



## World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce Global Meet 2017, Bangalore, India



Reported by Zarine Kharas

When Dolly Dastoor approached me to write a report of the WZCC Global Meet 2017, I laid my cards on the table and clarified that report writing is not for me. I hope, therefore, that you will find this article more interesting than a report and join me in my journey as I weave my way through the three exciting days of networking, active participation and valuable contributions.

December 14th, 15th & 16th 2017, saw over 120 delegates interact and enjoy the expanse of the Clarks Exotica Resort & Spa in Bangalore, India. We, at the Bangalore Chapter, were delighted at this response, though our motto through all the months of sloggng was “numbers matter little...let’s give, whoever comes, the best ever Global Meet, they’ve had so far”.

The work on this Meet began a year ahead - my diary has a neatly penned in reminder on January 26th 2017 saying “visit to Clarks”. It meant many, many meetings with my Committee Members, brainstorming and drawing up plans. The excellent harmony between us, and the enthusiasm and zest of the merry band of volunteers drawn from amongst our Chapter members, was bound to make the Global Meet a success. Of course, one needs to acknowledge the support and assistance of many others; from the hotel management and staff to our community members who helped with the printing and photography to the infrastructure set up and of course to each delegate whose presence there made all the difference.

December 14th saw the first set of delegates check-in, consisting mainly of Directors and Chapter Chairs for the Pre-AGM meeting. Items scheduled for the next day’s Annual General Meeting were discussed and fine tuned. An important agenda item was the “Financing Initiative” to help start-ups, professionals as well as grow existing businesses which in turn would uplift and improve the well being of the community. This initiative would be launched jointly with WZOT, represented by Mr.Dinshaw Tamboly, who has already being doing this for smaller projects in the rural areas. The joint effort would widen the range and scope of projects and become one of highlights of this year’s objectives.. The evening was spent enjoying networking and catching up with old friends through dinner, hosted by the Bangalore & Mumbai Chapters jointly.

For us here, on the organising Committee, December 15th was D-day. Over a hundred delegates would be checking in through the morning so our Reception Committee was set up with their little Diva table, gift bags and document kits, fairly early in the day. The gift bag was a delightful surprise, being filled to the brim with biscuits, chocolates, x’mas cake, wine, a coffee mug and many other give-aways thanks to the many sponsors that came to our aid. The bag itself was tailored by the physically challenged under the auspices of Kinder Trust, run by our community member, Mrs. Diana Bharucha.



The Annual General Meeting began with our Master of Ceremonies, Mr. Shereyar Vakil welcoming the delegates. Shereyar is a much loved & popular member of the Bangalore community, has been a Trustee on the Anjuman for many years and has the gift of the gab. Through the three days he kept the guests entertained whilst being the perfect MC. The Meet was officially opened by the lighting of the diva by our Global President, Mr. Edul Daver and the Bangalore Chapter Chair, Air Chief Marshal Fali Major (Retd.)

All the Office Bearers first presented their reports for the year - Mr. Edul Daver-President, Mr. Yazdi Tantra-Vice-President, Mr. Adi Siganporia - Corporate Secretary and Ms. Katayun Kapadia - Treasurer  
Two major initiatives were the focus of the AGM, which we expect will be game changers for WZCC long term;

-Youth Initiative with the appointment of a Youth Director and their global interaction on Social Media.

-Financing Initiative to help start ups, grow existing businesses & professionals. Plans include collection of donations worldwide to support businesses and improve the well being of the community, initially in India and gradually long term globally.



### The Annual General Meeting - *Lighting of the Diva, the Board, the Delegates*

It would have been selfish of us Bangaloreans, had we not shared the glorious December weather with our friends who had traveled from all over the world, and so we organised the evening events on the lawns and dined at the poolside. Two speakers of repute addressed the delegates at the start of the evening, followed by entertainment by Sanjay Manaktala, Bangalore’s best stand-up comedian.

**Dr. Ferzaan Engineer**, our first speaker of the evening, is a prominent and well-loved member of the Parsee community in Bangalore, a pharmaceutical scientist and healthcare entrepreneur. A pharmacist by training, he received a PhD in Pharmaceutical Sciences from the University of South Carolina.

He started the international clinical research industry in India and was the Chairman & CEO of Quintiles India from 1997 to 2011. Ferzaan became an independent entrepreneur four years ago and cofounded two companies :

- \* Medwell Ventures offers home healthcare services under the Nightingales brand
- \* Cyticare Hospitals is one of India’s only organ-based cancer hospitals and is super-specialized in various surgeries, radiation techniques and chemotherapies. The flagship project was a 150-bed hospital launched a year ago in Bangalore.

**Dr. Viloo Morawalla Patell**, Founder and current Chairman and Managing Director of the Biotechnology company Avesthagen Limited was our second speaker for the evening.

She obtained her Master of Science degree from the University of Mumbai in Medical Biochemistry and her PhD from IBMP-CNRS, University of Strasbourg, France. The company was founded in 1998 with a long term, strategic model to change the world and make it a better place with affordable healthcare and Environment Adjusted Crops. Dr. Patell is the recipient of many awards and titles. The most important being Charles du Gaulle National Order of Merit, L’officer de Merit, Government of France, awarded by the President of France, Nicholas Sarkozy in 2008.

A most interesting and actively participated Panel Discussion started off Day 3.

The subject read “*The Relevance of Zoroastrian Values in Today’s Entrepreneurial Environment*”. Cyrus Dhabhar, a member of the Bangalore Chapter was an excellent moderator, giving the audience food for thought and drawing out interesting anecdotes from the six panelists from diverse businesses.



**The Panelists** (from left to right)  
*Mrs. Pilloo Aga, Mr. Zerick Dastur,  
 Mr. Viraf Deboo, Ms. Zaver Divecha,  
 Mr. Adi Siganporia & Ms. Rokshar Vakharia*



**The Panelists with Moderator,  
 Cyrus Dhabhar** (far right)

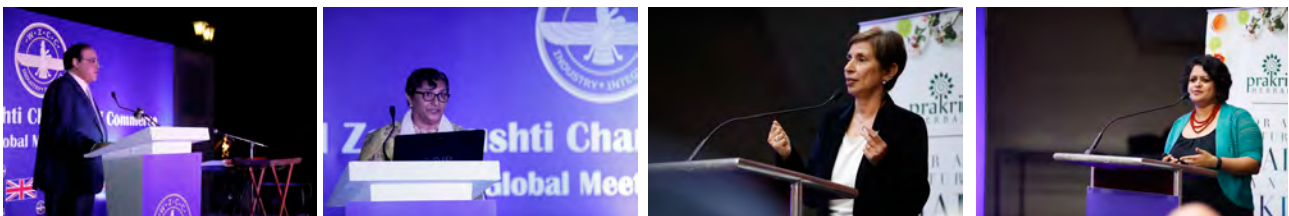
Our Speakers obviously held the audience’s attention throughout the morning since we continued to have full attendance and actually had to add seats to accommodate the delegates !

**Dr. Rashna Writer**, who, by training, is a political scientist and has also pursued a parallel career as a political analyst. She commenced her career as a Research Associate at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London; went on to become a Contributing Editor of the Defense & Foreign Affairs Handbook; Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy. Subsequently, she was Head of Global Risks for a leading strategic risk consultancy in the UK, where she specialised in advising Lloyds of London syndicates specialty insurance underwriters on political risks, war and terrorism risks; as well as being a senior advisor to some major Austrian and German companies. She has authored several books on the Zoroastrian Community and holds a doctorate from the London School of Economics in International Relations. She is also the recipient of several international awards.

Dr. Writer addressed the subject of "Entrepreneurial Social Conscience as a Means of Zoroastrian Self-Preservation" in the hope that her talk will highlight Parsi entrepreneurs who, having acquired wealth, will consider it their duty to re-invest a part of it in the community. In her own words, "this was the genesis of the outstanding Parsi infrastructure that exists to this day. The challenge for today's Zoroastrian entrepreneurs is to assess our current situation and make decisions tailored to our times."

The youngest of our speakers, at 30, was **Ms. Pronita Saxena**, a graduate in Economics, with honours from UC, Berkeley. After earning her degree she worked at MIT's Poverty Action Lab in rural Bangladesh and contributed to several policy papers for the World Bank and IMF at the Center for Global Development in Washington, DC.

She moved to India and founded Citizengage, a technology company operating the world's first waste-to-resource platform that channels waste into energy, compost and recycled products. Pronita was recently named one of India's Top Women Entrepreneurs by Cosmopolitan and specialises in creating markets for disruptive technology.



**OUR SPEAKERS** (from left to right)  
Dr. Ferzaan Engineer, Dr. Villoo Morawalla Patell, Dr. Rashna Writer, Ms. Pronita Saxena

Knowing how most eyelids tend to droop post lunch, we scheduled some interactive exercises and drama games for the afternoon. Zerbanoo Gifford, who needs little introduction, along with Adrian Locher, the Artistic Director at the Asha Centre, took the delegates through an interesting, self awareness exercise.

**Mrs. Zerbanoo Gifford**, is an author, a human rights campaigner and founder of the ASHA Centre, which pioneers youth empowerment in the fields of sustainable development, interfaith dialogue and the arts. She holds the International Woman of the Year Award 2006 for her humanitarian work, which spans fifty years of grassroots and global activism. In 1989, Zerbanoo was presented with the Nehru Centenary Award for her work championing the rights of women, children and minorities. A pioneer for Asian Women in British politics, she made history by being elected as a councillor in Harrow in 1982 and standing for parliament in 1983. Zerbanoo's biography 'An Uncensored Life' by Farida Master is published by Harper Collins.



**Mr. Adrian Locher** is an actor, voice coach and director of many years' experience. As the Artistic Director of the ASHA Centre, he has run numerous drama-based programmes with young people from all over the world including one play that was created with young South Africans and presented to Nelson Mandela at his home.

The formal evening of the 16th of December, was a glittering gala night and the highlight of the Global Meet. Young **Leah Divecha**, 13 years of age, formally opened the evening with a violin recital, playing the first movement of Bach's Concerto No. 1 in A minor followed by a very famous and beautiful piece composed by John Williams specially for the great violinist Itzhak Perlman which is the music for the movie "Schindler's List" but her piano recital of "La Vie en Rose" with vocals, stole everyone's heart.



Young LEAH DIVECHA



Air Chief Marshal, Fali Major (Retd), as Chairman of the Bangalore Chapter, gave the Welcome Address, encouraging the youth to strive and achieve great glory for the community and themselves.

This was followed by the Global President, Mr. Edul Daver's address and that of Dr. Peter Garland, the Chief Guest for the evening. Dr. Garland is Executive Vice-Chancellor of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education, and it is his hope that WZCC and their organisation can work together in the Education field in the months ahead.

Ms. Behroze Daruwalla, as Master of Ceremonies for the WZCC Annual Award Ceremony outlined the basis on which the awardees are selected and introduced each award winner. The 2017 awards were presented as :

For his outstanding contribution, selfless service and extraordinary entrepreneurial skills, the WZCC '**OUTSTANDING ZARATHUSHTI ENTREPRENEUR AWARD - 2017**' was awarded to **Mr FEROZE PESHOTAN BHANDARA**'.

For his extraordinary devotion in the field of science, medicine & healthcare; his noble pursuit to facilitate & help people in their times of need for medical assistance; and his contribution in developing, setting up & enhancing institutions of medical excellence; the WZCC '**OUTSTANDING ZARATHUSHTI PROFESSIONAL**' AWARD - 2017, was awarded to **Dr FERZAAN NARIMAN ENGINEER**.

For his meteoric rise in the legal profession, his selfless service to the community and his unstinted devotion to professional ethics, the WZCC '**OUTSTANDING YOUNG ZARATHUSHTI ENTREPRENEUR/ PROFESSIONAL**' AWARD - 2017, was awarded to **Mr ZERICK HOSI DASTUR**.



**MC Ms. Behroze Daruwalla and the Award Winners with Chief Guest, Dr. Peter Garland.**  
(from left to right)

**Mr. Feroze Bhandara, Dr. Ferzaan Engineer, Mr. Zerick Dastur**

Mr. Adi Siganporia, Corporate Secretary, in his Vote of Thanks, called upon the Committee Members and Volunteers of the Bangalore Chapter to take a bow for the meticulous planning and excellent execution of this Meet.





To do justice to an event of this standing, we realised we had to have a thumping finale. As chief event co-ordinator I was given the privilege of doing just that. Earlier on, we had asked all our delegates to fill in small cards stating their “hope for WZCC for the year ahead”. During the course of my address to the delegates I drew upon the symbolism of Fire. When Zoroastrian ideals and values are passed on from generation to generation without interruption we have an eternal flame, one that will endure the passage of time and give us invigorating energy and hope for the future. The “hope” cards were then handed over to Mr. Edul Daver, him being the safe keeper of our hopes as the Global President.

Many favourite songs were requested of our pianist, Ernie, especially flown down from Mumbai for the event, while the delegates mingled, chatted and dined for the rest of the evening.

When I look back at those exciting three days, and the months that preceded the event, I am left with a mix of emotions - Gratitude to the Almighty for keeping the weather in check and ensuring that we didn't have any hiccups, a wonderful sense of Achievement for an event well appreciated by one and all, Happiness at having made so many friends and Humbled that speakers of such repute offered to be part of our Event. I was truly privileged to have been given the honour of co-ordinating it and will always treasure and value the trust, faith and confidence that my Chairman and fellow Committee Members put in me. In response I say to them “**Ubuntu**” - 'I am what I am because of who we all are'.