

September 2020

KZBM's A&T Directory



This compendium of contacts was created in February 1996 by then President of KZBM, Toxy Cowasjee, following a nationwide census of Zarthostis in Pakistan which was also undertaken by her.

Since then there have been seven new editions of the Directory, and each time she meticulously updated the details and added new valuable contact information and, Tannaz Minwalla gave it a finish with a new attractive cover each time. The last issue was in 2015.

After two decades of dedication Toxy would like the Mandal to take over the charge. KZBM takes this opportunity to most warmly thank Toxy for this gift to the community, and to Tannaz for lending her expertise. We intend to keep the A&T updated.

Updating for the next edition is in hand: Each of you can play a helpful role. Please refer to the last edition of the Directory and check your details. If there is any change in family members/residential address/ phone-mobile numbers/email address, then kindly provide the **updated information to any one of the KZBM Joint Honorary Secretaries latest by September 15, 2020:**

Farahnaz Marker and Alla Rustomji



Pakistanis living overseas: Your involvement and interest is also sought: Kindly check your/your family/your friends' details in the directory. If there is any change in the email address, city or country of residence, do kindly inform **any one** of the two Honorary Secretaries mentioned above. **These details are in fact largely provided by Karachiites here**, and they are requested to also check these details and send updates to KZBM.

The Directory is an invaluable publication which helps us connect with ease. **Your help will make it meaningful and as updated as possible.** Do check your details in the last edition and send the updates to us. Thank you all.

Z-CLIP

Nergis Mavalvala new MIT Dean of Science



By now most of you must have read about the outstanding appointment of Nergis Mavalvala as the Dean of School of Science at the prestigious MIT University. Some of you may also know, that Nergis is the daughter of our ex-Karachiites Meher & Minoo Mavalvala who now live in Canada, and is the niece (sister's daughter) of Rustom Darrah. **KZBM heartily congratulate Nergis and her family, and wish her a fulfilling tenure.**

Couple of paragraphs are excerpted from the citation by the Provost of MIT as they bespeak Nergis' calibre and, MIT's endorsement of her appointment. You will be proud to read them:

"Nergis brings to the deanship an outstanding combination of qualities and experiences: Her exceptional creativity and achievements as a scientist, recognized in countless ways, including a 2010 MacArthur award and her 2017 election to the National Academy of Sciences. Decades of experience helping to lead and manage LIGO, one of the largest, most complex and most consequential scientific endeavors of our time. A gift for collaboration, mentorship and hands-on problem solving. And the ability to see MIT from the vantage point of all the roles she has held here – as a graduate student, a faculty member and an administrative leader."

"I very much look forward to working with Nergis and to benefiting from her unerring sense of scientific opportunity, infectious curiosity, down-to-earth manner and practical wisdom. I hope you will join me in congratulating her as she brings her great gifts as a leader to this new role."

POSTING

Roheinton Shroff, Mobile: 0300-2369385

For Patrel, Bafenu made of Chausa mangoes, original Parsi style Methya nu achar and limbu nu achar. Can also make to order: Tarapori patio of dry bambol or of fresh prawns.

MILESTONES

Janam (parents/family are requested to inform the birth of a baby, as early as convenient, at kzbm19112@gmail.com for inclusion in the newsletter)

Yasna, a baby girl to Gulshan & Aurzin Patel, Sister to Yazata, Granddaughter to Shernaz & Dhanjishaw Ferozepurwalla and Kharmen & (Late) Behram Patel on 28 June 2020

Maran

Homai Minocher Anklesaria, wife of (late) Minocher Anklesaria, mother of Bomi Anklersaria, mother in-law of Dossi Anklesaria, sister of (late) Faramroze, Noshir and Rattan Anklesaria on 3 August 2020

Sarosh Jehangir Vakil, husband of Roshan Vakil, father of Poolad Vakil, brother of Dinshaw, (late)Sam, Nari, Tehmi Patel (UK) and (late) Hutokshi Minwalla on 7 August 2020

Fradoon Sohrabji Sethna, husband of Zenobia Sethna and father of Razeshta and Vahesta Sethna on 12 August 2020

Ex-Karachiite: **Sehra Khodadad Shahbehrām Irani**, wife of Khodadad (Khodu) Shahbehrām Irani, mother of Ken, Sharon, Jason, & Ron, sister of Khodi, Khushrow & Mahyar on **16 August 2020 in Maryland, USA**

Ex-Karachiite: **Ava Jehangir Kharas**, wife of (late) Jehangir Kharas and mother of Jamshed, Khushroo and Hira on **18 August 2020 in California, USA**

Eddie Homee Mana, son of (late) Jer and Homee Mana on **21 August 2020**

Ex-Karachiite **Homai Magol**, wife of (late) Dinshawji Magol, Panthaky of Saddar Agiary and mother of Paurusasp Magol on **25 August 2020 in Ahmednagar, India**

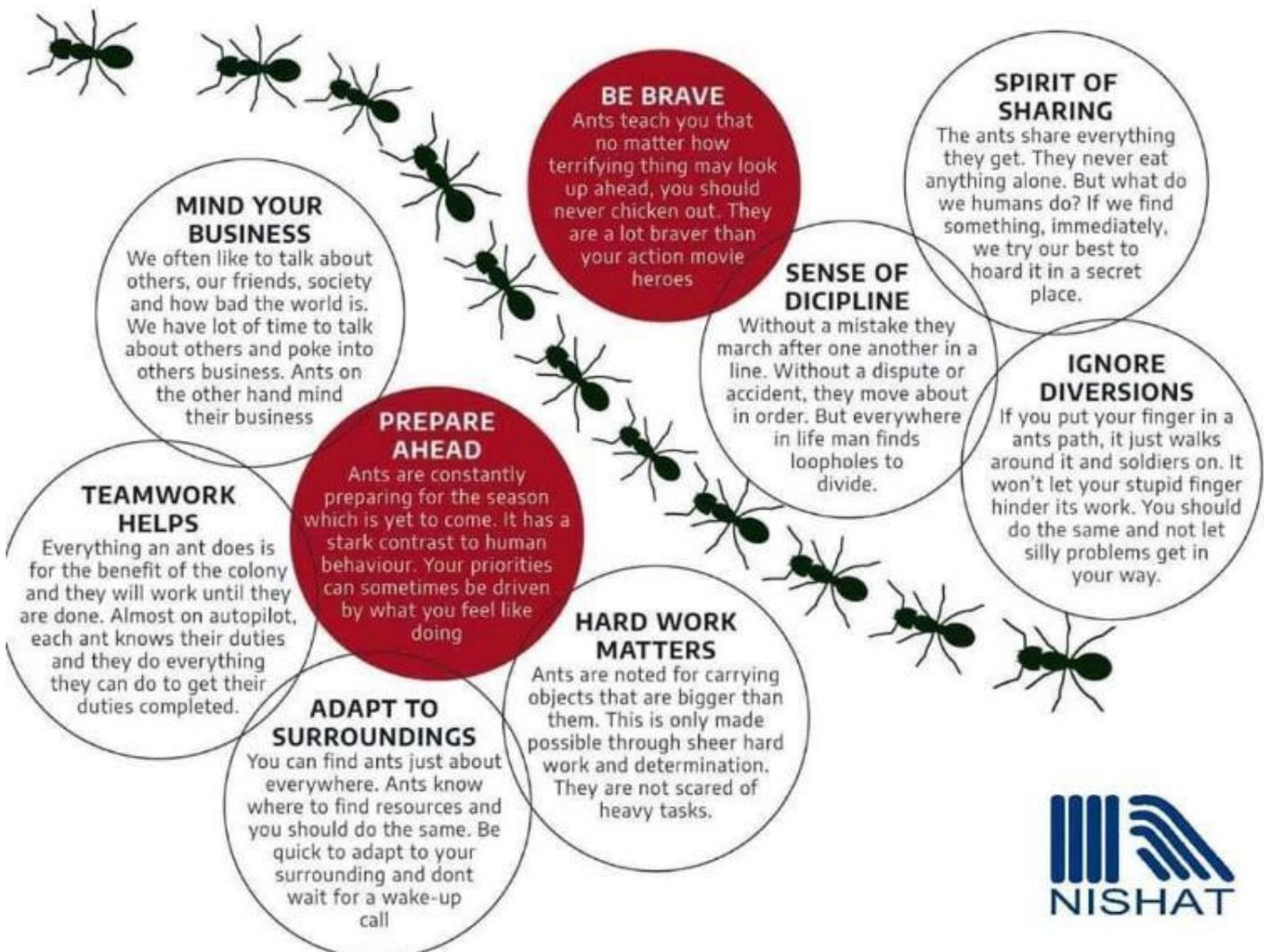


WHAT'S MORE

Good Life

The Ant's Rule Book of Life

Ant's make up around a quarter of the earth's animal numbers, with more than a million of them to every human. Human's may think they rule the world, but the tiny ant can tell us how to do it better.



Courtesy: Dilshad Aspi Irani

Our Faith

As Covid separates, Karachi's Parsis grow closer with online Humbandagi prayers

SAMAA | [Anushe Engineer](#) -



The Saddar agiari is 172 years old in 2020. Photo: Courtesy Narius Banaji

Natasha Mavalvala is standing on the upper floor of the H. J. Behrana agiari in Karachi's Saddar, singing hymns for the souls of the departed. Her audience is a camera, recording her recitations of the Humbandagi prayer. The hall, which used to be packed with Parsis, echoes with her solo voice.

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The coronavirus pandemic has forced Parsis to turn to technology to conduct the annual communal prayers. Even with social distancing, as many Parsis are elderly, the general consensus was that it would be putting them at risk by holding the sessions at the agiari.

When it was confirmed that the Navroze mela set for August 16 and the humbandagi would not be held, Tushna Patel approached the agiari's trustees. "Let's not break this chain we've had for so many years," she told them. She pitched the idea of recording the sessions and sharing them online.

In Humbandagi (or communal prayer in Gujarati), Parsis gather to sing hymns in the 10 Mukhtad days before Navroze, the New Year for those of the Zoroastrian faith. It is believed that during Mukhtad, the souls of the departed descend to Earth to bless their loved ones.

“You cannot see them but [the souls] make their presence felt, and the reading of the Humbandagi holds you together,” Mavalvala explained. “It gives peace to them in a religious sense... You’re not just praying for their soul but your soul too.”

Usually, a lead singer begins promptly at 7am. Mavalvala has been fulfilling this role for the last six to seven years. She sings one Gatha at a time, first solo and then with the audience repeating after her. A translation follows before the recitation of the second one. Gathas are the conversations believed to have taken place between the prophet Zarathustra and Ahura Mazda, who Zoroastrians worship as God.

A total of 39 gathas have to be completed every year, meaning three to four gathas have to be recited each of the 10 days before Navroze. Everyone in the room is expected to remain standing throughout the session which takes no more than twenty minutes.

Natasha Mavalvala, like Tushna Patel, has been attending humbandagi her whole life. She recalls the excitement she experienced as a child, attending the sessions in uniform with her brother and father before hurrying to school with her friends. Most Parsi children during the 1970s and 80s attended Mama Parsi Girls Secondary School or BVS Parsi High School, both of which are within walking distance from the agiari. This was also a time when the majority of Parsis lived in Saddar and so it was convenient for parents to bring their children to the agiari before heading to school or office at 7:30am.

“It was just once a year, 10 days in the year, but it brought a lot of us together,” said Mavalvala. “I remember it as a happy time, not as a religious time, but we learned a lot from it. We used to sit there and hear Godrej Sidhwa giving a sermon all 10 days.”

Godrej Sidhwa, a prominent Zoroastrian priest in Karachi who has passed away, used to pick out passages from the gathas and tell them as stories, often incorporating them into his sermons. Once he retired from his priestly duties and grew elderly, the sermons that followed gatha recitation ended altogether, marking the end of an era.

A mere two or three dozen Parsis have been attending hambandagi in recent years, compared to the hundreds who used to pack the prayer hall. “Ours is an aging community and the age bracket now is 70 years and above. People can hardly walk up the stairs to the main hall,” Mavalvala said. “A lot of emigration has also taken place.”

Pleasantly enough, though, Mavalvala and Patel have realised that by going online, the number of Parsis praying the gathas—albeit from the comfort of their homes—is far greater than could ever be physically possible in the agiyari.

Mavalvala sent the daily prayer video snippets to an email chain of hers with around 500 people, while Patel did the same thing through a WhatsApp group with almost 200 members. Both women said that what they had initially expected to be circulated among a few hundred Parsis in Karachi has instead reached well over 1,500 worldwide.

“The response was totally overwhelming,” Patel said. “People are telling me not to shut the [WhatsApp] group because along with Hambandagi, I’ve been posting other information, prayers and prayer books.”

Both women received messages from Parsis all over the world, grateful for being able to reconnect to their childhood memories of the Saddar agiyari. Aside from that, people like Rashna Gazder, a well-respected piano and language teacher, who moved to Karachi from Bombay 30 years ago, are appreciating that because of the technology they can pray at any time. “I told Tushna, I got involved in [hambandagi prayer] after a very long time,” Gazder added.

Patel reckons that they will have to continue for those people who will not come to the agiari next year also. “We’ve laid the foundation for it and I think we have to continue with it.”

