enterprise working on Education for Sustainable Development, Children's Rights, Peace and Environmental Protection by empowering young people and building effective partnerships with all stakeholders of civil society, policy makers and institutions. We engage and educate youth & adults alike, through our interactive workshops and conferences involving educational institutions, which target the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.*

*Our actions are guided by the United Nations mandate of "Leave No One Behind" and our engagement programs are specially directed towards the empowerment of the world's most marginalised sections such as refugees, orphans, the destitute and the homeless.*

*The issues that we focus on are Climate Change, Social Upliftment, Land Degradation, Sustainable Consumption and Production, Peace, Gender Equality, Biodiversity Conservation, Clean Energy, Future Justice and their overall impact on children's rights. We have directly engaged with over 80,000 young people in 25 countries in our quest to achieve a just, equitable and sustainable world.*

**Kehkashan Basu** was born on 5th June, World Environment Day and always believed that she was preordained to become an eco-warrior. At the age of 7, she saw the image of a dead bird with its belly full of plastic and decided to stop this atrocity from happening again, planted her first tree on her 8th birthday and started her journey of creating awareness in her neighborhood and community. She founded the Green Hope Foundation at age 12 after returning from Rio+20 because she was aghast at the lack of inclusivity of children and young people among the 50,000 delegates there and wanted to provide a platform to change that mindset. Through her organisation, Kehkashan involves hundreds of young people to take action to conserve the environment. She conducts workshops called "**Earth Academies**" for school and university students to spread awareness about the environment and sustainability.

Today she is a 20 year resident of Toronto Ontario, Youth Ambassador World Future Council Council Lead - Toronto-St. Paul's Constituency Youth Council, National Geographic Young Explorer Former Global Coordinator for Children and Youth, UNEP MGFC Climate Reality Mentor Founder President Green Hope Foundation **TEDx Speaker One Young World Ambassador Canada's Top 25 Women of Influence 2018 United Nations Human Rights Champion Winner of 2016 International Children's Peace Prize.**

# From 'Caterpillar' to 'Butterfly' Consciousness to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations through Education

Dr. Coomi S. Vevaina  
(Ph.D. Literature & Ph.D. Education)

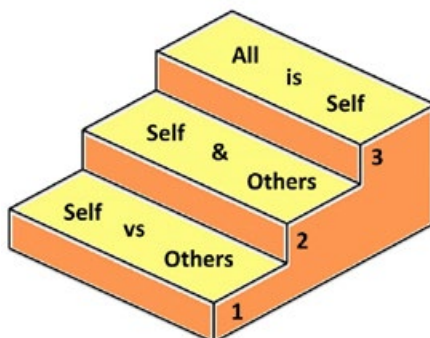


With millennials insisting on meaningful and relevant education and 264 million children left unschooled in the world (according to the latest UNESCO report), all who are involved in education, government and educational NGOs, are seriously attempting to bring about systemic changes. Many have created new models and have successfully reached out to thousands of learners but, by and large, mainstream education systems remain unchanged. The disruption caused by the pandemic seems to have thrown a gauntlet at what Sir Ken Robinson calls the teacher-centric, “assembly-line model” but, education at its best, cannot remain entirely digital for the full unfolding of mental, emotional, social and spiritual intelligence requires social interaction.

In 2015 the United Nations carefully designed seventeen Sustainable Goals of Development which all its member nations are to achieve before 2030. Its aspirations, though desirable and worthy (see the Notes section), read like a ‘wish list’ simply because NOTHING can change unless we change consciousness. Though we incessantly talk about ‘collaboration’, our mindset is still firmly entrenched in competition. Since consciousness creates reality, a “revolution in consciousness” which J. Krishnamurti (1975) insisted upon, is so necessary that for every rupee or dollar spent on developing technology, the next should be spent on changing consciousness (2018

Harari). It is only by changing from a greedy ‘caterpillar’ to a free and soaring ‘butterfly’ consciousness through Education **that our** young people can become responsible and productive citizens of the world and work with their unique, individual intelligence(s) to achieve the Sustainable goals.

In a telegram published in the New York Times in 1946, Einstein astutely observed: “a new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move toward higher levels.” Meaningful, learner-centric education demands that we think in entirely different ways to enable our learners to live their life “in harmony with all existence” (1913 Tagore). Achieving this change requires, what I refer to as ‘Source-full Intelligence’™ (2013) which is the unique capacity that we humans have of understanding and experiencing our uniqueness and our oneness simultaneously. Only then can our youth transition from a *Self-versus-Other* to a *Self-and-Other* to an *All is Self* consciousness and



TM by Dr. Coomi S. Vevaina

function with expanded awareness for the benefit of humanity as a whole.

Understanding the need for a change at both the personal and social levels, in the late nineties, a team of educationists came together under the leadership of Jacques Delors and designed a report for the UNESCO entitled “Learning: The Treasure Within” (1996). In their opinion, education can be made relevant and result in radical social change only if it is based on, what the report calls, “the four pillars of learning” - Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Live Together and Learning to Be. *Learning to know* refers to the type of learning that is “concerned less with the acquisition of structured knowledge than with the mastery of learning tools” like concentration, memory skills and the ability to think independently. *Learning to do* considers the manner in which we can adapt education “so that it can equip people to do the types of work needed in future” and facilitate innovation. The third and fourth pillars, namely *Learning to Live Together* and *Learning to Be* which involve co-existing peacefully with others and living life to one’s full potential, are regarded by the committee as vital to the survival of humanity in the millennium.

Young people can be encouraged to “live together” and to “be” by actively emphasizing universal human values. At the end

of a three-year project involving 55 leading social scientists, Positive Psychologists Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman (2004) created 6 classes of Virtues and 24 Character strengths as constituting core capacities in all human beings. These virtues and strengths require a framework of consistent reflection and discussion to enable children become both self-aware and mindful of the welfare of others.

Inspired by the vision articulated in the Delors Report and the ideas of positive psychologists, educationists all over the world have begun looking at ways of transforming their respective education systems. The unfortunate truth is that 'systems', however wonderful, are rarely flexible and non-hierarchical for, by its very nature, equality can never underlie the creation of any utopia. With our vision blinkered by what we consider to be 'good' and 'correct', "we end up pulling out a lot of fingernails from the people who don't agree with [us]" (1979 Atwood Exp. 2) and have different perspectives. Genuine transformation in Education demands that we move away from the idea of Education 'Systems' to the more organic and interconnected concept of 'Learning Ecosystems'.

The ancient Greeks believed that in any given society there are three types of people – Idiots (who are selfish and self-centred), Tribespeople (who cannot think beyond their small groups) and Citizens (who care for others and strive to create a civilised society). Surely, what our world needs today are citizens. If our aim is to prepare students for 'jobs' (though, 65% or more of the jobs that exist today are likely to change radically or be rendered redundant in the next few years by Artificial Intelligence, IoT and Biotechnology) and material 'success' then a few cosmetic changes will suffice but if we hope to make them into global citizens, prepare them for the fundamental challenges facing humankind and strive to help attain the SDGs, then we need to completely overhaul education.

The creation of new ecosystems is likely to produce meaningful results only if equal weightage is given to nurturing the mind (not the brain), body, emotions and spirit. The current emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) subjects and the marginalization of the Humanities and the Arts will not, in any way, foster the development of "a consciousness that has transcended the imperatives of the self or ego and so knows compassion or selfless love." (1997 Forbes). Individualistic,

discipline-centered STEM curriculum only prepares students for jobs or, at best, innovation whereas relational, H-TEAMS (Humanities, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math and Sciences) curriculum prepares them for life. With H-TEAMS education, we can enable learners think critically and creatively and, whether working on their own or in collaboration with others, demonstrate resilience, flexibility, compassion, empathy and an understanding of social justice issues. With deep sensitivity, our youth would then be able to see the truth in the words of Maya Angelou who once said, "if we lose love and self respect for each other, this is how we finally die."

Education which allows the flowering of the intellect and the spirit would necessarily lead to the emergence of what H. H. the Dalai Lama calls, "compassionate leaders" who would help their followers, understand that "[w]ithin the reality of our universal inadequacy, uncertainty and blindness lies a limitless capacity to reach out to one another, to hold one another, a limitless energy, a limitless empowerment which is available and accessible directly in our finite limited condition" (1990 Kogawa).

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# FEZANA Participates in HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

**NEW YORK, July 14, 2020** – FEZANA, with other faith-based NGO’s participated in a parallel event on the occasion of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), on the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

The meeting, “**A Shift in Mindset: Faith-Based Solutions to Climate Action Obstacles in implementing Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement at the Grassroots**” took place on Monday, July 13th, 2020 at 12 PM EST.

The meeting was attended by 56 participants from 12 different faith groups from Asia, Australia, Europe, Latin America/Caribbean, Middle East, Africa and North America. The speakers were from the Hindu, Islamic and Christian faiths. They spoke about Faith-Based solutions to Climate Change obstacles.



FEZANA was represented by **Afreed Mistry**, FEZANA’s Main Representative to the United Nations, from Toronto, Canada. She brings years of experience to the position having attended numerous sessions since 2004 at the UN Headquarters in New York, and mentored numerous Zarathushti youth on their journey to become world citizens. Afreed currently serves as the Executive Vice-President of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario. Professionally she is a Network Design Specialist at the Bank of Montreal.



**FEZANA supports the UN Sustainable Developmental Goals**

At the HLPF on Sustainable Development, in 2018, FEZANA was represented by a robust team of seven participants. An alumnus from that UN FEZANA representation, **Ervad Karl Desai**, originally from Sydney, Australia, currently residing in London, UK, was the moderator for the first FEZANA Talks titled, “Can Zoroastrianism Solve Climate Change?” held on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

## Ava Project

On **Saturday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021**, World Environment Day, the FEZANA UN-NGO Committee would like everyone to visit a body of water (sea, ocean, lake, pond, creek) and clean up the area and say a short prayer as a thank you for the creation of water.

We encourage all Zoroastrians all over the World to join us on this day in doing something together. If you are interested in participating in your area, please contact us, email addresses are listed below.



Zarathushtis interested in participating with FEZANA at the UN can send a letter of intent as to how they see themselves promoting the mission of the United Nations, ([www.un.org](http://www.un.org)) with a copy of their curriculum vitae to:

*Co-Chairs of the FEZANA UN NGO Committee:  
Afreed Mistry, [Afreed@fezana.org](mailto:Afreed@fezana.org) and  
Behram Pastakia, [behram@fezana.org](mailto:behram@fezana.org)*

# ZOROASTRIANISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## FEZANA supports SDGs 11, 13, 15



Hanoz Santoke



[www.makesoil.org](http://www.makesoil.org) which is led by Josh Whiton, that provides on line resources to promote connections locally to encourage composting of kitchen waste with Neighbourrhod friends in community bins.

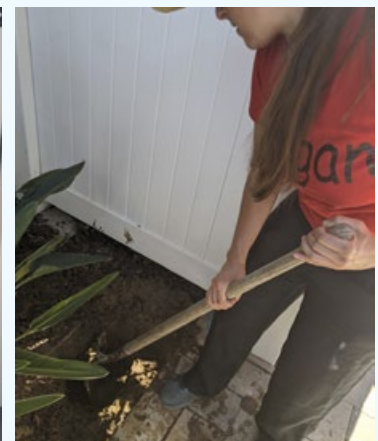
Zarathushtra has been called the first environmentalist. Centuries before scientists had any idea about air or water pollution, or understood global climate change, soil depletion or biodiversity, prophet Zarathushtra Spitama preached the importance of protecting and caring for all of Ahura Mazda's creations, including the plants, animals, waters, and the earth itself. Zoroastrians have always followed this principle, and diligently protected our natural environment from pollution and desecration, even before the modern environmental movement provided a scientific validation for our religious teachings.

The environmental movement began in the 1800s with the industrial revolution, when companies rapidly developed new technologies to manufacture iron, textiles and other items with little regard for the long-term consequences of their actions. Soon, the dangers of uncontrolled pollution became apparent, and people impacted began to advocate for relief, leading to "green" movements that manifested themselves in various ways, including consumer education, advocacy, and legislation. These movements have continued and grown to the present day.

The global Zoroastrian community, spread over several countries but united by a common commitment to the teachings of Zarathushtra, have been leaders in taking concrete action to put these principles into practice. These efforts have taken various forms, some on a small scale and some much more ambitious, but all have had a positive impact on our planet.

On July 4, 2020, the Zoroastrian Association of California held a gardening event, with the goal of creating a vegetable garden on the grounds of the ZAC Center in Southern California. A small group of eight local Zoroastrians, from children to seniors, planted a broad variety of items including tomatoes, thyme, mint, chives, cucumbers, bell peppers, kale, and raspberries. Led by youth coordinator Armaiti May, the group spent several hours digging holes, softening soil, and adding natural fertilizer to provide nutrients and ensure the health of the plants. (photos below)

Planting vegetables may seem unremarkable, but the environmental benefits are numerous. Plants absorb carbon dioxide, which is a major greenhouse gas that contributes to global climate change, and releases oxygen, which humans breathe in order to survive. Growing food locally helps reduce pollution from manufacturing facilities and transportation, thus further reducing greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption. Finally, growing food without the use of



synthetic pesticides and insecticides helps reduce runoff of these contaminants into surface waters, where they can damage ecosystems and potentially find their way into drinking water.

Almost diametrically across the globe, in the village of Udvada, Zoroastrians have been equally active. The Clean & Green Charitable Trust, established by Zarine Bharda, Filly Bapuna, Zenobia Sidhwa, and Nilesh Raichura in 2019, along with the support of like minded Parsis, has engaged in activities to “Recycle, Renew and Regrow Udvada together”, and proven that Zoroastrians have the same spirit anywhere in the world, whether in a bustling metropolis or a quiet rural village. This Trust was created to assist Udvada Village with implementing a sustainable waste management system along with cleaning and maintaining the beach front.

On March 13, 2020, Clean & Green partnered with Return to Roots, a program that takes young Zoroastrians from the diaspora on a two-week tour of Mumbai and Gujarat to explore their heritage and reconnect them to the homeland. Around 18 participants, aged 21 to 35, spent the day on a cleanup drive to beautify the historic village. Starting at J.J. Dharamsala, their base while in town, the group made a loop around Udvada, including the area near the Iranshah Atash Behram, collected trash and recyclables, and made sure that they were disposed of in the appropriate manner. By engaging in this highly visible drive, the RTR fellows encouraged the local residents to develop awareness of litter and pollution. As one of the participants, Ervad Sheherazad Pavri of Mumbai, described it, “picking up trash during our drive with them while on RTR was setting an example for them to do the same. If outsiders could come and keep it clean, why not us?”

Litter removal, like planting vegetables, may seem mundane at first glance, but it is one of the most effective things that individuals can do to protect the planet. Besides being unsightly and spreading disease, trash can contaminate soil and bodies of water, strangle or poison wildlife, and clog drains resulting in flooding. Recycling a portion of the collected litter can help reduce energy consumption, thereby contributing to the fight against climate change, and also



prevent the depletion of natural resources that would be used to make new products.

While examples of community initiatives like these exist all over the world, Zoroastrian enterprise has also been involved on a much larger scale. The Tata Group has created a 245-acre wetland inside an automobile manufacturing plant in Pune, providing a reservoir for carbon dioxide that would have been released into the environment, in addition to a home for wildlife that would otherwise be driven out of such an urbanized city. Homi Bhabha was the architect of India’s atomic energy program, and today the country has over 20 atomic reactors which produce energy with very minimal greenhouse gas emissions.

Whether a few individuals are planting vegetables in a garden or a large business established by a Parsi visionary is restoring acres of land back to its natural state, it is evident that the Zoroastrian community is deeply involved in protecting our natural environment for the generations to come. While there are myriad scientific benefits of these activities, including both immediate and long-term health and ecological benefits, fighting climate change and preventing pollution is, at its most fundamental level, an implementation of the teachings of Zarathushtra.

*Dr. Hanoz Santoke is a professor of chemistry and biochemistry at California State University, Bakersfield, and teaches physical and environmental chemistry, and leads a group of students who perform research on the degradation of pharmaceutical compounds in water. Active in the Zoroastrian community in southern California, he served on the executive committee of the 7<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in Los Angeles in 2019.*

# Progress of Faith Based Organizations In Support of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

By Joshua Basofin, David Hales, & Michael Terrien



*Joshua Basofin is Director of Climate Action at Parliament of the World's Religions. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a law degree, with honors, from Chicago-Kent College of Law. Joshua has worked in the environmental field for over fifteen years as an attorney, advocate, sustainability expert, and writer. He worked with Environment Now and*

*Defenders of Wildlife focusing on conservation, advised businesses, local governments, and civil society. In his current role, Joshua works with faith-based organizations to realize their enormous potential for addressing climate change*



*David Hales led environmental policy and sustainability programs for the US Agency for International Development. As a diplomat, he has represented the USA in numerous negotiations on climate change, urban affairs and policy, and biodiversity. He served in the Carter administration as Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior. He was the first American to serve as Chair of the World Heritage Convention.*



*Michael Terrien is an Oblate of St. Benedict. He is an associate member of the Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers (CADEIO) and was responsible for coordinating its partnership with the 2015 Parliament. He was project director of the Archdiocese of Chicago's Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. He holds a certificate in Executive Education from Harvard University.*

We face major sustainability challenges in the 21st Century. Fortunately, we have a unique opportunity to implement solutions at a global scale. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their precursor, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), grew out of a pioneering idea to mobilize around a global framework for sustainability. Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) (defined as those with religious, indigenous, and spiritual backgrounds) have made significant contributions in several SDG areas, including nature conservation, renewable energy, fossil fuel divestment, and education.

A broad spectrum of religious leaders have recognized our moral responsibility to the planet and each other. Their words inspired hundreds of organizations to include sustainability as part of their core Mission. FBO progress on sustainability closely tracks the roll out of the SDGs. Therefore, this five year anniversary of the SDGs presents an opportunity to take stock and plot a course forward.

## From MGDs to SDGs: An Evolution

In September 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted the MDGs, ushering in the new millennium with an ambitious objective of improving livelihoods for billions of people. The eight MDGs focused on a range of indicators, from halving extreme poverty rates to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015. The MDGs spurred unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest. Clear progress was made, including a reduction in global poverty. However, the MDGs did not address people and planet in the integrated manner we now understand to be important.

In 2015, as the MDGs reached their target date, the UN General Assembly adopted a new set of goals, designed for a new era. The SDGs have a broader scope focused on environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and economic development. This set of 17 new goals signals a recognition that our challenges are interlinked.

## FBOs: An Important SDG Stakeholder

FBOs are uniquely positioned to make progress toward the SDGs. Nearly every



religious, indigenous, and spiritual tradition teaches a moral obligation to protect the planet. Faith leaders from every corner of the globe have issued statements confirming this truth, and pledged to address sustainability challenges, particularly climate change and the loss of biodiversity, as the greatest threats to our future. One of the more publicized of these statements is *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis's encyclical urging us to care for our common home and hear the cries of the poor. Other faiths have made their own statements. As far back as 1970, the inaugural year of Earth Day, the National Association of Evangelicals released a policy resolution. In it, they pledged to support "every legitimate effort to maintain balance in ecology, preservation of our resources, and avoidance of the cluttering of our natural beauty with the waste of our society." Regardless of our theological, cultural, or political differences, our traditions are all imbued with an environmental ethic.

Aside from their moral obligations compelling good stewardship, faith communities play an important advocacy and logistical role in society. According to [The Zug Guidelines for Faith-Consistent Investing](#), FBOs control 8% of the habitable land surface of Earth, 5% of all commercial forests, 50% of schools worldwide, and 10% of the world's total financial institutions. With a portfolio including these vast resources, the potential aggregate impact of FBOs on sustainable development is immense. The UN General Assembly appropriately recognized FBOs as a key stakeholder upon inaugurating the SDGs in 2015. Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed noted "The continued support and activism of faith-based organizations will be essential as we forge ahead in our quest to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for all people."

## Decades of Progress

During 2020, The Parliament of the World's Religions has been tracking the environmental work of FBOs through our Climate Commitments Project. We have identified over 100 organizations working on faith-based projects and are discovering more on a continual basis. Their impact has been noteworthy. Each SDG has a set of specific targets which, if substantially met, will indicate that a particular SDG has been fulfilled. Below are some FBO milestones, as measured by contribution to an SDG target:

- 30% of fossil fuel divestment commitments made to date are attributable to the faith community, contributing to **SDG Target 12.C** (elimination of the market distortions enabling fossil fuel production). See [National Catholic Reporter](#). For example, 16 congregations of Dominican sisters together have committed \$130 million to seed new

climate solutions funds.

- Nearly 800 houses of worship in the United States have installed renewable energy, contributing to **SDG Target 7.2** (By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix). See [Solar on Houses of Worship Survey and Report](#). For example, some 90 United Church of Christ congregations have installed solar.
- FBO projects on every continent are working on reforestation and ecosystem restoration, contributing to **SDG Target 15.1** (By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems). For example, several Buddhist monasteries in Tibet are actively monitoring and protecting snow leopards.

These are just examples of the kinds of work being accomplished by FBOs. We have also seen initiatives related to water conservation, education, sustainable farming livelihoods, and wildlife protection, among others.

## Toward Greater Impact

Despite the strides in sustainable development made by FBOs, there is much work to do before the SDGs sunset in 2030. Our capacity for action far exceeds our accomplishments so far. The urgency has never been greater. This must be a decade of rapid progress if the SDGs are to be achieved. FBOs will need to deploy their finances to enable a low carbon transition. They will need to use their lands to conserve and protect natural resources. And they will need to educate the poor and lift up livelihoods *sustainably*, and without contributing to new sources of waste and pollution. These are not small challenges. They require a cultural transformation and broad mobilization in communities across the globe. Fortunately, we have every resource we need to meet the SDGs. What we must now demonstrate is a true commitment to the values and commandments of our own theologies and traditions. We must imagine a better world and commit to its stewardship.

To assist in this recommitment, The Parliament of the World's Religions is considering a project for 2021 and 2022 which will develop specific goals for FBOs to achieve in support of the SDGs. To be successful will require committed partners, especially the UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative, and significant as yet unrealized funding. Organizations interested in joining this effort are encouraged to contact Joshua Basofin, Director of Climate Action for the Parliament.

*A forthcoming report by Parliament, UN Environment, United Religions Initiative, and the Bhumi Project will detail FBO progress toward the SDGs.*

Stay connected at [www.climatecommitments.org](http://www.climatecommitments.org)

# Crash Not Accident:

## UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS ON MY STREET

FEZANA supports SDG 3, 11 of the UN



*Aysha Ghadiali is an International Policy Advisor for the U.S. Forest Service. She is on the board steering committee for DC Families for Safe Streets and a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations.*

I advocate professionally for the positive role forests contribute to the environment and the economy. I've been fortunate to represent the US government at the United Nations (UN) and other multilateral bodies on forestry and environmental policy, including connections to the broad UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15—Life on Land, which aims to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and sustainably managed forests. But, on a crisp December evening in 2018, my work and my personal life intersected in a surprising way. I left my office in Washington, DC for my daily walk home and was hit by a car.

How did this happen? I crossed DC's 14<sup>th</sup> Street, NW on a marked pedestrian crosswalk without a traffic light, like I had many times. Three drivers stopped for me to cross. I started to walk when an SUV in the second lane illegally drove through the crosswalk and struck me. I was knocked down but stayed conscious. In the emergency room, I learned I had multiple fractures on my nose and my left cheek, which was indented. These facial fractures required surgery in order to chew and breathe normally. I also had four fractures in my left foot, and one fracture in my right fibula. I needed a wheelchair and could not eat solid food for a few months. I had stitches, puncture wounds and bruises. It hurt to wear glasses or simply turn my body. And I was lucky. If the driver that struck me had been speeding, or if I had been one step ahead on the street, my outcome could have been devastatingly different.

From my wheelchair, I started to read about traffic violence in the DC metro area. I learned about the Vision Zero movement to eliminate traffic fatalities worldwide, and about local advocacy groups pressuring the DC City Council and District Department of Transportation to design better streets, which protect drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists. I had been trained to think analytically about social and environmental issues, but I never questioned the frequency of car "accidents" as the price for free movement in our society. The volume of crashes in the United States shows how we have designed our roads for the movement of cars over all else. They are not "accidents" but crashes. They happen because infrastructure and urban planning decisions let simple human errors end in disaster. Fatal car crashes are preventable with political will, resources, and safe street designs which discourage speeding and safer turns. Before my incident, I heard about car crashes on the local news, watched them in our popular media, and seen them on our streets, but now I can't ignore the statistics in front of my injured face. After speaking on the role of forests at the UN for years, I started speaking from personal experience of the importance other global goals. Mainly, UN SDG 3—Good Health and Well-Being and goal 11—Sustainable Cities and Communities to halve the number of global road fatalities by 2030 and to improve access to safe, accessible, and sustainable transport systems for all.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 1.35 million people die annually in traffic crashes. It is an extraordinary number of sudden, violent, and preventable death. More than half are vulnerable road

users: pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists. While over 90% of traffic fatalities occur in low- and middle-income countries, commuting in the United States is more dangerous than in other high-income countries. From a 2016 WHO study, the U.S. has 12.4 road deaths per 100,000 people annually, or around 37,000 individuals killed per year. 2019 was the worst year in 30 years for pedestrian deaths specifically, with over 6,500 fatalities, even as overall traffic crash fatalities lowered nationally. These statistics do not include the millions of crash survivors, many whom have seriously altered lives. Furthermore, in DC and other cities, Black and brown people are disproportionately affected by traffic violence even though they do not represent the majority of the total population.

Internationally, India has the highest number of road deaths, a devastating 22.6 deaths per 100,000 people, including one high-profile death of a minister in 2014. Iran has 20.5 deaths and Pakistan shows 14.3 fatalities per 100,000 people each. Meanwhile, Canada reports 5.8, Australia records 5.6, and the United Kingdom clocks only 3.1 traffic deaths per 100,000 people. A myriad of factors determine how safe public streets are, including investment in safe street infrastructure, the size of vehicles, the propensity to drive over the speed limit, and distracted or impaired driving. These patterns can change. Oslo, the capital of Norway, has a population of over 670,000 people. After years of planning and political efforts, one driver died in a traffic crash in the entire city in 2019. In other words, Oslo eliminated all pedestrian and cyclist traffic deaths last year. The SDGs aim to accomplish what may seem impossible—a safe daily commute for all road users.

I am grateful for the support of my family, friends, and colleagues, including the support from the ZAMWI and ZAGNY communities. With their help I was able to heal and get back on my feet to shift from international affairs to the design of the streets outside my home. I joined DC Families for Safe Street, a network of road users that supports safe street design and provides peer support for survivors and grieving families. I testified at a hearing for a new Vision Zero Omnibus bill at City Hall. Good governance, whether at the UN, local city government, or your neighborhood advisory council moves slowly and requires outreach to a broad coalition of diverse stakeholders. It's natural to wonder if these long meetings make a difference. In July 2020, the DC Council passed the first reading of a comprehensive Vision Zero bill. It's a start, with many miles left to walk. Whether you are in Mumbai, Tehran, Toronto or DC, in a car, on a bike, scooter or foot, we all deserve to get there safely.

Find resources and support for families affected by traffic violence on Families for Safe Streets founding NYC chapter website: <https://www.transalt.org/familiesforsafestreets>. Take the Pledge—Say Crash not Accident: <https://crashnotaccident.com/>

*Photocredit: Earth Negotiations Bulletin, International Institute for Sustainable Development Reporting Services*

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ZOROASTRIAN STUDIES**

The North American Mobeds Council (NAMC) has announced their resolution to establish an educational arm of NAMC, “North American Institute of Zoroastrian Studies,” that shall have two tracks: (1) To train and ordain Mobeds to serve the North American community, and (2) To teach Zoroastrianism at an academic level. Organizationally, an Advisory Board shall be set up consisting of Senior Mobeds, academics and respected community members to manage the affairs of the Institute. NAMC Vice President Er. Tehemton Mirza has been tasked by NAMC to set up the organization, create a curriculum and manage its operations.

This is an important milestone for Zoroastrians in North America, marking our coming of age and taking our rightful place as an established religion, among others, in North America. Gratitude to Rohinton Rivetna for his vision and inspiration and to NAMC -- President Er. Arda-e-viraf Minocherhomjee, for diligently pursuing it to fruition.

For information contact Vice President Er. Tehemton Mirza at [tmirza@execulink.com](mailto:tmirza@execulink.com), [www.namcmobeds.org](http://www.namcmobeds.org)

# SLOW AND STEADY: ACHIEVING SUSTAINABILITY ONE DROP OF YOGURT AT A TIME

If we are going to try and reach the Sustainable Developmental goals of the United Nations by 2030, we are going to have to start thinking about everything differently. The manufacture and access to food is no different. When people talk about food sustainability, it always feels like advertising or lip service in order to make a sale. Commercial food

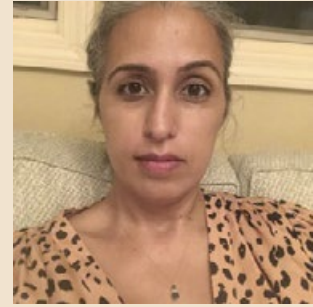


manufacturing and industrial farming, particularly in America, condone and accommodate terrifying amounts of waste. Agra-monologies and food conglomerates are squashing any competition that attempts to do better.

I started a yogurt company, named after my dad's glorious white moustache, as a way of showing that a small and sustainable business is not only possible, but essential to shifting some of the current wasteful ways that food is being manufactured in the world. Somehow, amidst a sea of Chobani and Fage and Danone, we are proving this point. Our success in the last few years has been entirely counterintuitive—by going smaller, more local and less efficient. We put a lot of stock in tradition and discipline, placing self-imposed limits on our production capacity to ensure sustainability. Our yogurt itself is made the way my family (and yours) has always made it: by hand, and slowly over the course of three days. We pair the yogurt with luscious simple fruit preserves that are true to the flavors we grew up with in Yazd. We save every drop of the whey to make drinks and popsicles. We operate our Brooklyn factory with a zero waste philosophy, not oblivious to profits, but also not ruled by them.

Too often in America, food production values efficiency and price points that do not accurately represent labor or ingredients that go into a product. It builds in, encourages and accommodates a lot of waste. For example, commercial Greek yogurt is produced by machines in hours and nearly 60% of it is lost in the straining process. This is what happens when food is divorced from the process and culture that birthed it.

Global modernity disconnects us from our past -- factory workers assemble goods on lines, farmers plant monocrops, processing plants mindlessly kill our meat, technology simultaneously shrinks and isolates us. Not only does this disconnect us from our past, it disconnects us from our food: we don't see the milk or the chicken or the earth that gave us this delicious bounty. We just see a commodity to work with. This leads to unsustainable waste.



HOMA DASHTAKI

*Homa Dashtaki was born in Iran with family roots in Mobarakeh, Yazd. She went on to study law at Cornell University and worked in NYC at one of the top 5 law firms in the country. After the 2009 financial crash, she accidentally found herself starting a yogurt company with her father, based on the recipes her family was using for generations. After three months of business in California, The White Moustache was asked to shut down or be threatened with a \$10,000 fine and jail time. Though wildly fond of jumpsuits, Ms. Dashtaki fought the law for two years to acquire permission to make her traditional family recipe. The law won. Bouncing the whole world over, from Portland to Tanzania, White Moustache Yogurt co. found a home in Brooklyn, New York, where New York State regulators worked with her to help set up her business.*





White Moustache intentionally limits production to reduce waste. Most commercial yogurt companies discard whey, the liquid extracted during our straining process. We cherish and celebrate this nutritious and delicious liquid gold as a brand new ingredient. We take time and money to educate customers about this easily neglected item. We talk about the obvious: whey is inherently part of the yogurt process and cannot be artificially reduced. It would be as illogical as throwing away egg whites, if the market only had a taste for egg yolks.

Our end goal is not just to sell a high quality sustainable yogurt, but to educate every day Americans on food alternatives, to show that we can be ecologically friendly, approachable, and in tune with traditional cultures. We also want to be an example to other food producers and to investors—to maybe not think so hard about cutting margins or scaling volume, but to shift their ambitions to curbing waste and reviving value in things like the labor our employees contribute to a craft product.

At White Moustache, we see ourselves as more of a food advocacy company than a traditional business. And we recognize that we are just a drop in the bucket of systemic change that needs to happen. International cooperation is the only way we can tackle the existential crisis of climate change and to achieve the goals of equity and sustainability. We do not have the privilege of prioritizing long-term growth over short-term gains. We must return to seasonal, local foods. We must be sustainable in the raising of our crops and animals. We must respect the labor it takes to produce the goods our lifestyle depends on. We must be inclusive of more people to participate in the solution. It does not entirely have to be in the name of altruism. Sustainability will ensure your business will be thriving many years from now.

It can be overwhelming when we, as individuals or even as small businesses, think about the Sustainable Developmental Goals of the UN. We think about Industry Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG #9) and Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG #12) on a daily basis, but we recognize that change will not occur



overnight and it is unreasonable to expect everyday folks to be concerned with such big ideas in their daily lives—but it is in our daily micro-decisions that I have hope that we will create a safer and more equitable planet. We are optimistic.

### **WHITE MOUSTACHE YOGURT**

White Moustache Yogurt Company started as a quiet family bonding activity for the Dashtaki family and has turned into a successful small business in New York State. The family's Zoroastrian ethos has paved the path for every decision the company has made. And White Moustache has become a celebrated advocate of sustainable food production and the prevention of food waste. In 2014 White Moustache voluntarily curbed its own capacity, committing to not increasing volume until all of their delicious yogurt whey (a by-product of the yogurt making process) found a market. With a waitlist of over 71 stores, White Moustache's commitment to the environment has led to it being a leader in education and innovation in the food waste community. It's efforts have led to the increase in value to the company for turning what is normally a waste production into profit, setting a whole new example of what a growing business could look like in America.

White Moustache sees its very existence as both a New York State miracle and a platform for reform.



### **FEZANA supports the UN Sustainable Developmental Goals**

FEZANA supports the SDG #3 and #11

## Jehaan Kotwal is the CEO of JFK Transporters Pvt. Ltd.

Jehaan strives, with passion and commitment, towards meeting U.N. SDG Goals 3 and 11.



Foundation for Liberal and Management Education in Pune was a new University when I had joined it. It was the first of its kind liberal education university in India and we had renowned professors from top institutes from around the world. It was reputed in the area of Holistic learning. I think that place truly changed me and made me the person I am today. The then President Parag Shah (my mentor) and the professors, were kind enough to let us experiment with new business ventures and that's where my first business started. It was a restaurant by the name of Joe's Café, Pune, in 2009.



My two best friends and I invested around 6k Rs at the time, serving Maggi and Sandwiches. It was truly a unique experience. It grew into a 15-member multi-chain Cafe in 3 years, while we were studying. I would learn about marketing, and finance etc. from my professors and use the same in our business. The beauty of studying and practising made the learnings far more impactful. I learnt the importance of creating "value" for our customers, to be able to take feedback positively during innovation and to be humble no matter who you serve, and always remember to be kind whenever you get the chance.

My father was a truck driver and he had 10 trucks and one decent sized customer when I joined, in 2013. I am now based in Bombay, but my head office is in Pune. I wanted to build a company that changes the way transport in India is looked at that creates value, economic and social, not only for its customers but for our country. I haven't met anyone who told me that it's possible to have a thousand vehicles ethically in India. Which is why we haven't reached the target yet. Some of the obstacles are the expectations of having to bribe officials for contracts, overloading, underpaying drivers, not paying taxes and breaking transport laws like 90% of our industry does. It is very tough to remain ethical as one has to put in thrice the time and effort. Being a Zoroastrian priest, I am very proud of our values that we uphold. It's something that I cannot compromise on. It may take us three times the time to reach the 1000 vehicles mark but I would rather make that sacrifice than sacrifice on my values.

We used to have at least 3-4 accidents every year. That was not



something that I was proud of and I knew that the cultural shift that I had to make had to become ingrained in our company, so much so that the team had to believe that safety was the foundation on becoming the best Transporter in India. Now, I am still not proud, as we had one accident in the last two years with over 111 of our current number of vehicles. I believe in paying the right salaries, 30% higher, not comparing myself to my competitors and seeing how we can give all our team members the right security. We provide insurance and education for their girl child; we have driver owner schemes which makes them owners after a few years, and financial freedom. I do think safety comes at a business cost but in the long run it is always beneficial.

Unfortunately, many truckers in India don't treat truck drivers as a part of their team. They are treated as disposable labour and not given any kind of support especially in times of crisis. During the covid-19 pandemic, 80% of India's truck drivers left the trucks and went home, as most of those truck operators never took care of them or secured them in anyway. For us it was quite the opposite. We had over 90% of our drivers remain with us (we had provided food, shelter and all the necessities needed to be safe). As everything was locked, we kept them on our payroll even though none of them was working and the industry never pays for not working. We do what we can with the little that we have in giving girl's education. We have partnerships with NGO's and our own foundation to give educational grants to the girls and other such schemes, such as working on a medical scheme that will now insure their family's health as well. We encourage these aspects in our company because that is the purpose of our organization.

We realised 80% of the accidents committed are due to human error. Out of this 60% was due to bad driving practises. The way we were able to reduce accidents was in correcting the driver's behaviour in real time in the local language (all the 12 regional languages in India) using AI. We started a foundation that, free of cost, can train drivers to drive correctly and guide them to be safer. As drivers in India don't go through any sort of formal training it is difficult to use manpower to hand hold them. That's where we think Technology will play a major role in the future.

The GPS we put on our trucks are expensive for the small fleet owners (drivers are the owners) which is about 80% of the 8 million vehicles in India. We have built a mobile app that does the same at zero additional cost. It gives the driver information: if he is over speeding, rest locations, sleep detection and warning on accident prone areas. We also give rewards, like a truck to the safest driver, free insurance, etc. The vision is that no one should die in road accidents. As we have the technology, we are giving it for free to the country in the hope that even if we can

save one life it would all be worth it. If our technology is used in every truck in India, we can potentially save over 200 lives a day and that is something that I look forward to doing. We received an award from the Ministry of Road Transportation and Highways, and the Mahindra group, for having the best driver in India, Mirzan, as well as for winning the youth transporter of the year.

The biggest reason I joined the family business was that I wanted to create a larger impact by empowering people. This is why I am a part of the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce as well. The hope is to give employment to as many people as possible, currently 250. As we grow, we aim to bring more people out of poverty, to create more value for society and make this world a better place. We fight the good fight and work hard with a good mind.

JFK Transporters Pvt. Ltd.  
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# CREATING A GENDER-BALANCED WORKPLACE IN PAKISTAN



## FEZANA supports SDG #5, #11 of the UN

*Shirin Mehri (Karachi, Pakistan) – Shirin's passion for an equitable educational and social landscape continues to be evident in her professional and volunteer work. After successfully completing projects in community development in UAE, Tanzania, Azerbaijan and the US, Shirin is serving as Program Manager, Ethics & Governance at the Pakistan Business Council. She holds a Master's degree in Entrepreneurial Leadership from Babson College and an undergraduate degree in Economics & Finance from SUNY Plattsburgh.*

**G**ender equality, as it relates to a work environment, means that men and women are hired at the same rate, paid equally for equal work, and promoted at the same rate.

There is a huge, untapped pool of talent if gender diversity isn't maintained at workplace. Gender diversity brings diversity of thought which results in better decision making. It brings competitive advantage because a diverse board is better positioned to thrive in today's global economy where the pace of change is rapid and accelerating. Advancing women to positions of leadership is smart business.

A 2017 study by The Pakistan Business Council's (PBC) Centre of Excellence in Responsible Business (CERB) found that women represent less than 20 percent of the workforce of 90 percent of the surveyed PBC member firms. Although this is higher than the national average of less than 10 percent women in the formal, private sector workforce, in most cases, women continue to be underrepresented in formal employment and earn less than men for equivalent work. Pakistan's private sector has a critical role to play in ensuring that women have access to more and better jobs.

Female leadership is not a "nice-to-have." It's a must-have for companies to survive and thrive. Today's global problems require leaders that have diverse skill sets and innovation that can only come from diverse ideas and players. Women bring the skills, different perspectives and structural and cultural difference to drive effective solutions. Female leaders change the way global solutions are forged. Having female leaders in positions of influence to serve as role models is not only critical to the career advancement of women, but stands to generate broader societal impacts on pay equity, changing workplace policies in ways that benefit both men and women, and attracting a more diverse workforce.

A growing number of forward-looking Pakistani companies have recognized the business case for gender diversity, even in sectors considered non-traditional for women. One of the ways in which companies are achieving this is through equal opportunity recruitment practices. These practices enable recruiters and hiring managers to limit discrimination and bias and ensure equality of opportunity at every stage of the recruitment process, from developing job descriptions and advertisements to shortlisting and interviewing candidates.

Research shows that several interlinked demand and supply-side factors compound Pakistan's low representation of women in and continues to keep women out of the workforce. Demand-side factors include employers' bias against hiring women and lack of workplace benefits and opportunities for women, whereas supply-side factors include traditional gender roles, women's household responsibilities, including time spent on unpaid care, as well as mobility constraints and safety issues. Research from the McKinsey Global Institute found that globally, women are three times more likely than men to do unpaid care work, however, in South Asia, including in India and Pakistan, women perform 10 times more unpaid care work than men, which prevents women from participating fully in paid work.

Over the past year I have led the project on family friendly workplaces at the Pakistan Business Council. This encompassed of a Peer-Learning Collaboration and a Landscape Analysis to gain a better understanding of the above policies in the private sector in Pakistan. For the Peer-Learning Collaboration, 14 Pakistani companies and

Pakistan-based multinational companies agreed to support working parents in finding a greater balance between work and family responsibilities and to implement family-friendly policies such as paternity leave, breastfeeding support, and employer-supported childcare. The Landscape analysis looked at both the demand and supply-side factors that contribute to the availability and implementation of family-friendly workplace policies.

Companies had a chance to attend webinars on different themes, participated in monthly group calls and had access to various resources, such as a monthly bulletin on family-friendly policies and childcare prepared specifically for the companies. Above all, the partnership served as a safe forum for employers from different industries to learn from each other, share resources and advance their family-friendly programs and policies in a supportive environment. The peer-learning collaboration was the first of its kind in family-friendly workplaces in Pakistan.

According to the World Bank Group, women’s participation rate has almost doubled in 22 years (1992-2014) but the increase isn’t happening fast enough and with much of our population in the youth category, we need to rapidly take measures to address gaps in women’s work status to achieve our goal.

Pakistan needs its women to enter the workforce and thrive in public and economic life. Investment in human capital, gender-sensitive policies and transforming social norms can change the status of women’s economic participation and put the country in the direction of growth and prosperity.

Without increasing women’s participation, Pakistan cannot meet its development targets or reasonably expect to become a competitive state and society in the 21st century.



## EMPOWERING WOMEN TO STAY IN THE WORKFORCE: MATERNITY LEAVE and SUPPORTING RETURN TO WORKPLACE



**FEZANA supports the SDG 5 and 10 of the UN**

Becoming a mother was a pivoting point in my life. For me the meaning of life instantly changed, to pursue a life whereby I am able to leave a legacy for my children to be proud of. With that vision came the challenge of balancing the combination of my pre-delivery life (work, social, community, health and wellbeing aspects) and post-delivery life (parenthood, family aspects).



o f

*Ferzeen Dadabhoy is a proud mother of 2 young kids; almost 2yr old girl and 5yr old boy. She is an analyst by profession at a not for profit health insurance company. Her passion lies in giving back to the community in the way of fundraising and spreading awareness on various charitable organisations such as Hagar, UNICEF, Kids Can, Foster Care among others. She enjoys spending time with her kids and enjoys discussions on sustainable environmental initiatives and women empowerment within workplaces.*



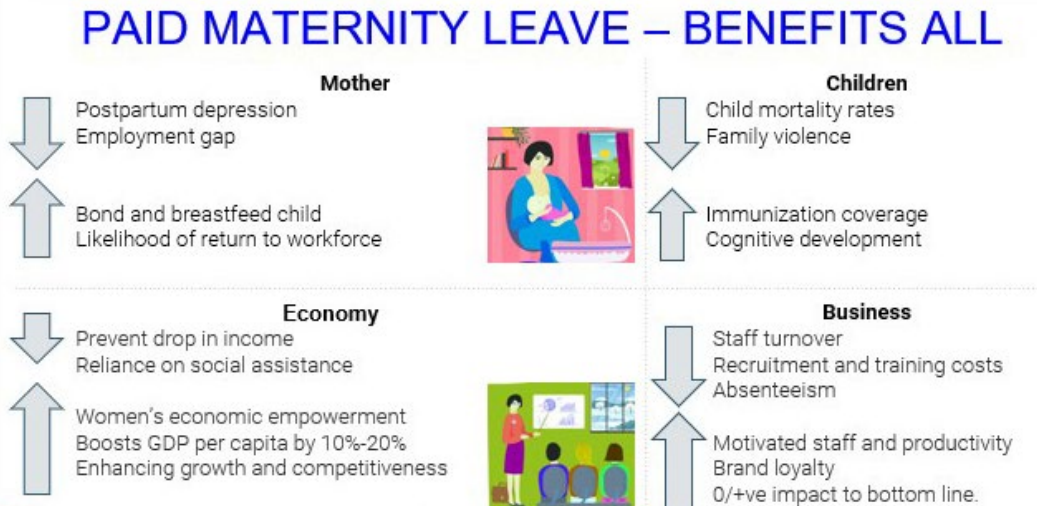
Becoming a parent in New Zealand (NZ), I was privileged to have the guilt free choice of taking time off for each of my kids when they were born. My job was secure for a year and the government supported us with paid parental leave for up-to 20 weeks for each of our kids.

The recent government led by Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister NZ, has increased its paid Parental leave to 26 weeks from July 2020 which is about 6 months, as strongly advocated by UNICEF. She led by example for women in the country, making her the first elected leader to take maternity leave. Her partner

took on the role of full-time parent after her return from leave. In an interview she defended her stance by saying “It is a woman’s decision about when they choose to have children, and it should not predetermine whether or not they are given a job or have job opportunities.” She was redefining the relationship between families and the workplace. With her choices, she not only normalized choices for women, but also empowered men who think about becoming full time career.

Other countries on research don’t show the same stats when it comes to parental leave, paid or unpaid.

Some countries are better and many below the average 18 weeks leave mark. The impact of paid parental leave is a positive one for all in the economy. As Henrietta Fore, director of Unicef once said “The gains of family-friendly policies far outweigh the cost of implementation: improved health outcomes, reductions in poverty, increased business productivity, and economic growth. Investing in our families is smart social policy and also smart economic policy.”



Reshaping how we adapt to a more supportive working culture is the key link to closing the loop of women empowerment in the workforce and ensuring that the 90% of women who decide to have families in their peak stages of the careers, can still have a strong foot in the workforce and return where they left off. This is essential to break the cycle of gender inequality.

UNICEF calls on governments and businesses to redesign policies and workplaces for the future. (Source – Unicef June 2019 article: Are the world’s richest countries family friendly?).

I see the policies between governments and businesses are like the front and back wheels of a car, they are both essential in the success of women in workforce. These strategies could be broken down into three-fold -

1. Empowering women during early stages of parenthood.
2. Supporting their successful return back to the workforce.
3. Accelerating their success.

Some actionable strategies in each of those categories–

1. Empowering women to have the choice during early stages of parenthood
  - ✓ Providing job protection while on maternity leave. This is key for both working parents.
  - ✓ Sufficient paid leave to all parents and guardians, in both the formal and informal economies. This includes paid maternity, paternity, parental leave and leave to care for sick young children. Employers can assist by ‘Topping up’ an employee’s pay during the period of Government-funded paid parental leave or by extending periods of employer-funded paid leave.



Cycle of gender inequality (Source - www.afl.org)

- ✓ Corporates could have intranet information portals as part of their toolkit to provide new and expectant parents clarity and transparency around various organization policies. These could be around parental leave, return to work policies, returning from leave notification requirements, employee rights and eligibility, annual leave calculations, being on leave and keeping in touch programs, early childhood education and care options and further information sources (government websites, external agencies etc.). Providing one point of information would be great as I felt I had to ask multiple managers, colleagues, HR team members to get varied responses. I was not aware that my workplace had certain return to work options available until after.

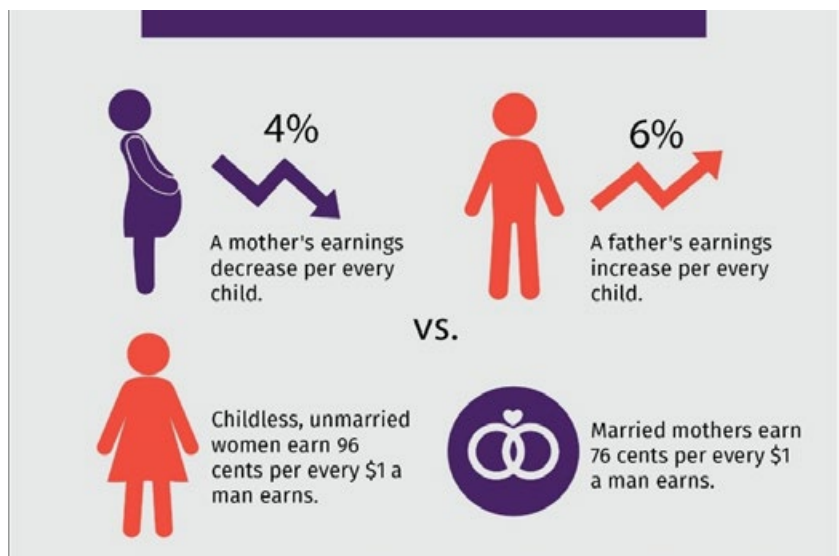
## 2. Supporting successful return back to the workforce

- ✓ Providing appropriate lactation facilities and breaks - Government and businesses need to provide support to mothers who wish to breastfeed after returning to work. My sister in law was advised to use the staff breakout area or the female bathroom when asked for space. Now under NZ law employers must provide appropriate breaks and facilities for women who want to breastfeed at work. NZ has also recently developed a 'Baby Friendly Workplace initiative', to educate both employees and employers about the legislation.
- ✓ Assure affordable quality childcare to all – This is clearly one of the big issues. I visited 8 daycares in 20km radius to find a childcare center that I was satisfied with. The cost of that daycare was equivalent to putting myself through my bachelor's degree. There are a lot of women who are working literally for nothing by the time they've paid for childcare. Many can't afford quality childcare services and end up quitting their jobs. Governments with the support of the private sector and donors should assure universal access to quality affordable childcare from the end of parental leave to children's entry into school. NZ provides 20 hours free childcare subsidy but after the child turns 3.
- ✓ Providing child benefits to help families provide for young children. NZ government since 2018 has approved a \$60NZD (equivalent to \$40 USD) weekly "best start" payment to all primary parents for a child's first year, and longer for lower income families. Governments should set minimum wages at levels that are adequate to support families.
- ✓ Corporates play a big role in successful return from maternity leave that is sustainable and long term. Establishing a robust return to work support infrastructure through: formal re-induction or re-orientation program, doing interviews on return and subsequently to learn what is working well and what needs to be changed. Implement a 'Stay in Touch' Program or a buddy system. These are programs that allow parents on leave to stay in contact through a buddy assigned on their projects, clients, and what's happening in the business. This can help alleviate the feeling of being 'disconnected' with the workplace and maintain levels of engagement to the workplace.
- ✓ Provide the options to work from home and flexible working hours. With impacts of COVID, working from home and flexi hours has become a new norm worldwide. As part of Telstra's 'All roles flex' initiative, some leaders at Telstra have an automated message included at the end of emails stating 'We work flexibly at Telstra. I am sending this message now because it suits me, but I don't expect that you will read, respond to or action it outside of regular hours.' This portrays the company ethos and the support they show for their employees.

When I returned from maternity leave, I transitioned back part time for 2 -3 days a week gradually increasing to fulltime hours. This helped while I established a new routine with 2 kids.

Flexible work practices have a number of benefits for workers and employers

alike, including increased efficiency; reduced absenteeism and turnover; reduced worker stress; increased job satisfaction; and increased capacity to attract and retain valued employees. Designing flexible roles which focus on output and results, as opposed to 'presenteeism' is being adopted by many organisations worldwide.



(source - Twitter #Empower\_Women)

### 3. Accelerating their contributions.

Eradicate motherhood penalty (Source: Motherhood penalty – Wikipedia): the systematic disadvantages in pay, perceived competence and benefits working mothers face in comparison to women without children. Specifically, women may suffer a per-child wage penalty, resulting in a pay gap between non-mothers and mothers that is larger than the gap between men and women. Mothers may also suffer biases against them of being less committed to their jobs, less dependable, and less authoritative than non-mothers. Thus, mothers may experience disadvantages in terms of hiring, pay, and daily work responsibilities. Research and surveys done by Bright Horizons' annual Modern Family Index found: 69% of working Americans say working moms are more likely to be passed up for a new job than other employees, 60% say career opportunities are given to less qualified employees instead of working moms who may be more skilled.

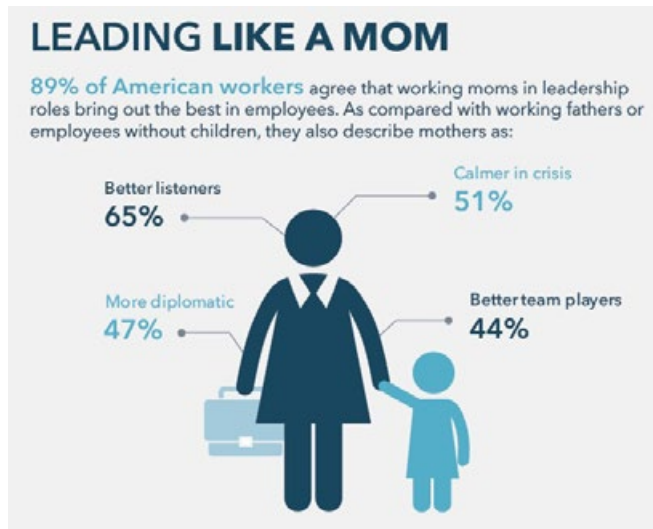
(<https://www.brighthouse.com/newsroom/modern-family-index-2018>)

Some great strategies with examples illustrated by the Australian Human Rights Commissions publication "Leading practices and strategies in the workplace" (Source <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/chapter-6-leading-practices-and-strategies-workplace>)

- ✓ Normalise working mothers being a part of a successful team and a successful individual in the workplace. Normalise having a family and ensure your team has a mix of staff through different stages of their lives.
- ✓ Normalise success of mothers in the workplace by leading from the top and train your managers to eliminate the perceived biases and maternity related discrimination either by them or by other colleagues. Ensure discrimination is not tolerated even under the disguise of concern and ensure your managers are trained to empower all of their staff regardless of family status.
- ✓ As an employer ensure mothers are also given equal pay and opportunities to progress based on their skills and experience. Give parents professional support and pathways to leadership. Promote moms into leadership positions so they are role models in the workplace, and give them the tools they need to succeed in both work and life. ANZ's Performance and Remuneration Policy provides guidance to line managers on how they should use their discretion to increase salaries so that women on Parental Leave do not fall behind on pay relative to their peers, as this is one of the main contributors to pay disparity between men and women.

An article published by Forbes states "Caregivers make the best leaders today, yet we're losing our best talent to caregiving! 89% of American workers think that working moms bring out the best in employees, and rate working moms as more diplomatic, better listeners, better team players and calmer in a crisis as compared to working dads and employees without children." Compassion, empathy, and resilience are some of the adjectives used by respondents to describe what women bring to the workforce. When we support mothers in the workplace and normalize caregiving for fathers, we *all* win.

So, let's close the link of women exiting the workforce, let's empower and support women to stay in the workforce and attain sustainability in employment and be their best selves regardless of their family status. We individually can also support these by lobbying for the change you want to see in our own countries, whether it be through the government, as a business owner employing more diversely, spreading the awareness of this subject amongst workplaces, talking to your employer about options or just supporting a mother in doing their best.



Forbes: *The Motherhood Penalty: Why We're Losing Our Best Talent To Caregiving*

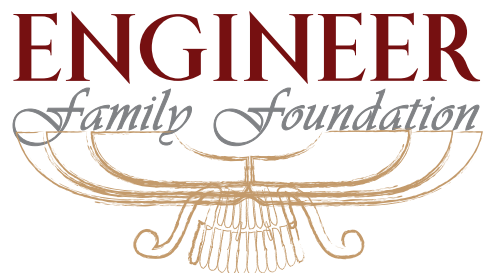


# ENGINEER FAMILY FOUNDATION

## *Impacting Lives Positively One at a Time*

Engineer Family Foundation (EFF) is a philanthropy minded charity institution that aims to make a difference in the lives of talented and aspiring individuals and those in need of assistance for basic human needs like food, clothing and shelter.

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[www.engineerfamilyfoundation.org](http://www.engineerfamilyfoundation.org)

GOOD THOUGHTS | GOOD WORDS | GOOD DEEDS

## SAM JOKHI'S UTHON WORK



### FEZANA Supports the SDG #3, #10, #11, #16 of the UN

Growing up in such a fantastic school district with a supportive family, I have learned how fortunate I am to be in the position I am in today. As a result, I have used this awareness to fuel my passion for community service and volunteering. UTHON has helped me discover one of the things I love to do--assisting those who are less fortunate than me. Of the four service communities I am a part of, I would say I have made the most impact on UTHON by elevating the club to new heights.

UTHON, a club dedicated to raising money for pediatric cancer, was holding a twelve-hour dance marathon and was offering volunteer hours to raise \$120 dollars and to attend the event. I jumped at this opportunity; following, I went to my religious community--ZAPANJ-- and told them about what I was doing. I ended up as the top student fundraiser that year with a little over \$1000, something which made me realize how supportive my community is.

When I first attended the event in 2018, I was left amazed. UTHON, a club that actually makes a difference in the real world, held a dance marathon to raise money for kids with cancer. The total amount was right around 30,000 dollars, a number that we would double when I got on the committee in my junior year.

To start the event, a girl who attended the district's middle school spoke to us. A recent survivor of cancer, Emily explained how much of a difference we were making and how grateful she is for our work. I was left shaken, and the impact that UTHON makes started to hit me.

Next, the dance marathon began. Dodgeball, a hypnotist, 3-on-3 basketball tournament, cupcake truck at 4 am, XBOX room, and yoga session were the main attractions and events. While I came in with the mindset that I will try to find a room to sleep in, I ended up enjoying myself for most of the 12 hours.

Afterwards, the adult and student leaders of the club approached me about being a part of the Leadership Planning Committee; they loved my fundraising ability and vibrant personality that I brought to my table. The people already in the club welcomed me with open arms, and we all became such close friends. Eliza Wilks--Chairman at the time-- and I had so much in common, especially our attention to detail, discipline, and hard-working mentality. Even after the big event in March, we still talked at school. Eliza now attends Washington & Lee, yet we keep in touch and update each other on what's going on at each person's school. During my junior year, I was leading the operations on how the actual event would go. Once again, I raised a little over \$1000 dollars, further cementing how amazing my family friends were to me. One problem we faced in 2018 was getting regular students to raise money and attend the big dance marathon. Using my voice, likability, and connections, I created a lot of excitement about UTHON and our event. My work led to the 2019 UTHON being the most attended event yet, while also doubling the fundraising total from 2018's \$30,000 to 2019's \$60,100.

*Sam Jokhi has been a Boy Scouts from 2013 rising to Eagle Scout in 2019 and held leadership position for 5 years including Patrol leader. He organized and held four basketball clinics for children in the community to promote physical fitness and a healthy lifestyle. Played Varsity Soccer (Junior and Senior year) on a team that went to the State Semifinal (Junior year) Played on a team that won the ChesMont league title (Senior year) He was on the UTHON Leadership Committee in his Junior and Senior years, co-chairman in his senior year, raised over \$3,500 for Four Diamonds, an organization that helps fund cancer research and assists in paying patients' bills*

While I was simply one of the leaders, I think the results during my first official year with the club speak for themselves. As a result of my contributions, I was named UTHON Co-Chairman for the 2019-2020 school year. To boost my accomplishments a little more, UTHON received the most interest it has ever had regarding students wanting to become planning committee members. These experiences with UTHON have made me a more selfless person, one who is motivated to help others no matter the circumstances. Although our event for 2020 was cancelled due to COVID-19, our work did not go disregarded, as we raised over \$65,000, and we all agree that it would have been much more if the event was held.

Lastly, I now know the people who will support me in my life endeavors, especially my caring family members. Along with giving me some of my best friends, UTHON has shown me the wonders of activism and community. When I learned that I had to raise 240 dollars, I wondered where I would get that money. I spoke to my parents and while they said they would donate to my donor page, they also said I should contact ZAPANJ. Even though religious class is held an hour and a half away from our house, my parents have emphasized the importance of regularly attending these classes throughout my lifetime. My parents' teachings ultimately paid great dividends. When I turned to ZAPANJ to see if members could help me and donate to my donor page, they responded in a way I never thought was possible. I asked the president to send out an email to the whole community, and I also made an announcement at the start of a class when the whole group assembles about how I'm raising money for pediatric cancer. After thanking every person who donated, I reflected on how my religious community was so willing to support my endeavors. UTHON has given me such a rich experience, and I was truly honored to be the Co-Chairman of the club this past year. The work we do goes in line with Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, with regards to equality and peace. This connection shows the worldwide impact that my volunteering has done.

### *APARTMENT FOR RENT IN MUMBAI*

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*It is located in a very well maintained Parsi Colony- A. H. Wadia Baug – in the Parel / Lalbaug area, equidistant between South Mumbai & Bandra & northern suburbs. It is also close to the expanding Lower Parel area with its boutique shops restaurants!*

*The apartment has AC in the living & bedrooms, a fully equipped kitchen and bathroom with shower & washing machine.*

*Strictly – No pets and No smoking!!*

*For bookings and further details please contact: -- DAISY and CAWAS ANTIA*

*TEL : - 410-879-4614*

*E MAIL : -- cawasma@gmail.com*

# The UN's Unsustainable Development Goals

**Poverty** is not a new issue and ending it is not a new cause. In his January 1949 inaugural address, President Harry Truman launched the U.S. foreign aid program, then called Point Four, to eliminate poverty and thereby block the spread of communism.

In 1959, the end of my senior year of college, I committed my life to that cause. I was 22 and a conservative Young Republican headed for business school. I believed that taking the secrets of America's economic success to the world's poor countries would solve the poverty problem. I would have enthusiastically endorsed the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as many do today.

Much of my career has tracked the subsequent history of the badly failed global effort to end human deprivation. I lived and worked for 21 of my now 83 years [as of July 30, 2020] as a member of the foreign aid establishment in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Those years included my service as a Ford Foundation advisor to the heads of the world's leading population programs and later with the U.S. Agency for International Development as a senior advisor to the U.S. aid missions in Asia and the Pacific Islands. Based on what I have learned, I believe the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals need serious revision.

The United Nations launched its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000. The SDGs followed in 2019 with 17 targets to be met by 2030. Many of the goals are laudable and obvious, for example "Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture." And "Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages."

But to reach its goals, the SDGs repeatedly call for "inclusive and sustainable economic growth." They call for foreign direct investment. They call for "doubling the least developed countries... share of global exports by 2020." And they call on developed countries to fulfill commitments of 0.7 percent of gross national income for official development assistance... to developing countries." These are the same policies that bear major responsibility for deepening the suffering the SDGs call on the world to end. Continued economic growth, which economists measure by Gross Domestic Product (GDP), is simply not sustainable on a finite Earth. And the overall consequence of development assistance has been to strip the poor of control of their means of living. That is why I cannot endorse or recommend the SDGs as currently presented.

The 2019 UN document launching the SDGs explicitly acknowledged the failure to achieve the earlier MDGs. It did not mention, however, that the failure had a more than 70-year history. It made no effort to identify and correct the causes of the environmental destruction, concentration of wealth and power, deadly conflict, and loss of institutional credibility that has characterized those years.

The Global Footprint Network estimates that total human consumption is already 1.7 times what Earth can sustain. Yet a substantial majority of the world's people experience daily desperation attempting—and often failing—to meet essential basic needs. It is now evident that the primary beneficiaries of a growing GDP are the world's 26 billionaires who now control more financial wealth than the poorest half of



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This is a written by invitation to *FEZANA Journal*.

humanity, 3.8 billion people.

The economic theories in vogue since shortly after WWII focus on growing consumption, profits, and financial assets without regard to what is consumed by whom for what purpose, who benefits from the profits, or who owns the assets. Known as neoliberal economics, these theories build from false assumptions to produce a flawed ideology that poses as a science to serve the short-term financial interests of billionaires. A theologian might describe neoliberal economics as a religion devoted to money worship and the promotion of the mortal sins of greed and gluttony.

Neoliberal economics embraces GDP as its defining indicator of economic performance. Economic activity counts as a contribution to GDP only if it involves a market transaction, i.e., an exchange of money. War, obsessive materialism, planned obsolescence, and auto dependent infrastructure all grow GDP. But if you and your neighbor each care for your own children and voluntarily help each other out from time to time you contribute nothing. If, however, you charge one another fees for your services then you both contribute to GDP. For most of the human experience, we have lived and organized as tribal and village communities in which we together harvested our own food and water, cared for and educated our own children, and freely exchanged labor to build our homes and care for our fields. Many of us enjoyed rich cultures, lived healthy lives, and experienced greater joy than many people do today. But by the test of GDP, we lived in absolute poverty.

By the logic of GDP, a person becomes economically productive when they separate from their land, family, and community to labor far away from home as agricultural or sweatshop workers stripped of rights, love, and joy to be paid pennies a day by a transnational corporation to produce products for sale to people in distant places. As the process we call economic development unfolds, people suffer. Corporations flourish. And the UN celebrates development's success in lifting people from "absolute poverty" to an income of a \$1.25 or more a day.

The role of debt in advancing this debacle bears special attention. Foreign aid has long featured loans made in foreign currencies to poor countries to facilitate their buying foreign goods and hiring foreign contractors. The earliest such loans supported construction of infrastructure to open farmlands, forests, and minerals to foreign investment, thereby accelerating foreign control and exploitation. The loans were to be repaid in foreign currencies, which could only be earned by selling domestic resources or the products of domestic labor to foreigners who had the money to buy them.

As debts grew, more foreign money was needed to finance repayment of the previous foreign debt and to provide services to the poor who had been stripped of access to their traditional means of living. All the while, the so-called development process shifted ever more control from the poor to the rich. When it became evident that recipient countries had no means to repay their outstanding loans, the IMF and World Bank stepped in to impose "structural adjustment" policies to further facilitate foreign ownership and use domestic resources and labor to produce goods for export to foreign consumers.

By the logic of neoliberal economics, if a country's people are starving, the answer is to export farm products to get money to import food. Transnational corporations serve as middlemen in both directions. GDP and corporate profits grow. A few local people benefit. Most people struggle to survive.

Debt is an age-old strategy by which the rich consolidate ever more power over the poor: Lure them into debts they can never repay and thereby reduce them to perpetual indentured servitude. In the United States we see this process playing out in ever-growing consumer, student, and medical debt. Many of the hapless debtors can never hope to repay their debts with the low-wage jobs available to them.

Might people living in more traditional ways have benefited from support from richer countries? Certainly. But only if assistance was provided in ways that secured their control of their means of living, built their resilience and that of the resources that sustained them, did not burden them with debt, and did not unleash a human population explosion.

If we had from the beginning followed SDG guidelines for combining basic healthcare and family planning services we might have achieved major improvements in wellbeing while maintaining population stability. That remains a good idea. The call of the SDGs for universal access to communications technologies can be highly beneficial, but only if used to facilitate mutual learning to manage global interdependence through mutual caring and sharing rather than to promote consumerism, corporate profits, and social conflict.

To move forward to a world of inclusive and sustainable wellbeing, we will need to:

- Replace GDP with indicators of wellbeing,
- Achieve an equitable distribution in the ownership of essential assets,
- Break up global corporate monopolies,
- Root power in local communities that are self-reliant in meeting most of their basic needs with their own labor and other local resources, and
- Relieve ourselves and Earth of the burdens imposed by war, advertising, financial speculation,

consumerism, unpayable debts, planned obsolescence, human population growth, and an auto-dependent infrastructure.

GDP and corporate profits will decline as the wellbeing of people and Earth grows.

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The SDGs merit support only if revised to call out economic growth, foreign debt and investment, and exports from the poor to the rich for what they are—diversions from an essential commitment to inclusive and sustainable wellbeing. To endorse the UN SDGs as currently presented is to endorse the same policies that have brought unconscionable harm to people and Earth since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The SDGs valid priorities can be achieved only if the contradictions are eliminated and the reasons for development’s monumental failure are clearly and explicitly acknowledged and addressed. Humanity faces a defining and mutually exclusive ethical choice between securing the wellbeing of people and Earth or growing GDP and the financial assets of the already obscenely rich. Life must come before money.

i <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/education/presidential-inquiries/challenge-international-aid>

ii <https://research.un.org/en/docs/dev/2000-2015>

iii <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

iv [https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A\\_RES\\_70\\_1\\_E.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf).

v Ibid. For sustained or sustainable economic growth see Introduction paragraphs 9, 13, 21, & 27, and Goal 8 For direct investment see goal 10.b. For exports see goal 17.11. For development assistance see goal 17.2.

vi <https://www.footprintnetwork.org/living-planet-report/>

vii <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/jan/21/world-26-richest-people-own-as-much-as-poorest-50-percent-oxfam-report>

**(cont from pg 24)**

## ON THE STREET WHERE YOU LIVE

On August 30th Meher Rusi Pavri organized a spectacular pop up concert in front of her house in London, Ontario. The trio entertained neighbours and community for an hour and a half with familiar songs from the Sound of Music, The Lion King, My Fair Lady, and others.

Meher is a soprano singer and a graduate of the University of Western Ontario. School of Music. She enjoys performing in opera, musical theatre, film and television and is most passionate about new works.

In September she would have been part of the world premiere of a new production “Mahabharata” at the famous Shaw festival . Sadly this had to be postponed to 2021 due to Covid 19.

Meher is the proud daughter of Dr Daisy and Rusi Pavri of London, Ontario.

*Submitted by Guloo Austin , London, Ontario, Canada*





# “GETTING TO KNOW THE MAN BEHIND IT ALL”



In an interview with Khursheed Navder, President, ZAGNY

**ARZAN SAM WADIA**  
**The Youngest FEZANA President**  
**Elected JUNE 20<sup>th</sup> 2020**

**After** the FEZANA AGM in June, Dolly Dastoor asked me to interview Arzan Sam Wadia, our incoming FEZANA President. Having known and worked closely with Arzan for over a decade at ZAGNY, I felt that while all of us know him based on the work he has done for our community, I did not know much about his earlier days and put together some personal questions that I was sure would be of interest to our readers as well.

So folks, this interview with Arzan Sam Wadia, is “Getting to Know the Man Behind it All” a bit better.

**Q: What were your family summer vacations all about?**

A: My younger sister, Mehernaaz and I, spent our summer vacations at my Mamaiji’s (maternal grandmother) ancestral farm in Anklaach, a village in the interior of Valsad. On my mom’s side, she had eight Mamas (uncles) and two Masis aunts) —pretty much like a cricket team. Throughout my childhood, we spent each May at the farm for our annual reunion, where anywhere between 20 to 50 people—three to four generations—would gather. Those were joyous times, we slept in the open under a thatched roof, meals were crazy extravaganzas where we ate all we wanted, we swam in a nearby river, and did all sorts of crazy things. Our summers at the farm were a fantastic break from our lives in Bombay.

**Q: What was it like growing up in a Parsi colony? Were there times when you wished for a change?**

A: Honestly, no. Growing up in a Parsi colony meant everyone around me was Parsi. So, throughout my youth and until my first or second year of college, the concept of having friends or family who had non-Zoroastrian parents, didn’t exist. For me, the understanding of being a Parsi was that both parents were Parsis—full stop. And then, once in college, I learned that if the father is a Parsi, then the kids can have a navjote; but, if the mother is a Parsi and the father is not, then it is not possible. While living in India, that was my worldview. I was a traditionalist. Not by choice, but by ignorance of any alternatives.

**Q: Were you always interested in coming to the US for higher studies? How did you end up in New York City?**

A: Growing up in India, I was always fascinated by New York City and developed a compulsion to go there—not the US, but, specifically NYC. In 1998, I enrolled in Pratt for graduate studies in Architecture and Urban Design. On admission and orientation day, I stood in line and heard someone from the Bursar's office call a Parsi name, Burzin Contractor. As he neared me, I said, "Boss, *ek minute ubho reh.*" in Gujarati. (wait here for a minute) He freaked out, not expecting anyone there to speak Gujarati. We soon became exceptionally good friends. He was my only Parsi connection for the next 10 years or so. He introduced me to his relatives, the Hirjibehedins. Poursu Aunty and Farokh Uncle, Homi Pappa, Piloos Granny, and Cyrus, who embraced me completely and became my New York Parsi family.

**Q: When and what led to the creation of the Parsi Khabar website?**

A: Since moving to NYC in 1998, I used to find many interesting Parsi articles online, which I would email to a small group of friends and family. Every once in a while, my mom would ask me to resend something previously sent—of course, I could not locate it. So, in 2004, I set up a website where I posted my favorite articles and also wrote and sent emails to my subscribers related to religious and ethnic issues that I thought faced our community. As I found myself drawn to the many positive aspects of our community, I noticed my worldview of our community and religion was changing. I was never orthodox. My worldview has evolved to where I now consider myself as a left-leaning, centrist traditionalist. You might say that Parsi Khabar is my online persona.

**Q: How and when did you start coming to ZAGNY?**

A: In 2010, I had a chance meeting with Vispi and Sheroo Kanga, at a common friend's New Jersey home when they told me they were on the ZAGNY Board and asked if I could help with the ZAGNY website. On the first Sunday in May, I met the ZAGNY Board at the Dar-E-Mehr. Gev Nentin, you, Behroze Dutia, Ferzin Patel, Nina Mistry, and others were there. We discussed and launched the new website just prior to the Parsi New Year function held that August. Around that time, I was asked to join the Board to fill a vacancy. Then, the NAZC Congress happened and I got completely sucked into doing stuff. People had faith in what I was doing and gave me considerable freedom to help enhance ZAGNY's role. I had found my calling in a way.

During my early years with ZAGNY, I saw that there can be Zoroastrians and a Zarathusti community, which includes non-Zoroastrian spouses who are equally a part of the community. Seeing friends like Shailendra Dusaj, Jasely Dukandar, Rajan Patel, and Mrinalini Nair completely immersed in volunteering their time and being involved with ZAGNY was mind-blowing. Then, being involved with the Congress and watching adults and kids working so hard was fantastic. I remember that in 2012, when my parents came for the Congress, they saw this too. It was eye-opening for them to experience a totally different worldview than what they were used to in India; for example, the stance about not considering kids who are born to Zarathusti women married outside the faith is wrong.

**Q: You have experienced some difficult times; can you discuss them and how you used them and your association with ZAGNY/FEZANA to clarify your life's purpose?**

A: I was married in 2006, separated in 2017, and divorced in 2019. Throughout this difficult period, I invested considerable emotional capital attempting to fix the unfixable. Tremendous periods of darkness, angst, self-recrimination, and hope tore at me. These were the most difficult years of my life. Many times, I convinced myself there was no "up," just "down." Then, at some point, ZAGNY (and later FEZANA) and its community activities began to fill my life with purpose and meaning. I think I gravitated more towards ZAGNY because I had all this free time in my personal life and nothing else to do. I could have spent it doing anything else, but I just chose my community because I was welcomed and embraced by the ZAGNY family as though they had known me forever. People like Ferzin Patel, the Hirjibehedins, Davers, Clubwalas, Kangas and Bansals became my beloved family, unselfishly giving their solace and support, yet never being judgmental.



Then, my world crashed again when my mom died. It was extremely sudden. I got the news at 3 PM and was on the 8PM nonstop to Mumbai. Life was a blur. After a fortnight I returned to New York in an emotional stupor. Ferzin Patel suggested I seek help from a mental health professional, which gratefully, I did. Together, these events provided the catalyst to refocus my life and provide the clarity needed to end what was not working in my life and move on. I realized that it was not all my doing and I did not need to be so hard on myself. I am profoundly grateful for the unswerving support I received from my sister Mehernaaz, Ferzin, and the ZAGNY family during my tribulations. I can never repay them, but have committed to pay it forward by giving back to my community.

**Q: You mentioned that seeing how Zoroastrians with their non-Zoroastrian spouses working alongside in service to their ZAGNY community was an eye-opener. Do you feel that if the Parsis in India saw this harmony their viewpoint could change?**

A: Yes. In India, some of the concerns are unfounded. One of the things that concerns folks in India is that non-Zoroastrian spouses are going to become Zoroastrian and they will take everything away. While here, I found that non-Zoroastrian spouses are extremely comfortable in their own faith and beliefs. They are not saying that they want to become Zoroastrians. Here, the kids have the opportunity to learn the religion of each parent and, when older, make their own decisions. From what I have seen in India during the last 10 years, there have been marked changes from what people believed and practiced in my generation. For example, there are more and more people living outside the baugs and families where one parent is not Zoroastrian. I believe people's worldviews are changing and are becoming more tolerant and accepting.

**Q: What is mind-boggling for a lot of us is, “How do you do all that you do?”**

A: I have the luxury of being the master of my own time. I am not regulated by someone else's timetable—that is a big plus. If you enjoy doing something, you will find the time to do it. You know, I joke about myself that I wish that I could enjoy going to the gym, because then I would find the time to do it. Because I don't enjoy it, I find every excuse in the world not to do it. But with this ZAGNY and FEZANA work, I think there is also a certain amount of self-validation in the earlier years.

I was also lucky that I found myself just to be in the right place at the right time. For example, with Return-to-Roots program, I have been involved right from the start and have helped shape that program to be where it is going. I think it helps that I am in New York City, the greatest city in the world, in all senses. And, I am at ZAGNY where we all have our differences of opinions and are not one homogenous mass where everybody blindly follows in one direction. However, the big thing is tolerance. When we were building our new Dar-E-Mehr, we had all of these ideological differences, but we sat down and resolved them. Nobody took it personally. That is the way every community should be.

I am acutely aware of being at the receiving end of a unique set of circumstances throughout my life, for which I am profoundly grateful. I could have landed in any other city to study. I was admitted to a school in London that was much, much better than Pratt. But, I did not want to go to London. I landed in NYC. Then I became associated with ZAGNY, rather than some other association. I think all things happen for a reason. I am a big believer in destiny and “whatever is meant to happen is meant to happen.” Over the years, I have slowly begun to learn that I should stress, agonize, and worry less daily. I think I was extremely fortunate that I was at ZAGNY, not only as a regular member, but by being able to know the people, work closely with them, spend days and hours and weeks on phone calls with them, and just to see them in action. I am not sure that everybody is lucky enough to have that kind of opportunity. I find myself lucky and, yeah, it is one of those blessings in life.

**KPN: And we in turn are so glad that things worked out the way they did and we indeed are lucky and blessed to have you here in our ZAGNY family. Thanks for being the helpful, humble person that you are and for all that you have done and continue to do for ZAGNY, FEZANA, and our amazing Zoroastrian community-at-large.**



## NERGIS MAVALVALA, THE CURTIS AND KATHLEEN MARBLE PROFESSOR OF ASTROPHYSICS, HAS BEEN NAMED THE NEW DEAN OF SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AT THE MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL OF TECHNOLOGY (MIT)

Astrophysicist Nergis Mavalvala has been named the new dean of MIT's School of Science, effective Sept. 1, the first woman to serve as dean in the school of Science. Mavalvala is renowned for her pioneering

work in gravitational-wave detection, which she conducted as a leading member of Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO). Since 2015, she has been the associate head of the Department of Physics.

Born in 1968, in Lahore, Pakistan, she grew up in Karachi, a tinkerer by nature, she often got up to her elbows in grease as she absorbed herself in the mechanics of bike repair. In school, she gravitated to math and physics early on, and her parents, strong advocates of both their daughters' education, encouraged her to apply to college overseas.

At Wellesley College, she earned a bachelor's degree in physics and astronomy, before moving to MIT in 1990, where she obtained a PhD in physics under the supervision Rainier Weiss, now professor emeritus of physics who was working out how to physically realize his idea of an interferometer to detect gravitational waves — minute disturbances rippling out through space from cataclysmic events millions to billions of light years away.

After obtaining her PhD at MIT, she went as a post doc to Caltech in 1997, studying the cosmic microwave background. In 2000, she joined as a staff scientist at the LIGO Laboratory, where researchers were collaborating with Weiss' group at MIT to build LIGO's detectors. After two years with the Caltech team she went back to MIT, joining the faculty in 2002 as assistant professor of physics. Since then, she has helped to build up the MIT LIGO group, where she has worked to design and improve different parts of the interferometers.

Mavalvala who had been working on the gravitational waves since 1991, was among the team of scientists and who, for the first time, observed ripples in the fabric of spacetime called gravitational waves which was announced to the public on 11 February 2016. The detection confirmed a major prediction of Albert Einstein's 1915 general theory of relativity.

Mavalvala is a recipient of numerous honors and awards, including in 2010 the MacArthur Fellowship, the National Organization of Gay and Lesbian Scientists and Technical Professionals recognized her as the LGBTQ+ Scientist of the year in 2014, and in 2015 she was awarded the Special Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics, as part of the LIGO team. In 2017, she was elected to the National Academy of Sciences. That same year, the Carnegie Corporation of New York recognized Mavalvala as a Great Immigrant honoree. She is also the first recipient of the Lahore Technology Award, given by the Information Technology University, a public university in Pakistan.

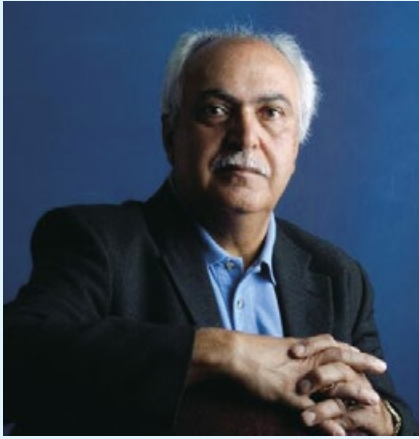
Mavalvala, with her deep passion for science and a lively personality, has been sought after as a sort of unofficial ambassador to the public on behalf of astrophysics and STEM more broadly. Her identity as an openly queer immigrant woman scientist of color has also brought her public attention. As she takes on her new role, Mavalvala plans to continue to engage a wide audience with her passion for science and discovery.

"MIT is one of the top places in the world for doing cutting-edge science, and we will continue to maintain that eminence. At the same time, we also have to push on issues of diversity, issues of racial and social justice, and of work-life balance," says Mavalvala, a parent of two children. "There's this idea at places like MIT that to be as excellent as we are in science and education, that has to come at the cost of all other aspects of being human. I reject that idea. So part of what I'd like to do, and part of my vision of a better MIT, is to find ways for those things to coexist, in good balance. I don't have any illusions that some of these things will be harder to do, but it doesn't mean we shouldn't try."

"We're in this moment where enormous changes are afoot," she continues, "We're in the middle of a global pandemic and economic challenge, and we're also in a moment, at least in U.S. history, where the imperative for racial and social justice is really strong. As someone in a leadership position, that means you have opportunities to make an important and hopefully lasting impact."

**CONGRATULATIONS PROF NERGIS MAVALVALA THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY IS VERY PROUD OF YOUR VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENCE.**

## Prof Soroosh Sorooshian wins the Hydrologic Science Medal in 2021



Prof Soroosh Sorooshian, has won the Hydrologic Sciences Medal in 2021 for his ingenious, ground breaking work on surface hydrology and the remote sensing of precipitation that has profoundly impacted the field of hydrometeorology.

The Hydrologic Sciences Medal is granted by the American Meteorological Society to researchers who make outstanding contributions to scientific knowledge in hydrology, hydrometeorology, and hydro

climatology, including interactions between the land surface and the atmosphere.

Soroosh Sorooshian is currently a professor at the University of California, Irvine, and a member of the American Academy of Engineering. He is a Distinguished Professor of Civil Engineering and Environment at the Samuel School of Art Engineering and also Director of the Center for Hydrometeorology and Remote Sensing, Civil and Environmental Engineering at the same school.

In 2005, he was awarded the **NASA Distinguished Public Service Medal** and in 2006 the **Robert E Horton Memorial Lectureship** awarded by the **American Meteorological Society**. In 2007 he became the recipient of the **Great Man-made River Water prize** given by **UNESCO** for developing foundations as the **Centre for Hydrometeorology and Remote Sensing Areas** at the University of California Irvine and the **Sustainability of Semi-Arid Hydrologic and Riparian Areas**,

a division of University of Arizona. He is the recipient of many prizes and awards including the **Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz International Prize for Water**, the **Robert E Horton Medal** from the **American Geophysical Union** for his outstanding contributions to hydrology, and the 2017 Ven Te Chow award from the **American Society of Civil Engineers' Environmental and Water Resources Institute** in recognition of his lifetime achievements in the field of hydrology and hydrometeorology

Soroosh Sorooshian was born and raised in Kerman Iran as one of the 5 children of late Jamshid and Homayoun (Kianian) Sorooshian. He is married to Shirin (Zomorodi) a research scientist. They have two sons Jamshid and Armin Sorooshian. Both Jamshid and Armin hold Ph.Ds in Chemical Engineering. Jamshid is a Senior Engineer at the Intel Corporation in Albuquerque New Mexico and Armin is a Professor of Chemical and Environmental Engineering at the University of Arizona.

**CONGRATULATIONS PROF SOROOSH SOROOSHIAN, THE COMMUNITY IS PROUD OF YOU.**

## NEVILLE SANJANA AWARDED THE 'PRESIDENTIAL EARLY CAREER AWARD FOR SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS' (PECASE).

PECASE is the highest honor bestowed by the United States Government to outstanding scientists and engineers who are beginning their independent research careers and who show exceptional promise for leadership in science and technology.

**Neville Sanjana**, PhD, is a Core Faculty Member at the New York Genome Center and Assistant Professor in the Departments of Biology and of Neuroscience and Physiology at New York University. As a bioengineer, Dr. Sanjana creates new tools to understand the impact of genetic changes on the nervous system and cancer evolution. His lab has harnessed high-throughput gene editing to pinpoint which regions of the genome are involved in diverse diseases. Dr. Sanjana holds a PhD in Brain and Cognitive Sciences from MIT, a BS in Symbolic Systems and a BA in English from Stanford University

Dr. Sanjana is a recipient of the Presidential Early Career Award for Engineers and Scientists, AAAS Wachtel



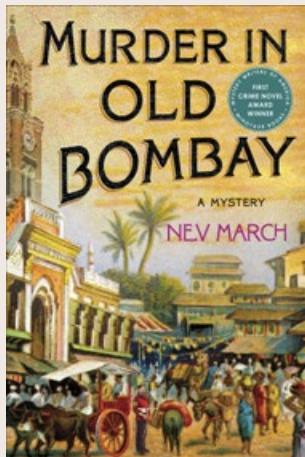
Prize for Cancer Research, the NIH's New Innovator Award, the Cancer Research Institute Technology Impact Award, the DARPA Young Faculty Award, the Kimmel Scholar Award, the MRA Young Investigator Award, and also is the Leichtung Family Investigator of the Brain and Behavior Foundation

Born in Connecticut, Neville grew up in San Diego. As an undergraduate, he attended Stanford University and obtained a PhD from MIT. He now lives in Manhattan on the NYU campus with his wife Ana Maria Gonzalez-Ortiz and two young daughters. His parents, Veera and Espi Sanjana live in California, near San Francisco having moved there in the early 1980s from the New York area.

Congratulations Dr Neville Sanjana, The community salutes you.

Hear his interview on Corona Virus (COVID19) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cjrNGvuG4&t=6s>

# AUTHOR NAWAZ MERCHANT WINS MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA'S AWARD



Each year Mystery Writers of America and Minotaur books invites unpublished writers to submit their manuscripts for the First Crime Novel Award (Minotaur Contest). We are proud to announce that the panel of MWA judges (published mystery writers themselves) and Minotaur's experienced editors chose Nawaz Merchant, (writing as Nev March) as the 2019 recipient. This is the first time this award was presented to a writer of Indian origin, or a Zoroastrian.

Her book titled The Rajabai Tower Mystery, (now called Murder in Old Bombay) was chosen from about 600 entries each year. Intended to find new talent, the contest includes a contract with St. Martin's Press (Minotaur imprint) which is a part of Macmillan Publishers, the world's largest publisher of detective fiction. It was not awarded the previous three years.

Mystery Writers of America presents Edgar Awards to writers of published mystery books that have made a mark. For mystery writers, the Edgar Awards are akin to The Oscar Awards, with luminaries like Walter Mosely, Jim Min Lee, and Sujata Massey in attendance. Introducing new writers, the Minotaur Award for First Crime Fiction is presented at the opening of this event.

Nawaz's acceptance speech at the Edgar Awards can be viewed on her website at [www.nevmarch.com](http://www.nevmarch.com). Her historical mystery, Murder in Old Bombay, will be published in November 2020. Based on real events, (the tragic deaths of the Godrej girls in 1891) this tale revisits the mysterious deaths of two young Parsi women during the British Raj which sends a young detective into dangerous adventures to reach the ultimate prize—a sense of belonging.

We congratulate Nawaz on her award and her new career.

## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE, ESTABLISHES THE FERDOWSI PRESIDENTIAL CHAIR IN

## *Zoroastrian Studies*



The University of California, Irvine has received a \$1.5 million challenge commitment from the Messiah Foundation to establish the Ferdowsi Presidential Chair in Zoroastrian Studies — the first of its kind in the United States. The University of California will support the chair with up to \$500,000 which will be affiliated to the Samuel Jordan Centre for Persian Studies at the University and was set up by Dr Maseeh in 2005.

Fariborz Maseeh, Ph.D., an Iranian American businessman and pioneer in the field of microelectromechanical systems lives in Newport Beach and founder of the Messiah Foundation which has made philanthropic investments in education, the arts and health-related causes.

The new chair is named in honor of Ferdowsi, the 10th-century Persian poet who is credited with saving the Persian language by writing Shahnameh (Book of Kings), the national epic of Greater Iran. Maseeh

hopes the chair will challenge and inspire the diasporic Parsi community — the ethnoreligious group of followers of Zoroastrianism who immigrated to the Indian subcontinent during and after the Muslim conquest of Persia — to help him revive an ancient Persian philosophy. The Ferdowsi Chair will be UCI's fifth endowed chair in Persian studies — more than any other university in the United States. The holder of the chair will be a recognized expert in Zoroastrianism, one of the world's oldest continuously practiced religions. Brian T. Hervey, vice chancellor for university advancement and alumni relations, added: "Zoroastrianism represents a cultural legacy for tens of thousands of Persians, many of whom live right here in UCI's surrounding Southern California region. Through Dr. Maseeh's generous gift, we will grow our offerings in Persian studies and serve the public interest."

# Dr FARHAD SAHIAR RECEIVED THE 2020 JOHN A TAMISIEA AWARD FOR ADVANCEMENT OF AEROSPACE MEDICINE



Farhad Sahiar, M.D., M.S., FAsMA, received the 2020 John A. Tamisiea Award for his dedication to the advancement of aerospace medicine. His career has spanned many years and many facets of aerospace medicine and his contributions to this field.

Born in Bombay, raised in New Delhi, he matriculated in 1980 from Mount St. Mary's High School. In 1985, he earned his medical degree from the Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC) in Pune, then serving

*The John A Tamisiea Award is established and sponsored by the Civil Aviation Medical Association in memory of John A. Tamisiea, M.D. and awarded annually to an aviation medical examiner or other individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the art and science of aviation medicine in its application to the general aviation field.*

for five years in the Indian Air Force. He served as a flight surgeon and his responsibilities included providing medical care to flight crews operating in remote and unforgiving environment of the Himalayas. He returned to AFMC for residency training in Anatomic and Clinical Pathology. In 1993, he completed aerospace medicine residency training from Wright State University (WSU), Dayton, OH, as well as earning his Master of Science degree. He received the Antoine St. Pierre award from the International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine and the Graduate Student Excellence award from WSU.

He married Tenaz (nee Turner) in 1995 and has two children; Olivia, 22 and Sam 18., The family moved to Oklahoma City in 2013 as he had a new job with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Since 2015, Dr. Sahiar has been the Manager of the Medical Officers' Branch at the FAA, Civil Aerospace Medical Institute in Oklahoma City where he supervises a team of Medical Officers processing tens of thousands of Special Issuances annually. He is responsible for administration and review of cases at the Federal Air Surgeon's (FAS) Cardiology Panel. In 2015, he received the FAA-Soaring Eagles award for his contributions to the Neurology Panel and in 2016, he received the FAA, Civil Aerospace Medical Institute's Leader of the Year award.

As program director of the Aerospace Medicine residency program and the Master of Science program at WSU Boonshoft School of Medicine, Dr. Sahiar continues to teach residents from the United States Air Force, Army, Navy, and other international military and civilian residents from more than 35 different nations during their rotation at the FAA. Author of several scientific publications, he has presented at national and international meetings.

He holds a private pilot certificate with instrument rating and enjoys collaborating and flying with fellow pilots.

*Congratulations Dr Sahiar*

## RAYOMAND KUMANA PROMOTED TO CAPTAIN IN THE US NAVY RESERVE



Baag in Bombay. He graduated in 1994 from the International Baccalaureate program at Pensacola High School and attended Rice University, Houston, for four years, participating in many extra-curricular activities, including sports, theater, and the Navy ROTC program.

Captain Kumana comes from a family with a history of military service, his father having served for 2 years in a reserve unit of the Indian Army (1966-68), and his two grandfathers having served in the Royal Indian Air Force and US Army Air Force respectively during WW2.

Captain Kumana is the eldest son of Jimmy Kumana of Houston, Texas. He presently lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, with his wife Katherine and their two daughters Zahra and Ariana. In addition to his Navy Reserve duties, he had worked for a short time as a process engineer for the paper industry in Houston, and currently works as an Inspector of civilian nuclear power plants for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in Baton Rouge. His two younger siblings – Zubin and Vivian live in Houston.

*Congratulations Captain Kumana*

Rayomand Kumana was officially promoted to the rank of Captain in the US Navy Reserve in May 2020. Captain Kumana graduated from Rice University (Houston, Tx) in 1998, with a double Bachelors in Mathematics and Political Science. Immediately after graduation he joined the US Navy through the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) as an active duty commissioned officer with the submarine force, with the rank of Ensign.

After completing his initial training in Orlando, and his graduation from the Naval Nuclear Power school near Charleston, South Carolina, he served for three years on the LA-class submarine USS Springfield (SSN 761) based in Groton, Connecticut. This was followed by a 2-year stint as an instructor at the Texas Maritime College in Galveston, TX, and in 2004 he earned an MS degree in Environmental Management from the University of Houston.

After leaving active duty service in 2005, Captain Kumana joined the Navy Reserve and was assigned Reserve duties in Houston, TX. In late 2007, Captain Kumana was mobilized to serve with the US forces in Afghanistan, stationed at the US military base in Qalat where he helped train the local Afghanistan National Army forces. On his return he was assigned to Navy Reserve duties in Fort Worth, Texas and San Diego, CA, where he served in multiple reserve detachments with increasing responsibilities and duties. After being selected for promotion to Captain in 2019, he was assigned as Commanding Officer of the Pacific Submarine Force Operations reserve detachment in Houston, TX.

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, he grew up in Pensacola, Florida when the family moved south in 1979. His navjote ceremony was performed in 1983 at Allbless

Avesthagen releases “*The First complete Zoroastrian-Parsi Mitochondria Reference Genome: Implications of mitochondrial signatures in an endogamous, non-smoking population*”– The study unravels mitochondrial signatures linked to Persian origin, longevity and associated health conditions



BRINGING SCIENCE TO LIFE

Avesthagen Limited, with support from the Foundation for a *Smoke Free World, New York, USA* is developing a systems biology-based approach for the early predictive biomarkers of tobacco-related cancers such as lung, head and neck, esophagus, stomach, colon, prostate and bladder cancers to achieve cessation of smoking.

Since 2008, The Avestagenome Project® (of Avesthagen Limited) has been collecting a biobank of Zoroastrian Parsi blood samples and extensive patient data from over 4,500 members of this community.

Recognizing the importance of the Parsi cohort and the unique system’s approach to research, the US-based, ‘*Foundation for a Smoke-Free World*’, whose mission is to end smoking within this generation, awarded Avesthagen “*Cancer risk in smoking subjects assessed by next generation sequencing profile of circulating free DNA and RNA*” to prioritize research into lung and tobacco-related cancers.

The maternally inherited human mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) is widely used for phylogenetic, forensic and clinical studies. Changes in the nucleic acid code of the mitochondrial genome (for example: A shift to nucleotide “G” in the place of “A”) result in what is known as “genetic variants”. Clusters of specific variants in a community/population result in haplogroups. These variants are associated with essential biological roles, the dysregulation of which increase the risk of inheriting a variety of human complex diseases. Thus, understanding genome-wide population-specific variation and assembly of population specific reference genomes provides one the unique opportunity to investigate human genomes across different populations in reference to its biological function and disease.

In this context, Avesthagen Limited generated the first complete *de novo* Zoroastrian-Parsi Mitochondrial Reference Genome, AGENOME-ZPMS-HV2a-1. The study analyzed hundred mitochondrial Zoroastrian-Parsi genomes to assemble the first *Zoroastrian-Parsi Mitochondrial Consensus Genome (AGENOME-ZPMCG V1.0)*.

The Avesthagen study using the Parsi mitochondrial genomes investigated the genomic basis of the historically recorded migration of the Zoroastrian-Parsis. The study showed their distribution into 7 major haplogroups (genetic variants) and 25 sub-haplogroups and a largely Persian origin for the Zoroastrian-Parsi community

The study found a total of 420 mitochondrial variants in the 100 Zoroastrian-Parsi genomes. Bioinformatic analysis of the variants showed a *presence of longevity as a trait and associated conditions like cancers such as colon, prostate, neurodegenerative conditions like Parkinsons, rare diseases and fertility disorders*. Furthermore, the study uncovered 12 mitochondrial variants, previously unreported in other populations which are under further investigation.

*The research in specific, found a lack of association with lung cancers and low frequency of DNA mutational signatures associated with tobacco smoking carcinogen induced cancers in the Parsi community, attesting to unique non-smoking social practices practiced in the community, whose origins go back a millennia.*



The research work now released on [bioRxiv](#) converges, ancient history, human migration, endogamous population genetics, social behavior and customs that express in genetic signatures of wellness and health.

**Dr. Viloo Morawala-Patell**, (right) Founder and CMD, Avesthagen Limited and The Avestagenome Project® says “We believe in bringing science to life by drawing it out of the confines of the laboratory and setting it free to work in the real, everyday world”. Both, Avesthagen Limited and The Avestagenome Project® were built on the bedrock of understanding and extrapolating diversity, from environment to human communities; The Parsi-Zoroastrian community renowned for its philanthropy will be contributing through The Avestagenome Project® to global health through a deeper understanding of genetics, disease and environment.



## Glossary of terms:

### Systems biology

Systems biology studies complex natural biological systems as integrated wholes, using tools of modeling, simulation, and comparison to experiment.

### Predictive biomarker diagnosis:

A **biomarker** used to identify individuals who are more likely than similar individuals without the biomarker to experience a favorable or unfavorable effect from exposure to a medical product or an environmental agent.

### Biobanking:

A biobank is a type of biorepository that stores biological samples (usually human) for use in research. Biobanks have become an important resource in medical research, supporting many types of contemporary research like genomics and personalized medicine.

### cfDNA & cfRNA:

These are freely circulating forms of DNA and RNA (components that form the building blocks of the genome) in the plasma (pale yellow fraction of blood) which has now gained popularity in its use for non-invasive genetic testing and role in diseases. Whole Genome of an organisms is mostly packed inside the cell, unlike the circulating DNA and RNA which are short segments of the genetic material found in the blood

### Population Genetics

Population genetics is a subfield of genetics that deals with genetic

differences within and between populations and is a part of evolutionary biology. Studies in this branch of biology examine such phenomena as adaptation, speciation, and population structure

### Mitochondria, Mitochondrial DNA:

Mitochondria are elements (organelles) that reside within the cells. They engage in a biochemical process that uses digested food and convert the energy from it into a form acceptable to cells to use. Mitochondria have their own DNA, a stretch of simple though in a small amount while most DNA is cocooned in chromosomes within the nucleus (the organelle in the cell that stores DNA). Such genetic materials like mitochondria with their own DNA are known as mitochondrial DNA or mtDNA.

### Mitochondrial analysis and Forensics:

Because the mother's egg cell is the source of mitochondria of each new embryo, all mothers and daughter have identical mitochondrial DNA. The father's contribution through sperm is only of nuclear DNA. A vital technique in missing person investigations is a comparison of an mtDNA profile from unidentified remains with that of a possible maternal relative.

### Phylogenetics:

A branch of biology involved in the inference of the evolutionary history and relationships among or within groups of organisms, and in humans between different populations

### Reference Genomes:

A reference genome (also known as a reference assembly) is a digital **nucleic acid sequence** database, assembled by

scientists as a representative example of the **set of genes** in one idealized individual organism of a species or in the case of humans, an idealized individual in a population.

### Variant:

Everyone's genome contains millions of genetic variations, or variants, that make each person unique. Some contribute to differences between humans like eye color and blood type. A small number of variants have been linked with disease. Most variants have unknown effects.

### Sequencing:

DNA sequencing is the process of determining the nucleic acid sequence – the order of nucleotides in DNA. The stretch of nucleotides A, T, G and C. It includes any method or technology that is used to determine the order of the four bases: adenine, guanine, cytosine, and thymine. The advent of rapid DNA sequencing methods has greatly accelerated biological and medical research and discovery

DNA sequencing identifies an individual's variants by comparing the DNA sequence of an individual to the DNA sequence of a reference genome maintained by the Genome Reference Consortium (GRC).

### Big Data Analysis:

Big data is a field that treats ways to analyze, systematically extract information from, or otherwise deal with data sets that are too large or complex to be dealt with by traditional data-processing application software.



**CYRUS RIVETNA** **RECOGNIZED BY CRAIN'S CHICAGO BUSINESS AS 2020 NOTABLE LGBTQ EXECUTIVE AMONG 55 OTHER CHICAGO LEADERS.**



**Cyrus**, founder, CEO and Principal Architect at *Rivetna Architects, Inc.*, has an impressive portfolio of residential, commercial, institutional and religious projects. Committed to their social responsibility, the firm works with Chicagoans to rehab distressed properties and help businesses in low-income neighborhoods. The firm prides itself on providing thoughtful design and building lasting relationships with clients. Over the last three years it has grown in the number of projects and staff, largely due to Cyrus' leadership and talented designers, project managers and consultants that collaborate to keep building on the firm's motto "Bright Minds. Improving Lives. Through Thoughtful Design." The rapid growth of Cyrus's firm, Rivetna Architects, is among one of many accomplishments over the last 18 months. Cyrus helped modernize the City of Chicago Building Code and completed a Zoroastrian Fire Temple, "The Bhandara Atash Kadeh" in Houston, first of its kind in the United States. Crain's Chicago Business named a recent project, the conversion of an abandoned firehouse into Turf's Design and Sales Office, as one of "The 12 Coolest Offices in Chicago 2019." As a founding member of The AIA (American Institute of Architects) Chicago LGBTQ Alliance, and a member of the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce Rivetna

Architects recognized the importance to help create awareness and fairness in the Architecture community. Son of Roshan and Rohinton Rivetna, of Chicago, Cyrus has a BS in Architectural studies and a Master of Architecture from Lawrence Technology University, Chicago.

# MEHER YAZATA: PATH TO SELF-ACTUALIZATION

## MEHER - AHURA MAZDA'S LIGHT, LOVE, AND LAW

In Meher Yasht, we pray to Ahura Mazda for His divine light, for enlightenment, and in general for our progress in the physical and the spiritual worlds. Meher is one of the more prominent Yazads/Yazatas in the Zoroastrian religion. He is the humkaar/coworker of Shehrevar Ameshaspand, and is responsible for several activities including love, friendship, justice, and ritual spaces (e.g., Dar-e-Mehers). Perhaps, the most important role of Meher Yazad, in concert with Sarosh and Raahsne Yazads, is in the judgement of our soul at Chahrum (dawn of the fourth day after death).

Meher Nyaayesh is in honor of sunlight (and other cosmic lights), over which Meher Yazad presides. It is taken from Meher Yasht, presumably written at least four centuries BCE. One of my favorite sections in this Nyaayesh is paragraph 14 in which we ask God's light through Meher Yazata for help and blessings (Table 1). Interestingly, the precise sequence in which the blessings are asked for reminded me of Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* (Exhibit 1). Maslow first introduced his concept of a hierarchy of needs in his 1943 paper, *A Theory of Human Motivation* and his subsequent book, *Motivation and Personality*. This hierarchy suggests that typically people are motivated to fulfill Basic needs before moving on to other, more advanced needs: Psychological needs, and Self-fulfillment needs. Maslow believed that people have an inborn desire to be self-actualized, that is, *to be all they can be*. In paragraph 14 of Meher Nyaayash, it seems that our forefathers had already thought of these concepts but in slightly different ways.

### BASIC NEEDS:

In paragraph 14 of Meher Nyaayash we first ask for God's light through Meher Yazata for help and protection (avangheh), and freedom (ravangheh) (Exhibit 1). Maslow believed that food, clothing, shelter, and protection are amongst the most basic needs. Significantly, he did not consider freedom as a basic human need, but our forefathers did: Cyrus the Great provided freedom to the Jews and allowed all his non-Persian subjects to freely practice their religion. Protection without freedom would be less meaningful, e.g., many communist countries offer strong protection but no freedom.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS:

When our basic needs of protection and freedom are met, we ask Meher Yazata to fulfill our psychological needs. *Belongingness and love needs / Intimate relationships, friends*. We ask Meher Yazata for happiness (rafnangheh), forgiveness (marzdikaai), and healing (baeshzaai). These attributes allow us to develop more intimate relationships with family and friends, and to be happy, satisfied and/or contented, but



Ervad Arda-e-viraf Minocher Minocherhomjee

not necessarily motivated. Typically, satisfaction refers to the contentment experienced when a want is satisfied whereas motivation refers to the drive and efforts to satisfy a want or goal.

### *Esteem needs / Prestige and feeling of accomplishment*

The higher level of psychological needs are esteem needs. We ask Meher Yazata for victory (verethraghnaai), prosperity (havanghaai), and righteousness (ashvastaaai). We look for victory/success in our work/business and personal lives, and for prosperity/wealth. Importantly, personal success and wealth do not lead to self-fulfillment since righteousness/sanctification is the attribute that must be achieved before reaching the next stage: self-actualization—a Zoroastrian credo: to be all you can be. And this may be the rate limiting step. (The slowest step in a chemical reaction mechanism is called the rate determining or rate limiting step.)

### *Self-fulfillment needs / Self-Actualization*

The inborn desire of humans is self-actualization. We ask Meher Yazata who is strong (ugro), powerful (aiwithuro), and worthy of respect/sacrifice and praise (yasnyo, vahmyo) for these attributes. In this context, we ask for spiritual strength which would activate our connection to the divine (Ahura Mazda), who in turn would give us the power to live a life of purpose, fulfillment, and hope, and to become worthy of respect and praise.

Finally, we acknowledge Meher Yazata as the undecieved one in the entire material world (un aiwi drukhto vispemaai anguhe astvaite), as well as the protector of the world/wide pastures (mithro yo vouru gaoyaoitish.). In summary, we ask God's Light through Meher Yazata to shower us with various benedictions to achieve self-actualization.

**Acknowledgements:** I thank Ervad Soli Dastur for his help and guidance, and Dr. Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia for his enlightening writings on Meher Yazad and other religious subjects.

**Arda-e-viraf** was ordained Navar and Maratab in Navsari. He is actively involved in the North American Zoroastrian community serving as the President of the North American Mobeds Council (NAMC) provides volunteer priestly services to Zoroastrians in the US and western Canada. Arda received a M.Sc. in Pharmacology from the University of Toronto and a Ph.D. and a M.B.A. from University of British Columbia and was a

post-doctoral fellow in pharmacology at University of Washington Medical School. He was the recipient of several scholarships including Tata, Connaught Laboratories, and Canadian Heart Foundation. He is a Founding and Managing Partner of Chicago Growth Partners, a private equity firm that managed \$1.2 billion in assets. Prior to that a Managing Director of William Blair Capital Partners and Head of their Health Care Research, involved in several IPO/secondary offerings. He was a Wall Street Journal All Star Analyst in both the medical device and the pharmaceutical sectors.

**Table 1:**

Prayer Text	Translation
<u>Aacha no jamvaat avangheh.</u>	May God's Light (through Meher Yazata) Help and Protect us
<u>Aacha no jamvaat ravangheh.</u>	May God's Light (through Meher Yazata) bring us Freedom*
<u>Aacha no jamvaat rafnangheh.</u>	May God's Light (through Meher Yazata) bring us Joy/Happiness
<u>Aacha no jamvaat marzdikaai.</u>	May God's Light (through Meher Yazata) bring us Mercy/Forgiveness
<u>Aacha no jamvaat baeshazaai.</u>	May God's Light (through Meher Yazata) bring us Healing/Health
<u>Aacha no jamvaat verethraghnaai.</u>	May God's Light (through Meher Yazata) bring us Victory in Life
<u>Aacha no jamvaat havanghaai.</u>	May God's Light (through Meher Yazata) bring us Well Being/Prosperity
<u>Aacha no jamvaat ashavastaai.</u>	May God's Light (through Meher Yazata) bring us Righteousness & Truth
<u>Ughro. Aiwithuro. Yasno Vahmyo.</u>	Strong, Powerful, Worthy of Respect/Sacrifice & Praise
<u>Un-aiwi-drukhto vispemaai anuveh astvaite.</u>	Undeivable in the entire world
<u>Mithro vo youru gaovaitish.</u>	Meher Yazata (Heavenly Light) the Protector of the world.

- Ravangheh has been translated as Freedom (Dr. Dhalla), Affluence (Er. Kangaji), and Ease (Darmesteter)

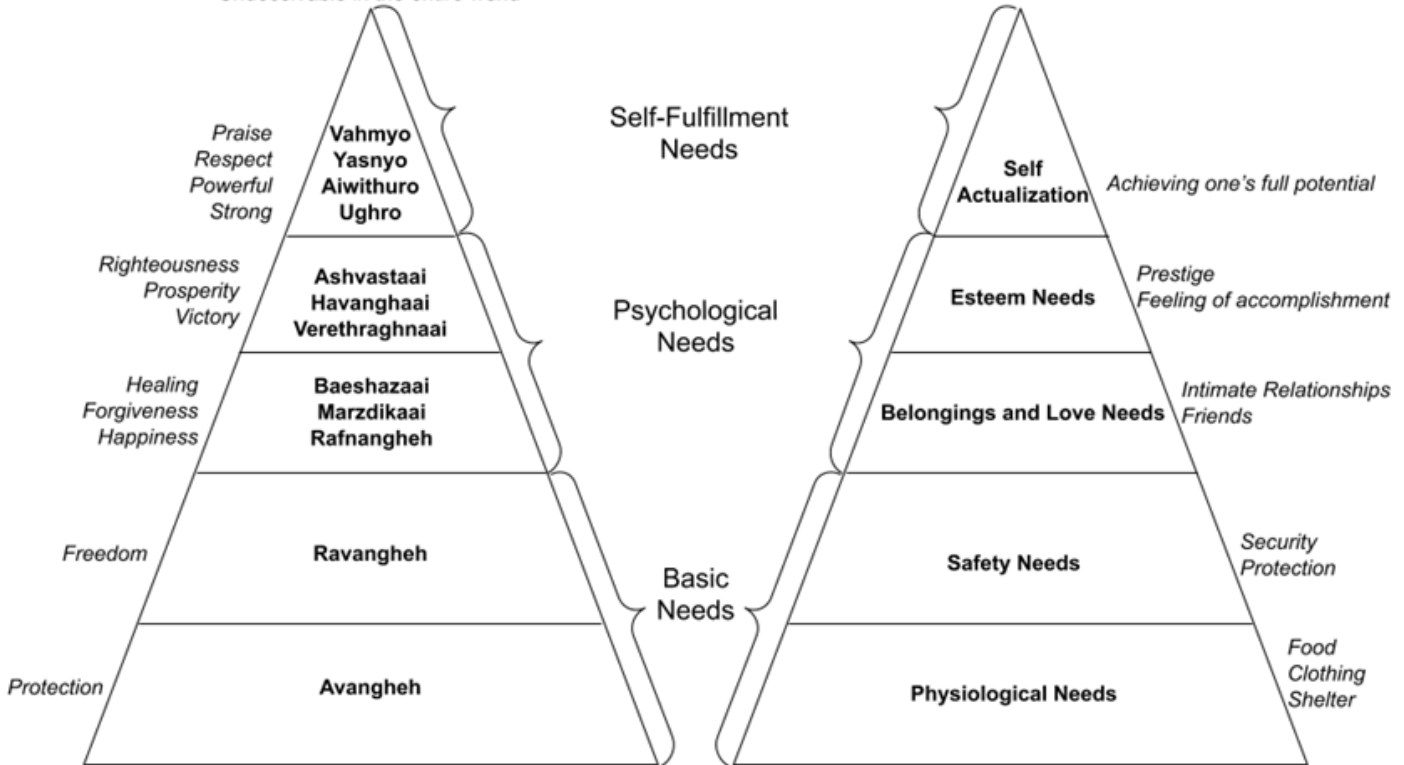
## Exhibit 1: Meher Yazata - A pathway to self-actualization

### Meher Yazata



Mithro yo vouru gaoyaoitish  
 Meher Yazata - Protector of the World  
 An-aiwi-drukhto vispemaai anguheh astvaitih  
 Undeceiving in the entire world

### Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



## Taq-e Bostan - High-relief of Ardeshir II investiture



4th century relief of the investiture of the Sasanian king Ardeshir II. Mithra stands on a lotus flower on the left holding a barsom

*Photo credit Ervad Soli Dastur*

<https://youtu.be/fF9IsZQcOUE>

*This video on Meher Yazata sung by Meher Pavri is hosted on FEZANA's YouTube channel.*

## ESSAY CONTEST

Topic: What do you consider the most important element in a happy family? Why? How does it relate to the teachings of Zarathushtra in the Gathas?

Due Date: January 15, 2021

First Place: 300 dollars  
Second place: 200 dollars  
Third place: 100 dollars

Winning essays will be published in collaboration with FEZANA Journal and Chehreh Nama Magazine

Endorsed by California Zoroastrian Center in Los Angeles  
Supported by Chehreh Nama Magazine and FEZANA Journal



Criteria:  
Age between 11-14  
700-900 words max  
Word Document file only

Sponsored by Fatane Farid Fund  
Rubric and topic information as described in the Gathas are provided on [czc.org/contest](http://czc.org/contest)  
Submit your essays online at website [czc.org/contest](http://czc.org/contest) or email [Zessaventry@yahoo.com](mailto:Zessaventry@yahoo.com)

By submitting, you agree for the essay contest organizer to publish or use your essay in any desired form.

## SHORT STORY CONTEST

Topic: *Spenta Mainyu*, progressive mentality is promoting spiritual and/or material improvement at a personal, family, community, or global level. This can be achieved by one or many individuals. Write a story centered around the main character or characters using *Spenta Mainyu*.

First Place: 300 dollars  
Second place: 200 dollars  
Third place: 100 dollars

Due Date: January 15, 2021

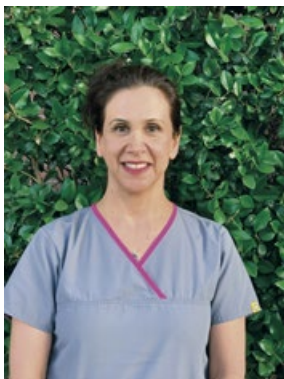
Criteria:  
Age between 13-18  
1000-2000 words max  
Word Document file only

Sponsored by Parimarz Firoozgar  
Rubric and topic information as described in the Gathas are provided on [czc.org/contest](http://czc.org/contest)

Submit your short story online at website [czc.org/contest](http://czc.org/contest) or email [Zessaventry@yahoo.com](mailto:Zessaventry@yahoo.com)

By submitting, you agree for the short story organizer to publish or use your short story in any desired form.

Endorsed by California Zoroastrian Center in Los Angeles



*Artemis Javanshir is the Essay/Short Story Contests organizer; member of Core Education Committee at CZC-LA, and the co-chair of FEZANA Education, Conference and Scholarship (Religious Education) Committee. She is a strong believer in the strength of our youth and involving community members in shaping a*

*strong and prosperous global Zoroastrian fellowship.*

## The 2021 Short Story Contest

sponsored by Ms. Parimarz Firoozgar is designed for youth 13-18 years old, with the topic: “*Spenta Mainyu*, progressive mentality in promoting spiritual and/or material improvement at a personal, family, community, or global level. This can be achieved by one or many individuals. Write a story centered around the main character or characters using *Spenta Mainyu*”.

The first place winner of the 2020 short story competition sponsored by Ms. Catherine Linka was published in the Fezana Journal Summer issue Vol 34, No 2 and the second and third place winners are published in this issue

**First Place: Ms. Azadeh Hormozdiari** from Tarzana, CA with the short story title: “The Bumpy Road to Happiness” \$300 plus a signed copy of “A Clawed and Feathered Spell”

**Second Place: Ms. Farnaz Behdinan** from Northridge, CA with the short story title: “Writing Destiny” \$200 plus a signed copy of “A Clawed and Feathered Spell”

**Third Place: Mr. Pouya Monokchian** from Corona, CA with the short story title: «Cyrus and the Greedy Leader» \$100 plus a signed copy of “A Clawed and Feathered Spell”

Visit our website: [www.czc.org/contest](http://www.czc.org/contest)

# WRITING DESTINY

Farnaz Behdinan

2<sup>nd</sup> place



Farnaz Behdinan was born in Tehran, Iran and has grown up as a Zoroastrian in the US. She is currently a senior in high school and has been involved in the Z studies classes ever since her freshman year. She has a passion for creative writing and creating art in all mediums. Next year she will be attending university and hopes to study business administration and design.

## SPRING 1934.

Knot by knot, string by string, I weaved and I weaved. But, life wasn't always like this, repetitive and demanding. In the past, my Maman (Mom) would come to wake my sisters and me with showers of kisses, and the smell of fresh naan barbari (bread) from the corner store would waft from the kitchen. We weren't a rich family in terms of money, but the small moments we spent together were filled with richness. Maman was a Persian rug weaver, like her mother before, and her mother before. Baba (Dad) left to find work in Tehran after I was born, but we haven't heard from him since. So it's just been my mom, my two little sisters (Donya, 11 and Jasmine, 15) and me,

(Golnaz, 17) ever since.

The art of weaving has been passed down generation by generation through the repeating strokes of the hand and muscle memory. Maman wanted us to learn about weaving and pass down these traditions. She taught us every morning before school and every afternoon after school.

However, I was a bad weaver. It all seemed so tedious and mindless, but then my Maman would remind me "Golnaz, it's a source of pride to be weaving Persian rugs." "From the ancient times of Cyrus, the great Persian Empire has made rugs that last lifetimes and are demanded across the globe. You should be proud of your history"

"Yes Maman," I would obey. But in my heart, while I admired her passion, I could not share it. Nevertheless, I learned how to weave, knot by knot and string by string.

In my small, local school located in the heart of Yazd, I was thriving in all my classes, earning exceptional grades and was top of my class. My maman didn't know this, and I intended to keep it that way. She also didn't know that my favorite subject in school was my Farsi poetry class. I loved reading Shah Nameh (Persian Book of Kings) and exploring its underlying meanings and beautiful language used by Ferdowsi. My teacher, Ms. Bastani was excited to talk to me about her new favorite poem and I would be equally as excited to read it. She believed in me and made me feel as if I was capable of leaving my historical weaving background. But, if I told my Maman about this underlying passion of mine, she would not understand. She had already decided my fate.

And then, it only took a moment for everything to change. For the fire that laid inside my Maman's heart to burn away. In a moment my maman fell sick and her skin became hot from fever, and her

body thinned from a lack of appetite. Doctors in Yazd couldn't do much and we didn't have the money to send her to Tehran for better treatments. All we could do was wait. Wait until the sound of her beating heart faded, and the moment her last breath disappeared.

"Take care of each other, and know that I will always love you," she said.

As a Zoroastrian family, we wore white as a custom instead of black and prayed for three days straight. "*Ashem Vohu Vaheeshetem, Asti, Ooshta, Asti, Ooshta Ahmaie, Hayat Ashaee, Vaishtae, Ashem*" Do the right thing for the sake of righteousness alone. But what was the right thing to do in a situation where you can't control anything and the world around you seems to be controlling you?

My sisters and I are alone. We don't have much money to keep us stable for long enough. And I am the oldest. The one who is responsible for everything my mom was in charge of before.

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A funeral in spring. Spring. The season of rebirth and the New Year. And now to us, it will always be the season of our withering lives. The funeral was held in our Fire Temple in Yazd where the fire has been kept alive for several hundred years and my entire neighborhood showed up to give their condolences.

Ms. Bastani came too, and she was wearing a grim attire. When she came in she held my hands and said: "Golnaz Jan, if you need anything, anything, please don't hesitate to ask, I will always be here for you and your family."

Then my Persian blood of tarof (refusing everything) instantly spoke: "We will figure something out but thank you so much for the offer." My life was in shambles and I had the nerve to refuse the one thing I needed the most: help.

Afterward, I decided to stop dwelling on the negative, because I didn't realize how much love surrounded me until that funeral. Families came from work and their hectic lives just to show how much they cared about our mom and to help us out during the most difficult situations of our lives. I forced myself to be strong, my Maman always told us that it's not the action that happens to us that should define us, but our reactions. And her advice, now more than ever, was necessary to help me fight the pain that lay inside my heart.

After the funeral, when reality finally struck me, I realized I needed to make a decision. I needed to decide our current financial situation and my future happiness. I needed to find a way to make money and satisfy my own needs. My heart kept telling me to go to school and finish my education on my last year, but my brain kept pulling me back to my duty, of taking care of my sisters and finding a job. The only job I was capable of getting at this age was rug weaving. But my heart wanted to read and write poetry from dawn to dusk. And then, my brain would bring me back to the reality of our lack of money. I couldn't betray my heart, or I could never be satisfied with my life. I couldn't betray my brain, or I would suffer the dire consequences of reality. I kept asking myself, what is the right decision? What is the best way to satisfy both sides?

And then my brain and my heart met in the middle. I had to weave rugs, but only temporarily to keep up our financial situation. And I needed to set aside my stubborn Persian blood of Tarof and accept all the help I could get. I decided to contact Ms. Bastani and ask her to help me out with my poetry lessons in any spare time I had. This way my sisters could go to school and gain the education I had the luxury of earning when Maman was alive, and I could keep learning my poetry. So, while I longed to go to the University of Tehran in the following year and move to the city, I had to be patient. I had to play the new game Life wanted me to play.

It's funny how Life finds a way of bringing me back towards my fate. I didn't choose to become a rug weaver. Life chose it for me. And I had to find a way to maneuver around the game Life was playing. But playing with Life takes a certain strategy and skill. It requires a driving goal in the mind and a driven plan.

#### SUMMER 1934

The days have grown hotter and my work has gotten more and more difficult. After the funeral, I went through my mom's carpet materials and stumbled upon an unfinished piece. It was a small wall carpet with a luxurious arrangement of bright yellow and orange clothing encompassing a beautiful woman that was dancing in a prairie field. And that's when I got to work, deciding that I needed to let the legacy of my mother's work live on.

It's been a few days since the moment

I finished adding the final touches to the rug and it took me a while to find a seller. I would stand outside of the bazaar every day holding up the rug in hopes that someone would notice the beauty that lay inside the heart of my mother's work. People would stop by and tell me how much they loved the traditional play of colors on the woman, but none had enough money. I had begun to give up, staying for fewer hours as I became more and more discouraged. Then one day, as I'm holding up the carpet, a man comes up to me and asks me for a price.

"Give me any price and I will pay for it."

Thinking for a moment I said, "This carpet is priceless. It's my mother's legacy. You can decide its worth."

Then he gave me a roll of money from his pockets, and I, in awe, just stared at the lump of paper I was about to exchange for my mother's soul. But I had no choice. Our money was running out, and I reluctantly gave the man the carpet.

That day I decided it was time to celebrate. I treated my sisters and me to some sweet, mouthwatering Bastani Sonati. This is the type of ice cream that makes you go to Ahura Mazda and back in one bite. It is a blend of smooth pistachios, enchanting rosewater, and delightful saffron.

"Golnaz can we PLEASE take some home," Donya said almost done with her ice cream.

"You know it's going to melt, so why would you ask?" Jasmine bickering back at Donya.

"Calm down guys, just enjoy what you have now, and then we'll worry about the future when it comes," I said trying to enjoy my ice cream.

"But this moment is too good to be true, I just want to keep it forever," Donya said.

And with that, we just sat there with dripping ice cream in the hot weather, and simply breathed in the beautiful moment.

-----  
Ms. Bastani and I set a schedule every night from 7 to 9 now that everyone was on summer vacation. I owe her my whole life and more for the kindness that she has shown me. We discuss the passion that lay in the heart of ShahNameh and the structure of each line.

Ms. Bastani would recite the great powerful lines of Ferdowsi, "How shall a man escape from that which is written; How shall he flee from his destiny?"

And that led to hours of discussion and thinking about life with my teacher.

I would ask "Do we get a choice in where our path leads? Are we allowed to have a choice when

expectations drown our dreams? How can you choose your destiny when princes are born to be kings, and peasants are born to serve these kings?"

But then Ms. Bastani would say "You have a choice."

"There's a soul in our body that makes decisions of your fate. You decide the path that you want to ride on, and while there are forces against it, in the end, you have the final decision. You make the judgment between conforming with expectations, slamming against them, or simply observing them. Whatever the right decision is, it is for you to decide. You don't escape what is written, you write your own rules."

After that, I was speechless. There is so much empowerment in her words that makes you feel as if the world is yours to grasp. If only my world was that easy to change.

Ms. Bastani forced me to go take the Konkour exam (College Entrance Exam.) even though she knew I couldn't go. But she said, "At least you allow yourself to decide."

#### FALL 1934

The color of the leaves change. Leaves of bright green become a myriad of colors. Sunshine yellow, vibrant orange, and blood red. Leaves that fall and represent how fast our life is about change.

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It is 9 a.m. and there are a few hard knocks on our living room door. I was too lazy to get up from my comfortable bed and Donya was awake enough to open the door. At that moment I was dreaming about school and my old friends when we would talk at lunch. I dreamed about sitting in a classroom as I listened to Ms. Bastani's angelic voice.

But my dream was ruined once Donya ran into my room and with shivering in her voice, "There was a strange man at our door claiming he shares our last name!"

I instantly woke up, "WHAT?" I whispered-screamed, "Did you let him in???"

"No of course not, I was too scared, but I said I would be back. Oh, Golnaz what if it's too good to be true."

"Okay, no need to start dreaming yet," I said rushing to put on some decent clothes.

With butterflies in my stomach, I ran to the door, and Donya and Jasmine following. Then, with a



deep breath, I opened it.

A man, with a fresh-shaved face, a brown suit, and a top hat, was revealed. He had a half-bald head and kind brown eyes but a structured face.

“Is this the Abadi residence?” he asked.

“Yes,” I answered.

I would like to talk to Mrs. Abadi if that is possible.”

“She passed away a few months ago, I am afraid you are too late.”

His face suddenly turned extremely white, and his features softened to reveal his sadness.

“Would you like to come inside?” Jasmine asked.

“Yeah, you can stay for tea, or longer if you want,” Donya added.

His features brightened and he nodded.

During our conversation with him, we realized that he was our uncle. Our dad had struck a fortune in Tehran, but sadly he had died in a car accident and in his will, he left our mother and us the fortune he had struck in Tehran. Our uncle, however, was just as dirt-poor as we were. It was nice to have a relative after being alone for so long, so we asked him to stay for as long as he needed. And he offered to help take care of us until we got of age.

Now that our financial situation was better, I finally had the chance to go to the University of Tehran. Our uncle could take care of my sisters, and I would be allowed to study poetry for days on end.

But, why did it feel like it was too easy? Everything in my life has worked against me, and when it’s finally working for me, there was something in my heart that kept pulling me away from my lifelong dream. I loved my sisters too much to leave them. I loved Ms. Bastani and our late night talks too much to flee. I loved my life too much to fly away.

When I told Ms. Bastani this, she slapped my hands with her ruler. “How could you not take advantage of this opportunity!?”

“I can’t leave the place I love most. This is the place I feel most alive. Yes, it has caused me the most suffering and pain, but it is the place I am most at home.”

“I refuse to allow you to stay. You have sacrificed too much of your life to stay. Your potential is much more than this. Promise me you will think about it.”

Once again, my heart and my brain were at odds. I am so scared of leaving now that I have gotten

used to my life. Deep down I know that to grow I have to set myself outside of my comfort zone. But my heart kept saying “What if everything you ever wanted was right in front of you?”

And then my brain came up with its counterargument, “Miracles only happen a few times in a lifetime and this is your one chance to take advantage of it.”

So, as I listened to both sides, I knew what the right decision was. I had to leave. I needed to figure out where I belonged in this world and the only way to find myself was by leaving. I loved Yazd. I loved my neighbors. I loved Ms. Bastani. I loved my sisters. But I never had time to love myself.

## SPRING 1944

Why is it that people ask you where you see yourself in ten years like you have an answer? I never knew I would end up teaching poetry as a living. I never knew I would move back to Yazd one year after I had gone to Tehran. I never knew I would end up living back with my sisters. How could I know any of this? Life had its way of changing and altering my path, but I always stayed true to my core.

I left university when I got word of Ms. Bastani’s funeral. I stayed in Yazd when I was offered a teaching position to live up to her legacy. I taught my sisters, and when they got older they began to teach alongside me. Jasmine taught math and Donya taught history. My uncle found a job that he loved and found a wife that he loved even more. My mother found her place in our lives too when I stumbled upon her soul, hanging, in an extravagant store. I bargained and negotiated the price with the store owner, and eventually returned her to her rightful place.

I couldn’t have asked for a better life than what I had at that moment. I had the opportunity to inspire children and help them realize their true potential. I was given the power to help students find themselves, not only through poetry but throughout their lives, similar to what Ms. Bastani had done for me.

If I ever had a conversation with Ferdowsi, I would tell him that I found the answer to his question. You cannot escape what’s written, what’s your destiny. You simply have to start writing it.

# CYRUS AND THE GREEDY LEADER

Pouya Monokchian

3rd place



My name is Pouya Monokchian, and I am 14 years old. In my spare time, I like to play video games and watch documentaries. When I grow up I hope to become a health professional because I want to help people.

There was once a village that was near a fast-flowing river called the Salzar River. A man named Salzar helped this village thrive and revolutionize their ways of life many years ago. The grateful villagers named the river after him and eventually elected him as leader. Salzar taught them to use the river for fishing, crops and trade. There were many other villages nearby that were bigger but not as powerful because they didn't have the advantages that come with living near a river. Ten years passed, and Salzar started to change and become greedier. He began to take the villager's food claiming it was for preparation of war. The villagers trusted him however, due to his previous accomplishments and willingly gave their harvest for the cause. Over the years, the villagers grew to depend on his protection, which plunged the village to mediocrity and eventually to poverty.

One day there was a young man named Cyrus who was heading back to his village after a long journey of gathering food and supplies that were meant to help his poor and starving fellow villagers. However, when Cyrus arrived at the village, his bags were immediately checked and all of his supplies taken by the village leader's guards. He noticed that the food and supplies weren't given to the village people in need, but instead put in a carriage and taken away. Witnessing this enraged Cyrus because he worked very hard to get food and supplies to help his fellow people but instead of having the food distributed to feed the poor and starving people, it was taken and stored away for reasons unknown. Upon this shocking discovery, Cyrus strolled throughout the village and saw all of his fellow villagers suffering in unbearable conditions. He had only been gone for five years, he never expected such change upon his return. He came across an old neighbor, Samuel, and he began to ask why everyone is still living

in such horrid conditions. "We are running out of food," his old neighbor replied wearily, "but we can live with the little amount we have and we still can grow more crops over the next year". The more he investigated, the more he realized that most of the villagers are growing their own crops but the food and harvest are being taken away by the leader to feed the army who are helping with a war that is being fought in a faraway land. Cyrus was puzzled because he knew for a fact that the village didn't have an army. The village was simply too small to need one and too far from any other strong village to pose a threat. Cyrus sensed that things might not be what they seem and he became ever more curious and wanted to find the truth behind all this.

Despite the fact that he had just arrived, he packed his bags once more to set foot on his journey to investigate. He packed supplies he would need for his trip to find the army, along with some old books to read on his journey. After a few days of traveling, Cyrus reached for some of the books he had brought with him. He started reading a book called The Gotha. He remembered that when he was a young boy his grandfather had given him a series of books before he passed away. He missed his grandfather even more now and reminiscing about the days when things were simpler made his heart ache. In those times, he never had the time to read books. This seemed like a perfect opportunity to begin reading and learning his grandfather's left wisdom. The more he read, the more he gained knowledge on the path of Asha. He started to practice the teachings of the Gathas throughout his travels and after five days Cyrus came across a village that was running out of food. He quickly learned that they had lost all of their seeds for crops due to a famine that took place last year. Without hesitation, Cyrus gave them some seeds he had taken with him while he was leaving his village and gave it to the village. He also took the time to help them with the sowing and farming to ensure successful harvesting for this village. The villagers continuously thanked him and offered to repay him for this kind deed, but Cyrus declined and said "my dear friends, the greatest thanks would be to see your village thrive once more." And with that, he said that he must set foot to continue his journey to find the army. The villagers looked bemused and said that there was no army in any village for miles due to the fact that all of the villages have been at peace for over one hundred years, thus they have no reason to have an army. This discovery made Cyrus wonder what the leader of his village needed all of that food and supplies for. He suddenly realized that the village leader had always spoke about a special breed of horse that were the fastest in the world and very beautiful in their colors, but because the horses were the fastest they required a lot of food.

These horses were known to have five kids a year and the kids grew up to full maturity fast as well

Once he connected the dots, Cyrus knew that he needed to get back to the village and inform his fellow villagers that their leader is using their hard-earned food to feed his own pets while neglecting the villagers who desperately need it. Cyrus thanked the villagers for their hospitality and packed his bags once more and left. During his journey back, Cyrus reread the Gathas and pondered about the book's message. He came to realize that the book talked about many virtues such as following the path of Righteousness and picking a good leader, along with what makes a good leader. Cyrus planned to expose and share what he had found and inform his people of all the dishonesty and greed going on from their current leader. He had learned from The Gatha that it was the village's responsibility to choose a leader with high merit. And once the people learned what their leader really has been up to, Cyrus planned to help them find a leader that was honest, had wisdom and practiced righteousness. After three days of travel, he finally reached his village with a plan and a positive mentality. As he strolled back into the village, he heard distant chatter gathered in one of the homes. He walked into a room filled with most of the villagers and found his old neighbor frail and lying in bed. "He has become weak and there is no food or water left in the village," his Samuel's wife said sorrowfully, "I don't think he can make it through the night." This scene broke Cyrus's heart and he turned to the crowd in the room and said, "I've traveled throughout the land and I have learned that there is no war, the land has been in harmony for a hundred years!" The room broke into small chatter and confusion. "Our leader has been dishonest to us my friends, we must take control of our village and end this madness," Cyrus continued as he unpacked his bag and showed them his plan. The villagers quickly learned that indeed the leader has been greedy and was using the gathered food to feed his horses and himself, rather than the people.

The people trusted Cyrus with his plans and they marched steadfast to the leader's living quarters, determined to take back their village. Salzar stepped out leisurely to find the entire village gathered at his porch. "What is the meaning behind all this? What do you want?" he demanded from the crowd. Cyrus stepped forward and calmly said, "There is no war or army far away, and everyone here knows that now." He could see the leader looking uneasy and sweating feverishly. "I come here with peace, but I propose a challenge to let the people choose who should be the new leader." The leader laughed, unimpressed at the young man before him. "You think you can beat me? I am a powerful person and you are simply a common man!" the leader scoffed, "I accept your challenge. Once I win, I never want to see you in this village again. You are to be banished from this village!" Cyrus knew that he had to keep a better mentality and without hesitation, he said, "I accept your exception to this

challenge, the one who loses shall be banished." Cyrus went on to propose his new challenge and stated that the land is to be divided into two, whoever grows the most crops by the time of harvest shall win and the people of the village are to elect their leader then. The leader pondered quietly and after a few moments he agreed to Cyrus's challenge and all of his fellow villagers also agreed to the new proposition. They were happy because the food they grow would not be taken from them and would instead be shared at the end of the harvesting season. The village was split in half and soon each side looked to their leader for instructions. Cyrus had read all the books that his grandfather left him and in the pursuit of knowledge, he had learned new techniques to ensure the best harvest. The Gathas had told him to obtain wisdom and spread wisdom to others and Cyrus knew a lot about farming and began to share his wisdom to his fellow villagers. Cyrus gave his fellow villagers tips while the leader was yelling at his people for not doing enough work.

Throughout the month Cyrus began to help his farmer by finding fish that could help their crops grow faster. Meanwhile Salzar provided his side of the land four weeks of yelling and no help. Salzar's greedy ways had led to him become uninformed about farming and he didn't want to read books to learn and give his farmers tips or get anything to help the crops grow faster. After five months of work, Cyrus was able to give his farmers a break from work and to repay them for their hard work he threw a party to celebrate the crops being half way ready for harvest. Salzar however was struggling to keep his farmers happy and willing to work. His crops grew but not as fast as Cyrus's. After the tenth month Cyrus let his farmers go because there was no work to be done until it was time to pick the crops. Meanwhile Salzar had his farmer working even harder than they were before to catch up. On the last day of the challenge Cyrus had his farmers finish picking the crops and he helped them take them to the village center. They waited for their old leader, Salzar, to bring his crops to see who had the better harvest. After an hour of waiting, Salzar came to the village center but he didn't have any crops because his farmer abandoned him and left the crops uncared for. Thus Salzar didn't have enough time to pick all of the crops and bring them ready for the challenge. The villagers realized who the clear winner was and they shouted with glee and asked Cyrus to become their new leader. Cyrus's Zoroastrian teachings and ways of life had taught him to become a better human being, he didn't want Salzar to be banished from the village because he did a lot for the village in his early years and he deserved a second chance to redeem his ways. Cyrus ask Salzar if he wanted to stay in the village because of his great contributions to the village earlier in his life. Salzar garetfully accepted and with tears in his eyes he apologized to his fellow villagers for his wrongdoings. Cyrus handed Salzar the Gotha and told him, "if you read this you may not become the leader of this village but a leader of your future."

**BIRTHS**

**Lyla Farhad Kasad**, a girl, to Farhad and Natasha Kasad, sister to Zoey Kasad, granddaughter to Dinyar and Mehroo Kasad (Pune, India), Noshir and Sanober Mundroina (Vancouver, WA) in Kirkland, WA in August 2020.

**Cameron Parvez Press**, a boy, to Erin and Carl Press, brother to Clayton, great grandson to Freny Katrak, grandson to Zarin and Minoos Press and Perveen and Yezdi Guzdar, nephew to Anna, Cyrus, Amy, Eric, cousin to Raina, Liam on April 21, 2020, ZA-Chi..

**NAVJOTE**

**Frayan and Omid** sons of Nazin Mazdapour and Khodaram Foroughi, in Vancouver. (ZSBC) on July 26, 2020.

**WEDDINGS**

**BEZAN IRANI**, son of Nilufer and Darayush Irani of Richmond to Paulina Nassab, daughter of Parto Moshrey, of North Vancouver, August 1, 2020.

**DEATHS**

**Dolly Rustom Patel**, 94, wife of late Rustom Patel, mother of late Cherag Patel, Viloo (Pesi) Balsara, grandmother of Yazdi Balsara, in Vancouver, BC on December 31, 2019.

**Aflatoon Sohrabi**, son of Noshirvan Felfeli and Homayoun Falahati, husband of Mahvash Namdarian, father of Nasim, Navid, Arash, Afrooz, father-in-law of Dariush Farazmehr, Azadeh Namiranian, Ramtin Shahriyari, grandfather of Yasna, Aria, Deeba, brother of Parichehr, Parvin, Manouchehr on March 23, 2020. (ZSBC)

**Zenobia Batliwalla**, 42, daughter of late Shavar Batliwalla and Doli Batliwalla, sister of Darius Batliwalla, sister-in-law of Zia Batliwalla in Mumbai, India on March 26, 2020. (ZSBC)

**Benaaz Ron Merchant**, 39, daughter of Ron and Sherie Merchant, niece of Meher Irani, Homai and Porus Khajautia, Pervez and Shirin Mistry, cousin of Dara and Yazdi Mistry, Zenobia, Xerxes, Kashmira, Hormazd, Diana, Jennifer in Mission Viejo, CA on April 16, 2020.

**Zinobia Ratansha Kharadi**, 88, daughter of Ratansha and Shirinbai Kharadi, sister of Cawas, Adi, Naja, Goola, Jaloo, Rayo, aunt of Roda Mistry in Laguna Woods, CA on May 2, 2020.

**Nergish Shirmardi**, 93, mother of Jehangir Shirmadi, Sanober Mundroina, Gulu Dubash, mother-in-law of Mehri Shirmardi, Noshir Mundroina, Khushru Dubash, grandmother of Fardeen and Fabian Irani, Mehrab and Natasha Mundroina, Arish and Kurush Dubash, great grandmother of late Tyreez and Suraiya Mundroina, Zoey Kasad, Dastan Irani in Pune, India on May 4, 2020. (ZA-CA)

**Jehangir Tehmurasp Parakh**, 87, husband of Rita Parakh, father of Eddie, Neville, father-in-law of Nazneen, Mehernaz, grandfather of Iyana, in Richmond, BC on May 17, 2020.

**Homayun (Homai) Mondegarian (Senami)**, 74, wife of Rohinton (Roy) Mondegarian, daughter of Rustom and Gul Senami, sister of Behram, Manijeh, and late Parvin in Laguna Hills, CA on May 27, 2020.

**Dhun Minoos Doctor**, 80, wife of late Minoos Doctor, daughter-in-law of late Nergish and Dorabji Doctor, mother of Kaivan and Nozer, grandmother of Jenai, Tanushka, Khairaz, mother-in-law of Yasmin, Rukshana in Mumbai, India on June 9, 2020.

**Jehangir Faramroze Sattha**, husband of Mahzarine Sattha, father of Paulad, Kayome, brother of Guloo Pesi Tamboli (Hamilton, ONT) in Mumbai, India on June 19, 2020. (ZSO)

**Ervad Hoshang Jamasp Buchia**, husband of Perin Buchia, father of Khursheed Dastur, Goolzar and Parizad Buchia, father-in-law of Barjor Dastur, grandfather of Mahtab and Darius Dastur on June 21, 2020. (MANASHNI)

**Phiroze "Phil" Lovji Hansotia**, 82, husband of Marilyn, father of Eric Phiroze (Nicole) Hansotia (Alpharetta, GA), Shirene (John Herms) Hansotia (Mt. Pleasant, NC), grandfather of Everett Hansotia, Alexa Chase, brother of Noshir (Hootoxy) Hansotia (Phoenix, AZ), Nina (Myron "Mike") Myers (Los Altos Hills, CA) in Ellison Bay, WI on June 23, 2020.

**Mehroos Dara Pithawala**, wife of late Dara Pithawala, mother of Minoos (Shahnaz), Nancy (Jerome), Jamshed (Hutoxi), grandmother of Taronish, Farishte, Jason, Jennifer, Aban, Jasmyne, Darayus, Darya on June 26, 2020. (ZSO)

**Jimi Faredoon Pavri**, 88, father of Hilla and Cyrus, father-in-law of Yasmin, grandfather of Farah and Porous in Mumbai, India on July 7, 2020. (ZAGNY)

**Sheroo Jokhi**, wife of Savak Jokhi, mother of Khushru (Havovi) and Sohrab (Pearl), grandmother of Kayzad,



Sam, Zehan, Parinaaz, in Pune, India on July 10, 2020. (ZAPANJ)

**Silloo Sethna**, 96, mother of Pervez Sethna (Houston, TX), Hormuzd Sethna (Virginia), mother-in-law of Jerry Sethna, grandmother of Jimmy Sethna, grand mother-in-law of Taylor on Thursday, July 16, 2020. (MANASHNI)

**Ervad Rohinton Madon**, husband of Yasmin Madon, father of Jehangir, Kaizad on July 27, 2020. (ZAGNY)

**Mobed Keikhosrow Mobed**, husband of Parvin on July 10, 2020. (ZA-Chi)

**Minocher (Minoo) Gatta**, husband of Mani Gatta, father of Kekoo, Rohinton, Mahroukh, father-in-law of Farah, Allane, Bijan in Niagara on the Lake, ONT on August 1, 2020.

**Mehroo Keki Bhote**, 91, wife of late Keki Bhote, mother of Safeena (Bob) Bottorff, Shenaya Bhote-Siegel, Adi, Xerxes (Amy), grandmother of Spencer, Olivia, Annabella, Garrison, Lily, Emma, Evie on August 8, 2020. (ZA-Chi)

**Bahram Mehraban Parsi**, husband of Homa, father of Trity, Nima, Sherene, brother of Parichehr, Fariborz, Farhad in Mississauga, ONT on August 9, 2020.

**Mehroo Minu Patel**, wife of Minu Patel, mother of Cyrus (Carrie Ann Waltman) Patel, Deena (Walter Polskosnik) on August 11, 2020. (ZA-Chi)

**Minoo Bomanshaw Madon**, 81, husband of Ingrid, father of Michelle, Yasmin, brother of Behram Madon, Maneck Madon, Persis Bass in Los Angeles, CA on August 13, 2020.

**Mahyar Ravani**, son of Parviz Ravani and Farnaz Ardeshiri, nephew of Shahrokh Ravani in Toronto, ONT on August 14, 2020.

**Sehra Khodadad Shahbehram Irani**, wife of Khodadad (Khodu) Shahbehram Irani, mother of Ken, Sharon, Jason, Ron, sister of Khodi, Khushrow, Mahyar, sister-in-law of Shireen, Vamard, Behroze Irani in Maryland, US on August 16, 2020.

**Behnaz Shahzadi Irani**, daughter of late Mobed Shahbahram and Banoo Shahzadi, wife of Firdaus, mother of Shadan, Arman, sister of Mernoosh Shahzadi Kiani in San Diego, CA on August 21, 2020.

**Mehroo Hoshi Kazak**, wife of Hoshi Kazak, mother of Sam (Christina), Gayve, Spanta (Shannon), grandmother of Anahita, Rustom, Jaxson, Jasper in Kitchener, ONT on August 27, 2020.

**Farida Yezdiar Kalyanivala**, 75, wife of Yezdiar Kalyanivala, mother of Areez, Zahir, daughter of late Freny and Ardeshir Enayati, sister of Rukshana (Ferzeen) Bharucha (Toronto, ONT), Zeba (Jayank)

Dalal (San Diego, CA), Shahin (Ceraie) Enayati (Panama), in Montreal, QUE on August 29, 2020.

**Jaloo Siganporia**, mother of Farrokh (Munira) Siganporia (Aurora, IL), Yazdi (Tannaz) Siganporia (San Diego, CA), grandmother of Tina, Lia, Poras in San Diego, CA on August 30, 2020.

**Farrokh Gowadia**, 87, husband of Aranawaz, father of Vispi (Perviz), grandfather of Behram, Kaivan, Sanaea in Lovettville, VA on September 5, 2020. (ZAMWI)

**Zubin Dotiwala**, husband of Soonu Dotiwala, father of Alicia Dotiwala, brother of Phiroze Dotiwala in Mississauga, ONT on September 10, 2020.

**Mobed Arash Kasravi**, husband of Gita, father of Aurad, Deebea in Kerman, Iran. (CZC)

**Houman Kamyar**, husband of Parodokht, father of Farzad, father-in-law of Manijeh, grandfather of Sammy and Aria Kamyar. (CZC)

**Simindokht Mavandadi**, mother of Ardeshir, Abtin, Farhad, Shirin Khosravi. (CZC)

**Rostam Khodamerad Khosravi**, husband of Homa Marzbanian, father of Fereidoon, Fariba, Fardad, Farshid. (CZC)

**Rusi Nariman Bharucha**, husband of Banoo, father of Zarrin (Zarir), Kersasp (Tazeen), grandfather of Zahra, Anaita, Cyrus in Port Moody, BC on October 2, 2020.

### *A Tribute To Ali Akbar Jafarey*

#### *A Fallen Limb*

*A limb has fallen from the family tree  
I keep hearing a voice that says "Grieve not for  
me"*

*Remember the best times, the laughter, the song.  
The good life I lived while I was strong.  
Continue my heritage, I'm counting on you  
Keep smiling and surely the sun will shine  
through.*

*My mind is at ease, my soul is at rest.  
Remembering all, how I truly was blessed.  
Continue traditions, no matter how small.  
Go on with your life, don't worry about falls.  
I miss you all dearly, so keep your chin up*

*Author unknown*

## Looking for a Soul Mate?

Also try these matrimonial sites and services:

[www.ParsiShaadi.com](http://www.ParsiShaadi.com). This initiative of the Jiyo Parsi program is now available as the "Parsi Shaadi" app.  
[www.zoroastrianmatrimony.com](http://www.zoroastrianmatrimony.com)  
[www.chaalokaajkariye.com](http://www.chaalokaajkariye.com)  
[www.Matrimonial.Zoroastrianism.com](http://www.Matrimonial.Zoroastrianism.com)  
[www.zoroastrians.net](http://www.zoroastrians.net)  
[www.TheParsiMatch.com](http://www.TheParsiMatch.com)  
[www.shaadi.com](http://www.shaadi.com)  
[www.ParsiMatrimony.com](http://www.ParsiMatrimony.com)  
[www.MatrimonialParsiZoroastrianism.com](http://www.MatrimonialParsiZoroastrianism.com)  
Mrs. Gool Banaji, Parel, Mumbai, [goolpesi@gmail.com](mailto:goolpesi@gmail.com), tel: 91-22-2416 6120.

PLEASE SEND ALL SUBMISSIONS FOR MILESTONES TO MAHRUKH MOTAFRAM  
TEL 425-961-0298  
[MAHRUKHM83@GMAIL.COM](mailto:MAHRUKHM83@GMAIL.COM)

## Matrimonial

Male, 27, 5' 8". M.S. Mechanical Engineering, Working as Senior Product Engineer in Indiana. Enjoys sports, fitness, movies, music, travelling, trying different cuisines. Held national titles in table-tennis in India. Contact [Varachhawala.arzan@gmail.com](mailto:Varachhawala.arzan@gmail.com). [M18.59]

Male, 27, Master of Science in Business and Information Systems (New Jersey Institute of Technology), Senior Product Manager in Information Technology and Services industry in New York, NY. Contact 1 (551) 267 2903. [M20.21]

Female, 30, 5' 6", MBA in Finance, working with Price Water Cooper PWC in US Taxation department, in Bangalore. Enjoys reading, traveling, classical music, plays piano. Interested in meeting well-educated, well-placed professional, preferably from USA or Canada. Contact [dnmotafram@yahoo.com](mailto:dnmotafram@yahoo.com). [F20.23]

Female, 25, 5' 5", Bachelor of Pharmacy from India, Diploma in Pharmacy Technician in Canada. Currently working as a Pharmacy Assistant in Toronto. PR for Canada in process. Contact aunt Ruby Umrigar at [rubyumrigar@yahoo.com](mailto:rubbyumrigar@yahoo.com). [F20.31]

Female, 26, 5' 4". BSc(Hons) Banking and International Finance, London. Chartered Accountant from Inst of

Chartered Accountants of England and Wales (ICAEW). Working as Senior Associate at PriceWaterhouseCoopers, London. Interested in well-educated professional boy. Kindly contact on [sblondon2009@gmail.com](mailto:sblondon2009@gmail.com) or call +44 796 009 9242. [F20.32].

Male, 28, 5' 8". Masters in Aeronautical Engineering from Imperial College, London. Working as Assistant Vice President at HSBC Bank, London. From a conservative family and well settled. Kindly contact on [sblondon2009@gmail.com](mailto:sblondon2009@gmail.com) or call +44 796 009 9242. [M20.34].

Female, 28, 5' 5", Bachelor of Arts in Media Culture and Communications. Advanced Diploma in Special Events and Wedding Planning. Working as Event Sales and Coordination Manager in Sydney, Australia. Born in Mumbai -- moved with family to Sydney at age 4. Contact [K\\_engineer@hotmail.com](mailto:K_engineer@hotmail.com) +61 424 768 765. [F20.35].

Female, 30, 5' 3", M.A. in Sociology from Mumbai. Early Childhood Education diploma from Ryerson University, Toronto. Working as Early Childhood Educator in Toronto. Enjoys baking, dancing, watching movies. Hardworking, passionate about work, outgoing, religious, good family values. Contact [dalzin777@gmail.com](mailto:dalzin777@gmail.com). [F20]

FEZANA Journal will coordinate initial contacts between interested parties. We do not assume any responsibility for verifying credentials. Contact Roshan Rivetna at [roshanrivetna@gmail.com](mailto:roshanrivetna@gmail.com).



# Obituary

## An Ode to Grandpa: An Officer and a Gentleman 1931 - 2020

On June 25th, 2020, Jamsheed Kanga passed away, after 88 years in service of community and country. Born and bred in Nagpur, Jamsheed completed his education with a Bachelor of Arts with honors and a degree in Law. He then joined the Indian Administrative Service to serve his country. India had recently gained independent from the British and the sacrifices and hard work of our freedom fighters was still fresh in the minds of young officers like Jamsheed.

Jamsheed started his career as a Supernumerary Assistant Collector in Poona, he was honest to the core and despite his seniors' disapproval, he stopped the use of collectorate jeeps for campaigning by the elected officials in power. He carried this practice to his next posting as Assistant Collector of Satara, here he met his future wife, Firoza Cooper, the granddaughter of Sir Dhanjishah Cooper, Chief Minister of the State of Bombay and the founder of Cooper Engineering Works.

His next posting was in Parbhani, a relatively undeveloped district of Marathwada where his success and potential was noticed by the Ford Foundation. He was selected for a prestigious Fellowship at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government for an M.A. in Public Administration, being taught by Henry Kissinger, John Kenneth Galbraith and other influential thinkers of the time.

One of his most prestigious positions was Municipal Commissioner of Mumbai. He dealt with corruption and pressure, yet managed to build bridges between the public and private sector, while working tirelessly to preserve the heritage of Mumbai, particularly its wonderful, old architecture. Mr. D. M. Sukthankar, ex-Municipal Commissioner of Mumbai said, *"Endowed with a spontaneously genial, warm and helpful disposition, Jamsheed had easily endeared himself to one and all. Deeply committed to high moral and intellectual integrity among civil servants, he was truly a role model for his service colleagues. Jamsheed had a genuine concern for them and not only believed in and espoused their mentoring but also actively practiced it."*

Jamsheed was a devout Parsi who lived according to the tenets of good words, good thoughts,



and good deeds. He took active interest in the affairs of the community, particularly the less fortunate. As a Trustee of the Parsi Panchayat he facilitated the building of Godrej Baug and personally convinced the State Government to provide land for building BPP's "Spenta" apartments. He was instrumental in the creation of a Parsi Prayer Hall for those who preferred to be cremated and a place where friends and family from all faiths could attend. His close friend, architect of the prayer hall and Tata Advisor, Homi Khusrookhan, said of Jamsheed.: *"I guess there are so many things he must have done to help people, but Jamsheed never bragged about his achievements over his long and illustrious career."*

Jamsheed was an inspiration to everyone, especially to his family and four grandchildren. To me, he was a man who stood unshaken by stress, trouble, or petty concerns. He was always jovial, ready for a good chat, and to help any and everyone who could benefit from his guidance or connections. Thanks grandpa, for teaching and inspiring me to live like a true Zarathushti!

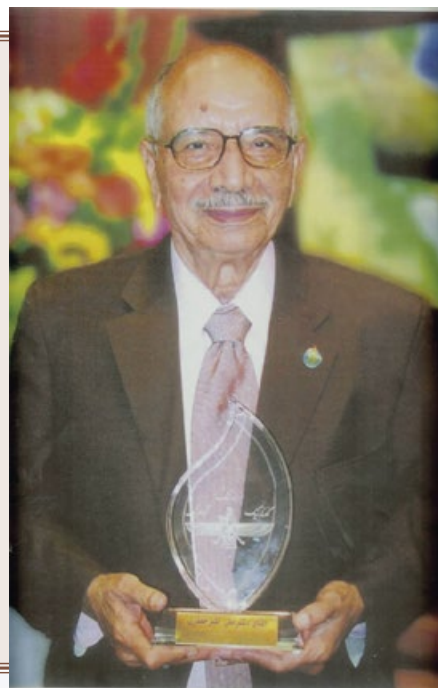
**Dario Dhabar, your grandson**

## Ali Jafarey – February 7, 1921- October 6, 2020

FEZANA Journal is saddened to learn of the passing of Dr Ali A Jafarey a scholar of Zoroastrian religion and an accomplished author and speaker of the Gathas, spreading the message of Zarathushtra around the world. We rejoice in his life devoted to the greater understanding of the Zoroastrian religion and its rich philosophy, we thank Ahura Mazda for giving us the benefit of his presence on this earth for almost 100 years to teach us the deep meaning of religion.

May his soul rest in ever lasting peace and keep guiding and looking after his beloved community world wide. Our condolences to his children: Nahid, Nasrin, Nozar and Naghmeh, and his extended family and friends and wish them peace and tranquility.

Dolly Dastoor Ph.D FEZANA Journal



# My reflections on Dr. Ali Jafarey

In the days since Dr. Ali Jafarey passed, beautiful and emotional tributes and reflections from dear friends, family, students, colleagues, and even those who only briefly met the kind and generous gentleman, have flowed across social media and ZOOM, across emails and phone lines, and across the pages of countless news outlets. The tributes recount his phenomenal and remarkable life completely dedicated to enacting the meaning and inspiration of The Gathas. Dr. Jafarey was a sage and scholar, a teacher and a student, who transformed the practice of Zoroastrianism by providing an opportunity for anyone who embraced The Gathas to choose the faith.

One day in February of 2019, days after his 99th birthday, I met Dr. Jafarey during a visit with his dear friend, Mr. Darius Irani in California. As a Zoroastrian who chose the faith after a decade of research, reflection and observation, the day was a dream for me. At Dr. Jafarey's insistence, we ate sweets and samosas from an Armenian-Iranian bakery and dined on khoresh and kabob in an Iranian restaurant where he was a regular guest of honor. Throughout the day we discussed impromptu lessons that included a deep dive into the pluralistic organization of the Persian Empire under the Achaemenids, the Zoroastrian tolerance for all faiths, and insight on the word "samosa" rooted in the word "se" or three in Farsi; the three-cornered food, he suggested, was a Sassanian invention that traveled to India with

Zoroastrians. But I also learned about the history of the Zarathushtrian Assembly, his efforts to support women becoming mobedyars, and his work around the globe. During that brief day in California, the qualities that so many people spoke and wrote of in tributes throughout the past several days after his passing, were prominent:

The overwhelming sense of closeness and friendship that individuals felt with Dr. Jafarey, even through a relationship built only on discussion over emails; a source of inspiration to study The Gathas and practice self-betterment through the study of rational science and the insights of The Gathas; a mentor and teacher, always sharing wisdom and knowledge, but listening and waiting for each of us to find the answers within; a brilliant scholar, linguist, but first and foremost a humble and kind gentleman connected with others through his humanity and honesty and commitment to equality.

I listened today to the beautiful service in honor of Dr. Jafarey's life that was held by the CZC on ZOOM. I can't claim a friendship or acquaintance, and I only visited the Zarathushtrian Assembly on that one day in February, but his impact on my life--dedicating his life to sharing the message of The Gathas, daily putting the Gatha's into practice, and providing the means for many of us to make a choice--was transformative, may his life long work inspire us all to grow motivated to do the hard work of forging equality for all and the importance of knowing and learning through self-betterment.

*Anne Khademian, President, ZAMWI*





# Between the Covers

## HUNTED BY THE SKY (VOLUME 1 OF THE WRATH OF AMBAR SERIES)

Author Tanaz Bhathena  
US Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux (FSG), a division of Macmillan (2020)  
Pages: 384 pages; Cost (US): \$18.99  
ISBN: 9780374313098  
Source: <https://us.macmillan.com/books/9780374313098>

You know an author's put the legwork into the fictional world they intend to build when you find yourself looking at a map of said world as you turn the first pages of a book. Tanaz Bathena's first foray into the land of Svapnalok, a fantastical version of medieval India, is crafted with care and a simple elegance.

After seeing her parents murdered at the hands of the kingdom's elite warriors, and under the orders of the tyrannical King Lohar of Ambar, Gul, the story's protagonist, sets out to avenge them. As fate (and the necessities of narrative pacing) would have it, her travels lead her almost directly to the people best placed to help her achieve her goal – the Sisters of the Golden Lotus, a group of women learned in the art of combat, both magical and conventional. While Gul trains to try and coax the latent magic in her to reveal itself when she needs it, and so complete her quest for revenge, the star-shaped birth mark on her arm convinces the Sisters that Gul is the warrior prophesied to end Lohar's reign.

During her time with the Sisters, Gul crosses paths with the non-magi, Cavas, and thus finds herself a means of entering the king's palace, where Cavas works as a stable hand. Though it's clear at the outset that Gul has a greater destiny ahead of her, Cavas' role in the grander scheme of things is less clear. Shunted to the periphery of Ambar's society and

made to live with his fellow non-magi (non-magicians) in the tenements outside the capital, it would be easy to cast him as the faithful supporting character and leave it at that, but there is more to Cavas than meets the eye.

Though slightly shorter than the average fantasy tome (around 350 pages, though note that a sequel is in the works), *Hunted by the Sky* examines a number of themes, none more obvious, or more topical, than the class system in place in Ambar – only here, the advantaged and the disadvantaged are divided according to whether or not they can perform magic. While doubtless apt for a story set in what could be India (a country that has been defined for centuries by its own caste system), it isn't hard to draw parallels with the wider current sociopolitical landscape, and with the current pandemic throwing into even sharper relief the societal structures that reinforce inequalities.

Another, more subtle, theme is the role of destiny and the wisdom (or lack of) in heeding the words of prophecy. Gul is clearly the warrior who's been foretold to overthrow Lohar, but as with most prophecies, acting on an isolated tidbit of information with little idea of the context and how the consequences will play out is never the best idea.

The characters have been skilfully portrayed too. While Gul, spunky, charming and brave though she is, may at times come off as slightly derivative, this could partly be attributed to the fact that the fantasy/young adult genre has become so over-saturated in recent years with what we now come to expect as the strong female lead, that it feels like any more additions become almost



a cliché at this point. Nonetheless, Gul's single-mindedness, to the point where she often can't see beyond the immediate consequences of her desire for revenge, make for a beautifully flawed protagonist, and one the reader may not always agree with.

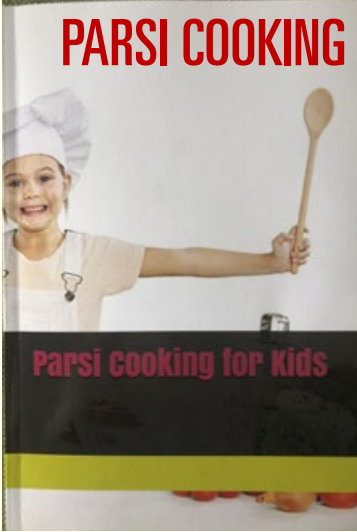
On the other hand, Cavas is a more nuanced character, driven by a motivation that is more wholesome than Gul's (his desperation to keep his ailing father alive and well). His levelheadedness and realistic outlook, coupled with moments of anger and bitterness over society's treatment of him, make him well-rounded and more relatable.

The story itself is told in first person, largely from the viewpoint of the two main characters. The author's writing style is crisp, efficient, and to the point, with some wit subtly woven in.

While *Hunted by the Sky* falls squarely into the genre of young adult fiction, it's really for anyone who's willing to let their imagination run free and immerse themselves in a world that is both familiar yet strange. An added bonus for this reviewer was that having spent much of their life reading fantasy written by Western authors and set in fictional lands that more closely resemble medieval or modern Europe, it was a treat to find a story set in a place that is more reminiscent of home.

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

## PARSI COOKING FOR KIDS



Rita Kapadia's *Parsi Cooking for Kids* is a fun way to help

your child get interested in Parsi food. Starting with simple instructions for akuri (Spiced scrambled eggs), pora, sali par edu, it goes on to cutlets and green chutney! Easy recipes like chutney sandwiches are idea to start with. More ambitious kids can cook roasted chicken (needs cooked chicken as an ingredient) and veggies, almond macaroons or creamy custard! The badam pak recipe is so simple I had to try it myself, while the sev



recipe is a no-brainer! This is a great present for kids, parents or grandparents. Each recipe is simple, and includes a brief log:

I made this with my \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_. My name \_\_\_\_\_. It will be a treasured memory book when you have made some or all of the recipes with your child. Purchase on Amazon for \$ 9.99 for paperback and \$4.99 for e.book

## THUS REPLIED ZARATHUSTRA BY ANN VAN SEVENANT

No of Pages 183 Price : \$19.99/ Pounds 15.99/ Euro 18,00

Available on Amazon and other online book dealers,

Publisher, MIMESIS INTERNATIONAL e-mail: [info@mimesisinternational.com](mailto:info@mimesisinternational.com)

ISBN: 9788869772252 Book Series: Philosophy, n. 34

### ZARATHUSTRA'S GATHAS

Composer Janpieter Biesemans, Op. 154 /2012

**Book and CD reviewed by Farobag Cooper**

### INTRODUCTION

**Two** intellectually challenging works received from Europe have raised the tempo of Zoroastrian studies. A contemporary analysis of the Gathas by Belgian Philosopher, Dr. Ann Van Sevenant, in "Thus Replied Zarathustra", and a musical composition of thirteen sacred hymns in "Zarathustra Gathas", opus 154/2012, by another Belgian, Composer Janpieter Biesemans, are reviewed below by our savant, Farobag Cooper.

Apart from the common country origin of the works, there

is yet another link between them in that Dr. Van Sevenant has also written the text of the Gathic verses sung in the CD and paraphrased them into English. Starting with the initial stanza of Yasna 28.1, "*ahyâ yâsâ nemanghâ*", which is lilingly rendered as "With uplifted arms, O Wise One, I pray and humbly ask for the perfect bliss", she ends with the stanza in Yasna 53.9, "*tat mazdâ tavâ xshathrem yâ erezhejyôî dâhî drigaove vahyo*", fittingly concluding the performance with a call to "O wise One, only in your sublime reign shall the doers of right benefit from the best of life." Accompanying the CD is a 6-page booklet containing the text

of the thirteen hymns in Avesta and English. Both the reader and the listener will indeed benefit from these two innovative works.

"Thus Replied Zarathustra" is available for purchase on Amazon.com, while Dr. Van Sevenant has sent to us multiple copies of the CD, to be distributed as gifts to those who purchase her book. We will send them, for payment of mailing costs of US\$7.00 (US & Canada only) to the book purchasers who request them. Please write to [dollydastoor@sympatico.ca](mailto:dollydastoor@sympatico.ca)

*(Kersi B. Shroff, Derwood, Maryland).*

# THUS REPLIED ZARATHUSTRA

BY ANN VAN SEVENANT

Being a musicologist, a conductor, a practicing Zoroastrian, and a student of moral philosophy in higher education, the title of this book was not only very appealing but revealing in several dimensions. All I could do was to be like a sponge soaking up the new through sheer inquisitiveness enabling myself to unlocking the myriad doors hitherto unknown or unexamined. As Socrates uttered his famous dictum during his trial for impiety (as described in Plato's Apology): the unexamined life is not worth living. The pursuit of wisdom through questioning and logical argument was the most important pursuit above all else. Likewise, the five Gathas in seventeen chapters composed in a poetic setting as songs which indubitably leads to maintain retention which is paramount to preservation in an oral tradition is a dialogue between Zarathustra and Ahura Mazda in the form of questions and answers where Zarathustra unlocks his Vohu Mana, the good mind with the help of Asha to formulate his own answers.

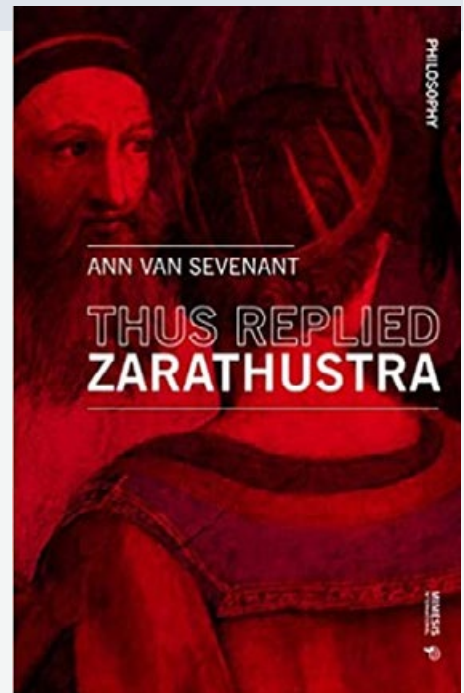
The title of this wonderfully written and researched book by Ann van Sevenant, Thus Replied Zarathustra, might be very familiar to philosophers and musicians alike

since Friedrich Nietzsche wrote Also Sprach Zarathustra (1885) and subsequently Richard Strauss composed his tone poem, op.30 with the same title (1896) inspired by Nietzsche's philosophy who revered Oriental religions and Persian culture and strived to go beyond the seemingly banal concepts of good versus evil and explored the revolutionary concept of thinking for oneself and discarding authoritarian prescriptions.

But thinking for oneself has become exceedingly difficult with the social mores dictated by our society's values, religious and political influences. Refreshingly, Ms. Sevenant does not capitulate in thought and word when addressing this cumbersome topic which has recently been relegated to our chosen political saviors who are entrusted to lead us followers to rapture. As she postulates on page 176,

*"True empowerment of the people may come from scarcity and necessity, although it may also stem from a process of unmasking the self-interested leaders at the top, who try to convince others that misleading is the best way to safeguard one's own welfare."*

Yet another important topic of our



day and age which Ms. Sevenant lends quite a few thoughts on is philosophical ecology since the Gathas do address a good environment (34,14) and respect for the planet we reside on and its related elements. While a particularity abhorrent idea of free will can relegate the debate on climate change into oblivion, reflection and responsibility need to be on the forefront in order that indifference and injustice be countered. Freedom, after all, is about emancipating ourselves from delusions of grandeur. Yes, we can strive for greatness but not at the expense of being grated.

## Zarathustra Gathas

### Composer Janpieter Biesemans, Op. 154 /2012

**The performers: vocalist (singer), Barbro Gullentops; violinist, Naomi Vercauteren; lute player Jonas Scheyes.**

There are three instruments featured on this CD, a violin, a lute, and a soprano. A lute, an instrument most of us don't hear nor see in a modern setting, somewhat sounds like a guitar though it may have many more strings that were plucked and was actually quite common even

up to the time of Franz Schubert (1797-1828) fell dormant then for about a century and was later revived. On this CD it is used as a solo instrument as well as an accompanying one for the violinist and soprano. The composer is Janpieter Biesemans, a Belgian

born in 1939 and conductor of the Consortium Antiquum which he founded in 1964 and, as the name suggests, indubitably gave rise to his interests in the ancient Gathas and composed this setting for some of the Gathas in 2012 before his early demise in 2016.

While there have been quite a lot of so-called composers trying their hand to lend a musical landscape to the Gathas lately, Biesemans is one of only two composers who has actually touched my soul and deservedly so. The other one is also a Belgian, Parizad Irani, whose works I introduced to Western audiences with the Zoroastrian Symphony Orchestra in Houston, Chicago and Toronto.

This CD displayed the composer's predilection for using all twelve tones of our modern chromatic scale instead of just limiting it to our major or minor seven tone formats. Although I have not seen the written score of this work, it is apparent from listening that he desired to emulate the various ancient Greek modes in his setting and many a times depicted the Diabolus in Musica interval (six semitones apart)

to portray the Sturm und Drang (storm and stress) in the violin part. For those who are mathematically astute, the difference between one semitone to the one adjacent to it is the 12th root of two. The extremely versatile violinist also played her part without vibrato which provided the performance a unique sensibility.

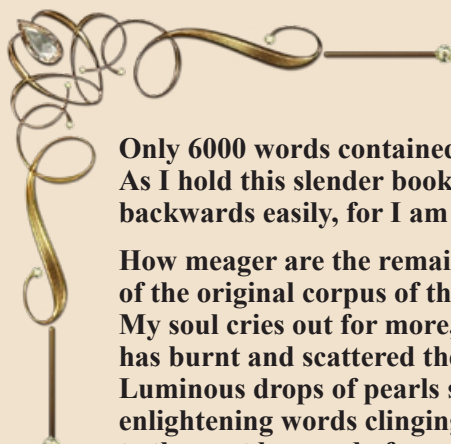
Biesemans also incorporated double stops or dyads (two tones played at the same time) particularly the open strings on the violin in the beginning tracts but then expanding in thirds, sixth, and octaves in the later tracts. For emulating the Grecian modes, the composer especially favored the Phrygian, Lydian, and the Hungarian modes imbuing the listener with extremes of emotion.

The one aspect that I desired was the three instrumentalists conjoining with one another and the composer



did just that on the last tract aptly named the Postludium. If feasible, I would welcome all three to come here and join me once with the Zoroastrian Symphony Orchestra in the future.

*Farobag Homi Cooper is the Music Director of the Zoroastrian Symphony Orchestra from the year 2000 and was also the Director of the Chicago Philharmonic Orchestra from 1985-2002. His interest in our Gathas stems from his conviction that eloquent words of comfort and grace can help embolden the heavenly love flowing from the music.*



## THE ABODE OF SONGS

**Only 6000 words contained within 238 verses.**

**As I hold this slender book in my hands, open at Spenta Mainyun 1, Yasna 147 the cover bends backwards easily, for I am approaching the end.**

**How meager are the remains  
of the original corpus of the Gathas.  
My soul cries out for more, but time  
has burnt and scattered these sacred writings.**

**Luminous drops of pearls strung on a glowing chain, they transform our simple being these 6000 enlightening words clinging to the rope that binds each century, bequeathed from one generation to the next by word of mouth, through the annals of ancient Iran, a living legacy.**

**Transport me to the days when you and Maidhyoimanha wandered the cities and plains in search of followers.**

**I will trek beside you.**

**Let me hear the rising and falling cadence of your voice.**

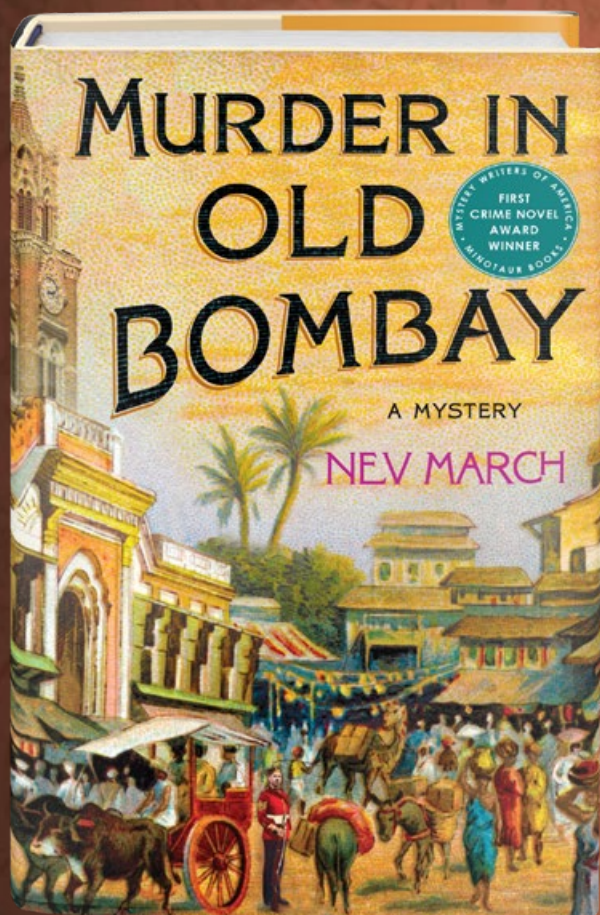
**Oh Zarathustra, seek me out with your lustrous eyes.**

**Open the door so I may walk with you in the abode of songs.**

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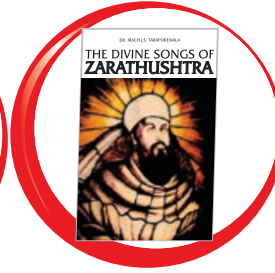
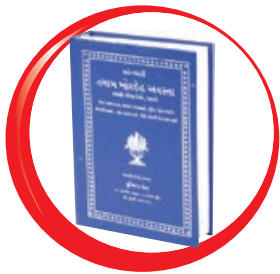
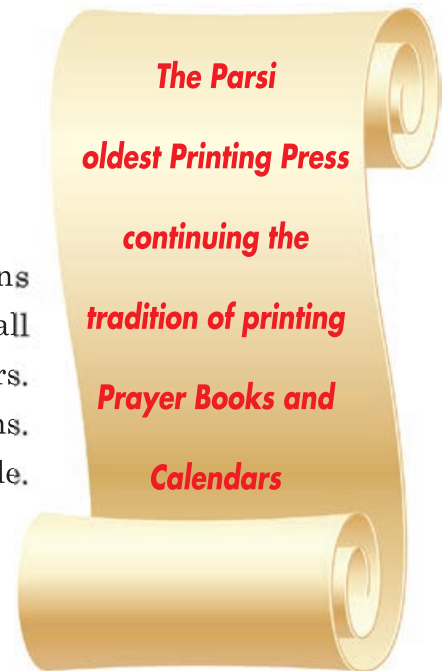
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