

A journey of 1000 miles begins with the first mile. Ours began in 1973.
[\(https://zagny.org/history-of-zagny/\)](https://zagny.org/history-of-zagny/)

1920's Era: (Pre-ZAGNY):

The first Zoroastrian Association in the New York area was formed on November 10, 1929, with seven persons present, among them the organizer Mr. Phiroze Saklatwala and Mr. Rustamji Wadia (who lived long enough to also become a member of ZAGNY for 15 years). This association folded after the death of Mr. Saklatwala, who was not only the founder but also the main financier. Mr. Saklatwala's death coincided with the arrival of the Great Depression, which financially devastated other affluent Zoroastrians of New York as well as the original association.

1960's Era: Zoroastrians of Tri-state Area grew from 14 attendees (1966) to 100+:



The Zoroastrians of New York continued to meet on Jamshedi and Shahanshahi Navroze at private homes, or at various NYC area restaurants like Mr. Rustamji Wadia's called "India Ceylon." Usually, 10 to 15 people would attend the Navroze celebration from the early to mid-nineteen-sixties.

In 1966, Homi Dalal and Veera Dalal (a brother and a sister team pictured on left) took the initiative to arrange for a Navroze function at the International House (IH).¹ Since Veera was a resident of IH, the total cost of renting the hall, including all china, crockery, and cleaning expenses after the event was only \$5. IH agreed to rent their hall for a maximum occupancy of 50. More importantly, IH allowed the use of their industrial kitchen between 9 and 11 pm.

During 1966 and 1967, attendance at the March and September functions approached 60, well beyond the maximum allowed occupancy. In March 1968, Homi Dalal (now Dr. Homi Dalal) left New York City for better opportunities elsewhere. Lovji Cama completed his doctorate, and was tasked with finding a hall that could accommodate more than 60 attendees.

From 1968 to 1972 Lovji arranged to rent Butler Hall at Columbia University which accommodated 100 fellow Zoroastrians. After 1972 until we purchased our first Dar-e-Mehr, we organized functions at the United Nations International School, and various churches and schools in New York City, and Long Island. By the Grace of Ahuramazda, what four pioneering Zoroastrians, Erach Munshi, Lovji Cama, Homi Dalal and Veera Dalal, began in 1966, continues until today.

The 1970's Era:

In the formative years of ZAGNY's existence, we were fortunate to have the pro bono legal service provided by Lyle Stewart, Esq. In those days, typewriter and carbon paper were king. Computers were not yet in common use. Lyle was a Peace Corps volunteer based in Bangalore (now Bengaluru) so he had come across Parsis. He was patient, and eager to help the community. For every correction we visited his office on Water Street. Needless to say, this young and able attorney guided us until he moved to Denver years later. Some ZAGNYmembers are still in touch with Mr. Lyle Stewart in 2024.

¹ International House New York, also known as I-House, is a private, independent, non-profit residence and program center for postgraduate students, research scholars, trainees, and interns, located at 500 Riverside Drive, Manhattan, New York City. International House of New York - Wikipedia

In 1973, a need was felt to formally organize ourselves into an association and approximately twenty individuals including Erach Munshi, Lovji Cama, Farrokh Patel, Mehru Jahina (Cama), Khushru Hakim, Lovji Hakim, Khushroo Patel, Framroze K. Patel, Edul Daver, Jehan Daruwala, Tehmasp Dotiwala, Jal Guzdar, Pilloo Irani, Dara Sutaria, and Rusi Sanjana attended a meeting at the home of Naval and Pervize Sidhwa on Staten Island. There, they selected a slate of nine individuals to form a committee. The mandate of the committee was to write the constitution and by-laws of the new association, to run the first formal election on the following Jamshedi Navroz, and to continue to organize the two annual dinners.

Elections were duly held. In 1973, the first elected Board of Directors of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) comprised Mr. Erach Munshi as President, the late Mr. Naval Sidhwa as the vice president, and Mr. Framroze K. Patel as treasurer. Dr. Lovji Cama was secretary, Mr. Khushroo Patel was joint secretary, while Mr. Rohinton Cama, Mr. Jehan Daruwala, Mrs. Nancy Daruwala, and Mr. Rusi Sanjana were members at large.

Since then, successive boards under the presidency of the late Mr. Erach Munshi (from inception through two terms 1974-76 and 1976-78), Dr. Lovji Cama (1978-80), Mr. Framroze K. Patel (1980-82), the late Mr. Faroke Gandhi (1982-84), the late Mrs. Ivy Gandhi (1984-86), late Mr. Erach Munshi (two additional terms 1986-88 and 1988-90), Mr. Astad Clubwala (four terms 1990-92, 1992-94 and then again 2014-17, 2017-20), and late Prof. Kaikhosrov D. Irani (1994-96). The initial two-year terms for the board were changed to three-year terms, effective in the fiscal year 1996. Mr. Gev Nentin served for four terms (1996-99, 99-02, and then again from 2008-11, 2011-14), Mr. Homi Gandhi (two terms 2002-05, and 2005-08), and Dr. Khursheed Navder (two terms 2020-23, 2023-26).

In 1973, religion classes for children were started and these have run continuously until today. The organizers were Pervez Patel, Nancy Daruwala, and Lovji Cama. The classes were held on the First Sunday of the month from September through June. The classes are organized by Lovji D. Cama and assisted by many teachers, some of whom have taught classes for over twenty years. In recent years, children from Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey (ZAPANJ) and the Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston (ZAGBA) have joined the children from ZAGNY at the Joint Religion class in September.

The Need for a Place for the Zoroastrian Community:

In late 1973, the Zoroastrian community saw it necessary to have a place the community could call its own. This is what the community envisioned:

“This place would become a center of our social and religious activities, where we can have a library, a place for worship, and where we can have religion classes. We feel that such a place is a necessity and without which, it will be extremely difficult, and perhaps impossible, to maintain our identity in this country.

We are making a small but first step to a very desirable goal. In the tradition of Zoroastrian charity, let us all contribute whatever one can, as often as one can, to this special fund. The goal we have set for ourselves, though modest for most communities, and for us because of our small size, seems at present like a dream. But on the fulfillment of that dream depends the very survival of our community.” (Source: [About DMZT, Zagny Newsletter.](#))

In June 1974 the office bearers of ZAGNY made a plea to members needing a permanent place to meet, a community center. With a miniscule membership consisting mostly of young professionals with school-age children who were just beginning to establish themselves, the dream seemed an impossible one. After a year, we had accumulated only \$1,500 in our special fund. That was enough to buy just one square foot of land in Manhattan. However, somebody up there moved in mysterious ways, and the Zoroastrian community eventually realized its goal.

The First Dar-e-Mehr, 1977:

In 1975, Dr. Rustam Sarfeh attended the Shanshahi Navroz dinner, which was held at the United Nations School, and was impressed by the number of Zoroastrians, both Parsi and Iranian, who attended and were concerned about the lack of their own meeting place. During a visit to Iran a few months later, Dr. Rustam Sarfeh met Arbab Rustam and Khanum Morvarid Guiv. He spoke with them about the struggling Zoroastrian community in the New York area. Arbab Guiv showed his desire to help us build a community center. Arbab's initial donation of \$92,000 was subsequently increased to \$125,000 to complete the renovation. The community is forever grateful to Arbab Guiv and Khanum Morvarid Guiv.

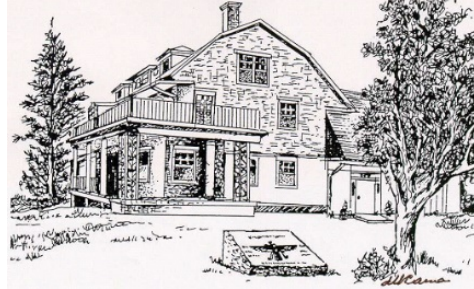
Dr. Rustam Sarfeh brought back the good news, and the search for a suitable building in the tri-state area began. The board spent many weekends and evenings scouting different properties in the area. Arbab and Morvarid Guiv visited New York the following summer and were shown three properties that had been selected by members of the community.

Mr. Guiv liked a simple church in New Jersey (Mr. Farrokh R. Patel had been instrumental in finding it) and an offer was made. However, the deal fell through. The search was resumed and eventually the property at 246 Weyman Avenue, New Rochelle, New York was purchased in May 1977. Arbab Rustam Guiv offered to renovate it so that it would be suitable as a community center and place of worship. Ervad Noshir Hormuzdiar played a significant role in this initial renovation.

The Dar-e-Mehr Zoroastrian Temple (DMZT) was formed in 1977 as a religious corporation under Section 10 of the Religious Corporations Act of New York State to own the property in New Rochelle, with Arbab Guiv, Dr. Rostam Sarfeh, Mr. Erach Munshi, Dr. Lovji Cama, Mr. Framroze K. Patel, and Ervad Pervez Patel as the first trustees. The Dar-e-Mehr was inaugurated in December 1977 in the presence of Arbab and Morvarid Guiv, Dr. and Mrs. Sarfeh and a majority of the active members of the community. A Jashan ceremony performed by priests from the New York and Philadelphia area began the ceremonies, followed by speeches of welcome by Arbab Guiv, Dr. Sarfeh, Mr. Erach Munshi, and others.

The guest of honor was Mr. Nani A. Palkhivala, the Indian Ambassador to the USA. Professor Stanley Insler of Yale University was the keynote speaker. Thus, the first Arbab Rustam Guiv Dar-e-Mehr in North America was established. The Dar-e-Mehr was managed on a day-to-day basis by ZAGNY, along with a supervisory board of trustees of the Dar-e-Mehr Zoroastrian Temple, DMZT, (the corporate entity, owning real estate property). Three trustees were appointed by Arbab Rustam Guiv. After his death the trustees were appointed by the Arbab Guiv Foundation. The remaining three trustees were appointed by ZAGNY.

This arrangement was in contradiction to the Religious Corporations Law under which the DMZT was incorporated. In later years, it led to a legal dispute around ownership of the property. The Dar-e-Mehr became the home of ZAGNY and the first Zoroastrian Community Center in North America. It was the first place in North America where Zoroastrians could gather to worship, to reinforce their identity, to meet regularly for religion classes, perform Navjotes and weddings, and celebrate the festivals of Navroz and New Year according to the Shenshai calendar. Here is a picture of four initial trustees. Farrokh R. Patel, Framroze K. Patel, Ervad Pervez P. Patel, and Dr, Lovji D. Cama. (Source: Special Issue, May 2016, Inauguration News Letter.)



Thus, the first Dar-e-Mehr opened in North America at 249 Weyman Ave, New Rochelle, NY, in presence of Dr. Rustam Sarfeh, Arbab Rustam Guiv, Khanum Morvarid Guiv, Erach Munshi, and the ZAGNY Board and Zoroastrians from tri-state area.

ZAGNY Organizes its First Congress, 1979:

In 1979, ZAGNY organized the Third North American Congress, a one-and-a-half-day event. The first day's session was held at the Dar-e-Mehr and the second day's session was held at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, near the United Nations in Manhattan. The organizers were ZAGNY president Dr. Lovji Cama, Prof. Kaikhosrov Dinshaw Irani, Framroze K. Patel, and the ZAGNY Board. Carnegie did not charge us for the facility. A newly arrived team of brothers-in-law chaired two sessions: the late Dr. Dinshaw F. Bardoliwala (University of Massachusetts) and Dr. Noshir A. Langrana (of Cornell University). Through the years, Dinshaw remained an enthusiastic member of ZAGNY and served ZAGNY in various capacities. Registration for *this one-and-a-half-day Congress, was the princely sum of \$19.50 per person!*

Professor Kaikhosrov Irani arranged the academic program on the second day. Because of Professor Irani's connections into the academic world, over the years ZAGNY has been able to organize excellent seminars on various aspects of Zoroastrianism and religious thought. To date, at least one conference or seminar is held each year.

The 1980's Era:

Ivy F Gandhi Zoroastrian Kids Camp 1982:²

In 1982, ZAGNY became the first association in the U.S. and perhaps North America to organize a youth camp for Zoroastrian kids, which was named after the ZAGNY board's first lady president, Ivy F. Gandhi.

Even after 41 years, the program continues to be popular, however, it was suspended during the Covid pandemic.

Most of these camps have been at the Dar-E-Mehr and are attended by ~20-35 children and ~10 adult chaperones. Occasionally, like the 34th annual Z-Camp organized during the 2016 Father's Day weekend was at Camp Me He Tu in Harriman State Park.

The Good Life Program Introduced- 1982:

The Good Life Program, approved by the Boy Scouts of America, was introduced in 1982, primarily to:

- make Zoroastrian youth more aware of their faith, its outlook, and achievements,
- encourage them to achieve a meaningful spiritual experience in living their faith, and
- inculcate the practice of religion of the prophet Zarathustra.

² Ivy F. Gandhi Zoroastrian Kids Camp: 2016, reported by Mayyar Noushi, ZAGNY Newsletter, November 2016, p 1.

In 1982, it was imperative that Zoroastrian youths progressing towards Eagle Scout had to earn a religious badge. The Good Life program enabled the Zoroastrian Scout to fulfill that requirement.

The first edition of the Good Life book was published in 1982. The fourth edition was published in December 2015. Even after 40+ years, the Zoroastrian youths have enthusiastically embraced the program. If one wants to understand the Prophet's message, briefly and concisely, in less than two pages, one has only to read the epilog that was compiled by Prof. Kaikhosrov D. Irani and Dr. Lovji D. Cama. (<https://zagny.org/goodlife/>)

It is a matter of pride that Harvard University quotes the translation of "Fravarane, The Declaration of Faith" from ZAGNY's Good Life Book. (Source: The Pluralism Project: Harvard University. <https://pluralism.org/initiation-into-the-faith>.)

Influx of Iranian Zoroastrians During the 1980s:

During these years, there was a large influx of Iranian Zoroastrians who emigrated from Iran, settled in the tri-state region and became members of ZAGNY. The differences in language, customs, and even festivals between the Iranian and Parsi communities led to some dissension. In 1986, Iranian Zoroastrians felt that their own association would better serve their needs and the Iranian Zoroastrian Association (IZA) was formed. IZA shares the use of the Dar-e-Mehr with ZAGNY, although initially the management of the Dar-e-Mehr remained with ZAGNY.

After the passing away of Arbab Rustam Guiv, the Guiv Foundation discovered that the New York Dar-e-Mehr, by the nature of its incorporation, was owned by the community and demanded that ownership of the Dar-e-Mehr be transferred to the Foundation. They filed a quitclaim suit against the trustees of the Dar-e-Mehr Zoroastrian Temple with ZAGNY as a codefendant. Since the Dar-e-Mehr Zoroastrian Temple (DMZT) had no funds other than the property itself, ZAGNY became the main defendant.

After five years of litigation and an appeal to the Supreme Court of New York State, the court's verdict was in favor of DMZT as the legal owner of the Dar-e-Mehr property. Barry Marcus Esq., very ably represented ZAGNY, DMZT and individual trustees at reduced rates. ZAGNY member, Mr. Astad Clubwala successfully coordinated with Counselor Barry Marcus. The community owes a debt of gratitude to these individuals.

Initiation into the Faith: By Choice or Continue the Traditional Practice? (1980-83):

The Zoroastrian initiation ceremony, called *Navjote* by Parsi Zoroastrians or *Sudreh-Pushi* by Iranian Zoroastrians, is an investiture of a sacred shirt (*sudreh*) and sacred cord (*kushti*) worn throughout life as a reminder to live a good life. While the ceremony is performed in distinct ways by the Iranians and Parsis due to centuries of geographic separation of two communities, the underlying premise and function is the same. The initiation represents an affirmative choice to enter the faith and to live as a Zoroastrian.

The Navjote/Sudreh-Pushi reveals many key elements of the Zoroastrian faith. Unlike many other religious traditions, the rites of initiation for girls and boys in Zoroastrianism are precisely the same and the core belief in gender equality is reinforced by this practice.

Further, the initiation is intended to be a choice, underscoring the importance of intelligent reflection and centrality of human choice and ethical responsibility in Zoroastrian religious life. However, it also raises

the highly contested issues of conversion and intermarriage and the question of who may be considered a Zoroastrian. Responses vary widely.³

During 1982-83, there was much debate after Mr. Joseph Peterson, an enlightened twenty-seven-year-old individual of Euro-American of Christian parentage, made a declaration by reciting Kusti prayers and affirming that he is now the follower of the Prophet Zarathushtra, in presence of Zoroastrians. This event was held at Arbab Rustam Guiv Dar-e-Mehr at New Rochell, N.Y., on March 5, 1983. He was self-taught in the teaching of the Zoroastrian faith, which requires that every man makes a rational choice, and “harken to your best counsels and contemplated with your best judgement.”

Ervad Dr. Kersey Antia and Ervad Noshir Hormuzdiar were present during this momentous occasion. Because of this they were ostracized by many Zoroastrians, both in India and in North America. Many ordained priests refused to perform ceremonies with them. However, Ervad Hormuzdiar became the preferred priest among the younger generation because of his progressive views. Since that time, several individuals born of non-Zoroastrian parents have come into the faith, and through their private acceptance of faith.⁴ Within the small religious community of Zoroastrians, the debate surrounding conversion continues.

The 1990's Era and New Dar-e-Mehr:

Prof. Shaul Shaked, an Emeritus Professor at The Hebrew University Jerusalem visits Dar-e-Mehr: 1995.



Professor Shaul Shaked was a board member of the Invisible East program. He was a prominent scholar of Zoroastrian studies and contributed to the study of Zoroastrianism by expanding the repertoire of sources and traditions that were used to study the impact on religion in the Sasanian era.

In 1995, late Dr. Pallan Ichaporia, a member of ZAGNY and Prof Kaikhosrov D. Irani brought this illustrious scholar to the Dar-e-Mehr. After Kaikhosrov introduced him to the audience, he went to the podium and looked at the audience. He was speechless. He could not speak for more than five minutes or so. He had tears in his eyes and when he had composed himself, he uttered these words:

“All my life I was studying the religion of the Prophet Zarathustra and his message, and I believed His followers were long dead. Today I am amongst them.” This was the happiest day of his life. Those who attended recall how deeply moved Prof. Shaked had been. He finally met people who he had thought were long gone. ZAGNY made that possible.

New Zoroastrian Temple and Cultural Center (NZTCC):

During a time of uncertainty when the future home of ZAGNY was in jeopardy due to the ongoing legal action, a committee was formed to collect funds for a New Zoroastrian Temple and Cultural Center (NZTCC). This committee of about 10 individuals was under the leadership of Mr. Erach Munshi, Dr. Farokh Tarapore, and Mr. Farokh Deboo. They were able to collect nearly \$300,000 and pledges for an additional \$150,000 but were not able to meet the goal of nearly \$1,000,000 needed to complete the project within the three-year time limit that the committee had set for itself.

³ Initiation into the Faith | The Pluralism Project

⁴ Initiation into the Faith | The Pluralism Project

At the same time, the final decision of the courts regarding the legal case was handed down, securing the ownership of the Dar-e-Mehr to DMZT. The need for a new Dar-e-Mehr eliminated, the collected funds were returned to those who wanted them back, though many donors left their donations with ZAGNY, to be used for different purposes.

The interest collected in the NZTCC account could not legally be returned to the donors. This left ZAGNY with sufficient funds for a complete renovation of the Dar-e-Mehr, which was completed by the ZAGNY board under the able leadership of Mr. Astad Clubwala on Jamshedi Navroz, 1994.

Cost and Contribution of Joint Ownership by the Iranian Zoroastrian Association (IZA) & ZAGNY: with the ownership of the Dar-e-Mehr firmly established, the DMZT trustees decided to correct the situation of election of trustees and to provide suitable roles for both ZAGNY and IZA in the management of the Dar-e-Mehr. At a meeting of the trustees and the boards of ZAGNY and IZA, a formula was worked out by which representation on the board of trustees and the cost of running the Dar-e-Mehr would be divided between ZAGNY and IZA in proportion to their dues-paying membership.

The proportion worked out to be 5:1 ZAGNY: IZA, and was to be reviewed and changed, if necessary, every three years, with a minimum representation of one trustee from the smaller association. The trustees elected were Lovji Cama, Noshir Langrana, Astad J. Clubwala, Yasmin Ghadiali, Homi Gandhi, and Ardeshir Kiamanesh. The election of trustees was by open election from the congregation as required by Religious Corporations Law. This arrangement has worked out exceedingly well for both communities and there is now no source of friction between the Parsi and Iranian communities.

The board of trustees of the Dar-e-Mehr plays an active role in the management of the Dar-e-Mehr, while the boards of ZAGNY and IZA arrange events there. In 1998, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of ZAGNY, a joint ZAGNY/IZA dinner dance was organized on Jamshedji Navroz with about 400 individuals in attendance in a rented hall. As the community outgrew this space, for a few years ZAGNY held the Navroz and New Year events according to the Shenshai calendar in a rented hall.

Search for a New Dar-e-Mehr:

Towards the end of the 20th Century, DMZT trustees faced many problems with the building in New Rochelle that was over a hundred years old. Although the community loved the old DMZT building and its history with our community, it was recognized that the building was too old, too small, and required too much attention and expense for the limited purpose it served.

To many of us, this realization hit home when the New Rochelle fire department insisted on the 99-person occupancy limit. Large events had to be held at different venues outside. This meant that 80% of the community that used to visit the Dar-e-Mehr only twice a year at the two big events of Navroz and Shenshai New Year would never enter the Dar-e-Mehr.

It was feared that the majority of the community would lose their connection with the Dar-e-Mehr and perhaps their reason to support it. Thus, obtaining a new Dar-e-Mehr property or expanding the existing Dar-e-Mehr became imperative. In March 1999, the Boards of Directors of the DMZT, IZA, and ZAGNY agreed to work together to evaluate alternatives including the purchase of a new facility to serve as a religious and cultural center for our expanding Zoroastrian community. A New Temple Project committee was formed and delegated to evaluate the needs of the community, select new sites, and raise funds.

After proper consideration of all the options and the costs involved, it became obvious that the community would be better off with a new building rather than trying to renovate and expand the New Rochelle

property. A second option was to find a larger existing building suitable for the community's needs. A few ground rules were formulated among the DMZT, ZAGNY, and IZA boards.

Those rules included that the present DMZT not be sold until a new one was bought, so that the community would not be without a place of worship and congregation. Arbab Rustam Guiv's name would be transferred to the new DMZT, in recognition of his seminal contribution to this community, and at the new DMZT, the current relationship between ZAGNY, IZA, and DMZT would not change. That is, DMZT would own the property and ZAGNY and IZA would use it and continue to finance its costs and upkeep. The trustees of the DMZT would continue to be elected as before. In the unlikely event that a new organization had to be created to own the new property, it would operate in a similarly to the DMZT.

Z-Land LLC donates seed money for a New Dar-e-Mehr:

A group of Zarathushti families from our community decided to be proactive by providing seed money to buy a suitable property. The partnership called Z-Land, LLC was formed and funded in the last quarter of 1999. Fourteen families contributed 10 to 20 thousand dollars each to make a total contribution of \$220,000. They included Faridoon and Mehraban Zatrathoshty Brothers, Homi and Ellen Byramji, Lovji and Mehru Cama, Edul and Niloufer Daver, Homi and Villy Gandhi, Toos and Hira Daruvala, Darius and Linda Jamshidian, Kaikhosrov and Piroja Irani, Maneck and Jasmin Kotwal, Noshir and Dinaz Langrana, Gev and Aban Nentin, Dinshaw and Shernaz Patel, Shiroy and Jeroo Ranji, Dara and Freny Sagar, Zubeen and Anahaita Kotval-Shroff, Satish and Phiroza Modi, and the Incorporated Trustees of the Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong and Macao, and significant donation from a very generous IZA member, Mr. Parviz Najmi.

The Z-Land members intended that Z-Land would assume all the initial risks and not use the community's funds. The assets of ZAGNY, IZA, and DMZT would not be used until Z-Land had purchased a suitable property and donated it to the community. Finally, Z-Land, LLC would dissolve after its donor role was completed. A diligent search for suitable property was spearheaded by Rusi Gandhi and Minu Dutia who, after looking at about 10 different properties, identified a three- and-a-half+ acre of land in the vicinity of Pomona, New York.

After considerable negotiation, a contract was signed to purchase the property, but the land turned out to be two-thirds wetland and Z-Land withdrew from that contract.

The New Dar-e-Mehr, Pomona, NY:

In 1998, Z-Land LLC had been formed to provide seed money to acquire a new Dar-e-Mehr, since the one in New Rochelle was too old and small for the growing community.

When the decision was made to purchase property for a new Dar-e-Mehr in Pomona, NY, it was followed by a tremendous effort by a handful of community members to collect almost \$1,000,000 in 3 months. Most of the community responded wholeheartedly and dug deep into their pockets to support the project with their donations and financial pledges. The DMZT trustees called a special meeting, on December 10, 2000, at the Pomona Property. Each member of the community was asked to vote on each of the following three resolutions:

- **Resolution 1:** That the DMZT trustees be, and they hereby are given the authority to sell the existing temple facility at 249 Weyman Avenue, New Rochelle, New York for consideration of not less than \$350,000, less brokerage commissions and expenses, and on such other terms as the trustees may consider appropriate and that they take such other actions necessary to secure a purchaser and effect such a sale.

- Resolution 2: That the proceeds of any sale of the facility at 249 Weyman Avenue be used exclusively to renovate, maintain, operate, improve, pay any debt or other expenses, or otherwise contribute to the new DMZT facility.
- Resolution 3: That the DMZT Trustees be and they hereby are given the authority to purchase, and to take such other actions necessary to affect such purchase, including incurring debt using the current DMZT asset as collateral, the real property located at 106 Pomona Road, Suffern, New York for a purchase price of \$1.2 million plus closing costs.
- Resolution #1 passed with 155-yes, 27-no and 0-abstain.
- Resolution #2 passed with 151-yes, 31-no and 0-abstain.
- Resolution #3 passed with 149-yes, 31-no and 2-abstain.
- All three resolutions passed with more than the two-thirds required vote.

December 10, 2000 was a historical event for the DMZT / IZA / ZAGNY organizations. The tri-state area community showed great interest and a desire to move ahead with plans for the purchase of a new property at 106 and 104 Pomona Road, Suffern, New York 10901, Village of Pomona Tax Assessment Lot as Section 04-59A and 59B, Zone R-40 for our future generations. One hundred and eighty-two (182) voting-age Zoroastrians attended this event and gave overwhelming support for this purchase.

Several people were actively involved with fundraising and coordination with the sellers to complete the purchase. Numerous difficulties arose along the way with the seller’s application with the Attorney General’s office and with another interested party wanting to purchase the property. While some of these delays were bureaucratic, there was a period when it was not at all clear that the purchase would be successful. However, the team overcame these obstacles and the purchase was completed on March 16, 2001. On behalf of the community, Lovji Hakim, chairman of the DMZT trustees, signed for the purchase of the property in the presence of Anahaita Kotval and Gev Nentin.

The property of almost 4 acres consisting of the main building and a separate smaller building at 106 Pomona Road. An adjacent property at 104 Pomona Road was purchased for \$1,214,980 including closing costs.

The Nostalgic Sale of the Old Dar-e-Mehr, New Rochelle, NY:



With the community’s purchase of the Pomona property, the DMZT Trustees commenced an effort to sell the New Rochelle Dar-e-Mehr.

With expert and relentless effort by Lovji Hakim as chairman of DMZT, the sale of the New Rochelle Dar-e-Mehr was negotiated for a price of \$610,000, significantly more than the \$350,000 passed in the original Resolution approved by the community. The New Rochelle Dar-e-Mehr was sold to the New Rochelle congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses. However this was after the team overcame several obstacles.

A major hurdle to the sale was the Mt. Tom Day School, Inc., which demanded a release from DMZT for the “right of first refusal” in any negotiations for the sale of the DMZT property. After months of difficult negotiations, DMZT trustees settled with a counteroffer of \$10,000 to the owner of the school and signed a “mutual release” as successor in the interest of Pehle Company, the owner of the school at that time.

Without this settlement with Mt. Day School, the DMZT property could not be sold. The Attorney General's approval was received only after many months of special meetings called by the DMZT trustees for the congregation to vote upon the sale.

The other main hurdle was to obtain the approval from the Office of the Attorney General of New York State to sell the DMZT property, a religious corporation of the State of New York under Article 10 of the New York Religious Corporation Law. The Attorney General's approval was received only after many months of special meeting called by DMZT trustees for the congregation to vote upon sale.

At a meeting of members of DMZT on December 16, 2001, and by posting on a bulletin board from December 2, 2001, to December 16, 2001, the following resolutions were offered and duly seconded and adopted by a unanimous vote of the trustees present at the meeting and a quorum of the membership present or voting, with 362 members voting for and 2 members against, to wit:

Whereas, the Dar-e-Mehr Zoroastrian Temple wishes to sell part of its property to wit: 249 Weyman Avenue, New Rochelle, NY to the New Rochelle Congregation of Jehovah's Witness and to utilize the net proceeds therefrom for the religious purposes of the Congregation; and Whereas, the Dar-e-Mehr Zoroastrian Temple has determined it is in the best interest to sell its property to wit: 249 Weyman Avenue, New Rochelle, NY and to use the funds derived from the sale of said land to renovate, maintain, operate, improve, construct a new building, pay any debt or other expenses or otherwise contribute to the New Temple property located at 106 Pomona Road, Suffern, NY; and Whereas, the Board of Trustees of the Congregation deems it advisable to accept the \$610,000, which it believes in good faith to be fair market value.

Lovji Hakim signed the Residential Contract of Sale on July 12, 2001, on behalf of the DMZT trustees. The closing of the property took place on July 12, 2002. The net sale amount was \$569,164.00 (\$610,000 less closing costs of \$41,315). DMZT had originally acquired the property on May 4, 1977. The net proceeds were utilized as per the resolution and contributed towards the new Dar-e-Mehr property. It is worth mentioning that the negotiating skills of Lovji Hakim were primarily responsible for extracting significantly higher sales prices than previously anticipated.

DMZT Trustees worked diligently on this project together and relied on expert legal counsel from DMZT Attorney, Mr. Troy C. Blomberg and Ms. Anahita Kotval and the help of several other individuals. The trustees also undertook the challenging task of cleaning the property before the sale and thanked many individual volunteers for their dedication and hard work.

Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) Granted Consultative Status with United Nations Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC, 1997:

In 1997, FEZANA was granted consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. This status allows non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to participate in the work of the United Nations. FEZANA was granted the status of Roster. Rosters are "other organizations that do not have general or special consultative status but that the Council, or the Secretary-General of the United Nations in consultation with the Council or its Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, considers can make occasional and useful contributions to the work of the Council."

The paperwork for the application for NGO status was prepared by Roshan and Rohinton R. Rivetna, founder and president of FEZANA. However, ZAGNY played a role when the petition was being discussed at the UN by ECOSOC. Three members from ZAGNY represented FEZANA. They were Prof. Kaikhosrov D. Irani, Dr. Lovji D. Cama, and Framroze K. Patel.

Almost ten minutes before the session was to end, the chairman asked Kaikhosrov to make presentation for three minutes. When Kaikhosrov finished the presentation, the Chair said, “The motion to grant Roster status to the Zoroastrian community represented by FEZANA is approved.” And the Chair banged the gavel three times. The committee consisted of representatives from Cuba (the Chair), Ireland, and India. It may interest readers to note that all Sub-Sahara Muslim countries and all Arab countries of the committee opposed the motion on the ground that “the applicant is a sect, not a religion.”

International Gatha Congress: and 11th North American Congress, 1998:



ZAGNY sponsored and co-sponsored the first two International Gatha conferences in Great Britain and Los Angeles and the Yasht conference. The taped proceedings or manuscripts of many of these conferences and seminars can be accessed at ZAGNY archives.

In 1998, ZAGNY hosted and organized the very successful 11th North American Zoroastrian Congress under co-chairs Mr. Gev Nentin and Dr. Noshir Langrana. Mrs. Armaity F. Patel and Mrs. Mehru Cama co-chaired the logistic committee. Mrs. Mahrukh R. Cama chaired the entertainment

committee which organized a very enjoyable musical evening.

Zoroastrian Interfaith Group (ZIG): 2003

Viraf and Toni Ghadially were the pioneers to get this group created. The members meet periodically at member homes to encourage intermarried couples to stay involved in the community and have important conversations around issues and challenges pertaining to intermarried families. ZIG has sponsored talks on “Blending Cultures and Community” and welcomes non-Zoroastrian spouses and children from these marriages into the Zoroastrian faith.

The 3000th Anniversary of the Zoroastrian Culture and Persian Parade:

On November 15, 2003, ZAGNY and IZA celebrated the UNESCO-associated 3000th Anniversary of Zoroastrian Culture, featuring presentations by Professor Kaikhosrov D. Irani, CUNY professor emeritus of philosophy and Dr. Farhang Mehr, Boston University professor emeritus of international relations. Former deputy prime minister of Iran made a presentation on “History, Beliefs, and the Influence of Zoroastrianism on Other Cultures.” Also featured were book displays, a multi-media presentation, Zoroastrian invocation prayers by priests, and a pageant of Zoroastrian attire, past and present.

In 2004 and 2005, ZAGNY and IZA participated in the Navroz Persian Day Parade in New York City. This participation has continued for many years.

ZAGNY celebrates with the Gujarati Community: 2006: Mini-Gujarat Comes Alive in New Jersey:

The Times of India, dated September 3, 2006, reported that “Despite torrential rains and high winds in the wake of Tropical Storm Ernesto threatening the East Coast, a mini-Gujarat came alive in New Jersey during the three-day “Chalo Gujarat World Gujarati Congress.” A crowd of over thirty thousand Gujaratis, including some ZAGNY members, went down memory lane recalling their days in Gujarat.

ZAGNY (the only organization other than the Gujarati association) was requested to participate in the celebration. ZAGNY was allotted a booth that exhibited 6x4 cardboard cutouts narrative of illustrious

Zoroastrians, including J.N. Tata, Homi Bhabha, J.R.D Tata, Nani Palkivala, Justice Sohrab Kotval (father of Dr. Peshotan S. Kotval). Books on Parsi history, Gara Saris, Ses and other cultural items were also displayed. ZAGNY members participated in the fashion show of traditional dress and also put up a parsi comedy play.

ZAGNY's stall was positioned next to Sardar Vallabhai Jhaverbhai Patel's stall. In 1958, Justice Sohrab Kotval was appointed as a one-man commission of inquiry into the causes of police firing in Ahmedbad (1956) as a consequence of reorganising the state of Gujarat and Maharashtra on linguistic grounds. Appointment of the Commissions was not the norm then. Hence, Justice Sohrab Kotval had to formulate the procedure, which is still a guideline for such commissions.

Justice Sohrab Kotval was chosen because he was considered to be impartial and was acceptable to both Hindus and Muslims. The states were subsequently divided on May 1, 1960. His report was considered one of the important documents for the establishment of two states. Given this close connection, the ZAGNY stall was one of the most visited, second only to Sardar's. Most of the visitors were pleasantly surprised to see Justice Sohrab Kotval being honored and would say આ આપણા કોટવાલ સાહેબ છે, i.e. this is our Kotval Saheb.

After the Congress, Dr. Navin Mehta, the Chair, read out the names of all participating organizations and added that they (Gujaratis), with the help of ZAGNY, were able to share this Congress with the Parsi Zoroastrian community, which was made possible by the participation of ZAGNY. (Source: ZAGNY Newsletter dated September 8, 2006.) ZAGNY also presented a Parsi Natak, which was well appreciated. Recall what Prime Minister Narendra Mody always says, “પારસીઓએ અમને કેવી રીતે હસવું તે શીખવ્યું.” i.e., Parsis taught us how to smile.

Gatha Colloquium 2009:

It was sponsored by ZAGNY, WZO and FEZANA hosted the Gatha Colloquium at Doubletree Hotel in New York. With an impressive line up of 12 distinguished speakers on various aspects of Gathas, the conference room overflowed with almost 150 attendees. Some of the world renowned speakers included Dr. Ervad Kersey Antia, Prof. Almut Hintze, Prof. Stanley Insler, Prof. Kaikhosrov Irani, Dr. Ali Jafarey, Prof. Willima Malandra, Dina McIntyre, Prof. Martin Schwartz, Prof. Oktor Skjaervo, Prof. Elizabeth Tucker, Farrokh Vazifdar, and Prof. Gernot Windfuhr.

City College of New York (CCNY) Honors Prof. Kaikhosrov D. Irani 2012:⁵

CCNY reported that K.D. Irani, a professor emeritus of philosophy, was chosen to receive the 2012 CCNY Alumni Association's Faculty Service Award.



At that event Professor Kaikhosrov D. Irani was honored for his 61 years of teaching at CCNY. During his tenure, he chaired the philosophy department for nine years and directed the Academy of Humanities and Sciences for 12 years. In addition, he served as director of the History and Philosophy of Science program. A student of Albert Einstein at Princeton University, Professor

^{5 5} <https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/news/Faculty-Service-Awards-2012>

Kaikhosrov D. Irani taught his final class at CCNY, a.k.a. City College, during the spring of 2012. The Alumni Association of CCNY honored him with the Faculty Service Award, for his distinguished career as a philosopher, scholar, chair, teacher, and mentor. Several ZAGNY members attended Prof. Kaikhosrov D Irani's celebration at CCNY.

"He'll be fondly recalled by multitudes of grateful alumni as a source of cultural and intellectual enrichment and encouragement, not only for students of philosophy, but for all those that have had the privilege of interacting with him," a message from The City College Department of Philosophy states. A man of varied interests, Professor Irani's influence on generations of City College students has been wide-ranging and enduring.

In 1999, one of his Scandinavian students who had become a successful chemical engineer (he wished to remain anonymous) donated \$2 million City College to establish a fellowship program named for Professor Irani. Professor Kaikhosrov D. Irani's areas of expertise included ancient civilizations and religions, especially Zoroastrianism. He was also an authority on philosophical issues in modern physics, which led him to work with Dr. Albert Einstein, who wrote him a letter of recommendation while he was at Princeton.

Hosting of the XVI North American Zarathushti Congress: Aug 2-5, 2012



In 2012, ZAGNY and IZA hosted the XVI North American Zarathushti Congress. Gev Nentin and Ferzin Patel co-chaired the Congress, Mrs. Mehru Cama chaired the logistic committee, Dr. Keki Dadachanji was the chair of the program committee, and Mrs. Mahrukh R. Cama and Dr. Khursheed Phiroz Navder co-chaired the entertainment committee.

The theme of the Congress was "Zarathushti Existence in the Contemporary World." The co-chairs opened the Congress with the words, "Our identity, existence, prosperity, and survival

depend of course on our understanding of our religion, but also how we have evolved over the centuries in two completely different environments--one in relative freedom and other in intolerable oppression. We are all the victims of our experience."⁶

ZAGNY Celebrates its 40th Anniversary:

On August 24, 2013, ZAGNY celebrated its 40th Anniversary, along with the Parsi New Year at the Dar-e-Mehr in Pomona, NY, with complimentary admission to all its members. The event was a huge success and marked a great milestone in our history. In their year round series of events, ZAGNY invited an elite group of prominent Zoroastrian innovators, leaders and trail-blazers in their respective field of Music, Academics, Social Change, Culinary Arts and Finance, to share their stories of struggle and success in a special, thought-provoking evening to a sellout crowd of over 200 people at the prestigious Cooper Union. Financier Navroze Udawadia, Chef Jehangir Mehta, Philanthropist Dinyar Devitre, Educator Jamshed Bharucha and Music Maestro Zubin Mehta participated in a two panel discussions moderated by our very own Shanaya Deboo and Anahaita Kotval.

Ceremonial Groundbreaking Ceremony, New Dar-e-Mehr: March 29, 2014:⁷

Over time, the ZAGNY community had outgrown the building in Pomona. The roof repairs were deemed costly. While this was being examined, investigators discovered asbestos in the flooring, which made any

⁶ ZAGNY. Special XVI NAZC 2012 Newsletter, p.1

⁷ Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York, Newsletter, June 2014, pp 3-4.

renovation exorbitant. After months of discussion with members, it was resolved that a new building was needed on the same property.



The Groundbreaking Ceremony

After weeks and months of planning, various checklists and numerous conference calls culminated in a historic event for the tri-state Zoroastrian community—the ceremonial groundbreaking for our New Dar-e-Mehr building was held on March 29, 2014. This day marked a new dawn that heralded the start of the construction of our new Dar-e-Mehr.

IZA President Shirin Khosravi addressed the gathering followed by President, Gev Nentin, both speaking about the journey through time that had led to this milestone event. Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) President Katayun Kapadia congratulated the greater New York Community on behalf of all the North American Associations and Corresponding Members.

Mayor Brett Yagel, the Mayor of Pomona Township emphasized that Pomona was honored that the Zoroastrian community had chosen Pomona to make this its home for the tri-state area. He wished our community much happiness in its new home, noting that the rain gods had showered us with their blessings and that the seeds of the ceremonial groundbreaking would flourish!

The exact location for the groundbreaking was determined to be the area where the prayer hall will stand in the new Dar-e-Mehr building. The priests recited the Ashem-Vohu and Yatha-Ahu-Vario prayers while sprinkling rose water and rose petals, placing cypress leaves and a coconut before placing the box of auspicious and significant religious items into the groundbreaking site. With the community's commitment and enthusiasm for the New Dar-e-Mehr project, another milestone was crossed.

Farewell Function at Old New Dar-e-Mehr: July 5, 2014:⁸

A farewell function was held at the old Darbe Mehr on July 5, 2014. President Astad Clubwala described it as “a momentous day in the journey that the Zarathusthi community of Greater New York has been taking for the last 50 years”. It was a bitter sweet moment. We bid farewell to our home for the last 13 years at 106 Pomona Road, Suffern, New York. The day was meaningful also as it brought us closer to the fulfillment of our dreams.... A beautiful new Darbe Mehr – where generations to come would meet to share our religion, culture and heritage in a place they can own with pride and gratitude.



On July 12, 2014, packing and moving was completed by a team of volunteers that helped clear out the kitchen, prayer room, library etc. and got the Darbe Mehr ready for the bull dozers!

⁸ Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York, Newsletter, June 2014, pp 3-4.

ZAGNY's Founding President Erach Munshi Passes Away, July 25, 2015:

Erach played a pivotal role in the early history of ZAGNY. He and his wife Perin, started raising funds in 1985 to raise funds for the poor, primarily priests in Udvada, Surat, Navsari and the surrounding towns and villages. The legacy of the Udvada fundraiser continues even today thanks to Mehru and Lovji Cama, and his nephew Hanosh and his wife Baljinder Munshi.

Temporary place for Religion Classes 2014-16: Stony Point Church in Stony Point, NY served as the temporary place at a reasonable price to have our monthly Religion classes for two years.

Inauguration of the Renovated Dar-e-Mehr, 2016:⁹



Vice President and emcee for the day, Khursheed Navder welcomed the congregation to this “momentous day in the history of the Zarthushti Community of Greater New York.”

Astad Clubwala, president of ZAGNY, in his inaugural address, eloquently said: *This new building, in some ways, represents a passing from one generation to the next and can be seen as a gift from the generation that was born in our homlands of Iran, India and Pakistan to the generation of Zarathushtis born in North America. We talk with sort of resigned acceptancee about our dwindling numbers, but it is our next genration that will be crucial to the perpetuation*

of our religion. We leave quite buden for them. Let us do what we can, while we can, to make the start of their journey easier. Our new Dar-e-Mehr will provide them with a foundation, a base, a center for their spiritual and cultural lives.



Professor Kaikhosrov D. Irani, the Guest of Honor, said at the inauguration ceremony, “*What is this building for? 3500 hundred years ago a teacher of humanity in Iran contacted the spirit of the Universe... his name was Zarathushtra-- one of the greatest teachers of humanity that ever was and he inspired the world to believe in a perfect order, an ideal truth which he called Asha. That is what we revere and commit ourselves to in this building. It is our commitment to dedicate ourselves to this world to establish the perfect order, justice without aberration, where each person gets what he deserves and no person suffers from what he does not deserve.*”



Prof. Kaikhosrov D. Irani cut the ceremonial ribbon along with two of the congregation’s newest Zarathushti, Zarah Shroff and Farhan Shoff. Soprano Tara Jamshidian opend the ceremony with the Star Spangled Banner, and was later joined on stage by children from the community to sing America the Beautiful.

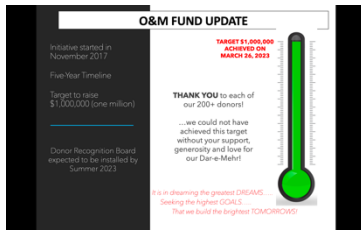
⁹ ZAGNY Newsletter Special Issue, May 2016, Inauguration Newsletter



Thirty Mobeds from all over North America gathered to pray and bless the *New Dar-e-Mehr*. Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor, the Head Priest of Iranshah, paid tribute to ZAGNY with these words: *Udvada has been well connected with ZAGNY since a very long time. It was from you all, your contribution towards the Mobeds and people of Udvada that has been helping us in so many ways-- year after year we have been receiving magnificent donations from ZAGNY. Blessing of the Iranshah to you all.*

A special recognition was given to the tremendous triumvirate—the visionary Edul Daver, the architect, Dinyar Wadia, and the builder Farrokh R. Patel.

Various National and International news media covered the inagural events, particularly, the Huffington Post, USA Today, Religious News, India Abroad, Parsiana, Parsi Khabar, and Iranian news outlets, Amordad and Payvand.



O&M (Operating and Maintenance) Initiative Started Nov 17, 2017: It was soon realized that the cost of maintaining the new building had gone up significantly so a new initiative to collect 1 Million was started with a 5 year timeline. It was hoped that the investment of \$1M could generate ~\$40-50,000/year to help with the operations and maintenance of the new building. That target was reached on the 7th Saalgareh of the DM on 3/26/23.



Professor Kaikhosrov Dinshaw Irani Delivers his Last Lecture at DM (3/5/17), Just 3 months Before he Passes Away (6/29/17):

Those that atteded the March Religion class were lucky to hear our beloved Prof. Irani give a talk on “Zarathushtra’s Vision and Zoroastrianism Today.” That last talk can be found at <https://vimeo.com/212254987>. President Astad Clubwala, The picture on the left is the 2017-20 Board Members with Prof Irani. In 2004 Prof Irani was felicitated at the old DM and was honored with a plaque.

Donation by Piroja and Prof. Kaikhosrov D. Irani Trust:

Late Piroja and Kaikhosrov D. Irani left instructions to the Trustee of the “Piroja and Kaikhosrov D. Irani Trust” to distribute 20.00% of their distributable estate to the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York, Inc. As of June 2023, ZAGNY has been a beneficiary of \$545,000 approximately from the above-mentioned trust. The donors stipulated that the funds should be used for the sole purpose of education.

Gatha Classes Started by Keki Dadachanji (2019):

These started off as in-person classes and were very well received. Soon a 2nd cohort was added due to popular demand. During Covid years the classes started meeting virtually, and continue to do so to accommodate attendees from all over.

COVID Years (2020-2022):

At the very first virtual AGM on April 5, 2020, ZAGNY’s 20th Board was elected. It was the 2nd time in our ZAGNY history, 36 years after our last female President Ivy Farokh Gandhi (6th President from 1984-86), another female President, Dr. Khursheed Navder was elected as the 20th President. Often referred to as the Zoom Board, the members ensured that all activities—Circle time/Religious Classes, Gatha Classes, and muktad prayers, annual events like KD Irani talks, cooking classes, bingo and trivia nights, adult talent shows, and virtual gatherings including the 2020 O&M Fund Virtual Maestro Broadway Evening and Auction fundraiser showcasing exceptional musical talent from all over (raised \$103,339!), took place under the new norms of that time.

ZAGNY and FEZANA co-host the first World Zoroastrian Congress (WZC) (July 1-4, 2022)



Held at the New York Hilton Midtown, the 12th WZC had nearly 1200 attendees from 16 nations. The WZC came back to North America after 22 years. The co-chairs Astad Clubwala and Arzan Sam Wadia together with their Program committee Co-chairs Aban Rustomji and Keki Dadachandji, posed the questions which have been

troubling the community but never openly expressed. The keynote speaker Justice Nariman and the distinguished speaker Lord musicians, a fabulous Zoroastrian orchestra and singers. The Zarathushti Youth Across Borders (ZYAB) program brought young Zarathushtis from around the world to New York City.



The spectacular performance by 45 ZAGNY members of the story of creation, brainchild of Behroze Clubwala, and directed by Shahnaz and Kaizad Shroff was a sight to remember, the costumes, the music, the script were all very professionally done. The gala night featured a trendy fashion show produced by our very own Ashdin Lilouwalla.



ZAGNY Turns 50! Golden Anniversary Celebration Sep 16, 2023




The 50th Anniversary Celebration brought together 425+ guests. The *Khushalini-Jashan*, was led by ZAGNY head priest, Ervad Pervez Patel and fellow mobeds, Ervads (in alphabetical order by last name) Adil Antia, Xerxes Antia, Jamshed Dastur, Poruz Khambatta, Jehangir Madon, Adil Masani, Porus Pavri, and Adi Sidhwa.

ZAGNY’s current 20th and 21st President Khursheed Navder then paid homage to and expressed endless gratitude to our original benefactors, late Arbab Rustam and Morvarid Guiv, and went on to present a pictorial journey of ZAGNY’s glorious five decades. She recognized all past ZAGNY Presidents not

with us that day—Founding Father Prof. Erach Munshi, Faroke Gandhi, Ivy Gandhi, and Prof. K. D. Irani.

Nina Mistry honored the six ZAGNY Presidents who were with us that day and they were presented with the Presidential Service Medal. **Visionary Leader Awards**

PRESIDENTS NOT WITH US TODAY

			
ERACH MUNSHI Founding Father 1st (1974-76) 2nd (1976-78) 7th (1986-88) 8th (1988-90)	FAROKE GANDHI 5th (1982-84)	IVY GANDHI 6th (1984-86)	KAIKHOSROV D. IRANI 11th (1984-86)

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ZAGNY PRESIDENTS

					
LOVA CAMA 3rd (1978-80)	FRAMROZE PATEL 11th (1980-82)	HOMI GANDHI 14th (2002-05) 15th (2005-08)	GEV NENTIN 12th (1986-89) 13th (1989-92) 16th (2008-11) 17th (2011-14)	ASTAD CLUBWALA 8th (1980-82) 10th (1982-84) 18th (2018-17) 19th (2017-20)	KHURSHIED NAVDER 20th (2020-23) 21st (2023-26)

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were presented to four ZAGNY members –Edul Daver, Gev Nentin, Astad Clubwala, and Arzan Sam Wadia, whose vision and leadership has had a tremendous impact in putting ZAGNY on the world map. **Lifetime Service Awards** were presented to members who have tirelessly served the community for the last 40+ years—Ervad Pervez and Katie Patel, Ervad Noshirwan and

Marion Hormudiar, Framroze and Armaity Patel, Sheroo and Vispi Kanga, Yasmin and Jamshed Ghadiali, and Mehru and Lovji Cama. Outstanding Service Awards were then given out to volunteers who always go above and beyond to serve the community. A ceremonial cake made by Chef Jehangir Mehta, was cut by all 6 Presidents. To mark this milestone event and preserve a piece of history for future generations, a time capsule was placed in the foyer.

Lastly, all 425+ guests gathered on the front porch steps to capture a group picture for the history books. This, we believe, is the largest group picture of a Zoroastrian gathering in North America!



Dar-e-Mehr Perspective:

The inaugural issue had a section titled “Dar-e-Mehr Perspective” Various second-generation kids were asked about their relationship with their beloved Dar-e-Mehr and ZAGNY community. This is what they said:

Temilyn and Darius Mehta: *It's not often in life when people can point to one place*



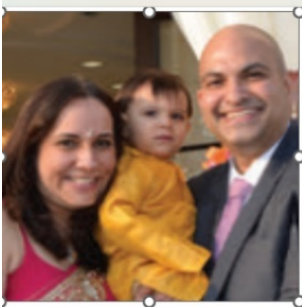
where they fell in love. In our case we can. The New Rochelle Dar-e-Mehr. To be fair, the seeds of love planted at the Dar-e-Mehr were cultivated over time. A slow progression of initially meeting at 13 years of age, note passing in Lovji uncle's class and Villy Aunti's region class, friendship through ZAGNY's camp and everything in between. As we grew, friendship turned to love (circa 18 years of age). Eventually, after dating for eight years and at the age of 26, love turned to marriage.



Shiraz D. Antia with children Shirin and Dinyar

Shiraz D. Antia: *I have been a member of ZAGNY for 40 years. I have fond memories of when our community moved our Dar-e-Mehr to New Rochelle. The highlight was coming to the Dar-e-Mehr to meet my friends every month. It was home away from home and despite space limitations we all pulled through and made it work. To us kids, it didn't matter much that we would have class in a small stairwell. It was actually fun because it was different from the usual classroom environment. After college, I wanted to give the younger generation the same experience I had growing up with ZAGNY and the religion classes at Dar-e-Mehr. Teaching has been a great joy for me. I am proud to be part of this community.*

Sherazad's family



Sherazad Mehta: *Memories of Lovji uncle's religion classes; waking up with rice on my face at Ivy Aunti's summer camps; a flashback to the Pomona open house before it was ours; carpooling with Erach Uncle and the Camas to attend to the DMZT board meeting; Sunday NDMI meeting led by Edul Uncle hammering out every single detail; losing my wife to fundraising months on end; each of these moments pushed me toward this one beautiful spring day in March 2016. Yet somehow, when I saw the new Dar-e-Mehr, it was simply awe-inspiring. The journey to this historic date in March was a long one. I am so thankful to the many who have contributed so much.*

Contribution to FEZANA:

ZAGNY contributes to FEZANA both in terms of finances and volunteer time by some of its members. Mr. Framroze K. Patel served as the treasurer, vice president, and later president of FEZANA. Dr. Rustam Kevala was co-editor of the FEZANA Journal and a president of FEZANA. Dr. Noshir Langrana was involved with organizing the North American Zoroastrian Directory and Census, Dr. Lovji Cama was the chairperson of the religious education committee for four years, Dr. Yasmin Ghadiali was the chairperson of the fund-raising committee of the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress, and Sarosh Sukhia was chairperson of the public relations committee for two years.

Homi Gandhi has served as a main Representative of FEZANA NGO at UNESCO in consultation with ECOSOC. Homi Gandhi also served as the president of Fezana. The late Khorshed Jungalwala, without doubt the most beloved and most popular, served on several committees as a chairperson including the FEZANA Publications Committee (The Information Receiving and Dissemination Committee), the Program Committee for the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress, and the FEZANA World Body Working Group. Arzan Sam Wadia is the third person from ZAGNY who became the president of FEZANA. Arzan is also the youngest FEZANA president.

The Scholarship Fund:

Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York Academic Loan Scholarships provide financial assistance to Zoroastrians for full-time study at a college, university, or equivalent academic institution in North America. The scholarships are offered in recognition of academic excellence and are intended to assist students who demonstrate a need for financial assistance. ZAGNY will provide students with interest-free loans as financial assistance, repayable over a period. When the borrower repays the loaned amount, it is invested back into the fund so it grows from year to year and does not only depend on current donations.

General Critical Assistance Funds:

At various times ZAGNY gets an appeal for critical assistance, primarily for medical assistance from fellow Zoroastrians, both within the U.S. as well as globally. ZAGNY has launched a “General Critical Assistance” fund, to meet that need. Over five years ZAGNY has disbursed over \$92,000 to various individuals to cover items like medical expenses, rent, living expenses, etc.

ZAGNY Members Collects Funds for Zoroastrian Causes in India:

The Munshis and The Camas: Financial Assistance for Fellow Zoroastrians of Udvada, Surat and Navsari, etc.

Perin and Eruch Munshi

Mehru and Dr. Lovji D. Cama



It is a long-held, erroneous belief that the Zoroastrian community of Maharashtra and Gujarat is financially wealthy and the poverty index is next to zero. That has never been the case.

Some of the Zoroastrians of Southern Gujarat live in huts, with no modern facilities to think of, and most of them are farmers, living below the subsistence level. During the 1950s their condition worsened due to the radical economic and agricultural policies of the Bombay presidency. The Zoroastrians living in these areas almost lost their livelihood because of:

- The enactment of the Land to Tiller Act granted the right of ownership to the tillers, which dealt a blow to absentee Zoroastrian landowners. Absentee landlords lost their economic power and as a result their main source of family income.
- In 1960, the Gujarat Government introduced “Prohibition” which was the second blow. Most Zoroastrian farmers supplemented their agricultural income with Toddy Shops which were destroyed.
- Nationalization of private bus operators and formation of the State Transportation system.

As a result of these changes, our fellow Zoroastrians’ economic situation worsened to a state from which they never recovered. Erach D. Munshi’s family came from this general area. He saw the need to financially help his fellow Zoroastrians. Perin and Erach Munshi started this noble and urgently needed endeavor in 1984. For more than twenty years, he organized fundraising events for this cause, and personally visited impoverished families to distribute funds. Mehru and Lovji Cama joined to complement the effort. In the initial years, the amount collected was meager. However, as of December 2022, approximately \$824,000 has been distributed to needy families in Southern Gujarat.

With single-minded attention and persistence, Erach Munshi worked to raise funds until the last days of his life. After his passing, this noble cause was continued by his friends, Mehru and Lovji Cama and by his nephew Hanoz Munshi and his wife Bajinder Kaur.

Mumbai Parsi General Hospital (PGH) aka the B D Petit Parsee General Hospital: Fundraing Initiated and Coordinated by Dr. Yasmin and Jamshed Ghadiali.

Yasmin and Jamshed



Many aging Zoroastrians living in Greater Mumbai and suburbs are economically marginalized. Most low-income Zoroastrians have no medical insurance and no safety net to think of. For this sector of the Zoroastrian community in Mumbai, only two medical facilities are available, one of which is the B.D. Petit Parsee General Hospital, which depends on donation from various trusts and community donations locally and from the Zoroastrian Diaspora.

During their 1986 visit to Mumbai, Dr. Yasmin and Jamshed Ghadiali felt that something must be done to meet this need. They collected \$6,839 in the first year, to provide free medication to the patients at PGH. As word of their efforts grew, donations came from all corners of North America.

Since 1986, this righteous couple has collected and sent to PGH a sum of \$1,008,855. Some critics had opined that “this amateurish effort would not last long.” However, over 37 years later, the efforts of the Ghadialis have netted a sum in excess of a million dollars donated to PGH. The funds are used at the discretion of the trustees of PGH to purchase and update hospital equipment and to provide free medication. The trustees of PGH have publicly acknowledged the contribution of these courageous Zoroastrians.

The Goolbai Kaikhushroo Patel Fund for the benefit of The Surat Parsi Orphanage:

Armaity and Framroze K Patel



In 2014 ZAGNY allocated \$25,000 from its Critical Assistance Fund to establish an endowment fund to perpetuate the memory of Goolbai Kaikhushroo Patel, the late mother of Framroze K. Patel.

The endowment has been created for the sole purpose of providing financial assistance to the Surat Parsi Orphanage (SPO). The SPO was established by the late Seth Rustomji M. Kooka in 1912 in memory of his late son who left for his heavenly abode at the young age of 21. It is estimated that at

least 15,000 Zoroastrian students have been educated, at almost no cost to their parents.

Since 2014, the friends of Armaity and Framroze K, Patel, ZAGNY members and Zoroastrians across the U.S. have enthusiastically supported this noteworthy endeavor and have transmitted approximately \$135,000-including the donation of \$25,000 from the Piroja and Kaikhosrov D. Irani Trust to date, to the Seth Rustamji J. Kooka, Surat Parsi Orphanage, managed by the Surat Parsi Panchayet. As of March 2022, ZAGNY's contribution to SPO was equal to 20.0% of the total revenue of SPO for the last five years. SPO revenue includes interest, dividend income, and donations from the community.

Tribute: Ivy and Faroke G. Gandhi: Leaders of Community during 1982-1986:



Since the inception of ZAGNY, four leaders having completed their assigned responsibilities have left for heavenly abode. Visionary Eruch D. Munshi, Mazda Ahura's helper Prof. Kaikhosrov D. Irani, and the Gandhis, Ivy and Faroke G. Gandhi, a husband-and-wife team who served the community in various capacities and later on as ZAGNY Presidents.

Faroke and Ivy both served as president of ZAGNY for one two-year term. Faroke: 1982-1984. Ivy: 1984-1986.

Faroke was born in Varanasi a.k.a. Banaras (West Bengal Presidency pre-independence India, currently a major city of Uttar Pradesh) in a middle-class Zoroastrian family. He completed his Bachelor of Engineering (B.E.) degree from Banaras Hindu University with Engineering as a major. At the young age of twenty-three, he migrated to the U.S. In time he completed an M.E. (master's degree in mechanical engineering) from Brooklyn Collegiate and Polytechnic Institute, (now known as The Polytechnic Institute of New York University and NYU-Poly) Brooklyn, New York.

Though very quiet by nature Faroke touched many lives. He was always eager, ready, and willing to aid fellow human beings, whether the help needed was renovating the basement, repairing the car or computer, or helping someone find a job. Faroke expected no reward for his friendship.

He started his working career as a part-time stockroom clerk at Abraham & Straus, in Brooklyn. Within a few years, he was a Director of Data Processing for the world's largest Shipping company--The United States Lines.

Ivy Gandhi (nee Irani) was born in Karachi. Her family moved to Bombay before the partition. Her three siblings were all girls. They were educated at Wadia Vachha High School. Ivy was a bright student full of self-confidence and perseverance and with a broad smile. Ivy had a reputation for being competitive and having excellent leadership qualities, which was evident during her involvement with ZAGNY.

Ivy also served the Zoroastrian Community in various capacities and became the leader of the community for two years. Besides being a forthright leader, Ivy's major contribution was as a teacher at ZAGNY's religion education class and in organizing day-camps for children for some years. Both Faroke and Ivy were at the helm of ZAGNY leadership during difficult times. They did their best and held the community together. This was their singular achievement.

Benefactors, Founders and a Visionaries



Khanum Morvarid Guiv and Arbab Rustam Guiv:

Arbab Rustam Guiv was born in Yazd in 1888, the son of Shahpur and Kharman Guiv. After his youngest brother, Bahman, died at an early age, he took his brother's name as his middle name and was known as Rustam Bahman Guiv.

Arbab went to a Zarathushti school, Dabristan-e-Keikhosrowi, in Yazd for his primary and secondary education. He married Morvarid Ardeshir Keikhosrowi and they resided in Tehran, Iran.

In all his acts of charity, it was his wife Morvarid Khanum who propelled him on. Between them, they created the Guiv Foundation. Arbab decided to change his residence and demolish his palatial residential place on Shah Reza Avenue.

In its place, he built a five-story commercial-residential building, the entire income of which went to the Guiv Foundation called "Sazemane Kheyria Rustam Guiv." Arbab Rustam Guiv appears to have been chosen by a divine force.

The one who came to the aid of the small, struggling, but vibrant North American Zarathushti Community was his friend, Dr. Rustam Sarfeh. He was instrumental in inducing Arbab Rustam Guiv to do something for the Zarathushtis of North America. ZAGNY became the first recipient in North America of Arbab Rustam Guiv's benefaction. He promised financial assistance, which culminated in the establishment of the Arbab Rustam Guiv Dar-e-Mehr in New Rochelle, New York.

This, the first Dar-e-Mehr in North America, was officially declared open on December 3, 1977, with 235 adults and 80 children attending. The total contribution of Arbab and Morvarid Guiv was \$180,000, which included the cost of buying the property, renovations, and furnishings.

At the opening ceremony held on December 3, 1977, Arbab Rustam Guiv said "...be united... be broad-minded and welcome newcomers who desire to know, study, and follow Zoroastrianism. *Our prophet did not ever put any restrictions on anyone who willingly wanted to follow his principles... make constructive criticism to build up new and thoughtful plans to make the Zoroastrian Temple an International Center.*" (ZAGNY newsletter January 1978; Compiled from an article by Mr. Jamshed Pavri of Vancouver Canada, for Vohuman magazine.)

Erach Munshi: A Pioneering Visionary



Erach Munshi was one of the first Parsi in the New York area, arriving from India in the 1950s. He was born in the village of Mandvi of Surat district of Bombay Presidency. His father passed away when he was very young and his mother admitted him to the Seth Rustamji S Kooka Surat Parsi Orphanage (SPO). While a boarder at the SPO he attended The Maganlal Thakordas Balmukunddas Arts and Sciences College (MTB) and graduated with a Bachelor of Science (BSC). Erach was an active member of the National Cadet Corp (NCC) while at MTB.

One thing that is not very well known is that he was a very good Volleyball player and was the vce-captain of the Gujarat University Volleyball Team. He was a very good “blocker”. After graduating from MTB he taught at SPO for some time before leaving for higher studies in the US.

After coming to the U.S. during mid-fifties, he was active in the Zoroastrian community of the tri-state area. Erach was known as a “persistent” individual. He sought out the handful of Zoroastrians in the tri-state area and called upon them from time to time. He was instrumental in bringing the Zoroastrians together for New Year functions, initially at someone’s home, then at rented spaces, until the gatherings grew quite large. By the end of the sixties and the early seventies, there was an increasing number of young Zarathushti couples with children joining the community in New York.

In 1973, the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York Inc. (ZAGNY) was incorporated as a not-for-profit entity as 501-C-3 organization. Erach was ZAGNY’s first president, and guided the community for more than five years.

Erach and his wife, Perin, always lived in New York in the same modest apartment that Erach had lived in since his student days. In the early years of the community, Zoroastrians from India were given Erach’s contact information to use in case they ran into trouble or needed a place to stay for a few days. Erach and Perin always welcomed Parsi students, if not with a place to stay, then at least with the offer of a good Parsi dinner. As a business professor at St. John’s University, Erach often used his connections to help new graduates find jobs.

Erach never forgot his roots and was determined to help the poor Parsis of India. About 35 years ago, Erach and Perin invited the community to a lunch at the Dar-e-Mehr to raise funds for the Udvada Atash Behram and for poor families of primarily priests, in Udvada, Surat, Navsari, and the neighboring towns and villages. Annually, the fund now collects approximately \$30,000 each year from donors all over North America. This became Erach’s pet project and passion until the end of his life. He personally checked on the proper distribution of the Udvada Atash Behram Fund each time he visited India. In his honor, the fund is now called “The Erach Munshi Udvada Fund.”

Erach will be remembered as the founding member and first president of ZAGNY. He viewed his greatest achievement as the creation of the first Dar-e-Mehr in North America in 1977 when he was ZAGNY’s president. He was a humble and devout Zarathushti. His vision for our community was instrumental in bringing us to the present vibrant community today. Let us always honor his memory.

Piroja and Kaikhosrov D. Irani: A Life Unsurpassed

Professor Kaikhosrov and Piroja Irani—A Life unsurpassed and legacy to “educate, promote, and advance the religion of the prophet Zarathushtra,

Piroja and Kaikhosrov D. Irani



Professor Emeritus Dr. Kaikhosrov D. Irani’s intellect, wisdom, vision, and extraordinary ability to share his knowledge of the Zarathushti religion remains forever unforgettable and incomparable. He was a world-renowned philosopher, a mentor to many, a teacher, a writer, a thinker and above all a true Zarathushti. His life was an example of what he taught. His wife Piroja Irani’s intelligence, charm, gentleness, and sharp acumen were always at his side. They were a formidable couple. ZAGNY is blessed to have benefitted from the Professor’s many lectures, talks, and adult classes. Now, ZAGNY will cherish their generosity and keep their vision of the Prophet alive and vibrant.

KD, as he was fondly known, was an intellectual and a mentor to many. Addressed by the majority as “Professor,” he was known throughout the world for his ability to teach and share the knowledge of our religion. Despite being a fountain of wisdom on our religion, he was so humble that it was rare to meet a human being with his knowledge and humility. Every time he spoke, everyone listened and learned. He could speak about the message of the Gathas endlessly. He was a man of stature, and vision, and unique in his ability to share the knowledge of our religion with clarity and conviction.

KD came to the United States in 1947. He taught Philosophy of Science at The City University of New York (CUNY). His first job at CUNY as Adjunct Lecturer was paid at a higher-than-normal rate: \$4.75 an hour instead of \$4.25 because he had a hand-written recommendation from Albert Einstein, who he knew at Princeton University. He taught for 61 years and retired at the age of 90. KD was influenced by his father, Dinshaw J. Irani, in whose footsteps he had followed to pursue his legal profession. His father’s knowledge of the Zarathushti religion was the defining force in his life. Professor went on to study our religion and became one of our foremost spokespersons. He will live in our history books forever.



When Kaikhosrov was perhaps three years old, his noble father advised him:

“Let your motto be: “Serve, serve, my son. Serve caring neither for applause, nor unmerited reproach. Serve, my son, never hoping for a reward, righteous service being the only purpose, your single goal.”

Kaikhosrov did take his father’s advice very seriously.

Contributors to the Historical Summary:

Sections through the year 2000 were compiled and written by Dr. Lovji Cama. Revised in August 2005 by Noshir Langrana, and various contributors, such as Mehru Cama, Lovji Hakim, and Framroze K. Patel.

The authors have taken every measure and precaution to provide the reader with a true and accurate historical record of the past events. As ZAGNY celebrated its 50th Anniversary, this document was revisited in 2023 and adapted by Dr. Noshir A. Langrana, Dr. Lovji D. Cama, and Framroze K. Patel.

Paragraphs which have no end notes and/or reference are sourced from ZAGNY's website as of September 30, 2023.

Any corrections or clarifications may be brought to the attention of the ZAGNY Board of Directors.