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About Presenters:

Ms. Paranosh Behruz Mazkoory is currently studying in the master's programme in Human Development at the Nirmala Niketan College of Home Science, University of Mumbai. She has graduated with a distinction and a merit rank from the B.Sc. programme in Human Development at Nirmala Niketan. Her longer-term goal is to complete her PhD in Human Development. She is interested in learning about different cultures and traveling. She has been a keenly active member of the cultural committee in the college for three consecutive years.

Ms. Benaaz Irani is currently studying in the M.Sc programme in Human Development at the Nirmala Niketan College of Home Science, University of Mumbai. She has graduated with a B.A. in Psychology from St. Xavier's College, University of Mumbai. She also completed the Sociology Honours' Programme at St. Xavier's College. As part of this Honours' Programme, she has volunteered for 120 hours (Social Involvement Program) at an NGO and at a rural teaching camp at Valsad, Gujarat. She was an active member of the Social Service League (St. Xavier's) for five years, and held the post of Project Secretary for two years. She has been a part of the organising team for Malhar, the inter-collegiate festival at St. Xavier's. She is planning a career in counselling.

Dr. Anuradha Bakshi is a Reader Designate at the Nirmala Niketan College of Home Science, University of Mumbai. She has completed her PhD from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, USA, and her master's degree from the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. She has also taught at both her alma mater universities and at the Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work, University of Mumbai. Her research career began as an undergraduate student and has spanned over two decades in varied areas such as resiliency, education, and spirituality.

As one of the senior-most faculty in Nirmala Niketan, she has served as a Department Head (2004-2007). She is teaching students in the B.Sc., M.Sc., and PhD Home Science programs. She has presented papers at international conferences; last year she chaired a session on research in Human Development at an international conference. She is a consultant in multiple areas such as Research Methods and Statistics, and Human Development.

Student support and welfare is one of her priorities. As a university teacher, she has invested substantial time in career guidance and counseling of students, especially advanced students and alumnae. In fact, her interest in the welfare of "her protégées" has led her to track their life paths both formally (i.e., through research) and informally.

Title of Paper: Youth Services in the Zoroastrian Community: Critical Evaluation with Regard to Career Guidance

Abstract:

In India, particular communities offer varied services to their own members; many of these services are directed to the youth in that community. In this presentation, one such community has been selected, namely, the Zoroastrian community in Mumbai.

Zoroastrianism, one of the oldest monotheistic religions of the world, was founded by the Prophet Zarathustra in ancient Persia. In the 10th century AD, in order to preserve their faith from persecution, some Zoroastrians took sanctuary in India. These earliest migrant Zoroastrians in India are called Parsis; more recent migrants are called Iranis. Members of the Parsi community have made notable contributions in multiple sectors.

There are a dwindling number of Zoroastrians in the world; the New York Times put the figure at less than 190,000 in 2006. Concerned members of the community have started several organisations to support Zoroastrians. There are varied youth services in the Zoroastrian community in Mumbai such as the Bombay Parsi Panchayat run Holiday Programme for the Youth, the May Queen Ball, the Third Child Scheme, and Coaching Class Assistance. Other youth services include the Youth Development Programme, and the Zoroastrian Youth for the Next Generation (ZYNG). The following questions are relevant: What are the different types of youth services in the Zoroastrian community in Mumbai? Who are the youth facilitators in these programmes or services? Do the Zoroastrian youth know about these services in their community? What is the perspective of Zoroastrian youth (beneficiary and non-beneficiary) about these services? And very importantly: To what extent do these services address the career-guidance needs of the Zoroastrian youth in Mumbai? These questions have been answered using interviews with committee members of the youth service organisations and other experts in the community (n=10), interviews with Zoroastrian youth including beneficiaries (n=50), literature on these services, and information on the websites of the programmes or organisations. The resultant picture is important for comprehending culture-specific systems for support of youth in areas including career guidance. Also, such an evaluation enables the designing of culturally-integrated practice.