



**Entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunity beyond resources controlled**

***A Conversation with Young Zoroastrians  
On Applying to Graduate School in the  
US and UK***

***Speakers***

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***Moderator***

**Farrokh Mistree**

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**Topics Covered**

1. Why pursue a graduate degree?
2. How do I put together a competitive application?
  - a. How do I fund my graduate studies?
  - b. MS or PhD, what to study, where to apply?
  - c. What is involved in putting together a competitive application? When do I start? Tips for writing a Statement of Purpose?
3. Who can I contact in the ZFN to respond to my queries in North America and the UK?

[Recording  
This webinar](#)

**Link to recordings of all ZFN Webinars** - <http://bit.ly/zfnyoutube>



## Janet K. Allen and Farrokh Mistree



Dr. Janet K. Allen and Dr. Farrokh Mistree

Our passion is to have fun in providing an opportunity for highly motivated and talented people to learn how to define and achieve their dreams.

Janet K. Allen holds the John and Mary Moore Chair in the School of Industrial and Systems Engineering and Farrokh Mistree holds the L. A. Comp Chair in the School of Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma. They have published over 400 papers, two books and four research monographs. Janet and Farrokh co-direct the Systems Realization Laboratory @ OU.

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## Karishma Koka



Neuroscientist – Learning and Development  
Effect of Stress on the Brain

10 years with the Medical Research Council (UK)

Co-founder and Mentor: The Ultimate Achievements Academy  
for Learning and Development



## What We Are About?

The World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC) in partnership with Zarathushti faculty in academia envision empowering Zarathushti students to learn how to create economic, cultural and intellectual value.

ZFN MISSION: Facilitate Zarathushti youth, through higher and specialized education, to pursue careers in industry, government, and academia as business entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs and knowledge entrepreneurs.

ZFN Webinars: Conversations to help Zarathushti youth with support of their parents to attain higher and specialized education.

This initiative is supported by R. D. Sethna Scholarship Fund.

<https://www.rdsethnascholarships.org/> For further information contact [rdsethnascholarship@gmail.com](mailto:rdsethnascholarship@gmail.com)





## Forthcoming Conversations



*October 24, 2021* - On Planning Where to Study.

*November 28, 2021* - On Creating, Economic, Social and Intellectual Value. Nokri Vs Career.

*December 19, 2021* - On Scholarships and Funding for Higher Education.

*January 23, 2022* - On Getting the Most from the College Experience: Planning, Networking, Selling Yourself.

*February 27, 2022* - On Being Happy as a Zoroastrian Graduate Student Away from Home.

*March 27, 2022* - On Being Successful in Education, Finance and Medicine.

*April 24, 2022* – On Giving Back. Focus on *Dyanat*.

*May 24, 2022* - On Challenges and Coping Strategies for Studying in India.



## Farrokhism and Janetism



You cannot argue against or for a belief.

We will share with you our strongly held beliefs that others may disagree with.

Please do talk to others and decide what is right for you.

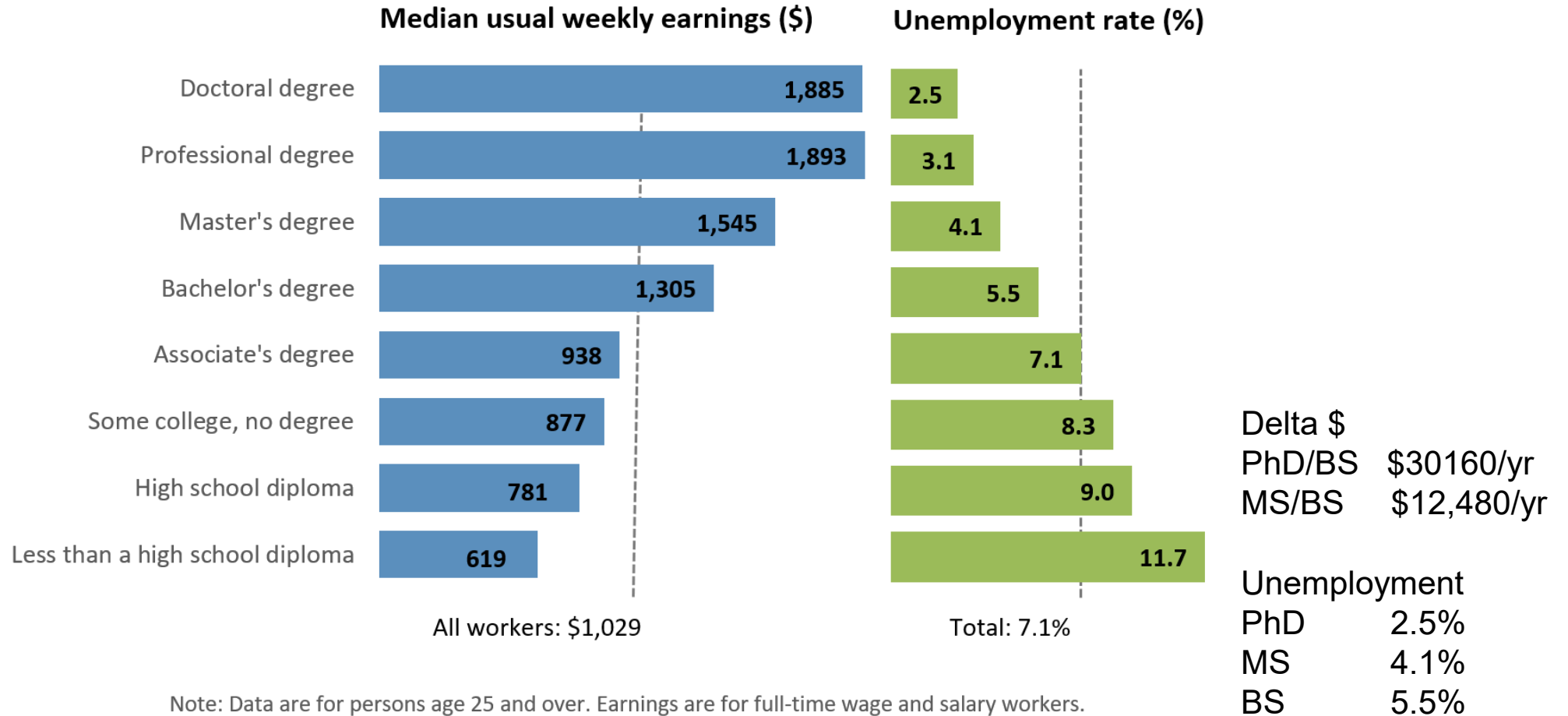


# Why Graduate School? (1/2)



Pandemic

## Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment, 2020



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

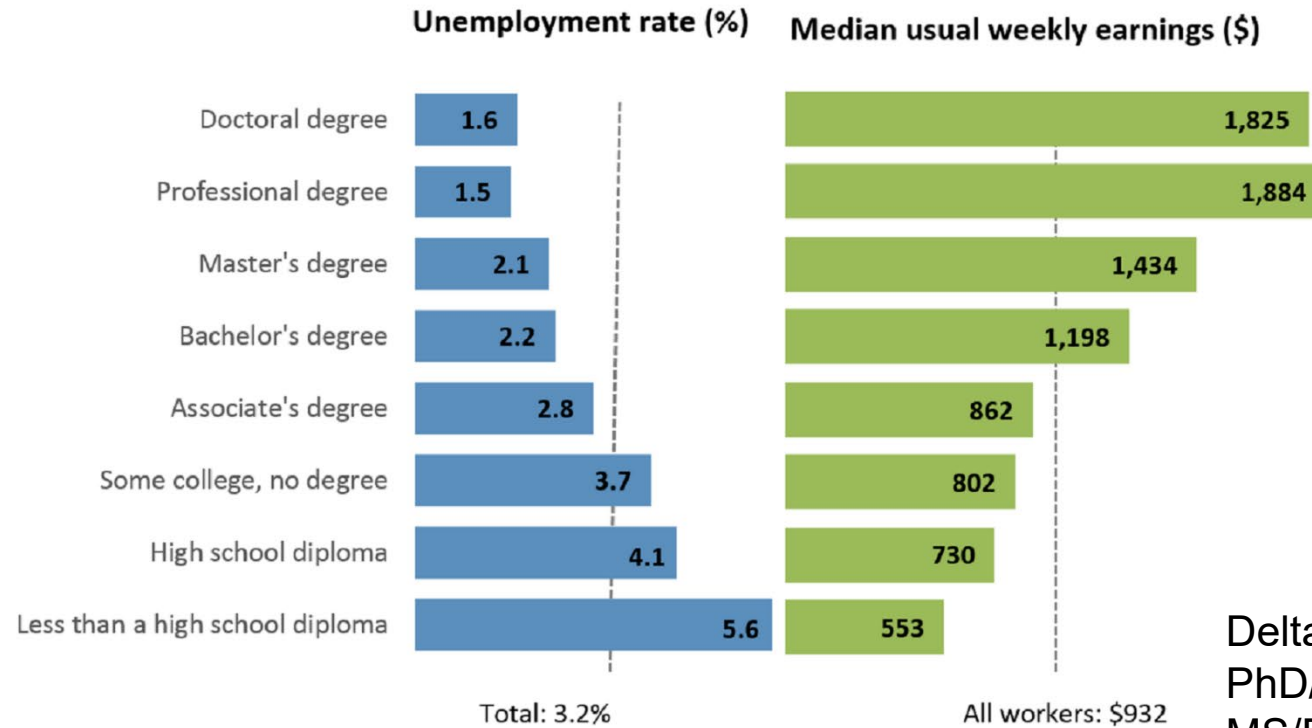
<https://www.bls.gov/emp/chart-unemployment-earnings-education.htm>



# Why Graduate School? (3/3)



## Unemployment rates and earnings by educational attainment, 2018



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.  
 Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Delta \$  
 PhD/BS \$32,600/yr  
 MS/BS \$12,272/yr

Unemployment  
 PhD 1.6%  
 MS 2.1%  
 BS 2.2%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics – Education Pays  
[https://www.bls.gov/emp/ep\\_chart\\_001.htm](https://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm)



## Nokri? Career? (1/2)

“We are currently preparing students for jobs that don’t exist using technologies that haven’t been invented in order to solve problems we don’t even know are problems yet.”

Former Secretary of Education **Richard Riley**



“It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent but ones most responsive to change.”

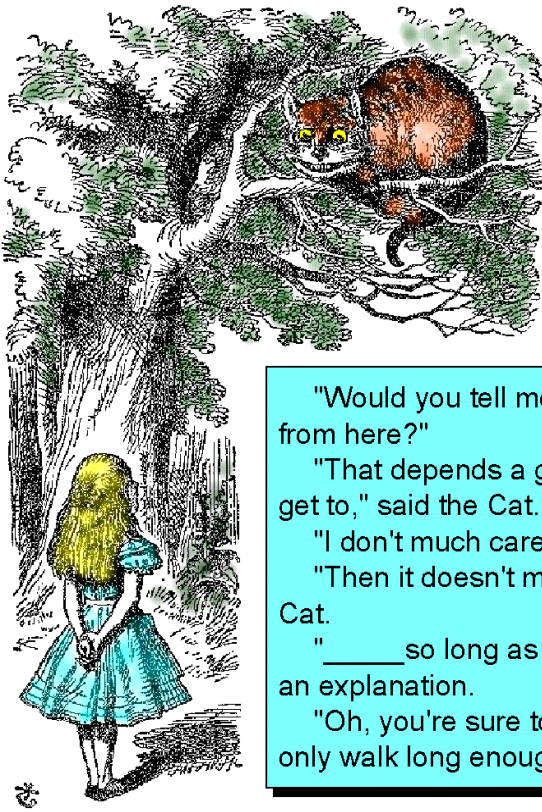
**Charles Darwin**





# Nokri? Career? (2/2)

## Which Program? Tool User and Tool Maker?



Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*, 1865.

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where \_\_\_\_\_" said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

"\_\_\_\_\_ so long as I get *somewhere*," Alice added as an explanation.

"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."

### TAKE AWAYS

1. Importance of having a goal.
2. Tool User facilitates execution
3. Tool Maker frames the problem
4. Both are valued in industry, government and academia.

### DECISION

What type of graduate program is right for me?



## Applying to Graduate School in the US



- Typically, graduate school is free for STEM students. This includes international students who qualify (GPA, GRE, SoP)
- In this talk we plan to cover
  - Minimum GPA and GRE scores, what to study, where to apply, how many places to apply, financial assistance, statement of purpose, finding a research advisor, etc.
  - What is the timeline and steps to follow to secure admission and financial support at a graduate institution in the US?



## Talking Points (1/3)

1. Does it matter what I study in graduate school?
2. How do I pay for my graduate education? Why get a PhD?
3. How many applications?
4. GPA and GRE (Q > 155 over 70%, V > 153 over 50%, A – ideally > 4 / 6)
5. Do your homework
  - Communicate with students of professors
    - How does professor guide students?
    - How does professor help students get jobs?
    - How does professor relate to students?
    - What are the professor's current research interests?
  - Tailor make your communication with professor
6. Tailor your statement of purpose to the professor and the institution. Copy the professor's student you have communicated with
7. Focus on how you can add value to the professor's research program and what will distinguish you from others.



## Talking Points (2/3)



### 8. Timeline – Ideal Scenario

- You need to start the application process a year before you plan to join the graduate program. To start in Fall 2022 you need to start working on your application in Summer 2021
- Summer / Fall 2021 - GRE, TOEFL, identify about a dozen schools that you may apply to
- Find out about program and professors from students that are already enrolled in the graduate program
- Prepare statement of purpose – show how you can add value to the research program at the institution in general and selected professors in particular
- Plan on applying to eight schools. Three dream schools, three good schools and two back-up schools
- Apply – you have a better chance of getting admission with financial assistance the earlier you apply. No matter what is stated on the website the last date for applications to be considered is December 31, 2021
- Most invitations go out by end of February / early March with a deadline to accept / not accept of April 15



## Talking Points (3/3)

### 9. Financial Aid

- Research Assistantships – specific, knowledge, skills and interest needed
- Teaching Assistantships – specific knowledge as well as knowledge of English
- Scholarships – usually small, based on merit and sometimes other qualifications, such as country or origin, gender, community activities, etc.

#### International students

- Loans – can be hard to get for international students
- Work – restricted to work on campus for international students – jobs such as work in library, in cafeteria, in parking lot, etc. Maximum 20 hours a week. Typically, paid at a minimum hourly rate. Will not be enough to cover living and tuition



# UK – Graduate Program Overview

## PhD - Application

- Apply for an existing PhD position – with funding
- Apply to a supervisor and seek funding separately

## PhD – Types of Programs

Integrated PhD a year-long project resulting in a Masters/MPhil or onto a three-year PhD.

Professional Doctorate is for students planning on working in professional jobs such as engineers and architects or in medicine and teaching

PhD by Publication is based on original, scholarly publications and present them in the same style as a PhD thesis.

## Example - University of Cambridge

Some institutions require you to identify a suitable supervisor before you submit your application.

1. Course: The admission process starts on September 1
2. Deadlines: Application deadline and the funding deadline.
3. Applicant Portal and Research Proposal
4. Academic references (2)
5. Colleges two College preferences or open
6. Apply: A number of the University's major sources of funding can be applied for through the Applicant Portal.
7. Interview



# UK - Research Proposal



Your research proposal: a specific question and how it proposes to build on earlier research

What is your topic? Demonstrate knowledge of the field.

What questions do you want to answer? Demonstrate need for further research.

What is the key literature and its limitations?

What are the main hypotheses of the work?

What methodology do you intend to use? Most topics will involve an application of the proposed methods to a substantive research question. Give a brief outline of this question and explain how it will benefit from this particular approach.

What theoretical/conceptual framework will you adopt?

What are your case studies, if any, and what are your case selection criteria?

What previous research have you undertaken in this field? Be specific about the training and skills you have to undertake the proposed research (do not simply list courses attended: this information is already available in the CV and transcripts).



## UK – Requirement Examples

**LSE** begins in **October** rolling

Requirement: MSc (taught) statistics

academic achievements

research proposal

statement of academic purpose

references

CV

sample of written work

### London Business School

Timepoint 08 January 2022

A completed application with essays (online)

Two academic reference letters (online)

Original GMAT or GRE score report (online)

Official transcript or certified copy of university

grades from all past degrees (online)

Valid, original Test of English (TOEFL or IELTS)

Please look at portals for the universities of interest

### Imperial

#### Split PhD scheme

some of your research abroad, fieldwork/ overseas institution.

#### Partner Research Institution (PRI) Scheme

register for a PhD at Imperial but carry out the research public research institution, industrial research laboratory or at another university

### Kings College London

Step 1 - Find supervisors

Step 2 - Find funding

Step 3 - Make an online application

Step 4 - Complete and submit your Project Approval

### Regents University

Entrepreneurship & Family Business Research Centre

Regent's Centre Transnational Business, Management

Faculty Centre for Applied Finance & Banking







## Salient Features – Statement of Purpose

Typically one to one and a half pages, that is, 400 to 600 words.

**Para 1** – What degree do you want and why. What do you plan to do after getting your degree.

**Para 2** – Your academic preparation for what you wish to study and your accomplishments.

**Para 3** – Your extracurricular activities and how these have shaped who you are.

**Para 4** – Particularize to the program you are applying to. Why this institution? Which professors interest you? Much of this information will come from your exploration of the web.

**Para 5** – Summary statement as to what you plan to do professionally and why this place is just right for you.





## Statement of Purpose - Some institutions require short one paragraph essays

1. Read the prompt for the essay.
2. Write the prompt for the essay in a word document or sheet of paper.
3. Reflect with a view to understanding the prompt.
4. Do a mind dump of what you could include in your essay. Could be sentences or bullet points.
5. Organize these ideas into categories that will morph into paragraphs.
6. Reality check – check if what you have in Point 5 is in agreement with your understanding of what is required (Point 3).
7. Modify where necessary.
8. Now you can start “writing” the essay by connecting the material you have put together in Point 7.
9. Review for connectivity and revise.
10. Put through grammar and spell checker. Read carefully / tweak.



## Letters to Professors – Turn Offs



- My research interests match yours therefore ...
- I have read your paper and I am interested in your work ...
- I have been to your web site ...
- You are the greatest therefore I want to work with you ...
- Your institution is great therefore admit me and give me financial support ...
- I am really interested in research, but I only want a MS ...
- To a professor who has never published in X ...  
I have been to your website and see that my research interest Y matches yours ...
- When writing to a female professor.  
Dear Sir: I have been to your website and my research interest matches yours ...
- I plan to get a MS, work in industry and then come back and get a PhD ...



# Resources - US

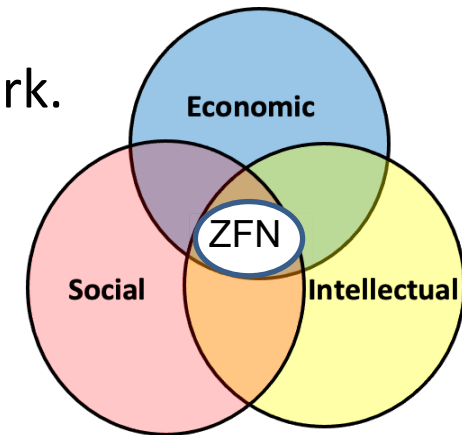


- Graduate School and You  
<http://www.cgsnet.org/graduate-school-and-you-guide-prospective-graduate-students>
- University of Oklahoma  
<http://www.ou.edu/gradweb>
- Graduate Schools on the Planet  
<http://www.gradschools.com/>
- US News and World Report  
<http://www.usnews.com/education/best-graduate-schools/>
- GRE Test  
<http://www.ets.org/gre//>
- TOEFL Test  
[http://www.ets.org/toefl?WT.ac=toeflhome\\_faq\\_121127](http://www.ets.org/toefl?WT.ac=toeflhome_faq_121127)

## UK - Preparation



- **Proper Preparation Promotes Positive Performance**
- Seek to **add value**
- Demonstrate
  - Purpose, ability to plan, evaluate, and create solutions (multi-subject, analytical skills)
  - Grades – and ability to overcome challenges, methodical (systematic)
  - Integrated approach to subjects + specialized focus on some
  - Learning and self-regulated: approach, strategise, evaluate, adapt – enjoy work.
  - Teaching experience – and contribution to those with less resources
  - Extra-curricular participation and organisation of events for others
  - Voluntary work – your sector + other sector
  - Work experience – your sector + allied area : implementing the knowledge
  - Reading, interpretation, risk assessment and change management
- Conclude – Dedication and emotional resilience with aim to contribute harmony





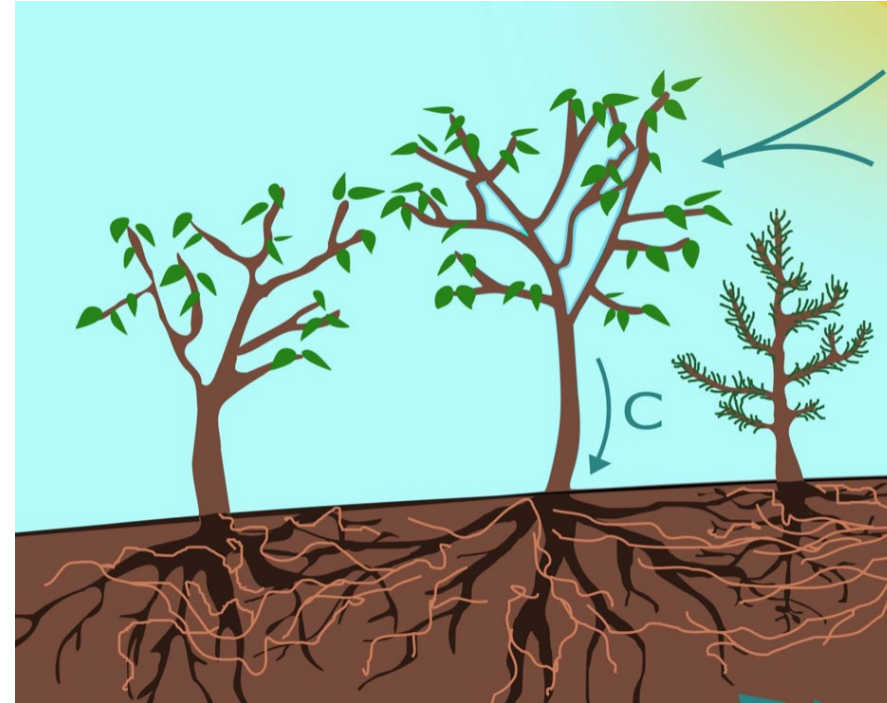
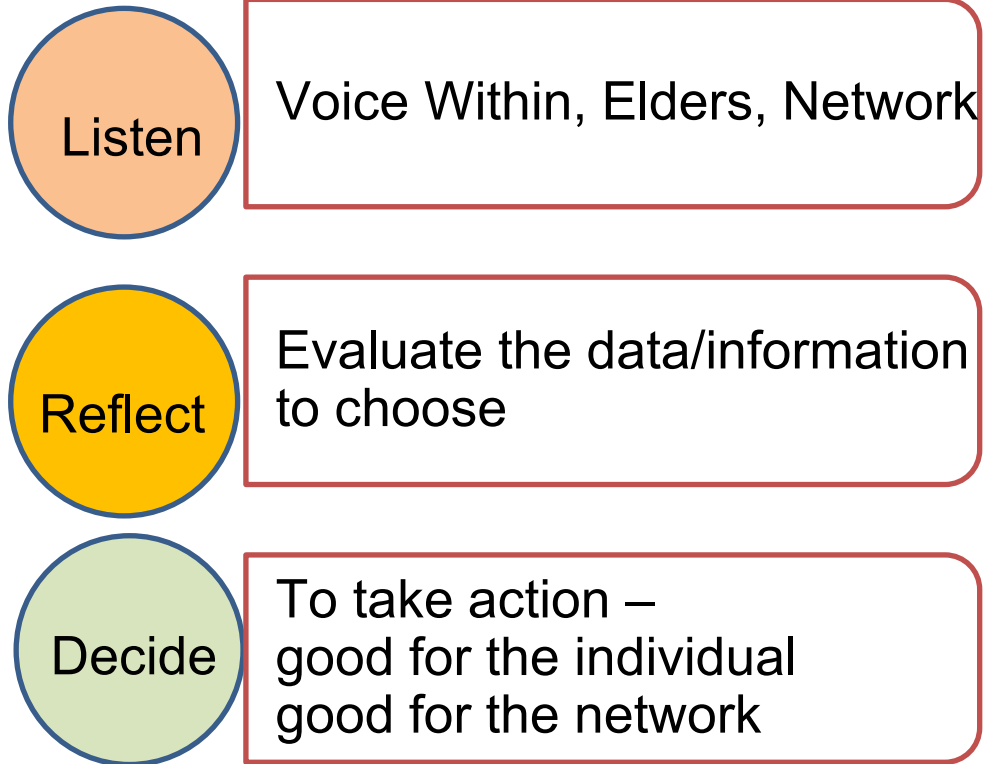
## UK - Resources

- <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/courses/doctoral-courses/phd/>
- <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/ioppn/study/prospective-students/programmes-of-study/pgr/phd>
- <https://www.cambridgetrust.org/scholarships/scholarship/?award=43>
- <https://www.postgraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/application-process>
- <https://www.postgraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/international/international-qualifications>
- <https://www.regents.ac.uk/research/research-centres>
- <https://www.port.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/>
- The Portsmouth Global PhD scholarships cover tuition fees at an international (non-EEA) rate, a stipend in line with the UKRI rate (£15,609 for 2021/22), and one return flight to London during the duration of the course (3 years).
- Scholarships: Cambridge Nehru, Rhodes, Chevening, Overseas Research studentship





# Listen, Reflect, Decide to take action now (to build Progress and Harmony) Yasna Ha 30.2



**Theory**  
**Implementation**

**Evaluate**

**Share**  
**Strengthen**  
**yourself and**  
**the network**

<https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2019/exploring-the-underground-network-of-trees-the-nervous-system-of-the-forest/>



## Closing Remarks



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### Mentors to review applications

North America Farrokh Mistree  
United Kingdom Karishma Koka

To continue the dialog and to provide feedback please visit  
[Zoroastrianfacultynetwork.org](http://Zoroastrianfacultynetwork.org)

