



# JOURNAL

Fravadin – Ardibehesht – Khordad 1379 AY (Fasli)

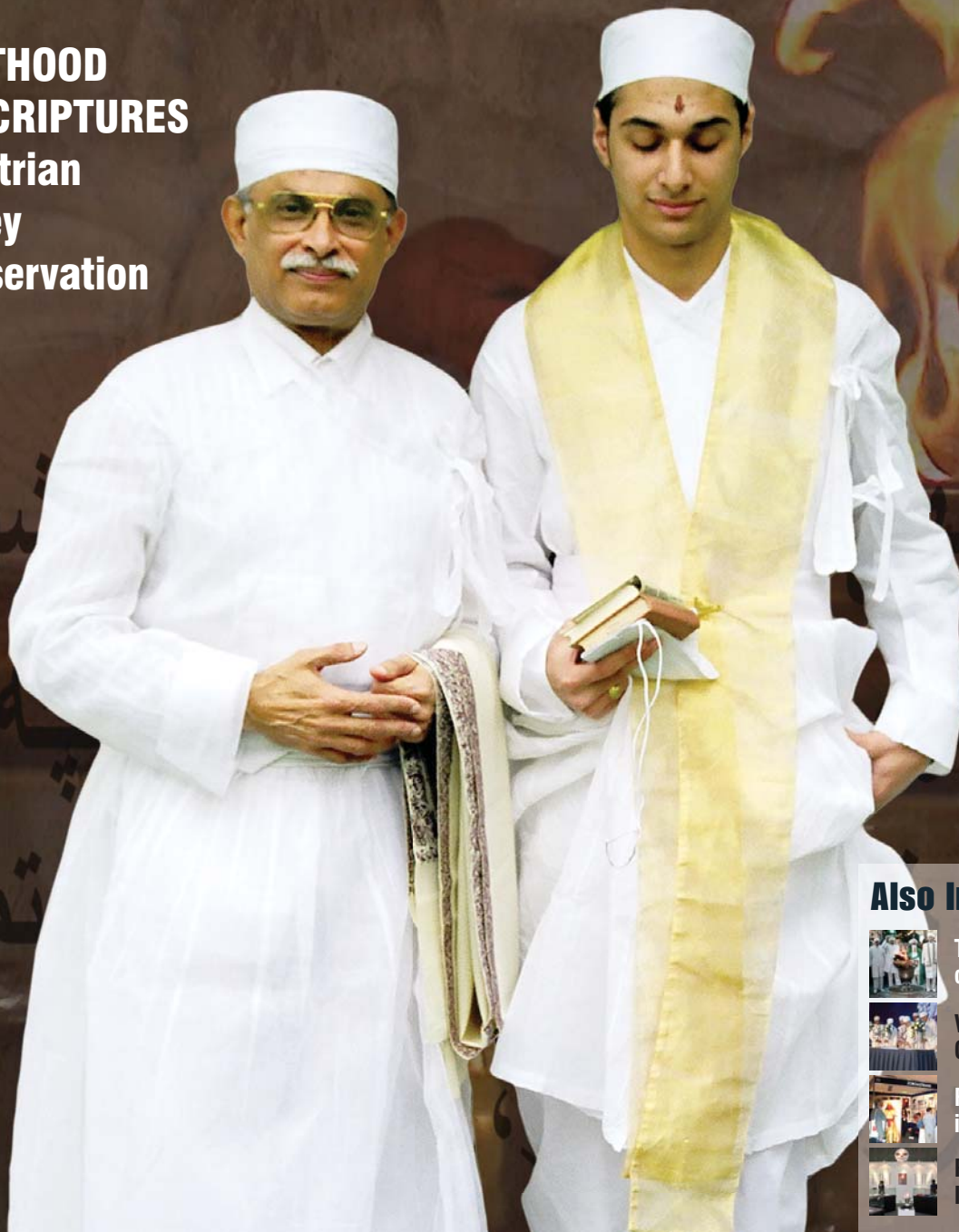
• Avan – Adar – Dae 1379 AY (Shenshai)

• Adar – Dae – Behman 1379 AY (Kadimi)

## NOROOZ PIROOZ BAD

## NOROOZ MUBARAK

### PRIESTHOOD AND SCRIPTURES Zoroastrian Odyssey to Preservation



### Also Inside:



The Iranian Ceremony of Nowe Zooty



World Zoroastrian Congress in Dubai



Religionists gather in Melbourne



PZAS-Singapore at Inter Religious event



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**Summer 2010**

The Zarathushti Diaspora  
**Guest Editor Deena Guzder**

FALL 2010  
**Global Health Perspectives**

Photo on cover:



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Lexicongraphics  
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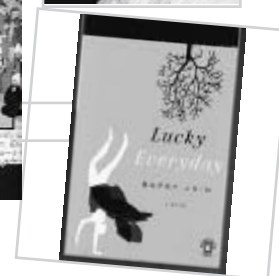
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**Opinions expressed in the FEZANA Journal do not necessarily reflect the views of FEZANA or members of this publication's editorial board.**

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# A word from the Editor

Dolly Dastoor

## A NEW BEGINNING

The year end 2009 was a triumphant one for Zarathushtis in the diaspora. I am delighted to report on the activities around the world in a short time span of one month: The Parliament of World's Religions, Melbourne, The China – Singapore Religious –Cultural Exhibition and the World Zoroastrian Congress, Dubai. In addition there were national awards from the Queen of England and the President of India.

I was humbled to witness the recognition afforded the community starting with the Parliament of World's Religions in Melbourne, December 2-9, 2009, where The Zoroastrian Association of Victoria under the leadership of Perviz Dubash and their President Sarosh Kariwala placed the Zarathushtis on the map. We saw people walking round with stickers which read "TODAY I MET A ZARATHUSHTI". Then the fravashis smiled on the Zarathushtis in Singapore where under the leadership of Russi Ghadiali, The Parsi Zoroastrian Association of Singapore had put together a tastefully decorated booth of Zarathushti artifacts at the China Singapore Religious and Cultural Exhibition December 16- 23. They had slotted two Zarathushti speakers as well, Farokh Vajifdar of London, and Dolly Dastoor of Montreal. Both at Melbourne and Singapore, the booths displayed an ingeniously made afarganyu set up with stack of sukhard to hid the battery operated tea lights that gave the effect of flickering flame. The effect was marvelous, attracting intrigued visitors who left with literature specially prepared for the occasion.

Then on to Dubai for the 9th World Zoroastrian Congress, December 27- 31 where the gods smiled on 750 Zarathushtis, who participated with good humor and camaraderie. And though we buried our heads in the sands of Dubai by not discussing "controversial" topics, but sphinx like we rose again with Sam Bulsara proposing, after consultation with the community through a survey, a blue print to be implemented in five years till we meet again in Mumbai. There was a lot of goodwill generated and a hesitant willingness to try new ways of behavior. It is hoped that this is a genuine desire to be "inclusive" rather than to be "politically correct". Hope the days of posturing are over and this seed of trust that was generated across the oceans, will germinate into a full-grown tree of communal respect for all branches of religious and social thoughts.

And the new year brought more good news for Zarathushtis. Cyrus Todiwala, the affable Chef of Spice Namaste was conferred with the OBE in the 2010 Queen's honors, and on the 2010 Republic Day of India the President of India announced the winners of India's highest awards where Anu Aga of Thermax India was awarded the Padma Shri and Dr Noshir Shroff, of Delhi,

the Padma Bhushan in the field of Medicine.

*Bravo Cyrus, Anu and Noshir.*

There is no dearth of talent and dynamism in the Zarathushti



community. Every year the spring issue of the Journal spotlights the winners of the different scholarships of FEZANA, The Congress Legacy 2000 in Houston, Chothia, Ahura, and Maseh. We are inspired by the achievements of the youth and are grateful to all who make it happen with their financial generosity. The future belongs to those who give the next generation reason to hope. And you give them hope by donating generously to the scholarship fund.

The spring issue of the Journal on *Priesthood and Scriptures Zoroastrian Odyssey to Preservation* has been crafted very lovingly and diligently by Ervads Soli Dastur and Jehan Bagli bringing to it their years of religious scholarship and their motivating the other mobeds and lay community members to contribute thought provoking articles in the five sections: 1 Priesthood 2 Scriptures 3 Preservation 4 Future and 5 Miscellaneous. We learn of the similarities and differences in the training and practice of priesthood in Iran and India, we learn of the new Mobedyar program and the enthusiasm with which men and woman are pursuing it, we learn of the preservation of scriptures from the Bronze Age to the Electronic Age and we learn of the loss of musicality in the recitation of our prayers. With this issue we are slowly building up a cadre of scholar mobeds to carry on the work of preservation through rituals and enlightened thought.

With the goal of transfer of knowledge, a complimentary copy of this keep sake coffee table FEZANA JOURNAL is being sent to all the mobeds of the Diaspora through the kind generosity of NAMC.

And as we enter 1379 AY I wish you and the community a new beginning of a glorious future based on mutual respect and trust for Zarathushtis living in all four corners of the world. May we continue to stoke the flames of Frashokerati. NooRooz Pirooz bad

# A Message from FEZANA President

## Wishing you a Very Happy and Prosperous NouRooz.

Congratulation to Dasturji Kaikhusro Navroz Dastoor on his appointment as the 17th Dastur Meherjirana as successor of Dasturji Meherji Dastur Kekobad.

Our heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the family and friends of Dasturji Meherji Dastur Kekobad Meherjirana Saheb. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

2009 came to an end with a big bang as we held the closing ceremony of the 9th World Zoroastrian Congress in Dubai.

With a total attendance of 750+ Zoroastrians at the congress the North American contingent of 200+ was the second largest following the 350+ attendees from India. The congress was quite successful with versatile speakers from all the continents of the world.

At the 2008 Houston Coming Together Round Table (CTR) conference there was some disagreement regarding the venue of the 10th World Zoroastrian Congress and I had suggested that The World Federations come together and appoint a committee to take a proper decision. I am happy to inform you that the CTR has now been handed over to a committee comprising of the four region elected representatives of BPP, ZTFE, FEZANA and Iran. The four region representatives have agreed to work together for the betterment of our community.

I am very happy at the progress the community elected representatives have made with this decision and also congratulate Mr. Rohinton Rivetna for his decision to hand over the CTR to the joint committee. I welcome the enthusiasm. I look forward to work with them for the greater good of our Zarathushti community and look forward to other regions like Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, etc following suit.

FEZANA has extended its full cooperation to all world community leaders. So far the four regions have agreed to work together without interfering in the working of other regions. We will be reconvening at the 15th NAZC in Houston.

Dinshaw Mehta (BPP) reiterated the importance of Hamazori. "We understand that we each have our own problems, we each have our own ideas".

Dr. Ekhtiyari (Iran) made a plea about "not forgetting our motherland," and the imperative to keep our language, culture and religion alive.

Paurushasp Jila (ZTFE) "It is a good outcome that the elected leaders from far and wide have decided to



come together," he said, "a very positive step that we have taken at this Congress."

Bomi Patel (FEZANA) reiterated that each Region has a diverse constituency of population, but we must work together. There will be changes in the working of the CTR, as we transition ownership of the CTR, to the Regions. So far we have agreed to "come together" and that we will not interfere in the working of each other's regions.

I also congratulate our N. American Youth for winning the second prize at the Youth Leadership Enhancement Program (YLEP) and Mrs. Meher Bhesania and her WZC team for organizing a successful congress. I hope the legacy programs continue throughout the next 4 years and at the 10th WZC which is to be held in Mumbai.

On the local front the 23rd FEZANA Annual General Meeting will be held on April 23-24, 2010, in Toronto and will be hosted by OZCF, and the 15th North American Congress hosted by ZAH will be held in Houston, December 29, 2010- January 1, 2011.

I thank the community and everyone who donated generously in response to the call given by the FEZANA Welfare Committee for individuals Critical Assistance and the Haiti Earthquake. I hope you will continue your support to FEZANA throughout the year.

Best Wishes,

**Bomi Patel, President**



## Priests and the Laity

The World Zoroastrian Congress in its Golden Jubilee Year was a forum where the laity articulated the need to support priests. At the Fifth Coming Together Roundtable, this was one item where consensus was reached by Zoroastrian leaders to work together. Should these intentions translate into action, it can become a legacy, a memorable footprint that we can leave in the sands of time.

A lack of respect for priests and lack of reasonable remuneration are cited as reasons for the steep decline in *mobedi* as a profession. Respect cannot be demanded, it has to be earned. Priests who serve at *navjotes*, weddings, funerals, *muktad*, *panjeh*; *gahambar*s; *jashans* do satisfy needs; but priests respected most are those who are knowledgeable and well versed in the scriptures not only of their own but of all faiths, and bring a measure of wisdom from their experiences in their discourse with the laity. The Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe [ZTFE] has been looking for such an individual for some time; is willing to pay a living wage to the right candidate, and is still looking. In North America we often see a scramble to fly in priests when faced with a death in the family. Those who cannot afford such costs make do with family members sobbing their grief into their family *Khordeh Avesta*. The problem of a lack of priests impacts Iran. I have the vivid memory of a young bachelor priest from India who was on “a contract” to earn his keep by caring for the fire at the Atash Behram in Yazd. His skills in the Farsi language were close to nil; indeed he was delighted to converse with a Parsi during the short visit. To say the least, he was quite miserable in his enforced exile. We wonder how effective he was in serving the needs of the Persian and Dari speaking Zoroastrians of Iran. Even in India, in small towns finding teams of priests to take care of the consecrated fires is a challenge. Denigrating priests for their beliefs with which we may not agree further compounds the problem.

### A LIVING WAGE

What has led us to this sorry pass? The problem has been in the making for decades, if not for a century. It will take a concerted, sustained collective effort to turn the situation around. The Zarathushti faith enjoins us to



## Behram Pastakia

procreate and have a family. Zoroastrian priests are encouraged to marry. Surely we as members of the laity have to recognize that there is a duty for us to provide a living wage, so that the children of priests can be well educated, that the housing, medical and societal needs of the priestly families are met. And yet the ground realities tell a different story. Many priests and specially the aged live in abject poverty. The spectacle of the well meaning Parsi Resource Group struggling to support the medical needs of the priests in India tells a vivid story of how as a community of entrepreneurs we have been found lacking. It is a matter of shame. In the west, we have been blessed by dedicated volunteer priests, who serve

out of love, sacrificing their weekends and holidays; living the meaning of the *ashem vohu* prayer, considering righteousness and righteous action as its own reward. Yet there is precious little support from the Zoroastrian laity in the west to financially support priests or priestly institutions.

### INFRASTRUCTURE

Discussions around the establishment of infrastructure in North America as the diaspora matures, focuses on constructing congregation halls, of places of worship, of creating Zoroastrian cemeteries or even exploring the feasibility of establishing a *dokhma*, but rarely heard is mention of building a place where resident priests could reside with family. The dream of establishing a Zoroastrian Seminary in North America remains unrealized – for lack of credible financial support. At the 9thWZC we heard a blow by blow account of how the Zartoshty Brothers from Canada, originally from Iran had supported the ZTFE in its quest for acquiring their new premises in Harrow, London; we have to thank Arbab Rustom Guiv of Iran for his foresight and magnanimity in sowing seeds with money carefully disbursed in establishing Dar-e-Mehrs where Zoroastrians have taken root abroad and call home. The quest is ongoing in establishing infrastructure to bind the Zarathushti Diaspora in Australasia. The question arises, where are the Zoroastrians from India with deep pockets, in playing a significant and not just a token role as this scenario unfolds in different parts of the globe?



# FEZANA Update

We know of non-Zoroastrians who have come forward with pledges of financial support to build Zoroastrian infrastructure on both coasts of the United States. When shall we start helping ourselves as a worldwide community without borders?

## GLIMMERS OF SUNSHINE

The solution for us is not only to use the Zoroastrian handshake, *Hama-zor-Bad – Hama-asho Bad*, (may we be united in strength, may we be united in righteousness!) at the conclusion of every congregational prayer, but to live it in practice. We already see glimmers of sunshine. The *Rivayats* of the current century, with electronically savvy Zarathushti priests from the western diaspora consulting in cyberspace with their peers in Iran, India and Pakistan augurs well for a comity of understanding leading to a constructive dialogue among the priests themselves. We look forward to the publication of the *Jamshedi Naurooz Prayers* in English, Persian and Gujarati, all in one place, arising out of such collaboration, to celebrate

together every year at the spring equinox. The family that prays together stays together! We should also be promoting meaningful dialogue between respected priests and the laity in preserving our heritage and culture for the next generation. Fifty years from now as the World Zoroastrian Congress is held, may those future participants, laity and priests alike, look back at this time and find that our Coming Together in harmonious thinking in Dubai was the progressive element in our collective quest for frashokerati and in preserving our faith and its traditions.

*Behram Pastakia is Chair of the Publications Committee of FEZANA*

January 23, 2010.

## NOTICE

### Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America The Twenty Third FEZANA Annual General Meeting (AGM). Friday April 23 – Sunday April 25, 2010

FEZANA Annual General Meeting will be held in OAKVILLE, ONTARIO on April 24 & 25, 2010. A formal agenda and other details outlining the timeline in the FEZANA Constitution will follow.

This notice is to facilitate members to make early travel plans, and for the host association, to plan the AGM event.

The meeting is hosted by OZCF and will be held at their new center at **1187 Burnhamthorpe Road East, Oakville, Ontario L6H 7B3**. Nearest major airport is in Toronto.

Please inform FEZANA Administrator, Zenobia Damania, [admin@fezana.org](mailto:admin@fezana.org) of your booking to enable a count of the number of delegates attending the AGM. Do indicate any dietary restrictions and if you are a vegetarian/non-vegetarian. This will assist the host in planning the Saturday dinner event.

#### AGM PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS IN BRIEF:

<b>Friday April 23, 2010</b>	<b>Open Forum (6:00 PM to 9:00 PM)</b>
<b>Saturday April 24, 2010 (DAY ONE)</b>	<b>AGM (8:30 AM to 5:00 PM)</b>
<b>Sunday April 25, 2010 (DAY TWO)</b>	<b>AGM (9:00 AM to 12:30 PM)</b>
<b>Afternoon Meeting (Tentative)</b>	<b>WZCC -Toronto Chapter (2:00 PM to 5:00 PM)</b>



The economic downturn has affected all of us individually and also it has had a devastating effect on FEZANA. We have seen fewer donations and support for the funds and programs carried out by FEZANA. However, without sufficient donations, FEZANA volunteers cannot

continue working to provide the services and support to our Zarathushti community. We urge you to send a donation to help FEZANA during these very difficult times.

Many times we overlooks those who are less fortunate and are unable to enjoy the basic amenities that many of us take for granted, Imagine how we would view life if we were unable to provide food or shelter for our children.

In 2009, many of us witnessed family members or friends lose their jobs and struggle to make ends meet. The current financial and job markets continue to challenge the unemployed and their future remains uncertain. Imagine what you would do if you were faced with the same ?

FEZANA is optimistic that with your help we will make a difference in peoples' lives,. a small donation can go a long way for those who are desperately in need. FEZANA is a voice for the less fortunate and we respectfully ask that you help us help them by making a donation to any one of the 17 FEZANA funds.

### General Fund

20th Anniversary Endowment Scholarship

20th Anniversary Infrastructure Fund

K Jungalwala (Wadia) Lecture Fund

ZYNA Sports Scholarship Fund

Academic Scholarship Fund

Religious Education Fund

Kheradi Endowment Scholarship Fund for Merit

Panthaky Endowment Scholarship Fund

Kapadia Endowment Scholarship Fund

Tamboli Endowment Fund for Welfare

Critical/Welfare Assistance Fund

ZYNA Performing and Creative Arts Scholarship

FundBhathena Endowment Fund for Critical Assistance

Moobed Faridoon Zardoshty Religious Education

Damkevala Endowment Fund for Welfare

Journal Fund

Due to the current economic climate, FEZANA is faced with a challenging future and the need to donate has never been more serious. Charitable contributions are down significantly throughout many philanthropic organizations and the need for help is reaching all time highs. This recipe spells disaster for the less fortunate and the time to act is now!

### FARESHTA CHALLENGE UPDATE.

As of December 31, 2009, the results of the Fareshta Challenge are as follows:

<b>Team 3</b> (ZAMWI, ZAF, AZA, ZA Virginia, Central Fl, ZATAMBAY)	<b>\$15,729.00</b>
<b>Team 4</b> (ZAH, ZANT, ZCAT, ZAK, ZANO, Z St. Louis)	<b>\$ 9,460.00</b>
<b>Team 6</b> (ZAA, ZSBC, ZANC, PZO, ZSWS)	<b>\$ 9,158.28,</b>
<b>Team 2</b> (ZAGBA, ZAPANJ, ZAGNY, IZA, ZAPA)	<b>\$ 7,050.00</b>
<b>Team 7</b> (ZCZ, TMZA, ZAC, San Diego, ZAAZ)	<b>\$ 3,704/00</b>
<b>Team 5</b> (ZAC-Chicago, ZAKOI, ZAOM, ZARM, MZC)	<b>\$ 615.00.</b>
<b>Team 1</b> (OZCF, CZO, ZAQ, ZAAC, Z Cleveland)	<b>\$ 140 00</b>

Please remember we are only halfway through the **FARESHTA** Challenge and all the associations still have time to climb the ladder and be the winner. The results of this competition will be announced in December 2010 when the members of the leading team will be awarded plaques at the North American Congress in Houston, Texas.

Become a **"FARESHTA"** and help those less fortunate.

Your generous donation will help to support the FEZANA Funds and programs at this time. All donations are fully tax deductible. Kindly make your check payable to FEZANA, indicate the fund you wish to support and mail to: Katayun Kapadia, **FEZANA Treasurer, 33 Preamble Drive, Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054.** Online donations can be made at [www.FEZANA.org](http://www.FEZANA.org).

May Ahura Mazda bless you and your family with good health and happiness during the Norooz season.

**Jerry Kheradi, MD, FACG**

**Chairperson FEZANA Funds and Finance Committee;**

**Co-Chair Katayun Kapadia, FEZANA Treasurer, Committee: Morvarid Behziz, M.Ed;**

**Sassan Nadjmi, DMD, FACP, Celeste Kheradi**

# FINANCIAL PROGRESS REPORT

FEZANA Updates



## FEZANA

### List of Donations received July 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009

FEZANA GENERAL FUND		FEZANA CRITICAL ASSISTANCE FUND	
Jimmy Dholoo, Gaithersburg, MD	\$ 301.00	Beach Cigar Group, Miami, FL	\$ 3,000.00
Parvez Guzdar, Columbia, MD	\$ 101.00	Beach Cigar Group, Miami, FL	\$ 2,500.00
Aspi Bharucha	\$ 100.00	Beach Cigar Group, Miami, FL	\$ 2,000.00
Mr. & Mrs. Adi Dutia, Huntsville, AL	\$ 100.00	Porus Austin, Stockton, CA	\$ 1,000.00
Pesi Sanjana, Farmington Hills, MI	\$ 100.00	Sanober & Aderbad Tamboli, Sugar Land, TX	\$ 1,000.00
Hoshang Shroff, Vancouver, BC, Canada	\$ 100.00	Farieda & Behram Irani, Plano, TX	\$ 500.00
Hoshang Khambatta, San Diego, CA	\$ 60.00	Keky Dastur, Karachi	\$ 100.00
Simin & Parviz Ardeshipour, Irvine, CA	\$ 51.00	Nari Dastur, Cheshire, CT	\$ 100.00
Khurshed Tengra, Boise, ID	\$ 50.00	Neville Patel, Modesto, CA	\$ 100.00
Mr. & Mrs. J. Zartoshty, San Diego, CA	\$ 50.00	Siaivos Noruziaan, Kanata, ON, Canada	\$ 90.00
Sunny Deboo, Laguna Niguel, CA	\$ 30.00	Lovji Cama, Tenafly, NJ	\$ 56.00
Spenta Irani, Plano, TX	\$ 30.00	Dinyar Amrolia, Calgary, AB, Canada	\$ 50.00
Noshir Motivala, Nashua, NH	\$ 25.00	Jeroo & Darius Captain, Granite Bay, CA	\$ 50.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 1,098.00</b>	Kersi Harda, Weehawken, NJ	\$ 50.00
FEZANA WELFARE FUND		FEZANA ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP FUND	
Cyrus Austin, Chandler, AZ	\$ 1,500.00	Ratan Vakil, Carrollton, TX	\$ 31.00
Sanober & Aderbad Tamboli, Sugar Land, TX	\$ 1,250.00	Ardeshir Damania, Woodland, CA	\$ 30.00
Farieda & Behram Irani, Plano, TX	\$ 500.00	Freddy Engineer, San Jose, CA	\$ 30.00
Mahrukh & Maneck Bhujwala, Huntington Beach, CA	\$ 100.00	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 10,737.00</b>
Adi, Pervin, Binaifer, Rashne, Tamina Davar, Falls Church, VA	\$ 100.00	FEZANA RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FUND	
Aloo & Tehmtan Mistry	\$ 50.00	Dinyar Karai, Mumbai, India	\$ 2,000.00
Khurshed Tengra, Boise, ID	\$ 50.00	Rastin Mehri, Burnaby, BC, Canada (C\$2,000)	\$ 1,822.00
Farhad Cama, Pittsburgh, PA	\$ 25.00	Anahita & Firoze Sidhwa, Coppell, TX	\$ 1,001.00
Zal Parakh, Irving, TX	\$ 501.00	Sanober & Aderbad Tamboli, Sugar Land, TX	\$ 500.00
Kali Buhariwalla, Flower Mound, TX	\$ 500.00	Mahrukh & Sorab Panday, Herndon, VA	\$ 200.00
Dinyar Kavouspour, Plano, TX	\$ 500.00	Mahrukh & Sorab Panday, Herndon, VA	\$ 200.00
S.B. International, Inc. Dallas, TX	\$ 251.00	Simin & Parviz Ardeshipour, Irvine, CA	\$ 50.00
Sanober & Aderbad Tamboli, Sugar Land, TX	\$ 250.00	Jeroo & Darius Captain, Granite Bay, CA	\$ 50.00
Farieda & Behram Irani, Plano, TX	\$ 200.00	Adi, Pervin, Binaifer, Rashne, Tamina Davar, Falls Church, VA	\$ 100.00
Fareed Khan, Bellaire, TX	\$ 150.00	Gooloo Wunderlich, Annandale, VA	\$ 50.00
Delna & Boman Godiwalla, Carrollton, TX	\$ 101.00	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 5,973.00</b>
Bahman Kaviani, Colleyville, TX	\$ 101.00	FEZANA JOURNAL	
Roya Kaviani Bidanjiry, Grapevine, TX	\$ 101.00	Jamshed Dastur, Newport Beach, CA	\$ 75.00
Rustom Anklesaria, Pearland, TX	\$ 100.00	Khushroo Daruwala, Bothell, WA	\$ 51.00
Persis & Naozer Behramsha, Houston, TX	\$ 100.00	Freny Deboo, Deerfield Beach, FL	\$ 50.00
Kambiz Behroozi, Irving, TX	\$ 100.00	Gooloo Wunderlich, Annandale, VA	\$ 50.00
Gity Hormozdian, Sugar Land, TX	\$ 100.00	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 226.00</b>
Minoo Italia, Houston, TX	\$ 100.00	FEZANA CREATIVE & PERFORMING SCHOLARSHIP	
Mitra Partow-Soroushi, Plano, TX	\$ 100.00	Mahrukh & Sorab Panday, Herndon, VA	\$ 200.00
Nazneen & Mehelie Warden, Sugar Land, TX	\$ 100.00	Mahrukh & Sorab Panday, Herndon, VA	\$ 200.00
Homa Kahl, Plano, TX	\$ 60.00	Sorab Modi, Washington, DC	\$ 101.00
Spenta & Delnaaz Irani, Plano, TX	\$ 51.00	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 501.00</b>
Behram Allahabad, Canoga Park, CA	\$ 50.00	FEZANA KHERADI SCHOLARSHIP FUND	
Perzad Avari, Irving, TX	\$ 50.00	Jerry & Celeste Kheradi, N. Providence, RI	\$ 4,000.00
Percy Behramsha, Houston, TX	\$ 50.00	Matthew Lungen, Cranston, RI	\$ 100.00
Kamran Behroozi, Flower Mound, TX	\$ 50.00	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 4,100.00</b>
A.R. & Lilian Aranha-Desai, Sugar Land, TX	\$ 50.00	FEZANA 20TH ANNIVERSARY INFRASTRUCTURE	
Cyrus Irani, Houston, TX	\$ 50.00	Jimmy Dholoo, Gaithersburg, MD	\$ 201.00
Gulshan Sunavala, Shreveport, LA	\$ 50.00	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 201.00</b>
Freddy Engineer, San Jose, CA	\$ 30.00	KHORSHED JUNGLEWALA FUND	
Darius Shroff, Carrollton, TX	\$ 30.00	B.M. Ghadiali	\$ 500.00
Niloufer Bustani, Murphy, TX	\$ 25.00	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 500.00</b>
Jamshed Dudha, Houston, TX	\$ 25.00	GRAND TOTAL	
Arnavaz Adil Godiwalla, Spring, TX	\$ 25.00	<b>\$ 31,413.00</b>	
Shahryar Irani, Irving, TX	\$ 21.00		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 7,547.00</b>		





## APPEAL FOR DONATION FOR A YOUNG CANCER PATIENT IN DALLAS

A young Zarathushti mother of one daughter, has been suffering from left middle cranial-fossa (brain tumor) which was partially excised on December 23, 2009, at the South Western Medical Center, requiring 8-10 weeks of rehabilitation.

Her medical bills are putting a big financial burden on the family as she had large deductibles and co-pays, plus her husband is not covered by any other medical insurance plan.

Any assistance from the community will be much appreciated by the family.

Please make check payable to

**“FEZANA Welfare Fund” with a foot note -- “Dallas Cancer Patient” and mail to:**

**Mrs. Katayun Kapadia – FEZANA Treasurer, 33 Preamble Drive, Mount Laurel, NJ 08054, USA. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION YOU MAY CONTACT FIRDOSH MEHTA  
Tel 817 599 9609 or fdjmehta@charter.net**

### SUPPORT FOR THE HAITI AND CHILE EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS:

The FEZANA Welfare Committee & Critical Assistance Subcommittee is supporting the victims of the earthquake in Haiti and Chile. Although we have not been advised of any Zarathushti families requiring immediate aid, we do feel that our intervention is required.

There are many organizations doing great work in Haiti, and Chile such as UNICEF and although we are looking at partnering with their efforts, we have also investigated and are looking to support **“The Shelter Box”** program. Each Shelter Box costs \$1,000 and according to Leslie Diefenbach Hall, communications manager for the program, “A Shelter Box will provide for a family of up to ten and includes a tent, water purification equipment, blankets, a cook stove, a tool kit, a children’s pack, mosquito nets, and other ancillary equipment. We anticipate the box and equipment will be used for up to 6 months – though in many cases this tent becomes a more permanent home. We’ve documented tents being used up to two years!”

As always we have done our due diligence and feel confident that we have formed

partnerships with reputable Haitian aid organizations. Please donate whatever amount you feel is appropriate, we will group funds together for boxes or will make a joint donation as appropriate to families and other organizations. We request you to please donate generously, trust that your contributions will be used wisely and share your charitable spirit with these innocent victims.

On line donations are now accepted at [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org) On the left panel, under the FUNDS menu, please click on “Donate Online,” select “Welfare & Critical Assistance,” and “Disaster Relief.”

Please mail your US dollar checks payable to:

**‘FEZANA WELFARE’**

**marked Haitian or Chile Victims Fund**

Attention: Katayun Kapadia ;

33 Preamble Drive; Mount Laurel; N. J. 08054

**For more information contact:**

*Hosi Mehta* at [hosimehta@aol.com](mailto:hosimehta@aol.com) or Tel 630-279-0566, *Houtoxi Contractor* at [HFMC31@aol.com](mailto:HFMC31@aol.com) or Tel 412-367-2948, *Freyaz Shroff* at [freyaz@aol.com](mailto:freyaz@aol.com) or Tel +91-98922-73973 (Mumbai)

## Zarthoshti Anjuman of Northern California (ZANC) Celebrates 25 Years in the San Francisco Bay Area

A full house with nearly 180 persons- gathered in the Ballroom of the Holiday Inn in San Jose- owned by a Zarathushti, Mr.Mobedshahi, to celebrate ZANC's 25 years of official existence. Though there was an association formed in 1980, called the Zoroastrian Association, it was on Nov 5, 1984 that it was officially registered with the State of California as the Zarthoshti Anjuman of Northern California.

The program started with welcome reception and cocktails, after which everyone moved into the ballroom for the official event. The program started with a benediction from our Dastur, Er. Kobad Jamshed, who recited the prayers for the well being and happiness of the community. The President of ZANC, Nazneen Spliedt welcomed the guests and thanked the members, specially the past presidents, and the original founder members, some of whom had traveled long distances to be there.



*Present and past presidents of ZANC left to right: Nazneen Spliedt, Bomi Patel, Dairus Captain, Maneck Bhujwalla, Dhun Engineer, Jijibhoy Patel, Feroze Bhandara, Erach Tarapore. Not present: Peshoton Irani and the late Jimmy Makujina*

The program included a power point presentation charting the highlights of ZANC's history, with its ups and downs . Most of the founding members with their families were present and they were honored and recognized for their contributions with certificates of appreciation, while they recounted some of the stories of the trials, tribulations and fun times of the early years!

Our ladies chorus, led by Annahita Jasavala, with musical accompaniment of Tasha Mistri, performed "Our Heritage" song .Our youth members performed solos and entertained us with their singing skills- among them Dina Marawala, Zubin Dumasia and Farita.

After a buffet dinner, catered by an Afghan restaurant, Maharukh Driver led the ladies in a parade of garas and traditional saris, which everyone had been asked to wear. Music and dancing followed.

## Zarthoshti Anjuman of Northern California (ZANC) Celebrates 25 Years in the San Francisco Bay Area



The next day, a celebratory jashan was held at the San Jose Dar-e-mehr, conducted by our priests and our newest young ervad- Rustom Chhor. (from left Ervad Kobad Jamshed, Ervad Rustom Chhor, Mobedyar Manek Bhujwala). The Atash kadeh was beautifully decorated with fresh flowers, flower torans and chalk ( rangoli) and as our priest's chants reverberated over the hills , on a beautiful sunny Sunday- an only in California kind of day , we gave thanks to Ahura Mazda for all the blessings showered on our community.

No Parsi event can end without food – and a biryani lunch was served, followed by traditional desserts of sev and rawo brought by members of the community.

*Photo credits to: Kainaz Amaria, Bapsy Vaid*





# Calendar of Festivals

Calendar of Festivities March 2009 to September 2009

## Fravardegan/Panjeh/Hamaspathmedayem Gahambar

*Five Gatha Days*

Tuesday, March 16- Saturday, March 20 (F)

## Char-Shambe Soori (Heralding the New Year)

*Tuesday Prior to Naurooz*

Wednesday, March 17 (F)

## NauRooz or Jamshedi NauRooz (New Year)

*Mah Fravardin, Roz Hormazd*

Sunday, March 21 (F)

## Khordad Sal (Birth anniversary of Asho Zarathushtra)

*Mah Fravardin, Roz Khorshed*

Friday, March 26, (F)

## Pir e Herisht Festival

*Mah Fravardin, Roz Amardad-Khorshed*

Saturday, March 27-Wednesday March 31 (F)

## Ava Ardivisoor nu Parab

*Mah Avan, Roz Avan*

Wednesday, February 24, (K)

Friday, March 26, (S)

## Fravardegan (Remembrance of the Departed)

*Mah Fravardin, Roz Fravardin*

Thursday, April. 8. (F)

## Jashne Ardibeshtgan

*Mah Ardibesht, Roz Ardibesht*

Thursday, April, 22. (F)

## Atash-nu-Parab

*Mah Adar, Roz Adar,*

Thursday, March 25 (K)

Saturday, April, 24 (S)

## Maidyozarem Gahambar

*Mah Ardibesht, Roz Khorshed-Dae-pa-Meher*

Friday, April 30- Tuesday, May 4 (F)

## Zarathusht-no-Diso (Death anniversary of Asho Zarathushtra)

*Mah Dae, Roz, Khorshed*

Monday, April, 26, (K)

Wednesday, May, 26 (S)

## Dae Mah nu Jashan

*Mah Dae, Roz Fravardin*

Tuesday, May, 4 (K)

Thursday, June, 3 (S)

## Maidhyarem Gahambar

*Mah Dae, Roz Meher-Bahram*

Saturday, May1-Wednesday, May 5 (K)

Monday, May 31-Friday, June 4 (S)

## Pir-e-Sabz Festival

*Mah Khordad, Roz Ashtad-Aneran*

Monday, June 14 - Friday, June 18. (F)

## Pir-e-Banu Festival

*Mah Tir, Roz Meher-Bahram*

Sunday, July 4 - Thursday July 8 (F)

## Maidyoshem Gahambar

*Mah Tir, Roz Khorshed-Dae pa-Meher*

Tuesday, June 29-Saturday July 3 (F)

## Jashne Tirgan

*Mah Tir, Roz Tir*

Thursday, July 1, (F)

## Fravardegan/Muktad/Hamaspathmedayem Gahambar

*Five Gatha Days*

Thursday July 15- Monday, July 19 (K)

Saturday, August 14-Wednesday, August 18 (Pateti) (S)

## NauRooz

*Mah Fravadin, Roz Hormazd*

Tuesday, July 20 (K)

Thursday, August 19 (S)

## Khordad Sal (Birth anniversary of Zarathushtra)

*Mah Fravardin, Roz Khordad*

Sunday, July 25 (K)

Tuesday, August, 24 (S)

## Fravardian Jashan

*Mah Fravardin, Roz Fravardin*

Saturday, August 7, (K)

Monday, September, 6 (S)

F=(Fasli), S=(Shenshai), K=(Kadmi)



## FIFTEENTH NORTH AMERICAN ZARATHUSHTI CONGRESS DECEMBER 29, 2010 – JANUARY 1, 2011

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#### ZAH WEBSITE

THE CONGRESS WILL BE HELD AT INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL. ROOMS AT USD\$ 89.00 + TAX FOR QUAD OCCUPANCY. EARLY REGISTRATION AVAILABLE. SEE REGISTRATION FORM.



FIFTEENTH NORTH AMERICAN ZARATHUSHTI CONGRESS  
DECEMBER 29, 2010 – JANUARY 1, 2011

PRESERVE! PROTECT! PERFECT!  
"PRESERVE THE PAST, PROTECT THE PRESENT, AND PERFECT THE FUTURE"

**Registration Form**

	Attendee 1	Attendee 2	Attendee 3	Attendee 4
<b>First Name</b>				
<b>Last Name</b>				
<b>Gender</b>	Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>	Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>	Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>	Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Age group as of Dec 1, 2010 (please check appropriate box)</b>				
Under 16	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16-30 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31-65 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
66 & above	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Personal details</b>				
<b>Address</b>				
<b>City</b>				
<b>State</b>				
<b>Zip Code</b>				
<b>Country</b>				
<b>Home Phone</b>				
<b>Cell Phone</b>				
<b>Email</b>				
<b>Emergency contact &amp; Phone #</b>				
<b>Registration options (please refer to page 2 and enter appropriate amounts below)</b>				
<b>Registration package (see rates on Page 2)</b>	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>Parsi Gujarati Natak by Nozer Buchia; music by Adi Tamboli (Dec 30) Snacks \$30.00</b>	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>Total</b>	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>Grand Total for all attendees</b>				\$
<b>Meal preference</b>	Veg <input type="checkbox"/> Non-veg <input type="checkbox"/>	Veg <input type="checkbox"/> Non-veg <input type="checkbox"/>	Veg <input type="checkbox"/> Non-veg <input type="checkbox"/>	Veg <input type="checkbox"/> Non-veg <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Credit Card Information</b>				
<b>Card Type (Visa or MasterCard only):</b>	Visa <input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard <input type="checkbox"/>			
<b>Cardholder Name:</b>				
<b>Card Number:</b>				
<b>Security code:</b>			<b>Expiration date:</b>	
<b>Total amount to be charged</b>	\$			
<b>Cardholder Signature:</b>				

## Registration Package Rates (US\$):

Included with registration: 2 daily coffee breaks; 2 lunches (Dec 29 and 30); 2 dinners (Dec 29 and 31).  
Does not include breakfast on any day, dinner on Dec 30, or lunch on Dec 31.

	Under 16 (accompanied by adult)	16-30 years	31-65 years	66 and above
Early bird (upto June 30, 2010)	150	225	250	225
Regular (Jul 1, 2010 - Oct 31, 2010)	175	250	275	250
Late (Nov 1, 2010 - Dec 24, 2010)	225	275	325	275
After Dec 24, 2010	500	500	500	500

## Instructions

Direct all inquiries to:

NAZC2010.Registration@zah.org or call

Hoshang Sethna (1-281-499-1832) or Manek Nariman (1-281-313-2654)

Mail completed forms with credit card information or check to:

Roshan Engineer, 8910 Four Leaf Drive, Sugar Land, TX 77479 or

Fax completed form with credit card information to 1-281-763-2623

## Accommodation information

Intercontinental Houston 2222 W. Loop-South, Houston, TX, 77027 1-713-627-7600

Reservations to be made directly with the hotel - use code FV9 to get NAZC negotiated rate of US\$89+tax for upto 4 person occupancy.

## Cancellation Policy:

Cancellations before Nov 28, 2010 will incur a 10% penalty.

No refunds after Nov 28, 2010.

Refund checks mailed 30-45 days after event.

- Registration and admission to the event are subject to availability.
- ZAH reserves the right to cancel the event in case of inadequate interest or circumstances beyond its reasonable control.
- ZAH is not responsible for hotel reservations and accommodation. Registrants are advised to handle these independently.
- ZAH is not responsible for any issues that the registrants may have with the hotel authorities.

### **SOCIETY OF SCHOLARS IN ZOROASTRIANISM ( SSZ CONFERENCE)**

**ARBAB RUSTAM GUIV DARBE MEHR, CHICAGO**

**JUNE 26-27, 2010**

**PRESENTERS** (Tentative) PROF H.HUMBACH; DR W. MALANDRA; DR P. ICHAPORIA;

DR M.STRAUSBERG; DR C. CERETI; ERVAD P.BAJAN; K. BHOTE

**CONTACT** ROHINTON RIVETNA rivetna@aol.com; PALLON ICHAPORIA kerfegar@aol.com;

KAYOMARSH MEHTA kayomehta@aol.com



## COMING EVENTS

**MARCH 2010, COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, FIFTY-FOURTH SESSION**, United Nations Headquarters, New York. (March 1-12, 2010) Contact: Afreed Mistry [afreed.mistry@gmail.com](mailto:afreed.mistry@gmail.com), Co-Chair FEZANA UN-NGO committee

**APRIL 2010 23rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, FEZANA** April 24 - 25, 2010, hosted by OZCF, Toronto, Contact [admin@fezana.org](mailto:admin@fezana.org)

**AUGUST 2010 63rd Annual UN DPI /NGO Conference** Monday, 30 August, to Wednesday, 1 September, 2010, at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Center (<http://www.mcec.com.au/>) in Melbourne, Australia. Theme of the conference; Global Health. Contact: Co-Chairs FEZANA UN-NGO Committee Afreed Mistry [afreed.mistry@gmail.com](mailto:afreed.mistry@gmail.com), [homidgandhi@gmail.com](mailto:homidgandhi@gmail.com), [bpastakia@aol.com](mailto:bpastakia@aol.com)

**JULY 2010, 12th ZARATHUSHTI GAMES**, California State University Long Beach, California. July 1-5, 2010. Registration [www.zathletics.com](http://www.zathletics.com). Information [zsc@fezana.org](mailto:zsc@fezana.org)



**DECEMBER 2010, FIFTEENTH N. AMERICAN Z CONGRESS** HOUSTON, TX. *Preserve, Protect and Perfect*, Hotel Intercontinental, December 29 to January 1, 2011, [www.zah.org](http://www.zah.org)

**APRIL 2011, WZCC ANNUAL MEETING, TEHRAN, IRAN**

**JULY 2011, FIFTH WORLD ZOROASTRIAN YOUTH CONGRESS, VANCOUVER, BC** July 1-4 2011 [Congress2011@hotmail.com](mailto:Congress2011@hotmail.com)

**APRIL 2012 FIRST ZOROASTRIAN MOBEDS AND SCHOLARS INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS**, Tehran, Iran. Contact: Mobed Firouzgary (for Mobeds) and Dr Farzaneh Goshatasbour (for Scholars) [Fezana Journal - Vol 23 No 2 page 127]

**AUGUST 2012, SIXTEENTH NORTH AMERICAN Z CONGRESS NEW YORK**, August 2-5, 2012. *Zarathushti Existence in the Contemporary World* [www.zagny.org](http://www.zagny.org)

**2012 FEZANA SILVER JUBILEE**

### DESIGN A LOGO

**FOR THE XVth NORTH AMERICAN ZARATHUSHTI CONGRESS AUGUST 2-5 2012 "Zarathushti Existence in the Contemporary World".**

The logo should be a unique design incorporating representation of the theme

Submission in JPEG file with a brief description of the representation

Keep it simple.- not more than 2-3 colors, but should work in black and white as well, scalable to any size without losing image quality or visual impact.

Typography is crucial, font's legibility must be of primary concern.

A witty slogan or tag line can complement your logo imparting a sense of personality.

The logo will be used on all publicity materials including the program for this event.

The winner will be selected by the Public Relations Committee in consultation with the ZAGNY Board. The winner will receive recognition in the event program. All submitted entries will be retained by the ZAGNY Board.

Each contestant may submit up to three different creations.

*The submissions should be sent by 30th June 2010 to*

Homi Gandhi at [homidgandhi@gmail.com](mailto:homidgandhi@gmail.com) Public Relations Committee





## READ ME

[www.zathletics.com](http://www.zathletics.com)

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**12th Zoroastrian Games**  
**4th of July Weekend 2010**  
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email: [zsc@fezana.org](mailto:zsc@fezana.org)



### Religionists gather in Melbourne to Heal the World

Over three thousand people from all over the world gathered in early December of 2009 in Melbourne, Australia to discuss worldly and spiritual matters under the umbrella of the Parliament of World's Religions (PWR). Majority of the sessions were planned keeping in line with the theme of the conference, **Healing Each Other, Healing the World**. Sessions addressing impact of Climate Change on air, water and land, and issues of



Religions represented at the Melbourne PWR ranged from the traditional as in, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Zoroastrian, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain, Bahai to Pagan, Scientology, New Age, indigenous, etc. Some secular and even atheists were present, both, as presenters and in the audience. The Zarathushti choir group of all ages led by Ervad Kaivan Antia recited the Ashem Vohu and Yatha Ahu Variayo prayers in unison preceded by Orchestra performing "Also Sprach Zarathushtra" by R. Strauss



One could feel the spiritual energy in the atmosphere of the Melbourne Convention Centre, especially in the Exhibition Hall. Sects of different faiths and practices had set up booths here. One could experience healing energy at a Japanese Buddhist healing sect; checkout the elaborate Sikh exhibit explaining the beliefs and traditions of the faith; have the Scientologist test a person on stress and aggression or savor a cup of Iranian tea and sweets at the Islamic Republic of Iran's booth; window shop and buy Australian Opals and Aboriginal made boomerangs, musical instruments and other artifacts. The members of the Zoroastrian Association of Victoria (ZAV) had diligently designed a collage from Zoroastrian scriptures, history and architecture and its members enthusiastically answered queries of the conference attendees. (photos 1, 3 4, page 18)

Each morning, a major religion had organized prayer sessions where they demonstrated their prayer rituals.



Indigenous People in different parts of the world dominated the program. Both these two dominant topics are currently of a great concern to the PWR host country. Today Australia is struggling through the fifth year of a drought; and coming to terms with its blood-stained history of the Australian Aboriginal holocaust and penal colonies.



# WORLD EVENTS PWR MELBOURNE



Panel on Zoroastrianism and Ecology, from left Rashna Ghadialy; Homi Gandhi; Pervin Mistry Homi Dhalla, moderator Rohinton Rivetna

Panel on Zoroastrianism and Bridge Building from left Perviz Dubash, Dolly Dastoor, Sam Kerr moderator Amavaz Chubb; Kayzad Namdarian



The Zarathushtis demonstrated the traditional tying of the Kusti with prayers and a mock Jashan. led by Ervad Armin Dumasia and Ervad Kaivan Antia. The explanation of the



jashan was provided by Arnavaz Chubb of the host association (photo 5 and 6 left)

Other faiths too had morning meditation and prayer sessions. The prayer sessions were followed by conference theme sessions and films on related topics. World Peace and/or lack of it, was also a major theme

it, was also a major theme of many presentations and speakers, including Dr. Homi Dhalla, a well-known Zarathushti scholar from Mumbai. The Zarathushti panels and discussions on Zoroastrianism and the Ecology, and



Zoroastrianism and Bridge Building were very well attended and generated healthy discussion and numerous questions from the audience. I had the honor of being one of the speakers on the Ecology panel and hope that panels on this critical topic in today's world are organized all over the Zoroastrian world.

The evening plenary sessions were filled with art, verse, music and dance; again ranging from the traditional, hip hop to indigenous. The international orchestra and choir along with the Aboriginal musicians playing their musical wind instrument the Didjeridoo entertained the audience. (photo left) The Aboriginal music although simple yet deep and profound, demonstrated the sounds of the land and a reminder of their ancestral spirits. The indigenous sand –drawing artist on stage, Stephanos Eleftheriadis created on-the-spot images on screen as each faith or indigenous group rendered their piece, painting murals depicting the Creator's creations and attributions added to the visual impact of our PWR conference experience. Traditional Eastern, and African dances, Hindu Bhajans, Buddhist gongs and drums, Islamic Naat and Rap, Jewish Hebrew Songs, Christian Sacred Music, Zoroastrian Prayers all wove together the rich religious traditions practiced in our present day world.

Each faith participating in the PWR had organized a community night for conference participants. The ZAV on behalf of the Zoroastrians too had organized a very enjoyable function portraying talents of their choir, drama club and children, followed by a delicious Parsee dinner including lagan nu custard. The Zoroastrian Community night served as a meet and greet outlet for the overseas Zoroastrian conference attendees and the ZAV community and an opportunity to develop friendships with our co-religionists in Melbourne.

After a week of discussions and entertainment, we were revved up for the grand finale, a speech by the Dalai Lama before bidding farewell. At the Closing Ceremony, Aboriginal elder Auntie Joy, Senior Woman of the Wurundjeri People, greeted the Dalai Lama with native



gifts of a piece of possum fur and a branch of euclyptus leaves. Her group is known as the traditional owners of the Melbourne area. Earlier, she had given an official welcome, and spoke movingly of the need to preserve the Earth for our descendants. The Dalai Lama in his brief, yet fitting message, urged the conference attendees and all religionists to reach out to secular people and not try to convert them to their own religion, rather work with them to solve problems facing human kind. The Dalai Lama challenged those who had attended the PWR to work to ensure that the gathering had not simply been a social occasion. He urged them to draw closer together to make love and compassion real, and to implement the dreams and possibilities that had been discussed there. He spoke of the need for a strong secularism- not a secularism that denies the importance of religion, but one which respects the practitioners of all religions and of none. Beliefs may differ, he said, but the core practices of love and compassion are common in all traditions.


Overall, the conference served the secular host country well. Most Australians, today, consider themselves secular, yet they reside on ancient land of many indigenous religions. The PWR was a reminder of this ancient history. It contributed towards accepting this past and giving the Aboriginal People a voice in mainstream Australian dialog. On a personal level, participating at the Parliament of World's Religions Conference in Melbourne served towards a growth in my personal journey of life. I was touched by the Australian friendliness and hospitality, and the enthusiasm and openness of the participants in learning about religions of the world. It also acted as a reminder of the indigenous Zarathushtis living in small towns and villages of Iran, minding the ancient fires which we in the western world seem to neglect.

**Editor's Note:** *Full credit for the conceptualization, organization and implementation of the Zarathushti presence at the World Parliament of Religions must be given to Perviz and Nergish Dubash. They, together with Arnavaz Chubb and Adil Dubash and with the able support of the Zoroastrian Association of Victoria created a positive image and memories of the Zarathushtis for all attendees of the congress. Thank you Perviz and thank you ZAV. Zarathushtis world over, owe you a debt of gratitude*

**Photo credit, Rashna Ghadialy, Sam Kerr, Dolly Dastoor, Ray Messner( PWR website).**

Rashna Ghadialy is a demographer, environmentalist and Reiki practitioner residing in Chicago, Illinois. She is an active member of interfaith groups serving as stewards for the environment. Her interests include permaculture and corporate sustainability reporting. She believes that good and truth triumph over all.







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**Zarathushtis in their traditional dress**

- 1 Sam Kerr and Dolly Pochkhanawala
- 2 Jezil Amalsadiwala; Manashni Mirza, Fezan Antia
- 3 Nergish and Perviz Dubash
- 4 Arnavaz and Aspi Chubb
- 5 Havovi Antia and Anahita Mirza
- 6 Rohinton and Roshan Rivetna
- 7 Ervad Kaivan Antia and Ervad Armin Dumasia





## Reflections on the Parliament of World's Religions (PWR) Melbourne, Australia, December 3-9, 2009



*The organizers of the Zarathushti presence at the Melbourne, Convention Centre for the World Parliament of Religions.*

*From left Perviz Dubash, Arnavaz Chubb; Adil Dubash*

### PERVIZ DUBASH, ZAV, MELBOURNE

#### UNI-VERSE

The Parliament of World's Religions (2009) was a 'joy-filled' event. One could not help but feel a bond of unity amongst the diversity of faiths. In some mystical way one could sense the 'living-vibrancy' of unity in diversity. It was as if diversity was the inherent constitution of unity. It was as if the cord between Divinity and humanity was made of threads of diversity.

Man, at the present stage of evolution, considers the diversity of faiths as the bane of humanity. But I see it, nay! I feel it, as the redeemer of humanity. One Indian Guru, in the closing plenary summed it up beautifully. He mentioned that while observing the huge orchestra, "It is enough, to keep your eye on the CONDUCTOR and play your own instrument." (The words are from my memory and might not be verbatim.)

May be, that's why we call our present abode the 'UNI-VERSE', a symphony of diversity.

### ARNAVAZ CHUBB, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

When Rohinton Rivetna first suggested the Zoroastrian Association of Victoria participate in the PWR to be held in our home city of Melbourne, I accepted the suggestion with alacrity, little realizing just what was involved. From preparation to final product, it was the sharing of the thoughts, talents and time of many that culminated in the fantastic Zarathushti presence at PWR. and indeed something for which ZAV and all Zarathushtis worldwide

can be truly proud. We proved we are still dynamic not dying out. I am certainly the richer for the experience.

### SAM KERR, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

There was an intensive, almost unending ritualistic celebration of activities. The massive 'Centre' was really a meeting place for anybody who cared to explore the meaning of life and tried to find a niche somewhere within this pulsatile rhythm that pervaded our being for 10 full days.

There was more talk of the stark reality of life we humans are facing on earth than the spirituality we may have been inculcated into.

Incidentally, some of us bombed ourselves out trying to keep up with 300 odd choices daily.

Still, the best part was the lavish ZAV evening; Z-friends, chattering and food, glorious Z-food.

### ADIL DUBASH, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

As a single voice, amidst thousands of other voices all wanting to share the beauty of their religions, but never feeling alone for a second, because one could sense the common humanity in each individual, yearning to strive for the path of righteousness. One of the greatest signposts to come from the Parliament was that we must return to the "original scriptures" of each one's religion, for there the "great Prophets" have left the TRUTH.

For this single voice, the theme of the "Spiritual Splendour of Zarathushtra" resonated profoundly as he witnessed the strength of Zoroastrian kinship, felt the depth of humility that Cyrus the Great represented, marveled at the eco-friendly principles that our ancient religion proclaimed and stood in awe of our great forefathers and their philanthropic business concepts.

### ROHINTON RIVETNA

#### Founding Trustee, CPWR

The week at the Parliament was inspiring and illuminating, an opportunity for understanding and dialogue. With a deeper understanding, one can hope that respect for diversity will develop. And can we then not hope that it will lead towards peace on earth? Theologian, Hans Kuhn, who was present in Melbourne has said "there shall be no peace on this earth until there is peace among religions". Whether these Parliaments have made a difference is a matter of reflection. Wars based on religious differences still go on. Man's inhumanity to man abounds. What should we do? Perhaps, the answer is to continue on but with more



stress on intrafaith dialogue, i.e. dialogue within each of our communities. It took one hundred years to jumpstart the 1893 Parliament. We hope it does not take another century of promoting the mission of the Parliament in every continent and every clime, before we begin to discern some results.

#### **NERGISH UDVADIA, MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA**

I had never before heard of the PWR. I was curious; the PWR was more esoteric rather than a tangible concept for me up until I actually ended up at the ZAV stall as a volunteer. The unfolding of events and meeting those who shared a passion for religious dissertation during the course of the week were to singularly convey a level of interest that was not expected.

Reflecting back on the PWR what struck me was that while religion was a way of life, spirituality was how I translate that way of life by the choices I make.

The extent to which there was knowledge of the word "Zoroaster" amongst the participants who visited the stall was refreshing. Disseminating and receiving further knowledge about the Zarathusti religion and way of life, gleaned thoughts and viewpoints of other religions was a highlight of the event.

The younger generation are often dismissed as being too young to have any firm stance in life, be it religious or other. What the PWR showed was there are sufficient numbers that not only have strong faith but also an incredible amount of tolerance and acceptance of other faiths. If this is nurtured and allowed to develop then perhaps the right to co-exist and follow ones way of life will flourish and there may be hope that the love and harmony espoused in most Holy Scriptures will endure.

My personal journey will continue to the next PWR.

#### **HOMI DHALLA, MUMBAI**

As an advisor to the Parliament and a participant, I played a dual role. I made two presentations on Zoroastrian subjects and a power point presentation on 'Peace' from a holistic point of view. Furthermore, it was challenging to be invited to participate in two other seminars on "human rights" and "inner and outer peace".

As the Parliament was multifaceted, it provided an opportunity to attend sessions on a variety of subjects. Being involved in the interfaith movement, I found it absorbing to hear some eminent personalities from other traditions. For me it was an enriching experience to exchange views, attend cultural shows and meet the Parsi community which was ever so warm and hospitable.

#### **HOMI GANDHI, NEW JERSEY, USA**

I reflect on two opportunities the Parliament provided. An opportunity to host this remarkable event (before the Copenhagen Conference of World Leaders on Environment Security) in Australia, which has abundant natural resources and a desire to preserve and, if possible, to reverse the losses of millennia. The Parliament gave an opportunity to the local host community of the Zoroastrian Association of Victoria to celebrate and showcase their hospitality and talent in the community night for local and international delegates. This gave us a chance to meet the local community and trace our relatives and linkages of common friends. It was a very joyous evening as it was topped with a delicious lagan nu bhonu and a very professional cultural program by local talents. Thank you ZAV.

#### **DOLLY DASTOOR, MONTREAL, CANADA**

An event like the Parliament comes once every 5 years where friendships are made. wisdom is shared. lessons are learned and souls are touched. But the networking it provides made me realize the respect our community commands on the world stage of religions and spirituality. During the breathtaking week December 3-9 2009, of the Parliament, over 200 religions had presented over 660 events, and the Zarathushti contingent were represented in 12 i.e, in 2% of the total, including a choir in the opening plenary, in morning meditation, prayers and in the evening cultural events. This is a credit to a community which represents about 0.001 per cent of the world population today.

#### **PERVIN J MISTRY, MUMBAI**

The fifth PWR recently held at Melbourne in 2009 was different from the previous four PWRs. Here much more emphasis was given to environmental issues than to religion. Of course many religious heads attended but there were more environmental scientists than priests! Major concern was global warming and subsequent climatic changes which, according to many, is critical and irreversible!

The Zarathushti delegation dealt with the environmental issues from all angles and our presentations as well as the display booth were highly acclaimed. Questions on Iran, "budgirs", dakhmas and Parsis were asked. Very complimentary comments were also received about the Parsis from participants who had known of the Parsis. What was also different at this PWR was the huge delegation from Iran! They were very appreciative of our Zarathushti presence at the PWR and paid high tribute to its ancient past, especially to Cyrus the Great who was the first to conceive the Charter of Human Rights and give religious freedom to all!

The PWR was a great success both from religious as well as from the environmental approach.





Parsi Zoroastrian Association of South East Asia (PZAS), Singapore  
China-Singapore Religious and Cultural Exhibition organized by the Inter  
Religious Organization (IRO) December 15-22, 2009.



It was the 60th Birthday of the Singapore Inter-Religious Organization (IRO) and for its commemoration the Singapore-China Religious and Cultural Exhibition was held from December 15th to the 22nd 2009 at the Suntec City Convention Centre.

The opening of this exhibition was performed by Senior Minister Goh, as well as visiting ministers and dignitaries from China. Through the course of the exhibition many distinguished guests and speakers visited the exhibition including H.E. Mr. S.R. Nathan, President of Singapore, as well as the Minister from China and the

Ambassadors and High Commissioners of various countries including the Indian High Commissioner to Singapore.

The sprawling convention halls majestically ensconced stunning displays and stalls set-up by each of Singapore's ten recognized religions, as well as many breathtaking exhibits from China.

Our Zarathushti stall looked dignified, yet stunning and was the cynosure of many eyes. The Afarganyu, cleverly lit from below with halogen bulbs, was fitted with an in-built fan, which when switched-on, blew the orange and red 'flames' in a most elegant and majestically

graceful fashion, so real from afar, that it truly was a crowd-puller. Four showcases overflowed with many informational and eye-opening displays. Some of these were a 100 year old Avesta, a 75 year old Shahnamah, religious clothing worn by priests, Navjote attire and cultural items such as ses with all its accompaniments and of course our very own traditional garas, kors, jabloos, pagdi and ijaar. A mannequin elegantly attired in a royal blue sari graced one end of the display.

There were also two Zarathushti speakers featured during the exhibition as well. Dr. Dolly Dastoor, from Montreal, Canada, presented on "Aging in the 21st Century", and Mr Farrokh Vajifdar who was sponsored by WZO in London gave a talk at the venue, on 'The Smallest Great Religion' alongside scholars from most other religions, whose booths were on display.

The entire exhibition was a resounding success and much thanks needs to be given to Russi Ghadiali who was a driving force behind it. Many thanks as well to all members who participated towards this exhibition in any manner including but not limited to organizing of the event and displays, as well as setting up, manning and clearing of the booths.



## Photos

*Top: Senior Misiter Goh visiting the booth, Russi Ghadiali in white talking with Minster Goh.*

*Middle Russi Ghadiali, VP, IRO with leaders of other faith communities,*

*Bottom Dolly Dastoor, Russi and Shireen Ghadiali, Jasmine Cooper,*

**Report Jasmine Cooper, Secretary PZAS**

**Photos Jasmine Cooper, Dolly Dastoor**

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## Coming Together Roundtable Gains Consensual Support



A rather momentous legacy of the Dubai Congress, which may have been underplayed in the glitz and glamour of that magnificent event, was the consensual agreement from leaders of the World Zarathushti community to “Come Together and Work Together” at a common forum – the Coming Together Roundtable (CTR). Through three sessions during the Congress and numerous informal meetings, elected leaders of the four major Zoroastrian regions – Iran, India, UK/Europe and North America, that represent 90% of the world’s Zarathushti population, consensually agreed to assume ownership and responsibility, and set future direction, for this forum. In time, representatives from the smaller pockets, in Middle East, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Africa, would be worked into the structure.

### Breakfast meeting of Regional Leaders

Realizing the imperative of keeping the world Zarathushti ‘Community Without Borders’ connected and collaborating,



Over 100 persons participated in Session I of the "Coming Together Roundtable" on December 27th, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Dubai. The CTR forum has been spearheaded by Rohinton Rivetna, with support from many dedicated individuals -- Behram Pastakia, Firdosh Mehta, Dr. Zareen Karani Araoz, Yazdi Tantra (for website [www.zoroastrians.net](http://www.zoroastrians.net)), Percis Dubash (administrative help) and many others.

The first Roundtable was convened at the World Congress in London, in 2005, facilitated by then Congress chair Dorab Mistry. Three succeeding Roundtables were held, in Mumbai in 2007 and 2008 and in Houston in December 2008. Discussions and actions arising at these Roundtables have spanned socio-economic, communal, spiritual/religious, educational/cultural and infrastructure projects and issues [see reports in FEZANA Journal, Fall 2005, Spring 2007, Spring 2008 and Spring 2009].



*Clockwise from left, Paurush Jila (UK), Khodayar Attaie, Dr. Esfandiar Ekhtiyari and Mehraban Hemavandy (Iran), standing Rohinton Rivetna (coordinator), Dorab Mistry (UK), Firdosh Mehta, sitting Bomi Patel (North America), and Khojeste Mistree and Dinshaw Mehta (India).*



At this fifth Roundtable in Dubai, five goals/projects were compiled (by Zareen Araoz and Dolly Dastoor) gleaned from the presentations made during the **CTR Session 1**: They are

- 1 *Transition ownership of CTR to Regional leadership;*
- 2 *Support technology platforms for global networking (www.zoroastrians.net and a new platform presented by Eric Engineer);*
- 3 *Follow up on the WZCongress survey recommendations;*
- 4 *Collect and analyze demographics to help make decisions about the community; and*
- 5 *Support ZWIN (Zarathushti Women's International Network).*

**CTR Sessions II and III** were co-chaired by the four regional heads: Dinshaw Mehta (India), Dr. Esfandiar Ekhtiyari (Iran), Paurush Jila (UK/Europe) and Bomi Patel (North America) — a credit to the vision and foresight of Congress chair Meher Bhesania.

While the discussions were productive, and will hopefully lead to follow up actions, the most satisfying development was the transition of the CTR forum from a chaotic gathering of “any individuals/organizations interested in the perpetuation and prosperity of the community” coordinated by individuals (albeit dedicated) with no mandate and little administrative/financial resources, to a more structured forum led by elected representatives of the major regions where Zarathushtis reside.

This consensual “Coming Together” of the Regional leadership, elusive for decades, is certainly a watershed moment for the world Zarathushti community and a legacy of no small proportions, for the Dubai Congress.



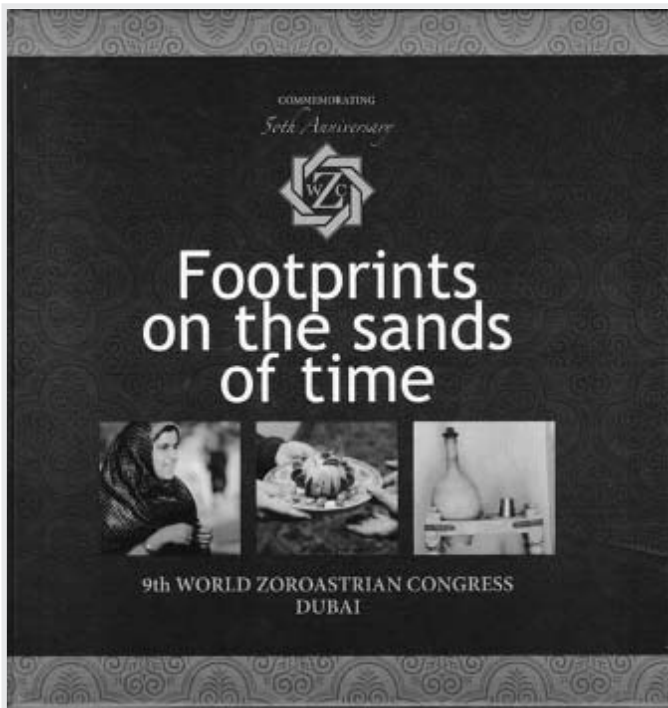
**Photo Left CTR Session III** co-chaired by Regional Leaders, from left: Past FEZANA president Firdosh Mehta and FEZANA president Bomi Patel (North America), BPP trustee Khojeste Mistree and BPP chair Dinshaw Mehta (India), coordinator Rohinton Rivetna, Mobed Dr. Ardeshir Khorshidian and MP Dr. Esfandiar Ekhtiyari (Iran), and past ZTFE presidents Dorab Mistry and Paurush Jila (UK/Europe). Not in photo, Tehran Anjuman President Dr. Rostam Khosravian.

**Report Roshan Rivetna**  
**Photos Jo Ann Dastur and Dolly Dastoor**



# “UNITY THROUGH THE SANDS OF TIME” THE 9th WORLD ZOROASTRIAN CONGRESS—DUBAI, DECEMBER 28-31 2009

Deena Guzder



speaker Lord Karan Bilimoria, of Chelsea, England, set the tone for the congress. Entrepreneurs and professionals, including legendary business luminaries such as Nadir Godrej and Sam Balsara, facilitated networking and business symposiums as well as provided comprehensive blueprints for community enhancement. Young leaders from India, Australia, Iran, and North America unveiled creative projects to assist the next generation of Zarathushtis in revitalizing their faith, expanding their employment horizons, and connecting

Under the banner of “Unity through the Sands of Time”, nearly 750 Zarathushtis across the world convened in Dubai on Dec. 28, 2009 for the 9th World Zoroastrian Congress. Presidents and Prime Ministers blessed the Golden Jubilee year of the Congress with their messages of best wishes for the Zarathushti community’s continued success and prosperity. The multi-talented mastermind of the Congress, Chairperson Meher Bhesania, presided over the dazzling opening ceremony, complete with a lighting of the lamp, and warmly welcomed delegates: "Today is a great day as the community unites together with a sense of common purpose, a shared past, and future aspirations."

A coffee table book "Footprints on the Sands of Time", an anthem, a logo and a Zoroastrian flag were released on the opening day. Before the start of the Congress, a jashan was performed with local and visiting mobeds led by Vada Dastur Khurshed Dastoor of Udvada.

Old friends warmly embraced at the Crowne Plaza Hotel and were treated to four days brimming with informative sessions, entertaining performances, and delicious food in the cosmopolitan Emirate that is home to 1,500 Zoroastrians. Community leaders attending the Dubai conference spoke of continuing Zoroastrianism's proud history of safeguarding human rights, advancing women's rights, and protecting the environment. The keynote





with the wider Diaspora community. Medical professionals addressed community concerns about disconcertingly high levels of breast cancer and multiple sclerosis. The stupendous evening entertainment included talented Zarathushti artists who energized the audience with soul-stirring songs, dazzling dance numbers, and hilarious comedy routines. The next edition of FEZANA JOURNAL will cover the Congress in more detail through the prism of the Diaspora.

In this edition we will present the WZC Award winners and the YLEP winners



Award Winner Outstanding Zarathushti :  
*Rohinton M Rivetna, USA*



Performing Arts and Literature  
*Sooni Taraporevala USA/India*

**Outstanding Philanthropy**

*Zartoshty Brothers Mehraban and (late) Feraydoon, USA*  
(accepted by Dorab Mistry past president of ZTFE)

**Engineering and Technology**

*Minoo Homi Patel UK*  
(accepted by Paurush Jila, past president of ZTFE)



Community Service : *Dinshaw Tamboly, India*



Medicine *Dr Farokh Udvadia (India)*  
The award being presented by Pallonji Mistry (Shapurji Pallonji & Co.),

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL FOR THE WELL DESERVED RECOGNITION.**

**THE YOUTH LEADERSHIP ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (YLEP)**, a legacy project of the Congress was designed to empower the young community leaders of tomorrow, between the ages of 23 to 35 years, encourage teamwork in leveraging resources for the community. The objective of launching the program was to build a network of enthusiastic young individuals and create a sustainable pool of next generation leaders that will benefit the community in the long run.

The youth responded enthusiastically from Australia, Dubai, England, India, Iran, and North America. Teams were formed with direction and support from their mentors, Homai Mehta (India), Khodayar Attaie (Iran) Paurush Jila (UK) Behram Pastakia and Firdosh Mehta and others (North America) Phil Madon (Australia) and their visionary projects were presented at the Congress.



**AUSTRALIA:** C-o-n-n-e-c-t-i-n-g (Young Zoroastrians in business and employment)

**DUBAI:** The Right Advice Project

**ENGLAND** Rejuvenate Zoroastrian Fun Club

**INDIA** Interconnectivity between Trusts

**IRAN** Organizing First Congress of Outstanding Zoroastrian Youth

**NORTH AMERICA (USA AND CANADA)**

Four projects presented by the North American team:

The Zoroastrian Stimulus Plan

Youth Life Skills Workshop

Zoroastrians for Renewable Energy

The WZCC Youth Initiative

The projects were judged and awards handed by Lord Karan Billimoria on the third day of the congress

**FIRST PLACE TEAM IRAN (photo top left)**

**SECOND PLACE TEAM NORTH AMERICA (photo top right)**

**TEAM INDIA (photo bottom right)**

**THIRD PLACE TEAMS DUBAI, AUSTRALIA, UK**

**THE SUMMER ISSUE OF THE FEZANA JOURNAL WILL CARRY THE YELP PROJECTS IN DETAILS**

*Photos:  
Ervad Soli Dastur; Parsiana, Dolly Dastoor*

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**Hamazori at the closing of the Congress**

Meher Bhesania, Ervad Pallanji Dastur, Ervad Soli P. Dastur, Ervad Pervaze Bajan, Dastoorji Dastoor Khurshed Dastoor Kaikobad Dastoor, Ervad Yazdi Aibara, Ervad Darayus Dastoor, Ervad Cyrus Dastoor, Nowshir Engineer.



From left: Lord Karan Billimoria, Vada Dastur Khurshed Dastoor of Udvada and Sheikh Hasher Maktoum



Vada Dastur Khurshed Dastoor, of Udvada and Mobed Dr. Ardeshir Khorshidian, of Tehran



**EDITORS 3**

From left  
Editor of HAMAZOR, Toxy Cowasjee,  
Editor of PARSIANA ,  
Jehangir Patel,  
Editor of FEZANA  
JOURNAL Dolly Dastoor





## AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGIONS (AAR), MONTREAL, NOVEMBER 2009: PANEL ON ZOROASTRIANISM



From left Yuhana Vevaina, Enrico Raffaelli, Michael Stausberg, Jenny Rose, Jesse Palsetia

On Sunday, November 8 at the Palais de Congr s, Montreal, Canada a 'Wildcard' Panel on Zoroastrianism was held as part of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) annual meeting. The panel was the first forum at the AAR on Zoroastrianism in over a decade. The panel was presided over by Professor Jesse Palsetia of the Department of History, the University of Guelph, and included prominent scholars offering lectures on Zoroastrian religion and studies.

The first speaker was Dr. Jenny Rose, Associate Professor in the School of Religion, Claremont Graduate University, and Stanford University. Rose was the chief impetus and organizer of the panel. Rose's topic examined the history and historical evidence related to Zoroastrianism and lay offering with an examination of the significance of 'water' for the laity in Zoroastrian ritual. Rose noted how the veneration of 'water' or aban in ancient and medieval Iran and the Near East offered the laity, and in particular women, significance in ritual. She noted the continuity of the veneration of water in modern times.

The second speaker was Enrico Raffaelli, Assistant Professor of Zoroastrianism at the University of Toronto at Mississauga. Raffaelli examined religious and non-religious genres in the Pahlavi Zoroastrian literature, and noted how the categorization of the various Pahlavi texts has varied from scholar to scholar. He noted that a new consistent form of categorization was necessary, and posited that scholarship concentrate more on the 'purpose' of literary texts as a means of grouping and categorizing them.

Michael Stausberg, Professor of the History of Religion at the University of Bergen, Norway, presented survey data on lay Parsi attitudes and expectations of the Zoroastrian priesthood in India. Stausberg noted the

Jesse Palsetia

close ties and loyalties between lay Parsis and 'family' priests, who perform the majority of rituals for Parsis. He noted how the data included both high expectations and modernist attitudes on priestly character and responsibilities, along with more realistic expectations of the good priest. Stausberg suggested that many Parsi lay attitudes towards the priesthood are conditioned by lay dependency on the priesthood and lay inability to properly assess the credentials of priests.

The final speaker was Yuhana Vevaina, Lecturer in Old Persian Language and Zoroastrianism at Harvard University. Vevaina examined contemporary 'para-Zoroastrian' groups and their impact on Zoroastrianism and noted how these various 'new' groups espouse new interpretations of Zoroastrianism and preach to wider audiences than traditional Irani and Parsi Zoroastrians. The para-Zoroastrian teachers and groups are found around the world, and some have come to utilize new mediums such as the internet in disseminating their message. These groups, while sometimes dismissed as peripheral to traditional Zoroastrianism, present both a challenge to traditional Zoroastrianism as they gain popularity and re-interpret Zoroastrianism, and offer a renewed vibrancy to the religion for some.



The wildcard panel was followed by an enthusiastic question and answer session that included academics and members of the local Zoroastrian community. The session reflected that Zoroastrian studies remains a relevant and significant subject at religious studies conferences and its reception bodes for its permanent place in such forums. (photo left speakers with local Zarathushti community)



## FEZANA SCHOLARS

What advances a community is not so much to prop up its weakest and most helpless members, but to lift up the best and most gifted, so as to make them of greatest service to the community.

Jamshetji N. Tata

*Scholarship*

When FEZANA started the academic scholarship program in 1999, only two scholarships of \$1000 were awarded for a total of \$2000. In the last eight years the program has grown exponentially and in 2009 we have awarded eleven scholarships of \$5000, \$4000, \$3000 (two) \$2000 (six) and \$1000. for a total of \$28,000.

We now have four endowed scholarships. 1 The Kheradi Endowed Scholarship, 2 the FEZANA 20th Anniversary Endowed Scholarship, 3 Khorshed Panthaky Endowed Scholarship 4 Kapadia Endowed Scholarship

In addition the program has inspired other organizations and associations in North America to develop their own scholarship programs all of which undergo a strict selection process. It is heartening to note that organizations and individuals are beginning to recognize that education is a personal achievement of an individual's desire to succeed requiring the right opportunity. It is also recognized that the investment in our youth is the investment in the future of the Zarathushti community. The future belongs to those who give the next generation reason to hope.

Your continued financial support, in this economically difficult period and your encouragement is of utmost importance to maintain this program

*Dolly Dastoor Ph.D*

*Chair, FEZANA Academic Scholarship Program*

### MEHRABAN AND MORVORID KHERADI ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

#### The FEZANA Scholar (\$5000)



**KIARASH VAKSHOURI, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.**

**Doctorate in Chemical Engineering**

**What this scholarship means to me;**

I am very honored and deeply appreciative to be the recipient of the Kheradi Endowment Scholarship for 2009-2010. I am deeply touched by the support our community has shown in my pursuit of PhD. This scholarship would certainly lighten my financial burden which allows me to focus more on the most important aspect of school, learning. Providing these scholarships motivate young members of our community to continue on their educational path. Having such a great supportive community always reminds me to contribute back to society and take steps to be a beneficial member for our Zarathushti community in the future.

#### **Vision for the Zarathushti Community**

Many young members of Zarathushti community have immigrated to North America since the beginning of this century. This young generation has an important role in spreading Zarathushti culture, theology and doctrine. They are also ready to participate fully in all other aspects of life. It is expected that in the coming decade, our young generation will be placed in important jobs, and therefore Zarathushti community will influence the society in a more powerful manner than before. One of the key tasks for Zarathushti community is to teach the youth our religion in order to keep the religion alive. In the next level, this young generation should be motivated towards higher education. I believe that an educated youth can achieve notable successes and be valuable members of our community. I think, as a successful, united and philanthropic community, we can be a proud example to the rest of the world.



## FEZANA 20th Anniversary Endowed Scholarship (\$4000)

**FARIBA KHOSHNASIB. UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, DALLAS**  
**Applied Mathematics /Bioinformatics**

*Scholarship*



I came to United States as a refugee, three years ago. I went to register for college the second day I was here. However I had to study in English and I had to spend much more time and effort compared to my American classmates to read the textbook, I never gave up my hope. As soon as I started taking classes in University of Texas at Dallas as a sophomore, it took me 1.5 years to receive my Bachelor's degree in Applied Mathematics. I know I might not be a talented person but I have Ahura Mazda's gift of persistence. I learn from my failures and improve myself and this helped me have a GPA of 3.87 and graduate with Latin honor of Magna Cum Laude. Then, I managed to get admitted to the fast-track program in UTD in which I took a few graduate courses while being an undergraduate student. I was the winner of the FEZANA scholarship in 2008. Currently, I'm working on my Master's degree in Engineering Mathematics and I have been informed that I won the FEZANA scholarship for the second time. This is a great honor for me and my family. I believe that, any of you students can do what I succeeded to do. I don't call it accomplishment but this was all because of my persistence and everyone's encouragements along the way. If it was not for FEZANA's support, I might have stopped continuing my education. I will try my hardest to utilize the knowledge and experience I gained for improvement of my community in any possible way. You made my life happier and easier today and it shall be my duty to make others' lives happier and easier, tomorrow. I want to thank my family, friends, ZANT, FEZANA and everyone who helped me reach this point.

## FEZANA SCHOLARS (\$2000)

**SHAZNIN P. DARUWALLA, WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY, Doctorate in Psychology**



Shaznin P. Daruwalla is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in clinical psychology at Wright State University, School of Professional Psychology in Dayton, Ohio. Prior to entering the graduate program, she received her Master of Arts degree at S.N.D.T. Women's University in Mumbai, India. Ms. Daruwalla has worked as a clinical psychologist in an inpatient psychiatric ward and at a child guidance clinic in India before coming to the U.S. for advanced studies. She has received numerous scholarships during her academic career, including the Lady Meherbai D. Tata Education Trust scholarship and J. N. Tata Endowment Trust scholarship.

"The FEZANA 2009 Academic Scholarship will make a significant financial contribution towards the pursuit of my degree. Further, the scholarship is a symbol of the continuing support extended to me by the Zarathushti community for the fulfillment of my dreams. I am deeply honored by this award and your recognition of my work! Upon completion of my doctoral studies, I am interested in social outreach and would like to work with underserved populations. I am also interested in the use of mindfulness-based interventions among diverse populations.

My vision is for a strong Zarathushti community active in today's modern world and yet firmly grounded in our essential qualities represented by Asha and the Amesha Spentas. I hope that we continue to grow in strength and sweeten the world through a multitude of contributions in all parts of the world. Organizations like FEZANA keep our small community together and inspire the younger generation. I thank FEZANA for awarding me this scholarship! "



# FEZANA SCHOLARS

**ZUBIN ADRIANVALA, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND,**

**Doctorate in Urban Planning**



I have always been faced with issues regarding race and religion. In India, like in most multicultural democracies it is hard to escape it, there are certainly good sides to living in a multicultural society, (including the cuisine options being much wider) but eventually one is exposed to the darker side.

My Goal is to work towards integration and cooperation in Multi-Ethnic communities in cities. My Major for my PhD comprehensive exams is *'Functioning of a Multi-Ethnic Communities'* and my minor being *'Second Track Diplomacy for Conflict Management'*. The idea is to resolve violent ethno-urban conflict using negotiations and trust building...thus saving lives..I sincerely believe that this would be a crucial contribution to the international effort towards peace. And while world peace has remained only a dream for all of human history it is nevertheless a goal worth striving towards, considering every great soul from Zarathustra to Gandhi did so.

The FEZANA scholarship is a great way to receive a pat on the back, it is akin to the elders of the community saying, "Well done and carry on." Personally I believe that the future of the Zarathushti community will be bright as long as we remember the deeper values of our culture and realize that true religion is about belief in service & realization rather than

dogma. Finally the purpose of my education and hopefully my life is to have the ability to serve the people and making sure there is an active insistence on Huvarshta.



**DELPHINA IRANI EASTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY.**

**School Psychology Program (Graduate Student),**

Before I begin I would like to thank the members of FEZANA for the generous donations that support students like me to pursue our dreams. I am presently pursuing a Specialist degree (EdS) in School Psychology. School psychology involves helping children and youth succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.

I completed my Masters in Counseling Psychology from the University of Mumbai. My interest for an international education stemmed from the absence of ethical practice, and lack of areas of specializations in India. The fact that School psychologists collaborate with educators, parents, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments for all students which strengthen connections between home and school lured me to pursuing it as a profession.

Raised in a Zarathushtian middle-class family, an international education was difficult venture to undertake. This scholarship is not only a means for funding my tuition but also a motivating factor to work harder and strive higher. It is a reminder that hard work towards your passions, honesty towards self, and determination towards your goals never goes un-noticed. I attribute this achievement to my parents for their continued support and guidance.

I am a proud Zarathushti. I am fortunate to belong to this community which provides support to students pursuing their goals and hope to someday contribute so that others may benefit from it. I will not only as a mother impart the religious values to my children but also be an active participant of our community.





## FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS

**ARMAITISH BURJORE SETHNA, UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO, CANADA,**  
Accounting and Financial Management



I am a second year Fellowship student at the University of Waterloo in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. I am in the Accounting and Financial Management program, specializing in Public Accounting and am pursuing a Minor in Human Resources Management. Starting January 2010, I will be working as a co-op student with the Toronto Office of KPMG.

I was honored to be the only Canadian university student nominated to receive the 2009-2010 FEZANA Academic Scholarship. I sincerely appreciate the acknowledgement of my academic achievements and my association with the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario, first as a student of Zoroastrian Religious Class and later as an Assistant Teacher.

I believe that the Zarathushti community is thriving in the Greater Toronto Area and our Society should continue to develop enriching programs and events for all ages. The recent introduction of a weekend-long Zoroastrian Religious Retreat for teens, offers young Zarathushtis the opportunity to engage in discussions about our religion, beliefs and current issues, and to meet other Zarathushtis of our age. With such enthusiastic members of our community, my vision is that we will flourish in our new homeland by continuing to organize programs to develop our faith and unite Zarathushtis from across the world. As we settle in new places around the world, it is important that we preserve our Zarathushti roots, continue on the path of Asha and practice Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds in everything that we do!

**JOHANN PAVRI, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY,**  
School of Arts & Sciences, Honors Program

I would like to thank the FEZANA board for my scholarship as tuition costs keep increasing the financial aid keeps decreasing. While this scholarship helps me financially, it motivates me to set high goals to work hard and reminds me that I represent the Zarathushti community.

It is said that one's life is determined by every experience one encounters and every action one undertakes. Science has been my passion since an early age. Although I could not quite classify this passion as an interest in biology, it became clearer as the years progressed. As a child, I spent countless hours watching science-based shows and questioning my parents on facts from the Science Encyclopedia. As I began to expand my knowledge on various scientific fields of study, I began to lean towards medicine.

My father was diagnosed with blood cancer when I was seven. Since then hospitals and doctors have been very much part of my life. Prominent amongst them was an oncologist who was treating my father. The focus and dedication he and his team showed made such a deep impact on me that I decided to study medicine.

My long-standing affinity for the sciences was catalyzed by my experiences with doctors. The ability to cure a total stranger fascinates me. I always think about the major role doctors have played in my life. My academic goal is to study medicine and my professional goal is to be a doctor who is focused clinically and emotionally on his patients.

Since I have been visiting hospitals from a very young age, what I saw and experienced sparked a great interest in community service. I often volunteer at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, which is where my father is being





## FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS

treated, as a Hospital Greeter and the oncology section of the hospital. My town recognized my efforts and conferred upon me the award of an "honoree volunteer". This recognition motivated me and I spend time collecting magazines and videos for local charities and hospitals, as well as food for soup kitchens.

My leadership qualities helped me in high school and I held several eminent positions in the Student Government Organization, National Honor Society and the National French Honor Society. I was awarded 2nd place at the Business Law and Management Decision Making Regional Conference.

As an ardent Zarathushti, I feel there is a global awakening in trying to address several different issues which affect our community. In North America, inter-faith marriages are becoming common and are being accepted by the community. There is more unity as a result of diversity and I believe that our community will never die but with time it will become stronger. A lot of our thinking will have to change but it should not overpower our traditions. I firmly believe that there are signs of growth and Zarathushtis all over the world will unite into a force to be reckoned with!

*Scholarship*

### **BENAZ COLABEWALA, Orange Coast College, Physics,**



My name is Benaz Colabewala and I am a sophomore at Orange Coast College majoring in Physics. I have a 3.81 cumulative grade point average and am a member of Mu Alpha Theta, the National High School and Two-Year College Mathematics Honor Society. I plan on transferring to Cal State Fullerton next year to complete my Bachelor's degree, and hopefully attend graduate school after that. I am so thankful for this FEZANA scholarship, as it is the only way I am able to attend college right now. It means so much to me to have this help in the midst of a financial crisis for myself and my family. My vision for the Zarahushti community in the future is a much larger community worldwide that is not only able to ensure a healthy future for itself, but able to give back to the global community as a whole. I hope that in the future, the Zarthushti community will continue to become a respected and prosperous one and see it produce successful members who can help create a better world for themselves to grow and raise families in. I also hope that one day I am able to contribute back to my Zoroastrian community and help it grow and prosper in the way that it has helped me, and I know my college education will help me fulfill that.

### **THE KHORSHED PANTHAKY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES (\$3000)**

### **DINAZ DEHMOBAD, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, majoring in Molecular Cell Biology (MCB) with emphasis on Neurobiology**

I was very happy and appreciative to learn that I was one of the recipients of FEZANA scholarship. I sincerely thank the generous donors and FEZANA administrators for supporting Zarthushti students, including me to excel in our academics. It is always heartwarming to know that there are wonderful people who are willing to support the students and do value their achievements. Scholarships would provide students financially to go beyond what they are capable of, in terms of different extracurricular classes and activities, it will also encourage students to work harder and achieve further goals. FEZANA's generous support has helped me to pursue my career goal more confidently. The least that I can say about the positive impact of FEZANA scholarship on my education is that: I should no longer worry about the high cost of MCAT prep





## FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS

courses; because this scholarship has provided me with far more than what I need to pay for those classes. Thanks to FEZANA, I am now one step closer to my goal. In addition to lightening my financial burden which enables me to focus more on school and learning, this scholarship has motivated me to do my best to succeed in my education and to return the favor back to my community. I am determined that in future I will help students achieve their goals just as you have helped me. I am planning to continue my education in research and pursue my goal in medicine. Establishing Din Dabireh classes, providing annual checkups for elderly and children at California Zoroastrian Center are two of my current goals for future. I will be working hard to achieve my goals and become competent enough to help the Zarthushti community to the best of my ability. Once again, thanks for your generosity and support.

**YASAMAN DEMEHRI, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES,  
Physiological Science.**

I am very honored to be one of the recipients of the FEZANA Scholarship for the past two years. I am also grateful to FEZANA for awarding me this scholarship.

I am currently a junior, studying physiological science at UCLA and my plan is to continue my education toward the medical field. My goal is to become a successful physician and to be able to serve my community and to be a contributing member of the Zarathushti society.

In the past few years, since I came to the United States, I have earned many leadership skills from different volunteer activities. For instance, I was the president of the Persian Student Society, vice-president of the Alpha Gamma Sigma Honors Society and have attended leadership conferences such as Southern Regional Conference and Associated Students of Orange Coast College Leadership conference.

In addition, I have worked on a research project for the Honors Council of California Student Research Conference at UCI this spring and my goal was to find out if individual's beliefs have any role in reducing their willingness to donate blood.

Besides my leadership achievements, in recognition of superior academic achievement I was selected as an UCLA Alumni Scholar for the year 2009-2010.

Overall, I have endured many difficulties since I immigrated to the United States. I believe that with my family support, inner-strength, dedication and having a great supportive organization in the Zoroastrian community I was able to reach where I am right now and to eagerly take steps toward achieving my goals. So again thank you FEZANA committee for your generous support.



### **BANOUBAI AND MANECKSHAW KAPADIA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES (\$1000)**



**JESSICA IRANI, KUTZTOWN UNIVERSITY, PA. Elementary School Teacher**

At the outset, let me thank the FEZANA Academic Scholarship Program for considering me worthy enough to be the recipient of the award towards my college education.

What I learnt from this gesture is that greatness for man is not in amassing the wealth for oneself but giving it to those who are less fortunate. We should strive and give back to our community where we

live, what we were fortunate enough to have – be it wealth, knowledge or time for community service. It is amazing how many lives we touch unknowingly through our acts of kindness and how many candles we light from the fire of the knowledge we possess.



## BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHOLARSHIPS

I am a freshman at Kutztown University and though I am undecided, I am focused on doing something which is leaning towards the prophecy of giving something back to the community – a Teacher! I do hope that my current inspiration would sustain and allow me to pursue my goals.

What the future holds for our community depends on how we carve the importance of moral and spiritual value of our religion rather than the material pursuits.

The sad thing of our young generation of today is that they drift towards other religions and beliefs because of lack of understanding of our own religion – parents in general have no time or patience to explain what it means to be a true Zarathushti. However, no community can forge ahead and shape the future unless there are true visionary and selfless individuals who have an ability to rekindle the fire of belief, making this and future generations, understand that identity with our religion is incumbent upon all of us to have true sense of belonging to the Zarathushti faith.

Our religion is not ready to be written off to the history books just yet. It is perhaps its core belief that has continued the fire from generations to generations, albeit with fewer of younger generations really understanding where the roots are and what the teaching professes.

### The ZOROASTRIAN SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS 2009



L to R:

*Kashmira Suraliwalla, Jamshed Gustavsp (for son, Zorast), Homi Italia, Hufrih Shastri (for son, Jasper), Ava Titina, Bella Tata, Benafsha Kapadia, Dinaz Mizan, Fariborz Rahnamoon.*

ZSBC Directors and members of the Scholarship Committee extend their hearty congratulations to Amanda Khorsandi, Zorast Gustavsp, Benafsha Kapadia, Ava Titina and Jasper Shastri who qualified for ZSBC's 2009 Scholarship Awards. These are given out annually to those students who have completed Grade XII and have not only achieved good marks but also met other criteria laid down by the Scholarship Committee (available for viewing at [www.zsbc.org](http://www.zsbc.org)) comprising of Dinaz Mizan, Bella Tata, Farrokh Namdaran, Homi Italia and Fariborz Rahnamoon.

The scholarships were awarded to the students or in their absence, to the parents on Sunday, October 11, 2009 during the death anniversary gathering for the late Jamshed K. Pavri at the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr. Reported by Homi Italia,





## BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHOLARSHIPS

### MEHRABAN & PARIDOKHT ZARTOSHTY SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS 2009

On October 4, 2009, after the death anniversary prayers for the late Arbab Rustam Guiv, scholarship awards for Mehraban & Paridokht Zartoshty Education Fund Association were presented. Directors of this fund are Homa Zartoshty, Kourosh Mehin, Fariborz Rahnamoon, Bella Tata and Khodadad Lohrasb. Congratulations to the awardees: Bahman Sotoodian, Shiraz Italia and Sheroy Mistry, whose scholarship presentations were made directly to them or to a family member. In the absence of Sheroy, her father Rumi Mistry was presented the scholarship by Kourosh Mehin, Noshir Balsara and Kashmira Suraliwalla presented the other two. Fariborz encouraged students to apply for scholarships next year by visiting the web site <http://www.ancientiran.com>



From left Fariborz Rahnamoon, Rumi Mistry (father of Sheroy Mistry - awardee), Shiraz Italia, (awardee), Bahman Sotoodian (awardee), Kourosh Mehin ; Kashmira Suraliwalla, Noshir Balsara

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CONGRESS 2000 LEGACY



Congress 2000 Legacy Award Winners for 2009 are:  
*Hormazd Minwalla and Naomi Bhappu*

Recognizing Academic Excellence

The Congress 2000 Legacy Award was established as a result of the funds that resulted from the success of World Zoroastrian Congress 2000. The award recognizes young Zarathushti students who are studying at the University level and who have achieved excellence in their scholastic studies, in extra-curricular activities and who have made substantial contribution to Zarathushti community affairs. This is the third year where two students are recognized and awarded this grant-in-aid. Additionally, this is the first year that one of the legacy awards has been designated as "Cyrus Rohinton Desai Award" in memory of a courageous young Houstonian who lost his battle with cancer.



**HORMAZD MINWALLA** is recipient of the Cyrus Rohinton Desai Award. A Summa Cum Laude graduate, from Langham Creek High School, Houston, TX, with CORDS for Science and member of National Honor Society, Vice President for Junior Achievement as well as ZAH Youth Group. A Biology major at University of Texas at Austin, TX, Hormazd claims, *"from the minute I stepped foot on campus, I could not help but notice people from all different backgrounds and cultures interacting with each other. During*

*my first semester I was accepted into The Emerging Scholars Program for chemistry and calculus. Throughout the semester I have learned interesting things from people all over the world. I have also learned to be independent and self sufficient. My study and time management skills have also improved".*

Our second winner, **NAOMI BHAPPU**, graduated Magna Cum Laude from Cypress Falls High School, Houston, TX, where she was President of Executive Student Council, Parliamentarian for National Honor Society, Vice-President of the Future Business Leaders of America, as well as President of our ZAH Youth Group in her senior year. Naomi writes, *"as a Civil Engineer major at the University of Texas at Austin, the classes have been challenging yet rewarding. I joined the American Society of Civil Engineers and have volunteered at fundraisers, community events, and have participated in various social activities sponsored or organized by the Cockrell School of Engineering. Of all the classes that I am taking, I have found my Engineering drafting class to be most interesting as it will help me in my career as an Engineer".*



The **Congress 2000 Legacy** is an award program of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston



## CHOTHIA SCHOLARSHIPS

### CHOTHIA SCHOLARSHIPS

#### FALI CHOTHIA CHARITABLE TRUST

THE FALI CHOTHIA CHARITABLE TRUST WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1988 TO HELP PROVIDE SCHOLARSHIPS AND INTEREST-FREE LOANS TO NEEDY ZARATHUSHTI STUDENTS. AWARDS ARE BASED ON FINANCIAL NEED, EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT, AND COMMUNITY SERVICE. THE TRUST IS ESTABLISHED UNDER THE ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON INC. (ZAMWI), AND IN THE PAST 20 YEARS HAS AWARDED SCHOLARSHIPS AND LOANS TO STUDENTS FROM ALL PARTS OF THE US AND CANADA. TO DEMONSTRATE SOLIDARITY AND TRUST BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS WHILE SERVING COMMUNITY CAUSES, THE US CHAPTER OF THE WORLD ZOROASTRIAN ORGANIZATION IS ONCE AGAIN JOINING THE FALI CHOTHIA TRUST'S SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM BY ADDING UP TO FIFTY PERCENT TO EVERY SCHOLARSHIP WE GIVE FROM OUR TRUST'S RESOURCES. THIS PARTNERSHIP ENABLES US TO SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF OUR SCHOLARSHIPS. I AM GRATEFUL TO THE WZO US CHAPTER, AND THRILLED THAT ITS SUPPORT IS RESULTING IN A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE HELP WE ARE GIVING TO OUR YOUNG SCHOLARS.

YOUR CONTINUED FINANCIAL SUPPORT REMAINS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE. YOUR HELP IS ESSENTIAL IN ASSISTING OUR DESERVING YOUTH TO ATTAIN THE LEVEL OF EDUCATION THEY ARE CAPABLE OF ACHIEVING. WE RELY ON YOUR DONATIONS

**ZUBIN ADRIANVALA** is pursuing a PhD in Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Maryland after obtaining a master's degree in Architecture at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. He hopes to work toward integration and cooperation in multi-ethnic communities, and to that end has been a founding member of an organization which enables farmers and villagers in India. (zubin@umd.edu) (Zubin is the recipient of the 2009 FEZANA SCHOLARSHIP pg 35)

**SHARMIN BHATHENA** is working toward a Master's of Science in Biomedical Engineering at the University of Southern California. She hopes to combine advanced technologies in biology, medicine and engineering to solve medical and health related problems. Sharmin has an active extracurricular background, including volunteering her time to help needy Zoroastrians. (sharminb07@gmail.com)

**SHAZNIN DARUWALLA** is a PhD candidate at the School of Professional Psychology at Wright State University in Dayton, OH. She hopes to destigmatize and further the mental health movement, here and in India, and hopes to continue her work with marginalized peoples. (shaznin@gmail.com) (Shaznin is the recipient of the FEZANA SCHOLARSHIP pg 34)

**PARISSA JAVEDANI** is in medical school at the Oregon Health and Science University School of Medicine. In addition to keeping up with a demanding curriculum, Parissa finds time to be a leader in numerous organizations, including the Oregon Stroke Center, the SW free clinic, and the Student National Medical Association/Latino Medical Student Association. (nikejav@yahoo.com) (Parissa was the FEZANA

SCHOLAR, the recipient of the Mehraban and Morvorid Kheradi Endowed scholarship for 2008)

**BENAFSHA KAPADIA** is working toward a degree in Business Administration at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, BC. Benafsha hopes to make a career in a creative field, and has been very active in Zarathushti and community organizations in the Vancouver area. She has volunteered with the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia from the age of 12, as well as the City of Vancouver and other charitable organizations. (benafsha.k@live.com)

**FARIBA KHOSHNASIB-ZEINABAD** is pursuing a Master of Science in Engineering and Mathematics at the University of Texas. She came to the US as a refugee in 2006, and since then has managed to obtain a Bachelor's degree with a 3.87 GPA Magna cum Laude, in a language which is not native to her. She is involved in community service with the Zoroastrian Association of North Texas as well as other community-service organizations. (fkhosh@gmail.com) (Fariba is the recipient of the 2009 FEZANA 20th anniversary endowment scholarship, pg 34)

**KIARASH VAKHSHOURI** is working toward a PhD in Chemical Engineering at Pennsylvania State University. Kiarash comes from Kerman, Iran, from a family active in Zoroastrian affairs. He completed his masters degree in record time, and has been singularly dedicated to studying and mastering skills in his chosen field of study. (KXV150@psu.edu) (Kiarash is the 2009 FEZANA Scholar, the recipient of the Mehraban and Morvorid Kheradi Endowed scholarship, pg 33)



## AHURA SCHOLARSHIPS



### Ahura scholarship mission:

**“To promote leadership among Zarathushti youth in academic, social, and political fields.”**

### Ahura Scholarship Recipients 2009-2010

#### AHURA SCHOLARS: \$3000



**ELHAM KESHAVARZIAN** was born and raised in Tehran, Iran, where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Applied Mathematics and Computer Science, and a Master of Science degree in Computer Science from Amirkabir Institute of Technology in 2005 and 2007 consecutively. She currently studies as a graduate student in the Department of Computer Science at the University of Southern California.

Elham was ranked No.1 among her peers in the Department of Computer Science during her undergraduate and master studies at the university in years 2005 and 2007. She was also elected as the best teaching assistant by an anonymous popular vote of the student body in the department of Computer Science.

Beside academia, Elham was a key player in Zoroastrian Students Organization (ZSO) organizing and overseeing several activities such as camping trips, sports Olympics, and major events such as Yalda, Nowruz, and Mehregan. She has volunteered substantial amount of her free time providing free classes for Zarathushti students in computer programming and web design and she was

selected as the best presenter during the Zoroastrian Educational Conference. She was the editor in chief of ZSO for two years and was a volunteer columnist in Amordad Newspaper.

Elham has made her belief the greatest fundamental of her continuous work and studies so that she can become successful not only for herself but by reflecting images of hope, positivity, and truthfulness into other's lives whiling holding their hands.

#### **FARIBA KHOSHNASIB-ZEINABAD**

She was the winner of the FEZANA scholarship in 2008. and is the recipient of the 2009 FEZANA 20th anniversary endowment scholarship

See page 34





# AHURA SCHOLARSHIPS

## AHURA STRIVERS (\$1000)



**Rishad Patel** is pursuing his JD at the University of Chicago Law School. after graduating December 2008 from the Georgia Institute of Technology with a degree in Industrial and Systems Engineering, a concentration in Economic Decision Analysis.

While at Georgia Tech, Rishad held many leadership positions and served on several leadership and philanthropy boards. He served as Treasurer for Georgia Tech, Treasurer for his fraternity, Alpha Tau Omega., served on the board for Relay for Life and Tech Beautification Day (partnered with Hands on Atlanta). Rishad is also a part of several honor societies, including Order of Omega, and received multiple scholastic honors, such as C. Whitney Knoll Campus Leadership Award. He is also a Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Scholar.

Rishad has traveled extensively during his undergraduate studies, studying abroad in Argentina for six months and in Australia and New Zealand. While in Australia, he participated in the Global Classroom Project, which aims to provide a digital forum that allows students from the United States and Russia to discuss and develop collaborative projects. He hopes to continue his international travels this summer by working for a Human Rights program in South Africa.

**Julie Bharucha** is a first year dental student at the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia, PA. She completed her undergrad at MIT, majoring in Biology and minoring in Music and Applied International Studies.

Julie was born and raised in Middletown, NY. As an active member of the Zarathushti community, she attended Zoroastrian classes and later taught religious classes to young Zarathushtis between the ages of 7 and 9. When moving to Boston to study at MIT, she continued to stay involved in ZAGBA and will continue to do so in Philadelphia.

Throughout her undergraduate career, Julie was an active member in her local community and soon became involved in international development work as well. On campus, she was a member of the MIT Wind Ensemble and President of this organization for 3 years. She was also the coordinator and counselor for a pre-orientation program, the Freshman Urban Program, which introduced incoming freshman to community service projects and opportunities they could pursue during the next four years.

As well as being an active member in her school, Julie has traveled to Nicaragua, Zambia, and India to continue her service work in underdeveloped communities. Her experiences led her to volunteering at health clinics in Nicaragua, testing and treating water with a chlorination system in Zambia, and starting a sanitation system in a slum community in Delhi, India.

Julie's experiences, her education, and support from her family and friends have led her to pursue a career in dentistry, where she can continue her passion to serve her community.



**Parisa Javedani** is a first year medical student at Oregon Health and Science University's School of Medicine in Portland, OR..Since starting medical school, Parisa has continued working with underserved populations by volunteering in free clinics in the Portland area. She has also undertaken a leadership position in the SNMA student group. This group's goal is to provide support for minority students who hope to pursue a career in medicine. In her free time, Parisa enjoys skiing, swimming, and traveling.

In 2008, Parisa graduated from the University of Oregon in Eugene, OR. During her undergraduate time, she was a member of several honor societies and received several prestigious awards, including the Presidential Scholar and Bowerman awards, from the University of Oregon. At the University of Oregon, Parisa undertook leadership positions in student organizations on campus, including a vice-president position in Alpha Chi Omega. Aside from her academic achievements, Parisa was also an active member of both the Portland and Eugene communities, and she volunteered for over 5 years with several non-profit organizations. (Parisa was the FEZANA SCHOLAR for 2008)



## AHURA SCHOLARSHIPS



**Parshan Namiranian** was born in Tehran, Iran. After graduating from Tehran University School of Dentistry and completing his Obligatory Military Service he moved to the US. He successfully passed the National Board Dental Examination and got accepted to UCLA School of Dentistry to receive a US dental license. Currently he is a 4th year dental student and looking for continuing his education in Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery Residency.

After Parshan was accepted to Tehran University, he mentored a class at Kanoon-e-Daneshjooyan Zartoshti to educate the interested students on proper method of studying for University Entrance Exam (Konkoor).

Parshan also had the honor of being the class president for two years at Tehran University, during which he had a lot of interactions with many faculty and staff members. He realized that they were very interested in knowing more about Zoroastrianism. Likewise, many of them expressed their admiration for zarthushti people and how much they loved working with them.

Between June 2007 - Jan 2009 Parshan volunteered as a research student at UCSF department of Biomaterials, UCLA department of Bio-engineering and UCLA

department of Dental Materials.

In 2007 Parshan began working at Align Technology, a company conducting research on orthodontic aligners where he was involved in finding a solution to address the weak points of aligners. He discovered the answer, prepared the corresponding prototype and presented his idea to the Clinical Vice President and the Senior R&D Director. His efforts were rewarded when he was named the inventor of this soon-to-be registered U.S. patent.

Outside of the academic curriculum at UCLA School of Dentistry, Parshan started an Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Study Club for those of his colleagues who were interested in this specialty. This provided him and his fellow students with additional opportunities to interface with surgeons as well as attend interesting lectures on various oral and maxillofacial surgery topics.

In May 2009 he was honored with the Phi Beta Kappa Alumni International Scholarship for his educational achievements. He enjoys playing piano and in Iran has had piano concerts at Sazman-e-Fravahar,

### Submitted by

**Koorosh Vakhshoori**

**Member of the Board of Directors, Ahura scholarship**

Applications are now invited for the 2010 competition,  
Deadline JULY 15, 2010

For more information visit [www.vakhshoori.org](http://www.vakhshoori.org)  
[www.pzo.info](http://www.pzo.info)

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## MASSEH SCHOLARSHIPS

### **KIARASH VAKHSHOURI (see FEZANA Scholarship and Chothia Scholarship page 33 and page 42)**

In September 2002, I was accepted, in Chemical engineering, in Sharif University, the best engineering school in Iran. In 2006, I was ranked second among all undergraduate students in Chemical and Petroleum Engineering Department. So, by "Exceptional Talents Organization" at Sharif University I was awarded an "Outstanding Students" admission to Master's program in Chemical Engineering in September. But since I was already accepted at the University of British Columbia, I decided to study in Canada which was a good experience for me not only in academic aspects but also in cultural aspects. Whilst completing my Master's degree in one year I was also the vice-president of Sustainability Club. Now, I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Southern California, working in the area of natural gas production from unconventional gas reservoirs. After finishing this thesis successfully, I would try my best to get a position in academic places to serve younger students and hopefully make a great contribution in science and technology.



**ATHRA KAVIANI;** Massiah Foundation Scholar. UT Southwestern Medical School; University of Texas at Austin, B.S. in Biomedical Engineering with high honors; Terry Scholar; Cockrell Scholar; Engineering Honors Program.

### **ANAHITA MAZDYASNI is a**

fourth-year Public Relations major at the University of Southern California's prestigious Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. After studying in Milan, Italy last Spring, Anahita looks forward to spending this Spring embarking upon a career in corporate or entertainment PR in her hometown of Los Angeles. The 22-year-old is immensely proud and honored to be recognized by the Massiah Foundation with a 2009 Maseeh Scholarship, which will help her further pursue her passion and profession in public relations.



**VAHISHTA VAFADARI** is currently in her third year at the University of California, Berkeley. She is majoring in Integrative Biology with a minor in Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies with a concentration in Acting. At Berkeley she makes time not only for her classes and job in the University's main library, but has also participated in multiple Main Stage productions with the UCB Theater Department. In the future Vahishta hopes to look into ethno botanical research.



**ANAHITTA KHOSRAVIANI** recently obtained her Bachelors degree in Bioengineering from the University of California, San Diego. In 2008 she cofounded the UCSD chapter of Engineering World Health which provides medical technology to developing hospitals world wide. She is now working at a biotech company in San Diego helping develop and manufacture products which advances local academic and industrial research. In the future, she plans to get a Masters in Bioengineering in order to pursue a career in the development of medical devices. She would like to thank the Maseeh Scholarship for supporting her educational ambitions.



### **PARISA JAVEDANI (See AHURA SCHOLARSHIP pg 44)**

# ***FEZANA ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS (2010-2011)***

**Applications are invited for the**

**FEZANA ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP  
MEHRABAN AND MORVORID KHERADI (MMK) ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP  
FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE - THE FEZANA SCHOLAR.  
FEZANA 20th ANNIVERSARY ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP  
THE KHORSHED PANTHAKY ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES  
BANOObAI AND MANECKSHAW KAPADIA (BMK) ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP**

**All scholarships are open to Zarathushti applicants who have obtained admission for attendance at institutions of higher learning (accredited degree-granting colleges or universities) in USA or Canada.**

**SCHOLARSHIPS** Scholarships for the academic year 2010-2011 will be awarded in September 2010.

The FEZANA Scholarships

The MMK Scholarship

The FEZANA 20th Anniversary Endowed Scholarship

The Khorshed Panthaky Endowed Scholarship

The BMK Scholarship

**ELIGIBILITY:** Applicants must complete the application form and provide documentation for:

- (1) proof of USA or Canadian citizenship. (For non citizens a minimum of one year or two semesters residency in USA or Canada academic institution is required)
- (2) past academic records and accomplishments (attach documentation of the past four years only)
- (3) program of study
- (4) annual financial need including assistance already pledged by other funds, charitable institutions or the institution of choice;
- (5) other financial assistance available from family and friends
- (6) community service including contributions to Zarathushti functions and organizations
- (7) three reference letters

**AWARD CRITERIA:** Applicants will be rated on Scholastic Achievement (40%), Financial Need (40%), Extra-curricular Activities (10%) and Community Service (10%).

**The Mehraban and Morvorid Kheradi** Endowment Scholarship of \$5000 and the **20th anniversary FEZANA Scholarship** of \$3000 will be awarded to post graduate students for scholastic excellence

**The Khorshed Panthaky Endowment Scholarship** of \$3000 and **The Banoobai and Maneckshaw Kapadia Endowment Scholarship** of \$1000 will be awarded for undergraduate studies to a student with good academic standing who demonstrates financial need.

**APPLICATIONS:** Application forms are available from the FEZANA website at [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org) OR from Dr Dolly Dastoor ([dollydastoor@sympatico.ca](mailto:dollydastoor@sympatico.ca))

**Completed application forms should be post-marked August 1, 2010 to**

**DOLLY DASTOOR Ph.D, Chair, FEZANA Academic Scholarship Program,  
3765, Malo, Brossard, Quebec Canada J4Y 1B4**





### **PERFORMING AND CREATIVE ARTS SCHOLARSHIP**

*Scholarship*

*The Performing and Creative Arts Scholarship is accepting applications for the 2010 year from residents of US and Canada who are studying in the field of performing and creative arts. So if you are studying to be a dancer, artist, singer, actor, etc please apply. Applications are due by May 31, 2010. Applications are on [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org). You can also contact Sherazade Mehta, chair of the P&CAS committee at 972-385-4847 or [sherazadem@yahoo.com](mailto:sherazadem@yahoo.com) for further information.*

### **THE EXCELLENCE IN SPORTS SCHOLARSHIP (EXISS)**

#### **APPLICATIONS FOR 2010.**

Created in 2005, the objective of the Excellence in Sports Scholarship is to provide financial support to young Zarathushtis (between the ages of 10-30) who are performing exceptionally and at highly recognized levels in all areas of Sports activity. The purpose of the scholarship is to enable the recipients to get world-class training or study with experts in their field and thus fine tune and enhance their talent and capabilities. The deadline for applications is May 31, 2010.

For details or more information contact **Zenobia Damania** at [admin@fezana.org](mailto:admin@fezana.org) or call the Fezana Office at 630-468-2705.

## **M**OOBED FARIDOOON ZARDOSHTY

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP**

*FEZANA has established a Religious Education Scholarship fund in memory of late Moobed Faridoon Zardoshty. We are grateful for the munificence of the Zardoshty sisters, late Pari, Homayoun, Iran and Farangiz and their families for their generous donation to FEZANA in memory of their beloved father to set up this scholarship fund.*

*The Moobed Faridoon Zardoshty Scholarship(s) is to be awarded to selected Zarathushti individual(s) for higher studies and research in Zarathushti religion at a recognized institution of higher learning anywhere in the world. These scholarships are awarded for a period of five years. An amount has been budgeted for each academic year and may be divided between one or more selected individuals. The Religion Education Committee of FEZANA will manage the eligibility of selection of awards. Awardees will be required to allow FEZANA and/or Zarathushti community to receive the tangible benefits from their study and/or research.*

*All interested Zarathushti individuals can request an application for scholarship from Lovji Cama Ph.D Chair, FEZANA Education, Scholarship and Conference Committee  
58 Leroy Street, NJ 07670, e.mail [ldcama@verizon.net](mailto:ldcama@verizon.net) 201-569-7359*



## NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL

# Guest Editorial

### PRIESTHOOD AND SCRIPTURES--ZOROASTRIAN ODYSSEY TO PRESERVATION

Ervad Jehan Bagli & Ervad Soli P. Dastur



All religions start as a philosophy advocating a way of life. As the philosophy starts to intertwine with religious credence, Divine thinking begins to pervade the way of life. With time, humankind seeks out ways to commune with the Divinity. This invariably results in the emergence of customs and rituals that transforms the philosophy to a religion. These customs and practices contribute to a degree the binding within a religious community, satisfying the popular etymology of the term 'religion' from the Latin *religare* meaning to 'bind fast'. All religions institutionalized or otherwise, embody some kind of individual and/or congregational ritual practices.

It is in these customs and ritual practices lie the emergence of a class of members who evolve as priests. The term priest is of Greek origin from *presbyter* meaning a senior or elder, however a Zoroastrian priest is addressed as a Mobed (from Avestan: *magu-paiti* meaning chief priest) will become clear, as you will flip through the pages of this issue.

Zoroastrian rituals as they have evolved are directed, to express and demonstrate that immanence of the Divine in the physical existence. They are designed to bring the consciousness of the Divine and to synchronize the physical with the spiritual. In bridging the material with the world of Divinity, the Holy

mantras recited steer the existence, towards the completeness or wholeness, which brings the fulfillment of Haurvatat (wholeness or perfection) state of being.

In a Panentheistic faith, as that proclaimed by Zarathushtra, God is Universe as a Whole and beyond. The celebration of Yasna ritual, with its pavi and alat involved is a microcosmic model of the greater reality, that is macrocosm – the Universe. This observance is initiated (Ys 1.1) with the invocation of the Supreme Divinity Ahura Mazda with the associates, to complete the Whole. The sacred Fire, as conceived by the early followers (Ys 36.6), is indeed an embodiment of Ahura Mazda. Post-Gathic Yasna (Ys 17.11) states the presence of fires in all creations – earth, water, plant, animal and man. This while establishing the concept of Omnipresence of Mazda, also brings to light, unequivocally the notion of immanence of Mazda, in all creations including humans. This is implied in the Holy Gathas ( Ys 45.11; 44.17; 44.1; 46.2,7) of Asho Zarathushtra.

Scriptural texts are the heart and soul of the rituals we perform. It is indeed the hard and laborious efforts of the *Hudinan Peshobays* (Leaders of those of the Good Religion) of the post Sasanian era and their scribal foresight that has left us with a fraction of the ancient Persian Zoroastrian scriptures. As is well documented, the venomous campaign of Alexander the Macedonian around 330 BCE totally depleted all the written Avesta of the Achaemenian era. It was over two centuries before a concerted effort to retrieve the lost fragments was initiated by Vologeses or Valaksh I (51-80 C.E.) in the mid Parthian era. It was not until 226 C.E., the inception of the Sasanians, that the collation and canonizing of the recovered texts fell to the share of Tansar, the authoritarian prelate of the Ardeshir Papakan, the founder of the dynasty. The collection of 21 Nasks compiled by Tansar met with disaster when, the zealots Arab hoards from the south overcame Iran and extinguished the life-breath of the Sasanian era. Today Zoroastrians have just one of those 21 Nasks intact and there are some who wish to see it rejected.

In the North American Diaspora we must be prudent and carefully evaluate our sparse religious heritage of scriptures before making any selective and



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bias judgment. The objective of the papers reproduced in this issue is to give the community a flavor of the contents of some of scriptural texts, together with a historical account of the functional efforts of those who helped preserve and perpetuate this heritage. In this respect, the history of the North American Mobeds Council (NAMC) has been presented to give an idea of the efforts involved to form this important body. This is juxtaposed against the Panthaki system among the Parsi priests of India with its history and its current status. This is followed by five separate presentations on the five major parts of our current religious prayers: the Khordeh Avesta, Yasna, Baj Dharna, Visperad and Vendidad.

We then present the ceremony of initiating a Zarathushti priest in India (called Navar) and compare it with the same in present day Iran (called Nowe Zooty). Some photographs of the ceremony give a visual comparison of the ceremony in two different Diaspora. An interesting interview with two Iranian Mobeds presents their thoughts about why they became Mobeds.

Many NA Zarathushti Communities have problems finding Mobeds to perform much needed ceremonies and so NAMC has instituted a Mobedyar (helper to a

Mobed) program for any layperson, man or woman, to train them to perform some of the ceremonies. A few of these practicing Mobedyars and two in training have expressed their motivation to be a Mobedyar. NAMC feels that this is a very important program for the future of the NA Zarathushti community.

We finally have some thoughts about building a NA Zarathushti center and what it will take to do so. Also, we have some thoughts from a Parsi layman and an Iranian lady in NA about how they perceive the service provided by the Mobeds in NA to the Zarathushti community.

We sincerely hope that notions presented in some of the papers help spark the stimulus for further actions by the community of this Diaspora.

*We both are very grateful to our FEZANA JOURNAL Editor-in-Chief, Dolly Dastoor, to provide us with this opportunity to be Guest Editors for this Spring 2010 FEZANA Journal issue.*

### **UN General Assembly Recognizes 21 March as International Day of Nowruz,**

On 23 February 2010 in its sixty-fourth session, the United Nations recognized 21 March as the International Day of NowRuz. The action by the General Assembly, came after UNESCO, in its deliberations on 30 September 2009 in Abu Dhabi, UAE, declared NowRuz, an intangible heritage of humanity.

According to the preamble of the UN resolution, the International Day (document A/64/L.30/Rev.2), Nowruz heralds in the New Year for more than 300 million people worldwide. It has been celebrated for over 3,000 years in the Balkans, the Black Sea Basin, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East, South East Asia and other regions, beginning with its origins in Persia.

***UNESCO Parzor was part of the team which prepared the Candidature File for the award. They worked with the Iranian Government and several other countries representing the Ministry of Culture, Indian Government for this purpose.***



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### **Training of Zoroastrian Priesthood Historic Perspective**

**Ervad Dr. Jehan Bagli**

*In the highest ranges of thought, in theology, philosophy and science, we find differences of views on the part of most distinguished experts - theologians, philosophers and scientists.*

Charles Evans Hughes

Zarathushtra saw God in the Supreme Intellect vested in the immutable order of Nature. The order that governs the changes in Nature, from day to night, from sunrise in the east to sunset in the west, the waxing and waning of moon over precise intervals, and the constant cycle of seasons, over boundless time. It was the Peace and Truth vested in this order, that led the great Aryan prophet some 3,700 years ago to identify a Force that Creates, Governs and Sustains the universe, and he baptized that Force with the epithet Ahura Mazda –the Wise Lord or Lord of Wisdom.

#### **EVOLUTION OF NOMENCLATURE OF PRIESTHOOD:**

A priest is addressed by a variety of names depending upon the era under discussion. The Gathic hymns refer to terms such as *ratu* (Yasna 26.13) and *zaotar* (Ys 33.6). The former meaning a righteous guide/leader, while the later finds its origin in the pre-Zarathushtrian Sanskrit term *haotar* implying an invoker of the Divine. In the later Gathic era the title of *aethrapaiti* meaning a teacher, came into vogue. This in later Pahlavi/Persian came to be known as Herbad or Ervad. While the Gathic *Magavan*, a member of the Zarathushtrian fellowship (Ys 33.7, 51.15) never appears in the later Avesta, the old Persian Magu (Greek, *Magoi*; Latin, *Magus*) evolved into Pahlavi *Magopat* which later Persian recognized as Mobad or Mobed meaning an ordained member of the Zarathushti priesthood. It was the *ratu* of the early era that emerged in the later Pahlavi/Persian writings as Dastavar or Dastur implying the leading priest.

#### **THE ARAB CONQUEST AND JOURNEY TO INDIA:**

Poverty and religious fervor drove Arab zealots into Iran in 636 BCE. Islam began to be rooted in Iran, landing a second serious blow to the Zarathushtrian Faith. By eighth century the province of Pars was far away from the

frontiers of wars of Umayyads, hence the Zarathushti minority in Pars had preserved their books, fire-temples and the customs of the Sasanian kings. Although neighboring Kerman to the east was predominantly Muslim in the late ninth and early tenth century, there were still many Zarathushtis there in late tenth century.

The Zoroastrian religious leaders of the later Islamic era, came to be recognized in the ninth century C.E. as Hudinan (Hudin, Good religion) Peshobay (Boyce M., Zoroastrianism pg 147) meaning 'Leader of those of good religion'. Dadistan-I-Dinig (Religious Judgment), of that era, was written by Manushchir, a prominent Zoroastrian leader around 881 C.E. deals with questions from the laity and describes the harassment that Zarathushti community underwent in that time. Several of the extant religious texts were written in that era. Among these were Shkand-Gumanig Vizar (Doubt-dispelling Exposition), and Dinkard (Acts of the religion). The later was a monumental compilation initiated by the first known Hudinan Peshobay named, Adurfarnbag Farrokhzadan and reedited by his descendent Adurbad-e-Emedan.

The 21 Zoroastrian books of scriptures, pooled together by the first Sasanian prelate Tansar were all but lost by this time, leaving behind just one complete liturgy of Vandidad or *Vi-Daev-Dat* (the Laws against the Demons). Tired and harassed by the Islamic rulers, Zoroastrian leaders of the province of Pars decided the time had come for them to leave the country. The Zarathushtis set sail to India from Pars, via the Straits of Hormuz in early tenth century. They are to this day, known as Parsis. They first landed at the island of Div on the west coast of India, only to move southwards to Sanjan in the province of Gujarat some 19 years later in 936 CE. They pleaded with the Indian ruler of the time, for asylum to preserve and perpetuate the integrity of their beloved Faith, the request was granted under certain conditions. It was the labor of love of the priesthood of Yazd and Kerman that almost all the surviving Avestan and Pahlavi manuscripts were copied, preserved and were often transported by Parsi emissaries to India.

#### **CULTURAL IMMERSION:**

This is the point in the history, where we have a Zarathushtrian religious leadership partly immersed in Hindu culture in India and partly embedded in the Islamic culture in Iran. Consequently, these diverse cultures have left their imprints on the training of the religious leadership, on their ceremonial observances, as well as the overall comprehension of the Zarathushtrian faith by the two groups.



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THE NAVAR CEREMONY. INITIATION TO THE PARSEE PRIESTHOOD.  
3. INVOCATION.

At this time, in India, there were no educational institutions to train the religious leaders. Parsis continued to train their youth privately in towns and villages under the guidance of senior priests. They evolved a two-tier ceremonial system to ordain the priests. The first stage is known as Navar or earlier known as Nao-bar meaning "one newly ordained to perform sacred Rites". This qualifies a person for the performance of outer liturgical ceremonies. It is only after the second level of the priestly training, known as Martab, that a Zoroastrian priest can perform the inner liturgical rituals.

The inner liturgical services are those that can only be performed within the confines of the sacred spaces created for them in a consecrated Zoroastrian Fire Temple. In contrast outer liturgies of Zoroastrian Faith are those services that can be performed in a Darbe-Mehr (a place of worship) or within the sacred space created in a house or a hall.

All Zoroastrian ceremonies imply a communion with the Supreme divinity Ahura Mazda. Ahura Mazda is absolute Purity, absolute Truth, and unconditional Love. In keeping with this tenet a participant must attain the highest order of ritual purity of mind and body before undergoing any ceremonial ritual. Accordingly, the participant for Navar must undergo, two nine-day periods of sacred ablution to attain the level of ritual purity for the ceremony. During these periods, which are known as *Bareshnum*, the person is isolated and dedicates much of his time to prayers and meditation. The sacred ablutions described above, are carried out in specially prepared areas in certain Zoroastrian Fire Temples in India. These facilities are not accessible in North America, hence the community is dependent on the Zoroastrians of India to have their youth ordained as priests.

Traditionally, the ritual of Navar is undertaken between the ages of 11 and 14, after the boy has memorized the essential Yasna prayers. While the process of imparting the knowledge of the religion should be initiated at an early age, the decision for priestly commitment must wait at least, till 16-18 years of age and must evolve as a gradual but deliberate choice. During the ordainment at the young age of 11-14 the stress is on preparing the child for the ritual performances to serve the lay community. Little effort is made during this training, to impart the knowledge of history and theology to the new initiate.

### **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PARSI AND IRANIAN PRIESTS:**

Little is known about the priestly leadership in Iran between the tenth and the sixteenth century except for the sporadic accounts of the preservation and copying of certain manuscripts. The late fifteenth century saw the initiation of dialogs, historically known as the *Rivayats*, between the Iranian and Parsi priesthood through Parsi emissaries to Iran, which lasted over three centuries (1478-1778). The first envoy to make this hazardous voyage was Nariman Hoshung who returned to India with two Pazand manuscripts from the Sharifabadi priests of

Iran. This was the one of many missions, that terminated some three centuries later by a Parsi priest Mulla Kaus who brought back answers to Seventy Eight (known as '*Itthoter*' in Gujarati) questions posed by the religious leaders of India

These documents reveal some striking differences between the theological comprehension of certain religious issues by the two communities. The focus of the



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Iranian priesthood has remained on the Gathic scriptures and finding their religiosity, in living a life, following the tenets of Zarathushtra. Rituals are perceived as a means to an end.

In contrast Parsi priesthood regards rituals as means to attune with the Divinity and find therein the sole source of spiritual strength. In turn, these differences are reflected in the training of Iranian and Parsi priests.

Iranian priesthood independently evolved their own method to ordain priests. The ritual is known as Novzut, which differs markedly from, that evolved by the Parsis for Navar and Martab ceremonies. The prayers are in general abbreviated compared to those of their Indian counterpart. The responsibility of training of priests in Iran, presently rests with Kankash-e-Mobedan (An Association of Iranian Zarathushti Priesthood). They also have a training program for lay youth. Those interested are trained as Mobedyar, who initially assist the priests and in time can evolve to be the full-fledged priests of the future. Both Indian as well as the Iranian training involves several years of study and memorizing of prayers. However, Iranian priests often choose to read their prayers instead of learning them by rote.

### **ROLE OF GENDER AND LINEAGE:**

According to later Zoroastrian text (Aerpatistan 1-37, Vendidad (Vd) 4.45) in the early era, any aspiring Zoroastrian could undergo priestly training and become a performing priest -Athraivan. The eighth book of Dinkard even speaks of the women assuming the duties of the performing priests (Dinkard, Book 8, 28.6). The ability of women to tend a consecrated fire is also recorded in other Zarathushtrian text ( Erbedestan Ch 5.6,7; 6.7).

Priesthood should be open to all Zarathushtis, men and women who innately get the calling. The question of gender in serving the religion has been debated ad nauseum. Many research articles (Status of Women: Sacred and Secular (Parts I-V) by Dr .Ketayun H. Gould, Parsiana, October 1995-April 1996; Women: Venerated and Victimized by Dr. Ali A. Jafarey, Parsiana, April 1991) have already been written to demonstrate that doctrinally and theologically, men and women are a part and parcel of the same Whole - the fellowship of mankind. Despite that, egalitarian position clearly vindicated by Asho Zarathushtra in the Gathas, and despite historically, the significant religious contribution of women over centuries, tradition has chosen to retain the social dictum of patriarchal character of the past, and dragged it into the core of the religion.

There is essentially nothing in the history through Achaemenian, Parthian, Sasanian and post-Sasanian era to indicate that a Zarathushti priest interacted with laity any more, than to fulfill their ritual needs and his responsibility to perpetuate the religion. The present 'age of reason', particularly on this continent, specifically demands a broadening of that role. An ideal Zarathushti priest of the future, must play a unique role to assist in leading the 'moral and spiritual consciousness' of the Zarathushti community.

While the heredity principle has the advantage of replenishing the ranks of the priests, it hardly guarantees the quality. The ability of the priests to satisfy the needs of the laity be it theological, spiritual or historical, was missing. This inadequacy of knowledge, over time has emerged as one of the major reason for the loss of respect of laity, for the profession and its practitioners.

Although the heredity principle has become a part of the religious tradition, the intellectual Zarathushtrian community in North America recognizes that the criterion of heredity was introduced in the era when the Median tribe of Magoi seized control of Zarathushtrian religion back in 6th century BCE. It has absolutely no doctrinal bearing. It has served its purpose, and the time has come for it to go.

Mobeds in the western world in general and in North America in particular, have faithfully served, their religion, on a volunteer basis, despite their professional commitments. These services are largely limited to the performance of the outer liturgies. These dedicated individuals have shown little or no interest to reasonably familiarize themselves with the philosophy, history, spirituality and/or theology of the religion they help perpetuate. Has the adherents in the technology and materialism of the 21st century, lost their zeal to preserve the knowledge of the teachings of Zarathushtra or is it the strength of those teachings that impels their efforts? Time will tell the Truth as newer generation rises to the helm.

### **. Acknowledgement**

***The author gratefully acknowledges kind editorial assistance of Ms Teenaz Javat, for the articles "Historical Perspective" and the "Training the Priests of the future"***



## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

### **Iranian Zarthushti Priesthood**

***Mobed Rostam Vahidi PhD***

#### **Introduction**

I want to thank Mobed Jehan Bagli, a kind priest, who believes in the coordination of all the Mobeds, Parsi and Irani. I am therefore grateful to prepare this article about Iranian Zarthushti priesthood as per his suggestion. Also I wish to mention, that FEZANA Journal is an important Zoroastrian periodical whose goal is to, bring about unity among the Parsi and Iranian Zarthushtis by providing information and news of both the communities. We, Iranian Mobeds are very glad to live in this age of technology, and can speak and write about the teachings of prophet Zarathushtra and the thoughtful customs and traditions of Din e Vah- e- Mazdayasni.

#### **Recent History of Priesthood in Iran**

In the recent times, well known famous High Priests or Mas Moghan who acted in leadership role of the religious as well as the social affairs of the Zarthushti community, were Dastur Tirandaz e Dastur Namdar and Dastur Namdar e Dastur Mehraban. The Mobed organization known as Kankash-e-Mobedan was established at 1915. Kankash was the religious body that would make decisions regarding the customs and prayers to be done for all the ceremonies. In the past fifty years late Dastur Ardeshir Azargoshasb and late Mobed Rostam Shahzadi were the chief administrators of the Kankash. At present the President of the Board of Directors of Kankash is Mobed Dr. Ardeshir Khorshidian.

Presently, the membership of the Kankash is open to all the Zarthushti and Parsi priests, all the Mobedyars and their families. They attempt to perpetuate teachings of Zarathushtra as well as Zoroastrian customs and traditions in Iran and abroad. Mobed Mehraban Firouzgari is a highly respected priest, who knows the Avesta and Yasna prayers. He is involved in ordaining the New Mobeds through Nowzut Ceremony.

#### **Position of Zoroastrian Priests in Iran**

In Iran, traditionally the position of Mobeds is very spiritual and well respected. They are well known for reciting Avesta and performing the religious ceremonies. Iranian mobeds have a general body meeting every five years to discuss the religious matters. Then they vote to

continue or change a part of a ceremony which is not suitable to present community. Most of the Mobeds in Iran now have a professional job so they are comfortable and don't have to live solely on the income of the priestly function. Now, there are about 60 Mobeds and Mobedyar in Iran. Tehran has 20, Yazd 20, Kerman 5, Shiraz 3, Esfahan 2, and some in the other cities where there is a smaller Zarthushti community.

Anyone interested in becoming a priest must attend Hirbod classes in Iran. Then they must pass two exams, one in Avestan prayer and the other in Zarthushti religion and its traditions. We had six new mobeds pass their exams, and were ordained in past four years. Their Nowzut ceremony was attended by several mobeds in Tehran fire temple.

#### **Future of Priesthood in Iran**

In the past the sons of the Mobed were not interested in the family tradition. So young Zarthushtis were accepted as a Mobedyar, because many intellectual Zarthushti thought this was an important duty. Today however, the youth feels that religious duty of priesthood is one of their family aspect. So sons of Mobeds are interested to do the Nowzut ceremony to continue the heredity of the mobed profession. The Mobeds and the Mobedyars both feel that they are engaged in a spiritual perpetuation of a traditional religion. So the priesthood in Iran has a good future.

The credit of changing the minds of the young boys to return to the priesthood goes to the famous Mobed Hormozdyar Khorshidian. He was a high priest in Yazd and Esfahan about 30 years ago. There were some priests who encouraged their sons to take up other profession, but Mobed Hormozayar did his best and succeeded in getting the Nowzut Ceremony for his five sons. He was the Mobed who prompted me to become a Mobed. Through the efforts of this late well-known mobed, many young boys of mobed family, were eager to follow the profession.

#### **Priestly Function in Iran:**

In ancient times Yasna ceremony was performed by a group of eight priests, with the senior as Zaotar and assistant as Raspi. Now a days we only have two priests perform the same ceremony. When a new mobed passes the Nowzut Ceremony he is called Navar, and has to work as Raspi (assistant) for one year with a senior Mobed. After one year he can perform as Zaotar and is called Martab.



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The function of mobedyar is to assist the mobeds in doing all Zarthushti ceremonies and prayers. Some forty years ago, we had a shortage of mobeds in Iran, except in cities like Tehran and Yazd. Kankash at that time, decided to train interested Zarthushtis from mobed family to perform religious ceremonies. The community was happy to see that Avesta prayers were performed by trained persons. During that time the sons of mobed could also pursue other careers such as accounting and medicine.

In cities like Shiraz and Esfahan we have many tourists at the fire temples. The old mobeds who can perform the ceremonies, could not explain the Zarthushti religion to the visitors so there was need for young well-trained priests. I recall that young eager mobedyars in those days filled the need to give a good overview of Zarthushti religion.

Presently, we have some forty Mobedyars in Iran spread across Tehran, Yazd, Kerman, Shiraz, Esfahan, Ahwaz, Zahedan and Karaj. They are well respected, spiritual persons who provide excellent service to the community.

### **Iranian Mobeds in North America**

There are 11 Iranian Mobeds and Mobedyars in North America, that I know of..Most of them live in California, where Iranian Zarthushti population is high. Four in Orange County, two in San Diego and two others in San Jose. One Mobed Kaikhosrow Mobed lives in Chicago. He was the first Iranian Mobed to come to United States. The Mobeds in North America are very knowledgeable, have an excellent spiritual relationship with the Zarthushti community, and also with other people interested in our religion.

Mobeds in North America have contributed to places of worship, built in four big cities of US with the donation of Zarthushtis and more particularly from Arbab Rostam Giv and his wife Morvarid. These four Dar e Mehrs are now lighted with the sacred fire in New York, Chicago, Orange County and San Jose.

The two Mobedyars who live in California, perform all the religious ceremonies for the Orange County Dar-e - Mehr. We also have some Mobed training Courses in Orange County Dar e Mehr. Interested Zarthushtis (Parsi or Irani) can join and get the trainings of Zarthushti Religion and Avesta prayers. We have courses on; *Zarthushti philosophy, history of Zoroastrianism, customs and traditions, Zarthushti civilization in Iran and India, theology and psychology.* The students learn Avesta prayer and religious ceremonies in two years. Then they

must pass two exams and presents a paper in front of a Board of Jury of Mobeds and seniors. The accepted person will be ordained as a Mobed, Mobedyar or religious teacher (Hirbod). There are four students in this course now. We hope to have more knowledgeable, spiritual priests in future in North America.

### **Family Tree of Mobeds**

After the fall of the Zarthushti Empire, we have the record of Mobed families who lived in Yazd and Kerman, as a family tree from the Safavid dynasty, prepared by late Mobed Hormozdyar Khorshidian. Mobed Hormozdyar was the cousin of my grandfather, Mobed Shah Fereydoon and my grandmother Firuze was the daughter of Mobed Ardeshir Malekuti. Mobed Hormozdiyar was keen to continue the heredity of the mobed family.. He encouraged me to do my Nowzut ceremony, which I did in 2003, three years after his passing away.

The family tree of Mobed families was completed by Mobed Mehraban Firuzgari. He also did my Nowzut Ceremony, with a group of Mobeds in Tehran Fire Temple, where my grandfather was the Atashband (chief) in 1930. Mobed Firuzgari is the only Mobed who can recite Yasna for Nowzut Ceremony, hence I was fortunate that he officiated my ceremony. At present I am the only person in the family familiar with Avesta and Pahlavi. I translated Kordeh Avesta to Farsi language and published with the Avesta text that was prepared by Mobed Mehraban Firuzgari in 2003.

### **University Avesta Study**

The well-known Iranian Mobed Rostam Shahzadi studied religion in India at Cama Athornan Institute. As a teen I was fortunate to learn Avesta and Farsi translation from him. Mobed Shahzadi considered me as a good religious student and presented me with his Dastur Kanga Dictionary. He advised me to continue Avesta study in university. I am glad I followed his advice, so today – remembering his soul - I am a PhD in Ancient Culture and Languages, and my research is in Avesta and Pahlavi text especially in Gatha, the songs of Asho Zarthusht. I studied at Azad University in Tehran and my thesis - Yasna 44 – Avesta, Pahlavi and Sanskrit comparison and translation was accepted in 2007.





## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

### **Coming to North America**

Sohilla and Fereydoon Parsinejad who live in Chicago knew me, and introduced me to the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago. I am thankful to Hosi Mehta the President of ZAMC, who did his best to get me to Chicago in 2007. I first rang the Bell of Chicago Fire Temple 21 times and prayed for happiness and health for him and all the Zarathushti families in Chicago.

I lived with Sohilla and Fereydoon for two months. There I prepared a book for learning Avesta called 'Simple Avesta' which I dedicated to Parsinejad family. I hope they could publish the book in US, so all Zarthushti youth can learn Avesta language in a simple way.

Later I visited San Jose Dar e Mehr and Orange county Dar e Mehr and to see my daughter Mehrak and her husband Peyman after three years. Mobed Keykhosro

**Mobed Dr. Vahidi** was born in Iran 1954, and educated at Azad University in Tehran. He was ordained as Mobed through Nowzuti ceremony (Navar and Martab) in Iran. He is a scholar of Avesta and Pahlavi, and has published his translation of Avesta and Atash Neysesh into Farsi. He has directed religious classes for youth in Iran for the last 15 years and is editor of monthly Fravahr. Mobed Vahidi is married to Shidrokh Novzari in 1980 and has two children Mahrok and Kashayar. He is presently fulltime High Priest of California Dar-e-Mehr



Khorshidiyan and his family kindly welcomed me, and I prayed Avesta to increase the goodness around the world in the Fire Temple.

In 2008 I was invited to Orange County Dar e Mehr by the Board of Trustees of California Zoroastrian Center. Now I am the high priest of Dar e Mehr and I work in our library where there are many English and Farsi books on Zarathushti religion, as well as history of Iran and India. In the Dar e Mehr, I pray Avesta every day, do the ceremonies and Jashans and also speak on religious topics on Sunday service which is held from 11 am to 12 pm I am fortunate to have high priest Mobed Bahram Shahzadi as my colleague.

### **Iranian Priesthood in North America**

I believe Zarathushti priests in North America are knowledgeable and are respected by the Zoroastrian community. The mobeds perform the religious ceremonies and prayers voluntarily for Ahura Mazda and not for money, as they have a profession or they are seniors

I believe, the Zarthushti religion is prospering in US. There are more and more people interested in Din e Behi and many Iranian and Parsis will emigrate to this country, and they will need to have places of worship for their spiritual fulfillment. It is satisfying for Zarathushti priests to maintain purity and spirituality; to guide interested humankind, to familiarize with the teachings of Zarthushtira, to live righteously, and to serve and protect the environment. In doing this work, we had recently eleven new Sedre Pushi ceremony for young Zaratushtis, and we hope many young Parsi and Iranian Zarthushtis will undergo the ritual, so that we can have an enlightened future generation. Eydun Baad

## **TRADITIONAL PARSI SNACKS**

Dar-ni-pori, Khajoor-ni-ghari, Bhakhra  
Batasa, Khatai, Agharni Ladoo, Vasanu  
Contact, Dilnavaz Meer (281) 491-8436  
[dilnavazmeer@comcast.net](mailto:dilnavazmeer@comcast.net)



## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

### **PANTHAKS: THEIR HISTORIC EVOLUTION AND MODERN DAY FUNCTIONS**

**Ervad Parvez M. Bajan**

It is now more than a millennium since the Parsis came to India from their mother country Iran as a small band of emigrant, seeking friendly haven where they could freely practice the religion of their forefathers. They landed on the coastal plains of Northern Konkan, stayed at Div for 19 years. They later moved to Sanjan on the coast of Gujarat in Vikram Samvat 992 (936 CE.) where the Hindu Raja of Gujarat kindly received them. It was at Sanjan that they established their first home and consecrated a sacred fire Iranshah according to the due rites of their forefathers, which the Sanjana priests have tended faithfully to the present day.

In Sanjan, they created their own small independent community within the framework of tolerant and generous Hindu society, which enabled them to make their contribution, while upholding their own religious beliefs and observances undisturbed. Gradually, as the community prospered and spread to various other towns of Gujarat, north of Sanjan, they felt the need for the priests to serve their religious needs.

Thus, in course of time, four other Parsi priestly groups or Panths came into being in districts northward from Sanjan. The first, called the Panth of 'Bhagarias' or 'Sharers' (as they divided the priestly work amongst them on a strict pattern of sharing), was established at the small town of Navsari. There followed 3 other Panths, Godavaras in Surat, Bharuchas in Broach and Khambatats in Khambat. These Panths were independent of one another; each was responsible for its own usages and discipline and trained its own young priests. All of them seem to have been established about 1290 CE.

During the last decade of the 14th century . Sanjan was sacked by the Muslim ruler and Parsis fought and lost with the local Hindu Raja. Those who managed to survive, carried the holy Iranshah to safety and guarded it in caves of Bahrot for 12 years and then to Bansda for the next 14 years..Eventually, they were invited by the Parsis of Navsari to bring the sacred Iranshah and enthrone it in their town in around 1419 CE. Iranshah remained In Navsari for well over 300 years.

During this time, Navsari was the strong hold of Parsi learning and tradition, with priests of the two oldest Panths, the Sanjanas and the Bhagarias, living harmoniously together and striving to uphold the ancient ways and the presence of Iranshah made the small town a place of pilgrimage for all Parsis.

During these centuries, disaster overwhelmed the most northerly Panth. Khambat was sacked repeatedly by Muslim invaders, and there was tremendous loss of life and property. At the same time, Broach was sacked and burnt by the Portuguese, and the Parsis suffered the most and many priestly records were destroyed. The old traditions were maintained with the greatest quietness and continuity in the mainly rural areas of Navsari and Surat, which were too small to attract greed of would-be conquerors.

For centuries the Parsis had occasional contacts with their co-religionists in Iran until the 15th century CE. Iran was however, the mother country of faith; and so when education and prosperity made the Parsis of India more conscious of their ancient history, some of them began to look to their co-religionists there as leading authorities on all matters of religion. However, few minor differences in observances of rituals and practices are to be found between the priestly classes of the two communities. Despite many centuries of separation, both communities seem to have been faithful to their heritage, upholding the ways of their ancestors with ardent fidelity.

The authenticity of ancient priestly tradition has been preserved by the devotion of priestly copyists, through the manuscripts of ancient works, describing various rituals and ceremonies as they were performed centuries earlier. The most comprehensive and ancient of such books is the *Nirangistan* or "Book of the Place of Rituals" representing the tradition of Sasanian times, before the conquest of Iran by the Arabs.

The golden age of tranquility and brotherly cooperation between the Bhagarias and Sanjanas in Navsari gradually came to an end during the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The cause was essentially one of growing number of priests. There was not enough work in the little town to support the Priests of both Panths. Quarrels developed between the younger and less disciplined priests which led in time to a serious breach and in the end the Sanjanas departed with Iranshah to settle in a little coastal village Udvada, in the region of their old Panthak.

The priests in India formed five groups called Panths (Guj.) as mentioned above and trace their genealogies from three Mobeds – Mobed Shapur Sheheriar, Mobed Hormazdiar Ramiyar and Mobed Neryosang Dhaval. Their jurisdictions were divided based on the rivers located in the surrounding townships. The priesthood is hereditary, and a member of the priestly class has the inalienable right to be



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initiated a priest. He has to learn the basic rituals and study rules of ritual purity and impurity that are to be observed during the two *Bareshnum* (nine nights retreat) which precede the initiation.

The Navar ceremony, which the priests in India have solemnized for centuries, is described partially and in strict technical terms in a text in the oldest existing manuscript of the Zoroastrian scriptures viz. *K7 of the Visperad Sada*, (reprinted in Pahlavi Codices and Iranian Researches Series 49, Shiraz, 1976) written by the famous Iranian Scribe Rodastahm Mihr–Aban Marzban in 1288 CE.

The members of the priestly class are subdivided into

- a) High-Priests (dastur < Phl. dastwar)
- b) Fully initiated priest – who perform ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ ceremonies (mobed < Phl. mowbed)
- c) Those with the first grade of initiation who perform only ‘outer’ ceremonies (ervads < Phl. erbad)
- d) Uninitiated members of the clerical class (osta < Phl. hawist)

It appears that in olden days the priestly affairs were managed by the Anjumans of the respective towns in India. The main duties of the priests were to perform ceremonies, to impart religious knowledge to the Zarathushti children for the Navjote and to the young Athornans, also for the Navar and the Maratab. In earlier days, the priests devoted their leisure hours also to priestly studies. Besides, scriptural studies, astrology, geomancy, medicine and Sanskrit were the subjects of their studies. They were also doing important work of copying the ancient manuscripts of the Avesta, Pahlavi, Pazand, Persian, Sanskrit and Gujarati texts.

In those days, particularly in the villages and towns of Gujarat the priest was treated as a family member by the Behdins, and he used to render social services also. The Athornans and Behdins mutually shared their joy and sorrow and helped each other in every respect, particularly in times of difficulty, danger and emergency. Generally a priest in those days was a friend, philosopher and guide in religious as well as social matters. Although there are instances of conflicts and serious incidents, generally the relations between the Athornans and Behdins were cordial and amiable in the villages and towns of Gujarat.

The priest did not receive fixed remuneration for his services. Generally the fees were fixed by the Anjumans for performing ceremonies and for instructing the children for Navjote. But such fees were meager and were supplemented by a portion of *myazd* (offerings in the ceremonies), which was regarded as share of priests.

For centuries the Parsi priests lived in a precarious financial condition. There was no economic stability in life. But that did not matter much in those days of less expenses and simple lifestyle of contentment, particularly in villages. More importantly, the priests had full faith in efficacy of prayers and ceremonies. The latter part of the 19th century and early 20th century changed the entire outlook of life. As mentioned, the priest devotedly performed his duties with full faith in his heart and mind that, he was performing ceremonies to invoke divine help and blessings of Ahura Mazda, Amesha Spentas and Yazatas.

But, changing times has shaken, if not shattered, that faith knowingly or unknowingly. The ceremonies were ridiculed and priests were derided. The priesthood thus degraded in the eyes of the laity. With advancing literacy standards, the less educated priests were ridiculed and humiliated.

In 1915, *Dr. Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi* wrote regarding Parsi priesthood:

”Such being the case with reference to emoluments – and to a certain extent, the question of status and position is connected with the amount of emoluments – the vocation of priesthood has little attraction. A priest would like to see his intelligent and educated sons taking up profession other than that of priesthood.”

It appears that at present we require educated and deserving priests of three categories:

- 1) *Yozdathregar* priests who can perform ceremonies of higher order.
- 2) *Teachers and preachers* who can conduct classes to impart religious knowledge to children and grown-ups.
- 3) *Teachers for higher studies and for doing literary and research work.*

Since the latter part of the 20th century, the Parsi population has shifted from rural to more urban, semi-urban areas and to a large extent to metropolitan cities, especially Mumbai, Surat, Pune and Ahmedabad. More than half of the Parsi population is now concentrated in and around Mumbai and its western suburbs.

Till the beginning of the last century, as was the custom, the ‘outer’ ceremonies like the *Satum*, *Afringan*, *Fravashi*, *Jashan* etc. were performed by priests at the place of residences of the laity (Behdins), who used to prepare food, sweet-meats and arrange for the entire ceremonies including fruits, flowers and sandalwood. However, this practice has slowly dissipated, due to urbanization and modernization of large cities. The ‘outer’ ceremonies, are now performed at the Fire-temple and the Panthaky (Head-Priest) has to make all the arrangements including



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dispatching the *myazd* (consecrated fruits) to the laity's residence. Thus a modern day Panthaky has to provide multifarious services to the laity as a contractor, caterer and a courier of sorts. In doing so, he became proficient in ancillary functions and lost sight of his priestly vocation of performing rituals.

The Panthaky system of management of the affairs of the Fire Temple is in existence since the later half of 19th Century when wealthy devout Zarthushti merchant princes and industrialists built fire temples in India to commemorate the memory of their dear departed ones. They endowed a Trust to be managed by the Trustees who in turn appoints a Panthaky (Head-Priest) to look after the day-to-day management of the Fire-Temple and to provide religious services to the laity living in the vicinity of the fire temple in particular and to the Zarathushtis of Mumbai at large.

Thus, majority of fire-temples in Mumbai are managed by the Panthakies and few of them are even hereditary since its enthronement where the holy fire is tended from generation to generation by the descendants of the same priestly families. One such example is Seth Bomanji Merwanji Mevawala Agiary in Mumbai consecrated in 1851. Since then, its fire is tended by generation of descendants of the Bajan family (see photo), whose sixth direct descendant is the humble writer of this monograph.

In modern day practice, some fire-temples are looked after by Manager Priests who are appointed by the Trustees on a fixed remuneration. Due to declining Parsi population, and shortage of good qualified priests, at some fire-temples even Behdin (laity) is appointed to manage the day-to-day affairs of the fire-temple.

Centuries back, Athornans and Behdins mutually shared their joy and sorrow, they helped each other in every respect and generally a priest in those days was a guiding light to the Behdin in matters religious as well as social. If we want to preserve the priestly class and to improve its condition, faith in purity and virtue, faith in efficacy of prayers and ceremonies must be revived.

### **Panthaky**

### **Years of service**

- |  |            |
|--|------------|
| 1. Mobed Noshewan Hiraji Bajan             | 1851-1886  |
| 2. Mobed Pallonji Sheriarji Bajan          | 1886-1917  |
| 3. Mobed Ardeshir Pallonji Bajan           | 1917-1947  |
| 4. Mobed Jal Ardeshir Bajan (jointly)      | 1947-1979  |
| 5. Mobed Minocher Ardeshir Bajan (jointly) | 1947- 2003 |



*From left to right - Jehan Darayus Bajan (my grandson), Mobed Darayus Parvez Bajan (my son), Zerxes Darayus Bajan (my grandson) and Parvez Bajan. Photos on wall from left Mobed Pallonji Sheriarji Bajan (Panthaki No. 2), Mobed Ardeshir Pallonji Bajan (Panthaki No. 3) and Mobed Noshewan Hiraji Bajan (Panthaki No.1)*



**Ervad Bajan** is a qualified priest having undergone his Navar and Maratab in Navsari at a very young age. He is a graduate in Physics and Mathematics from The Royal Institute of Science, Mumbai and holds a post-graduate degree in Law, specializing in International Law and Criminology. He was awarded gold medal for his Masters Degree in Avesta, Pahlavi and Ancient Iranian

Languages from Mumbai University.

*Ervad Bajan is a lecturer in Avesta, Pahlavi and Ancient Iranian Languages at St. Xavier's College Mumbai and Sir J. J. Zarthoshti Madressa, Mumbai, and a Trustee of the Athornan Mandal - the apex body of the Zoroastrian clergy. He is also a member of the Governing Body of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute.*

*He has presented several research papers at National and International Congress and Seminars on Iranian Subjects and has given numerous talks on religion, history and Shahnameh in India and abroad. Apart from his scholastic pursuit, Ervad Bajan is the Panthaky (Head Priest) of Seth B. M. Mevawala Fire-temple in Mumbai which is managed by the Bajan family for six generations since the enthronement of fire in the year 1851.*



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### **The Iranian Ceremony of Nowe Zooty (Navar) to become an Iranian Mobed**

**Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary**

The Initiation of a person born into a Mobed family, to become a Mobed is called Nowe Zooty meaning the introduction of a new Zaotar, abridged to Zoot, in Farsi. From the time the candidate applies and goes through the required tests, and the Initiation Ceremony, he is called a Nowe Navar = a new Initiator (lit. one who is bringing in {learning} new things).

Compared to the long established practice of taking 2 nine nights *Bareshnums* by an initiate (Navar) in India, in Iran we do not have any active *Bareshnum* facilities anywhere and hence a candidate does not take any *Bareshnum*. The consecrated urine (Nirang) of the Varasia and any derivatives from there on are looked upon as items of history when antiseptics and hygienic products were not yet discovered. At the age and with the amount of serious intentions that we (about one or two elderly priests left) impress on our candidates for Nowe Zooty, we can hardly expect too much from them.



#### **The Nowe Zooty Examinations**

The tests are in three stages:

1) Proficiency in Avesta recitations covering the entire Khordeh Avesta and Afringans, plus "Yasht e Sraosh". This is the combination of Sraosh Baj and Ahunavaiti Gatha, plus the entire 5 Draonas (Comprising Yasna 3-8 with additions from Farvardin Yasht for the benedictions

of Sraosh, Rashna, Ashtad and Ram Yazads, The Ashavans, the Gahanbars) and Yasna Has 1 to 21.

Two other Mobeds and I examine them for these Avesta recitations. We require these initiates to learn by heart to recite the following: the Sraosh Baj and Kushti Prayers (both more elaborate than Parsees pray in India) and short prayers like the *Doa Tandorosti*, *Ahura Mazda's 101 Names*, *Setayesh Yakta Khuda (Doa Naam Setayashne)*, *Berasad*, *Din no Karmo* and portions of the *Gah Prayers (Ahurem Mazdam; Thvam Athrem)* that are repeated in all the *Gahs*, *Ahe Raya Khvarenangha* of *Sraosh Yashts* and *Behram Yasht*, the *Afrinamiye Khshatrane (Aafrinaami Khshathrayaan Danghu Paiti)* of *Afringans*. The rest of Khordeh Avesta, the *Draonas* and *Ahunavaiti Gathas* must be read, fluently, out of Persian books. The *Yasna*, should be read from Avesta Script up to the first 21Has. We do overlook some faltering and slow speed, especially for the difficult words.

The book used for the 5 *Gahs*, 5 *Niayeshes*, 5 *Yashts*, 4 *Afringans*, and *Patet* is the recent publication of the Khorde Avesta originally transcribed from *Din Dabire* by *Ostad Rashid Shahmardan*, with some updating and corrections, by myself.

Why we use only 21 Has for the *Yasna* ceremony I cannot say. Probably so because they cover the major *Hoama* pounding rituals, and the *Ashem Vohu*, *Yatha Ahu* and *Yenghe Hatam* prayers, explanations and descriptions.

2) Another group examines the candidate for religious knowledge, the basics and philosophy of our Religion.

A vast range of questions with answers, are also presented to the candidate. They are collected from *Gatha* translations and mainly dealing with the philosophy and insight of *Zarathushtra*. These are compiled by *Mobed Dr. Ardeshir Khorshidian*, the president of *Anjoman e Mobedan*, as well as from other well researched books, on our Religion, in Farsi. We hardly cover the later written *Rivayats* and the likes of *Sad dar*, *Bundahishna*, *Denkard*, and the likes.



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3) A third group examines the candidate for the manners of performing different Religious Rites and ceremonies.

### **Nowe Zooty Ceremony**

On the appointed day, the lead Mobed, the candidate and the Mobed initiated before him, called the VarsDar = holder or carrier of the Vars, (if for any reason, this immediate predecessor Mobed is unable to attend, then the Mobed initiated before him must present himself) come to the Ijashngah (Section of the Agiary where Ijashny is performed). The candidate is helped to dress up and to be decorated with the ornamented turban (Probably in line with the Sasanian Mobed Shahis = the Royal Mobeds' crown like turbans) containing 21 ancient gold coins surrounding the turban and a jewel decorated mirror hanging over the Panam covering the face. The mirror signifies enlightened and bright future for the candidate as well as it radiates Divine energy from the candidate to the surroundings and to the crowd. A short silver rod with a silver strip nailed, in the middle, to one end is held by the candidate in his right hand and keeps rotating the strip during his trip out of and back to the Ijashngah.

### **The Construction of the Vars**

The Vars mentioned above is formed by twigs forming a cone similar to Soparo used by Parsis in the traditional Ses. It was given to me long time ago and had always remained intact and covered. Just recently we opened it for examination and we found that its skeleton consists of nine twigs of pomegranate. One twig formed a perfect circle for the base. Around this circle, the four longer ones are tied at the top to form the cone. The other four form semicircular arches between the four main pillars of the cone. Woven colored thread is used to fasten all the lower components of the nine twigs. Vars - hairs, from the tail of a sanctified Bull, the Varasya, - are used as thread for tying the apex of four twigs. This conical structure is covered with a green cloth making it look like the *Soparo*. The cone is further decorated with jewelries and a decorated mirror. My own guess as to the significance of a cone, used by other Religions as well, is that for absorption of the cosmic energy by its pointed tip and the body of the cone acting as a reservoir.

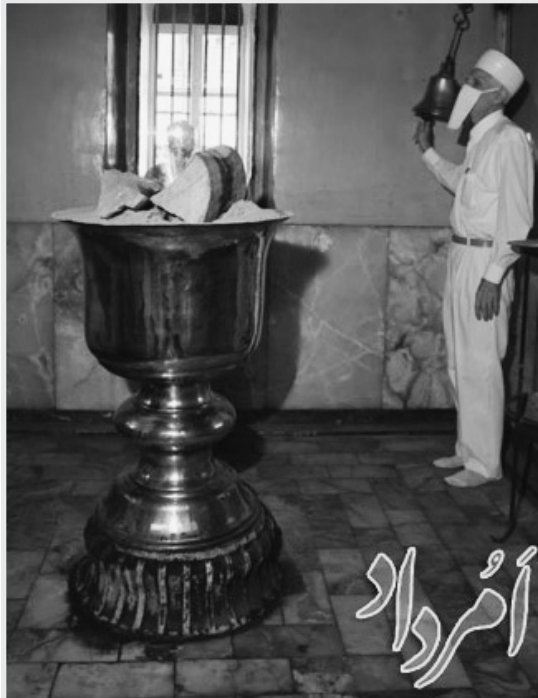
### **The Nowe Zooty Procession and Final Ijashny Ceremony**



After the Nowe Navar is all dressed up, the lead Mobed, the VarsDar, and the Nowe Navar are ready to perform the Padyab Kushti. Other Mobeds and Mobedyars join them. After Padyab Kushti they recite Dahma Afraiti for the benefit and Tandorosti of the Nowe Navar. (Mobedyars are allowed to join in as long as they don the Priestly dress. They can perform outer rituals but cannot perform the inner liturgies like Ijashny and they do not have the right to examine or lead the Nowe Zooty. No uninitiated persons born in Mobed family are allowed in this procession.) Soon after, this procession leads out of the Ijashngah, to the compound where a large Afringanyu with a big pyre of lighted fire stands. The leading Priest leads the procession holding the left hand of the Nowe Navar, who keeps rotating the silver strip nailed to the silver rod with his right hand finger. He is followed by the VarsDar carrying, on his head the tray containing the Vars. Other Mobeds & Mobedyars follow them holding hands of one another and proceed to the lighted Fire surrounded by jubilating crowd. Three clockwise rounds (as a sign of Humata, Hukhta, Hvarshta – Good Thoughts, Words and Deeds) are taken around the Fire, while Atash Nyayesh is prayed by the individuals, and the procession then returns to the Ijashngah. The guests give out cheers during this ceremony and shower white sweets and garden thyme leaves over the Nowe Navar and other Mobeds circling the fire. Before entering, the group usually poses for photographs and felicitations by family and friends. The leading Mobed, the Nowe Navar and the VarsDar enter the Ijashngah to celebrate the Ijashny (only the first 21 Yasna Has are prayed). The rest of the group goes to the adjoining Community Hall for speeches and



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celebrations for the occasion. For Yasna ceremony, we use 21 metal wires bound together with Vars as Barsom. The lead Mobed performs all the rituals of Haoma pounding, holding his left hand fingers on Barsom resting on two Mah-ruys while reciting the Yasna with Nowe Navar and VarsDar. After about two hours of Yasna Prayers, the ceremony ends, and the Nowe Navar is declared a Nowe Zoot. Family and friends of the Nowe Zoot are free to touch and greet the new Mobed.

The above is a brief description of the procedure followed to ordain a Mobed in Iran at the present time.

***Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary,  
is the Head Mobed in Tehran, Iran  
and Chehre Mandegar***

***He is a member of the managing committee of the  
Anjoman e Mubedan for the past 40 years and Chief  
Registrar for Zarathosti Marriages in Tehran,  
appointed by The Iranian Justice Ministry ,***

## An Interview with Mobed Keikhosrow Mobed (MKM)

**FEZANA JOURNAL FJ:** What motivated you to be ordained as priest at a late age?

**MKM:** The Iranian Zartoshti community of Chicago and the east coast had no Iranian mobed. There was a need for an Iranian Mobed. That was the reason I became a Mobed.

**FJ:** What did you have to study for that ceremony and how long did it take?

**MKM:** I started to learn Avesta when I was five years old. As I grew up I continued the study of Avesta prayers. I learnt Khorshed, Mehr, Mah Neyaeshes, Hormazd, Ardibehesht and Haftan Yashts. I also learnt all Afringans and Ahunavaiti Gatha.

**FJ:** What is the Iranian name of the ceremony? How long did it take you to undergo the ceremony? And what did you have to recite during the ritual?

**MKM:** The ceremony to become a Mobed is called Now-Zoodi. The sons of mobeds would learn the necessary Avesta and Yasna and then take an exam. After passing the exam, there would be the ceremony. A few weeks before the ceremony I learned the necessary Avesta and Yasna from Mobed Hormozdiar and Mobed Ardeshir Khorshidian and recited Avesta and Ahunavaiti Gatha.

Then I had to take an appointment with Mobed Council of Tehran. There I was presented to a panel of few Dastooors including Mobed Firooz Azaargoshasb and Mobed Rostam Shahzadi. Here they asked me over





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three hours to read and recite various Avesta. This I did and passed the exam.

On the day of the ceremony, all Mobeds get together with the candidate. During the ceremony the candidate has to wear a crown-like headpiece, and recite Avesta with other Mobeds. They recite Atash Neyaesh while circling around a fire placed in an open area. All family members, neighbors, and many other Zartoshtis participate as observers in the ceremony.

**FJ:** Did you have to take a Bareshnum for the ceremony?

**MKM:** According to history and research Nirang and Bareshnum was practiced in the ancient times when they had no antiseptics and medicines as we know today. They have no connection with Zartosht or Zartoshti religion. The last Nirang ceremony in Yazd was performed in 1941, and last Bareshnum -e-Noh Shva (Purification of Nine Nights) was performed in 1945.

In ancient times when a person traveled from one city to another, at the border they had a special room where newcomer would be kept for nine days. They would have

to be washed with Nirang which has ammonia and would have to sip it also. Presumably this was to prevent the spread of any infectious disease from the outside world. Nirang and Bareshnum are not used in Iran anymore.

**FJ:** How many Iranian Mobeds are there in Chicago and how many in North America? And are they organized as a Council?

**MKM:** In Chicago I am the only one. In North America there are about ten Iranian Mobeds. There is no organized Iranian Mobed Council of North America.

**FJ:** Do you actively participate in priestly activities, and can you coordinate ceremonies with Parsi priests?

**MKM:** Yes I do participate in the priestly activities and I am able to coordinate our activities with those of the Parsi priests.

**FJ:** What is your view of the Iranian Zartoshti Priests, and future of the priesthood in North America?

**MKM:** In my opinion the Iranian priests are quite knowledgeable in religion and in Avesta. They are also eloquent speakers. In my view we must establish a seminary in USA to train those who wish to become a priest. We should teach them Avesta and particularly the knowledge of the religion of Ashoo Zartosht and train them to be good speakers.

**FJ:** What are your thoughts on how to get youth interested in Zoroastrianism?

**MKM:** More young Zartoshtis should meet at Nourooz and Pateti functions when there is music and interesting program. We should have more camps for youth. We should learn from Christianity and bring music and knowledge of the new world society in our worship that could bring youth to Dar-e-Mehr.

**Mobed Keikhosrow Mobed** *has lived in Chicago for many years. Since his Nowe-Zooty he has been the sole Iranian mobed in Chicago.*





## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

### **An Interview with Mobed Jamshid Jamshidi, Vancouver, BC, Canada**

**FJ:** FEZANA Journal asking questions

**MJJ:** Mobed Jamshid Jamshidi answering the questions

**FJ:** What motivated you to be ordained as priest at a late age?

**MJJ:** When I came to Vancouver in 1989, I was asked by Mobed Mehraban Zartoshti to do some prayers on different occasions, because I am the grandson of Mobed Ardeshir Azargoshasb. Then my father-in-law Mobed Feridoon Khorshidian came to Vancouver and he was doing Mobed's job. When he got sick and could not perform any more, then I decided that it was my duty to continue his mission because there was no Iranian Mobed in Vancouver. So that motivated me to be ordained as a Mobed.

**FJ:** What did you have to study for that ceremony and how long did it take?

**MJJ:** I had to study and learn to recite Yasna and Gathas to be able to become a Mobed and it took me nearly two months.

**FJ:** What is the Iranian name of the ceremony? How long did it take you to undergo the ceremony? And what did you have to recite during the ritual?

**MJJ:** The Iranian name of the ceremony is Nowe Zooty. It took about three hours to go through the ceremony. On the day of my initiation, in the morning hours, all the Mobeds joined us. We all prayed Sarosh Baj and performed the koshti prayer. Then we prayed Afringan prayers. After that we all Mobeds joined hands with Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary in the lead and I and Mobed Tooraj Khodabakhshi who was VarsDar at the time and other Mobeds went outside and we went three times around the fire in courtyard with many people joining us in the celebration. Then other Mobeds and the people went to the adjacent hall for speeches and treats. Mobed Firouzgary, myself and Mobed Khodabakhshi went back to the Agiary to pray Yasna and Gatha and Mobed Firouzgary did the Hom and Barsam ceremony.



**FJ:** Did you have to take a Bareshnum for the ceremony?

**MJJ:** Sorry I do not know what Bareshnum is? May be it is the Hom in our language. No I did not.



## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**



**FJ:** How many Iranian Mobeds are there in Chicago and how many in Vancouver? And are they organized as a Council?

**MJJ:** So far that I know there is one Iranian Mobed in Chicago; his name is Mobed Keikhosrow Mobed. In Vancouver, Mobed Mehraban Zartoshti and Mobed Fereidoon Khorshidian have retired. I am the only Iranian Mobed in Vancouver.

There used to be a Council which Mobed Jehangir Panthaky used to run. Since he is not performing any more, there has been no Council.

**FJ:** Do you actively participate in priestly activities, and can you coordinate ceremonies with Parsi priests?

**MJJ:** Yes I do. I participated in the 5 Gatha Days prayers in 2007 Parsi Muktaf Days in our Vancouver Dar-e-Meher with Mobed Soli P. Dastur from Florida. It is hard to coordinate due to different ways of performing the ceremonies.

**(Soli Dastur:** *In 2007 Jo Ann and I went to Vancouver to perform Gatha prayers at the invitation of the Parsi Group. I found Jamshid as the only Vancouver Iranian Mobed, called and visited him in his home, and insisted to join me in the prayers. We exchanged what prayers we both use in the Jashan ceremony and found there were more similarities than differences. Jamshid was kind enough to join me in the prayers all 5 Gatha Days. I will never forget that experience in my whole life! Thank you Jamshid for being so accommodatng to pray with me!*)

**FJ:** What is your view of the Iranian Zoroastrian Priests, and future of the priesthood in North America?

**MJJ:** I hope that more Mobeds could join us and a Council would be formed to coordinate between Irani and Parsi Mobeds.

**FJ:** What are your thoughts on how to get youth interested in Zoroastrianism?

**MJJ:** First we should make both Parsi and Irani youths to get together which somehow it is hard to do. Secondly we should get more gatherings and talk more about our Ceremonies in interesting manner, with hope that they will get interested in the Zoroastrian Religion.

**Mobed Jamshid Jamshidi has lived in Vancouver for many years. Since his Nowe-Zooty a few years ago in Tehran, he has been the sole practicing Iranian Mobed in Vancouver.**



*In pious memory of  
Our Dear Dhunjishah  
(Dick) Vazir*

*A loving husband, Dad and Granpa,*

*from*

*his loving wife, Sherco Vazir,*

*His loving daughter, son-in-law and grand  
daughter*

*Franah, Gerry and Sara Marino,  
Miami, Florida*





**NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

**KHORDEH AVESTA**

**GENERAL**

The Khordeh Avesta, literally means 'abridged Avesta', or 'a selection of Avesta prayers'. Some people call it "smaller Avesta", "little Avesta", "lesser Avesta", "Book of Common Prayers". By whatever name you call; it is a collection and admixture of selected Avesta and Pazand texts and has passages from Yashts, Yasna, Visparad, and Vendidad, collated, to be used for daily prayers by laity and priests, depending on the seasons and various circumstances of life.

For example, take our basic Kusti prayers: Kemna Mazda itself is a composition of 3 paragraphs from the Gathas and one from Vendidad. Ahura Mazda Khoday and Jasa-Me-Avanghe Mazda is a collection of Avesta and Pazand texts and have paragraphs from Yasht and Yasna.

Another example is Din-no Karmo i.e. Rajistayao, Chistayao. It is in two parts; the first part is in Avesta from *Rajistayao Chistayao to Vanghuyao Mazdayasnois* and that is the Khshnuman of Din Yasht. The latter part from *Din be rast, va darust Din dineh Zarthosht, dine Ahura Mazda, dadeh Zarthosht Spitaman* is in Farsi.

Gahs and nyaeshs have paragraphs from Yashts and Yasna incorporated in them; the Atash Nyaesh is taken from Yasna Ha 62, and the Avan Ardivisur Nyaesh is taken from Yasna Ha 65. The Karda that we recite in memory of the departed souls is Yasna Ha 26 and 59.

For better comprehension, a compendium listing references of Yashts, Yasna, Visparad and Vendidad in our daily prayers included in the Khordeh Avesta follows this article.

There are many versions of Khordeh Avesta in circulation and in use. The contents of each publication vary in language, size, and substance. As such, it is not a book of uniform content and fixed arrangement.

Because of the cost and expediency of printing facilities, about 6 to 8 Yashts which publishers consider desirable and popular are generally included in a Khordeh Avesta edition. A few editions have all the Yashts and the Gathas included and an odd edition has

***Ervad Brigadier Behram Panthaki***



Afringans, too. Some publications contain only prayers where as others have prayers with brief explanation and a few have detailed word-by-word translation with illustrative notes.

During their long history, the Zarthushtis had Avesta, Pahlavi, Persian and Gujarati (on migration to India) as their mother tongue; as a result we find that the Zarthushtrian scriptures have been written in these languages.

The ongoing transcriptions of our prayers from the original Avesta language in several vernaculars have resulted in flawed composition of words and inaccurate pronunciations in

many of these editions.

**GAHS**

We generally know that as per the Zarthushtrian philosophy the day is divided into five segments indicating the progress of the day. There is reference to divisions of the day in the Gathas. In Yasna Ha 44.5 (*Ushtavad Gatha*) - Line 5 reads: "Ke ya ushao arem-pithwa khshapacha" when translated "Who created morning, noon and night?" *Ushao* i.e. morning; *Arem Pithva* i.e. noon-middle of the day and *Khshapacha* i.e. the night; only three segments of the day are referenced. This suggests that during the Avestan times the day was divided into three sections.

All Gahs have Avesta passages in the beginning i.e. *Ahurem Mazdam ashavanem ashahe ratume yazamaide Zaghmushtemam ashaono ashahe rathwo ratufritim yazamaide* and at the end *Thwam atarem Ahurahe Mazdao puthrem ashavanem ashahe ratum yazamaide .....varshtacha vareshyamnacha* from Yasna Ha 71 (Para 2, 3 and 23, 24).

**NYAESHs**

The nyaeshs are a collection of five short prayers of praise addressed to the sun, light, moon, water, and fire, and to the Angels who preside over these elements:



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*Khurshed, Meher, Mah, Ardivisur, and Ardibehest.*

The nyaeshs are relatively short as compared to the yashts. This does not necessarily mean they are abbreviated version of yashts. Nor does it mean they are later than the yashts. Presumably, short prayers always coexisted with the longer ones. Finally, it certainly does not imply they are in any way inferior to the yashts.

The nyaeshs are composed in Avesta, of fragments taken from the yashts and Yasna including the Gathas with Pazand passages added at the beginning (*Pa Name Yazdan..Pa patet hom*) and in the end (*Roj nek nam..Dadare gehan dine*) and they form the primary component of the Khordeh Avesta.

Khurshed and Meher are both Yazatas of Ahura Mazda in the spiritual world and are manifested in the physical world as the sun and its rays. Hence it is recommended Khurshed and Meher Nyaeshs to be recited together during daylight hours.

Khurshed Nyaesh is part of Khurshed Yasht and has in the first paragraph a passage containing Arabic words: "*khaleke makhluk, al-rezzeh ruzi-dehandeh, kader o kavi o kadim*". This is an indication that this passage containing Arabic words was added later on by individuals who must have Arabic influence on them.

Meher Nyaesh has passages from Meher Yasht and Khurshed Nyaesh. Mahbokhtar Nyaesh is same as Mah Yasht and is recited during the hours of darkness.

Ardivisur Nyaesh is enjoined to be recited during the first three gahs of the day i.e. during day light hours and not to be recited during the night for fear that the invocation may be utilized by demonic forces to produce confusion. The core text of the Nyaesh is from Yasna Ha 65.1-14.

While the above stated four nyaeshs invoke the veneration of a specific creation of nature and are to be recited at a specified time, the unique feature of Atash Nyaesh is that it is the only litany that can be offered at all times of the day. The other unique feature of this Nyaesh is that it is the only liturgy of the group, that has Gathic passages [Ahunavad Gatha (Yasna 33.12-14; Yasna 34.4)] incorporated within and the core text is from Yasna Ha 62.1-10.

### YASHTS

The word yasht (Pahlavi) means worship. The yashts are hymns of praise and adoration composed in honor and worship of Ahura Mazda, the Amesha Spentas, and the Yazatas. The yashts seem to have been written

in different ages by different writers, with material drawn from pre Zarthushtrian times.

Each of the yashts is individually dedicated to one of the divinities. At present we have 22 yashts and fragments of some more. The Avesta texts of some of the yashts are identical (with adaptations) to the texts of some of the chapters of the yasna; for instance Yasna 9 and 10 form Hom Yasht; Yasna 35 to 42 Haftan Yasht; Yasna 57 is Sarosh Yasht Vadi.

Each yasht contains introductory and concluding prayers in Pazand that seem to have been added at a much later date. Except for Avan Yasht, all other yashts can be recited at any time of the day or in all gahs.

There are short laudatory passages, called Nirangs, to be recited at the end of some of the yashts. Of the present 22 yashts only seven have Nirangs which go to show that there is no uniformity. It is discernible that all Nirangs are in Farsi and Ardibehest Yasht and Vanant Yasht Nirangs have Arabic words – once again Arabic influence!!!!

Important historical events of kings and heroes of the Pishdadian and Kayanian rule have been recounted in Avan Yasht, Gosh Yasht, Behram Yasht, Ram Yasht, Fravardin Yasht, Ashiswang Yasht, Jamyad Yasht, Hom Yasht. It would not be incorrect to presume that Firdowsi may have taken material from these Yashts to relate stories of the kings of these two dynasties in his epic Shah Nameh. As there is no mention of any regent after King Vishtasp in any of the Yashts it is probable that the Yashts were compiled during King Vistasp's rule or immediately thereafter or during the early years of Achaemenian rule.

Originally a Yasht was intended for recitation during a religious ceremony to remember and honor a Yazata but that is not the case now. Hom Yasht has inner liturgical relevance during the Yasna ceremony. Fravardin Yasht is regularly recited in Agiaries by priests as part of outer liturgical service commonly known as Farokhshi.

### EQUALITY OF GENDER

The Zarathushti faith does not make gender discrimination and women are given the same status in all walks of life; men and women enjoy freedom as equals. There are distinct references in Haftan Yasht Large-Karda V (Paras 2 & 3); Karda VII (Para 2); Sarosh Yasht Hadokht-Karda I (Para 4), Sarosh Yasht Vadi-Karda IV (Para 10). Last seven chapters (Karda 25-30) of Fravardin Yasht are devoted to glorify the fravashis of the most celebrated Iranian personages of both genders who served the cause of spreading Zarathushtra's religion.



## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

The last Karda 31 of the same Yasht is replete with combined veneration of fravashis of men and women of various countries. For lack of space it is not feasible to quote the references in full and as such the impact of it may be lost on the reader.

We also find repeated allusions to this aspect in the Karda to be recited in memory of the departed souls (Yasna Ha 26) where men and women are talked about in the same breath. There is also a reference to this aspect in *Aiwishuthrem Gah* –

Para 5: “*Nairikamcha ashaonim yazamaide, .....yaoscha te ghenao, Ahura Mazda.*”

It would not be out of place to mention that the short prayer “*Yenghe Hatam*” we recite at the end of every gah, nyaesh and yasht also implies that women are accorded equal importance as their male counterparts.

### **SHEHENSHAHI, KADMI AND IRANIAN KHORDEH AVESTA**

There are differences in the composition and formulation of prayers in these three versions. Take the basic Kusti prayers: Kadmis and Iranis do not have the Ahura Mazda Khoday prayers that are in Pazand; Iranis do not narrate Kemna Mazda where as Kadmis recite whole Sarosh Baj including Kemna Mazda.

At the end of gahs, nyashes and yashts Shehenshahi recite Ahmai Rascha, Hazangarem Baeshazanam, Jasa me Avanghe Mazda Amahe Hutastahe and Kerfe Mozda. Kadmis and Iranis do not recite full Jasa me Avanghe Mazda Amahe Hutastahe. The end passage “*Ramno khwastrahe, vayaosh uparo-kairyeh taradhato anyaish daman, aetat te vayo yat te asti spento mainyaom*” is omitted. Kerfe Mozda prayer is non existent in the Kadmi and Irani editions.

There are rearrangements, additions and omissions at the beginning and at the end of nyaeshs and yashts. The Shehenshahis and Kadmis recite the name of the day, month and the gah (Roj nek nam roj pak nam roj Mubarak.....) in nyashes and yashts; the Irani version is void of this aspect. There are no nirangs after any of the yashts in Kadmi and Irani prayers.

### **CONCLUSION**

Khordeh Avesta, not an original scripture, is a collection of prayers to be recited by the devotees at different times of the day, in different seasons and in various situations of their lives. Although ascribed to Adarbad Mahraspand of the Sassanian period, many

additions seem to have been made since then. Except for Ardivisur Nyaesh, Atash Neyaesh, Hom Yasht and Fravardin Yasht the other prayers play no direct role in the inner and outer liturgical rituals conducted by priests in fire temples.

There are variations in three different renderings of our prayers as recited by Zarthushtis in North America, Iran, Pakistan and India including the Kadmi sect. The core of all prayers is identical in all three versions with additions and deviations in the beginning and at the end which are in Pazand. It is a clear indication that these were introduced at a later date after our migration to India in the 9th Century and thereafter.

The nyaeshs and the yashts along with other short prayers, included in the Khordeh Avesta, are recited in a wide range of settings; in private in the comfort of one's own home, in public in the halls of Agiaries and Atash Behrams, during day and night, individually and collectively, on the shores of the Arabian Sea, by adherents offering reverence and adoration to Ahura Mazda and seeking solace and succor from the trials and tribulations of this world.

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**continued**



## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**



**Brigadier  
Behram  
Panthaki**

born in India in 1942 is a graduate in Physics and Mathematics from Pune University, received his religious education and became a navar and later a martab

from M. F. Cama Athornan Institute, Bombay, under the guidance of High Priest Dastur Firoze Meherji Kotwal.

Brigadier Panthaki served with the 2nd battalion of the 8th Gorkha Regiment. Among several appointments during his career, the one he covets most was as ADC (Aide-de-Camp) to Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw. Behram served on the Indo-China and Indo-Pakistan borders, and was on the faculty of two premier military establishments, the College of Combat, Mhow and the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington. In 1994, after 30 years of outstanding service and having earned

12 military honors, Brigadier Panthaki opted for early retirement to join his family in USA.

During his army career, Behram had kept in touch with his religious training, occasionally performing ceremonies for friends and family. On migrating to the US he was presented with the opportunity to serve the Zarathushti community of Washington, DC area; Behram is one of the very few practicing priests in an area spanning from Bel Air, Maryland in the north to Richmond, Virginia in the south. He participates in the children's religious education class once a month, where 70 plus children attend. He teaches Zarathushti values and the moral obligations to family and society. Behram promoted adult religious discussion group which is conducted simultaneously with the children's classes. Brigadier Panthaki is often invited to speak on our religion at the University of Maryland, George Washington and George Mason Universities, and at churches, area schools and support groups. He is also the Zoroastrian Faith leader of the Washington chapter of the Inter Faith Conference.

In his professional life, Brigadier Behram Panthaki is the Director for Human Resources at The Kingsbury Center, a non-profit organization based in Washington, DC.

**Photo Khordeh Avesta courtesy Roshan Rivetna**



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### **PRAYERS IN KHORDEH AVESTA**

#### **REFERENCES**

#### **FROM YASNA, VISPARAD AND VENDIDAD**

Compiled by Ervad Brigadier Behram Panthaki

#### **NAME OF THE PRAYER**

#### **REFERENCE**

##### **Nirang-e- Kusti**

Kem-na-Mazda.....	Fravocho	- Yasna 46.7 (Gatha Ushtavaiti)
Ke Verethrem Jathava.....	Vasi Kahmiai Chit	- Yasna 44.16 (Gatha Ushtavaiti)
Pata no Tabishyant.....	Astavitish Ashahe	- Vandidad VIII.21
Nemascha Ya Armaitish Iza cha		Yasna 49.10:3 (Gatha Spenta Mainyu)
hura Mazda Khoday.....	Awadeshan Bad	- Abridged Kem na Mazda in Pazand
Ahura Mazda Khoday Aj Hama....	Patet Hom	- Short Pazand Patet; occurs in Nyaeshes and Yashts
Haihya Varastam.....	Frashostemem	- Yasna 50.11:4
Jasa-Me-Avanghe Mazda		- Hormazd Yasht-Paragraph 27
Mazdayasno Ahmi	.....Astuyetish	- Yasna 12.8-9

##### **MISCELLANEOUS**

##### **Sarosh Baj**

Pa name yazdan.....	Pa patet hom	-	In Pazand. Appears in every Neyaesh and Yasht
Fravarane Mazdayasno Zarathushtrish Vidaevo			Shortest Zoroastrian Creed
Ahuratkaesho		-	- Yasna 68.11
Ahmai Raescha.....	Vispo Khathrem		Afrin-e-Paighambar Zarthosht-Para 8
Atha Jamyat Yatha Afrinami		-	- Yasna 68.15
Hazangarem	.....Baeshajanam		- Hormazd Yasht-Paragraph 27
Jasa-Me-Avanghe Mazda			- Siroja Yasht Para 20
Amahe Hutastahe.....	Uparatato		- Siroja Yasht Para 21
Ramano Khvastrahe	.....Daregho-Khvdhatahe		- In Pazand
Kerfe Mozda.....	Asho Bed der Ji	-	In Avesta; Afrin-e-Paighambar Zarthosht-Para 8
Atha Jamyat Yatha Afrinami		-	

##### **Din-no-Kalmo**

Rajistayao.....	Mazdayashnoish	-	In Avesta; Siroja Yasht-Para 24
Din beh rast	.....Dadeh Jarthosht		- In Farsi
Din-no-Kalmo (Avesta)			Yasna 12.1-9
Jamwani Baj (Grace)		-	Yasna 5.1; Yasna 37.1 (Haftan Yasht Large Karda III-1)





## NORTH AMERICAN MOBED COUNCIL

### NAME OF THE PRAYER

### REFERENCE

#### Hoshbam

Atha Iman Vacho..... Tanum Paiti	-	Vandidad 11.3
Aetat Dim Vispanam.....Damanam ashaonam	-	Yasna 27.1, 2
Vanghucha vanghuyaoscha.....Dravato stoish		- Yasna 52.1-7
Stavas asha ye hudaoyoi henti		- Yasna 45.6:2
Vasascha tu Ahura ..... Ahurish Zarathushtrish	-	Yasna 8.5-7; Yasna 11.12-14
Yatha no aongham.....Hamem thaw Hakhma		- Yasna 60.11-12
Doa Nam Setayeshne		- In Pazand
Char Disa no Namaskar		- Yasna 1.16
Doa Tandorasti – Avesta (Tao Ahmi Nmane)	-	Yasna 60.2-7; The same Avesta is recited as Afringan Dahman
Patet Pashemani	-	In Pazand
Frastuye Humatoibyascha (Patet Avesta)		- Yasna 11.17-18
Karda in Memory of Departed		
Ashaunam vanguhish...saoshyantat verethraghnat	-	Yasna 26.1-10; Yasna 59.18-27

#### Gahs

Common to all Gahs (Beginning and ending paragraph)		
Ahurem Mazdam .....ratufritim yazamaide	-	Yasna 71.2,3
Thwam atrem.... Taoscha yazamaide	-	Yasna 71.23,24
Havan Gah		
Haurvatatem ashavanem.....ratum yazamaide	-	Yasna 71.12

#### Nyaeshes

##### **Khorshed Nyaesh**

Ferastuye humatoibyascha.....Staomi Ashem	-	Yasna 11.17-18; Avestan Patet
Nemo Ahurai Mazdai.....Bushyanithyaicha	-	Yasna 68.22
Vohu ukhshya manangha.....Ushta Tanum	-	Yasna 33.10
Ima raochao barezishtem barezemanam	-	Yasna 36.6
Yahmi spenta thaw mainyu urvaeese jaso	-	Yasna 43.6
Hvare-khshaetem ameshem.....Yasnemcha	-	Khorshed Yasht 1-6

##### **Meher Nyaesh**

Ferastuye humatoibyascha.....Staomi Ashem	-	Yasna 11.17-18; Avestan Patet
Nemo Ahurai Mazdai.....Bushyanithyaicha	-	Yasna 68.22
Vohu ukhshya manangha.....Ushta Tanum	-	Yasna 33.10
Ima raochao barezishtem barezemanam	-	Yasna 36.6



## NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL

### NAME OF THE PRAYER

### REFERENCE

Yahmi spenta thaw mainyu urvaese jaso	- Yasna 43.6
Hvare-khshaetem ameshem.....Yazamaide -	- Khorshed Nyaesh 6-9; Khorshed Yasht 1-6
Mithrem aiwi-dakhyum..danghu paitim Yazamaide	-Meher Yasht 144-145
Ahe Raya kharenanghacha.....Mithrem vouru	
Gaoyotim yazamaide -	Meher Yasht 4-6
<b>Mah Bokhtar Nyaesh</b>	
Nemo Ahurai Mazdai..... Taoscha Yazamaide	- Mah Yasht 1-6
Keya mao ukshyeiti nerfsaiti thwat	- Yasna 44.3:4
<b>Ardavisur Nyaesh</b>	
Aredvim Suram Anahitam...khshathrinam Paema -	- Yasna 65.1-5; Avan Yasht 1-5
A hatamcha anghushamcha...vasna ferashotemem	- Yasna 65.6-14
<b>Atash Nyaesh</b>	
Us moi uzareshva.....seroshem khshathremcaha	- Yasna 33.12-14
Yasnemcha vahmemcha.....bereja yaozdatan	- Yasna 62.1-10
toi atarem ahura.....dereshta aenanghem -	Yasna 34.4
<b><u>Yashts</u></b>	
<b>Hormazd Yasht</b>	
Ferastuye humatoibyascha.....Staomi Ashem	- Yasna 11.17-18; Avestan Patet
Ke Verethrem Jathava.....Vasi Kahmiae Chit	- Yasna 44.16 (Gatha Ushtavaiti)
Damim Yazamaide.....paoiryanamcha damanam	- Visparad 19.2
Aetat Dim Vispanam.....Damanam ashaonam	- Yasna 27.1, 2
Haftan Yasht Large	- Yasna 35 to 42 (Yasna Haftanghaiti)
Sarosh Yasht Hadokht	- Hadokht Nask (20th Nask)
Sarosh Yasht Vadi	Yasna 57.2-34
<b>Aban (Avan) Yasht</b>	
Aredvim Suram Anahitam...khshathrinam Paema	- Yasna 65.1-5
Hom Yasht Large	Yasna 9 and 10
Hom Yasht Small	Yasna 9.17,18, 21



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### THEORY AND PRACTICE OF YASNA RITUAL

*Ervad Dr. Jehan Bagli*

*Yasna* constitute the central sacrament of the Zarathushtrian Faith. Etymology of the word *Yasna* is cognate with *Vedic Yajna* which means devotion or worship. The text of *Yasna* are organized into 72 chapters, *haas or haitis* meaning sections. The 72 threads of the sacred girdle *kusti* is a reminder to the devotee of these liturgies.

#### TIME AND PLACE OF PERFORMANCE:

*Yasna* ritual is performed only during the daytime preferably in the morning. These inner liturgical ceremonies are performed in a place called *Dar-i-Mehr*. These are buildings that are attached to the main fire temples. The meaning of the term is 'the door or portal of *Mithra*'. *Mithra* being venerated sun god, the term is generally interpreted as 'House of Divine light or Justice'.

Presently, the ritual is performed by two priests, and takes about two and a half hours. However, we note in *Vsp. 3.1, Nirangistan book II, Ch.27, Vd. 5.57* that in the earlier times eight priests were involved in performing this ritual. It is essentially a priestly act of worship performed on behalf of the community. However, the laity often sponsors the ritual and sometimes the sponsoring families are permitted to observe the liturgy.

#### THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

*Yasna*, like other inner rituals, involves the representation of cosmic space and creation. The entire consecrated ritual area and all the objects and enactments within it, become a microcosmic model of the larger reality that is the macrocosm. *Duchesne-Guillemin* in his book '*Symbols and values in Zoroastrianism: Their survival and renewal*' states:

*"...figuration of the Sun, Moon, earth are easily recognizable. Fire is a substitute of the Sun:..... The Moon is present in the form of the two metal crescents on which the barsom is placed... As for the earth, it is the table, in front of which the chief priest sits..... It seems that this completes the cosmic definition of the ceremony in which all the elements take part: fire, water, vegetable*

*and animal nature, The entire universe, as one may infer, is brought into play to avert the demons and death"*

We must recognize at the outset, that Spirituality is a reality. When harmonized with the innate Divinity, it can be directed within the realm of physical to experience the phenomenon consciously.

*Ahura Mazda*, - the personification of Wisdom- is the absolute in purity; in truth, and in unconditional love, compassion, and benevolence. It is that intangible spirit (*Shayast la Shayast, 15.2*), as transcendent, as it is intimately personal. Human beings are an emanation of *Mazda*, an insignificant tiny spark of that Infinite Glow. Consequently, it is incumbent upon mankind, to make every effort to attain the highest level of ritualistic purity of mind and body possible, for this spiritual encounter.

The main service of *yasna* starts with the recital that in fact invites the Lord Wise, *Ahura Mazda* together with all HIS benevolent aspects, to participate in this celebration, to receive the offering and bestow their blessings.

The major purpose of the *Yasna* liturgy is synchronous, with the goal of human life, that depicts the purification of the *getig* creation, to renovate it to its pristine state. In order to achieve this goal, it is crucial to maintain the cleanliness and sacredness of all the ritual implements, requisites and the location. The participant becomes consciously engaged in a struggle of cosmic proportion between Wise Lord and its negation. The priest who solemnizes the liturgy, thus seeks not only to increase all that is wise, good and bountiful in both the visible and ineffable existence but also challenges the forces of evil around to fight and defeat them. By establishing an area scrupulously pure within the precincts of an enclosure the celebrant chooses *Spenta Mainyu* (*Ys 19.15, 30.3-4, and 45.2*) over its negation.

The importance of this ritual may be judged by the fact that *Mazda* is believed to have performed the *Yasna* ceremony with the Benevolent Immortals in *Rapithwin gah; (GBd III.23)* at the beginning of time. Also when all evil will be vindicated (*GBd XXXIV.29*) *Ormazd* will return as *Zaotar* and the holy *Sraosha* as *Raspi* at the end of time implying the inference, that a *Yasna* ceremony will be celebrated, at the end of time.

#### THE LAYOUT-YASNA/URVIC GAH

The area enclosed by the furrows is called *yasna-gah* (see fig.1). The enclosure made by the furrows is called a



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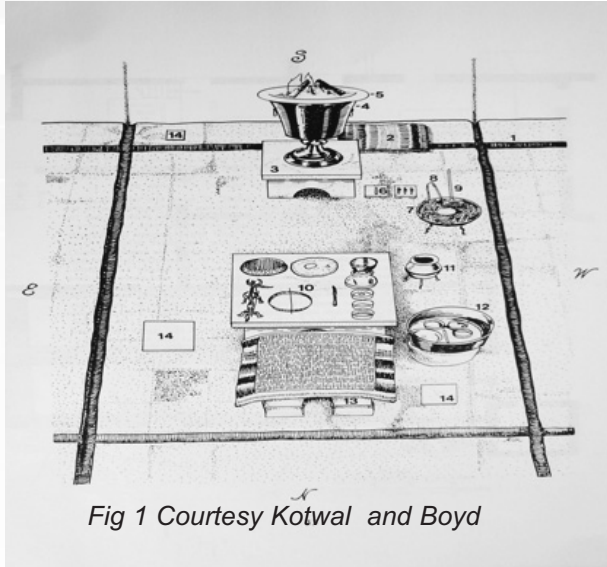


Fig 1 Courtesy Kotwal and Boyd

*pavi* (from Av. *Pav*, meaning to make sacred) and is believed to retain purity within. The *pavi* is 18'x10.5' in size. There are three stone tables (Av. *khwans*) in the *yasna-gah*. one to keep all the *alat* - the requisite utensils - one for the priest to sit on, and a third one for the *afriangan* to hold fire. The distance between ritual table and *atash* - *kwan* is about six feet. The seat for the priest is oriented to North and the fire *afriangan* to the South.

### ALAT-GAH

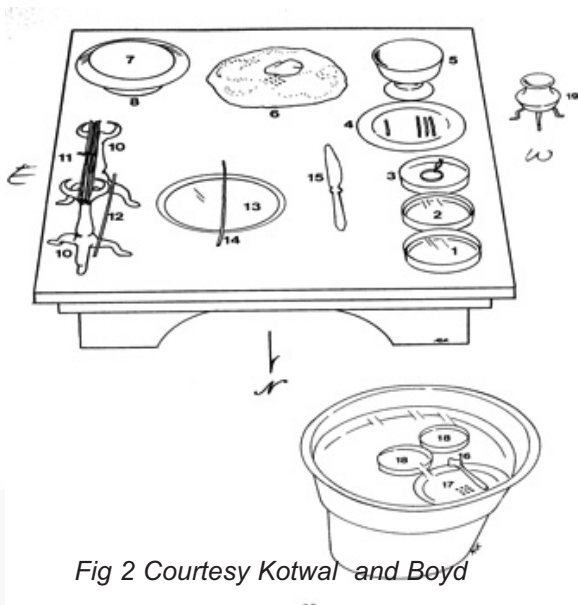


Fig 2 Courtesy Kotwal and Boyd

In the first row (see fig 2) of utensils are 1) a dish containing *parahom* mixture 2) a dish containing libation water 3) a dish containing *varas* -hair tied to a ring. The hair is from the tail of *varasya* the white bull kept in the consecrated area. 4) a dish containing *hom-urvaram* (*hom* and pomegranate twigs) 5) mortar or *havanim* for the pounding 6) a saucer of sacred *dron*- the sacred bread made out of unleavened flour, with clarified butter 7) an inverted saucer covering 8) cup containing reserves *parahom* mixture 9) cup (not shown) 10) two crescent shaped *mah-ruy* 11) a bundle of metal wire (*Barsam*) with 12) a wire across the base 13) a saucer containing *Jivam* -goat milk 14) a metal wire used to libate the date palm cord with *jivam* 15) a knife 16) pestle 17) a nine holed saucer 18) an extra cup and 19) a metal bowl (*karasyo*) for water.

All of the above requisites are previously purified and consecrated. The element that is crucial to affect this purification ritual is water. The water used for the ceremony is the water drawn from the well. Use of water from the tap is prohibited for this ritual. Water is so important for the ceremony that some scholars call *Yasna* as the "offering to the waters". Consistently during the ceremony libation with water is carried out on to these utensils and other requisites, to preserve their purity.

The water is drawn three times to rinse the container, and is filled with water of the fourth drawing which is considered consecrated water. There are three stages of purification for the entire *alat*. First all the utensils are cleaned with fire ash and ordinary water, to make them *saf* (clean). Then they are made *pak* (pure) by rinsing with consecrated water and finally made *pav* (consecrated) through the recital of Avestan manthra.

### PARAGNA

In order to consecrate all the requisites tradition has evolved a preparatory rite for the *yasna* ceremony known as *paragna* ritual. The term *paragna* is derived from Avesta/Sanskrit (*para*(Av) before; *yagna*(Sk) devotion). The officiating priest of this prefatory ritual becomes the assistant priest (*raspi*) for the *Yasna* ceremony that follows.

During the *paragna* ritual the ceremonial rites are performed to collect and consecrate all the requisites such as *Jivam* (goat milk), *Haoma* (Haoma twigs), and *Urvaram* (pomegranate twigs). They are first purified with consecrated water and made *pav* by reciting the



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appropriate *baj* formula dedicated to them. These are then used for the preparation of *parahom* to be used in the *yasna* ceremony that follows.

### YASNA CEREMONY

While the celebrant who concluded the *paragna* ritual is on his seat, the *zaotar* who is to be the officiating priest for the *Yasna* now enters the *pavi*, consecrates his hands with water and cleans and purifies the fire *khwan*. The celebrant of *paragna* arranges the ritual table in order, for the ensuing *Yasna* ceremony and leaves the seat to assume his position as *Raspi*.

The officiating *Zaotar* now walks over to the seat, and climbs on the seat at the word *shayothnanam* of two *Ahuna Vairya*, and starts to recite *farastuye* - the profession of faith. That is the start of the *Yasna* ceremony. The recitation of Ys 1 is largely the praise of divinities and invoking them to partake in the service.

The Ys. 2 is known as *Barsom Yasht*. and it is here that *zaotar* puts the barsom across the crescent-shaped *Mah-ruy* and puts his two fingers over it. Historically the barsom consisted of twigs of a plant. It was only after the exodus to India, that custom was changed to use of metal wires. The word *barsom* is derived from the Av. root *barez* meaning to grow. The number of twigs used vary in different *Yasna* services (*Shayast la Shayast* 14.2). Regular *Yasna* ritual, requires 21 twigs/wires, while the one associated with *Vendidad* and *Visparad* requires 33, *Yasna* for *Rapithawin* uses 12, during a *baj* ritual 5, and for *Navar* ceremony 7 wires are used. In the ritual, barsom is a symbolic channel between *Getig and Menog*. It also serves as a homage to the creation of plant kingdom.

Ys.3-8 are dedicated to the consecration of the sacred bread, known as **Sraosha-dron**. It is here that the *zaotar* breaks off edge of the sacred bread dips it in the clarified ghee and tastes it. Ys 9-11 are *Haoma Yasht*. Here at Ys 11.10 the *Zaotar* sips the *parahom* three times, that was prepared during the *paragna* ritual. The highlight of Ys 12 is the *Avestan Confession of Faith* that we recite at the conclusion of *padyab-kusti* recital.

We then arrive at *Staota Yasna* that some scholars consider extend from Ys 14-59.

While Ys 14-18 serve as an introduction, Ys 19-21 are the commentaries on the three most important prayers *Yatha ahu vairyo*, *Ashem vohu*, and *Yenghe hatam*.

Ys 22-27 is where pressing of the *homa* takes place. The operation is similar to the one during *paragna* ritual

except that *jivam* –the goat milk- is mixed in this preparation. The pounding and filtering is finished in Ys 27.

We now come to the 17 Gathic hymns extending from Ys 28-34 *Ahunavaiti*, 43-46 *Ushtavaiti*, 47-50 *Spenta Mainyu*, 51 *Vohu Khshthra*, and 53 *Vahishtoishiti*. In Gatha *Ahunavaiti* we have the basic teachings enshrined in Ys 30, and it terminates with homage to that divine energy of fire of *Ahura Mazda*. Sandwiched between the first two Gathas is the well known prayer of *Yasna Haptanhaiti* Ys 35-42 also known as *Haptan Yasht*. The first communal prayer that was composed in the old Gathic dialect, with some striking differences from Gathas, in textual style. Then follows Gatha *Ushtavaiti* (Ys 43-46) the liturgy of revelations to *Zarathushtra*. followed by hymns Ys 47-50 of *Spenta Mainyu*- Progressively Benevolent way of being. Ys 51.9 of *Vohu Khshthra* is the metaphoric mention of *Asha* as the Divine energy of Fire that will transform evil, to the righteous path. The last Gatha (Ys 53) is the wedding sermon eternalizing the marriage of *Zarathushtra's* youngest daughter *Paouruchista* to *Jamaspa*.

Ys 55 extols the Gathic hymns as the source of Wisdom. Ys 56 to 69 includes liturgies of several *Yashts* and *Niyaesh*. We are now at the concluding (Ys 70-72) *Haa* to pay homage to various Divinities. After finishing the last *Haa* (Ys.72) *Zaotar* performs the traditional *Hamazor* with *Raspi*. Both the priests now perform the ritual of *Padyab- Kusti*. Both the priests return to the *pavi* and proceed to the well. While offering final reverence to the creation a portion of the libation is returned into the well.

To conclude with the words of *Dastur Firoze Kotwal*, "*Avestan Manthra* is a sacred language, which has performative powers....The celebrant through his acquired ritual power is able to establish purity, consecrate offerings and receive bountiful blessings."

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# **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

## **“Is Havanan present?” Visperad – The Oldest Recorded Roll Call**

*Ervad Soli P. Dastur*

### **THE OLDEST RECORDED ROLL CALL**

**“Havananem Astaya?” Zaotar (Chief Priest) calls out: “Is Havanan present?” and Havanan replies: “Azem Visai” “Yes I am here.”**

This is the oldest recorded roll call found in Visperad 3.1 when the chief priest Zaotar calls out the names of seven priests individually who in turn answers the roll call. Currently, we only have a Zaotar and a Rathwi and the Rathwi takes his position one after another in the different corners and sides of the Yazashna gah (see Figure 1 below) before giving replies “I am here” (azem visai).

### **MEANING OF THE WORD VISPERAD**

The word Visperad is formed from the Avestan words “vispa ratavo” which have two significance, viz., (1) all seasons and (2) all lords or chiefs. So, Visperad is a form of prayer intended to celebrate the season festivals, and, it is also a form of prayer, wherein all the “rads” or chiefs or the best of the creations are invoked.

The word “rad” is a form of the Avesta word “ratu” which comes from Avesta areta = Sanskrit “rita”, which means, “to be straight, to say the truth.” This word areta is the same as English “right.” Now, in a species the one which is straight or perfect, true, correct or well-formed, enjoys superiority over others. So the word ratu or rad has come to mean “a chief”.

In the Avesta, the word “Ratu” resembles the Sanskrit “Rutu” and conveys the idea of season, time, climatic periods, etc.

Different writings on the subject reveal that all bodies both of the spiritual and the physical worlds have their ratus. For example, the Athornans or the priestly class must have a ratu or chief to whom they can look for guidance, whom they may hold before themselves as a 'High Ideal' for imitation and guidance. The military class has its own ratu, and so on. Even FEZANA Members have their own Ratu!

### **THE AVESTA TEXTS WHICH REFER TO THE RATUS OR RADS AND THEIR CLASSES**

The principal parts of the Avesta that refer to the ratus :

- (1) *The Gâhs;*
- (2) *Yasna, Has 1-4, 6, 7, 12, and 13.*
- (3) *Visperad, Kardeh 1 to 3.*
- (4) *The Ahunavar or Yathâ ahu varyô.*

The 24th chapter of the Bundeleshin specially refers to the subject of rads. We can classify the being—both spiritual and physical—of which the ratu or primary types are referred to in the Parsee books, as follows:—

1. The spiritual beings. Ahuramazda and his Ameshâspentas and Yazatas. Ahuramazda stands at the head as ratum berezantem, i.e. the Exalted Chief.
2. Mankind. The different grades and professions of men have their own rads or chiefs.
3. Animal creation other than men.
4. Inanimate creation.
5. Religious abstractions. Even religious abstractions have their ratus. For example, the prayers of Ahunavar and Yenghe Hatam are the ratus or the best primary types of the prayers of Ahura Mazda (Âhuirim tkaêshem).

### **CONNECTION BETWEEN ASHA AND RATU**

One thing must be remembered in the consideration of the meaning of the word ratu. Wherever the word ratu is used, it is used with the word asha, i.e. righteousness, piety, purity. The ratu is always spoken of as “ashahe ratûm,” i.e., the chief of righteousness. Again, the very roots of the words “ratu” and “asha” are the same. Both the words come from “aret” (right) to be straight, to be righteous. Thus, the word ratu carries with it the idea of straightness, perfection, excellence, righteousness. Among men, one who is straight-forward, righteous, perfect, becomes the ratu or rad or chief of his class, to whom others look as a leader, worthy to be followed.

### **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORD AND THE OBJECT OF THE CEREMONY**

The meaning of the word ratu enables us to understand, what the prayer known as the Visperad is. In the word Visperad, “vispa” means “all.” So, the Visperad is a collection of prayers which praises all the ratus, the guardians of the different creations of God.

The 24th chapter of the Bundeleshin speaks of the different ratus of the different classes of creation. There, at the end we read the following sentence, which sums up the object of the celebration of the Visperad. It says:

**“Hangard denman, aigh kola mûn kar-i-mas vadûnêt, adinash kasich veh,”**



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"The conclusion is this, that everyone who performs a great duty has then much value." In other words, the celebration of the Visperad should suggest to the celebrant the idea of "Excelsior" (ever upward). How is that state of "excelsior" to be attained? We find the reply in the 1st Para of the 15th chapter (Visperad 15.1) of the Visperad:

### **THE ZOROASTRIAN CREED!**

*"ava padhō ava zastē ava ushi dārayadhwem,  
mazdayasna zarathushtrayō!*

*Dāityanām rathwyanām,*

*hvarshtanām shyaothnanām varezāi.*

*Pairi adhāityanām arathwyanām,*

*duzhvarshtanām shyaothnanām varezāi.*

*Verezyâtāmcha idha vohu vāstrya,*

*uyamna anuyamnāish daste."*

"O Zoroastrian Mazdayasnans!

Hold your feet, hands and understanding, in readiness for the purpose of doing proper, timely, charitable works, and for the purpose of avoiding improper, untimely, uncharitable works.

Practice good industry here.

Help the needy and relieve them from their needs."  
(Visperad Kardeh 15.1)

### **Recital of the Visperad.**

The Visperad is divided into 23 Kardas (Av. karêta) or sections. It is never recited alone but is always recited with the Yasna. In fact, the celebration of the Visperad is the celebration of the Yasna with the additional recital of the 23 chapters of the Visperad. Vendidad ritual also incorporates Visperad, and so whenever the Vendidad is recited, the Visperad also is recited along with it.

The Visperad is an important scripture as well as higher liturgical ritual, but it is not used daily like the Yazashne and Vendidad, but recited only at specific occasions as follows:

- 1) On the fourth day of the Navar ceremony,
- 2) On the last day of the 'Geti kharid' ceremony,
- 3) On the 6 Gahambars of the year, and
- 4) Whenever the Vendidad is performed.

During the special periods of 6 Gahambars (seasonal festivals), the Visperad is specially recited, called Gahambar ni Visperad, i.e. the Visperad of the Gahambars. The Gahambars are the "ratus" of time. The furtherance, progress, development and improvement of everything in the world depend upon the due succession of seasons at their proper times. Nature holds forth, before men, the Gahambars or the seasons as the best ideal for all work to be done at the proper time. The Gahambars then are specially considered to be the proper times for the celebration of the Visperad ceremony.

### **THE 33 RATUS OR RADS OR CHIEFS OF THE RELIGION**

Nivaêdhayemi hañkârayemi vîspaêibyô aêibyô ratubyô yôî heñti ashahe ratavô thrayascha thrisâscha nazdishta pairish-hâvanayô yôî heñti ashahe yat vahishtahe Mazdô-frasâsta Zarathushtrô- fraokhta!

"I announce and proclaim all these Ratus and prepare for the requisites of ritual. They are the 33 Ratus of righteousness who come close to havane ("Gah") masters of righteousness taught by Mazda and proclaimed by Zarathushtra". (Yasna 1.10)

In this paragraph of the Yasna there is a reference to the thirty three (thrayasca thrisâsca) Ratus of righteousness.

Visperad 1.1-9 and 2.1-11 gives a list of 33 Ratus. It includes seasons like 6 Gahambars, our most holy prayers like Ahunavar, Ashen Vohu, 5 Gathas, Yasna Haptanghaiti, Yazatas like Meher, Behram, Ram, and even a woman (Genao) and a mountain (Gairi).

### **Summary of the 23 Visperad Chapters**

The first 3 chapters invoke the various Ratus as presented above.

The summary of the rest of the chapters is as follows:

#### **KARDEH 4 :**

The virtues of wisdom, purity, knowledge and health, necessary for the devotion of Ahura Mazda and the progress of His creations, are remembered here.

#### **KARDEHS 5 & 6:**

The Ameshashpands (bountiful immortals):

- having "good sovereignty and wisdom" (hukhshathra hudhaongho)
- work towards the happiness and progress of the world,



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They are remembered with ritual offerings and truthful words per the teachings of the Mazdayasni religion.

### KARDEH 7 :

This heaven (Avesta “Garodemán”) which is bright and full of happiness is remembered here along with the virtues necessary to attain it, like truthful speech (arshukhdho vakhsh), divine voice - intuition (Sraosha), purity of body and mind.

### KARDEH 8 :

All of the Yazatas, along with their lord Ahura Mazda are remembered here.

### KARDEH 9 :

The rituals in which offerings of Hom and “Zor (Zaotra)” (charged water) are prepared and praised over here, because they help in smiting the enemies, furthering righteousness, increasing wisdom and recognizing Ahura Mazda.

The Ameshaspands and other divinities are presented with the offerings of Hom and Zor.

### KARDEHS 10-12 :

During the recitations of these 3 Kardehs, together with Yasna Has 24-27, Hom Juice is extracted in metal mortar & pestle (Havanim and Lalo) by pounding a mixture of Zor (charged water), Jivam (goat’s milk), and twigs of Hom and Pomegranate plants.

### KARDEHS 13 & 14:

Ahunavaiti Gatha (Yasna 28-34) are recited with these Kardehs.

First, the three primal prayers of the first order, viz. the Ahunavar, Ashem and Yehghe Hatām are remembered here. They should be prayed by singing, reciting, chanting and with praise (frasraothremcha, framerethremcha, fragathremcha, frayashtimcha).

### KARDEH 15:

The first paragraph of Kardeh 15 (presented at the beginning) is considered a very important part of our scriptures, because in it are stated the traits of a true Zoroastrian.

### KARDEH 16 :

Here, fire, the life-force of the whole universe, is remembered. The presence of fire is necessary in each and every ritual of Zarathushti religion.

### KARDEH 17 :

This Kardeh sings the praises of the teachings of “Yasna Haptanghaiti”, and states that they ought to be practiced in everyday life.

### KARDEHS 18-23:

The Ushtavad Gatha (Ushta - spiritual happiness), The Spentomad Gatha (Spenta Mainyu – Bountiful Spirit), The Vohukshshtra Gatha (Good Dominion), and The Vahishtoish Gatha (Best Desire) are all remembered in these Kardehs.

### A Plan showing the eight priests referred to in the Visperad with their positions and functions.

It appears from the Visperad (3.1), that, at one time, a total of 8 priests were required for the celebration of the Yasna ritual. The Uzarin gah (Gah, 3.5) and the Vendidad (5.57) also refer to them. The Nirangistan<sup>1</sup> seems to be the authority on which the positions and the functions for the different priests are determined. These 8 priests are listed with their positions in the Yazashna Gah as shown in the Figure 1 below.

In the modern ritual, the senior officiating priest Zaotar calls for their presence (astaya) in form of a roll call! Today, instead of the 7 priests answering to their names, it is only the Rathwi who replies “I am here” (azem visai) after taking his stand in the different corners and sides of the Yazashna gah as shown in the Figure 1.

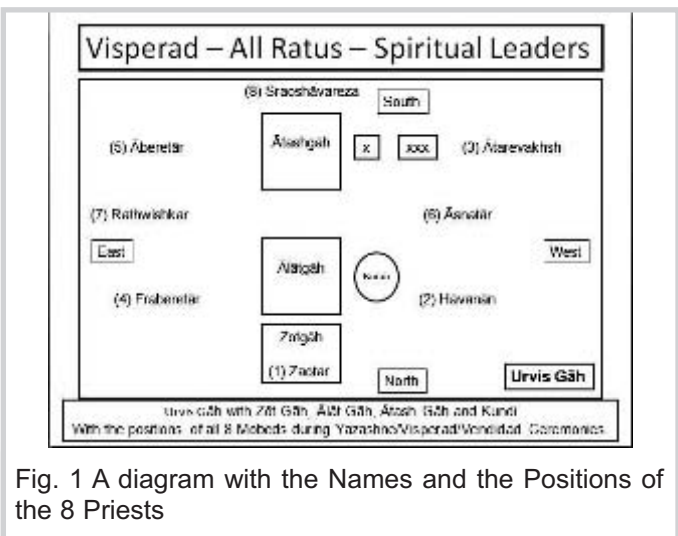


Fig. 1 A diagram with the Names and the Positions of the 8 Priests





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Fig. 2 A Navar Initiate performing Visperad with an experienced Mobed and a Rathwi.

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**Soli Dastur** was born to a priestly family from Udwada, as the last of 11 children, in a small village, Tarapur, India. Soli completed his high school in the M. F. Cama Athornan Institute boarding school, completing his Navar, Martab, and Samel ceremonies in Udwada.

Soli completed his B. Chem. Eng. from the Bombay University Department of Chemical Technology in 1960, and proceeded to USA for his graduate schooling and received his M. S. and Ph. D. in Chemical Engineering from the Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.



He joined the Procter & Gamble Co.(P&G) in Cincinnati in 1964 as a Research Chemical Engineer, but drifted away to Computer Technology, developing Marketing Data Analysis, working with UPC Technology, and eventually developing Store Shelf Management Software for managing stocks in Grocery and Mass Merchandising industries for P&G Sales Division. The last 3 years of his service with P&G, Soli was transferred to Brussels, Belgium, where he trained P&G sales people in computer technology in 11 countries from UK to Saudi Arabia and UAE. After retiring from P&G in 1994, Soli worked as a partner in the Partnering Group for 5 years consulting with the Grocery and Mass Merchandising industries.

He has been performing Mobed duties all over Florida and NA wherever he is requested to do so. He was elected on the Zoroastrian Association of Florida (ZAF), Miami, Executive Board and helps to create its Newsletter. Jo Ann and he have been visiting different Zoroastrian Associations during the Gatha Prayers and started the first ever all Florida Mukta Gatha prayers in Miami in 2009. He is an active member of NAMC and is in charge of all its communications.

He met Jo Ann in Cincinnati on a blind date and has been married to her for 43 years. They have twin daughters, Shirin and Anahita, and 5 grand children.

Soli is fully retired and lives with Jo Ann in University Park, Florida. He is an avid tennis player and dabbles with the computer for his free time.



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### The Baj-dharna (Dron-Yasht) ritual Ervad Dr. Ramiyar Parvez Karanjia

Rituals have played an intrinsic role in the Zarathushti faith, and they continue to figure prominently in the religious life of the community. Rituals not only embody the philosophy, theology and cosmogony of a religion, they also serve the purpose of venerating and offering gratitude to Ahura Mazda and the divine beings.

The *Baj-dharna* ritual holds a primary place in Zarathushti devotional life. The word *Baj-dharna* is the colloquial Parsi Gujarati term for the ritual originally known as *Dron Yasht*. The term *Baj-dharna* is a translation of the Pahlavi term *waz-griftan*.

The *Baj-dharna* is primarily performed in the *urwis gah* within the precincts of the fire-temple. However, it can be performed in any ritually pure place, within the confines of a *pavi* (demarcated furrow) after fulfilling certain requirements. It is performed by a single priest and takes about twenty minutes to perform.

The performance of *Baj-dharna* is an essential prerequisite for performance of other inner rituals as it bestows on the performer the ritual power to perform them. Hence, it enjoys a central position among Zarathushti rituals. After performing the *Baj-dharna* for the self to acquire the ritual power, the priest performs it at the behest of the laity, especially to commemorate departed ones.

As a memorial prayer, it forms part of the set of rituals<sup>1</sup> performed on various occasions after death, like the fourth day (*Paz chahrom*), tenth day (*Paz dahom*, *G. dasma*), thirtieth day (*Paz siroza*), first month (*G. masisa*; *NP mahigan*), monthly commemorations (*G. rozgar*), sixth month (*G. chhamsi*), first death anniversary (*G. varsii*; *NP saligan*), subsequent death anniversaries, as also on important days of the Zarathushti calendar such as the *Parabh*<sup>2</sup>, *Gahanbar*, and *Frawardegan*.

The *Baj-dharna* is essentially performed for consecration of *dron* and other edible ritual requisites, things and places connected with rituals, as also for commemorating and celebrating festivals and events. Whenever rituals are to be performed collectively, the *Baj-dharna* invariably forms a part of the group

1 presently this set consists of the *Baj-dharna*, *afringan*,

*Farokhshi* and *stum* rituals

2 the day on which the *roz* and *mah* coincide in parsi calendar

The way the *Baj-dharna* is performed now, dates back at least to the Sasanian times. Apart from the short Pahlavi text *Cim i Dron*, which exclusively deals with the *Dron Yasht*, several Pahlavi texts either have chapters dedicated to the ritual or have references to its performance. The *Arda Viraz Namag* refers to the

performance of various rituals amongst which it mentions the consecration (*Phl. yasht*) and the performance (*Phl. kard*) of *dron*.

*Nerangestan*, a ritualistic text, refers to the *Dron Yasht* and variations of its performance – the *Srosh Dron* and the *Hom-Dron*. The text emphasizes the paramount importance of this ritual when it states that “when there arises to a person no desire for the Holy Service of the sacred *Dron* cake, that must be wrong.”

During Sasanian and post Sasanian times, the *Baj-dharna* was indispensable after death ritual. The Pahlavi *Rivayats* recommend the performance of this ritual to fulfill one's obligation towards a departed one. The Pahlavi *Rivayat* accompanying the *Dadestan i Denig* refers to the ritual at several places. In the Pahlavi *Rivayat* of *Aturfarnbag* (first half of the ninth century), the *Dron Yasht* stands out as one of the most commonly performed ritual, and an important component of after-death rituals.

The Pahlavi *Rivayat* of *Farnabag-Srosh* (1008 C.E.) is almost entirely devoted to the performance of *Dron Yasht*. It succeeds the previous *Rivayat* almost by a century. There is a preponderance of questions relating to the *Dron Yasht* and related topics.

The second paragraph of the *Pazand Dibacheh* mentions *Yasna*, *Dron (Yasht)* and *Myazd*. Of these, the first two are well attested. The last mentioned ritual, seems to be the *Afringan* ritual with minor variations.

In the Sasanian times, a variation of the *Dron Yasht*, was also performed by lay adult members of the community, including women, as a form of religious service for meals. However such a service did not require ritual requisites nor the performance of ritual acts. The performance of such a *Dron Yasht* was strictly adhered to by laity as well as the priests. Even drinking water without its performance was prohibited. In the *Arda Viraz Namag* (XXIII.6), *Arda Viraz* is introduced to a soul suffering punishment in hell on account of not performing the *baj* before eating and drinking. Several instances of strict adherence to this injunction during the Sasanian times, especially by kings, are met with in the *Shahnameh*.

As with other rituals, so with the *Baj-dharna*, the moral character of the performer and those who cause it to be performed is also taken into consideration. If the *Baj-dharna* is caused to be performed by sinners, it loses its efficacy and merit, and becomes a tool in the hands of the evil. It had been envisaged that in bad times, men who are not properly qualified would perform the



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*Baj-dharna*. At such times if this ritual is properly performed by priests who have the ritual power of the Kusti, the performance will be equal in merit to the performance of a Yasna.

As referred to earlier, in order to acquire ritual power, priests perform a *Baj-dharna* with the combined invocation of Ahura Mazda, the divine being presiding over that day and his co-workers (*hamkars*). Such a performance is invariable before the performance of any other inner ritual. On account of the primary function of this ritual, fully qualified priests were often referred to as *bajgir* in Parsi priestly parlance. Once a priest acquired the ritual power, he could perform the *Baj-dharna* several times during a single gah throughout the day.

In the *atash-wahram*, priests who tend the sacred fire generally have a right by priority to perform this ritual. In the *atash-adarans*, *atash dadgahs* and *dar-e-mihrs* any qualified priest can perform it.

The study of the *Baj-dharna* has been overshadowed by the Yasna to the extent of being almost neglected. The study of Yasna did not seem to necessitate a separate study of the *Baj-dharna* ritual or text as there were many similarities in the text and rituals. Hence, in spite of fundamental differences in these seemingly similar rituals, the differences have never been highlighted and the *Baj-dharna* has never been studied on its merit in entirety as an individual ritual. The text of the *Baj-dharna* is borrowed from Yasna 3 to 8. This section of the Yasna is referred to as *Srosh dron*. In the Yasna, as in the *Baj-dharna*, the ritual act of tasting the dron takes place at the same place in the text (Yasna Haa 8 of the Yasna). Ritual requisites like the *dron*, goshodag, water and some fruits are also common to both the rituals.

In actuality, the ritual implements and acts of the Yasna and the *Baj-dharna* are substantially different, the main aim of the former being the preparation of Haoma juice, whereas the main aim of the latter being the consecration of *dron* and other religious requisites. The Yasna is a text containing 72 chapters, which are recited in the Yasna ritual along with the performance of rituals. Yasna is performed by two priests over a period of about 3 hours.

Whereas the performance of Yasna constitutes propitiation of a multitude of divine beings, in the *Baj-dharna* they are comparatively fewer. The *Baj-dharna* is performed for more purposes than the Yasna.

During the long span of time that this ritual has been performed, it has been referred by several names. In

Pahlavi the terms *waz-grifan*, *yasht-i-dron*, *dron yashtan*, *goshodag yashtan* or *dron* are used. New Persian books, especially the Rivayats, generally use the term *baj-i-nan* to denote this ritual. The Iranians refer to it as *yasht-l-barsom* or *dron*. The Indian tradition uses the term *Baj*. In Parsi priestly parlance it is known as *dron chashni* or *goshoda bhantar*. Amongst priests it is referred to as the *vispaesham*. Most of the terms used for this ritual either designate a requisite or an aspect of the ritual.

Indian Zarathushti priests also use the word *Baj-dharna* as a technical term to denote the set of Avestan texts, which precede and follow the texts of Visperad and Videvad as recited in rituals. When the word *Baj-dharna* is employed in this secondary sense, the entire word is used and never a single component.

### CLASSIFICATION

In India, Zarathushti rituals are classified into two groups. The distinction is made on the basis of various criteria like ritual purity of the performing priests, implements required for the performance, place of performance, and the source of the text recited during the ritual. These two groups are variously referred to as the Inner and Outer rituals (on the basis of place of performance), Higher and Lower rituals (on the basis of ritual purity required of the performer), Major and Minor rituals, supposedly on the basis of the texts recited for the performance, as also the place of the performance and the ritual qualification of the priest.

In Gujarati the two groups are referred to as *Pav-mahel* "rituals performed inside specially demarcated precincts" and *Hushmordi* "common" rituals. The word *Pav-mahel* is derived from the word *pavi*, referring to furrows or grooves in the floor used to demarcate ritually pure areas. In all Indian fire-temples, adjoining the main hall there is a room known as the *urwis-gah*, in which *pavis* are permanently made to facilitate performance of rituals. *Pav-mahel* rituals are invariably performed in this area.

Presently in India, priests who have undergone the Navar initiation can only perform outer rituals. In case of absence of a priest, any male or female member of the laity, who is in a ritually pure state and who have studied the text and the performance, can perform outer rituals for themselves and their family. The qualification of Maratab initiation becomes necessary for the performance of inner rituals.

### PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS (INSERT PHOTO)

Before the performance of any inner rituals, a priest is expected to first perform a *Baj-dharna* either by taking his own name in the Dibacheh or collectively remember



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all the souls. This gives the priest the ritual power of the *nani khub*. Thus it is the foundation for all higher rituals.

The priests may also perform the *Baj-dharna* ritual at the behest of the laity for various purposes like venerating divine beings, initiating a candidate into priesthood, or celebration of certain events and festivals.

The various purposes for which the *Baj-dharna* is performed, reveals its primary place among Zarathushti rituals and also sheds light on several Zarathushtrian customs, festivals and observances, some of which have been obliterated with the passage of time.

A manuscript dating c.1750 C.E. (1119 A.Y.) enumerates 65 different purposes for which the *Baj-dharna* was performed then. Some of these purposes had been introduced in India during the period of the Persian Rivayats.

There are six broad purposes and functions for the performance of this ritual. They are:

- i. Invocation of Divine Beings
- ii. Consecration
- iii. Commemoration of persons and events
- iv. Part of a Set of Baj
- v. Part of a group of rituals
- vi. Special Purposes

### PERFORMANCE OF BAJ-DHARNA IN THE DIASPORA

Most manuscripts and books on *Baj-dharna*, state that only a priest holding the power of the Bareshnum can perform the *Baj-dharna*. In India, till about the middle of the last century, only priests observing the ritual power of Bareshnum were able to perform the *Baj-dharna*. Priests now perform it even without this ritual power, except in Atash Behrams. Hence this ritual can be performed anywhere by a Mobed who has undergone Navar and

Maratab and who has the requisite knowledge of prayers and ritual-acts to perform the ritual. (photoon left of a Baj ceremony in a home outside the precincts of an Agiyari/Atash Behram. It shows clearly the sand, the Pavis which was made by the mobed Zarir with his finger in the sand, Baj utensils, etc.).

A *Baj-dharna* ritual can be performed, within temporary or permanently created *Pavis* in any ritually pure place. There are no special alats (ritual implements) required for it as in other inner rituals. The special requirements for the performance of *Baj-dharna* are the metallic *barsom* and *aiwyaonghan*, generally referred to as *tae-sankli*. The other important ritual requisite for this ritual is the *dron*. It can be prepared in a ritually pure environment by any Parsi/Irani Zarathushti in a ritually pure state. Other ritual requirements like pomegranate, clarified butter (ghee) and dates can be easily procured from the market.

### CONCLUSION

The *Baj-dharna* is the most performed inner ritual in the Zarathushti religion, especially in India because it is an essential pre-requisite for performance of other inner rituals. An interesting development to look for in the future is its performance in the diaspora.

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Photo Ervad Zarir Minu Dastoor



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### The Vendidad

Due to historical circumstances much of our prime source documents are non-existent. As a result, the 21 Nasks of the entire Avestan scripture has been reduced today to just one (1) complete Nask (or Volume) and several fragments. The complete Nask we possess is the 19th of the 21 Nasks, and is popularly known as Vendidad.

The 21 Nasks were organized into three subject matters: Gathic or religious, Datic or pertaining to laws, and Hadamanthic or the intermediate between Gathic and Datic. These Nasks were symbolically divided to correspond to the 21 words of the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer, and the Vendidad which belongs to the Datic class pertaining to laws, corresponds to the 19th word *dregubyo*. Originally in Avesta it was known as *Vi-daeva data*, *Vi* meaning against, *daeva* meaning demon and *data* meaning a law; hence it means The law against the demons. In Pahlavi it's known as *Javit-shida dad*.

There are two major manuscripts of the Vendidad: the first is a Pahlavi Vendidad which has an Avestan text along side the Pahlavi translation and commentary. The second is the Vendidad Sade (VS) which has Avestan text intermingled with the chapters of the *Yasna* and the *Visparad*. In liturgical ceremony, the Vendidad is not recited as an independent text, but in the form of the Vendidad Sade.

The hypothesis that the Vendidad was composed by the magi is false. Prof. William Malandra very succinctly defies that assumption: "there is nothing in the content of the entire text which would lead to the magian authorship" (Summer 2005 FEZANA Journal, pg 85). This can be substantiated by the translation of certain phrases from the *Yasna*. For example, when we pray *fravarane Mazdayasno Zarathustrish vidaevo Ahura-tkaesho* "I confess myself to be a worshipper of Ahura Mazda, a follower of the religion revealed by Zarathushtra, turning away from evil, acting according to the Law of Ahura Mazda" (Ys 12.1 The Zoroastrian Creed). Furthermore we find *datahe vidaevahe, dateh Zarathustroish* "the antidemonic Law, the Law of Zarathushtra" (Siroza 1.29, Ys 1.13, 3.15).

As aforementioned, the Vendidad is a law book, which contains religious laws against visible and invisible impurities. The Vendidad has 22 chapters, known as *frakart* (Phl) or commonly known as *Pargarad* from Avestan *frakereiti* "sections, chapters".

The main principle of the Vendidad is "*ýaozhdâ masyâi aipi-zâthem vahishta, hâ ýaozhdâ zarathushtra ýâ daêna mâzdayasnish ýô hvâm anghvâm ýaozhdâite humatâishca hûxtâishca hvarshâtâishca*" (Ahura Mazda

### Ervad Gustad Panthaki

conveys to Zarathushtra) purity for man from birth is best, this purity O Zarathushtra which is the Mazdayasni religion which purifies one's own life by good thoughts good words and good deeds. (Vd 5.21).

The Vendidad is a monumental accumulation of canons. As Zoroastrianism advocates preeminence of *Asha*; "purity" of mind, body and spirit; the Vendidad contains, besides other matters, religious laws of sanitation, hygiene and ritual purity. It is the most important text to provide the code of ceremonial ablutions, penances and purification. Most ceremonial observations and instructions such as installation of Fire temples and *Dakhmas*, *Nahans*, *Barashnooms* etc. are to be found in the Vendidad. This large range of subject material within the Vendidad has puzzled the western scholars, who are equipped with only philological and grammatical knowledge, leading to their characterization of the Vendidad as a Magian law text.

To understand any scripture, one has to go beyond its translation. Dr. Irach Taraporewala, in his magnum opus "*The Divine Songs Of Zarathustra*", lays down a rule "Read the things of the flesh with the eyes of the Spirit, Not the things of the Spirit with the eyes of flesh". Direct translations of a text will lead one astray. For example:

#### 1) **Khsmuibya Geush Urva gerezda: kahmai ma thwarozdum? Ys 29.1**

Many European scholars translated "To You (Ahura Mazda) the soul of cow complained; why did You create me"? Often they rendered the meaning of *Geush Urva* by "the soul of the cow, or the soul of the cattle".

Taraporewala translates "To You (Ahura Mazda) the soul of Mother-Earth complained; why did You create me"?

This line from the *Ahunavaiti Gatha* describes the preparations made in Heaven for the advent of Zarathushtra upon Earth. The soul of Mother-Earth goes up to Ahura Mazda to complain of all the evil that has come down upon her. The excess of Evil upon Earth always calls forth a Divine Outpouring and a Revelation from above. We read a similar outpouring in the *Srimad Bhagavata* x.1.17-18 where Mother Earth is described as "the form of cow".

#### 2) **"GausH бага Kharemno" Ys 32.8**, Bartholomae's translation takes *GausH* to mean literally the animal; and suggests this refers to *the flesh of the ox*, and *bagá* as piece and says it refers to pieces of flesh. He suggests that Yima (Jamshed) introduced meat-eating amongst the Iranians and that is the cause of his downfall.

Taraporewala translates *GausH* to mean "Mother Earth", i.e. creatures living upon her, and *bagá* to mean "good



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fortune". He suggests that Jamshed tried to spread happiness on the earth.

### 3) "Nemasate gao spenta, Nemasate gaosh hudaou" Vd. 21.1

Darmesteter: "Hail, holy bull! Hail to thee beneficent bull"

Kanga: "Homage to the Earth, Homage to the beneficent Earth"

Regarding the criticism of the Vendidad, the most obvious are that:

The Vendidad is made up of many disparate material. But The Bible is also a collection of 66 books, which contain codes of law, historical narratives, cosmogonies, folk tales, collections of wise saying, hymns, dramas, prophecies, miracles, parables and much more.

The Vendidad contains archaic prescriptions, animal sacrifice and cruel punishments. The Bible has the similar prescriptions and punishments in Deuteronomy, Leviticus and Numbers.

The tragic thing is that blind rigid insistence on the literal translation and anachronistic scientific analysis of the Vendidad has done immeasurable harm over the years. It has needlessly opposed faith to reason, and alienated many who can't accept a faith that means sacrificing their minds.

### CONTENTS OF THE VENDIDAD:

*Pargard 1* presents names of the 16 places created by God.

*Pargard 2* presents the legend of Yima and building of the vara (enclosure).

*Pargard 3* describes how to cultivate and protect the earth from pollution.

*Pargard 4* describes breaches of the civil and criminal law; damages for breach of contract and penalties for criminal offences. There is an excellent precept for charity. It states that those who are in need of money, marriage and knowledge; are aught to be helped.

*Pargard 5-7* describes defilement from a corpse and carrion, rules for burials, interment and dakhma. Here we find the origin of the modern usage of "bangli", where the corpse is laid till it can be taken to the Dakhma, and admonition that nothing not even a cloth of the length of "avi", which can be useful to a live person be wasted on the dead.

*Pargard 8* describes funeral rites for men and dogs; the sagdid, Barashnum (without isolation for nine nights) and admonition of the sin of sodomy, method of purification of fire used by different trades; the source of

16 different fires required in consecration of Atash Behram.

*Pargard 9* fully describes nine nights' Barashnum and Barashnum-gah.

*Pargard 10-11* are full of Gathic verses. They are prescribed as holy spells for exorcising evil spirits.

*Pargard 12* (later addition according to Prof. Malandra) describes the periods for mourning according to relationship with the dead person.

*Pargard 13-14* are on a treatment of dogs.

*Pargard 15* deals with five (5) heinous crimes: slandering a righteous person, to injure a shepherd's dog, hitting a pregnant bitch, cohabit with a menstruating woman and sodomy.

*Pargard 16* deals with isolation of a woman during menses.

*Pargard 17* deals with disposal of hair and nails.

*Pargard 18* deals with various subjects; heretic priest, procrastination and laziness, leading a licentious life etc. An Athravan is described as one who strives night and day for wisdom and knowledge, and the injunction to put on sudreh-kusti before the age of 15.

*Pargard 19* describes the temptation of Zarathustra and its repulsion by recitation of Ahunavar

*Pargard 20* alludes to the origin of healing; medicines and cures.

*Pargard 21* deals with invocations of the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars and the Manthra Spenta.

*Pargard 22* deals with the creation of Angra Mainyu and antidotes.

The Vendidad is ceremoniously performed in two ways; with rituals and without rituals. It can be performed on any day of the year except on *Roj Aneran* of any Mah, and *Roj Avan and Mah Avan*. It is only performed during the *Ushahin Gah* i.e. period of midnight to the following morning, and can only be performed by Mobeds who have acquired Maratab qualification.

### PAOW OR CONSECRATED VENDIDAD CEREMONY

The two Mobeds, who perform the Vendidad ceremony, must have observed the Khub (a liturgical qualification). The proper Vendidad ceremony is preceded by a prefatory ceremony known as paragna; the ceremony for preparation of ritual implements is done during the preceding afternoon in the *Uziran Gah*. The Vendidad is the only ceremony where a Mobed is allowed to read from the text. Approximate time for the ceremony is seven hours.



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### APAOW VENDIDAD OR UNCONSECRATED VENDIDAD CEREMONY

This is the ceremony in which only the Vendidad text is recited without the rituals. It is performed by one Mobed in a house or on a portico of the house. The purpose of this ceremony is to purify the house and drive away evil.

In Apaow Vendidad only the twenty-two (22) fargards of the Vendidad and the interspersed Chapters (haas and kardas) of the Yasna and Visparad therein are recited. The large part of beginning and ending before and after the twenty-two fargards are omitted.

### CONCLUSION;

The Vendidad contains injunctions of a specific socio-historical period that may be questionable to readers within a modern social context. As a textual source, the Vendidad provides history, injunctions, admonitions, background of rites and rituals, instructions, penalties and much more.

Those who wish to eliminate the Vendidad ceremony perhaps overlook the centrality of its recitation within the consecration ceremonies for Fire-temples, Tower-of-silences, preparing a new varasiya, the initiation of the final grade of priesthood - Maratab, the "Sarosh" ceremony of the deceased person during the first three days after his/her death etc.

Rituals provide expression to our feelings in the same manner as literature, art, and music. The thoughts and reasons remain in head, while emotions and feelings in heart. In our daily life we need to balance both head and heart. The rituals help inculcating morality in daily life, which requires disciplining the mind. For example; bowing head in front of the fire, putting incense on the fire, putting fire-ash on forehead in the Fire temple etc. create feeling and emotion which the mind alone can not fathom.

Faith is another important factor in life. Without faith prayers, rituals or belief in God can not exist. "asraddhaya hutam dattam tapas taptam krtam ca yat, asad ity ucyate partha na ca tat pretya no iha"- Whatever offering or gift is made, whatever penance is performed, whatever rite is observed, without faith, it is called "asat," O Partha (Arjuna); it is of no account hereafter or here (The Bhagvad Gita 17:28, tr. S. Radhakrishnan). "Reasoning and logic, completely devoid of faith, in matters religious and moral leads to a sort of spiritual paralysis" (Er. R.R. Motafram).

In the end one needs to have faith that "the main object of this scriptural text, the Vendidad, is to preserve the Law of Asha (Order, harmony, Truth and purity) whereby the universe can prosper, and man may be law-abiding so as to counter the destructive effects of evil" (K. Dabu).

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## Hama Anjuman Prayers for Naurooz

*In English, Farsi and Gujarati*

Hamā Anjuman Prayers for Naurooz  
In English, Farsi and Gujarati



Haft Sheen Tables for Naurooz

Assembled by Ervad Soli P. Dastur  
with the help of  
FEZANA Naurooz Planning Committee

In 2007, Rustom Kevala, Past President, FEZANA had organized a Naurooz Celebration Committee to coordinate 2007 celebrations among FEZANA Member Associations. One of the projects was to create a common Naurooz Prayer of about 20 minutes and Ervad Soli P. Dastur was given that project. Soli consulted Dastoorjis, Mobeds, and Scholars from India, Iran, and North America and assembled eight prayers. This book is the culmination of these efforts. This may be the first book ever, with prayers in the language of our common heritage : English, Farsi and Gujarati with interpretation. The front and back covers with Table of Contents are presented here. The

book has been distributed in time for this year's Naurooz Celebrations to all FEZANA Associations and NA Mobeds. This is a humble effort to bring all our Zarathushti Groups together in a common prayer environment. The book is NOT for sale but a donation is welcomed to cover printing and mailing expenses, this can be done directly at [www.fezana.org/publications/books](http://www.fezana.org/publications/books)

*This book is availbale as an e.book, and also on three websites:*

[Fezana.org](http://Fezana.org); [zoroastrians.net](http://zoroastrians.net); [avesta.org](http://avesta.org)



Naurooz Prayer  
By  
FEZANA  
Naurooz Planning  
Committee

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## SECTION THREE PRESERVATION

# NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL

## A Historical Perspective of the NAMC

As I got involved doing ceremonies for the Toronto Zarathushti community in 1969, I had a lot of questions in my own mind about how to adapt our ceremonies to the North American (NA) life style. I went back to India in 1973 and met with a very learned Dastoorji Dr. Hormazdyar Mirza. I had a meeting with him at his home and he was kind enough to spend 3 hours educating and discussing with me all types of religious subjects. One thing I remember the most was his advice: "In NA you have a "Navo" (new) ball and a "Navi" (new) game; so you should start thinking for yourselves and not rely on Dastoorjis in India to advice and solve your problems." This advice has always been in the back of my mind and you can say this is the reason I conceptualized the formation of the North American Mobeds Council (NAMC).

In 1982 there was a lot of discussion among the Mobeds of North America about what ceremonies could be done for Non-Zarathushtis and what could not be done. This all started after the Navjote of Mr. Joseph Peterson in New York. After discussing with a lot of Mobeds over the phone, I suggested a meeting of Mobeds in Toronto in 1983. We had about 25 Mobeds present from 6 to 7 Zoroastrian Associations. We had 2 days of intense and honest discussions about practices of our religion in NA. A lot of resolutions and conclusions were adopted. We all had understanding that every Mobed will follow his own conscience whether to perform the Zarathushtrian ceremonies for Non-Zarathushtis or not. This was the start of North American Mobeds Council. I would like to thank people who helped me during the first meeting and then to formalize NAMC. They were Ervad Nozer Kotwal, Ervad Jal Birdy and Ervad Gustad Panthaky.

When we started to hold our NAMC AGM in different cities, we received very good response and thanks from the local Mobed community, local Zoroastrian Association and especially from the local people; we then knew that we have done the right thing by forming NAMC. FEZANA started inviting me to represent NAMC at their AGMs. During the first years of our organization, we had both the Parsi and the Iranian Mobeds taking part in our AGMs. After a few years, Iranian Mobeds formed their own organization called The KanKash-e Mobedan - Council of Iranian Mobeds in North America (CIMNA). During my years as founding President of NAMC (1990 – 1994), we

## Ervad Kobad Zarolia, Founding President

had good cooperation between both Mobed organizations. I was always invited to attend their AGM and in return we had Ervad Faribourz Shahzadi, VP of CIMNA, a NAMC member from its inception, attend our AGM.

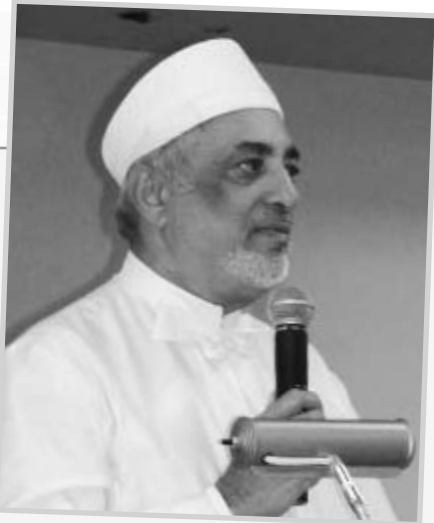
Attending CIMNA AGMs and also participating in Jashans with Iranian Mobeds were pleasant experiences. Mobeds of NA found their voice was being heard by Mobeds and other Zarathushtis in Europe and India, with the help of their articles written in the FEZANA JOURNAL, and my interviews in Parsiana magazine and Jam-e-Jamshed weekly. My aim was always to elevate the respect for the Mobeds in NA. So when requests for Mobeds to speak at local association functions, and NA congresses were made, I felt very happy that our Mobeds in NA not only perform ceremonies but also educate the members of our community.

## The NAMC PRESIDENT'S WISH LIST FOR THE FUTURE:

- The future of any organization has always been new active members. For the future I would like to abolish any Membership fees and automatically make every Mobed in NA a NAMC member. For this we might require a change of constitution, but it can be done.
- I would like a formal newsletter published by NAMC, involving some young Mobeds so they can feel a part of the organization. As the world is getting smaller with email and web sites, this newsletter or journal could become the voice of all Mobeds in the world.
- The Mobed community in NA should work and take leadership roles in establishing Atash Kadehs (Dar-e-Mehers) in NA in the future.
- We in NA have established a volunteer class of Mobeds to serve the community. This was the best way to serve the community in the past and at the present. But I am afraid that this system of volunteers may not be viable in future. Chicago Zoroastrian Community has already sponsored a full time Mobed from India for their Dar-e-Meher. The Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) is actively searching for such a full time Mobed. The Zoroastrian Communities of North America should be encouraged by senior NAMC Mobeds to look into getting a paid Mobed to serve the communities.



## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**



*Kobad Zarolia was born and raised in Nargol and ordained there as Navar. After obtaining an Engineering Diploma in Mechanical Drafting, he migrated to Canada in 1969 and since then he*

*has served the NA Zarathushti community as a priest. In 1971 he started his own business as an Insurance Broker. He has been associated with the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) since its inception and has served on the Executive Board and was its President (1986 – 1988, 1997 – 1999). He was instrumental in starting the structured Religious Classes in Toronto together with other members of ZSO and was the Chairperson of the North American Zoroastrian Congress in 1988 in Toronto. He was the founding father and President of the NAMC (1983 – 1992 and re-elected in 2008). and the founding President (2002 – 2004) of the Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation (OZCF). He helped raise \$1.5M and acquired 10 acres of land for future building of a Zoroastrian Temple, a Meeting Hall, and an Old Age Home. He is one of the four Founding Directors of the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC) and served on its board (2000 – 2006) and developed the Toronto Chapter. He started the Zoroastrian Cricket Club in Toronto in 1978, was President (1978 – 1988) and Captain (1978 – 1981) starting the Etobicoke Cricket League. He has served on Indian Immigration Aid Services, Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce, Trillium Hospital Fund Raising Committee, and United Way. He received an “Achievement Award” in 1994 from the Ontario Province. He now resides in Mississauga.*

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## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

### **HISTORY OF THE NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL (NAMC)**

*Nozer Kotwal*

The North American Mobeds Council was incorporated as a religious organization, under the laws of the Province of Ontario, Canada on September 24th 1992 and was granted a tax exempt status by the Government of Canada, in 1993.

The NAMC was officially formed on April 14, 1990, when a group of Mobeds, from all over North America, gathered together in New York, to approve the constitution and the by-laws governing the Council, that was discussed and drafted a year earlier, in Montreal.

The **First Executive Committee** elected unanimously

<b>Ervad Kobad Zarolia</b>	Ontario	President
<b>Ervad Jal Birdy</b>	California	Vice-President
<b>Ervad Jal Panthaky</b>	Ontario	Secretary
<b>Ervad Nozer Kotwal</b>	Ontario	Treasurer
<b>Ervad Cawas Desai</b>	Pennsylvania	Executive Officer

Following Mobeds have served on the Executive Committee as:

#### **PRESIDENT**

Ervad Kobad Zarolia (1990-1994); Ervad Yezdi Antia (1994-1996); Ervad Jal Birdy (1996-2002); Ervad Jehan Bagli (2002-2008); Ervad Kobad Zarolia (2008-2010)

#### **VICE-PRESIDENT**

Ervad Jal Birdy (1990-1994); Ervad Pervez Patel (1994-1996); Ervad Adi Unwalla (1996-1998); Ervad Behram Panthaki (1998-2002); Ervad Adi Unwalla (2002-2008); Ervad Noshir Mirza (2008-2010)

#### **SECRETARY**

Ervad Jal Panthaky (1990-1992); Ervad Xerxes Bamji (1992-1994); Ervad Firdosh Bulsara (1994-1996); Ervad Nozer Kotwal (1996-2000); Ervad Boman Kotwal (2000-2002); Ervad Nozer Kotwal (2002-2010)

#### **TREASURER**

Ervad Nozer Kotwal (1990-1994); Ervad Gev Karkaria (1994-2010)

#### **EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Ervad Cawas Desai (1990-1992); Ervad Faribourz Shahzadi (1992-1994); Ervad Pesi Vazifdar (1994-1996); Ervad Yezdi Antia (1996-1998); Ervad Xerxes Bamji (1998-2000); Ervad Mehabad Dastur (2000-2002); Ervad Cawas Desai (2002-2008); Ervad Gustad Panthaki (2008-2010)

Members of the Executive Committee are elected by members in good standing, via secret ballot (if there is a contest for a position), every two years after the annual general meeting as per the Council's Constitution & By-laws.

Council's accounts are audited and annual tax returns completed & filed by a chartered accountant every year as per the Council's Constitution & By-laws.



## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

The main objective of the Council is to direct, guide and assist the Zarathushti Communities in North America in the perpetuation of the Zarathushti religion on the North American continent, without either imposing its views or accepting any hegemony from any other body or organization.

The Zarathushti Communities in North America owe the existence of the Council to a single individual, namely Ervad Kobad Zarolia of Ontario, who thought of the idea way back in early eighties. He arranged for an informal meeting of Mobeds of North America, in Toronto in 1983, to discuss the idea of forming a Mobed Council. The meeting was attended by 21 Mobeds. The end result of the meeting could be summed up as "the Mobeds agreed to disagree", main obstacles being a wide diversity in the thinking of Mobeds ranging from ultra orthodox to extreme reformists as well as the formation of hierarchy within the Mobeds of North America. This set back, did not discourage Kobad and he continued to pursue the idea, until the Council was formed.

Couple of years, prior to the formation of the Council, were full of trials and turbulence. There was a very strong opposition, from some of the Executive Members of FEZANA, (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) to the formation of an independent Council of Mobeds, as they believed that Mobeds should be part of FEZANA. Few Mobeds were recruited to convince others, to be a part of FEZANA. Initially none of the Chicago Mobeds participated in the formation of the Council. At one point, the pressure was so strong, that Ervad Nozer Kotwal joined forces with Ervad Kobad to continue working towards the formation of the Council. However, once the Council was formed there has been significant improvement in the relationship with FEZANA, and is continuously improving with time. Most of the Mobeds from Chicago became members of the Council. The 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004 Annual General Meeting of the Council were hosted by the Mobeds of Chicago and the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago.

The Council enjoyed a cordial relationship with The KanKash-e Mobedan - Council of Iranian Mobeds in North America (CIMNA) during its existence, keeping each other aware of all the activities.

SINCE 1988, the Mobeds have been meeting at least once a year, in different cities:

1989	Montreal	1996	Chicago	2003	Toronto
1990	New York	1997	Toronto	2004	Chicago
1991	Toronto	1998	Montreal	2005	New York
1992	Chicago	1999	New York	2006	Montreal
1993	Toronto	2000	Chicago	2007	Marlton N.J.
1994	Montreal	2001	Marlton N.J.	2008	Toronto
1995	Voorhees N.J.	2002	Toronto		

One of the most important resolutions that was passed at the Council meeting was at its 13th AGM in 2000. The resolution was to define a "Zoroastrian" as well as to distinguish between a "Parsi" and a "Zoroastrian".

The resolution reads as follows:

- *Parsi is a race.*
- *Zoroastrianism is a religion.*
- *The term "Parsi" applies to the descendents of the original migrants who left Iran to settle in India to preserve the Zoroastrian religion.*
- *A "Parsi" is a person born of both Parsi parents who has an inalienable right to practice the Zoroastrian religion.*
- *A "Zoroastrian" is a person who believes and follows the teaching of Zarathushtra. It is recognized that "Zoroastrianism" is a universal religion.*
- *It is further recognized that a Zoroastrian is not necessarily a Parsi.*



## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

However, there were not many other major decisions made, once again, mainly due to the wide diversity in the thinking of the Mobeds, the meetings have been very fruitful, as there have been open discussions between Mobeds, who respect each other's opinions, and are, therefore, able to discuss all matters, important to the community, whether they are controversial or not without any disruption, as well as learning from each other's experience and knowledge.

### **Other note worthy achievements of the Council are:-**

**Introduction of "Mobedyar" (Para-Mobed) program in 1995** to cover shortage of Mobeds in remote areas. So far the Council has successfully trained six Mobedyars to perform outer liturgical ceremonies in the absence of an ordained Priest. One more is currently in training.

**Criteria for the eligibility and training of Mobedyars to include women.** The 1999 resolution establishing the eligibility criteria was amended in 2008 by the council. Currently one lady is being trained as a Mobedyar.

**Publication of Books** The Council has published the following books:

<b>Jashan &amp; Afringan for beginners</b>	Ervad Yezdi Antia
<b>Understanding &amp; Practice of Jashan Ceremony</b>	Ervad Jehan Bagli & Ervad Adi Unwalla
<b>Understanding &amp; Practice of Obsequies</b>	Ervad Jehan Bagli & Ervad Adi Unwalla
<b>Congregational Prayers for Jashan Ceremonies</b>	Ervad Jehan Bagli & Ervad Brigadier Behram Panthaki.

**Educational Sessions** The Council has incorporated educational sessions in the form of seminars and contemplations preceding the Council meetings. Some of these events are kept open to laity, and the deliberations are also published in **FEZANA JOURNAL**. In fact, these seminars have become so popular that the Council has been holding seminars in various cities in North America. This has helped evoke awareness of our rich history, culture and religious heritage not only to the Council members, but also to the community at large.

This is the History of the Council as we recall up to 2009.

**For more information on our mission, membership, seminars, mobeds etc. please visit our website at [www.namcweb.org](http://www.namcweb.org)**

***Ervad Nozer Sorabji Kotwal*** born in Mumbai was ordained as a Priest in 1953 at Vadi Dare-Mehr in Navsari and completed his Martab ceremony in 1984 also at Vadi Dare-Mehr in Navsari at the same time his son was going through the Navar ceremony

*Came to Canada in 1966 and retired from the Bank of Montreal after 39 years of service. Has been looking after the Social, Religious & Spiritual needs of the Zarathushti communities*





## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

### **BECOMING A MOBEDYAR, AN EXPERIENCE SERVING THE COMMUNITY**

***Maneck Bhujwala***

My father Navroji and mother Meherbai said daily prayers at home, and every Sunday morning I accompanied my father to the Banaji Atashbehram in Mumbai. I had a desire to become a priest, but being a Behdin I did not have that option in India.

In Northern California, I met a Parsi family who mentioned that their father had died, but one priest was in India and the other worked on weekends, so the ritual was not done right away. This made me think of becoming a priest.

At the Zoroastrian Congress in Vancouver, Canada, Mobed Fariborz Shahzadi announced his program to train anyone who wished to become a priest. When I contacted him about this, he told me that currently it was restricted to Iranian Zarathushtis due to opposition from the North American Mobeds Council (NAMC).

I started writing on the Zoroastrian internet alias pressing NAMC to start a similar program. Eventually, NAMC organized a training camp in Washington D.C. area where I learned to perform various rituals from Ervad Adi Unwalla assisted by Ervad Jehan Bagli.

I started participating in community Jashans and at individual homes. After some time, the local priests objected to my practice with public email postings, phone calls, starting prayers before scheduled time, etc., but I persevered.

When NAMC required formal initiation for Mobedyars, the local priest declined, but Ervad Zarir

Bhandara volunteered and initiated me at a public Jashan in Southern California where I had moved by then. Zarir also included me at community Jashans and funerals, and sent me to individual homes.

Being easily available, due to retirement, I perform Jashans and funeral prayers for many Parsi and Iranian families, even outside California at their convenience. They appreciate my prompt availability and I am happy serving the community.

I thank Ervads Unwalla, Bagli, and Bhandara for their training and support in fulfilling my spiritual calling. Shortage of practicing priests is a reality, and opening priesthood to Behdins is a timely step to save our traditions. Even the Cama Athornan Institute Mumbai as started Mobedyar training to meet the shortage especially in small towns in India. I am willing to assist NAMC in training others based on Spiritual Calling regardless of hereditary status, as the criteria for enrolling priests.

***mazdâ vidvanoi vaocâ hizvâ  
thwahyâ aongho***

***yâ jvanto vispeng vâurayâ.***

*Ys 31.3*

***Speak O Wise one, with  
tongue of thy mouth***

***that I may convince all the  
living***

***Maneck Bhujwala*** was born in Bombay, obtained his B.E.(Electrical Engg) from Baroda, worked as an engineer, before coming USA. He obtained his M.S.(Elect.Engg) from New Mexico, worked as a Design Automation engineer at many high-tech companies and NASA in California, got his M.B.A. from San Jose, and worked in management positions. Maneck co-founded Society for Rapid Advancement of India, Zoroastrian Association of California (Los Angeles), and Zarthushti Anjuman of Northern California, serving on their executive committees, coordinating religion classes and lecturing at Zarthushti Congresses. He became a Mobedyar and serves the community as needed. After retirement, he works as a Realtor in Huntington Beach, where he lives with wife Mahrukh, and close to daughter Shehnaz who is an attorney in a Beverly Hills law firm.





## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

### **A PRACTISING MOBEDYAR**

***Jamshid Mistry***



Growing up in a pious household, I had always been religiously inclined. Thus, when I was approached to undertake the role of a mobedyar, it seemed a natural extension of my own spirituality. The Zarathushti community in the Washington, DC area has unique blend of Parsis and Iranian Zarathushtis that seamlessly co-exist. The religious connection we all share seemed to mask some of the cross-cultural differences that might have existed, and I am fortunate to have received a diverse education through my association. Thus, I was immediately drawn to the idea of serving the spiritual needs of my community. Though they never pushed me in either direction, my parents played the greatest role in influencing my decision. Having instilled in me the importance of religion from both a spiritual and communal aspect, my parents have always guided me to follow the path of Asha, righteousness.

The training process was a 2 year process which began in my sophomore year in high school. I could not have asked for a more devoted person to train under, than Brigadier Ervad Behram Panthaki. Behram uncle eagerly volunteered to sacrifice his time and efforts to teach me the necessary prayers and customs. Every weekend, I would take the train to his house where we would go over the curriculum he designed. Having served the Washington, DC area community for over a decade, Behram uncle is someone who I consider a role model.

Throughout my experiences, I have been able to help many people who might not have had access to religious services. From sitting in Navjotes to praying in funerals, my experience has been extremely enriching. I have given talks and lectures to associations with over three hundred members, to doing a Jashan in a state with only five Zarathushtis. Each experience has given me the great opportunity to build on my own knowledge base and further my skills as a religious servant.

*Jamshid Mistry is a 28 year old, living in Seattle with his wife Nadia attending medical school and has been accepted as the neurosurgery pre-residency fellow for 2010/2011 at the Riverside County Regional Medical Center, Moreno Valley, CA.*

#### **COVER PHOTO**

Jamshid Mistry ***the first individual to be ordained as mobedyar in this Diaspora*** is the son of Tehmton and Farida Mistry of Maryland (MD). Farida is the daughter of Tehmina and late Ervad Jehangirji Turel, a very famous mobed of Surat. Jamshid was trained by Ervad Behram Panthaki for two years in our faith's history, culture, rituals and religiosity, and in the performance of outer liturgical ceremonies.

The **Mobedyar ordainment ceremony** was held at Arbab Rustum Guiv Property and Prayer Room (colloquially called ZAMWI Center (old) at 2347 Hunter Mill Rd., Vienna .on **Sunday, October 26, 1997, Khordad Roj, Khordad Mah, 1367 YZ.** the birthday of his grandfather late Ervad Turel. Jamshid's maternal grand mother, Tehmina, came from Surat to attend the ceremony. and as a gesture of honoring her grand son put the shawl around his shoulders prior to the ceremony. and Jamshid wore the shawl during the ceremony.

Jamshid got married on July 21, 2007 to Nadia (nee Kharas) daughter of Thrity and Cyrus Kharas of Karachi.

*The photograph on cover was taken at the ordainment ceremony by Jimmy Dholoo.. We thank Jimmy and Ervad Soli Dastur for all their efforts in locating the photograph. ED.*

Jamshid's maternal grand mother, Tehmina, had specially come from Surat to be present at the ceremony. She as a gesture of honoring her grand son put the shawl around his shoulders prior to the ceremony and to grant her wishes Jamshid wore the shawl during the ceremony.

Jamshid's mobedyar ordainment ceremony took place on Sunday, September 28, 1997 i.e. Dae-Pa-Adar Roj, Ardibehest Mah, 1367 YZ. As per the latest information he has been accepted as the neurosurgery pre-residency fellow for 2010/2011 at the Riverside County Regional Medical Center, Moreno Valley, CA.



## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

### **Becoming A Mobedyar**

***Khushroo Mirza***

My interest in our religious ritual was aroused only after immigrating to Montreal, Canada in 1969. Growing up in Dadar Parsi Colony I took a lot of our religion for granted and never really gave it any serious thought. Yes, like many others I memorized our prayers and went to the Agiary daily, but that was the extent of it. The daily observance ritual was simply woven into the fabric of my existence.

Once I was separated from my familiar Zarathushti milieu, I realized that my children would not be able to absorb our religious tenets through a surrounding cultural osmosis as I had. This is when I started taking serious interest in learning more about our religion and our rituals.

I familiarized myself with works by Mary Boyce, Stanley Insler, Taraporewalla and other scholars. I also had a marvelous opportunity to run religious classes for the children of our community in Montreal. Children from 7 to 15 years not only brought me their enthusiasm but also their own unique perspectives on our religion and scriptures.

As I observed our purely voluntary mobeds performing Jashan ceremonies I began to wish I had undergone the Navar initiation in my younger days so that I too could do my part.

Around this time I was informed that the North American Mobeds Council (NAMC) had initiated a program for training Mobedyars. I was very happy to enroll and under the able guidance and encouragement of our Montreal mobeds Ervad Gev Karkaria and Ervad Jal M. Panthaki I completed my training and obtained my Mobedyar certificate in 2003.

Since then, I have been given the opportunity to perform regularly in all our jashans, variously as a Raspi as well as Zaotar on a number of occasions. I have even had the good fortune of being invited to assist in performing a few navjots and a wedding.

Judging from the enthusiastic support I have received from our community, I feel convinced that there is a very real place for Mobedyars in North America, especially within the smaller communities, where, often there are no ervads available to serve the spiritual needs of the Zarathushtis.

The Mobedyar program is one of the most important innovations set in place by the NAMC. I sincerely hope more people come forward to enroll in it and help in serving the spiritual needs of our community all over North America.

***Khushroo Mirza*** born in Dadar Parsi Colony, Mumbai, graduated from the Training Ship Dufferin and served in the merchant navy till 1969 when he immigrated to Canada with his wife and their two children. He holds a Master Mariner's certificate, both from India and Canada. After working in various aspects of the shipping business till 1979 he started his own firm, and in 2009 he retired after having worked as a marine consultant on a contract lasting eight years with Fednav Limited of Montreal.

*Khushroo has served as president of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec for 4 years, and has been actively involved with the Zarathushti community of Montreal for the last forty years.*







## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

### **ON BEING A MOBEDYAR**

***Rumi Engineer***



The decision to become a Mobedyar came to me about the time when the NAMC decided to ordain lay persons to perform Jashans and Geh Sarna prayers. In Colorado we have a relatively small Parsi community but no Dastur in case of need. I believe in prayer. I also believe that our rituals serve to ground us in our connection to the Divine. The energy that is released by the vibrations of the ceremonial prayers is energy created by the intention behind the ritual. Since I have become a Mobedyar, I have found there is a great deal of interest in understanding the basis of the Jashan ceremony, its meaning and significance from non-Zoroastrians. I feel strongly that allowing participants of other (or no) faiths is a wonderful way of spreading knowledge of the Zarathushti religion. This in no way implies that it will attract people to convert or there is any intention of converting people. But I am firmly convinced that the first Monotheistic religion that was given to mankind needs

to take its rightful place in the history of religions as the progenitor of the major religions of the world.

To some people I am a heretic and, therefore, not acceptable as a Mobedyar. Therefore, there have been few calls to perform a Jashan. Fortunately, none for Geh Sarna prayers. I believe, that not all Parsis (I cannot speak for Iranian Zarathushtis ) have yet come to accept the idea of Mobedyars. I believe, personal animosities, prejudices, and a misplaced sense of conservatism has hindered a full blown acceptance of the idea of a lay priest performing any type of formal religious ceremony. Be that as it may, it takes time and, perhaps a generation or two, to change a perspective that is entrenched in our very DNA's.

Do I serve the spiritual needs of the community? I believe I do, when called upon. However, we must distinguish spirituality from religiosity. A spiritual need can be fulfilled in many ways other than purely ritualistic. To me, a Jashan is a ritual we undertake to give thanks to our Creator. It is a Celebration of Life itself and the many gifts that are bestowed upon us by the Divine. In that sense, perhaps one's own ritual of gratitude (or however one may express it) to the Divine is just as valid as someone else interceding on one's behalf.

***Rumi is a noted Immigration Lawyer in Denver and Past president of the Rocky Mountain Zoroastrian Association.***

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### **PERSPECTIVE OF A MOBEDYAR-TO-BE**

***Boman Damkevala***

Why I chose to become a Mobedyar is a long story - one that starts from my early childhood, over 60 years ago. Long before I was even ready for my Navjote, I was keenly fascinated with the language and recitation of our prayers. Proper pronunciation and intonation provided me with a sense of satisfaction and peace. I was enthralled with not only the words themselves, but in the way they were so elegantly connected. As I matured in both age and in understanding, my love for the language of our prayers developed into a deeper veneration for the

concepts and precepts of Zoroastrianism. As ancient as our religion is, it is astoundingly relevant to modern times.

Had it been customary to ordain Behdins into priesthood in my youth in Bombay, I would definitely have become a Navar. Since this was never an option, I was content to pursue religious studies on my own. I have a moderate collection of books on Zoroastrianism and a few tapes of the daily prayers and Jashan prayers recited by Dasturji Nowrooz Minocheher-Homji. I listen to these tapes often, carefully reciting the prayers alongside.



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Recently, The North American Mobeds Council (NAMC) instituted a process to ordain 'Mobedyar' status to qualified individuals after receiving appropriate training. I cannot profess to know the exact reasons behind their decision, but I can tell you that I think that it is a wise and commendable step. As the size of our North American community grows, Mobedyars will be increasingly needed to serve the community's ritualistic and spiritual needs. This need is already acute in areas where there are just a few Zarathushti families.

Becoming a Mobedyar is a natural step for me. I have serviced our community in a number of ways over the years, and I know that I can be of even greater service as a Mobedyar. My desire to become a Mobedyar is entirely based on personal interest in the language and teachings of Zoroastrianism, my faith and gratitude to my community, and not for any other reason. Becoming a Mobedyar should not be construed as being in competition with any of the Mobeds in my Chicago Zarathushti community or elsewhere.

My training to become a Mobedyar has been extremely pleasant. I received nothing but support and encouragement from my family and Chicago area priests. Ervad Pesi Vazifdar agreed to help train me, despite his hectic schedule and constant travels. Ervad Neriosang Karanjia, Ervad Jamshed Antia, and Ervad Jamshed Ravji have also all actively assisted and encouraged me in my training. I truly must thank these fine gentlemen for their assistance. (photo right Ervads Karanjia, Ravji, Mobedyar Damkevala; Ervads Vazifdar, Antia)

During my training the most surprising element was the physical effort required to project and eloquently recite our prayers, hour after hour; and at the same time tending the fire. I also found that our priests demonstrate

an amazing amount of self-discipline in preparing for religious ceremonies and events.

As I finish my Mobedyar training, I look forward to serving the North American Zoroastrian community with gratitude, faith and knowledge. I hope that my story may inspire the next generation of Zarathushtis to actively pursue religious education and to provide service to the



community as ordained Navars or Mobedyars and therefore help propagate our ancient and noble religion.

**Bomi Damkevala** has lived with his family in the Chicago area for the past 40 years and has always been closely associated with the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC) and the Zoroastrian community at large in North America. He has been a keen supporter of ZAC as well as a community leader, having been one of the four individuals who drew up the ZAC constitution. He has served on the ZAC Board for many years in various capacities including as its Secretary, Vice President and President. Currently he is training to become a Mobedyar.

Bomi Damkevala earned a B. Tech. degree from the Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai, and an M.S. degree from the Illinois Institute of Technology. Presently, he is working as a Senior Project Cost Estimator at Sargent & Lundy LLC, a Chicago based engineering consulting company.



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### **A Parsi Woman Mobedyar in Training – My Reflections!**

***Hutoxi Contractor***



I can still recall the excitement I felt at the 2008 Annual General Meeting in Los Angeles when it was announced that the North American Mobeds Council (NAMC) would start accepting women as Mobedyars; my heart skipped a beat! Soon after I expressed my desire to join the program, and the generous and learned Ervad Soli Dastur offered to train me.

I am excited for what this new policy will mean for communities throughout the US. I have lived in Pittsburgh, PA for the past 30 years, where we have a small, but wonderfully cohesive Zoroastrian community. One thing that we lack, however, is a Mobed within our community. Each year, we invite priests from other towns to officiate our jashans – and if one is not available, we aren't able to enjoy holding the ceremony. When members of our community experience a death in their family, we are unable to perform proper bereavement services without a Mobed.

As a young girl growing up in Ahmadabad, India, I loved watching my father, Darashah Randeria, and his brother as they prayed at the changing of every Geh. I remember hanging on to the ends of my father's kusti as I became lost in the melodious sounds of the Avestan script. In India, we were surrounded by a Zarathushti way of life morning to night; in moving to the US, however, I realized that our children lack that same sense of immersion in the religion that my siblings and I had enjoyed decades ago. I felt as though we were losing our beautiful religion because our youth were not being

exposed to it in the same way. That's why I started educating myself about Zoroastrianism, through reading, talking to community and academic scholars, and my own personal reflection. With what I learned I started teaching religious classes for our Zarathushti youth in Pittsburgh. Over the years, I have also become more involved in teaching people of different faiths about Zarathustra's beautiful message. Mahatma Gandhi himself used to recite verses from the Gathas. Being part of interfaith activities has made me proud to be a Zarathushti, both for the unique aspects of the religion and for the positive influence it has had on other faiths.

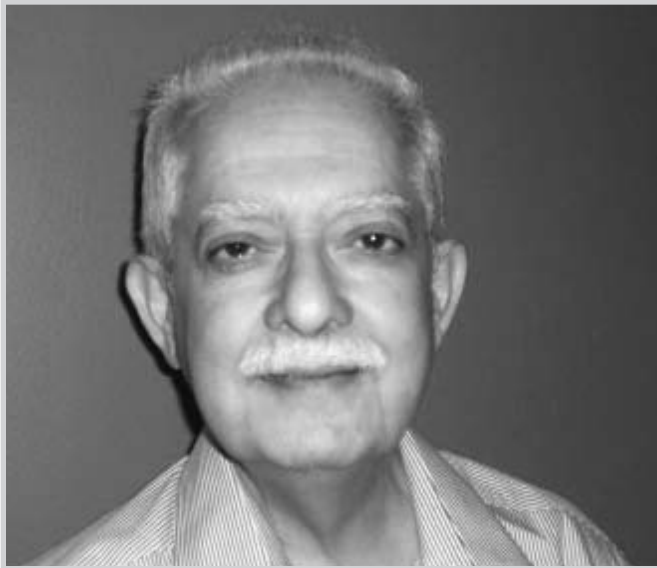
Now as a Mobedyar-in-training, I look forward to taking my religious education to a new level. As my mentor and father-in-law, Dr. Minocher Contractor always said, "God, give me the opportunity to do good in life and, give me the life to do it." I want to thank FEZANA and NAMC for offering this wonderful opportunity to all members of our community. I encourage others within our community to take advantage of this wonderful initiative so that we can together increase knowledge of Zarathustra's teachings throughout North America and celebrate our beautiful faith. With Ahura Mazda's blessings, I look forward to the day I will officially become a member of NAMC as a Mobedyar.

***Hutoxi Contractor*** lives in Pittsburgh, PA with her husband Farhad. She is the co-chair of FEZANA Welfare & Critical Assistance Committee, Past President of the Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and actively involved in many charitable organizations with fund raising activities & currently serves on the board of the Tri-State Indian Physician Auxiliary, India Nationality Room Committee at the University of Pittsburgh & Interfaith Alliance of North Pittsburgh. She has two daughters, Laila and Cyra. Hutoxi is proud of her family, including her new sons-in-law Homi Bodhanwala and Farzin Morena, for their continual good works and contributions to the community.



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### **How Zarathushti laity (Behdins) in North America see the Mobeds in NA different from how they are perceived in India?**



#### ***Framroze Patel***

Behrams, Atash Adarans and Dar-e-Mehers which are like tiny islands of Zoroastrianism in an ocean of indifference and apathy". This beautiful tribute was paid to our Athravans by Ervad Shapur Pavri at the closing ceremony of the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress 2000

In Denakrd the importance of a priest in cultivating virtue is described as follows:

***"The holy priest is the man to explain what virtue is; and by this explanation every soul has to lead a good life. Every man obtains from Dastur the knowledge of what to do and what not to do. A man lives in the world without sin by not injuring men, and then the man obtains the love of god. All men not having the benefit of the Dastur's true knowledge about everything, they do not possess the knowledge of God, religion and virtue. How can an ignorant man know of virtue without the aid of religious leader? Therefore every one amongst men has the need of a teacher of salvation from sin and the acquisition of virtue."***

***(Denakard Bk 3-Chpter 339).***

I was asked to write how the Zarathushti laity in North America views the Mobeds in North America different from how they are perceived in India? This question probably implies that the communities in India and in North America have different perceptions of the role of priests. However, my opinion, based on my involvement in the affairs of the Zarathushti community of North America, is that to a great degree Zarathushti community since sixties appreciates very much the role played by Zarathushti priests. I am of the opinion if the NA Zarathushti community had done scientific polling, the opinion of a large majority would be positive.

Why should not the community have a positive opinion of the priests? The prophet of our faith, Zarathushtra, was trained as a priest. He refers to himself in the Yasna 33.6 as a priest-zaotar- "he who invokes prayers". We know that in Younger Avesta (Yt.13.94) the term Athravan (priest) is used as his professional description. What binds our community is our Athravans.

"Our priesthood is the glue that holds our community together. As priesthood goes, so does the community; if we disrespect the priests, we dishonor ourselves. In the 1300 years since the last Zarathushti king, we have no kings, no country, no borders, no religious head, nothing we can call our own. All we have are our 168 Atash

#### **WHAT DO WE EXPECT FROM OUR PRIESTS**

Primarily, three things are expected by the community from priests: (a) performance of ceremonies, (b) provide understanding of the ceremonies, (c) to act as catalysts for research scholarship. However wrong I may be in my opinion, substantially large number of our congregants still wish to continue the religious ceremonies. Many of North American Mobeds who are professionally qualified have continued study of faith, published technical papers and through regular meeting of North American Mobeds Council have continued their role as teachers.

What the North American Zarathushti congregation expects of the priest class is that they should be more active in explaining why ceremonies are essential and why they are performed. An explanation of how the ceremony blends with and reinforces the idea of the



## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

community of believers would be more appropriate at the end of the ceremony. For example, what are rituals and what is the purpose of rituals, how through a ritual an individual experiences a link between the physical and spiritual world, and how a ritual enables a believer to maintain a continuity of religious experience with the past, and why we invoke the fravashis of the departed ones.

### **THE TWO ROLES OF A PRIEST IN NEW WORLD COMPARED TO BACK HOME**

In India there is a distinct hierarchy that classifies the priesthood by a system called “**Panthak**”. As almost all Zoroastrian places of worship, may it be Atash Behrams or Dar-e-Mehers, are owned and managed by private trusts, mainly by Behdins, invariably, the priest who takes care of religious responsibilities and administrative function of the institution is an employee of the trust. They are called Vada-Dastoor or High Priest if they are affiliated to the Atash Behrams. The priests who attend to second and third tier fire-temples are called “**Panthakis**”. None of the Zarathushti priests have power to declare punishment or ex-communication of a congregant. In religious matters the community may ask the High-priest or other priests for guidance. However, their opinion does not have power of legal sanctions. In his infinite wisdom the prophet created a unique system wherein every individual endowed with good mind (Vohu-mano) was given the responsibility to promote good and dispel evil without any intermediary as found in other organized religions.

In North America in absence of any duly consecrated Fire Temples and family owned religious institutions, and its natural corollary, the “**Panthak**” system, the Athravans have greater freedom to serve the community following the dictates of their conscience and ethical beliefs. Majority of the priests – even though they were trained in traditionally orthodox institutions - to a great extent and very admirably have adapted themselves to the changing time and circumstances.

They have understood the core message of the prophet, viz., that the goal of life is to promote the good, that is to strive to make the world and society evolve towards perfection in accordance with the principle of Asha. With righteous resolve act to promote the good and dispel falsehood, and the way of life is one of action in bringing the world towards perfection more clearly than

their bellwether counterparts back home. Let me emphasize that our Athravans have done so without neglecting their core responsibility as a priest and teachers. This is what the community expects from them. I am emphasizing that Zarathushti priests of North America have fulfilled both the obligations, viz., that of the priests and teachers of religion commendably.

### **SECOND GENERATION OF PRIESTS BORN AND EDUCATED IN NORTH AMERICA**

The North American Mobeds Council (NAMC) has provided the leadership to train the future Athravans who probably don't have a working knowledge of Gujarati. NAMC also has the program to train laity to perform limited ceremonies. Some of the priests have trained their sons for priestly functions and accompanied them to India for formal confirmation as “**Navar**”. These young Athravans one day will take over the responsibilities both as priests and teachers. It is my fervent hope that North American Athravans would be primarily responsible for doing research now being done by non-Zarathushti scholars. The universities in North America and advent of internet age provide unique opportunity to young Athravans born in North America to spread the message of the prophet, Zarathushtra. These young Athravans should be actively engaged in inter-faith activities so that in next fifty years knowledgeable North American citizens may be well aware of “**Good Religion**”. The future torch-bearers of Zarathushti religion would be able to say that, Zarathushtra was, and still is, in very truth the World-Teacher and His Message is for all humanity for all time.

**Framroze Kaikhushroo Patel** was educated at the Surat Parsi Orphanage from 1942 to 1958. His entire education from elementary school to Masters degree in Commerce and Articleship (for Institute of Cost & Management Accountants-London) at Tata Iron & Steel Company, Jamshedpur, was paid for by the Surat Parsi Panchayet. He is practicing as a Certified Public Accountant, Certified Valuation Analyst, and Chartered Management Accountant (UK), and has MBA from St. John University, New York. His practice includes Accounting & Auditing, Business Valuation and Forensic Accounting. He is a past president of FEZANA and ZAGNY. He lives in New Jersey with his wife Armaity.



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### **Some Thoughts regarding Zarathushti Mobeds in Iran by an Iranian Behdin**

***Nahid Dashtaki***



I would go to the Zoroastrian Atash Kadeh (Fire Temple) in Tehran a few times when I was living there in 2005. I found the center to be quite similar to the many Zoroastrian Centers I have seen in Mumbai, Sydney, Canada and even Los Angeles. There is a familiarity as every temple first ushers you into a small room to take your shoes off and cover your head before heading into the main prayer hall that holds the fire. This familiarity was intensified as we greeted the Mobed (priest) at the Fire Temple in Tehran.

On my first visit to the Zoroastrian Center in Tehran, I went with my whole family. We were greeted at the door by an elderly priest, who knew my father and mother very well. I was later informed that he performed the sedreh pushi of many of my parents' cousins and relatives as well as being the officiating priest at their wedding ceremony as well. The instant recognition by the priest was comforting and exciting, as if we were meeting an old friend after many years of being apart.

The priest who knew my parents was able to share stories and anecdotes about many of my family members. He asked for them by first name and even nicknames. The intimacy that he shared with my family was such that I felt he was an honorary family member as well. I am sure that many households in Iran considered him to be a part of the family. I noticed that many of the other younger priests were interacting with other families at the center that day. They had the same comforting presence and reverent manner as well as jovial informalities, such as you would share with a close friend. I noticed this interaction and could not help but think that, in Iran, these priests functioned as the invisible thread that held the many layers of the community together.

Admittedly, there is a different need for Zarathushti priests around the world. In Los Angeles we have always leaned on our priests to serve the community as a limitless source of religious information. We have seminars, classes, lectures, and other academic opportunities to expand our knowledge of the religion. We get to know our priests mostly by theological debates, discussions and conversations.

The two communities, in Tehran and Los Angeles, are different on many levels and always will be. Zarathushti priests have differing community obligations and thus will have different interactions with their congregations in different regions of the world. I think this difference is a positive attribute to the strength of the global Zarathushti community. Our priests adapt to the needs of their congregations and show us their dedication and devotion everyday in our religious centers.

I am only able to speak on my perception on the priests from Iran, from my minimal interactions with them. However their connectedness to the community is something that I clearly saw as crucial to their devotion of the faith. I find that to be the case with our priests everywhere from Los Angeles to Tehran. They are the most connected to the community not by mere occupational right, but by sheer devotion to the principles of our faith.

***Nahid Dashtaki*** received a Bachelor of Science degree in International Relations as well as Comparative Literature from the University of California, Irvine in 2005. She has international work experience in India and Iran. Nahid is currently working to complete her master's in both Dispute Resolution and Public Policy. She is now serving her second year as the Assistant Secretary for FEZANA.



**With our heartfelt thanks and best wishes to**

***THE MOBEDS WORLDWIDE***

**For your dedication and service to**

**The Zarathushti community**

**Sincerely**

**The Zoroastrian Association of  
Florida**



## SECTION FOUR FUTURE

# NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL

## TRAINING THE PRIESTS OF THE FUTURE

*Ervad Dr. Jehan Bagli*

### INTRODUCTION

In a Diaspora that is so obtusely motivated by technological materialism, what are the chances of survival of Zarathushtrian Faith that evolved almost 3700 years ago? The fact is, that it has survived and, in this age of "reason", in this 3rd millennium C.E., is gaining momentum. Would the religion have outlasted, in the absence of, that group of knowledgeable people of the early era, we choose to call today "the priest"? Would we have the most revered Scriptures 'The Gathas' without the oral transmission by these dedicated people? The answer is, that this precious philosophy would have never seen the Light of the Day, as a distinct Religious identity in the absence of these religious 'invokers'.

Although institutionalized priesthood evolved later in the history of Zarathushtrian religion, the insemination of a priestly class, can be traced back around the 6th century B.C., when the Magi took over the reigns of the religion of Zarathushtra from the Athravans of the Eastern Iran. It was not until the Sasanian era (226-641 C.E.), that clergy was empowered to interpret and administer the religious measures, sometimes at the expense of the Laity (1). The clerics continued to enjoy the respect of the laity, even after their migration to India. It was a series of events, coupled with the advent of the western education and the increased affluence of the lay community around late 18th to mid 19th century in India, that charted the downfall of the priestly dominance. The collapse of the priestly hegemony left behind a class of ritual performing priesthood, which in time, was at the mercy of grass-root community for their livelihood. Iranian Zarathushti community and their priesthood, till the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th century were still suffering in dismal state of poverty under later Qajar regime.

### PRIESTLY FUNCTIONS:

A magi is described by Pseudo-Lucian as 'an order of seers who are dedicated to the service of Gods. their profession as Magi makes it incumbent on them to observe strict rules of life.'(2). Doctrinally, the life of a

Zarathushti priest should be in tune with precepts outlined by the prophet in his profound hymns (3).

Priesthood of the early migrants to India, continued the Sassanian tradition of rigorously and rigidly enforcing the purity laws (4), in an effort to maintain and reflect what they sincerely perceived as a necessary constituent of religiosity. While they expected the laity to follow strict purity laws, their own observance of these rules was even stricter. This led them to focus solely on the ritual, essentially to the exclusion of intellectual understanding of the various facets of duties of a professional clergy. Even those in the position of leadership, have essentially restricted their intellectual efforts in the area of philology, and need for the observance of rituals. Furthermore, heredity, poor remuneration, and lack of respect for clergy are the major reasons for failing to attract intellectuals to the priestly profession. Ironically however, most notable Parsi Zarathushtis such as the Tatas, Dadabhoy Naoroji, Godrej, Sir Phirozeshah Mehta, Dinshaw Watcha, Dr. Homi Bhabha, Dr. Homi Sethna hailed from the priestly class.

The changing socio-cultural fabric, will compound the job of the future priesthood to bridge the vacuum of a worldly society, with the notions of spirituality and piety. In the western world, and to some degree globally, advances in biotechnology coupled with genetic engineering, adds a new dimension to the responsibility of priesthood in general and Zarathushtrian clergy in particular. The issues such as organ donation, abortion, euthanasia, use of fetal tissues or stem cells, cloning, and different modes of procreation have significant socio-psycho-religious ramifications that will greatly accentuate the need for proper priestly guidance.

There is essentially nothing in the history through Achaemenian, Parthian, Sasanian and post-Sasanian era to indicate that a Zarathushti priest interacted with laity any more, than to fulfill their ritual needs and his responsibility to perpetuate the religion. The present 'age of reason', particularly on this continent, specifically demands a broadening of that role. An ideal Zarathushti





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priest of the future must play a unique role to assist in leading the 'moral and spiritual consciousness of the Zarathushti community.

### **TRAINING**

By any guideline, the instruction for priesthood in general, and of Zarathushti Mobed in particular, is a prolonged process that must involve an intensive training period. It demands, for self-sacrifice, dedicating oneself to the priestly calling, and a commitment to serve Ahura Mazda spiritually. It entails a service to fulfill the spiritual needs of the community, to propagate and perpetuate the religion, and to spread the message of Zarathushtra not only to the community but also to the humanity at large to refresh the world as Asho Zarathushtra implores us in Yasna 30.

Training of the Parsi priests at the seminaries (religious institutions) in India, is at present directed primarily toward producing Ervads capable of performing inner and outer liturgical ceremonies. In contrast, the responsibility of training of priests in Iran rests with Kankash-e-Mobedan (An Association of Iranian Priesthood). They have a training program for lay youth as Mobedyar who in time can evolve to be the full-fledged priests of the future. Both Indian as well as the Iranian training involves several years of study and memorizing of prayers. However, Iranian priests often choose to read their prayers instead of learning them by rote.

Presently, Iranian Mobeds in North America follow the training pattern that evolved in Iran. Laymen are invited to come forward, who are trained as Mobedyar, following a prescribed curriculum of prayers and the Message of the Prophet. It is hoped, that some of these youth will evolve to be the priests of tomorrow. In contrast Parsi families induct, only the sons of priestly heredity, into priesthood, regardless of their personal interest, the majority of whom hardly practice after becoming an Ervad.

It is of little practical value to induct youth into priesthood, whose heart and soul is not in tune with the commitment, but is persuaded to appease and satisfy parental ego. A North American youth ordained as a priest in India, just for the sake of being ordained, has explicitly no knowledge, of how to perform even the

common outer liturgical ceremonies of Navzote, or Jashan. They have no alternative, but to learn to perform these rituals, with other knowledgeable priests. Without such training, they are only priests in name, unable to satisfy the spiritual needs of the community.

The training of Zarathushti priesthood in N.America should be open to all Zarathushti men and women who innately get the calling. Despite that, egalitarian position clearly vindicated by Asho Zarathushtra in the Gathas, and despite historically, the significant religious contribution of women (5) over centuries, the tradition has chosen to retain the patriarchal character of the past, and dragged it into the core of the religion. The basic principle for maintaining ritual purity as expounded in the Sassanian Vendidad is in fact gender-free. Ritual purity must be maintained, as the principle is based on regarding as Nasu (impure) anything that parts from the body, of man or woman.

Needs of the N. American community are also diverse, based on its cultural background. Religiosity of some members may be anchored more to rituals and prayers, while for others the expression of religiosity may focus on the message of Asho Zarathust. A priest of the future must cultivate tolerance for harmonizing such differences. Furthermore, even among the priests, there will be differences in the understanding of certain aspects of rituals and/or theology. It is however imperative to imbue in a Mobed of tomorrow the sense that

- “There is great healing, in acknowledging mine is not a better way, mine is merely another way” (6) to the same spiritual goal.
- A priest should be able to discern, the crust of the tradition, from the kernel of the Message. This is not to imply, that the crust be discarded. In fact, they should gradually evolve, the ability to evaluate rationally the adequacy of the tradition and discover its theological basis.
- A priest must be intellectually capable to impart the spiritual rationale implicit in the rituals.

In the coming decades, effort should be directed, in concert with Iranian and Parsi priesthood, to intertwine and unify the various modes of instruction, to evolve an



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infrastructure for investiture of young priests in the western world.

The knowledge of the actual languages, such as Avesta, and Pahlavi is desirable, but the proper accent and intonation of the recitation of the prayers are essential. Besides the history, theology and philosophical aspects, the future priest must have some exposure to the study of Comparative Religion, in order to understand the unique features of various Faiths and how they compare with the contemplation of God, and Spirituality in Zarathushtrian religion. To equip them to deal with contemporary ethical issues, some exposure to psychology and sociology as they relate to the prevailing way of life on this continent should also constitute a part of their training.

This is a tall order and would require the organization of a body, of priests and laity, of Parsis and Iranian, with sufficient expertise in various disciplines to work in concert and harmony to evolve a curriculum for such an undertaking. The group will constitute an Advisory Council to formulate the Curriculum for Training of Zarathushti Priest (CTZP) or of Mobed (CTOM). It will require proper coordination of time and effort, to bring together the teachers and the disciples at suitable locations, two to three times a year to impart the Global knowledge of both theory and practice of Zarathushtrian Priesthood in North America.

The process such as this, will take varying length of time for different persons. It will be the responsibility of the individual to display their preparedness for the commitment. A Committee, selected from among the Advisory Council may, best render the unbiased decision of the candidate's ability to serve the religion. As an interim measure, such training should be offered to those ordained priests, who wish to further their knowledge and ability to better serve their community.

All this cannot be achieved without inspiration and sacrifice. That sacrifice must come, not only from the priests-to-be, but also from the community. This can only happen if the community wants it to happen. In order for the community to express their motivation, the grass-root must lead the way. The community must vitalize the fiscal base. Yes, it is time consuming to think, and even more consuming to put the thoughts into words, but all that is far, far cheaper than putting it all into action. To generate

the ecclesiastical infrastructure of this new millennium, to furnish the spiritual enlightenment for the generations to come, can be a monumental task -the project of the millennium. Nothing short of a healthy endowment which can feed a constant stream of funds can fulfill such a dream. For project of this magnitude, the need, the desire and the financial contribution to make it happen, must come from the grass root community. If community wishes, it shall happen.

In this world charged with the intense stress of materialism, Spiritual guidance to realize the Divine within, often escapes humanity in general and Zarathushti in particular. The need of Zarthushti priests trained to expound upon the harmonization, to attune the physical with the spiritual elements of life, to bring into focus the wholeness or completeness - Haurvatat - of a Zarathushtrian way of life is more real in this technocratic age than ever before. One cannot think of a better legacy for the present Zarathushti community to leave, for the enlightenment of generations to follow than to bring an insightful and erudite priesthood into reality.

***Atha Zamyat yatha Afrinami***

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### **Spreading Zarathushtra's Teachings: From the Bronze Age to the Electronic Age**

***Kaizad Cama***

Many Zoroastrians speak with pride about the timelessness of Zarathushtra's message, and rightly so. What have not been timeless, however, are the means by which his teachings have been passed on between people and between generations. Over the history of our religion, those means have naturally evolved. Zarathushtis have handed down the religion's teachings orally through poetic hymns, and in written form in golden ink on cow hides, in books and on the internet. Parsi-run schools in the East have given way to religious education classes in the West. Although we have never been a community that kept religious knowledge confined to an elite subset of the community, our survival going forward will depend even more on our ability to educate ourselves—as lay Zarathushtis—about our history, traditions and religion.

In Zarathustra's time, information spread by word of mouth. The period was prehistoric in the true sense of the word. Zarathustra was, however, part of a culture with a rich oral tradition—even today Iranians have an affection for reciting poetry. In this light, Zarathushtra left his message to future generations in the best way he could: encoding his teachings as a poetic conversation between himself and God.

Few religions have a direct record of their prophet's teachings and we are lucky to have our prophet's own words in the Gathas. I find it particularly comforting to have this record of our prophet; although we know so little about him that we cannot even pinpoint the century or location of his birth, we can be assured that his message is preserved for posterity. Unfortunately, the language of the Gathas, Avesta, has long since fallen into disuse and we are left to rely on linguistic scholars to translate the scripture for us. The problem is that translations often reflect the biases of the translator, and at best, they filter out some of the nuance of the original version. For example, Professor Martin Schwartz (UC Berkeley) argues that Zarathushtra was purposefully ambiguous at points in the Gathas, but this insight escapes those of us who are not Avestan scholars. The lay Zarathushti is left with a translated version of the scripture that is imperfect and, at times, subjective.

The Gathas and the majority of our religious corpus, including the Yasna Haptanghaiti and the greater Yasna,

were transmitted orally for centuries before being written down. In particular, this burden fell on the priests, who undertook the tremendous task of memorizing and mentally preserving Zarathushtra's teachings for later generations. In Sassanian times, the high priest Adarbad Marespand undertook a reorganization and standardization of the Zoroastrian liturgical texts.

The formal training for the Zoroastrian priesthood continues to emphasize the memorization of our scripture in their original Avestan and Pazand forms. More than once in our religion's history we have lost parts of the written texts due to invasion and the passing of time. The original writings of early priests in the Achaemenian era were destroyed by the invading Macedonians. During the invasion of the Arabs at the end of the Sassanian period, the 21 Nasks of the Avestan texts were scattered or destroyed. However, the summary of 19 of those volumes can be found in the Denkard. We owe our priests an incredible debt for transcribing our scriptures and continuing the practice of memorization even after the scriptures were eventually written down because those are the chief reasons why we have the knowledge of our religion that we do today.

Following the Arab conquest of Iran and the emigration of the Parsees to India, Zoroastrian priests on both sides of the Arabian Sea continued to spearhead the preservation and transmission of the religion. While priests in Iran undertook large-scale projects to develop the Pahlavi literature—namely the Denkard and the Bundahishn—through the 9th century, priests in India began to translate and transliterate the prayers into the local Gujarati language as well as into Sanskrit. Their efforts culminated with a series of religious question and answer correspondences, collectively termed the Rivayats, between the priests of India and their counterparts in Iran between the years 1478 and 1773.

In India, the late Meherwanji Mancherji Cama established the famous M. F. Cama Athornan Institute for training Parsi/Irani Mobed boys to be priests. The Athornan Mandal later followed by establishing the Dadar Athornan Institute for the same purpose. Both of these institutions have done an excellent job in educating Mobed boys from all over India and some from Iran.



## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

There have only been a few times in the history of Zoroastrianism when the community has had a central figure of religious authority. Zarathushtra was the first, of course, as prophets tend to be. After Zarathushtra, and Jamaspa who immediately followed him, only the high priests of the Sassanian period—among them Adarbad Marespand, Kirdar and Tansar—stand out as unifying and definitively authoritative figures for our religious community. This religious community has never needed a Pope or an Imam to guide us, as Zarathushtra's message was intended for all of us to understand and act on individually. Taking nothing away from our learned priests, there are no spiritual requirements that prevent a layperson from understanding his teachings. Instead, I would argue that relying on the voice of another person as a substitute for our own good thinking and proper reflection seems quite un-Zarathushti.

In India, lay Zarathushtis began to take a lead role in the preservation of the community by establishing institutions such as the K.R. Cama Institute. They also set up Parsi high schools, such as the B.V.S. Parsi High School and the Sir J.J. School, both having religious education components in their curricula.

The 20th century gave rise to the Zarathushti migration to North America and other parts of the world. Zarathushtis raised in the West, particularly during the early years of the diaspora, were more questioning than their Indian-born counterparts. This created a demand for religion classes—"ZAGNY classes" as we called them in New York—which could formalize religious education for our community, just as "Sunday School" and "Hebrew School" did for their respective communities. In addition to religion classes, the establishment of local associations, the FEZANA Journal and Zoroastrian congresses have all serve to build our community and spread knowledge of the religion amongst our community. Once again, although our priests have often been instrumental in these efforts, it is the Zarathushti community at large that has taken the reigns.

The 21st century democratized the flow of information like no time before it ever had. Most of us rely on our computers—if not our mobile phones—to connect us to information instantaneously. Moreover, the internet, email lists and social networking sites turn the world into a global village, especially for a community as spread out as ours. They replace libraries as our go-to source for information and they replace the gymkhanas of India as the place where members congregate to organize events

or discuss the topic of the day. Between the hundreds of Zarathushti- and Parsi-named groups on Facebook and the community's own Zspeakerbox, the problem is not a lack of channels to answer their questions and express their opinions, but perhaps an oversupply that dilutes readership and participation.

But the truth is, that is already yesterday's news. Looking forward, our community needs to make better use of the available technology to help two underserved groups learn more about their religion: college-age Zarathushtis and Zarathushti children that live far away from community centers.

Today's Zarathushti young adults have come of age in a time when information is easily accessible and learning about something new can be as simple as Googling it. In high school and college, I used the internet almost exclusively for all but the most serious research projects, and even then turned to the web to find the most relevant academic papers related to my research. But the ease of finding information comes at a price: the accuracy of the information we find online can be suspect, to say the least. The sites with the most obvious web addresses and the message boards with the most activity are not always the ones with the best information. Our community—and anyone looking for reliable information on our religion—would be well-served to make use of three of the more recent developments on the web: social filtering, open source content and Google Books.

One of the best examples of social filtering is Digg ([www.digg.com](http://www.digg.com)), where users vote up or vote down a story or webpage. In the context of information on Zoroastrianism, articles and blogs about our religion or community could be collectively reviewed and filtered, leaving the best information on top. For a Zoroastrian Digg to succeed, we would need an engaged community of users with enough knowledge about our religion to sniff out and "digg down" spurious information.

Next, we need to move from social networking to social collaboration. Wikipedia and other such open source sites open up the creation and editing of news and research articles to the general public. Some of the best content about Zoroastrianism on the web is on Wikipedia, which has gone through multiple versions in an effort to improve the credibility of its articles and prevent incorrect or malicious editing. We need more people visiting, creating and editing Zoroastrian-related content on these so-called 'wikis'.



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Finally, where community-reviewed information fails, we need readily-accessible, scholarly information. Google has scanned millions of books, thousands of which are about or include topics on Zoroastrianism, and over 1,800 of which can be searched and viewed online in full. While old-fashioned book learning isn't always the easiest route, Google Books combines the relative credibility of published work with the ability to search for keywords and phrases like other online documents do.

The three technologies mentioned above all address the important challenge of disseminating information to an increasingly spread out community. However, when it comes to teaching children about their religion, we need to concentrate on delivering the lessons in more familiar ways. Children who cannot attend formal religious classes can be "home schooled" by their parents if we consolidate our religious education materials. In fact, FEZANA's Education, Scholarship and Conference Committee has already begun to do just that with its website: [www.zoreled.org](http://www.zoreled.org).

These suggestions are just a few of the uses of available technology that would be achievable in the short-term, but of course, we can dream even bigger. Some of us may one day figure out how to deliver religious classes over the internet. In doing so, they will solve the technological challenges: where to host the videos and how to film classes with a multiple-camera format so that they are interesting to watch. More importantly, however, they will also figure out how to prevent a loss of attendance in the actual classroom, and how to build a social community around these online classrooms so that the children engage with their Zarathushti peers and build social connections on par with those who are able to attend the classes in person.

The Zarathushtis I know like to tout our community's historical ability to adapt to different times and environments. The landscape has fundamentally changed once again for us, allowing just about anyone to learn or educate others about our religion. Today all of us share the responsibility for engaging our community with these new technologies.

**Kaizad** is a Senior Consultant with Ambit Risk Consulting, a management consulting practice within Sungard. He recently returned from a sabbatical to Ahmedabad, India where he worked with the Centre for Microfinance on providing better crop price information to farmers in rural Gujarat and developing financial literacy training for the urban poor in Ahmedabad. While there, he kept a blog at [kaizad-in-india.blogspot.com](http://kaizad-in-india.blogspot.com)



*Kaizad has served the community as a teacher in ZAGNY's religious education classes and a co-organizer for Zoroastrian youth in New York City. Kaizad holds a BA and an MS from Stanford University. He currently lives in New York City with his wife, Dixie.*

### Helpful Links

#### Zoroastrian Education Websites

FEZANA Religious Education [www.zoreled.org](http://www.zoreled.org)  
Avesta.org [www.avesta.org](http://www.avesta.org)

#### Examples of Existing Technologies

Social Networking - Facebook [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)  
Social Networking - ZpeakerBox [www.zpeakerbox.nariusnet](http://www.zpeakerbox.nariusnet)  
Wikis - Wikipedia [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)  
Social Filtering - Digg [www.digg.com](http://www.digg.com)  
Online Books - Google Books [www.books.google.com](http://www.books.google.com)



## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

### **I HAVE A DREAM.....**

#### **NORTH AMERICAN CULTURAL EDUCATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS CENTER**

**Homi Gandhi**

**"You gotta have a dream. If you don't have a dream, how you gonna make a dream come true?"**

**--Oscar Hammerstein II**

*"We have been building local association centers, Dare Mehrs, libraries, and cultural centers in the last 35+ years. It is high time that we think about building a National, nay a North American, Cultural and Educational Center. In my opinion, the building architecture of this center should reflect the old Persian architecture and inside of that building should include a library, cultural, and research center on the lines of Smithsonian, where young and old, scholars and laity, Zarathushtis and non-Zarathushtis can find the necessary information about our community—Prayers, history, culture, etc.—with the help of interactive computerized equipment. This center should also include a consecrated fire temple. I know that this will arouse emotions in many people. But a time has come to discuss without emotions and with respect for each other."*

The above is a part of my presentation at the 20th FEZANA annual general meeting (April 2007) in Dallas, Texas, on behalf of the FEZANA Interfaith Activities Committee. Since that date my determination for the establishment of a Zarathushti Cultural and Educational Center with an attached consecrated fire temple has been strengthened.

We have carved out a distinct identity in this new Diaspora. It is up to us to find new solutions to the old problems. When our ancestors arrived to the shores of India in the first Diaspora, they found solutions for their survival. I am no romantic here when I challenged the North American Mobeds Council (NAMC) at its meeting in July 2005 at the Arbab Guiv Dare Mehr in New York, to think of establishing a Consecrated Fire temple on the North American continent. Ladies and Gentlemen, let us have courage to discuss this issue without tearing us apart. As Sir Walter Scott said, "Without courage, there cannot be Truth, and without truth there can be no other virtue".

History suggests that a new immigrant community builds a place of worship when they arrive in the new Diaspora. Zarathushtis did it when they arrived in India. Other Christian communities and Jewish groups did it when they arrived in the new world. And Hindus, Moslems, and Sikhs have done the same in North America since their arrival in the last century. As I have stated earlier, we have local Dare Mehrs and Associations but no central place where all Zarathushtis can identify themselves. **And I will tell you why it is so necessary.**

A few years ago, I was shocked at the end of watching a two-hour documentary entitled "Religions of India" on PBS, produced by the Information and Broadcasting Division of Government of India. My eyes could not believe it. I was not sure that my ears heard everything during those 2 hours. The documentary talked about the religions of India and showcased the temples, mosques, churches of the respective religion. But there was no mention of Zoroastrianism or a picture of any fire temple from outside, let alone the Iranshah Udvada Atash Bahram!

I started wondering what went wrong! India is a country which takes pride in its secular state. It has enshrined its religions (including Parsi) in its national anthem (second stanza of Jana Gana Mana). It has the largest population of Zarathushtis. Most of the Indian people recite "sugar in the milk" story fondly. For a tiny community, Zarathushtis have built many temples of modern India in arts, science and industry (as stated by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India). After all that, there was not even a passing reference to the Zarathushtis or the Zarathushti faith in that documentary. What was the reason?

After watching the repeat performance of the documentary I noticed that each religion segment started with the formidable architecture of the religion and then went into the history, arts, beliefs, and fundamentals of that religion. That is why, I thought, that there was a full segment of Baha'i faith, even though there is n

o mention of Baha'is in the Indian National Anthem.

Zarathushtis have a rich history and culture to display. A big segment of such collection has been included in "A Zoroastrian Tapestry" book of Godrej and Mistree. There are other examples of PARZOR and other publications depicting the past glory. **It would be ideal to display such rich heritage physically at a North American Zarathushti Cultural Center.** There are traditions of activities like Kusti-weaving, reciting Monajats, Parsi Gujarati plays, making of dar ni pori and malido, etc. which could be displayed as hands-on activity. I recently heard of a Jewish Children's Museum in Brooklyn, New York, where hands-on and touch screen displays of various Jewish activities and holidays are displayed in a story-telling fashion. I think Zoroastrian children (and even elders) would be fascinated to watch and learn new things from such a museum activity.

And of course, there is the Zarathushti faith and its influence on mankind. Late Mary Boyce, Professor, University of London, writes, "Zoroastrianism is the oldest of the revealed world religions, and it has probably had the



## NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL

most influence on mankind, directly and indirectly, than any other single faith....its leading doctrines were adopted by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam...." Jatindra Chatterji in the introduction of his book *"The Hymns of Artharvan Zarthushtira"* writes, "Another feature of Mazda-Yasna is the prophet's regard for equality. No one was to be excluded from the worship of Ahura Mazda. It matters little whether a man is Aryamna, a Verejena, or a Khaetu (Yasna 33.3); even non-Aryans were not to be excluded from taking part in the worship of Mazda (Yasna 46.12)." **An inter-active computer simulated display of faith literature, texts, translations, etc. can help Zarathushtis and non-Zarathushtis understand the basic tenets of faith. And there should be a research library for students and scholars of the Zarathushti faith.**

The current population of North American Zarathushtis is guesstimated at around 25,000-30,000, third largest group after India and Iran. Demographers expect that if the past trend of population growth continues in all these three locations, the North American Zarathushti population in the next one or two generations will be the largest. And yet we have not established a single combined educational, cultural, and religious centre identifying the whole group of Zarathushtis on the North American scene. It is time that we all start thinking about it and take steps to lay the foundation of such an edifice for our next generations. Zarathushtis have always made a covenant with its future generations when they moved into a new Diaspora. We are at the threshold of this new second Diaspora and such a center would be our legacy to the future generations of Zarathushtis.

**So what is stopping us from making that decision and acting upon it?** A few months ago I was watching a motivational program on the public television. The speaker listed 3 main reasons (excuses) whenever an individual is confronted with any decision for change, purchase, acquisition, etc. **They are money, time period, and institutional. And I believe that we Zarathushtis are facing the same situation in the North America today.**

The monetary reason: It is too expensive; I don't have money; where is the money going to come from, etc. Each one of us has faced that situation in our personal lives but most of us have gone around finding those funds when we are determined to work at it. And the same is true for our proposed project. I visualize this as a large scale project, running into millions of dollars and it will not be easy to raise these funds. There is a saying in Gujarati "Man Hoi to Mandve Jawai" (If you have ambition, you can reach the heavens). If there is a per capita donation of \$ 1,000 by each North American Zarathushti, we will have an initial down payment of \$2.5-\$3 million. There will be some who may not donate to the full extent and there will be others

who are blessed to donate more. In the end it will equalize or it may even exceed the projected down payment figure. **But this requires a commitment on the part of each one of us.**

The duration of the project is viewed as another obstacle in achieving our goal. Yes, it is going to be a long term project for completion but if we do not sow the sapling today, we are unlikely to see a big tree in the next generation. This is not a one man/woman project. This will require a group of like-minded visionary people to come together and plan it out in detail and then invite the best of our community to come forward and contribute their skills in which they are specialized. We will need architects and engineers, decorators and curators, teachers and storytellers and many other people with different skills, etc. **But we must begin.....**

There are many institutional reasons against the project as I have indicated above, the main one being that it is a blasphemy to think, let alone build, a consecrated fire temple without a rigorous process which has been adopted for so many years on the Indian sub-continent. And I question to those with such strong feelings to describe the process for establishing the consecrated fire temples in 2 outposts outside the sub-continent, Aden and Zanzibar. And what is the evidence that such a rigorous process was followed when the very first consecrated fire temple was established in India? Even Dastoorji (Dr.) Firoze Kotwal, High Priest of the Wadiaji Atash Bahram in Mumbai recommended that "we in North America install a continuously burning 'dadgah' fire in a specially built 'gumbad' (sanctum sanctorum), with an adjoining 'yazeshne gah' area for performing ceremonies." (FEZANA Journal – Winter 1998 issue, page 9). In that article, Dr. Kotwal further describes the process for the consecration of dadgah.

**So friends, "where there is a will, there is a way!" The North American Zarathushtis have to decide and commit to this dream and work for it in an earnest manner if we want to leave a heritage for our future generations.**

**Homi Gandhi** is the immediate past president of ZAGNY and co-chair of FEZANA NGO committee. He is actively involved in the interfaith activities in the New York area.





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### **North American Mobeds by Country, State/Province**

North American Mobeds By Country and State/Province (Iranis & Parsis Combined)		North American Mobeds By Country and State/Province Sorted by ST/PR Totals in Descending Order (Iranis & Parsis Combined)	
	Totals		Totals
Canada	65	Canada	65
USA	128	USA	128
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>193</b>
State/Province	ST/PR Totals	State/Province	ST/PR Totals
Alberta	1	Ontario ***	52
British Columbia	4	Texas	31
Ontario ***	52	California ***	24
Quebec ***	8	Illinois	17
Arizona	3	New Jersey ***	14
California ***	24	Quebec ***	8
Colorado ***	1	Pennsylvania ***	7
Connecticut	2	Florida	6
Florida	6	New York	5
Georgia	2	British Columbia	4
Illinois	17	Massachusetts	4
Kentucky	1	Ohio	4
Massachusetts	4	Arizona	3
New Hampshire	1	Washington ***	2
New Jersey ***	14	Georgia	2
New York	5	Connecticut	2
Ohio	4	Virginia	2
Oklahoma	1	Alberta	1
Pennsylvania ***	7	New Hampshire	1
South Carolina	1	Colorado ***	1
Texas	31	Oklahoma	1
Virginia	2	South Carolina	1
Washington ***	2	Kentucky	1



**NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL****The House Of Song*****Raiomond Mirza Ph.D***

Have you ever sat at a jashan or wedding or gahambar and wondered why do Zarathushti priests sound the way they do? Not those priests who simply rattle off an unchanging monotone drone, but others who seem to have some shape to their sound? Have you ever been to a Church or Synagogue or even a Mosque? Perhaps seen a documentary on religious rituals in aboriginal cultures? Most of us will have been exposed to various religions and for the most part we take their music for granted – “that’s what they do”. Then we go to our own Zarathushti functions and take it for granted that in our rituals we don’t have any formalized choirs, instruments, or anything that we’d normally call music “that’s not what we do”.

This was my own outlook until I began to study music composition at university and upon listening to an Ave Maria by the Franco Flemish composer Josquin des Prez, I found myself wondering where is the Zarathushti Ave Maria? Where are the masses, the hymns, anything? My graduate study was formed in that very moment. I decided there was no music in Zarathushti ritual and so I would compose it.

Ignorance is often equated to bliss and rightfully so. As a species we tend to be most happily confident of precisely those things that we least understand. The beginning of my graduate work was, therefore, a shining example of being very self-assured and contentedly uninformed. However, the more I looked at our history the less chirpy I became. Something didn’t add up. I may go on record as the only research student who was unhappy because his instincts were correct. History was proving me right – too right. There was/is simply no hard evidence of any music in ritual Zarathushtrian worship. There were often tantalizing leads such as Amnon Shiloah citing that there was rich information about the music of the Sasanian (late Zarathushti empire) state church at Al-Hira (Shiloah 1995: 7,8). Unfortunately this and other claims by other authors all proved unfounded or insubstantial.

The reason I was so troubled was that there was one simple argument that no amount of missing evidence could defeat – although there was no trace of music in ritual worship in the thousands of years of Zarathushtrian history, there should have been.

Ours was not the faith of an isolated, small, unique tribe of people undisturbed by contact with anyone else and so, effectively left alone to evolve differently to any other society on earth. Quite the opposite. Zoroastrianism was the state religion of a series of Persian empires that spanned over 1000 years (broadly 500 BCE – 637 CE) and whose reach once stretched from India to Egypt. The evolving culture of Persia during this vast period was enriched by over 1000 tribes that flowed through it. The Mesopotamian civilizations that preceded it had abundant records of music, religious as well as secular. The Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) with which the Zarathushti religion had close contact all had music in worship, as did the Greeks, Egyptians and many others. Could it really be that we, who had so much in common with all our neighbors just never developed music in worship although every single one of them did? What were the odds? Not very convincing.

There was also some internal evidence to suggest the existence of music in our religion. The word Gathas (the central texts of our liturgy whose composition is attributed to Zarathushtra) is a term usually translated as hymns. Also of note within the Gathas themselves was the expression “the House of Song”, used as a metaphor for heaven. The verbal root ga, ‘to sing’ from which the Avestan noun Gatha is derived, is also a compelling indicator of the presence of music in the liturgy. Ga also reappears in fragathra, ‘the singing of prayers’, in Yasna 19.21 and 55.7 (Hintze 2002: 143-144).

We also have the observations of the Greek Historian Herodotus, the geographer Strabo and the traveler Pausanius who all provided first hand accounts of Zarathushti rituals between the 5th century BCE to the 2nd century CE and who all described what they saw as singing.





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Ultimately my attention turned to the present and (thanks to Prof John Hinnels and Dr Almut Hintze) I recalled a remark made year earlier by Mobed Rustom Bhedwar in London about the sound of his prayers. He said "Iranian Mobeds told me that Parsi priests sounded like the Brahmins of India". "But" he added "To me, the Iranians sound like the Mullahs". It would be natural to extrapolate from this that after 1000 years of coexistence, Zarathushtis in India and Iran had absorbed something of the majority cultures around them. However, what if there was something in Parsi prayer performance that was unlike the Brahmin sound and, equally, something in Iranian prayer that was different from the sound of Mullahs? Furthermore, what if these differences were something that Parsi and Iranian Mobeds shared with each other?

I traveled to India and Iran and recorded priests and students. I obtained archival recordings made 60 years ago. I began to notate the prayers musically and began to perceive an aural substructure within the voices of priests. In time I was left with nothing but pure sounds and patterns that were not initially apparent to the naked ear but could be perceived through the microscope of notation. Writing a sound down in notation freezes that sound in time. It allows one to see its shape and to contemplate it in stillness. It was very similar to boiling sea water. After the liquid is gone, only the salt remains. In this case, after the prayer was gone, the music remained.

Ultimately I was able to isolate six clearly identifiable musical structures that were common within the voices of priests from India and Iran. They can be named but space prevents a full musicological explanation of their details and manifestation.

### MUSICAL STRUCTURE OF ASHEM VOHU

The results brought me back to Mobed Bhedwar and the initial question he inspired. If Parsis and Iranians had something in common that was unique to them and different from their surrounding cultures, maybe this thing could be said to have survived from the last time Zarathushtis were a single community, 936 CE. — the date many Zarathushtis fled Iran. Had I just discovered music that was over 1000 years old? If so, how had it survived?

#### Sample Notation

The diagram shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The title of the prayer is "Ashem Vohu". The lyrics are: "A - shem Vo - hu Vahish - tem as - ti Ush - ta as - ti Ush - ta ahm - ai Hyat a - shai Vahish - tai a - shem." The notation includes a thick line indicating a passage not performed in direct sequence with the following. Six features are annotated:

- Feature 1. Ouvert - clos motion. Note the ouvert (o) phrase has ended on B and the clos (c) has ended on C.
- Feature 2. Tri-semitone, E - D $\flat$ .
- Feature 3. Trichordal motion.
- Feature 4. Subtonic as leading tone.
- Feature 5. ornamentation.
- Feature 6. Articulation of Melodic Contour.

Other annotations include "Original pitch" and "Actual reciting pitch of performer." A thick line indicates that this passage is not actually performed in direct sequence with the one following.

A musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: "A - shem Vo - hu Vahish - tem as - ti Ush - ta as - ti Ush - ta ahm - ai Hyat a - shai Va - hish - tai a - shem." This is a simplified version of the notation shown above.



## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

The answer lay in the training of priests which was via a simple method, common the world over and stretching back 1000 years and more – imitation. A teacher says a line of prayer and the student repeats it back. The teacher corrects pronunciation and memorization but nothing else. However, almost any young boy repeating line after line absorbs the things he hears as much as the things he is told. For over 1000 years student Mobeds were unconsciously picking up inflections, melodic lines and in short, the six performance features from their teachers.

I now began to wonder if these features were all the music we ever had in prayers or were they the only survivors of an ancient practice that was once more complex and developed? If so, what happened to that tradition?

Surprisingly, the answer was not within Zoroastrianism, but Hinduism. It may at first sound preposterous that the world's first monotheistic religion could have anything in common with its largest polytheistic opposite but actually the two faiths spring from exactly the same source. Again I am indebted to Almut Hintze who suggested I explore the commonalities between the two.

Indians and ancient Persians stem from the same tribe and so Avestan and Sanskrit both spring from a common proto Indo-Iranian language. There are further striking similarities. The Gathas are hymns. The Vedas also have hymns, the Rigveda. Many Vedic hymns are addressed to deities such as Indra or Agni. Zarathushti Yashts, too are hymns dedicated to individual deities. The Zarathushti priesthood is a hereditary institution as is the Brahmin priesthood of Hinduism. Both young priests receive training in an oral tradition between ages 5 – 12 (Hinduism) or 7 – 14 (Zoroastrianism). Zarathushtis wear a kusti. Brahmins wear a sacred thread called a krsnainam as well as a sacred rope, the mekhalaa. The Gathic and Vedic traditions also share a common word for priest, athravan/atharvan.

The list goes on extensively but one feature in the Vedic tradition is of particular interest, the Samaveda. The Samaveda is essentially the singing of the text of the Rigveda using a large number of musical notes. Most significantly, the Samaveda is specifically to be chanted by a special class of singer priest, the Udgatr. Herein lies the clue to our own past. Perhaps originally, Zoroastrianism also had singer priests and a version of the Gathas which was more elaborately sung than what we hear today

This brings us to the final question. If an elaborate tradition of music in worship had existed, what happened to it? Perhaps, in one word, Alexander. His invasion of Persia was notable for its tremendous slaughter of priests, particularly at temples. If a special class of Zarathushti singer priests ever existed, it would be normal for them to mostly be found in temples and during an invasion that would have made them exceptionally vulnerable. It is likely that when they died, an entire body of knowledge and a musical tradition died as well. It could very well be that in the Samaveda and its singer priests, the Udgatrs, we have the modern, evolved, Vedic counterparts to what was lost in Zoroastrianism.

In the end, rather than simply getting mad at Alexander (well, oh go on, I did) I was thrilled to have found something that was right in front of us for centuries. It is sufficiently rewarding to know that when certain Zarathushti priests pray and they manifest the musical DNA, they are making music, ancient music and when we hear it we connect to our ancestors, possibly to our prophet, and always, to God.

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***Raiomond Mirza** is a composer, writer and producer. He is currently working on the film score of a UK thriller, the script of an American action adventure film and is producing a darkly comic feature drama. Visit [mirzamusic.com](http://mirzamusic.com) for more info and to hear his music.*

**"Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything" - Plato**



## **NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL**

### **PARSI ROOTS- A journey through Google and Face Book**

**Zubin Appoo**

As Parsis, we all remember our parents telling us the story about how our religion was originally from Persia, and how when we migrated to India, a Zarathushti priest mixed milk and sugar to symbolise peace and integration.

Little did I know that through a hobby that I started as a teenager, I would not only learn the identity of that priest, but I would come to realise that this priest, Neryosang Dhaval, was my 24th great-grandfather! I would also soon discover links to other priestly families including the Behram (from Bharuch), Kamdin (from Navsari) and Pahlan (from Surat) lines. Through these lines, links were established to the first Dastur Mehrji-rana who died in 1591. This information was sourced from a 367 page document titled "Asiatic Papers" dated September 1924, Through more research, I discovered that Neryosang's grandfather (Mobed Shapur Mobed Shehryar)'s father was very likely Prince Shahrijar of Sasanian Persia.

Using F. C. Davar's 1955 book, "Sir Nowroji P. Vakil – *A Biographical Sketch*", I found some information that suggested that Prince Shahrijar had another son, Yazdgerd III.... 29th and last King of Sasanian Persia. Now there are definite problems with this story so far – as the years of birth of Yazdgerd III (600 CE) and his apparent brother, Mobed Shapur Mobed Shehryar (915 CE) do not fit together. Through discussions with Vada Dasturji Meherjirana who passed away only very recently, and discussions with other dasturjis, there is apparently a lot of confusion and discussion on this very matter – however no resolution.

If, however, we take the brother-relationship as true, then the links between Zarathushtis and other faiths are fascinating. Links to Jewish Exile, famous Kings and Queens of Italy, Aragon and even Edward 1 King of England! Travelling even further back, into the 6th century CE and beyond through Prince Shahrijar's father, Chosroe II Parvez, links to King Xerxes and King Darius of Persia, Kings of Iberia, the Maurya Empire, Babylon, Israel, Judah, Assyria and Egypt.

A lot of this information was sourced from an American genealogist, Daniel T Rogers, who claims to have built an on-line family tree of over 70,000 relatives – all the way back to Adam and Eve. Dan is married to a Parsi lady, Dinaz Sorab Kutar and has traced his wife's tree back to similar roots – ie Dhaval and others.

How did such a fascinating journey begin for me? My parents, Sheila (nee Dalal) and Pervez Appoo, recorded a very small family tree in the early 1990s, when I was a teenager. Over the years, I started to convert this to computer format. Using Google, Facebook and other technologies, I was able to establish contact with numerous distant relatives from all over the globe and expanded the family tree from a few hundred people to more than 4000 people! I was also able to source photographs – some ageing over 250 years – of my heritage.

Whilst this task has taken years, surprisingly, it is not as hard as one would imagine. Parsis have unusual names – and dwindling numbers – both of these facts help with searching for relatives.

It is fascinating however, for me – a young IT professional growing up and working in Sydney – to discover these links to such famous, religious and culture-shaping figures. I have not only found the link to Mobed families, but found links to some of the first Parsis who arrived in Ahmedabad (Vakils and Kothavalas), relatives living only 20 Km from us in Sydney, re-established contact with family not seen or heard from in decades, discovered unknown cousins and other relatives of both my own and my wife's family, retrieved copies of portraits of relatives from nearly 300 years ago, read tales of corporal punishment, hangings, jail-breaks and even piracy!

Google and Facebook were not alone in my means of building this tree. A number of people who I have contacted (mainly through email) have been pivotal in this project – Burzoe Gandhi in Wisconsin, Jehangir Vakil, Rashid Medora and my mama, Hafez Dalal in Ahmedabad, Mharukh Hira in Toronto, Zarir Cama in London, Rohinton Patel in Estonia, Khush and Ed Minocher in Quetta, Adeshir Cowasjee and Toxy Cowasjee in Karachi – just to name a few!

When I am asked what I will do with the tree, I tell people that I am doing it for my 1 year old son, Zayden in the hope that he will one day be fascinated by having information about people 40 generations above him! I wonder that if in hundreds of years time, when we are long gone, whether some 28 year old will be looking at old portraits of us – researching what we did, who we were, where we lived!

My wife Rakhshandeh (daughter of Hutokshi and Rumi Hira of Karachi) and I were discussing the tree just last night – our next task is to build a time machine to take us back to the eras when these people lived – I will write again once accomplished!

**Zubin Appoo, Sydney, Australia,**

***If others are interested in this research, please feel free to contact me on [zappoo@zip.com.au](mailto:zappoo@zip.com.au)***



## NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL



Bachubai Pestonji Vakil (1825)  
Pestonji Framji Vakil (1815)

Maternal great-great-great  
great grandmother and  
grandfather



1860  
Dosabhai and  
Navajbai Harver  
great, great grandparents



1880  
great great grandma  
Bhikaiji Medhiwala



1912  
great grandparents  
Nadirshah and Bapaimai



1944 - Bapli, grandmother  
(left)

2009 - Appoo Zubin, Rakshandeh,  
Zayden  
(right)



# In The News

## Anu Aga of Thermax India Awarded the Padma Shri for her work with education for underprivileged children

Anu Aga, Chairman of Thermax India (1996-2004) has been awarded the Padma Shri by the Government of India on the occasion of Republic Day 2010 for her involvement in social work since her retirement in 2004.

Born in an upper middle-class Zarathushti family in Mumbai. Anu has a B.A. in Economics from St Xavier's College, Mumbai, and post graduate degree in medical and psychiatric social work from the prestigious Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai. She spent four months in the United States as a Fulbright Scholar.

Anu started her career in 1985 in Thermax, an engineering company that was begun by her father A S Bhathena three decades ago and was later managed by her husband Rohinton Aga. She headed its human resources division, (1991 to 1996) but in 1996 she was thrust in the role of Chairperson, of Thermax, when her husband, died from a sudden heart attack. Just as Aga was finding her feet as the head of Thermax, she suffered another deep loss – the death of her 25-year-old son Kurush in a road accident. Her calm but steely determination helped her family and company Thermax, India, tide over trying times. At the time of her take over Thermax's growth curve had dipped and share prices plummeted from Rs 400 to Rs 36. Losing no time, she detached herself from day-to-day operations, brought in a consultant to restructure the company – and changed its fortune.

As Chairperson, Anu turned around the company and helped transform it into a high performance organization with a bigger presence in 14 international markets, and a turnkey player in energy/environment projects. Since its turnaround, Thermax, has emerged as a leading manufacturer of engineering products and systems for industries with Rs 830 crore of business. Retiring in 2004 she was succeeded by her daughter and company vice-chairperson, Meher Pudumjee. She has however remained on the company's Board of Directors.

Since her retirement, Anu has been involved with the social sector, deeply concerned about promoting communal harmony and nurturing education. She is on the board of *Akanksha*, an NGO that promotes education for the underprivileged children from the



slums in Mumbai and Pune to attend Municipal schools but who do not learn much. In each Centre 60 children come daily for 2 1/2 hours and are taught English, Maths, Creativity, Values and to have fun at the same time. She is closely associated with the Thermax Social Initiative Foundation (TSIS), which in partnership with the Municipal Corporation and Akanksha, manages schools, for lower income groups, two in Mumbai and four in Pune. One of the schools received "Best school Award" among all municipal schools in India,

Anu with a group of people initiated *Teach For India* (based on Teach for America) : [www.teachforindia.org](http://www.teachforindia.org) which is entirely funded by the private sector.

Anu Aga has appeared in the pages of Business Today as one of the top 25 most powerful women in business, has been the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Financial Express-Electrolux Women in Business Awards and served as Chairperson of the Confederation of Indian Industry's Western Region. She has written extensively and given talks on corporate governance, corporate social responsibility, the role of women and education, etc. Mrs Aga ranks 38 on India's Richest list,

### **Congratulations Anu.**

#### **ABOUT THE AWARDS**

The *Padma Awards*, India's highest civilian awards, are conferred in three categories: *Padma Vibhushan*, *Padma Bhushan* and *Padma Shri*. The awards are announced on the occasion of Republic Day every year and conferred by the President of India at a function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan around March/ April

The awards are given in all disciplines/ fields of activities, '*Padma Vibhushan*' is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service; '*Padma Bhushan*' for distinguished service of high order and '*Padma Shri*' for distinguished service in any field. This year the President has approved 130 awards including 13 in the category of Foreigners/ NRIs/ PIOs, 6 *Padma Vibhushan*, 43 *Padma Bhushan* and 81 *Padma Shri* awards. *Dr Noshir Shroff of Delhi was awarded the Padma Bhushan in the field of Medicine.*

# In The News

## **CYRUS RUSTOM TODIWALA, OBE, MBE, DL in the 2010 Queen`s Honours List**



*Cyrus Todiwala, Proprietor and Executive Chef of the Café Spice Namasté restaurant, in London, renowned for its innovative and fresh approach to Indian cuisine, was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the 2010 Queen`s Honor List. His name*

was proposed by Gordon Brown, the Prime Minister of England for his services to the hospitality industry

In 2000, Cyrus was awarded an *Member of the British Empire* (MBE) in recognition of his extensive knowledge, skill, commitment and expertise to the restaurant and catering industry. He is also a Deputy Lieutenant of Greater London, which means he can represent the Lord Lieutenant in certain functions, including functions where one is the representative of The Queen.

In November 2009 Cyrus received an Honorary Doctorate from London Metropolitan University.

In 1998 Cyrus created a collection of his most interesting recipes and launched a phenomenally successful book - *Café Spice Namasté*, followed by *Indian Summer* ( *FJ Vol 23, No 2, 2009, pp153*)

Born and brought up in Bombay, India, he graduated from Bombay`s Catering College and trained as a chef with the famous Taj Group in India. In 1991 he left

India for Europe, where he developed his hallmark style of blending traditional Indian culinary techniques and flavors with more unexpected ingredients. Being a keen environmentalist, Cyrus cooks with organic products wherever possible.

Cyrus regularly appears on BBC Food and Drink, BBC UK Today, BBC Saturday Kitchen, Channel 4`s Big Breakfast, BBC World Service, Channel 4`s Light Lunch, BBC`s Money Matters, BBC Educational programs as well as regular slots on National Radio stations such as Radio 4, Radio 5 Live, BBC World Service and Talk Radio.

He has been voted Best Indian Chef in the UK, awarded a Culinary Honor of Merit Award from the World Chef Society and Café Spice Namasté is one of the only Indian Restaurants to win the BIB Gourmand Award from the Michelin Guide.

Congratulations Cyrus and Pervin Todiwala, the community is proud of you

## *Zarine Boyce of Houston....*

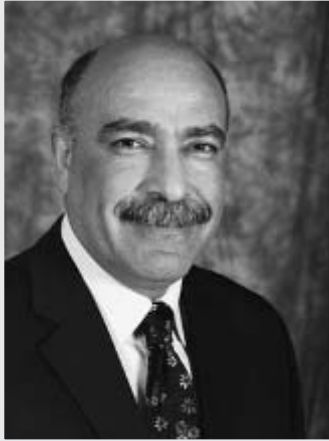


Zarine Boyce of Houston, Texas, was nominated in the Greater Houston Women`s Chamber of Commerce Hall of Fame and received the award at the Hall of Fame Gala on December 10, 2009 .



# In The News

## Shahrokh Khanizadeh appointed Editor - in- Chief of the Canadian Journal of Plant Science



Shahrokh Khanizadeh was nominated by Canadian Society for Horticultural Science (CSHS,) Canadian Society of Agronomy (CSA) and Canadian Weed Science Society (CWSS), as Editor-in-Chief of Canadian Journal of Plant Science and approved by the Scientific Journal committee of Agricultural Institute of Canada. The appointment came into effect January 1st 2010

Canadian Journal of Plant Science is a bimonthly international peer-reviewed journal reporting research in all aspects of plant science, including agronomy, horticulture, and pest management, as well as cross-disciplinary papers in the application of technology, plant breeding and genetics, physiology, biochemistry, microbiology, management, economics, and plant production systems.

Contributions published in English or French with abstracts in both languages reflect aspects of plant growth and reproduction, such as winter-hardiness, cold and drought tolerance, unique to cooler latitudes.

In recognition of his expertise, Shahrokh Khanizadeh is invited to Brussels, April 12-16, by Seventh Framework Program (FP7) of the European Community as an independent expert to review programs and proposal submitted to the FP7, for research, technological development and demonstration activities

***Shahrokh is the layout and Graphic Designer of the FEZANA JOURNAL  
Congratulations***

## MALCOLM BILIMORIA, CANCER SURGEON AND MEDICAL DIRECTOR OF THE NEW ILLINOIS CENTRE FOR PANCREATIC AND HEPATOBIILIARY DISEASES, (ICPHD) AT NORTH WEST COMMUNITY HOSPITAL.



Pancreatic cancer considered one of the most worrisome cancer diagnoses, is giving patients new reason to hope through the expertise of Dr Malcolm Bilimoria the center's medical director. He is able to offer many innovative treatments and therapies to fight pancreatic cancer from laparoscopic resections to the complex Whipple procedure. Extremely difficult, this procedure is generally only offered at academic medical centers.

Nationally recognized in the practice of surgical oncology with over a decade of experience, Dr Bilimoria received his medical degree from Feinberg School of Medicine North Western University, his surgical residency at North Western Memorial Hospital, a 2 year research fellowship at the Robert Lurie Cancer Centre, and the surgical oncology Fellowship at M.D. Anderson Cancer Centre in Texas, Dr Bilimoria specializes in gastrointestinal oncology with special interest in the treatment of pancreas and hepatobiliary diseases. With over 50 peer reviewed articles and text book chapters, Dr Bilimoria is the recipient of five awards for excellence in teaching. He is an Assistant professor of Surgery and a fellow of the American College of Surgeons.



# In The News

## Dina Mody of Houston, receives Lifetime Achievement Award from the College of American Pathologists (CAP)

Dina R. Mody, MD, FCAP, received the 2009 College of American Pathologists (CAP) Lifetime Achievement Award at a ceremony held on October 12, 2009, in Washington, DC.

The CAP Lifetime Achievement Award is presented to recognize and honor members of the College who have made a broad and positive impact on the pathology profession through contributions to one or more areas of the College over an extended period of time.

Dina Mody was honored for her distinguished years of service to the College on the Cytopathology Committee, the Cancer Committee,

and the Archives of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine Editorial Board. Her service and dedication over the years has contributed greatly to the advancement of patient care, the specialty of pathology, and to the CAP.

I am the “accidental pathologist” who discovered this field after immigrating to the United States in 1981. *“There is no higher professional honor than to be recognized by one’s colleagues and peers,”* said Dr. Mody. *“I would like to express my deep gratitude to the College of American Pathologists for this distinction.”*



## FUTURE FIGURE SKATING CHAMPION FROM ALBERTA, CANADA

At 12 years of age, SANAEA MAHAVA, shines as a budding Figure Skating enthusiast, having developed a passion for it over the past 3 years.

Sanaea who had already won two Silver medals, went on to win a Gold on Nov 27, 2009 in Barrhead Alberta, at the Midnight Twilight - Alberta Open Competition.

She is now progressing to the intermediate level.

She is the recipient of a few medals for Tap Dancing, has received 2 High Golds for her solo and 1 Gold with her Dancing Group in 2008. She is in Grade 7 at Aurora Charter School

***Sanaea is the daughter of Kashmira and Gev Mahava and lives in Edmonton, Alberta with her family.***

# In The News

## Malcolm Deboo - Loyalty & Leadership

### The 26th President of ZTFE



The Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) has elected Malcolm Minoos Deboo as their 26th President. Established in 1861, ZTFE is the oldest religious organization of South Asian origin, a fact not lost on Malcolm who promises to "ensure that the religious, social, educational, cultural activities for all ages would be maintained and to continue to represent the Zoroastrian community nationally with government and non-governmental agencies including interfaith, religious education and health".

Born in Aden in 1963, the Deboo family fled to India when Malcolm was seven, and soon after immigrated to UK. Malcolm excelled at his studies and initially wanted to join the army; however an astute Sergeant Major noted in spite of his excellent overall performance, Malcolm was not able to easily follow orders! The officer recommended that university would offer a better career path. After graduating with a degree in

Bio Chemical/Environmental Engineering from University of Teesside, North East UK. Malcolm would use his academic prowess to serve his community and set up Zarathushtrian Education Team (ZET) classes in Zoroastrianism. Engineering was set aside.

Before being elected president, Malcolm was actively involved in ZTFE. Over the years he served as the honorary Librarian and Information Officer of ZTFE where he readily disseminated information on the Zoroastrian religion, heritage and culture to interested individuals, educational and interfaith establishments, and local and national government agencies. His passion for preserving and representing Zoroastrianism for the world stage has led to exciting projects such as helping preserve the priceless manuscript in the Mehrji Rana Library in Navsari; coordinating the first professional recording of the Gathas as they are recited in the Avesta, and working with the Royal Library of Denmark on preserving Zoroastrian manuscripts.

He has also held a number of positions in ZTFE, including Information Officer, Honorary Secretary and Vice President, and Vice President of the 8th World Congress 2005. Malcolm has represented Zoroastrians in many interfaith events in UK, the Parliament of World Religions in Barcelona, attended almost all of the North American Congresses, organized the largest collection of Zoroastrian books for sale at the International Book Fair at the 7th World Zoroastrian Congress 2000 in Houston, and was instrumental in supplying a startup of core collection of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston Library which is presently FEZANA Information Research & Educational Systems (FIRES).

Malcolm resides with his mother Roshan and younger brother Freddy in London, where he works as the Finance & Development Officer for the Faith-based Regeneration Network, UK.

**Report Aban Rustomjee**  
*(photo courtesy ZTFE)*

# In The News

"FROM BOMBAY TO KITCHEN STADIUM, "CHEF JEHANGIR MEHTA."

*Dilshad Marolia*



This past fall, millions of Americans tuned in to watch ten professional chefs compete to be *"The Next Iron Chef"* and join the current roster of Iron Chefs, all of whom have become household names. Each of the contestants were memorable in their own way, but one stood out for most readers of this magazine- Chef Jehangir Mehta, who with his creative, flamboyant and sometimes nerve-wracking risky creations wowed the judges and made it all the way to the very end, as one of two finalists.

When Jehangir Mehta got a call in early 2009, inviting him to compete on the forthcoming season of *"The Next Iron Chef"*, he was torn. Mehta was about to leave for India the week filming for the show began; his twins, a son, Xerxes, and daughter, Xaera, had just been born in India and he had not yet had the chance to see them. Saying yes to participating would mean delaying his holding them for the first time, an idea he found hard to stomach. On the other hand, going on

the show was the opportunity of a lifetime and the success engendered by becoming an Iron Chef is apparent to anyone who has seen a show on the Food Network. As he tells it, every part of him was telling him not to go, so he decided to seek the counsel of his wife, parents, mother-in-law, and two close friends. If even one of them cautioned against it, he would immediately decline to be a contestant. Fortunately for the viewing public, everyone thought it an opportunity he couldn't pass on, and so began his culinary journey from Los Angeles, where the first shows were filmed, to Japan for two more competitions and finally to Kitchen Stadium for the grand finale.

The first thing that strikes you about Jehangir Mehta is his extraordinary humility. Despite a cookbook, stints at New York's finest restaurants, increasing professional success and, more recently, national fame through the *"The Next Iron Chef"* series, he addresses you as 'ma'am' or 'sir', waits tables at his restaurant and is polite to a fault.

Mehta was born and raised in Bombay. After high school, he did a dual degree in sociology and hotel management. Mehta had always enjoyed creative processes, and found he had a flair for cooking. After graduating, he came to upstate New York to commence a two year cooking course at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA). He recalls his arrival in January, in the depths of an East Coast winter (a season he still doesn't enjoy 18 years later) as being a marked change from his life in India, but one that was very easy to transition into given the warmth of his classmates. He felt immediately welcomed and was taken under the wing of his colleagues who did everything to make him feel at home and comfortable - ensuring he went through the rites of Americana- like trips to McDonald's and visits to the bowling alley.

While Mehta had initially planned on returning to India after finishing his course at the CIA, his two years there made him decide to stay and try his hand at a culinary career in the United States. His time in New York has been spent working in numerous prestigious restaurants and reads like a dream-list of culinary destinations, including stints at restaurants such as

# In The News

*L’Absinthe, Typhoon Brewery, Jean Georges, Mercer Kitchen, Union Pacific, Virot and Aix.* Early in his career he transitioned to becoming a pastry chef, and over the years Mehta had risen to local prominence for his work with dessert. His appearance on “The Next Iron Chef”, however, was a reminder that his repertoire extends beyond pastry and he can indeed cook just about anything, and cook it amazingly well.

In 2007, Mehta opened his own restaurant, *Graffiti*. *Graffiti* speaks to much of what Mehta holds dear- the creative process, intimacy, excellence, and non-conformity. Located in New York’s bohemian East Village, *Graffiti* has been designed entirely by Mehta, does not adhere to a specific cuisine and epitomizes culinary creativity and innovation. There, Mehta can be found, at any given time, in the kitchen, answering the phone, and even waiting tables.

Mehta’s parents still live in Bombay and he tries to go back to India every year. He lives in Manhattan with his wife, Hinata, and children and tries to balance the demands of his professional life with his personal life. A practicing Zarathushti, Mehta says he derives great comfort from his faith and attributes much of his success to the support of his family.

In addition to his work behind the stove, Jehangir Mehta has also authored a cookbook entitled “*Mantra: The Rules of Indulgence*”. Mantras seem to be

essential to Mehta’s approach to success and happiness and when asked to share one with readers, he responds “Be True To Yourself”. Words we should all live by.

***Dilshad Marolia lives in New York with her husband, Zal and son Zerxes. She loves food.***



## Pakistan Directory

The 7th Edition of the Directory of Zoroastrians of Pakistan, published by the Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal, lists 1,839 Zarathushtis living in Pakistan of which 1,757 are in Karachi, 40 in Lahore, 18 in Quetta, 17 in Rawalpindi, and 5 in Islamabad.

It also lists practicing Mobeds, practising pallbearers, charitable trusts, community centres, hospitals, chemists, ambulance services, other emergency numbers, parsi doctors practicing in Karachi, caterers, clubs, hotels, stores, restaurants,

An exhaustive lists of information for which Toxy Cowasjee and her hard working committee need to be congratulated.



# In The News

## DOUBLE HONOUR FOR FIRDOSH MEHTA , P.E. DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING, PECOFacet Corp., MINERAL WELLS, TEXAS, USA. PAST PRESIDENT of FEZANA.

The Board of Governors has elected Firdosh Mehta as a *FELLOW* of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers as per The Citation of Outstanding Accomplishments, which states that, Firdosh "will be one of only 2,956 FELLOWS out of 93,537 ASME Members, which makes it truly a distinction amongst the members". And he "ensures ASME's commitment to be the premier organization for promoting the art, science and practice of mechanical and multi disciplinary engineering and allied sciences to our diverse communities throughout the world".

On October, 20, 2009 the American Welding Society, North Texas Section, honored FIRDOSH MEHTA with a *MERITORIOUS CERTIFICATE AWARD*" in recognition of loyalty, devotion to the affairs of the Society, effective service in the advancement of welding, and for generous contributions of time and effort on behalf of the Society".

This award was conferred upon him at a Joint Technical Meeting of American Society of Mechanical Engineers ASME, American Welding Society AWS and American Society of Materials ASM, at University of Texas in ARLINGTON.

Firdosh has been a member and volunteer with ASME and AWS Local chapters for 35 plus years.

**Congratulations, Firdosh.**

**The North American Zarathushti community is proud of you.**



# In The News

## A Silver Muktrad Bowl acquired by the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco



The ZANC community is happy to have helped the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco acquire an extremely rare silver muktrad bowl, for its permanent collection. Other funds came from members of the museum's support group- Society for Asian Art- and other private donors.

This extraordinary ceremonial bowl, commissioned by the Alpaiwalla family, a wealthy Bombay based family of bullion dealers, is decorated in unusually high relief with Zarathushti themes. A similar bowl is at the Alpaiwalla museum in Bombay, (featured in Godrej & Mistree's "Tapestry" book. pg. 696). which was commissioned by F.D. Alpaiwalla as a muktrad vase in the name of his father in law, Mr. Bhowmagree. \* This bowl was likely commissioned at the same time from the same silversmith in the name of another family member.

The bowl sits on a low foot and is made of thick-gauge silver, and weighs more than 2.5 kilograms. It is of Burmese workmanship. The bowl is reposed in high relief with two main scenes, based on the rock relief carvings at Bisitun. One scene depicts Darius with his foot upon the defeated Gaumata. Nine figures stand before Darius with their hands bound behind their backs, roped to one another. These are the leaders of the tribes that defied Darius' authority and rebelled. The ninth figure is a local addition- a sari-clad woman.

The Asian Art Museum plans to have this on view sometime in the Spring 2010, and it would be the Museum's only Zarathushti-related artwork, other than a small group of Sassanian coins that show a fire altar. With this bowl the museum is planning to expand the knowledge of Zoroastrianism into the wider community of people who visit the

museum. The labeling will briefly discuss that, plus the history of the Zarathushti Diaspora in India and North America. Museum docents will be trained to speak about various topics such as : What was the use of such an object, why does it bear scenes from a famous Achaemenid rock relief, why would a patron in Mumbai have commissioned an object to be made in Burma and what does it suggest about Zarathushti business and community networks?

By helping acquire this object for the museum, we hope to spread knowledge about the Zarathushti community as well as encouraging our community members to visit the museum, which is the largest museum in North America exclusively devoted to Asian art.

*Report and photos by  
Nazneen Spliedt*

# In The News

## 'THREE CUPS OF TEA': AN INSPIRATIONAL EVENING WITH GREG MORTENSON

USHEEN DAVAR, NEW YORK

The fundraiser for "Three Cups of Tea" took place at the Hyatt in Brunswick, New Jersey on Oct. 24th 2009. It began with a reception at which Greg Mortenson and Bapsi Sidhwa signed books for patrons. (photo right) By six o'clock the banquet hall was packed with a sold-out crowd of over 800 guests. Entertainment included a children's recital, silent auction and Quawalis. Distinguished guest and internationally acclaimed writer, Bapsi Sidhwa was introduced to the audience and was constantly being approached by the crowd to autograph her novel, "*Cracking India*", which was included in the gift bag for every guest at the dinner.



The theme for the evening was defined by the book's subtitle "One Man's Mission to Promote Peace – One School at a Time" Greg Mortenson, a mountaineer who has built over 150 schools in North Pakistan and Afghanistan, spoke of the pressing need for education in a region that has almost no schools. Since its inception, The Central Asia Institute founded by him has promoted and supported community based education, especially for girls, in the remote and almost inaccessible reaches of the mighty Karakoram and Hindu Kush mountains. The Institute not only helps build schools, but provides scholarships, medical facilities, teacher training and seeds incipient library projects.

Through his personal story in "Three Cups of Tea", Greg Mortenson has been influencing people globally. He has been able to motivate students to launch the *Pennies for Peace* program in schools all across America. For more information on this program, please visit <http://www.penniesforpeace.org/>.

Today, "Three Cups of Tea" is not only sold in bookstores worldwide, but is part of curriculums in schools and a mandatory read within US military and government organizations assigned to the area. Earlier this year, Mortenson launched a Young Readers

version of the book aimed at elementary school children and in December he hopes to launch his second book: "*Stones into Schools*"

The well organized event was enjoyed by all the guests, who also found the evening's talks and films inspirational. The dinner raised around two hundred and thirty thousand dollars.

To learn more about The Central Asia Institute or to make a donation, please visit <https://www.ikat.org/>.

**Bapsi Sidhwa's website:**  
[www.BapsiSidhwa.com](http://www.BapsiSidhwa.com)

**Photo courtesy Usheen Davar**

# In The News

## THE BAS-RELIEF OF KOROSH (Cyrus) IN MELBOURNE & SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

The bas-relief of Korosh II was unveiled at the Dar e Mehr in Sydney, Australia on October 29, 2009, the anniversary of the Great Achaemenian King, Cyrus the Great, traditionally designated as "Cyrus's Anniversary day." The occasion was well attended and celebrated with vigor.

Presented to the Australian Zoroastrian Association by Mr. Homer Abramian, Founder of the Cultural Foundation in Sydney and his colleague Mr. Akbar Eghbali in collaboration with Mr. Filli Madon of the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce – Australia, it was unveiled in the Garden of the Sydney Dar e Mehr. It was designed by Mr. Hushang Saihun and sculpted by Mr. Peter Scipperheyne, mentions Sam Kerr of Sydney, Australia. Sam continues, "We have two in Sydney - one unveiled on 29 Oct 1994 in the Sydney Olympic Park (an exact replica of the one in Parsagard, Iran) and one unveiled on 29 Oct 2009 in our Sydney Dar e Mehr.

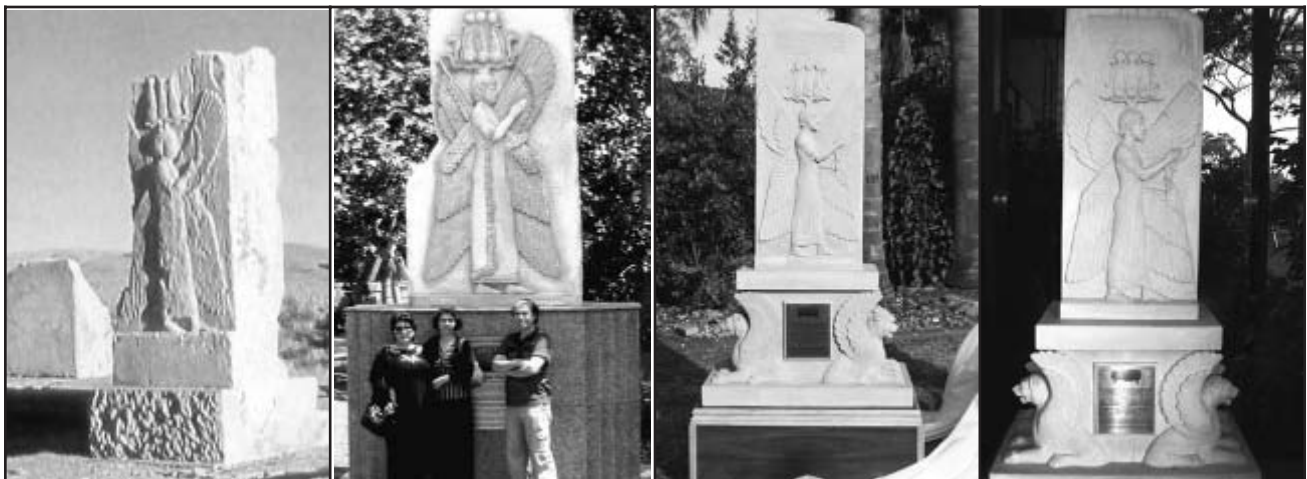
Today, the Dar e Mehr holds this beautiful bas-relief with great pride in its lush green gardens. It has not only brought the Iranian and Parsi communities, the descendants of the ancient Persians, closer, but also instilled pride as worthy bearers of the Zarathushti Faith.

The representative of the Persian Cultural Foundation in his speech said. "When the Arabs invaded Persia, you took off in boats to distant lands with our fire, our religion and our culture in order to preserve it, while we stayed back and let the Arabs convert us to Islam. We respect you for this" Too true; the Zarathushti world should rejoice on this merit and work on methods of maintaining our Faith.

A similar bas-relief has been donated to the City Hall in Melbourne. It was unveiled in the main foyer of the Manningham Council Building in Doncaster, suburb of Melbourne

An exact replica of the 'Fravashi' was unveiled in the Olympic Park in Sydney in October 29, 1994, a creation of Lewis Batros, a Sydney Artist. It was again due to a combined effort of the Australian Iranian community with donations from all over the world and contributions from the NSW State Government. Along with the inscriptions on the 'Cylinder' of Cyrus it symbolizes the first documentation of human rights and multiculturalism.

Sam, adds that the bas-relief is not an image of Cyrus but rather his 'Spirit' in a physical manifest state. It was affectionately called his 'Fravashi' by his subjects, as if the two images at the Main Gates and



*From left*

- 1. The ruins of the Left bas-relief of Cyrus the Great at Parasagard (Greek: Pasargadae)**
- 2. In the Sydney Olympic Park October 29, 1994**
- 3. In the AZA Dar e Mehr October 29, 2009**
- 4. In Melbourne October 2009**



# In The News

Gate House of the City of Parsagard were 'guardian angels' guarding their City. The one shown in the photo (page 127) is the Left bas-relief. The Right bas-relief lies among the ruins along with the Main Gates and the Gate House.

It is possible that his son, Khambujia II (Gk: Cambyses II) and his advisers, following his return, after the conquest of Egypt, decided to erect the bas-relief images at the Main Gates to represent the diverse multicultural tapestry of his realm. The four-winged bearded person represents an Assyrian divinity. The encircling headgear represents the Egyptian Crowns of Osiris. The two horns of the crown are mentioned in the Bible in the Dream of Daniel. The encircling long, fringed robe is Elamite. It is unusual that his bare feet should touch the earth but Cyrus, 'the peoples' king'

would have wanted to align with the predominant custom of the common masses. The oldest intact Achaemenian bas-relief detected, it certainly reflects dedication to the philosophy of multiculturalism - a harmonious coexistence and peaceful cohabitation of peoples from different background and culture in one land.

*Report based on submission by Feryal Trofa,  
Sydney and Sam Kerr.*

*Photos Sam Kerr and Dolly Dastoor*

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# INTERFAITH INTERALLA

## Culturally Confused - An Essay by Bahrom Firozgary

Religions Working for Peace and Justice



Born and raised in Houston, Bahrom Firozgary, son of Mahnaaz and Farrokh Firozgary is anything but confused. His essay for application to Rice University titled "Culturally Confused" is a testament to this remarkable young man who enjoys music, plays the guitar, loves basketball and is the Varsity team captain at his high school, ranks #1 in academics at Stratford High School, and is an Eagle Scout awardee whose final project was to organize and stripe a parking lot at the Zoroastrian Association of Houston. He became a navar, and Grandfather Mobed Mehraban Firozgary traveled to Mumbai to be present at the investiture ceremony, a ceremony that took place on Mobed Mehraban's birthday. What better gift could a proud grandfather receive from his beloved grandson! Since then, Bahrom has participated in community and private jashans, and assisted with navjote ceremonies. Bahrom starts his college career at Rice University in Fall 2010, and plans to major in medicine, setting his goal to be a surgeon.

***We thought you may enjoy Bahrom's fresh, articulate, and meaningful essay. - Editor***

### BAHROM'S ESSAY:

I am ethnically, culturally, racially, and physically different from everyone in the entire world. There is no other 6' 8" person on the face of this Earth that can say he or she is a Zarathushti, (Bahrom is the tallest in photo pg 132) valedictorian, varsity basketball captain, homecoming king, Eagle Scout, National Honor Society Vice President, and church youth group president all at the SAME time. However, I am no fluke either; thanks to my unique personality, I seek to improve my character every chance I get. Coming from a very diverse Persian/Indian/British/American cultural background, I am always open to trying new foods, activities, and customs that require me to go beyond the normal cultural boundaries here in the United States.



With a name like Bahrom, stating that I am American always seems to fail people's expectations when they ask me, "Where are you from?" So I go on and explain: I was born and raised in Houston, my parents are from Pune, India, and my grandparents are from Tehran, Iran. Having foreign parents, I have learned how to perform various rituals that are rarely seen in typical American households. For example, every morning before I have a school dance or important event to attend, I light a tea lamp and place it

next to my deceased sister's picture. In India, my parents were accustomed to lighting candles before festive occasions in order to pay homage to departed family members. The candle symbolizes the boundless presence of my sister in our lives, whether it be good times or bad times. In addition to lighting a candle on certain days, I pray to God everyday; the Zarathushti prayers that my family and I recite on our way to school or work were written in an ancient Persian language called Avesta. Our prayers are simply "words of gratitude" that thank our God (called Ahura Mazda in Avesta) and ask for his protection throughout the day. Although I pray in a different language and to a different God, I am similar to most people in the sense that I also ask for forgiveness and thank a "superior being" for all that I have been blessed with. However, whenever I pray, I wear a cloth hat called a "topi" which serves as an imaginary "landing site" for angels. The topi is common in most South and Southwest Asian countries and similar to the Jews, Zarathushtis also wear a "sudreh" and "kusti." The sudreh is a very thin undershirt made out of cotton that symbolically stores all of our good thoughts and deeds that we commit

# INTERFAITH INTERALLA

Religions Working for Peace and Justice

during the day; the *kusti* is a thick, woolen “string” that is tied around the waste while prayers are recited. Both the sudreh and *kusti* are worn after Zarathushti youths have their *Navjots*, or confirmations. My sister and I had our confirmation ten years ago on February 13th, 1999; since then, I have worn my sudreh and *kusti* everyday, only taking it off when I shower, swim, or indulge in physical activities. My commitment to my faith has allowed me to learn my friends’ religious rituals without feeling embarrassed or insulted because I have matured and accepted that I AM unique. When I’m changing clothes in the school locker room, I feel proud to show off my unique, Zarathushti apparel. No matter how many times I am asked to go into details about my cultural habits, I am enthused to inform others about my religious and cultural habits. Thanks to my distinct, unbiased attitude towards different peoples’ ethnicities



and religions, I can comprehend the plethora of cultural traditions practiced all over the world and in my community.



## Dr. Dhalla invited to Commemoration of 70th Anniversary of World War

Seventy years ago, at 4.45 a.m. on September 1, a Nazi German battleship on a goodwill visit opened fire on a Polish fort on the Baltic Sea. This triggered World War II which led to the death of 50 million people. The year 2009 also marked the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall as well as the collapse of the totalitarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe.

To commemorate these significant events in world history, an important peace conference was held in the city of Krakow in Poland from September 6-8, 2009. Prominent personalities and religion leaders from all over the world were invited to participate in this landmark conference. Dr.Homi Dhalla was invited to

represent the Zarathushti community.

Various sessions were held to discuss a whole range of issues, viz., dialogue, human rights, peace, ecology etc. Dr. Dhalla made a presentation in the panel “*Faiths in Asia: Building a World without Violence*”. Moreover, on the final day, he conducted a simple ceremony before a lit fire. He commenced with the *kusti* ritual, played a recorded monajat, followed by the recitation of prayers on peace from the Zarathushti scriptures.

He then joined the Procession of Peace leading to the large market square in Krakow. At this final ceremony there were addresses and testimonies as well as the proclamation and delivery of the *Appeal for Peace 2009*. He was then asked to light the candle on behalf of the Zarathushtis and sign the Appeal for Peace.

On the following day, all the delegates were taken to the Memorial Museum at Auschwitz Concentration Camp. This demonstrated the most tragic and barbaric chapter in European history. This nerve-shattering experience showed how millions of Poles, Russians, Jews, gypsies and others were brutally killed in this death factory. In this monstrous form of evil, he experienced the deepest pain and sorrow. In this abyss of Auschwitz, what he saw was inconceivable and unimaginable. This was followed by a visit to the Birkenau Concentration Camp. The Silent March along the rail tracks was followed by a Memorial ceremony at the Monument for the victims of Nazi fascism. Dr. Dhalla was asked to offer flowers on behalf of Asian religions at this Monument. (photo above)

# INTERFAITH INTERALLA

Archbishop of Canterbury and faith leaders

## launch 'Inter Faith Week'



Seated in the front row are Faith leaders and Trustees of the Inter Faith Network for the UK: Mr Malcolm Deboo – President Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (Front row seated 3rd left in a white dugli) His Grace Dr Rowan Williams – The Archbishop of Canterbury, seated front row 6th from left)

On Monday November 16, 2009 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams invited faith leaders and Trustees of the Inter Faith Network for the UK, to Lambeth Palace to launch 'Inter Faith Week'.

Those who attended the launch, including Dr Indarjit Singh, Dr Manazir Ahsan (vice-chairs Interfaith network of UK) The Chief Rabbi, as well as leaders of all other faith communities, signed a statement of common commitment to continue building good inter religious relations and to contribute to the common good from different religious perspectives. The Secretary of State, John Denham, also attended the event and was warmly welcomed by those present. (photo below Mr Malcolm Deboo, President Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, signing the loyal greeting to Her Majesty The Queen on behalf of the Zarathushtis of United Kingdom.)

The Archbishop read a statement of support and encouragement which Her Majesty The Queen had sent him. The Archbishop responded by sending loyal greetings on behalf of the faith leaders present.



The resolution builds on the precedent of the Millennium Act of Commitment, a shared act of reflection and commitment by the Faith Communities of the United Kingdom, in the year 2000.

The Archbishop said at the event: *"We're celebrating the breadth and the depth of the involvement of communities of faith across the country, and of the great variety of events and initiatives directed towards the lasting sustainable health of our corporate presence in this country".*

<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2610>

# INTERFAITH INTERALLA

**Inter Faith Week November 12, 2009 England and Wales**

**JEHANGIR SAROSH**

**President Emeritus, Religions for Peace, Europe.**



*Zoroastrian delegation at Inter Faith Week Launch Event with Senior Civil Servants from Department of Communities and Local Government, England. From left Rusi K Dalal – ZTFE Trustee & 23rd President Jehangir Sarosh, Ervad Rustom Bhedwar, Trustee, ZTFE; David Prout – Director General, Communities, Department of Communities and Local Government; Dorab Mistry, Zoroastrian Director of Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom / Vice Chair Faith Based Regeneration Network UK & ZTFE 24th President, Warwick Hawkins – Head, Faith Communities Engagement, Cohesion and Faiths Division, Department Communities and Local Government, Malcolm Deboo Development & Finance Officer, Faith Based Regeneration Network UK (FbRN), 26th President of ZTFE*

*The Inter Faith Network (IFN) for the UK founded in 1987, links in membership, national representative organisations of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zarathushti faiths in the UK; national, regional and local inter faith organisations; and educational and academic bodies with an interest in inter faith issues. It works with its member bodies and other agencies to promote good relations between the faith communities in the UK; to combat inter religious prejudice and intolerance; and to help make the UK a*

country marked by mutual understanding and respect between religions where all can practise their faith with integrity. Mr. Dorab Mistry, past president of Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE), is a member of the Executive Committee of the IFN

Scotland has been holding an Interfaith Week since several years. But in 2009 the Interfaith Network of UK (IFN) managed to convince the government that a similar week ought to be held in England and

Wales. The government decided to launch the week 15-21 November 2009

- to strengthen good inter faith relations at all levels;
- to increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, in particular celebrating and building on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society; and
- to increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious belief.

Though facilitated by the Inter Faith Network for the UK and the Department for Communities and Local Government the events were community-led, with local people and groups of different backgrounds highlighting work going on to promote understanding between people of different faiths and beliefs.

Hundreds of organisations around the country held events – from art exhibitions to inter faith seminars; from football matches to pilgrimage walks; from the good deeds of Mitzvah Day to the good food of shared meals - to bring major faith communities, as well as those with no religious beliefs, closer together.

Mr John Denham, minister responsible for the Government's public policy on faith stressed the importance of respecting faith in its own right, and not as

# INTERFAITH INTERALLA

Religions Working for Peace and Justice

a prop to Government when it has a problem to solve, he further stated “Government should respect – should value, prize and celebrate – those things which matter to citizens. And for many, their faith, shapes and defines who they are and this deserves respect. But Government and politicians are also interested in how society can be shaped for the better. Whether it is parenting, personal health, or sustainability, government is interested in what makes people tick. For millions of people the values instilled by their faith are central to shaping their behaviour. We should continually encourage and enhance the contribution faith makes on the central issues of our time.”

Mr. John Denham concluded by acknowledging the efforts of faith groups to build relationships at a local level – not only amongst themselves, but also with the police, politicians and councils – has helped manage tension in the face of extreme provocation from right-wing extremists.

At the launch of the week young people spoke of their faith and contribution to society, Youngest participant 15 year old Darius F Parekh of Therfield School, Leatherhead, Surrey, representing SE England and the Zoroastrian Faith, made a presentation on “*Shaping our Future*”, he spoke very eloquently and impressed the gathering.

During the week events were held by national, regional and local bodies around the country, as well as in the House of Lords, Universities, colleges, schools, community halls such as

(photo below Darius Parekh with mother Vera at the Zoroastrian exhibit, which was designed by Malcolm Deboo and Darius Karkaria, publications officer, ZTFE)



The varietyThe Archbishop of Canterbury hosted national faith communities' leadership event, the Mayor of London hosted a get-together of all faiths, the young Jains offered “*In Tune with God*” devotional songs from various faiths, others held “*Young British and Believer*” : A Seminar of sixth form students on the key question: “*why should we live peacefully with the people of other faiths today?*” the British Humanist Association hosted a discussion seminar centred on the question: what is the role of faith in community development and cohesion work?

Various places of worship were open for visitors and guided tours offered. All major faith communities hosted events. The Zarathushti contribution was to invite different religions to speak on the theme “*Religious Philanthropy & Social Action: Tools for Cohesion & Building Stronger Communities*”. The event was held in the Zarathushti Brothers hall hosted by ZTFE. The seminar examined:

1. How your faith's / religion's contribution benefits communities, the local and national governments and other non-governmental bodies.
2. How the resources of your faith / religion are shared with others.
3. The importance of sharing within your faith / religion to help build strong cohesive communities.
4. How your faith / religion is looking beyond serving besides serving your own community.
5. How good practices from your faith / religion can be jointly promoted and good practices from other faiths /religions incorporated within your community organisations.

Those of us involved in interfaith work were dashing from one event to the next for a whole week, ensuring that the Zarathushti presence was everywhere. A most enjoyable week that made an impact beyond the “usual suspects” and helped us reach out to those who are not normally involved in interfaith co-operation.

Perhaps what was started by Scotland will be taken up by more countries, and slowly but surely we shall learn to live together in harmony.

**Yatha Jamiyad, yatha afrinami May it be so**

Photos supplied by ZTFE

## Letters to the editor

DINSHAW K. TAMBOLY

SHANTI, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, 8 Banaji Street, Fort, Mumbai 400 001, India.  
Tel No. 91-22-281 3718; 281 3719. Fax No. 91-22- 281 0560. E – Mail: beedee@vsnl.com

November 12, 2009

To The Editor  
FEZANA JOURNAL

Dear Dr. Dastoor,

As a long-time subscriber to the FEZANA JOURNAL, I've watched it grow from a "fat" newsletter format into a slick-cover, highly professional journal. This year's fall issue was especially outstanding! As I reviewed the entire magazine, I found myself "dog-eared" over half the articles to go back and read more carefully. You had articles by the youth as well as articles on the Gathas and interfaith matters. There's nothing accidental about quality!

God (Ahura Madza) is with you,  
Ken R. Vincent, Ed.D.

Author, *THE MAGI, FROM ZOROASTER TO THE "THREE WISE MEN"*

Ms. Dolly Dastoor,  
3765, Av Malo,  
Brossard, Quebec,  
Canada J4Y 1B4.

Dear Dolly,

FEZANA Journal; 2009 Fall Issue.

I have just seen the latest issue of the FEZANA Journal (Fall – 2009) that focuses on the youth. If I were to describe the issue in one word, that word would be – 'Magnificent'. Well done indeed. Please convey my compliments to all those who contributed, for the succinct manner in which articles were penned, resulting in creating an outstanding issue.

Focussing on the Zoroastrian Diaspora it is very clear that the youth of North America have a balanced and pragmatic view of the direction that needs to be taken to safeguard the future of the community. The Zoroastrian community is bound to proliferate and progress in North America, objective as they are on issues and free from the dogmas, religious diktats and intolerance that unfortunately prevail in some parts of the world.

Kind regards,

Very Sincerely,



Dinshaw K Tamboly

### To the Editor

My name is Kamran Behroozi and I am president of ZANT (Zoroastrian Association of North Texas). I enjoy reading the FEZANA journal especially where there is discussion about the hot issues of the day concerning our religion and our community. In the Fall edition of the journal, there is an article on page 55 written by Roshni Kharoliwalla that I have a problem with. About twenty five lines into the article she mentions the phrase "Atash Parasti" and she describes it as "reverence for fire". Atash Parast is a Farsi term and it means "Fire Worshipper". That is the epithet Muslims in Iran used against Zartushtis during the time I was growing up in Tehran. Just giving you an idea of how insulting it sounds to Irani Zartushtis. It is equivalent to the "N" word epithet, should someone use it against African Americans in the United States. I realize the author is not a Farsi speaking individual but was expecting the editorial staff to catch and correct it.

**Best wishes.**

**Kamran Behroozi**

### RESPONSE AND APOLOGY

We have done some investigation into the connotation of the word.

The word '*parasti*' in Farsi has its etymology from the verb '*Parastidan*' meaning to worship. So *Atash Parasti* clearly is 'fire worship'. A 'Fire worshipper' will be "*Atash Parastandeh*" in Farsi. The Parsis in India have corrupted the Gujarati language and they have interpreted the farsi term *parasti* as reverence. The farsi term for reverence is *ehteram*.

The term *Atash Parasti* was used out of linguistic ignorance and is an innocent and unintended oversight and no insult intended.

***Our sincere apologies to our Iranian Zarathushti readers.***

## Dear Editor,

Browsing through the last issue of FEZANA Journal, one comes across the back inside cover advertising (at the rate of USD300) FEZANA FUNDS requesting donations. One wonders, Names/titles of 18 individual funds/endowments are mentioned – but no other particular information to encourage /prompt prospective DONORS. To prompt and encourage donors to come forward and donate 'Generously', Funds/Endowments History and present status, their purpose, goals, their donations received to date disbursements (to date), earnings/losses/investments and future holdings; detailed Annual balance sheets are necessary. *"Donate Generously, our programs depend upon you"*, is an unnecessary Slogan of non-specific value.

Also essential is the history of past recipients, how were they helped, did they achieve what they set out to in first place and how they contributed to FEZANA and its programs as feedback /give back consequent to receiving the awards. This is also a necessity for those receiving education/academic scholarships and awards in their application process. May a future issue be devoted to the total historical account (it may have been achieved on website – the would-be Donor is not obliged to study the WEB). In the future annual update with reference to the past is adequate.

Can the FEZANA FUNDS CURATOR or TREASURER please oblige ?

Please forward this request to appropriate FEZANA personnel.

**Mehroo M. Patel Biostatistician, University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Nursing**

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## RESPONSE FROM THE EDITOR:

Thank you for your interest and positive suggestions to encourage more donations. We will consider as to how best we can implement them.

As background information, in each issue of the Journal (except the winter 2009 issue) Katayun Kapdia, the FEZANA Treasurer publishes a list of donors and donations received by each fund that quarter. In addition Dr Kheradi, the Funds and Finance chairman writes in each issue of the Journal an article **The Financial Update**, where, he mentions the different areas where the funds are needed and how they are spent. For confidentiality purposes the welfare committee does not disclose names of individual recipients. The Journal issue following the Annual General Meeting each year carries a detailed account of where the money was spent and what the budget for the following year will be,.

The spring issue of the Journal each year carries a list of scholarship recipients for the different FEZANA Scholarships, (Religious Education, Academic Program, Performing Arts, Sports) complete with their academic backgrounds. (see page 33-48).

## ADDENDUM FEZANA JOURNAL 2009 VOI 23 No 2, Page 110

### Dear Editor.

In the article - *"Equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men"* by Trity Pournahrami, Summer 2009, "the team" at the Bel-Air Hospital in Panchgani, whose work was highlighted in a parallel session entitled *"Success Stories in care giving of HIV/AIDS: South Asia"*, presented by the Fezana UN NGO committee, refers to the Bel-Air Team. The Bel-Air hospital in Panchgani, India that treats individuals with HIV/AIDS and also trains nurses, is a project of the Indian Red Cross Society, Maharashtra State Branch and is managed jointly with the Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. The web-referred power point presentation in the article was forwarded by Fr. Tomy, Director of Bel-Air, Panchgani and edited by the FEZANA team for the specific presentation. Both versions can be found by visiting <http://fezana.pbwiki.com/>

1. UNBELAIRFEZANA.ppt PRESENTED BY FEZANA GROUP
2. UNFRTOMY.ppt SENT BY FR. TOMY

**Kamalrukh Katrak**  
**Branford, Connecticut.**



### **ARE WE SPIRITUAL OR OBSESSED WITH RITUAL?**

It makes me really sad to see the unresolved controversies, the unwillingness of dasturs, community leaders and elected trustees to progress with the times and be willing to accept changes and guide the community in the right direction. What was good thousands of years ago is no longer applicable today.

There are several ongoing issues :

1. **Dokhmenashini:** This was the most advanced and environmentally-friendly method of disposing dead bodies; in keeping with our religious teachings of charity and not polluting the environment. Due to many reasons, the vultures have moved out. The bodies lie in the Dokhma for days and weeks; they rot and decompose, giving a foul odour that spreads to surrounding areas. Yet our so-called, self-proclaimed guru(s) try to convince the community that Dokhmenashini is still the religious method of disposal.
2. **Refusing To Perform Prayers For People who are cremated.-** Disposal of a dead body, whether buried, cremated, sent to the Tower of Silence or donated for medical research, has no religious significance. Funeral prayers are to soothe and assist departed souls for their journey towards the spiritual world. The prayers are neither for the body nor for the method of disposal. Recently, a few Mobeds were barred from performing prayers at Doongerwadi and Agiyaries as they prayed for the cremated. I applaud their conviction.
3. **Refusing To Perform Mixed Marriages and The Navjotes of Children of Mixed-Marriages; Disallowing A non-Zarathushti Spouse From Attending Prayers, Including Funeral Ceremonies and Disallowing Non-Zarathushtis From Entering Fire Temples.**

Our dasturs and community leaders have encouraged the misconstrued and misunderstood beliefs of few selected group of people: that the universal teachings of our dear Prophet are reserved solely for a select group of people. Anyone born in any faith should be allowed to follow the path of Asha. Any good human being -- living his/her life on the universal principles of Good Thoughts, Words and Deeds with all other virtues -- should be considered no different from a Zarathushti.

A Zarathushti-by being born in the faith and not conducting his/her life according to all the virtues and teachings of our religion, -can still enter the fire temple and his/her presence will not desecrate the fire; but the presence of a good non-Zarathushti in the fire temple will? How is the mighty power of the fire desecrated by the mere presence of a non-Zarathushti?

In Atash Niaesh, Fire Is Defined As The Son of God (*"Atash Ahurahe Mazdao Puthra"*) and emphasized and repeated 16 times. Do we really believe that the presence of a good Non-Zarathushti has a power greater than the Son of God? Can a human being really overpower the mighty fire that provides heat, light, tranquility, divine guidance, peace of mind and nourishment for our soul? Every other religious community allows people from other faiths to enter their places of worship. Only Zarathushtis do not.

We take pride in saying that Zarathushtra was the first prophet who taught One God: The Creator Of The Entire Universe and Galaxies Beyond. Then are we all not children of the same God? There is no religion in the spiritual world. Every religion ultimately talks about one Supreme Being. Why do we think we are superior to them? Do we really think that God has chosen us above his other creations? God does not discriminate, so why are we discriminating those who believe in the same God through their faith?

#### **We are too preoccupied with our rituals, customs and dogmas.**

We follow the negative traits of manipulation, egoism, lies, arrogance, jealousy, anger, hatred, greed, false pride, selfishness, hypocrisy, We have diverted ourselves from the teachings of our Prophet: do we all follow the path of Asha; be truthful, charitable, tolerant, peaceful, loving, compassionate and forgiving; have empathy and treat everyone equally?.

This is what our dasturs, community leaders, elected trustees and self-proclaimed (and opportunistic) scholars should be guiding us towards,.Instead, they mislead and misguide the community; being obsessed and wrapped up in rituals, customs and dogmas. Their failures have caused nothing but confusion and chaos..In essence: they have moved away from spirituality. Whether they are driven by ignorance at best or selfish motives at worst, our leaders and dasturs are not only creating bad karma for themselves but for others who blindly follow them.

**Ervad. Jal Panthaky**  
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# Personal Profiles

## The Spiritual Legacy Of The First Dastur Meherjirana (1514-1591 CE)

*By Noshir H. Dadrawala*

The Bhagarsath Anjuman of Navsari has elected Ervad (now Dastur) Kaikhushroo Navroze Dastoor as the 17th Dastur Meherjirana as successor of Dastur Meherji Dastur Kekobad, who passed away on 23rd January 2010.

Perhaps this would be an appropriate time to know who the First Dastur Meherjirana was and the spiritual legacy that his 17th successor has inherited.

### THE FIRST DASTUR MEHERJIRANA

The First Dastur Meherjirana was the undisputed spiritual leader of the Parsi community in India during the 16th century. He was renowned not just among the Parsis but also amongst other communities on account of his piety, vast knowledge, and spiritual powers.

The First Dastur Meherji was born in a priestly family at Navsari, in 1514 CE. His father's name was Rana Jesung (thus the name Meherji Rana). India at that time was ruled by the Mughals.

According to one school of thought, Dastur Meherji was a disciple of the mystic saint Dastur Azar Kaivan whose seat was in Patna. Dastur Azar Kaivan's disciples were called "yaar" (meaning spiritual friend or spiritual helper). Thus Dastur Meherji is sometimes referred as Dastur Mahi-yaar ("mahi" is the fish that can see the smallest object even when it is dark).

The First Dastur Meherji was adopted by his paternal uncle Vaccha Jesung as a palak (a person adopted as a son for the purposes of succession and inheritance). It is for this reason that in our ceremonies his name is invoked as "Dastur Meherji, Ervad Vaccha."

It appears that the behdins of Navsari presented a piece of land near Pipla Wadi in 1573 to Dastur Meherji in recognition of his service to the religion and community.

### FROM NAVSARI TO AKBAR'S COURT

The First Dastur Meherjirana is a renowned name in Parsi history and religious tradition mainly because of his very positive and lasting influence on the Mughal emperor, Akbar the Great, who had great love for matters spiritual and philosophical. Although a Muslim by birth, he loved to discuss and understand other religious traditions. Hindu Brahmins and Christian priests would often be invited to his court for religious discussion.

It is believed Akbar first met Dastur Meherji in 1573 when the former laid siege to Surat. They appear to have met at a place near Kankrakhadi (present day Rustompura in Surat). Impressed with Dastur Meherji's knowledge and personality the emperor invited him to his court in Delhi.



Accordingly Dastur Meherji appears to have visited the royal court of Akbar in Delhi on Roj Hormazd, Mah Khordad 947 YZ (1578 CE). Akbar's prime minister Abu Fazl and historian Badaoni also have written about Parsi priests from Navsari visiting the royal court around 1577-78 CE.

Pleased with Dastur Meherji's erudition and piety, Akbar gifted 200 bighas (around 67 acres) of land near Gelkhari in Gujarat, free from all taxation (madad-i-maash), for Meherjirana and his family's sustenance.

Akbar was a sufi at heart and liked to absorb the good traditions and beliefs of all religions. He also attempted to popularize a new faith called Din-i-Illahi, drawing from the beliefs and traditions of various faiths including Zoroastrianism.

It is said that Akbar had a sacred fire burning 24 hours at his court and his prime minister Abu Fazl was put in charge of maintaining the fire.

Dastur Meherjirana's prominence and close affinity to the emperor gave the Parsis, as a community, national visibility and fame.

In 1579, the priests of Navsari signed a document acknowledging Meherjirana as their leader and declaring that all religious ceremonies would hence forth be performed only after obtaining his permission. This was the origin of the gaadi (seat) of the high priest of Navsari. The present high priest Dastur K. N. Dastoor is the 17th heir to this famous gaadi.

# Personal Profiles

## DISPELLING SORCERY AT THE COURT

Legend has it that during Dastur Meherji's stay in Fatehpur Sikri a Hindu tantrik (magician) claimed that with his occult powers he would make two suns shine in the sky. He challenged all holy men in Akbar's kingdom to respond to this "miracle." It appears that the magician with the aid of certain spells had launched a metal plate in the sky and the sun's reflection made it appear as if there were two suns in the sky.

Nobody was aware of this trick and attempts by many holy men to thwart the magician failed. However, Dastur Meherjirana arrived, prayed the sacred kusti prayers and took the name of God. The plate came crashing down, confounding the magician and amazing the whole court.

Inspired by the drama that unfolded the famous musician Tansen composed a song in raag sarang which has the lines, "Elahi Parsee padhe sho kabool" (By God, the prayers of Parsees are accepted). Tansen praises Dastur Meherji with the words "Lambi lambi dahadee Shah Mehreyari tere mukh pi barshat noor" (Shah Mehriyar, your beard is long, your face is radiant with fame). Tansen in his time was the sangeet samrat (king of classical music) and one of the jewels (ratna) of the royal court.

There is no direct historical reference to the encounter Dastur Meherji had with the magician. However, this has been part of oral tradition for more than four centuries.

The First Dastur Meherji died at age 76 on Roj Daepadar Mah Asfandarmad 960 YZ (1591 CE). Today, even after four centuries since his death, the priests in Navsari perform his baj ceremony annually on Roj Daepadar, Mah Asfandarmad.

Four years after Dastur Meherji's death, Akbar apparently granted an additional 300 bighas of land to Dastur Meherji's son Kaikobad. This was in addition to the 200 bighas of land gifted earlier.

## DASTUR DARABJI MAHIARJI MEHERJIRANA

The First Dastur Meherjirana's successors have all proved themselves worthy of his rich spiritual legacy. The most notable among them has been Dastur Darabji Mahiarji Meherjirana (1857 – 1907). Parsi Lustre on Indian Soil by H.D. Darukhanawala refers to him as "The Pope of the Parsis." Dastur Darabji ascended this spiritual gaadi as the 13th successor in 1873 at the tender age of 16.

According to Parsi Lustre on Indian Soil, "the maturity of thought that Dastur Darabji showed at an early age was remarkable. He scrupulously observed the best traditions of religious and public life and was always generous in appreciation of his opponents. But his was a crown of thorns. As the head of the Samast Bhagarsath Anjuman, his whole life was spent in troubles and worries and in staunch

fight in maintaining his anjuman's and his own prestige, rights and privileges, in spite of his lean resources and poor purse.

Through all these difficulties, he never lost heart, nor set aside the ideals and principles which he had made his own. He always expounded and expressed his religious views fearlessly. Dasturji Darabji was a rare embodiment of simplicity, sincerity, selflessness, self respect, religious orthodoxy and spiritual luster. Pride, pomp, pleasure and glitter of gold dared not enter his threshold. He sacrificed his all and even incurred debts in fighting the cause of his anjuman, but at the same time he was very anxious to see that others' rights were respected and not encroached upon."

When the late Seth Nassarwanji R. Tata built the "tower of silence" well-known as Tata's Dokhma at Navsari in 1878, he had invited Sir Richard Temple, the Governor of Bombay, for its inauguration. An address was then presented to Temple which was read by the young Dastur Darabji, aged twenty, who made such a strong impression upon Sir Richard that the latter described him as a "picturesque priest."

Maharaja Sir Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda, who held Dastur Darabji in high esteem, had conferred upon him the great honor of the rank of first grade chhatri-masal for which the then Sir Jamsetji Jeejibhoy, 3rd Baronet, thanked the Maharaja personally on behalf of the whole Parsi Community at the Dinner given to His Highness at the Ripon Club, Bombay. On the occasion of the coronation of King Edward VII, Dastur Darabji was awarded a certificate "as Head of the Parsi Community."

Dastur Darabji first visited Bombay in 1902 when an unprecedented ovation and honor were given to him by all sections of the Parsi community. On his return from Bombay, an unparalleled reception, befitting a royal personage, was given to him at the Navsari station by the government and the general public. Never had Navsari seen such a gathering of her citizens and witnessed so many of the distinguished leaders of various communities, all anxious to pay honor and respect to one who was by common consent the greatest of her sons.

This is the spiritual legacy Dastur Kaikhushroo Navroze Dastoor - the 17th Dastur Meherjirana has just inherited. May he, along with all the other high priests of our community set credible and high standards of ashoi (truth, righteousness, and purity, in thought, word, and deed) and help the community to attain spiritual excellence in day-to-day life.

*Noshir H. Dadrawala is CEO of Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy & elected trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayat*

*Photo courtesy Malcolm Deboo, ZTFE*

# Personal Profiles

## Dasturji Meherji Dastur Kekobad Meherjirana: the 16th high Priest of Navsari

January 1935- January 23, 2010

Dasturji Meherji Dastur Kekobad Meherjirana passed away on January 23, 2010, Shehenshahi Roz Daepadar, Mah Shahrivar in Surat, Gujarat, after suffering a massive heart attack. We offer our sincere condolences to his wife Mehru and to Dasturji's family.

Prayers for this respected High priest were performed at several places: the Behramshah Shroff Daremeher in Jogeshwari, Mumbai and the Navsari Atashbehram as per Dasturji's request, and also at Delhi, jointly by the Delhi Parsi Anjuman and PARZOR organization, that worked with Dasturji to fulfill his dream of a Meherjirana Library Annexe.

At a time where it appears our community is facing many challenges, such as, lack of religious knowledge and lack of scholar-priests in the future, inter-marriages, lack of faith in traditions, customs and beliefs, and unwillingness to work out differences, our scholarly High Priests who are established at eight Atashbehrams, are the pillar of authority and continuity for our community. The sad loss of one of them like Dasturji Meherji is a serious blow.

Dasturji Meherji was born in January 1935 in the family of the sister of Dasturji Kekobad Dastur Darab Meherjirana and was later adopted by Dasturji Kekobad. For his early education and religious training young Meherji attended the Athornan Boarding Madressa in Dadar, Bombay, from 1944 to 1948 and he obtained his Navar and his Martab at Navsari. He later studied at St. Xavier's College, Bombay, and acquired a B.A. in Avesta and Pahlavi languages and successfully performed the elaborate Nirangdin ceremony at a young age.

When Dasturji Kekobad Meherjirana passed away in July 1960, the 25-year old Ervad Meherji was elected to succeed him as the 16th High Priest on the Uthamna (3rd day after death) day on July 26.

It is interesting to note the line of succession of Navsari High Priests started with an election of Ervad Meherji Vaccha as the first Dasturji Meherjirana (1510 - 1590 CE) in 1579. It was during the siege of Surat in 1573, during the time of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, that Meherjirana first met the emperor. He was later invited to Akbar's court in Delhi at a religious conference (1578-1579) where he impressed the king with the greatness of the Zarathushti religion, and received many gifts, one of which was a Jagir of 200 bighas of land at Gelkhari village near Navsari. All successive High Priests after him have taken the title of Dastur Meherjirana and are considered senior to other High Priests.

Dasturji Meherji studied the life and teachings of Mr. Behramshah Shroff (1857-1927) who had obtained special knowledge (Khshnoom or the Zarathushti Wisdom of Bliss) about the Mazdayasni Zarathushti religion from a group of



spiritual masters living in mountain areas of Iran.

Dasturji Meherji's accomplishments were numerous, one of which was the compilation of an exhaustive Gujarati dictionary of technical terms used in Khshnoom literature. The dictionary was published in 2003 under the title "Farhang-e-meher", and contains a list of Avestan, Pahlavi, Arabic and older Gujarati words with their meaning and significance, as well as cross-references to all Khshnoom writings and books wherever they occur.

Dasturji Meherji worked tirelessly to protect the manuscripts of the

Meherjirana Library with the help of Katy Antia and Bharti Gandhi. He collected and bound issues of Parsi Avaz, a news weekly, into annual volumes and compiled a topic index (approximately 100 sheets of paper) of all the copies (1947 - 1974) published by Jehangirji Chiniwalla,

Another labor of love was an index of all articles written by Dr. Framroze Chiniwalla (Jehangirji's elder brother) and separate indexes for books and topics published on Khshnoom. With the help of the late Dosabhai Desai of Navsari, he published several books that Dr. Framroze (died 1962) had left as manuscripts, by typing the manuscripts, proof-reading formatted copies from the printer, etc.

Not only did Dasturji Meherji contribute immensely towards documentation of religious literature, he was also a good teacher, who shared his knowledge and gifted the books from his private collection to grateful Khshnoom students.

In ancient Iranian tradition of Royal Sages the Kings also held the position of spiritual leader. (Dr. Irach Taraporewala "The Religion of Zarathushtra"). Eventually this evolved into the position of a High Priest or Chief Priest (Avesta: *Zarathrushtrotemo*, Av.:*Magavpaiti*, Pahlavi:*Magavpat*, *Magupat*, Av. *Dasva*, Phl. *Dastawar*, currently: *Dastur*) separate from the King during Parthian and Sassanian empires .

Dasturji Dr. Hormuzdiar K. Mirza in "Outlines of Parsi History" (1987), says that the term Dastawar (from which Dastur is derived) literally means 'one who holds the hand', hence a guide; one possessing knowledge, wisdom, meaning 'one having authority' and used in Pahlavi for 'a priest', among others. Also, that currently a Dastur is appointed by the Zarathushti congregation (anjuman) from among full-fledged priests belonging to that congregation, and can also be appointed by the trustees of a Fire-temple.

Ervad R.R. Motafram in his book "200 Short Questions - Answers on Zoroastrianism" (1988) describes the required properties of a Dastur as one who should combine in himself the best qualities of head and heart, is holy, having innate wisdom and spiritual insight, the two important qualities expected of a high priest..Dastur Meherji embodied all.

# Personal Profiles

## Succession of Ervad Kaikhushroo Navroze Dastoor : the 17th Dastur Meherji Rana: The High Priest of Navsari



When Dasturji Meherji K. Meherjirana passed away, there was concern about finding a qualified candidate to succeed him. The concern was especially acute because according to tradition, the successor has to be appointed at short notice, specifically by the (Uthamna) third day after the passing.

Also no inner liturgical ceremony can be performed without having a replacement for High Priest, because during the Bareshnum purification by a priest before doing the ritual, (as explained in Sir J.J.Mody's book "*The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsis*") a 'Dasturi' formula is recited in Baj (suppressed tones). The Dasturi recitation consists of a statement by the priest that he performs the ritual as enjoined by the Dasturs (names of all the Dasturs from ancient times to the current Dastur are recited).

Fortunately, Dasturji Meherji had prior to his passing requested the congregation leaders to consider Ervad Kaikhushroo Navroze Dastoor as his successor. Ervad K.N.Dastoor was offered the position of High Priest of Navsari Atashbehrum by the Bhagirath Anjuman Committee of Mobeds, which he gracefully accepted, thus averting a potential crisis. But keeping in mind his advanced age of 83 years, the challenge will be to prepare a candidate to succeed the High Priest in the future

After the Uthamna ceremony performed by senior Bhagaria priests in Navsari, and attended by Dastur Firoze Kotwal of Mumbai, Dastur Peshotan Mirza of

Udwada, Dastur Cyrus Dastoor of Surat and many other Mobeds, Dastur Firoze Kotwal announced the appointment of Ervad Kaikhushroo Dastoor as the 17th Dasturji Meherjirana of Navsari, and shawls were offered to the new High Priest by Ervad Khurshed Desai, Dasturji Kotwal, and others.

The new Dasturji Meherjirana is also the 17th direct descendant of the first Dasturji Meherjirana. He completed his Navar and Martab education from Navsari and then obtained his academic degrees in science and law. His past career positions include General Manager, Chief Legal Advisor and Chief Vigilance Officer of the Bank of Baroda, part-time post-graduate Professor of Law at the University of Bombay, visiting faculty at training colleges of the Reserve Bank of India and other banks, and general practice of Law for 25 years.

Dastur Kaikhushroo is a student of Indian classical music, plays the flute and is a follower of the Kirana gharana of Ustad Abdul Karim Khan, and particularly of the late singer Gangubai Hangal of Hubli. During his youth, KND, as he is popularly known in community circles, used to frequently give musical recitals on the All India Radio in Vadodra In the religious sphere. The new Dasturji Kaikhushroo has in the past worked hard to educate the Parsi community about religion and religious institutions, with over 5000 lectures in India and USA, and religious camps and annual religious retreats. I attended one of his religious retreats in California and was impressed by his knowledge, oratory and recitation of verses from the Shahnameh.

Dasturji Kaikhushroo was co-editor of the Chiniwalla brothers' weekly magazine '*Parsi Avaz*' for 25 years, and now is the editor of the new *Parsi Avaz* which is a merger of *Parsi Pukar* and *Dini Avaz* magazines. He has promoted respect for other major religions of the world. We wish a long healthy life to the new Dasturji Meherjirana.

**Information sources:** *Ervad Marzban Hathiram, Percy Shroff, Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia, Nauzer Bharucha, Noshir Dadrawala, Shernaz Cama (UNESCO-Parzor), and books of Dr. Irach Taraporewala, Sir J.J.Mody, Ervad Kavasji Kanga, and Dastur Hormuzdiar Mirza.*

**Prepared by Maneck Bhujwala**

**Photos Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia and Percy Shroff**

## BIRTHS

Cyrus Patel, a boy, to Khushnuman and Pashang Patel (New York), grandson to Armaity and Framroze Patel on May 8, 2009.

Jehan Mody, a boy, to Tinaz and Darius Mody (New York), grandson to Rupy and Lovji Hakim and Dianne and Keki Mody in May.2009

Cyrus Dadabhoy Darki, a boy, to Dina and Amir Darki, grandson to Zerine and Porus Dadabhoy, and Abdul and Shamsi Darki and great grandson to Shirin Irani in Hinsdale, IL on June 16, 2009.

Zane Mehta, a boy, to Temilyn and Darius Mehta (New York), grandson to Toni and Viraf Ghadially and Khurshed Mehta on August 22, 2009.

Rayan Cama, a boy, to Farzana and Cyrus Cama (New York), grandson to Niloufer and Edul Davar and Mahrukh and Rohinton Cama on August 27, 2009.



Zarina Mistry, a girl, to Zenobia and Pervaz Mistry, sister to Kerfehgar, Shiavux, and Mehrzad, granddaughter to Pervin and Jimmy Mistry (Mumbai, India) and Katy and Dara Panthakee (Toronto, ONT) in Perth, Australia on October 3, 2009.

Lily Choksey, daughter of Zubin and Nicole Choksey, sister to Leslie, granddaughter to Meher and Kersi Choksey and Gertrude Phillip, in Illinois, October 16, 2009.

Zinnia Saher, a girl, to Kamal and Sarosh Saher, sister to Zubin, granddaughter to Shirin and Viraf Kanga and Amy and Bahadur Saher on October 19, 2009.

Anahita Tushad Driver, a girl, to Persis and Tushad Driver, sister to Rayhan, granddaughter to Navaz and Percy Driver and Mafrid and Lavji Mistry in Chicago, IL on December 1, 2009.

Zarina Sribnick, a daughter to Zenobia and Ethan Sribnick, sister to Kaizad, granddaughter Nergish and Kayomars Mehta and Sandra and Howard Sribnick in New York on December 22, 2009.

Rayaan Mehta, a boy, to Mahafirin & Ruzveh Mehta, grandson to Mahanaz & Rayomand Mehta and Jasmin & Mehernosh Daruwalla, in Marietta, GA on December 23, 2009.(photo left)

## NAVJOTES

Anaita Dadinatha, daughter of Zarine and Zarir Dadinatha in Richmond, B.C. on October 10, 2009.

Kyra and Vira Vatcha, daughters of Rinavaz and Nariman Vatcha in Woodbridge, ONT on October 13, 2009.

Yasmin Sabawala, daughter of Hoshang and Dilnavaz Subawala (Houston, TX) on November 25, 2009.

Rayomand, Dina, and Rohan Hormuzdi, children of Khursheed and Yazdi Hormazdi (Houston, TX) on November 26, 2009.

Zarius Engineer, son of Thrity and Kersi Engineer (Houston, TX) on November 28, 2009.

Jaden Nicole Mahava Husser, daughter of Kevlin and Zenobia Husser in Liverpore, CA on December 12, 2009.

Jamsheed Mistry, son of Pervin and Ratan Mistry (Cupertino,CA) in Mumbai, India on December 24, 2009.

Cyrus Mistry, son of Jasmine and Yazdi Mistry (Houston, TX), grandson of Tehmi and Bhikhu Mistry and Aloo Italia in Mumbai, India on December 25, 2009.

Narius and Natalya Mehta, children of Natasha and Naushad Mehta (Houston, TX), grandchildren of Sillie and Jehanbux Mehta and

Sanober and Minoo Baria on December 26, 2009.

Aliya Byramji, daughter of Rubina and Feroze Byramji (Houston, TX), granddaughter of Khorshed Khan on December 27, 2009.

Zoey Patel, daughter of Shernaz and Jamshed Patel (Los Altos, CA) in Mumbai, India on December 29, 2009.

Zarvaan and Myah Balaporia, children of Mehernaz and Zahir Balaporia (Green Bay, WI) in Mumbai, India on January 2, 2010

Yazad Sidhwa, son of Kayomars and Farzana Sidhwa of Houston, in Mumbai on January 9, 2010

## WEDDINGS

Vinifer Pardiwalla, daughter of Nergesh Jehangir Pardiwalla to Farzad Dutia, son of Behroz and Minu Dutia in Mahwah, NJ on September 5, 2009.

Dr. Karl Bilimoria, son of Yaz and Firoza Bilimoria (Carlsbad, CA) to Sheila Plunkett, daughter of Dr. Michael Plunkett and Elizabeth Peterson (Glenview, IL) in Gargonza, Italy on September 18, 2009.

Anita Kothari, daughter of Kanti and Yasmin Kothari (Romeoville, IL) to Ryan Jaronik, son of Dave and Teresa Jaronik (Pahrump, NV) in Lombard, IL on October 11, 2009.

Cyra Mobed, daughter of Goher and Darayes (Danny) Mobed to Oscar Duran at the South Sea Island Resort, Captiva Island, FL on November 7, 2009.

Darius Mobed, son of Goher and Darayes (Danny) Mobed to Jamie Rumpf at the South Sea Island Resort, Captiva Island, FL on November 7, 2009.

Jamshed Arjani, son of Dogdo and Tehemton Arjani (Glendale, CA) to Kristin Yang, daughter of De Xiang Yang and Dad Li Zhang (Guiyang, China) in San Jose, CA on November 9, 2009.

Ahunavar Chhapgar (San Francisco, CA), son of Phiroze and Anahita

Chhappgar to Nitila Patel, daughter of Suresh and Anjana Patel in Mumbai, India on November 27, 2009

Lily Kotwal (Toronto, Ontario), daughter of Nergish and Ervad Nozer Kotwal to Nozer Gariba (Baroda, India ) son of Aloo and Bejan Gariba, in Baroda, on January 5, 2010.

Burzin Daruwalla, son of Jasmin and Mehernosh Daruwalla to Nicole Marie Ferguson, daughter of Susan and Harold Ferguson in Marietta, GA on January 9, 2010.



## DEATHS

Dara S. Behrana, father of Niloufer (Kaika) Clubwala in Campbell Hall, NY on June 30, 2009.

Keki Sohrabji Sethna, 76, husband of Havovi Sethna, father of Sharookh Daroowala (Rukshana) (North Vancouver, BC), Shanaz Jal and Dilnaz Anklesaria, and grandfather of Shermeen, Hormuzd, Xerxes,, Rohann and Rishad in Mumbai, India on July 3, 2009.

Freny Darab Shroff, mother of Fali (Pam) Shroff (New York) in Mumbai, India on August 14, 2009.

Benaifer Wadia, daughter of Aloo and late Furdoon Wadia, sister of Kanizehn in Mississauga, ONT on September 4, 2009.

Morvarid (Zarthoshty) Yeganegi, 81, mother of Bahram and Rostam

Yeganegi in Vancouver, BC, on September 9, 2009.

Baji Shroff, husband of Rona, father of Sandra Dhunjishaw Master, Stephen, and late Brian in Brampton, ONT on September 29, 2009.

Mehroo Bacha, 83, mother of Percy and Syrus Bacha, in Surrey, BC. on September 30, 2009.

Rusi F. Bengali, 80, father of Kathleen Homi Chothia (San Ramon, CA), grandfather of Brandon in Mumbai, India on October 18, 2009.

Bejan Patel, husband of Bakhtawar, father of Hozi and Feroze in Toronto, ONT on October 13, 2009.

Rustomji Cawasji Bordiwala, 93, father of Kali and Farida, father-in-law of Farzana, grandfather of Behram and Behnaz on October 20, 2009 in Concord, CA.

Diniar Yadegari, husband of Ashraf Pirghaibi, father of Ramin Yadegiri (Jessica Moreno), and Nasrin Yadegiri and grandfather of Brandon and Gabrielain Southern California on October 31, 2009.

Perin Phiroze Tata, mother of Roshan (Aloke) Paul and Shireen (Navzar) Dotivala (Jamshedpur, India) and Spitaman (Shiraz) Tata (Rockford, IL) and grandmother of Rayomand on November 14, 2009.

Jasmine Surty, wife of Behram Surty, mother of Khurezad in Toronto, ONT on November 16, 2009.

Jamshid Khodayar Irani, husband of Golnavaz, father of Tania Khodayar in Southern California on November 18, 2009.

Minoo Maneck Mistry, husband of Zarine Mistry, father of Zeena and Firuze, grandfather of Erica and Tia, great grandfather of James, brother of Keki Mistry (Newcastle, ONT) in Burnaby, BC on December 2, 2009.

Pesi Framji Buhariwalla, husband of Mehra Buhariwalla, father of Edul (Mississauga, ONT), Darius (Pune, India) and Jamshid (Pune, India) in Pune, India on December 3, 2009.

Pirojshaw Umrigar, father of Farida (Rohinton) Shroff (Chicago, IL) and Arnaz and Jehangir Bharucha in Seattle, WA on December 22, 2009.

Darius (Dara) Hormuz Irani, husband of Dilnavaz, father of Farzana (Kaizad) Irani, Aban (Hoshang) Irani, Didar (Roozbeh) Dodhi, grandfather of Zubin, Rayomand, Xeromy, Ava, Zoie, in Champaign, Illinois on December 29, 2009.

Dinu Pardiwala, wife of Khurshed, mother of Rashna (Adil) Pooniwala, Farrah (Farokh) Jijina, and grandmother of Cyrus, in Mumbai December 31, 2009.

Behram Behmard Khosravi, father of Shirin Khosravi (New York).

Villy Sorabji, 66, wife of Rusi Sorabji, mother of Daraius (Lori), Shermin (Joe de Biase), Grandmother of Shiraz and Bijan Sorabji, in Stanford, CA, on January 23, 2010.

Tehmina Gundevia, 89, wife of late Burjorji; mother of Arnavaz (Gustad) Irani (Boca Raton); Sam (Pam) Gundevia (Vancouver), Minoo Gundevia (Montreal); grandmother of Jhangir (Zena Bharucha) Irani (Philadelphia); Rustam (Jennifer Khajautia) Irani (Tampa), Navroj Irani(Boca Raton), Cameron Gundevia (Vancouver), Jason Gundevia (Vancouver); great-grandmother of Zachary, Sam, Nicole, Meher and Hvovi; in Mumbai on February 1, 2010.

Please send all submissions for "Milestones" to Mahrukh Motafaram, 2390 Chanticleer Drive, Brookfield, WI 53045, maharukhm83@gmail.com Tel: 262-821-5296. NOTE: If no year is specified, it implies "within the past 12 months."

## Recipe for a Perfect Hug. Serves 2

### Ingredients

2 People    *A touch of love*  
4 Arms      *A pinch of humor*  
2 Hearts    *A sprinkle of glee*

### Directions

Extend arms, and wrap them  
round each other.

Clean your minds, take a good  
look at each other, then pull  
yourselves together and mix  
well.

## Matrimonials

**FEZANA Journal will coordinate initial contacts between interested parties; We do not assume any responsibility for verifying credentials. Contact Roshan Rivetna@rrrivetna@aol.com.**

Female, 24, BE, Electronics and Telecommunications, from India. Presently doing Masters in Aerospace Engineering in mid-western US University. Enjoys reading and outdoor activities. Interested in highly qualified boy preferably with engineering background, 5' 9" and above, non-smoker, broadminded with a good sense of humor. Contact bpsavai@gmail.com. [F10-02].

Female, 28, in medical profession, living in Australia. Contact bshownag@bigpond.net.au. [F10-03].

Female, 38, 5' 1", well-settled in USA with Master's degree in Social work. Brother invites correspondence from well settled 38 to 42 year old Parsee men in North America. Please email your photo and particulars to kbadhas@gmail.com. [F10-04].

Female, 45, pretty, fair, BA, working in Texas. Divorced with one son. Good mother and homemaker, enjoys reading, cooking, music (plays the piano). Interested in meeting well-settled gentleman. Contact sainika27@yahoo.com. [F10-05].

Female, 29, AA degree in web development, living in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania with her parents. Very happy spirited, loving and easy to get along with. Interested in meeting a loving, smart, understanding Zoroastrian man from North America. Contact: heavenly\_destiny81@yahoo.com, tel: (717) 795 8143. [F10-06].

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**<http://matrimonial.zoroastrianism.com>**

**[www.TheParsiMatch.com](http://www.TheParsiMatch.com) - [www.shaadi.com](http://www.shaadi.com)**

**Mrs. Gool Banaji, Parel, Mumbai, [goolpesi@gmail.com](mailto:goolpesi@gmail.com)**

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## **GREETINGS TO EVERYONE**

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Hence I would ardently request each one of you to please come forward and contact me so that I can help you find the most suitable match and also assist you in every step of the way, by finding a life partner who will match your personality and compatibility.

I already have a list of women and men all ages, who are looking for a suitable match, within our community. So please don't feel shy and kindly contact me as this is a free and purely community service for our friends and family and above all for our religion.

The current database stands at:

68 listings of men    43 listings of women

Age range 17 to 59 years

Men and Women from Canada, USA, Europe, New Zealand, Australia, India & Pakistan.

3 couples have been engaged.

14 couples have been in serious matrimonial correspondence.

With best regards,

**Aban Vazir - Toronto, Canada. Tel: 416-622-6552  
Email: [aban\\_vazir@yahoo.ca](mailto:aban_vazir@yahoo.ca)**



Reviewed by Er. Dr. Ramiyar Parvez  
Karanjia

# A Zoroastrian Liturgy

The Worship in Seven Chapters (Yasna 35-41)

By Dr. Almut Hintze

Published by Harassowitz Verlag – Wiesbaden, 2007.

Pages 397 ISBN 0944-1271

BOOKS  
ARTS &

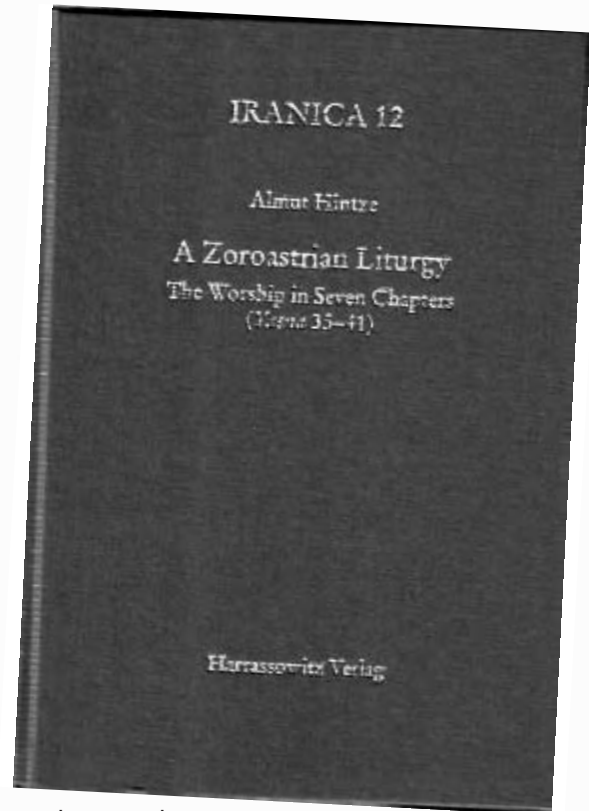
The *Yasna Haptanghaiti* belongs to the small minority of texts which are termed as Gathic prose. A few scholars have given special attention to these texts. T. Baunack was the first in the late nineteenth century, then Johanna Narten, and more recently Almut Hintze who have made a dedicated study, generated interest in them, and built up on the work of previous scholars with their own meticulous findings.

From the *Yasna Haptanghaiti* is derived the *Haptan Yasht* (consisting of the seven chapters of *Yasna Haptanghaiti* plus the final concluding eighth chapter -*Yasna 42*, and an Avestan prologue) which, among *Zarathushtis*, is considered a very powerful, and at times difficult to understand prayer.

Most western scholars, including Hintze, do not consider chapter 42nd as part of the *Yasna Haptanghaiti*, since the name of the text suggests only seven chapters. It is interesting to note that the 42nd chapter begins with the veneration of the collection (*handata*) of *Yasna Haptanghaiti* (*yazamaide ve amesha spenta yasnahe haptanghatoish handata*), and seems like a summing up of the veneration to all the elements and *Amesha Spentas* covered in the *Yasna Haptanghaiti*. It would be nice to know whether *Yasna 42nd* is considered part of the Gathic prose, the other Avestan literature or something else.

To me *Yasna 42nd* seems to be the concluding part of the *Yasna Haptanghaiti*, perhaps a part of the last recognized chapter of *Yasna Haptanghaiti*. When being grouped in the *Yasna* and the *Yasht*, it may have been separated from *Yasna 41* and considered a different chapter. As a faith representative, it would be interesting to know the learned author's views about the origin of *Yasna 42*. Another similar conundrum connected with this text is the appearance of *Y. 37* from *Yasna Haptanghaiti*, identically as *Ch. 5* in the *Yasna*.

Dr. Almut Hintze's above mentioned book is a complete compendium on *Yasna Haptanghaiti*, with an introduction, text, translation, exhaustive grammatical notes on prominent words, and a masterly glossary of



the words occurring in the *Yasna Haptanghaiti* at the end.

Looking at the glossary it seems that the search for an Avestan dictionary, after the passage of more than a century may well, come to an end under the able hands of Dr. Hintze. The glossary will be an asset to any student of the Avestan language. It not only lists all words occurring in the *Yasna Haptanghaiti*, it also gives their occurrences in all their inflected forms along with references to their occurrences. Moreover she also gives the meaning as given by Bartholomae in his *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* for all the words. The reader is also informed whether the word occurs in the Old Avesta, and the Younger Avesta. The Old Persian, Vedic, Middle Persian, and Indo-European forms are also given wherever applicable.

Two of Dr. Hintze's comments about establishing the importance of *Yasna Haptanghaiti* are very appropriate, one that it is embedded within the Gathas

and second that it is placed right at the centre of the 72 chapters of Yasna.

The contention of Dr. Hintze and of others about the language of Yasna Haptanghaiti being virtually identical to the Gathas, and about the text being poetic in form (first espoused by Narten) are difficult to accept, although the author has taken great pains to prove her point.

As to the first observation, the language seems closer to the other Avesta, than to the Gathas. One can suggest that it is the Avesta with shades of a few Gathic dialectical features. Many features of Yasna Haptanghaiti do not seem to be essentially and characteristically Gathic in nature, like, the abundant use of the word *yazamaide*, the repetitive use of the formula *humata, hukhta* and *hvarshta*, the frequent invocation of thoughts, words and actions as a triad. These features suggest the text to be closer to the other Avesta than the Gathas. In fact the repetitive use of words as in 38.2, 4 et al indicate a Yasht like composition.

The author's argument about one of the stylistic feature related to 'Argument + Negated /Counter Argument' to prove the point regarding the first observation, does not seem very strong, as such cases can be found throughout the Avesta, as in Yasna 57.XIII (Srosh Yasht – *idhatcha ainidhatcha*) and Yasna 60.5 (*akhshtish anakhshtim, raitish araitim*). She herself at one place acknowledges that this stylistic feature is found else where too and hence cannot be used to substantiate an argument. The second contention is much debated, as there are a very few, stray poetic pieces in Yasna Haptanghaiti.

The author has inserted ritual context within the translation, much in line with the contemporary symiotic trend of linking texts with rituals. She has also identified ring structures in Yasna Haptanghaiti, a field in which Martin Schwartz has done pioneering work with regards to the Gathas. Over and above circular patterns, pairs, axis and cross patterns are also identified as stylistic features of the text. Other stylistic features discussed in the text are "jeux d' echo", that is, the repetition of a word between the beginning and end of a paragraph as in Y. 36.5, and words forming concentric rings or a ring composition as in Y. 37-39.

The field of Avestan etymology and translation is much enriched with Dr. Hintze's treatment of individual words, with her vast knowledge of Vedic and Indo-

Iranian cum European languages like Sogdian, Chorasmian, Bactrian, Khotanese, Vedic, Latin and Greek. The annotations are meticulous with elaborate attestations of all occurrences, and citing references for most of them. With multi-disciplinary etymology, she has gone to great lengths to fix the meanings of certain doubtful and singly occurring words.

While discussing philosophical, semantic and etymological aspects of words, she meticulously keeps track of the explanations, views and interpretations of other contemporary and recent Avestan scholars like Cantera, Insler, Kellens, Pirart, Kuiper, Humbach, Schlerath, Schmidt and Skjaervo, the Yasna Haptanghaiti specialists, as well as savants from the past like Bartholomae, Baunack, Lommel and Wolff.

Her critical, analytical, etymological, philosophical and theological notes on fundamental Avestan words like *asha, gav, yazamide, fravashi, daena* and *amesha spenta* will be very interesting, fulfilling and revealing especially for the lay and faith-based readers.

I am tempted to add my bit to the debate to fix the secondary meaning of the word *ahurani*, more so because it seems to have been left inconclusive to a certain extent. There is complete clarity about the literal meaning of the word "belonging to Ahura." However its interpretation is left open. "Wives" is suggested by several authors. "Waters of Ahura" is suggested by Dr. Hintze. If one asks the question: "What belongs to Ahura?" and take a cue from the two standing epithets *raya* and *khvarena* which also 'belong to Him' it would not be difficult to come to the conclusion that "energy" should be the interpretative meaning of the word, since, though the two epithets are variously translated, in the end, they are His energies. Hence I postulate that the term *ahurani* may be considered "energies of Ahura," also since the word is connected with *zaothra* "libations" and is also attested at the end of Khorshed Nyaishna just after remembering *hvare khshaeta* "the sun" which is the collector (*hambarayenti*), transmitter (*niparayenti*) and distributor (*bakhshenti*) of *khvarena* – the divine energy of Ahura Mazda.

Barring the stylistic differences, the grammatical exposition of the chapters of Yasna Haptanghaiti and the etymologies and translation of the Avestan, to which more than 90 per cent of the book is devoted, are done in a thorough and masterly manner and are a welcome addition to the body of Avesta work.

250 pgs, 3200 tomans (1000 copies only)

## Setiz va Sazesh:

Zartoshtiyan-e maqlub va mosalmanan-e qaleb dar jame-ye Iran-e nakhostin-i sadeha-ye Islami

Persian translation by Nadereh Mir Saeedi of

**CONFLICT AND COOPERATION**

*By Jamsheed K. Choksey*

Ghohgnus (Qoqnus) Publishers, Tehran, 2002

The defeated Zoroastrians and the victorious Moslems in the Iranian society in the first centuries of the Islamic era

Farid Shoulizadeh: *Conflict and Cooperation* is the name of a book written by a Parsi scholar, Dr Jamsheed K. Choksey, and translated by Nadereh Mir Saeedi into Farsi. In this book the demeanor of a group of Zoroastrians and Moslems during the first 7 centuries (600 CE to 300 CE) after Islam is studied. Shaping of new circumstances in Iran society after invasion of the Arabs and spread of Islam, the condition of the new religion structure and also study of the causes of decline of Zoroastrian religious structure, from the political, literature, religion, economic and social point of view are cases that have been mentioned in this book.

'*Conflict and Cooperation*' tries to give fresh and documented information about the changes that took place in the Iranian society in the first centuries after Islam. Dr Jamsheed K. Choksey, who is a professor for Near East Cultures and Languages and Middle East program and also Central Asia studies in Indiana University of America, writes as preface:

"Research for writing this book started among the active group of Friends Association, in Harvard University. The Middle East Languages and Civilizations group and the Central Asia Study group supported my work, plus members of the Council of Research in social Science help me in the section related to the East. The Foundation for Iranian Studies honored me with a prize for the preliminary results of my work, and Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the History Group of Stanford University gave me the possibility to edit my writings during a long period of time. And, finally, the School of Historic Studies in the Institute of Advanced Studies, the National Donations for Human Science and the Language and Culture group of Indiana University made the final edition."

Translation by Rowshan Lohrasbpour

Source: <http://www.amordaden.blogfa.com/post-743.aspx>

BOOKS

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### ORIGINAL PREFACE FROM CONFLICT AND COOPERATION

by Jamsheed K. Chosey

"Research for this book began within the stimulating setting of Harvard University's Society of Fellows. Both the department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and the committee on Inner Asian and Altaic Studies at Harvard also supported my endeavors. Insights obtained during a conference in Malaysia sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council helped clarify the work's orientation. I am honored that the Foundation for Iranian Studies bestowed its annual award upon my preliminary results. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in conjunction with Stanford University's Department of History underwrote an extended period spent revising this manuscript in very congenial fashion. Final touches were added under patronage of the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and Indiana University's department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures."

# Lucky Everyday

**By Bapsy Jain**

**Publisher:**

**Penguin Books, 2008**

**ISBN: 978-0-14-311535-9**

**Pages: 309**

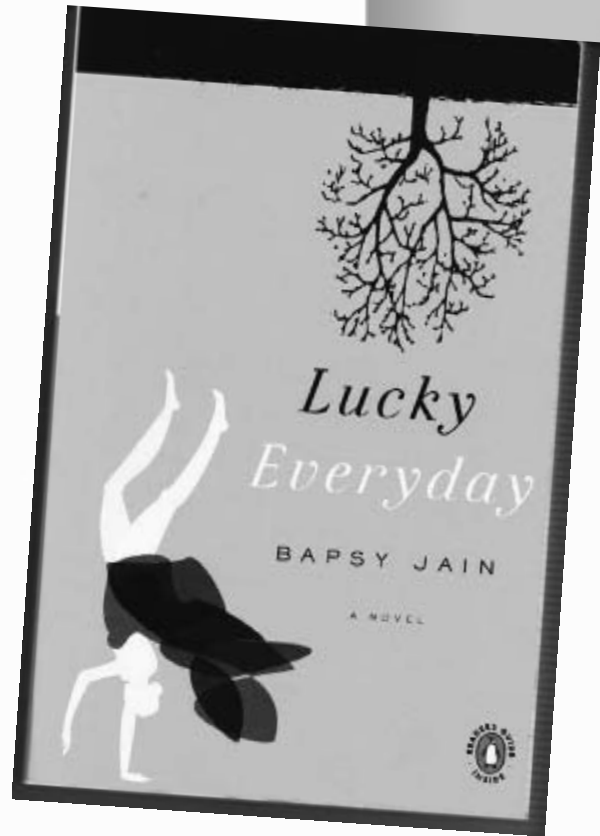
Remember Sidney Sheldon's heroines? Those strong women, who went through so much adversity in page-turners hard to put down, but who, by the last page, came out on top. Lucky Boyce, the protagonist of *Lucky Everyday* is something like that. Only she's Parsi. This makes *Lucky Everyday* a rather exciting read for young Parsi women in

particular.

But Lucky Boyce is anything but lucky. She's coming out through a messy divorce in Bombay that's ruined not only her personal life but her entrepreneurial career too. And trying to build a life again in New York City she has awful luck in just about every aspect of her life – work, love, family. She makes interesting, albeit difficult, choices – from teaching yoga to inmates at a state prison, to having an affair with a devoted, but married, old flame, to agreeing to adopt an inmate's child and working for a company whose accounting practices are, at best, creative.

Still, Lucky survives. She is guided in her endeavors by the teachings of a yogi, Shanti, who becomes Lucky's spiritual guide at a dramatic juncture in Lucky's life. By the end of the book – in a shocking turn of events that seems to come from nowhere – Lucky does come out on top, but in a very different way than the aforementioned Sheldon heroines. In these aspects, the book is different – and perhaps more thoughtful – than general chick lit and the stuff of Sheldon's bestsellers.

The author, Bapsy Jain took ten years to write the book. She hopes a western audience will not miss the symbolism in the novel: *"The message the novel*



*transmits to the readers is that it is internal engineering that gives happiness, not external trappings. The novel symbolizes in many ways that we do not choose this kind of life.... This kind of life chooses you."* says Jain in a discussion following the novel's end.

On the whole, *Lucky Everyday* is an enjoyable read

*Jain is currently working on a sequel called Night Vision – an intriguing prospect given the way in which Lucky Everyday ends.*



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## Monajaato

**Dharmik Ane Tavarikhee Bhakti Geeto na Chitro Saathe**

**By Ervad Irach Sorabji Kuka (ISHK)**

**Avan Series – 11**

**Published by Athornan Mandal; Pages 75**

**11 Color Illustrations**

**Subsidized Price – Rs. 20/- available from Dadar Athornan Institute**

Ervad Eruch Sorabji Kuka deserves to be congratulated for his zeal and enthusiasm in versifying 25 Monajaats or devotional songs in Gujarati. He has made this book interesting by using appropriate, eye-catching color pictures and also added brief notes in English. He was inspired by Ervad Dr. Ramiyar Karanjia and his wife Havovi.

Dr. Karanjia in his preface notes that one of the paths to reach God is through music. Such devotional songs

are an integral part of our Parsi Culture. In this book, the poet has composed songs of religious and historical episodes as also meanings of our Avesta Prayers in simple, easy to understand language. Every song is based on a popular tune. He has given the tune below the title of the song. The explanatory notes on prayer, holy Prophet Zarthushtra, Atash, Kusti, Path of righteousness, Farohar, The Flag – Drafsh-e – Kavyaan, Sanjan Stambh, Battle of Nehavand are very informative and make readers aware of our religion and history.

This is Ervad Kuka's 11th book. At an advanced age of 90+, this nonagerian Trustee- in -charge of The Dadar Athornan Institute has rendered yeoman service and continues to actively organize programmes and spread awareness of our excellent religion and our glorious heritage.

Athornan Mandal also deserves credit for publishing this book. which deserves a place in every Parsi Zarathushti home. Singing devotional songs will help usher peace and righteousness in our Parsi community.

**Reviewed by Marzban Giara**



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## **WZCC** World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING in DUBAI**



WZCC has now entered its 10th year and, at the World Zoroastrian Congress in Dubai we got great exposure as many of our Honorary Members were speakers or sponsors including Pallonji Mistry, Nader Godrej, Lord Karan Billimoria, Sam Balsara and Alayar Dabestani. We cheered when our Founding President, Rohinton Rivetna was presented the "Outstanding Zarathushti" award by the World Zoroastrian Congress



At the AGM held in Dubai on December 29, 2009, the following were declared elected as Board Members (and the Administrative positions mentioned hereunder were allotted at the post-AGM Board meeting):





Minoo Shroff	<b>President</b>
Rustom Engineer	<b>Vice President</b>
Framroze Patel	<b>Treasurer</b>
Behroze Daruwala	<b>Corporate Secretary</b>
Yazdi Tantra	<b>Technical Director</b>
Zareen Karani Araoz	<b>Director for Global &amp; External Relations</b>
Eric Engineer	<b>Director for Youth Affairs</b>
Adil Sarkari	<b>Australia</b>
Fariborz Rahnamoon	<b>Canada</b>
Farrokh Rustomjee	<b>India</b>
Firdosh Mehta	<b>USA</b>
Minoo Mody	<b>India</b>
Jamshid Dindar	<b>Iran</b>
Rumi Sarkari	<b>Middle East</b>
Rusi Gandhi	<b>USA</b>
Shahram Jiveh	<b>Iran</b>
Shernaz Engineer	<b>UK</b>

*Kersi Limathwalla will serve as Past President on the Board*

At this AGM, WZCC took a major stride forward when it amended the Bye-Laws to include the position of "Director for Youth Affairs" on its global Board. At the post-AGM Board Meeting held the next day, Eric Engineer was appointed to this post. (photo left) As "Youth Representative" on the Board for the last 12 months, Eric has done a remarkable job, bringing together the Youth at various Chapters by organizing very interesting activities and involving them all through *LinkedIn and conference calls*.

Mr. Nusli Wadia has been appointed Honorary Member for 2009, and as he was unable to attend the WZC in Dubai because of prior commitments, this plaque will be presented to him in Mumbai in early 2010.

WZCC has now set for itself the following 5 goals, to be achieved in the next 4 years, and an interesting discussion took place on these goals:

1. **Encourage Youth Participation**
2. **Create Awareness & Visibility**
3. **Facilitate Mentoring**
4. **Provide Networking Opportunities**
5. **Funding Mechanism**







It was agreed that the next AGM would take place in Iran in May 2011, and the hosting Chapter has given an assurance that visas would be issued without any problem.

WZCC presented the following 3 Awards during the World Zoroastrian Congress in Dubai:

**(1) Ms HOMAI DARUWALLA - OUTSTANDING ZARATHUSHTI PROFESSIONAL**

Ms Daruwalla has recently retired as the Chairperson and Managing Director of The Central Bank of India, one of the largest Nationalized Banks in India. During her tenure, she introduced new initiatives in all areas of Banking Operations which yielded a record growth of 110.55 per cent. Her most commendable achievement is the overwhelming response the Bank's Initial Public Offer received in July 2007, which broke all records in the Banking Industry. The IPO attracted nearly 800,000 applications. In overall terms, the issue was over-subscribed 62 times, which is the highest ever subscription till date received by any Bank. (middle in the photo above)

**(2) UMEED KOTHAVALA - OUTSTANDING ZARATHUSHTI ENTREPRENEUR**

Umeed is a true entrepreneur and all the businesses he has created have the hallmark of being intelligent, dependable and caring. He is the founder and CEO of Extentia Information Technology ([www.extentia.com](http://www.extentia.com)), a company involved in software development and consulting, which employs over 150 people across three continents.



He is also the co-founder and a key executive manager for Extencore Solutions (www.extencore.com) - an engineering and design services company. Umeed is the co-founder of PingPoint Software (www.pingpointsoftware.com) which provides software distributors with in-application messaging services and other benefits. He was responsible for the product's design and serves as the company's CTO. *(right in photo opposite page)*



### (3) **FIRDOSH BHESANIA - OUTSTANDING YOUNG ZARATHUSHTI PROFESSIONAL/ ENTREPRENEUR**

As a leader, Firdosh has provided the vision for multi-year successes and drives towards well defined goals of service, education and research. His passion for both hardware and software found him the role of a Program Manager at Microsoft in the Windows Division, working on software development for new hardware technologies. His passion for patents and article publication grew out of space as his scope expanded. He strongly believes that success is a journey and not a destination and that life and work should be a combination of passion, achievement and fun *(left in photo opposite page)*

WZCC got a lot of publicity at the very well-organized WZC in Dubai, especially as all 700 delegates were present at WZCC's Awards function. The two Board meetings and the AGM were also well attended and we express our deep gratitude to Meher Bhesania, Noshir Engineer and their team for the excellent organization of all WZC events in Dubai.



### **Zarine Kersi Commissariat Outgoing Secretary, WZCC**

*Photos Parsiana; Ervad Soli Dastur and Dolly Dastoor*



**mazdâ vidvanoi vaocâ hizvâ thwahyâ aongho  
yâ jvanto vispeng vâurayâ.**

**Speak O Wise one, with tongue of thy mouth  
that I may convince all the living**

**Ys 31.3**

# BUSINESS

## "Real Estate Opportunities in Challenging Times" a Panel Discussion at WZCC AGM in New York New officers elected.

On November 22, President Arnaz Maneckshaw summarized the Chapter's progress over her three year term. Edul Davar, Chapter Advisor, Noshir Dutia, Chapter Finance and Membership Director, and Rusi D. Gandhi M.B.A., Chapter Advisor and WZCC World Director, felicitated her dedication. The Chapter awarded Arnaz with a plaque of fine mahogany. She discussed excellent traits in the new board members. Incoming Chapter board members include Paul Daruwala, Vice-President Elect, Noshir



*Photo above from left Vispi Kanga, Paul Daruwala-Vice President, Sheroo Kanga, Natalie- newly elected chapter Chair, Noshir Dutia, Treasurer, Arnaz Maneckshana-Chapter Chair, Dinyar Hodiwala, Rusi Gandhi, Advisor & World Director, Past Chapter Chair & founder, Meher Hodiwala, Edul Davar, Advisor & Past World Director.*

Dutia, Sheroo Kanga, Secretary and Communications Director, Zubin Canteenwala, Youth Director and Yazad Dalal, Youth Director.

The incoming Chapter Chair, Dr. Natalie H. Vania-Gandhi, complimented Arnaz for her striking professional record and devotion. All are enthused with the new team, with members assured New York's Chapter will be a showcase of North American Chapters. Natalie's entrepreneurship, her experience as a founding member of WZCC in

# BUSINESS

California and Chicago, and her engagement in AGM's, should enhance progress for the New York Chapter's progress. Arnaz entrusted the Chair's gavel to the new Chair.

Rusi Gandhi highlighted Arnaz's experience as a first for North American women leading a Chapter and he discussed the upcoming Dubai WZCC AGM. Area residents, Rusi and Natalie, Edul and Niloufer Daver, Farrokh and Gool Patel, Rohinton and Maharukh Cama, Dinyar Hodiwala and his son, Adil Hodiwala, Homi Gandhi, and Navroz Gandhi are Dubai delegates.

The day's central event was a Panel Discussion, *"Real Estate Opportunities in Challenging Times"*. Professional expertise was on display in detailed presentations displayed expertise.. Participants included Dinyar Hodiwala, on *"Foreclosures and Short Sales"*, Vispi Daruwala, on *"Securing Mortgages Today"*, Persis Daruwala, on *"The Role of the Title Company"* and Rusi D. Gandhi, Moderator, *"Real Estate Internet Auctions"*.

It was vital hearing timely strategies from practionnaire experts, especially for those looking to profitably invest in the current economic climate. The audience's Q&A examined fine points in contract negotiations as well as the brave entrepreneurial efforts of panelists. Each panelist had entered real estate in an intriguing way. The audience received inspiration in their business startup perspectives, their long-time stamina, and their depth of knowledge. We were surprised hearing of a clever internet auction at \$26,000.00 below an earlier offer for a property, with resulting ownership being \$104,000.00 below the median price of surrounding homes.

Paul Darawala, incoming Chapter Vice-President, helped with logistics and concluded the event. Guests included a contingent of ten people who enjoyed a unique cultural tour in the Arbab Guiv Darbe Mehr, and an exquisite lunch provided by Sheroo and Vispi Kanga. Noshir Dutia provided the kind service of recording the event. Meher Hodiwala devised the Agenda and helped with others in setting up for the event. The group celebrated Arnaz's tenure and Dinyar's birthday with luscious cakes. Pictures of the event are posted at <http://tinyurl.com/realestatepanel>.

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Photo Natalie H.Vania-Gandhi



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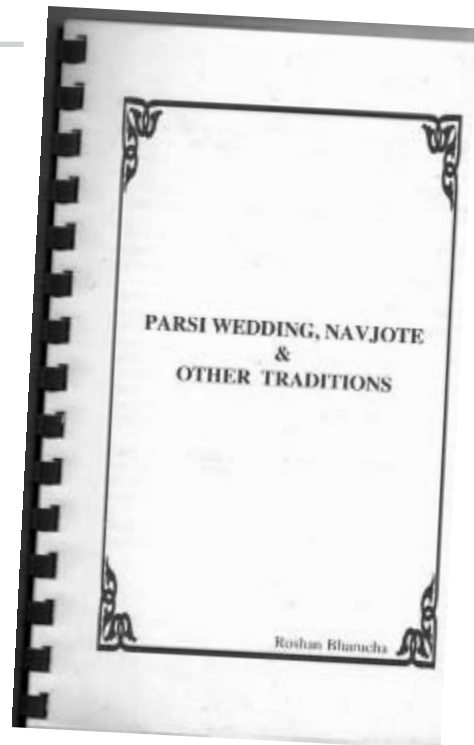
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# FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA (FEZANA)

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