Zoroastrianism, Diaspora and Pilgrimage: A Singular View

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the nexus between identity and religion through the lived experience of three terms: ‘Zoroastrianism’, ‘Diaspora’ and ‘Pilgrimage’ (ZDP). All three aspects are deeply personal to me as a Zoroastrian, but have a bearing on the sustainability, understanding and education of new generations of Zoroastrians; a small, possibly 150,000 worldwide ethnic and religious community spread throughout the world. Although used interchangeably the word Zoroastrianism refers to the religion and Parsi/Parsee is used to denote ethno-cultural aspects relating to those Zoroastrians who trace their ancestry from the Indian Subcontinent. This thesis explores issues around re-connection and understanding of the Zoroastrian faith emanating from pilgrimage and described from my personal point of view as a diasporic Zoroastrian. Analysis of the primary research i.e. pilgrimage to Iran is located in the theoretical frame of Jafar Jafari’s (1987) Tourist Model. The study provides a contemplation for the practice of Zoroastrianism and Parsi identity in the future especially among second and third generations of diasporic Zoroastrians.

The Zoroastrian religion does not have any formal pilgrimage tradition, but there is a strong desire among diasporic peoples to seek meaning and affirmation through a journey to ‘homelands’. Pilgrimage, for Zoroastrians, takes place mainly in various locations in Iran (Shiraz, Yazd, Persepolis, Mt.Damavand and so on), the original home of Zoroastrianism, and in India (specifically locations such as Mumbai, Navsari, Udvada, Surat and Sanjan, all being early settlements and home to significant fire temples and monuments). My study focuses on religious, heritage and cultural aspects and attempts for diasporic Zoroastrians to gain a deeper understanding of both the faith and self-identity through undertaking travel to Iran, the site of the first diaspora.

The research for this thesis is based on qualitative methodologies involving auto-ethnography (AE), participatory action research (PAR) techniques (Filipovic 2015a; Filipovic 2015b), a review and analysis of secondary literature sources including social media, narratives of experiencing pilgrimage, and post pilgrimage activities such as attendance and management of Zoroastrian-specific and community functions. Conceptual frameworks and models derived from Hospitality and Tourism, Diaspora, Religious Studies are used as a base for this multidisciplinary study with Jafar Jafari’s (1987) Tourist Model being the main lens to interpret primary data collected during pilgrimage.

The use of secondary literature applying perspectives of emic versus etic or insider versus outsider viewpoints and critiques (Headland, Pike and Harris 1990) are canvassed to frame this thesis, arguing that emic and ‘lived experience’ perspectives are underrated in Zoroastrian studies while etic perspectives are favoured dealing with historical, theological, ontological and eschatological views. This focus on dense academic presentation of Zoroastrianism has consequences for the sustainability of religion and ethnicity, especially for diasporic ‘third culture kids’ (TCK).

The auto-ethnographic data presented in this thesis comes as the result of Participatory Action Research conducted during my 3-week pilgrimage to Iran, undertaken through an organised group tour this research is subjective, and given the personal nature of the experiences expressed as observations and narratives.

Outcomes for the thesis include a deeper understanding of the nexus between Zoroastrianism, Diaspora and Pilgrimage and the edumetric potential arising from its accessible presentation style including the use of photographs and commentary. Additionally, it is hoped that this study will fill a gap in knowledge and literature by becoming a reference point for other diasporic Zoroastrians seeking to enhance their identity.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was always going to be a ‘labour of love’. Its genesis was serendipitous as was its progression and completion. Embarking on a second PhD was a result of anomie with my ‘profane’ life and I did not believe that I would get another brilliant supervisor. However, Professor Carole Cusack has been both supervisor and mentor extraordinaire.

My family particularly my husband was crucial to completion and encouraged me to complete the thesis, when it would have been easier to chuck it all in. Cyrus and Avan – our children who have been vested as my personal ‘stewards’ to keep the flame of Zoroastrianism alive and pass it on to their children and our grandchildren assisted with providing a TCK perspective and forcing me to both acknowledge and jettison ‘baggage’ that I carry as a first generation diasporic Zoroastrian. My four-legged ‘child’ Sammy, patiently ‘listened’ and helped me live the Zoroastrian dictum ‘Ethiram-i-Sag’ (respect for the dog).

This thesis is dedicated to my mother Silloo Surti who remains a shining beacon in my life. Her role as ‘research associate’ while she was alive, included constantly curating, investigating, sharing knowledge and bequeathing me family heirlooms that were relevant to my studies. She inspired me by always living life following the dictum of Hvarastha (Good Deeds) to the very end and remains the most profound influence and role model in my life.

Many people contributed to this journey of self-discovery and I thank them. Staff in the Department of Studies of Religion at Sydney University, family, friends, work colleagues, and informal ‘research associates’ who were always sending me ‘things’, as also inspirational people both within and outside the Zoroastrian community my heartfelt thanks.

Sincere appreciation to Dr Sarah Balstrup employed as an editor in the initial preparation of this thesis for examination. Dr Balstrup works in the Religious Studies discipline, but does not have any subject matter expertise relating to this thesis.

Most importantly, ‘Dadar Ahura Mazda, tamari maya mehrbani ne maate oo ghano upkar manuche’ (Trans: Almighty Ahura Mazda, I acknowledge and thank you for your great kindness and love).
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This thesis is entirely the work of the undersigned and all sources of ideas and expressions are duly acknowledged in in-text references and bibliography. This project does not incorporate any material previously submitted by me for any other degree or similar award.
Dedicated to

Silloo Eruch Surti

28.2.2020
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INTRODUCTION

Overview and Background

Statement of Argument:

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the nexus between identity and religion through my own perspectives of the lived experience of three terms: ‘Zoroastrianism,’ ‘Diaspora’ and ‘Pilgrimage’ (ZDP). The multidisciplinary approach of this research allowed for the discrete discipline areas of Religion (Zoroastrianism), Travel and Tourism, Migration and even research methods to be knitted together to ‘transfer/transpose’ knowledge in these distinct domains to interrogate my experience as a diasporic Zoroastrian going on pilgrimage to Iran. While my own background in academia (tourism, hospitality, management studies) provided solid theoretical approaches, the areas of diaspora and migration studies as well as studies of religion were gaps in the academic context. Melding learning from ‘lived experience’ of diaspora and studies of religion/s under the overarching context of tourism and hospitality studies, encompassing aspects such as Systems, Transport, Accommodation, Motivations, Culture, Heritage, and even identity in the form of pilgrimage took a considerable leap of learning. Doctoral studies seek to address the ‘so what’ question and as a diasporic Zoroastrian who undertook pilgrimage to Iran, this thesis allowed for an investigation of identity and cogitations about the future of Zoroastrianism in the diaspora. This thesis while being a personal narrative seeks to contribute to the future understanding of practice sustainability and education of new generations of diasporic Zoroastrians. This study will contribute to raising awareness among Zoroastrians about benefits of ‘experiencing’ travel with elements of pilgrimage accompanying their travels for secular and recreational purposes. Imbibing heritage, history, culture, the narratives and ancestry of Zoroastrian (and Parsi) ancestors allows for a grounding of identity of a religious and ethno minority cultural group. Additionally, understanding the long lineage of Zoroastrian thought, practices and impacts on other religions will hopefully lead to an appreciation of the privileges of this religion of descent and contextualise the importance of keeping ‘the faith alive’. Lamentations of dwindling numbers are futile if not accompanied by ‘actions and solutions’ that embed evolution essential to the continuance of the religion. Other tropes like it being an individual rather than a congregational religion and ‘baggage’ of conversion and intermarriage are interwoven into the narratives of continuity. The writing on these topics in the past have been replete with pedantry and dogmatic assertions in both emic and etic scholarship of Zoroastrianism. This ‘future’ about Zoroastrianism encompasses not only Third Culture Kids (TCK) but also corresponding trends of migration away from India and Iran.

The Zoroastrians are a small ethnic and religious community spread throughout the world (Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada, UK and the Middle East hosting some of the larger populations). The Zoroastrian diasporic community is broadly drawn from two distinct ‘homeland’ contexts. The first is Zoroastrians from Iran and the second are referred to as Parsis/Parsees from the South Asian Sub Continent (mainly India and Pakistan). A third ethno-religious grouping referred to as ‘Iranis’ is applied to those Iranian Zoroastrians who migrated later to India (1800-1900s) from Iran. Confusion over the terms Zoroastrian and Parsi persist and often are used interchangeably. David Weaver (2014, p.22) citing Hinnells (2005) addressed these ethno-religious ‘confusions’ noting “The word Zoroastrian is increasingly being used by younger members of the international communities, in preference to Parsi
to indicate both their ethnicity and their religion”. This understanding and practice accords with TCK and the movement away from identifying as being of Indian/Pakistani/Iranian extraction especially as second-generation diasporic youth identify with their birthplace not the country of their ancestry.

The broad purpose of this study is to investigate the impacts of diaspora on the understanding and practice of religious and cultural beliefs in ‘non-homeland’ contexts. Issues of identity are explored based on the truisms ‘distance makes the heart grow fonder’ as diasporic first generation Zoroastrians often seek the comfort of both re-connection and a deeper understanding of the faith and religion. The Zoroastrian religion does not have any formal pilgrimage tradition unlike Hindus, Muslims and Christians, but there is a strong desire among diasporic peoples of all faiths to seek meaning and affirmation through a journey ‘home’ (even when the ‘home’ is nebulously defined because of multiple migrations of ancestors as is the case in Zoroastrians). Pilgrimage, for Zoroastrians, takes place mainly in Iran, the original homeland and in sites primarily in and around Yazd and the associated Pir, Abrukh, site of the sacred Cypress Tree, said to have been planted by Zarathushtra himself, Mount Damavand and Shiraz, home of the Atashbehram. In India, Mumbai, Navsari, Udvada, Surat and Sanjan, all being early settlements and home to significant fire temples and monuments are locations considered to be imbued with special meaning.

My explorations examine not only religious but also heritage, cultural and historical identity that would help diasporic Zoroastrians reinforce issues of identity. The distinctiveness of being a Zoroastrian and a minority religion of descent along with aspects related to non-conversion and dwindling populations are explored, linked as they are to the continuance of the faith and the ethnicity of Zoroastrians. Outcomes sought from this thesis include the development of niche tourism products for diasporic Zoroastrian visitation to sites of significance in India and Iran. Additionally, dissemination of the findings and the methodology might inspire future generations of Zoroastrians to ‘investigate’ aspects of the lived experience, in order to add to the corpus of literature and increase the accessibility for future generations about topics ranging from theological ritual practises to myths and practises of the faith.

Of particular significance to Australian and other diasporic Zoroastrians visiting the subcontinent, particularly India might encompass an understanding and appreciation of the connections between Australia and India. Kumud Merani, Executive Producer of the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) Hindi Radio Program says, “They say Australia and India are bound by curry and cricket. But more than a century ago, the two countries located on either side of the Indian Ocean, shared an uncommon thread connected through their British masters. SBS Hindi unravels unknown tales of the colonial era when Australia and India were British colonies. During these times many Australians and Indians travelled across the seas to the other side and discovered love, fortune, recognition and even notoriety.” The podcasts and radio interview series, ‘Unknown colonial connections between Australia and India’ featured diverse stories ranging from that of Richard Casey, an Australian, who was sent out as a wartime appointment as Governor of Bengal. His outspoken ‘Australian ways’ about British government policies that he disagreed with while trying to get on with the real business trying to “ameliorate the effects of the famine which took the lives of more than three million Indians” are noteworthy. The interviewee for this was Associate Prof Kama Maclean South Asian and World History at the University of New South Wales (UNSW). Another story refers to Roanna Gonsalves’s recounting of the mistreatment of Indian servants brought to Australia in the nineteenth century. These astonishing numbers included ‘ayahs’ (servants), cameleers and even traders. Seven thousand seven hundred identified India as their place of birth prior to Federation and the White Australia policy in 1901. This number compares with recent (ABS 2016 Census) estimates that 619,164 people identified as being of Indian extraction. As Dan Tehan, Minister for Education pointed out on his November 2019 visit to New Delhi the current figure of 107,673 Indian students to Australia contributed close to 5.5 billion and represented some proportion of the growth of Indians in Australia (Duttagupta 2019). A third story is revealed by the descendants of Haji Khwaja Bux who called himself a “Musaffir, a sojourner” and came from Calcutta to make his fortune in Perth, building the first ever mosque in Perth. The alluring but sad story of “Australian actress and comedienne Elsie Caroline Thompson who married an Indian King Raji Kumar Gopa Saran Narain Singh, the Maharaja of Tikari in 1909” is recounted by Chris Kunz who wrote a book ‘Maharani-The First Australian Princess: A novel based on a true story’ detailing his great aunt’s grand ‘adventure’ as part of the outward bound Australia-India connection. Themes of racism are mentioned by John Zubrzycki, “Indian performers, jugglers, magicians and
acrobats were brought to Australia in the nineteenth century” and faced extreme racism and extreme prejudice similar to 'Shams Un Nisa’ daughter of a cameleer who came to Australia in 1906 in search of her fiancé. Shams Un Nisa’s story told by Samia Khatoun, a cultural historian and author of Australianama – The South Asian Odyssey in Australia described the history of Muslims in Australia and argued for the recognition of South Asian and Aboriginal language sources as keys to viewing historical and current contexts. Alice Moldovan (2019) writing for the ABC radio program ‘Soul Search’, presents the story of Samia Khatoun’s research journey for Australianama as commencing with her find of “a book of Bengali Sufi poetry in the old tin mosque at Broken Hill”. The book called Kasasol Ambia (Trans: the stories of the prophets) is designed to be performed as Sufi poetry. Serendipitously, Khatoun discovered her great grandfather’s memoir in her diasporic parents’ home in Sydney and read that “this same collection of stories was the very first book” her great grandfather who had been a renowned scholar performing Bengali poetry had encountered. These performances were seen as “an honourable responsibility designed to teach others how to understand Sufi thought and poetry”. (Moldovan, 2019). Khatoun reveals to Merani that her research of passenger lists of South Asian people coming to Australia in the early nineteenth century shows that a number of women employed as ‘ayahs’ (servants/nursemaids) to Anglo children and camels were part of this 7700 people population. These ‘stories’ while relying on scholarly and authoritative sources (Khatoun, Maclean, Zubrzycki) present the information accessibly to a lay audience – and have potential to be woven into the stories presented to diasporic Zoroastrian Australians. Khatoun’s PhD dissertation ‘Camels, Ships, Trains: Translation Across the Indian Archipelago’ 1860-1930’ gives support to my own ethnographical approach. Other facets that resonate from Khatoun’s work include its diasporic lens, translations and movements of both time and space and as an “extended meditation” (Forster, 2013). Ethnography as methodology is described next as the preferred paradigmatic approach to ZDP:ASV.

The primary data for this research thesis emanated from qualitative methodologies involving auto-ethnography, participatory action research techniques (Filipovic 2015a; Filipovic 2015b), review and analysis of secondary literature sources, narratives of experiencing pilgrimage, and attendance and management of Zoroastrian specific and community functions undertaken by me. Conceptual frameworks and models were used both to guide the choice of methodology as well as to ‘explain’ and interpret data. Heuristic applications and models were gleaned from travel, tourism and religious studies discipline areas but the main model employed to frame and interpret data was that of Jafar Jafari (1987) ‘Tourist Model’ describing the springboard metaphor of travel from a tourist perspective. Other tourism models including the works of Richard Butler (1980), Stanley Plog (1972) and Neil Leiper (1979) along with spiritual tourism approaches Alex Norman’s (2011; 2013). The work of Erik Cohen (1979) and Victor Turner (1973) on pilgrimage and its precepts influenced and shaped arguments. Concepts from organisational change approaches including the work of Kurt Lewin (1947) theory of change, Donald Schon and Chris Argyris (1997) reflection in action and reflection on action and, Peter Senge’s (1996) work on Mental Models and Systems Thinking were instructive. The 'applied’ nature of Shernaz Cama’s (2016) work on the Everlasting Flame (EF) International Programme and Zoroastrianism in the New Millennium (ZINTM) were considered as well. The use of secondary literature applying perspectives of emic versus etic or insider versus outsider viewpoints and critiques (Headland, Pike and Harris 1990) guided the perspectives and findings of this thesis. The American anthropologist and linguist Kenneth Pike coined the terms ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ (derived from Greek phonemic and phonetic) to analyse linguistic units, but increasingly they are used in the social sciences to represent viewpoints from a local (subjective) versus a global (objective) viewpoint (Headland, 1990).

The auto-ethnographic data presented in this thesis comes as the result of Participatory Action Research (PAR) conducted during my three-week pilgrimage to Iran, undertaken through an organised group tour: ‘The Complete Iran Experience with SillooM’. Primary data for this research study is presented in the form of a journalistic narrative employing photographs and commentary of my journey. This research is subjective, and given the personal nature of the experiences, observations and narratives featured in Chapter Three, it would be inappropriate to consider these insights as generalisations to be applied to other religious or diasporic contexts. However, they shed much light on the complexities of diasporic Zoroastrianism and the implications of pilgrimage in this context. They illustrate some of the conundrums faced currently by diasporic Zoroastrians and speculate on the nature of Zoroastrianism religious and cultural practices of the future in the diaspora.
This thesis commences with an exploration of the three key terms: Zoroastrianism, Diaspora and Pilgrimage (ZDP). The employment of thematic analysis and a review of literature on these themes will be explored in Chapter One. Chapter Two outlines the qualitative research methodology employed. Chapter Three is the heart of the thesis, providing a subjective auto-ethnographic account of the twenty-one day pilgrimage I undertook from 25 April to 13 May 2015. In Chapter Four post, pilgrimage activities and events are described along with conclusions and recommendations for the future. The possibility of developing a Zoroastrian pilgrimage track is one of the outcomes canvassed for Indian and Iranian destinations. Other recommendations for the future of Zoroastrianism and diasporic communities involve the curation of, and concentrated research from emic perspectives and the ‘lived’ experiences of Zoroastrians. Undertaking pilgrimage serves as a means of self-identity formation and a means of endorsing a connection to culture, to reduce dissonance and encourage stewardship of the faith, culture and heritage.

**Zoroastrians in the Diaspora**

Before continuing any further, it is important to distinguish terms used in this study. Herein, religion is defined as Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrians (and Parsis) are an ethno-religious group, “possibly the oldest surviving religion practiced today based on the worship of one God” (commonly called monotheism) (Eduljee, 2017). Following the prophet Zarathushtra, this Proto-Iranian group migrated to India around 700 CE. There have been subsequent waves of emigration in the diaspora, with most Zoroastrians relocating to Western nations (Australia, New Zealand, UK, USA, Canada), although Zoroastrians migrated to places like the Middle East, Africa and Mauritius.

The term Parsis (or Parsees) is used to refer to adherents of Zoroastrianism who migrated from Iran to India in the seventh century CE. This diasporic community distinguish themselves from Iranian Zoroastrians who remained in Iran (Boyce, 1984, 1992, 2001; Rose 2011; Waterhouse 1934; Clark 2001; Stausberg 2008). Ethnicity broadly refers to a place of origin, common heritage, culture, language and even kin ties (Geertz, 1973) whereas religion refers to personal faith and spirituality. In the Zoroastrian context, the terms ethnicity and religion are often used interchangeably as a result of the common heritage, ancestry and religious beliefs shared by Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians. Renate Ysseldyk, Kimberly Matheson and Hymie Anisman (2010) explain this dichotomy perfectly;

Grounded within a social identity framework, we propose that the unique characteristics of a group membership is inextricably linked to a religious belief system (even compared with other ideological belief systems) and may be essential to explain why religiosity is often embraced with such tenacity (p.60).

According to the authors (Ysseldyk, Mateson and Anisman, 2010, p.60), religious identification offers “a distinctive ‘sacred’ worldview and ‘eternal’ group membership, unmatched by identification with other social groups.” This religious bond has implications for both religious and ethnic identification, setting the group apart from others. Sumit Paul-Choudhury (2019) alludes to the idea that religion brings about social cohesion in communities. He mentions “Syncretism is the “pick and mix” approach of combining religious traditions and practices. This syncretism is particularly apt when applied to the Zoroastrian community in the diaspora, both individually and communally as ancient ‘homeland’ factors come into play along with pragmatism and sheer logistical imperatives (no full time priests, no consecrated fire, distance from community place of worship and so on). Jessica Jacobson (1997, pp.239-240) buttresses this idea suggesting that the intertwining of religious and ethnic bonds “maintained by young British Pakistanis,” noting that, for these young people Islam has “universal relevance,” and in a diasporic environment where ethnic boundaries are increasingly permeable as a consequence of migration, religion with its more rigid and “clear cut” delineations bind them closely. Jo Ann Farver, Sonia Narang, and Bakhtawar Bhadha (2002a), studied 180 American born Asian Indian adolescents and found that acculturation, enculturation and ethnic identity are likely to vary greatly across generations, and adolescents tended to acculturate much more quickly than their parents, who held on to the ‘natal’ belief systems and culture much more strongly:

For example, U.S.-born adolescents may be trained by their immigrant parents to: participate in
In a second article on acculturation and psychological functioning Farver, Bhadha and Narang surveyed “85 U.S.-born Asian Indian adolescents (45 girls; 40 boys) and one of their immigrant parents about family demography, self-identification, acculturation, and religiosity with adolescents completing a self-perception profile.” (2002b, p.11) Religiosity was measured using a six statement Likert Scale (0-5) developed by Antonsz (1990), in which aspects such as knowledge of religion, importance and significance of their religion in their life and participation in rites and rituals were examined (this study included a consideration of Zoroastrian youth and their immigrant parents). Their results, unsurprisingly, revealed that parents tended to identify more strongly with their religion, and that families where religiosity played a significant role tended to have a “separated acculturation” style (p.25), where they maintained a distinct identity from their host culture (i.e. America). Interestingly Farver, Bhadha and Narang found that socio-economic status (SES) and religiosity were the two variables that directly influenced whether parents and adolescents adopted integrated, assimilated, or separated acculturation styles. Higher socio economic status (SES) meant greater adoption of integration and assimilation whereas higher religiosity scores meant greater separation in acculturation.

The authors note that the location of their studies might have affected the scores and how immigrants are viewed, saying, “Southern California has retained a somewhat higher degree of tolerance and acceptance for diversity, whereas, in relatively ‘monocultural’ communities, immigrant families have fewer choices of how to associate with the host culture.” (Farver et.al 2002b, p.27) Such findings inform discussions about the Zoroastrian diasporic community undertaken in this thesis. In Australia, Sydney hosts the largest concentration of Zoroastrians, followed closely by Melbourne. Demographic trends are presented later in this chapter wherein the overall growth of the community is compared with the results of three Australian Censuses. Attitudes of the host culture, issues of identity and similar demographic characteristics found by Farver et.al (2002a and 2002b) in Southern California, might apply to the Zoroastrian diaspora in Australia and the general South Asian population. These demographic issues propel a rationale for the existence of such attitudes in the Zoroastrian diaspora as they have a direct consequence on continuity of the religion.

The rationale for undertaking this study includes issues such as the dwindling numbers of Zoroastrians worldwide and the very real fear that soon this religious and ethnic minority will cease to exist. This concern is spelled out in the following discussion regarding the socio- demographics of Zoroastrians worldwide. Recent research estimates that only 57,264 people identified as Zoroastrians in the 2011 Census in India (Parsiana, August 7, 2017, pp.214). Figures around the world are more fluid. Shernaz Cama presented the most recent estimates regarding diasporic Zoroastrian communities at the Everlasting Flame Conference in March 2016. This data reflected the growing diasporic nature of Zoroastrians, with numbers in both Iran and India declining. Growth in numbers occurred mainly in North America and Canada, followed closely by Australia and New Zealand. The United Kingdom, Singapore and Hong Kong (in the eighteenth century) represent the historic ‘older’ diasporas, but numbers are diminishing with the increasing immigration constraints imposed by those nations and the preference for newer settlements of Zoroastrian communities such as in the Gulf region (1900 Zoroastrians) followed closely by migration to Australia and New Zealand. This pattern of successive migrations is evident in the increasing numbers of Zoroastrians in the Gulf region choosing to on-migrate to places in Australia as it is extremely difficult to get permanent residency or own property in some of the Gulf States.

Hong Kong has a special history in the diaspora story of Parsis. Annemarie Evans for Hong Kong Heritage Podcast (2018) interviewed my cousin, Jimmy Master. Jimmy a third generation Hong Kong resident recounts and explains the role of the diasporic Parsi community and its contribution to Hong Kong and more generally to Zoroastrian associations worldwide because of their wealth. This Parsi ‘diaspora’ features in Amitav Ghosh’s, Trilogy Sea of Poppies (2008), River of Smoke (2011), and Flood of Fire (2015) on the Opium Wars and Britain’s eventual seizure of Hong Kong. The role of Parsis and their involvement in shipping and trade between India, Hong Kong and as traders in
Mauritius is woven into a compelling story with one of the chief protagonists in *Flood of Fire* being “Shireen Modi, a widow determined to reclaim her opium-trader husband’s wealth and reputation”. In *River of Smoke*, the Indian diaspora to Mauritius is explored as it was as a staging post in the Opium Wars. Serendipitously, on a trip to Mauritius I found evidence of this diasporic Parsi merchant ‘Negociant Parsi’, in a poster.

![Figure 1.1: Daruwalla. Pheroza (2004) Négociant Parsi, Parsee Merchant, Types de l’Ile Maurice.](image)

Demographics for Zoroastrians in the Australian Bureau of Statistics census data of 2016, 2011 and 2006 revealed that the number of people identifying as Zoroastrians had increased over the three census periods. Divided into state-based statistics, i.e. New South Wales (NSW) Victoria (VIC), Western Australia (WA), South Australia (SA), Queensland (QLD), and Tasmania (TAS), Northern Territories (NT) and Australian Capital Territory (ACT), it is interesting to see that despite such small numbers there is Zoroastrian representation in every state and territory. This anomaly given the worldwide declining numbers of Zoroastrians worldwide is attributable to the economic and family reunion migration of Zoroastrian families in both Australia (and New Zealand). Additionally, the uptake of ‘skilled migrant visas’ by international students mainly Parsis choosing to study in Australia boost the numbers, with many becoming permanent residents/citizens. The birth of babies to parents identifying as Zoroastrian in Australia contribute to this increase in numbers. It is theorised that given the increasing difficulties and restrictions for people to migrate/study/work in the United States, because of Donald Trump, Australia is increasingly seen as a favoured destination for migration. With the growth of South Asians sending their children overseas for undergraduate studies, Australia with its more temperate weather, multiculturalism, three year undergraduate study program (as opposed to four years in North America and Canada) and post work visa options, all contribute to increasing not only Indian but Zoroastrian student numbers as well. Similarly, young Zoroastrians from Iran are able to come to Australia with more ease. A snapshot of Zoroastrian numbers in the Australian Censuses:
Zoroastrianism religious affiliation, 2006–2016 Census, persons by place of usual residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>% increase 2006-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>1,108</td>
<td>1,304</td>
<td>1,347</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2,112</td>
<td>2,541</td>
<td>2,730</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Answering this question is optional.


The Census numbers went from n=2112 in 2006, to n=2541(+429) in 2011, and to n=2730 (+189) in the 2016 Census data. It will be interesting to see if this trend continues in the 2021 census collection.

In each case, Zoroastrianism was classified under the ‘Other’ Category. An article in The Conversation by Gary D. Bouma of Monash University (June 2017) stated: “When the full results become available, we will be able to see how many Australians identify with the myriad small groups – Zoroastrians, Satanists, Scientologists, Witchcraft/Wicca, and more.” The classification of Zoroastrians (2730 in a total Australian population of approx. 25 million) as ‘Others’ lumped in with more esoteric ‘religious’ groups, while understandable, is an area of sensitivity for Zoroastrians. The Census of 2016 is probably not accurate, as it is possible that many Zoroastrians, particularly those who are not enrolled as members of state-based community groups, for e.g. Australian Zoroastrian Association of NSW (AZA) may have identified themselves simply in the ‘Other’ category. Unverifiable accounts suggest that there are less than 450 paying adult memberships at the AZA in 2020 as many Zoroastrians do not become members of the AZA or participate in events, or even receive the newsletter. Currently only NSW (including ACT), VIC and WA appear to have ‘formal’ registered Zoroastrian Community organisations. This lack of identification in the Census is discussed in some detail in the “Review of Literature” on Zoroastrianism undertaken in Chapter Two.

Shernaz Cama (2016) estimated the worldwide population of Zoroastrians to be approximately 150,000 and presented the following table at the Everlasting Flame conference in New Delhi in March 2016. Given that census data relies upon self-reporting, a clear picture of the international Zoroastrian population continues to elude the community. The mix of geographical regions and nation states adds further ambiguity to a definitive count. For example, the ‘Gulf Region’ includes areas like Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates. Demographic Clusters presented in the Everlasting Flame International Programme, 2016 show the following population distribution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Iran: 15,000 or 25,271</th>
<th>India: 61,000</th>
<th>US: 14,405</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada: 6,442</td>
<td>Britain: 5,500</td>
<td>Australia: 2,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulf Region: 1,900</td>
<td>Pakistan: 1,675</td>
<td>New Zealand: 1,231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe and Central Asia: 1,000</td>
<td>Singapore: 372</td>
<td>Hong Kong: 204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa: 134</td>
<td>East Africa: 37</td>
<td>Sri Lanka: 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia: 43</td>
<td>Japan: 21</td>
<td>Seychelles: 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China: 21</td>
<td>Thailand/Vietnam: 16</td>
<td>Philippines: 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland: 10</td>
<td>South America: 10</td>
<td>Mexico, Central America and the Islands: 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea: 5</td>
<td>Indonesia: 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7
Worldwide estimates of Zoroastrians vary in community-based sources such as Zoroastrians.net, ‘Parsis, Iranis, Zarthushti all under one roof’, Fezana Journal (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America 2004), and other sources estimating the numbers of Zoroastrians to be anywhere between 120,000 to 190,000. These numbers represent the most accurate estimates in the collated literature.

Kurds re-claiming their Zoroastrian heritage compound conundrums regarding the number of Zoroastrians worldwide with increasingly strident claims. In ancient times, Zoroastrianism flourished all along the Silk Route and according to Sylvain Mercadier (2018) writing for The New Arab website increasing numbers of Kurds are reclaiming the religion of their ancestors and converting to Zoroastrianism. He says this trend is particularly notable in Iraqi Kurdistan where the Kurdistan Regional Government has passed laws officially recognising Zoroastrianism as a religion. Awat Tayib (Zoroastrian representative at the regional government’s ministry of religious affairs) asserted that under the Baath regime of Sadam Hussein, Zoroastrianism was not recognised as a legitimate faith. In the article ‘The curious rebirth of Zoroastrianism in Iraqi Kurdistan’, Lara Fattah (2015) describes the rising number of Kurds converting to Zoroastrianism because of Islamic State/Daesh. This rising tide of re-conversion and claims to Zoroastrianism are considered important to future dialogue as they raise important points about ‘who is a Zoroastrian’ especially in diasporic communities. The question of conversion (or reversion) to Zoroastrianism has consequences for the ‘identity’ of both the religious and ethnic aspirations of masses of people especially in countries beset with political and religious schisms. This issue is pertinent to Australian Zoroastrians as during the World Zoroastrian Congress in Perth 2018, a group of Kurds attended ‘re-claiming’ their Zoroastrian ancestry. In some sections and associations in the Zoroastrian diaspora, Kurds are increasingly being recognised as having the right to claim their Zoroastrian ancestry and to be counted as Zoroastrians.

Elizabeth Bodine-Baron, Todd C.Helmus, Madeline Magnuson and Zev Winkelman (2016, p.xi) in their study of Twitter data examined the use of the terms Daesh and ISIS. They explain the difference in terminology and ideology thus:

“While ISIS has formally requested that its followers refer to it as The Islamic State or الدولة الإسلامية, group detractors often use the abbreviation Daesh or Daesh”.

Bodine-Baron et.al (2016) “lexically analyzed” the two terms and “found that frequent users of Daesh had content that was highly critical of ISIS. Rafat Kurdi (2016, p.3) described ‘ISIS Naming’ saying:

The name of ISIS itself is quite hard to understand in English, considering the fact that there are three translations of the Arabic word Daesh. This term is not only used as an acronym, but more as an insult, because it carries the meaning of someone who crushes underfoot. This explains why it is not favoured by ISIS itself.

All three names that are used – IS, ISIL and ISIS – actually do have different meanings: nevertheless the group is the same. The first one is IS which stands for Islamic State. This refers to the expansionist ambitions thus generalizing the group. Then there is ISIL which stands for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. This gives it a broader definition, mainly because the Levant was used to describe “Greater Syria”, which included Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Iraq and Palestine. Lastly, there is the name ISIS which refers to the actual location of the group and to where it holds most of its territory – the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), a multicultural Australian broadcasting service (Television and Radio) explain the conundrums succinctly: (SBS, ‘Explainer: What is Daesh? What’s in a name?’ of 4 Dec 2014), “The Australian, the United Kingdom and the United States governments tend to refer to the group as IS or ISIL but the US Secretary of State, John Kerry has started using the term Daesh too”.

The explanations of Daesh and ISIS are provided above, as they are endemic to understanding Fattah’s (2016) comments where she identifies Kurdish nationalist and ethnic pride, rather than religion, as
driving this conversion to, or reclamation of Zoroastrianism. Dissenting views, however, question the Iraqi Kurds’ claim to Zoroastrianism, which posits ‘Iranian Kurdistan’ as a homeland, rather than being geographically specific and falling within the Iraqi border lines. Questions are raised about reprisals against those converting and the limitations of the movement to Zoroastrianism in Kurdistan. Another side of the debate not canvassed in Fattah’s article, but equally pertinent, is the question of whether Iranian and Indian Zoroastrians are accepting of Kurdish people ‘reverting’ to Zoroastrianism, and claiming it as their ancestral religion.

Debates about the number of Zoroastrians, and precisely who is a Zoroastrian, leave the question of exact numbers unanswered, and raise thorny issues around religious conversion and the practice of Zoroastrianism. Richard Foltz (2011) noted the existence of converts referred to as ‘no Zarthushtis’ (new Zarthushtis in Farsi) citing the example of the former Muslim turned Zoroastrian Ali Akbar Jafarey, head of the Zarathushtrian Assembly based in Southern California. The Zarathushtrian Assembly actively rejects Zoroastrianism as an “ethnic identity” (http://www. Zoroastrian.org) and Jafarey “actively solicits converts and promotes Zoroastrianism as an universal religion open to all” (Foltz, 2011, p.83). These re-verts are not generally viewed or welcomed positively by diasporic organisations who reject them as not being “real Zoroastrians” (ibid. p. 84). However, in Sydney, adherents of Ali Jafarey are anecdotally known to have conducted ‘sudreh pooshi’ (initiation similar to Navjotes among Parsis) ceremonies and claimed those converts as Zoroastrians. However, the AZA of NSW does not allow these ‘converts’ to be members. Iranian Zoroastrians tend to identify first as Iranians and then as Zoroastrians and this introduces issues of social cohesiveness in the Zoroastrian community. To confound issues further Iranian Bahais are seen as closer to Zoroastrians than Shias. These anomalies contribute to the uncertainty of census data, which is both confidential and less discrete in breakdown with the ‘Other’ categorisation being opened, ended unless self-disclosure of Zoroastrianism is made on the form.

Theological and social contexts are interrogated as relevant to pilgrimage and community identity, and while not the purview of this thesis, do become pertinent when assessing the sustainability of Zoroastrianism in the future, which is discussed in both the literature review in Chapter Two and the conclusions from the study in Chapter Four. The next section deals with the rationale for the study, which builds on the discussion above. These discussions included a brief overview of numbers, subjectivity and declared singularity of view of the thesis matter, and difficulties associated with getting exact figures of adherents of Zoroastrianism in the diaspora and worldwide.

Riddles of classification aspects of ethno religious identity are compounded in diasporic communities. A review of the literature on Ethno Religious identity and its impacts on younger second generation Zoroastrians in the diaspora and natal lands, were instructive, revealing constructs related to post-colonialism and impacts (Dharwadkar, 1998), “forum shopping” (Sharafi, 2010, p.980), and “processes of metaphor inversion as ‘symbolic entailment’ (Luhrmann, 1994, p. 333). Mitra Sharafi (2010, p.980) investigating Zoroastrian marital systems calls out forum shopping as an “attempt to push one’s case into a jurisdiction promising an optimal result when there is ambiguity over the controlling jurisdiction”. Parsis in the diaspora have inherited and continue to maintain ‘colonial law and rule’ ties and Sharafi’s article, which investigates three case, studies, where ‘jurisdictional opportunism’ is applied. While historical in context, reverberations of the consequences of intermarriage are still applicable when it comes to the ‘recognition’ of Parsi marriages by ‘recognised religious celebrants’ which are still rare in the diaspora. For example, there are only two recognised and registered priests in Sydney, Australia who are allowed to officiate as marriage celebrants. The second two cases of Parsis and marital law discussed by Sharafi “illustrate the ways working-class litigants moved across international boundaries to try to alter their legal status” (p.996). The Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act of 1865, the concept of ‘no-fault’ divorce and even the schisms between ‘Iranis’ and Parsis became areas of ‘forum shopping’ in order to improve economic or other prospects. The third case dealt with the request of an ‘Irani’ woman in 1919 who wanted to divorce her husband on the grounds of bigamy as he had returned to Yazd where he had taken a second wife, while she continued to reside in Bombay. The husband’s actions of ‘defensive forum shopping meant he was beyond the reach of ‘British and Parsi’ marital sanctions as long as he continued to live in Persia. In the diaspora questions around ethno-religious practices among Parsis and Zoroastrians are further overlaid with legal systems of the diasporic country resulting in most dissolutions of marriage to comply only with the laws of the land.
one is resident in (unless transnational relocation, children or property settlements are at stake). This practice of having second families was a feature of earlier Diasporas and was a strong thread in Ghosh’s (2015) Flood of Fire with Shireen Modi’s husband having a Chinese ‘wife’ and son. These tropes play into Zoroastrian sensibilities about lineage and ‘purity’ of bloodlines. Looser non congregational structures of religious practice and worship abet this to some extent as there is no ‘over-arch’ church or parish to rein in errant partners and the priesthood has no ‘authority’ over such matters unlike in other faiths.

Fenggang Yang and Helen Rose Ebaugh (2001, p.271) use Zoroastrians as an example of the ‘Americanization’ of “new” (arrived since the mid-1960s) immigrant populations to adopt ‘congregational forms of religious practice, a return to theological foundations and inclusion of others’ as evidence of pluralism. Observations made by them include the ease of ‘leaving’ a religion in the diaspora, the need to ‘recruit’ members to the religious association/organisation and the growth in ‘lay’ leadership that facilitates inclusivity and welcome of new immigrants. The move from religion and ritual places of worship to ‘community’ centres hosting social celebrations are noted by Yang and Ebaugh stating that even “Zoroastrian centres are learning to run charity and welfare programs and are establishing parochial schools” (p. 276) (for example Gatha and Sunday School classes). Other changes encompass changes to the language of worship moving to English as Gujarati is spoken less and less in the diaspora, this however is not the case among Iranian Zoroastrians who maintain Farsi as the central language in most of their homes and social settings. Convenience’ factors of worshipping on Sundays to accommodate for the ‘profane’ life rather than the ‘sacred’ life (and specified days of worship) and social inclusiveness (without prosleytisation in the context of Zoroastrianism) all widen the gulf in the business of ‘being Zoroastrian’.

David Weaver (2014, p.22) citing Hinnells (2005) addressed these ethno-religious ‘confusions’ noting “The word Zoroastrian is increasingly being used by younger members of the international communities, in preference to Parsi to indicate both their ethnicity and their religion”. Kamala Ganesh (2012, p.324) goes one step further confirming that young people in the North American diaspora given their primary views of religion rather than ethnicity were inclined to favour both conversion and interfaith marriages. Ganesh’s article is instructive and a wonderful read as she ‘sabre rattles’ about issues of ethno-religious identity comparing it to Indian and diasporic conditions. Her definition of Zoroastrians as being transnational with the three major constituents being from India, Iran and the diaspora and her addressing of the debates within the community regarding ethnicity and purity of genealogical lines, provide a laser like rendering of the ‘current state of the nation’ in lived Zoroastrianism both in India (principally Mumbai) and the diaspora. Her discussions pull no punches on the ‘purity’ and perceived ‘superiority’ that Parsis manifest with her wry observation that “Iranians claim to follow the faith in its pure form, whereas Indian Parsis are seen as more westernized due to British influences …and they (Iranians) feel that Parsis have become too ritualistic due to Hindu influences” (p.323). These examples and understandings go to the heart of notions of ‘homeland’ and diasporic practice of Zoroastrianism.

Tanya Marie Luhrmann (1994) addresses the ethno religious identity and this post-colonial confusion among the Parsis who had “adopted hypermasculanized British ideals” (p. 333) only to find themselves experience a crisis of identity (which perhaps led to the diasporic dispersions of the 1950s and 1960s). The trope of ‘inadequate’ Parsi men is caricatured in the despotic father figure Hormusji in Cyrus Mistry’s play Doongaji House where he blames his two “irresponsible sons” for the decline of the Parsi community at large.

The older one, Rusi, has emigrated to Canada, and the younger, Fali is an alcoholic bookie. Since both sons have also violated the rules of endogamy – Rusi marries a Canadian and Fali a Christian woman employed as a nanny – Hormusji considers them guilty of miscegenation and feels that “the blood has been polluted”. This paternal outrage is ironic because, following the loss of his family business thirty years earlier, Hormusji has lived off the labor of two women, his wife Piroja and his daughter Avan whose salary supports the household. (Dharwadker, 1998, p.88).

Luhrmann explains her concept of symbolic entailment as the “symbolic markers which communities use to identify themselves” relative to larger power structures and shifts as are attendant in diaspora and
migration. The presence of a time lag compounds the movement of these shifts away from both the semiotics and understanding of these self-perceptions. Older first generation Zoroastrians (particularly Parsis) still refer to the idea of Parsi men being “mama’s boys” and make jokes about the analogies to Jewish culture and tropes including guilt, and matriarchal power. Luhrmann notes the pervasive theme of ‘self-criticism’ inherent in her informants and in community discourse. Underlying this self-deprecation however, is a strong vein of sense of superiority built on the close resemblances (both in appearance and manners) to the colonial masters, that persists in the form of a snobbery of ‘gentee1 poverty’ that still exists today. Representations of Parsis in both literature and on celluloid quite often ‘assert’ these stereotypes. Luhrmann concludes that at the heart of a number of these discussions is the inability of the community to come to terms with concepts of racial purity and intermarriage. The next section elaborates on factors that impelled this research study and why it took on the form of doctoral studies rather than independent publication processes.

**Research Motivations and Rationale**

Making a significant original contribution to knowledge is required of doctoral and other higher degree research candidates when nominating research projects. This thesis does not ‘create’ new knowledge; rather it draws together and transposes knowledge from three disparate domains of study: Zoroastrianism (Studies of Religion/Faith/Spirituality), Diaspora (International Studies, Political Science, History and Ethno-Nationalism, Dispersal and Migration Studies) and Pilgrimage (Travel, Tourism, Hospitality Studies). PhD students are motivated to take on doctoral studies, sometimes for career, or fulfillment of academic aspirations. However, how does one explain embarking on a second doctorate? Simply, it became a ‘passion’ project that allowed me to divorce myself from the ‘profane’ life; it was an escape and an opportunity to curate information from my ‘Infovore’ tendencies into an organised, structured thesis.

Ian Brailsford’s (2010) excellent article defining motives and aspirations of history PhD students succinctly divides these imperatives to undertake doctoral studies as being: career, personal reasons and the desire to influence colleagues, academics, family or friends. Ruth Neumann’s (2007) study comparing PhDs to professional doctorates concluded that personal interest was the most important factor, as she says “insofar as there is a direct connection between profession or workplace and research, it has been created by individual student interest” (Neumann 2007, p.185). Student comments featured in Brailsford’s study (2010, pp.21-22) resonated strongly with my own motivations, including those of altruism and “giving back”. An altruistic pursuit is highlighted as a tenet of the Zoroastrian faith and provided one of the stimuli for this research. I could see that the “magpie” approach described by one particular student (p.21) reflected my own practice of collecting endless small pieces of information that helped build my understanding of pilgrimage and diasporic Zoroastrian identity.

I becoming a Sunday school teacher for children aged eleven to fourteen years at the AZA played out the role of influences as enunciated by Brailsford (2010). In the process of preparing study materials my limitations and knowledge, gaps became obvious and the need to be both professional and credible spurred me onto formal study. During my tenure as President, of the Management Committee, AZA the need to be credible on both religious and secular matters was magnified. Further, discussions on ‘academic imperialism’ and ivory tower approaches to viewing these dynamic, ‘living’, secular and religious matters, goaded my desire to make information both ‘applicable and accessible’ to the wider diasporic Zoroastrian community and provide a record for future generations of Zoroastrian scholars. Julio Aramberri (2001, p. 757) issues a challenge seeing the researcher academic as a ‘tourisier’ (i.e. interpreter). As he reviews the shibboleths of tourism studies “the host-guest paradigm, tourism as nonordinary behaviour, and the theory of the lifecycle of attractions” he asks:

> “Why don’t you get real Prof. Tourisier?” it might read as another chapter in Alvin Gouldner’s old proposal of a sociology of sociology…Why is it that so many colleagues are bent on turning their backs on the (un?) real world? Why are the fiercest critics of tourism to be found in that part of Academia that provides mostly teaching jobs? Could it be because modern society offers less and less space and fewer rewards to the lecturing profession? Might this process be the
source of a growing alienation in some parts of the intelligentsia? How long can these academic segments remain in denial of the external world without making credible the claim that they are in fact irrelevant? At another level are not the theoretical tools used to express this strange feeling somewhat dubious? Can the elitist theories of culture associated with the Frankfurters, those haughty denizens of the highbrow School, and with the hermeneutics of the Lacan-Foucault-Derrida ancestry help to understand the complexities of modern society and of modern tourism?"

John Hinnells (2000) refers to the importance of religious education convened by laity, particularly in diasporic communities. He specifically mentions the existence of Sunday Schools among Zoroastrians in the US, Canada and the UK (p.49) that function to reinforce identity, but as social-networking opportunities intended to introduce young people to potential partners in life. The covert theme of marriage and the issues around conversion are a constant refrain in the background of my consciousness as a Zoroastrian parent. While Hinnells talks about ‘religious education’, Sunday Schools for Zoroastrians are much more holistic in approach, with children being encouraged to debate history, culture and rituals in a self-reflective mode. This notion of self-reflection and tying classes back to personal ‘lived experiences’ is very much driven by lay teachers like myself who are diasporic and see their role as parents being eroded as their children assimilate and are won over by the dominant culture they inhabit in daily life.

‘Push and Pull’ factors functioned as motivators as push encapsulated the need to know about Zoroastrianism to be able to teach with credibility and pull factors related back to self-identity. Push and Pull factors are applicable in both travel and tourism studies and diasporic studies, providing interesting parallels to doctoral study motivations. Crompton (1979) identifies travel motivations as the desire to escape from everyday life, newness, education, self-exploration, relaxation, status, regression into the past and the heightening of relationships both familial and with friends through social affinity. Many of these psychosocial dimensions may be applied to the undertaking of this second PhD, notably education, self-exploration and to some extent regression into the past (as a feature of displacement from being diasporic). In my case, I had already completed a PhD from the School of Social Sciences at the University of Newcastle, Australia in 1999 on changing attitudes toward people with disabilities (PWD) in the hospitality and tourism (H&T) industry. This study was a continuation of both undergraduate and postgraduate studies in the area of PWD and H&T. This qualification was entrenched in the realms of professional competency in order to have an academic career. Ten years after the achievement of this award a great sense of ennui with my academic career ‘pushed’ me to want to research Zoroastrianism and Diaspora, while my work as a Sunday School teacher ‘pulled’ me toward the need for more knowledge. These push and pull forces along with a form of rootlessness as evinced in the poetry of the Parsi poet Keki N. Daruwalla impelled me to undertake this PhD. Diaspora and its resultant impacts on identity furthered this desire.

Writing about the Indigenous musical duo, ‘Apakatjah’ (Jonathan Lindsay Tjapaltjarri Hermawan and Dion Forrester), Neha Kale (10 July 2018, p.12) articulated the conundrum of geography and the movement away from homeland. This is mirrors the experience of diasporic migrants who assimilate into the culture but always retain their ‘difference’. In the case of the musical duo, it referred to their movement from regional Alice Springs to the urban Campbelltown Arts Centre, in a suburb in Sydney, where they were undertaking a song-writing residency. Their sense of dislocation (even in the same country) was palpable as they describe the effect on language as well. Hermawan is quoted as saying “When I am out bush, I’m thinking in English and speaking in language, out here I’m speaking in English and thinking in language” (p.12). Hermawan reflected on the idea of being from two worlds, but resolving to see oneself as “whole” so then you can draw on the strength of these different worlds” (p.12).

The literature in all three areas of study is extensive but no study/research existed specifically addressing the issue of diasporic Zoroastrians and their experiences of pilgrimage. Writers such as Khurshed, E. Eduljee, Marzban, J. Giara (1998, 1999), Aspandyar Sohrab Gotla (2013) and Richard Foltz (2011) all refer to places where worship (and pilgrimage?) might occur for Zoroastrians in both India and Iran. Daryoush Mehrshahi (2000) examined significant historical, cultural and geographical sites in Yazd Iran, particularly the Pir, suggesting they might be staging posts in the long history of
migration, and that their current use for religious and cultural gatherings is a continuation of this tradition of fellowship. *Pars* are places of worship and the six main *Pars* are located around Yazd in Iran and are related to the story of the fall of the last Zoroastrian Sassanian King Yazdegerd (632-651 CE). Supplementary factors such as the lack of a ‘defined’ pilgrim track or route, along with the muddying of social, cultural and historical contexts inherent in Zoroastrianism, added complexity to the question of Zoroastrian and particularly diasporic experiences of pilgrimage. First person narratives of Zoroastrian ‘pilgrimage’ were found in Noshir H. Dadrawala’s (1996), Soli Dastur’s (2006) and Navroze Sethna’s (2013) accounts of their visits to Iran. John Hinnells (2005) and others (http://www.yazd.com/features/inthefootsteps.htm; http://www.zarathushtra.com/z/footsteps/index.htm) make reference to the pioneering work of Tenaz H. Dubash’s (2000) documentary film *In the Footsteps of our Forefathers* which traces the journey of thirty four Americans to Iran. Dubash who as the chief protagonist and producer describes the story of this re-connection back to Zoroastrian roots and religion refers to this pioneering work as ‘pilgrimage’.

Hinnells (2005) refers several times to the documentary (pgs. 525,517,604,709) alluding to the documentary as testimony of the abiding emotional attachment of diasporic Zoroastrians to their Persian ancestry, and pride in their historic “ultimate” homeland. Other films like *On Wings of Fire*, by Persepolis Productions Inc (1986) presented a contested narration around Zoroastrian beliefs about reincarnation and resurrection. Rati Dawar (1986, 2014) addresses this argument saying that at least three high priests rejected reincarnation as a Zoroastrian belief. The film is presented with conductor Zubin Mehta (a Zoroastrian) ‘questioning’ a priest played by Khojeste Mistry (a Zoroastrian scholar) about the religion and interpretations of Zarathushtra’s message. A YouTube version restoration of the film was made in 2016 and despite the contested views still serves as a source of information about Zoroastrianism. Other portrayals of Zoroastrianism on film include film star Morgan Freeman’s (2016) *The Story of God With Morgan Freeman: Zoroastrianism* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0K3vEBG3sk).

Democratisation of information yielded by the internet have led to several references and audio-visual representations of Zoroastrianism including:

BBC’s, *Heaven & Earth – BBC 1 – Zoroastrians*, Urban Religion program with Andrew Fenner (July 20, 2008) interviewing a diasporic Zoroastrian actor (Nina Wadia) in the UK, visiting the Zoroastrian Centre in London and of course making reference to the currently most famous Zoroastrian, Freddie Mercury (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHZs-0erQ1k).

Mentions of Zoroastrianism even find their way into the TV Series *Game of Thrones* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryEYQt_TgKA) with commentary by Dariush Ashkani (July 20, 2015) referring to George RR Martin’s borrowing of the dualistic principles of Zoroastrianism. Albeit fleetingly (20 seconds) a snippet of Milhouse in The Simpsons, (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEOmyLHZyqc), *Zoroastrianism as taught by Milhouse*, appears on YouTube. Bart says “their top guy is called Mazda, isn’t that hilarious?” and Milhouse’s explanation “…the nature of the universe is we are forced to wait for every moment as Mazda teaches us”. More interestingly is the comment by Neville Aga, “Hey-someone actually noticed!” attesting to the invisibility of Zoroastrians and Parsis. It however bears testimony to Zoroastrianism having captured the imagination of a wider audience or at least a writer on the Simpson show having heard about it. Milhouse’s interpretation of the “top guy Mazda’s words” is contextualised in response to Krusty the Clown’s declaration of wanting to convert to Zoroastrianism.

This paucity of literature and representation add to the reasons my study matters because it will introduce diasporic Zoroastrians to learn not only about aspects of Zoroastrianism but embed these in a more scholarly discourse. The consideration of pilgrimage to sites in Iran and India will help cement their identity as Zoroastrians, and provide impetus to younger diasporic Zoroastrians to investigate their religiosity and ethnicity in situ, getting the full benefit of ‘experience’.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that if Zoroastrian numbers drop to 20,000 by 2050 in India, *Parsi* will cease to be considered a minority and instead be officially classified as a ‘tribe’. It may be argued that this sustainability agenda needs to be pushed if Zoroastrians and Zoroastrianism are not to become extinct, based on the current trends of low birth rate, high death rate, and increasing numbers of young Zoroastrians moving away from identifying with Zoroastrianism through assimilation to their diasporic homes and through intermarriage. Farver et.al’s (2002a; 2002b) studies refer to these issues of integration, assimilation and enculturation. Foltz (2011) alluded to this problem in Iran noting that the rise of women in careers, out marrying and other constraints meant Iranian Zoroastrians often had only
one child. “MP (Member of Parliament of Iran) Ekhtiari cites his own case as an example: I tell young couples they should have bigger families” he says with a self-deprecatting smile, “but my wife and I have only one child!”. This along with emigration and the inability of those who have married out of the community to maintain Zoroastrian homes has mirrored the decline of the Zoroastrian population in Iran as well as India. In the diaspora however, there is a marked increase in the acceptance of our married couples (regardless of the gender of the Zoroastrian parent). Additional ‘push’ factors come from Western ways of living and the lack of proximity to places of worship, ‘organised’ religion, rituals and practice of faith. A good example of this are the traditional ‘Muktad’ ceremonies conducted every 10 days prior to the commencement of the new Zoroastrian Shenshai calendar year. In the diaspora, the lack of full-time priests or even the ability of priests in the community who are career professionals to take the requisite amount of time off from their jobs precludes holding these ceremonies, or even other ceremonies, such as those related to death rituals. Particularly devout Zoroastrians organise with family or friends to have these prayers said in India, while others forego it completely, which in turn, leads people to ‘forget’ as they drift further away from ritualistic anchors. Without regular practice, the vital importance of ritual is lost to the younger generations who assimilate into their new culture and forget the ‘old ways’. This provides a rich vein of possibility for virtual religion and collaborating that is canvassed in Chapter Four.

Related but separate is the need to ‘construct an argument’ about pilgrimage and diasporic Zoroastrians, not only from the perspective of self-identity but pilgrimage’s impacts on self-identity, continuity of ‘ethnicity’ and even contributions to the natal land and new ‘homeland’ in terms of both physical spaces and economic flow of funds. Sanjoy Mazumdar and Shampa Mazumdar (2013, p.222) highlight these influences when discussing the impacts of “Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Catholicism” on the American urban landscape. These influences have come mainly in the form of the building not only of places of worship but communal centres, settlements and even private homes. The increased focus on Eastern practices and diasporic identification with things like Vastu Shastra (Based on Hindu cosmology) and Feng Shui (Harmony between humans and their surroundings). In home contexts the location of and orientation of the home plays a role in purchase decisions. Developers are increasingly recognising the need for a ‘prayer room’ for Hindu homes; Jewish homes pay special attention to kitchen design to allow for maintenance of ‘kosher’ and dietary laws and proximity to the synagogue like Muslim enclaves situate themselves around their local mosque (and Islamic schools) and providores. Many Sikhs in Australia buy into areas close to the Gurudwara and “congregational religions” tend to cluster around the ‘Headquarters’ usually the place of worship. This ‘ghettoisation’ however is not a feature of Zoroastrian/Parsi migration in Australia though it has been evidenced in Auckland, New Zealand with the suburb of Pakuranga often referred to as ‘Parsi-ranga’ based on the number of Parsis who have bought into the suburb. Additionally, as the diaspora ages it has often been floated as an idea that a ‘gated retirement community’ should be considered as future planning near the DarbeMehr. For Zoroastrian centres, iconography includes the Asho Farohar symbol, places to remove shoes and perform ritual purification prior to entering the main hall and more particularly the Kebla (sanctum sanctorum) area. These ‘modifications’ to traditional design are considered essential to helping cement identity, for example Parsis would never presume to enter the Kebla area in India as it is where the sacred fire rests and is tended to 24/7 by priests in India. They would not permit none ‘initiated’ Zoroastrians to enter the Agiyari (fire temple) whereas no such strictures exist in the diaspora. Other considerations include the alignment of light and the non-use of any form of electric lighting in the sanctum sanctorum, the use of traditional patterns of flowers, steel and marble benches and other design features like cupboards for storage of prayer books and prayer caps and scarves. Often in the diaspora, second and third generation migrants forget the dictum of covering their head as a basic faith precept and need to ‘borrow’ communal head coverings. These familiar ‘markers’ become part of the experience of ‘orienting’ pilgrims when they visit sites (temples, dakhmas, or cemeteries) in India and Iran associated with Zoroastrianism.

Another source of identity and ‘communality’ comes from ‘belonging’ to ‘groups’ on the Internet. Oliver Krueger (2004) makes explicit the role of the Internet among Zoroastrians and Parsees. Couching his analysis in the observation that Zoroastrianism was a “less hierarchical religion” than others like Catholicism he makes the point that most (all?) Zoroastrian internet sites fall into the purview of “interactive communication on religious themes (through chatrooms, guest books, FAQs, discussion forums and discussion lists), presentation of religious institutions, groups and doctrines” and
“commercial: the advertisement and sale of books, music compact discs, ritual items etc.” (p.185). Missing notably in the Zoroastrian usage of the internet as a medium are “religious services (free or against payment) such as pastoral care, horoscope predictions or the ordering of rituals online”. However, later in the article he specifically mentions the “so-called Cyber-Temple of Zarathushtra” which “offers a virtual pilgrimage to three kinds of “open air” holy fire temples of the Zoroastrians”. The term “cyber temples” is used rather loosely in this context but other internet resources like Avesta.org and Vohuman.org (open access journal) along with “discussion forums, newsletters and e-journals” allow for the disbursement of “important exegetic, historical and ritual questions of the Parsee religion (Kreuger,2004,p.186-7). This ‘democratisation’ of knowledge allows for communication across a variety of Zoroastrians (in the diaspora and in the ‘homelands’). However, the lack of peer review in most cases (and occasional lapses of administrator control in others) can result in ‘heated’ theological and interpretational discussions. The ability to “re-embed” into the culture that diaspora has caused to be ‘dis-embedded” from, that is removed from “its local and social context” has great value to diasporic Zoroastrians.

Robert Langer, Dorothea Luddeckens, Kerstin Radde and Jan Snoek (2006) coalesce these “social and cultural contexts” changing, without change to the religious contexts of rituals brilliantly in their article, ‘Transfer of Ritual’ using Parsis (Zoroastrianism) as a case study. Using the term ‘double migration’ (p.4) they explain changes to the death rituals of Zoroastrians from being placed in the ‘Towers of Silence’ (Dakhma) to being cremated or buried in India, Iran and the diaspora. The ‘transformation’ of the rites and rituals and their modifications to suit contexts is alluded to by Choksy and Kotwal (2005) in the reduction of time to pray the Gathas and Niyashenes from several hours to ceremonies lasting only an hour or less is concomitant with the death rituals described by Langer et.al. Other examples they use of the changes wrought by context include the abolition of “bull sacrifice in Iran”, “the lighting of incense sticks imported from India becoming common practice in Iran in the twentieth century” and the “adaptation of the ‘fire vase’ replacing the older stone altars in Iran as a consequence of Indian practices. However, the most relevant note is the “recent Iranian influx into the religious practice of the Zoroastrian community worldwide in the propagation of shrine visits and pilgrimages (in Iran) which were not known to Indian Zoroastrians until recent times. In recent years it has become common for Parsis and Zoroastrians from the Diaspora visiting Iran, to perform pilgrimages to Zoroastrian sites there”.

The second rationale for undertaking this thesis was the desire to enhance the niche tourism market for Zoroastrian pilgrimage in Iran and India. The market segment of diasporic Zoroastrians, while interested in the history and culture of Zoroastrianism, are often so immersed in their ‘profane’ routine lives that they cease to be curious or zealous about maintaining their identity as Zoroastrians. This is especially true of those who assimilate or immerse themselves completely into their new surroundings and actively start to disengage from the Zoroastrian community, sometimes as part of a desire to ‘fit in’ and other times out of sheer lassitude or apathy. The cliché ‘travel broadens the mind’ has added resonance for diasporic Zoroastrians who enjoy a Western lifestyle and forget, or are immune to, the historical depredations of their Zoroastrian ancestors, and the still-vast gulf between social and cultural contexts in both Iran and India when compared to more developed countries. Even first-generation migrants ‘forget’ and ‘buy into’ the Western economic migrant’s dream and need to be jolted back to reality by undertaking travel and re-connecting with their roots. This is even more prevalent among Zoroastrians, and Parsis in particular, who identify travel as being a ‘status’ motivator (Crompton 1979) and would rather visit Europe and other Western destinations than Iran or India. Excellent programs like ‘Zoroastrian Return to Roots’ (RTR) Return/Reconnect/Revive (https://zororoots.org/) run by Arzan Wadia under the aegis of the UNESCO ParZor foundation aimed at Zoroastrian youth in the diaspora exist but the issue is still to get youth to go on these travels especially those from regions other than Canada and North America. However, RTR serves as a good blueprint as it incorporates sacred, cultural and heritage aspects in its program. The vision of RTR seeks to:

- Reconnect Zoroastrians in the diaspora with their origins in India and Iran
- Foster a sense of community and identity
- Focus on youth and the future generation
• Create a network of RTR global alumni
• Build a Return to Roots foundation & corpus of funding for future generations of Zoroastrians

While these programs exist, there is a definite trend away from the religious to more heritage and culturally based travel approaches. Additionally, younger, more adventurous Zoroastrians prefer to undertake Free Independent Travel (FIT) as opposed to ‘tours’ and anecdotal evidence has shown that those who are intermarried wish to be free of the diktats imposed by tour guides around visitation as well as purity laws when travelling. While more conservative Zoroastrians might lament this permissive approach it might very well be the solution to the diminishing population of Zoroastrians and knowledge about Zoroastrians. Sometimes, non-Zoroastrian partners are more receptive and greater advocates for the religion than those who have been born into it and take it for granted. An added dimension that appears for these FIT travellers is the move away from religious dogma to an altogether more holistic (spiritual?) experience, where travel and exposure to the local culture is viewed from several prisms of perception and understanding as opposed to being seen primarily from a religious lens. This movement away from ‘pilgrimage’ to ‘spiritual ‘quest fulfilment travel is an increasing feature in tour brochures and descriptions enticing Zoroastrians to visit Iran bundled with historical, heritage, cultural and other secular dimensions.

Alex Norman (2011) refers to spiritual travel as being for both recreation and re-creation. Several authors (Reisinger and Turner, 2002; Dogan, 1989; Jafari 1987; Sinkovics and Penz 2009 and Smith 2012) have discussed the gulf between hosts and guests. Pilgrimage, encompassing both spiritual aspects as well as historical and cultural immersion would bridge this gap and create awareness and interest among diasporic Zoroastrians. Iran and India, as developing countries, need to harness this interest in their geographical, socio-cultural, historical and religious identities and build niche-marketing strategies to attract international tourists. The ability to engage in-group travel as a part of this travel product of ‘pilgrimage’ is described more fully both in the main body of the thesis, and is an integral part of my Participatory Action Research. Barriers and constraints that are often cited are: safety and security, navigating unfamiliar processes and spaces, easier and preferential access to sites, and informed scholarly discourse with like-minded individuals. Each of these factors need to be considered when developing ‘group’ pilgrimage packages for Zoroastrians travelling to India and Iran.

Constraints to travel for diasporic Zoroastrians include political imperatives and are especially prevalent in travel to Iran. The negative rhetoric that emanates from the US, in particular, has had a very deleterious effect on the ability of people to travel to Iran. The thawing of relationships and the lifting of sanctions during President Obama’s administration have been laid waste by President Trump’s administration. This affects not only diasporic Zoroastrians from the US but also those from allied countries including Australia and New Zealand. The barrier does not come in the form of sanctions to travel to Iran by the Australian or Iranian governments, but through difficulties imposed on visa and travel requirements if one attempts to visit the US and has previously visited Iran. In my case, despite holding an Australian passport, this meant a long drawn-out process to obtain a US visa, necessitating filling out several forms, and attending the Consulate in person prior to travel. Even after being granted a visa, I still had to go through ‘special’ Customs queues, and was interrogated at every American port of entry and even when exiting from a Canadian port outbound to the US. For diasporic Zoroastrians with family and friends abroad, particularly in the US, this negative treatment is a major disincentive to going to Iran.

Historical and political tensions between India and Pakistan compound the problem for Pakistanis wishing to undergo pilgrimage to Zoroastrian fire temples and significant sites in India. Anecdotal evidence shows that both countries often refuse visas resulting in family reunions having to be relocated to a third arguably neutral country. However, changes might be afoot, as a recent (Nov 23, 2019) report in the Pakistan Observer noted:

Ispahanyar M Bhandara former MNA has asked India to allow Parsi community to travel visa free to India to perform religious rites at Udwada as Pakistan has allowed Sikhs to visit Kartapur. In a statement, he said Pakistan has opened up a “hard border” also called corridor for the Sikh community, facilitating them to perform their religious rites free of visa and harassment hassle.
It should be noted that in the diaspora there is much more commonality between Zoroastrians from the sub-continent compared to those from Iran. Language, food, rituals and even ways of worshipping are different between Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians but Parsis no matter where they come from have commonalities and differences when and if they do arise are more likely to arise based on the adoption of Hindu or Muslim observances rather than fundamental differences in approach. This however cannot be said for differences in religious ceremonies (birth, Navjote, marriage and death) between Zoroastrian Iranians and Parsis. This dichotomy and barriers to travel become prominent when Parsis visit Iran. Pakistan allows dual citizenship and most Parsis from Pakistan or those still holding Indian citizenship prefer to and have greater ease of access to visas to Iran compared to those who hold citizenship of their ‘western’ places of residence, for example the US, Canada, Australia or New Zealand. This yearning for ‘pilgrimage’ to Iran and India seems to be unique to the Parsis in the diaspora, furthering the gulfs between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis. However, younger diasporic Zoroastrians of both Iranian and Parsi heritage are increasingly converging on this aspect and are more likely to participate in programs like Return to Roots. These gulfs in understanding and practices between Iranian and SAsian Zoroastrians often have a direct impact on questions of long-term sustainability and commonality of understanding of both the faith and Zoroastrianism more generally. This disconnect similarly lends itself to differences in ‘pilgrim’ typology especially when linguistic barriers present themselves with Parsi pilgrims preferring to go to Iran in organised tour groups while younger Zoroastrians are often happy to be free independent travellers (FIT) despite not having the language skills.

Tourist demographics explained in Tourism models like Stanley Plog’s (1972; 2001) psychographic model referring to tourist typology as Allocentric/Venturers or Ethnocentric/Dependables. Erik Cohen (1973) used the term ‘drifter’ to denote the Allocentric tourist as opposed to the ‘mass’ tourist that was the prevailing view of tourist types. These tropes still hold true today and can bring informed decision making to the pilgrimage travel product, particularly for diasporic communities visiting developing destinations like India and Iran. Defined pilgrim tracks like Mecca and the Camino de Santiago are absent for Zoroastrians travelling to India and Iran. Plog’s (2001) description of traveller characteristics firmly place conservative older Zoroastrian pilgrims as ‘mid centrics’ exhibiting a combination of characteristics such as a preference for group travel (ethnocentric) but allowing for some independent activity (mid centric) to encompass exploration as a free independent traveller (FIT). Allocentrism is still hard to practice, particularly for Parsis wishing to travel to Iran, as linguistic barriers are starkly evident. The reverse is not true of Iranian Zoroastrians wishing to travel to India, as English is widely spoken in India and thus the need to rely on an interpreter is reduced if the Iranians are fluent in English. It bears mentioning too that several Iranian Zoroastrians were educated in India and there was considerable cross border marriage between Iranian Zoroastrians from Iran and those of earlier migrations from Iran to India, especially during the Pahlavi era. Many of these Iranian Zoroastrians imbibed Parsi customs and practices and carried them on when they went on to further diasporas in third countries (like the US, Canada, Australia) or even returned to Iran in the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi.

When this tourist-type model is coupled with ‘destination development’, as explained by Richard Butler (1980; 2006) in his Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model, it becomes evident that the development of a unique tourist product that is not in danger of being over- utilised (or exceeding its ‘carrying capacity’) is needed. Carrying capacity is now considered an outmoded approach by some tourism scholars (McCool and Lime 2001) claiming, as they do, that it does not ask the right questions. One should ask: ‘What are the right conditions? Rather than: ‘How many can be accommodated?” However carrying capacity still holds utility as a means of ensuring that tourist destinations manage themselves sustainably, by placing various limits (spatial, monetary, resource, infrastructure provision and regulation i.e. visas) to the number of people visiting. Zoroastrian houses of worship in India are still immune to this issue, and in fact, face the reverse problem of not having enough adherents/visitors/priests to keep them operational, as they are exclusive to only Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians.
Seasonal variation of diasporic visitation is an important consideration, as are associated costs, travelling during peak times is significantly more expensive than ‘out of season’. In India, during peak times, December and January, as this is not only the holiday period but offers a weather pattern more suited to diasporic tastes. Diasporic tastes in this context refer to the acquired fussiness that is implied in suitable weather (not too hot or too cold given the vagaries of both heating and cooling devices in India and Iran). Additionally, periods of festivities like Zoroastrian Navjotes and Weddings are typically held in the months of December and January due to cooler weather conditions. Seasonality places a very great part in the timing of World Zoroastrian Congresses, Youth Congresses and ‘Utsavs’ (coll. gathering/event), they are very much geared to the potential for ‘diasporic’ attendees preferences/tastes.

Plog’s research studying the psychographic traits of visitors is closely aligned with Richard Butler’s work on destination life cycle. This occurs through the rise and fall/rejuvenation of a destination based on the type of tourist visiting. Butler’s description of the ‘rejuvenation’ phase (as opposed to the ‘decline’ phase) of a tourism destination can be symbolically applied to the pilgrimage undertaken as a part of this thesis. That is, by undertaking pilgrimage the Zoroastrian identity is ‘rejuvenated’ and leads to subsequent practice and increased interest in religious and community. Participation in global congresses, meetings and associations are both enhanced and impelled by this ‘awakening’ through pilgrimage (religious and secular as conferences are), going to the crux of the matter: the sustainability of Zoroastrianism.

Butler’s TALC model is derived from marketing and is primarily focused on consumer product life cycles. Essentially, the TALC model refers to destinations commencing the bell shaped incomplete curve starting with Exploration and moving through Involvement, Development, Consolidation and Stagnation to either eventual Decline or Rejuvenation. These stages correspond to the initial visitation by “venturers” seeking experience “off the beaten path”, to “mid centrics” where increased development and consolidation push locals out in favour of large corporate entities. At the peak saturation level, the Stagnation phase begins, after which decline is inevitable unless rejuvenation or renewal takes place. Baum (1998) extends the model contending that alternative scenarios must be considered in the post-Stagnation. He proposes that occasionally the “collective community” (p.170) (that is, locals) might seek to downplay or totally abandon the tourism angle in favour of community stakeholder economic activities ranging from residential housing to agriculture. The tandem nature of the TALC model with Plog’s model comes from “Allocentric” travellers “exploring” the destination before it becomes commercialised.

In the case of Iran, this scenario would certainly fit the bill, as years of sanctions have severely restricted tourism and curbed the potential of historic, cultural and geographic dimensions from being used for economic gain through tourism. These sanctions have had the added deleterious effects of preventing the development of other hospitality and tourism services suitable to tourists and tourism. Infrastructure, particularly of hotels, has not kept up. Additional sanctions imposed since the start of the Trump administration have compounded these problems. Masood Khodadadi (2018) writing in Tourism Management Perspectives elaborates on the positive impacts that the Iran nuclear deal of 2015 had on tourism in Iran. He goes on to lament the implications of “Donald Trump’s new aggressive foreign policy towards Iran” (p.28) claiming, “Renewed hostility between Iran and the West could seriously jeopardise the progress made and the future of the now flourishing tourism industry in Iran” (p.29).

Khodadadi’s characterisation of Iran’s tourism industry as one that is ‘flourishing’ is supported by the Euromonitor International report. This report found that the majority of travellers to Iran come from Europe with travellers from France, Germany, Netherlands and the UK growing “from 2 million in 2009 to over 6 million in 2017” (p.29). However, the forecast of “8.3 million visitors expected in the year 2022” looks a distant dream in 2019. The impact of US sanctions extends to major infrastructure projects including the development of international hotel chains into the Iranian market and transport infrastructure for both rail and air (Iran already has an excellent road infrastructure).

Sanctions severely restrict small to medium enterprises especially the growth of family run Airbnb and ‘homestays’. A good example of this can be found in the Zoroastrian owned family property of Ramtin and Tina Shohrat who own and run Nartitee Ecolodge in Taft, near Yazd. Their restoration and conversion of the 100 year family home has drawn high praise including from Ali Torkzadeh and
Saeideh Ajilchi (2018) in their blog series ‘Escape from Tehran...to find the real Iran’. Accompanied by gorgeous pictures their article titled ‘Persian Hospitality vs. Iranian Hotel Fiascos Nartitee Ecolodge is an example of a “homesay” option outshining typical Iranian hotels goes into raptures about everything from the rooms to the home cooked fresh produce and meals. The very Zoroastrian twist of “Tina cleanses the home with smoke from a burning mixture of sage and other herbs favoured by Zoroastrians” brings a wave of nostalgia to diasporic Zoroastrians reading the article, as they recall the practices of wafting loban (incense) through their natal homes.

Jane Green (22 August 2018) writing for The Guardian elaborates on the impact of sanctions citing examples of European companies like car manufacturer Daimler, Peugeot and Renault along with French energy company Total, quitting projects in the absence of a waiver from US sanctions that were rejected by the French Finance Minister. These decisions have come about because companies are unable to do business in markets with the US if they break sanctions. Green highlights the impacts of sanctions including dropping the Iranian currency to “less than 30 percent of its April exchange value”, compounding the unrestrained growth in the cost of basic goods and water, electricity shortages, and “spiralling unemployment”. Adding fuel to the theory that sanctions are a “Behind-the-Scene Economic War” driven by Trump’s desire to control resources and the political discourse in the region are illustrated in Dr. Mohammed Cherkaoui (10 May 2018) report ‘Trump’s Withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal: Security or Economics?’ published by the Al Jazeera Centre for Studies. He concludes by saying that there is stillroom for movement as Trump’s ‘economic nationalism’ is not driven by an ideological stance and hence a distinction might emerge between “the politics of hard-line Trump and the pragmatism of business-minded Trump!” (p.9). This economic war in the face of sanctions was particularly poignantly expressed by a Zoroastrian pharmacist who told a pilgrim that while medicines were exempt from importation sanctions the fact that the US dollar (USD) was the preferred currency meant that he could not access USD to actually pay for these medicines. Given the dominance of US pharmaceutical companies, this restriction caused great hardship to not only businesses but citizens too (pers.comm.JM, 2020).

As mentioned earlier Hinnells (2005, p.25) frames the enigma about Zoroastrian homeland saying “Indeed many second and third generation Parsis in America see Persia rather than India as their homeland”. He notes that there is a “strong sense of homeland” and “for some Parsis India is a homeland in addition to not instead of Iran” (p.722) and this invocation of ancestry is manifest through pilgrimage, love for the Shahnameh epic and that “homeland lies at the core of their identity” (p.723). Hinnells refers to the Parsi proclivity for partaking in pilgrimage not only to sites such as the Aslaji Fire Temple in Grant Road Mumbai but in non-Zoroastrian pilgrimages to the “Catholic church in Mahim and at a Muslim holy site Haji Ali Tomb” both in Mumbai. Hinnells draws attention to the various “babas” most notably Sai Baba (of both Shirdi and Puttapurthi) and the mystic Meher Baba who was born a Zoroastrian but believed himself to be an Avatar. This lack of an established pilgrimage track/sites/faith leader (like the Pope) is further evidenced by the ‘cultural divide’ (p. 489) between Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrian, saying “because we have nothing in common, the two cultures are different, we do not share the same language, even the food is quite a change …and the festivals are celebrated in a totally different manner” (p. 522). These anomalies persist when discussing nomenclature around pilgrimage. Pilgrimage particularly to Iran by Parsis, is driven by cultural and heritage imperatives as much as by religious drivers. Concepts of madar-vatan (homeland) are quite different for Parsis, Iranis and Iranian Zoroastrians. For most Parsis they are unable to trace their lineage and connectivity to Iran but for Iranis and Iranian Zoroastrians this is not the case given their later diasporic moves from Iran to India or other countries. Intermarriage between Parsis and Iranis mean that when visiting Iran, the Irani Zoroastrian is quite likely to still have relatives and ‘claim’ ancestral connections to places (typically in Yazd and its surrounding areas) See Annemarie Evans (2019).

Jamsheed Choksy (2006b) draws attention to this “recall their heritage” (p.131) aspect tying it in to visitation to sites such as “Pasargadae, Persepolis and Naqsh-e-Rostam”. He notes the duality that existed with protection of ‘Zoroastrian monuments’ by the State but the enforcement of replacing pictures of Asho Zarathushtra with pictures of Khomeyni (sic). The flight of Zoroastrian ‘emigres’ and their subsequent construction of fire temples, cemeteries and Darbe Mehrs in their new homelands during the Islamic Revolution and after it is noted by Choksy. However, he notes a truism amply evident today in the diaspora “especially in North America and Europe” (p.163) of the ‘distance’ culturally, linguistically and religiously between Parsis and Zoroastrians even when sharing common facilities and communal centres. In other
commentary Choksy reveals what Parsi and diasporic pilgrims are increasingly encountering in their travels, changes to rituals and practices that have been adopted to meet the ideals of westernized devotees, compensate for the lack of priests and not attract undue attention from the Muslim population (in Iran). Changes in rituals similarly mean that diasporic Iranian Zoroastrians when they do return to the ‘motherland’ are likely to partake of heritage, cultural and historical travel rather than pilgrimage as such. Interestingly, Choksy and Kotwal (2005) discussing the practice of praying ‘Niyavishn and Yastis’ refer to modern contexts where the prayers are available on the internet and old practices using academic translations and editions of the prayers and of reciting it by rote, “with the exception of scholars and learned priests” have fallen out of favour. I would go so far as to say that many/most diasporic Zoroastrians are ignorant of what the Niyaveshes and Gathas refer to and it has become the purview of the cognoscenti (Firoze M Kotwal, being a High Priest of the Wadia AtashBehram and scholar) and the scholarly academic (Professor Choksy). Even initiated Parsi priests, having learned the prayers by rote for their investiture are unable to provide explanation or religious advice contained in this liturgy. The then compounds the ‘practise’ of pilgrimage to being more about heritage, culture and history rather than religion. Vestiges of the religious significance are maintained in the diaspora and in Iran with “pilgrimage, especially on Roj (day) Tir of mah (month) Tir, the feast of Tirgan, which now falls on the first day of July” (p.232-4) and the practice of pilgrimage to the Pirs “especially during Mihragan” (p.235). Jashnes and Gahanbar days are observed in the Sydney diaspora and are mainly attended by Irani and Iranian Zoroastrians with a smattering of Parsi. However, a Jashan draws a full house especially if it is followed by a meal. There is only one elderly Iranian Mobed who recites the prayers and does not participate in the Parsi rituals. Intermarriage between Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians is rare in the diaspora.

Paul Morris, in his Jewish Themes in the New Testament: Yam Yisrael Chai!, refers to the Jewish people as descendants of Biblical Hebrews. He does point out that ‘intermarriage’ and ‘mass conversions’ mean that “those who call themselves ‘Jews’ today can lay no claim to those promises being theirs” (2013, p.8). Parallels to the Jewish diaspora exist in the literature and history of Zoroastrians, including questions of ethnicity versus religion. Valeriy Chervyakov, Zvi Gitelman and Vladimir Shapiro (1997) refer to the ‘fusing’ of religion and ethnicity in the case of Russian Jews, and these conundrums impact on the notion of the Zoroastrians having a single identity, even when it comes to a ‘pilgrimage’ track. This is because Iranian Zoroastrians do not necessarily identify with India as a pilgrimage destination, whereas Parsis see both Iran and India as ‘motherlands’, as explained above. Thus, various such ‘pilgrimages’ were undertaken by me (the researcher) in a “quest” (Smith, 1992) for meaning.

A desire to engage on a deeper level along with a serendipitous falling into the role of Sunday School teacher at the AZA ‘pulled’ me into the vortex of learning. A confirmed ‘Infovore’, I decided that to be a better Zoroastrian, academic and community member I needed both information and credibility that allowed me to talk from a position of knowledge. The idea for this self-improvement program germinated as a consequence of hearing a visiting Zoroastrian scholar Dina Mehta McIntyre speak about the Bundahishn also called Zand-agahih and referring to the Book of Creation, a cosmogonic Pahlavi text, reflecting pre and ancient Zoroastrian scripture, at a seminar in the Department of Studies of Religion at the University of Sydney. A thicker description of the relevance of the Bundahishn is provided in Chapter One when elaborating on Zoroastrian theology.

Once accepted and enrolled at the University of Sydney my eyes were opened to a world of critical, interpretive approaches to qualitative methodology. Attending seminars, reading and contemplating discourses far removed from familiar tropes of business, management and quantitative positivist studies pushed and tested my boundaries (and engendered greater sympathy for my own post graduate students). My background in Hospitality, Tourism and Social Sciences explored in my first doctoral study on Changing Attitudes Towards People with Disabilities in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry (Darwalla, 1999) had sparked new insights and revealed that contact theory was a powerful tool in changing attitudes. The positivist approach using an experimental method had pushed tourism studies to the background. Now I had a second chance to interrogate tourism and tourist models framing them as pilgrimage with the added dimension of diaspora and migrant experiences. In many ways the ability to apply ‘retrospective’ but pivotal learning from post graduate studies (Masters) in Hospitality and Tourism provided an added lure to completing a second doctorate in a completely different area of study utilising concepts and studies from hospitality and tourism to frame diasporic ‘hospitality’ in the contexts of ‘country’ as host and pilgrimage with its travel and tourism dimensions.
Aspects of qualitative methodologies, especially Autoethnography, Participatory Action, and Emic (Insider) approaches to research, had to be delved into and justified as instinctual qualms related to my proposed methodology and the lack of ‘big data’ and positivistic methods like surveys that I had previously used had to be rationalised and accepted. Perspectives concerning emic and etic or insider and outsider approaches discussed at the start of this chapter referenced the work of Thomas Headland, Kenneth Pike and Marvin Harris (1990). The use of emic and etic approaches in qualitative research is well established in the tourism literature (Jafari 1982; Pearce and Packer 2013; Cohen 1979; and Miller 1993). All of these authors call for an increased focus on the use of emic and etic approaches to tourism research moving it from commerce to “social science frameworks or perspectives which would facilitate the study of tourism, including structural-functionalism, the integrative or holistic perspective, the emic and etic approaches, cultural relativism, and intercultural relationships” (Jafari, 1982). This imprimatur of ‘approval’ for qualitative research methods added impetus and courage to tackling a purely qualitative study devoid of statistics or ‘mixed’ methods (which may be construed as ‘hedging one’s bets’). Qualitative approaches used by various emic scholars of Zoroastrianism including Hinnells, Boyce, Kreyenbroek and others provided support for this qualitative approach particularly given the focus on subjective descriptive primary data. Qualitative data fitted the tropes of epistemology, ontology and eschatological approaches of academic researchers. The nexus between justified belief and opinion (epistemology), philosophical questions related to being and reality (ontology) and theological querying (eschatology) were all apparent in my research on ZDP:ASV.

A separate but related realm of literature to be examined under pilgrimage was Jeroen Nawijn’s (2016) critique of positive psychology in tourism, noting issues with the hedonistic nature of its application and interpretations of happiness. Citing Martin Seligman and Mihalyi Czikzentmihalyi (2000), the coining of the term “positive psychology” and its subsequent use by authors such as Phillip Pearce (2009), Sebastian Filep and Margaret Deery (2010); Filep (2012) raised relevant issues for the study of pilgrimage. Filep (2016) in his rejoinder to Nawijn’s (2016) critique uses the concept of “Eudaimonia,” defined as a higher state achieved through engagement and meaningfulness, allowing for self-development and self-awareness even in negative tourism contexts. This observation is particularly relevant to this thesis on Zoroastrian pilgrimage, as many of the sites visited encouraged reflection on unpleasant events (described in detail in Chapter’s Three and Four). These ‘dark’ places in ZDP:ASV were both literal (ghettoising, architecture and policy regarding inclusion and exclusion) and of the mind (persecution of ancestors, fleeing from terror, disenfranchisement and other depredations). Visits to these ‘dark’ tourist/pilgrimage sites muted, but did not eliminate, the euphoria experienced at these particular places, for example the Pir at Chak known as Pir-e-Sabz. Legend has it that the mountain opened up and Princess Nikabanu, daughter of the last Zoroastrian emperor Yazdegard, was given refuge as she fled the invading Arab army (dated 640 CE). There is a steep ascent to view and worship at this Pir, and despite this physical hardship, pilgrims associate it with positive and rewarding emotions.

Other factors that affected the physical experience were the plethora of sources and sophisticated means of communication available, ranging from social media to online groups. This accessibility to information brought its own issues, and necessitated a serious rethink of my approach to data collection, interpretation, and articulation, forcing professional development as a researcher and academic. It contrasted sharply with techniques and methods that I had used to complete my first PhD gauging the effects of attitudinal training and education programs for hospitality and tourism employees toward people with disabilities (Daruwalla 1999). Undertaking quantitative, positivist studies for a doctorate are in many ways a ‘safer’ option. Mark Twain’s popularisation of the phrase ‘lies, damned lies and statistics’ in many ways sum up the certainty of statistics and positivism to be more acceptable to examiners of doctorates. Critical interpretivist, subjective, qualitative paradigms however leave open vast spaces for misinterpretation, vested agendas and dissent for perspectives that do not align with one’s own ‘bounded rationality’ (i.e. the amount of information available, one’s own cognitive limitations and the time available to make critical judgements) or biases that frame perception. This risk was inherent in choosing the methodologies of Autoethnography and Participant Action Research as frames for the data in this thesis. However, the payoff was richer, deeper data and the ability to make it accessible to a wider audience with minimal tweaking. Research is only of value when it is
disseminated and articulated and this ‘applied’ approach had always been the bedrock of my academic aspirations. Presenting my data in the form of a narrative I was striving for what Ellis and Bochner (1992, p.80) referred to as the goal of AE “to lead readers through a journey in which they have an experiential sense of the events and know what it must have felt like”. Cohen and Turner had both referred to this ‘experiential’ aspect as a feature of pilgrimage experiences. Elaine Campbell (2017) writing about the trolling of AE researchers on Twitter aptly noted “It strikes me that the marginalized experiences and complex insider accounts which autoethnography (and other creative methodologies) provide an insight into the very narratives these online accounts and their followers are looking to shut down”. Thus, I am not sure about whether I will eventually have the backbone to disseminate some of the more contentious aspects of my learning despite my ‘service ethos’, lived insider experience and desire to be authentic.

The ethos of service in the Zoroastrian community, and lived experience, served as ‘push’ factors. Expectations through both ‘nature and nurture’ play a significant role in self-identity as a Zoroastrian. As the literature on Zoroastrianism reveals, there is an imperative to live the faith through service, altruism, philanthropy and good deeds (Stewart 2012; Ringer 2009; Hintze 2010; Writer 2016). The ideology guiding Zoroastrian philanthropy is examined in detail in Chapter Two through a review of the literature, and describes its antecedents in history and its current practice in modern day contexts. These exhortations to ‘do well’, both covert and overt, require action. Transforming from the objective ‘armchair’ perspective to that of the vulnerable volunteer, moving far beyond simply giving money to charitable causes.

The work of certain people and groups have inspired the need to contribute to the cause of promoting Zoroastrianism in an uncertain, dynamic and chaotic world. These include: Shernaz Cama and ParZor, a UNESCO project for the revival of Zoroastrian Arts and Crafts providing employment and training to Indian crafts persons; Arzan Wadia and the Return to Roots program (where young people from all around the world travel to India to become informed about their history, culture and religion); Rohinton and Roshan Rivetna, the stalwarts behind the founding of Fezana in North America, Dr Khojesteet and Mrs Firoza Punthakey Mistree (notable authors on Zoroastrianism); Dr Pheroza Godrej, author and promoter of Zoroastrian art and culture; and Silloo Mehta (renowned for her deep knowledge of Zoroastrianism and tours of Iran). The writings in Parsiana, Fezana and Hamazor and their staff who do everything on the smell of an oily rag inspired and educated me to the lived contexts of Zoroastrianism and current issues exercising the minds of the global community. More recently, the work of Firoz and Mahrulk Pestonji as the Coordinators of the 11th World Zoroastrian Congress in Perth 1 to 4 June 2018 inspired deeper reflection and consideration of the concept of ‘service’ to community. For the first time in its history, the World Congress was hosted by Australia, and it was only the vision and sheer determination of the Pestonji’s in the face of enormous odds in pulling off a successful congress where ‘action spoke louder than words’. Diasporic Zoroastrians ‘roared’ and challenged the hegemonic practices of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet that sees itself as all things Parsi (Zoroastrian). Foundational bastions of ‘truth’ were challenged, particularly those around conversion and who may be classified a ‘Zoroastrian’. This was a direct consequence of the presence of a Kurdish delegation at the Congress that attest to be ‘re-claiming’ their Zoroastrian heritage. Even in the diaspora, there are vast gulfs amongst different organisations and local associations and individuals, whether in the UK, Canada, the US or Australia about the legitimacy of recognising ‘new/reclaimed’ converts to Zoroastrianism. Disquiet and differences in opinion have a profound impact on the management of Zoroastrian associations in the diaspora.

These debates go to the heart of questions about inclusivity and exclusivity and address thorny issues of who has the right to make these decisions in a community that does not have a recognized figurehead. This directly affected this thesis in terms of my own experiences as President (2017-2018) and left me with a vastly changed perspective regarding the ‘rejuvenation’ (Butler, 1980) view of Zoroastrianism and its future presentation in the diaspora. The role of hubris, megalomania and ‘personalities’ and the ‘baggage’ attendant in Boards of Trustees and Managing Committees will come to ‘bite’ future generations of TCK Zoroastrians. In an editorial in the Parsiana (2019, Dec 7, p.4) the focus on ‘trust funds’ and internal power plays rather than the community contribute to the ‘declining population’. Demographic data does not address the question of ‘practising Zoroastrians’, simply those who identify
themselves as part of the ethno-religious group. Bigotry, discrimination and social exclusion still prevail even in diasporic community associations where dissent or questioning is considered traitorous. The focus and obsession of ‘protection’ of assets drive the exclusivity paradigms despite “if we can easily prove (and this has been admitted over and over again before us) that the Zoroastrian religion was originally a prosleyzing religion: that its tenets not only permit but energetically enjoin the making of converts” (Parsiana, 2019). This angst against accepting the universalism of Zoroastrianism plays out in diasporic communities in equally toxic ways especially when it comes to issues of old age and care of the elderly as well. This is especially noticeable in Anglo centric approaches to aged care where loneliness is a major factor and exacerbated by linguistic difficulties when elderly migrants are isolated by both life circumstances of their families and geographical constraints.

W.Richard Scott (1990) interrogated the barriers and facilitators to understanding organisational innovation (in healthcare); however, the constraints may be equally applied to sustainability and evolution of diasporic (and Parsi) Zoroastrian Associations and Organisations. These four explanations are the impact of Bounded Rationality, which imply that a person/organisation is limited by the amount of knowledge they have at hand, their own cognitive limitations and the finite amount of time to make decisions. Bounded Rationality is tied up with the idea of making satisfying decisions, sacrificing ‘utopian’ or perfect solutions. This concept is particularly relevant to Zoroastrianism as issues of diasporic practice, conversion and intermarriage might all have to accept that ‘satisficing’ and accepting different norms are needed for the community to evolve and sustain.

The second of Scott’s explanations referred to Vested Interests and acknowledgment of political systems and agendas built into systems. Vested Interests and agendas of ‘personalities’ in the absence of an arch religious leader mean that innovation and evolution of the practice of Zoroastrianism is vehemently rejected as it often leads to the ‘competence destroying’ of those with vested interests. Additionally, the obsession with exclusion to protect ‘trust funds’ as well as the belief that opening the doors to ‘outsiders’ would swamp the community all act as leverage for resisting change.

The third of the barriers/facilitators is Embeddedness. Nowhere is this more apparent than among Zoroastrians and Parsis in particular. Small numbers mean that we are all connected through familial or friendship ties. While this interconnectivity of informal relations (heightened by social media groups) mean that it allows for networks of some interconnectedness it often tips over into nepotism. The Zoroastrian marriage market is a classic example of Embeddedness with parents urging their children to attend Youth and other Congresses and attending themselves in the hopes of ‘introducing’ their child to a suitable partner. On a positive side, it has the effect of being able to reach a much wider audience than simply your local organisation in terms of sharing both knowledge as well as requests as diverse as organ donations.

The last of the four barriers/facilitators is that of Institutionalisation and it plays out in the Zoroastrian community through it being driven by narrow economic interests, where the structure of formal organisations then translate into ideology of action for example donors dictating terms when making philanthropic gestures or community members taking umbrage at actions saying “At XYZ we always do things this way” to justify barriers to decisions and actions to an external audience. This example of Institutionalisation played out in the recent case of the controversy around the donation of Jal and Pervin Shroff of Hong Kong who pledged USD 22.5 million toward the management and renewal of the Parsee General Hospital (PGH) in Mumbai but later withdrew their offer. This withdrawal was based on cases being filed by Khusru and Meher Zaiwala and a second case by Aspi Deboo and Zoru Bhathena opposing the use of PGH land to construct and run a hospital by ‘outsiders’ (i.e. Non Parsis), the Medanta Group (Jijina, 2019). These actions have deprived the Zoroastrian community not only from gaining new much needed medical facilities but also from earning revenue from the paid services that would have been offered to all persons regardless of religious orientation. Entrenched and paranoid institutionalisation of the idea that ‘land grabs’ and seizing of assets have ensured the demise of innovation and an opportunity to provide health care services for Zoroastrians, especially elderly and poorer community members, while attracting professional expertise in the form of doctors and ancillary health providers to come and practice at this new state of art facility. In diasporic communities this institutionalisation plays out in the form of ‘baggage’ that the first generation of migrants bring to proceedings by trying to control the narrative and impose ‘diktats’ based on their limited cognition of and currency of modern day contexts.
Anecdotal doomsday predictions of Zoroastrianism becoming extinct in the next 50 years propelled me to action, both through study and in service to my local community, volunteering in various capacities and becoming a vocal supporter of the World Zoroastrian Congress held in Perth in June 2018. Meeting my obligations as a Zoroastrian parent in the community, coupled with my own doubts as a diasporic Parsi Zoroastrian, were added incentives. This role as an ‘elder’ came first, while my ostensible role as an academic scholar of the religion, was a position I found myself taking on unwittingly. Additionally, a significant health scare in December 2017 that ended in a hospital stint of almost 3 months re-ordered my priorities and my ways of thinking. Faith and religiosity became central to my recovery and imbued me with a sense of purpose and a commitment to serve ‘my’ community (i.e. of Zoroastrians). This aspect of ‘spirituality’ has been referred to in the literature as a prompt for pilgrimage (Turner, 1973) and Noga Collins-Kreiner (2010) and is discussed later in the review of literature as a motivator push factor. The difference for me however was that I was forced to acknowledge and give thanks for having already experienced pilgrimage to Iran as I was unlikely to have a ‘second chance’ even though I had been given ‘second life’. My zeal for imparting the need for greater religiosity and spirituality among younger members of the community was amplified.

Chapter Outline

In conclusion, this thesis focuses on three central domain constructs: Zoroastrianism, Diaspora and Pilgrimage (ZDP). These three domains are examined through the singular lens of my own “me-search” (Campbell, 2010) experiences of pilgrimage as a diasporic Zoroastrian. The literature attendant to the domains will be examined in depth in Chapter One: The Three Domains: Zoroastrianism, Diaspora and Pilgrimage. Chapter Two, will consider research methodology and the use of qualitative research methods including auto-ethnography (AE) and Participatory Action Research (PAR). Additionally, it will provide an exposition of the tourist model (Jafari 1987), which is used as the lens to frame the experiences of pilgrimage. The use of Kurt Lewin’s model of change (that of Unfreeze, Change, Re-Freeze), Richard Butler’s (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model, and Schon and Argyris’s work on reflection, form the basis for my self-reflection, interpretation and analysis of the auto-ethnographical data in Chapter 3. Chapter Three is presented in a narrative form, employing the precepts of auto-ethnography. Chapter Four closes the thesis with a discussion of findings, provides recommendations, and identifies the implications for Zoroastrian diaspora studies.
CHAPTER ONE

The Three Domains: Zoroastrianism, Diaspora and Pilgrimage

Statement of Argument:
The purpose of this chapter is to examine the three domain study areas Zoroastrianism, Diaspora and Pilgrimage (ZDP) on which this thesis is framed. Each of these three domains is examined in and of itself and in conjunction with the others and applied to the experience of personal pilgrimage. The multi-disciplinary aspect of this thesis was brought into sharp focus when interrogating the literature on these disparate subject domains located as they are in Religion (Zoroastrianism), Migration (Diaspora) and Hospitality, Tourism and Travel (Pilgrimage) contexts. Pilgrimage in the context of this study is firmly embedded in the realms of a religion i.e. Zoroastrianism distinguishing it from Spiritual tourism. As the focus of this chapter is forensic in relating to Zoroastrian Diaspora and Zoroastrian Pilgrimage both for reasons of context and relevance.

Conceptual Research Framework: Zoroastrianism, Diaspora, Pilgrimage (ZDP)

In this thesis, concepts of Zoroastrianism, Diaspora and Pilgrimage are examined through a singular lens of a diasporic Zoroastrian (myself) to reveal the intersections between them. These auto-ethnographic observations of diaspora, Zoroastrianism and pilgrimage are investigated to shed light on the function of pilgrimage as a means to re-connect with faith.

Figure 1: Pheroza Daruwalla, ‘Schematic of the Conceptual Study of Zoroastrianism, Diaspora and Pilgrimage: A Singular View (ZDP:ASV).
**Zoroastrianism: Overview**

The ancient faith of Zoroastrianism or Zarathushtrianism is believed to have been founded by the prophet Zarathustra (Zoroaster in Greek) has no single existing definition. The term Parsis/Parsees was explained in the Introduction earlier to contextualise the ethno religious origins of Zoroastrians who trace their ancestry to Zoroastrians (Persians) who arrived between the eight and tenth CE on the western shores of Gujarat in India. The terms Zoroastrian and Parsi are often used interchangeably but technically Zoroastrianism is the religion and Parsis refer to the ethno religious classification. Jenny Rose (2012, p.xviii) suggests that the term Zoroastrianism is better given the “narration and appropriation of the religion and its eponymous founder Zarathustra by both Zoroastrians and ‘outsiders’.” The advent of Zoroastrianism is a matter of conjecture, but in *Zoroastrianism Its Antiquity and Constant Vigour* (1992) Mary Boyce suggests 1100 BCE as the “lowest possible date for the founding of the Zoroastrian religion – that is for the lifetime of Zoroaster” (p.29). Yet, she then goes on to say that no “precise date” is ascertainable and it could be anywhere between 1700-1000 BCE. Boyce refers to Old and Young Avestan texts noting that the Old Avestan language is “archaic” (p.29), even in comparison to the Vedic texts (mainly the ancient Sanskrit Rigveda). Peter Clark (2001, p.1) suggests a date of 1400 BCE “reckoned by a large number of scholars”. All sources agree that Zoroastrianism was a major Indo Iranian religion (Mistree, 1982, p.2) and is based on precepts of dualism and the fight between Ahura Mazda Hormazd (Righteousness) and Aingra Mainyu/Ahreman (Evil, falsehoods).

Several authors, (Boyce 1979; Rose 2011; Clark 2001; Kreyenbroek and Munshi 2001; Kriwaczek 2004; Dabu 1966; Dhalla 1994; Kotwal and Boyd 1982; Hinnells 1995; 2005a; 2005b; Zaechner, 2011; Nigosian 1993) refer to the antecedents and history of Zoroastrians and Parsis. Zoroastrians immigrated to India in about seventh century CE (Avesta.org; Boyce, 1979) to avoid forced conversion to Islam and the successors to these émigrés came to be known as the Parsis/Parsees (i.e. hailing from Pars). They adopted the language of their hosts of the Gujarat coast while still maintaining their unique ethnic and religious identity, which is still practiced today. Parsis see themselves as a subset of the Zoroastrians and preserve the ‘religion’ in its ancient form. They see themselves as ‘keepers of the flame’ and recount the apocryphal story about the ‘Sugar in the Milk’ and their acceptance to India by King Jadi Rana. This ‘coming to India’ story of the Zoroastrians is elaborated upon in the history of the Zoroastrian migration in several sources both scholarly and in popular Zoroastrian media (Parsikhabar.net; Zoroastrians.net; Chaubey et al 2017). Briefly, it is reiterated here, the wise leader/priest of the Zoroastrians who came onshore after their escape from Iran was greeted by the Hindu King Jadi Rana who indicated through a pot of milk brimming to the top the lack of space to accommodate the refugees. It is said that the wise leader put a pinch of sugar into the milk and none of it spilled over and was seen as a sign of ‘sweetening’ the lives of the Hindus without causing overcrowding or disruption. The king then gave permission to the refugees to settle with certain conditions and even set them up with agricultural land.

Farrokh Jijina, 2019, p.26) reporting on the work of Rukshana Nanji, an ‘independent researcher-archaeologist’ says Nanji, challenges many of the premises on which the story is based and recounted in the *Qissa-e-Sanjjan* (Story of Sanjan), an early account of Zoroastrian settlers in India, believed to have been written about 1600 CE. Nanji’s asserts that not only had the trade routes been well established between Persia and India but the diasporic migrants were well aware that they would be given shelter as a multitude of cultures (including Islamic already existed in 820 CE). Nanji avers, “The *Qissa* has been discussed threadbare over the last 120 years...there is a lot of speculation...most Parsis vehemently defend the date of their arrival of 936 CE as correct...However, this was never based on any archaeological evidence” (p.26). This conundrum of when the Parsis actually came to India runs the gamut of dates between the eighth and tenth century’s. Nanji supports her assertion of 936 CE as the more likely date of arrival noting that the earlier part of the Qissa does not appear in the first half of the Qissa and “the migrants were known as Behedins (people of the good faith)”. Her assertion that the migrants “did not suddenly flee from Persia” (Zeini, 2010) is reiterated as is that the ‘sugar in the milk’ story is probably a recognition by
the Hindu king of the economic benefits that the new migrants were likely to bring as “there were Persian, West Asian and even Chinese cultural influences in the areas around Sanjan Bunder many centuries prior to the tenth century”. This accords with Julian Droogan’s (2019) references when speaking of the ‘Frankincense Routes’ of the role of the monsoons in facilitating shipping ‘dhow’ trade from the West to the East and the return winds accords with Nanji’s narratives and timelines. Further, Droogan ties this to the stories of the “perfidious Indian” masquerading as an Omani (Majid Al Najdi), said to be the ‘original’ Sinbad the Sailor considered one of the greatest sailors of the time.

The Khordeh Avesta is the book of prayer (and comprises synopses of prayers from the Avesta) and referred to as the “Bible of Zoroastrianism” by John Waterhouse (1934, p.42), who tells the “romantic story” of the French Anquetil du Perron and his acquisition and translation of some 200 manuscripts through “bribing an erudite priest or Dastur”. The Khordeh Avesta has been translated (and printed) in English, Gujarati, Farsi and Hindi for Zoroastrians to pray from. Some have the meanings of the prayers published alongside to help Zoroastrians ‘connect’ spiritually instead of simply reciting by rote. However, it is still largely based on the oral tradition of recitation. Boyce (1984, pp.1-7) identifies the religious writings, with the Avesta being the primary source and composed over two ‘stages’ during the time of the Rigveda, a Hindu scripture of the second millennium, and Younger Avestan. Given oral tradition and the belief that the Avesta is presented as the direct revelations of Ahura Mazda to Zoroaster, Boyce argues that the Avestan alphabet was specially invented for this purpose of writing and the “oldest extant dated manuscript is 1323 BCE” (1984, p.1). Old Avestan refers to portions written in Gathic Avestan and the Younger Avestan is referred to as the Standard Avestan (Choksy, pers.comm. 2019). The Gathas are short hymns, poems, psalms and songs and are believed to be “utterances, addressed by Zarathustra the Prophet to Ahura Mazda; and they convey in their passionate exhortations visions of God and his prophecies. Boyce (1984, p.1) is careful to point out that because of their great antiquity they contain “many words of unknown or uncertain meaning and have baffling complexities of grammar and syntax”. Boyce says that this ‘mantic poetry’ is prone to misunderstanding due to its study in ‘virtual isolation from the religion’ and alluding to oppositional ideas presented in major translations. In Zoroastrian rituals however the Gathas are regarded as the “greatest of manthras (inspired holy utterances) and guard the central rituals of the faith with their sacred power” (Boyce, 1984, p.2).

Other terminology that frequently occurs when discussing the Avesta include K. E. Eduljee’s authoritative and succinct summations of the contents of the Avesta (Zoroastrian Heritage 2005-2017). Eduljee references the work of Martin Haug’s Sacred Language, Writings and Religions of the Parsis (1838) to develop a summary of the key vocabulary of Zoroastrian studies. I have paraphrased Eduljee’s classifications below:

1. The Yasna, noting that it is spelt as “izzlyshne” in later texts. Semantics of the word Yasna relate to the Sanskrit (and subsequently Hindu traditions of yajna) where the priest recites the words of worship as part of the rituals and priestly functions. However, in Zoroastrianism, the Yasnas are liturgical and the Old Avestan name of the principal act of worship, with the 72 chapters mirrored in the 72 strands that are woven into the kusti (girdle).

2. The Gathas, known as the hymns of Zarathushtra are part of the Yasnas and were said to have been composed by Zarathushtra himself. Their focus is on the struggles between good and evil and the five days before the start of the Shenshai New Year (immediately following the 5 days of Muktaad prayers for the dead) are referred to as the ‘Gatha Days’. Avesta.org (Avesta.org/Gathas.htm) refer to there being 17 hymns grouped into five clusters: Ahunavaiti Gatha (comprising Yasnas 28-34); Ushtavaiti Gatha (Yasnas’ 43-46); Spentamainuyush Gatha (Yasnas’ 47-50); Vohukhashathra Gatha (Yasna 51) and Vahishtoishiti Gatha (Yasna 53).

3. The Visperad is part of the extended liturgy and prayed as part of the Yasnas. It is prayed to celebrate the six Gahambar (seasonal events and feasts) which are dedicated to the six Amesha Spentas
The Vendidad, known as the Videvdad, are prayers and texts used to confound evil spirits ‘daevas’. K. E. Eduljee (2016) describes the Vendidad as being one of the surviving Avestan books (nasks), of which there were originally 21. A chapter in the Vendidad is called a ‘fargard’ and there are two manuscripts of the Vendidad referred to as the Vendidad Sadeh and the Pahlavi Vendidad. Topics covered in the Vendidad include aspects related to the dead including hygiene, disease, mourning, sanctity and invocations, unacceptable behaviours and the praise and care of animals like the bull and dog used in liturgical practices.

5. The Yashts (Hintze 2014) are part of the Avesta (book of prayer) and are devoted to the praise of deities of the Zoroastrian pantheon and associated with the Zoroastrian calendar. These deities are broadly classified into four groups which are firstly derived from Indo Aryan roots like Haoma and Mithra, secondly with divinities like Anahita (Ancient Persian Goddess and Yazata), (Nabarz, 2013), thirdly deities related to natural phenomena such as the Sun (Khorshed), Moon (Mah), Wind (Vayu) and Stars (Tir/Tishtrya). The fourth cluster refer to the Amesha Spentas and the Fravashis (personal spirit of an individual/god essence). Prayers dedicated to these divinities are prayed specifically on the named day (e.g. Behram Yasht, Hormazd Yasht and so on). There is ambiguity about the number of Yashts, which range from 16–21. (Hintze, 2014).

6. The Khordeh Avesta is the ‘book of common prayer’ (avesta.org) for the Zoroastrians. Usually available in English, Hindi, Gujarati and Farsi, there are many versions with translations of the prayers for the laity. Both daily prayers and special ‘baj’ prayers for assorted occasions (death, before and after meals and so on) are included. The prayers are classified by Eduljee referencing Avesta.org and broken into classifications such as “frequently used short prayers” and “named prayers”. (Eduljee, n.d.)

7. Frequently used Short Prayers include: Ashem Vohu (invocation of Asha), Ahunwar known as Yatha Ahu Vairyo (most sacred mantra), Kem na Mazda (exorcism), Padyab-Kusti known as Ahura Mazda Khodae (ablation and formula for tying the kusti), Jase me Avange Mazda, Baj’s before a meal, Srosh Baj, Hoshbam (prayer at dawn), Doa Tan Dorostrti (trans. for good health and life), Patet Pashemani (prayer of repentance) the 101 names of Lord Ahura Mazda and specific prayers for the five times of the day (gahgeh: Hawan, sunrise to midday; Rapithwin, midday to mid-afternoon; Uzerin, mid-afternoon to sunset; Aiwisruthrem, sunset to midnight and Ushahin, midnight to dawn) are included.

8. Niyayeshes (litanies) include: To the Sun (Khorshed), Mithra, Moon (Mah), Water (Aban) and Fire (Atash) along with the prayer Namaz-i-chahar Nemag (praise to the four compass points North, South, East and West) are contained in the Khordeh Avesta.

9. Yashts (hymns and prayers to Ahura Mazda, the Arch Angels and Angels) include: The Ohrmazd/Hormazd Yasht (dedicated to Lord Ahura Mazda), Haft Amahraspand Yasht (dedicated to the 7 arch angels), Behram, Sarosh, Rashna, Ram and others numbering 21 Yashts are contained in the Khordeh Avesta, published in English in 1993 by Prof Ervad Maneck Furdoonji Kanga, but published originally by the author Ervad Kavasji Euji Kanga in 1880 with the last Gujarati (13th edn) in 1976.

10. Sirozas (dedications for the 30 days in the month) and Afrinagans: Other inclusions are those of the Sirozas (dedications for the 30 days in the month) and Afrinagans, that are prayers of blessings and recited to venerate Dahman (Ahuric doctrine), Gatha (hymns of praise said to come directly from Zarathushtra), Gahambar/Gahanbar (festivals) and Rapithwin (invocations to defeat the daevas or evil doers). Eduljee classifies the Afrinagans, Siroozas and Geh prayers as ‘Fragments’ contained in the Khordeh Avesta rather than being part of the major corpus.
These elaborate descriptions and definitions are provided here because they are essential to an understanding of the role of the Khordeh Avesta in pilgrimage. Additionally, many diasporic Zoroastrians and TCK have forgotten these prayers (Kem na Mazda, Ahuramazda Khodae, Jase me Avanghe Mazda, Sarosh Baj, Ashem Vohu, Yatha Ahu Vairyo and Din no Kalmo) learned for their Navjote and have ceased to wear a sudreh kusti (sacred vest and girdle) as they assimilate into their new ‘homes’. The archaic and ‘dead’ language of the Avestan prayers learned by rote and often unaccompanied by explanation or understanding, if not recited regularly tend to fade away as people focus on their profane and secular lives. Some tour guides, who are scholars in their own right, provide pilgrims with personal prayer books used as a guide for both the recitation of specific prayers and as a facilitator of meditation on various discourses. Additionally, because Zoroastrian prayers are in Avesta (a dead language), they are learned by rote and hence a copy in English or Gujrati with translations of meanings of the words is essential for a ‘deep’ understanding. A further observation is the ‘customisation’ of the prayer Doa Tandarosti (a petition for well-being) where individual elaborations have crept in but are not necessarily contained in the published Khordeh Avesta. This ‘customisation’ might be a familial aspect, but I have heard the words recited in Udawada as well. For example in my maternal family the following words, many of them borrowed from Sanskrit and Hinduism, are added, and do not appear in standard prayer books. Dhan van, Putra van, Ayush van, Lakshmi van, Vruddhi van, Roji van, Sugrana Dadar Ek, Din Ek, Zarthosht, Bar Shak, Be Shak, Be Gunah, Pak Din, Saccha Din, Rasti Din, are invoked.

A loose translation includes invocations to Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth in Hinduism), Vruddhi van (refers to Acquisition of Knowledge and Wisdom), be Gunah (Without Fault) and Saccha Din (True Belief/Religion). These ‘customisations’/omissions and additions are noted by Joseph Peterson (Avesta.org) in the notations of the prayer and its translation with the last line “Edun Bat, Eduntara bat. Pa Yazdan u Ameshaspandan Kame Bat” (trans. “May it be so, May it be more so, may it be according to the wish of the Yazads and the Ameshaspands!” ending at Edun Bat in the version of the prayers published by Dr. Kersey Antia in his recitation of the Doa Tandarosti.

Joseph Peterson (Avesta.org) has an expanded list of liturgical sources including sacred literature in Middle Persian/Pahlavi, such as the Arda Viraf (visit to Heaven and Hell) the Bundahishn (Book of Creation and Zoroastrian Cosmology), the Chidag Andarz I Poryotheshan (Cathecism), Counsels and Sayings of Adarbad Mahaspadan (advice on living a good life by Priest Adarbad Marharspadanam who was High Priest and Prime Minister in the reign of Shahpur II 309-379CE), Dadestan-i-Denig (religious decisions), the Denkard (compendium of Zoroastrian wisdom written in the ninth century), Epistles of Manuschchihr/Minocher (written in 881 by Manuschchihr High Priest of Kerman in response to complaints about decrees ordained by his brother Zadsparam, High Priest of Sirjan. Three epistles including a response to the people complaining, a remonstration with his brother and declaring Zadsparam’s decrees as unlawful changes to Zoroastrianism), the Menog-i-Khtrad (spirit of wisdom and seen as advice on various aspects including silence while eating, consequences of not wearing the sudreh-kusti, death, marriage and beliefs on dualism among other topics).

The Pazand texts (Avesta.org) include prayers grouped into Afrins (blessings), Doas (Benedictions), Setayashs (Praises), Nirangs (Formulas), and Patets (Confessions). The Bundahishn, Menog-i-Khtrad, Rahman Yasht, Arda Viraf Nameh, Aogamadecha and the Pazand Rivayat were all grouped as Pazand texts i.e. written in Middle Persian (Pahlavi) and were phonetic and devoid of Arabic elements. The ninth century Rivayat of Adur Farnbag who was a leader provided views and opinions on all manner of religious, social and cultural aspects related to Zoroastrianism including marriage, death, adoption and even money and debt. The Rivayat of Farnbag-Srosh on the other hand is dated to 1008CE (Avesta.org) and Behramgore Tahmuras Anklesaria is attributed with its translation in 1938. He says the Rivayat is concerned with “the calendar, and intercalary reckoning, appointment of a Magian, adoption and ceremonial rites”.

The Selections of Zadspram (translated by Edward William. West in 1880 and 1897) deal with
excerpts from the *Avesta* and *Zand* (Middle Persian Zoroastrian term) referring to translations, commentaries and explanatory annotations written in the margins of the texts and dealing with creation, legends about Zarathushtra, and formation of man. Mary Boyce (1998) is cited approving the ‘Selections of Zadspram’ as a “plain and intelligent summary” for the beliefs of the Sassanians.

According to Avesta.org and *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, the *Sayest Ne Sayest* work deals with Zoroastrian jurisprudence and the proper and improper laws concerning purity and sins. It provides ‘compensations’ for the occurrences of such improper behaviours. It is a compilation from different Zoroastrian works and Pahlavi commentaries (*Zand*) and parallels between the *Sayest Ne Sayest* and other texts ‘Herbedestan, Nerangestan, Pahlavi Rivayats and Videvdads’ are indicated as well as a lack of ability to ‘date’ the age of the *Sayest*.

The *Denkard*, written in the tenth century is considered one of the most notable Zoroastrian sources. While not considered scripture it deals with acts in the religion, hence ‘Den’ from the *Avestan daena* (*deendldin*) referring to the religion and ‘karda’ referring to ‘acts/action’. The *Denkard*, originally consisted of nine books (*nasks*) or volumes. Books 1, 2 and the early part of 3 are lost. The remaining part of Book 3 deals with doctrines and beliefs, Book 4 with writings on moral wisdom by priests of the Arsacid and Sassanian times, and Book 5 the writings of *Adarfarbarg* on the life of Zarathushtra. Books 3-5 have been described as being devoted to ‘rational apologetics’. Book 6 has been described as devoted to the wisdom of sages and wise persons and Book 7 to the marvels of Zoroastrianism including detailed descriptions of Zaroaster’s life, events in the millennia following his death and the promise of the coming of a *Saoshyant* and the revival of Zoroastrianism. Books 8 and 9 are related to Zoroastrian canon with Book 8 describing *manthic*, scientific, legal and religious aspects as contained in the holy books including the *Avesta*. Book 9 contains commentary and explanations based on *Gathic* and other theological issues.

The ‘thick’ descriptions employed to describe Zoroastrian theology here illustrate the depth of Zoroastrian academic and theological studies and the absence of this knowledge in the average Zoroastrian. This is further compounded in the diaspora where ‘embeddedness’ and ‘institutionalisation’ described earlier become even more remote for Zoroastrians. Unless one is a very self-motivated scholar, the density of this information makes it less ‘accessible’ and while Avesta.org is a most erudite site with considerable detail its academic approach puts it out of reach to most Zoroastrians who are only interested in ‘surface knowledge’ and trotting out the trope of ‘Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds’. K. E. Eduljee and the Heritage Institute on the other hand make knowledge much more accessible through the way it is written but through the infinitely superior navigational and sophisticated website. K. E. Eduljee’s Facebook page (Zoroastrian Heritage) and his various writings and postings in community magazines (*Fezana, Parsiana*, and so on) ensure access to a wider audience of both insiders (Zoroastrians) and outsiders. An added impetus for the detailed descriptions was related to ‘reflection’ both ‘in action’ (during pilgrimage) and ‘after’ action (events, research and learning after pilgrimage). Donald Schon and Chris Argyris and their writings on reflection in and after action are discussed more deeply in the theoretical framework section in Chapter 3 but are introduced here to contextualise the depth of the definitions related to Zoroastrian theology.

Special mention is made here of the *Bundahishn* (Book of Creation) and the *Rivayats* (teachings), as information about both these texts were notable in the genesis and motivation for this research. Boyce (1984) referred to them as the Persian *Rivayats* in explaining their contents as covered by correspondence between Iranian and Parsi priests regarding “matters of ritual and observance” (p.5).
Rumy Mistry and Shernaz Cama’s (2004) book *Oral Traditions: Unesco Parzor Report on Questionnaire 1 (a) Reet-Rivaj* (trans. traditions/practices/rituals) presents the results of a study detailing the practices and rituals observed by Parsis in India. Boyce (1984) mentions the role of secular records (p.7) including among them records from the Achaemenians (550-330 BCE), Parthians (141 BCE – 224 CE) and Sasanian (224-651 CE) periods along with notices by “Muslim writers” (p.7). Early Parsi records, notices by European merchants and travellers of the seventeenth and eighteenth century’s and modern Parsi and European writings on the beliefs and practices of Zoroastrians are sources of information on traditional beliefs and practices of Zoroastrianism.

Dina McIntyre (n.d.), a respected emic scholar among Zoroastrians, has made a study of the *Bundahishn* and its influence and messages when discussing issues about Zoroastrian beliefs, contemporary practice and theological precepts. It was only fitting that this book of creation and history, which set me on the path to ZDP:ASV be mentioned. This cosmological text, whose name translates to ‘Book of Primal Creation’, is written in Pahlavi and includes “a short history of the legendary Kayanids and Eransahr in their days” (http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bundahisn-primal-creation). Boyce (1984) refers to the *Bundahishn* as a Pahlavi text compiled at different times and without stated authorship. Its value lies in its antiquity and presentation of a ‘pre- Zoroastrian world’.

The *Bundahishn* has three main themes: creation, the nature of earthly creatures, and the Kayanians (their lineage and abodes, and the vicissitudes befalling their realm of Eransahar)... Here is preserved an ancient, in part pre-Zoroastrian picture of the world, conceived as saucer-shaped, with its rim one great mountain-range, a central peak thrusting up, star-encircled, to cut off the light of the sun by night; a world girdled by two great rivers, from which all other waters flow; in which yearly the gods fight against demons to end drought and famine, and to bring protection to man. Natural phenomena are speculatively explained; the sprouting of the plants, for example, is ascribed to the mythical Tree of All Seeds growing in the ocean, whose seeds are mingled with water and so scattered annually over all the earth when the god Tishtar brings the rains. Not only is the matter ancient and often poetic, but the manner of presentation, although arid, is of great antiquarian interest; for after the distinctively Zoroastrian account of creation, the speculative learning and legendary history is set out in traditional oral fashion, that is to say, in schematised mnemonic lists: so many types of animals, so many kinds of liquid, so many names of mountains, so many great battles. This is the learning of ancient Iran, as it must have been evolved and transmitted by generations in the priestly schools.” (quoted in Mary Boyce, ‘Middle Persian Literature’, in *Handbuch der Orientalistik, 1. Abt., IV. Band, 2. Abschn, LFG.1*, pp.40-41).

Jamsheed Choksy (1988) examined the “images and functions of Woman” in the *Bundahishn* alluding to the “six passages” that referred specifically to women. These passages relate to conception, the origins of menstruation and the dichotomy between women and the “whore demoness”. A number of still prevailing beliefs underpinning Zoroastrian purity laws still view menstruating women as being unclean and impure and to this day some families attempt to ‘isolate’ these women in separate areas. The modern ‘spin’ that women of my generation grew up with included the idea that it was not impurity so much but a chance for women to recoup that saw them isolated during their menses. In the diaspora, there is a more relaxed view especially in the absence of consecrated fires but ‘baggage’ about not attending the Darbe Mehr (community house) during the menses still exist.

Contemporary issues that cogitate the Zoroastrian mind, both in scholarly contexts and otherwise, are based on deeply rooted and dearly held views. Chief among these is the issue of conversion and inter-marriage (Rose 2014; Haug 1884/2013; Goodstein 2006; Luhrmann 2002; Maneck 1994; Nigosian 1996; Shroff and Castro, 2011). Closer to home for me were the works of David John Weaver, whose article ‘Zoroastrians at Large: Intermarriage in New Zealand’ (2014) and Master’s Thesis ‘The Parsi Dilemma: A New Zealand Perspective’ (2012) interrogated both conversion and intermarriage. Readers of his work are left in no doubt about prevalent viewpoints that impact on and will continue to have reverberations for the Zoroastrian community into the future. Weaver, draws attention to the differences in both practice and understanding of Zoroastrian and Parsi customs in the newer and smaller diasporas like New Zealand compared to more established
Zoroastrian diasporic communities particularly in the US, Canada and UK. Using Hinnells work on the Zoroastrian diaspora his small-scale study of interviews are redolent with meaning and relevance for the Zoroastrian diaspora in Australia and New Zealand. The rituals surrounding death and disposal of the body are a close second that exercise some diasporic minds (Gupta 2017; Modi 1922; Foltz and Saadi-Nejad, 2007; Hinnells 1995). Issues of death rituals and disposal of the dead are deliberated in community media both online and in print, sometimes resulting in legal proceedings. Hamish McDonald (1993) writing for the *Far Eastern Economic Review* notes the discrepancies subtitled his article ‘The Parsi Dilemma’ with ‘Dwindling community faces questions of identity and orthodoxy. McDonald’s commentary from interviews and meetings in 1993 is as pertinent today (with the same players coincidentally still some of the loudest voices). The only difference might be that TCK neither are interested nor care about the history, even when their immigrant parents still hold orthodox views. Diasporic TCK are much more likely to be familiar with ‘western’ style funerals in crematoria and chapels with eulogies, music and sometimes-even food provided (similar to a wake). None of these customs is part of the natal ‘homeland’ cultures but new generations are free from this baggage. First generation and orthodox migrants among us still however observe rituals including maintaining a vegetarian home for the first three days of the death ceremonies, with traditional *dhansak* (traditional Parsi lentil and meat dish) served on the fourth day, despite not having the accompanying prayer rituals. Kamala Ganesh (2008, p.317) sums up these ‘contestations and conflicts’ between Bombay Parsis and the Zoroastrian Diaspora, saying, “It is contestation that plays a role in the making of community. The conflict over some aspects – acceptance of new entrants via conversion or intermarriage and the distinctive mode of disposal of the dead – actually underlines the fact, that in many other aspects a common heritage is accepted”. She notes (p.318) that “the involvement of the Zoroastrian diaspora in these debates is a new and still unfolding one, and provides fresh insights in an old situation”.

Tied up with all of these aspects of living Zoroastrianism are the gulf between Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians. These differences manifest themselves in many ways: language, food, customs (initiation, marriage, and death), clothes, and even religious sites and celebrations. While Iranian Zoroastrians are still very attached to their Jashnes, celebrating different aspects, Parsi Zoroastrians tend to focus on the observances of Navroze (arrival of Spring on March 21), *Khodad Saal* (New Year for Shenshais) and the *Muktads* (10 day prayers for the dead). Other divisions come from the calendar with three distinct ‘sects’; the principal one being *Shenshais*, and the other two groups being *Kadmis* and *Faslis*. KE Eduljee (2005-2017, [http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/calendar/index.htm](http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/calendar/index.htm)) explains the meanings of the calendars saying that Fasli refers to the seasonal and is sometimes called the *Bastani* meaning traditional calendar; *Shenshais/Shahenshais* refers to imperial; and Kadmi/Qadimi/Gadimi means ancient. While minor, there are differences in the calendar, and it is still hotly disputed whether the Fasli calendar is best suited to modern times, as it has been formulated based on the Bundahishn and Dinkard, pre-dates Arab influences and most importantly makes adjustments to account for leap years. The Shenshai calendar was “instituted” by the Parsis on arrival in India in the seventh century and the Kadmi calendar was developed by the Zoroastrians in Iran to maintain the ‘old’ calendar and have taken into account the ‘missing’ years. However, the Shenshai calendar has not been adjusted since 1126-1129 CE and the Qadmi calendar in 1006 CE resulting in them lagging behind the Gregorian calendar with the effect of having the New Year come earlier and earlier (July for Kadmi and August for Shenshai). Some Parsis and Iranis in India adopted the Kadmi calendar in 1700 CE. Another consequence of the different calendars is that Iranian Zoroastrians tend to celebrate 21 March as the start of the calendar year while Parsis who are predominantly Shenshais tend to celebrate Newroz (usually in August) as the start of the new calendar. Many Zoroastrians tend to be attached to the calendar, not only for religious reasons but also for the observance of their *Roj Parsi* birthday (which is always a moveable feast due to the anomalies in the calendar calculations) in addition to their ‘date’ birthday, which remains constant because the English calendar is followed. There are minor differences in liturgical practices between Kadmis, Shenshais and Fasli adherents.

Other features of the revival of Zoroastrianism include the increasing identification of people from
Azerbaijan, Kurdistan and other such regions, as practicing Zoroastrians. Bombay (Mumbai), which still sees itself as the “seat” of power and the arbiter of religious and social mores through the Bombay Parsi Punchayat, steadfastly reject these groups. Discussion often revolves around the inclusivity/exclusivity approach and the fact that Zoroastrianism is (seen as) a religion of descent (Morris 2013). Related to this preoccupation with the dwindling number of Zoroastrians, schemes like ‘Jiyo Parsi’ (trans. Live/Flourish Parsis) are being backed by no less a personage than the current Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi. Feroza Jassawalla (2017) in ‘Cama’s Crusades’ in the Parsiana (21 March) chronicles the efforts and spearheading of initiatives like Jiyo Parsi and the UNESCO ParZor Foundation by Shernaz Cama, and her advocacy and initiatives on all things Zoroastrian. The Jiyo Parsi scheme has ParZor foundation, the Government of India Ministry of Minority Affairs, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and The Tata Institute of Social Sciences as its partners. It provides assistance with crèches, senior citizens helping to look after children, and for families who have elderly dependants living with them. The stated objective of the scheme is to help contain the decline of Parsis in India, with Parsi/Zoroastrians being a minority group. Factors like late and non-marriages, decline in fertility, emigration, out-marriages and separations and divorces have all contributed to the decline along with a disproportionate number of older persons in the community. The changes being sought are both attitudinal and health focused and reverse this decline through subsidised infertility treatment and support for caring for elders and children in the community. This photograph demonstrates the message loud and clear.

Figure 1.2: Jiyo Parsi, 2020. Will you marry me?

Part of this ‘revival’ and support may be attributed to the current Prime Minister Modi’s prior experiences as Chief Minister of Gujarat. When Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi was instrumental in providing subsidies and encouraging Parsi companies to use Gujarat as the Indian state for commerce and entrepreneurship, with companies like Tata setting up factories and industries when rebuffed by Bengal (for example, the case of the Nano Car factory) (Sud 2008).

The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London is probably the best-established institution of Zoroastrian Studies with several prominent scholars on staff. The establishment of the SOAS Shapoorji Pallonji Institute of Zoroastrian Studies (SSPIZ) with a five million sterling pound bequest cemented it as a major centre for research and study into Zoroastrianism. A great
number of publications on Zoroastrianism and authors emanate or bear the imprimatur of SOAS and they are integrally involved in events. Professor Almut Hintze is the Zartoshty Professor of Zoroastrianism and Dr. Sarah Stewart, holds the endowed long term Lectureship of Zoroastrian Studies. The news item ([https://www.soas.ac.uk/news/newsitem122263.html](https://www.soas.ac.uk/news/newsitem122263.html)) notes:

> Mr Shapoor Mistry, Chairman, Shapoorji Pallonji Group, said: ‘Through the creation of the Institute, Lectureship and Scholarships, this donation will ensure that SOAS continues to develop as the world’s leading centre of Zoroastrian Studies, advancing in perpetuity the understanding and appreciation of this ancient religion and its history, culture, languages and peoples.’

Zoroastrianism has been studied at SOAS since 1929 thanks to the Parsi Community’s lectureship, which was held by Sir Harold Walter Bailey and Walter Bruno Henning. Renowned scholar Professor Mary Boyce taught Zoroastrianism from 1947 until 1982. Many other distinguished scholars of Zoroastrianism and Iranian Studies have taught at SOAS, including Professor John Hinnells, Professor A D H Bivar, Professor Philip Kreyenbroek and Professor Nicholas Sims-Williams. SOAS also produced a major international exhibition exploring the cultural history of Zoroastrianism, The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in history and imagination, which was exhibited in SOAS’s Brunei Gallery in 2013 and in the National Museum in Delhi in 2016.

The SOAS website refers to the teaching modules offered in Zoroastrianism, at Undergraduate level being a Foundation course and Zoroastrianism in the Ancient and Modern Worlds’. At the Postgraduate levels it offers, Zoroastrianism: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives, Avestan and Middle Persian. (Avestan and Middle Persian are offered upon request at the Undergraduate level). Most recently, they sent two scholars, one emic and one etic to participate in the World Zoroastrian Youth Congress held in 2019 in Los Angeles. “Dr Nazneen Engineer, an SSPIZS postdoctoral researcher in Zoroastrian Studies presented a paper on ‘The Lasting Impact of the Mazagon Navjotes’ which formed part of her doctoral thesis. Pablo Vasquez, a Master’s student in the Department of Religions and Philosophies, presented on ‘Kurdish Zoroastrians: An overview and what we can learn.’ SOAS boasts to being the ‘home’ of Professor Mary Boyce who is considered one of the foremost authorities on Zoroastrianism and whose fieldwork in Sharifabad near Yazd was instrumental to radically changing the study of Zoroastrianism from one “gained chiefly by reading difficult ancient and medieval texts” to accepting the “fact that there was a living religion to be studied in Iran and India”. Albert de Jong (2006) notes that her advocacy of an “early date for Zarathushtra” and the “oral tradition” for the first half of Zoroastrianism’s 3000 year existence, “still remain uncontested to the present day”. Her devotion and erudition brought to both SOAS and Zoroastrianism were noted in The Telegraph’s (2006) obituary, “Mary Boyce considered the demands of scholarship and family life to be incompatible and consequently remained unmarried, preferring the fidelity of academia, as put it, to which she was totally committed throughout her life”.

However, Zoroastrianism is still a rather esoteric area of study both ‘inside and outside’ the faith. Prof Kaikhosrov Irani of the City University of New York (CUNY) was another emic scholar of Zoroastrianism instrumental in advancing the study of Zoroastrianism. This in itself presents definitional conundrums and the section above has been simply a ‘tasting plate’ approach to these issues. Detailed examination is beyond the scope of this research however the writing of emic contemporary ‘insider’ authors like Shernaz Cama, Pheroza Godrej, Phiroza Punthakee Mistry, KE Eduljee, Jamsheed Choksey and writers for community magazines Parsiana, Fezana, and Hamazor all played a significant role in shaping the conversation of this thesis. The next section discusses the term ‘diaspora’ and more particularly, Zoroastrian diasporas.

**Conceptual Frameworks: Religion, Spirituality and Zoroastrianism**

The literature on conceptual frameworks in Zoroastrian studies are thin on the ground given its rather esoteric and highly specialised place in the pantheon of religious studies. Further complexities arose from the melding of three discrete study areas – religion, migration and diasporic studies and hospitality, tourism and travel. The way I chose to address this challenge was to research the literature on conceptual frameworks used in religion and spirituality. Unsurprisingly a majority of
the literature and conceptual frameworks are drawn from the nexus between Religion/Spirituality and Health issues particularly around Mental Health thus enforcing the close nexus of religion/spirituality with body and mind.

Ruth A Tanyi (2002) makes a distinction between spirituality and religion similar to that by Alex Norman (2011). While Tanyi focuses on the spirituality and religious nexus to nursing practice and education Norman addresses it from the perspective of pilgrimage and tourism. Other authors (Dyson, Cobb and Forman, 1997; Chatters, 2000; James and Wells, 2003; Park 2005; Gall, Charbonneau, Clarke, Grant, Joseph and Shouldice, 2005) all use conceptual frameworks based on literature and theories around spirituality/religion. Key terms that crop up include ‘coping, hope, stress, self-regulation, religious involvement, spirituality, and meaning’.

Terry Lynn Gall et.al. (2005, p.89, see Figure 2 below) present an excellent example of a Conceptual Framework mitigating stressors and coping through using spiritual aspects. Not only is it aesthetically pleasing but also it captures the dimensions of ‘coping’ and ‘stressors’ of daily life and how spirituality (an abstract concept) can aid and abet in the mitigation of poor health by recognising these ‘constructs’.

![Figure 1.3: Terry Lynn Gall et.al. ‘The Spiritual Framework of Coping (an adaptation/application of the transactional model)’ p.89.](image-url)
Examples of theoretical frameworks in Zoroastrianism were even fewer in number, however, Towler Mehta’s (2010) thesis ‘European Zoroastrian Attitudes to Their Purity Laws’ a quantitative paper and pencil survey of 603 respondents employed a theoretical framework and used the precepts of 6 purity laws to be obeyed as her ‘variables’ in the study. Her numerical data was presented thus:

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Farvardigan / Mukat Ceremonies</th>
<th>Prayer Room</th>
<th>Joshans</th>
<th>Priest</th>
<th>Child Birth Rituals</th>
<th>Prayer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men and Women</strong></td>
<td>603</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total group of women and men affirm reject</td>
<td></td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men N = 298</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women N = 293</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men N = 293</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women N = 298</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents do not answer each of the six purity laws in the same way. Thus, for each of the laws there is a different percentage of affirmation/rejection and this will be called the ranking of the six purity laws.220

**Table 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire number</th>
<th>The purity law</th>
<th>Percent affirmation</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1d.</td>
<td>Menstruating women should avoid the Farvardigan/ Mukat ceremonies</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b.</td>
<td>Menstruating women should avoid the prayer room</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c.</td>
<td>Menstruating women should avoid Joshans</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1d.</td>
<td>Menstruating women should avoid the Priest</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Zoroastrian women should observe the rituals after childbirth</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a.</td>
<td>Menstruating women should avoid prayer</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>6</td>
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Conversely, Fatameh Safaii Rad (2012, p.31) referred to the “theoretical framework of material culture” as her methodology in her paper ‘Subjectivity and the Cultural Constraints of Academic Literature in Material Culture: An Investigation into the Discussion of Pattern and Symbol in Persian Carpets’. She alludes to the Eurocentric interpretations and values ascribed to Persian carpets as expressing the social reality of “that group” i.e. Europeans. While calling it cultural appropriation might be a step too far, Rad points out very clearly that the analysis of the carpets “often end up telling us far more about the archaeologists and anthropologists that analysed them than they do about the cultures that created them” (p.31). This strikes a nerve with me bringing me back to the tropes of non-Zoroastrians studying and reporting on Zoroastrian heritage and culture, ‘etic views’. Further, it lends weight to my ‘singular view approach’ to ZDP and its distinct ‘qualitative, deep’ approach through AE and PAR. Towler Mehta (2010, p.28) echoes this refrain saying her position as a non –Zoroastrian despite being married into a
Zoroastrian family made the subject doubly sensitive. She brings to the fore the work of emic scholar Jamsheed Choksy saying “as a Zoroastrian he is able to describe the rituals associated with purity and pollution by Zoroastrians today that non-Zoroastrians would never be able to witness”. Choksy’s (1986, p.167) work on pollution and purity in Zoroastrianism addresses issues of ‘ritual’ purity defining them as “religio-ritual purity” for the “sake of devotional acts” and other socio-ritual acts of purity undertaken during “rites of passage” e.g. navjote and forty days after childbirth among Zoroastrians.

Most of the academic literature on Zoroastrianism are textual analyses or historical accounts and do not really employ either a conceptual or theoretical framework as such unless they are studies/thesis such as Towler Mehta cited above. This might be ascribed to the ‘writing’ of religion and its scholarly approaches that differ, dependent on the discipline area from which the researcher is based. The next section describes conceptual and theoretical approaches to diaspora, that are more clear-cut and instructive about approach/lens through which they are viewed.

**Understanding Diaspora as a Conceptual Framework**

Considerable literature exists about conceptual and theoretical frameworks in discussion on Diaspora. Common terminology that is related to diaspora include migration, transnationalism, globalisation and various sub themes related to these concepts. There is discussion about the shift in meaning in the term diaspora, which was originally applied, to Jewish and Armenian populations mainly to encompass a vast variety of ‘migrations’ (Brettell and Sargent, 2006). Aspects of social and political change have changed the narratives of diaspora and economic betterment is one such area that is particularly applicable to Zoroastrian diasporas of more recent times. Mistry (2015, p. 169) draws attention to distinctions in her review on Hinnells and Williams’ work saying:

Hinnells and Williams have rejected the Jewish persecution model of Diaspora and argue that the Parsis who have experienced more hospitality than hostility from their host society and do not have a return movement display many of the key features of their South Asian diasporas namely dispersal from an original homeland, a collective memory and myths about the homeland and its idealization, a strong ethnic group consciousness, solidarity with co-ethic members and enriching host societies.

South Asian Diaspora is a well researched and written about topic. Several authors make reference to South Asian Diasporic communities in particular those of the subcontinent and their migrations to Western countries like the UK, Australia, United States, Canada and New Zealand. In examining the Zoroastrian diaspora the foremost writer and authority in this area remains John R. Hinnells. In his study ‘South Asian Diaspora Communities and Their Religion: A Comparative Study of Parsi Experiences’ (1994) he introduces the conundrums associated with the semantics of diaspora studies which have expanded to include terms such as “acculturate, assimilate, and community” (p.63) in addition to race and ethnicity.

The term “diaspora”, although used originally to refer to those Jews settled outside the Holy Land, is now more generally used to refer to communities and peoples living away from the land they identify with, whether a notional or actual state. More recent studies, however, have expanded the definition of diaspora to include other peoples and communities. These stem from a variety of discipline areas including: transcultural and transnational studies (Faist, 2010), ethnic, sociological, and post-colonial studies (Bhabha, 1994; Brah, 1996) and migration studies (Pellerin and Mullings 2013). Other writers such as Ragazzi (2012, p.108) define diaspora as ethnic communities living abroad who use this term as a means of constructing narratives of political and cultural elitism. Mavroudi’s (2007) description, writing from a human geography perspective, is particularly relevant to modern day contexts where the focus is on the creation of boundaries. Her refrain is taken up by Berns-McGown (2007-2008) who calls for a new definition of diaspora. Francesco Ragazzi (2012, p.107) notes that “academic debates about the definitions of diaspora as endless” going on to say that these are largely a waste of time because they are primarily politically motivated and fail to address ontological perspectives of diasporic communities, focusing instead upon “naming migrants, travellers, nomads, guest workers, minorities,
their relations and their politics”. His approach to diaspora and its six possible meanings are framed in the discourse of international relations. The six frames are provided here and contrasted with differing views of diaspora. The generality of these definitional and referential issues is simply to contextualise the term but the focus always remains on the Zoroastrian diaspora and diasporic communities.

Ragazzi (2012) broadly categorises diaspora as an “essence” and as a “practice”. He bases his groupings by first elaborating on the six distinct uses of the term diaspora. The first referencing Charles King and Neil Melvin (1999), describes diaspora as (an) ethnic community living abroad (p.108). The second as a specific social environment referring to the context of Jewish organisations like Nativ, citing Peter HäGel and Pauline Peretz (2005, p.481). For the third construct Ragazzi applies Yossi Shain and Ahatron Barth’s (2003, p.449) treatment of diaspora as a “discrete actor in international relations… that actively influence homeland (ancestral or kin-state) foreign policies”. The fourth dimension reflected in Fiona Adamson and Madeline Demetriou’s (2007, p.489) work, uses diasporic mobilisation of material resources and political influence when referring to diaspora. This is amply evident in American political systems and lobbying particularly around the Palestine versus Israel conundrum. More recently, in Australia the impact of China’s influence on government has been queried with the nomination and subsequent election of Gladys Liu and her alleged connections to Chinese governmental organisations. (Cadzow, 2020)

The fifth use of the term references Rima Berns-McGown (2008, p.7) as a “space in imagination” and a “form of consciousness”. Returning to the work of King and Melvin for the sixth understanding of the term, diaspora is seen as a form of political and cultural discourse presented by elites in their writings on “ethnicity and nationalism”. Ragazzi (2012) presents his thesis based on a synthesis of the six frames described. He posits that diaspora should be considered as an “essence” considering factors of population, social environment and the acting out of a political persuasion that demonstrates in action the beliefs held from the natal and adopted country. His second approach is to frame diaspora as a process-based event or “practice” with characteristics of social movements, signifiers or political discourse as identifiers. He concludes by emphasising the performative nature, i.e. the applied contexts of diaspora and exhorts careful academic production of knowledge on diaspora given the politics and contexts it “legitimizes”. This legitimisation is expressed as both a right and privilege to be in the diasporic destination. It involves both acculturation and enculturation into the dominant paradigm and mores of the adopted land and occasionally religion.

This is apropos the Zoroastrian community especially in current contexts: political, religious and cultural, where people are ‘re-claiming’ their Zoroastrian faith. Earlier discussions regarding Kurds and Muslim Iranian motives for this declaration are often viewed with deep suspicion by Zoroastrians in the diaspora, perceiving it as a means of gaining permanent residency and ‘improving’ their chances of being able to stay on in the country whether this be the UK, US, Australia, New Zealand or Canada. Foltz (2011, p.81) notes the existence of “special refugee programs (such as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) program in the US, through which they can obtain residency within as little as six months)”. The HIAS program () originally established to help Iranian Jews to migrate now help all minority religions and use the Austria as the gateway to mainly the US. Visa issues are often related to other aspects of integration of migrants particularly refugees into the new host society.

Julie Power (2019) writing in the Sydney Morning Herald refers to the added trauma faced by refugees when their visas are in limbo saying:

A world-first study tracking 1,100 refugees over three years has found that people who come to Australia seeking asylum are nearly two and a half times more likely to think about killing themselves or to believe “they would be better off dead” than those with more secure visas”. Book lover, Engineer, Democrat, Zoroastrian. For these “crimes” against Iran, Mehdi Hamidpour was persecuted and his children thrown out of school.

The study conducted as a partnership between UNSW Sydney (Lead Author A/Prof Angela Nickerson), Australian Red Cross, Settlement Services International (SSI) and Phoenix Australia at the University of Melbourne, the study surveyed more than 1,085 refugees from Arabic, Farsi, Tamil and English-speaking backgrounds who arrived in Australia after January 2001 and obtained either secure (permanent residency or citizenship) to insecure visas (asylum

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Sheringham and Daruwalla (2007) take the notion of hospitality a step further citing the work of Selwyn (2000) who asserts that hospitality is a means of articulating social structures, enabling people to join and leave groups and further the order and disorder inherent in extending and receiving hospitality from individuals or host nations as in the case of diaspora. Viewing ‘nation’ as host, they discuss the transgressive nature of providing ‘hospitality’ to refugees and asylum seekers. They allude to the pseudo-equity and hypocrisy that prevails in the debate on asylum seekers, visa over stayers and the methods of their ‘arrival’ in Australia (boat or by air). Arguments around both morality and economic aspects that impact on ‘diasporic’ communities and their future identities (e.g. Zoroastrian Australian) come into play and have long-term implications for the identity of future generations. This recognition of ‘some’ migrants being of economic benefit and being granted refuge is the argument made by Nanji regarding the original acceptance of Zoroastrians by King Jadi Rana. Nowadays, most Zoroastrians regardless of their country of origin have come as skilled professionals and/or through familial sponsorship. An added complication for Iranian Zoroastrians when they undertake travel back to their country of origin is the suspicion they arouse when coming from countries that are seen as promoting ‘conversion’ and allowing ‘converts’ to be part of Zoroastrian member organisations in the diaspora. This belief that their local Associations (Anjumans like AZA) accept ‘converted’ Muslims as Zoroastrians creates impediments and brings scrutiny to their interests and family still resident in Iran. Conversion from Islam is strictly forbidden by the Republic of Iran and brings sanctions against both convert and converter.

Elizabeth Mavroudi (2007), on the other hand, conceptualises diaspora as “bounded and unbounded” and approaches it from a human geography perspective. Mavroudi contextualises diaspora in terms of boundaries, identity and homeland. The fluidity of ‘boundaries’ is explored in both a literal and metaphorical sense. Mavroudi’s ideas find sympathy with Rima Berns-McGown (2007-8) who calls for new definitions of diaspora based on increasingly porous borders and the mass movements of people away from their traditional homelands. Berns-McGown approaches her study from a Canadian perspective and it is particularly poignant and relevant to the current context in 2019 where the mass migration crisis is sparking new understandings of citizenship and multiculturalism. Mass migration and associated humanitarian issues are prominent across the world’s stage as people flee their homelands, initiating refugee flows from Syria, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, and other places. While more recent Zoroastrian diasporas have not shared this experience of hardship and have often migrated as professionals, the confusion around homeland persists and family reunions are increasingly harder to achieve because of stringent immigration conditions and quotas from countries like India and Iran.

Other writers like William Safran (1991), Martin Sokefeld (2006), Lily Cho (2007), Robin Cohen (1996) and Rogers Brubaker (2005) regard diaspora with a lens on definitional issues. These definitions are often in tandem with behavioural and psychological perspectives of diaspora on both the homeland (natal) and the new land. Earlier, the role of religiosity was examined in relation to diasporic communities and the work of Farver et.al discussed. South Asian diasporas and the literature investigating ethnicity and identity in immigrant women (Durham, 2004 and Raman, 2011), food and identity (Valliantatos and Raine 2008; Highmore 2009; Mintz 2008 and Palat 2015), self-identity (Kirmayer, Rousseau, Jarvis and Guzder 2008) and religion in diaspora (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 2009, Hausner and Garnett 2015 and Boyarin 2015) all play an increasingly pertinent role when considering the Zoroastrian diaspora. Tensions inherent in intergenerational views were beautifully captured in the movie ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’ (2018), a biopic on Freddie Mercury (real name Farrokh Bulsara), of the band Queen whose family came to England from Zanzibar but were originally from Mumbai. Zoroastrians all over the world have a renewed interest in ‘identifying’ as ‘Zoroastrians like Freddie’ and youngsters in the diaspora are oblivious to some of the more homophobic antipathy and the disapproval of Mercury’s parents to his lifestyle choices as he tried to ‘assimilate’ into the culture of the UK. Younger generations born in diasporic communities do not experience the cringe of older first generation migrants when Mercury is referred to as a ‘Paki’ (derogatory term for Pakistanis) but older and first-generation migrants like myself take the generalisation as offensive. This is partly because as a Parsi of Indian extraction, I see India as home, and the partition of India is still a sensitive topic.
Fortier (1998, p.41) makes the following observation:

Concerning the opposition between homeland and host land, Avtar Brah makes a useful distinction between “homing desire” and “desire for the homeland” as a way of capturing the problematic of “home” and “belonging.” Brah introduces this differentiation because, she argues, “not all diasporas sustain an ideology of ‘return’” (p.180).

This generally holds true of most Zoroastrians. ‘Return’ for most Zoroastrians is not in the reckoning and exists in a liminal space where they occupy a position on both boundaries (homeland, or place of origin, and settled land/nation). In discussing the Zoroastrian diaspora, this is a particularly pertinent view, as the question of homeland is problematic and dependent on where the migrant is from. Evident with Parsis from India identifying as Indian, Parsis from Pakistan identifying as Pakistani, Iranian Zoroastrians calling themselves Iranis/Parsis from India/Pakistan and Zoroastrians from Iran claiming Iran as their motherland with little or no connection to the Indian subcontinent. Thus, Brah and Fortier’s ideas of ‘host land’ and the lack of concept of ‘return’ present in other diasporas apply to Zoroastrians regardless of where they are from.

The review of the literature around Zoroastrian diaspora suggests that John Hinnells is the foremost authority. His volumes include The Zoroastrian Religion: Migration and Diaspora (2005) and the edited work The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada and the United States (Coward, Hinnells and Brady Williams, 2000) with an account of Zoroastrian diaspora from data collected from Britain, Canada and the US. Parsis in India and the Diaspora (2008) edited by John Hinnells and Alan Williams is divided into three sections with essays on “The Settlement of Parsis in India”, “Parsis in 19th Century in India” and “Parsis in 20th Century India and in the Diaspora”. The eclectic range of writings include Mitra Sharafi’s chapter ‘Judging conversion to Zoroastrianism: Behind the scenes of the Parsi Panchayat Case (1908)’ reporting on the case of conversion of Suzanne Briere, a Frenchwoman, when she married a Tata scion (RD Tata in 1903). This conversion was challenged in a landmark case Petit v Jijibhai. Etcic and emic perspectives and ‘interests’ are best summed up in Sharafi’s article with Hintze (2009, p.198) commenting that originally both Justices Dinshaw Davar and Frank Beaman:

…were initially in favour of limited conversion. However, Davar first changed his mind and adopted an anti-conversion stance mid-way through the hearings…and then Beaman yielded to him…for Davar dominated Beaman by force of personality, seniority and membership of the Parsi community. The expert witness of the scholar-priest J.J. Modi, whom Justice Beaman was then Beaman yielded to... Derision of “Parsi orthodox solicitor and charismatic orator J.J. Vimadalal” is alluded to in this article. Mistry (2015) elucidates the case was not as much about principles as personalities” (p.171) referring to the forceful ‘emic’ nature of Justice Davar’s perceived superiority to Justice Beaman (a non-Parsi) and the weight given to the opinions of Vimadalal and JJ Modi, whom Justice Beaman was said to “dislike intensely” (Sharafi cited in Zeini, 2010, p. 261). A hundred plus years later (2020) ‘conversion’ is still a hotly debated issue among Parsis. Recently other contested matters in community organisations in the diaspora and India have included the e.g. the very public battle between Ratan Tata and Cyrus Mistry about the management of the Tata group of companies with Neville Wadia weighing in. While not religious matters, these spats are considered to have tarnished the perception of Parsi corporate probity and upstandingness. On the religious front the issue of a ‘pinnacle’ authority on matters of faith and religious practice in the absence of a ‘Pope’ and Stausberg’s suggestion that memes spread through interaction and can include features such as the notion of authority and authorship in the textual domain” (Zeini, 2010, p.261) are extremely pertinent to ‘lived experience’ and matters of religious interpretation and authority. Mistry (2015, p.170) makes this emic insight too, referring to Hinnells work Chapter 6, Changing Perceptions of Authority among Parsis in British India, “He throws light on a neglected area—the importance of Anjuman meetings in framing bundobusts or agreements and their authority to discipline erring priests. Disputes as to who could call these meetings led to a decrease in their authority in the twentieth century. The contemporary Parsi community therefore has no clear concept of authority”. 40
Hinnells and Williams edited text *Parsis in India and the Diaspora* was reviewed by assorted etic (Hintze, 2009) and emic scholars (Mistry, 2015; Vevaina, 2010; Zeini 2010) and sharp differences approach in their perspectives and to some extent the diversity of emic (Choksy, Palsetia, Wadia, Sharafi, Nanji and Dhalia) and etic (Hinnells, Stewart, Stausberg, Williams, Towler Mehta, McLeod) authors who contributed to the volume. Mistry (2015, p. 169) notes the phenomenon of “double diaspora” and makes explicit the differences associated with the word diaspora. Mistry in her opening paragraph highlights that Parsi diasporas especially in modern day contexts have received ‘hospitality rather than hostility’, do not display a return movement to their original homeland ethos and like other South Asian diasporas retain “a collective memory and myth about the homeland and its idealization, a strong ethnic group consciousness, solidarity with co-ethnic members and enriching host societies”. These astute observations can be ascribed to perhaps a greater awareness (Mistry was published in 2015) the other reviews that range from 2009-2010 and a greater emic appreciation of the nature of Parsi diaspora in current times. Mistry concurs with Nanji’s position (Jijina 2019) that “Parsis who arrive at Sanjan were a mercantile group that fled Iran not so much due to religious persecution but due to commercial compulsions”. This view does not get much of an outing even in modern day times validating the anecdote “Why let truth get in the way of a good story?” and Zoroastrians cling to the story of Jade Rana and Sugar in the milk to explain the ‘original’ diaspora (flight?) to India from Persia. (I count myself among those who have and continue to perpetuate the myth).

Other discussions about diaspora and Zoroastrianism occur in Bharucha’s work (1995) exploring the treatment of diaspora in *Parsi literature* and Cohen’s (2007, p.9) references to diaspora, citing the work of Hinnells, related to the *Parsis* of Mumbai. Diasporic communities of Zoroastrians in Australia, emanate from India, Pakistan, and Iran. The work of Mary Boyce, Almut Hintze, , Jenny Rose and Michael Stausberg alongside others represent an etic approach to Zoroastrianism, a more organic emic approach is incorporated in the writing and scholarship of people like Jamsheed Choksy, Rustom Chothia, Ramiyar Karanjia, Firoze Kotwal, Jehan Bagli, Marzban Giara, Bachi Karkaria, Pilloo Nanavutty, Silloo Mehta and K.E. Eduljee among others. These ‘Parsi/Zoroastrian’ authors mostly represent contemporary issues and discourses on theology, practice and the ‘lived experience’. Bachi Karkaria is a well-known journalist and author. Her latest offering *In Hot Blood: The Nanavati Case That Shook India* (2017), details the constitutional crisis that emanated because of Captain Nanavati killing his wife’s paramour, and the reactions of the Indian, and more particularly, the Parsi and Sindhi communities, to the case. The literature and writing of Parsi authors, including Bapsy Sidhwa and Rohinton Mistry, both informs and connects diasporic first generation Parsis to familiar themes and metonymy. Aparna Dharwadker (1998) in her article ‘Diaspora, Nation and the Failure of Home: Two Contemporary Indian Plays’ addresses the displacement of diaspora, ‘mediated’ by complex post-colonial contested nationhood identity and diaspora citing the work of Cyrus Mistry’s play *Doongaji House* (1978). ‘Home’ is identified not so much “as a material structure (a house)” but encompassing ‘emotional space of ancestral memory, family attachments and community bonds” (p.75). The author categorises Cyrus Mistry’s in the context of a familiar trope of Parsi connectedness noting that *Doongaji House* is less about drama and the use of English language and about “the literature of self – representation” (p.79). She draws parallels to Parsi poets like “Keki Daruwalla, Adil Jussawalla and Kersi Katrak, the fiction of Rohinton Mistry (Cyrus’s younger brother) and Bapsi Sidhwa (a Pakistani writer) and the poetry and drama of Gieve Patel. This ‘frozen in time’ approach in literature of diasporic Parsis and Indians more generally represents a very important acknowledgement that while life has moved on for those who ‘remain’, this moving on, similar to the omission phase in travel is missed by the diasporic person who experiences their life overseas as a form analogous to ‘animation’ and is shocked to discover ‘on their return’ (to their homeland) that it is very different from what they remember it to be. This dislocation and discombobulation is even more pronounced in those who go infrequently to their homeland or like TCK rely on their parents memories, to form a picture of what to expect (and are often pleasantly surprised, to see evolution and growth of the natal country themselves). Inflation, access to technological advancements and innovative products are often the most remarked upon facets along with the state of ‘cleanliness’ now or otherwise, especially when travelling to India. Iran on the other hand is a very clean and ordered country with a high level of civic sense evident.

Rohinton Mistry’s *Tales from Firozsha Baug* (1987) and *Family Matters* (2002) bring humour, pathos
and a particularly emic perspective to the fore and as part of the diaspora (Mistry is based in Canada) add a touch of piquancy. Similarly, Bapsy Sidhwa’s *An American Brat* (1993) is redolent with meaning for diasporic Zoroastrians like me, who went to America to study and never ‘returned’ to India/Pakistan/Iran, choosing instead to live overseas. *The Ice Candy Man* (1988) was made into the film *Earth* (1998) and evokes memories for older Zoroastrians caught up in the ructions around Partition (the separation of India and creation of Pakistan as separate countries in 1947) and its aftermath. Many *Parsis* from both Pakistan and India saw their families separated by the division of the subcontinent into two separate nations. The lingering difficulties in obtaining visas for both India and Pakistan born diasporic *Parsis* wishing to visit one place or the other still remains a source of deep angst. These difficulties pose problems for pilgrimage and for programs like ‘Zoroastrian Return to Roots’ that promotes growing awareness of Zoroastrian ancestry and motivates a desire to visit. As Zoroastrian Return to Roots is aimed at 22-35 year old Zoroastrians in the diaspora and mainly visit sites relevant to Zoroastrianism alongside ‘tourist’ places like New Delhi the idea underpinning the program is to experience culture, religion and gain a sense of ‘place’. Participants are usually drawn from the US, Canada, UK, Australia, New Zealand, the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan. Diasporic Zoroastrians from Pakistan face additional barriers having to wait significant amounts of time to get visas and permission to travel in India, as having to report to a police station and being limited to where they can travel. Those diasporic Zoroastrians who may have married and moved to India and got Indian passports often hang on to them even when they move out of India. The reason for this is that for many Pakistanis, the laborious process involved in obtaining a visa to visit India when one’s ‘place of birth’ on the form says ‘Pakistan’ pushes them to seek full citizenship of India so that they may travel freely, own property and so on.

A rich vein of emic perspectives will be drawn from social media sites like:

- Parsee Paanu (https://www.facebook.com/ParseePaanu/)
- Zoroastrian Heritage (https://www.facebook.com/groups/856677201052226/)
- Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Hyderabad and Secunderabad (https://www.facebook.com/ParsiZoroastrianAnjuman/)
- Ancient Zoroastrianism and Comparative Indo-European Studies (https://www.facebook.com/groups/authenticgathazorooastrianism/)
- Indo Pak Iranian Café and Baker (https://www.facebook.com/groups/1392135954447054/)
- Universal Zoroastrianism (https://www.facebook.com/groups/534971139937908/)
- The Laughing Bawa (https://www.facebook.com/groups/337488593064139/) and
- Parsi Irani Proud Zarthustis (PIPZ) (https://www.facebook.com/groups/337488593064139/)

Other sources that are examined include ‘emic perspective’ journals and newspapers dedicated to Zoroastrianism and include:

- Parsiana (https://www.facebook.com/Parsiana-106444976062658/)
- FEZANA (Fedération of Zoroastrians Association of North America) (https://www.facebook.com/fezana1/) and

At a very local level the *Manashni* (newsletter of the Australian Zoroastrian Association of NSW) (https://zoroastrians.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/manashni_august-2018-web.pdf) will be used to provide and corroborate the auto-ethnographical approach to the research.

The most recent publication of the four-volume 2017 works, *The Parsis of India Continuing at the Crossroads* edited by Shalini Bharat and Armaity Desai, provide insight into both Old and New Themes (volume 1); *Marriage, Family and Community* (volume 2); *Indian Parsi Youth Status and Perceptions* (volume 3); and *Living with Dignity for the Parsi Elderly* (volume 4). The large empirical studies using both quantitative and qualitative data mirror in some ways mirror Hinnells works on the Zoroastrian
diaspora. While informative, these volumes are now dated given the rapidity of change and statistics. Pilgrimage, which is the third part of the axis of this thesis, is discussed next. The lack of a dedicated, named, pilgrimage track in Zoroastrianism raises all sorts of opportunities including moving this thesis beyond theory to an actual event. Chapter Four will discuss recommendations for the development of Zoroastrian Pilgrimage to India and Iran.

**Zoroastrian Pilgrimage**

This term is perhaps the most contentious in the context of this thesis. Perhaps this stems from a lack of formal recognition of pilgrimage in Zoroastrian theology. However, Zoroastrians practice pilgrimage in a ritual context. Following milestone events in a Zoroastrian’s life, including *Navjote, Shaadi* (Wedding) or Death, a journey to the High Temple (*Atashbehram*) in Udvada, in the state of Gujarat, forms an important part of the ritual. Definitions of pilgrimage indicate that it is a journey, or search, of high moral significance or religious purpose, but common parlance has reduced to a form of ‘quest’ in the secular world where it is devoid of organised religious purpose. Secular pilgrimage takes various forms, including visits to Graceland, Memphis to view Elvis Presley’s home (Alderman 2002; Campo 1998) and music tourism (Gibson and Connell 2007), thana or dark tourism sites such as Jeju Park in Korea (Kang, Scott, Lee and Ballantyne 2012), contested slavery heritage sites such as Whitney Plantation in New Orleans where history is presented from the perspective of people who were slaves and the tour guides are descendants of the original slaves (Dann and Seaton 2001; Amsden 2015; Westenberg, 2017; Johnson, 2019), tours of Gallipoli and other battle fields (Kenneth Hyde and Serhat Harman 2001; McKenna and Ward 2007; Stone 2012) or sport related events (Norman and Cusack 2012; Gammon 2004; Ramshaw and Hinch 2006).

For the purpose of this thesis, two destinations are defined as pilgrimage sites for the Zoroastrian diaspora, Iran (Yazd and Shiraz specifically) and India (Mumbai, Navsari, Udvada, Sanjan specifically). For Zoroastrian pilgrims, these places are imbued with both religious and secular meaning. Secular reasons for travel include visiting friends and relatives, and when this is the primary focus, pilgrimage becomes a secondary activity. For diasporic Zoroastrians, the lack of dedicated places of worship, and feelings of nostalgia associated with home, are influential in the development of self-constructed pilgrimages. These personal journeys blend the sacred with the profane as the pilgrim visits restaurants redolent with childhood memories, which are offered up as side bar to visiting the *Agiyari/Atashbehram*. Pilgrimage and visitation to *Atashbhrams* and *Agiyaries* in this context are relegated to subsidiary destinations, if employing Neil Leiper’s Systems Model of Tourism, which consist of a Tourist Generating Region (TGR), a Transit Route (TR) and the Tourist Destination Region (TDR). Perhaps, this is directly attributable to the lack of ‘pilgrimage’. In fact anecdotal evidence points to the fact that Zoroastrians are even beginning to think seriously of ‘pilgrimage’ as an experience, is an idea pushed by diasporic Zoroastrians who feel the need to ‘connect’ with the religion and experience the ritual elements when they return to the ‘homeland’. This revival of feeling may be a function of the lack of access to ritual ceremonies (*jashans, humbandagi* and so on) in the diaspora. For families battling to stem the tide of assimilation, these visits are an opportunity to introduce their children to the physical acts of piety and prayer. For many diasporic Zoroastrians who do not wear a *sudreh-kusti* on a daily basis (and as time passes, do not even possess one) these ‘enforced’ visitations can be a traumatic exercise as it is not possible to simply ‘wander’ into an *Agiyari*. The risk of being accosted by someone else who notes your lack of a *sudreh kusti* or not praying and performing the ablutions before entering the sanctum are all barriers and markers of being an ‘outsider’. Diasporic parents of a religious bent often find themselves having to ‘brace’ themselves and their children for these religious devotions unlike in Iran where the *sudreh kusti* is not mandatory and outsiders are allowed access to the *Agiyari/Atashkadeh/Atashbehram*.

The literature on pilgrimage is extensive but there is little evidence of anyone having examined Zoroastrian pilgrimage in a sustained scholarly way. Part of this gap in knowledge comes from the absence of ‘pilgrimage’ as a construct in Zoroastrianism. Pilgrimage, as it is currently experienced by diasporic Zoroastrians, manifests as a form of ‘return to homeland’ or a desire for ‘self-awareness as a Zoroastrian. The multiple ‘leavings’ from Iran and India add complications and a sense of
‘homelessness’ when considering pilgrimage in the Zoroastrian context. Hence, ‘diasporic pilgrimage’ means different things to Parsis, Iranis and Iranian Zoroastrians. The need to factor in variables like age, country of origin (the subcontinent or Iran), and identification with place, are inherent in planning pilgrimage. For example, first generation Parsi children born in Australia see both India and Iran as their homeland. It may even be argued that among Parsis, those born and raised outside of Bombay may be considered ‘diasporic’. This provocative statement is not made lightly, and is based on the political discourse discussed above as part of the definition of diaspora. The Bombay Parsi Punchayet has presented itself and been recognised for many generations as the arbiter of all things pertaining to Parsis in India. Pushbacks against their diktats by local regional associations, and even decrees about who can and cannot visit a fire temple (pilgrimage/worship), have led to tension and alienation. The Parsiana, a community magazine run by Jehangir Patel often carries stories as do other social media sites, which diasporic Parsis seize upon to stridently proclaim their independence and liberality.

Pilgrimage for Zoroastrians is not limited to places of religious significance but include monuments and other attractions such as museums, built by Zoroastrian ancestors. seemingly, secular destinations become important to most diasporic parents taking part in Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) travel as a means of introducing the next generation to a sense of what it means to be Zoroastrian. The practice of philanthropy and altruism as part of the central tenets of living by Humata, Hukata and Hvarshtha (Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds) are impressed upon the children, such as giving their pehrannis (gifts of money at special occasions) to less fortunate Zoroastrians/Indians. Perhaps the most instructive Zoroastrian pilgrimage guide ‘The Global Directory of Zoroastrian Fire Temples’ has been produced by Marzban J.Giara (1999), which was preceded by the ‘Global Directory of Zoroastrian Fire Temples’ (1998). Pictures and short narratives accompany the pictures of the fire temple along with the address of the fire temple or monument. Aspandyar Sohrab Gotla (2013) has compiled the Guide to Zarathushtrian Historical Places in Iran, and Ravi Khetrapal’s (2016) book The Journey of Ahura Mazda’s Children is a welcome pictorial addition to the compendium of ‘travel’ books covering Iran. Khetrapal’s tome is introduced by Shernaz Cama as “telling of a story through poetry and visualisations” (p.2) and is replete with pictures and iconography. Zoroastrian pilgrims display their secular interests often by relying on The Lonely Planet Guide to Iran (2012) as I did in online digital format downloaded on my iPad. Mary Boyce (1977) describes pilgrimage along with other matters of rites, atashes, purity rituals and festivals like Navroze. Robert Rice (1979, p.155) in his review of A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism: Based on the Ratanbai Katrak Lectures 1975 by Mary Boyce, notes that descriptions of pilgrimage fall into the realms of “religion of the shrine” and association with “public occasions, funerary rites and the great festivals of the Zoroastrian New Year’s”.

Growing uses of technology can be transferred to the pilgrimage experience, and authors like Connie Hill-Smith (2011) explore the possibility of pilgrimage undertaken via the Internet. Hill-Smith addresses people’s motivations to undertake such activities, citing the self- mediated aspects of online participation, and questions the authenticity of the experience of such cyber-pilgrimage. Christopher Helland (2007) canvassed the ability for the diaspora to develop virtual connections with sacred homelands, through use of the Internet. This would work well especially with tech savvy TCK and young migrants. Helland’s research concluded that the use of the Internet allowed people to practice rituals and other religiously motivated activities and to develop significant connections. Sabine Kalinock (2006) has investigated the ability to overcome geographical distance with the Internet amongst the Shias of Iran. Her study revealed that the relatively safe and anonymous nature of the Internet brought not only a degree of safety and security, but created a space for both theological questions and those of a more profane nature (such as, ‘where is the closest Shia mosque?’). Kalinock notes that the Internet increases the ability of religious leaders to reach their diasporic flock. The mediating role of the Internet does not merely affect religion, but has implications for nationalism and privacy, while the democratised nature of the Internet increases the dissemination of misinformation. However, the benefits of the Internet could be ample for diasporic communities who might not be able to undertake physical pilgrimage due to political, economic or health barriers. A current WhatsApp message (pers.comm) doing the rounds amongst Parsi friends goes thus:

“An old Parsi Bawa (PB) (colloquial for Parsi man) enters an Agiyari and this is what the scene looks like in today’s times.

The Agiyari is empty, wears a deserted look with no mobed (priest) around, except a lone
Chasniwalla (C) (person who prepares ritual offerings and cleans and maintains the Agiyari).

PB: Kem bawa koi Agyari ma mobed dekhata nahi (Trans: Chasniwalla, there is no priest to be seen in the Agiyari?)

C: Bawaji, tame paper vanchoch ke nahi? (Trans: Do you not read the newspapers these days?) All Mobeds are now moving online.

PB: Online et le? (Trans: Online, meaning/referring to?) Central Railway ke (or) Western Railway?

C: Bawa, now all mobeds have gone through the Empowerment Program and they are now empowered to serve the public without being physically present.

PB: But how is that possible? I want to book a Jashan (name of liturgical ceremony that may be performed either at home or in the fire temple to commemorate any life event) for this month of Dae (name of month in Zoroastrian calendar) and also want to register a Maachi (short prayer of thanksgiving).

C: Then go online and do the booking.

PB: Arre chhor ni tahri vaat (trans: forget about it), just let me know where is this line on which these mobeds are moving? (reference to the two train lines above – Central and Western).

C: Online, means through the Internet. Now India is advancing and going digital and so are our mobeds.

PB: Nakkhrot gayu taru, pun te hu su karu (Go to hell, what should I do?). I don’t know online, offline I just want to book a Jashan and a Maachi.

C: You have to first buy a smart phone and go online yourself, then connect to the mobed.

PB: Arrey marva no vakhat aayo, (My time to die has come now) now the only ‘line’ (referring to the train lines) I can see is the one leading to the Doongerwadi (Towers of Silence where Parsis have sky burial).

C: You are just wasting your time here, this Agiyari and all others in Mumbai have been computerised.

PB: So if there is no mobed, who prays for our ceremonies? Who gives Boi (act of tending the sacred flame with prayers and sandalwood) to our Padshahh (Sacred Flame representative of Ahura Mazda – the King i.e. Padshahh).

C: Bawaji, we have been supplied with a robot who is programmed by GO Mobed group. The robot can also be programmed online.

PB: Robot prays? We Behdins (non priestly class/laypersons) are supposed to sit in front of your robot? Who will give us our chasni (offerings of fruit and other foods that are used in rituals and delivered to families after being prayed over) ?.

C: Te divaso gaya, (trans: those days are gone) when Chasniwallas delivered the chasni to your house on a bicycle. Now even we are going to move online.

PB: Chasniwalla moving online? Who will give us our chasni? Aay su chali rayuch? Badha ganda thai gayache su? (trans: What is going on? Has everyone gone crazy?)

C: We will photograph your chasni – malido (ritual sweet made with wheatgerm and semolina), fruits, bhonu etc. and send the photos to your smartphone.

PB: Send to my smartphone? Then how do I eat the chasni?

C: Eat online. Khali jovanu ne pet bharvanu (you just have to look at and your stomach fills). This is the digital age.

PB: Toba, Toba, su jamano aayo? (trans: God forbid, what times we are facing!) How do I pay for these services?

C: You have to pay online, no cash business.

PB: Khallas aay badhu ganda parnu ayu tena karta sidhu Doongerwadi javu parse. (trans: With all this madness, it is all over, better I die than go through this madness).

C: Bawaji, now even the Khandias (Corpse bearers who carry the metal bier, to the amphitheatre style resting place) will be moving online and have a Khandia empowerment program.
PB: Etle tya Khandia pun nahi malase? (Do you mean that there will be no corpse bearers in the Doogerdadi?)

C: No, if anyone expires, you have to book the bunglee (equivalent to a chapel) online. The Khandias will send you instructions online, then you pack the body and courier it online. Then once it arrives at Doogerdadi you will be notified online. You pay your last respects and dues online and then the Khandias will transport the body to the Dakhma in their newly acquired buggy!

PB: Is the Bombay Parsi Punchayet also moving online?

C: Arrey, they moved online long ago. That is why they now abuse and fight each other online now.

PB: Su thasse Parsi o nu? (What will happen to Parsis?) I am now going offline…

NB: Khandias are considered ‘impure’ and while Zoroastrians do not have a ‘caste system’ as such Khandias and Chasniwallas are usually represented by lower economic Zoroastrians. Cyrus Mistry’s (2012) book Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer, is profoundly moving. It tells the story of priest’s son falling in love and marrying the daughter of a Khandia. It brings into stark relief the snobbery, hereditary and pervasive falseness of ‘equitability’ among Zoroastrians, proving conclusively that the class system is well and truly alive. In the diaspora and other places where there is no dakhma the body is not only placed in a casket but also carried by members of the family, as there are no Khandias.

This long and somewhat chilling exchange particularly resonated with me as it was shared amongst a group of diasporic friends, including one who lost her daughter in the US and another friend, her mother. It points to a future where technology will be used to conduct the business of religion and rituals (including death) as resources; adherents and physical structures (Agiyaris) become depleted and diminish. The Mobed Empowerment (EM) Program referred to is a scheme that the Athornan Mandal, WZO Trust Funds Mobed Welfare Scheme will provide workshops aimed at developing “leadership and counselling skills among priests” (Parsiana, 7 April 2018). The scheme arose because of the disrepair and inability to provide full time priests in all Agiyaris with the lack of younger people choosing to become full time mobeds (priests). The Editorial of the Parsiana (7 June 2019) noted, “EM imparts and reinforces modern day skills and training to the existing and aspiring mobeds. To be trained in counselling techniques and technology usage, the priests would be better equipped to interact with the laity. Funding from local, national and international organizations will enhance the remuneration mobeds receive”. However, there is already dissent in the community with hard-line conservatives questioning the content of workshops and the ‘authority’ to allow mobeds to make decisions (especially around converts and acceptance of children of Parsi mothers and non-Parsi fathers into the community). From a diasporic point of view, however, the business model for the introduction of virtual technologies is sound and has the potential for benefitting both priests and Agiyaris in India through diasporic support, funding and collaborating with Agiyaris in the sub-continent (primarily India and Pakistan). The flow of diasporic funds would benefit the Agiyari and pay for its maintenance as well as the mobeds and chasniwallas and in turn, diasporic Zoroastrians could meet their religious obligations and maintain traditional customs and rituals. With the ease of access to internet technologies like Skype, it would have an interactive element in addition to flexibility with different time zones. The uses of this would be particularly beneficial around death ceremonies beyond the immediate funeral (paidash) and would allow for other (uthamna, sarosh nu patru, varsi etc.) death rituals to be offered.

This use of the Internet and ‘second hand’ pilgrimage is an increasingly popular option for diasporic Zoroastrians who have been scared off travelling to Iran because of the strident American rhetoric against Iran. The intense scrutiny and travel warnings issued by the US and its allies are a major disincentive for diasporic Zoroastrians who express the desire to ‘see Iran’ but do not want to take the risk of actual travel to Iran. Although few in number worldwide, Zoroastrians are actively seeking to preserve and maintain their cultural, religious and ethnic identity. Of late, these efforts include the development of tours to Iran and India focused on Zoroastrian culture by Zoroastrian tour companies. Conferences like the World Zoroastrian Congress held every four years, the Zoroastrian Youth Congress every four years, the annual ‘Return to Roots’ event, the annual World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce meetings and other ‘Utsavs’ and gatherings the commemorate special occasions and milestones are all examples of Zoroastrian efforts to experience Turner’s (1973) idea of “normative communitas”:

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…where under the influence of time, the need to mobilize and organize resources to keep the members of a group alive and thriving and necessity for social control among those members in pursuance of these and other collective goals, the original existential communitas is organised into a perduring social system (this is never quite the same as a structured group whose original raison d’être was a utilitarian one for normative communitas began with a nonutilitarian experience of brotherhood and fellowship the form of which the resulting group tried to preserve, in and by its religious and ethical codes and legal political statutes and regulations).

While the discussion above has focused on pilgrimage and its inherent characteristic of religiosity, a wider trend is the growth in what Norman (2011) terms “spiritual tourism”. An important distinction between religion and spirituality is the ability of spirituality to be applied to secular as well as religious contexts. Norman’s own travels to India, and on the Camino de Santiago walk, remain firmly in the realm of spiritual tourism, unlike this thesis, which lies in the realm of pilgrimage, given its anchor in Zoroastrian religion and practice and the liberal application and its conjunctions with Zoroastrian faith principles. Additionally, Zoroastrian pilgrimage cannot (is not) be undertaken by anyone other than a Zoroastrian, simply by virtue of it being tied so closely to a distinct religion. Further, Zoroastrian pilgrimage is distinguished by other features of the religion including that of being a religion of descent and individual (non-congregational).

In conclusion, it would appear that all three key phrases Zoroastrianism, Diaspora and Pilgrimage are multilayered and multi definitional. Some may consider this problematic, but I see it as an opportunity to personalise and reflect deeply on the experiences of being a diasporic Zoroastrian who undertook pilgrimage. The added dimension of ‘individual interpretation’ of both pilgrimage and its consequent impacts add to the uniqueness of Zoroastrian pilgrimage praxis and construct, given its non-mandated, non-obligated and voluntary character (Turner, 1973). Additionally, ZDP:ASV provides a forum to contribute to knowledge in a substantiative way, translating and applying information from three discrete areas of study but framed through a particularly subjective lens.
CHAPTER TWO

Research Design and Methodology

Statement of Argument:
This chapter elucidates the application of models and constructs to interrogate the data. Primary data was collected using a qualitative paradigm employing auto-ethnography (AE) and Participatory Action Research (PAR). Primary data was gathered through PAR and maintaining a journal (AE) focused on my 2015 pilgrimage to Iran. The primary construct for explaining the data was based on Jafar Jafari’s (1987) Tourist Model encompassing six stages but focused on the phase of Animation. Animation in this springboard model describes the behaviours of tourists but was equally applicable to my experience of Zoroastrian pilgrimage (tourism). However, other important experiences post pilgrimage of PAR in events that while mainly secular in nature took on overtones of pilgrimage are described and inform my conclusions in Chapter Four. Additionally other constructs were drawn from hospitality, tourism, and organisational learning. A source of auto-ethnographic insight was drawn from my experience as President of the Australian Zoroastrian Association (AZA) of NSW and that of being a Sunday School teacher for eleven to fourteen year old young Zoroastrians over a period of several years. Pilgrimage played an instrumental role in my decision to take on the role of President as a direct consequence of the ‘re-education and rejuvenation’ of being Zoroastrian through pilgrimage. Following my pilgrimage, my attitudes towards participation in community matters were changed and went from passive participation (despite the Sunday School teaching) to active involvement in the Management Committee of the AZA of NSW. Participation in various Zoroastrian/Parsi events and forums were part of this ‘re-education’ including attendance at the Everlasting Flame Conference 2016, and participation in the exhibition Tales from the East: India and New South Wales 2018.

As previously outlined, this thesis will explore the nexus between Zoroastrianism, Diaspora and Pilgrimage (ZDP) through a deep consideration of these terms, gaining valuable insights through the ‘action’ of pilgrimage and auto-ethnographic reflection. This study, through its auto-ethnographic fieldwork, fills a gap in knowledge and literature by becoming a pilot that may be referred to by others of the diaspora who seek to enhance their identity as Zoroastrians. The findings of this research are tailored to provide useful guidance to the young second-generation migrants born in the diaspora. My research findings will allow tour planners to consider product development for the Zoroastrian tourism and pilgrimage, which is currently in a nascent stage of development. Further, this thesis will add to the ‘voice of the Zoroastrian diaspora’, already well established in the US, Canada and the UK but still in its infancy in Australia and New Zealand. Finally, the research skills gained through this research...
project are to be used in ‘applied contexts’ including publications and dissemination of information through various Zoroastrians events.

**Qualitative versus Quantitative: Justifying the Methodology**

This is my second PhD thesis (Darwalla 1999, *Attitudes, Disability and the Hospitality and Tourism Industry*). My first PhD was part of the ‘business’ of setting myself in an academic career, and happened fortuitously for me in a topic area i.e. People with a Disability (PWD) and their treatment in the Hospitality and Tourism industry that I had already started researching during my Honours and Masters degrees. The Sydney Olympics and Paralympics were going to be held in 2000 and there was a gap in knowledge about PWD and service provision. My interests in training staff and volunteers, educational, attitudinal and awareness aspects in Hospitality and Tourism all combined to interrogate the best way to bring about these attitudinal changes toward PWD. The research found that changes toward PWD persisted if they had contact with a PWD who was a peer and that societal attitudes were easier to change than personal attitudes toward PWD. I have subsequently used my research not only in teaching but also to complement my role as a Disability Coordinator and advocacy for students (and staff) with a disability and provide training to H&T organisations along with colleagues. (Professor Simon Darcy, UTS and Mr. Bruce Cameron, Principal of Easy Access Australia).

I embarked on this second thesis as a project of ‘love’ and as a means of enhancing knowledge on Zoroastrianism and pilgrimage in the diasporic context. Having successfully completed a PhD in 1999, I assumed that I would ‘know’ what my research methodology and design would encompass. I was better prepared for ‘bumps’ in data collection and had contingency plans. However, the biggest obstacle to choosing a research approach was my own prejudice regarding qualitative versus quantitative paradigms. The temptation to stay with the tried and tested mixed methods approach incorporating quantitative/empirical data was overwhelming at the design stages of the thesis. This was amply manifest when I presented my grand vision for the first time to my peers in the Department of Studies of Religion at the University of Sydney. I felt like I was speaking a different language when I started talking about “surveys and ethics clearance”. I doggedly persisted, completing a National Ethics Application Form (NEAF) application detailing the mixed methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and interrogate the data. The intention was to start with a large-scale survey of Zoroastrian Associations in the diaspora (particularly from the US and Australia), to be followed by a qualitative ‘interview’ approach with people who had been on pilgrimage to Iran (or India). This data was to be supplemented by an auto-ethnographic personal pilgrimage to Iran.

My ‘best laid plans’ came to naught and after preliminary research and being introduced to qualitative methods, most notably through Alex Norman’s (2011; 2013) work on spiritual tourism, and several other tourism ‘accounts’ from authors like Vukonic (1996), Razaq and Morpeth (2007), and Swatos (2006). I soon realised that a quantitative study was not the best fit for what was effectively a deeply personal and rather esoteric area of study. The added complications of insider/outsider paradigms (Headland, 1990), and Kurt Lewin’s work on reflexive praxis were additional imperatives that propelled me out of my comfort zone of mixed methodology. My experiences during pilgrimage and subsequent activities and opportunities post pilgrimage to Iran opened up vistas and perceptions that I had not previously considered. I began to see elements of Zoroastrianism, diasporic viewpoints and pilgrimage facets in my profane life. The use of auto-ethnographic, PAR and reflexive praxis to routine life and work increased my desire for depth rather than width in my academic and ‘lived experience’ repertoire.
The deeply personal approach meant ‘primary data collection’ came from journaling and my own experiences and had a level of authenticity that I felt I could vouch for and was not obfuscated by political correctness or social desirability bias. Aspects of trust (in committing them to paper to be read by others) and the problems of recall and critical interpretation however, proved a much greater challenge than I had expected.

Quantitative/positivist scholars have always viewed qualitative research methods with a degree of scepticism. Issues of reliability, generalisability and validity are commonly cited as reasons for the mistrust of qualitative research methods. However, with the increase in computing power and the increased interest in ‘human’ behaviour, the qualitative method is being increasingly recognised as a valid means to interrogate ideas. Additionally, this practice is well established in Arts and Humanities disciplines, lending credence to their robustness in being able to describe social phenomena and ‘lived conditions’. These ‘qualitative’ methods are the ‘disruptors’ that challenge common long held tropes of how research, objectivity and presentation of materials must be ordered. Michael Fischer (1977, p.294) reviewing Mary Boyce’s ‘A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism’ in *Iranian Studies* (vol.10, no.4) sums up this credo saying:

> The Orientalist who temporarily abandoned the dusty bookshelves to do some intensive fieldwork, how would her ethnography differ from that of an anthropologist? Might the differences illuminate and encourage a fruitful and complementary exchange between anthropology and the history of religions?

He was referring specifically to Boyce’s 12-month stay (1963-1964) in Sharifabad-e-Yazd, a traditional Zoroastrian village. He goes on to praise and recommend the book for it is “warm, lively, rich in detail and an ode of both thanks and respect to Boyce’s informants …”. He highlighted the importance of using informants “who know enough about their own culture to serve as teacher and guide for systematically curious outsiders, thus addressing the emic/etic (insider/outsider) perspective that informs this research and its presentation.”. Mary Boyce’s own ground-breaking work came from her field studies in Kerman, Yazd and Sharifabad and to a large extent has paved the way for future researchers including people like Rukshana Nanji and myself to ‘question’ what have been long held ‘beliefs’ about Zoroastrian aspects of ‘lived experience’. 

While anthropological, historical and religious documentation have always used qualitative methods to examine and document their work Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (1995, p.354) provide a compelling argument why qualitative research methods may be considered “a revolution”. They refer to the trans-counter and interdisciplinary nature of qualitative research, contrasting it with the “Empiricist American Tradition”. They allude to the “post-colonial world” we live in and the need to recognise ethnography as a commodity in the “electronic world economy”. A qualitative approach allows people to be represented as they see themselves, challenging ethnographic accounts written by outsiders. The acknowledgement of “multiple truths” and the need to acknowledge the role of the participant as an integral facet in studying the social world are all implicated in the qualitative approach.

David Snow and Calvin Morrill (1995, p.359) acknowledge the work of Denzin and Lincoln’s *Handbook of Qualitative Research* in clarifying qualitative field research techniques and the “philosophical premises” that underlie qualitative research. However, they take issue with a number of these premises including the “uneasy potentially contradictory duality” of a single perspective approach. They take umbrage with the use of the word “colonized” as being antithetical to good research, and see this as an example of “shrill identity politics rather than constructive dialogue over multiple methods and perspectives”. Their second criticism is related to the requirement of qualitative
research to use “thick description” from the local perspective while Denzin and Lincoln exhort the need to “think beyond the nation or the local group as the focus of inquiry”. The lack of pragmatic application in the ethnographic research method receives criticism for not being clear enough and simply focussing on conceptual ideas, hence my decision to pair it with PAR in the field work component. Snow and Morrill assert that the role of observation cannot be privileged over discourse in qualitative methods. They go on to say that “messy texts”, co-constructed and self-reported narratives all flow out from the informant’s feelings and perceptions, representing the “context” in which they are situated. They predict the death knell of “ethnography as an empirically grounded enterprise” based on Denzin and Lincoln’s ideas around “boundary crossing” by “ethnographer-turned-performer”. Perhaps their prejudices would have been mitigated by reading Turner (1973) and Ronald Grimes (2000, p.266) expositions on “ethno-drama or performing ethnography” as examples of “liminoid ritualizing” especially in the practice of ritual and pilgrimage. In my pilgrimage to Iran, the tour I went on was limited to practising Zoroastrians and additional ‘boundaries’ were in place, such as purity laws that had to be observed.

Authoritative tourism scholars like Anthony J. Veal (1997, 2005) and Gayle Jennings (2001) have distinguished between the characteristics of qualitative and quantitative research. Jennings (2001, p.132) provides a comprehensive table distinguishing qualitative and quantitative research referring to the following facets that are useful to consider here:

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<th>QUALITATIVE</th>
<th>QUANTITATIVE</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research Approach</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Ontological view</strong></td>
<td>Multiple realities</td>
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<td><strong>Nature of truth</strong></td>
<td>Grounded in the real world</td>
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<td><strong>Epistemological view</strong></td>
<td>Subjective</td>
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<td><strong>Researcher Situatedness</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Research design</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Representation of data</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Themes, motifs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Representation of Findings</strong></td>
<td>Narrative</td>
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<td><strong>Voice of the Researcher</strong></td>
<td>First person, active</td>
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<td><strong>Reflection of the real world</strong></td>
<td>Slice of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semantic/Paradigmatic</strong></td>
<td>Holistic/Inductive (p.129)</td>
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Figure 2.1: Jennings, Gayle. (2001, p. 129-132)

To these features might be added issues of generalisability, reliability and validity and most importantly methods of data collection. Veal (2005, p.29) elaborates on “Paradigmatic issues and Data Issues” classifying the features as positivist-critical/interpretive, quantitative/qualitative, induction/deduction, experimental/non-experimental. In referring to data issues the differences are presented as primary/secondary (that is, whether the researcher is the primary user of the collected data or whether the researcher uses data collected by others for non-research purposes). The second distinction in data approaches concerns self-reported or observed information, referring to the nature of self-reported data provided by subjects (through questionnaires, interviews and so on) versus observation of the subject’s
behaviours and patterns. Implicit in this form of collection is the dichotomy between what is reported and what is real, that is, the cognitive versus affective domains. This is particularly true of data that is concerned with sensitive material or self-disclosure, extending to politically correct and controversial viewpoints.

Veal (1997, p.67) introduces the range of research methods employed, arguing that different techniques can suit different purposes. He addresses issues of dominant paradigms (including the American empiricist-quantitative research method outlined above) emphasising that the idea that techniques should be applied based on their “appropriateness” rather than making unilateral judgements about whether a technique is “good or bad”. As will be discussed below, PAR and auto-ethnography are the primary methodological tools used in this thesis for the investigation of Zoroastrian pilgrimage based on their ‘fit for purpose’ and ‘appropriateness to context’.

Auto-ethnography (AE) and Participatory Action Research (PAR)

AE is described as a form of qualitative research that uses personal experience, self-reflection and anecdotal events which may be then ascribed to draw conclusions, meanings or understanding of phenomenon/phomena existing in wider dimensions. It challenges ‘canonical’ ways of researching and involves both process and product treating “research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act” (Adams and Holman Jones, 2008). AE has the ability to extend sociological understandings about personal issues through the act of sharing and articulating both experience and reflections on actions. Some principal writers in the field of auto-ethnography who influenced my views on using this as a method are Carolyn Ellis, Tony Adams and Arthur P. Bochner (2011, p.273) and Leon Anderson (2006). The following scholars are informed by auto-ethnographic approach to data collection: Duncan (2004), Filipovic (2015a and 2015b), Heewon Chang (2015), Holmes and O’Neill (2010), Holt (2003), Andrew Sparkes (2010), Tami Spry (2001) and Wall (2006, 2008). Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) define auto-ethnography as an approach that challenges “canonical ways of doing research” and seek to combine an understanding of culture through the analysis of personal experiences. They believe auto-ethnography is a socially just research process and product. On a personal level, I was struck by Mary Boyce’s approach to Zoroastrian studies, notably her yearlong (1963-64) fieldwork in Kerman, Yazd and Sharifabad. Albert de Jong (2006) wrote:

Her observations and learnings, departed from the approaches that were current thus far in a number of important ways. The most obvious change was her awareness that the Western academic study of Zoroastrianism had made a critical mistake in believing that Zoroastrianism could be understood only based on its literature and that this literature should be studied with the well-established instruments of philology only. (de Jong, 2006)

The Ratanbai Katrak Lectures in Oxford (1975) at which she presented her convictions were received to great acclaim and continue to influence the treatment of Zoroastrian studies to this day. Given the ‘personal’ nature of AE and PAR I felt a kinship with Mary Boyce by virtue of the fact that she was born in Darjeeling, India where I went to boarding school and have familial connections. Visiting Sharifabad and her observations about the treatment of dogs were additional touch points in the AE journey of this piece of research. I took solace and courage about AE from JR Russell’s review of A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism: Based on the Ratanbai Katrak Lectures, 1975 by Mary Boyce noting his commentary on her writing style:

Although anthropologists might deplore her failure to adopt their theoretical structures and stance of detachment, Boyce employs methods perhaps more directly useful to Iranists,
analysing her abundant data on the basis of the Avestan scriptures and Pahlavi books themselves. She demonstrates thereby how the orthopraxy of the Sharifabadis maintains faithfully the dualist doctrines of Zarathushtra, even where book learning is non-existent. Her writing is also pleasantly free of the deadening jargon that one finds in ethnographical works: it has more of Lady Drower than of Malinowski.

Anderson (2006, p.373) refers to auto-ethnography as being both “evocative” and “analytic”. For Anderson, auto-ethnography involves 5 aspects: “(1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher’s self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis.” (p. 378). Carolyn Ellis (1999, p.669) refers to “heartful ethnography” in her article based on a conversation she had with a student researching breast cancer. Ellis commences her paper saying that ethnography should take into account “selves, emotions, bodies and spirits”. Like Anderson (2006), she circles back to the concept of evocative stories based on real-life experience. She refers to the value of “meaning” the “moral, ethical and political consequences” implicit in auto-ethnographic research, encouraging researchers to apply compassion, empathy and action to both the self and the wider community. The idea of action and co-operation is both explicit and implicit in the paradigm of PAR. Ngyuen Cao Thanh and Tran Thi Le Thanh (2015) note that participatory research is inherently subjective and holistic, allowing the acceptance of multiple perspectives. Further to this, it is open to emergent data and change. Valuing subjectivity heightens the emic nature of the research and the lens through which data is analysed.

Jelena Filipovic (2015a, p.3) in her studies on linguistics through the QUALIROM (Quality Education in Romani for Europe) poignantly asks “Was I supposed to ‘just do my job’, write a policy paper, propose certain measures based on the cutting edge academic linguistic research, present examples of good practices from other countries and then move on to the next project?” She was troubled by questions about action and the application of higher education and social mobility for Serbians and “the most marginalized minority of them all, the Roma” who were stereotyped and suffered bias based on their ethnicity. It was a light bulb moment for me when I read about Filipovic’s feeling that she was “developing a guilty conscience” which heralded her move from academic cogitation to action, “adding a personal voice to her research”. Ellis and Bochner (2006) echo the importance of a “personal voice” in their discussions as they sat mesmerised by images of Hurricane Katrina and Ellis commented on her inability to concentrate on providing a response to Anderson’s article. She reflected, “It’s so hard to get into that frame of mind right now with all that’s going on in the world. I don’t think any of the people in New Orleans are worrying about deadlines for journal articles” (p.430). These comments resonated strongly with me as I felt a strong sense of apathy and ennui (Dann, 1977) associated with my academic position as a “detached spectator”. I agreed with the sentiment that ethnographers have to move beyond “word games” and “appropriating lived experiences” to a “realist auto-ethnography” (p.432). I realised that “distanced theorizing” would only allow me to scratch the surface of Zoroastrian pilgrimage in a diasporic context. In order to get to the significant part, I need to embrace the “intimate” and become engaged in “embodied participation”. PAR was the key to unlocking this conundrum and it had to be ‘actioned’ not simply by self-service (through research) but by service to community (through my involvement in Sunday School, the Zoroastrian Management Committee and other leadership roles) and undertaking pilgrimage. Victor Turner (1986) referred to this approach as ‘Co-Activity and Co-Performance’, highlighting the need to use a conversational style of communication if content is to be made accessible to a wider population (such as the Zoroastrian youth, who are stewards of the future).

McTaggart (1994) describes PAR as being a combination of Action Research and Participatory Research referring to the “distinctive conceptual, moral and practical agenda” that underpins such study. The work of Lewin (1946, 1952) describing the cycle of planning, acting, observing and critically
evaluating is relevant to PAR, where action research is framed as a series of “commitments to observe and problematize through practice the principles for conducting social enquiry” (p.315). The role of reflection in the process of PAR becomes integral to the robustness of the discussion and findings. Taggart, however, believes that PAR is incorrectly ascribed to Lewin saying that action research is actually based much more in community activism rather than social psychology. Further, self-reflective inquiry in action research is done with a view to improvement of both self and collectives.

Kathryn Herr and Gary L. Anderson (2012) observe a marked growth in action research dissertations, attributing this to the growing recognition of qualitative research. They acknowledge the researcher as part of the “organization”, noting that qualitative research is “inherently interdisciplinary” because it must grapple with findings that do not fit into a single discipline or field of study. The study of ZDP:ASV provides a perfect example of such intersections (see Venn diagram, Figure 1.1, Chapter 1). However, institutional imperatives sometimes “Co-opt and Corrupt” (Taggart, 1994) action research through the process of requiring rigid processes (including Ethics Applications) stymying organic approaches. While Ethics Applications definitely have a role to play in legitimising research and to ensure safety and accountability, bureaucratic forms do not always satisfy the needs of PAR. McTaggart (1994, pp.330-331) provides examples of PAR in An Australian Experience, describing the collaboration between Batchelor College lecturer Leon White and the Aboriginal people of Yirrakala in Northeast Arnhem land. He says PAR operates in a context where collective responsibility towards community development is recognised where the participants have both ownership and control over the practice and reflection aspects of the work. A PAR approach acknowledges the role of negotiation in research, recognises both learning and leadership as aspects to be passed on to others, values the reality of cultural heritage, comprehends the significance of reciprocity, establishes common objectives, and builds confidence in the self through participation and peer observation. Ethics applications in Australia ask pointed questions about the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as part of the respondent sample. If the researcher marks ‘yes’, there are additional and convoluted processes that need to be met before the research can be approved. In the case of fieldwork, this is magnified and can often be a disincentive to the researcher as it inevitably limits the scope of their study. The recent case of author Bruce Pascoe “falsey claiming to be Indigenous” by “Aboriginal businesswoman Josephine Cashman” (Morton, 2020) was a lightning rod in Australian literary circles and more generally questions about identity and affiliation. They are a commentary on perceived cultural appropriation and insider/outsider perspectives. Ms Cashman has been calling for a “registry of Aboriginality”. Her complaint was not upheld and Mr. Pascoe who “identifies as of Tasmanian descent and Yuin by cultural law” was referred to as “collateral damage in a fight against the facts of Aboriginal history” in a tweet by “Indigenous academic Marcia Langton”.

While these observations in no way intend to diminish the role of Ethics Committees or their scope, the point I make is that bureaucratic and legalese zeal and coverage override ‘common sense’ approaches and tend to ignore ‘emic’ perspectives at tertiary institutions. Doctoral students, even with low risk projects are driven spare with demands for more and more information that seem to serve no other purpose than fulfilling a checklist for managerial processes. Quite often, this is inimical to ‘deep research’ and can be a barrier to both authenticity and organic development of qualitative insights.

The political engagement inherent in PAR is explicit in both Filipovic (2015a, 2015b) and McTaggart’s (1994) work. Caitlin Cahill (2007) adds to this in utilising PAR as a means of overturning traditional research methods in “Makes Me Mad: Stereotypes of Young Urban Womyn of Colour” that she developed with six other participants. The method involved the use of a sticker campaign to investigate and change attitudes towards young women growing up in a “gentrifying/disinvested neighbourhood” (p.327). Parallels to this are inherent in the research ZDP:ASV, where generational disparities in
perspective are magnified as the younger generations of Zoroastrians hold very different attitudes toward the ‘preservation’ of property – a major preoccupation of first generation diasporic Zoroastrians. This ‘disinvestment’ extends to the minimal usage of the property with the youth preferring to hold their functions and get togethers at other venues. This ‘disinvestment’ might be attributed to the complacency of TCK who will simply inherit the property and assets (similar to their personal lives) and have not experienced the hardships of actually raising funds for the building or even maintenance of the property. The use of research tools like “journaling, mental maps, behaviour mapping, a guided tour of places of significance in the neighbourhood, a social map of roles identifying the responsibilities associated with the expectations of everyday life and daily focus groups/brainstorming sessions” resulted in various outcomes. These outcomes were measured and revealed improved understandings of the neighbourhood including pricing of real estate, and the personal transformations of the participants who developed the ability to theorise and produce proposals for change. This praxis moved them from “individual understandings to social and then in turn political interpretations” (Cahill, 2007, p.329).

PAR literature including first-person accounts are abundant in both scholarly and popular media. Additionally with the ease of access to recording devices, the growth in blogs, vlogs and social media has exploded, allowing everybody to become an author should they so choose. It is worthwhile to note that these more popular media forms are ‘engaged’ with by all demographics much more than ‘scholarly treatises’ (PhDs especially). Anecdotal evidence garnered from over 30 years of teaching and academia have further concretised my belief that (even) students are increasingly less likely to engage in readings that are not ‘on the exam’. Exacerbating this trend is the movement away from libraries with books to digital resources and the situating of campuses in vertical high rise Central Business District (CBD) venues rather than ‘campuses’ with physical space. Replacing the Library with ‘i-Hubs’ is a trend that even schools in Sydney have started adopting. As Jordan Baker (2020) noted about a new state of the art school in Sydney; “It has 17 storeys, science labs with panoramic views and abseiling window cleaners. However, Sydney's new, $225 million high-rise high school has no library. Rather than dedicating a room to the school's books and research resources in the form of a traditional library, the new Arthur Phillip High School in Parramatta which opened this week, will have so-called iHubs for each year level on different floors”.

In tourism studies, PAR methods have been utilised in ecotourism to gain insights that might otherwise be missed. These include both positive and negative community views of ecotourism and conservation at the local level (Stronza and Gordillo 2008), and the experiences eco-tourists, employees and locals in Amozanas, Brazil and their contribution to conservation and community development (Wallace and Pierce 1996). Claire Ellis (2003) tackles the thorny issue of “voluntourism” where tourists undertake a “volunteer vacation or conservation holiday” (p.45) where participants pay to work and conduct environmental or educational research, and in some instances, teaching. The Channel 4 production Millionaire’s Mission (2007) represented a similar situation where a group of rich British entrepreneurs were challenged by World Vision to spend 3 weeks in a remote village in Uganda close to the Rwandan border and come up with a plan to spend £120,000 with the aim of effecting change and making the village economy more sustainable (Mangan 2007). Some just want to throw money at the problem while others were more interested in long-term self-determination, self-sufficiency and sustainability of the village and community. These differing approaches lead to serious conflict among the participants and are comparable to issues faced by Zoroastrian organisations where generational, origin of homeland and socio economic status dictate views about the future of the organisation and long term sustainability of the local Zoroastrian association.

Dallen J. Timothy (1999) injects a note of realism examining the effects of trying to overlay Western notions of PAR in developing country destinations like Indonesia and reinforces the constraints
emanating from sociocultural and economic conditions on participation by locals. This touches on another important aspect of PAR and the emic/etic perspectives that underlay such methods. Cevat Tosun (1999) succinctly sums up these conundrums especially around democracy and their absence in particular destinations, inhibiting the ability to harness PAR as a method. This observation is particularly prevalent in Iran and among Iranian Zoroastrians where democracy is an alien concept. His suggested typologies of pseudo-community participation, passive community participation and spontaneous community participation lend themselves to being used to interrogate issues related to diasporic Zoroastrians and the sustainability of the Zoroastrian religion in the diaspora.

Tazim B. Jamal’s (2004) excellent paper, ‘Virtue Ethics and Sustainable Tourism Pedagogy: Phronesis, Principles and Practice’ referencing the work of John Tribe’s (2002) ‘Education for Ethical Tourism Action’ is particularly relevant to this study ZDP:ASV. While it is specific to sustainable tourism practices, it actually exhorts the need to address “phronesis (practical wisdom) for living a good life…issues of theoretical or scientific knowledge (episteme) and skill development (techne)” (p.530). When Jamal’s work is read in conjunction with Tribe’s other works, notably ‘The Philosophic Practitioner’ (Tribe, 2002), the notion of “stewardship of the future” applies to Zoroastrian youth and the need to inculcate this future focus as a means of the continuation of the Zoroastrian community, albeit in a much altered way. Writing with Shuang Xin and Donna Chambers, Tribe’s (2013) call for understanding the need for “Conceptual Research in Tourism” and moving beyond the qualitative/quantitative binary are important to the context of this research. They endorse the relativist outcomes and multiple mental constructions dependant on the person who created them in conceptual research, ideas which dovetail with ethnography and auto-ethnography. They address questions of quality such as “soft falsification or concept scepticism” and insist that rhetoric be present while paying due attention to “structure, logic and plausibility of the argument presented” (p.71). As Bowen and Sparks (1998) assert, conceptual research is exactly the opposite of empirical research. The authors (Xin, Tribe and Chambers, 2013) are careful to distinguish that not all-conceptual research is non-empirical, using the example of historical research (a well-established approach in the current literature on Zoroastrianism including Boyce 1984, 2001; Stewart 2012, 2013; and Williams, Stewart and Hintze 2016).

The literature in journals like Action Research and Narrative Inquiry contain several accounts of first person auto-ethnography, covering a diverse range of topics. Areas that are particularly suitable to first person accounts include teaching, therapy, nursing, palliative care, and travel related topics such as pilgrimage, spiritual tourism, cruise tourism, dark tourism, battlefield tourism, educational tourism, poverty alleviation tourism and other personally meaningful travel (in contrast to empirical positivist studies focussed around the business of travel). While the writing on the ‘business’ of travel is very significant to the hospitality and tourism industry it is simply a corollary to the main themes of spiritual and religious travel, which is the substance of this work.

Laurel Richardson’s (2013) work has particular resonance with this study and the motives for adopting auto-ethnography as a research method. Richardson chronicles two specific days in her life with two very different therapeutic approaches (“enhanced meditation” and a writing group) hoping to address her sense of ennui. Her reflection “how often during difficult family times I had used my professorial knowledge to distance me from personal pain, how glad I was that I could ‘compartmentalize’ home and work” (p.24) touched a nerve for me. I realised that my motives for attempting a second PhD were complicated and that challenging myself to use auto-ethnography meant having to share information that I did not necessarily want to. I recognised questions like “In whose interest? Valuable for whom?” and “therapy did not concern me: survival of the human species did” (p.25), leading to the conclusion:

No more data collection through interviews for me, though, and no more writing about others’ lives: I became an auto-ethnographer. To do auto-ethnography is to be a witness to one’s self. Writing auto-
Richardson’s (2013 and 1999) work set the scene, allowing me to employ the methods of “Creative Analytical Practice (CAP) ethnography and imbibe the idea that “the more people do CAP ethnography the more inviting and welcoming ethnography becomes to people of different cultures and traditions. The more welcoming, the greater the diversity, the more the feathers fly” (1999, p.661). The reference to feathers incorporates the title of Richardson’s (1999) article ‘Feathers in our CAP’. She explains the antecedents of the semantics, “Cap (and CAP) comes from the Latin for head, caput” and how it fits in with the “Ethnographic Era: a rounded head covering, a special head covering, indicating occupation or membership in a particular group”. I take these references to head covering (very important to Zoroastrian prayer and ritual and a strong ‘pointer’ of the pilgrim and visitor to Iran) to be an omen in employing auto-ethnography, CAP and action research as methods for ZDP:ASV and as permission to allow me “the transformative experience of having pieced together disparate pieces into a “piece” (Richardson, 2013, p.26).

Hanne Heen (2005) writing in the first person makes a case for taking ‘feelings’ into account when doing ethnographic action research. Her article is particularly instructive as issues she raises include that of a graduate student, similar to Brailsford’s (2010) thick descriptions of history PhD students and their motivations, discussed in Chapter 1. Additionally, Heen expresses her “irritation” with first person inquiries saying she “tends to see it as a too self-centred activity” and more would be gained by “inquiring less and doing more spontaneous acting” (p.264). Heen lays bare the insecurities associated with being an action researcher especially after coming from a more positivist research paradigm. She explains her feelings of disquiet when her report is questioned and the organisation she is studying pushes back due to a change in executive management. The sensitivity of her research project around gender and equality lend it dimensions similar to my project where Zoroastrian numbers are small, and there is little research in the area of diaspora and pilgrimage and the information is highly subjective. Heen (2005) articulates her conviction the use of “poetic language, an artistic form or other means of analogue communication” are preferable in the auto-ethnographical form (and first person accounts) rather than “analytical terms” (p.274). She alludes to the concept of the self as sacred and the sacral in auto-ethnographic approaches to research. Arlie Hochschild’s work on emotional labour and the role of feelings resonate as auto-ethnography is necessarily about “managing emotion” and pilgrimage is full of emotion. The importance of “Reflection and dialogue create distance and reframe the immediate experience” (Heen, p.275) and this observation highlights methodological issues of accurate recall memory, the impact of context, and personal interpretation in auto-ethnography.

However, there is something ‘solid’ in the assertion of one’s own experiences as being equally valid to other people’s experience. This aspect is highlighted in John Heron and Peter Reason’s (2006) work ‘The Practice of Co-Operative Inquiry: Research With Rather Than On People’ who reiterate the fundamental principle in PAR that it leads to action and is not simply a theoretical study. They reinforce the difference between subjectivity and objectivity in approaches and particularly when first person action research is the method employed.

Several authors (Bochner, 2012; Richardson, 1990; Connelly and Clandinin, 1990) refer to ‘narratives and storytelling’ as the articulation of first person PAR. They refer to these as acts of meaning, a lens to frame and experience the (social) world, and a tool for reflection, action and connecting knowledge
with the knower. F. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin, (1990) sum up the main logistical tools used to collect data in education as being: field notes of shared experience, journal records, interviews, storytelling, letter writing, and other document sources such as class plans, newsletters, metaphors, and personal philosophies. To these might be added websites, blogs, vlogs, YouTube videos, and social media like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Heewon Chang (2016, p.6) adds other techniques including “free drawings of significant places, ‘kinsgrams’ and ‘culturegrams’; inventorying people, artefacts, familial and societal values and proverbs”. The use of this type of data infuses my study of ZDP:ASV, and includes books chronicling Parsi humour and sayings such as Parsi Bol I and II by Sooni Taraporevala and Meher Marfatia (2013, 2016) and Roshan Rohinton Rivetna and Dinaz Kutar Rogers’ (2015) My Mother Used To Say Parsi and Persian Quotations and Vignettes of their Inimitable Language and Lifestyle (2015).

In organisational contexts the use of PAR is driven by Lewin’s ideas on both reflection and “re-education” (Coghlan and Jacobs. 2005) as a means of effecting change gleaned from the evaluation and reflection cycles. Lewin’s model consists of three stages: “Unfreeze (create right environment), Change (support change to desired state), Refreeze (reinforce to anchor change)”. Ideas such as “unlearning”, resistance to change and “unfreezing, transformation and refreezing of new attitudes” are common tropes in management. Authors such as Schein (1961) interpret re-education to mean coercive persuasion but Coghlan and Jacobs (2006) dispute this interpretation. In later work by Edgar Schein (1996), he subtitiled his elaboration of Lewin’s theory of ‘unfreezing’ titling the section “There is nothing as practical as a Good Theory” and proceeded to laud the ideas of force fields of change and restraining forces. This theme is applicable in studies on tourism and pilgrimage where motives, push, and pull factors emerge. Schein goes on to speak about the role of “Disconfirmation” emanating from information that does not accord with expectations or hopes and might lead to “learning anxiety and a form of guilt or survival anxiety”. Both of these ideas are relevant to my study of ZDP:ASV particularly the diaspora and long-term sustainability of Zoroastrian identity. Cognitive re-structuring, or reframing, begins as part of the cycle of change and is divided into three possible categories.

Categories of Cognitive Restructuring of Zoroastrian Diasporic Identity

The first semantic redefinition refers to a comprehension of the meaning of words (this occurs on various levels and is probably exacerbated for diasporic people. This depends on linguistic and cultural differences and their competencies in a new land, for example, Parsis find it much easier to assimilate in Australia than Iranian Zoroastrians for whom the English language can provide barriers). The second aspect is called ‘cognitive broadening’ and this is where a person’s horizons are broadened and an understanding emerges of an idea that assumptions are not necessarily bounded and can be expanded. This ‘broadening’ aspect happens at many levels for diasporic Zoroastrians and is partly forced by the fact that Zoroastrians tend not to ‘ghettoise’ in particular suburbs and do not necessarily seek the comfort of other Zoroastrians, shops or ways of living. Immersion into the local suburban culture usually hastens this process particularly when the immigrant family has school-aged children. The third impact is that of new standards of judgement or evaluation where one is forced to confront the idea that nothing is absolute and that judgement has to shift based on context. This is particularly applicable in Zoroastrianism as the diaspora generates theological, cultural and religious differences and approaches. Notable examples of these behavioural and mental changes in the diaspora include initiation of children of mixed marriages as Zoroastrians through the Navjote ceremony and marriage outside the community. Death rituals have had to change as traditional rituals have not been available to people in the diaspora, and this can include those living in regional parts of India. Cremation and burial, along with an inability to offer the requisite prayer ceremonies are a feature of the diasporic communities. More subtle changes include things like the offering of eulogies, music and slide shows
at the funeral. Embalming of the body still seems too far a leap for most Zoroastrians despite the difficulties in procuring bookings at crematoriums and cemeteries. The scattering of ashes is another area of change and adaptation. Most recently the passing of the Same Sex Marriage Act (2018) and the movie ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’ featuring the life story of Freddie Mercury and the band Queen have forced questions of the acceptance of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) to the fore. Acceptance of partners and children of LGBTIQ will have to be factored into the Constitutions of Zoroastrian Associations to ensure that they are not excluded. Additionally, adoptee/foster children need to be factored into consideration. This area is fraught with conservative dissent and first generation migrants unwilling to enter into debate on the issue, or initiate change.

Schein suggests that this cognitive redefinition may be hastened by imitation and positive or defensive identification with a role model. The ‘mentor’ may provide this role and is more likely to be present in religious settings. In the case of Zoroastrian pilgrimage, this ‘mentor’ role is usually adopted by the tourisier (intermediary) who is the guide but might be in the form of peer-to-peer learning as co-pilgrims who are knowledgeable and ‘share’ information. This peer-to-peer learning is enhanced because the ‘product’ (i.e. Zoroastrian pilgrimage) is such an esoteric area and attracts ‘travellers’ already invested in the ‘product’. Describing unfreezing and the concept of learning new ideas, Schein points out that these new ideas might not necessarily bring about intended outcomes citing the example of Nazi concentration camps where “identification with the aggressor” (p.62) was the only way to ensure survival. In the absence of good role models, self-education might occur through a variety of mediums. Second generation diasporic Zoroastrians are particularly vulnerable to ‘drifting away’ as they do not necessarily have the opportunities to find these role models and their ‘scanning’ might result in them not finding a happy fit or sometimes being outside the cultural norm. The dangers inherent in this for diasporic Zoroastrian youth are not necessarily perceived by them, but pose a real threat to the future of Zoroastrianism. This is because their changes and learnings need to be “refrozen” in order to be sustained. When cultural and organisational support is not provided for these “changed attitudes and behaviours” and there is no opportunity to refreeze action and apply the changes, the disconfirmation cycle will repeat endlessly. This goes to the heart of practice in the diasporic Zoroastrian communities where efforts are made to provide regular get-togethers whether through Sunday Schools/Events or a Youth Group. These are less structured than Christian services and for this reason, can lead to drifting and non-identification as a Zoroastrian as people become more deeply assimilated in the dominant nation culture. The individual orientation of Zoroastrianism as opposed to a congregational community and religion along with upwardly mobile aspirational parents who send their children to private Christian schools are more prone to assimilation. This ‘drifting’ is compounded by parents who are not invested in maintaining their Zoroastrian identity or are ignorant themselves about the religion and mores. Zoroastrian children in the diaspora are easily seduced by religions of ascent that actively proselytise and ‘package’ their faith more attractively especially when faced with apathetic Zoroastrian community associations and their busy parents who may not be able to prioritise faith and spirituality.

According to Edgar Henry Schein (1999, p.64), “You cannot understand a system until you try to change it”. This ‘truism’ was brought into stark relief post pilgrimage and is discussed as one of the ‘fall outs’, leading to a rather gloomy view of the future of Zoroastrianism. Issues of insight, joint ownership and the validity of the diagnostic and change interventions need to be present. “Too many researchers and consultants assume that they can ‘objectively’ gather data and arrive at a diagnosis without having already changed the system” (p.65) brings Kurt Lewin’s argument into congruence with my own theory regarding emic/etic approaches to the study of Zoroastrianism and particularly the “lived” experience of being a Zoroastrian. Change has to be “planned” and it is here that ZDP:ASV dovetails into PAR, reflection and action. The tolerance of dissent, a willingness to jettison old grievances and baggage and an embedding of the desire to evolve are all part of ‘learning organisations’
if they are to survive and thrive. Zoroastrian associations would do well to learn from Organisational Learning and Development literature including the dangers of groupthink while incorporating other practices like double, triple and deutero loop learning. Other concepts in the literature of organisational learning like leveraging Communities of Practice, challenging Mental Models and employing Systems Thinking (Senge, 2006) would all benefit both the religion and ethno religious group praxis.

The Harwood studies are seldom referred to (Burnes, 2007, p.214) but were seen to lay the foundation of Organisational Development Studies as a discipline. They consisted of a series of studies conducted by behavioural scientists over a period of 31 years at the Harwood Manufacturing Corporation. Bernard Burnes (2007, p.214) avers that these neglected studies actually “played a central role in Lewin’s work on change… moved research on group behaviour from laboratory settings into the real world…, laid the foundations of the approach to change adopted by the Organisational Development movement and are one of the single most important longitudinal studies on participative management”. Similarly, Zoroastrian attitudes to pilgrimage are a longitudinal venture, with diasporic Zoroastrians needing to first connect or re-connect with Zoroastrianism as their religious identity before they consider visitation to India and Iran for pilgrimage.

In management and organisational learning and development studies the work of Donald A. Schon and Chris Argyris’s (1974) precepts on ‘Reflection in Action and Reflection On Action’ are particularly suitable as a methodology to be employed in studies using PAR. These concepts, though used extensively in domains of nursing and education, have equal value in areas like management development, tourism and hospitality, and other business and social science orientated industries.

The literature on reflection is extensive and has been narrowed here to contextualise it in terms of its uses in auto-ethnography and PAR. Some authors like Prue Holmes and Gillian O’Neill (2010) and Heewon Chang (2015) use concepts of reflection in explaining the effects of auto-ethnography in assessment on intercultural competence of self and others. Chang (2015) makes some important observations about reflection not least of which is the role of memory. “Memory is both a friend and foe of auto-ethnographers” (Chang, 2015, p.210) and can be blurry or result in “smoothing out” the remembrance of the “experience” or field study (preferred term to data). It can be a source of succour and healing when combining autobiography and ethnography. This certainly applies to research where memory proved to be a source of nostalgia and recollection but was a point of pain, having been impacted by life events like death and illness prior to the writing up of the journals. The idea that ‘memory can play tricks’ on the researcher is widely recognised as a truism.

Sarah Wall’s (2006, 2008) articles about writing auto-ethnography are instructive in “giving voice to personal experience for the purpose of extending sociological understanding” (2008, p.38). Her writing is particularly poignant and personal as she writes about international adoption and her experience of it. She says, “So much of what I want to say about auto-ethnography is about me, not it” (2006, p.2). Her deep reflections are mirrored in a “writing story” guided by Laurel Richardson (1994), Nicholas Holt (2003) and Andrew C. Sparkes (2000) all of whom are cited in this thesis. Her ascription of the creation of “theatres of self” and auto-ethnography as a creative process expressing “my truth” prompt her exhortation to researchers to “share their experiences and reflections” (Richardson, 2008, p.51) as a means of understanding this “empowering and compelling method”. Sarah Wall’s (2006) ‘Reflexivity and Voice’ (p.3) notes that “token reflection” has become a hallmark feature added to “otherwise neutral and objectively presented manuscripts”. Self-introspection offers the ability to address and inform specific problems and situations while moderating the researcher’s place in the dynamic of representing others.
The introduction of ‘tacit’ knowledge, a concept propounded by Michael Polanyi (1966) and its relationship to knowledge and understanding in heuristic/conceptual research cannot be underestimated. In my study on ZDP:ASV, tacit knowledge has an emic (insider) character. Polanyi’s (1958) assertion “We know more than we can tell” neatly sums up the acquisition of knowledge gained through lived experience. Duncan (2004, p.4) uses the term “Inner Knowing” acknowledging the subjectivity and recognition by auto-ethnographers that “reality is neither fixed nor entirely external but is created…by the viewer”. She justifies her choice of auto-ethnography and first person accounts in reporting her study on the design of hypermedia educational resources whilst maintaining a realistic view of the possible drawbacks of auto-ethnography. These drawbacks include less academic depictions of research experiences, shortcoming in writing aimed at eliciting emotional responses from readers, superficial reflection and scholarship, a temptation to avoid honest self-reflection based on a desire to advocate for a particular agenda and the failure to link theory to personal experience when making claims or defending critiques of the study. She cautions researchers about the need to make “tacit” knowledge “explicit” through rigorous research methods including field notes, reflective journals, files of documentary evidence, and categorising secondary data sources including publications and narratives that are reviewed by others. ZDP:ASV could relate to the assorted works of PAR whether interrogating the role of shamans (Spry, 2001), the justification (and apologist) tone in the use of AE as described by Holt (2003) or the need to justify the ‘authentic’ voice and acknowledgement of the use of PAR and AE to examination panels. Research methods and readership continue to evolve with the introduction of technology and digital access and these have to be factored into any discussions on doctoral studies as well. The need to challenge and disrupt ‘canonical’ ways are crucial, as is consideration to the mental models that frame the researcher’s perspective.

The challenge to canonical ways were exercised to the fullest by author Tami Spry (2001, p.107) where she described a research trip she undertook in the Andes with a Chilean shaman to examine the role of performance in healing rituals. In stark contrast to the “liminal” feelings accompanying her fieldwork, Spry described the academic world as one that she was “expected to ‘report back to’, for critical evaluation, for verisimilitude, for promotion”. As an antidote to this, she resolved to integrate her “body and voice in all parts of my life”, and commenced a “methodological praxis of reintegrating my body and mind into my scholarship” (Spry, 2001, p.708). Boundaries were pushed by Nicholas Holt (2003, p.5) as he defended his methodological choices and use of auto-ethnography to reviewers. Holt noted that reviewers who were generally supportive of auto-ethnographical methods offered “sympathetic” comments but were “unsure of verification criteria” (p.5), while “sceptical” reviewers repudiated auto-ethnography based on scientific paradigmatic approaches and could not abide the absence of “empirical” data. Sparkes (2002) goes even further questioning why personal narratives are considered so “offensive” given that it is the very subjectivity of the researcher that is seen as a resource (being a Zoroastrian in my case) with the emic perspective. This level of doubting was expanded on by Herr and Anderson (2012, p.2) who add to this misconception about AE saying, “Dissertations in the social sciences are not what they used to be…and dissertation committees and Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) have become more tolerant of the unique needs of qualitative researchers”. The work of authors like Carolyn Ellis, Tony Adams and Arthur Bochner (2011), Ellis and Bochner (2006) and Laurel Richardson (1999) along with Denzin and Lincoln’s (2003) work in qualitative methods, particularly auto-ethnography, were canvassed above. The synchronicity of Anderson (2006), Filipovic (2015) and Herr and Anderson’s (2012) to my own research helped strengthen the choice of auto-ethnography, and PAR. From one perspective, the aim of auto-ethnographical research is to present a level of authenticity rather than turgid academic jargon. ‘Narcissistic’, ‘self-indulgent’, ‘introspective’ and ‘individualised’ are some of the epithets thrown at auto-ethnographers. They can be taken as both insult and challenge as it forces them to justify their methodological use of auto-ethnography and PAR.
as a method. The authors reveal open raw wounds of rejected papers, and criticisms of ‘voice’ and content stemming from their qualitative approach. However, from an optimistic point of view, the academic consideration of methodology opens up self-reflection and hopefully ensures the prevention of hubris. With a bit of luck, auto-ethnographical and PAR approaches have a greater capacity to lead to ‘action’ through the dissemination of the knowledge in a more personal and accessible style.

In light of the research presented here, auto-ethnography and PAR have been chosen as the most suitable research methods for the interrogation of ZDP:ASV. Adopting these qualitative methods allows for a rich description of Zoroastrian pilgrimage in a diasporic context that captures the ‘action’ implicit in pilgrimage along with the desire to find practical applications for this research that benefit the Zoroastrian community. My own background in Hospitality and Tourism both as a student and academic were integral to the choice of pilgrimage as a topic for research. Additionally, earlier sections had outlaid clearly that elements of pilgrimage (accommodation, food, travel, attractions, motivations and so on) fall firmly into the provision of services and psychosocial aspects of tourism related industries. The next section introduces the theoretical models drawn from travel and tourism studies that were applied to analyse the data. They include Tourist Models, particularly that of Jafar Jafari (1987). Pilgrimage uses a number of aspects of tourism theory. This chapter interrogated the literature on pilgrimage and theories regarding motives, authenticity and organisation of travel. The following section is divided into the three distinct areas and the conceptual frames through which they are viewed for research.

**Conceptual Research Frameworks from Travel and Tourism Studies**

Frameworks and constructs help a researcher to identify and delineate relationships between concepts that provide context and make sense of the study area. Tourism models abound in literature and may be system based (Leiper, 1979, 1990; Leiper, Stear, Hing and Firth 2008), destination based (Butler, 1980; Leiper 1989), tourism knowledge systems based (Tribe and Libbord 2016), or curriculum based (Leiper 1981; Getz 1986; Chen and Groves 1999; Tribe 2002; Oktadiana and Chon 2016), among other approaches. However, there is a distinction between ‘tourism models’ and ‘tourist models’. This difference lies mainly in the focal content of the model, with ‘tourism models’ addressing singly, or in multiples, different views whether systems and operational approaches, curriculum, destination or destination development or knowledge. ‘Tourist models’, are much rarer and take the tourist experience as the focus. Tourist models may be based on behavioural aspects of the actual journeying (Jafari 1987), motivations (Hsu, Cai and Li 2010; Sharpley 1994), or the information search strategies adopted (Fodness and Murray 1999).

Conceptual and theoretical frameworks in travel and pilgrimage deal with a wide range of issues, but the following are the most relevant to the topic of Zoroastrian diasporic pilgrimage. Jafari’s tourist model (1987) will be used as the lens to frame the experiences of pilgrimage. Other models are drawn from tourism (Butler, Leiper, and Plog) and organisational studies (Lewin. Lewin’s model of change (that of Unfreeze, Change, Re-Freeze), Richard Butler’s (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model, and Schon and Argyris’s work on reflection, then form the basis for my self-reflection, interpretation and analysis of the auto-ethnographical data.

**Jafar Jafari’s Tourist Model**

For this study, Jafari’s highly influential (1987) *Tourist Model* will be used to interrogate the data and experience of pilgrimage to Iran. ‘Figure 1: The Tourist Model’ uses the metaphor of a springboard to
illustrate the nature of the ‘leap, being animated in the airborne phase and the inevitable return’ that travellers experience. The six stages of the tourist model are applied to the pilgrimages and travels of the author. Each of these six stages is further subdivided into one or two characteristic experiences and actions. These stages and their sub stages are:

1. Corporation (Emission)
2. Emancipation (Separation and Declaration)
3. Animation (Orientation and Valediction)
4. Repatriation (Reversion and Submission)
5. Incorporation (Emulsion)
6. Omission

![Tourist Model Diagram]


‘Corporation’ encompasses all the pre-departure preparation and planning. This is followed by the ‘emancipation’ phase, where the tourist both mentally and physically separates from the ‘ordinary/profane’ life in ‘corporation’. The third phase ‘animation’ describes the experiences of the tourist. This refers to hedonism and uncharacteristic behaviours of tourists who lose their inhibitions as they assume ‘guises and masks’. The return to the profane and routine commences in the Repatriation phase, which is followed by the fifth phase of Incorporation into daily and routine life. An important phase is Omission, where profane life has continued for those ‘left behind’. Omission, as a phase, is under-researched but definitely a source of exploration for researchers interested in the experience of those who did not travel (and have to suffer through the traveller’s tales), and from the position of a hospitality host at destinations where they are always in a position of omission when working to meet the expectations of the tourist. Ignacio Rodriguez Del Bosque and Hector San Martin (2008) while not referencing Jafari’s model, proposes a model based on the “cognitive and affective psychological processes which an individual goes through during the pre-experience and post experience stages” (p.551). These correspond to the Corporation and Incorporation stages in the Tourist Model. They propose a Tourist Model based around positive and negative emotions engendered in the ‘expectations’ of ‘satisfaction’ or ‘disconfirmation’, which in turn would lead to destination loyalty and repeat visitation. It is worth noting that Omission, is in some ways similar to ‘being frozen in time’ as tourists often fail to recognize the movement and continuation of profane life in their generating region while they have been experiencing animation through travel. Additionally, omission represents the gap seeking to be filled by the pilgrim disseminating their experiences and allowing those ‘left behind’ in the profane routine life to experience (live vicariously without the inconveniences of travel) through the recollections of the pilgrim.
Richard Butler’s Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) Model

Butler’s, TALC model is in itself a modification of the Product Life Cycle commonly found in Marketing. Similar to the TALC model it has five stages i.e. Introduction, Growth, Maturity, Saturation and Decline. The concept of ‘rejuvenation’ was introduced to ‘products’ where they were revamped through a variety of means to prevent them from decline (including new packaging, line extension, modifying the product and so on). Butler posited that destinations tourism or otherwise replicate these patterns.

Overlaying Butler’s TALC model were other tourism theories including Stanley Plog’s Psychographic model of the typology of tourists, ranging from ‘Allocentric’ (adventurers) who visited destinations in their infancy phases and tended to be travellers who shunned group/mass tourism and went off the beaten path. As a destination matured and its services and products became more formalised ‘mid centric’ tourists who used a combination of self-developed and formalised travel grew and there was a falloff in the ‘Allocentric’ traveller. The next stage of maturity was characterised by the predominance of large formalised corporations managing the destination and its products and offerings with an upturn in both competition and the presence of mass/group tourists. Examples of this type of destination type in Iran include Tehran as a mature ‘psychocentric’ attractive destination compared to Yazd in Iran that is still less developed and attracts the ‘Allocentric’ visitor.
Erik Cohen (1979) alluded to the Drifter’s as opposed to ‘Mass’ tourists in the same vein as Plog’s references to Allocentric, Mid-centric and Ethnocentric tourist typologies. However, he developed a five-category “mode” (p. 183) of touristic experiences ranging from the modern tourist to the pilgrim. These categories included; The Recreational Mode, The Diversionary Mode; the Experiential Mode, The Experimental Mode and The Existential Mode. ZDP:ASV fell squarely in the category of Experiential Mode category with references to Dean McConnell’s assertions of “the pilgrim undertakes his journey to the spiritual centre of his religion, though that centre may be located far beyond the boundaries of his life-space or society”. (Cohen, 1979, p.188)

The work of Victor Turner is instructive in terms of concepts of ritual, liminality and communitas (as constructs). Ronald Grimes (2000, 259) too, explores ritual, rite, ritualizing and ritualization raising not only questions about the meaning of the words but noting “the bedevilling problem of inclusion and exclusion”, and “the additional difficulty of deciding how to use related terms such as “ceremony”, “magic” and “liturgy.” He draws attention to Turner’s work on ritual theory encompassing not simply rites of passage but “major “before” and “after” difference” (p.264). He goes on to say “those who study ritual are bit players”, which I take to mean, both emic and etic scholarship on the subject similar to Cohen’s concept of the experiential tourist v the pilgrim. Grimes references Turner’s movement away from liminality and rites of passage observing,

The liminality-saturated model of initiation served him less and less well, so he turned his attention to other ritual types, most notably pilgrimages and festivals. Pilgrimage functioned for him as a transition type between tribal initiation and the dispersed quirky stuff of the North American arts scene, experimental theatre. Pilgrimage rites had some of the attributes of liminality, but pilgrimage was voluntary rather than obligatory. (p. 265)

And,

One of the bridges between Turner’s theory and his practice was pedagogy. The term he eventually used for one of his most distinctive practises was “ethno-drama” or “performing ethnography”, by which he meant the imaginative re-enactment of social dramas, life crises and their corresponding rites. By the end of his life, Turner himself was becoming an example of liminoid ritualizing. (p.266)

A number of these theoretical concepts were all used in the framing of ZDP: ASV including definitional aspects of ‘performing ethnography’ through PAR and AE. Also, the framing of post pilgrimage activities in the form of ‘festivals’ around Zoroastrian identity and praxis, typology of pilgrims in the Cohen and Plog frames and the idea that Zoroastrian pilgrimage is unique to Zoroastrians as it is embedded in the ‘religion’. This metier of embeddedness renders it different from spiritual tourism. Therefore, although Zoroastrians may experience spiritual tourism elements (visits to mosques, temples or participation in ‘other’ religion practices) the focus is on Zoroastrianism. The ‘niche’ has direct consequences for wider participation by other faith groups and even interested scholars and tourists who can never really ‘access’ the religion through practice and inclusion into the community regardless of their desire to do so. Thus remaining in the realm of the ‘experiential tourist’ (Cohen) as opposed to the pilgrim. Turner’s references to pedagogy and application are likewise resonant with ZDP:ASV and dissemination of findings from the research and applied actions emanating from the study.

The ‘rejuvenation’ phase for tourist destinations (Butler, 1980, often it means that tourist places might be converted to other functions; for example, the Olympic Village accommodation was converted to apartments after the Sydney Olympics in 2000. Rejuvenation can come in the form of ‘man made attractions’ being built or new areas being developed to entice repeat visitation by tourists (e.g. the new
proposed Casino at Barangaroo, Sydney). It may arise when opening up pristine areas to tourism and the revelation of ‘well-kept secret spots’ that only locals know about, until it is opened up to larger scale development.

‘Rejuvenation’, when applied to the context of ZDP:ASV involves the activities that follow pilgrimage. Rather than simply slipping into the ‘profane’ routine life post pilgrimage life, I embarked on a series of ‘activities related to Zoroastrianism, ranging from attendance and presentations at multi-cultural events and festivals, an increased interest in ‘disseminating’ information about Zoroastrians and Zoroastrianism to the outside world including involvement in an ABC radio program (Evolving Towards Perfection – Zoroastrianism Today June 28, 2014), and my service as President of the local Zoroastrian community. Additionally, the ‘cycle’ of pilgrimage and interest in all things Zoroastrian was extended to travels that while secular in nature sought to incorporate and/or find meaning and connection to religion more generally. More activist approaches to Zoroastrian ‘practice’ formed part of this rejuvenation and included both participation in and helping with curation of the Works of Faith section in the exhibition ‘Tales From The East: India and New South Wales’ (2018) which traced the time of Governor Lachlan Macquarie in India and his contact with Parsi (Zoroastrians) prior to his tenure in Australia. A further exhibition concentrating on Zoroastrianism is on the cards for 2020-2021. Thus it follows that once the ‘cycle’ of pilgrimage is completed through Incorporation into routine life including actions such as showing pictures to friends and family, unpacking the bags, returning to work, distributing the souvenirs and mementoes of travel, the pilgrim might go into ‘decline’ phase similar to a destination that has been saturated in the TALC model or alternatively ‘rejuvenate’ themselves by increased participation in community and religion (indicated by dotted line A). This then ‘melds’ and ‘solidifies’ the Lewinian idea of ‘refreeze’ of changed attitudes which in turn engenders action and even re-starts the ‘cycle’ of ‘pilgrimage/s’.

Neil Leiper’s (1979) Systems Model of Tourism which consist of a Tourist Generating Region (TGR), a Transit Route (TR) and the Tourist Destination Region (TDR) set in the context of a larger macro environment (physical, technological, social, cultural, economic and political) are important as part of systems thinking in pilgrimage and learning and development contexts too. Concepts of Macro environmental conditions that envelop systems such as Political, Environmental, Sociocultural, Technological, Economic and Regulatory/Legal (PESTEL/PESTER) are representative of environments over which the person/corporation have no control whereas in business/management contexts Micro environments which are represented by Buyers, Suppliers, Competitors, Vested Interest bodies and New Entrants to the marketplace all have some level of ‘controllability’. These Vested Interest organisations might include non-governmental organisations like local associations, Amnesty, Ecotourism bodies and Heritage groups like the National Trust in Australia that can have an impact on the destination region. Pilgrimage is a particular product in the Religious Tourism genre and pilgrims experience exactly the same dimensions of TGR, TR and TDR while undertaking both Pilgrimage and Spiritual Tourism.
Religious and Spiritual Tourism Models:

Alex Norman (2011, p.200) presents Pilgrimage, Religious Tourism and Spiritual Tourism in the form of a Venn diagram with all three aspects intersecting. The differences he clarifies are in the secularized nature of the ‘growth’ sought by the spiritual tourist apropos the embeddedness of a pilgrim who clearly identifies with a faith tradition (Zoroastrianism in my case), identifies as being “on pilgrimage” and undertakes “collectivity or a journey of particularly deep personal meaning”. Additionally, clearly spelling out the differences positioning Spiritual tourists as “those who travel with the intention of undertaking practices and/or of attaining a sacred state or spiritual growth”. He refers to the overlap of religious, pilgrimage and spiritual travel but is careful to point out that the term spiritual tourism “we begin to describe certain types of touristic and spiritual intent on the part of the traveller”. Aspects related to personal growth (not necessarily grounded in the tourist’s own faith system) appear to be particularly attendant as exemplified by the perspective “… in the West the practice of travelling has become synonymous with change, discovery and learning, as well as with pleasure and relaxation” (p.99). This construct and ‘western viewpoint’ is grasped in diasporic Zoroastrian visitation to the ‘homeland’s’ especially among TCK who identify more with ‘spiritual tourism’ than ‘pilgrimage’. This is played out in examples where a visit to Dharamsala to see the Dalai Lama, or to Amritsar to see the Golden Temple are part of the itinerary along with the obligatory visit to Agiyaries, Atashbehrams and Udvada to pray at the Iranshah. TCK identify with ‘self-knowledge’ perspectives a la Elizabeth Gilbert’s Eat Pray Love approach.
Norman (2012, p.28) refers to the “plasticity of the religious/spiritual in contemporary Western societies” to further distance spiritual tourism from “corporate religious structures and symbols”. He proposes a five-laddered taxonomy of seeing Spiritual Tourism as Healing, Experiment, Quest, Retreat and Collective. Pilgrimages often fit all of these tropes but clearly seen through the presence of the dominate religion. Frances McGettigan and Laura Voronkova (2016) notice the spirituality, religion and wellness tourism aspects in their discussion of walking labyrinths making a resurgence as a “response to the growing felt need for a spirituality to counter the materialism and chaos of our time”. They compared the experiences of respondents walking labyrinths in Ireland and Lithuania and interestingly found that none of their participants described themselves as a religious tourist (p. 49). They extrapolate this finding to New Age movements and self-spirituality: “that self is sacred and that spirituality lies within the individual person” and not tied to a religion, emphasizing that “labyrinths are used in many spiritual traditions and in all faiths as a walking meditation” (p.37). McGettigan and Voronkova’s work is especially interesting for its perspective in developing a ‘niche’ tourism product built around ‘walking labyrinths’ similar to the niche product of Zoroastrian pilgrimage (with secular activity thrown in for heritage and cultural visitation). The distinction however is that Zoroastrian pilgrimage has a very limited audience but spiritual, heritage and cultural tourism would find favour with tourists prepared to go to India and Iran. Cohen (1979, p.188) makes this distinction between experiential tourists and pilgrims saying:

…the experience-oriented tourist even if he observes the authentic life of others, remains aware of their otherness… the experiential tourist remains a stranger even when living among the people whose ‘authentic’ life he observes…the pilgrims experience the sacredness of the centre: the tourists may experience aesthetically the authenticity of the pilgrims’ experience.

On the other hand Noga Collins-Kreiner (2010, p.259) develops a model of tourist typology in Jewish pilgrimage tourism noting that visitors range from “religious orthodox pilgrims to ‘traditional’ pilgrim-tourist who can be understood as alternative tourists”. Using Barber (1993), and Vukonic’s (1996) explanations she defines pilgrimage using words like “a journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding or as a journey undertaken by a person in search of holiness, truth and the sacred” (p.25). Collins-Kreiner’s model results in delineating tourist typology (somewhat similar to Plog’s psychographic model) specific to “modern-day Jewish pilgrimage tourism to the shrines and graves of isaddikim (saintly and pious religious figures in the Jewish tradition). This ‘pilgrim’ typology model results in four distinct groups with Jewish nomenclature. The first “Pure” pilgrims refer to the ultra-orthodox Jews (Haredim) Hasidic males, fitting into the collectivity ethos suggested by Norman (2012) as they travel in groups and have “an emphasis on graves of saintly personages”. Some travelled as part of “official pilgrimage” organised by religious organisations, and as a function of the congregational nature of the Jewish religion and its praxis. The second category of “Pilgrim tourists” were categorized as religious visitors (Datiim) while having the main motivation of religion, undertook activities that would not be seen as religious by orthodox standards. The third category referred to as “Traditional Believers (Masortiim)” tended to be women, “visit the sites as part of an organized group, and pray for things such as fertility, health, marriage and other such personal needs”. (p.265), this group fell into “traditional and popular than religious” as they laid supplications on the graves and tied coloured cloths on a “wishing tree”. The fourth category labelled as “Secular visitors (Hilonim)” were seen to be partaking of “heritage tourism” and “nostalgia; the search for self-identity, the search for family roots; increased awareness; and an understanding of historical events and places, which necessarily involves components of history, patriotism and nationalism” (p.266). All of these typologies interestingly seem to fit into Plog’s model of ethnocentric tourists given their proclivity to travel in groups and the congregational nature of worship. Collins-Kreiner uses a variation of Butler’s TALC model in explaining the stages of development of these sites starting with “spontaneous – popular stage”, moving to the “semi-formal stage” and culminating in the “formal-stage”. This corresponds with Butler’s Exploration, Development and Consolidation stages of a tourist destination. Additionally, she notes that the sites of
these visitations (particularly Ha’ari) were undergoing development which can often be part of the Development but part of Rejuvenation (of the tourist attraction site).

A completely different approach to ‘models’ and constructs to researching “religious tourism research” comes from Alison J. McIntosh (2010, p.213-214) work on reflexivity as part of methodological orthodoxies that have “evacuated the researchers voice” (cit. Everett, 2010, p.161). McIntosh writes:

Telling the stories of ourselves as private individuals and tourism researchers, rather than just speaking for others, is argued to be an enlightening process that illuminates the knowledge creation process and positions our research within our own epistemological journeys…Reflexive practices “emphasise the agency of the researcher and the researched and the dynamics of their intersubjective relationships”…Otherwise tourism is a force that can bolster “restrictive, monological and heavily capitalized worldviews that tend to help concretize pseudo colonialist, urban-industrial and pungently North Atlantic/Judaico-Christian certitudes upon alterity” (cit. Hollinshead & Jamal, 2001, p.64)

McIntosh does not propose a model per se but draws very important conclusions about the investigation of religious tourism, using her experiences both as a supervisor and as a qualitative researcher. She describes reflexive practice eloquently citing the work of two doctoral students and the consequences of ‘situatedness’ of the self and the “issues and realities associated with situated or subject-centred nature of knowledge creation in religious tourism research” (p.223). Jennings (2001) positions ‘situatedness’ in terms of the researcher suggesting that emic approaches are qualitative while etic approaches tend to be quantitative. This is borne out in McIntosh’s recognition of self and emic approach in her ‘model/construct’:

Firstly demonstrate the intentional self-introspection and inclusion of the self in the research process and the rich insights that a reflexive approach can bring; secondly, to highlight the impact of the emotional entanglement in the research process for both the researcher and to advocate the use of reflective journals or field notes to support researchers in their reflexive journey; and thirdly to shed light on the co-engaged process of religious tourism research through raising an understanding of potential religious or cultural differences or similarities and the journey that may that may ensue towards understanding the phenomenon and the people we choose to study. Potentially a reflexive approach to research may lead us to write the finding of our research in different ways, for example through weaving our own religious narrative and personal experiences into the religious tourism research we report, and to advise our students to similarly embrace a reflexive tone in their thesis that is outside of the safe space of the methodology chapter (Feighery2006).

Conceptual models applied to the study especially around reflexivity, the use of reflection as an agent of change and knowing were drawn from organisational literature including Kurt Lewin’s Change Model and ideas around emic and etic, tacit and explicit knowledge, ideas of unlearning, learning loops, attitude change and Peter Senge’s (2006) work on Mental Model and Systems Thinking. The appropriateness of these models lie in their ability to describe how ‘progression’ is structured in organisational learning and development. These ‘change’ models feed into methodological choices of AE and PAR where ‘learning’ was from doing and “situatedness” (McIntosh, 2010). Rejuvenation as described in the TALC model could equally apply to pilgrims who ‘rejuvenate’ themselves by increased participation in community and religion (indicated by dotted line A). This then ‘melds’ and ‘solidifies’ the Lewinian idea of ‘refreeze’ of changed attitudes which in turn engenders action and even re-starts the ‘cycle’ of ‘pilgrimage/s’.

**Conceptual Models drawn from Organisational Learning**

**Kurt Lewin’s Change Model**

Industrial organisational development theorists recognised the inevitability of change and its
ramifications for organisations early. One of the influential persons was Lewin who postulated that attitudinal change was a three-step process that commenced with an ‘unlearning’ phase where prior assumptions had to be set aside and ‘unfrozen’. A process of adding inputs and ‘refreezing’ them into the new desired shapes followed this. He likened it to getting a cube of ice to go from being a square shape to a cylindrical one. Each of these change states had to be ‘planned’ and communicated clearly to the human objects being subjected to these planned changes, this means that a clear rationale and explanation was an essential precursor to the process. Feelings of insecurity and fear often accompanied this phase as long held assumptions and truisms are interrogated and critically examined. The next change step involved introducing the new ways of doing things or changing their views on matters. This step involved inputs of both time and communication resources in order to allow people to adjust to the new ideas. The last step that of re-freezing was aimed at reintroducing stability and equilibrium back into the organisation and for individuals and cementing the changes. Sustaining and enhancing these changes required reward and feedback systems that allowed success to be celebrated and mistakes to be corrected. This ‘change’ model transfers easily from an organisational context to a personal one especially when the ‘change’ comes in the form of significant life events whether planned or unplanned.

Bernard Burnes (2007, p.213) notes that Lewin’s work with the Harwood industries where “research on group behaviour and group change (moved) from the laboratory into the real world” is seldom recognised though it had a profound impact on understanding group decision-making and organisational development. I suggest that if the concept were to be transferred to Zoroastrian contexts they would work just as well. This is because the ideas behind creating social change with a view to sustainability and Lewin’s ideas (Burnes, p.213) of “quasi-stationary social equilibria, namely, group behaviour, is the notion of field theory” recognising that the effect of stability in structures and groupings affect both group and individual behaviours and actions in organisations and associations. If Zoroastrianism is to stay relevant and continue, it is essential that these mindsets be adopted by homeland and diasporic Zoroastrians to remove the dysfunctional and entrenched negative attitudes to change. In the same vein David Coghlan and Claus Jacobs’s (2005) paper highlights the lack of attention paid to Lewin’s work on re-education and the idea that human systems could only be changed by direct participation of the ‘actors’ in the system. Citing Lewin’s ‘reflections’ that grew out of his study of Alcoholics Anonymous and with the women of Iowa, Coghlan and Jacobs draw attention to Lewin’s ten observations of re-education.

Several of Lewin’s ten observations are relevant to this thesis. Lewin posits that individuals and social systems are intertwined and “reality is shaped by what is socially accepted as reality”. These realities are experienced through reflection and participation in-group processes. 1) The underlying thinking behind this fundamental ‘truth’ is that interaction and cognition are shaped by externalities and reality is predicated through these ‘group’ processes and individual self-reflection is insufficient in ‘shaping reality’. 2) Where reflection is concerned with the individual is questioning of their “philosophy of life”, Lewin classes this as ‘upstream’ reflection, while ‘downstream’ reflection comprises the interactions and ways of relating with the world. Both upstream and downstream practices are played out in terms of action and changes in “cognition, values and behaviour”. (pp.447-448). Travel (and pilgrimage) are good initiators of both upstream and downstream changes in cognition. 3) The public testing of assumptions is imperative in the reflective cycle and it is not enough to simply relay first hand experiences, action and reflection must follow. 4) Action research is integral to the re-education of perception. This involves the concept of ‘unlearning’ as well as reflection on action and in action. This means that unless a process of unfreezing occurs, no movement to re-education can be made. 5) Lewin postulates that changing cognition is much more than a function of theory alone and must include
unfreezing, changing and refreezing attitudes toward the object of the reflections. That is, there must be congruence between rhetoric and reality as actions must speak louder than words. 6) The development of personal awareness, systems of inquiry and language are tools to move from stereotyping to alternative explanations of the world. This means that when people involve themselves in self-experimentation (as I did with pilgrimage) I was able to ‘action’ other ways of interpreting and seeing the world as a Zoroastrian. 7) Lewin notes “Change in how a person feels about any situation is integrally linked to that individual’s degree of involvement. Thus, active involvement entails attitudinal, affective, cognitive and behavioural aspects of that person”. (p.449). Action and immersion are critical to the re-education process, and this is true of pilgrimage where questions of identity and belonging are being canvassed as part of the ‘spiritual’ journey that will eventually result in attitudinal and cognitive behavioural change. 8) Lewin espouses the concept of ‘action-ideology’, where changes in attitude become changes in fact and behaviour. The idea that these changes need to occur in psychologically supportive ways and not be autocratically dictated, is fundamental to their acceptance. 9) The ‘all or nothing’ systems approach involves holistic re-education including general and specific environments. Action research and ‘systems thinking’ are essential, instead of a piecemeal approach based on item-by-item change that does not hold the entire system together. In my case, this meant ‘accepting’ the re-education of pilgrimage and faith rather than imposing my Western worldview and positivist questioning to items of faith. However, reflection after the fact and critical interpretation meant that I ‘accepted’ the premise of the scientific explanations without diminishing the spiritual context of the ‘event’. 10) “‘The individual accepts the new system of values and belief by accepting belonging to a group’. Downstream behaviours and being part of a group support learning and re-education allowing for re-freezing of the new attitudes. This was amply evident in my pilgrimage where being part of a group of passionate Zoroastrians created a level of common identification and membership framing our thinking and behaviours. The danger of ‘group-think’ might be an obverse symptom of this same ‘belongingness’ and was manifested in the effect of taking the tourist’s interpretation as the gospel truth. The lack of/poor access to technology meant that ‘veracity and verification’ had to be saved to be part of the recollections and narration phases of the research as opposed to ‘immediacy’ which is available when technological access is abundant and unrestricted. Ideas about reflection both during and after pilgrimage were drawn from Argyris and Schon’s work, which is elaborated next.

Chris Argyris and Donald Schon’s Reflection in Action and Reflection on Action

Self-reflection and Donald Schon’s and Chris Argyris’s work on Reflection In Action and Reflection On Action are an essential part of PAR. They refer to the “surfacing” of problems (Argyris and Schon, 1989, p.622) so that the “undiscussables” become part of the action research routine taking on functional roles that help “theory building and testing”. Schon (1983) in his notable book, The Reflective Practitioner, explained the concept of reflection in action as being the necessity to engage in reflective conversations with the participants when neutrality or technical certainty are not assured. Problems and solutions need to interrogate using concepts of loop learning (single, double, and triple). These ‘conversations’ recognize that it is insufficient to reflect simply after the fact but reflection needs to be embedded into action as well, especially for practitioners using this construct of reflexivity into their professional lives whether it be teaching, medicine, nursing, planning and so on. I used this approach by ‘reflecting’ not only in my journal when on pilgrimage but in post pilgrimage activity and in writing up the results for ZDP:ASV. Nienke Wieringa (2011, p. 168) summed up Schon’s model succinctly saying:

The world is governed not by academic, formal knowledge, but by knowing-in-action and reflection-in-action of practitioners. Their knowing-in-action is revealed by everyday routines
of action. This is a type of knowing practitioners will not readily be able to explicate. Also, practitioners think about what they are doing while doing it in the process of reflection-in-action.

Chris Argyris (2004, p.507) ‘reflecting’ on research in organisational learning refers to the inhibitor of defensive reasoning and its consequences for future research. He highlights the need for bringing “intuition and emotion to the fore” in research as well as “critiquing our own actions and policies that we use to design and implement research”. He suggests that the:

> Focus of research is to describe the universe in as complete a manner as possible and, another fundamental assumptions that our research methodologies should be in the service of providing valid knowledge. The methodologies should be neutral, meaning that they should not favor a particular normative position. It is possible to show that the ideas in good currency about conducting sound research violate this premise. For example, the rules in use for conducting positivistic and humanistic research are consistent with a top-down unilaterally controlling theory of action”. (p.508)

Sarah Wall (2006; 2008) describes the role of reflection in auto-ethnographic studies commenting on the highly personalised nature of the writing and the need to share experiences and reflections with others undertaking ethnographic studies. As Wall writes about her experiences of adoption, she explains the need to manage others’ expectations while still being authentic and reconciling theoretical assertions with personal experience. Her writing struck a chord with me as I have been admonished for my “persistently informal tone”, but in the context of auto-ethnography, this becomes strength, and a marker of authenticity.

More traditional representations of self-reflection in PAR (Sparkes 2000; Holmes and O’Neill 2010; Duncan 2004; Chang 2015; Spry 2001; Holt 2003 and McTaggart 1989) investigate and report on the use of self-reflection in differentiating auto-ethnographic writing contexts, including: Intercultural (Holmes and O’Neill, 2010 and Chang 2015), Prison (Fine, 2003), the public sphere (Kemmis, 2006), and Public Health (Baum, MacDougall and Smith 2017). Having taught Organisational Learning and Development for a number of years to undergraduate students, Lewin’s (1946) theories of attitudinal change (Robbins, Coulter, Stag and Bergman 2015) and the importance of Schon and Argyris’s work on Reflection in Action and Reflection on Action, played a significant role in adopting PAR. This is because Lewin posited that cycles of action and reflection were intended to impact and bring about social change, exhorting social scientists, to bridge the gap between theory and action. Argyris and Schon (1991) moved the debate further by introducing the concept of an intervention experiment within the practice context of the situation being studied. They emphasised that learning occurred when reflection was both during and after the ‘action’. In my case I used a journal to collect reflections ‘in action’, and this was buttressed by research ‘after the action’. Reflection in action revealed the enormous gap in knowledge and ‘sticky knowledge’ from pre-reading. This idea of ‘practice’ is certainly true of pilgrimage and ties in with contrasts between those who embark on pilgrimage and spiritual travel with the expressed purpose of ‘practice’ as opposed to simply recreation/re-creation.

Lewin’s (1947) model regarding change is part of the rejuvenation process described by Butler accompanied as it is by reflection in action and on action (Schon and Argyris). The dynamic nature of attitude change particularly toward the religion and practice of Zoroastrianism has been enhanced and developed through the sheer ‘edumetric’ qualities of researching for ZDP:ASV. Social media, websites, and community news forums appear multiple times daily in my social media feeds and the ease of communication with other emic scholars is vastly enhanced including the immediacy of news and relevant content. (Examples of some such sites I ‘follow’ include Jame Jamshed, Parsiana, JohBawa,
This thesis is a curatorial project, drawing together online resources in an easily accessible format. Unlike an unfiltered Google search, this material has been ‘critically investigated’ prior to inclusion. This approach aims to move the academic study of Zoroastrian away from rigid tropes of historical approaches and illuminate other forms of knowledge whether it be from online sources like blogs or posts of the Return to Roots youth group that present the perspective of participation in, and the real life experience of, being a Zoroastrian. These emic forms of evidence and investigation fill a gap in the current literature and are especially relevant to gaining a true understanding of the Zoroastrian community.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided insight into the research methods to be employed in investigating the nexus between ZDP:ASV. It has provided a rationale for the conceptual framework as well as the use of qualitative data collection techniques. The constructs that will be used to analyse the qualitative data from Chapter 3 are drawn from multiple discipline areas, but Jafari’s (1987) Tourist Model and its 6 stages are the principal theoretical model used to ‘explain’ the narrative of pilgrimage to Iran.

Research for this study employs a qualitative paradigm using auto-ethnography, PAR, and the thematic analysis of secondary data materials including Zoroastrian community publications and online websites. Data from PAR (Hughes and Seymour-Rolls, 2000) was collected primarily through visitation to Iran. Travel to Iran was undertaken for 3 weeks through an organised tour ‘The Complete Iran Experience with SillooM’. PAR encompassed other activities including data collected at events such as ‘The Everlasting Flame’, a festival celebrating Zoroastrian art, literature, culture, religion and the revival of ancient crafts. Additional primary data was sourced from post-pilgrimage activities including my service as President of the Australian Zoroastrian Association of NSW’ (2015-2016 and 2017-2018) and several years as a Sunday School Teacher for 11-14 year olds at the AZA. Participation in other exhibitions and forums dedicated to the promotion of Zoroastrianism (Tales From The East: India and New South Wales (TFTE), Peace Day Services at the Uniting Church (2013-2019) and the workshop ‘What Next for the Sydney Zoroastrian Community?’ are part of the narrative of post-pilgrimage that will be considered in Chapter 4. Secondary sources of data analysed included literature from online sources and Zoroastrian publications and community forums. These secondary sources address an important criticism that is often levelled at qualitative studies, that is, the lack of empiricism and generalisable data in the absence of quantitative data collection. Suggestions for future positivc studies are offered as part of the recommendations in Chapter 4.

Conceptual frameworks were used to interrogate the experiences of Zoroastrian pilgrimage. The principal one was Jafari’s (1987) Tourist Model, used to frame the descriptions of pilgrimage to Iran. The concept of ‘Rejuvenation’ is appropriated and used in a modified way deriving from Butler’s 1980 Tourism Area Life Cycle model. Plog (2001) and Cohen (1979) were used to describe tourist and pilgrim typology and Systems Theory of Tourism (Leiper, 1979) were used to illustrate some of the mechanics of pilgrimage as part of a larger system and general environment, of Tourist, Tourism and the Tourism Industry. The literature around travel for spiritual reasons and personal-growth was illustrated using Norman (2011), Collins-Kreiner (2010), ritual (Grimes, 2000) communitas and
pilgrimage as ethno drama (Turner, 1973). Models of change both personal and organisational were canvassed using Lewin’s (1940) phases of; Unfreeze, Change and Refreeze, and the role of reflection (Schon and Argyris, 2012 and McIntosh, 2010) leading to significant changes in life and self-identity as a consequence of pilgrimage.
CHAPTER THREE

Pilgrimage: Australia to Iran
25 April to 13 May 2015

Statement of Argument:
The purpose of Chapter Three is to illustrate the ‘journalling’ of the twenty-one days of pilgrimage in Iran. This primary data was collected using Authoethnography and Participatory Action Research. The narrative style of presentation commences with a description of the significance of each day ‘Raj’ related to the Zoroastrian calendar. The narrative contains information about the sites visited, the religious observances, reflection in action and reflection on action (Schon and Argyris) and group and personal dynamics and conversations. The diary approach focuses on aspects of nostalgia, religious, self-identification, and elements of pilgrimage that mirror secular touristhood and concerns of accommodation, travel, visitation and host guest relations. Photographs and historical commentary illustrating the daily narrative are presented in Appendices at the end of the thesis and should be read in conjunction with Chapter 3.

Chapter Two elaborated on the conceptual frameworks that guided the study, most notably The Tourist Model (Jafari, 1987) employing the springboard metaphor to explain the ‘cycle’ of touristhood. This ‘cycle’ is applied to the act of pilgrimage. The model and its six stages is replicated here with a focus on Corporation, Emancipation, Animation and Repatriation. Incorporation and Omission are discussed in detail in Chapter 4 because “my” pilgrimage while experiencing Repatriation commenced a second cycle of Animation almost immediately following in the form of secular travel. Additionally, the period of Incorporation and smaller ‘pilgrimages’ and experiencing elements of the springboard metaphor, particularly around Animation, are represented in subsequent deliberate actions both of physical travel and travel of the mind. Going on pilgrimage to Iran opened my eyes to seeing elements of pilgrimage (sacred and secular) in subsequent travel journeys and even actions in my ‘profane’ life. This change in my ‘mental models’ that govern everyday life are part of the reflection (after action) cycle and the remnants of PAR which are now endemic to my profane life. For example, they include certain ritual practices around specific prayers and dietary practices.

Recommencing the animation phase immediately after pilgrimage to Iran by experiencing secular travel to Turkey in 2015, took on overtones of secular/spiritual pilgrimage as it involved forms of war/dark/battlefield tourism with visits to Gallipoli, cemeteries and participation in a dawn ceremony with the reveille being played and a remembrance of the fallen. Additionally, hearing the talk of ‘experts’ (tourisiers as interpreters) came in the form of testimony from a Victoria Cross awardee and a subsequent talk by a Turkish academic about the ‘sites’ and memorials. Visitation to Gallipoli is considered a particularly significant marker of ‘Australian identity’. It is an area well researched and classified variously as ‘thanatourism’ (dark tourism), battlefield tourism and heritage tourism. Authors like Lynne Dore, (2006); Kadir Cakar (2018) and Felicity Cheal and Tony Griffin (2013) all refer to the ‘sacralisation’, emotion, identity (national and personal) and even the commercialisation of dark tourism as a niche product which veers into ‘pilgrimage’. This has implications for the ‘interpretations’ of Zoroastrian specific sites in Iran. The six stages of Jafari’s tourist model could equally be applied to this form of dark tourism as to more conventional ‘pilgrimage’. These six stages are reiterated below to contextualise and embed the stages to my own narrative. The focus of this chapter however, is the Animation phase.

1. Corporation (Emission)
2. Emancipation (Separation and Declaration)
3. Animation (Orientation and Valediction)
4. Repatriation (Reversion and Submission)
5. Incorporation (Emulsion)
6. Omission

A recognition of Jafari’s (1987) Tourist Model of the Springboard Metaphor, representing Animation (B-C in Fig 1) and the push and pull factors of escaping the ordinary (Profane/Ordinary) to experience the Sacred (Pilgrimage tourism/Non-ordinary) are the genesis for the ‘cycle’ in ZDP:ASV. Cohen’s (1979) and Turner’s (1973) work weave similar narratives describing as they do the ‘phenomenology of tourist experience’ (Cohen, 1979, p.182) to include “Traditional pilgrimage is essentially a movement from the profane periphery towards the sacred centre of the religious cosmos” and Turner’s (1973, p.197) assertion: “Sacred” … means “consecrated or held dear to a deity…dedicated or reserved or appropriated to some person or purpose; made holy by religious association, hallowed”. However, Turner’s definition of pilgrimage as per the Jewish Encyclopaedia did not apply to Zoroastrian pilgrimage in the context of ZDP:ASV as “a journey which is made to a shrine or sacred place in the performance of a vow or for the sake of obtaining some form of divine blessing”. Given that Zoroastrian pilgrimage does not exist as a formal construct or ritual obligation in the religion, each pilgrim ‘shapes’ their own journey and ‘quest’. The common denominators of animation, sacredness and escape from the ordinary, espoused in the Jafari Tourist Model however, remain constant.

Figure 1. The springboard metaphor.

Figure 2. The ordinary – nonordinary structure.

Motivations for pilgrimage form action in the first stage ‘Corporation’ with Emission the resultant act of travel commencement. However, occasionally Emission may be delayed, as was the case for me. I start the narrative of pilgrimage with my first aborted attempt in 2014. Motivations and my rationale for going on pilgrimage to Iran have been described in detail in both the Introduction and Chapter 1.

Figure 3. The corporation component.

Corporation had commenced several years ahead of my actual travel to Iran. In fact, the seed had been planted almost as soon as I started my PhD studies. Emission had been delayed as the mechanics of travel and vagaries of logistics involved in travel and obliquely referred to in the discussion on barriers and constraints to travel do not adequately explain my ‘aborted’ efforts of 2014. Briefly, travel to Iran with the group involved the requirement for a ‘tour approval number’ that has to be provided by specially licenced tour agents in Tehran. Our tourisier had for some reason (monetary perhaps) decided to try a ‘new’ agent in 2014. The long and short of it was the the tour number failed to materialise which meant that pilgrims like me were unable to get our visas from Canberra. The tour was postponed, my leave from work ran out and travel in May in Iran was far too hot for my constitution (especially considering the strictures of appropriate dress). All of this was sorted in 2015 and pilgrimage was back on with the added bonus of having two co-travellers from Melbourne with whom I corresponded and spoke with as we experienced the extremely complicated process of trying to get an Iranian visa from Canberra.
By the time 2015 began, I was well and truly ready to make my pilgrimage. During the Corporation phase, I had fantastically imagined that I would learn some basic Farsi to be able to communicate but the ‘profane’ life intervened as it inevitably does and my intentions to learn basic Farsi never materialised (an oversight I regretted greatly). Later contemplations and reflections on the pilgrimage highlighted for me how much more satisfactory the trip would have been if I could follow Farsi. As Jafari had explained many years ago to my graduate class, the tourisier (intermediary, whether hospitality provider, tour guide or service provider) shapes the ‘view’ of the experience and destination. Linguistic misinterpretations including the understanding of jokes and ‘insider’ comments nuanced by language are often lost in translation when one has to rely on an interpreter.

Jafari (1987) in describing the tourist model ascribes the feelings a tourist experiences in the phase he calls ‘Emancipation’. He further divides this phase into separation and declaration. My experience of this was phase was overwhelming when I commenced my journey to Iran, it started on a rain swept day in Sydney waking early and preparing for a departure to the airport. An “unhappy” traveller at the best of time, I was carrying more than just physical baggage. My cultural and metaphorical baggage weighed me down. The previous stage of Corporation had been fraught with visa difficulties, anxiety about the unknown and a deep gnawing worry that I was making a huge mistake leaving the safe surrounds of my home in Sydney to embark on a trip to Iran with a group of people I had never met to a country where I did not speak the language. There were worries about whether I had taken the “right” accoutrements of a pilgrim; prayer book, scarf, my sacred vests and girdle (kusti). My anxieties ran the gamut from the sacred to the profane as evidenced by my worries about whether my favourite prayer book was going to suffice, to whether I was going to have internet access to connect back with loved ones. It was the fear of the unknown, compounded by unfamiliarity, at least when I travelled to India I could speak the language, knew the culture and how to dress. Going to Iran, these familiarities were denied to me. Additionally, my anxieties were heightened by the Anglicisation of my brain and attitudes that had occurred living in the United States and Australia for the last 30 years. Demonisation and negative publicity of Iran as a destination and travel through the Middle East had become deeply ingrained in my ‘new’ identity as an Australian migrant. I was experiencing a deep sense of disconnect and cognitive dissonance about my identity as neither Australian nor Indian. I clung on to the only certainty in my life,
I was a Zoroastrian first and everything else was peripheral. Pilgrimage and connection were the lynchpins of my journey and were going to be the narrative of my trip.

I checked for the hundredth time whether I had my mandatory scarf to cover my head when I landed in Tehran. All the advances of the last so many years in terms of globalisation, aviation and telecommunications seemed redundant as I commenced the physical act of travel to the airport. Bad weather at the Tourist Generating Region, i.e. Sydney (Leiper 1987) and petty irritations and intolerances were tested when asked to open my hand luggage by the customs official. My catastrophising brain saw this as a portent of things to come and the foolishness of embarking on such an ‘adventure’ for a non-traveller like myself. Minor irritations began to magnify this theme of fixating on minor matters recurs with frequency in accounts of ‘reluctant travellers’ and as a psychological barrier when dealing with the intangibles of customer service. Mathieson and Wall (1982) sum up this disjunct as the ‘unequal and unbalanced’ experiences of host and guest. To the guest, everything is novel, and during my bag inspection, I failed to reflect-in-action, that the customs official was simply doing their job and that I was simply one more of the estimated 149,096,001 travellers that went through Sydney airport in 2015. (https://www.bitre.gov.au/publications/ongoing/airport_traffic_data)

Jafari’s (1987) reference to ‘Separation’ is compounded when schedules and circumstances beyond your control occur. I tortured myself with catastrophic thoughts as the plane sat grounded on the tarmac in Sydney for two hours due to the rain and stormy conditions. The ongoing quarrel between the irate Iranian woman with two young children and the cabin crew did nothing to appease my gloom and self-doubt about this “journeying”. I tried to slip into “pilgrim” mode by praying but my mind constantly wandered into profane territory i.e. the logistics of international travel. I agitated about missing my connection to Tehran and landing late at night in Tehran. What would happen if the assigned driver were not there to collect me? How would I get to the hotel; I had no rials only US dollars and I was a woman travelling on my own. Small irritations like not being familiar with the AV system of the airline began an insistent tattoo in my head. Jafari’s assertion that travel was more than spatial markers and included a breaking away “in the mind” (p. 153) was proving difficult. This state of “mind” and inability to ‘separate’ lasted all the way to Dubai but was somewhat appeased by having the luxury of an extra seat next to me and as I started the transition to ‘Declaration’ donning the ‘mask’, disguising my real identity and transitioning into the ‘non-ordinary’ or surreal as the cynic would say. I was moving to Emancipation manifested by my tamping down of my instinctual urge to assist the quarrelsome Iranian woman with her two youngsters. I rationalised this ‘emancipation’ – this was my time, all three weeks of it.

“The new soul begins to take a firmer hold of the body and mind in which it assumes residency during the sojourn. The tourist - ‘adequately’ masked, attired. Equipped, and transformed - has now entered the state of touristhood (Jafari, 1987, p.153).

My emancipation was furthered by my expensive phone call to the tour organiser to inform her that I had missed my flight to Tehran and failed to join the rest of the group in Dubai. Separation was mitigated by the sense of familiarity that stole over me at Dubai airport – it swarmed with Indians, had Indian eateries and plenty of Indian airline staff. I would be all right I rationalised, as I could revert to Hindi if my communication in English failed to achieve the desired message. I had time to ‘separate’ further as I waited to make my connecting flight and wondered why everyone raved about Dubai airport. A more literal separation had come with the US$10 that I had been charged to make a two-minute call to Tehran from a Business Centre (as my mobile did not work) to tell our tour leader that I had missed my connecting flight and would need to have someone pick me up separately (the group I was to join had already taken off by the time my flight landed) at the airport. ‘Could they please have a board with my name on it?’ I requested, fearing taxi tout (a legacy of arrival experiences at Indian airports).

An uneventful and comfortable flight followed and I dutifully donned my headscarf, pulled my trousers low to ensure no ankle was showing when reminded to do so by the airline crew. An extremely rapid transition through immigration and non-existent customs at Tehran airport left me marvelling – all my
fears were unfounded. This was the easiest, most pleasant experience I had ever had of an airport. This euphoria at the profane, however was muted by a niggling sense of disappointment in the sacred – where was the instantaneous connection to my ancient motherland that I was supposed to experience in my limbic brain identifying me as a Zoroastrian? In retrospect I now realise that airports are hardly the place to experience these connections as one is still in the bland tourism ‘bubble’ governed by similar legal processes all over the world. I walked out of Customs and was met by Manucher (who much to my relief had a board with my name on it). Manuchehr was the major domo of our tour group, and a ‘host’ in the truest sense as he chaperoned us on our trip and pandered to our every whim. Manucher’s hospitality allowed a glimpse of the ‘real Iran’ through a visit to his Bakhtiyari tribal relatives’ home. At their home, we had a resplendent heartfelt reading of the *Shahnameh*, which despite being in Farsi transported us to the time of Ferdowsi. Manuchehr seized my trolley and set a brisk pace towards the airport carpark.

Entire families seemed to be using the airport carpark as a recreational/entertainment venue – the ladies looked like a flock of black geese, the open boots of cars revealed whole watermelons rolling around and people picnicking (a particularly Iranian trait as I was to discover) adding to my sense of unreality. Driving away from the airport on what are definitely some of the finest roads I have ever seen in the world, trying to communicate and work out Manucher’s role in our journey was an interesting exercise. Part of my ‘emission’ phase (as part of Corporation) had involved talking to friends who had already been with our tour leader. They had referred to Manucher and his role as a ‘tourisier’ but I was still somewhat befuddled given the linguistic barriers. By now, I had given myself over to the experience and entered the non-ordinary dimension of pilgrimage. Checking into the hotel, having my passport taken away (required by law in Iran for foreigners) and then being made to change rooms just as I had settled in for the night, all made for an interesting experience. As I crashed into oblivion, I had made the ‘separation’ and achieved emancipation. Jafar Jafari would have been proud of me – as his student I was well on my way to creating the ‘story’ of my pilgrimage.

**Innovative Perceptions that Emerge Animation in Pilgrimage Travel**

The phase of Animation as per Jafari’s model has two phases: Orientation and Valediction. The ordinary, temporal and spatial aspects of the past became increasingly distant as I made my way to the dining hall for the breakfast buffet on Day 1 and was greeted with a plethora of exotic foods and no women sitting on their own. I tentatively approached a group who appeared Indian and found to my relief they were part of the group – we were going to be together for the next 21 days – time to get “orientated” and let ‘touristdom’ take over. The rather unusual breakfast items including vegetables and an assortment of unfamiliar cheeses heralded the first day of the three-week sojourn. By the end of our pilgrimage, we were all dab hands at identifying our favourite breakfast foods at the buffet.

The next twenty-one days of ‘journeying’ involved crisscrossing the country, experiencing all manner of transportation modes – rail, air and our very own luxury coach. Tehran, Namak Abrud, Ramsar, Qazvin, Hamedan, Kermanshah, Esfahan, Shiraz, Shahr-e-Kord, Yazd, Maashad and Tus were all visited. However, in sharp contrast to Jafari’s examples of animation and the five S’s of tourism (Snow, Sun, Surf, Sand, Sex and a sixth Sin) there was a reverse animation in the case of us pilgrims. While there were moments of levity particularly with one of our group members having a wellspring of jokes at the ready, our behaviour was circumspect ranging from attire to moderated language. The average age of group was sixty-five, the oldest being seventy-nine and I the youngest at fifty. A submersion into the religion and historical heritage dominated the animation phase of our pilgrimage. Touristic sanctuaries ranged from ‘escaping’ into our hotel rooms at the end of a long day to our tourisiers having to translate even the most basic requests when we ventured out shopping. Our contacts with locals was through the lens of touristdom and the overt moments of animations came while dressing as Bakhtiyari tribals and hearing the exploits of the brave *pehlwan* (warrior) Rustam enacted and recited for us by an auteur in front the friezes at the tomb of Firdausi. Animation was expressed through ‘bonding’ and the different roles assumed by different people in the group, i.e. the pulling on of the ‘mask’ whether for emancipation and distance from the home culture or to disguise oneself to fit in more readily with the local hosts. As
the ‘baby’ of the group, I appointed myself ‘guardian’ of two of the more elderly women who in turn cocooned me and incorporated me into their ‘coupledom’ routines with their husbands.

Food practices are an area of contention in the animation phase as the pleasures of eating exotic foods pale after a while. Our ‘tourisier’ an experienced expert had learned that while her ‘flock’ of pilgrims sought out the exotic (travel to Iran), comforts of home particularly around ‘home cooked’ and familiar foods was essential. Parsi meals would be prepared in scenic locations on two small gas cylinders and regular stops for saffron ice creams, dried and fresh fruit and nuts all became part of the emancipation. Fresh cream with leavened bread were consumed with gusto with no thought of calories or richness, indulging in the ‘non–ordinary’ by people used to being disciplined with their foods and consumption in their ‘ordinary’ domain. Animation of the mind became a feature, hedonism not in behaviour but in knowledge acquisition and dispersion. Freed from the constraints of the ordinary, as pilgrims we immersed ourselves in stories of religion, heritage and practice. Prayers were offered to the river, mountains, plants, places of worship, water and to valiant ancestors. The reading of a story/play in the Pir-e-Banu (place of pilgrimage) telling the story of Princess Banu’s flight from the Arab invaders) and conviction in the ‘flying fires’ were all manifestations of the ‘non-ordinary flotation’ that is Animation as described by Jafari.

Traditionally the Animation phase is construed as the four S’s of tourism Sun, Sand, Sea and Sex, skimpy attire and animated behaviour without a care for financial or safety consequences mobile phone at the ready to take photographs and a general profligacy ‘acting like a King or Queen for the day’ are the common stereotypes of touristhood. However, a form of ‘reverse’ animation occurred in pilgrimage, with us covered head to toe (even men did not wear shorts) and the only ‘Sun’ we got was when in Yazd having the desert sun beating down on us. However, becoming the object of others tourism practice (See Figure 5) in ‘animation’ occurred when tourists peered into the sacred fire space and devotees like us as we worshipped at the AtashBehram in Shiraz. The feeling of being a museum exhibit and the inherent
dichotomies associated with tourists being allowed to ‘photograph’ the sacred flame whilst forbidden and considered sacrilegious to the pilgrim/worshipper, highlighted these reverse forms of animation. Sacrosanct rituals, devotions and modest behaviours for fear of censure bind the pilgrim from fellow pilgrims and as being inimical to the very nature of pilgrimage. No such constraints apply to the ‘tourist’ and as pilgrims and tourists jostled for space in common exhibition areas a feeling of hostility grew in me. Critical reflection of this hostility brought to mind readings and studies on host guest hospitality/hostility (Smith 2012; Sheringham and Daruwalla 2007). If ‘animation’ in pilgrim behaviour had to be described, it would relate more to instances of prostrating oneself in physical contortions that one would never consider in the ‘profane’ routine parts one’s lives for fear of injury or inability to rise from the floor.

Fig 3.6: Tourist taking photo of pilgrims and sacred fire (worshippers can be seen to the left of the flame)

As ‘valediction’ drew nearer and we started to move into the Repatriation and return phase, animation was tinged with both sadness and joy. Sadness at the prospect that one might never meet fellow pilgrims again not just because of the age but the distance factors that constrained frequent travel between the continents. However, the joy of an imminent return to ‘home’ and the ordinary helped cement the wonders of the journeying as did ‘escape’ from a particularly difficult co-pilgrim who had been tolerated but not embraced despite the nature of pilgrimage and wanting to live by good thoughts, words and action.

Reversion and Repatriation to the ‘ordinary’ sphere beckons every traveller. Like the “Adjourning” phase in Bruce Tuckman’s (Tuckman and Jensen 1977) group development model this phase was marked with a sense of relief that one would never have to interact with a particular fellow pilgrim and grief at the prospect of perhaps never seeing others where there were deep bonds formed. Reversion commenced with a farewell dinner combined with a birthday celebration for our beloved tourisier and group leader. More practical forms of reversion included settling the hotel bills and making sure to be in lobby in the middle of the night for the transfer to the airport. Other forms of reversion became apparent as women whipped off their headscarves as soon as they had boarded the flight. This mental image was brought to mind recently in the movie ‘Ali’s Wedding’ where the migrant Iraqi refugee family leave Iran for a new life in Australia and women are showing whipping off their headscarves and shaking
out their hair with an abandon and zeal that has the audience who understand the constraints guffawing in mirth. I was able to relate to this ‘freeing’ as I left Tehran.

In my case, the process of reversion was delayed as I “stopped off” in Turkey and experienced secular leisure tourism. This added journeying delayed ‘submission’ for a period of a week and re-integration to ordinary life was eased by this side journey. Turkey was a total contrast – luxury abounded, liberality and an immersion back into the “Aussie” culture, re-asserted itself as I joined a group of Australian and New Zealander merry-maker’s intent on hedonism – as they were on an incentive trip through meeting successful sales targets. The hedonistic nature of the trip to Turkey was a stark contrast and more ‘familiar’ than pilgrimage but I found myself comparing destinations, experiences and even historical events to pilgrimage.

A more traditional form of animation re-asserted itself with occasional lapses back to pilgrim mode when places like the Blue Mosque, Troy and Anzac cove were on the itinerary. All of these provided a foil to the previous experience – secular pilgrimage redolent with meaning to other parts of my identity. Lapses into ‘pilgrim’ mode were felt most acutely when we visited Gallipoli for a dawn service and listened to the Last Post being played and Mark Donaldson holder of a Victoria Cross medal talk about sacrifices and service. Australia, my adopted homeland and the valiant men and women who had sacrificed and endured to guarantee the freedoms we enjoy today reminded me of stories that I had heard on pilgrimage. Stories of our ancestors who fought and endured untold injustices ranging from the Jaziya (tax) imposed on them to public condemnation, travails, hardship and having to be secret about their faith in order to ensure that Zoroastrianism could still exist in today’s world. The rows of war graves recalled visits to the Pirs (sacred shrines where members of the last Zoroastrian king Yezdegard escaped to prevent capture by the invaders) on pilgrimage.

Jafari’s (1987) lament that Repatriation is one of the most under researched areas still holds true. While feedback surveys are often, the norm of many services these days there is still little written about the “return”. Norman (2011) alludes to this conundrum in his exploration of the theories of Leisured Travel (Chapter 5) stating categorically “the focus of this chapter is the practice of travelling, not subjective analysis of the qualities of travellers lives upon return” (p.110). Questions about travel and pilgrimage more particularly as being “idealized visions of themselves and their worlds” (ibid.) persist long after the Incorporation stage.

Emulsion leading to Incorporation back into the ‘ordinary’ life begins the return from emancipation phases in the travel experience. Emulsion, which is diametrically opposed to the Emission phase when starting the journeying, takes on many forms. The sense of inertia, lethargy and anomie all return to me. There is the slow seeping realisation that people’s eyes glaze over when I start my sentences “In Iran…” hastens my incorporation into the humdrum of life. Unpacking, washing, sorting through pictures and trying to recall the feelings behind expressions and comments in my digital journal maintained as notes on my IPad are all markers of the repatriation being complete. Brief glimpses of the ‘journeying’ reveal themselves every time a souvenir or gift is handed over. I feel impelled to tell the recipient of the antecedents of the gift and its significance. I become a one-person mouthpiece proselytising to other Zoroastrians about the need to put Iran on their bucket list. My renewed faith and sense of identity as a Zoroastrian is confirmed but in a more informed and knowledgeable way. The Lonely Planet guide to Iran is dipped into for “refreshers” and to help with formalising the journal entries. My incorporation back into the ‘profane’ is delayed as immediately upon my return I am invited to be a panellist on the future of Zoroastrianism at our local Australian Zoroastrian Association of New South Wales. This vibrant event ‘What next for the Sydney Zoroastrian Community?’ (See Figures 6 and 7) has been organised by dynamic youth leaders of the community and I get the opportunity to pontificate with some credibility (as a returned pilgrim) on the role of history and diasporic Zoroastrianism in the continuity and vitality of the faith. However, incorporation is completed the following Monday as I return to work and the minutiae of routine.

The purpose of incorporating this synopsis of the Jafari (1987) Tourist Model cycle applied to my pilgrimage was to provide an overview of the six stages and their application. The next section of the
thesis is a daily narrative. Built into this narrative is a loose format where each day starts with an explanation of the significance of and naming of the day in the Shenshahi calendar. Elements of ‘touristdom’ including places we visited and their significance, literature describing the cultural, heritage or religious aspects of the attraction are ruminated on and my own feelings and ‘connections’ for the day described. The element of AE and my own singular view of the ‘feelings’ is incorporated into the narrative in order to illustrate the profound ‘personalisation’ of the experience. These personal observations /feelings directly affect the experience of pilgrimage. Tropes alluding to ‘experience’ and the ‘experience economy’ (Chang, 2018a and 2018b) are well established in the hospitality and tourism literature. Jesse Walker, Amit Kumar and Thomas Gilovich (2016) and Amanda Macmillan (2016) note that ‘experiential consumption’ as opposed to ‘material consumption’ cultivate “beneficial emotion” and improvements to everyday life in addition to making them more grateful and giving. When combined with some of the implied qualities inherent in pilgrimage especially around thankfulness and piety through acts of kindness and generosity, Seohee Chang (2018a, p. 62) clearly distinguishes between experience and service economies highlighting that good experiences increase revenue and increase customer expectations of ‘future’ experiences with the product and service. Interestingly, this is particularly true of contexts as “festivals, museums or natural environments where experiential components may be considered more important than in restaurants or hotels, where more structured service systems are provided to guests”. In the case of pilgrimage, Chang’s (2018b) assertion that “emotion precedes rationality and thus that future prediction and decision making are based on an assessment of hedonic quality” is a truism. This use of “heuristic system to reduce cognitive complexity because such a system uses a shortcut to information stored in memory” is borne out in Mariana de Freitas Coelho, Marialuisa de Selvila Gosling and Antonio Sergio Araujo de Almeida’s (2018, p.11) article on the role of “Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE)” containing elements of ambience, socialization and emotions and reflections as being significant in ‘sense making and meaningful’ experiences in hospitality and tourism. The move of tourism experiences from rationality and physical service attributes to “enhancement of subjective perceptions and travellers emotional involvement” and encompassing of both negative and positive “feelings” toward the experience are particularly applicable to narratives and my own daily ‘journaling’ presented in this chapter.
Like all first days of any new experience, the butterflies in the stomach are acute for me. I had commenced the day meeting some of my fellow pilgrims at the hotel breakfast buffet. We had then congregated in the foyer introducing ourselves as we waited for our tour guide to corral us onto the bus. It was Adar Roj and Adar Maino – a fitting tribute to start the pilgrimage with a visit to the Adrian Fire Temple. Adar is Fire and the name of my beloved nephew (who was much longed for, is an only child and whose arrival helped boost the dwindling numbers of Zoroastrians). Research indicates that the term Adar means Illustrious and Exalted and in the Yasna’s referred to as ‘son of Ahura Mazda’. Additionally, Jewish people celebrate Purim (deliverance from death decree dating to 4BCE) in the Hebrew month of Adar, which usually falls in February/ March. 

The Adrian was built in 1917 with funds from benefactor Behramjee Bhicajee (of the Bhika Behram Koooa (Well) in Mumbai) we were immediately struck by the façade of the building. Registered as one of the National Monuments of Iran, it is considered a heritage site, and maintained as such, and no person is allowed to deface it. We meet Mobed Merzban Mobed Firuzgari, one of the most prominent priests in Iran [see: Figure 4]. Occasionally referred to as the ‘High Priest of Iran,’ Mobed Firuzgari pointed out that he has no claim to this title, because in Iran there is no ‘High Priest,’ and the Head position of the Priest’s Association rotates between different people. We were introduced to a young man named Behrad Mistry, who was in training to be a Mobediya (lay/para priest). Behrad’s flawless grasp of English endeared him to all of us but I was even more fascinated as conversation revealed that he was doing a Master’s thesis on the writing of Rohinton Mistry. We chatted amicably about my collection of Parsi literature including Bapsi Sidhwa, Bachi Karkaria, Kaizad Gustad, Gustasp Irani, Armin Wandrewala, Farrukh Dhondy, Meher Pashajee, Khorshed Jhaveri and Ardashir Vakeel. Having relatives in both India and Australia, whom he visited regularly, gave us an instant point of connection. Zoroastrians (and Parsis in particular) are intertwined because they are such a small community, with the joke being “there is no such thing as six degrees of separation”. Rules regarding non-conversion and the smallness of the community inevitably mean that relatives, friends, or friends-of-friends, are seen as an international ‘family’ where it is acceptable to make fun of each other. The connection with my co-pilgrims, who were all Parsis of Indian or Pakistani origin, became more and more important as the tour went on.

After offering our devotions [see: Figure 1] and marvelling at the differences between Iranian Atash Kadehs (Fire Temple, known as Agiyari in India), Mobed Firuzgari explained some of the inherent variances in Iranian and Indian rituals. First was the absence of the washing station inside the Atash Kadeh with a basin outside that was used by both men and women, the shoehooks hanging outside to assist with removal and putting back of shoes before entering the sanctum, and the absence of a bench for the less flexible take off their shoes with greater ease. The lack of a separate enclosure for women to do their kusti was noted but those of us in the diaspora seemed unfazed as we are used to this. The attire of the priest was dissimilar to the Indian style of dress that normally includes the long white muslin jamo with a stiffly starched cotton cummerbund, a pagree (white turban) and leather slippers which can be slid on and off before entering the sanctum sanctorum [see: Figure 3]. Mobed Firuzgari had a white coat and trousers, shoes and a white cap [see: Figure 4]. This became the norm and we stopped remarking on it as we travelled through Iran and visited different Atash Kadehs and met various priests. Unlike the Namaste (that is Hindu in origin) used in prayer utterances in India, in Iran, upturned palms are used [see Figure 2]. We noted the lifting of the forefinger during the prayers for Afrinami (demonstrating belief in one God), the use of two fingers for Vispa Khathrem (representing two worlds, good and bad), and the kissing of fingers and touching the forehead to indicate blessings. We were encouraged to practice these when we visited the Shah Behram Izad shrine and listened to Mobed Firuzgari conduct, and pray a jashan for us. Mobed Firuzgari’s fame preceded him, I had heard about him from friends who had visited Iran earlier with Sillooom Following their pilgrimage, many pilgrims turned to Firzugari’s YouTube videos as meditation tools. For a sample of his dulcet tones, listen to him praying (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIJX0KAr-Vag). Conservatives may consider the background music heretical, but for the more liberal, it adds to the sanctity of the intonation and vibrations
Our next stop was the Shah Behram Izad shrine; a rare ‘hidden’ jewel much favoured by SillooM our tour doyenne. It is said to have magical properties and was built by Behram Shah when his wish to have a child was fulfilled. Many pilgrims go there to pray or take a manat (undertaking/vow) and should their wish (usually concerning children) be fulfilled they will come back and have a jashan prayed there. The Zoroastrian family shop provides bottles of oil to keep the lamps burning. I am intrigued because in India we are used to ‘paying’ for a divo but here it is an entire bottle of oil. The reason behind this becomes clear when we see the large votives. Along with the oil are ‘souvenir’ items for sale made by Zoroastrian families including miniature ‘Avesta’s’ the size of a matchbox. The presence of the Grandfather clock at the shrine strikes a note of familiarity as they are treasured in both Agiyaris and were prevalent in the homes of the rich Parsis of yesteryears. In fact, they had given rise to an entire ‘guild’ of persons called Ghadiai (i.e. ‘person who looks after clocks and watches’). I am reminded of my mother’s uncle (surname Ghadiali) whose job it was to go to the homes of rich Parsis and service their clocks. I think of my own home in Sydney where a prized family heirloom bequeathed to my husband, and ‘restored’ in Mumbai, happily chimes bringing waves of nostalgia to my husband and I. We would have been completely oblivious to the clock’s charms it if we had continued to live in India and as youngsters we were embarrassed by our parent’s collection of ‘antiques and heirlooms’ and longed for ‘modern’ things. The clock is no longer viewed as a relic but a treasured and vital link to the notional idea of ‘home’.

There are animated discussions amongst us right through the pilgrimage about the value of these heirlooms to our children and grandchildren. Those of us in the diaspora lament the ease of acquisition of modern goods and the distinct lack of sentimentality for antiques. Suketu Mehta (2004) writing in his book Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found summed it up speaking of the “showcase in the living room” in their home in Bombay where all “imported” things would be displayed as evidence of “foreign trips” and “kids in the building would assemble around the showcase and look up at the toys inside, toys we weren’t allowed to touch for fear of breaking them” (p. 7). Of course being Parsis our ‘showcases’ tended to be several, and usually contained heirlooms ranging from Chinese and Japanese satsuma and porcelain, to silver and glass objet d’art including Lalique, Wedgewood, Royal Doulton, Baccarat crystal and ivory.

The role of education in Zoroastrianism became very prominent on the first day of the pilgrimage. Throughout the trip, we were reminded of how the lack of education was used to subjugate the Zoroastrians by the Arab invaders and rulers. Illiteracy was used as a tool of genocide and oppression and this topic recurred frequently in our travel ‘homilies’. I was shocked by my ignorance on the role of Limji Hataria and Peshotanji (Pestonji) Marker who are revered to this day. Mobed Firuzgari and Malcolm, (our tour guide) in his various ‘lessons’ during our trip reminded us that this lack of education combined with the Jaziya (tax) imposed on the Zoroastrians and other persecutions contributed to the reduced numbers of Zoroastrians in Iran as they either fled or were killed. Hataria inspired Marker to set up schools in Yazd, Kerman and even in Tehran. The story of how Hataria and Marker came to be involved in the Parsi Amelioration Committee, which oversaw the flow of funds to assist Zoroastrians in Iran, is fascinating to those of us in the diaspora who have benefitted from the reverse flow of funds from diasporic Iranian Zoroastrians to build our Darbe Mehrs (Community Centres). This two-way flow resonated with a number of us as we animatedly discussed our diasporic communities (Australia, US and Canada). We visited the Marker Traffic circle referred to as the Midaneh Sa’at Markar known as the Marker Clock Plaza situated on the road to Kerman when we are in Yazd [see: Figure 5], Choksy (2006, p.328) explains the origins of the term Darbe Mehr as meaning the “court of Mithra” with mentions in the “fifteenth century as attested in the Persian Revayats, “Treatises” (written 1478-1773). These buildings house sacred fires and are the term commonly used in the diaspora to distinguish them from the fire temple building ‘agiary’ used by Parsis. The sacred fire in the altar (kebha) area in the Darbe Mehr is lit when the community gathers as opposed to an agiary fire, which is tended 24 hours. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most diasporic Parsis had never heard the expression until
they migrated and sought out other Zoroastrians in their new ‘homelands’.

The teacher in me immediately latched onto any information relating to education as I have always had a strong conviction (instilled by my parents) that education is the key to success and independence. My mother was a particular inspiration and her work with the Tatas and in the local Zoroastrian community, setting up schools and serving as a Board member of assorted schools in Jamshedpur, are always in my mind. Throughout the trip, memories of my mother rear up in my mind and I regret not having gone on this trip earlier with her. I often think of my much-loved mother-in-law as well, who always wanted to visit Iran and I wished that I could have brought both of them with me. They would have loved it. Perhaps this explains my immediate and close bond with both SillooM (our tour leader) and Silloo D one of my co-pilgrims. Two strong women, who share my mother’s name, showered me with love and generously shared their vast knowledge on Zoroastrianism without reservation. I was excited when I discovered that Silloo D. and I are related, albeit distantly. Accounts of genealogy were frequently discussed and I recounted with great relish the story of my son Cyrus’s great disappointment at not finding an Australian ancestor when his primary school took them on a field trip, and he could find no Daruwalla or Surti listed among the convicts. The idea of ‘ancestors’ was slowly embedding itself in our conscious and this grew as the trip progressed and we heard the stories of ancient valour and the depredations suffered by Iranian Zoroastrians who did not convert and stood strong in their faith. We felt a debt to our ancestors is during the pilgrimage as we saw more and more evidence of their suffering. This cogitation on ancestry lends itself to discussions of identity and the nature of diasporic self-identification for both oneself and our children.

To the right of the Atash Kadeh is the Firooz Bahram School for boys. Constructed in 1932, it is one of the oldest schools in Iran and was built on land owned by Zoroastrians in the Qajar style, sporting the Zoroastrian symbol of a Farohar at the entrance. The School’s name derives from an Iranian Zoroastrian that died in World War 1. We were excited to see the stained glass Farohar but it began to dawn on us that the Farohar is not necessarily a Zoroastrian symbol but rather, one of Persia and is used widely to emphasise the non-Arabic nature of Iranians. While Jamshid Jam High School was, the first Zoroastrian School (built in 1906) Firooz Bahram is still a noteworthy Zoroastrian enterprise and was built with the financial help of Parsis in India.

The girl’s School set up by Ratan Bamji, sister of Jamshedji Tata, in memory of her father Nusserwanji, was mentioned during the tour but unfortunately, we did not get to see it. This was a bit disappointing as a number of us are involved, either directly or peripherally, with education, and Zoroastrian women’s education has a particularly good reputation in history and modernity. As we see different schools and hear about their history, it becomes clear that Zoroastrian schools are now only Zoroastrian in name, as the Zoroastrian population is not high enough to sustain them. In India and Pakistan, the situation is similar, as can be seen with the Bai Avabai Petit and J. B. Petit School in Mumbai, the Bai Virbaijee Soparivala (BVS) Parsi School, and the Mama School in Pakistan. Three of my co-pilgrims hail from Pakistan and are related to the Soparivala family. During animated discussions we discover that two of them are cousins of a friend who lives in the United States whose mother (Deena Mistri) was a muc

After the rituals of saying our kusti prayers, having a jashan and providing offertories at Shah Behram Izad shrine are concluded, our return to the profane is heralded by ‘food’. Even though it is the first day of our pilgrimage, we relish the traditional Parsi celebratory meal of ‘dhandar and patio’ (lentils, rice and prawns in a rich tomato gravy). This is followed by an ‘Orientation’ session broadly divided into four categories:

1. Religion: places of worship and prayer to various elements (Fire, Mountains, River/Water, Burial grounds),
2. Culture: spend time with Manucher’s family who are Bakhtiyari tribes’ people, enjoy a meal with
local Zoroastrians in Sharifabad at Darbe Mehr, and visit a family home in Yazd.

3. Recreation and History: Boating in Hamedan, cable car ride in Ramsar, bridge walks in Isfahan, and lastly,


We go through the daily itinerary and various ‘rules’ that are to be followed (including not taking photos of the sacred flame, not wearing black clothing in Yazd, and making sure to always have our heads covered). Weather conditions and the all-important conversion of money and currency equivalency are described in detail. Eyes glaze over in a combination of information overload, a full stomach and residual jet lag. Soon it will be time to set out to our next destination, a visit to a ‘residential Zoroastrian colony’. Many of us are surprised that such a place should still exist and are even more surprised when we arrive to find that it mirrors similar such ‘baugs’ (actually gated communities, though the literal translation of baug is ‘garden’) in India. Called Rustam Baug it had not only apartment houses but also a fire temple and a dharamsala (rest house). We discover that Malcolm and SillooM have both stayed at the Dharamsala when in Tehran.

Rustam Baug is both familiar and different. Most of us ‘diasporic’ Zoroastrians heave a great sigh of relief that we are not staying in the Dharamsala with its rather primitive plumbing and lack of air conditioning! The flowering pots and little gardens remind me of my in-laws home in a baug in Bombay. Colourful public art works [see: Figure 6] and an opportunity to converse with some young Zoroastrian ladies returning from college get us in the ‘animation’ spirit and make us feel like we are seeing the ‘real Iran’ as we interact with locals.

An early dinner rounded off the day. We practiced ‘jay walking’, trying to decipher toilet signage and are starting the process of getting to know one another. I reflected on Stanley Plog’s (2001) description of tourist typology, and we definitely fall into the ‘mid-centric’ category. Not mass travellers (‘psychocentrics’) and definitely not ‘allocentrics’ venturers’ We experienced all the safety of the group, with only 16 of us on tour and none of the anxiety of being a Free Independent Traveller.
Day 2: Tehran, Friday 24 April 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Avan Roj (Day)

I awoke early surprised at the lack of jet lag. We had no telephone coverage at the hotel but I wrote a long email to my family, serving the dual purpose of providing them with an update and doubling up as my AE journal. We boarded the bus and started with a reminder of the Roj (day). Avan Roj is special to me as it is my daughter’s namesake, and Avan means ‘spirit of the waters’. I shared the story of my daughter’s disgust at her name being spelt with ‘n’ at the end – Ava would have been so much more ‘Western’ friendly and would have opened up a world of merchandise. My explanations that we did not wish her name to be pronounced as Eva still falls on deaf ears and I dread the day when there is yet another ‘cutting off’ and a deed poll change to Ava. We set off for North Tehran and the Niavaran Palace complex, noticing the ‘poshness’ of North Tehran as we drove along. I was ‘prepared’, having read the Lonely Planet blurb beforehand. We were going to see the Sabz (Green or Shahvand) Palace, the Sham’s Palace (built for Shah Reza’s sister) and the Shah’s French style Palace, now called the Mellat Museum. Covering an area of over 300 hectares, not all of these ‘Palaces’ were open to the public, as some of them had been converted for governmental use. Interestingly, the entire Sa’dbad complex (despite being a relic of the monarchy) is administered by the Cultural Heritage Organisation of Iran, funded by the Iranian Government.

During the drive to North Tehran, we passed areas that were established during the Qajar and Pahlavi Dynasties. It was fascinating to watch the passing scenery, particularly when we saw the downward sloping road dividers were actually above-ground canals (qanats), dotted with chinar trees, where the melting snows are used to provide the water. As we waited to go to see the Sabz Palace [see: Figure 8] a ‘platoon’ of soldiers ran past during their morning exercise. Our tour guide immediately warned us not to take photos but I was determined to be subversive. Internally, I asked myself where this subversiveness came from. Perhaps ‘animation’ allowed me to take the photo, as I am a very rigid and rule abiding person in daily life. Under the pretext of taking a photograph of the gardens I captured a picture of the platoon [see: Figure 7] and then immediately reverted to my ‘cautious’ self, worrying incessantly about whether I was to be bailed up and have my pictures deleted. I am guessing this is not uncommon for tourists to act as ‘tourist journalists’ when they are undertaking an ‘adventure’ pilgrimage in war regions or are in situations of political instability. Fortunately, nothing happened! PS: However, in more recent times the continuing plight of the Australian academic Kylie Moore Gilbert, being held in the notorious Evin prison since September 2018 (https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-01-22/kylie-moore-gilbert-jailed-rejects-irans-offer-to-become-a-spy/11888424) and the capture and release of Australian couple Jolie King and Mark Firkin for flying a drone without a permit allegedly near a military base (https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-05/australians-released-from-iran/11576776) explain our tour guide’s continued and forceful iterations of not referring to our trip as ‘pilgrimage’ while applying for our visa. Her reminders to not take photographs of sensitive sites or military activity as we travelled through make complete sense. These warnings were despite the mood of optimism in 2015 when we visited as the Obama administration had lifted sanctions and Julie Bishop (then Foreign Minister of Australia) had just concluded a very successful diplomatic visit to Iran.

Photography was forbidden at the Sabz Palace, which is small, and is like a beautiful piece of jade jewellery made from green marble from Yazd. Subsequent investigation disproved a ‘recolleciton’ of mine, with one source saying that the green stones are actually from Zanjan province. This is one of the pitfalls of memory and a limitation of qualitative methods where recollection is often less than optimal. In quantitative research, the numbers do not lie (although their interpretation and methods of collection can be questionable).

The docent informed us that Reza Shah never used the Palace bedroom, as he preferred to sleep on the floor. The residential areas were used for private receptions and to host international visitors. Among these were Anwar Sadat (President of Egypt whose sister Fawzia was the first wife of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the last Shah of Iran), Jimmy Carter (President of the United States during his 1977 visit) and Malik Ghulam Muhammad (Prime Minister of Pakistan 1951-1953). The latter was of particular interest to my Pakistani co-pilgrims who lived in Pakistan during the 1950s. Notable at the Sabz Palace were the exquisite carpets and the seventy-six kilogram silver serving dish that, we are told, was used for
seafood and fruit. We were intrigued by the display of silver cutlery, and the absence of crockery. It was speculated that the crockery was destroyed during the Iranian Revolution of 1979. This example of ‘destruction’ of items of cultural, religious and heritage value lead to a contemplation of the lack of ‘education’ still prevalent with Donald Trump’s threats to strike the 52 Iranian sites “Some at a very high level and important to Iran and the Iranian culture” as retaliation for the attack on US troops in Iraq. (https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-01-08/donald-trump-has-options-for-responding-to-iran/11852860).

Our next stop was Princess Sham’s Palace that had belonged to the Shah’s sister. Serendipitously, there was an exhibition on ancient Zoroastrian religious practices [see: Figure 10]. The docents were dressed in costumes and there were various stalls dedicated to themed displays (sudreh pooshi, marriage, death, gahambar, initiation of a new priest, hospitality in the home, and the Amesha Spentas). There was a mobed who was answering questions [see: Figure 9] and I could not resist a picture with him. Like all good tourists, I wanted to prove ‘I was there’ but my frustration at not being able to speak Farsi was overwhelming, as so much gets lost in translation. Jafari (1987) and Julio Aramberri (2001) had referred to this phenomenon when dealing with ‘tourisiers’ (i.e. intermediaries to the experience whether hotel staff, tour guides, interpreters or academics explaining pilgrimage in Aramberri’s example).

In front of the White Palace stands the enormous statue of Arash the Archer. We heard the story of how Arash (a popular Zoroastrian name variously spelled as Aresh and Erach/Eruch) defined the boundaries between the warring Turanians (General Afrasiab) and Iranians (Manuchehr) by shooting an arrow, thus demarcating the territories where the arrow landed. It was said that Arash had climbed to the top of Mount Damavand to shoot the arrow. Mount Damavand has deep significance for the Zoroastrians and was the site of Day Three’s visit. The Zoroastrian festival of Tirgan celebrated in June invokes Arash. It is particularly appropriate as not only is it Avan Roj – representing the spirit of water but Tirgan is the celebration of rain and as we visited on a rainy wet day it seemed to intensify the ‘sense making’ of pilgrimage experience. My dad’s name was Eruch but I had never known until then that it derived from Arash.

The Arash statue had further significance to me as our niece is named Tishtrya and when we first heard the name, we had marvelled at the outlandish names of our nieces (Khsheta, Mithra and Tishtrya) and nephew (Stivant). Pilgrimage, and seeing Arash, confronted me with the fact that we had taken the easy option by naming our children Anglo-friendly names (Cyrus and Avan) and had never really bothered to learn what these important Avestan names of our nieces and nephews meant. Khsheta, our second niece lives up to the meaning of her name, that is, “shining or resplendent”, as noted by Poure Davoud’s (1927), Introduction to the Holy Gathas. Mithra, the youngest of the children in the extended family of cousins, refers to a yazata or the Romans worshipped angel of Light and the Sun. Mithra but the religion of Mithraism declined after the acceptance of Christianity by Emperor Constantine in the fourth century.

The Mellat Palace Museum was known as the White Palace and was the summer home of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and his wife Farah Diba [see: Figure 11]. Filled with Farah Diba’s clothes [see: Figure 12], and with a very French style to it, we were taken by the ‘frozen in time’ approach that accompanied the various objets d’art mixed in with the profane (like patterned plastic shower curtains in the Princess’ bathroom, which must have been the height of sophistication and westernisation in the 1950s and 1960s).

Wandering through the dining room and the bedrooms of the Shah, reminders of Farah Diba and the four children provided a stark sense of difference between the time the before and after the Iranian Revolution. SillooM, our tour guide, who used to live in Iran prior to the Revolution told stories about her husband being invited to perform magic tricks for the royal children’s birthdays and the lavishness of the gifts bestowed by the Shah and his wife as thanks for the entertainment. The building itself was interesting, with a retractable roof and balustrades running around the central open square area, all very Downton Abbey, including European furnishing and tapestries. There was a cosmopolitan feel to the contents of the showcases and I was thrilled to discover a Japanese Satsuma tea set. Parsi families still treasure our Satsuma heirlooms and covet them as inheritances. I am always on the hunt for Satsuma and it is a favourite topic of conversation with a close friend who laments the passing of the Satsuma in her husband’s family to the daughter despite him being the eldest ‘boy’ child. As I am chief
‘sentimentalist’ in our family, it makes perfect sense to me that I ‘inherited’ the bulk of the ‘intangible and invaluable’. As a diasporic Parsi these ‘articles’ (souvenirs?) of heritage evoke nostalgia, which is something absent from the TKC and second generation. This fading of ‘memory and meaning’ makes me sad and adds to my feeling of hopelessness about ‘loss’.

The air of surrealism and sadness was heightened by stories of the royal family. The Pahlavi Dynasty lasted only two generations and we heard about the doomed love story of Mohammed Reza Shah and Soraya, his second wife, who was considered his true love, but whom he divorced, as no children resulted from their union. His third wife Farah Diba bore him four children. During the Revolution, two of the four children committed suicide, and their tragic story elicited our sympathy. We heard firsthand accounts of Shah’s support for Zoroastrians and a co-pilgrim told us that she and her husband migrated from Bombay and worked in Iran prior to the Revolution. They had to flee to Canada and drew parallels between themselves and many other Parsis with a similar story in the diaspora who have come to their new homeland via Iran. There was a lingering sense of sadness about having to ‘flee’, with allegories to the original ‘flight’ in 651 CE. I was especially interested in the Shah and Farah Diba’s connections to India, and in particular, Jamshedpur, as they had visited when I was a child when I was given the opportunity to present a bouquet to the Shahbanu Farah Diba. This brought a wave of nostalgia for my childhood and my Parsi upbringing of a Jamshedpurian. Recent articles in the Australian press rekindle memories of Shahbanu Farah Pahlavi, with articles around the launch of the book *Iran Modern: the Empress of Art* which has been authored by Australians Miranda Darling and Raikhel-Bolot and covered in the *Sydney Morning Herald* by Nick Bryant (2018) in ‘From Persia with Love’ and in the *Weekend Australian* newspaper (2019) by Charles Bremmer ‘A Queen’s Treasure’. Both articles made for fascinating reading for a slightly endemically ‘royal’ obsessed Zoroastrian like me. There are several references in the literature to the abiding love of Parsis and Zoroastrians more generally with royalty (both British and Iranian). However, this too is a sentiment that has fallen by the wayside of TKC and second and third generation Australian Zoroastrians (most of whom share a fervour for becoming a Republic). Older generations of monarchists express their dismay but both young and older generations view movies like *The Kings Speech* and the series *The Crown* through very different lenses. One with nostalgia and the other with a kind of fascinated horror at the archaicism of it all, dress, food, manners, public mores.

By now, the pilgrims had turned their mind to our favourite occupation – eating, and a late lunch was long overdue. Fresh chicken rolls accompanied by mushroom flavoured potato crisps restored the good humour of the pilgrims especially as we ate *al fresco* in a beautiful Persian garden filled with magnificent traditional tiles, water features and mosaics, with classic Persian designs and colours including *firuzi* (turquoise). We saw the park was filled with cats and these were the first animals we had seen. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Muslims tolerate cats but do not like dogs (Oliphant 1880; Armenian Reporter International 1983). Zoroastrians on the other hand are very predisposed to dogs and “*Ehtiram-I sag* (great respect for the dog) is a command to Zoroastrians” (*Parisana*, 7 June, 2018, p. 5). The dog is firmly entrenched in our psyche because the dog is a vital part of our death rituals. Traditionally a dog is brought to the corpse, as it was believed in ancient times that a dog could establish that life was extinct. Another anecdotal but still practised ritual is that of leaving a morsel of food on one’s plate. Referred to as the ‘*kutra no buuch*’ (dog’s morsel/share), many Zoroastrians besotted with their dogs still practice it, despite our diasporically cultivated ideas of not feeding our pets table or ‘human’ food especially Parsi food due to the spice levels. During our entire pilgrimage, we did not see dogs until we got to Yazd and visited the Zoroastrian areas. Mary Boyce (1977) commented on the difference in treatment of dogs by Muslims and Zoroastrians saying that it went back to the Zoroastrian tradition of using dogs to herd cattle, thus having cultivated a relationship with the animal as a pet.

In the streets, we noticed an increasing number of Iranian women with plasters across the bridge of their noses. On enquiring about this we came to learn that facial cosmetic surgery, primarily nose jobs, are *de rigeur* among Iranian women. (See Appendix A2: Day 2)

In our travels, we notice the Iranian love affair with watermelons. This is something firmly established in our Parsi minds, a feature that we had noticed amongst our Iranian relatives and associates in India. They seemed to consume inordinate amounts of watermelon when in season and the hollowed out shell
would be occasionally worn like a helmet (in the home) to ‘cool the head’. Needless to say that while we did not follow through with the helmet idea, we certainly consumed vast amounts of watermelon every day of our trip. Manuchehr would leap out of the bus and procure a couple of watermelons that would then be cut up and eaten through the day.

After our trips to the palaces and our walk down ‘nostalgia lane’, it was time to see ‘modern Iran’ in the form of the Milad Tower. Iranians are incredibly proud of the Milad Tower, which is a telecommunications hub and is the tallest tower in Iran as well as the sixth tallest tower in the world. Built in an octagonal shape, it has an outdoor walking platform with viewing binoculars. Tehran’s superior road networks and green spaces make for an interesting sight and enhance the process of ‘falling in love’ with Iran. The internal hall hosted a variety of artisans displaying traditional handicrafts. The super-fast lifts were a revelation and I was amazed at the respect for personal space. The more ‘sensitised’ diasporic pilgrims were both horrified and fascinated by the resident peacock and peahen in a concrete display in the lobby. Our whispered “not RSPCA adherent!” comments amused our more hardy co-pilgrims from India who sniggered at our “delicate Western sensibilities”.

I bought a turquoise encrusted Asho Farohar but had to get Malcolm to be the ‘intermediary’ as the money continued to confound me, especially since the terms toman and rial are both used but refer to differing values while still applying to the same notes. I looked longingly at the gorgeous coats but they were made for petite Iranian beauties. Being a foodie, I looked forward to trying the hand-churned ice cream, falooda mix and the local tea with sugar sticks, but my fear of not being able to translate the money meant I passed on both. Again, I mentally berated myself for not having learned some basic Farsi.

It is only Day 2, but irritation with one of our co-pilgrims is already emerging as a dominant theme. Her silly questions and comments have set off a cycle of teeth gnashing and uncharitable thoughts that come with their own share of guilt for going against the dictum of ‘Good Thoughts’. It is early days but we soon progress as a group to ‘mere civility’ with this particular co-pilgrim. Our sympathies for the woman who has to share her room have their genesis in Day 2’s behaviours. I begin to think of her as the bête noire of the group and she lives up to this title subsequently.

My diary for the day ends with “Spiritually, I am beginning to feel very connected as we start and end with Atha Yashem”.

Day 3: Mount Damavand and Drive to Namak Abrud, Saturday 25 April 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Khorshed Roj (Day)

*Khorsheed* (meaning ‘the sun’) is a very special day and as we set off to see Mount Damavand we heard a small treatise on the value of the prayer *Khorsheed Niyayesh* (a litany to the Sun) from the *Khordeh Avesta*. Jamshed K. Choksy and Firoze M. Kotwal (2005, p. 216) refer to it as “Xwarsed Niyayisn directed to Huuarae Xsaeta the shining sun”. Its association with Mithra and the praying of the *Mihr (Meher)* are noted in the *Riyayats* dating from 1773, a volume that covers all matters ecclesiastical posed by Indians to the Iranian priests. Choksy and Kotwal note that the Khorsheed Niyayesh is still prayed by devout Zoroastrians on *Khordad Saal* (considered the birth date of the Prophet Zarathushtra).

Day 3’s journal entry marked the start of my ‘immersion’ into pilgrimage and the mystical, inexplicable thing that is faith. We set out for Mount Damavand and were told that we could not proceed as there had been rock slips on the mountain road. Manuchehr and Malcolm organised mini vans to take us and we were able to get out and take photos on the way [see: Figure 14 and 15]. The wind was blowing like crazy but the sun was out and we said our *kusti* and the *Parvat no namaskar as a humbandagi*. Everyone seemed to be in accord and this was very uplifting. Although, we wished we could have had a *jashan* here [see: Figure 13 for an example of the jashan being performed at Mount Damavand] we did not have a mobed or the requisite ritual implements to do so. The uneven terrain and the ‘gate’ were no impediment to us clambering like geriatric mountain goats to the base of the mountain where we did the *parbat no namaskar* (prayer to the mountain).

Faredoon and every night Zohak licks his chains and makes them thin and is in danger of breaking free connect Mount Damavand to not only Aresh and the firing of the arrow but Zohak the Evil One is supposed to be chained there, but then *Khorsheed* (the sun) comes out and they thicken up again. ‘Zohak and Faredoon’ is a favourite story of mine, and I often tell it to the Sunday school children in Sydney.

There is a discussion about the Ilm Kshnoom (mystic movement) and the role of mountains and Magavs (spiritual people) in Zoroastrianism. See Appendix A3. SillooM ‘rewarded’ my sceptical nature about the existence of these Magavs later in the tour by giving me a copy of the book, *Who Killed Zarathushtra. Some Zoroastrian Riddles answered through Ilm-e-Kshnoom* by Marzban J. Hathiram (2013). This was a response to my vocal disputing of the concept of ‘organ and body donation’ as the ultimate gift of altruism as a Zoroastrian. She directed me to read the chapter “Can Parsis donate organs or the body after death?” (p.74-78). Suffice to say, that it is one of the rare areas of disagreement between her and I. I have strongly held views about organ and body donation as being noble and desirable against the view that it is an act of ‘defilement’, and might hinder the progress of the soul. My mother donated her eyes and body and the conservative priests of the city where she was living refused us funerary prayers. I tell SillooM about this deep hurt and anger I still carry around about being refused funerary rituals and am taken aback when she tells me that she is unconvinced by this personal example of ‘donation’, maintaining her ambivalence about the concept. This refusal of funerary rituals however, cements my long held views and well reported instances of variance in rituals from place to place and fire temple to fire temple. In our ‘hometown’ of Jamshedpur, not only were all the prayers for my mother performed but also we do not prevent ‘outsiders’ from attending funeral services in the ‘Aramgah’ (resting place, cemetery) unlike in Bombay.

After what proved to be a very spiritual but ‘heavy’ experience at Damavand, lunch was an interesting introduction to more traditional Iranian food with buttered rice, roast chicken and sour cherry sauce along with the mandatory flat bread and mint starter. Saffron ice creams rounded off the meal and I took the opportunity to browse and purchase an assortment of dried fruits. In the manner of tourists all over the world unfamiliar with the language or currency I held out the money and let the young shopkeeper take the ‘right’ amount. I ogled the bags of walnuts, wondered about the fermented milk in the white bottles left out in the sun and marvelled at the local honey [see: Figure 16]. The pickled walnuts, olives and other exotics fascinated me and I regretted (again) not being able to speak Farsi and satisfy the ‘foodie’ in me by merely viewing (and eating with my eyes). Food plays a very important role in all Zoroastrian rituals and we have certain items that are always part of the offertory especially
fruit, nuts, yoghurt, milk and other cooked foods like malido (a sweet unctuous mixture of semolina, caramel, spices, nuts and ghee). Parsis eat it with ‘papri’ (a flat bread). Iranian Zoroastrians have different dishes including sirog (flat bread), pashmak (Persian fairy floss) and other Iranian foods.

It became rapidly evident that SillooM was an incredibly generous host and tour leader (and knew that Parsis are obsessed with their food). She kept everyone fed and watered offering constant cups of tea and little snacks in the bus. Her legendary ability to sweet-talk even the most recalcitrant officials to keep us moving was amazing. I observed in my diary, “She is a fount of knowledge and a very spiritually connected person. Not afraid to say that she was displeased with her sons marrying outside and while she maintains contact with them she feels they have done the wrong thing”. It had me thinking...about what I ‘felt’ about the possibility of my children marrying outside, a very real possibility as their self-identity is Australian with their religion being Zoroastrianism. The different perspective presented by SillooM and Malcolm who were adherents of Ilm-e-Kshnoom on conversion and intermarriage had me mulling and reflecting as we continued our drive toward the Caspian Sea and hotel at Ramsar. The drive through the mountains was gorgeous [see: Figure 18]. Iran is very pretty and interesting. I was amazed to see poppies growing wild [see: Figure 17] along with what looked like cornflowers or Patterson’s Curse (an Australian flower).

As we passed through Firuz Kuh (mountain), we were beginning to see more animals (cows and goats). There were hand-brick houses and murals of the martyrs. As we went through the mountains, I thought of how hard it must have been for our ancestors traversing the terrain and recalled stories of people escaping to India on donkeys as recently as the early to mid-1900s. I wondered about the Magavs, torn between my rational, scientific, positivist Anglo-centric, diasporic, research self and the pull of ‘mysticism’ represented by the Magavs and the utopian community descriptions that were provided by Malcolm and Silloo. The strong flavour of ‘organic’ living is replete in the story of the Magavs and Zoroastrians pride themselves as being the first ecologically aware persons. However, the consumptive westernised lifestyle of diasporic Zoroastrians give the lie to this rather empty boast now. In fact, the dogma can overtake practicality as is evident at our DarbeMehr where some members of the volunteer ‘working bee’ refuse to spray the array of fruit trees rendering all the fruit inedible.

The juxtapositions and contradictions in Iran are rife and becoming more evident to us. There is a very sophisticated policing system for long distance buses with the driver having to keep a pen drive that logs his speed and so on. Poor Faramarz, our bus driver, has his licence confiscated and his mobile phone checked and we all have to go to the police station to get it back.

I was relaxing into my trip and really feeling spiritual connections. I was so glad I have come on this spiritual quest, my mind had been very busy and cluttered and I needed to separate the grain from the chaff. Not having proper Internet connection (digital detox) is good. It kept me focused: though I would like to check Facebook and use it to communicate...
On Day four, we awoke to a glorious day where all of Iran’s faded glory was paraded before us, especially in the hospitality stakes. Our ‘resort’ hotel, located in Ramsar, in the Mazandaran province, is in close proximity to the Casino built during the Shah’s time. The hotel overlooks a garden and the sea is visible. The room looked as if it was frozen in time.

We went to visit the Shah’s Ramsar Palace and it was enchanting to see a slice of the French style grandeur in situ. As we observe various ‘hunting trophy’ items on display, our Western sensibilities kicked into high gear with expressions of dismay at the elephant’s foot stand, ivory carvings and horned chairs [see: Figure 19]. ‘Locals’ holding ubiquitous mobile phones whilst wearing traditional dress captivated the tourism scholar in me. Again, my lack of Farsi meant that I could not go up and ask questions and I did not want to monopolise Malcolm’s time by getting him to act as translator. I thought to myself that next time I visit Iran I will do so with my own personal ‘guide’ and enough Farsi to get by. The woman in colourful clothes with her chador draped across her middle looked as though she might come from a regional area. The local people in Ramsar were referred to as Gilaks and Mazandaranani people and were affiliated with people from other Caucasus regions including Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan (all along the silk route).

There is a tiny, yet wonderful museum display in a building off to the side of the Ramsar Palace. The displays include jewellery, daily living ornaments [see: Figure 20] costumes, a copy of the Shahnameh and even a timber boat. The entire display, while fascinating was in stark contrast to the richness of the Palace and its displays, bearing none of the slickness now associated with museum exhibitions in developed countries. One could see evidence of the ravages of the sanctions that Iran had been subject to for many years.

Our next stop at the Casino provided another example of contrast. The vestiges of a grand casino a la Monaco remain, but everything was dusty and in a sad state of disrepair [see: Figure 21]. We were taken in through the back entrance, which intrigued me, but I soon realised that this ‘decadent’ place is not exactly touted as a tourist attraction in this very conservative country. Chris Moore’s (2014) article recollects his days of being a ‘Western’ croupier in the heyday of the Casino. (See Appendix A4 for an account)

There was no sign of the tent slot machines or roulette tables when we visited in 2015, as Muslims consider gambling and usury haram (forbidden). The sense of opulence and the remaining fittings including the crystal chandeliers all lent an eerie and somewhat sad air to the place [see: Figure 22]. The mirrors were stained and the upholstery faded but it must have been quite something during its peak [see: Figure 23]. Incongruously, there were towering statues of Rustam and Sohrab at the base of the entry stairs and ‘ever-the-tourist’ I could not resist having my photo taken with them [see: Figure 24]. Zoroastrian legends, myths, iconography and even population enjoyed a revival under the Pahlavi dynasty and the story of Rustam and Sohrab along with Simurgh the mythical phoenix like bird were represented the Casino gardens and could be found in many other instances throughout Iran, in pictures and street art. Simurgh is believed to have raised Zal who was reputed to be an albino, who was rejected by his father Saam. Zal, in turn, is the father of Rustam Perjepet and invokes Simurgh’s help for Rudabeh, his wife, when Rustam is born. This is because Rustam was considered abnormally large (anecdotally the size of a three year old). Simurgh is credited with instructing the caesarean section that delivers Rustam.

As we travelled, I kept copious notes and precious ramblings/musings and on Day 4, I wrote about the deep sense of spirituality I was experiencing as we prayed Humbandagi together at the beginning and end of journeys, and then prayers like Atash no Namaskar at the Agiary in Tehran and Parvat no Namaskar at Mount Damavand. I felt a great sense of connection and feeling for the Amesha Spentas. Yesterday was Anrojo but no one seemed particularly keen on eating vegetarian so we ended up having a less tasty repeat of the previous day’s chicken, this time accompanied by a sort of mint raita. Obviously, we were rather ‘casual’ pilgrims, as we could not even give up meat for one day! We joked about ramakras (slang for pieces of meat, literally translated as ‘playthings’) and I felt a wave of nostalgia for ‘home’ in India.

The only true vegetarian in our group is A and the poor thing is always having her food eyed off by the horrid K. SillooD. maintains her Tuesday vegetarianism, a Hindu custom adopted by many Zoroastrians. SillooM
had learned through experience that ‘meat’ is expected at lunch and dinner regardless of the dietary dictums. Apart from the hot weather in Iran, it now made eminent sense why she does not take people to Iran in June/July when Parsis observe Bahman maino and do not eat meat or fish in order to allow them to propagate and give plentifully through the rest of the year. I worried that this tradition was being lost in the diaspora, especially in the Southern Hemisphere as it happens during winter and there is nothing more comforting than a ‘steak and three veg’ (standard fare in Australia). I contemplated that idea that modern day mores interfere with religious dictums and that those of us in the diaspora who have grown used to eating vast quantities of animal ‘proteins’ have become fixated.

Today’s discussions revolve around the scripts used. They are Semitic and Hakemanishian Cuneiform (Achamenian). Although cuneiform was used and is referred to as Old Persian dating to the time of the Achamenids, including Cyrus the Great, distinction is made between Hakamenishian cuneiform and Sumerian and Akkadian scripts. An important difference to note was that the Semitic script went from left to right whereas the Hakamanischeian went from right to left. Later in the pilgrimage, we played a game with Malcolm who gave us the Hakemanishi script in order to decipher our own names and write them down. In turn, we ‘translated’ some prose from Hakamanishi to English. The page on ‘Old Persian’ at the website Ancient Scripts (http://www.ancientscripts.com/oldpersian.html) is a treasure trove and I resolve to use it as an exercise for my Sunday school class as an activity.

Our discussions and educational experiences about the Creation story, the Ancient Dynasties and the ultimate decline of the Zoroastrian might,(See AppendixA4.2) continued through dinner and we learnt the meaning of terms we had used innumerable times, but had not necessarily understood. Therefore, Paigambaram refers to the ‘bringer of the message’, and it is related to the expression ‘Mazdayasno Ahmi Mazdayasno Zarthusthist’ (trans. ‘I am a worshipper of Mazda and as a Mazdayasno Zoroastrian and I declare myself to be an ardent believer of this faith’) (Framroze, 1963, p.10). Zoroaster is the Greek corruption of Zarathustra. Zarathushtra means Gold Camel (i.e. gold, which is incorruptible, and the hump of the camel, which is the pinnacle). It means someone who turns dust into gold. Frashogar means ‘Renewal’ or to make fresh. Later my research reveals that Frashogard is used as the title of the Ilm Kshnoom movement’s newsletter, perhaps alluding to the ‘renewal/refreshing’ ways of viewing Zoroastrianism.

We learn that Ferdowsi (c. 940 -1020 CE) wrote that Shah Jamsheed was given the kusti by Shah Behram and told that he should tell his people to wear it too. This was done on 21 Navroze, which is the Spring Equinox and time when the sun enters the sign of Aries. It was on this day that he first wore the kusti, as it was the start/creation. This ‘conversion and prosleytisation’ story seems almost at odds with the current paranoia around conversion and acceptance of people into the faith. We are swiftly reminded that the Shahnameh is ‘faction’ (fact+fiction) and being in pilgrimage mode none of us are willing to engage in the ongoing battle or to some extent even reveal our own views on the subject. This is more so the case because we have actively chosen to come with this tour group knowing that our ‘tourisiers’ tend to more conservative views.

Our day ends with a communal meal and prayers as usual and we retire for the night thinking about the differences pre and post the Revolution.
Today is Monday and it is Tir Roj. Tir is the star. I think of my niece Tishtrya whose name means ‘star’ and of my husband and father who were both born on Tir roj.

We started the day in Ramsar and had murrabas (sweet ethnic style candied fruit jams popular in India and Iran) for breakfast, extremely tasty, and very sweet. No cereal to the dismay of some but now that I have discovered the taste of butter on flat bread with veggies in them and a little bit of the local paneer (firm cottage cheese) there is no looking back for me. I am ‘immersed’ in touristhood (pilgrimage) adopting local customs and shedding ways and habits of my profane life.

The drive out of Ramsar was very pretty and with sprawling views of rice paddy fields on one side and the ocean on one side [see: Figure 25]. We said goodbye to the Caspian Sea and travelled inland. In a fit of enthusiasm, I wore my green kurta pyjama and a beautiful dupatta which mum had made for me from her green tissue sari. The synthetic tissue fibre made me feel hot but I loved telling the admirers that it was made from my ma's sari. I had started a strange habit of wearing my hat over my headscarf, as I cannot stand the sun and glare. My co-pilgrims called it my ‘Australian’ thing, schooled as we are in Australia with the ‘Slip, Slop, Slap’ campaign about sunscreen and protecting ourselves against skin cancers. Differences in ‘diasporic’ adaptation and acceptance of norms is evident as co-pilgrims from the US and Canada do not seem to wear hats. Many things remind me of my mother and how much I miss her ... especially when we saw a dog [see: Figure 26] and I got to scratch his belly with my foot (much to Malcolm’s disgust as both Mahrukh and I ignored his blandishments to ‘not touch the dog’). The dog attached himself to our group but refused SilloM’s curry chawal (rice); I guess he could smell the spiciness and unfamiliar aromas. I bought some candied apricots in vivid hues of green, red and orange to share and as a small act of subversion, in order to ‘experience’ local food.

We visit Massuleh, a pretty tourist town and walk through the streets and bazar. It reminds me of Darjeeling and similar to the Pir-e-Shaliar we note that roof of one home forms the ceiling of another as the homes are built into the hillside. There are tourist tropes everywhere from souvenirs to ‘dress up’ and have your photograph shops but how do people make a living I wonder? Iranian doorknockers are a source of great fascination and I covet a set to bring home for decoration. Separate male and female knockers so that the women in the house are able to ensure that their headscarves are firmly in place before they answer the door to a male visitor.

Malcolm continues the story of “Zohak and Faredoon”, “Zal and Saam” and the Simurgh bird. He kept insisting that these stories are allegorical and should not be taken seriously. Inspired by the dog we saw at lunch, I wanted to ask about the role of the dog in Zoroastrianism. I would like to write a paper on the role of the dog in Zoroastrianism, considering the important place they have.

For levity, some of us enjoy the street signs and as we pass the University of Guilan and we see a shop called “ARSEs”. Lucky Parsis are a fun loving lot, known for both their love of the English language and the ability to poke fun at themselves (even when on pilgrimage). FD keeps us entertained and sometimes we have to explain the racier jokes to our dear SillooM. My ‘research’ journey has uncovered the deep vein of Parsi humour previously present in the annual nataks staged by the impresario Adi Marazban, especially around Jamshedi Navroze in March and Shenshai New Year in August/September. The growth of YouTube and social media has seen the birth of Zavare Tengra’s ‘very funny but extremely naughty series “Shit Parsi Women Say” based on a character called Najamai Lasan (Lasan means garlic). These videos are not for the faint hearted but are eerily close to the mark and every Parsi can identify themselves and one or more of their relatives in the caricatures and sayings of the show’s characters. The videos are ‘insular’ in the extreme and require an emic working knowledge of the foibles and eccentricities of Parsis.

Zoroastrian groupings, akin to the Hindu caste system were discussed, and I was surprised to hear that the common belief that there are only two groups, Athornans (priestly class) and Behedins (lay persons), is incorrect. There are actually four: Athornans (priests), Rathestars (warriors), Vastriyosh (cattle breeders) and Hutokshir (artisans), resembling the Hindu castes. Subsequent research on the Zoroastrian ‘Class System’
through Iranicaonline.org confirmed this.

Our travels continued toward Qazvin. The scenery was breathtaking and the mixture of farms, mountains, bridges and wind towers provided the many contrasts that do not bear out the stereotypical images of Iran. The most unusual example was a set of eye-catching banana shaped benches that provided a great conversation starter [see: Figure 30]. The three of us ‘Aussies’ are somewhat smug about these oversized installations coming as we do from the land of the ‘Big’ (Banana/Prawn/Sheep/Pineapple/Potato and so on)

We have to ‘see’ a lot of Iran’s physical beauty as we travel by bus and Massuleh is definitely ‘different’ from anything else we experience in our pilgrimage.
Day 6: Qazvin to Hamedan and the Ali Sadr Caves, Tuesday 28 April 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Gosh Roj (Day)

The day was Gosh Roj. I ‘ruminated’ (pun intended) on the many meanings of this day as Gosh Roj represents the Cow and means ‘soul of the earth’. The Indian word for meat is ‘gosh’. The female yazata (angel), Gosh Yazata, looks after sheep, cows, children and old people.

It was a long drive to Hamedan and the Ali Sadr Caves. We continue to be regaled with stories about Zal, Saam and Rudabeh and the birth of Rustam pehelwan. Malcolm and Silloo provide insight into the planning of the tour and the effort it takes including having to register the tour with the Iranian government and sending all the documents in order to get a code. The coach driver must keep this code and keep a logbook of the tour itinerary. We changed drivers that morning because Faramarz, our previous driver, lost his logbook as he was deemed to have been speeding. He had to go to the town of Sari, some distance away, to collect it and attend to the fine and so on. These insights into ‘organisational’ and ‘logistical’ aspects of the pilgrimage cement the ‘tourism systems’ facets that even pilgrimage must incorporate to provide a ‘whole’ experience. It is of particular interest to FD and I as we both have deeper insights being in ancillary parts of the H&T industry. FD owns a successful tour company in the United States and I have studied, taught and worked in the industry for many years.

We found out that Navsari in India (a bastion of Zoroastrian/Parsi culture and pilgrimage) takes its name from Sari in Iran with ‘Nav’ meaning ‘new’. Sari is the name of the traditional wear of Indian women. The synchronicity of semantics in Gujarati and Farsi are beginning to dawn on us as the continuance of naming conventions tying India and Iran through both Zoroastrianism and trade through the ages.

Qazvin, reportedly founded by Shapur II in 250 CE, attained significance under the Safavids (1548-1598), is known for its seedless grapes. We saw a sign referring to ‘Univercities’, and were told that Qazvin is renowned for its centres of learning. As we progressed toward Hamadan, the terrain expanded into scraggy green fields with flocks of sheep, the occasional tractor, and very few people to be seen. The houses were made of packed earth with thick walls that were open to the sky.

As we travel along the story Zal, Saam and Rudabeh is continued much in the tradition of old troubadours and perhaps Ferdowsi himself. (See Appendix 6)

The moral of the stories of the Shahnameh is to be applied in practice of daily life and to be disseminated among the faithful Zoroastrians. This process is referred to as Amar and for example, pregnant women were encouraged to pray Ava Yasht (so they would not have a caesarean). Nowadays we still pray Ar dibesht Yasht and use Ar dibesht Nirang (prayers) as they are said to cure the sick. I discovered a YouTube video of Mobed Firuzgari’s dulcet recitation of the Behram Yasht as a meditation and continue to use it as a meditation post pilgrimage in my profane life (especially when faced with difficult situations). (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMXoshMQ1sM)

Other moral messages emanating from these stories include:

a) Obstacles should be seen as stepping-stones.

b) It is our moral obligation to help the less fortunate in every respect. Malcolm illustrated this by telling the story of the rich American Zarhushhti philanthropist who insisted that his son-in-law should have gone to the cheaper petrol station and given the money, he saved doing so to charity.

c) The challenge is to tame our baser instincts to be more charitable (words, deeds feelings and so on).

d) To be mindful of things we cannot recover, the spoken word, the arrow that has been shot from the bow and the milk or water that has been spilled. Behram Yezad (angel) gives us the victory to meet these head on.
My attire that day was a covert sales pitch for my first ParZor (a UNESCO initiative) present from mum (the tomato red scarf with the classic gara pattern of chrysanthemum flowers). I have been ear bashing everyone about ParZor and why we need to support them (the organisation is ethically run and with great attention to being a shining example of Parsi women’s brilliance and entrepreneurship and in the revival of authentic designs and materials). I am surprised to find that even the Indians do not seem familiar with ParZor. SillooM and Malcolm know about it and add to my ‘sales’ pitch. I became increasingly aware of the ‘neglect’ of Zoroastrian women of substance in the literature, and praise the work of Pheroza Godrej and Phiroza Punthakee Mistry, authors and curators par excellence.

My quest for postcards had eluded me until we got to Ali Sadr but the caves were underwhelming as the Lonely Planet guide warned. I attribute this to the group’s previous experiences in destinations with sophisticated tourist machinery and resources to present the attraction in a much slicker manner. The interesting part was listening to one of the guides expressing his pacifist views and informing about the 2 million people who lost their lives in the Iran-Iraq war because of the bloody mindedness of two leaders. He delight in meeting ‘Zoroastrians’ was genuine and we were impressed to see how seriously he took his role in spreading the message of “peace and amity”.

The boat ride through the cave and our walk through the illuminated areas was an exercise in nerves as some of the older less mobile pilgrims struggled with the stairs that had to be climbed. The wearing of life jackets and the area marked as ‘Bailment’ did not inspire confidence, but it was definitely worth going to the Ali Sadr caves, if for no other reason than to witness the pride in the local guides about sharing their history and culture. Passion and enthusiasm in a ‘tourisier’ compensates for attraction’s shortcomings. Being on pilgrimage means that one is more relaxed and less focussed on extracting every ounce of value from the ‘entrance fee’, allowing them to be immersed in the experience. In some ways, this addressed a very important distinction between travel and pilgrimage as it mitigated some ‘tourist’ irritations around food, lodging, attractions, costs and other ‘profane’ details because the mindset is already at a ‘higher’ plane. This phenomenon of ‘experiential consumption’ and its role in promoting both giving and pro-social behaviours by moving away from material consumption to ‘experiencing’ events is canvassed by Walker, Kumar and Gilovich (2016) who posit that people are more grateful for what they have experienced rather than ‘products’ they have purchased. In H&T, this is particularly relevant as the gap in ‘product’ narrows and there are less discrete differences in product but the ‘experience’ (emotional and aesthetic labour aspects) can make or break a ‘memorable’ event. The domino effect of positive experiences not only mean repeat visitation but also is tied to greater ‘spend’. These concepts around experience are interactive and include peer-to-peer communications especially in the ‘experience’ of pilgrimage.

We were getting more familiar and comfortable with each other and SillooM came to ask if she could share my room with me sometime. I agreed immediately especially since it meant that Manuchehr would not have to sleep in the bus as he could use her room. I invited her to do so right away that night as there were three beds and I used the single one. As things go she never really took me up on my offer but it represented a great ‘movement’ in my own psyche that I was able to move past my intense dislike of having to ‘share space’. The effects of pilgrimage was definitely starting to override my natural barriers around personal space. However, I had to admit that it was only to SillooM that I would extend this courtesy and the ‘space hog’ introverted personality trait in me could not extend the invitation to anyone else. So ‘unconditional’ was still not in my vocabulary and there was a disjunction between what I should practise as a pilgrim and my actual behaviour. Post pilgrimage I
immediately reverted to ‘needing my own space’ and sharing is restricted to my immediate family only. Free Wi-Fi (but poor connectivity) in the room forced me down to the lobby where I found a fellow pilgrim catching up on her email correspondence. We logged into our respective workplaces too and that is when I went from the sublime to the ridiculous. I had been so excited about joining my husband in Turkey for a work function following pilgrimage in Tehran. My ardour for the trip was dampened when I discovered on my webmail that there had been another ‘coup’ at work. I immediately began panicking, imagining the consequences of these changes on teaching intensive staff like myself and wished that I had not opened the work emails. This immediate reversion into the ‘vortex’ of profane life, made me question my ability to ‘immerse’ myself in pilgrimage fully. Mindfulness practices and yogic meditation suggest that one should allow oneself to let these thoughts in but I still felt traitorous for the shift in my focus from spiritual to ‘base’. I finally went to bed at midnight. Despite being tired, I could not resist another inventory of the delightful little tiles I had purchased earlier in the evening. They were a mixture of historical scenes and others were of ‘Persian’ women, to add to my collection of ‘women and women’s work’ artefacts back home in Sydney.
Day 7: Gajnameh, Hamedan to Kermanshah, Wednesday 29 April 2015, Adar Maino (Month)
Daepameher Roj (Day)

Daepameher is the ‘Giver of Friendship’. While not considered a ‘high’ day in the calendar, I reflect on the role of friends in life and give thanks for the many friends I have had over the years. I think about the role the ‘sisterhood’ with my mother and mother-in-law, especially when they lost their husbands.

We set off to see the old ruins of Hegmataneh in Hamedan. Not much to see even though it is a UNESCO site and associated with the Achamenids, Seluks, Parthians and Sassanid dynasties. (See Appendix 7 for a history)

We drove past the University, which is named after Avicenna (Latin version of Ibn Sina). Avicenna was a multidisciplinary scholar who was extremely brilliant and it is believed that he wrote the first Medical Encyclopaedia.

On our way to Ganjnameh, we deviated to taste one of the local delights, fresh cream eaten with flat bread. Silloom buys the cream from a roadside vendor, as we drive to the famous Ganj Nameh waterfalls and inscriptions. All moderation is put aside as we indulge and reminisce about growing up eating fresh clotted cream in India/Pakistan. Now as ‘Westerners’, we had bought into the ‘health’ messages and there is a frission of delight at the ‘wickedness’ in consuming ‘real cream’.

Ganj Nameneh bears inscriptions in cuneiform carved into granite written in three languages; Old Persian, Babylonian (referred to as Akkadian) and Elamite (called Sussanian). The inscriptions of Darius the Great, Achamenid emperor and his son Xerxes translate to read:

The Great God Ahura Mazda, greatest of all the Gods who created the Earth and the Sky and the People; who made Xerxes king and outstanding king as outstanding ruler among innumerable rules; I the great king Xerxes, king of kings, king of lands with numerous inhabitants, king of this vast kingdom with far-away territories, son of the Achamenids monarch Darius.

The experience was somewhat surreal especially when I cheerfully ran into a bunch of schoolchildren that were most amused when I told them that I come from Australia [see Figure 37]. Unfortunately, our conversation was limited to ‘hello’, ‘goodbye’ and my poor imitations of a kangaroo. Again, I wish I spoke Farsi as I was enchanted by this opportunity to relate Zoroastrian history to modern day Iranians. I was fascinated that such young girls have to wear headscarves. They were exceedingly well behaved and I was reminded of taking my children on excursions where the wild and woolly Australian kids were a real handful. My modern diasporic sensibilities were aroused as I took pictures of the children and nobody rushed out to stop me; in fact the teacher tried to converse and we had a half-hearted exchange. With an air of order and decorum the children dutifully take ‘notes’ despite being very young and line up so I can take a ‘photo’. I would have loved to ask what they knew about Zoroastrians but the cultural and linguistic ‘gap’ is too wide.

I broke away from our group and wandered around, indulging in ‘Persian’ Fairy Floss (again a throwback to childhood) and admiring the souvenirs on a mat, again redolent of memories of India [see: Figure 38]. Confusion regarding my identity was heightened. Am I Australian as I had just told the children? Alternatively, am I Indian, as I think of India as ‘home’? None of that fancy ‘fairy floss’ sold at exorbitant prices in Sydney, pashmak is the Iranian sticky full sugar version sold at local fairs to ‘bring on the diabetes’! Nostalgia for my childhood and remembering that it is called “Buddhi Ka Baal” (hair of the old woman) remind me of my own ‘advancing’ age and grey hair as I gleefully consume the sugar confection. For my ‘indulgence’ I get a scolding from Silloom who is worried about the hygiene, and duly chastened, I promise not to do it again but secretly delight in how much I enjoyed ‘animation’. This is ‘animation’ in full flight and supports my hypothesis that acting outside of one’s normal ‘frames’ of behaviour is part of the ‘experiential’ component of pilgrimage and the memorableness of the event compensates for the hygienic factor while I rationalise about the money I have put into the local economy by directly buying from the vendor..
On the bus, we hear the continuation of the story of “Rustam Pehelwan”. SillooM and Malcolm are wonderful ‘tourisiers’ and raconteurs. Their passion for the Shahnameh and the stories of Ferdowsi are brought to life with their animated voices and colourful detail. The focus is on the moral message embedded in these stories and this adds an important religious and spiritual dimension as they ignite the flame of recognition of Zoroastrianism amongst us. Ferdowsi’s caution to people that life is temporary and to lead your life well throws us into a reflective mood. For my fellow co-pilgrim teachers it reinforces a teaching method that we grew up with where parables and stories were often used to drive home messages about ethical behaviours. The fact that these parables were sourced from a wide range of religions, created an automatic respect for other faith groups is a fact that I had not acknowledged previously. Thus the Indian Panchatantra (Five tales) said to have been written in 200 BCE are still favoured as they have important moral messages.

The Bishtoun inscriptions were one of the most significant sites we visited and were redolent with meaning and history.

The inscriptions at Taq-e-Bostan were significant for what they revealed about the Sasanian identification with Zoroastrianism: “Mazdesn = worshipper of Mazda” (p. 104) was a theme later picked up by Narseh in the fourth century CE in establishing his right to the throne and wresting it from Wahram, King of the Sakas, with Narseh claiming himself as the rightful heir of Shahbuhr. Narseh called upon the dualism of Zoroastrianism (p. 104) and his connections to Shahbuhr I in order to establish his position. Taq-e-Bostan was a significant part of our pilgrimage because it set the scene for our visit to Naqsh-e Rustam (near Persepolis) referred to as Takht I Jamshid. Naqsh-i-Rustam is significant as the historical and religious site and as the necropolis of the Achaemenians. The word Jamshid is of enormous personal significance to me personally. It is the name of my brother, the town I grew up in (Jamshedpur known as Tatanagar) and the name of the revered founder of the Tata Empire, Sir Jamshedji Tata.

It had been a long and overwhelming day filled with information historical and heritage based. Revelations hitherto unknown to any of us (due to its very scholarly treatment) and being ‘pipped at the post’ by the bête noire of our group when attempting to purchase a book at the souvenir shop, I was thrown into a sulk of fury. No amount of soothing by our wonderful tourisier that I would have many more opportunities to buy that particular book would placate me and I went around with a face like thunder all through dinner. So much for ‘good thoughts, good words and good deeds’ – my behaviour and demeanour were not of the earnest pilgrim but more of the ‘Queen’ denied in touristhood of a particular privilege or product. Our meal at the Jamshid Hotel and Restaurant was a collision of sacred and profane as the museum-like nature of the restaurant demonstrated that the hosts had set themselves the task of ‘educating’ tourists about Iran; its history, culture and people. The hotel helpfully provided replicas of the murals at Taq-i- Bustan for the hapless tourist (or pilgrim) with less-than-professional photographic skills. I promptly took advantage of this ‘inauthentic but authentic’ replication. Clothing of various regional areas was presented through life-size mannequins positioned ‘in situ’. The samovar was a nod to Mohammad Ali Mirza Dowlatshah’s victorious battles against the Russians in Yerevan and Tbilisi and against their archrivals, the Ottoman Empire, in Baghdad and Basra. The aesthetic of the restaurant was ‘edumetric’ in its own way as it presented a curated animation of Iranian/Zoroastrian heritage and its interactive nature (along with interpretive signage) meant that it created a tacit intake of knowledge even while involved with the profane (consuming a meal).

There were the requisite stories of ‘Rustam Pehlwan’, metalwork and paintings in addition to the seating that recreated traditional Iranian ambience with flat beds and cushions. The ‘eccentricity’ of the collection is manifest in the ‘buoy clock’ side by side with the painting of an Iranian beauty [see: Figure 42]. It was pure tourism kitsch and in retrospect, I realised that the pilgrim in me had forgotten that for 99.9% of the visitors to Hotel Jamshid it was simply a tourist excursion not a ‘search for deeper meaning’. However, tacitly and by ‘stealth’ it still ‘educated’ tourist or pilgrim alike.
SillooM and Malcolm discussed the significance of the Roj on which you are born as influencing your life and the qualities represented by that particular ‘being’. SillooM (2011, Spring, Summer and Autumn) covers each of the 30 Roj in detail in the publication The Mazdayasnie Connection. While ‘replicating’ the information as a part of my ‘data collection’ process, I notice the lack of consistency in the publication where some of the items are missing for certain days, and I go on a ‘hunt’, checking various Zoroastrian websites to see if they have answers. For instance my query “What is the prayer for Spendarmad Roj in Zoroastrianism?” is ‘answered’ by a post by Ervad Marzban J. Hathiram (n.d.) who goes on to explain it as “Zoroastrian Earth Day” when the Roj (day) and maino (month) are the same, Spendarmad, in this case. He describes the day as the “Day of the Farmer” and notes that in the past Parsis engaged in agriculture, would “consecrate a special Baj” (prayer) or perform a thanksgiving jashan. The role of prayers in Pazend was canvassed and my scribbled note, “Prayers in Pazend” made sense now, as Ervad Hathiram alluded to the requirement for priests performing the Nirang-i-Khrafastar Zadan prayer to be able write the special nirang in Pazend script. These slips of paper were given to the faithful to place above their doors. Hathiram bemoaned the absence of such practices today, blaming this on the “spiritual calibre of our priests and the totally un-Zoroastrian way of living of our entire community”.

Our lesson for the day included the information that as Zoroastrians we were supposed to have three things necessary for our Khoreh (aura): 1) Gavah: witness for confession (Meherpatet), 2) Guru: spiritual master, and 3) Ameshspandad: Guardian angel (Sarosh or Yezed). SillooM our tourisier demonstrated the practical application of these concepts explaining that she would recite the Khordad Yasht for forty days in order to get enough people to purchase tickets for her tours. The sacred and profane worlds collided in this instance as the imperative for a tour to go ahead still meant a minimum ‘mass’ of pilgrims were needed to make it economically viable as a business.

The role of the Saoshayant was described variously as a “future benefactor” in the Gathas with Zoroaster being considered a Saoyoshant. We hear the story of Saoshayant Aderbad Marespand who was said to have lived in the time of Shahpur II and was a great dastoor (priest) who was able to emerge unscathed after pouring molten metal on himself. He “re-organised the scriptures of the Avesta” and authored the prayer Patet Pashemanum (prayer of repentance) (Parsi Khabar, 14 November 2012). The concept of waiting for a ‘Saviour’ (Saoyoshant) in Zoroastrianism was another piece of information most of us are unfamiliar with. It is only by partaking in pilgrimage that I became aware of this idea and it is potential to sustainability and continuance of Zoroastrianism including the assertion that the saviour would ‘rise’ again. My cogitations, still in the routine world of positivism had me thinking about whether ‘reclaimants and converts’ would be the ones leading this revival of the religion, the Kurds in particular.

The day concluded with tales of Iranians giving Christians protection and settling them into Armenia. The linkage of this to the commemoration of the Genocide of Armenians in Islamic Iran and the government’s permission to take out a march were contradictions that exercised our minds. There is a community of Iranian and Indian Armenians in Sydney who are part of the diaspora but seem to be able to mobilise as a serious force for repatriating funds back to support less wealthy relatives overseas.
On Meher Roj we spend a lot of time travelling on the bus from Kermanshah to Isfahan. I was looking forward to Isfahan because I had heard so much about it but my dear Professor and mentor Dr Jafar Jafari is from Isfahan. Today is Meher Roj and Malcolm tells us that Meher is the Judge and refers to the Yazata as a “CPA”. When we ask what he means he explains ‘Cosmic Perfect Accountant’ and goes on to say that the Meher Patet prayer is associated with repentance.

We heard that the number ten is considered perfect in Zoroastrianism, meaning it is without error. I ‘researched’ this concept with little success, but found an article by Ervad R. R. Motafram discussing the significance of the number five in Zoroastrian religious thought.

The story of the Sassanian dynasty is continued:

Founded by Ardeshir I (Babakhan) in 224 CE and ending with the Arab invasion in 651 CE in the reign of Yazdegard III, the Sassanian Dynasty is referred to by A. Shapour Shahbazi in the Encyclopaedia Iranica as “the last Persian lineage of rulers to achieve hegemony over much of Western Asian before Islam” and ruling from 224CE-650CE. Shroff and Mehta (2011) summarise the notable Sassanian Kings as Ardashir I (224-240CE), Shapur II (309-379 CE), Khushru I (531-579 CE) and Yazdegurd III (631-651 CE). Each King assumed a ‘throne’ name and Kobad I, II (etc.) and would each light their own fire and mint coins with the year of their ascension. Every year on Navroz they would mint commemorative coins and distribute them to people who had come for the Salaam ceremony [see: Figure 43]. Practised from the Achamenian times, two thousand five hundred years ago, this tradition was revived by the last Pahlavi Shah. Shahbazi’s (2005) article makes various references to this practice of minting coins noting that the coins of Sapur bore both his and his father’s image with him representing himself “full-faced (a well-known sign of rebellion in Parthians numismatics)”. Ardesir in addition to adopting the old designation of Eransahr (Empire of the Iranians) and now used to refer to the AtashBehram (High) temple at Udvada “symbolised his ideology on imperial coinage” using both silver and gold. Additionally, imitating the ancient Achamenian practices wearing a new type of diademed headgear “surmounted by the korymbos, a fine, bejewelled fabric encasing the top hair in a glob-like fashion... The reverse of his imperial coins shows a fire holder placed on a platform throne, which is itself supported by a stepped altar (both directly copied from the representations on the Achaemenid tombs”). To this day, Zoroastrians wear the symbol of the fire holder (Atash) as an adornment. I myself wear pendants of a Farohar, a picture of Zarathushtra and an Atash every single day both as symbol of faith and as a talisman.

When the Sasanians claimed their ascendancy and right to the throne invoking the legends of the Peshdadian and Kayanian Kings as found in the Yasts they added the Avestan royal title “Kay” (Kai, meaning King) in addition to the regular Sahansah (King of Kings). Zoroastrianism was declared the state religion.

We then heard about the relationship between the Armenian Christians and the Sassanid Empire. Shahpur II waged war against the Romans and the Huns from the East in 350CE. He defeated the Huns and formed an alliance with them and in 363CE with the death of Julian (the Apostate); he made peace with Julian’s successor Jovian, a Christian emperor. There was an exchange of territories and Armenia was given to Shahpur in exchange for Mesopotamia. Shahpur, despite resistance from the Armenian nobility, tried to introduce Zoroastrianism into Armenia but the Zoroastrian priesthood who viewed religious rivals with suspicion stymied his efforts. Armenians too are able to claim a long descendancy of practicing the Christian faith and diasporic Iranian Armenians still hold to their traditions and rituals (including desiring their children to marry within the faith). This particular trope was beautifully portrayed in a recent program on SBS called ‘Marry me Marry my Family’ (https://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/video/1124158531848/marry-me-marry-my-family) when Armenian Christian bride Nancy marries Ashu (a Hindu groom) in the Armenian Church. Nancy’s mother’s distress at this ‘out-marrying’ leaves mother and daughter estranged for eighteen months prior to the wedding. In another episode Iranian bride Pariya marries Viktor a Macedonian migrant who takes
charge of the wedding and whose efforts to “organise the ostentatious blingy wedding” and “not break any Iranian traditions along the way” to “keep his exacting fiancée and emotional mother in law happy” result in some hair raising moments. The fact that Pariya is an only child and her mother’s aspirations for her wedding are bigger than Ben Hur give an insight into diasporic Iranian culture. (Note: They are not Iranian Zoroastrians but it must be acknowledged that their wedding ceremony is probably a close approximation of Zoroastrian Iranian weddings, which are dissimilar to Parsi weddings). A good foil for these is to watch the SBS show ‘The rare marriage of two Aussie Zoroastrians’ by Jeanette Francis (2013) (https://www.sbs.com.au/news/the-rare-marriage-of-two-australian-zoroastrians).

My reflections on the persecution of the Armenians, was interrupted as I ‘transferred’ the power of the priesthood in ancient Sasanian times to modern day contexts especially in regard to these two issues of ‘exclusion’ and the ‘fighting’ within the priesthood and more generally with the self-perceived ‘Kings’ of the modern day (The Bombay Parsi Panchayat). Sadly, the intersection of politics and religion persists unmitigated 1800 years on and is played out as venal politics where ‘dissent’ of any form is couched as ‘Ahrimanic’ (evil). We heard the story of ‘Vartan’ a commander in the Armenian army who tried to destroy Zoroastrian places. My research, however, revealed a contrasting picture of the Armenian ‘view’ of ‘St. Vartan and the Battle of Avararyr’. While acknowledging that the “Armenians growing zeal for their religion and the consequent loss of Persian influence”, in the mid fifth century, Yazdigerd II was referred to as a ‘ruthless, evil person” fanatically opposed to Christianity and particularly cruel to the Armenians. His imposition of taxes on Armenians and asking them to “submit to the precepts of the pagan Persian religion (Zoroastrianism) and its worship of fire” along with a demand to convert to Zoroastrianism led to the “brave” Armenians fighting the Persians. The story of Shahpur’s brother’s conversion to Christianity was mentioned, that resulted in Shahpur’s retaliation along with Mobed Adarbad Marespand who took matters into his own hand and was able to verify the status of Zoroastrianism by performing the miracle of pouring hot metal over himself and not suffering any ill effects.

We heard the story of Khushru Parvez, known as Khosrow II (590-628), whose throne was usurped by Bahram Chobin, a general in the army. Bahram Chobin declared himself King (590-591) but was defeated by Khushru Parvez’s army consisting of Byzantine and Persian soldiers in the Battle of Blarathon. Khushru Parvez, referred to as the last of the great Sasanian Kings had Bahram Chobin assassinated and aligned with Rome and Emperor Maurice (582-602) by marrying his daughter Mariam. He managed to restore the Sasanian Kingdom to that of territories held by their forebears the Achamenians. He besieged Constantinople and his reign led to a surge in the arts, crafts and architectural prowess’s of the Persian Empire. Khushru II was said to have brought the True Cross held in Jerusalem to his wife as a trophy.

His son, Kavadh, whose mother was Mariam, daughter of Emperor Maurice, eventually murdered Khushru II. Khushru II married the sister of Bahram Chobin, Gordiya, and then, most famously, Shirin. Ferdowsi presented Khosrow and Shirin as one of his centrepiece stories in the Shahnameh. After his murder, there was a succession of ten to twenty Kings until Yezdegard came to the throne and that was when the Zoroastrian calendar started.

The story of the origins of Chess, the game is part of our ‘education’, I was fascinated by the stories especially as I neither play nor understand chess. Chess is very popular in Parsi and Zoroastrian households and my children learned to play in school. I ‘alas’ have only played the game of the proletariat, Draughts. I recollect purchasing an elaborate chess set exported from Iran and giving it as a gift to a young man ‘Jamshid M.’ on the occasion of his Navjote. It was received with great enthusiasm compared to the envelopes of money (pareekas), which were ‘impounded’ by his parents.

The story of the Miller and King Yezdegard III as recounted in the Shahnameh and the end of the Sasanian Empire are the final stories told on our long drive that day. Yezdegard III, from all accounts, had fallen out of favour and fled the Sasanian capital of Ctesiphon taking his treasury and servants. The Battle of Nahavand seemed to settle things finally with Yezdegard then fleeing to Isfahan, Merv and Khorasan. The story goes that a miller robbed Yezdegard of his clothes and jewellery but it is speculated that it was
Mahoe Suri (known as Mahuy Suri) a nobleman who served as the general of Merv who killed the deposed King. The miller had to kill the King and the spies then stripped the body and threw it in the river. It was recovered by a Christian priest, bathed and then given to the Zoroastrians for a ceremonial funeral. This effectively signalled the end of the Zoroastrian Kings and led to the first wave of the diaspora to India.

We were reminded that we would take up the story of Yazdegard III and the end of the Zoroastrian Empire when we visit the Pirs in Yazd province because they are related to the sanctuary afforded to various members of Yazdegard’s family including Pir-e-Banu (to commemorate the flight of Banu-Pars, youngest daughter of Yazdegird and Hastbanu she was known as Sherbanu and Khataribanu), Pir-e-Sabz (known as Chak-Chak and dedicated to Princess Nikbanu, daughter of King Yazdegird III), Seti Pir, (last Zoroastrian Queen, wife of Yazdegird III, Shabanoo Hastbadan) Pir-e-Naraki (dedicated to Nazbanu/Zarbanu, daughter of the governor of Pars), Pir-e-Narestaneh (consecrated as the shrine to Ardeshir, son of Yazdegird and Hastbanu, it is the only Pir dedicated to a male member of the family) and Pir-e-Herisht (devoted to the memory of the governess/nursemaid Moravarid).

We finally arrived in Isfahan and go straight to the Naqsh-e-Jahan Square (trans. Design/Image of the World) known as Meidan Eman/Shah Square/Imam Square. Our joy was twofold, we have to stretch our legs after a long day of travel in the bus but we have to see Iranian arts and crafts in the bazaar. Naqsh-e-Jahan Square was constructed in 1602, according to the Lonely Planet guide, under the patronage of Shah Abbas, a Safavid King, and is 512m long and 163m wide. Again we saw Iranian families ‘picnicking’ (a national past time) and this reminds me of Joanna Lumley’s travel documentary Silk Road Adventure – Iran (https://www.facebook.com/watch?v=417030232345577) where she joined of a group of school children having a picnic to celebrate their graduation in this same square. ITV described it in the following manner:

From the arid surroundings of Kashan, Joanna travels south again to Isfahan, the jewel of ancient Persia. At the centre of the city is Naqsh-e-Jahan, the biggest enclosed square in the world where Joanna discovers the palace, mosque and bazaar that surround it. As night falls, the square comes to life with hundreds of people picnicking and promenading.

There were shops on the northern side, the Sheik Lotfallah Mosque to the east, the Imam Mosque on the south and the Ali Qapu Palace to the west. One of the interesting aspects of the Lotfallah Mosque (meant for use by the King and his entourage) was the construction of a vestibule passage connecting the entrance and the qibla to meet religious requirements. There was a ‘peacock’ in the centre dome and its tail radiated sunrays. The interior and exterior are both lavishly tiled and have us ‘oohing’ and ‘aahing’ at the symmetry and beauty of the tiles. It is suggested that the famed ‘Ardabil’ carpet design is derived from the interior dome.

We went to the Bastani Restaurant for dinner. It was an aesthetic treat and an assault to the senses not just in terms of the food, but the décor. The gargantuan samovars, delicate friezes on the wall and colourful tiles make for sensory overload. The Iranian ice creams, ‘mocktails’ (with flavoured syrups in lurid colours) are intriguing to the foodie in me and the bar tender is amused by my enthusiasm about photographing them. We are all tired at day’s end and the sensory overload we have experienced not to mention the joy at being able to ‘shop’ finally! As Carole Cusack and Justine Digance (2008) explain we experienced a form of existential communitas and the generation of emotional recognition of human fellowship and “communitas, a special fellow-feeling that arises between groups of pilgrims” (citing Turner 1972) as we “tourist shop” but with an interest in artefacts that resonate with the religious symbolism for example the Asho Farohar symbol. While not shopping in a ‘western mall’ there is still a sense of place as it is the grand bazar in Isfahan and there is a distinct ‘local’ flavour and focus on arts, crafts and handicrafts unique and “redolent with meaning” (Cusack and Digance, 2008, p.233). We are able to extrapolate this retail consumption to quasi-religious beliefs around sustainability and doing the ‘right thing’ as we have bought into the trope of sustainability through a local economy with unique and symbolic products that represent our ‘quest’ as diasporic Zoroastrians.
Day 9: Isfahan, Friday 1 May 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Srosh Roj (Day)

The day was Sarosh Roj. Sarosh refers to Consciousness and Malcolm reminds us of the importance of this in our Birth, Life and Death. He says it is the most important of all Yazatas, ‘Salare damaane Ahura Mazda berasad’ in the Sraosh Baj prayer translates to Leader and Guide of the creations of Ahura Mazda may come to us as per Framroz Rustomjee’s (1976) free translation of the Avestan prayers. The word Saroshem refers to Obedience and traditionally the Dog is called the virtue of Sarosh. This is why in the Sagid death ritual a dog is brought to the corpse.

Ervard Ramiyar Karanjia, a noted scholar, explains it on his website:

Sagdid: The word is made up of two parts; Sag ‘dog’ and did ‘sight’. It is the practise in which a Doongerwadi attendant leads a dog on a leash to look at the body. It is done at the beginning of each geh until the disposal of the body in the dakhma. Dogs whose fur has two distinctive markings above the eyes (chathru chasma) are preferred for this purpose.

Note: Geh refers to the five time periods into which a day is divided.

I am of course delighted by this reference to the role of the dog in Zoroastrianism and reminded of my long cherished desire to ‘write a publication’ collating and describing the various ways in which dogs and Zoroastrians are intertwined. This account would include Mary Boyce’s observations about the mistreatment of dogs during her time in Iran and the many humorous accounts of Parsis and their dogs (myself and my family included). The Parsiana magazine (7 June 2018, p.5) has the saying ‘Ehtiram-I sag’ (great respect for the dog is a command to Zoroastrians) along with a picture of Nergish K. Plumber (with her two dogs) in whose memory that issue is dedicated [see: Figure 49]. The ‘So they say’ section quotes Shirin Merchant a canine behaviourist.

In Firoza Punthakey Mistree’s online article ‘Know Your Religion on Birds, Animals and Symbols in Zoroastrianism’, she addresses the role of the dog in Zoroastrianism saying:

Dog: The dog is the most sacred of all creatures. It is said that kicking a pregnant bitch can send the soul straight to Hell. The dog is a companion of the Yazata Srosh, and its bark is meant to frighten evil. It is said that upon the fourth morning, after death, the soul arrives at the Bridge of the Separator. At the point of spiritual judgement, all the dogs one has kept as pets, as well as other dogs that one has fed food to during one’s lifetime, come to welcome the soul and give it comfort as it makes its journey either to the House of Song (Heaven) or as it falls into the abyss of darkness (Hell) depending upon the life it has lead in the physical world. During each watch after a person has died, and until the corpse is consigned to the Tower of Silence, a special dog, said to have 4 eyes (i.e. with two white markings above its eyes), is brought in, to cast its gaze upon the corpse, in order to contain the fiend of putrefaction, known as ‘nasus’.

My diarising started with “Bit of a bewildering and full on day. I was last on the bus, not good. I thought folks were in the lobby but they had already boarded”. I loathed being late especially in group settings. While I made jokes about IST (Indian Stretchable Time) and AEST (Australian Eastern Stretchable Time), I still have the vestiges of my time spent in the US where lateness was frowned upon. Australians have a more relaxed attitude to time but not quite in the same league as Indians and especially around religious events like Navjotes and Lagans (weddings) where it is considered ‘fashionable(?)’ to show up just in time for the drinks and meal and skip the religious part of the event. Some in the diaspora adhere to these ‘fashionable’ habits but for many of us it is a matter of principle that we participate in the prayers, especially as it helps reinforce the ‘connection’ to Zoroastrianism. It makes us the butt of jokes when we are VFR (visiting friends and relatives) and insist on going for the religious part of the event.

Our first stop was to the Atash Dadgeh. We have to spend some time on our own before joining the Mobed Berzin Neki who recited the Tandarosti (prayer for good health) in the most dulcet of tones. He
was a bit of a showman and very dramatic in his gestures and voice. The power of prayer and the showmanship and voice of the priest is important in engendering religiosity in pilgrims. I resolved to suggest priests were ‘trained’ with good vocal skills. The difference between Iranian mobeds and nasal Parsi priests was evident during our pilgrimage. Rock star status priest Mobed Firuzgary’s superb voice praying is ‘available’ through a series of YouTube videos, which I use for meditation and as background sound when working. I think of Ervad Marzbani Katila, (originally from Pakistan now in Sydney) who has one of the best praying voices and resolve to ask him to develop an ‘App’ with him praying that people can listen too. (PS. Update 2019, He is considering it saying to me “when I retire”, having experienced pilgrimage to Iran himself in 2018 and having prayed a jashan at the foot of Mt Damavand for his group).

Everyone prayed with fervour and Silloo D. and I went behind the screen and said our prayers. Where to face was a bit of a dilemma but we sorted it out by looking at the gents outside and seeing which way they were facing. In Indian Agiyaries there is always a large sun motif showing which direction is east). The two winged bulls at the entrance were magnificent [see: Figure 50] and the construction of the Agiyari in a circular shape brought to mind our beloved Jamshedpur agiary. The kebla area with the fire was cordoned off behind marble and glass with a little door and I was surprised to see that the Dasturji wore his jingo jolly white shoes into the kebla when praying. We were encouraged to hold our palms aloft in Iranian style as we said the Tandarosti. The priest had a very mellifluous voice. There was a nice picture of Spitman Zardosht in King Vishtasp’s court. Serendipitously, I was able to buy a tile depicting the picture to add to my personal ‘collection’ in 2018 when a would be ‘importer’ of Zoroastrian artefacts was getting rid of some unsold pieces. The picture on the slate tile is now a prized possession despite my family’s scepticism about Zoroaster curing King Vishtasp’s horse. My blandishments about Lord Alfred Tennyson’s words “Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of: Wherefore let thy voice, Rise like a fountain for me night and day”, fall on deaf philistine ears as they resolutely cling to their positivist, westernised sensibilities.

We are beginning to associate the presence of cypress trees as markers of Zoroastrian settlements and this is reinforced when we go to visit the famous Aberukh tree in Yazd. Considered the ‘tree of life’ in Zoroastrian folkloric history its paisley symbol is widely used in textiles, carpets, carvings and even referred to in poetry. A greater exposition on the Aberukh tree is provided in the narrative of Day 15 when we visit the 4500-year-old cypress said to have been planted by Zarathushtra himself.

Our next stop was the Armenian Church in Julfa [see: Figure 51]. It was very crowded and the beautiful frescoes on the wall tell assorted stories of Jesus’s life. There is a Museum adjacent to the Church, which hosts the world’s smallest book, and the passages of the Bible inscribed on a single strand of human hair. There was an interesting collection of items including cafaques (priestly headwear), girdles in silver and European ceramics. There were posters all around denouncing the Armenian genocide of 1915 by the Turks. There were enormous crowds as it was the hundred-year anniversary of the event. We were told that the Armenians were allowed to take out a procession one day every year to commemorate the genocide. I (cynically) wonder whether it was propaganda dressed up as religious tolerance. This cynicism was heightened was the television story conveyed a pervasive story of the Iranians sending relief to Syria and being roundly lambasted by the international community. I am unnerved by the ‘tourists’ cheerfully stepping, and sitting on, what are clearly gravestones. I learn that these were both Orthodox and Protestant Christian graves and am again surprised by the juxtaposition of various denominations, seemingly in harmony with being of ‘Armenian’ extraction the common denominator (and the universal loathing of the Ottomans). These run along the exterior wall and there is a raised memorial commemorating the 1915 Armenian Genocide.

A. Amurian and M. Kashefi’s (original 15 December 1986/updated 12 August 2011) article in Encyclopaedia Iranica on the ‘Armenians of Modern Iran’ is most instructive including details of the Armenian population in Iran, Southern India and other regions in India (primarily Kolkata). I learned that while the “great majority of Iranian Armenians follow the traditional Gregorian church of Armenia” other denominations like Catholics, Carmelites, Protestants and Sabbatarians and the Eastern Orthodox
Julfa, where we visit, is the traditional seat of the Armenian diocese of Southern India, India and the Christian community in Iran. It is called New Julfa to distinguish it from Old Julfa, which was in Aras (Araxes River), and from where the Armenians were uprooted during the reign of the Safavid king Shah Abbas I, who waged war against the Ottomans. This ‘forced emigration’ persisted for several years bringing talents in artisanship and trade to Iran. The presence of Armenian schools with “funds provided by Indian-Armenians foundations (in Calcutta)” resonated with me, not only because I have connections to Calcutta but also because it reminds me of. In one of those serendipitous meetings that seem to populate my life, I had travelled to India seated next to an Armenian (Australian) woman of Indian extraction who was taking back several bags of supplies for the Armenian school in Calcutta. In addition, I recall working with an Armenian Indian woman whose family immigrated to Israel, as they were Jewish. This brings to mind the story told to me by young Behrad Mistry in Tehran of the Jewish foundation that was assisting young Iranians of Jewish and Zoroastrian extraction to migrate to Canada, the US and Australia and noted in an earlier chapter. Amurian and Kasheff note that the first church was built in 1606-07 one year after the arrival of the Armenians and by 1664, there were twenty churches in New Julfa in Isfahan.

Finally, it was time for a late lunch. We headed off to a restaurant up a flight of stairs, and I eat too much and feel sick. I must not overeat as I feel unwell after and it sort of ruins the day combined with my phobia and refusal to use public toilets. I tried some of the green rice with beans and a very yummy beef and bhaji (spinach) curry. I was not crazy about the meat here but the bhaji was great. Many in the group do not eat beef and associate it with the cow varisya and the fact that it is like a mother. Younger, particularly female Zoroastrians eschew meat increasingly as they trends of vegetarianism and veganism take off. However, I do not think they actually even know about the varasiyaji or the ascription of cows as ‘Mother’.

Then it is off to visit Chehel Sotoun, the Reception place of Shah Abbas II [see: Figure 53]. It is situated in a traditional Persian garden and is exquisite with (forty) columns hence Chehel Sotoun. The ceiling is magnificently decorated and I have visions of lying down on the cool floor pretending to take in the beauty but actually napping after that very big lunch. However, being the youngest among the pilgrims I have to be ‘energetic’.

There are numerous paintings on ceramic but I am particularly interested in the frescoes depicting stories of the visit of the Indian Mughal King Humayun in 1544, and later of Nader Shah who defeated the Indians in 1739. Emperor Humayun (real name Nasir-ud-Din Muhammed) was the son of Babur, founder of the Mughal Dynasty in India and the father of Emperor Akbar. Akbar the Great besides being a much lauded king was the founder of a religion called ‘Din-i-Ilahi’ which was a combination of several religions including Islam, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Christianity. Having studied the Mughals as part of the mandatory Indian History syllabus and being partial to Mughal architecture, I realise I missed the bit about Humayun spending 15 years in Iran and winning back his kingdom from Sher Shah Suri with the assistance of the Iranian Safavid kings. My research informs me that this time spent in Iran caused the major move away from Central Asian origins (Babur was a descendant of Timurlane) to the finesse of the Persians. Additionally, Humayun’s return from Persia was accompanied by several Persian tradespersons and this is reflected in the carvings, paintings and architecture of both his and Akbar’s reigns. Nevertheless, the exchange is not all one-way (kitchensofhistory.wordpress.com) as the Persians develop a taste for the fragrant long grain rice (basmati?), turmeric (golden like saffron but with a peppery taste) and ghee (clarified butter). It is said that Humayun gives Shah Tahmasp the famed Kohinoor diamond in “a box lined with mother of pearl…and a tray with a scattering of precious stones” after a hunting excursion. The fresco of Tahmasp I the Safavid Sultan receiving Humayun is striking in its detail. Tahmasp had two conditions in exchange for his help to Humayun, the first being that he move from Sunni to Shia Islam and the second that the province of Kandhar (in Afghanistan) should be ceded to the Persian empire when it was recaptured by Humayun. Shah Tahmasp requests Humayun to organise a “Hindustani-style feast” before his departure to reclaim his kingdom in India is
eloquently described in the fresco interpretation.

Malcolm regales us with the story of Bairam Khan, Humayun’s right hand man, who is offered the traditional Safavid headdress by Tahmasp but being a diplomat declines it saying that it would not be appropriate for him to wear it as he is in the service of the Mughal king Humayun. It is said to be Bairam Khan’s suggestion to Humayun to part with the Kohinoor diamond, as it would smooth the path for refuge in Iran with the Safavids. Bairam Khan endures in my memory as the “chubby orange man” (a pejorative now since Donald Trump goes by the same moniker!). Bairam Khan is seated left of Humayun (in the spotted yellow cloak) in the frescoes. (kitchensofhistory.wordpress.com). the other Indian connection that captured my attention was the defeat of the Mughal King Muhammad Shah by Nader Shah in the battle of Karnal in 1739. Jacob F Fielding writing in the Encyclopaedia Britannica comments on the battle being the precursor to the downfall of the Mughal empire and compares the losses of the much smaller ‘disciplined’ Persian Army as being 400 dead and 700 wounded of the 100-125,000 versus the 10,000 of the total 200,000 Mughal Army. There is mention of the elephants used by Mughals being fired on with arrows by the Persian army and the comprehensive rout resulting in a great loot of jewels and precious metals by Nader Shah.

Parvez Mahmood (2017) writing for eSanskrit Culture Spirituality Travel ‘Sacking the Subcontinent Part 3 Nadir Shah’ writes a colourful and more comprehensive account describing in vivid detail including “thousands of women threw themselves into the wells to save their honour”. The article enumerates the “colossal heist” and notes that it allowed Nadir Shah to stop taxing the Iranians for the next 3 years. The bounty was described:

The detailed list of his loot has been recorded by Fraser – working with the East India Company – as jewels, including the Koh-i-Noor, Darya-i-Noor etc., valued at 25 crore (250,000,000); utensils and handles of weapons set with jewels – with the Peacock Throne included – worth 9 crore; money coined in gold and silver for 25 crore; gold and silver plates – which he melted – valued at 5 crore; fine cloths and rich material of all kinds valued at 2 crore; household furniture and other valuables worth 3 crore and weapons, cannon etc. worth 1 crore. This list adds up to 70 crore rupees. He carried away 1,000 elephants, 7,000 horses and 10,000 camels.

We are all keenly aware of where our ‘loyalties’ lie when we hear the descriptions of carnage and loss caused by Nader Shah. It is an interesting experience and serves to cement my already fractured perception of ‘identity’, reasserting my one truth ‘Of all other things I am uncertain – my only certainty is that I am Zoroastrian’. We take an opportunity to relax in the gardens of Chehel Sotoon for a bit before heading out to our next stop.

We head back to Naqsh-e-Jahan Square to visit the workshop of Hossein Fallahi, a renowned miniaturist. I sneak away while everyone is watching him paint and seize two frames with Zoroastrian themes (soldiers and Asho Farohars) as a ‘souvenir’ for my sister-in-law and our home. I am particularly chuffed with my ‘stealth attack’ and ‘smarts’ (a bit like Nader Shah) because others are unable to find the Zoroastrian ‘themed’ artworks as there aren’t any. Envy, competitiveness and gloating are not endearing characteristics in a pilgrim but I convince myself that now I am in ‘secular touristhood’. I request Mr. Fallahi to sign the works I am purchasing and he generously obliges. While the western pilgrims (with the exception of the Canadians) express their ‘animated’ state of touristhood and spend ‘like kings and queens’ (Jafari 1987) the Indian pilgrims are more careful of their spending and look for cheaper souvenirs and emblems of their travels. This difference is probably because Parsis in India are used to having material artefacts and symbols of their Zoroastrianism unlike diasporic migrants who are not surrounded by family heirlooms. The other thing that enchants me is Mr Fallahi’s declaration that he has been to Australia and more especially to the Kuringai Art Society. We hear about the construction of the inlaid wood picture frames, a very Persian skill of ‘fine’ art.

We are then let loose for a bit of shopping before a visit to the Lotfollah Mosque [see Figure 54]. It is
stunningly beautiful with the Persian aesthetic in full flow. The calligraphy of Quranic verses in tiles is spectacular and Malcolm explains the concept of the ‘haft-rangi’ (seven coloured polychromatic mosaics) and points out the Shia passages establishing the role of Shiaism in Safavid times. We note the extensive use of marble reminiscent of mosques in India. There is a wonderful play of dark and light in this rather unusually shaped mosque, which has a winding corridor, no central courtyard (like the Mashaaad mosque that we visit later in the trip), and the lavish use of the ‘firuzi’ (turquoise) coloured tiles. When I research the Lotfollah mosque several of the sites refer to the design being specifically to ‘shield the women of the harem’ and from others entering the mosque. In retrospect, I find the synchronicity of the numerous women gathered outside with baggage astounding. When we enquired we were told that there was a ‘religious’ gathering for women and we see mattresses spread out in an inside hall ready to accommodate the ‘pilgrims’ (all women) for their visit.

Finally, the day is done and we set out for dinner, a picnic at the park and fun all around as we are surrounded by Iranian families’ intent on sharing their food with us. I am beginning to become known for my refusal to sit on the ground and feel slightly bad about being fussy but Manuchehr is always at hand with a plastic stool for my stiff joints that refuse all attempts to be folded into a sitting lotus position. Isfahan is very beautiful and our picnic spot is right next to a busy road near the river but everyone is completely oblivious to the traffic and I feel right at home with people lighting their little gas barbecues, just like at Homebush’s Bicentennial Park (favoured by the Middle Eastern communities in Sydney).

Disaster strikes as I alight from the bus and one of my beautiful Asho Farohar ceramic tiles crashes to the ground and breaks, I console myself, the one I have bought for my sister in law is still in perfect shape and super glue is the remedy for broken tiles, broken hearts not so much! (PS. The superglue works a treat and the crack is hardly visible. One of the wings is slightly chipped but as the Farohar represents the ‘God Essence’ in us, I rationalise it is an accurate description of myself).

Another thing that has become abundantly evident as we travel is that the diasporic Zoroastrians are okay about eating beef but our Indian co-pilgrims refrain from eating beef and pork. We are now getting used to the chicken sausages and the lack of pork products. It is dawning on those of us from Canada, the USA and Australia exactly how much we have assimilated into our ‘new’ homelands and exactly how reliant we are on pork and charcuterie. I discover that SillooM has a great love for Australian Kraft Cheese in blocks, my Australian co-pilgrims had been requested to bring some along but not knowing of this quirk, I had brought TimTams to share as an expression of my Australian identity. I am tickled pink when the cheese is shared amidst great ‘acclaim’ and even the ‘cheese snob’ diasporics get excited as despite being referred to as ‘plastic cheese’ it represents a distinct change from the Middle Eastern varieties we eat for breakfast and as a starter before our meals with flat bread. It reinforces the gulf between the diasporic pilgrims and the Indian origin pilgrims who are much more robust about a number of things ranging from food to toilets compared to the ‘pampered and pandered to’ diasporic Zoroastrians in the group.
Day 10: Isfahan, Saturday 2 May 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Rashna Roj (Day)

We wake to a beautiful day in Isfahan and I am determined not to be late to the bus. We load our luggage on but miss our daily dose of the day’s meaning as we cross over from the hotel across to the boardwalk in the front do a walk of the Si-o-Se Pol Bridge. Before we commence our walk however, we pray the *Pani no Namaskar* (prayers to the waters). It is very spiritual and moving especially as I recall Avan (spirit of the waters) and my daughter’s name. Malcolm draws our attention to the fact that this is the third *Namaskar* and reminds us that we did the *Atash no Namaskar* (Fire) in Tehran (Adrian Atash and Shah Behram Izad Shrine) and *Parbat no Namaskar* (Mountain) at Mt Damavand and now *Pani no Namaskar* in Isfahan. I am sorry to be leaving Isfahan, there is so much I would have liked to see and I do not know if I will ever return.

For the sake of consistency however, I research Rashna Roj, especially as it was the alternate name I could have been given based on my birth *rasi* (horoscope). Rashne is considered the judge and one of the three angels along with Mithra and Sarosh when the soul reaches the Chinvat Bridge after death. KE Eduljee (2005-2017, [http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/death/index.htm](http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/death/index.htm)) explains that Rashnu (sic) is the guardian of justice and stands with golden scales of justice which never tarnish and tip based on the life lived by the person. This judgement of the life lived will determine the width of bridge and the ease of passage for the soul to pass to the afterlife.

Our next stop is the Flower Garden of Isfahan, which highlight Persian garden design and elements. A relatively modern construction (1990s) it is an oasis in the middle of the city and features ponds, rock gardens, waterfalls, rose gardens and a herb garden said to house 132 species of herbs from around Iran. It is a hot day and I notice that my co-pilgrims have adopted my headwear fashion style of wearing a sun hat over our mandatory scarf and some even sport umbrellas.

I think of my mother and maternal grandmother who would have known the names of assorted plants and delighted in the magnificent symmetrical displays. I wander off on my own ‘needing some head space and quiet for my whirring brain’ and discover a ‘labyrinth’. I perambulate it meditating as I had been introduced to the use of a labyrinth as a meditative device in a yoga class in Sydney. McGettigan and Voronoka (2016) have referred to it as a form of niche spiritual tourism in their studies of labyrinth visitation in Ireland and Lithuania. This one is built with buxus and redolent of Jane Austen books and English and French garden follies. As I perambulate around repeating my prayers and trying to force obedience and meditation on my disobedient brain I forget time. All my hard won calm is out of the window when I arrive at the designated pick up point and there is no one there. In a ‘Mr Bean’ like moment I congratulate myself on being early but after several anxious minutes of waiting I realise that ‘maybe the group forgot me’. After what seems like an eternity Manuchehr ‘rescues’ me.

My diary entry reflects the ‘exhaustion’ that has crept in as we are now going at a pretty good clip and SillooM and Malcolm have us ‘trained’ with early morning starts and late night finishes. My journal entry reads: Visit to the flower gardens very pretty but no signage and map difficult to follow. Lost the group and gave myself a fright. My watch 10 minutes late? Irises amazing colours and double ones. Beautiful water lilies too. Saying my prayers as I walked the maze very therapeutic but all the calm vanished when I could not find the group. Many people seem very tired. We have hit ‘hump’ time (like a Wednesday in the trip). People's enthusiasm has not waned but all of us could do with a little more rest and sleep. Is it okay for pilgrims to be GRUMPY and complain? I feel a bit mean but K is driving everyone batty and today I witnessed the unflappable Malcolm snap at her. She gave her bag to Manucher she claims and it was subsequently lost. Malcolm told her rather curtly that we were all responsible for our own bags and Manucher was not supposed to take responsibility for them! ND filled me in over lunch on what a state poor Manuchehr had been in thinking he would be blamed for the loss and searching high and low for it. Talked with TP and found out how she met her German husband. He was a chef and she was chuffed when I told her I was married to one too. We bonded on both our son’s being named Cyrus.

My ‘whirring’ mind is consumed with thoughts of a very close friend whose mother was very ill before I left and I worry that she may have died and I am not there for my friend. My thoughts are scattered and tumultuous
as I compare my close relationship with my mother compared to my friend’s where there was constant sniping and fighting between mother and daughter. I resolve to check email as soon as we arrive at our next hotel stop and have access to Wi-Fi. My abiding refrain rears itself: “I miss my mum so much and I am constantly talking in my head to her. She would have loved the gardens and the parks. We would have had such a laugh about K too...but now there is no one to talk to (about K) or get the gossip from.”

We pass the Shahrestan Bridge and are awestruck that the piers were built during the Sassanian (3-7 CE) and Achamenian (550-331 BCE) times. It has been renovated by the Buyid dynasty in the tenth century and then by the Seljuk’s in the eleventh century. Dismissed by travellers as not being as notable as the Si-o-Se Pol and Khaju bridges, it is however highly significant to us as ‘pilgrims’. There is no water flow now as the river was diverted hence the presence of lake like ponds on either side. ‘Toll booths’ to collect tolls from the caravans exist. The different eras of renovation have left it with a haphazard appearance using mud and straw outer surfaces with wooden batons and hand bricks.

We are heading out for lunch now and thankfully, the air conditioning in the bus is working. Lunch was at a very pretty restaurant called Shahrzad. Beautiful central room open to the sky with greenery all around. Stained glass doors and beautiful wall frescoes, more restrained than Bastani in the marketplace at Naqsh e Jahan where we ate yesterday. We ate fesanjan, which is pomegranate molasses cooked with walnut paste and chicken. The chicken is stringy and dry but others seem to relish it.

My co-pilgrims are amused when I get a call from my family during lunch and instruct my son to ‘email’ his university assessment so that I can proof read it! Cyrus of course ignores my instructions and I can visualise my husband and daughter rolling their eyes at my typical controlling ‘Parsi mother persona’. The ‘hospitality and tourism’ academic in me is endlessly fascinated by food service practices and at Shahrzad I manage to get a picture of the chef rolling in yoghurt sauces from the street, including one uncovered vessel. By now us, are ‘acculturated’ and I have reverted back to my ‘native’ state of being more ‘Indian’ rather than the ‘shocked Aussie’. The ‘owners’ cash booth at the front reminds us of traditional ‘Irani restaurants’ in Mumbai. I surreptitiously look around hoping to see the resident rooster/ (now cat) lounging on the owner’s pay desk, like the famed Britannia restaurant in Bombay but this is Iran.

Ideas around death preoccupy me on the pilgrimage not only because I am missing my mother but because of the senseless, wanton destruction of wars and chicanery from time immemorial. From the perspective of tourism, there are several allusions to the Zoroastrian death rituals and ‘Dakhmas’ were in use till quite recently in Zoroastrian communities. It is still a ‘hot’ button issue for modern day Zoroastrians in India and overseas. Parsi Khabar (December 3, 2018) reporting on an article by Khushbu Solanki, a Rutgers Law Graduate, makes a case for the installation of a ‘Dakhma’ (Tower of Silence) in Texas for the “11000 Zoroastrians in the US”. Stating that the labelling of the traditional excarnatory funeral practices deemed criminal in the US mean that many “Zoroastrian-Americans are forced to transport their dead overseas which can be prohibitively expensive or to have funerals against their religious mandate”. She nominates Texas as a ‘promising state’ in which to build a dakhma because of the buzzards to consume the corpse, the need for sun to bleach the bones after excarnation, and the likelihood of the dakhma being situated remote from commercial and residential areas. This very recent development makes for more than simply ‘interesting’ reading for diasporic Zoroastrians because of the implications it has for funerary practices in the diaspora in fact in any place including in Indian cities where there is no dakhma. I discuss this issue in Chapter 4 as an ‘emergent’ aspect for diasporic Zoroastrians to consider.

I should know that in places where the history is ancient and well accepted as part of the DNA of the nation and when it is accompanied by a lack of affluence the locals tend to treat ‘history’ (and especially around death) rather cavalierly and are less starry-eyed about it. This point was brought home in force to me when I went to Turkey straight after being in Iran with a group of Australian tourists. While the Australians remained awe-struck and reverential about Gallipoli, the ANZAC service and War monuments there was less interest in touring Troy, the Blue Mosque and other Ottoman historical sites. In India too, partly the newly ‘awakened’ diaspora is leading the charge when it comes to patronising monuments and creating a demand
for revival and restoration of historical sites and monuments. The ease of social media which allows for ‘meetings’ in the virtual space are driving entrepreneurship too in the form of walking tours and other customised experiences for the diasporic Indian/Zoroastrian visiting Iran and India. I discuss this in some detail as an impact and opportunity in Chapter 4.

Ever the ‘Infovore’ I take pictures of a public display of the ‘restorations’ that are displayed for people to see. It is for the building of ‘hamams’ (baths) at Hamam-e-Ali Gholi Agha. Built in the Isfahani style during the Safavid era it comprises one large hamam, a small hamam, a dressing house and a ‘Garmkhaneh’ (hothouse/sauna) with a central pool known as a ‘howz’. The howz dependant on its location was multipurpose serving for bathing as well as for aesthetics and to perform ablutions if situated in a mosque. The hamam is currently used as a museum with mannequins dressed in period costumes. I am enchanted with a picture of a ‘school excursion’ visiting the hamam that pops up on TripAdvisor when I am researching my photos to find the location of the hamam pictures. I especially like the picture of the bathhouse attendant scrubbing what appears like a recalcitrant reluctant young child while another watches on! The pictures remind me of my own photographs of the children I met at Takht-i-Jamshid in Hamadan and give an insight into Persian ‘school excursions’ and the teaching of Persian history and culture to primary school children.

Our trip to Shahr E Khord is full of majestic scenery and delight, as our bus has to give way to nomadic Bakhtiyari shepherds herding their flock. Manuchehr brings in a kid goat for us to pat and coo over. The Aussies of course get bragging rights and tell of New Zealand jokes and rivalries around sheep. Enroute we go over the Zayendeh River where people were picnicking and zip lining. There were white water rafting dinghies but none seemed to be being used. SilloooM and Manuchehr scouted out a place for tea that included a ridiculous walk down to the river nearby. Much as I enjoy being in the tranquillity and nature I live in fear of one of our less steady elderly pilgrims keeling over or slipping.

Exotic foods being sold along the side of the road intrigue me. The Iranian vegetable (bamboo?) is seasonal and I wonder how it is cooked but my lack of Farsi interferes again. I get very excited when I see a ‘childhood’ forbidden favourite – called bers in India. Known as Chinese date, Chinese apple, jujube and Indian plum it is a tropical berry. They are small orange fruit which can be pickled with salt and the old wives tale is that they give you a cough (or at least that is what we were told to dissuade us from spending precious money on them as we wandered home from school). If we had Google then, as children, I could have battled this illogical explanation and asserted that actually the ‘ber’ was a ‘powerhouse’ packed with Vitamin C and in fact according to The Times of India, (June 23, 2016) article bers were recommended for people with diabetes. (https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Fruits-to-be-consumed-for-people-with-diabetes).

The big drama of the day is K’s missing bag, which she claims she gave Manucher but is more likely to be left behind somewhere in Isfahan as they insist on lugging all their gear to breakfast. She is very annoyed and was vicious to her roommate DV as we were waiting for the lift. She complained vociferously to SilloooM who told her she could not understand what she was trying to say (!) much to our mirth! I feel mean but she really gives us all the ‘pip’ and despite our best efforts at Hamata Hukata Hvarshtha, it is hard. DV on the other hand is a gentle soul and we all feel sorry for her being stuck with K.

We arrive at our ‘Parsian Hotel’ in Shahr E Khord at 5.30pm and dinner is set for 8pm. While it is a nice room, the bedside light does not work and the console in the old-fashioned bedside table has been pulled out and has naked wires hanging down. “Hope I don't get electrocuted, what a way to go that would be ... Atash,” I think to myself... A visit to the gift shop in the hotel is instructive as I observe the sad range of goods on offer including several SpongeBob Square Pants toys. More evidence of being caught in the ‘past’. I decided to go for a walk, investigated the hotel, and took pictures of some posters with information with the most hilarious spellings. I appreciate the effort (even though it seems like a school project) to have the information with accompanying pictures of the sites and objects. My smugness and amusement gets a good reality check when I realise that I am ‘again’ missing most of the information because I had not taken the time to learn Farsi and how difficult it would be to communicate in an alien language when you have had little or no opportunity to learn it. Humble pie is hard to swallow when you realise you are behaving like the classical ‘neo-colonial’ you purport to despise.
While I was taking pictures and reading the legends of the various tourist sites the Restaurant Manager came by and asked if I wanted tea or coffee and I said “a cup of tea please” but who knows where he vanished? I wonder if I am super sensitive and have unrealistic expectations because of my hospitality tourism background. The ability and opportunities to travel and experience really luxurious hospitality has turned me into a snob and I keep reminding myself of my ‘pilgrim’ status (although a five start pilgrim by Iranian standards).

This heat is killing me and wearing a 
*sudreh* means an extra layer to trap the heat, despite my cotton garments. I long to ‘rise’ above my secular modern world sensibilities (i.e. the need for cold air conditioning in this instance) which hijack my spiritual ‘questing’. My petty irritations are tethered to the prosaic and profane.

The delays in proving the access code for the internet by hotel staff who are well aware of our arrival time and booking are minor irritants but impinge on the total ‘experience’. (I am undeterred by my grumpy old demanding woman persona, the ‘ugly’ entitled Western Tourist in me raises its head again!). A few deep calm breaths and recitation of *Ashem Vohu* and *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* while wandering around the ‘almond’ orchard next to the hotel calm me right down. It is sobering to think how reliant I am on technology, immediate connectivity and instant gratification and how quickly I am irritated at the lack of these ‘amenities’. Again, a move from pilgrim (higher plane) to demanding entitled tourist (‘I’ve paid for it and must have it NOW,’) remind me of the positioning of pilgrimage in the tourist machinery.

I delight in seeing almond trees and thoroughly enjoy stuffing my face with raw almonds – like a naughty child ‘stealing’. I am quite alone in the orchard and restored to good spirits by the time it gets dark and we set off for dinner.
Day 11: Isfahan to ShahreKhord, Sunday 3 May 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Farvadin Roj (Day)

It was Day 11 of our tour and a Sunday (though the day of the week becomes immaterial on pilgrimage in one sense but our ‘Western’ sensibilities are acutely tuned to Sunday as being a day ‘off’).

I spoke to MK at breakfast about the need for solitude hence the single room. She agreed. Manucher ate breakfast with me and got a lovely warm naan for us to eat with cottage cheese called labneh. I asked MK to translate and tell Manucher not to worry about silly K. He was at great pains to point out that SillooM trusted him with all the money and with the credit card, which was in his name. Poor chap. He is amazing and I must say I love being spoiled by him and given double portions of dry fruit and today, even at lunch, he wanted me to eat more of the fried roll, but I had to say no. I must not overeat, and have been good at lunch, but were carried away on Saturday night with the bhel puri and falooda and ate some of the left over fessanjan with naan and some of A D’s veggie and bean dish. Too much, not good. It is hard to tell my with my ‘one size fits all’ karta pyjamas with expandable drawstrings whether I have eaten too much, but I have to watch both my weight and my stomach so that I do not get sick.

Manucher asked MK to tell me that he would take me around in his own car if I ever visited on my own again. Giving me his wife’s email address he assured me that email was better as mobile numbers could change, reminding me of the tenuousness of the telecommunications network in Iran. Not having a mobile phone and having to rely on intermittent access to the Internet is hard. The enforced digital detox though has benefits as it allows for ‘focus’ and ‘concentration’ and a level of distance from the ‘profane’, which I must admit to enjoying, luxuriating in ‘reading’ and ‘thinking’. I think it would be wonderful to do this trip with my sister in law and her husband as FIT travellers in Plog’s Allocentric mode. We are compatible travellers and my urge to visit and soak in history would have been slaked by my current pilgrimage so I would go along with “where are we going to eat” tourism much more happily.

It is Fravadin Roj and we are treated to a detailed discussion about the significance of both Fravadin Roj and the power of prayer. Spelt as Fravardin in the Delhi Parsis page (19 August 2007) I learn that it refers to the Guardian Spirit. The import of the day as being one in which we remember the ‘Fravashi’ (spirit) of those who have died is not lost on me especially given me daily remembrance of and longing for my mother. I recall that we pray the Satum-no-Kardo (sometimes known as Stom Karta) along with the Fravadin Yasht especially when Farvadin Roj falls in the month (mah) of Fravadin. People in Mumbai might visit the Doongerwadi in Mumbai and offer prayers and have jashans recited. ‘Soli’ writing in Avesta.org explains in detail the worth of the Fravadin Yasht noting its importance in maintaining creation and all the Amesha Spenta, like sky, earth, sun, moon, stars, waters, plants, cattle and humans. Additionally, the repelling of evil, reinforcing that the living are stronger than the dead, helping the battle against evil with the help of the departed by supporting their living relatives and fravashis gracing the home of the living especially during the ten days of the Mukta being all part of the homily.

Understanding that when we pray we are contributing to something not asking for something is emphasised. For example, when we pray the Behram Yasht we are becoming a hamkar (co-worker). We are helping the Yazatas in their work and helping all of humanity. For example when we pray the Tir Yasht, we are invoking rain to drought stricken areas through our prayers. The concept of duality is extended to explain that every action has a reaction. We must do good deeds but we must respect those who pray as they are benefitting all of humanity. For example, the Roj ‘Mino Ashisvangh’ translates to blessings and prayers for adequate wealth, contributing to the prosperity of the world and requesting Ahura Mazda to grant good fortune, wealth and treasures but a prayer for happiness in equal measure. (AhuraMazda.com).

That is why we must focus when we pray. I feel a sharp sense of guilt when I hear this because despite my religiosity which includes praying both in the morning and at bedtime I am often assailed by other thoughts, and I often ‘punish’ myself by starting from scratch again as I recite the prayers. McIntosh (2010, p.223) refers to this conundrum between researcher and pilgrim in AE and reflexive practice when using observational technique at the ‘puja’ the researcher recognizes her lack of ‘immersion’ in the practice of meditation and visualization saying “Therefore in the puja I actually did not really chant the script with my
SillooM explains that there are two sides to the coin, Mathra, i.e. prayers and the other side of the coin Mithra, which refers to ‘meaning’. The importance of pronunciation is elaborated as being responsible for ‘creating vibrations’ when enunciated with concentration. Our two most basic and fundamental prayers the ‘Yatha Ahu Vairyo’ with twenty-one words and Ashem Vohu with twelve words hold enormous power when prayed with concentration. I feel very chuffed repeated my own words back to me saying that praying the Yatha Ahu Vairyo and Ashem Vohu has calmed them and provided sustenance in times of great stress for them and ‘might’ work for me as well.

The role of numerology is canvassed. We are told that in the Sarosh Baj prayer when we pray five Yatha Ahu Vairys and three Ashem Vohu the effect is varied and considered optimal. As a child growing up in a not very theologically religious or observant family, I am struck by this, as it is a practice that my family observes to this day, before we leave to work or even when we leave the house for a significant event. The substitution effect of Yatha Ahu Vairyo and Ashem Vohu is explained as a possibility for those of us who do not have the time or ability to sit down with a prayer book every day and read the relevant prayer for the Roj.

“The people who composed the MATHRAS were experts in the Ilam and Avam?” I find this sentence in my journal and my ‘research’ fails to unearth what ilam and avam refer to. The following sentence adds even greater mystique to this comment: “For example women staying away from the temples for forty days after childbirth”, I interpret it to mean that the ancients responsible for the terminology of both the liturgy (mathra = prayers) and meaning (Mithra) based their work on certain principles both mystical and practical e.g. the bleeding that occurs for forty days after childbirth, resulting in both weakness and ‘perceived’ impurity.

As we travel to Shahr-e-Khodr, to visit Manucher’s relatives, we hear about the Bakhtiyari tribes and their nomadic way of living. We are all excited about this after our encounter the previous day with the kid (goat) and having observed the shepherds and family groups. Malcolm insists that people who were coughing had to take the medicine doled out from the Darukhana (chemist) as he did not want the entire bus affected including himself, Silloo and Manucher. He then proceeded to regale us with two examples of when this had occurred and the disastrous consequences on the pilgrimage and group. (PS – I reflect on this as I make the revisions at the height of the Corona virus outbreak and its paralysing effects on travel and tourism, education and the hospitality and tourism industry).

Today as we went our way through the Zagros Mountains and to visit Manucher’s Bakhtiyari “settled” cousins we pass shepherds picking up and carrying baby lambkins because they could not keep up with the rest of the herd. Manucher’s cousins are his mother’s brother’s children and three generations of the family live in a joint family. We go to cousin Shahbehram's house, which consisted of two massive rooms with carpets. A lounge suite on one side and a dining table on the other side of the rooms with a kitchen act as a divider. There was a bathroom with a divider and another English style toilet outside the front door. Shahbehram recited some couplets from Ferdowsi and my video sound did not work. The travails of the pilgrim researcher who happens to be a Luddite! Shahbehram’s brother Rustam told a story about Ashisvangh (an army general) being instructed to bring Rustam to Saam, his father in handcuffs to prove himself. Rustam agrees to go along but not in handcuffs. The narration in Farsi is enchanting, you can feel the emotion and the regard with which the Shahnameh is treated, and of course, the reverence that Rustam bears for his namesake Rustam Pehlwan as a great warrior.

There is an oversize Shahnameh produced with beautiful illustrations, we were told of an Egyptian professor who marvelled that despite the Arab invasion, and thanks to Ferdowsi, they maintained their language and customs and did not take on Arabic as the lingua franca. We were served watermelon and cups of Iranian tea with big cubes of yellow sugar and a caramelised toffee like brittle. Of course, our resident bête noire picked through the caramel stuff much to my disgust and I had to overcome my germ phobia to taste it. I am reminded of a loathsome professor I had the misfortune to work with several years ago who despite being in tourism and hospitality would pick through working lunches looking for ‘Devon’ sandwiches. I berate myself for not
having got to the brittle before it reached her. I am equally horrified by my own venality and allowing the very unprincipled and irreverent thinking to intrude on a very sacred and lofty spiritual experience. The concept of ‘duality’ in Zoroastrianism has a lot to recommend it but a lot to answer for.

The men tried on the woven jacket, bellbottom elasticized pants held up with a belt. The elasticised bottoms served the dual purpose of being able to be hoisted into shorts when faced with wet conditions. They posed with the “bandook” (gun) amid much mirth. First Manucher, followed by the other men in our group. This is the version of ‘pilgrim’ animation – including posing with the rifle and donning a ‘mask’ [see: Figure 65]. There is much mirth as the role-play of ‘shooting’ reinforces that in every man, there lurks a childish desire to play with ‘weapons of destruction’ and in today’s politically correct (PC) world, the opportunities are rare. Questions of cultural appropriation assailed me – but the opportunity to be a ‘researcher’ and experience the (semi) authentic was much more powerful. I consoled myself by putting Manucher (the real Bakhtiyari) picture first then following it with the ‘tourist snaps’.

We were reminded that we owed our existence and remembrance to Ferdowsi and his revival of the stories of Zoroastrian valour. The tragic story of Ferdowsi’s betrayal was that the King Muhammed Ghazni (who invaded India and caused tremendous destruction) promised him a gold coin for every couplet he wrote but eventually Ghazni only paid 60000 silver coins. Ferdowsi flew into a rage and he gave away 20000 coins each to the hamam owner where he was bathing at the time, the sweet merchant outside the hamam and his servant. Ferdowsi then wrote couplets mocking the king and saying that if his mother had really been a Shahbanu (i.e. Queen) then he would never have done such a thing. This stemmed from the fact that Ghazni was not of royal birth as the preceding king only produced daughters. Ghazni was said to have exchanged despite being born to commoners, with the daughter, that had been born to the royal couple. Queens were referred to as ‘Malake’ and Farah Diba the Shah’s third wife was the only one who was invested with the title ‘Shahbanu’ the feminine complementary to Sahansah (King of Kings). Soraya never enjoyed the title of Shahbanu, which literally translates to Empress. I resolve to read up more about it – because every Parsi secretly harbours a great interest in all things royal (a legacy of our ancestor’s relationships with the British monarchy).

There were beautiful big cushions with the Persepolis design on them and bolsters all around the room at the home of Manucher’s cousin. I sat down but my right hip was killing me and I ended up having to take medication to relieve the pain. I gave the little girl Nirvana a packet of Oreos and sesame snaps that I had in my bag. I noticed the adults in the family enjoying it too as we left. N gave Nirvana two clip-on koalas so the Aussies were well covered and we are feeling a sense of superiority over our Indian, North American and Canadian co-pilgrims who are rather ‘tight’ with their gifts whether money or souvenirs. I am somewhat mollified when we are encouraged by SillooM to make gifts of cash to the family and they reluctantly do so. There is a headlong rush to use the ‘English’ toilet, which strangely is located outside the apartment. The profane intrudes again…

We head out to the Shir mountains and some waterfalls called Pir e Ghar which means place where wise person Pir e Ghar (refers to the cave, Ghar means home). Located in Deh Cheshmeh village near Shahrekord it is an important historical site and boasts inscriptions from 1908 ratifying the Constitution and saying that the Bakhtiyari people had marched to the king and demanded the right to choose their own representatives.

We then went on a spectacular drive to a place for picnic lunch by a spring [see: Figure 66]. There we prayed the humbandagi and washed our hands in the cold water and viewed the cave entrance, which led up to the fort at the top of the hill. The other cave (where I refused to go in, as I am claustrophobic) has a myth about it that if you manage to get a stone to stick to the walls your wish shall be granted. People lit candles there and made wishes.

Lunch was Salad Olivieh/Olivier (an Iranian concoction of finely shredded chicken with eggs, potatoes, grated carrot green peas, and gherkins) in a roll. It is a version of Russian Salad and makes complete sense when one thinks of the Silk Route influences. Chips and Cheetos (called ‘Elephants Farts’ by Iranian kids according to MK had me laughing hysterically, perhaps high on the yellow food colouring. Who says a non-
drinking Daruwalla (liquor person) cannot get high? Orange quarters and apples completed the meal.

The drive continued to Chelgerd and the most spectacular scenery with the snow filled Zagros Mountains and deep lush green valleys dotted with sheep and lamb and goats and donkeys and even some horses. Bakhtiyari nomads had pitched their tents on the sides of the hills. They looked wretchedly poor and SillooM did give them some money. We share the road with the shepherds and sheep [see: Figure 67] a bit like rural Australia or New Zealand! We saw Bakhtiyari men having a picnic on a large striped rug [see: Figure 68]. They shared their hot tea water with us and one of them entertained us by singing in a beautiful voice. We clambered around to see the waterfall from higher up and Manucher and Reza our driver helped us across some very precarious streams.

Some officious police officers stopped us after lunch and took photographs of all of us. The place we went to is a bit of a hidden jewel and not many tourists know about it or are told about it. The highlight for the others was their nature stop, as they had to pee in the woods. Never underestimate a Parsi’s ability to get endless humour from ‘toilet’ jokes whether eight or eighty years old. I am convinced that no other ethnic group derives as much satisfaction from ‘discussions’ around ‘toileting’ and it is the pervasive comments of Parsi diasporic pilgrims and tourists alike when they visit India or Iran. Toilets: I can’t go at all so I make sure my ablutions are completed in the morning, hence an early breakfast so I can go back up to the room before we depart. Parsis are built tough; everyone bar Malcolm, the driver and I are over sixty. As I write this I reflect on ‘insider’ humour that is inaccessible to ‘outsiders’ very similar to the emic and etic approaches to writing and investigating Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrian pilgrimage more specifically. I realise that this insider humour is multi layered and composed of commonalities in language, upbringing, location and economic status as well. I recognise and acknowledge that being diasporic brings its own ‘insider’ perspective and there are many ‘insider’ groups even within the broader Zoroastrian grouping.

I am slowly learning everyone's history and it is interesting to me to contemplate both similarities and differences including in the motivations for this pilgrimage. Ranging from the widely secular (I wanted to see Iran) to issues of identity and religion (Who am I and what does being Zoroastrian really mean?)

After Chelgerd, we stopped by at some mineral springs and filled up our water bottles. It is supposed to have health giving properties. The water was cold and beautifully clear. I am not so sure, about drinking it though it is clear as crystal. Now we are heading back to the hotel for sali murgi (potato straws and chicken, a very traditional Parsi dish) and rotli (a Parsi version of roti, wholemeal bread but much softer and richer due to the oil, ghee or butter that is used in the mixture) for dinner.

ND spends a lot of time sleeping in the bus and snoring. Poor fellow does not sleep well over a night and is my soul sister about the heat! He has sleep apnoea and does not have his CPap machine with him so is always tired during the day and being upright in the bus helps him catch his forty winks. I am reminded of my dad who could sleep anywhere, anytime much to our embarrassment as children. However, I have turned into dad and so have my brothers, we love our sleep.

I keep mulling the concept of ‘vibrations’ in ancient words of the Avesta. Numerology and Astrology, ancient and opaque spiritual practices, what role do they play in Zoroastrianism. how do they relate to the Kshnoomist views of Zoroastrian is a question that plays havoc with my reflections as I am alternately drawn to and repelled by some of the Kshnoomist views. Loving SillooM as I do but unable to move past my deep scepticism of her belief in Kshnoomist discourse I struggle with some of her teaching.

KE Eduljee (2005-2017) canvasses the concept of ‘Healing Prayer’ in the Heritageinstitute pages on worship. The contents of the page are written eloquently but simply to be accessible to a lay reader. (http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/worship/healingprayer.htm)

Explaining that the Manthra refers to the Zoroastrian scriptures, which are composed in verse, the content of them is geared toward reflection, meditation and personal growth through spiritual introspection and practice of the faith. The recitation of the ‘mathra’ has a soothing and calming effect simply through the concentration
on correct recitation even when the meaning of the words is obscure as is the case of all the prayers in the Avesta (given its status as an ‘extinct’ language). “Some may say that the manthra correctly intoned opens the portals to the spiritual realms enabling access to spiritual healing”.

The recitation of prayers is often seen as both an article and expression of faith for Zoroastrians. For some orthodox Zoroastrians observing the different ‘geh’s’ is seen as ‘respite’ from the rigours of a profane and mundane life and can be perceived as both talismanic (as in preventative) and curative. As a self-confessed introvert, I certainly find great solace in reciting my prayers regardless of the time of day as it forces me to concentrate on recitation and breath. During illness whether my own or of others I found it a soothing panacea during uncertain times and remember softly whispering it into the ears of both parents as they lay ill and when dead. I whispered prayers into the ears of both my children when they were born and presented to me to hold, an instruction that has come down family generations.

Eduljee (http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/overview/index.htm) expounds on the concept of moderation in Zoroastrianism succinctly dividing it into two codes: “The guiding principle for many life-style choices (not moral or ethical choices) is moderation between the extremes of too much and too little. Applying the principle of moderation does not preclude the need to apply the tests of goodness to every choice (for instance if something is helpful or harmful).”

That night I go to bed with my head full and buzzing.
Big day today, very heavy on theology as the religious component of the tour starts in earnest and the long drive gives us plenty of opportunity to ‘learn’ and have information disseminated to us.

Today is Behram Roj. Behram is the giver of victory over external and internal evil (anger etc.). Malcolm gives us a briefing on the significance of Behram. My mind wanders and I wonder why colloquially Parsis refer to our rear ends as ‘Behram’. I am immediately mortified but then my innate Parsi ‘humour’ bone comes into effect and I am reminded of yesterday’s lessons on moderation and the importance of ‘enjoying’ life and having a sense of humour is definitely part of being a Parsi.

The significance of Behram as a Yazata (angel) lies in attuning ourselves by praying the associated prayer i.e. Behram Yasht.

Malcolm informs us that one needs to pray the Behram Yasht for forty days for maximum potency and Ervad Karanjia says this is particularly appropriate “to overcome problems and difficulties especially connected with health, money, job or relationships”. Behram Yasht is strict. Other yazatas like Bahman and Spenta help coax us to goodness but if you keep doing negative things when the limit is reached justice kicks in and it is for our own good.

Behram Yazd is known as “Fattehmand, Perojgar and Dushman Jadaur” all of which refer to the characteristics of victory and triumph (over enemies). I am suitably gratified as my name ‘Pheroza’ means Victory and is a derivative of ‘Perojgar’. Phiroz is the male version of the name and my ‘fondness’ for Behram Roj grows even stronger despite my mother in law’s admonishment to me “baadhe Roj sara avey” (all Roj’s are good). This was in the context of my questioning her about why we must try and ‘pick’ a ‘Roj’ instead of considering convenience when organising a jashan, navjote or shaadi. With her reassurance that ‘convenience’ could be considered as important as the ‘Roj’, I have been able to practise my faith much more comfortably.

Ervad Karanjia’s note that Behram Yazd is associated with ‘travel’ brings a lot of significance to our pilgrimage and the day. The invocation “Behram Yazad Tamari Madad” (Invoking the help (madad) of Behram Yazad) begins to make complete sense, especially as it was part of the prayers we always said when setting out on a journey along with the five Yatha Ahu Vairyos and three Ashem Vohus discussed in the journal entry for Day 11.

Complementary associations with Behram and highlighted by Ervad Karanjia include the word ‘AtashBehram’ referring to the special fire and the high temples of Zoroastrians. The popularity of the name Behram stems from Sassanian times and includes emperors; Behram Chobin the General who rebelled against Khushru Parvez and Hormuz IV, Sassanian Kings and the ill-fated Yazdegard III, last Sassanian king was named Behram. Other attributes of Behram include healing, especially in matters of chronic headaches

Karma (fate), Bhakti (devotion) and Gyan (knowledge) are in all religions. Avan Niyaeash prayers (Gyan) Karma (benefits everyone when prayed) and Bhakti when implemented (for e.g. gives faith and when praying for rain benefits the growing of crops for all of humanity not simply Zoroastrians). Malcolm makes the statement that Zarathushtrians need to see themselves as TRUSTEES of humanity and I am reminded immediately of my constant refrain about ‘Stewardship’. The concept of stewardship imparted through education is a strong theme in my teaching (both secular and religious, I fervently believe my role as a ‘teacher’ is to impart this sense of ‘obligation’ to future generations, especially as we sink more and more into a selfish world).

Zoroastrians expressed ‘Bhakti’ (devotion) by singing devotional songs called Monajats. These have unfortunately fallen out of favour and ‘revivalists’ have put together disks and digital recordings but the community is unfamiliar with them. The influence of Hinduism and more notably Gujarati are
evidenced in that the Monajats are all in Gujarati. Comparisons to other faiths and the role of devotion through song include Hindus and Bhajans, Christians and Choral Music and Sufi and Buddhist chanting as Sikhs and the recitation of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Action follows words and as we are now in the historical and religious component of the tour, to put ourselves in the right frame of mind, Monajats were played and we were handed song sheets to sing along. There was a sense of déjà vu and calm that came to all of us through this little exercise as we reflected on ‘learning’ these things as children but ‘forgetting’ them as adults and through disuse. A sad commentary on so many things about Zoroastrianism that will be lost to the mists of time and dislocation but hopefully retained in digital and other formats that may be revived later with the coming of the ‘Sayoshant’ (Saviour).

The teachers amongst our group (AD, HK, ZW and I) are in danger of getting fatheads when we learn that teachers are highly respected in Iran and that Sheravar and Behram Yashit give us fatkas (smacks) to make us understand. According to the Ferdowsi’s stories, Bahram V referred to as Bahramgur, and a great favourite of Persian literature due to his victories against Romans, Hepthalites, Indians and Aryans. He was a noted hunter and lover and was compared favourably to Rustam Pehlewan and his ability to beat the Daevas (devils) and fight on the side of the Mazdayasnies (good).

Our conversation then moves to how an AtashBehram is consecrated.

Malcolm explained the steps in consecrating an AtashBehram fire. My research and notes revealed that the source of most of the information shared was from Curset M. Patel’s (2001) seven part series titled ‘Iranshah’ published in the Dini Avaz and affiliated to Ilm-e-Kshnoom. The Parsi Pakar, Parsi Avaz and Dini Avaz were all publications that are now housed in digital format at Zoroastrians. Net Parsis, Iranis, Zarathushtis All Under One Roof.

There was a need for a discussion about Kadmi and Shenshahi adherents of Zoroastrians at this stage given that three of the eight Atashbehrams identified as Kadmi. While both Kadmi and Shenshahi Zoroastrians agree about theology, there are minor differences in some rituals and in pronunciation and recitation of some prayers. The Kadmis are a sect that emerged in the eighteenth century when they opted to revert to the ancient (qadim) Iranian calendar to accommodate for the one-month discrepancy between the Indian and Iranian calendars. Many prominent Zoroastrians identified as Kadmis but now the majority of Zoroastrians follow the Shenshahi calendar. A notable difference in traditions include the necessity of Kadmi priest initiates to undergo the additional barasnom (purification) ceremony of nine days. Another difference is the Shenshahis mention the name of the wife in conjunction with their husband while Kadmis mention the father’s name when reciting the name of the woman. This is an essential part of the prayers (jashans) and modern day women might consider both archaic especially in today’s day and age where women are independent. It raises interesting conundrums when the girl is married outside the faith and whether to mention her children’s names if they have had their Navjote done. Conservative priests baulk at having to even mention the Zoroastrian woman’s name if she is married outside the community. I on the other hand take great delight in ‘slipping’ in the name of my third child ‘Sammy’, who just happens to be four, legged. After all Ethiram-I-Sag (great respect for the dog) is a commandment for Zoroastrians.

Malcolm elaborates on the story of the priest Naryosang Dhawal – explaining how the Iranshah fire was consecrated using Patel’s (2001) writings. The story is written with great detail and Malcolm introduces the concept of Pavmahal which is a Gujarati expression and explained as “the unseen spiritual base on which and by its connection everything spiritual survives. It is the foundation. It is a great reservoir of power and blessing which sustain and protect us.” He attributes the longevity of the Zoroastrian (Parsi) faith despite the depredations to this ‘Pavmahal’ erected by Naryosang Dhaval who is termed as a giary (i.e. a spiritually advanced priest mobed or dastoor).
Dastoor Adarbad Marespand, reorganised the Avestan scriptures and was said to have authored the prayer of repentance (Patet Pashemani), Dastoor Meherji Rana and Ardaviraf Varzavand are all considered high priests.

We pass Firuzabad and eat lunch in a park before we come to the highlight of the day ‘Naqsh-i-Rustam’. Naqsh-i-Rustam is spectacular but it is a very rushed trip as it is very windy although not particularly cold. We worry about keeping our heads covered as the wind makes a mockery of the whole scarf around the head business. I end up buying plenty of books about Persepolis as it is only a short distance away and I hope to do some reading before we get there.

Naqsh-i-Rustam is the necropolis of the Achamenian dynasty and the belief that it derives its name from Rustam Pehlewan is a well-worn trope based on the mural of the man with an unusual cap. It is believed to house the tombs of Darius I and II and Xerxes I and Artaxerxes. These four Achamenian kings ruled in BCE and Alexander the Accursed looted the four tombs after the death of Darius III, the last of the Achamenian kings. KE Eduljee (2005-17) provides a detailed overview of the Naqsh-i-Rustam site with the inscriptions in cuneiform, translated into text and their English translations.

The Ka-ba-ye Zarhost (Cube of Zoroaster), a square tower with a single door opening has three of the exterior doors with inscriptions dated to Shahpur I (241-72 CE) serving as a memorial and said to be built in the reign of Darius I [see: Figure 71]. Scholars vary on the purpose of the building with some including Frye (1974), suggesting that it served as a ‘depository’ or a ‘safety box’ for records including the Avesta. Others, like H Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1983) speculated that they were ‘coronation towers’ and were more ‘dynastic’ than religious in orientation. Analogy is drawn to the ‘Zendan-e-Soleyman (prison of Solomon) which is in Pasargarde (home of Cyrus the Great’s ossuary) and to the Urartian tower temples by David Stronach (1967). The Investiture relief of Ardashir I depicts Ahura Mazda handing the ring of kingship to Ardashir I (224-242 CE). It is the first attestation of the word ‘eran’ with the inscription bearing the words “Ardashir, king of kings of the Iranians”. The triumph of Shapur I (241-272 BCE) over Roman emperors Valerian after the Battle of Edessa and Marcus Julius Philippus (known as Phillip the Arab) is commemorated with suggestions that Shahpur humiliated Valerian by being used as a footstool when mounting his horse. Scholar Touraj Daryaei (2009) disputes accounts of Valerian’s death by being made to swallow molten gold/being flayed and then stuffed like a trophy. Daryaei asserts that Valerian was released after the construction of the Band-e Kaisar (Caesars Dam) located in Susa. Most tourists though prefer the gory version of Valerian’s death as it makes for a better story.

The bas relief of the Investiture of Narseh (293-303 CE) represents the ascent of the Sasanian king Narseh after the short reign of his grandnephew Bahram III [see: Figure 72]. This particular relief is notable for its depiction of a woman handing the ring of kingship to the King. The female form is said to represent the divinity Anahita associated with fertility, healing and wisdom. Referred to as Ardevi Sura Anahita in Avestan she is conflated with the Hindu goddess Sarasvati (goddess of knowledge, music, art, wisdom, learning, and one of the triumvirate with the other two goddess Lakshmi and Parvati). Rahele Koulabadi, Seyed Rasool Mousavi Haji and Morteza Ataie (2012) in their contribution to Payam Nabarz’s edited monograph Anahita – Ancient Persian Goddess & Zoroastrian Yazata go to great lengths to validate the figure as being that of the goddess Anahita and not Narseh’s mother or wife as suggested by others. The fact that she is represented with a taller headress than the king on the right is attests to her grand status. The authors are lyrical in their descriptions, “The hemline sweeps out over the ground like boiling matter pouring on the earth reminiscent of shaking waves and in the duty of the water goddess Anahita. She has a crenelated crown secured with broad ribbon ties that has knotted curly hair emerging from the top, of a type that is specialised to kings. Her hair is piled on top of the head in a mass of curls …” and so it goes on. (p.138). All the ladies in the group stoutly agree that it must be the Goddess and I am secure in my knowledge that feminist pride is alive and well amongst Parsi women.

Like all good ‘tourism’ sites, there is an opportunity to shop for souvenirs and I cannot resist getting a
bracelet for each of my children with their names embossed in cuneiform. They have never worn them…despite my not so gentle hints. It is proof positive that even on pilgrimage one never really ceases to be a tourist, nor refrain from retail therapy. Souvenirs have long served as ‘mementos and proof’ even though their charm is greatly reduced once ‘back home’ and incorporated back into the foot of the tourist trampoline (Jafari, 1987). I decline a camel ride but cannot resist getting a picture of the camel herder in his magnificent attire and the bedecked camel [see: Figure 73].

Then we are back on the bus and heading to Shiraz. As we go through the historic Qur’an Gate known as the Darvazeh Qu’ran [see: Figure 74] we hear that people would shout “Allah au Akbar” (God is Great) on seeing the gorge and entering Shiraz. Travellers going under the gateway are said to receive blessings from the Quran, which is housed in a small room at the top of the gate. It is late by the time we get in but we are all entranced.

The next day is a public holiday and there are people milling around admiring motor cars (preparing for some sort of rally) and doing what Iranians love doing, picnicking! We however are ready to stop for the day and head to our hotel to be welcomed with this charming sign in our rooms. “Dear guests: To help preserve the environment and reducing water and help to futurity, if you don’t need to replace the towels, please impend them here.” I resolve to ‘impend’ my ‘towels’ on the hook as I do care very much about the ‘futurity’ of Zoroastrianism and the planet more generally.
Day thirteen of our trip, almost two weeks and that means two thirds of our ‘pilgrimage’ is done. We have settled into a pattern and everyone now falls into ‘line’. It is warm in Shiraz and I wake after not having slept much and dreading the hotter weather that is coming as we go to Yazd and away from the mountains. I am obsessing about ‘toilets’ as I am trying to set a record for not going to the toilet anywhere other than when in the hotel for the night and trying to make sure I remain hydrated at the same time. Ah, first world problems!

We come to the Agiyari in Shiraz. I have made sure to wash my hair (as instructed earlier by SillooM as being a prerequisite to visiting fire temples). I can hear the chatter of children and it is delightful especially as the courtyard is a beautiful tree filled place.

Today is Ram Roj and Malcolm who has never been married informs us that it is considered auspicious to be married on Ram Roj. I hide my smile especially when he reminds us that in conservative Parsi family’s meat would not be consumed on Ram, Gosh, Bahman and Mohr Roj. No self-respecting Parsi would then want to get married on these days if they were going to abide by the vegetarian dictums. No gosh no pulao (mutton pulao), machi (fish), eeda (eggs), murgi (chicken) – unthinkable that Lagan nu Bhonu (Wedding feast) could be prepared without these ‘ramakras’ (literal translation – toys but colloquially refers to meat and fish which are expensive and were used sparingly in household consumption).

FD and SD give me back my sandalwood and TP offers to buy it so she can take back to Toronto. I give it to her as I can always organise to buy more when I am in Mumbai whereas she does not have easy access to buying it. I offer FD money for the scarves he had ‘bargained’ for me in Isfahan but of course, he refuses to take the money. I really adore them and my ‘lovelies’ from Melbourne. They exude kindness and love and really represent the best of Zoroastrian values in ‘lived’ lives, sans hubris despite their accomplishments.

We head over to Narengstan Museum and Gardens. It is very beautiful with every room is differently decorated. In the old days, the Qavam family used it as their town house to receive visitors. They had other properties in the country. The University of Shiraz manages it. The American Arthur Upham Pope and his wife Phyllis Ackerman were brought out by the Shah to help research and archive archaeological and historical sites. Their common interest and passion for Persian arts and expertise in the area made them advisors to several institutions and wealthy individuals investing in art. He was founder of the Asia Institute in New York in 1930. The Asia Institute was moved to Shiraz, affiliated with Pahlavi University and housed in Narenjestan in 1966. They spent the rest of their lives in Iran. When they died, they requested to be buried in Iran and were granted permission. Their mausoleum is on the banks of the Zayandeh River close to Khaju Bridge in Isfahan. Interestingly, Pope’s student Richard Nelson Frye (b.1920-d.2014), Professor Emeritus of Iranian Studies at Harvard University made a similar request to be buried next to the Zayandeh River like his mentor but due to the heightened American-Iranian tensions his family had to cremate him despite waiting two months for permission. Frye had headed up the Asia Institute in Shiraz University for five years.

This story evoked mixed feelings amongst us – happiness that the work of these scholars and their advocacy of Persian history and art was recognised and sadness that politics always seemed to win. It reinforced to me the role of emic (outsider) scholars in telling the stories of non-English nations and communities. I cogitated on the conundrum of them being ‘outsiders’ and never really understanding the ‘inside’ workings and their interpretations being coloured by their sheer ‘enthusiasm’ for the subject they were studying. The other side of the coin is the ability to be objective and not swayed by personal feelings or agendas subscribing to certain dogmas and pedantry.

Narengstan has stunning mirror and fresco work with painted wooden ceilings. It was built in the Qajar era and gets its name from the rows of orange trees. The external parts of the building have bas-reliefs
of Achamenids soldiers, animals and other motifs similar to Persepolis. Currently owned and maintained by the Faculty of Architecture of Shiraz University it is a riot of colour and beauty. Boasting exquisite murals and tile work – quintessentially Persian in orientation, we saw bas-reliefs similar to Persepolis, with depictions showing obeisance to the King and gifts from Satraps. There are several tourists admiring the vista framed by the arched walls with recessed tile work [see: Figure 69].

The Narengestan Museum, while interesting brought home the stark realities in ‘preservation’. Developing countries like India and Iran simply do not (have or commit) the resources and funds necessary to ‘preserve/restore’ their art and heritage when compared to developed (read rich) destinations in the west. In countries where people struggle to eat a meal a day it is hard to argue that more should be spent on the dead than taking care of the living. Women at the museum gave demonstrations of Persian painting using paper and camel bone used to create Persian miniatures [see: Figure 70]. It is interesting to see that there appears to be no bar to depicting ‘people’ in the Persian miniatures with hunting scenes and ‘portraits’. The phenomenal collection of very ancient coins are interesting and we are struck by the very low-tech security in place to protect the specimens from both robbery and deterioration (in terms of lighting and moisture controls). This is in stark contrast to more recent examples in Australia, particularly of the closure of the National Gallery of Art in Canberra owing to fears of smoke and particle damage from the bush fires.

Our next stop were the Eram (Rest? Aram in Hindi) Gardens. I was underwhelmed by the gardens as per my journal entry but my reflections (after action) and reviewing my photographs indicated that it was probably the after effect of a poor night’s sleep and general tiredness. I failed to see the connections between Narengestan and Eram gardens which include aspects such as Eram Gardens are classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and were part of Pahlavi University and represent the archetype of a classical ‘Persian garden’. The Shiraz Qavami family who were instrumental in establishing Narengestan played a significant role in the construction of the garden and the building (which is not open to visitors). The building was used by the College of Law and housed the Asia Institute to which Pope, Ackerman and Frye had been connected through Pahlavi University. Now it is part of the Shiraz Botanical Gardens and still associated with Shiraz University, ranked as one of the top three-research university’s in Iran by the Times Higher Education rankings in 2017.

Shiraz University fascinates me especially when research reveals that other aspects including its close associations with the University of Pennsylvania and its adoption of the American model of studies with a flourishing exchange program. The Islamic Revolution saw many changes including its name change from Pahlavi to Shiraz University and its seal going from one inspired by Persepolis to the ‘Tree of Life’ motif, which has been popular from the Sassanian period. I ponder the ramification of the closure of Iranian Universities for 3 years during the Islamic Revolution (1980-1987) and the enormous losses and suffering of fellow academics and students. It helps bring into perspective the first world problems associated with the politics of Australian university work places.

I spend time with FD and SD my ‘favourites’. Unfortunately the bête noire of the group attached herself to us – but we forbore from being rude and sending her packing. Maybe the pilgrim spirit is catching on finally. There were cute little school kids in grey and red uniform and one little boy fell down and I gave his teacher a muesli bar to try and get him to stop crying. It worked a treat and mimed that he should not eat it if he had any allergies being my responsible caring Australian hyperactive vigilant mum mode in action. He had no such qualms the tears stopped and the bar was gone in a flash. While waiting for the bus to pick us up we are entertained by the ‘Budgie’ man. I am quite happy to stand back and photograph and do not want the birds sitting (or doing anything else) on me. It is reminiscent of our childhoods and local ‘fairs’ where tame animals including monkeys were part of the entertainment. I miss my dog…

We go for lunch to the Shiraz Dharamsala and we all dole out money to the woman who runs the place. The money still confuses me. I am amused when the young Zoroastrian ‘grounds person’ stops to take
a picture of us. It is a reversal of the tourist trope and a good taste of our own medicine as we have been happily photographing everything and everyone. I am struck by several thoughts including the democratisation and access to photography with the advent of the mobile phone, the still pervasive desire to photograph the ‘tourist’ (who ostensibly lives a very different life to yours) and the reversal of object and subject. People researching wild life v Zoo photography by tourists often comment on this object/subject conundrum but it equally applies to people and access to the ‘world’ more generally. These thoughts are furthered when we go to our next stop in Firuzabad and visit King Shahpur’s ‘castle’ and the visiting Iranian tourists take pictures of us.

The Dharamsala and its set up in Iran always enchants me with its very definite communal feel. I recognise that it is an ‘attitude’ thing and the concept of ‘pitching in’ is very much part of the Iranian ethos. This is a trait I have noticed in Sydney with AZA functions that specifically attract our Iranian Zoroastrians. Communitas – is practised and there is no tension as everyone ‘finds’ something to do and help out. We set up the table in the verandah outside the kitchen, eat baghali polo (Iranian rice with broad beans and dill), and fish curry. I bring the idea of cooking it at ‘home’ and replicate it using the Australian SBS channel for the recipe. It makes good use of the dill I grow in my garden.

We met a group of Iranian women from Khosravan visiting who ululated, said Hello, and were very pleased with us [see Figure 71]. The leader insists on a photo of us together and giving me an Iranian sweet. We are amused as one of the women calls out to HM “I love you” – as the eldest in our group and one of the few males, he is both chuffed and amused. It brings home the incongruity of semantics and gaps between tourist and local use of language, especially in ‘buttoned up’ Iranian society.

The next part of our visit contextualised in pilgrimage and piety involved the distribution of ‘gifts’ we had been encouraged to bring. These ‘gifts’, paltry by first world standards has been a hallmark of all SilloM’s visits and is much looked forward to by the village children in Firuzabad. It was great fun to watch especially as MS was almost tackled to the ground. The bigger boys stuffed things down their shirts! [See: Figure 73] Toothbrushes and pencil cases seemed to be in high favour! Some pushy mother came along and kept stashing her kids’ stuff and sending them forwards much to the disgust of some of the pilgrims. Manucher giving up any attempt at order and ended up flinging the last of the gifts [see: Figure 74] into the crowd.

Today I thought a lot about death as I prayed the Satoom no Kardo at the Agiyari. I wonder whether the pain of losing mum will ever leave me. I thought of how good a relationship we shared compared to so many friends who have a very adversarial relationship with their mothers but I loved mine unconditionally and can only recall one fight with her. We did not clash even when I went through the teenage years and I attribute this to the inherent prudish, prissy attitude I had while she was much more free spirited. I think of the strong women in my life including my mother in law and my maternal grandmother and their interest and intellect, which set them as being way ahead of their time. All three women would have relished pilgrimage and been ‘educated’ tourists having read ‘literature’ before their visit. My musings on death are likewise echoed in the several nomadic tribal kabrastans (cemeteries) that are scattered around Naqsh e Rostam with their pom poms floating in little frames and the Bakhtiyari tribes with their lions protecting the graves, seen in the SIS E POOL bridge in Isfahan.

Another of our ‘pilgrim’ conventions that SilloOM insists on is the rotation of our seating arrangements in the bus so that we all get to know each other. I am now sitting in line with MK and TP and it is fun with MS in front and ZW at the back. We are the ‘younger ones (under seventy) and are cementing our reputation as ‘rowdy’ pilgrims as we enjoy more ‘elephant fart’ Cheetos with our dinner.
Day 14: Shiraz, Hafez and Persepolis, Wednesday 6 May 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Govad Roj (Day)

Today is Govad Roj. Zubin Lilaowala (nd) writing in Zoroastrians.net provides a delightful discourse of each day as a “ready reckoner for kids and adults like”. For Govad Roj: “The twenty second day is named Govad. What does the word mean? “Go,” means “good” and “Vaad/Vaat” means “Wind”. Hence, Govad means a gentle breeze which everyone welcomes, not a stormy wind which knocks you down”.

I am particularly struck by the ‘serendipity’ of this explanation as my journal for the day starts thus: “It is raining today” and we have to postpone our trip to Persepolis to later in the day when the ‘gentle breeze’ replaces the rain. Instead we set off to Hafezi, the tomb of the celebrated Iranian poet Hafez. A second moment of ‘serendipity’ occurs when I am researching Hafez and the Encyclopaedia Iranica uses the term ‘Bildungsroman’ thus “The attempt to write a conventional modern biography of a medieval poet like Hafez or Ferdowsi, in the form of a bildungsroman constructed out of ascertainable facts, is itself an anachronistic venture.”

This leads me to Farida Master’s (2019) article ‘Art explores cultural identity and sexuality’ published in the Times Online in New Zealand and describing the ‘Bildungsroman’ exhibition by Parsi artist Areez Katki. In the article, Katki explains his choice of the title stating, “As a narrative trope it refers to the formation and development of identities from two perspectives”. Master’s adds helpfully “A Bildungsroman is the growing up or ‘coming of age’ of a sensitive person who goes in search of answers to life’s questions with the expectation that these will result in gaining experience of the world”. Areez Katki’s work tells the story of his ‘tumultuous journey’ as a Parsi gay man searching for ways of expressing his identity. Areez is a textile artist, which immediately endears him to me along with the fact that he visited Zoroastrian heritage sites in Iran and Azerbaijan as part of his journey about self-identity and that he references his grandmother as a muse – I relate to all of these passions loving textile art, undertaking ‘pilgrimage’ and having had great mentors in my maternal grandmother Perin and my mother Silloo. Master’s blurb expands, “Some of the evocative bead and needlework at the exhibition will showcase the spiritual practices of the Parsi community, their ritual, topography, architecture, archaeology and historic figures”.

The ‘matriarchal fragments’ are replicated in my own matriarchal mementoes – my grandmother’s Japanese Doll (she lived in Japan as a child), the carved sandalwood box and most importantly the ‘Kashmiri’ vase given to her by my grandfather on their honeymoon and now my proud possession. Grandma Perin’s ‘gifts’ including the eggshell Japanese tea cups (part of her trousseau in 1935 and then part of mine in 1991 and the ‘showcase’ which belonged to my great grandfather, was restored and relocated to Sydney by my indulgent husband).

This then plays right into the signature theme of Hafez’s mystical poetry so beautifully illustrated in Joanna Lumley’s series ‘Silk Road’ when she visits Hafezi and participates in opening a book of Hafeez for the ‘Fal of Hafez’ where if you have a question in your mind and then open the book of Hafez your answer will be revealed through his poems. You have to unravel the symbolism in the poetry and modern day Iranians still learn his poems use them as proverbs. It is said that Hafez and the Shahnnameh will be found in every Iranian home and Hafez influenced poets like Rabindranath Tagore, Ralph Aldo Emerson and others. Hafez is very mystical in his approach and his poems do not translate well as the symbolic effect are often lost. He talks of beautiful women and drinking wine, but the inner meaning is that the tavern is a mystical world of knowledge and the pourer (‘sakhi’ i.e. beautiful woman) is drinking wine (spiritual knowledge) which in turn intoxicates him. It is not about physical love but spiritual love. His poems target religious hypocrisy and blend ‘human and mystical love’ while using metaphors liberally. Diwan-e-Hafez was the book he wrote and many Iranians will have a copy of it and open to tell their ‘fortune’ for the coming year especially during Nowruz (Spring Equinox) and Yalda (Winter Solstice). Hafez's encounter with Pir E Mogan (wise men, Zarathusthi in origin) translated to ghazals (couplets with a refrain of one to three words).
Hafez was his pen name and he is referred to as Kaja Sams-al-Din Mohammed Sirazi, and considered among the greats of Persian poets along with Ferdowsi, Rumi and Sa’adi. Details of Hafez’s life are sketchy but it is generally agreed that he was born (1315-1390) to a poor family where his father died young and he became responsible for providing for his family. He was a devotee of the Sufi Master Hajji Zayn al-Attar and in his early days was said to have spent forty days at the tomb of Baba Khouri meditating on his unrequited love for Shakh-e-Nabat, a noblewoman.

Malcolm saying that Angel Gabriel (Sarosh Yazad) gave Hafez the cup of immortality and the power of poetry introduces the Zoroastrian twist to the Hafez story. The angel was so spectacular that Hafez forgot his hopeless love and instead decided that he would be better off knowing the beauty of God. This devotion has parallels to Mary Boyce’s devotion to academia and the obituary in The Telegraph noted, “Mary Boyce considered the demands of scholarship and family life to be incompatible and consequently remained unmarried, preferring the fidelity of academia, as put it, to which she was totally committed throughout her life”.

Hafez undertook a second forty-day vigil when he was sixty. Referred to as a Chilla-nashini it is a Sufi practice of penance where the mendicant stays awake for the forty days and nights and follows a fast or a very restricted diet. Hafez was said to have attained ‘cosmic consciousness’ and in his meeting with his mentor Master Hajji Zayn al-Attar drunk a cup of wine leading to speculation that his verse which suggests that the ‘clarity of wine is developed by allowing it to sit for 40 days’. These mystical pronouncements add further to the associations between Hafez, Shiraz and the ambiguity of the messages said to have been contained in his writings. I am intrigued to read an anecdotal account that (Pandit) Ustad Zakir Husain, an exponent of the tabla in Hindustani Classical music has undertaken a ‘chilla-katna’. The veracity of the source is suspect, but it makes for a good story.

There is a spectacular gift shop at the tomb filled with unusual local crafts and I have a field day shopping. I gleefully ‘show off’ my treasures not revealing that I bought all of the wooden brooches available that some of my co-pilgrims covet (this return to unprincipled selfishness fills me with guilty pleasure about having ‘scooped’ up the best). A little bit of Hafez, mysticism has to me along with the Fal that I will get an Iranian friend to interpret for me. As a side note, I end up keeping all the brooches for myself instead of giving them away as gifts. I find that I have no pictures of our trip to Hafez consumed as I am by the ‘profane’ desire to get shopping done. What does this say about my religiosity and/or pilgrimage status? I’m sure Ahura Mazda being the benevolent Almighty will forgive me for lapsing into just another avaricious ‘tourist’ playing ‘queen for the day’ spending my rials without constraint as described in the Animation phase of Jafari’s (1987) Tourist Model.

The tomb is a beautiful cupola made of metal on top of mausoleum in the shape of a dervish’s hat [see: Figure 81]. Inside it is replete with mosaics. The front verandah has eight columns and the mausoleum is in the middle cupola. The rain clears and we head off to Persepolis (always the jewel in the crown for every visitor to Iran). Malcolm helps us to get the history sorted as our brains are full of the Cyrus’s, Darius’s, Xerxes’s, Artaxerxes’s, Shahpurs, Ardasir’s and the various dynasties that are all beginning to overwhelm those of us who are intent on keeping it all straight (for research purposes especially).

We learn about the sophisticated postal system developed during the Achamenian period with daylong stages and resting points. An equestrian would travel approx. twenty-four kilometres at full speed and then the next equestrian and horse would take over. A bag of mail would travel over 2000 km in five to six days. The words of Greek historian Herodotus, in Book 8 Paragraph 98 of ‘The Persian Wars’ claim that nothing deterred Persian postmen and the saying goes “Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds”. Now appropriated by Postal head office of the US Postal Service the slogan is carved in the granite above its building entrance in Manhattan. While the Americans would like to believe that it refers to them, it actually references the work of the Achamenids in BCE.
In addition to the postal system, Darius I (2500) years ago was the first to build canals. A cuneiform discovered in 1886 said he was a Persian King who facilitated trade with Egypt. KE Eduljee’s scholarship alludes to Darius I (referred to as Darayavahush I 522-486 BCE, Hakajmanish – Achamenids) travelling to Egypt in 497 BCE to inaugurate the Suez Canal of his time which stayed in use for 200 years before falling into disuse. He introduced a monetary system and gold coins bearing the likeness of the King’s head were made. Seals discovered attest to the development of seals used to authenticate messages. The British Museum in London holds ‘The Darius Seal’ and provides a detailed description of the features of Darius and the animals and the Farooh said to represent Ahura Mazda. Eduljee notes that Darius’ I monetary system included a weighting system with a silver coin of 8 grams and a gold coin referred to as the “Darayaka” and derived from the Greek Daric. He notes that one of these gold coins weighed 129 grams (8.34g), the exact weight of an English guinea and said to be found in Lord Pembroke’s collection in the UK. The unit of measurement referred to the King’s measure was the royal cubit. Using the cuneiform script Darius I was a man way before his time. The panels in Behistun attest to the multilingualism (Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian). Sir Henry Rawlinson, First Baronet, employee of British East India Company and a great Orientalist was sent to Persia in 1827 to reorganise the Shah’s army. The British had to leave due to differences with the Persians but Rawlinson is renowned for having studied the cuneiform inscriptions at Behistun and for transcribing the Old Persian parts of the tablets referring to Achamenians especially Darius I. Rawlinson’s other claims to fame and associations include his membership of the first India Council in 1858, and then again in 1868 till his death in 1895. His long association with the British Museum included his bequeathing of his personal, valuable collection of Babylonian, Sabaean and Sassanian antiquities to them. His published works including ‘The Persian Cuneiform Inscription at Behistun’ and ‘Outline of the History of Assyria’ published by the Asiatic Society’s journal. Peter T.Daniels (2009) is less adulatory of Rawlinson’s prowess and providing justification for his concealed contempt of Rawlinson versus his adulation for Edward Hincks an Assyriologist and decipher of Mesopotamian cuneiform. The third notable interpreter of cuneiform was Jules Oppert, a French German Assyriologist. Daniels saying, “Oppert credits Hincks with correctly reading 103 cuneiform signs, Rawlinson with 61 and himself with 147”, demonstrates the underlying rivalry. It amuses me to see that academic hubris and rivalries continue unabated with the rush to ‘publish’.

I learned a couple of other things like:

- When it came to religious practises, the Achamenians were very secretive. The Greek servants however noted that they chewed some leaves (homa) and applied a very pungent mixture (nirang) on high religious days.
- Keeping of a goat in Agiyaries whose milk was used in the Yasna ceremony. The ritual of washing of udders only from the ‘pure’ well water in the agiary. The first stream of urine emanated by the Varasiyaji (Sacred White Bull) would be given to Spenta Armaiti (i.e. the soil). I am excited when I ‘reflect’ on this as it is only in 2019 that I have seen a ‘Varasiyaji’ and domesticated goats for their milk in context at the ‘oldest’ Agiyari (Seth Banaji Limji) in Mumbai [see: Figure 83]. Thanks to my dear friend Farrokh Jijina, Senior Editor at the Parsiana Publications, who took me on a fabulous ‘walking tour I was able to visit and learn about some of the oldest Agiyaries that in all my years of living and visiting Mumbai I had never seen or been aware of. These post pilgrimage activities constitute the legacy of pilgrimage and form mini pilgrimages in their own right. These ‘post pilgrimage’ visits have had the edumetric effect of getting me to ‘reflect’ on sustainability and the tenure of Agiyaris especially as their patronage dwindles and the prime real estate is eyed off by both the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and other secular bodies. The diasporic ‘children’ have little ‘connection’ to homeland and even our navars know little of being a ‘working’ priest in the diaspora as they volunteer their time for priestly functions while pursuing professional working lives.
- ‘Alats’ refer to the ritual implements which are used in the praying e.g. mortar and pestle to pound homa twigs. Putting of water in it to pound the leaves, ‘charges’ this water which is poured back into the well at the fire temple. These wells are connected to the ground and thus the performance of these prayers allow us to help humanity more generally but the praying is entrusted to the
Zarathusthis. I ponder the ‘wells’ that have run dry or are at risk of being affected by underground ‘Metros’. The lack of such ‘wells’ in diasporic lands mean that we can never expect to have a fully consecrated or full time fire temple in the diaspora and must make do with Atash’s that are lit at will.

- ‘Gambhrs/Gahanbars’ celebrated by the Iranians 6 times a year are considered to bring the spiritual energies to earth. They last for 5 days each.
- The cooperation of various elements required to grow a grain of rice: Fertile soil, sunshine, water and so on all must ‘co-operate’ to give us that grain of sustaining rice.
- The ‘Jamvana ni Baj’ (like grace) is recited before eating. Dasturjis used to pray the baj then eat in silence, then say a few concluding sentences and this would be referred to as ‘Baj poori thayye’ (Trans: the baj is now over). The eating in silence was practised by a great many Parsis who believed that talking during meals dissipated the ‘staota’ (energy) and is analogous to the concept of always-wearing socks or standing on carpet when praying so as not to ‘break the kusti prayers’.
- The idea of praying before eating is to thank Ahura Mazda and the Amesha Spentas for the food and says “May the minerals and nutrition be energised and nourish me and finally please bless the hands that have made this food”.
- In the olden days, they would not wash their hands directly in the river as it was considered polluting the water. Instead, they would scoop up the water and wash over the soil. This custom is replicated in the fire temple when we fill the ‘karisiya’ (metal container used to scoop water out of a bucket) after we use it so that the next person who comes along does not pollute the water in the big container with their polluted hands. This is how we keep in tune with nature and then the ‘Kudrat’ (Power) looks after us.

‘The Homilies of Malcolm’, as I like to refer to them, include the assertion that Religion's teachings are for lifetime. We need to fit in not vice versa. He says this is Reformation and not Deformation. Despite having travelled with him for two weeks he is an enigma and I wonder whether this is a subtle declaration of his more conservative bent or simply an observation based on taking several ‘pilgrims’ over several years to Iran. Malcolm should have been an academic but he is ‘doer’ and revels in his role (at which he is excellent) as a ‘tourisier’ (interpreter of the faith and tour guide in this instance).

The weather clears as we approach Persepolis despite our rainy start in the morning. The sun comes out and the heat dissuades us from climbing to see the Astodans (Ossuary) as we had already seen the four Astodans at Naqsh E Rostam. Three and half-hours fly by and only a few of us do the full walk around the site as it proved too much for some of the older pilgrims.

SD introduced a touch of levity into the proceedings as she pointed out the anatomical detail on the horse in the carvings of the Satraps lined up to pay obeisance to the King. We felt like a bunch of convent-educated pupils (which we all were) on a school outing as we giggled our way up the steps admiring the level of accuracy in the carvings and bas-reliefs. We speculate about the Satraps exchanging information, as they would meet annually and the things they must have discussed. Tributes including livestock for the Shanshah [see: Figure 86] and chatting satraps carved into the side is one of my favourite memories and images from Persepolis Apadana North stairs. I have speculated at what these noblemen were talking about. It is evident that they are from different regions given their headdress. I would like to believe they are catching up on news of each other’s families since the previous year’s meeting. Maybe one of them is offering condolences for sad news or salutations for good news evidenced by placing his hand on the shoulder and shaking hands. Maybe they are sharing a delicious piece of gossip about one of the other Satraps!

My retail proclivities are satisfied through my purchase of a CD and book set called ‘Persepolis Recreated’ by Farzin Rezaeian (2004) to show my Sunday School class. It will make a good foil to my own amateur photos. Glowing endorsement by scholars like A. Shahpur Shahbazi (Achaemenid specialist and Prof of History at Eastern Oregon University), Matthew Stolper (The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago), Roger S. Moorey (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University), Richard Frye (Harvard University), Abbas Alizadeh (The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago) and
Remi Boucharlat (National Centre of Scientific Research, France) and John Curtis at the British Museum all lend gravitas to this 3D version of what Persepolis might have looked like. To a visual learner it is a feast and I hope my students enjoy it as much as I did. The book is glossy and beautifully presented too and I find myself being very possessive of it. I cannot however prevent my feminist side rearing its head to wonder why no ‘female’ scholars are represented/consulted.

Persepolis’s other wonders include:

- Xerxes harem (seraglio) with Museum (which we did not go into)
- The markings (seal/logo) of the team that had ‘carved’ or done the work
- Both men and women were employed as supervisors
- No slave labour was used and expertise came from all around the world including India where the Mauryas were contemporaries and had built beautiful palaces.
- Maternity and Disability leave records attesting to the greatness of the Achamenians
- Clay cuneiform tablets found in the TREASURY building attest to the fact that people were paid in either coins or produce.

We returned to the hotel with our heads buzzing but not before we had eaten dinner in the ‘food’ area and souvenir shops of the Persepolis complex. I had to pass on SilloM’s lovingly but eye wateringly spicy Parsi style dishes of kheemo (mince) and masoor (black lentils). Luckily, I had already scoffed down most of a big packet of cheetos and a glass of pomegranate juice. SD had a burger and in future, I am going to do the same, despite feeling slightly guilty for being fussy and worrying that this was my horrible ‘Western’ tourist persona putting on airs and graces. I impress myself by not ‘buying’ anything for a change and curbing my love of retail therapy.

As we are returning to Shiraz and our hotel our poor driver, Agha Olam Reza had his logbook confiscated and a fine of 100,000 tomans. The dreaded highly efficient road monitoring systems in Iran have struck again. When we got into Shiraz after a long drive from Persepolis, we are caught in a massive traffic jam because it was the equivalent of “Friday night”. There was to be a classic car rally the following day and we recall seeing the admiring audience ‘viewing’ them when we had entered Shiraz.

We stop along the way for HK to pick up dry fruits because she is flying out from Yazd, our next stop. She has to get back to India for work. Then it is finally back to the hotel and bed, Hurrah! Nevertheless, not before the final aggravation of the day “the idiotic woman” tries to muscle in and jump the queue to pay her bill at the reception. ND blocks her and ... and the rest of us laugh as kids all the way up in the elevator. I feel a ‘twinge’ of remorse and shame at my glee but it is fleeting because 2 weeks into the trip and we all are unanimous in our ‘dislike’ of her behaviours. The rationalisation that there is always ‘one’ in the group is small comfort as the rest of us get along famously and are very conscious of personal, social and comfort levels of space given the long periods of time we spend together. I add a little addendum in my prayers that night that our ‘rotating’ seats will never require me to ‘sit’ next to her during the trip. Ahura Mazda hears my prayer and I beg forgiveness for the inappropriateness of my ‘bad’ thoughts on pilgrimage but at the same time beg Ahura Mazda to cut me some slack. I reflect on whether other pilgrims (of different faiths) particularly those who go in groups experience similar ‘negativity’ toward a co-pilgrim/s. It seems less of an issue when one is on secular travel and can remove themselves from annoying or grating co-travellers but in a small intimate Allocentric (Plog, 1972) group travel mode it is hard to ignore. Maybe ‘pilgrimage’ groups of larger numbers that come from India do not have similar issues – but then on the other hand imagine trying to democratically make decisions with forty people in the group! Our bus is a 40 seater that means that we can ‘escape’ to sit alone if we need to be on our own, as there are only seventeen pilgrims and three others, (SillooM, Malcolm and Manucher) and ample spare seats.

I receive a delightful gift of Zoroastrian themed cards and envelopes from ‘ZS’ (Zoroastrian Studies) from ND and AD. Zoroastrian Studies started in Mumbai in 1977 as an educational institution particularly for young Zoroastrians has a shop housed in the KR Cama Oriental Institute building and
is a great destination for diasporic Zoroastrians like myself who want Zoroastrian themed gifts and
books. Firoza Punthakey Mistree a driving force behind ZS, and co-curator with Pheroza Godrej of
several books including the ‘must-have’ Zoroastrian Tapestry (a whopping 6.5 kg tome exquisitely
illustrated and with essays by the who’s who of the Zoroastrian world) is one of the ‘women’ I look up
to as being instrumental in keeping Zoroastrianism culture and heritage alive. I have three copies of
Zoroastrian Tapestry, the first a gift from my parents and two others to pass on to our children as part
of their inheritance.

The minutiae of the profane life even while on pilgrimage intrude again when Manucher’s desire to
treat us to ice-cream/falooda is kyboshed by our intrepid leader. Like children deprived of a treat, we
go to bed without dessert but compensated and replete with images that will last our lifetime of the
fabled Persepolis.
Day 15: Shiraz, Taft, Pasagarde, Thursday, 7 May 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Daepdin Roj (Day)

Today we see go to Pasargadae to see King Cyrus’s Astodan (Ossuary) and the then on to Yazd to see the acclaimed 4000 year old tree in Aberkuh or Aberkooh.

We are on the downward run of our pilgrimage but the most significant religiously and heritage wise as we keep being reminded. This is because Yazd being in the desert was where the Zoroastrians ‘escaped’ to and maintained the faith. We are going to meet Zoroastrians in Yazd at their home and this is a huge privilege in my ‘tourism’ book as I always fancy myself getting off the ‘tourist track and seeing how the locals really live’. The ‘twenty one countries in nine days’ is not my idea of travel and whipping through museums and other attractions being constantly asked to ‘hurry up’ irks me given my dislike for travel and knowing that I am unlikely to return to the place.

Daepedin Roj has always been a non-sequitur sort of a day in my book until I make the connection that this day actually refers to both our religion (Din) and Dae means ‘to see’. Hence, my fervent praying of the Din no Kalmo (Article of Faith) thrice as part of my daily prayers is recited with extra fervour today. This prayer beseeches Ahura Mazda to allow us to ‘see, hear and obey’ his wishes. I often feel like an ‘American’ reciting the national anthem with my hand held over my heart when I say the Din no Kalmo.

Malcolm had downplayed Pasargadae and so my expectations were not high. However, I felt a great connection to the place especially seeing Cyrus’s (Iranian name, Kurush’s) simple but iconic Astodan.

Malcolm is most insistent that we do not refer to it as Tomb because unlike other civilisations like the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, we did not embalm or bury people with jewels and so on He reminds us of the Astodans we have seen of the Achamenian Kings in Naqsh I Rustam and Persepolis. We are amused by the narration of of the horror of ‘tomb-robbers’ who would break open the seal in the front only to find a pile of bones. The ASTODAN is built on a raised platform and sealed to make sure that no animals can climb in and defile the bones and spread them around. Additionally, the Astodan [see: Figure 89] is said to be the oldest base isolated structure in the world and built to withstand earthquakes bearing as it does the ziggurat shape of the ancient Mesopotamians and Elamites.

I am greatly moved by the Astodan and the stories of Cyrus, which include how he was so smart he outwitted and defeated Nebuchadnezzar without battle by diverting the course of the river Euphrates and entering the city of Babylon via the dry riverbed. Cyrus’s help to the Jews and freeing of slaves included not only allowing them to return from exile, rebuilding their temples but also giving them gold and silver utensils to help them. The Livius.org site contests the ‘no battle’ assertion claiming that he took them by surprise and owing to the size of the place and the fact that inner portions of the town were occupied with a festival they were unable to raise any defences against Cyrus’s army.

Malcolm tells us that the Arab invaders took away the stones at Pasargadae and built a mosque, which was subsequently dismantled during the time of the Shah, and the Astodan restored. Another incident narrated by Malcolm is that of the site being saved from destruction by the invading Arabs by claiming the ASTODAN to be the tomb of Solomon’s mother. The Arabs acknowledge Solomon as a sacred person and forbore from ransacking the Astodan. It was said that when Alexander came to invade Cyrus’s tomb there were Mobeds praying there despite it being 200 years since Cyrus’s death. There is a story about Alexander the Accursed ‘discovering’ the Astodan and according to his commissioned account by Aristobulus, asking Aristobulus to enter the ‘tomb’. Other accounts claim that Alexander wept with regret at the destruction he had wrought in Persepolis. This is where the story diverges and the zealous Zoroastrian in me disputes the account, rationalising the source to be anecdotal rather than scholarly (a trope I am inclined to revert to when my Western rational academic scholar wars with my religious, faith based persona):

“Inside he found a gold coffin, various ornaments studded with precious stones, and a table set with drinking vessels. The tomb was originally ornamented with an inscription that, according to Strabo’s notes, the famous Greek geographer, philosopher, and historian, stated “O man! I am Cyrus the Great, who gave the Persians an empire and was the King of Asia. Grudge me not, therefore, this monument.”[1] The inscription, with
minor variations, was mentioned by Plutarch and other ancient sources. However, no trace of any such inscription survives today.” (https://www.thevintagenews.com/2017/06/01/the-tomb-of-cyrus-the-great-a-simple-tomb-for-a-great-king).

Pasargadae [see Figures 87 and 88] is very low key compared to Persepolis, which lies forty km away but Pasargade is stunning in its simplicity.

We have a picnic lunch and are almost blown away by the wind that whistles across the mainly flat space that is Pasargadae and makes its desolation and mystery even more intriguing after the flash and pomp of Persepolis the previous day. It soon starts raining and is a good excuse for us to patronise the ‘souvenir’ shops at the entrance to Pasargadae.

I go into a shop to escape the bête noire who has taken to following me around in the mistaken belief that I manage to unearth ‘good’ buys. I on the other hand cringe at the aggressive haggling that seems endemic amongst our Indian co-pilgrims (perfectly rational when you consider the value of a rupee compared to the American dollar, which is the preferred currency in Iran, but it grates nonetheless). Two young children in their ‘tweens’ are minding the shop. I purchase a couple of things but we can’t understand each other for me to pay so I simply lay down the money and tell them to help themselves to however much it should be (even the calculator is in Farsi). My co-pilgrims who are convinced I must have been ripped off meet my story with great horror. I on the other hand in my ‘Queenly’ animation can only be delighted by my purchases and feel a salve on my guilty conscience for being ‘wealthy’ by having contributed to the ‘local’ economy. I wonder why those children are not at school. First world guilt consumes me in Iran because although poverty is not as overt as in India it still exists and the sanctions have wreaked havoc on the people especially those in rural and regional areas with tenuous occupations like ‘souvenir and artisan shops’. No visit to Pasargadae would be complete without mentioning the Declaration of Human Rights by Cyrus the Great and the much-viewed cuneiform Cyrus cylinder declaring such human rights. The souvenir shops are full of replicas but I curb my ‘tourist’ proclivities as it being too stereotypical a souvenir.

We commence our drive through the desert headed to Yazd. The lush green foliage and topography is replaced by arid land and gray gravel with scrubby bushy outcrops. Many of the villages we go through were Zoroastrian in the old days and I wonder how or whether it was different when the great scholar Mary Boyce visited for fieldwork. I wish I could be as brave as her but I am ‘soft’ and enjoy the luxuries of life rationalising that having achieved the grand age of 50 I am entitled to ‘comfort’.

Malcolm plays a DVD of the Rustam and Sohrab movie. It is the original 1967 black and white version with Prithviraj Kapoor and Suraiya playing the title roles of Rustom and Tehmina. There is plenty of overacting and my notes reveal that I did fall asleep mid movie given the brevity of the story that I have noted down. There is plenty of creative licence in the movie, which contrasts with some of what is contained in the Shahnameh but the parts I do watch are entertaining. The movie and Shahnameh diverge in that according to the Shahnameh Sohrab and his mother’s brother (Uncle referred to as Mama in Gujrati) set out to look for Rustam and Sohrab has been told who his father is. However, the Uncle is killed when sneaking into Iranian camps remembering that Tehmina (Sohrab’s mother) is a Turanian who are archenemies of the Iranians. The death of his uncle causes Sohrab to challenge the pehelwans (warriors) to single handed combat. He defeats them. People request Rustam to fight Sohrab but Rustam feels kinship to Sohrab and he tries to dissuade Sohrab from fighting. However, Sohrab insists saying that he wants to fight and demands to know Rustam’s name. Rustam tells him not to waste time and “act like a woman questioning everything”. (I am glad my feisty feminist daughter of 15 is not here to listen to this characterisation of women – her ears would be smoking!) They fight and Rustam plunges a dagger into Sohrab and as he lies dying, Sohrab says that his father Rustam will avenge him. The amulet that Rustam had given Tehmina with instructions to tie it on a boy or put into the hair of a girl is revealed and that is when they realise their relationship as Father and Son. No matter how many times we hear the story we are incredibly moved by the ‘tragedy’ and we recall Matthew Arnold’s epic poem ‘Rustom and Sohrab’ but not having Wifi means we cannot google it and read it aloud in the bus, which the ‘teachers’ amongst us would have relished. Then we could have discussed it ad nauseam and speculated on the various dichotomies and allusions speculating on the nuances of meaning and putting our Zoroastrian spin on the interpretations.
As we drive along, we discuss the role of resilience amongst Zoroastrians. In addition to moving to Yazd and its harsh environs [see Figure 90] and the cruelty inflicted on those who refused to convert, we hear the story of the Adenwalla fire being moved from Aden to India. However, before we get to this we hear the story of the Arab commanders Sa’ad ibn Abi Waqqas and Khalid ibn al-Walid who during the Caliphate of Umar ibn al-Khattab not only burnt the palaces, libraries and archives at Ctesiphon but decapitated and dismembered Zoroastrian prisoners of war, then threw them into the river and opened the dam gates upstream creating the ‘River of Blood’. They referred to Zoroastrians as Ajam (mute) and post Arab conquest referred to them as ‘Dhimmi’ which entitled any Arab to persecute, harass or discriminate against them on the smallest of pretexts and be confident of escaping censure of any sort. They imposed taxes known as Jizya on them. Additional depredations visited on them included the murder of priests and identification as najis (impure untouchables). Under the rule of the Umayyad the General Yazid-ibn-Mohalleb was said to have massacred twelve thousand residents of Gorgan and used the watermills to drain the blood of its victims, which were, in turn, was alleged to have been used to mix the bread flour and fed to the army. The Abbasids continued the reign of terror (752-833 CE) and changed the status of Zoroastrians from Dhimmi to Kafirs (Non-Believers) claiming they were polytheists and fire worshippers, banning and burning the religious books of the Zoroastrians and converting fire temples to mosques. KE Eduljee (2005-2017) provides scholarly evidence of these atrocities citing the work of John Hinnells and Mary Boyce among others to buttress the claims.

Our next stop is to see the 4000-year-old tree in village of Aberkooh/Aberkuh. The local tourism person to come and see some wind chimes palaces approaches (buildings?) However, Malcolm declines as we are on a tight schedule [see Figure 91]. Called the ‘Sarv-e-Abarqu’ or Zoroastrian Sarv this cypress tree is considered an Iranian national monument. We learn that the cypress tree is often a visual marker of Zoroastrian occupation in the Yazd area. This tree is believed to have planted by Zarathushtra himself. Representing life and beauty it appears in Achamenian carvings in Persepolis, textiles, carpets and is even mentioned in poetry. We pass Eagle Mountain on the way to Yazd. Known as Oghab in Farsi. Tehran’s Football club is called the Oghab Tehran FC. The Achamenids believed the eagle was sacred and according to the website, Zoroastriankids.com the Bundahishn states that Ahura Mazda created falcons and eagles to fight Ahriman. The falcon is associated with Verethragna Behram and various kings used the falcon in their crowns and on coins to represent victory. We pass through the oasis of Taft famed for its pomegranate trees and its bread called Taftoon. It is home to a number of Zoroastrian families and we visit the next day.

Joanna Lumley refers to the Yazd as a large city in the desert and according to Marco Polo, you would only find 3 sips of water in either direction if you travelled for 7 days. We catch our first glimpse of Badgirs (wind towers and ventilation shafts) [see Figure 92] a form of natural air conditioners replicated in the modern “whirly gig” airflow roof fans. We see Ab Anar’s (Ab being the Farsi word for water) that are water storage tanks built underground in the desert to minimise vaporisation of this scarce resource into the hot dry air.

It has been a longish day and we all heave a sigh of relief at arriving at our slightly off the beaten path ‘resort’ hotel with individual ‘cabins’.
Even the most devout and zealous pilgrim researcher stuffs up, *mea culpa*. I had no notes for today but a quick look at my photographs for the day proved educative. It was a packed day as it heralded our time in Yazd, significant religiously, culturally, full of ‘our’ heritage and source of our identity (as Zoroastrian *Parsi*). After all the *Pirs* are located here, marking the downfall of Yezdegard III the last Zoroastrian King and it was the last ‘bastion’ of Zoroastrianism still standing in Iran.

It is particularly apt that today is ‘Din’ *Roj*. Din refers to religion (credo) and today is especially important as we are in Yazd where we need to follow our ‘Daena/Din’ and ‘Sraosha’. We are charged by Ahura Mazda to be fair and just in our dealing with others (Sraosha = Justice) even if it brings hardship to us. Our actions must be guided by our ‘Din’ (Credo) and I take this to mean the most basic trope of ‘Humata, Hukata, Hvarshtha’ (Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds). I make a silent commitment to be ‘just’ in my dealings with the *bête noire* today, silently, and childishly cross my fingers hoping to will myself into ‘sacred’ (pilgrimage) rather than ‘profane’ (tourist) territory.

Our day commences with breakfast and we share the dining hall with some European tourists who are quite excited at discovering that we are Zoroastrians. Despite our linguistic limitations, we manage to exchange information with some of them telling us that, they are so excited to be in Iran (with the easing of sanctions initiated by President Barack Obama). The Aussies among us cannot help ‘skiting’ (bragging) about our Foreign Minister Julie Bishop’s visit some 4 weeks prior. I am tempted to ask whether Ms. Bishop’s fashion sense (impeccable always) has inspired the French tourists to tie their scarves with the insouciance they display versus the more bundled up look we pilgrims sport. The following year post pilgrimage I meet a French tourisier who gushes about her visit to Iran and my husband and I receive special attention, as she is so delighted to meet the Zoroastrians in her tour group.

Our first stop is to the *Atash* Behram in Yazd, it is the only one in Iran as the other eight *Atashbehrams* are all in India and houses a fire of the highest order. We have all dressed in ‘light’ coloured clothing as instructed to by SillooM. Interestingly the funds to build the Achamenids style *Atash* Behram were provided by the *Parsi* of India and a bust of Manekji Limji Hataria acknowledges his part in raising the living standards of Zoroastrians in Iran. This example of reverse diasporic funds from India to Iran is intriguing to the diasporic pilgrims from Canada, Australia and the USA, as all of our Darbe Mehrs have benefitted from Iranian Zoroastrian philanthropy and bequests.

We enter from the back of the fire temple after performing our ritual ablutions of washing our hands and doing our kusti. This area is cordoned off and only Zoroastrians are allowed to enter this area. We have always been told that we are not to ‘photograph’ the *Atash Padshah* but have the disquieting experience of becoming the ‘objects’ of ‘touristhood’ as secular tourists take photographs of the *Atash Padshah* with the objective of capturing us praying in the background (albeit through a glass screen) [Figure 93]. I get the sense of being a highly endangered species/animal (as some Zoroastrians jokingly refer to themselves) in a museum/zoo.

The flame in Yazd is reputed to be a continuation of a flame burning since 470 CE and signs on the wall in the viewing area assure tourists that Zoroastrians are monotheists similar to Islamic, Jewish and Christian peoples and not ‘fire worshippers’. The cynic in me wonders whether ‘methinks (the lady) doth protest too much’ approach is being adopted to distance Zoroastrianism from Hinduism and polytheism and in some ways reclaim the narrative of Zoroastrianism and Persia.

After our devotions we go to the Museum and view the Exhibition in the adjacent building [see: Figure 94] which is ‘word-intensive’ compared to the one we had seen in Tehran’s palace on Day 2 of our tour. The ‘permanent’ exhibition is aimed at ‘educating’ and explaining Zoroastrianism, Zoroaster and important aspects (*Gathas*, *Life* events like *Sudreh-Pooshi* etc.) for non-Zoroastrians particularly. It is interesting and appeals to the ‘visual’ Infovore in me and I photograph the various explanations, to read at leisure as we are being summoned to go to our next stop – a souvenir shop specialising in Zoroastrian artefacts. I pick up some
wonderful ‘souvenirs’ including a silver bracelet of Asho Farohars and a classic picture of Zoroaster found in most Parsi homes. My grandmother’s house had a painted version and that painting now hangs in my brother’s home.

We pass the signage of this wonderful looking shop and I would have loved to go and visit it but alas, when one is on a group pilgrimage, one must follow a tight schedule and the Khaneyekasra goes unvisited. When I ‘research’ it as part of my reflections and see the pictures, I really regret not having visited it. My husband and wallet though both heave a sigh of relief that I was ‘deprived’.

We get back on the bus to head out to our ‘lunch’ at the local Zoroastrian community hall where the women have prepared lunch and we are going to have a meet and greet. The head of the Anjuman (congregation) is going to welcome us. But before we get there we ‘circle’ around the very important Markar Clock Tower known in Farsi as Borj-e-Sa’at Markar.

We do not get out of the bus (not even to take pictures) as we cannot be late for our lunch, meet, and greet. It is gratifying to see that the Iranians are not as cavalier about time as Indian Parsis, who have fallen into the trap of Indian Stretchable (actually Standard) Time (IST). With an ‘American based’ tourisier time is of the essence as both our dear SillooM and Malcolm wholeheartedly embrace the American punctuality ethos. The bête noire has some difficulty comprehending this and many a cross word is exchanged despite Humata, Hukata, Hvarshtha.

We arrive at Sharifabad Darbe Mehr and take a seat for our welcome by the Mobed. Malcolm translates for us, but again my dissatisfaction with my inability to understand Farsi strikes me anew. I know we are losing a lot of information but the sentiments are genuine and warm. The Mobed talks about the great relationship SillooM has built and her tireless work. I think of her work and her trips as being the modern day equivalent in some ways of Limji Hataria and Peshotanji Marker’s work (see additional commentary in Appendix Day 16) as she connects communities, raises awareness in the diaspora and helps Zoroastrians ‘spread the word’. The business side of my brain realises that WOM (Word of Mouth) is one of the most effective ways of ‘spreading the message’. The parallels to ‘disseminating research’ through publications is brought home to me as part of the message; Intention without Action goes nowhere. I resolve to ‘share’ my pilgrimage with as many people as possible, and have the zeal of the converted as I feel more in tune with my own identity.

This feeling of being in sync is engendered by a growing sense of ‘connection’ with Iran and more especially those in Yazd. Perhaps it is a long seated ‘mammalian’ recognition of our DNAs being intertwined in the past.

Our hosts await us and in true Oriental fashion – the women sit separately even though we do not practice purdah in Zoroastrianism. Communitas (Turnerian both normative and ideological) is very big in Iranian Zoroastrian culture and we see it in its fullness in Sharifabad. Our offers to help are politely but firmly rejected as we are ‘guests’ but we are welcomed to take pictures [see: Figures 95 and 96]. This firmness is in display as the crew ‘wash up’ and the diasporic among us are stricken with guilt at not helping, assimilated as we are to diasporic western life without ‘help’ in our homes.

The Zoroastrian dwindling population is brought home to us as there is only one little child there and the average age of our hosts is in the 60s and 70s. I rationalise it as younger people being at work and school but the reality is there are not many younger Zoroastrians left in Yazd. It was explained to me by my namesake ‘Firuzeh’ that young people left to go either to bigger cities for work and study or went overseas with some heading to Pune India for studies. I was captivated to find that her son was called ‘Kourosh’ the Iranian appellate for Cyrus and felt an instant bond with her. Despite our linguistic difficulties, we managed to exchange to hold a conversation.

If only the Jiyo Parsi scheme (http://www.jiyoparsi.org/) a joint effort of ParZor, The Government of India Ministry of Minority Affairs, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences the promoters of the scheme could bring it to Iran… The Jiyo Parsi scheme provides three components “Advocacy, Health of the Community and Medical’ assistance to arrest the decline of the Parsi population. They provide upto eight lakhs of rupees for couples to undergo Assisted Reproductive Technology,
matrimonial meets, and a delightful advertising campaign that builds in aspects like child care arrangements, senior citizen reimbursement for child care services provided by them and even support for elderly dependants living in joint family situations. It seems ironic that in a country like India where population control is the problem the Parsi population is being encouraged to ‘breed’.

I cannot resist telling my co-pilgrims about one of our ex-Treasurer’s, Peter Costello’s, encouragement to Australians to “have one for mum, one for dad and one for the country” and then riposte it with “so I got a dog for my third child” and bore them silly with pictures of my canine. Despite our laughter, there is an undercurrent especially when we hear stories of how dogs were treated by the Arabs and Zoroastrians Ethiram-i-Sag (great respect for the dog) reoccurs in our discourses constantly with Mary Boyce’s observations to back up the claims of cruelty to dogs by the Muslim population. We also cogitate on the one-child families that many Zoroastrians end up with and the reasons for it. Two of our co-pilgrims share their own story for why this is the case (mainly being in the diaspora and not having the support systems to have more children).

Replete after our lunch and having distributed the ‘sadras’ (sacred muslin vests) we had brought, the level of ‘poverty’ is brought home to me. Bicycles are ridden not as as exercise but as a mode of transport similar to India where it is all that some can afford. I ponder how it must be to ride in forty-plus degree heat in the desert.

Our ‘religious’ part of the pilgrimage is starting to take a very definite shape as we visit the first of the Pirs. A Pir is a site of pilgrimage, in the Zoroastrian faith there are six Mountain Pirs that are considered sacred, and all of them are in Iran. This is because they are all related to the story of the defeat of King Yazdegard III the last Zoroastrian Sassanian King. KE Eduljee (2005-2017) notes the significance of Pirs to Zoroastrians: “And so it is that even when Zoroastrians seem blinded and when darkness surrounds them, there is hope that one day they will awake to the light. But they must be committed to keep alive the memory of the brave souls who have passed before them, continue to maintain the faith despite every adversity, work together as a source helping those in need and labour to build rather than destroy.”

The first Pir we visit is Pir-e- Herisht dedicated to the royal governess Moravarid and legend has it that it was built by a traveller who lost his child while travelling through. The parents find the child unharmed and the child recounts that a kindly woman answering to the name of Moravarid led her back to where her parents were and then disappeared. The legs of the marble table cover the rock in the mountain, which opened up and took Moravarid in when she was being pursued by the Arabs. Note the arrangement of pictures of departed persons on the mantle. This appears to be a particularly Iranian ritual that we observed even in Agiyaries [see Figure 97]. In India however, people are not allowed to put up pictures or any personal items and the only pictures one sees are either related to the liturgy, the founding members (donors) who helped build the Agiyari or venerable priests who served the fire temple. There are however, some magnificent portraits of scions of families who helped build the Agiyari and I constantly cogitate on the lack of care and curatorship of these portraits.

We then get to read the play ‘For the Sake of My Religion’ from the book ‘Learning Parsipanu with Meher and Sarosh’ (2011) written by SillooM, our tourisier extraordinaire [Figure 98]. Several of us get to read the ‘parts’ and the ambience is heaving with pathos as the play covers the downfall of Yazdegard. The ending however is full of hope and positivity as it tells of King Jadi Rana and his acceptance of the Persians who have fled the persecution and seek refuge in India. His gracious acceptance of the Zoroastrians and his giving of land and acceptance are reminiscent of King Cyrus who liberated the Jews and helped them re-establish their faith in Babylon.

We have a tempered discussion about refuge and refugees and SillooM reminds us that our faith might have not have survived if we had not received refuge in India. She shares that despite having lived for so many years in the US she still retains and travels on an Indian passport as a sign of her fealty. Many of us are terribly impressed by this loyalty, as most of us have become citizens of our new diasporic countries especially as unlike Pakistan and other places India does not allow people to have dual citizenship.
We go back to our ‘resort’ with its green ‘sorounding’ (on the noticeboard at the entrance) and meet up for dinner al fresco later in the night to continue our discussions. Just in case, like Goldilocks I needed to find the ‘not too hard, not too soft, just right’ bed, there are four beds in my room. The ‘hospitality’ person in me could not help thinking that the property managers had obviously not learned about ‘yield management’ and cost saving techniques when allocating rooms but I soon realise that this is my western imperialist self-talking as those rooms would be perfect for large extended Iranian families travelling together. MK a single supplement traveller like me, and I concur on our dilemma both ‘choosing’ the bed closest to the fan as the desert heat is starting to get to us. A long and emotional day ends with a growing awareness that we are on the ‘home’ run and repatriation and incorporation beckon.
Day 17: Yazd, Pirs, Mazarkalantar, Saturday 9 May 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Ashishvvangh Raj (Day)

Ashishvvangh Raj and Malcolm explains that the reference is to a female deity responsible for money. It is suggested that we pray Ashishvvangh Nyaesh for forty days when having money problems. Zoroastrians.net in their wonderful explanation of Raj’s say that Ashishvvangh is the ‘sister’ of Daena and Din (Religion). Other familial connections describe Ahura Mazda as her father, Spenta Armaity (devotion) as her mother and Sraosha, Rashnu and Meher as brothers. Interestingly Sroasha, Rashnu and Meher are the three Yazatas that meet the soul as it tries to cross the Chinvat Bridge to pass into the afterlife. (See explanation for Rashnu Roj). In the Gathas Zarathushtra relates her to Asha (Righteous Truth) referring to her as ‘Rayo Ashish’ i.e. Radiant Rewards on both earthly and heavenly realms.

There is reference to the need to understand the nine centres of the body to enable comprehension of the deeper meaning of why we do certain things e.g. not walk barefoot after saying the kusti, cover our head while eating, and so on. Then there is talk of sixteen chakras including in the soles of feet and in the head, borrowed from Hinduism. I am thoroughly stumped by it all and when I attempt to research it my confusion grows and I abandon my ‘quest’ for knowledge as it is too esoteric for me and I can’t see any relationship to Zoroastrianism. I realise that it is a rabbit hole and with my proclivity to go off on tangents I am best off in concentrating on Zoroastrianism, with chakras being very much in the realm of Hindu and Buddhist realms and ritualistic understanding.

The day started early as the sun rises early in the desert. I spend some time checking emails on my trusty Ipad sitting in the Reception area, before boarding the bus to head to the Atash Dadgah. The Atash Dadgah was in a massive blond brick residential building with a basement area. There was an outdoor area with a ‘show’ afarganiyu and pictures of the six Pirs meant for non-Zoroastrian consumption but the Atash was hidden in a side room. It glowed brightly and was reputed to have been burning since Sassanian times. The Khadmak (caretaker, person tending the fire) was a lovely man who told us of the miracles at the Pirs. The Iranian Zoroastrians are very attached to their Pirs. The pictures lining the wall are from photographs taken by a Chinese man, who then painted the Pirs and sent to the Tehran Anjuman who in turn made copies and sent out to places (approximately 35 years ago). The Khadmak told SilloOM that the government had decided that even the sacred Atash must be visible to tourists and that just the ‘show’ afarganiyu is not enough. We are all upset when SilloOM tells us this as we are now firmly entrenched in the ‘sanctity’ and ‘preservation’ synecdoche mode of thinking. Despite my frisson of excitement at viewing the secret Atash, I find myself envious when AD manages to get the Khadmak to take her downstairs to an even more secret fire.

I notice my own reaction (reflection ‘in’ action) and recognise the ‘one-upmanship’ games that have begun to creep in to have ‘exclusive’ insights. It must be a function of the impending end of the tour and the dawning realisation that for most/all of us this is a never to be repeated experience. Although, I keep thinking that I will come on pilgrimage again with family in tow, chances of it happening are remote.

From the deeply sublime and sacred to the ridiculous and profane – our next stop is a famous Iranian sweet shop (Haj Khalifeh Ali Rahbar) selling the traditional pashmak (Persian fairy floss). I cannot get close enough to hear SilloM’s explanations of how it is made and content myself knowing the I can “google” it. We proceed to Mazra Kalantar, which is labelled as an “old Zoroastrian village” by TripAdvisor while Malcolm gives us a talk about the migration to India. He mentions the Qissa –e-Sanjan, which translates to The Story of Sanjan and tells of the coming of the Zoroastrians to India. It begins with fall of Yezdegard III with a group wandering around areas like Gilan and Maashad (eastern and northern areas) before going south to Bandar-e-Hormuz. Having spent sixteen years preparing to sail to India, the group landed in Saurashtra Diu where they lived for nineteen years under the leadership of Naryosing Dhawal, the head priest. When they set sail for the Gujar coast, they were beset by a storm. They prayed and promised to build an Atash Behram (Behram; victory yazata) for their safe deliverance. There is some confusion still about the exact date of landing in Gujar. The Zoroastrians start migrating to other areas like Bharuch, Ankleshwar and so on they established five different geographic areas to be administered, Sanjan, Navsari, Surat, Bharuch and Khambatt.
KE Eduljee (2005-2017) in his discussion on the Iranshah AtashBehram in Udvada India, traces the journey of the fire first consecrated in 721 CE was originally housed in Sanjan, and kept in hiding in the Bahrot caves when Sanjan was overrun by the Muslim forces. From here, it was moved to Bansda for a short period before Chang Asa, a benefactor from Navsari convinced the community to bring the fire to Navsari (1516). A feud between the Sanjana priests and the local Navsari priests (Bhagarias) saw the fire virtually kidnapped by the Sanjanas and moved to Bulsar (which fell under Sanjana jurisdiction). Again, due to disputes over the sharing of the earnings between the local priests and the head of the AtashBehram saw the fire consecrated in Udvada in 1742 in a building funded by Bhikhaji Eduljee, a native of Surat.

All of us pilgrims are well versed in the story of the ‘sugar in the milk’ but are surprised to discover that the myth perpetuated that ‘non-conversion’ of the local people was a condition laid by King Jadi Rana is not backed up by any evidence. Malcolm asserts that the four conditions that Jadi Rana requested were that:

1. Gujarati was to be the lingua franca
2. Marriages must only be conducted after sunset (presumably so that the working day was not interrupted)
3. The Zoroastrians must give up their arms and weapons
4. That women must wear saris like the local Gujarati women

I am horrified to discover that I have been ‘peddling’ falsehoods all this while regarding the dictate to not convert, to not allow non-Zoroastrians into their places of worship and to not take up arms against their hosts. Interestingly one of the first things that happens on my return is my sincere apology to my ‘Sunday School’ students and then being robustly challenged about the whole non-conversion and marriage to a non-Zoroastrian by my young and very bright students. I eat ‘humble pie’ for a long time…

We prick up our ears as Malcolm outlines the contribution of Bai Motlibai Maneckjee Wadia who gave a substantial amount of money for the current Iranshah to be re-built in 1894, paid for the road from Udvada railway station to be constructed, and deposited a sum of money with the Government for its upkeep. ‘Daughters of Mashyani’ a book by Toxy Cowasjee celebrates the achievements of twenty Zoroastrian women and the book was launched at the seventh World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston in 2001. Mentions of women’s role in Zoroastrianism have been fleeting but I subsequently learn that Mashyani was said to be the first woman on earth who gave birth to six sets of twins which in turn gave rise to the rest of humankind according to a Parsi Times article of 2016. Malcolm alludes to a hitherto unknown (by me) tragedy in Parsi history during the eleventh century. Till today Ashishvang Mah, Farvadin Roj commemorates the death of brave Parsi village women of Variav in Gujarat who jumped into the Tapti river rather than face dishonour when they attacked by the Raja (king) of Ratanpur. The Raja wanted the wealthy Parsis to pay additional taxes and attacked when the men were away at a feast. According to the story in Zoroastrians.net (Nauzer Bharucha) were initially repelled by the women who had donned visors and men’s clothing. The legend goes that when the soldiers realised they were being routed by women they renewed their attack leading the women to commit ‘jauhar’ (self-immolation). According to Bharucha a gahambar called ‘Vaal no Gahambar or the Vairav Behedin nu Parab” and vaal (a very special type of lentil found mainly in Gujarat) is served because the original party that the menfolk were away for was a vaal and toddy (arrack, a country liquor) feast.

Malcolm concludes by reminding us that for thirteen centuries Zoroastrians have managed to survive by dogged persistence and adherence to our religious rules; citing the wearing of the sudreh kusti, not encouraging mixed marriages with other faiths and retaining the ancient principles of dokhmenshai (air burial). I privately wonder how long these rituals will endure as the need to evolve is already upon us and many of this metonymy have been abandoned especially in the diaspora.

We arrive at the village of Mazarkalantar and it is filled with ancestral family houses with older Zarathustrian families. They farmed to sustain themselves but being in the desert meant that water was scarce and as they were considered Najis (untouchables) no one would buy their crops. Now most of the young have moved away and only visit their ancestral village during Nowruz. I want to cry as we peer down this passageway where the tap from the ‘qanats’ (canals) would bring water [see: Figure 93]. Zoroastrians were not allowed to collect water from them and were severely punished if they were caught using these taps. Often the taps allocated to them were vandalised or did not work and they suffered great hardship. Janet Kestenberg Amighi’s (2014) writing on the treatment of Zoroastrians in the nineteenth century in Yazd and Kerman.
make for harrowing reading. The litany of humiliations heaped on them ranged from not being allowed to build their homes higher than the upstretched hand of a Muslim, to making themselves identifiable by wearing yellow, brown or tan clothing only and wearing tight pants rather than loose ones and splashing white paint around their doorposts. All of these are reminiscent of the Holocaust and the fate meted out to Jewish people during the time of Hitler. Frightening analogies are being made today in India with the CAA bill and the persecution of Muslims.

We go for lunch to the home of Parvez who doubles up as the caretaker of the Atash, which is right next door to his home. It had started raining when we arrived but we plodded through the rain and mucky clay lanes. SillooM and Macolm had argy bargy about whether we needed to do kusti in the rain and SillooM gave dispensation to the kusti so we could all get in out of the rain and into the Agiyari. Then we sat in a circle and prayed one Atash no namaskar. I did not approach the Atash as I had not washed my hands nor unlaced my shoes, which would have rendered my hands unclean. I surreptiously ‘observed’ that other “bhanna gannas” (sarcastic expression for overly religious) had no such qualms with the bête noire being the worst offender in this regard. “Yesterday she took off her shoes after doing kusti...” and then did not wash them before praying at the Atash! I think self-righteously and then immediately feel guilt and shame about being so pedantic and uncharitable.

The little hatch in front with the afarganiyu captivates us and SillooM explains that it is for people to leave their family Atash’s in the care of the Agiyari if they have to go away so that the flame is not extinguished. She herself has had her family Atash in LA burning consistently for several years and gives it to a Zoroastrian family to make sure that the flame does not die out. This is a particularly unique Iranian Zoroastrian custom and we are all beguiled. It reminds us of ‘baby hatches’ in Churches.

Lunch was Osh (soup of beans and with noodles) and Sirag (fried sweet bread with sugar dusted on it eaten with Pashmak spread in the middle like a sandwich. I was very gleeeful that I had bought two boxes of pashmak and was so childishly pleased at others moaning about the rubbish sweets they had purchased. Pilgrimage is not competition but human nature is endemic, in wanting an ‘exclusive’ and upmanship. I am much chuffed to meet Salome who is the aunt of an acquaintance in Sydney. I realise this when I see the Australia tablemat [see: Figure 96]. After lunch, we play dress, ups and I make a very demure Zoroastrian woman from Yazd. The ‘underground’ home is an absolute revelation and we are all fascinated at the measures to keep cool. The ubiquitous Persian carpets covering the floors are beautiful and the lack of windows disquieting and claustrophobic to me.

We bid farewell to our hosts (after having purchased some souvenir items crafted by the local Zoroastrian community) and then head out to what some consider the pinnacle of their pilgrimage to Iran, a visit to Chak Chak known as Pir-e-Sabz. It is equally popular with non-Zoroastrian tourists to Iran. The name Pir-e-Sabz is a nod to the ‘green’ growing on the mountainside and Chak-Chak refers to sound of the dripping water from a crack in the mountainside, which falls into a pool.

Pir e Banu is dedicated to the youngest princess, Banu-Pars (known as Sherbanu and Kataribanu), one of Yezdegard III and Queen Hastbadan’s daughters. She was fleeing the Arab invaders and paused to ask a farmer for a glass of milk to quench her thirst. As the farmer is completing milking the cow, the pail topples over and pours into the ground. With no water in sight and the Arab enemy approaching Banu-Pars lifts her arms in prayer and the mountain is said to have opened up and taken her in. A portion of her clothing was caught as she is taken into the mountain’s embrace and this trapped piece of fabric created the drip of water, which are said to represent the “tears” of the grief stricken princess.

Several years later a blind man has a dream in which a young woman beseeches him to build a shrine, he agrees and when he awakens his sight has been restored. He follows through on his promise to build the shrine. Interestingly most Parsis are quite oblivious to the presence of Pir and the legends associated with them as they are embedded in the story of ‘Sugar in the Milk’ and the coming of Zoroastrians to India.

Heritageinstitute’s KE Eduljee (2005-2017) elaborates on the Zoroastrian connotations and connections saying that the spring and waters (Ab-e-Hyat) reference both Yazatas Armaiti (angel guardian of the Earth) and Anahita (Angel of Water). It is said that the willow tree overhanging the pond of water at Chak-Chak
combusts and renews itself every 1000 years. He enumerates the various names given to the Pir-e-Banu including associating it with the divinities Mithra and Meher (Mazreh-e-Meher Yazad and Pir-e-Meherbanu).

Chak-Chak is both atmospheric and worth the steep climb to get up to the shrine [see: Figure 97]. We pray our kusti outside after having performed the required ablutions of hand and face washing. There are various buildings that have been constructed with platforms and basic amenities, intended for visiting pilgrims to spend the night. Called ‘Kheileh’ we are informed that other Zoroastrian groups have stayed there but all of us are relieved that our accommodation is more ‘five star’ as most of us would never be able to hack the primitive plumbing and facilities. The floor is awash with water and the ‘germaphobe’ in me refuses to ‘partake’ in the plastic slippers left outside having visions of picking up a fungal or bacterial infection. The injunction though to wear socks means that I have sodden footwear that has to be thrown away after our visit. Our descent takes less time than our ascent to Chak-Chak and the more portly among us offer to ‘roll’ down the hill in the interests of a scientific experiment to see whether we will reach faster than that on foot. Luckily our offer is declined which allows us time to ‘tut-tut’ about the graffiti as we pass the kheileh. The ‘tourism’ academic in me recognises these scribblings as ‘markers’ of touristhood but the pilgrim in me both grieves and is outraged at the desecration [see: Figure 98]. I cannot help myself as seeing it as another sign of ‘persecution’ as the writing is in Arabic script. all the while recognising that the very fact that those very same people had at least come to view Chak Chak even if simply out of curiosity. I rationalise ignorance, poor upbringing and a lack of respect as being the causes of such wanton destruction.

Our next Pir is Pir-e-Narasteaneh dedicated to Prince Ardeshir son of King Yazdegard III and queen Hastbadan. Similar to the stories of Princess Banu and Moravarid, Ardeshir is said to be surrounded by Arabs. He is said to have vanished after having prayed for assistance. A hunter chasing a deer sees the apparition of the Prince when the deer he is chasing transforms and the Prince invites the hunter to partake of a meal. The hunter builds the Pir and is rewarded with many blessings and advantages.

We have climbed and walked a lot today and round off the evening with dancing and merriment at the local community hall at the base of Pir-e-Herist that bears a long dormitory style room. The drinkers in the group are treated to a bottle of local wine and we watch in awe as our oldest pilgrim whirls his wife around, both of them are as light on their feet as a pair of professionals. We practise some Iranian dancing and even the flat footed amongst us get into the spirit.

Most of us sleep on the bus ride back and drag ourselves off the bus and into our rooms with a sigh of relief. I fall asleep on the bed closest to the door, not even bothering to change.
It is Ashtad Roj and embodies Truth and Justice in our daily life.

Today is Mother’s Day and all the Mother’s amongst the pilgrims are wished the very best with phone calls starting early from various offspring. While we publicly dismiss it as a “Hallmark creation”, I am chuffed as I do miss the children (not just my dog, as I proclaim). We have all started the day still a bit weary. I packed and showered struggling with something close to a hangover despite being a teetotaller (my perennial joke is that I am a ‘Daruwalla’ only by name and not habit as my husband’s family were liquor merchants hence the appellation ‘daru’ meaning liquor). I am so tired that I need a rest before departing at 9.30 am as the desert heat and end of the journey fatigue begin to set in. Our suitcases are going on in the bus to Tehran as our next stop is Mashad and we are going there by train and will then fly to Tehran. This means that we will have experienced all modes of transport in Iran; air, train and bus.

The level of creeping tiredness became evident early today, (Saint) Malcolm actually allowed himself to say, “She can join us in Tehran” when everyone bar the bête noire was on the bus and ready to leave on time. Even her roommate DV took everyone’s breath away by having a whinge and then when challenged by FD to say that to the lady face to face she stoutly declared, “You don’t know what all I say to her in the room”. We all had a fit of giggles at that because DV is the most gentle soul and would not say Boo to a Goose (as Aussies would say). However, it had the salutary effect of changing the topic and FD held forth on the theory that rooms in the Middle East were bugged and conversations were monitored. There is nothing like a good conspiracy theory to set Parsi hearts fluttering which is evidenced by the pronouncement “Koi eh maine kaiyu…” (Trans: Somebody told me…). Now the term is usually “Ma Google ma vachuyu…” (Trans: I read on Google…) or “Meh Oprah/ (insert any other host) ma samejhu…” (Trans: I heard it on the Oprah/Host name show…).

Our drive through the fascinating landscape of Yazd and its surrounds still mesmerises everyone and now we recognise the ‘shape’ of the land and the architecture, which is so different from anything, we have seen previously. Our heads are still buzzing from the previous days stories of persecution as we head to visit Atash Kadeh’s contained in private homes. The first Atash Kadeh in the village of Zainabad reveals a main fire in an Afarganyu and three side fires smouldering under a mountain of ashes in their separate afarganyus (I cannot make out the flame but am assured that they are there).

We hear the bewildering story of ‘Flying Fires’ and their erratic behaviour, ‘escaping’ when disturbed. Examples of these ‘disturbances’ include being created when viewed by menstruating women (considered impure) and in cases of non-believers sneaking in to see the fire. We are told that fire actually leaves, goes, ‘sits’ in a tree, and has to be brought back. We hear of the Bagh-e-Khandan flying fire but I am not sure whether it refers to Taft or Cham. It is immaterial in a sense because the focus is on the sanctity of fire and its powers in Zoroastrian belief and ritual. The ambience and general degree of ‘being in the moment’ is so strong in all of us that we accept this concept of the ‘flying fire’ without questioning. It is only later that the rational explanation of the gas fields in the Yazd area surface and there is a ‘scientific’ explanation for the fire appearing to ‘fly’ and ‘sit’ in a tree. I choose to put faith over science ‘in the moment’ but once out of the ‘pilgrim’ bubble, nagging thoughts intrude especially when I describe this to my very rational and cluey Sunday School students, who are all in favour of the gas fields explanations.

We saw four fires in all including one tended by a woman ‘Atash Bund’ and her daughter. On enquiring, I was told that they managed to observe purity laws by sharing the duties of tending the fire among themselves. This along with the growth of female mobedyars (lay priests) in Iran is still viewed with horror by conservative traditionalists. I however, think it is a marvellous evolution and know my feisty feminist daughter and liberal, broadminded Zoroastrian son agree with this progress, including the idea that laity should be allowed to become priests and one does not have to be ‘born’ into a priestly family.
like the Parsis believe. The Iranians have already done away with this idea, training men and women mobediyars (lay priests) who are able to perform all ceremonies, bar the high liturgical services for the community. This is more evidence of the younger generations of diasporic Zoroastrians choosing to identify with and accept practices that are neither Parsi nor Iranian but Zoroastrian.

All the Atash Kadehs bear the Iranian stamp of assorted ‘worthies’ pictures’ set on a lintel around the room and I am fascinated by the number of women wearing saris and the studio family portraits that resemble the ones I possess of my grandparents in staged venues. Attempts to replicate this Iranian Zoroastrian custom at the AZA Darbe Mehr in Sydney have been strongly opposed and no fittings are allowed to be appended to any part of the property unless agreed to at an AGM by vote. This however, has not prevented the hubris and opportunism of some members of the community putting up a plaque bearing their names on the 25th anniversary of the Darbe Mehr while disrespecting ‘legally’ installed decorative donations approved at the AGM.

At one of the Atash Kadehs they have set up a table selling Zoroastrian memorabilia and we all purchase something to show support and to allow for the continued maintenance of the place. The size of the ‘medieval’ key used to unlock the front door is worthy of mention and a photograph.

Our next stop is the medieval village of Taft, which besides being the home of pomegranates and other fruit was the locale for the start of caravanserais. We visit two Atash Kadehs and eat our lunch there. Taft is supposed to have the largest number of aqueducts (qanats). Noshir Dadrawala (1995) in his book Iran, The Spiritual Motherland, refers to the village of Cham (our last stop before heading to the train station for our trip to Mashaad). We visit the Atash Kadeh and view the sacred Cypress tree in the middle of the building, very aware now that the presence of Cypress trees is synonymous with Zoroastrian settlements.

We visit the Dakhma and recite the Dakhmo no Namaskar (prayers for the Dakhma = Zoroastrian funeral tower) and head out for the railway station which reminds me a lot of the station in Jamshedpur. There is a discussion of differences between Parsis in India and in the diaspora after going for a funeral. In India, we would head straight home after a funeral and bathe (to rid ourselves of pollutants from being in the presence of a corpse) but in the diaspora where funerals are ‘snatched’ moments usually in the middle of a work day we not only not wear white but end up heading straight back to our workplaces. As our trip comes towards its end I feel a sense of melancholia that my children will never know of these practices (such as bathing after a funeral, not cutting nails at night and other purity practises) and soon these rituals will be conscripted to mentions in dusty tomes or in the ‘digital cloud’ as an anachronism.

There is a rush to ‘board’ our train, no mean feat given the average age and agility of our group. Nevertheless, we all manage to get on board into our allocated cabins and the Aussies are put together to our delight. We end up having the bête noire come visit us and I ‘escape’ on the pretext of looking for something. I feel guilty for leaving PaD and ND to her not so tender mercies but when I return, they tell me with great pride that they managed to get rid of her quick smart. I applaud them and we all enjoy our thoroughly childish and not very charitable behaviour and thoughts. We get dinner packs and everyone turns in for an early night. I climb up on the top bunk and after making sure my two much loved Aussie co-pilgrims are tucked in for the night it is lights off.

The changes in modes of travel are a point of reflection of changed economic circumstances as diasporic pilgrims. When I lived in India train travel was as much a function of economics and safety as it was a mass means of democratic transport. Now with the ease, speed and cheapness of air travel, railway travel has been replaced by the frenetic stress filled experience of airports. As I get older, I resolve to enjoy ‘grand’ rail journeys including the Palace on Wheels to Rajasthan in India. It is nice to be older, wealthier and not have to worry about planning journeys so that overnight travel designed to save on hotel accommodation can be enjoyed ‘first-class’. Train travel is another area of diasporic nostalgia as our co-pilgrims from India still use the well-connected Indian rail system a legacy of the British.
Waiting at the railway station, we saw a traditionally dressed Iranian couple going to Mashaad on pilgrimage. There is a strange synchronicity in being co-pilgrims albeit of very different faiths. Visiting Mashaad, which is a significant place of Shia pilgrimage and having visited the Armenian Church in Julfa helps to contextualise Zoroastrianism relative to other religions.
Asman Roj is dedicated to the Sky (Asman) covers the Earth, Stars and Planets. AhuraMazda.com associates this day with the prayer “The guardian of the vast skies, complete and adorned, Let Thy power and vastness always remain, in my heart till the eternal dawn”.

I awoke early, not even needing the alarm I had set. I had slept right through the night being gently lulled to sleep by the sound of trains. The train was running late and as we ate a pre-packed breakfast, I marvelled at SilloM’s planning and constant generosity. We got into the station (with our hand luggage) and there was a mad rush to the toilets. I stunned everyone by actually going to the toilet, as my ability to hold off until we were at the hotel had become stuff of legends. SD was so thrilled at my capitulation that she insists on ‘cleaning’ the toilet after she has used it so I could go next. I realised what a ‘spoiled’ Western brat I had become and had to battle my mind so that matter might ‘result’. Part of me wondered about whether this phobia was just ‘airs and graces’ that I had developed, I should be more robust, and after all, I was born and brought up in India. However, the truth was that I have lived overseas longer than I lived in India and have become old and set in my desire for ‘comfort’. SilloOM was bailed up the female security guard at the station who told her that some co-pilgrims with shorter tops (that were not knee length), were inappropriately dressed and had to wear additional clothing that reached their knees. I felt so sorry for those who had to wear coats as the heat was oppressive and it made me wonder (again) how Muslim women survive menopause and the summer months.

We headed off to see Imam Ali Reza Mosque. I had not been looking forward to having to wear the all-enveloping chador but that was the price to visit what turned out to be an absolute revelation. I put on the chador back-to-front and did not realise this until much later. I consoled myself admiring the cute print of the material and the lack of any ‘smell’ of its previous wearer. The voluminous amounts of material made my self-appointed role of ‘protector and chaperone’ for SD difficult but we bumbled along. We were exposed to a very rigourous screening process and have been forewarned not to say anything and comply with all requests, which we all do. Men and women are segregated. We faced some drama when we entered, as we went through as a group and were dragged off to the side (except for DV who went through the accessible gate for women). Lucky MK was there to interpret and we stuck to the party line that we were Hindustanis as we had been forewarned not to say we were Zoroastrian. We were given a thorough frisking and bags were passed through the electronic detector. The men took even longer coming out of security and it was awhile before we could start our ‘tour’ of the mosque. I do not seem to have any photographs of our visit to the Mosque which is strictly controlled had we entered. I was not unduly concerned, as I knew the Internet would be swarming with pictures.

Housed in the enormous Goharshad Mosque complex, the shrine was stunning [see: Figures 104 and 105]. It was managed by a Foundation and looks after museums, library, seminars, a university, prayer halls and a cemetery. There were several prayer halls and courtyards filled with the most magnificent frescoes, tiles and mirrors. It is mindboggling in scale, opulence and sumptuousness. Imam Ali Reza is the eighth Imam of the twelve Imams of Shi’ite Islam. Ma’mun an Abbasid Caliph in 818 CE martyred him. The Goharshad Mosque is considered one of the biggest and most beautiful mosques in the world and was built by Sharukh Mirza’s the Safavid King’s wife Gowharshad Agha. The Tsar’s Russian artillery was said to have shelled the holy shrine in 1911. In 1935, Reza Khan Pahlavi was said to have invaded the shrine and killed protesters who were complaining about the anti-Islamic rule of Reza Khan and his directive that women did not need to wear the Hijab. There was an invasion of the Shrine in November 1978 during the Islamic Revolution. At the entrance of one of the main doorways, a man in a uniform (like Salvation Army officers, though Muslim) was holding a silver staff with a knob, which pilgrims were kissing. I was told that it was a tribute to the martyrs (from the Iran, Iraq conflict). All I could think about was the possibility of catching some disease from the contact with the staff (another example of my Western germ phobia overwhelming my faith gene and respect for other religions). Babak the ‘fixer’ for our visit to the Mosque which is strictly controlled had met us at the station and as soon as we got into the mosque, we were met by a young man who told us he was one of three hundred volunteer tour guides. He was very spiffily dressed in a suit because he was headed to work straight after his ‘volunteer’ shift. I was very impressed by the astute use of volunteers as tourist guides,
in hospitality and tourism parlance it is truly genius as a cost saving measure while harnessing the ‘passion’ of the religious adherent.

We were warned to be very sombre and were appropriately, so; though it was hard not to laugh when we discovered that DV had ‘dropped’ her sandals into the plastic bags receptacle, (we were supposed to carry our shoes in the plastic bags provided as we walked through the prayer hall with mirrors). Luckily, the sandals were still in the receptacle when we got back, though the chivalrous men-folk in our group had to trawl through the plastic bags to reach them. Luckily, DV remembered which bin she had dropped the shoes in.

We saw the main square with the drinking fountains where men and women were again segregated. We were lucky enough to watch a funeral procession through the main square and see the golden lattice gate at which people prayed. Apparently it is a great honour to be buried in the mosque area (which is enormous) though it does cost about USD $60,000! The sceptic in me is always stirred by the intersections between organised religion and money. I had seen firsthand in my work with the AZA, the assumption that being a major donor somehow entitled the person to treat the organisation and property as if it were their own private fiefdom. This thought went further when ‘nominee representatives’, who have contributed nothing themselves, become the ‘voice’ of the donor. Many a Zoroastrian charity and association has been divided by this avaricious sense of entitlement and hubris.

Another interesting thing was finding out the extent of the Mosque territory, which stretched over many blocks. Mosque authorities owned most of the real estate in the area, including the hotels and commercial buildings. I wondered whether the Mosque authorities behaved as poorly as the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, which is riven with factionalism and rancour, spending community funds litigating rather than supporting the social welfare, religious and other aspects that would benefit the Parsi community. The line between politics and religion is very slender and even more so when vast amounts of money are at stake. The desire to become ‘corporation like’ rather than an ‘association’ is hard to resist especially when ‘bean counters’ take over the organisational running of the largely volunteer group.

Ali Torkzadeh and Saeideh Ajilchi (2016) post incredible pictures in their blog post “Escape from Tehran…to find the real Iran”. They refer to a ‘Wailing Wall’ in the Dar-al-Hojjeh underground hall adjacent to the burial chamber of the Imam. I do not recall seeing anyone ‘wailing’ there but there was certainly the odd scattered supplicant. After our tour we were marched out, quick smart, to our bus stop. Women beggars approached us asking for money, which was interesting because it was the first time we had seen anyone begging in Iran. It probably is a purposeful strategy to capitalise on the sentiments of the pilgrims as they come out of the mosque that are more likely to give money. It is common to most places of pilgrimage and spirituality that the ‘experiential consumption’ aspects of the visit will make people more altruistic (Walker, Shah and Gilovich. 2016). This play on their emotions and ecclesial euphoria along with the ‘animation’ of the experience render them more generous. This aspect has been leveraged effectively through the introduction of ‘entrance’ fees to places of worship that function as tourist attractions (e.g. Notre Dame). Anecdotal evidence suggests that the revenue garnered from tourists far outstrips that donated by adherents.

We had to wait ages on the street for the bus to arrive to pick us up. We waited opposite an ice-cream shop and FD (generous to a fault) wanted to get us all ice-creams but the bus ‘police’ were not having a bar of it, claiming that no member of the group could be away, even for a moment. After half an hour of waiting, and a very rushed tour of less than 45 minutes, we were collected. Some members of our group who were physically challenged and needed extra time were unhappy at being denied the visit to the mosque and had been sent to the bazaar, where those who did not want to come to the mosque had been taken. While their frustration was understandable such is the nature of group travel, pilgrimage or secular, the mosque fell into the category of ‘nice to see’ as opposed to the Zoroastrian sites which were on the ‘must see’ list for pilgrims.

Our next stop was the Bahraman Saffron Shop. Our eyes goggled to see this treasured spice that is more expensive than gold. Forget bank heists, the saffron was much more valuable. Malcolm took orders and I waited outside on the footpath as it was too crowded for comfort and I was not going to buy any saffron. I walked up and down the street which was full of plastic Chinese made rubbish and then I stumbled upon two goldfish in a polystyrene cup, they looked dead but upon closer inspection were sluggishly holding onto life.
in their cramped quarters. Such sights are a part of the mysteries of Iran and I wondered whether these two fish had been abandoned after Nowruz festivities and the Haft Sheen/Sin table, where a gold fish is put in a bowl. The Haft Sheen table is put in every home and contains seven traditional items. (See Appendix 19)

Finally, the shopping frenzy for saffron ended and we headed out to the hotel, and are delighted with the best accommodation of the trip. Quick showers were supposed to be the order of the day, but I took my time, and had a little lie down and cup of coffee to keep me going. I was getting a bit tired by this stage of the trip and it was tempting to wimp out completely but I could not possibly miss visiting Ferdowsi’s tomb in Tus. Are pilgrims allowed to give in to physical (profane) discomfort? Shouldn’t the ‘high’ of faith carry them through? I ask myself these questions and find myself lacking in zeal, with the desire to lie down causing me to be late for our next appointment. The splendid air conditioning in what is a hot destination make staying indoors even more alluring.

We head out to lunch at the restaurant at Ferdowsi’s Tomb and Museum complex (see Figures 106 and 107). By now, we were familiar with the seating arrangements (takhts and cushions) and ate a ‘speciality’ clay pot dish of mutton and fat with potatoes. It reminded me of a ‘comfort’ dish called *ras chaval* (gravy rice). The décor of the restaurant was a tribute to the *Shahnameh* and the feats and stories of Rustom Pehelwan. Beautiful paintings depicting his seven ‘labours’, his battle with Sohrab, his trusty horse Raksh and other exploits dotted the walls [see Figure 107]. One of the other things that struck me was that Rustam’s body size seemed to vary considerably in the assorted depictions. In some paintings, and in the friezes at the Ferdowsi Museum, he is much heftier and I wonder whether the preoccupation with thinness was a feature during Ferdowsi’s time too. Iranians of the present time are highly conscious of their figures, especially the women.

After lunch, we had a real treat when we went into the tomb. There was a performer reciting Ferdowsi’s poetry. We saw the carving and heard a synopsis of the story from Malcolm and then the orator acted it out for us. He had an amazing voice and was very impressive. SillooM and Malcolm are often invited to India to stage exhibitions of the *Shahnameh* and they have even flown this ‘narrator/raconteur’ to India for performances.

The evening is rounded off with a visit to a local market and as I wander around the shops, I am amazed to see some rather racy women’s attire. My questioning of this leads to an explanation that under the long coats worn externally, Iranian women remain some of the most fashion conscious, a legacy of more liberal times I suspect. We have dinner in a ‘local’ restaurant famed for its kebabs before retiring for the evening.
Day 20: Mashaad to Tehran, Tuesday 12 May 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Zamyad Roy (Day)

Today is Zamyad Roy and my ‘ready reckoner’ on Zoroastrians.net informs me that today is a day to show love and protect the Earth and all its creatures. The word Zamyad is a combination of Zam (Earth) and Yad (contraction of Yazatal/Yazad) referring to angels and Menog (mental and spiritual world) and Getik (physical world) analogous to a two-sided coin. This ‘coin’ is sacred and humans have an obligation to nurture both sides.

After a good breakfast, we headed out to Mashaad airport to catch our plane to Tehran. I sat next to ND and we had a good giggle because as usual it was the bête noire who created havoc by sitting in the wrong seat then having a strop at poor Malcolm who was trying to help her. He gave up in disgust, first time I saw him crack! It was eventually sorted but we were happy for the free entertainment. We had begun to demonstrate signs of reversion as our trip got closer to ending and some of the seriousness had been replaced by a nervous silliness that masked deeper feelings and anxieties. For me this is with every trip I undertake where I have a personal investment in the people. My tendency to catastrophise takes over and I am anguished at the prospect of not ‘seeing’ that person ever again. I trace this back to going to boarding school at 11 years of age and having my beloved maternal grandfather pass away suddenly in my second year of school without a chance to have seen him for our annual get together. Then years of living away from my parents and later my grandmother with whom I was exceptionally close exacerbated this anxiety. I feel tremendous guilt because I am always desperate to come ‘home’ (i.e. Sydney) but worry about not seeing these people that I love again. Pilgrimage to Iran with Silloom had been a very group and ‘family’ centric trip and because my co-pilgrims were older I was beset with fears knowing as I do that I will not see any of them again in all likelihood. Flying on the local airline did not help either coming as I did from the land where Qantas has an impeccable safety record. Lunch on the plane consisted of a triangle of gormeh sabzi with the moisture squeezed out of it. Pretty ordinary food but Iranian airlines (and Turkish ones too as I discovered when I flew to Istanbul after leaving Tehran in the middle of the night) feel obliged to serve food regardless of the time and length of the flight.

Manucher is waiting to pick us up at Tehran airport and was greeted with much happiness by all of us who are extremely conscious of the enormous role he has played in making our pilgrimage ‘memorable’ on so many levels. He had travelled ahead with the bus driver and luggage to Tehran. We rush off to visit the Crown Jewels at the National Bank Vault. Known as the Bank-e-markazi-e Iran, we have to wait endlessly in line to get in as it is very strictly monitored and only open for two and a half hours three or four times a week (2.00-4.30pm) and the queues to get in are long. The official website fails to mention the length and elaborateness of the security process and the strict management of carrying capacity by having very limited numbers of visitors given access. I admired this example of ‘yield management’ nous from a tourism academic’s perspective but was deeply unimpressed as a tourist at being rushed through the experience.

The collection is beyond superb. Said to be one of the finest collections in the world I am reminded that unlike a number of other nations where coups have occurred, the bulk of the treasure collection remains in Iran. Additionally, the section ‘About Treasury of National Jewels a website of the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran (https://www.cbi.ir/Page/AboutTreasuryNationalJewels) points out:

During the glorious Islamic Revolution of Iran and the imposed war, the devoted and revolutionary employees of The Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran protected this precious and peerless collection. Now, you will visit a unique collection of precious stones that have been gathered over turbulent eras. It is hoped that by viewing these objects and remembering the Almighty God, you will see the finite place of humans in the vast world, and recognize that the place of crowns and tiaras is in a museum --- which shows a bloody and painful history --- a history that should under no circumstances be repeated again.

It is interesting that the uniqueness of some of the pieces render them unable to be valued. A Reddit site claims, “the Iranian crown jewels are considered so valuable that they are still used as a reserve to back Iranian currency”.

A guide takes us on a highlights tour (another effective tourism device to manage throughput of people and prevent ‘lingerers’ like me who want to read every possible description of the items). This ‘tour’ ensures that there is no backtracking but some of us (the eternally rebellious) sneak back before we can be unceremoniously dumped

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Out so we can listen to Malcolm talk in some detail about the Naderi and Peacock Throne. I have to supplement my information by trawling the internet for pictures and information due to the limited time at the Treasury and the overload on my brain. The Peacock throne known as the Sun Throne along with the Marble Throne are more like a platform where the king would kneel (which must have been very uncomfortable). The original Mughal Peacock throne looted from India was broken up and stolen by mutinying soldiers of Nadir Shah and the Peacock throne we view is a replica. I discover the irreverently titled “Sunny the Throne” picture by michaelasanda [see: Figure 105]. There is an excellent slide show of a number of items that can be viewed at the National Jewellery Museum and the quality of the pictures is high on the same site. Another throne that we see is the Naderi throne constructed with wood, covered in gold, jewels, and dismantable so it could be taken along when the king travelled between his various residences. The word Nader refers to rare or unique and this throne is attributed to Fathali Shah. Given the security arrangements, we have to leave our bags in lockers and no phones are allowed either so I satisfy myself by purchasing a box of postcards with the highlights of the collection.

We are decanted out of the Museum and Malcolm insisted we must go to see the fabulous Taleghani Park in Tehran with the largest pedestrian overpass (Tabi’at [Nature] Bridge) connecting Taleghani Park and Abo-Atash Park. The overpass bridge goes over the Modarres Expressway and has three levels including one filled with restaurants. Tabi’at Bridge is of recent vintage having only been completed in 2014 after its design was approved. We were amazed when we discovered what a large area was covered by the parks as the Taleghani Park, Ab-o-Atash, Nowruz and Banander parks are all connected to each other. The Ab-o-Atash (Water and Fire) park is famed for water fountains and fire flames all set to music. Ab-o-Atash Park connects with Nowruz Park by the Abrisham suspension bridge, a pedestrian only walkway and reminded me of the Anzac Bridge in Sydney. We never did find out what the ‘Museum of Holy Defence’ was all about but the Harry Potter Fans amongst us did speculate…

An interesting feature was that the architect who designed the bridge is Leila Araghian and she has won several awards for her design [see: Figure 106]. However, she was not allowed to enter the World Architecture Festival because of her Iranian heritage and the sanctions imposed against Iran. This injustice seems yet another example of politics hurting the common person.

The park was lovely but everyone was pretty tired by this time. Some of us did the walk across the freeway and marvelled at the rooftop gardens and the beautiful Persian flower gardens with their symmetry and design. There are gorgeous views, sculptures and some very interesting looking cafes, which I did not get to explore for fear of getting lost. Soon it was time to head off for dinner and we ended up at the same place we had on Day one, a fitting closing of the loop of pilgrimage. We even repeated the fried fish menu but this time we knew what else we wanted including the yoghurt milk drink called dugh. Popular right across the Middle East we had developed a taste for it and it reminded us of the Indian version called ‘chaas’ (buttermilk). We knew we had finally arrived at our Persian roots as we got a “craving for doogh (with salt and pepper, of course)” which is a standing joke among diasporic Iranians.

However, we obviously were not Persian enough to read the signs on the toilets, SD and I went into the Men’s toilet, and it was hysteric all around when we told everyone on our return. To compound matters we sent ND one of our male co-pilgrims to the Women’s toilet so there was even more laughter. However, the poor man who tried to go to the Men’s toilet while SD and I were there did not share our ‘tourist’ humour. If I knew Farsi, I could have overheard how he described it to his table companions. By now I have come to terms with what I see as one of the fatal flaws of my preparation as a ‘pilgrim’, not having learned basic Farsi before I went to Iran.

Finally, it was back to the Engelhab hotel and the air conditioner that actually worked. However, not before some drama that erupted when we realised that our checkout time the next day was noon but most of us were catching a flight at midnight that day. There was consternation and several pilgrims reverted to ‘cost conscious’ touristishood determined to get their pound of flesh for the amount they had paid for the trip. For others of us we were quite happy to pay the extra charges ourselves as SillooM had been so exceptionally generous with us and it was unfair to expect her to pay the additional charges. We did a collection for SillooM’s birthday party, the next day, which was doubling up as our ‘last supper’ in a manner of speaking.

We had become adept at dodging traffic and were soon ready for our last full night in Iran as we returned to the hotel dodging traffic as we crossed the road with some insouciance like the local Iranians.
Today is Mahraspand Raj – the twenty ninth day of the calendar and denoting the ‘word of Ahura Mazda’. How fitting is it to end our pilgrimage on that note, taking away the sacred manthra (word) and better informed about the Avesta (our foundation and bedrock). The invocation (mathra prayer) for today is “Bestow upon us blessings, worthiness and capacity to serve my fellow human beings, having desire to serve them in distress.” Little did I know at the time how this would pan out in my profane life after pilgrimage?

The morning starts well with a good ‘cold’ sleep in thanks to the excellent air-conditioning at the hotel. I send off eighteen garments to be laundered having checked that they will be back by three pm. Breakfast is in the dining hall and I march down like a seasoned veteran unlike Day One when I was quaking with nerves and wondering how I was going to survive twenty one days with strangers. After breakfast, we head off to visit the Golestan palace [see: Figure 114]. It is a very lovely palace but the heat outside is sapping my will to live. We bump into a group of Parsis from Bombay, despite Malcolm’s disapproval some members of the group fraternise, and even Malcolm is forced to hug one of his ‘cousins’. He cannot wait to get away from her and get us away from the group and is not happy with FD’s insistence on making conversation. There are thirty-two of them in total and we feel rather smug about our ‘first class’ travel as opposed to our hypothesis that theirs is more ‘cattle class’ crammed into a bus for forty. I wish I had thought to ask what tour group they are with so I can do some comparative research but we are hurried along. I am reminded of other group travel analogy about ‘classes’ of travel and offerings and the ‘status’ they bestow on their customers – Contiki versus Bespoke.

The Qajars are responsible for the Golestans palace and I am horrified to discover that the mish-mash of modern buildings in some of the areas can be sheeted to Mohammed Reza Pahlavi’s desire to modernise. The Pahlavi’s did not use Golestan Palace except for ceremonial functions having built themselves the Niavaran complex (that we visited on Day 2). There are several building in the complex including assorted ceremonial halls and museums, which are used to store and display gifts given to the monarchs by European and other nation states. We do the requisite ‘tourist’ visits but the highlights of the trip to Golestans for me are when I insist on breaking rank and going to the photographic exhibition that is mentioned in my Lonely Planet book. The photography archive was created on the orders of Naser-ed-Din Shah, a Qajjar monarch who reigned from 1848-1896 and was the first Iranian monarch to visit Europe. He maintained a travelogue and published it. Said to be the first Persian to be photographed he became a patron of photography. He was assassinated by Mirza Reza Kermani. There is one photo I particularly want to see, that of the ‘dakhma’ scene. I find it and photograph it from many different angles cursing all the while at the brevity of time I have to view the exhibition [see: Figure112]. The second photo that I find unexpectedly is the picture of Cyrus’s Astodan in Pasargarde (I am less pleased to see the people climbing all over it). I am delighted when we run into women art restorers who are working on scaffolds. While I do not envy them having to work in the heat all bundled up I am so impressed with this display of artisanship and equality.

Lunch is at Hani restaurant, 3 different types of pulao, one with green bean and meat, one with berries and one shirrne (sweet) with orange peel and pistachios. It is all very tasty and one of the nicer restaurant meals during pilgrimage. I am given a ‘tour’ of the kitchen when I evince interest in the large-scale production of ‘take-home ready packed meals’ in addition to other packed products that the restaurant is turning out. They have a range of unusual jams including quince and fig and I resolve to try making quince paste when I am home. I have an aborted attempt when I collect quinces from our Darb Mehr garden in Sydney. The quinces are unusable thanks to the ‘organic’ orientation of our
Maintaining a journal, photography, and additional secondary research to aid the reflective process. They are flying first class and know the market. A whip through the itinerary for all the days by Malcolm which I agree to research, collate and send to everyone in the group (sans my comments). Dried fruits and sweet mulberries as starters ensure that our ‘Iranian’ sojourn is cemented in our minds as we have been helping ourselves to the super sweet white mulberries that line roads and grow in abundance. Dinner is some rice and chicken curry with yoghurt. I begin to feel unwell (combination of the heat and my anxiety about the ending of the trip) and have to go visit the dharamsala’s common bathroom. It reinforces my ‘five star brat’ status to myself and I heave a massive sigh of relief that I have a room at the hotel to retire to. We have all begun our ‘reversion’, having abandoned our scarf at the dharamshala; we all express some surprise about what we were ‘hiding’ underneath our scarves. Who knew so many of us had so much beautiful silver hair and some were still so dark haired?

We sing SillooM happy birthday and joke with Malcolm that he tells every group they are the best group he has had [see: Figure 13 and 114]. He smiles his enigmatic smile and says he will miss FD’s great repertoire of jokes. In my ‘speech’ I pay tribute to SillooM, Malcolm and Manucher whose incredible hospitality and generosity has ensured that our pilgrimage will remain with us for our lifetime. We reflect on all that we have learned and experienced and the bonds we have forged.

Dessert is cake and ice cream. Back to the hotel after the goodbyes and I fulfil my second last time as ‘chief protector’ of my favourites ND, PD and SD. Time to pack and head off for the airport, it comes very soon. We are driven to the airport in a maxi taxi, as there are 7 of us, and start our trip with our Yatha Ahu Vairyos and Ashem Vohus. We are all travelling to different places, Mumbai, LA, Melbourne and I to Istanbul. Our trusty Manucher hefts our luggage around and we all go through security and immigration together. I worry about FD not being well and am somewhat placated by the thought that he and SD will be well looked after on Emirates as 7 of us.

Our resident bête noire ends up getting a serve as she crashes into poor FD’s gammy leg not once but twice with her trolley because she is being a busybody. We all scatter, I check in much too early for Turkish Airlines and am directed to go behind the ticket counter to put my luggage away. Then I go and sit at a café after having trawled the pathetic shops masquerading as duty free. Being Iran of course there is no alcohol but they have not even made much of an effort to merchandise anything else. A missed retail opportunity as I think of all the beautiful artisan products Iran has to offer. I head to the boarding area and have to hang around there for ages before queuing up in what I think is the early line. I enter the plane to find it is heaving with people and I am stuck in a window seat. The overhead locker is full so I use a different one and then feel very relieved because an ‘aggro’ (Australian slang for aggravated) Turkish man is removing another person’s luggage from the overhead locker where I am seated. I wait anxiously for an all-out fight but things are resolved and finally I succumb to my exhausted sleep. We are packed in like sardines but I do not care. Reversion in the form of taking off my headscarf can wait though I observe the speed at which the Iranian women whip off their scarves. We are woken to be force fed food before landing. I deplane slightly groggy but am snapped into alertness and high stress at Istanbul airport, which is a melee of people.

It takes forever to clear customs, and collect luggage and there is no order in the madness. I have snapped right out of pilgrim hood into tourist hood and am on the springboard again. The big difference is that I am now just another ‘tourist’.

Chapter 3 contained a daily ‘narrative’ of pilgrimage for 21 days. As primary data it forms the main corpus of the research, was collected, and analysed using Auto Ethnography and Participant Action Research as the method. It is best read in conjunction with Appendix A that contain the photographs and additional commentary. Maintaining a journal, photography, and additional secondary research to aid the reflective process. We sing SillooM happy birthday and joke with Malcolm that he tells every group they are the best group he has had [see: Figure13 and 114]. He smiles his enigmatic smile and says he will miss FD’s great repertoire of jokes. In my ‘speech’ I pay tribute to SillooM, Malcolm and Manucher whose incredible hospitality and generosity has ensured that our pilgrimage will remain with us for our lifetime. We reflect on all that we have learned and experienced and the bonds we have forged.

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processes along with description is how the ‘data’ is presented in Chapter 3 and through the Appendices. The format employed included a meditation on the significance of the ‘Raj’, historical, heritage, cultural and religious meaning of the visitation and psychosocial dimensions and feelings about ‘experiential consumption’ that was pilgrimage. The thick descriptions aid not only in establishing the authenticity but the deep connections to Zoroastrian identity and diaspora as a variable influencing the experiences of pilgrimage. Most importantly this data is presented as the ‘Animation’ phase seen through a singular lens (mine) of The Tourist Model (Jafari 1987) which underpins the ‘interpretation’ of the data. The next chapter (4) canvasses Post Pilgrimage Activities and Impacts along with Conclusions, Discussions and Recommendations for the future of ZDP.
CHAPTER FOUR

Post Pilgrimage, Conclusions, Discussions, Impacts and Recommendations

Statement of the Argument:

The purpose of Chapter Four is to tie together the many disparate experiences of my diasporic Zoroastrian pilgrimage and the processes of transformation that occurred after returning ‘home’. This bringing together incorporates the original premise of the thesis, i.e. pilgrimage in Zoroastrianism and its framing under the theoretical ‘Tourist Model’ proposed by Jafari (1987). Other conceptual lens both tourism and those related to methodology, qualitative research and even concepts of organizational learning and development are the overlays to answering the “so what” question PhD dissertations demand. Diaspora and the concept of contested ‘homelands’ and practices in Zoroastrianism along with ethno religious groupings of Zoroastrians into Parsis, Iranis and Iranian Zoroastrians are examined from both emic and etic lenses. The concept of ‘home’ is complicated by the diasporic nature of Zoroastrian identity and this is one of the reasons that journeys of pilgrimage become integral to being a practicing Zoroastrian. The impetus for travel is a quest of spiritual self-discovery and a search for connection with Zoroastrian identity. Along the way, signs of recognition and connection imbue further travel and life experiences with deeper religious meaning. In the pilgrimage journey described in this thesis, the sacred and profane were intertwined at various moments, and elements of the profane sometimes took on a sacred meaning. With the ‘sacred’ intention of ensuring the sustainability of the Zoroastrian faith and continuance of our ancient traditions, this thesis considers the ‘profane’ realm of tourism as a potential avenue for diasporic Zoroastrians to revive their religious connection through travel to places like Yazd, Kerman and Shiraz in Iran and Bombay, Udvada, Navsari and Sanjan among others in India.

Reflections about completing this thesis, include: its contribution to knowledge, the curatorial process of gathering together sources (insider and outsider) and experiences, finding meaning through participation in the act of pilgrimage, and disseminating learning through various fora (publications, exhibitions, digital resources). Although Iranian Zoroastrians undertake a visitation of the Pirs, and Parsis go to see the Iranshah in Udvada, Zoroastrianism, as a religion, does not have an established ‘pilgrimage’ track. This thesis has shown that groups of like-minded Zoroastrians who are travelling in a faith-context can enact pilgrimage through organised tours such as ‘The Complete Iran Experience with Silloo Mehta’. The successful Zoroastrian Return to Roots (RTR) Program (aimed at 21-35 year old Zoroastrians) organised by Arzan S. Wadia could provide a similar experience. Together, these insights provide a framework for the continuance of the Zoroastrian faith for people of the diaspora. A post-script update added in 2020 concludes the thesis with descriptions of implications of geo-political change at macro environmental levels along with micro level changes in perspective and practice at ‘local’ association levels of Zoroastrian diasporic associations. Conclusions about the emic and etic nature of the religion, proselytisation and moving away from insularity to a broader worldview are
canvassed as possibilities for the future of Zoroastrianism. Having undertaken pilgrimage as an adherent and researcher, significant life events post pilgrimage profoundly changed my perspective and have continued to colour my activities and approaches to both life and travel. The ‘internalisation’ of messages both theological and psycho-social leach into my profane life and have radically altered my view about the sustainability of Zoroastrianism and the role of diasporic Zoroastrians in this process, moving me from the wide eyed ingénue I was when I started this thesis to the somewhat cynical but cautiously optimistic I currently hold. Post pilgrimage activities and events have led to this somewhat more ‘gloomy’ perspective as while I was in the ‘pilgrimage bubble’ and ‘honeymoon’ period immediately following pilgrimage I was ‘relentlessly optimistic’.

**Post-Pilgrimage Activities and Transformations**

Following the personal pilgrimage to Iran that I undertook in 2015 through the organised group tour ‘The Complete Iran Experience with Silloo Mehta’, I engaged in a range of ‘mini’ secular pilgrimages. In Chapter Three I described the AE primary data of pilgrimage encompassed by the Corporation, Emancipation and Animation phases of the Tourist Model. I experienced the Repatriation phase partially before I was thrown into the Declaration phase of Emancipation again as, I travelled to Turkey immediately following my visit to Iran to join my husband on a ‘secular’ recreational holiday in Turkey. Hence completing the springboard (of pilgrimage) through Repatriation, Incorporation and interrogating the Omission cycle were delayed. While I went back to a stage of Animation, the eventual the phase of Incorporation has been a longitudinal residual consequence of my pilgrimage as well as the accompanying introspection (reflection) that becomes a ‘practice’ of both the profane working life and my sacred life. Like Victor Counted’s (2019) observations in his studies of African migrants my “attachment to God and survival” were enhanced even further by pilgrimage and life events post pilgrimage.

The other post pilgrimage activities that I undertook incorporated ‘mini’ pilgrimage components in different forms and for varied purposes. The first, was being propelled into the Animation phase while only partially through Reversion in the Repatriation phase by going to Turkey directly from Iran. I took additional trips to India in 2016, 2017 and 2019 and built ‘religious and/or devotional components’ into each of these visits. During my 2016 trip to New Delhi, I attended the Everlasting Flame (EF) Festival and the Zoroastrianism in New Millennium Conference (ZINTM). My ongoing pilgrimage experiences inspired further research, scholarship and actions around Zoroastrianism and its practice. In Australia I participated in a youth organised forum with the Australian Zoroastrian Association (AZA) immediately on my return intensifying the emulsion and incorporation into my profane life (see Appendix C&D). Further to this, pilgrimage ignited and intensified my commitment to the Zoroastrian community and this was expressed through my service as President of the Australian Zoroastrian Association in 2015-2016 and 2017-2018. My ‘questing’ did not end with my return from Iran, and I continued to explore my self-identity as a Zoroastrian and as a Parsi. Part of this service
‘Hvarshtha: good deeds’ credo manifested in ongoing representation at Interfaith events especially Peace Day Services organised by Rev Manas Ghosh, a Uniting Church Minister first at St. Davids Uniting Church at Lindfield and then later at Leigh Memorial Uniting Church in Parramatta. Leigh Memorial Uniting Church has grown in significance in my own mind as it has the added connectivity of being one of the oldest churches in Sydney and boasts an impressively multicultural congregation of diasporic people. Representing the ‘Z’ of religions and always the last to offer a prayer of peace I take this role seriously as part of my post pilgrimage credo of ‘disseminating’ information and moving beyond insularity.

Pilgrimage had ‘broadened’ my mind not only about being a practicing Zoroastrian but my identification as a Parsi and Indian history. As a ‘fellow colonial’ Australian ties with the British yielded a vast trove of connectivity with colonial masters who had served in both India and Australia most notably Governor Lachlan Macquarie. SBS Hindi’s Radio series coverage by Kumud Merani of ‘Unknown colonial Connections between Australia and India’ yielded a treasure trove of ‘stories’. With all these connections cementing identity and ‘belonginess’ in mind, I gratefully accepted an opportunity to participate and support a local exhibition called Tales from the East: India and New South Wales (TFTE) in Sydney in 2018, hosted by the National Trust. No museum or exhibition is safe from my mind’s attenuation to find significance from a Zoroastrian/Parsi angle. In 2019 the Art Gallery of NSW hosted a series of six talks by Dr. Julian Droogan, ‘1001 Nights: Magnificent Tales from the Near East’ and as I take copious notes from a master presenter who rivals Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh’s stories building Scheherazade’s stories into ‘The melancholic pleasure of ruins’; Earthly paradises; Of poets and mystics; Frankincense routes; Silken roads and Lost enlightenment”. (https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/calendar/1001-nights/). Each of these phases of Incorporation are described below linking them back to the central thesis of ZDP:ASV.

Conclusions describing the links between ZDP:ASV and their implications for the future are described next. First, the visit to Turkey and employing the tourist model in ‘re-animation’ and ludic behaviour with overtones of ‘war’ pilgrimage; second, the return to incorporation, encompassing a catching up on ‘Omission’ and ‘emulsifying’ back into the profane life as I speak as a panel member and participant in the “What next for the Sydney Zoroastrian Community?” forum (Desai, 2015); third, participation in The Everlasting Flame and ZINTM in New Delhi, March 2016 (Cama, 2016). Fourth, Tales from the East (TFTE) in 2018 and finally fifth, ‘1001 Nights: Magnificent Tales from the Near East’ Jun-Aug 2019, (Droogan. 2019)

**Turkey: Pilgrimage of a different sort**

Immediately following my Iran pilgrimage tour, I began my forays into secular travel tinged with aspects of ‘other’ types of pilgrimage joining my husband and a group of Australians on an incentive work trip. I had begun the descent into ‘emulsion’ and ‘incorporation’ but was propelled back into the ‘animation’ phase, skipping ‘emission’, ‘corporation’ and ‘separation’ in the ‘emancipation’ phase and going straight into ‘declaration’. ‘Declaration’ was swift and ritualised with the removal of my headscarf, as we got closer to Istanbul. Landing in Istanbul and being met with enormous immigration queues shattered all vestiges of spiritual calm and I reverted to secular touristhood. This included irritation at the chaotic nature of arrival compared to my calm and orderly entrance into Tehran three weeks prior. Having collected my baggage and found my friendly tour host I was seated in a van for twelve people 12 and felt my ‘aloneness’ acutely having become used to the friendly banter of my co-pilgrims. The lack of sleep, compounded the pressure and my desire to ‘take it all in’, a form of perception honed to a fine art over the last three weeks, made it a struggle to ‘separate’ and enter ‘animation’ completely. I was pulled back into a state of quasi-religious pilgrimage as I was driven to join the group at Hagia Sophia and then the adjacent Blue Mosque. The ‘Blue Mosque’ (Sultan Ahmed Mosque) known for its blue tiles, is interesting but very subdued compared to the Imam Ali Reza Mosque in Mashhad and starts me off with what becomes my (tiresome) refrain through the entire trip in Turkey, “In Iran…” as I compare things, ad nauseam, especially around historical sites like Troy and Ephesus with Persepolis and Pasagarde.
At the mosque and church I was the only ‘prepared’ tourist as I had my own headscarf and was dressed appropriately (in my salwar kameez) at the mosque. I felt ‘superior’ to the Western tourists wearing shorts and other scant clothing, forced then to cover up with robes provided by site management. I was struck by the many differences including the shallowness of the information given by the tourisiers and the lack of receptivity to this information from the tourists. The focus seemed to be on getting in and out as quickly as possible so it could be ticked off on the tourist’s status list (‘I have been there’). I diminished my own tourism experience with these critical comparisons. Although it is quite common, for tourism, to be perceived as a competitive sport where it is more important to have been to many places than to have had the deepest experience, I keenly felt the nuances of the Hagia Sophia, which started out as a Greek Orthodox Christian cathedral, only to be forcibly converted into a mosque and now a museum. This idea of forcible ‘conversion’ brought memories of Zoroastrian history and Atashkadeh to my mind.

The historical consequences of one faith appropriating and re-purposing the physical spaces to their own beliefs raised questions not only of historical antecedents and the treatments of faith followers but in a more modern context the role of de-consecration followed by re-consecration to a different faith group. Modern day expedients see this re-purposing in a variety of ways with churches being converted to homes or taken over in some instances as mosques to cater for a growing demographic population while the original group dwindles. These phenomena accords with the rejuvenation rather than decline phase described by Butler (1980) of tourist destinations and attractions (e.g. theme parks introducing new rides etc.). This aspect has particular resonance for Parsi and even Iranian Zoroastrian places of worship which owing to the diminishing population and lack of priests entering the fold, are unable to be maintained and serviced and need to consider re-purposing or consolidating their Atashes. Religious organisations including Zoroastrian ones are increasingly being forced to sell of parts of their real estate portfolios to fund costly (and in some instances unnecessary litigation). In other instances these ‘lands’ are being taken over by squatters. These actions of today certainly will have an impact on the sustainability of the religion and stewardship issues for TCK.

My movements from religious pilgrim to ‘nationalism/thanatourism’ was cemented a few days later, when we visited Gallipoli for a dawn service and a talk by Mark Donaldson a recipient of the Victoria Cross. This was followed up with visits to ANZAC Cove, Gallipoli National Park and the Hellas memorial. It was the closest I have to renew my feelings of pilgrimage. It was probably the closest the other 150 ‘tourists’ in the group got to being ‘pilgrims’. Cakar (2017) mentions ‘spiritual, family, pilgrimage, nationhood, commemorative and remembrance concerns…which reinforce the national identities of Australians and New Zealanders’ as motivations for travel to “battlefield” sites like Gallipoli and associated with Australian and New Zealand forces. There was a level of fervour about ANZAC Day and Gallipoli that I had never really understood, despite reading several academic and first person accounts. Firsthand experience, especially when it is done in ‘first-class’ style dressed in Incremental Marketing Group (IMG)provided personalised ‘Drizabones’ (oilskin jackets) certainly imbued the event with the hallmarks of ‘secular’ pilgrimage similar to those described in Chapter One where music, sport, food and even battlefield tourism were described as ‘pilgrimage’. The experience bolstered an elusive inner sentiment and helped me identify as Australian (while still clinging to my Zoroastrian/Indian heritage). We visited cemeteries and read gravestones attesting to the young men lost in wars. I curbed the academic in me and withstood from telling my co-travellers that we were experiencing ‘dark tourism’/battlefield tourism, ‘co-creating touristic meaning’ and exploring ‘difficult heritage processes and practices’ attested to by a number of edited volumes on Dark Tourism (Stone, Hartmann, Seaton, Sharpley and White. 2018; Sharpley and Stone 2009; Skinner, 2012; White and Frew 2013, Birna and Hyde 2013, Carrigan, 2014). However, I have to share this insight with a fellow scholar who had been invited to give a talk on the War Graves. Our fortuitous meeting came about when we both opted not to go on a vineyard tour and tasting after a lunch event and serendipitously found ourselves in a wonderfully long, rambling conversation on pilgrimage, war and politics in
academia. Our perceptions of the visit to the war cemeteries and monuments was coloured by the movie The Water Diviner (2014) telling the story of a farmer played by Russell Crowe who travelled to Turkey in search of his three sons who had signed up to join the WW I. I begin to see possibilities for ‘outcomes’ and publications in ‘dark tourism’ and Zoroastrian pilgrimage scholarship for me. Including the unfortunate incident at Tapti River, the story of the Pir and the destruction of Persepolis and brutal treatment of Zoroastrians in Yazd there is enough material to write a paper on dark tourism from a Zoroastrian perspective.

While in Turkey we have to go on an optional trip to Troy and it is a revelation because we had the great good fortune of having a passionate, articulate dramaturg tourisier who brought alive the entire experience with his explanations and knowledge. This ‘ethno-drama’ playing out (Turner, 1973) intensifies the feeling of being embedded in the narrative and situatedness of the experience. It reminds me of the orator at Tus who recounted the feats of Rustam the Pehlewan to us making the friezes come alive with his sonorous voice and flowery Farsi phrases. The tourisier at Troy referred to the Persians and Troy and, of course, I was on high alert. The reference was to human and animal sacrifice, and according to Mark Cartwright (2018) writing for the online ancient history encyclopaedia, Herodotus claimed the Achaemenid king Xerxes sacrificed 1000 oxen at Troy prior to his invasion of Greece. However, one of the problems of being an academic is scepticism, and Julia Kindt’s (2016) article for The Conversation, ‘Guide to the Classics: The Histories by Herodotus’ had me questioning my over-reliance on Herodotus’s historical accounts given that Cicero called him “father of history” but Plutarch referred to him as the “father of lies”.

Other experiences in Turkey included a stay in Cappadocia, and this fed into my personal search for the ‘mystical’ and religious. A visit to Cappadocia’s fairy chimneys and undertaking subsequent research on it revealed the ‘Zoroastrian connection’ with the earliest mentions appearing during the Achaemenians Persian periods during the reigns of Darius I and Xerxes. Cappadocia formed part of the satrapy of the Persian Empire, was governed by Ariarathes the last Achemenids satrap (governor) who declared himself king, and repelled Alexander’s attempts to conquer it. Mary Boyce (2001) referring to the work of Strabo, (63BCE-24CE) who claimed Cappadocia as a Zoroastrian outpost based on the findings of an “altar” with a large pile of ashes and evidence that the magi keeping the fires ever burning. In situ and during the ‘animation’ of visiting the fairy caves these connections were not immediately obvious but subsequent research revealed this nugget of information, prolonging aspects of my pilgrimage and the reach of Zoroastrianism in ancient times especially under the great Achemenian dynasty.

The ‘underground’ nature of the buildings, fairy chimneys and network of tunnels were all reminiscent of Yazd’s Badgirs, ab anars and mudbrick underground homes. Travel as status symbol is an aspect that often impedes the development of diasporic travel for the express purpose of pilgrimage to the ‘homeland’. Among Zoroastrians these examples of ‘diasporic tastes’ is noticeable as the ‘lure’ of ‘European’, North America-Canada and even South East Asia are infinitely preferable to ‘going home’ especially once there are no familial drawcards left in the original ‘homeland’. This desire to travel to places other than diasporic Zoroastrians enhance India or Iran vastly improved economic status and access to travel. However, Helen Gerth’s (1991) dissertation ‘Zoroastrians on the internet, a quiet social movement: Ethnography of a virtual community’ although dated, has sound theoretical ideas that underpin ‘pilgrimages of the mind’ that were part of the experience (aftermath) of physical pilgrimage to Iran. It would find favour with ‘non-travellers’ like me who would relish ‘virtual travel’ without the inconveniences especially if a 3D or 4D version were on offer.

Sirince, a pretty village near Ephesus, 30km from Kusadasi, reminded me of Iran. The tourism academic was never far from the surface and I read that the village originally called itself ‘Cirkince’ meaning ‘ugly’ as “it did not want to be bothered by foreigners nor to share the beauty of their village”. However once the secret was out it was renamed Sirince (pretty) (Sirince Village – Ephesus nd.). This behaviour is reminiscent of Butler’s TALC life cycle, the IRRIDEX (aimed at tourists and development) and
Milligan’s Modification of the Irridex (but aimed at transient workers who come to service the tourism industry) described in Chapter Two.

Our gala dinner at Ephesus saw us embrace the spirit of ‘animation’ and dress in toga outfits. My desire to connect this moment to Zoroastrianism was rewarded when I found Joseph Weishofer’s (2003) writing in Encyclopaedia Iranica, references to Heraclitus of Ephesus, a Greek Philosopher who wrote about the Magi in the Persian period (500BCE). “Among other things, the role he assigns to fire as the archetype of constant flux has led scholars to seek Iranian roots in Heracleitan thought”. Michael Stausberg (2005) contends that Friedrich Nietzsche’s Also Sprach Zarathustra (Thus spoke Zarathushtra) drew on Heraclitus (sic) for inspiration along with other sources. Most Zoroastrians recognise Richard Strauss’ score but are quite oblivious or misinformed about Nietzsche’s inscrutable and dense prose. Thanks to the use of Strauss’ music in Star Wars many have actually heard of Zarathushtra though not necessarily in the context or way Zoroastrians would like to see themselves portrayed. This witlessness extends to the use of Zoroastrianism in some ‘new religious movements’ but that diatribe is reserved for another day and time.

In Sirince, I saw a sign advertising a Whirling Dervish show but my co-travellers were completely disinterested, preferring to go for lunch. I satisfied myself by buying a traditionally made whirling dervish porcelain figurine and ‘recalling’ performances by Astad Deboo, a Parsi friend and eminent exponent of Indian classical and modern dance including Sufi-inspired whirling. The links between Sufism (a form of mystical Islam), and Zoroastrianism, were addressed by Alexander Bard and Parviz Varjavand (2009) in their response to an email enquiry from ‘osred90’. Bard and Varjavand confirmed the commonality of thought between the traditions and Zoroastrianism is predating of Islam. However, Bard is categorical in his belief that “the basiv tenent of Zoroastrianism is that there are an infinite number of paths available rather than just one path. The passive ‘submission’ inherent to Sufism is Islamic and not Zoroastrian. Zoroastrians (and interestingly Pagans) do NOT have a submisssional relationship to Ahura Mazda the way Islam is practised within Sufism, a submission to Allah.

Having undertaken pilgrimage, subsequent visits to India have been ‘altered’ to ensure that visits to ‘Agyaries, Atashbehrams and Udvada’ are built into my visit, wherever possible. Apart from using these ‘mini’ pilgrimages to conform to the expected ‘pagey paroing’ (paying obeisance and devotion) they are my escape from the ‘hurly burly’ of travel; being overwhelmed by sights, sounds and expectations in India. Being able to pray in front of the Atash concentrates my mind, settles the anxieties, and, most importantly, confirms my identity. Therefore, whether it is Kolkatta, Jamshedpur, Mumbai, Delhi or Ahmedabad, a visit to the Agyari/ies is necessary. On my most recent work trip to India in 2019, I have to visit three Agyaries as part of a walking tour which a friend takes me on. Farrokh Jijjina’s encyclopaedic knowledge and passion for the subject and all things Zoroastrian make him an outstanding ‘tourisier’ whether he was telling the history of the Godavara Agyari or describing the plague and its consequences on the Parsis living in the Fort area. His work with both Parsiana (a community specific magazine), and with Khaki Tours, seeded ideas in my brain about potential ‘niche’ tourism product possibilities for diasporic Zoroastrians (especially those who want to experience, rather than read about, their heritage). It has potential for ‘digital resource’ curations and development for ‘non-travellers’. Marzban Giara’s (1998) directory of Zoroastrian Fire Temples is a good aide memoire for further research about these sites and communities.

Research, Scholarship and Actions around Zoroastrianism and its Practice

As soon as I returned to Australia from pilgrimage the weekend was taken up with preparation for a panel presentation I was part of, organised by Karl Desai, a dynamic young Zoroastrian, Sunday School Teacher and one of two registered Mobed celebrants for Zoroastrian weddings the get together in our AZA DarbeMehr in Sydney brought together people of varying ages, backgrounds and ideology (ideas). Given the immediacy and memories of pilgrimage, I spoke about the need to connect to heritage and
its role in self-identity. I reverted to a favourite trope encouraging Zoroastrians to seize the opportunity to explore their Zoroastrianism through their School and University projects, wherever possible. I explained my thinking, as not only being research and exploration with a definite outcome, but as an opportunity to break out of insularity and parochialism and share knowledge about our faith with the outside world. This need for the Zoroastrian community to look ‘outwards’ is especially essential for the diaspora if we are to move beyond and evolve the strictures imposed by our first generation migrant ‘baggage’ especially from Mumbai Parsis. As migrants to Australia, knowing about the ‘refuge’ given by India to Zoroastrians in 600 CE by King Jadi Rana, would help shape their own views about humanity and their life choices. Knowledge is ‘power’ and the currency of the future, and would arm them with information that they could use to repudiate bigotry and narrow mindedness both from within and outside the community on matters like conversion and inter-marriage while recognising that they were the ‘stewards’ of the Zoroastrian future. A healthy dose of critical thinking for themselves instead of ‘turning off’ or imbibing their first generation parent’s prejudices would significantly benefit their stewardship strategies for the future. With enhancements in technology and virtual and AI possibilities it is possible to reconnect through cyber space. The forum had the added benefit of closing ‘the circle’ for me in some ways and incorporating me back into the profane life. This came through discovering that a co-panelist was the nephew of Salome who had hosted us in Yazd. In my mind this was highly significant in ‘closing the loop’ of pilgrimage, making a physical break and helping me to settle back into the mundane life.

I soon found myself attending the Everlasting Flame (EF) Festival and the Zoroastrianism in New Millennium Conference (ZINTM) in New Delhi in 2016. Deeply significant events in this ‘quest’ I had set for myself, Valene Smith’s (1992) term ‘The Quest in Guest’ had been influential in shaping my thinking about tourism, hospitality and pilgrimage. Victor Turner, Ronald Grimes and Erik Cohen had me thinking differently about pilgrimage. This along with other conceptual frameworks like Jafari’s Tourist Model, Richard Butler’s TALC model, Stanley Plog’s work on psychographic characteristics of tourists, Neil Leiper and Lloyd Stear’s Systems Approaches to Tourism, Graham Dann’s work on Anomie as a motivator (for travel and pilgrimage in my instance) and Lewin, Schon and Argyris and McIntosh’s work on reflection (introspection in my case), coalesced along with the more recent works of Shernaz Cama on Zoroastrian revival. Alex Norman’s work on Spiritual Tourism had me wondering whether Zoroastrian pilgrimage was a misnomer, given the incorporation of heritage, culture and other touristic tangents evident in Zoroastrian travel to India and Iran. All of these contributed to ‘closing the loop’ but still allowing me forays into ‘pilgrimage/s of the mind’.

In order to attend The Everlasting Flame and Zoroastrianism in the New Millennium (ZINTM) conference, I had to rationalise my taking of leave from work, mid-semester, as I had been ‘invited’ following my contribution to the Shernaz Cama (2016) compendium ‘Threads of Continuity Zoroastrian Life and Culture’. Coupled with my role as President of the AZA this once in a lifetime opportunity was too good to miss and instead of sitting on the sidelines, vicariously watching on and devouring media accounts of Zoroastrian events in India, I decided to go. The accompanying conference was a chance to meet and hear scholars I had read and heard about. Reconnecting with beloved childhood friends and an aunt and uncle were all-powerful ‘pull’ factors especially when both friend and aunt and uncle were integrally connected to the Zoroastrian community in New Delhi. Getting an ‘insider’ view into New Delhi’s Zoroastrian community, a ‘diasporic’ beacon in their own right and legendary for going against the dictats of the Bombay strictures, I got to see real ‘change’ in approaches to Zoroastrian continuity. These ‘insights’ greatly enhanced the writing of and approaches to interrogating the ‘insider’ literature on lived Zoroastrianism especially through digital and community resources (Facebook groups, Parsiana, Hamazor and the Fezana Journal). Viewing David Adam’s documentary reinforced the insular nature that diasporic Zoroastrians can occasionally be guilty of. Adams a Sydney based photojournalist was subsequently invited to the 11th World Zoroastrian Congress in Perth 2018 because of the exposure at ZINTM and screened ‘Alexander’s Lost World’ and talks on Oxus Civilisations and the Origins of Zoroastrianism were presented there as well.
Everlasting Flame opened to great acclaim and there was a ‘who’s who?’ of Zoroastrians there. I got an early start to my ‘fandom’ journey when I have to ‘help’ in a very marginal way with unpacking some artefacts for display at the ‘Threads of Continuity’ Exhibition. Sitting on the floor ‘orchestrating’ a thousand things at one time sat one of my ‘idols’ and I was thrilled to meet others at other events whose work guided my thinking and writing on the PhD. The ZINTM conference was a good opportunity to sort the grain from the chaff. Its biggest contribution to my ‘thinking’ was in terms of the etic-emic/insider-outsider lens through which Zoroastrian studies is viewed. In my notes, I jotted down thoughts about the differences between Western scholarship and Indian scholarship, where the latter takes a more emic approach. I thought about the role of history in my research, and resolved “my interest is in the living and not the dead.”

This then became a cornerstone of my own ‘framework’. Interestingly, some of the ‘outsiders’ became ‘insiders’ through familial associations, for example, Ravi Khetrapal who presented on his travels through Iran. My notes continued:

“Great consequences and clarification for my thesis. It strengthened my conviction that my thesis was not going to be a treatise on the Gathas, Yasnas or historical theory or eschatology. The thesis (and future research) is/would be concerned with the lived experience of Zoroastrianism and its foci for the future. Although the conference was called ZINTM, the talks were focussed on the past, not one young person presented. And as YK (a conference delegate) remarked “how does this pertain to the new millennium” (if there are no young people represented here?).”

I tried to map a ‘way forward’ that would draw together the wisdom I had gained during my pilgrimage and remedy the aforementioned shortcomings of ZINTM. I came back to a few central ideas: Zoroastrian connectivity; emic perspectives and the need to exalt this past history; the need to get past the purely academic version of things; consideration of the role of social media as a valid and critical resource for research and dissemination given its currency, reach and democratisation; reconsideration of intermarriage and conversion; finding ways to inspire youth to appreciate the lived culture of Zoroastrianism by witnessing and taking part in things first hand (e.g. through ‘Return to Roots’); reviving monajats and other traditional expressions particularly oral traditions and recitations (e.g. of the Shahnameh and the Woodcutter story); and encouraging the dissemination of Khetrapal’s visual work which was very important to my thesis and helped construct my narrative of pilgrimage. I realised that mere words were not going to help preserve items of ‘intangible and tangible’ culture and that action needed to be taken whether it meant making available items from ParZor or holding exhibitions that allowed a ‘show and tell’ approach to Zoroastrian culture and heritage for both insiders and outsiders. However, I recognise that my zealousness is not shared by all and that there was massive ‘over-reach’ in my thinking, having made assumptions about Zoroastrians actually ‘caring’ about the shaping the future. My highly unorthodox and ‘heart’ led research similar to Campbell’s (2010) observations about the use of Twitter collided in my fondness for Facebook ‘quizzes’. Although pooh-poohed by ‘real’ scholars – I saw ‘evidence’ of my study ‘sacred’ and profane life represented in this diagram. The size of the words were further proof of my preoccupation with identity (for e.g. Zoroastrian, Diaspora and Jamshedpur, my childhood ‘hometown’). Disturbingly for me neither Sydney nor Australia featured.
Other measures to ‘disseminate’ information came with an opportunity to present my thesis in a three-minute format at a School of Business Research Forum for Staff and Students in June 2019. Allowed only one slide I decided that the Asho Farohar background with key words was the way to capture audience interest and move them away from the most obvious question, “why would anyone do a second PhD?”. This ‘dissemination’ of information was a first step to reconciling my ‘enlightenment’ about the fact that Zoroastrianism especially in the diaspora (and Sydney) was so focussed on institutional insularity and parochialism that diasporic Zoroastrians failed to ‘look’ outside and capitalise on the fact that we could never be accused of proselytisation and all its associated negative connotations around neo-colonialism, xenophobia and other drawbacks. One cannot be ‘converted’ to Zoroastrianism. My earlier beliefs that the real ‘prosleytisation’ had to be within (emic) the community to “bring them back to the path of Asha” and help them understand Zoroastrianism in current contexts (including through pilgrimage) were essential for
future sustainability was ‘surfaced’ as a mental model. Unlearning and re-learning (Senge 2006) would have to be actioned for the community is to be sustainable in the future.

Benefits of my presentation however, to an etic audience (I was the only Zoroastrian in the room of seventy plus people) were personal and professional. From a personal perspective it helped me enunciate ‘ennui and anomie’ as motivations for a second PhD to an incredulous audience (many of whom are struggling with completing their first PhD); solidify my own ‘identity’ and ‘questing’ as a diasporic Zoroastrian; enunciate the role of pilgrimage and attendant spiritual dimensions to work and personal life; explain ideas around stewardship and future innovation (virtual partnering with Agiyaries in India) and ‘justify’ the use of qualitative methodologies like AE and PAR and their relevance to the business and management of communities. Further, the ability to introduce elements of multiculturalism and faith-based perspectives has value for organisations in their understanding and practices of diversity and inclusion. The ability to cross-pollinate and introduce ideas around ‘social cohesion’ ‘communitas’ and ‘ethno drama’ (Turner, 1973) through doing, semantics and applied action were opportunities for organisational learning and development in a business school focussed on ‘positivism’. Showing that this research had the potential to have a ‘business’ outcome in the form of niche tourism was as important to the audience as it was to my own professional development.

Another outcome might result in a version similar to Anosh Iran’s short stories, Translated from the Gibberish, (Chau, 2019) where Irani “grounds stories in the personal”. This kind of writing is referred to by both McIntosh (2010) and Campbell (2017) in autoethnography and reflexive writing genres. Chau’s review of Irani’s book picks up on a number of my own deliberations in this thesis including the idea of ‘lived experience’, notions of identity (Zoroastrian and SAIndian) in diaspora and “a sense of urgency…spurring introspection” (and belonging). Irani is a diasporic Zoroastrian Canadian of 20 years, and Chau elucidates:

> Nostalgia holds little appeal for Anosh Irani. The notion that the past was better, after all can turn joy to despair. “But longing, for me, is different because it leads to a search …for home—it’s one of the most primitive and oldest instincts that we have.” Home in Irani’s material occupies not only the geographical and physical, but the psychological as well.  

> Translated from the Gibberish, saw its genesis based on diasporic dislocation and the sense of urgency from the approaching 20th anniversary of Irani’s arrival in Vancouver from Mumbai (similar to the ennui I felt ten years after completing my first PhD which propelled me into the second PhD.) Immigration, introspection and ‘home’ as muddled concepts are as Irani says: “There are some people who are immigrants and you ask them about ‘home’ they’re extremely comfortable about it …And there are others like myself – *we don’t fit in anywhere now.*” (emphasis added)

I am complicit in “writing (that) thrives on the reveal, the sudden remark or action exposing absurdity as a means of survival and rapport as a cloak for malice”; explorations of “grief and legacy and how individuals can be snared between free will and destiny” (as elaborated through my disillusionment of experiences of service to the community during my second stint as President of the AZA 2017-2018): and Irani’s own comment, “The depth that you get in your writing has so much to do with who you are as a person as well. At least for me it does. The more I’ve grown as a human being…the more experiences I’ve had I think my writing-if not better- it’s had more depth”. Therefore, despite my rambly writing and ‘persistently casual tone’ I feel I achieved ‘depth’ and authenticity in the writing of this thesis from my ‘singular view’.

**Community, Culture and Conflict: Returning ‘Home’**

Sydney has a healthy population of Zoroastrians though not all are members of the AZA and reasons for this non-membership are complex and include reasons ranging from “why should I pay $80 annually for a family membership” to historic feuds with entire extended families boycotting the AZA. The main
activities of the AZA of NSW include a Sunday School service, a Working Bee (whose members maintain the premises), and a seniors group. Additionally, there is a requirement to stage the Nowruz and Shenshai New Year functions, gahanbars and other ‘special events’. The Darbe Mehr is rented out to community members to host private functions. The nature of a ‘volunteer’ based (sometimes co-opted) Managing Committee who run the day-to-day operations and perform the ‘donkey’ work of the organisation can be contentious. For several years now there has been no need to hold ‘elections’ at the Annual General Meeting, in fact, the reverse has been the case as people have to be co-opted to prevent having to call an Extraordinary General Meeting. This was the case in 2015 and I found myself in the role of President and was ably supported by a group of disparate individuals who worked well together. I returned to the role of President in 2017-2018 but this time it proved to be traumatic. Suffering from a series of serious health episodes, I tried to maintain my integrity and support the ‘working’ members of the committee in the face of unprecedented pressure and bullying from the Trustees and this resulted in a complete breakdown of my ‘service to the community’ ethos that had been so zealously ignited by pilgrimage. Bruised, battered and shattered, and at the cost of sounding hyperbolic, I retreated (like good Persian generals who knew when to ‘hold them and when to fold them’). I resolved to withdraw to the realms of ‘academic’ and ‘writing’ (Hukata, Good Words) and save my Hvarastha (Good Deeds) for related projects divorced from the AZA, including separation from my beloved Sunday School. The need for reflection ‘in action’ and ‘after action’ that had been a corner stone of my ethos and study were finally being prioritised over ‘donkey’ work. This experience lead me down the pathway of understanding and interrogating the literature on ‘volunteers’ not simply in the staging of community events but in the role of ‘pilgrimage’ contexts. The experience of having one of the ‘volunteers’ act as tour guide at the Imam Ali Reza Mosque in Mashhad had ignited a train of academic possibilities including development of a product of ‘passion’ for Zoroastrianism pilgrimage.

**Questing for Meaning and Self-identity as a diasporic Zoroastrian Parsi**

My ‘quest’ for self-identity lead to participation in an exhibition called ‘Tales From The East: India and New South Wales’ (TFTE) curated by Ian Stephenson of the National Heritage Trust of Australia at the Old Government House in Parramatta, Sydney (April-August 2018). My involvement came about when I was co-opted by Jimmy Medhora, a friend and President of the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce Australia (WZCCA) and lead curator of the ‘Works of Faith’ section of TFTE. Four religious groups (Sikhs, Islamic, Hindus and Zoroastrians) that Governor Lachlan Macquarie (Governor of NSW 1810-1821) mentioned in his diaries during his time in India (1788-1803, and then again 1805-1807) were invited to be part of the exhibition and showcase their religions along with featuring a ‘diasporic’ member of their community in Australia. Jimmy chose me to be the ‘featured’ Zoroastrian person and a scroll was produced telling my story (I did not know until the exhibition opened). The text read:

**Pheroza Daruwalla**  
Jamshedpur, Jharkhand

Pheroza Daruwalla was born in Jamshedpur, a planned city founded in 1911. Jamshedpur, growing up Zoroastrian and her parents shaped who she is today, that is a passionate advocate of education, philanthropy and living the Zoroastrian principles of Humata, Hukata, Hvarshtha (Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds).

Her father Eruch Surti was the first Director of Environmental Management for the Tata Iron and Steel Company and her mother Silloo was one of the first women to be selected to the elite Tata Administrative Services after having studied at Stanford University.

As the head of Community Development at the Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company, Silloo promoted education and health and advocated for women’s education and self-sufficiency. Silloo is
Pheroza’s role model as she was way ahead of her time and effected real change in people’s lives.

Pheroza and her two brothers went to boarding schools in Darjeeling, Pheroza to Loreto Convent and her brothers to the Jesuit run St. Joseph’s. Values and friendships forged there still stay with them today. She completed a four-year program in Hotel and Catering Management at the Institute for Hotel Management, Catering Technology and Applied Nutrition in Dadar, Bombay and a Bachelor of Arts at Osmania University, Hyderabad. This was followed by a Master’s degree from the University of Wisconsin-Stout, USA before her move to Sydney, Australia in 1993 when she married Yezdi.

Yezdi and Pheroza have two children Cyrus and Avan of whom they are immensely proud, she lectures them incessantly about their identity as Zoroastrians and their obligations to live by the tenets. She has now lived longer in Australia than India but is still ‘confused’ like many of the diaspora. Her one certainty though is her Zoroastrian identity.

This and being a compulsive student and Infovore (a person who craves information and takes advantage of their ready access to it in digital devices) has led her to pursuing a second PhD on Zoroastrian, Diaspora and Pilgrimage in addition to being the President of the Australian Zoroastrian Association of NSW. Her first PhD examined the role of attitude change toward people with disabilities in the hospitality and tourism industry. Her day job consists of teaching management at the University of Western Sydney’s School of Business, while on weekends she teaches 11-14 year olds at the Zoroastrian Sunday School. Their questions about inclusivity, conversion and intermarriage have forced her to question her own assumptions and biases.

Pheroza maintains a collection of books, textiles, family heirlooms and other artefacts, which celebrate Zoroastrian culture. Uninspecting guests often find themselves at the receiving end of a potted history of an object. She loves the internet and relishes keeping abreast of Zoroastrian news, ‘promoting’ the work of other Zoroastrians and celebrating their various achievements, particularly young Zoroastrians who she is constantly trying to rope into her projects.

Pheroza is a chronic over-committer and has been known to ‘volunteer’ family, friends and students in her causes including volunteering with St. Vincent de Paul and the Ronald McDonald House Westmead. She has a personal interest in the Macquarie’s as she works at the Rydalmere Campus of the University of Western Sydney the centrepiece of which is the 1818 Female Orphan School designed by Elizabeth Macquarie.

Accompanying this scroll were photographs and artefacts loaned by me from my personally curated collection of Zoroastrian items. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to present these Zoroastrian artefacts, personal treasures, including items from ParZor to an Indian and Australian audience. Items included a ‘textile’ section featuring traditional gara sarees loaned by the renowned Naju Daver’s daughter who was one of the first to revive the passion for Parsi garas through her business. I practised Turnerian “performing ethnography and liminoid rationalizing” of ritual (Grimes, 2000, p. 266) ‘modelling’ two different Parsi saris, one a gara, and one a tanchoi. Both were personally meaningful as they connected me to family inheritances (or ‘hand me downs’ as modest Parsi custom dictates that we refer to them). Through the ‘action’ of presenting these items, I was able to engage in the practice of Zoroastrian revival, talking to others about the need to support Zoroastrian artists. Notable examples include: ParZor, Ashdeen Lilaoowalla, Zenobia Daver and the Parsi women who make beaded torans, shops like Coronet and jewellers who ‘copy’ old patterns rather than being seduced by the ‘modern’ Western (Tiffany, Cartier and so on) or Indian patterns. Engendering ‘feeling’ among young and older generations of the diaspora, inspiring them to keep and pass down heirlooms, is vital to the preservation of Zoroastrianism as the trend to ‘trade in’ old jewellery is rampant both in the diaspora and among Zoroastrians in India.

As part of TFTE, Jimmy organised and staged a ‘special event’ which incorporated 3 cameo skits depicting 1) The arrival of the Zoroastrians to India and being given refuge by King Jadi Rana, 2) A ‘typical’ Parsi home scene, and 3) Celebrations melding young and old Parsi passions (including sport and food). This was somewhat similar to what was presented at the Everlasting Flame event, albeit at a
miniscule scale. I have to organise the food part, which consisted of servings of rava (celebratory semolina dish), and falooda (milk drink with rosewater). Volunteers were roped in to prepare and serve, including the young people who are ever ready to help ‘Aunty Pheroza’ (a title I relish and revel in). It is a sneaky way of getting the young enthused about being Zoroastrian when they can bring their substantial experiences as event organisers to helping ‘old’ people stage events. Events like these serve to fulfill the ‘quest’ in practical ways, as well as addressing the ‘rootlessness’ that springs from the inability to identify which ‘tribe’ one belongs to. The work of Parsee poet Keki N. Daruwalla in his poem ‘Migrations (Map Maker 48)’ draws on such feelings of rootlessness:

Mother used to ask, don’t you remember my mother?
You’d be in the kitchen all the time
and run with the fries she ladled out,
still sizzling on the plate.
Don’t you remember her at all?
Mother’s fallen face
would fall further
at my impassivity.
Now my dreams ask me
If I remember my mother
And I am not sure how I’ll handle that.
Migrating across years is also difficult.

The poem highlights the widening gulf between diasporic second generations, which was one of the strongest motivations for commencing this study. Rootlessness and disassociation with India and Iran is especially evident in those that do not still have grandparents and extended family in the ‘homeland’. This sense of distance and loss is a direct consequence of the differences between the ‘natal’ and ‘visited’ cultures (and in many instances the ‘not visited’, and no matter how sophisticated electronic communications become they will never be a substitute for physical presence). Without pilgrimages of return to homeland, there is a risk that the gulf will continue to widen and soon there will be no residual memory. In tourism, this is often cited because of neo-colonialism and cause for intercultural conflict. That is, the greater the differences between cultures, the greater potential there is for negative stereotyping, mis-communication, and conflict. Transmigration and migration (including of refugees) cause struggles with losses of both cultural and religious identity, harkening back to Keki N. Daruwalla’s refrain: “Migrating across years is also difficult”.

My ‘quest’ verges on the obsessive these days and I search for Zoroastrian/Parsi/Indian meaning in every exhibition, museum and cultural ‘experience’. This delight and questing ranges from discovering a Victorian necklace or examples of Satsuma that I have inherited and seen in the Art Gallery of Western Australia at the ‘Beyond Bling’ exhibition, or watching Bohemian Rhapsody with a Zoroastrian as its central character. Reminders of family diaspora are everywhere, both tangible and intangible, and are given full expression in my desire to ‘convert’ diasporic Zoroastrians to the idea of undertaking pilgrimage. Merani in her series on SBS Hindi Radio’s program ‘Unknown Colonial Connections between India and Australia’, participation in TFTE, attending ‘1001 Nights: Magnificent Tales from the Near East’ presented by Dr. Julian Droogan all provide concretization of my ‘bowerbird’ and voracious desire for information on all things Zoroastrian/Parsi/SAAsian (Indian). Khatoun’s dissertation and descriptions of diasporic ‘searching’ and meditative (Forster, 2013) reflection resonance with my approaches and understandings of self and the role of serendipity in research interests and how ‘passion’ projects are in and of themselves worthy of investigation and dissemination.

This is amplified by Cusack and Digance’s (2008, p. 231) assertion using the work of Demerath (2000) that questing in sacred is a mechanism that seeks to replace through experience what the ‘old’ meanings and experiences fail to adequately express. Other ‘experiences’ where I seek ‘connectivity’ include my visit to the Bombay Stock Exchange where I take a ‘selfie’ with the bust of Sir Shapoorji B. Broacha (1845-1920), President, Native Share and Stock Broker’s
Association (1896-1919). A walking tour of Mumbai’s Fort area resulted in a treasure trove of ‘Zoroastrian connections’ including Tata Palace with its servant’s quarters (all very Downton Abbey) and the crumbling Parsi Lying in Hospital. All of these experiences help to seed the ‘so what’ and ‘what happens from here’ questions that every PhD student should ask themselves, particularly those doing second PhDs ‘for love’. Re-discovering the love of learning simply for the sake of knowledge and coalescing the bower-bird approach into a coherent piece of work is an exercise in discipline and reflective praxis essential to academics and academia. Following this research, I find myself justifying auto-ethnography, as a credible and appropriate tool in ‘tourism’ writing, responding to comments online. The conversation runs as follows:

MD, the originator of the conversation thread on Trinet presented the question: “What it is called with the researchers uses their own experience as a part of the data they have collected?” (sic)

GM commented: “I see autoethnography increasingly being abused in the tourism literature.”

(Several stout defenders of auto-ethnography immediately rush in):
SS responded: “Ultimately, auto-ethnography is simply not autobiography nor is it pure ethnography. Often, it is ethnographic description with a great awareness of the self, limited as it is by ethnicity and culture, among other things, and in the repertoire of theories that we use in analysis.”

Another responded: “Authors like Carolyn Ellis state that auto-ethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) one’s personal experience (auto) in order to understand a cultural experience (ethno) (Ellis, 2004; Jones, 2005). Auto-ethnography can be considered as more of a philosophy than a well-defined method (Wall, 2006), so there remains a considerable creative latitude in the production of an auto-ethnographic text (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Here I would like to add my two cents worth. This can be a problem because many readers may see us as being too self-indulgent but they have to realise that our stories and experiences we share are not solely ours, but rather that they also represent the group we are auto-ethnographically representing (Dewan, 2017). Do have a read through of my 2017 article on ‘My Vegetarian Experience: An Auto-ethnographic Approach’ (attached).”

I remained silent but wonder whether my relentless ‘quest’ will ever be satiated. As an auto-ethnographic narrative of Participatory Action Research experiences, I have outlined the transformative aspects of pilgrimage as a diasporic Zoroastrian. Providing a starting point for continued research into diasporic Zoroastrianism and the experiences of Zoroastrian pilgrimage, I hope to inspire others to make their own journeys of discovery. Thus, while my cogitations and experiences particularly of the studies of religion viz. Zoroastrianism and Diaspora and Migration still remain mainly in the ‘lived experiences’, pilgrimage is a subset of tourism and the inherent perspectives of touristhood still apply. Pilgrimage in my life as a diasporic Zoroastrian is firmly cemented now in my psyche. The curatorial aspect of this research takes on particular importance as worldwide Zoroastrian populations continue to decrease. If we ‘don’t bear witness’ especially as ‘insiders’ or fail to pass the message along to the ‘stewards’ of the Zoroastrian future, then our traditions, culture and heritage will be forgotten. In the experiences of pilgrimage detailed in this thesis, religious teachings, rituals and other aspects of Zoroastrian ‘lived’ culture are revealed to involve a complex interplay of sacred and profane. It is through such interplay that the ancient religion of Zoroastrianism is made present in the lives of modern Zoroastrians. Importantly, Zoroastrian religious identity cannot be acquired merely through study, and it is vital that Zoroastrians connect with their faith through firsthand experience and travel.

Post Script and Conclusions:
The process of revising this thesis yielded a number of conclusions, chief among them that Zoroastrianism in the diaspora and perhaps in India as well would endure but in a markedly different format than it
currently exists and is practiced. In the diaspora, the aging of the first generations of migrants and their passing would have the benefits of reducing their stranglehold and baggage on the way Associations and organised entities function. TCK have a significantly different approach and perspective. The negatives of this evolution would be the loss of ‘organisational, religious and praxial’ memory. There would be a further pulling away from ‘homeland’ identification from SAsia or Iran and would coalesce into the place of residence (i.e. Australia). TCK would reform to be more democratic in their ‘management’ of the community and its assets and actively move away from the ‘personality politics’ of their migrant parents. This ‘liberality’ would change attitudes toward out-marriage and even definitional issues of who is a Zoroastrian to recognize the universality of the religion.

My ideas about the development of a niche tourism product around Zoroastrian pilgrimage is likely to be put on the backburner for several years as Donald Trump’s reinstatement of the sanctions undo all conciliatory work of Barack Obama with Iran. This has direct consequences on the growth and development of Iran as a tourism destination and puts ordinary Iranian people at further disadvantage economically and psychologically (“everybody in the west hates us”). Geo-political conflict, pandemics like Covid-17, demonisation of groups and religions all make travelling complex, difficult and even inaccessible in some instances.

The rise of sustainability issues, carrying capacity, food and travel miles, locavore practices and technological disruption including artificial intelligence, virtual reality and access to data will change the way Zoroastrians of the future, practice their religion and maybe the ‘online’ approach to ‘living Zoroastrianism’ will become the norm rather than the exception. Additionally, part of the relationship-building process between diasporic Zoroastrians and those in ‘homelands’ could be enhanced by the ‘outsourcing’ of religious ceremonies and rituals which, in turn, could be live-streamed to allow the diasporic Zoroastrian to participate. Actions such as these would enhance repatriation of much needed funds to India/Iran while satisfying the needs of diasporic communities to be able to conduct the full gamut of religious services without having to inconvenience or rely on priests (in the diaspora) who are volunteers and perform the services around their professional lives. In addition to the economic benefits for the fire temples and priests in India and Iran, this ‘virtual’ experience would help promote both travel and a level of ‘belonging’ to these fire temples particularly for those which suffer a lack of patronage in India. This sense of ‘familial’ belonging is an integral part of religions and groups of larger sizes with dedicated facilities in the diaspora (e.g. local mosques, gurudwaras, temples, parishes and synagogues). My efforts though to ‘action’ this are going to have to be more directed as the Facebook exchange reveals:

![Figure 4.4: Posting on Empowering Mobeds (EM) Facebook website 27.2.2020](image)
On an organisational level, change in Zoroastrian organisations and scholarship issues are still characterised by Chris Argyris (2004, p.509) writing about the practice of reflection:

The dilemma is that the hallmark of scholarship is espoused to be consistent with productive reasoning. However, the current theory of scholarship, to study difficult and potentially embarrassing issues in organizations is controlled by defensive reasoning that encourage the use of defensive mindsets. If true, what is the impact on our research activities if we espouse productive reasoning when the very individuals we seek to help challenge our most basic premises.

The mantle must be passed on, defensive reasoning vanquished and principles of stewardship of our Zoroastrian forefathers inculcated in our youth. My time is over and I pass the baton on…


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https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2018/2/5/the-quest-for-identity-how-kurds-are-rediscovering-zoroastrianism


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Appendix A: Additional Commentary and Explanatory Notes

Day 2: The Persian love for ‘Nose Jobs’

According to Melissa Etehad, writing for the L. A. Times (31 Mar 2017) “nose jobs are a rite of passage and a quiet rebellion for many Persian women”. She goes on to say that in 2013 the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery found Iran had almost as many instances of rhinoplasty as Brazil, Mexico and US. We joke about this especially because Parsi humour is often focused on the size of our olfactory proboscis. The joke has always been that Parsees have big noses, similar to Jews, and in my family (especially on my mother’s side) their large noses were said to be so distinguishing that if the children ever got lost, people would just take one look at their nose and bring them back to the right family. Interestingly evidence of rhinoplasty became so commonplace for us during pilgrimage that we only noticed when women did not have the telltale bandage over their nose. Layla Ehteshami (April 6, 2016) writes about the “The Complicated Beauty of the Persian Nose” and refers to the “badge of honour” that is the plaster. She, however, claims that Iran has four times the rate of rhinoplasty compared to the US. Ehteshami also notes that “In Iran a huge bulge under the headscarf is considered a major turn on.” Her tongue-in-cheek commentary goes on: “The bandage signals that you come from a family who cares and provides for you - even if you don’t need a nose job, having a family that can afford to give you one is preferable to having the genetics for a petite nose”. Ehteshami, saying that the despite the deep conservatism of the Islamic Republic there has been, pointed out cultural inconsistencies no backlash regarding cosmetic surgery and, in fact, Ayotollah Khomeini himself “sanctioned rhinoplasty in the 1980s referencing the Hadith: God is beautiful and loves beauty”.

Day 3: Mountains, Magavs and Ilm Kshnoom

SillooM in her book Thus Spake the Magavs, Understanding the Zarathushri Religion, History and Culture as Presented at the Exhibitions (2009) refers to the Ilm Kshnoom, which is a school of esoteric Zoroastrian mysticism. She presents the connection with Mount Damavand and its hosting of the Magav Sahebs (wise people) who reside in Firdaus (Paradise), living in harmony with nature. The story goes that Behramshah Shroff (founder of Ilm Kshnoom 1858-1927) ran away from Surat to Peshawar at the age of 17 because of a fight with his mother. He went to stay with his mother’s brother and was approached to join the Abed Sahebs (wise persons) residing in Damavand. Mehta’s pictorial story claims he stayed in Damavand for 3 ½ years, learning the Zarthushthi religion through “Sêda (trance)”. His stammering disappeared and he claimed to have been told to remain silent for 30 years before he began lecturing in 1906. K. R. Cama was one of the people who attended his lectures and was impressed. All his lectures were written down and published in Frashogard in 1910 and then latterly by Parsi Avaz (voice), followed by Dini Avaz and then by Mazdayasnie Connection. Behramshah Shroff died in 1927 but a number of Parsi Zoroastrians still identify, as Kshnoomists and have a fire temple in Jogeshwari Mumbai that is associated with Ilm Kshnoom. There are however, contestations to the Kshnoomist ethos and ideology by other Parsi Zoroastrians who do not recognize the teachings of Behramshah Shroff. In the diaspora, the levels of ‘ignorance’ about Ilm Kshnoom are even greater as it is virtually unknown and seen as ‘esoteric’ in approach.

There are claims that a kash (talismanic boundary) protects the Ahmed Sahebs who not only plough the land, but also manage the sowing of seeds and harvesting of crops with prayer. No chemicals were used and cow’s manure and urine used instead to fertilise the earth (organic farming). Balot sheep were used to weave new kustis and each Saheb weaves his own kusti and changes it on Jamshed Navroze (21 March). When the Balot sheep dies, all kustis made from that particular sheep cease to be used. This is similar to the Nirangdin ceremony, which is a high liturgical ritual to consecrate the varsiyaji (white bull’s) urine. Conducted over nine days and nights, in modern times, it is not performed often, but diasporic Zoroastrians are known to have it done as an offering to commemorate a departed soul. The Ejashnie ceremony using thirty three alads (implements) and takes three and a half hours to perform with Nirang (consecrated bulls urine) as the end product and using a ring as one of the implements. The ring is made from seven metals and has the hair of the varasiyaji tied to it. Similarly, when the varisayaji dies, the ring ceases to be used. Hom also known as Haoma (Tree of Life) is given to the dying and when a child is born into the group. Parsis use the haoma leaves, pounding the twigs and mixing them with water. It is believed that this mythical group of people who live near Mount Damavand grow their own fruit and vegetables and follow the concept of tameez.
Ilm. The tide dumped more pebbles every day, leading the
Rabadi Gandhi and Gulshan Pagdiwalla (2018) have produced a beautiful
Dynasties and Illiteracy
Day 4: Casinos, Croupiers and Failed Beaches, The Creation Story, Ancient Dynasties and Illiteracy

Mountains are seen as the focal point of energy and spirituality, with other religions also believing this, for
example, the Rishis in the Himalayas, Monks in the Pyrenees and the Abed Sahebs in Damavand. This had
me thinking of the correlations between Zoroastrianism and other faiths. Silloom stoutly defended Ilm-e-
Kshnoom and asserted that contrary to popular opinion, Ilm-e-Kshnoom was not a secretive cult and the
message that Behramshah Shroff preached is available to everyone. Some of the co-pilgrims talk about the
centre/Agiyari dedicated to Kshnoomists in Jogeshwari in Mumbai and I later found out that the Kshnoomist
movement was aligned with a form of Theosophy, and Annie Besant. I recall family members who have
‘flirted’ with Theosophy but never actively pursued either Theosophy or Ilm-e-Kshnoom. At this stage, I am
still sceptical and treat the stories of the Magavs as ‘myths’ in the vein of the Mahabharata, Ramayana, Iliad
and Odyssey.

Chris Moore’s (2014) recollections of being a croupier at the Casino in 1975 provided an insight into the
culture and revelry that prevailed prior to the Revolution of 1979. The ‘tacky’ coffee shop was not open, and
the signage and exterior of the building was crumbling despite the sweeping staircase leading up to the front
entrance. Reading Moore’s recollections it was amply evident that even in its heyday some things were
impossible, including the building of a “Caribbean Beach Club on the shoreline” using pebbles collected
from the beach that were dumped behind the dunes. The tide dumped more pebbles every day, leading the
owner of the Casino to eventually give up trying to build a ‘sandy’ beach. Another hilarious story recounted
by Moore deals with the owner’s intense hatred for ‘tacky’ slot machines and his refusal to have them inside
the Casino. However, unwilling to forego the profits, he set up a marquee on the grounds and filled them
with the latest slot machines.

Known as the slot tent, the tent quickly developed an unpleasant, all pervading smell of human body odour
mingled with stale cigarette smoke. The mobile air conditioning units and three extractor fans broke down on
a very regular basis leaving the tent virtually uninhabitable.

Malcolm tells us the Zoroastrian Creation story. Gayomard (or Kaiyomarz) was the first man and we want
to attend ourselves to the fravashi (spirit) of Gayomard. He was the first to know and understand the
teachings of Ahura Mazda. He was the first Saoshyant (the first lawgiver) and was of the Peshdadian (pre-
Zoroaster) dynasty. Shahzeen Rabadi Gandhi and Gulshan Pagdiwalla (2018) have produced a beautiful
illustrated book Hello World telling the story of Creation and referring back to the Bundahishn, which is
considered the book of creation by Zoroastrians. Malcolm tells the story of the clash between the
“Daevaesanas and Mazdayasnis” and traces the historical backgrounds starting with the Peshdadian Dynasty
(c.3000BCE), followed by the Kayanians (1500BCE), The Achaemenians (550BCE-331BCE), Parthians
(248BCE-224CE) and the Sassanians (224-651CE). Shroff and Mehta (2011) note that the Peshdadian and
Kayans are referred to as “Legendary” history as the others form part of “Recorded” history. Malcolm makes special note of Yazdegerd III, (631-651CE) the last Sassanian King as the Pirs we are going to visit have a strong connection to the downfall of the Zoroastrian empire as they are all related to Yazdegerd and his family.

He prefaces his comments by saying “Why do we need to know our history? So we can pass it on”. Malcolm also notes that a lot of history was written from the perspective of the Greeks Iranians and Indians who claim to be home to the cradles of civilisation. The Achamenians (550CE) were a part of the golden age of Zoroastrianism and were referred to as the friends of the world because everyone was allowed to practise their own religion. Cyrus the Great came to the throne from the province of Pars (modern day Fars). He built a world empire. His capital was the capital of the world. It stretched all the way from the Danube, through Romania, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Palestine Israel, Syria, Ethiopia, Libya, and all the way to the Indus River. His empire lasted 200 years until Alexander the Accursed. Alexander the Macedonian was said to have used 20,000 mules in his destruction of Persepolis. Seleucus Nikator formed a dynasty for about 50 years. At Pasargarde we hear that Alexander visited the ossuary of King Cyrus and wept.

The founder of the Sassanian dynasty was Ardeshir Babakian/Papakian (224-240CE) and the use of the Semitic script seemed to become more widespread during this time. Sustained persecution from the Arabs for almost 1000 years followed the fall of the Sassanian Empire. First, they destroyed the Agiyaries, and then they burnt all the books or threw them in the river. There is no recorded history during this period because it could have been used as a tool of subversion. This was so devastating that within a generation Zoroastrians became illiterate and the Arabs began to refer to them as ‘mute’. They practised their religion in secrecy. From this emerged Ferdowsi, the poet from Tus. Ferdowsi’s poetry recalled that for 30 years the Zoroastrians were mute but that they would soon find their voices.

There were 330 million Zoroastrians during the ‘best’ times in Persia. Then there were only 7000 left after the purge and forced conversions. Today’s Zoroastrian community owes its continued existence to the help of Indian Parsis such as Pestonji Marker, Limji Hataria and the Parsi Amelioration Committee, and to those Zoroastrian ancestors who refused to convert to Islam despite the depredations and persecution visited upon them.

**Day 5: Massuleh, Iranian Door Knockers and Organ Donation in Ilm Kshnoom**

The town of Massuleh reminded me of Darjeeling and the clothes hanging out to dry were reminiscent of the messiness of life in Indian cities like Mumbai [see: Figure 27]. An article reported in the Tehran Times (February 1, 2020) about the celebrations of Pir-e-Shaliar – “an ancient annual ceremony celebrating abundance and good fortune since centuries ago in Uraman Takht rural district, Kordestan province, western Iran” reports that “people come out from their terraced houses which roof of one is courtyard of another the witness the ritual”. Pir-e-Shaliar was a wise man said to have “magically cured ‘Shah-Bahar Khatoun’ the beloved daughter of king of Bukhara” and being rewarded by marrying the princess. Seen as a celebration of Iranian Kurds, Pir-e-Shaliar festivities are characterized by the playing of the ‘daf’, the slaughter and cooking of sheet and goat into a special soup called ‘Velooshin’ and dervishes whirling.


The parallels to Massuleh’s architecture and Iranian Zoroastrian practices of serving ‘Osh’ (a bean and noodle soup vegetarian soup) at communal functions particularly preceding Navroze are striking.

Another interesting tradition in Massuleh was the use different door handles for men and women (making different sounds) to alert the ‘bibi’ (lady) of the house whether she needed to wear her hijab or not when answering the door [see: Figure 28]. Joanna Lumley makes specific mention of the separate doorknockers in her four part series ‘The Silk Road’. When I returned to Australia, I asked one of my colleagues whose husband is an Imam, about the hijab, and how she copes with the heat. She explained that in the house she does not wear the hijab. Their front door is fitted with a camera so they can see who is there before they answer the door, and they have a head cover conveniently at hand.

Massuleh is very tourist oriented place and there did not seem to be much industry there. I wondered how people made a living. There are cute souvenirs of handmade dolls and intriguing preserved fruits [see: Figure 29]. The bazaar has woollen bags and I would have loved to try some of the traditional kebabs. There was a
‘dress up’ shop where you can have your photograph reminiscent of a ‘theme’ park. A little bit of ‘Disneyfication’ but with traditional ethnic attire not cowboy or cartoon characters! I am excited to see gooseberries, another thing that I have not seen since my school days in Darjeeling. I wish I had bought the glass hanging carafe in *firuzi* (Turquoise) blue ceramic, but Malcolm’s “chalo, chalo” (“hurry, hurry”) ringing loud and clear in typical male fashion, was a potent dissuader.

I am disturbed by the ideas put forward in the book *Who Killed Zarathushtra. Some Zoroastrian Riddles answered through Ilm-e-Kshnoom* by Marzban J. Hathiram (2013). On Day 2, when I started reading this book, I am dismayed by the author’s insistence that organ donation and blood transfusion affects the *ruvan* (corpse) and the notion that the donated organ does not ‘belong’ to the individual. Today, as I read, I discussed the state of the *dakhma* (funeral towers) in Mumbai with my co-pilgrims. Those from Bombay shuddered as they contemplated it, all of us having heard of the inefficacies resulting from the death of the vultures and the presence of other carrion birds attacking the body. The diasporic pilgrims were slightly smug, being safe in the knowledge that only cremation, burial or donation will be open to them. I laboured the point by saying that I have already committed to donation and have made my wishes clear to my family. Secretly however, I felt a sense of disquiet about my hypocrisy as I am firmly against tattoos believing that it ‘defiles’ the body, but I remain quiet on this. However, I rationalise the acceptability of tattoos as part of cultural and religious traditions of ‘others’, which I feel is totally acceptable. There is no evidence in the literature to support that Zoroastrians approved of tattoos and it seems they preferred ornamental adornments.

**Day 6: Zal, Saam, Rudabeh, Rustam and the Shahnameh story**

Zal (an albino with pigmentation deficiency) had white hair all over his body and was brought up by Simurgh. He went back to his father Saam then decided to go to Kabul where King Mehrab (a vassal king) reigned and to pay tribute on behalf of Saam and King Manuchehr, but Mehrab and his family as descendants of Zohak, are considered unbefitting of any liaison. However, Mehrab’s beautiful daughter Rudabeh (Roda) and Zal end up falling in love with each other and wanting to marry.

Zal’s albinism is no barrier (a fact that appeals strongly to my advocacy of people with a disability) and Zal is allowed to visit Rudabeh. Zal, however, realised that King Manuchehr would not countenance the wedding because any progeny would be a descendant of Zohak and seek revenge. Rudabeh’s mother Sindokh (an eminently practical woman according to Malcolm) after her initial wrath about the liaison becomes an ally and convinces her husband about the merits of the coupling.

King Manuchehr in the meantime calls Saam for a banquet and order Saam to attack Kabul and kill all descendants of Zohak. Saam sets out but was intercepted before he could attack Mehrab by Zal who convinced him to let him to speak to King Manuchehr. In the meantime the news of the intending attack reaches Mehrab’s ears but Sindokh averts the disaster by paying tribute offering “treasures (300000 dinars of gold, fifty slaves with cummerbunds of gold, sixty servants, horses etc. all caparisoned with gold) to Saam (Ferdowsi’s description of the presents she went with were supposed to have stretched for two miles).”

In the meantime, Zal reached King Manuchehr's court and read Saam's letter. He consulted with astrologers to see whether Zal and Rudabeh's union would result in any children. The astrologers reported that the union would be very auspicious. They said that a wonderful *Pehlwan* (Warrior/Strongman) who would glorify Iran and its kingdom would be born. Manuchehr was very pleased and decided to test Zal who passed all the tests with flying colours in intelligence, display of battle and arms. Manuchehr consented, and a day was fixed for the marriage. The women started preparations for all the *pehelwans* who were supposed to come and Sindokh gave Mehrab’s ‘credit card’ a good work out. She strewed lapis lazuli and pearls along the processional pathway and dressed Rudabeh in the greatest finery.

Special mention is made of the catering, an important logistical activity even in the Hakemanishi times.
When the army travelled they would take cooks, and water from Iran carried in huge metal casks to be boiled. They would also have vessels for *mithu monuu* (literal trans. ‘sweet mouth’ sweets/desserts) along with regular meals. This belies the saying ‘An army marches on its stomach’ attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte. The purpose of mentioning the inclusion of dessert is to establish that no half measures or meagre rations were entertained by the Achamenians. Zoroastrians are partial to sweets and most Zoroastrian families include dessert as part of the meal – which leads us down the path of nostalgia as we reminisce about the type of ‘desserts’ including jelly made from china grass (agar-agar) in my in laws home. SillooM panders to this sweet tooth with regular fixes of saffron ice cream as we travel.

Ferdowsi described Zal as a tall stately cypress that bore bloom (when describing the birth of Rustam). However, poor Rudabeh soon became very uncomfortable as the baby was huge and as the pregnancy advanced, they felt either mother or child would have to be sacrificed. The *dayas* (midwifes, servants) were most concerned and went to Zal. Zal remembered Simurgh’s promise to come to his aid and burned one of the feathers given to him in promise by Simurgh to summon her. Simurgh arrived, blessed Zal and directed them to give *anosh darus* (sleeping draughts) to Rudabeh. An incision was made to remove the baby. The wound was healed with Simurgh’s feather. When he was born Rudabeh was said to have uttered the words *rust am* (‘I am free’). Rustam is considered the first example of a caesarean section birth. He was placed next to Rudabeh and said to have looked like a one year old when he was a day old. Ten wet nurses of noble lineage were employed to feed him, as it was believed that the milk needed to give nourishment but also build good character. When he started to eat solids, he could eat the amount of three men, at eight years was very sturdy, and began to look like his famous grandfather Saam. It is claimed by Ferdowsi that Rustam was born a lion cub that was inherently knowledgeable and did not have to be taught things like martial arts. Rustam was a *rathestar* (warrior).

One day Rustam awoke to the sound of white elephant that had gone berserk. He grabbed his grandfather’s mace and insisted on being let out of the palace gates. Like a blast of wind (he was only 8 years old), he felled the elephant with the mace. The next day Zal showered his blessings on his son (very dramatically described by Ferdowsi). Rustam was said to have prayed the *Behram Yasht* (giver of victory) and *Sharevar Yasht* (giver of power as Sharevar is the angel of metals and minerals) which allowed him to accomplish this feat. Devout Zoroastrians to this day pray the *Behram Yasht* in times of trouble and repeat the mantra “Mushkil Aasan Behram Yazd, tamari madad” (trans: Angel *Behram Yazd, please mitigate our troubles through your help*). The Mushkil Aasan story about a woodcutter and assistance from Ahura Mazda is favoured in Zoroastrian stories and narrated with the accompaniment of ‘channa’ (toasted chickpeas).

**Day 7: Hegmantaneh, Cyrus the Great, Rhytons, Avicenna and Taq-e-Bostan’s significance**

Hegmantaneh was the capital of the Medes and is referred to as Ecbatana. There is also some suggestion that it was the capital of Cyrus the Great’s grandfather Astyages from whom Cyrus wrested the throne. We did not even get off the bus and just drove around the site. However, I managed to get a picture of the drinking cup and felt very pleased about it as I have a small souvenir version of it at home on my bookshelf. Known as a ‘rhyton’ it was a drinking horn and *The Harvard Gazette* (24 September 2018) article by Colleen Walsh and the curator Susanne Ebbinghaus describes the vessel as being a depiction of a mythological griffin and represented in Persepolis and closely connected to Persian Kingship. The fifth and fourth century BCE piece might be considered a type of ancient wedding favour. Ebbinghaus (quoted in Walsh, 2018) goes on to say, “The king handed out silver vessels as a token of allegiance to reward his subjects,” taking them home after a “big royal banquet.” For a member of the Persian elite, “being able to show off such a drinking vessel that came from the king or one of the governors would have shown your status in the empire,” as a result, added Ebbinghaus, “we find that the local elites begin imitating these vessels and reinterpreting them.”

**Avicenna: Medic and Scholar**

Avicenna was responsible for identifying tuberculosis and the concept of quarantine. He died in 1037 and his tomb is a major monument in Hamadan. His two main masterpieces were *Kitab-al- Shi'a* (Book of
 Healing) and al-Qanun fil-Tibb referred to as the *The Canon of Medicine*. Both works were used as major references and al-Qanun fil Tibb was even reprinted in 1973 in New York. Although the Arabs claim him as their own, it is important to remember that Avicenna was a Persian. The Sassanians and Hakemaneshis were highly literate unlike the invading Arabs, and Persians do not like to be referred to as Arabs, maintaining their distinct cultural identity.

**Bishtoun: Significance and History and the story of Shirin and Farhad**

KE. Eduljee (2005-2017) provides an erudite and scholarly description ‘Behistun Achamenian Parthian Historic Site Kermanshah, Iran (Zoroastrian Heritage, n.d.). There are 18 historical monuments at this UNESCO heritage site. The inscriptions and carvings are a curious and bewildering amalgam. The monuments and stories include King Darius the Achamenian King, altar to Heracles (Hercules) built in the Seleucid or Parthian eras, inscriptions and carvings from the Safavid, Medien and Parthian times, and even the romantic story of ‘Farhad and Shirin’. The legend goes that Farhad, is in love with Shirin but King Khosrow is in love with Shirin and covets her for himself setting Farhad the impossible task of carving a stair in the mountain. Farhad completes the task but Khosrow claims that Shirin is dead, leading Farhad to throw himself down from the mountain and die. However, Shirin and Khosrow face other tribulations including Shiroy, Khosrow’s son from his first wife Mariam (daughter of the Caesar of Constantinople) also desiring Shirin. Khosrow had to marry Mariam in order to secure the support of the Caesar to wrest back the kingdom of Persia from the General Bahram Chobin who had usurped it, and as per the condition of Shirin who refused his advances until he was King again. However, the wily Caesar built in a clause not allowing Khosrow to take on any other wives while Mariam lived. Complications upon complications ensue including Shirin poisoning Mariam to dispatch her, Farhad committing suicide thinking that Shirin is dead after he has laboured to carve the stairs into the mountain, Khosrow dallying with Shekhar a lady from Isfahan to Shirin’s ire and eventually Shiroy murdering his father Khosrow and telling Shirin she has to marry him instead. Shirin commits suicide to avoid marrying Shiroy and is buried in the same grave as Khosrow according to legend. The story is mentioned by the twelfth century Romantic Persian Muslim poet Nizami Ganjavi, whose lyrical style was also employed in the recounting of the story of ‘Laila and Majnu’, another set of star crossed lovers forbidden to marry. Both Laila and Majnu and Shirin and Farhad are common tropes familiar to Parsis and a recent (2012) Bollywood movie called Shirin Farhad Ki Toh Nikal Padi starred a number of familiar Parsi actors, most notably Boman Irani and Farah Khan. The comedic parody touches on a number of well-worn themes including the overbearing Parsi mother and their compliant son/s, issues of finding a suitable Parsi bride/groom, and the perceived ‘misdeeds’ of the ‘Parsi Trust’. The movie received mixed reviews from Parsis and non-Parsi, given its rather unorthodox subject matter (by Bollywood standards). It is one of the few Bollywood movies where the Parsi “Bawa” (colloquial for Parsi) is not simply a caricatured ‘fill in’ but an entire story with Parsis as the main protagonists.

The centrepiece of Bishtoun, attributed to Darius I the Great (522-486 BCE) is the rock relief carved into the cliffs tracing the biography of the King including his lineage and battles. ‘The Grace of Ahura Mazda’ is acknowledged as being responsible for these military successes and the bas-relief of Darius with his foot on the chest of Gaumata (the impostor trying to take the throne), with a Farohar carved above, is eminent proof of the Zoroastrian context. Like the Ganjnameh, the cuneiform script is contained in Elamite, during that time.

The Volagases relief monument depicts a Parthian King with a bowl in his left hand. Meghd Omrani and Navid Chehri (2013, p.9) in their book *Bistoun the Gate of Zagros* note that the ‘v’ and ‘b’ in middle Persian are interchangeable and refer to it as the “Balash Stone”. The date of this monument is uncertain, ranging from 51-258CE, as there were six Parthian monarchs with the name Valgash who ruled during that time. They postulate that the figure is standing before a fire and perhaps adding incense. They also comment on the unknown identities and functions of the two figures on the side. Omrani and Chehri (2013, p. 101) note that “religious syncretism” affected those influenced by the Seleucids and that “Hercules is an anthropomorphized version of the legendary Iranian Verethragna (Bahram), meaning victorious”. The Relief of Heracles is said to represent the Greek counterpart of the Roman God Hercules born to Zeus and Alcmene. I looked at the bas-relief of Mithridates II of Parthia paying homage to Mithra (meaning: sun, contract, and covenant). Mithridates II was said to have grown the Empire to its largest extent welcomed Chinese Ambassadors sent by the Han Emperor Wu Di and was instrumental in opening the Silk Road. The engraving of Goodarz II’s (46-51 CE) victory over his rival Mehrdad (whose ears Goodarz was said to have cut off) shows the presence of an angel holding a wreath as a sign of victory. Goodarz was a tyrant and who killed his brother Artabanus and his family. There is some debate about whether Goodarz died of natural causes or was murdered by Vologases I, his successor.
The Shaikh Ali Khan Zagagheh inclusion on the sign causes great interest amongst us. It was the first evidence of ‘vandalism’ that we had seen. Shaikh Ali Khan was a Safavid Grand Vizier to Shah Suleiman (1669-1691) and placed his own text inscription on the bas-relief. Omrani and Chehri (2013, p.107) note that the calligraphy “dedicates four shares (out of six) of his properties in Gharehvali and Chambatan (local villages) for Sadaats (descendants of the Prophet Muhammad) and two remaining shares for the Bistun Safavid caravanserais”. The Safavid Dynasty established Shia Islam as the official religion of Iran. This Dynasty created a bureaucracy, engaged in the patronage of fine art and left a legacy of economic plenitude. It was a classic case of hubris that still prevails today among local Zoroastrian associations.

The Medien Place of Worship commemorates the ancient Iranian people who were said to have been pre-Zoroastrian and who practised a form of Mazdeism and Mithraism. The priesthood were named the Magi and the story persists that the three Kings (Magi) who visited Jesus were Zoroastrian and remnants of the later Median kings who embraced Zoroastrianism. Other sites that captured my ‘gaze’ in Bishtoun include the souvenir shop where I purchased the Omrani and Chehri text (one of the few in English). I refrained from purchasing any of the icons but take ‘visual’ souvenirs instead [see Figure 39]. There were two paintings of the ‘Shirin-Farhad’ legend and we commented on the presence of faces which are absent in later Islamic art. There was a statue of the Lion and Bull derived from ancient Persian mythology, and an article in the Financial Tribune (24 December 2018) titled ‘Lion and Bull: Old Iranian Mythological Symbol’ explained that this mythological motif can be traced to the Stone Age in numerous cultures. The article says “According to the Avesta, Angre Mainyu kills the primeval bull, whose seed is rescued by Mah (Avestan: Maonghah, the moon) as the source for all other animals”. This symbol is also found in Persepolis and represents the defeat of winter by the spring. I also note that in Persepolis satraps paid homage to the King on 21 March (Spring Equinox).

Our trip continues to Taq-e- Bostan Kermanshah that features bas-reliefs from the Sassanid era. Taq-e-Bostan was particularly interesting from a variety of perspectives, not least of which was the introduction of the story of Maryam, an Eastern Roman Princess who had married King Khosrow and introduced Christianity to the empire. In some ways, it carried on the story of Shirin (of Shirin-Farhad fame) as she too had been married to King Khosrow. Touraj Daryaee (2013), a prominent scholar on all matters Iranian, in his book Sasanian Persia the Rise and Fall of an Empire alludes to a number of factors that made Taq-e-Bustan notable. He noted the violent end of both Ardashir II (379-383 CE) and his son Shahpuhr III (388-399 CE) who are commemorated in the reliefs. The Lonely Planet guide profanely describes the growing power of the nobility, priests and kings in the following way: “The second niche shows kings Shahpuir III and his Roman-stomping grandfather Shahpur II. To the right of the niches is a fine tableau again showing Shahpur II (r379-383) in which he is depicted trampling over the Roman emperor Julian the Apostate (whom he defeated in 363) and receiving a crown of blessings from the Zoroastrian God Mithras”. Daryaee’s other observations related to Taq-e-Bustan included the opulence and absolutism of the kings and “the culmination of the advancement in Sasanian armor” (p. 45) represented by the bas-reliefs showing the full-body armour for humans and armour for the horses as well. Links to India were emphasised through the representation of elephants as part of the military corps and these were used by Shahpur I in the third century CE to raze the city of Hatra and then “by Khurso II: according to Islamic sources they were used against the Arabs (again) in the seventh century” (p. 46). Elephants also featured in hunting scenes where the King was portrayed as a hero, depicted in “Shahbuhr I inscription at Ka’ba-I Zardosht” (p. 52). The Ka’ba-I Zardosht is located at Naqsh I Rustam compound near Persepolis. It is speculated that this stone chamber might have been used as a temple to the Goddess Anahid.

Perses (son of Perseus and Andromeda the Greeks) was believed to have been an ancestor of the Persians. Heracles was believed to have been a Perseid and is represented in a bas-relief in Behistun and referred to as Herakles -Verethragna. Verethraghna refers to the spirit of victory and is associated with Mithra and Rashnu. Zoroastrians also associate Verethragna with Behram and it appears in the Behram Yasht. Bahram was considered the patron divinity of travellers and there is some speculation that the Behistun bas-relief represents this.

The inscriptions at Taq-e-Bostan were significant for what they revealed about the Sassanian identification with Zoroastrianism: “Mazdesn = worshipper of Mazda” (p. 104) was a theme later picked up by Narseh in the fourth century CE in establishing his right to the throne and wresting it from Wahram, King of the Sakas, with Narseh claiming himself as the rightful heir of Shahbuhr. Narseh called upon the dualism of Zoroastrianism (p. 104) and his connections to Shahbuhr I in order to establish his position. Daryaee notes that the royal inscriptions after Narseh gave very little historical information and the location of Taq-i-Bustan in Kermanshah were noteworthy being so far from Persepolis. He alluded to the strong Zoroastrian imagery.
of “Khurshro II’s investiture” with images depicting Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda) in attendance and Anahid “pouring libations” (p. 106). The strong focus on the Goddess Anahid attest to her popularity with Mithra and Ohrmazd and the continuity with Zoroastrian belief systems. In my mind, I conflate it with the relatively elevated position enjoyed by Zoroastrian women compared to their Hindu and Muslim counterparts, in both antiquity and modern days.

Taq-e-Bostan was a significant part of our pilgrimage because it set the scene for our visit to Naqsh-e Rustam (near Persepolis) referred to as Takht I Jamshid. Naqsh-i-Rustam is significant as it the historical and religious site and as the necropolis of the Achaemenians. The word Jamshid is of enormous personal significance to me personally. It is the name of my brother, the town I grew up in (Jamshedpur known as Tatanagar) and the name of the revered founder of the Tata Empire, Sir Jamshedji Tata. Following the Lonely Planet directive to arrive at sunset, we have to admire the lights and the beautiful atmosphere that pervades the monument. It is highly reminiscent of Indian heritage sites where food, souvenirs and even small-scale fairground rides are part of the ‘attraction’. The famous duck pond and the ‘naughty’ Parsi jokes about how they could be ‘eaten’ (muttered under our breath and in Gujarati) cemented our role as Parsis in our eternal obsession with food. Taq-e-Bostan was interesting for later additions including the carving depicting Muhammad Ali Mirza Dowlatabhah, the “prince-governor in Kirmanshah, Luristan, Khuizistan and Hamadan.” The site inscription went on to say: “The relief depicts him together with two of his sons and his chief chamberlain Agha Ghani”. As I investigated this ‘addition’ to the Sasanian inscriptions, I learnt from J. Paul Luft’s (2007) article ‘The Qajar rock reliefs’ published in Iranian Studies (34:1-4, p. 36) that this is one of the few ‘vaaf inscriptions’ ordered by Agha Ghani to commemorate Muhammad Ali Mirza Dowlatabhah’s generosity and almsgiving. Luft notes that this mural provides evidence of a change in the representation of human figures emblematic of the Qajar movement to both propagate and defend Shia Islam in Iran in the 1820s and 1830s. This involved a shift from “rejection to toleration to eventual approval” of pictorial representation of the figure. This change was important for us pilgrims who were grappling to overlay our current understanding of Islamic Iran and its Zoroastrian ancestry.

**Day 8: Numbers in Zoroastrian belief, Metro woes in Mumbai, Laying claim to the origins of Chess, Persian or Indian?**

Ervad R.R. Motafaram’s essay published in Parsi Pukar (August 1998, vol.4, no.2), associates the number five with the Angel Sraosha (who stands for humanity and is the leader of creations and the protector of humankind). The second association is with evolution as five stands between one and ten, signifying that “man has yet to evolve spiritually”. This contextualises the idea of ten being perfection and Motafaram cites “Vedantic theory” of the five planes (koshas) that intervene between matter and God. The five koshas are: 

- Annamaya Kosha = Matter; 
- Pranayamaya Kosha = Life; 
- Manomaya Kosha = Mind; 
- Vijnymaya Kosha = Super Mind; and 
- Anandmaya Kosha = Soul. 

Further, he draws on the “mystic sect of the Ismailis” (Shi’a Muslims), citing the work of Edward Granville Browne (1906) A Literary History of Persia From Ferdows To Sa’di. In this work the five principles between God and Man are: Universal Reason; Universal Soul; Matter; Space and Time. Motafaram also cites William James’ (1996) Some Problems of Philosophy: A beginning of an Introduction to Philosophy using the Australian born (but cited as a British Philosopher) Samuel Alexander’s ideas of emergent evolution to present the case for the time, space, matter, mind and deity (five) connections. He connects all of these to Zoroastrian views of “(1) Ahu or life principle, which makes us aware of the world around, through consciousness, (2) Daena or the inner conscience, (3) Boada or the discriminative faculty, (4) Urvan or soul and (5) Fravashi or the guardian spirit which serves as the divine guide of the soul. To be in tune with God man is enjoined to follow the dictates of his Fravashi which acts as the divine monitor and also represents the ideal which the soul has to realise”.

Motafaram references the existence in Zoroastrianism of the five: ‘Gahs/Gehs’ (time periods of a complete day in the life of a Zoroastrian: Havan, Rapithwin, Uzrin, Avisruthrem and Ushahin; Gathas (Hymns in Zoroastrian scripture: Ahunavaiti, Ustavaiti, Spentanainyush, Vohukshatra and Vahishitoithit); invisible principles in the human constitution (Ahu, Daena, Boada, Urvan, Fravashi); and the five metallic wires, usually silver or brass in the performance of the Baj ceremony (prayers before undertaking a task, death anniversary prayers and grace before meals). The metal wires replace the use of Barson, which were a bundle of twigs traditionally of pomegranate or tamarisk tied together with a date palm cord
Sassanians, Armenians, Christianity and Metro woes in Mumbai

The ascent of Shahpur III proved a turning point with him freeing Christian prisoners and integrating them into his Kingdom as tax paying subjects. Bahram IV who succeeded his father, Shahpur III, kept up this practice and it was further enhanced with Yezdegerd I, Bahram IV’s brother, who succeeded him. Yezdegerd I’s thrust for diversity included helping Christians rebuild their churches and this was viewed with great unhappiness by the Zoroastrian priesthood who labelled him ‘Yazdegerd the Wicked’. This tolerance however was short-lived with the ascendancy of Bahram V who re-commenced the persecution of the Christians. The Roman King Theodosius II gave them refuge and Bahram waged war and was defeated. This war resulted in a hundred year accord for peace to practice Zoroastrianism and Christianity in both respective countries.

Encyclopaedia Iranica’s essay by James R. Russell, “CHRISTIANITY i. In Pre-Islamic Persia: Literary Sources” is especially instructive about the ‘differences’ between Christians and Zoroastrian belief systems. “The Armenians were outraged by the Zoroastrian practice of consanguineous marriage (Av. xvāetvadātha-) and called the Persians kinemol ‘woman-crazy’. In the text of Elišē, the Iranians retort that Christian monks by their celibate way of life depopulate the world and thereby further the destructive aims of Ahriman. In current times, Zoroastrians take great pleasure in ‘lording’ it over other faiths that have experienced the shame and vilification arising from abuse by the clergy and other institutions that were supposed to protect them. This ‘smugness’ among Zoroastrians is expressed as the dictum and preference for priests to have families and eschew celibacy. However, conservative Zoroastrians still have a long way to travel before they accept otherwise in form of LGBTIQ.

Hans Kristian Drangsland (2018) in his Master’s thesis ‘The “Great Persecution” of the Christians in Eransahr 340CE Targets, Persecutors and Causes’ claims that the dualism of ‘Mazdeism’ was perceived as diametrically opposite to that of ‘ascetic Christians’ and fuelled by the Zoroastrian priesthood who found their institutionalised version of Zoroastrianism threatened. Drangsland (2018, p.vi) is upfront about this, stating in the abstract “Sasanian historiography interprets the events as a result of Constantine the Great’s conversion to Christianity”. He goes on to suggest that these ascetic Christians who were persecuted usually came from the elite communities. He also tests the theories relating to kingship, religion and the priesthood. Drangsland (2018, p.50) articulates the hierarchy of the Mazdean clergy commencing with the mow who was of the lowest rank, followed by dadwar, to mowbed, to rad, to herbed to Mowbedan Mowbed whose authority was the highest. Of these titles only the Mowbed endure and Ervad and Dastoorji are more commonly used honorifics to identify a priest among Parsis.

Priests accompanied the Sasanian armies and Drangsland (2018, p.52) concluded, “The interests of the Kings and priests often converged; both institutions were deeply influenced by Mazdeism while at the same time serving in import political functions of the Empire”. The blurring of the lines between a priest and a noble and the hereditary nature (until today) of the priesthood lend support to the thesis of the nobility being the main persecutors of Christians. “Priests are said to have been the primary antagonists as interrogators, accusers and overseers of executions. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the King of Kings even had to restrain the more bloodthirsty tendencies of the clergy, who had their way whenever the King was more dependent on the priests for support.” (Drangsland, p.54)

Drangsland’s observations are apropos to modern day contexts not over the subject of wars or persecution of people of other faiths but to ‘persecution’ (in the form of exclusion) of the faithful who intermarry or choose to ‘step out of line’ by forbidding them and their children Navjotes, entrance to fire temples and traditional death rituals. A further example of the power of the priesthood and their impact on Zoroastrian secular and religious life is evinced in the recent furore of the building of the Mumbai Underground Metro. Seven of the high priests and religious scholars provided a letter to support the petitioners who were seeking to have tunnelling under the two Atashbehrams stayed through the courts. The petitioners believed that the
tunnelling could result in damage to the heritage structures of the Atashbehrams and further that the wells in the fire temples might run dry and lead to ‘spiritual pollution’. However, the High Priest of the Iranshah (AtashBehram in Udvada) Dastoorji Khurshed K Dastur who is the Zoroastrian nominee on the ‘National Commission for Minorities’ was forced to defend himself stating his version of events regarding a series of meetings he had with assorted Government ministers and others to request realignment of the tunnel by seven metres.

His letter published by the Parsi Times (6 Dec 2018 at 7.54pm) asserted:

To further put the record straight, in respect of an allegation ‘The Metro authorities had put forward the affidavit of Khurshed Dastur in their defence in the High Court where he gave a permission to the Metro authorities to let Metro run under the Atashbehrams’ is bereft of truth, absolutely false, fictitious and misleading.

I emphasize that I have never given any permission or any affidavit to MMRC for the tunnel or to the court. Let those who indulge in such Ahrimanic untruths share the details of where and when, and before which authorities, the imaginary permissions or affidavits have been recorded.

Those who make such ludicrous statements based on figments of their imagination, hatred and animosity should look within and ask of themselves if they are worthy of being followers of Prophet Asho Zarathushtra.

I have made known the true facts as they exist and will not respond to any further manipulations that vested interests will surely write about based on conjecture, fallacies and falsehoods.

May good sense prevail in the community.

Chess: Indian or Persian?

Originating in India and then migrating to Persia. The legend of King Nushirvan (Anoucher Rawane Adil) the Enlightened Soul of Justice (531-579) was said to have received the mysterious gift of a Chess Board from an “Indian Raja”. The story goes that Bouzorg Meher, one of the courtiers was the first to unravel the game and mastered it overnight. This mortified the Indian envoy and the King rewarded Bouzorg Meher handsomely. In turn, Bouzorg Meher invented the game of backgammon (Nard) and this was sent to India. The Indians were unable to decipher the game and ended up having to pay tribute to King Anoucher. King Anoucher was said to have been so righteous and just that Prophet Muhammed mentioned in the Qur’an “Praise be to God that I was born in the time of King Anoucher”. The Freer Sackler Smithsonian’s Museums of Asian Art contains an artwork depicting this story in their collection ‘Shahnameh: 1000 Years of the Persian Book of Kings’. Later research revealed the ‘cloudy’ versions of the origin of chess with an article digitally reproduced from 1896, vol XX No. 6, in Current Literature American Periodicals claiming that the game had originated in India and was brought to Persia in the sixth century CE, was disputed with evidence being found through excavations in Egypt at the pyramid field of Sakkara showing a wall painting on which two high ranking officials are playing chess. These tombs were dated back to King Teta who was said to have ruled in 3,300 BCE. The anonymous writer asserts that despite words such as “Schah” (shah and matt or “mate”) being traceable to “Indian, Persian and Arabic influences this was evidence that chess at was 5,200 years of age was the oldest of games. A more ‘recent’ article by George Y. Wells (1952), made connections with the Russian word Shahkmaty (checkmate) having derived from the word shahk (sic) for king. The article goes on to say, “Actually the Persians called their game chatrang, from the Indian chaturanga. Vestiges of the Arabian variant shatranj which reached Spain with the Moors, survive there and in Portugal as ajedrz and xadres respectively”. The Ferdowsi account of the story of ‘Gav and Talehand’, half-brothers in India, fighting for the throne and meeting in battle is used to illustrate the use of chess. A folio painting from the Shahnameh illustrates the battle between the brothers for the throne and it is believed that Gav refuses to kill Talhand who nonetheless ends up dying on the battlefield of hunger and thirst and falling off his elephant when surveying the scene and realising that there was no way of escape. The sages presented the grieving mother, unable to accept Talhand’s death, with a chessboard and mimic the battle with the King chess piece in a simulated game to help her understand the routing (death) of the king. There is a belief that ‘check-mate’ is the Persian word ‘Shahmat’ meaning no escape, describing Talhand’s fate on
the battlefield. Interestingly Al-Ghazali, a prominent Islamic Sunni mystic likens the playing of chess to an addiction. It is also suggested that the Islamic chess sets banned the lifelike pieces using abstract designs and patterns depicting human faces as idolatry.

**Day 9: Winged Bulls, Armenian Church in Julfa and Zoroastrianism**

Atash Kadeh in Isfahan, The Winged Bulls: significance and meaning in Zoroastrianism

Marzban Giara (1998) in his *Global Directory of Fire Temples* describes the Atash Kadeh in Isfahan as being re-built in 1993 by Tovar and Meheraban Gustaspoor with the fire being transported from Yazd. There is also a dharamsala (Iranian word, Pazireshgah) for travellers to stay on the premises. Giara refers to the old fire temple Atash Kadeh-e- Ardashir that was built in Sasanian times and is now in ruins. Interestingly, when I search for the *Atash* Kadeh the old ruins come up and there is no mention of the modern *Atash* Kadeh.

The presence of the Winged Bulls and the two cypress trees flanking the entrance also make for visual impact and interest. Research on the winged bull reveals a wealth of information. Punthakee Mistree (2008) describes them:

Winged Bulls: Winged bulls are found at the Gateway of All Nations, built by Xerxes (486 – 465 BCE) at Persepolis. These bulls are said to be the guardians of the Gates of Heaven. The wings represent the spiritual world and the human head represents the psychological world. The body of the bull represents the physical world. Thus the winged bull is the guardian of the spiritual, psychological and physical worlds. These religious icons today decorate the entrances of Parsi Fire Temples buildings in different parts of the Zoroastrian world.

The sculptures feature a crowned human head and are related back to Assyrian kings ranging Assurnasirpal II (883-859 BCE) to Esarhaddon (680-669 BCE). E. C. Ravenshaw (1856) writing in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (vol.16) refers to the design of the “Sheedu Lamassu” (trans as the Repellent of Evil) as being portrayals of “certain mysteries and ceremonies of the primeval religion of Assyria”.

Adi F. Doctor’s essay published in the Dini-Avaz, (vol.19, no.4, citing ‘The Orient 1980-82’) alludes to the use of the winged bull in palaces in Susa and Persepolis by the Achaemenians Darius I and Xerxes and their continued use in modern times by Zoroastrian places of worship as well as souvenirs. He goes on to claim that the major difference between the Susa representations and the Persepolis winged bulls lay are the presence of wings and no human head in Persepolis. The winged bulls are always represented in pairs and the website Ahuramazda.Com provides a very comprehensive overview about the mythology of the winged bull. Like EC Ravenshaw, the article describes the adoption of the winged bull brought to Persian art from the Assyrio-Babylonian kingdoms (Traditional Zoroastrian Website). The article also refers to the crowned human head being indicative of the king in whose reign the bull was carved and that the horned caps represented the divinity while the king’s crown might have been a symbol of the sun or stars. The addition of wings represented sovereign power and many Assyrian winged bulls were shown as having five legs while some had four.

It could been driven from the wild bulls, it remained as a separate species throughout the north-western Mesopotamia as late as Neo-Assyrian times, when they were hunted by Assyrian kings. The wild bull must have been a truly awe-inspiring beast, six feet tall at the shoulders and with an enormous pair of wide-sweeping horns. Domestic cattle were tiny by comparison, as a visual and literary image of power and strength, wild bulls preoccupied the Mesopotamian imagination, a metaphor for deity or a suitable comparison for heroes or kings. In the early painted pottery the bull has been thought to symbolize a storm Deity.

Armenians and the Armenian Church in Julfa

The ‘Vank’ (meaning monastery/convent) Cathedral (also known as the Holy Savior Cathedral and
Church of the Saintly Sisters) built in 1606 is a UNESCO site and when one sees the elaborate frescoes it becomes immediately apparent that the combination of Iranian and Armenian architecture make it highly significant. The combination of architecture blends that of churches and mosques with a domed sanctuary, an ‘apse’ that is a semi-dome prevalent in Byzantine, Greek, Roman and Gothic Christian architecture. It also contains a chancel that is an area reserved for the clergy and separated from the nave. The exterior also boasts a belfry tower with bell. The frescoes present the story of the creation of the world and Adam’s expulsion from Eden. Malcolm points out to us the ‘pendentive’, a term used to describe the situating of a circular dome over a square or rectangular room with weight bearing piers in the four corners. The frescoes depict two very different aspects with the top section focused on Jesus and the bottom dedicated to the tortures and forced assimilation of Armenian martyrs by the Ottomans. There is also an abundance of cherub’s heads, a favoured motif of Armenian art. The plainness and rather chunky exterior is a direct comparison to the elaborate frescoes in the interior. We visit the Library and Museum in adjacent buildings and are struck by the artefacts including costumes, tapestries, printing presses and sacred and religious ornaments. I am reminded of visiting ‘The Book of Kells’ at Trinity College in Dublin when I see an elaborate manuscript in the museum. Artefacts brought back by Armenian Traders included crockery, paintings, carpets, musical instruments and other objects.

The Vank Cathedral complex included an example of a Yurt [see: Figure 52]. Attributed to architectural traditions of the Ottoman period the yurt was/is still a feature of accommodation with the travel company ‘Travel with Neo Armenia – New Partner in Armenia to Feel the Spirit of Time’ featuring a picture of a modern yurt with motorbike parked in front and satellite dish primed, additionally appending Georgia-Armenia-Turkmenistan to its legend. Yurts are very fashionable in the H&T industry as ‘glamping’ (glamourous camping) is becoming increasingly popular in regional destinations, desert locations and farmstays.

**Day 10: Bridges, Death and Death rituals and rites: Zoroastrian considerations for the Diaspora.**

We pass the Shahrestan Bridge and are awestruck that the piers were built during the Sassanian (3-7 CE) and Achaemenian (550-331 BCE) times. It has been renovated by the Buyid dynasty in the tenth century and then by the Seljuks in the eleventh century. The Persiantourismguide.com (http://www.persiantourismguide.com/2015/08/25/shahrestan-bridge/) describes the Shahrestan Bridge:

Shahrestan Bridge is the oldest bridge on Zayandeh Rud in Iran. The foundations are from the third to seventh century Sassanian era, but the top was renovated in the tenth century by the Buyids and finally during the eleventh century Seljuk period. However, the architectural style is totally Sassanian. The bridge was built in two parabolic shapes. The vertical parabolic component means that the middle point of the bridge is the highest part. The horizontal parabolic produces a bend to the west strengthening it against the flow of the river. This bridge is 107.8 metres long and an average of 5.2 metres wide. It has two levels of arches, 13 in the bottom and 8 on the top. The higher sluices quickened the passage of water during floods, thus taking pressure away from the structure. About 100 metres away from the bridge, the Zayandeh Rud has recently been diverted towards the south and an artificial lake has been established around the bridge to protect it from further damage.

After lunch, we head out to Khaju Bridge. Described as the ‘finest’ of the bridges again it is significant for us as it is said to link the Khaju quarter with the Zoroastrian quarter with the river Zayande Rud flowing below. People are picnicking all along the bridge and underneath, putting their feet in the water. Families had taken possession of the inside platforms for picnics and there were also sing-songs going on. The lions at either end were the head stones of Bakhtrya tribesman who used to put the lion sculptures over the graves of the important people. Here, however, people were clambering all over them and children taking turns to sit on them and be photographed. I was surprised to see funerary icons treated so cavalierly. At the Armenian Church, people sat with their feet on the tombstones and walked all over them. As I take a picture of the ‘pilgrim’ and ‘the other tourists’ I reflect on whether this demonstration of the ‘sacred’ (i.e. the funerary lions) being turned into secular tourism souvenir objects for selfies is disrespect. In addition, I wonder about
my own double standard, I am offended as a pilgrim but if I were a secular tourist would I have posed for a picture with the lions?

This aspect of ‘respect’ comes sharply into focus when I visit a wonderful exhibition in 2017 and then again in 2018. Called ‘Hidden’ it is held annually at Rookwood Cemetery in Sydney. One of the oldest and largest multicultural cemeteries in Australia, the annual exhibition invites artists to respond to “Themes surrounding the Rookwood site, including history, culture, remembrance and love”. Beautifully curated and presented the many different exhibits out in the open remind visitors to tread lightly and definitely not on gravestones, to maintain the sanctity and respect the functions of the cemetery using only the paths provided.

Day 11: The Bakhtiaris and The Zoroastrian ‘Gospel’

The migration known as the KUCH or KOOCH by the Bakhtiyari was previously done by foot but modernity has now included the use of trucks. Thomas Erdbrink (2018) writing for the National Geographic magazine highlights the conundrums faced by the Bakhtiyari people. Titled ‘Why Iran’s nomads are fading away – As modern life lures a generation to cities some left behind struggle with drought and dust storms and wonder: What kind of life is this?’ the article is filled with amazing pictures and commentary. The commentary includes aspects related to education of both genders but especially of women, the dislocation in going from a nomadic culture to a settled one with one poignant picture bearing the legend: “Mostafa Mokhtari, 10, sits in a tent in his grandparents’ yard. His grandparents decided to stay in a house to help their grandchildren attend school and study. But being accustomed to living in a tent, they made one for the yard.” Another picture included the caption: “Unable to afford the cost of renting a large truck to make their move easier, some Zamani family members must walk while a pickup carries their belongings, the elderly, and kids. In recent years, many families have stopped moving and living as nomads because of the hardships. For others, raising animals provides the only income.” [See: Figure 63].The Bakhtiyari are considered descendants of Faredoon who is known in Zoroastrian literature for having finally enslaved the evil Zohak in Mt Damavand. Faredoon’s sons Salm, Tur and Iraj were all said to have been given a share of the kingdom with Iraj the favourite inheriting the most (Iran), Tur getting Turan (Central Asia until China) and Salm inheriting Anatolia (Roman empire/the west). Legend has it that Iraj was murdered by Salm and Tur and Iraj’s grandson Manucher was installed as King. Manucher is said to be the first of the Shahs who ruled Iran and that the Turanian–Persian enmity sprang from Iraj’s murder and persisted for many generations. The story of Faredoon and Zohak is a well-known trope that I regularly recycle in Sunday School classes to illustrate everything from duality to the constant fight between light and darkness with the legend asserting that Zohak’s chains grow weak overnight as he strains to break free but with the rising of the sun (and the presence of light) Zohak is enslaved tightly again.

Farsan (Isfahan) is the city where many Bakhtiyaris have settled. Bakhtiyari attire is also distinctive and all the clothes pants, jacket and even shoes are reversible. This is to prevent them from being worn out in any particular spot. The men wear a Chugha, which is woven by them from sheep’s wool. It is knee length tunic vest with vertical indigo stripes. They also wear distinctive black trousers called Shalwar, which serve to identify their tribe and are cut up to 120 cm wide at the bottom. This is different from the garb of the Kurdish people whose pants are loose at the top and tight at the bottom. Their pants are held up with a leather belt over which they wear a sash (Shal) which in turn serves as a repository for assorted items ranging from pipes to knives. The hat is another part of the unique garb and made of felt called a Kola. However there is a strict pecking order in hats and the felt kola is worn by boys and shepherds while mature men and rank is denoted by a ‘Kolah-Kosrawi’ which is usually black, cylindrical and taller than the regular felt kola. The Khavanin-e- bozorg hat is in white and worn by tribal Bakhtiyari chiefs. Shoes are called Giveh and are worn on opposite feet every day to prevent them from wearing out [see: Figure 64]. Made of cotton and leather usually, they may now, have plastic soles on them. The juxtaposition of the Giveh with the ‘Persian’ carpet makes this photo one of my favourites.
I am also struck by the fact that the second wife of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahalavi – Soraya Esfandiary – Bakhtiyari was the only daughter of Khalil Esfandiary Bakhtiyary, a Bakhtiyari nobleman and Ambassador to Germany and his German wife Eva Karl. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Soraya and the Shah were ‘star-crossed’ lovers and she was the ‘true’ love of his life with the Shah reportedly having told a journalist who asked about their divorce and his feelings for Soraya “nobody can carry a torch longer than me”. The contradictions between the life of the Bakhtiyari tribes and the luxury loving very European Soraya are not lost on me. Milani Abbas (2011, p.155) in his book ‘The Shah’ claims Soraya railed against her duties as the Queen which necessitated visiting “hospitals, orphanages, charities, the people’s quarters with their djoubs open to the sky, with streams of dirt water which supplied their dwellings, having first served washerwoman, tramps and dogs. Poverty and squalor. Children with rickets, ravaged women and starving old men, the filth of the alleyways where the houses are no longer houses, where poverty, real poverty prevailed”. At the cost of being, unkind Soraya comes across as a self-absorbed spoilt rich young woman with no sense of ‘noblesse oblige’. In fairness, though it must be said that I have not read either of her two books. Nevertheless, I cannot help think that the status of the Bakhtiyari people would have improved dramatically if she had been different and actively advocated for their betterment.

SillooM’s teachings about Manthra and Mathra:

- When we pray we must un-tie the kusti only after Kem no Mazda. It is said that only one tenth of the prayer benefits us and nine tenths is a blessing for the universe when we pray.
- When we pray the five Yatha Ahu Vairyo, we are referencing the five senses (hearing, sight, touch, taste and smell). This explains its context in the Sarosh Baj where we pray five Yatha Ahu Vairyo and three Ashem Vohu. It also ‘explains’ our childhood recitations and my ‘default’ position of the five Yatha, three Ashem, finally an explanation and context.
- Yazamaide (trans: in tune with), used at the end of short prayers attunes us to the Zarthushti faith. Parsi Pukar’s (January 1999), in its essay “Kriya- Kaam, a vital vein of Zarthushti Din – Its Genesis, Operation, Function, Effect and Efficacy” uses the following example from the “8th Kardeh of Haptan Yashra:
  - Yazmaide Ve Ameshaaspentaa Yasnahey (trans: We attune ourselves with you)
  - Haptanh-haitoish Handaatata (trans: Oh Ameshaspends through the Yasna of Haptang-haiti)
  - The Yasna of Haptangh-haiti
- The article describes the “kriya-kaam” (i.e. the rituals and ceremonies) for both the living and dead including Navjote, navar (initiation of the priest), marriage, jashan etc and also death rituals including the Sachkar, Sarosh nu Patru, Geh saran, Uthamna and Chahrum and other major and minor ceremonies associated with death.
- SillooM provides the example of the Navjote saying “we are signing a covenant and it is said that if a Navjote is done in the morning then the Yazatas and Ameshaspentas also attend because it is so important.
- You must have at least one foot on the floor and it must never be in direct contact with the floor (ie you must wear socks or stand on carpet) because according to purity laws you are nullifying the purification by being in direct contact with the floor surface. This is referred to as ‘breaking the kusti’ and according to Tehmurasp Shawaksha Pardiwala (n.d, p.11) in his book ‘A Guide To Our Prayers’ this is because the body is seen as possessing energy through ‘Atashe Vohufrisian’ and is guided by the person’s actions. Sitting or standing allows “bad magnetism” to pass through one’s legs without disturbing the good effects of the ‘Staota’. (translated as vibrations of sound as adoration and praise through prayers).
- Electric lights cut off the light we pray to. That is why the boi area where the Atash is situated does not have lights as no light should compete with the Atash’s sacred light from the wood burning in it. (How does this explain and concur with the Iranian habit of having non tended fires with a burning gas lamp I wonder?)
- Observances, include washing your arms all the way up to your elbows. You can use a few limbu (lemon/lime) drops instead of taro (which is just plain cow pee and not even prayed over. When it is
prayed over it becomes nirang). You must have a “head bath” before going to the Agiyari and if you have used public transport you must do the kusti 3 times before going in. You must hold the front of
the kusti till you finish the Jase me Avange Mazda. My mind goggles at all these diktats – and I can see
that some of my co-pilgrims are also digesting these pieces of information with a ‘handful’ (as opposed to a grain) of salt. They like me are also forebearing from arguing that the demands of modern day life preclude from such strict observances. But, none of us say anything.

- The first tareekat (directive?) in Meher Yazad is you must tell the TRUTH. This is why Parsis are still held in high regard because telling lies is forbidden to us. Does this still hold true in modern times? I am reminded of the delightful example of Firoza Punthakee Mistry narrating the story of a Parsi lady being caught by a policeman in Mumbai breaking the law in some way and insisting on being fined even though the policeman says she is a Parsi and therefore it must be a genuine mistake not a case of flouting the law and so she should be excused. FD chimes in with the story of the Parsi driving down incorrectly on a one way street followed by a policeman. When pulled up at the end of the street they insist on getting a ticket and then proceed to tell the policeman to give themselves a ticket too for having broken the law stating that “Quida (Law) applies to everyone and no one is above it”. The importance of more give as opposed to take is also canvassed as part of the legacy of our ancestors and the need to reinstate/keep it going in modern times as part of a community characteristic.

**Day 12: Significance of Behram Roj and The Building of an Atashbehram ataš**

The significance of Behram as a Yazata (angel) lies in attuning ourselves by praying the associated prayer i.e. Behram Yasht. Translated the Behram Yazata refers to coming to the aid of ‘his’ devotees in ten different forms. Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia, (https://ramiyarkaranjia.com/Behram-Yasht/) a renowned and revered priest, scholar and Principal of the Dadar Athornan Institute for trainee Zoroastrian priests lists these as:

1. Wind.
2. A bull with golden horns (Ama Yazad sits on the horns).
3. A white horse with a golden caparison (Ama Yazad sits on the forehead).
4. Camel with a piercing eyesight.
5. Aggressive sharp-toothed boar.
6. Handsome youth of fifteen years.
7. Swift, high flying and strong bird Varehgna, comes at the time of dawn.
8. Wild ram with bent horns.
9. A buck (male deer) with sharp horns.
10. A heroic man carrying a sword

Consecrating an Atashbehram: Steps and procedures

We learn that Iranshah in Udwada is the oldest, followed by the AtashBehram in Navsari. Mary Boyce and Firoze Kotwal’s (2006) entry in Encyclopaedia Iranica notes that the term ‘Atas Bahram’ references the fire now installed at Udwada but originally established in Sanjan in Gujarat. The Iranians however use the term ‘Iransah’ to refer to the Atas Behram of Kerman referring as it does with the term Sahansah (King of Kings) and Bahram Firoz Sah (Victorious Bahram, King).

There is a complicated story about the movement of the fire from Sanjan to Navsari and then to Udvada and the role played by the priests over who should have ‘exclusive’ rights to tend the flame and receive all the donations tendered by devotees. The breakdown in relations between the Bhagaria priests of Navsari and the Sanjan priests eventually led to the fire being moved to Udvada, its permanent home [see: Figure 69]. Dasturji Meherji Rana was a Bhagaria priest and was invited to the court of King Akbar to expound on the faith and proved his worth when he exposed the magician who had tried to show two suns but Meherji Rana managed to bring down the plate with his prayers and show it was
simply a trick. Descendants of Meherji Rana continued to hold the title of Head Priest. The current Meherji Rana gaadi (throne/seat) is held by Ervad Kaikhushru Cowasji Ravji, appointed in 2019 on the passing of the 17th Vada Dasturji Kaikhushru Navroji Dastoor Meherjirana. In his acceptance speech “Vada Dasturji Ravji thanked the Bhagarsath Anjuman and all humdins”. Dasturji Ravji’s impressive bio include “68 nirangdin ceremonies (44 were at Navsari), 5,000 ijashnes and 3000 Vendidad ceremonies. He has consecrated two varasyajis and the gumbad of the Navsari AtashBehram in addition to recording the entire Avesta prayers”. These high liturgical practices amply qualify him to hold this ancient and venerated position existing since the time of King Akbar the Great. (https://parsikhabar.net/news/18th-vada-dasturji-meherjirana-appointed/20048/)

John Hinnells and Alan Williams (eds) (2008) present the background to the setting up of the Iranshah in their writing ‘Long-standing priestly authority tensions: Sanjanas and Bhagarias’ and continue the narrative in ‘More Atashbehrams’ and ‘The JamaspAsa Lineage of priestly authority’. The latter ‘lineage’ became central in Bombay and Poona (Mumbai and Pune now). They also canvass the tensions arising from the “naujote of Suzanne Briere”, and described in detail in Chapter One. To consecrate the AtashBehram sixteen different fires are needed from:

1. Burning a corpse
2. Dyer of fabric
3. The house of a king or ruling authority
4. Potter’s kiln
5. Brick-maker’s kiln
6. Ascetic
7. Goldsmith
8. Mint – used to forge coins
9. Ironsmith
10. Armourer (making weapons)
11. Baker
12. Brewer
13. Soldier
14. Shepherd
15. Lightning strike
16. Hearth fire from a Zoroastrian home (preferably a priest).

These fires are purified by passing them through a series of pits in the soil. They then put combustible materials on a “hole vali chamach” (round slotted ladle) and once this fire is ignited they are then moved into a second pit which has combustible materials. Each fire has a different number of pits e.g. Kings seventy, soldier thirty three, and so on to get a number of 1128 fires. This physically purifies the fires. They are spiritually purified by prayers for each pit ‘Yazashne’ and ‘Vendidad’, eg sixty one for the potter, seventy five for the brick maker etc.

An Ejashnie ceremony takes three and a half hours for two mobeds to do. It takes seventy two chapters for the Yasna and they are not contiguous and are missing bits. For example they start at number twenty eight. Gathas (of which there are seventeen in number) are not standalone they are part of the Yasna which is the principal liturgical Avestan text and are constituted by seventy two chapters which a mobed has to recite from memory. Usually performed in the morning the ceremony can take up to three hours and is also represented by the seventy two strands that are woven into the kusti (sacred girdle). Thirty two priests are required for the consecration ceremony which can be up to a year long.

An amalgamation of four fires must take place only on the first Gatha day (Ahunavad). Gatha days follow on from the Mukhtads (remembrance of the dead) and prior to the onset of the Shenshahi new year. Each of the sixteen fires which has been purified are placed on a large afarganyu (silver receptacle in which the holy fire burns) in a certain sequence and mixed together to form one entity. These amalgamated fires are then re-consecrated. Then one Yazashne, one Vendidad and one prayer to Sarosh
Yasht are prayed. From Hormazd Roj (start of the new Shenshahi year) one month prayers are said with Ejasnie and invocations for the Roj (day) for example Behram Yasht etc. The Vendidad is also prayed and the first three days prayers commence from the day of the fires being amalgamated into one. This total of thirty three days (thirty days of the first month plus the three additional days) are added to the one thousand one hundred and twenty eight days required for the purification ceremonies. The Atash Padshah is then moved to the outer room kebla (sanctum) where it is to be housed and three days of prayers follow. It is then taken in a procession with some priests walking in front with a mace and swords (seen in the kebla) area. The fire is now considered a Rathestar (fighter) and we have to make sure that the power of the fire is kept and the energy is maintained. Hence we do the kusti outside before entering to purify ourselves. We then are ready to present to the Atash Padshah having purged ourselves of not just atmospheric pollution but also spiritual pollution. The constant fight against evil in the world reduces the fire's energy and hence the mobed does boi at regular intervals (when the geh changes) re-charging the fire by putting sukhar (sandalwood) and reciting the Atashniyaesh prayer. Synthesised these steps were:

1. Collection of fires
2. Physical purification
3. Spiritual purification
4. Amalgamation of all entities
5. Consecration of amalgamated
6. Consecration of chamber where it is to be kept
7. Procession to bring fire to kebla and do the first boi

Seven of the Atashbehrams were consecrated this way. The Iranshah in Udvada, however was consecrated (721 CE) a different and more elaborate way hence its status. Marzbân Giara (1998) provides a picture and details of the 8 Atashbehrams in India. There is one AtashBehram in Yazd in Iran in Shiraz and we visit it. Architectural styles and presentation of different Atashbehrams reflect the subtleties of their major benefactors approaches and have varying ambiance. As a ‘pilgrim’ track opportunity this would lend itself very well to an erudite talk on the history of the Atashbehrams.

Dasturs, Mobeds and Navar Martab (initiation ceremonies)

Other discussions revolved around the initiation of priests with clarifications that a Navar ceremony (for boys only) meant that he could perform ‘outer’ ceremonies but to be a Navar Martab (Exalted) means the ability to perform ‘inner’ rituals including the Yasna, Vendidad and Baj. This means that the initiate must be able to fluently read and recite from the Vendidad, Yasna and Visperad. Iranian priests on the other hand have only one grade of priesthood and it is much simpler and can be performed at any age unlike the Indian Navar who must be initiated before adulthood. Ervad Karanjia also notes that the ‘Samel’ ceremony is performed among Sanjana priests who wish to venerate the Iranshah. They are required to undergo a ‘viva’ on rituals and texts by senior priests before they can enter the sanctum sanctorum and offer ‘boi’ (tend the fire). (https://ramiyarkaranjia.com/navar-and-maratab-rituals)

Diasporic parents send their sons to be initiated as Navars and Martabs as this news item demonstrated. “Proud Turel brothers, 10-year-old Fravash and 14-year-old Ushaan Turel, recently completed their Navar and Martab ceremony at Rustom Faramna Agiary, Dadar, on 25th and 28th December, 2018, respectively. Sons of Mehroo and Er. Kaiwan Turel, grandsons of the Aspi and Kashmira Turel (paternal) and late Jal and Arnavaz Mistry (maternal), underwent their ceremonies under the tutelage of Er. Aspandiar Katila and Er. Jehaan Darbari. Students of ESF International schools in Hong Kong, the sons hope to follow their father’s footsteps and offer prayers at the Zoroastrian Association of Hong Kong.” Source: Turel Brothers Ordained Navar, Martab (Jan 5, 2019) (https://parsi-times.com/2019/01/turel-brothers-ordained-navar-martab/)

The Vendidad is the most strenuous and exalted of all prayers and can only be prayed after midnight in the Ushahin geh and lasts for 7 hours by a pair of mobeds. We refer to these priests as the ZAOTA (chief) and RATHVI (assistant). These are known as higher liturgical ceremonies and can only be done
in an Agiyari or Atashbehram where there is a special room with channels among the pavers. The rigour of the Vendidad ceremony and the attendant purification laws are so restrictive that if officiating priests even go to the toilet then the whole ceremony is nullified.

**Day 13: Narengstan, Persian Gardens, Western Scholars and Firuzabad’s Palace of Ardasir**

After lunch we are back on the bus heading to Firuzabad which commemorates the victory of King Ardasir and to visit the spectacular ‘castle’ [see: Figure 72] with three chambers open to the sky and with the three fires represented ‘Atash, adarnan, dadgah’. Considered as the first place to be able to build a round roof (vault) on a square building and using architectural concepts such as ‘squinch’ and *pendentive* describing construction devices where the concave triangular vaulting allow for the placement of a circular dome on a square or rectangular space. This device has been used extensively in the building of several mosques, churches and even the Taj Mahal in India and St. Peters Basilica. We had already viewed the pendentive in the Vank cathedral in Julfa. There are three domes and the architecture does not fall strictly into Parthian or Sassanian eras but seems unique.

Ardasir- e-Babkan founded a city which he called Ardasir Karra (Glory of Ardasir) and this was a major catalyst for his fight with the Parthian King Ardavan in 224 CE (Huff 2012 in Encyclopaedia Iranica). The use of brick rather than stone places this ‘Palace of Ardasir’ in the pantheon of advanced architecture. It is also believed that the ruins might have looked like a Parthian palace at Ctesiphon and been influenced by the architecture at Persepolis. The walls are thick and some have stones stuck together with mortar paste. Huff, also uses other scholars to dispute the “incorrect interpretation of the great palace of Ardasir in the plain as a fire temple (*ataskada*)”. However, there is a great deal of ambiguity and no clear indication of its use. We choose to believe it is the *Atashkadeh* as we do our venerations (a classic case of ‘interpreting’ history to suit the needs of the present).

We gather kindling and light a fire and pray the *Atash Niyahesh* in the central/main area. In this moment of great meaning and ‘connection’ to the past, the *bête noire* cannot help getting up to her old tiresome tricks and insisted on heaping the kindling on till it almost obscures the fire. We all draw in our breath and pray to Ahura Mazda to give us the patience and fortitude to not scream at her and will ourselves to stay in the ‘sacred moment’.

I am reminded of the time my family spent living in Ireland (2002) and our several visits to Stone age Newgrange in the Boyne Valley. There are similarities in the way the structures are aligned and built to allow for light to permeate to the central area. I also cannot help but compare the differences between the upkeep of Newgrange and the Palace of Ardasir. Another important difference, I noted was that Newgrange did not use the squinch and pendentive approach but consisted of the placing of stones one on top of the other to result in the circular (igloo like) temple which allowed the winter solstice to bathe the passage and chamber for about seventeen minutes. Newgrange is said to have been built 5200 years ago and so the Iranians can justifiably lay claim to the squinch and pendentive construction device.

**Day 14: Persepolis: Ancient wonder and jewel in the crown of Zoroastrian heritage**

Persepolis, the dynastic capital of the Achamenian Kings is 57 kms from Shiraz and one of the best known of the (Zoroastrian) UNESCO World Heritage sites in the world. It is also referred to as Takt-e-Jamshid or Throne of Jamshid, the mythical Peshdadian king around 3000 BCE, who preceded the Kayanian 1500BCE. References to Jamshid are present in the *Yashts*, the *Vendidad*, the *Videvdad* and even the *Denkard*. The history of the mythical Jamshid according to Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh* and mentioned in the Avesta as the hero Yiμa Xšaēta became the world-ruling Shāh. There was some suggestion that Yiμa was the first man
who assisted in God’s creations and there are also parallels drawn to the God Yima (Yama) in the Rigveda and represent the God of Death and the Ruler of the Underworld being the first mortal to experience death. The Sanskrit meaning of Yima is ‘twin’ and I speculate about connections to the notions of duality in Zoroastrianism. The Shahnameh notes that Jamshid was the fourth king of the world. Prods Oktor Skjaervo (2012) enumerates the various myths associated with Jamshid (Jamsid in Iranica) including saving living things from a catastrophe, possessing the most fortune among mortals, establishing Nowruz and discovering the healing property of the bull’s urine (taro/nirang – used in Zoroastrian rituals). Other beliefs include that inventions such as armour, weaponry, textile weaving, building of brick houses, making of perfumes, mining and even medicine and navigating the world in ships can be attributed to Jamshid. Legend has it that Jamshid raised a great civilisation and was responsible for the division of his subjects into four classes (in the Avesta).

- Athornans (Kātouzians): The priests
- Rathesthars (Neyṣārians): The warriors
- Vastriia fsuiiand (Nāsoudians): The farmers and cattle breeders
- Huitis (Hotokhoshians): The artisans

Mary Boyce (1982) however, disagreed and said that Zoroastrian classes were mainly divided into the priests (Athornans) and those who were warrior-herdsmen (Behdins). The length of Jamshid’s reign also vary widely from anecdotal sources that claim three hundred years, and in other instances ranging from six hundred and sixteen to a thousand years. His downfall was attributed to hubris when he declared himself as Creator. Jamshid was said to have had a magical seven-ringed cup, the Jām-e Jam which was filled with the elixir of immortality and allowed him to observe the universe. The Persian poet Omar Khayyam is said to have referred to the Cup of Jamshid in his Rubaiyat (translated by English poet Edward Fitzgerald) and presumably alludes to its discovery and then loss in Persepolis:

“Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose, and Jamshyd’s Sev’n –ring’d Cup where no one knows; But still a Ruby kindles in the Vine and Many a Garden by the Water blows”. If it sounds familiar, that’s because it shares a lot of similarities with the Holy Grail of European culture. Whereas the Shahnameh was written between the tenth and eleventh century, the first recorded mention of the Holy Grail is seen in the twelfth century. So it is possible that this cup may have been an influence, or borrowed, in European culture that survives today. Regardless, the cup of Jamshid is an important link between the two, and proof in the transfer of ideas between cultures in literature. Source: The Cup of Jamshid Version 3, Eng 283 E Our Premodern Epics: How Epics Create Culture and Vice Versa (http://scalar.usc.edu/works/eng-283e-our-premodern-epics/the-cup-of-jamshid.3)

From the sublime to the ridiculous. An Iranian restaurant in Sydney calls itself Jaam-e-Jam and has a Persian drinking cup as its logo. However, it is not seven ringed and resembles the more common drinking horn cup, (See Figure 82) demonstrating even to returned pilgrims that historical accuracy is not high when legends are being invoked. When FD and SD visit Sydney, I take them to Jaam-e-Jam as part of ‘nostalgia’ for our pilgrimage, represented in the most basic ways ie. through food.
Several excavations of Persepolis followed the initial excavation by the Andreas Expedition in 1874 with the most recent being the re-establishment of the The Foundation for Parsa-Pasagardarshasht Research (2002) supported by UNESCO and charged with scholarly support and preservation of Achamenid heritage (A.Shahpur Shahbazi, 2009, in Encyclopaedia Iranica). Shahbazi goes on to say that early Persians venerated Persepolis as sacred similar to Bishtoun and associated it with Mithra/Mehr the Guardian of Iranian lands.

The site consists of a terrace platform, ceremonial palaces, residential quarters, a treasury and fortifications to protect it. The construction of Persepolis was by Darius I (also referred to as Darius the Great) and to distinguish him from Darius II and Darius III who was defeated by Alexander the Accursed. Darius I efforts were continued by Xerxes and Artaxerxes I and remained till the looting and destruction in 330 BCE. While there are some dissenters the majority believe that Persepolis was not simply an administrative or political symbol but also the site for celebrating the Nowruz (new year) when the Satraps would come and give obeisance and gifts to the King.

My absolute favourite was seeing the different groups paying allegiance to the king and the unbelievable level of detail (facial features, robes, and gifts). The hierarchy of representation was also interesting and featured those closest to the empire geographically i.e. the Medes given first position. Each different delegation was separated by representation of a cedar tree and was led by hand by a Mede or Persian soldier.

The steps leading up to the Apadana palace and the Throne Hall (Hundred Column Hall) are full of friezes, showing the twenty eight subject nations who were brought together by King of Kings, Darius I. Governors known as Satraps administered Satrapies and communication was through waterways and road ways. A 2000 Km roadway connected Susa (head of empire) till Sardis and resting stations at regular intervals with bazaars, public baths and even security were arranged by the King.

The motif of the Lion attacking bull – is a very significant motif in Persian mythology and is complex in meaning and interpretation. Some suggest that it represents the fundamental representation of life and death in intense struggle. From a Zoroastrian perspective, it is seen as being symbolic of Angre Mainyu (the evil force) killing the primeval bull and the legend goes that the bull’s seed was rescued by the moon and gives rise to all other animals. Other associations include those with the Zodiac and those with Mithra the Sun God in pre-Zoroastrian pagan times. There are also references in Indic literature referencing Mitra’s killing of the
god Soma (represented by the white bull or the moon). The overlaps between India and Iran stir the ‘hearts and minds’ of us diasporic pilgrims and seem to draw the ‘umbilical’ cords of ‘motherland’ even tighter as we hear these stories.

**Day 15: Pasargarde: Cyrus the Great, Cypress Trees in Zoroastrian imagery and belief and Moving the Aden Atash**

David Stronach and Hilary Gopink (2009) writing for *Encyclopaedia Iranica* refer to the clear evidence of the Persian gardens and the water channels used to feed these gardens especially around the area designated as ‘The Palace Area’ and linked to other structures like Palace P and S and Gate R. Other notable excavations are the The Zendan-e- Soleyman (Solomon’s Prison) a tower, which some scholars suggest might have been used as “fire temples, tombs, treasuries or investiture towers”. The Tall –I– Takht known as the Takht-i-Madar-I – Suleiman (The Throne of the Mother of Solomon) is speculated to have been intended as a platform for palatial functions similar to that found in Persepolis. There are also several allusions to ‘unfinished business’ at Pasargadæ which are then replicated at other sites including Naqsh I Rustam and Persepolis leading Stronach to conclude, “Since substantial fragments of early Achaemenid stepped stone altars have also been found at other parts of the site, the close resemblance between these plinths and altars and the depiction of religious ritual at Naqsh-e-Rostam can perhaps be taken as one of the few hard and fast archaeological indications for religious continuity between the reigns of Cyrus and Darius”.

I am intrigued about the references to Suleiman (Solomon) and investigations reveal the place of Solomon in the Jewish Hebrew tradition in the Talmud as one of the 48 Prophets and builder of the First Temple in Jerusalem. Solomon appears in the Christian tradition as the Son of David and in both the Old and New Testaments. He is commemorated as a Saint in the Eastern Orthodox Church and Jesus was said to have referenced Solomon when telling disciples not to worry about their lives as recorded in Matthew and Luke.

In the Islamic context he is referred to both in the Quran and the Hadiths as a Prophet and Messenger of God. The Quran also makes commentary on the great wisdom of Solomon. There is no reference to Solomon in the Zoroastrian faith but I am glad that Pasargadæ was saved because of the ‘said’ associations with him in the form of the Zendan and the Takht-i-Madar.

The Cyrus cylinder: clay cylinder; a Babylonian account of the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus in 539 BC, of his restoration to various temples of statues removed by Nabonidus, the previous king of Babylon, and of his own work at Babylon. The cylindrical form is typical of royal inscriptions of the Late Babylonian period, and the text shows that the cylinder was written to be buried in the foundations of the city wall of Babylon. It was deposited there after the capture of the city by Cyrus in 539 BC, and presumably written on his orders.

The British Museum holding of the Cyrus Cylinder is probably the best representation and description. The Curator’s notes record that it has been continuously displayed since 1879 and was loaned to Tehran in 1971 to commemorate the 2,500 anniversary of kingship in Iran. ([https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details](https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details))

And the description accompanying it:

The text is incomplete. It is written in Babylonian script and language and records that Nabonidus, the last King of Babylon (555-539 BC), had perverted the cults of the Babylonian gods, including Marduk, the city-god of Babylon, and had imposed labour-service on its free population, who complained to the gods. The gods responded by deserting Babylon, but Marduk looked around for a champion to restore the old ways. He chose Cyrus, King of Anshan (Persia), and declared him king of the world. First Cyrus expanded his kingship over the tribes of Iran (described as Gutians and Ummannanda), ruling them justly. Then Marduk ordered Cyrus to march on Babylon, which he entered without a fight. Nabonidus was delivered into his hands and the people of Babylon joyfully accepted the kingship of Cyrus.

From this point on, the document is written as if Cyrus himself is speaking: ‘I, Cyrus, king of the world...’ He presents himself as a worshipper of Marduk who strove for peace in Babylon and abolished
Cyrus claims to have restored their temples and religious cults, and to have returned their previously deported gods and people.

The text ends with a note of additional food offerings in the temples of Babylon and an account of the rebuilding of Imgur-Enlil, the city wall of Babylon, during the course of which an earlier building inscription of Ashurbanipal, King of Assyria (668-627 BC), was found.

Closing Agiyaries: Diminishing populations and geopolitical imperatives
In modern days the need for Diasporic Zoroastrians to again flee and ‘protect’ their sacred fire was captured in the moving of the ‘Adenwalla’ fire to from Aden Yemen to Lonavla, India. A stirring rendition of the story titled ‘Aden to India: Shifting of the Parsee Fire Temple’ is published in ParsiKhabar (13 Jan 2007). The original story by Pervez Daruwala had been published on 16 Aug 1998 in the Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly. Malcolm recounts the story for us.

The story commences with the sad note that both the Shanghai and Zanzibar Agiyaries had to be shut down as more and more Parsis left. The Adaran grade Atash (Adaran is the second grade of fire temple between the an Atash Dadgah and an AtashBehram) in Aden which in its hey day had a population of 1300 Parsis living there had to be moved to avoid the fate of the Shanghai and Zanzibar Agiyari’s. An Atash Adaran requires a gathering of fires from the four professional groups ie the priests, the soldiers the farmers and herdsmen and the artisans. Eight priests are required to consecrate this fire and it takes up to 3 weeks to establish an Adaran fire.

Cowasjee Dinshaw, the great grandson of the original Cowasjee Dinshaw undertook to move the fire in 1967 when the British ceded Aden and the communists moved in. He approached the government in Tehran but their inability to house the varasiya (sacred bull) in the Darbe Mehr and desire to convert it to a Fasli tareekat Agiyari was not acceptable. The London ZTE (Zoroastrian Trust of Europe) was also approached but they could not maintain the levels of an Adaran fire especially due to not having a full time priest and local fire laws.

They then approached India and the Prime Minister of that time Mrs. Indira Gandhi,(her husband was a Parsi, Feroze Gandhi and is not a relative of Mahatma Gandhi, a confounding fact for people who are not au fait with Indian history) and Mr. YB Chavan who was Foreign Minister and the Yemeni government took a lot of persuasion that the fire could be moved out of Aden to India using an Air India plane. The fire had to be moved at midnight (because religious dictates include that no artificial light should fall on the Atash Padshahh (flame of flames). The problem was how to bring the fire to India as an overland route would have necessitated going through Mecca and Medina and according to the Denkard (Pahlavi text of the tenth century said to have been edited by Adurbad Emedan) and considered an Encyclopaedia of Mazdean religion) the Atash is not allowed to be carried over large stretches of water. Added problems included the obligatory attentions to the fire including giving boi (sustenance) during the various gehs (time periods) to keep it burning. The requirement of various hostile countries, terrain and people including the need to only have Zoroastrians (drivers and mechanics) were too cumbersome so both logistically and theologically it was not a favoured route to go by land.

Air India however, came to the party and with JRD Tata held in high esteem by the government and as founder of Air India the relocation was set in train. Religious and logistical nightmares (open flame, only a Parsi crew), Captain Sam Peddar having to undertake a number of sorties to build up his hours to fly the 747s and the myriad things that could go wrong were all considered. An unexpected problem emerged when the Yemeni Police Commissioner insisted that he must view the fire and box in which it was going to be transported so as to prevent any ‘smuggling’. This would be sacrilegious as a non Zarthusthi is not allowed to gaze on the Atash Padshahh. However, the Parsis looking after the fire, were most relieved when they found out at midnight that the Commissioner had just died thus saving the pollution and defilement of the...
fire by being viewed by a non-Zarathusthi. (I am utterly compelled with religious fervour and entranced by the story by this point and my religious persona has completely subsumed any rationality).

Flown first class in a specially modified area, the aircraft was not even switched off on the tarmac at Aden airport and the fire was loaded in its special box, along with mobeds who had British citizenship (allowing them to enter Aden). The resident priest Dasturjee Minocher Manecksha had given the last ‘boi’ of the Ushahnin Geh. Observing requirements for a pavi (sanctuary demarcated by furrows on which the urn holding the fire is placed) the fire was taken in convoy and loaded onto the flight. The flame was ‘tended’ on the flight – an extremely risky move to have an open flame in a pressurised cabin. Daruwalla says “every time they opened the box to look at the Fire, they found it resting quietly, just glowing softly and serenely, almost as if enjoying the unique journey”. Taken from a tumultuous welcome at Bombay airport to the Soonawala Agiyari at Mahim by a luxury bus, the fire was “rested” and religious ceremonies including the Boi for Havan Geh and Machi were offered. The bus then transported the Fire to Lonavala’s Adenwalla Agiyari where it was enthroned. The Bombay Pune highway to Lonavala was closed and a convoy of buses and cars filled with Parsis accompanied the sacred flame to its new home. The Aden Adaran fire consecrated in 1883 came to its new home on 14 December 1976.

**Day 16: Limji Hataria and Peshotanji Marker, Reverse diaspora**

We have been hearing the names Maneckji Limji Hataria and Peshotanji (Pestonji) Dossabhai Marker (1871-1965) over the course of the trip. The Markar Clock Tower serves as a legacy to the generosity of Peshotanji Marker who according to Aban Rustomji, writing for the Zoroastrian.org.uk Vohuman Article says “The name of Peshotanji Dossabhai Markar has been written in gold in the annals of the Zarathushtis of Iran”. She attributes this to Markar’s unceasing devotion to the cause of improving the lives of the Zoroastrians in Iran who lived in abject poverty and illiteracy as a consequence of hundreds of years of deprivations. A man after my own heart Peshotanji recognised that education was the key to unlocking and breaking the cycles of poverty and ignorance and he started orphanages and Boys and Girls Schools in Iran. He gave them a reason to be proud of their heritage insisting that religious knowledge be part of the daily lessons. His philanthropy extended to building wells and tanks and providing medical facilities in Vesu, a small village in Surat. Peshotanji was highly influenced by Limji Hataria’s accounts of the poverty as well as first hand narratives of Iranians who had fled Iran for Bombay. Mirza Soroush Lohrasb was the Principal of the Marker Orphanage for 30 years and actively lobbied the government to allow the building of the Marker Clock Tower.

**Day 17: Cogitations about food and locavore sustainability**

We need to take suitable gifts of sweets to our hosts in Mazarkalantar and stop at Haj Khalifeh Ali Rahbar to buy Pashmak (Persian Fairy Floss) and other sweets. Having always referred to it as ‘fairy floss’ as children we called it “Buddhi ka Baal” (old lady’s hair). I learn that it is referred to as Dragon’s Beard and of course Cotton Candy. BUT none of these describe adequately or are a patch on the most divine Pashmak that is available in Iran. The taste is different and it gives the ‘locavore’ concept a whole new dimension. Locavore eating is a fancy way of saying food that has been sourced and grown locally rather than having been transported many ‘food miles’ to its place of consumption. As a buzz word in sustainability agendas for chefs, hospitality and tourism providers it is ‘on trend’.

The food snob in me is in full flow and I turn my nose up at the Iranian Sohan Halwa and my co-pilgrims gourmand streak. The Sohan Halwa is greasy and my co-pilgrims who raved over the artificial essence melon icreeram the previous night are deemed philistines as I give full vent to my ‘superior’ knowledge of food. I am tickled pink at the ‘English’ translation of Sohan Halwa as ‘Brittle’. Then I am reminded of the Indian version called “Chikki” and very popular especially in Lonavla (where the fire from Aden has been enthroned). Chikki is made most popularly with peanuts but can be made with pistachios, sesame (black and white) seeds, almonds and cashews. This recollection sets off a wave of nostalgia among the Indians.
and we have to explain it to our Pakistani compatriots (especially the bit about peanut chikki being the cheapest and most common as dried fruits and nuts have always been very expensive in India compared to Pakistan. Pakistan’s proximity to Iran and other Middle Eastern countries meant that they had better access and prices for nuts and dried fruits.)

**Day 18: Train travel: trips down nostalgia lane**

I love train travel – it is the only time I don’t get motion sickness or stressed. It brings back very happy childhood and young adulthood memories as it was the transport of choice for family holidays. My father travelled like a king and meals were planned down to the last piece of fruit and the food basket was the most important piece of luggage. When travelling from Jamshedpur to Mumbai for our annual holidays, family friends who lived in Nagpur the midway point would meet us at the station with ‘refills’ of food, boiled water and icecream cups from their family icecream business. Buying famed Nagpur oranges in the winter months was de rigueur as family in Bombay looked forward to the baskets of fruit. The same routine would be repeated on our way back home to Jamshedpur. Travel was innocent and carefree times with little ticket stubs that invariably got put somewhere ‘safe’ and resulted in a massive hunt when the ‘ticket collector’ came to check. There were bedrolls to be carried and all other manner of household paraphernalia to ensure a ‘comfortable’ journey, including card games and books to keep us occupied. We spent a great deal of time ‘learning and imbibing’ India through looking out at the passing scenery, dropping coins into the river and making a wish as we rattled over the bridges and noting ‘rural’ life. My eyes light up when we received our freshly laundered ‘bed roll’ and blanket, very posh as we were travelling first class, the perks of age and income.

**Day 19: The Haft Sin/Sheen table and Nostalgia for Ras Chaval**

Iranis and Parsis refer to it as Sheen to account for the ‘Sharab’. Usually the seven items on a Haft Sin table consist of:

1. Sabze – Usually sprouts (lentil, wheat, barley or mung)
2. Samanu – Sweet pudding
3. Senjed – Fruit (Pomegranate or other Persian fruits)
4. Serek – Vinegar (Parsi/Irani homes have Sharab – Alcohol)
5. Sib – Apple
6. Sir – Garlic
7. Somaq – Sumac

Additional items may include a mirror, rose water, painted eggs, goldfish in a bowl, coins, a hyacinth, a copy of the Avesta and picture of the prophet Zarathustra. In Iran, a copy of the Shahnameh or the Divan of Hafez might also be included. Parsis are now beginning to put on a Haft Sin table, especially in the diaspora as part of the reclamation of their Zoroastrian identity. However, Iranian Zoroastrians and Iranis in India have always maintained the practice of having a Haft Sin table during Nowruz.

Nostalgia comes in many forms, for most Parsis food is one of them. The ‘Iranian’ lamb dish we consume before visiting Ferdowsi’s monument reminds me of Ras chaval – a staple dish of Parsi homes. Ras chaval is a basic mutton ‘thin curry’ and varied depending on the lady of the house and the cook’s proclivities. Growing up in Jamshedpur, our neighbour ‘Sheroo Aunty’ (who was like a second mother to my brothers and I) made the best ras chaval ever. Many a time I found myself at their home for lunch when ras chaval was on the menu. The difference between our home and theirs was our Bengali cook who had a weakness for fish and mustard oil and never quite got the hang of Parsi ras chaval. Having a ‘career’ mother meant that household micro management was somewhat ad hoc unlike at Sheroo Aunty’s house where she supervised and even did some of the cooking herself.
Appendix B: Photographs of Pilgrimage Days 1-21.

Day 1: Tehran, Thursday 23 April 2015, AdarMaino (Month) Adar Roj/Dae (Day)

Figure 1 (left): Pheroza Daruwalla, ‘Day 1, Tehran: doing the kusti outside the Atash Kadeh’, 23 April 2015.
Figure 2 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 1, Tehran: Behrad praying the kusti Iranian-style with upraised palms’, 23 April 2015.
Figure 3 (left): Image of a Parsi priest with palms together in Namaste in front of the Atash obtained from Pinterest (https://www.pinterest.com.au/mazdayasna/atar/) Note the differences in his attire compared to the picture of Mobed Firzugari.

Figure 4 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 1, Tehran: Mobed Firzugari doing Boi’, 23 April 2015. Note the glass bead toran (garland) at the entrance – a Parsi addition.
Figure 5 (left): Image of clock tower dedicated to Peshotanji (Pestonji) Marker who contributed significantly to the improvement of Zoroastrians obtained from Apochi.com.
Figure 6 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 1, Tehran: Zoroastrian street art in the Rustam Baug’, 23 April 2015.
Day 2: Tehran, Friday 24 April 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Avan Roj (Day)

Figure 7 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 2, Tehran: Morning exercise for the troops as the tourists wait to enter the Saadabad complex at Niavaran’, 24 April 2015.

Figure 8 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 2, Tehran: The Sabz palace from the outside’, 24 April 2015.
Figure 9 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 2, Tehran: Mobed as Tourisier interpreting and explaining Zoroastrianism to visitors’, 24 April 2015.

Figure 10 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 2, Tehran: Pooshi-themed display including Sudreh and Kusti (girdle made of lamb’s wool with 72 strands woven together),’ 24 April 2015. Note the conical ‘sugar’ cone wrapped in green foil with a picture of Zarathushtra. This is uniquely Iranian and not used by Parsis. Iranian friends say it was used by families in times of rationing or when sugar was in short supply.
Figure 11 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 2, Tehran: Portrait of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi’s wife Farah Diba at the Mellat Palace Museum’, 24 April 2015.

Figure 12 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 2, Tehran: Farah Diba’s clothes at the Mellat Palace Museum’, 24 April 2015.
Day 3: Mount Damavand and Drive to Namak Abrud, Saturday 25 April 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Khorsheed Roj (Day)


Figure 14 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 3, Mount Damavand and Drive to Namak Abrud: Selfie at Mt.Damavand.’, 25 April 2015. Note the green mini bus to the right – a landslide prevented our bus from taking us but prayers and cold hard cash brought/bought the minibus.
Figure 15 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 3, Mount Damavand and Drive to Namak Abrud: Getting ready to pray the Parbat no Namaskar’, 25 April 2015.

Figure 16 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 3, Mount Damavand and Drive to Namak Abrud: Doogh (Iranian Buttermilk), Local Mount Damavand Honey and Walnuts for sale out in the sun’, 25 April 2015.
Figure 17 (right): Stock image of poppies in the field near Mount Damavand.
Figure 18 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 3, Mount Damavand and Drive to Namak Abrud: driving through the mountains’, 25 April 2015. , Note the amazing Veresk railway bridge in the background connecting Tehran to the Caspian Sea by a rail journey.
Day 4: Ramsar and Namak Abrud, Sunday 26 April 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Mohor Roj (Day)

Figure 19 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 4, Ramsar and Namak Abrud: ivory carvings and horned chairs at Shah’s Ramsar Palace’, 26 April 2015. Figure 20 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 4, Ramsar and Namak Abrud: daily living ornaments at museum near Ramsar Palace’, 26 April 2015.
Figure 21 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 4, Ramsar and Namak Abrud: The Casino’, 26 April 2015.
Figure 22 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 4, Ramsar and Namak Abrud: Casino chandelier’, 26 April 2015.
Figure 23 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 4, Ramsar and Namak Abrud: ‘The Casino’s faded interior’, 26 April 2015.
Figure 24 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 4, Ramsar and Namak Abrud: ‘One of the two statues of Rustam and Sohrab’, 26 April 2015.
Day 5: Ramsar, Massuleh, Qazvin, Monday 27 April 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Tir Roj (Day)

Figure 25 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 5, Ramsar, Massuleh, Qazvin: saying goodbye to the Caspian Sea’, 27 April 2015.
Figure 26 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 5, Ramsar, Massuleh, Qazvin: a friendly doggie’, 27 April 2015.
Figure 27 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 5, Ramsar, Massuleh, Qazvin: messy washing at Massuleh reminded me of Mumbai’, 27 April 2015.
Figure 28 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 5, Ramsar, Massuleh, Qazvin: Massuleh door knockers for men and women’, 27 April 2015.
Figure 29 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 5, Ramsar, Massuleh, Qazvin: the bazzaar at Massuleh’, 27 April 2015.
Figure 30 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 5, Ramsar, Massuleh, Qazvin: bannana shaped chairs on the way to Qazvin’, 27 April 2015.
Day 6: Qazvin to Hamedan and the Ali Sadr Caves, Tuesday 28 April 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Gosh Roj (Day)

Figure 33 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 6: Qazvin to Hamedan and the Ali Sadr Caves: source of much amusement ‘Bailment’ - meaning life vests were stored and handed out from this area’, 28 April 2015.

Figure 34 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 6: Qazvin to Hamedan and the Ali Sadr Caves: farm vista’, 28 April 2015.
Figure 35 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 6: Qazvin to Hamedan and the Ali Sadr Caves: example of Iranian hotel ‘family rooms’ seem to be the norm’, 28 April 2015.

Figure 36 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 6: Qazvin to Hamedan and the Ali Sadr Caves: Hospitality Credo in Iran’, 28 April 2015. “In the name of God, As long as a tourist is in an Islamic country, the Islamic government is responsible to guarantee his safety and comfort. If a tourist in an Islamic country loses his property the Islamic government should support and provide him with the lost property. Imam Ali (peace be upon him).”
Day 7: Gajnameh, Hamedan to Kermanshah, Wednesday 29 April 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Daepamaher Roj (Day)

Figure 37 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 7, Gajnameh, Hamedan to Kermanshah: School children in Ganjnameh’, 29 April 2015.
Figure 39 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 7, Gajnameh, Hamedan to Kermanshah: Zoroastrian icons in the gift shop’, 29 April 2015.
Figure 40 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 7, Gajnameh, Hamedan to Kermanshah: selfie in front of bas-relief’, 29 April 2015.

Figure 42 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 7, Gajnameh, Hamedan to Kermanshah: ‘buoy clock’ side by side with the painting of an Iranian beauty’, 29 April 2015.
Figure 43 (left): Image of Sasanian coins. In this example, Bahram II was credited with issuing a number of diverse coins and even going against prevailing norms by including images of his queen and heir next to his own in the place normally reserved for the patron deity.

Figure 44 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Kermanshah to Isfahan: approaching the Lotfallah Mosque in Isfahan’, 30 April 2015.
Figure 45 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 8, Kermanshah to Isfahan: an outside view of Lotfallah Mosque’, 30 April 2015.
Figure 46 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 8, Kermanshah to Isfahan: the stunning Lotfallah Mosque’, 30 April 2015.
Figure 47 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Kermanshah to Isfahan: Reminders of the Jali windows in Rajasthan India where women observed purdah’, 30 April 2015.
Figure 48 (right): Architectural Digest India - Image of Jali windows in Rajasthan India.
Day 9: Isfahan, Friday 1 May 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Srosh Roj (Day)

Figure 49 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 9, Isfahan: a picture of Nergish K. Plumber (with her two dogs)’, 1 May 2015.
Figure 50 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 9, Isfahan: two winged bulls at the entrance to the Atash Dadgeh’, 1 May 2015.
Figure 51 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 9, Isfahan: Armenian Church in Julfa’, 1 May 2015.
Figure 52 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 9, Isfahan: Yurt at Vank Cathedral’, 1 May 2015.
Figure 53 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 9, Isfahan: Chehel Sotoun, the Reception place of Shah Abbas II’, 1 May 2015.
Figure 54 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 9, Isfahan: People gathering at the Lotfollah Mosque’, 1 May 2015.
Day 10: Isfahan, Saturday 2 May 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Rashna Raj (Day)

Figure 55 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 10, Isfahan: my co-pilgrims at the Flower Garden of Isfahan’, 2 May 2015.
Figure 56 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 10, Isfahan: the amazing flower displays at Isfahan Flower Garden remind me of my mother and maternal grandmother’, 2 May 2015.
Figure 57 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 10, Isfahan: cobble stone path and hand brick walls flanked by modern cement buildings, a juxtaposition of old and new at the Shahrestan Pol’, 2 May 2015

Figure 58 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 10, Isfahan: a very pretty restaurant called Shahrzad where we had lunch. The ‘owners’ cash booth at the front reminds us of traditional ‘Irani restaurants’ in Mumbai’, 2 May 2015.
Figure 59 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 10, Isfahan: the Khaju Bridge, linking the Khaju quarter with the Zoroastrian quarter with the river Zayanderud flowing below’, 2 May 2015.
Figure 60 (right): Day 10, Daruwalla, ‘Isfahan: People picnicking underneath the Khaju Bridge’, 2 May 2015.
Figure 61 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 10, Isfahan: a head stone of a Bakhtiari tribesman topped with a lion sculpture. Kids taking it in turns to have their picture taken on the head stone’, 2 May 2015.

Figure 62 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 10, Isfahan: a nomadic Bakhtiyari shepherd herding his flock on our way to Shahr-E-Khord’, 2 May 2015.
**Day 11: Isfahan to ShahreKhord, Sunday 3 May 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Farvadin Roj (Day)**

Figure 63 (left): Newsha Tavakolian, photograph of Bakhtiyari tribes people loading their possessions into vehicles and travelling on foot in Thomas Erdbrink’s (2018) *National Geographic* article, ‘Iran Nomad Tribes Fading Away’.

Figure 64 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 11, Isfahan to ShahreKhord: shoes known as the ‘Giveh’, 3 May 2015. The juxtaposition with the ‘Persian’ carpet makes this photo one of my favourites.
Figure 65 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 11, Isfahan to ShahreKhord: the tourists ‘hamming it up’ in the spirit of play and ‘animation’, 3 May 2015.
Figure 66 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 11, Isfahan to ShahreKhord: pilgrims gathering by the river after praying the ‘Pani no namaskar’ (Prayer to the waters) at Pir-e-Ghar’, 3 May 2015.
Figure 67 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 11, Isfahan to ShahreKhord: a Bakhtiyari shepherd and his flock’, 3 May 2015.
Figure 68 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 11, Isfahan to ShahreKhord: Bakhtiyari men having a picnic at Chelgerd,’ 3 May 2015.
Day 12: ShahreKhord to Shiraz, Monday 4 May 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Bahram Roj (Day)

Figure 69 (left): Mumbai Hikers, Pinterest image of Iranshah Udvada.
Figure 70 (right): Zoroastrians.net, Image of artwork depicting Dasturji Meherji Rana and at the Court of King Akbar.
Figure 71 (left): Image of an Urartian/Achaemenian Tower Temple published in the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*.
Figure 72 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 12, ShahrKhord to Shiraz: bas-relief of the Investiture of Narseh (293-303 CE) representing the ascent of the Sasanian king Narseh including depiction of a woman handing the ring of kingship to the King’, 4 May 2015.
Figure 73 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 12, ShahrKhord to Shiraz: camel herder in his finery, with IPhone’, 4 May 2015.
Figure 74 (right): Alaedin.travelStock image of the historic Qur’an Gate also known as the Darvazeh Qu’ran.
Day 13: Shiraz, Tuesday 5 May 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Ram Roj (Day)

Figure 75 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 13, Shiraz: pilgrims admiring the vista framed by the arched walls with recessed tile work’, 5 May 2015.
Figure 76 (right) Daruwalla, ‘Day 13, Shiraz: demonstration of Persian painting at The Narengestan Museum’, 5 May 2015.
Figure 77 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 13, Shiraz: selfie with the group of women tourists visiting from Khosravan’, 5 May 2015.
Figure 78 (right) Daruwalla, ‘Day 13, Shiraz: entrance to the Palace of Ardasir’, 5 May 2015.
Figure 79 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 13, Shiraz: boy with his ‘gifts’ stuffed in his shirt’, 5 May 2015.
Figure 80 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 13, Shiraz: Manucher flinging the last of the gifts’, 5 May 2015.
Figure 81 (left): TripAdvisor photo of Hafez tomb.
Figure 82 (right): Scalar.usc.edu Image of Cup of Jamshid.
Figure 83 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 14, Varasiyaji’ the Sacred White Bull at the Agiyari Seth Banaji Limji in Mumbai’, 26 January 2019.

Figure 84 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 14, Shiraz, Hafez and Persepolis: palace column tops in the distance, at Persepolis’, 6 May 2015.
Figure 85 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 14, Shiraz, Hafez and Persepolis: Lamassu at Persepolis’s Gate of Nations’, 6 May 2015.
Figure 86 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 14, Shiraz, Hafez and Persepolis: bas-relief from Persepolis’ Apadana North stairs depicting tributes being given to the Shanshah’, 6 May 2015.
Day 15: Shiraz, Taft, Pasagarde, Thursday, 7 May 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Daepdin Roj (Day)

Figure 87 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Shiraz, Taft, Pasagarde: the Astodan in Pasargade’, 7 May 2015.
Figure 88 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Shiraz, Taft, Pasagarde: Palace Hall S (Audience Hall) Pasargadae’, 7 May 2015.
Figure 89 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Shiraz, Taft, Pasagarde: the ‘pilgrim’ as tourist – contemplation with the accouterments of ‘touristhood’ - the camera’, 7 May 2015.

Figure 90 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Shiraz, Taft, Pasagarde: Scrubby topography with Zoroastrian village in the background on the way to Yazd’, 7 May 2015.
Figure 91 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Shiraz, Taft, Pasagarde: Waiting to view the Sarv-e-Aberkuh’, 7 May 2015.
Figure 92 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Shiraz, Taft, Pasagarde: Badgirs (wind towers and ventilation shafts) Ab Anar’s that are water storage tanks built underground’, 7 May 2015.
Day 16: Yazd, Sharifabad, Friday 8 May 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Din Roj (Day)

Figure 93 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 16: Yazd, Sharifabad: photographing the Atash Padshah by ‘Tourists’, 8 May 2015.
Figure 94 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 16: Yazd, Sharifabad: Museum exhibit on Zoroastrian religion and culture’, 8 May 2015.
Figure 95 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 16: Yazd, Sharifabad: washing up – by hand – no dishwashers though there were close to 70+ people who ate lunch in Sharifabad’, 8 May 2015.

Figure 96 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 16: Yazd, Sharifabad: Sharifabad Honoured guests – I wished again that I could have spoken Farsi’, 8 May 2015.
Figure 97 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 16: Yazd, Sharifabad: the legs of the marble table cover the rock in the mountain which opened up and took in. Note the arrangement of pictures of departed persons on the mantle. This appears to be a particularly Iranian ritual that we observed even in agiyaries’, 8 May 2015.

Figure 98 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 16: Yazd, Sharifabad: we then get to read the play ‘For the Sake of My Religion’ from the book ‘Learning Parsipanu with Meher and Sarosh’ (2011) written by Silloo Mehta, our tourisier extraordinaire’, 8 May 2015.
Figure 99 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 17, Yazd, Pirs, Mazarkalantar: I want to cry as we peer down this passageway where the tap from the ‘qanats’ (canals) would bring water. Zoroastrians were not allowed to collect water from them and were severely punished if they were caught using these taps’, 9 May 2015.

Figure 100 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 17, Yazd, Pirs, Mazarkalantar: We all revel in being able to take off our scarves feeling like naughty children’, 9 May 2015.
Figure 101 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 17, Yazd, Pirs, Mazarkalantar: communitas in action again – frying the sirog bread’, 9 May 2015.
Figure 102 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 17, Yazd, Pirs, Mazarkalantar: I am very chuffed to meet Salome who is the aunt of an acquaintance in Sydney. I realise this when I see the Australia table mat’, 9 May 2015.
Figure 103 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 17, Yazd, Pirs, Mazarkalantar: Shrine at Chak-Chak’, 9 May 2015.
Figure 104 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 17, Yazd, Pirs, Mazarkalantar: The ‘tourism’ academic in me recognises these as ‘markers’ of tourishood but the pilgrim in me both grieves and is outraged at the desecration’, 9 May 2015.
Figure 105 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 18, Aberkooh, Taft and Cham: Malcolm explaining the establishment of the home atash kadeh’, 10 May 2015.
Figure 106 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 18, Aberkooh, Taft and Cham: Taft – home of the pomegranate’, 10 May 2015.
Figure 107 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 18, Aberkooh, Taft and Cham: Family pictures on the lintel. Note in the family picture next to Zoroaster – one of the ladies is dressed in a sari, the other in an Iranian outfit’, 10 May 2015.

Figure 108 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 18, Aberkooh, Taft and Cham: Ancestral family portrait – note the Parsi kor sari worn by the lady’, 10 May 2015.
Figure 109 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 18, Aberkooh, Taft and Cham: Lady Atash Bund (Caretaker)’, 10 May 2015.
Figure 110 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 18, Aberkooh, Taft and Cham: Cham Dakhma where we prayed the Dakhma no Namaskar’, 10 May 2015.
Figure 111 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 19, Mashhad: Water bubblers were located in front of the little golden cupola covered structure. Separate side for men and women’, 11 May 2015.
Figure 112 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 19, Mashhad: The man with the ‘kissing mace’ stood just at the entrance to this magnificent archway, 11 May 2015.
Figure 113 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 19, Mashhad: Fangirl moment with Ferdowsi, 11 May 2015.
Figure 114 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 19, Mashhad: But nothing to beat Silloo M. (third from the left)— the original ‘fangirl’ of Ferdowsi, 11 May 2015.
Figure 115 (left): Rustam after defeating the magician king of Mazandaran, embraces the Shah (Kai Kavus) who he has set free and returns with him to the ancient city of Estakhr near Persepolis. The ox headed mace (Gorz) according to Jalil Doostkhah (2012) writing in the Encyclopaedia Iranica was both a weapon and symbol of victory and justice when used in mythical, religious and epic contexts. It is held by Navar Martabs at the conclusion of their initiation into priesthood.

Figure 116 (right): Source: Parsi Times Gorz Mace over the shoulders of both priest initiates. Ushaan Turel (14 years) has been initiated as a Navar Martab which allows him to perform higher liturgical ceremonies. His younger brother Fravash (10 years) has been ordained as a Navar.
Day 20: Mashaad to Tehran, Tuesday 12 May 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Zamyad Roj (Day)

Figure 117 (right): Illustration of the Shah Jehan Peacock Throne (irreverently referred to as Sunny) and the king kneeling as opposed to sitting. Source: https://www.slideshare.net/michaelasanda/iranian-national-jewelry-treasury

Figure 118 (left): Wikipedia entry about Leila Araghian.

Leila Araghian, is an Iranian architect. She has a Master of Architecture degree from the University of British Columbia, where she won the UBC Architecture Alumni Henry Elder Prize. She previously studied architecture in Iran, at Shahid Beheshti University. Wikipedia

Born: 1983 (age 36 years), Tehran, Iran
Structures: Tabiat Bridge
Awards: Khwarizmi International Award for Innovation
Figure 119 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 20, Mashaad to Tehran: Bridge with different levels – pedestrian walkway on top level and cafes and retail on lower level’, 12 May 2015.

Figure 120 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 20, Mashaad to Tehran: Benches for those who needed the rest. The lady in the extreme left is reading her Khordeh Avesta’, 12 May 2015.
Figure 121 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 20, Mashaad to Tehran: I loved this sign!’, 12 May 2015.
Figure 122 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 20, Mashaad to Tehran: other side of sign’, 12 May 2015.
Day 21: Tehran, Wednesday 13 May 2015, Adar Maino (Month) Mahraspand Roj (Day)

Figure 123 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 21, Tehran: The ‘extra’ bit at Golestan – Photography exhibition’, 13 May 2015.

Figure 124 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 21, Tehran: Image of a Dakhma (Towers of Silence -pits where dead bodies are placed – open to the sky) Southeast of Tehran, Bibi Sharbanu Mount. Picture taken during Qajjar period’, 13 May 2015.
Figure 125 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 21, Tehran: Image of Cyrus the Great’s Astodan in Pasargadae with people climbing over it during the Qajjar period’, 13 May 2015.

Figure 126 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 21, Tehran: Iranian lady artisan restoring tiles at Golestan Palace Complex’, 13 May 2015.
Figure 127 (left): Daruwalla, ‘Day 21, Tehran: The ‘last’ supper of the pilgrimage. Notice the scarves are off and ‘reversion’ (Jafari, 1987) has started’, 13 May 2015.
Figure 128 (right): Daruwalla, ‘Day 21, Tehran: Happy 79th Birthday to our beloved doyenne Silloo M. Ever the generous host she serves cake to us’, 13 May 2015.
Appendix C: Brochure of Tales From The East: India and New South Wales

TALES FROM THE EAST: INDIA AND NEW SOUTH WALES

Celebrating the relationship between India and Australia from Governor Macquarie up to today, this unique exhibition features stories from the arrival of the British after 1788, and the central role India has played in Australia's ongoing history and identity.

Discover
- Governor Lachlan Macquarie's connections with India.
- House halls painted with murals and stories.
- Amazing textiles from the early 19th century.
- Spectacular stories of Indian servants brought to colonial Australia.
- The universal importance of religion.
- The Indian imports that enhanced life in the fledgling colony.

Shop
Take home a little piece of India. Check out our Indian gifts at the Old Government House boutique shop.

Tickets and Information
To secure your chance to discover Tales from the East visit us:
- At the door (Old Government House, Parramatta Park)
- Phone: (02) 9655 8148
- Online: www.nationaltrust.org.au/exhibitions/tales-from-the-east
- Facebook: @OldGovernmentHouse
For bookings of more than ten, please phone OSH on (02) 9655 8149

Prices
Old Government House
National Trust Member: Standard: 
Adult: $10
Groups: $8
Child: $5
Family: $20
Concessions: $10

Old Government House & Experiment Farm Cottage Joint Tickets:
Adult: $19
Child: $10
Family: $40

Prices (NT Members: Free to EIC only)
The National Trust of Australia (NSW) thanks the members of the Exhibition Advisory Committee for their support. "Tales from the East" is supported by the Colonial Foundation. We also acknowledge Sirona Print, Sydney Living Museums and the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS).

Old Government House Parramatta Park
From Bombay to Parramatta, discover the rich history between India and NSW, from the time of Governor Macquarie to today's vibrant cultural life of Western Sydney and beyond.

www.nationaltrust.org.au/exhibitions/tales-from-the-east

FASHION ASIA
Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences
39-41 Harris Street, Ultimo
Thursday 19 July, 11am - 1pm
Curators Chris Johns and Rui Jang Kim will give you a behind-the-scenes tour of the Museum's collection of Indian textiles and Asian decorative arts through the collection and exhibition.
Bookings: Old Government House - (02) 9655 8149

BAPS SHRI RADHAKURMI RAAS PHERTH KIRTAN SATSANG OF SEYCHELLES TO OLD GOVERNMENT HOUSE
Carrville Room is in front of Old Government House
Saturday 14 July, time to be advised
This is an ancient Hindu festival, held annually, involving a public procession of Chafants (marchers) associated with the Lord Jagannath.
Bookings: Old Government House - (02) 9655 8149

FASHIONING ASIA
Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences
39-41 Harris Street, Ultimo
Friday 18 August, 11am - 1pm
Join a guided tour in the Textiles Gallery. Discover the vibrant and diverse history and traditions of Asia.
Bookings: Old Government House - (02) 9655 8149

OTHER EVENTS IN THE FESTIVAL
Visit www.nationaltrust.org.au/exhibitions/tales-from-the-east or Old Government House on Facebook www.facebook.com/OldGovernmentHouse for updates and new programs as they are added!
Appendix D: Report on “What next for the Sydney Zoroastrian Community”
Sunday May 24, 2015

“WHAT NEXT FOR THE SYDNEY ZOROASTRIAN COMMUNITY?”

WHEN
Australian Zoroastrian Association- Annangrove
Sunday, May 24 at 3:00pm - 6:00pm
On Sunday, 24th May, over 100 engaged, passionate and willing Zoroastrians gathered at AZA House to discuss the future of our Sydney Zoroastrian community.

Attendees came from diverse sections of the community with differing backgrounds, views and ideas, however bound together by one common thread – their religion.

Following a panel discussion, members broke up into small groups to workshop ideas on the future of our community.

There were two small group exercises:
1. SWOT Analysis
2. Brainstorm Next Steps
SWOT Analysis

‘Identify the current position of the community by highlighting Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.’

Across the entire group, a number of similar findings were identified. The top five responses under each category can be found on the following slides.
Strengths


2. Close-knit community – a strong sense of “family”.


4. Social by nature.

5. Diversity tied together by the bond of religion.
Weaknesses

1. Lack of knowledge generally e.g. not being passed down, level of access.
2. Dwindling numbers.
3. Disengagement – following our religion, not understanding it.
4. Prejudices towards acceptance e.g. mixed-marriages, conversion.
5. Resources – lack of funding or volunteers (very few doing a lot).

Opportunities

1. Youth – engaged, flexible, forward-thinking.
2. Elders – building on their foundation and passing on their wisdom.
3. Untapped passion and motivation of community members.
4. Increased awareness and profile of our community externally.
5. Desire to learn more about our religion.
Threats

1. Dwindling numbers ultimately leading to extinction.
2. Division, including, across generations and Parsi vs. Irani.
3. Complacency and a lack of interest.
4. Lack of community leadership.
5. Distance to AZA House for a decentralised population.

Next Steps...

‘After understanding the current position of the community, what steps would you like to see us take moving into the future?’

Bringing everyone’s thoughts together, generated a number of interesting and inspiring ideas for the future. A selection of responses can be found on the following slides.
Next Steps

- Increase knowledge opportunities – workshops, adult talks (after SS).
- Support AZA – become members, attend functions – get involved!
- Volunteer however best you can – time, skills (e.g. professional), resources.
- Develop a standard guide on customs and traditions.
- Combat ↓ numbers by ↑ acceptance of M-M couples + bridge the Parsi-Irani gap.
Next Steps

- Having more discussion forums in an open-minded manner.
- Adapt to changing times (progress).
- More informal gatherings at random venues (not always AZA).
- More youth-centric activities with increased regularity.
- Open the AZA’s doors weekly.
- Recording Sunday School lessons and putting them on YouTube.
Results

This thought-provoking event was the first of its kind... and by all accounts it was a success. Generating robust discussion in a communal setting can only result in healthy outcomes.

Let us hope that events of this nature aren’t a once-off, and that we continue to support our religion and community into the future.

“You may never know what results come of your action, but if you do nothing there will be no result.”

– Mahatma Ghandi
Take Action

If you would like to become more involved with your community, please ensure you continue to support the AZA with your membership and participation in events.

Upcoming events:
• **Papeti** – Sunday 23rd August
• **Annual General Meeting** – Sunday, 30th August

With thanks

Sincere thanks to the panel members – Fariborz Jamshidi, Aspi Bulsara, Pheroza Daruwalla, Kobad Bhavnagri, Simone Balsara and Karl Desai; and all who attended on the day – your dedication and support is appreciated.
Appendix E: Report in Manashni (Aug 2015), Newsletter of the AZA of NSW. “What Next for the Zoroastrian Community?”

Grandiose Plans for the Future...
But More Needs to Be Done
Discussion Forum at the Darbe-Meher 24 May, 2015

The twice postponed event, saw 100 or so enthusiastic members head over to the Darbe-Meher to discuss the future of the Zoroastrian Community in an Australian context.

The event began with our Sunday School teacher, Aspi Bulhara’s thought provoking introduction where he expanded upon the relevance of Zoroastrianism today and how we can apply it in our lives. He explained that the purpose of our life is to be happy, improve this world and leave it a better place for the next generation. Speaking of Zoroastrian dualism in the Gathas, Aspi explained this is an ethical dualism which has meaning...
only at the level of human thought. The two basic minds are conceived as twins. One represents good and the other evil. Good represents all the forces that lead to achieving a happy life. Evil represents all the forces that impede to leading a happy life. The responsibility is upon us to choose. We can correct the imperfections of this world through our good choices. It is only we who can help Ahura Mazda make this world a better place. If we reject our bad thoughts and focus on the good thoughts we can use our good mind to make the right choices. This makes the Zoroastrian religion a religion of reason and the religion of choice. Marveling at the simplicity of Zarathustra’s teachings Aspi reflected on how powerful the teachings were in answering the questions about the meaning of life. Happiness is achieved by using our Good Mind to help others and make this world a better place for our children. What could be a better rulebook for all of us in this day and age? Karl Desai, who took the initiative to organise the event, assumed the role of a moderator and introduced the panel members:

Dr. Pheroza Daruwalla – Currently undertaking her second PhD, this time on ‘Zoroastrianism, Diaspora and Pilgrimage’, and Sunday school teacher at AZA for the past two years.

Aspi Bulsara – Sunday school teacher at AZA for the past five years, with extensive knowledge about the Zoroastrian religion and history of the Zoroastrians.

Kobad Bhavnagri – Recipient of the WZCC’s Outstanding Young Zarathushhti Professional of the Year award in 2013, previous AZA Committee member, and previous AZA Sunday School teacher.