

Individual vs Communal voice

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

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

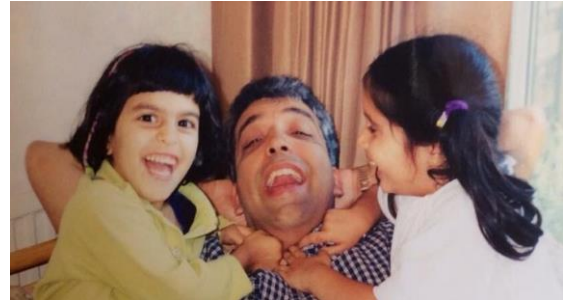
This first article highlights the journey of the two congress Co-Chairs and how they use their voice to represent the community and add value to bring about progressive change through a communal voice.

Introduction

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

Both Sheherazad and Sanaya come from Zoroastrian families who have been strongly involved in serving their Zoroastrian communities. In the past, Sheherazad's father was the Treasurer in the 1997 2WZYC and her mother was a teacher for the UK Zoroastrian Children's Fun Club. Sanaya's family has been prominent in the Delhi Parsi community and several charitable causes. As a result of their family's extensive communal involvement, Sheherazad and Sanaya have both been actively involved in the Zoroastrian community, from a very young age.

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



Sheherazad and Sanaya aged 5, with Sheherazad's Dad

Why do you wish to be involved in the community?

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

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

Sanaya - Growing up, my family always ensured that I had a strong sense of

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

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

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

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

Sheherazad – For us, having a communal voice is essential to good leadership. Often today, we see world leaders who bring their personal agenda in politics- which tends to only create more divide.

Having a communal voice does not just mean representing the views of others, it means accepting that sometimes your ideas or opinions will not be followed and you will have to implement a different ideology. Whilst at times this can seem hard, we always remind ourselves of the wider goal that we are working towards and that by listening and considering other points of views, we can create a more inclusive and empowered community.

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



Sheherazad & Sanaya at Sanaya's 18th Birthday

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

Sheherazad - The young Zoroastrian community in the UK has a vibrant atmosphere, and I am both proud and grateful to say that having women in leadership positions is not a rare

occurrence in the UK YZ community. I truly feel that having a congress committee that is made up of so many wonderful and accomplished young women is essential and will showcase how we are paving the way to a more equitable society. Sanaya and I firmly believe that with the equality and empowerment of women, we will achieve a stronger future for our community as well as our religion.

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

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

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

Closing paragraph

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

Authors



Sheherazd F. Kapadia

Chair - Young Zoroastrian's of the UK,
Co-Chair - 2023 8th Zoroastrian World Youth Congress (London, United Kingdom)

Occupational Therapy Student/Assistant Therapist



Sanaya Khambatta

Vice Chair - Young Zoroastrian's of the UK
Co-Chair - 2023 8th Zoroastrian World Youth Congress (London, United Kingdom)

Technical Consultant at IBM