

FEZANA

PAIZ 1383 AY 3752 Z

VOL. 28, No 3 FALL/SEPTEMBER 2014

JOURNAL

Mehr–Avan–Adar 1383 AY (Fasli) • Ardebehesht–Khordad–Tir 1384 AY (Shenshai) • Khordad–Tir–Amرداد 1384 AY (Kadimi)

GAHAMBARS AROUND THE HAFTA KESHWAR ZAMIN

YAZAD

TO PRAY

SAAZAD

TO PERFORM

KHURAD

TO PARTAKE

DAHAD

TO DONATE

PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

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FEZANA JOURNAL

PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

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Dancers photo courtesy Oshihan.org

Mehr- Avan – Adar	1383 AY (Fasli)
Ardebehesht – Khordad – Tir	1384 AY (Shenhai)
Khordad - Tir – Amordad	1384 AY (Kadimi)

Winter 2014
RITUAL IMPLEMENTS THE USE OF THE SACRED
GUEST EDITOR: FIROZA PUNTHAKEY MISTREE

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A Word from the Editor

GAHAMBAR AND THANKSGIVING

The Fall issue of the Journal on Gahambar brings to mind the spirit of thankfulness, the spirit of sharing and giving. As we enter the season of Gahambar and Thanksgiving, we need to reflect on what matters most in life: the joys of family and friends, of people we love and with whom we spend the time together, with whom we share our hopes, our dreams and fears. Each family has their own treasure trove of gifts for which they are thankful, healthy children, secure food supply, safe living conditions etc. As we gather round for a simple Gahambar meal let us take time to reflect on the things for which we are most thankful.

As a community also we have many things to be thankful for. The Jivo Parsi Scheme has been productive, literally, with the first set of twins born. Narendra Modi the PM of India continues to take personal interest in the Udvada Area Development Authority (page 73) by inviting Dasturji Khurshed Dastur, Dinshaw Tamboly, Homai Engineer and R.J. Cama to meet with him in Delhi. Udvada may become a heritage centre one day. We will be thankful for that.

ZAMWI (Washington) has a new home, the Kamran Dare Mehr was inaugurated (page 8), a bigger ZAGNY home is on its way. The sports in LA drew record participants and spectators (page 12), our young continue to excel at the UN where. Zoroastrian religion is slowly getting better exposure: Parzor Foundation has a virtual exhibition on Google Cultural Institute, a no mean achievement!!.

But all this can change in a flick of an eyelid!! As it does for millions of people around the world with disasters, both natural and man made. The recent world events have brought into focus the hardships many in the world are experiencing.. Why do they experience loss of life or limb or home or possession for no fault of theirs, except that they are in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The militant Islamist group ISIS with its expressed desire to see the whole world become Muslim with Sharia law enforced is very troubling. Their barbaric methods of killing innocent people is reminiscent of what happened to the Zarathushtis in 648 CE when the Arabs invaded Iran. There is genuine fear in people especially of my generation. Is history repeating itself? This brings the question of the



Yazadis and Kurdish people to the forefront. Are they Zarathushtis? Should they be saved? Yes they should be saved, but not because they are or are not Zarathushtis but because they are innocent human beings caught in the crossfire. But how can we save these people? When we ourselves are a group of people without borders, without a country, without a voice. Situations like this make it more and more imperative for us to organize ourselves politically and socially to speak with one voice and be heard. Several attempts have been made over the years which have all been sabotaged with nebulous fears of losing our racial identity. Leaders from the mother countries of Iran and India and from the diaspora need to come together and develop a strategic plan for both growth and survival for the community.

Hence it behooves us to share our good fortune with people less fortunate, people undergoing hardships We need to share our time, our expertise and our monies. Simple acts of kindness, sharing a meal, giving a smile, holding a frightened hand, listening to concerns. Acts done without any expectation of a reward or acknowledgement will bring its own satisfaction in the spirit of a gahambar.

Yatha Jamyad, yatha afrinami

A Message from FEZANA President

Dear Presidents and Representatives of Member Associations, Corresponding Members, Committee Chairs and fellow Zarathushtis

SECOND TEN YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN (2011-2021):

The Stakeholders of this plan: Member Associations, Corresponding Members, Standing & Ad-Hoc Committees and the Zarathushti community at large continue to work harmoniously together with the FEZANA Executive to achieve the 5 major goals as identified:

1. *Increase awareness of FEZANA domestically*
2. *Foster HAMAZORI (harmony) by building strong relationships between various Zarathushti entities/groups*
3. *Advance religious education, cultural awareness, and interfaith dialogue*
4. *Ensure economic stability through fund raising and prudent investments*
5. *Showcase FEZANA successes around the world*

The activities undertaken by FEZANA and its members and committees are showcased in the monthly FEZANA Bulletin and the quarterly FEZANA Journal. Refer to www.fezana.org.

FEZANA member associations and committees continue to work actively with complimentary organizations like NAMC, WZCC, and others to find resources within the community to bring this plan to fruition. The Terms of Reference (ToRs) that define the Committees' mission, roles, and operational responsibilities are being used as road maps to plan and conduct their activities to achieve short and long term goals as identified in this Plan.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN NA:

These past few months have seen two associations on the East Coast realize their dreams of establishing a Dar-e-Mehr for their communities. Zoroastrian Association of New York (ZAGNY) and Iranian Zoroastrian Association (IZA) jointly broke ground for their new Dar-e-Mehr in Suffern, New York, and Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington DC (ZAMWI) celebrated the grand opening of their Kamran Dar-e-Mehr in Boyds, Maryland. Homi Gandhi, FEZANA Vice President and I were invited to both these momentous events and happily participated in the celebrations together with the local Parsis and Iranis who had jointly worked hard to make this

happen. Heartiest Congratulations to the Zarathushtis of the greater New York and greater Washington, DC areas. These events will help the Zarathushtis in NA towards achieving the four overarching goals developed by the Infrastructure Development in NA Committee:

- *Establishing our identity as North American Zarathushtis*
- *Perpetuating our community in North America*
- *Gaining visibility in North America as Zarathushtis*
- *Branding of Zarathushtis in North America as an industrious, trustworthy community much like the stature achieved in the mother countries of Iran and India.*

As FEZANA and the member associations continue to develop plans for these infrastructure needs, we have to ensure that as we focus on serving the above goals, the assets developed are income generating as well as self-sustaining to ensure their



perpetuation.

I would like to welcome the newly elected presidents and board of the following member associations to the FEZANA Family: ZAGNY, ZAMWI, ZANT, ZSBC, ZSO, ZAC-Chicago, ZAA, PZO and ZSWS.

As Gahambars is the theme for this Journal issue, I urge all in FEZANA to hold these celebratory festivals in their communities to inspire the unity and spirituality of their people. Let us practice charity and honesty within our communities, socialize with our loved ones, and remember to live our lives as Ahura Mazda taught us to. As we nurture a love for humanity and promote our Zarathushti way of life, we

A Message from FEZANA President

are increasingly aware of our religion and culture domestically and globally. This is the vision we are promoting to instill pride in our future generations

Please continue to support FEZANA's goals and activities with your generous donations. Your donations are used wisely to help those in real need, in planning and coordinating religious education, scholarships, workshops, sports, seminars, publications, etc. This is done by committees made up of numerous volunteers who freely give their time, and often their money. To

continue this work and prepare for our future, we need to constantly raise funds.

I request that we continue to follow the **5-STAR Guiding Principles: Teamwork, Respect Diversity, Innovation, Empowerment & an Optimistic 'Can Do Attitude'**. Let us continue to work individually and collectively for a unified, knowledgeable Zarathushti community in North America.

Katayun Kapadia FEZANA-President

Welfare Report

"You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you." - JOHN BUNYAN

THERE ARE NO WORDS TO EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE TO ALL THE DONORS who continue to donate generously to our appeals. When the appeal for May was sent out, donations started to come in within hours. The generosity of the community and the outpouring of empathy is simply remarkable.

Generous gifts from donors provide the financial and moral support that is needed to keep the mission of the Welfare Committee alive. Our committee is always here to help and provide guidance, and never do we make judgments or conclusions on individual circumstances or scenarios. We do however perform our due diligence on all cases and try and understand the totality of a situation before an appeal is funded. Our goal is always to try and help individuals in need both here, and abroad.

This past quarter, we were able to offer financial assistance to an individual and his family during (and after) the final stages of his terminal illness. Additionally we were able to send help to a premature infant in India, and her family, to assist in the paying of her medical bills. These are just two of the many families we have been able to assist over the years. We continue to keep in touch with the families we have been able to help in the past, and depending on their circumstance provide further assistance or are happy to hear about their success stories.

Our committee understands there is no way to fully express the gratitude for the loyalty that has been shown by our community in supporting the Welfare Committee. We are continually inspired by the the dedication and generosity of donors within our community who answer our call for help to donate again and again. It is because of all that you do, that we are able to do all that we do.

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR GENEROSITY. May Ahura Mazda always shower his choicest blessings on us all.

"It is in giving that we receive" - anonymous

Freyaz Shroff

Hosi Mehta

Houtoxi Contractor

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huty.contractor@gmail.com

*Then I realized You as Bountiful,
O Mazda Ahura,
when the Good Mind encircled me.
He declared that silent meditation is the best for man.*

[From the Gatha Ushtavaiti, *Yasna 43: 15*]

Silent Meditation Is the Best For Man:

Silent Meditation, *Tushnamaiti*, extolled by Zarathushtra as being the best for man, precedes *Armaiti*, “perfect thought” according to Pahlavi writers ⁽¹⁾. Practiced with mindfulness, *Tushnamati*, empowers the individual to attain a state of bliss. It brings the mind, body and spirit together in harmony – creating wholeness, *Haurvatat*, which leads to happiness. Faithful to his educational approach, the prophet is not prescriptive. We are free to choose (*Ys 30:2*) the course best suited to our environments, abilities and needs in how *Tushnamaiti* is practiced.

Our priests, over the centuries, have incorporated the idea of *Tushnamaiti* structurally into our *Jashan* prayers:

***Humata Naam; Hukhta Naam; Huvrashta Naam; Yada Chaa, Anyada Chaa,
Verezyamamna Nam Cha, Vaa Varezana Naam Chaa, Mahee Aibi Jare Taro,
Nae Nae Staaro, Yatha Nam, Vohoo Naam Mahee (recite twice).***

*Good thoughts, good words and good deeds, here and elsewhere
Of those who are performing them and those who have performed them*

*We are glorifiers and **meditators**
And by doing so we shall redeem ourselves. (2)*

After this congregational recital, (and the completion of the flower ceremony) woven into the liturgy, is a silence which follows ⁽³⁾. Attend with a listening heart and enjoy a few moments of silent congregational meditation, a gift from our traditions. Gaze into the fire to connect with the one within to find the peace which comes with silent meditation. The same sense engulfs us when attending the *Boi* ceremony at Iranshah Atashbehram in Udvada, gazing silently into the blazing fire, with only one priest in attendance, intoning the prayers for the *Ushahin gah*, with the sanctum sanctorum almost all to oneself.

Silent Meditation by the individual can take different forms. The only limit to our creativity is our own imagination. A walk in the woods, preferably at the first light of dawn (*hoshbam*) does wonders in brightening the entire day. Listening to creative thoughts which flood the mind when in tune with a sacred space can become a habit. Our forefathers connected with nature – praying near a river, or on the Oceanside, or in the mountains with reason.

As we rediscover our traditions, we realize how *tushnamaiti*, a gift from our scriptures, can uplift each one of us in leading purposeful productive lives every day.

Rooze Khordad, 23 August 2014.

Behram Pastakia is Chair of the Publications Committee of FEZANA

Notes:

(1) (i) Gatha *Ushtavaiti*: The Gatha of Supreme Bliss, Hymns in Praise of Wisdom, Translation and commentary by Pilo Nanavutty, 1999, page 113, Mapin Publishing, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India / ISBN 1-89026-6-09-1.

(ii) Irach JS Taraporewala, translates *Tushnamaiti* as silent meditation, and ends his commentary with the statement: “The idea of inner growth of the Soul through silent meditation seems to me to be quite appropriate

here". "The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra". 3rd Edition, 1993, Hukhta Foundation, Union Press, Mumbai, page 454.

- (2) Translation of the "Humata Naam Hukhta Naam..." prayer, provided by Erv Brig Behram Panthaki, Head priest of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc. http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/outsidepages/avestaorg/khordeh_kanga.htm
- (3) *Jashan Prayers With Understanding* – Text and translation from "My Prayer Guide" Dasturji N.D. Minocheher-Homji – 2011, published by the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago, Burr dge, Illinois, USA, page 64.

FEZANA

DONATIONS RECEIVED - MARCH 1, 2014 TO AUGUST 31, 2014

CHILDREN'S EDUCATION FUND IN MEMORY OF KERSI D. KAPADIA

Dara A. Sinor	\$1,001
Amy D. Sinor-Anderson	1,001
Jeroo D. Sinor	1,001
Zubin D. Sinor Agency, Inc.	1,001
IPW Construction Group, LLC. - Cyrus D. Sinor	1,001
Farhad & Houtoxi Contractor, Laguna Beach, CA	200

5,205

GENERAL FUND

Sarosh & Pearlina Contractor, League City, TX	250
Kamran & Saghar Behroozii, Flower Mound, TX	200
Burjor & Vira Santoke, Huntington Beach, CA	101
Kersi Shroff, Rockville, MD	100
Yazdi Bharucha, Markham, ON	100
Iranian Zoroastrian Association	98

Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston Area	42
Noshir Motivala, Nashua, NH	40
Zarine Ranji, Clarksburg, MA	30
Jam Jamshid, Thornhill, ON	30
Diana Vania, Markham, ON	30

1,021

Stanford University - Zoroastrian Studies

Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York	1,000
Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago	1,000
Zoroastrian Society of Ontario	1,000
Zoroastrian Association of Houston	1,000
Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston Area	500

4,500

ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS

Rohinton H. Tata, Myrtle Beach, SC	500
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500

FEZANA WELFARE & CRITICAL ASSISTANCE FUND

Estate of Late Homi Kapadia	24,000
Neville Sarkari, Gillette, WY	8,500
NR Trust - Navaz Bankwalla	5,000
Lydia Tata, San Francisco, CA	3,620
Adil Choksey, Alpharetta, GA	3,000
Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York	2,100

(Continued)

FEZANA WELFARE & CRITICAL ASSISTANCE FUND (Continued)

Edul & Niloufer Daver, Green Brook, IL	\$2,000
Dalal Family, City of Industry, CA	1,000
Christi Dadachanji, San Diego, CA	750
Rohinton H. Tata, Myrtle Beach, SC	500
Homi Cooper, Houston, TX	500
P and J.P. Sethna, Houston, TX	500
Nozer & Meenaish Damania, Collegeville, PA	500
Behram Kapadia, Montreal, QC	500
Fereidoon Demehri, West Vancouver, BC	440
Jamshed Antia, Bolingbrook, IL	350
Jal Birdy, Corona, CA	301
Yazdi Pithavala, San Diego, CA	300
Viraf Zack, Foster City, CA	300
Farrokh and Katy Cooper, Fair Oaks, CA	300
Roshen D. Patell, Stockbridge, GA	300
S&Z Vyas Charitable Foundation, Longwood, FL	251
Zoroastrian Association of Kentucky, Ohio & Indiana	250
Viraf & Anita Patel, Coppell, TX	500
Farokh & Maneck Contractor, Kenner LA	250
Dolly V. Kapadia, Plainsboro NJ	250
Pesi Vazifdar, Bolingbrook, IL	201
Zoroastrian Association of Michigan	200
Vispi Shroff, Buena Park, CA	200
Rohinton Desai, Spring, TX	200

Meheryar N. Rivetna, Spring, TX	200
Kavasji & Pouruchisti Dadachanji, San Diego, CA	200
Debbie Aliya, Fenwick, MI	200
Behram & Zenobia Panthaky, Falls Church, VA	200
Azita Dehmobed, Port Coquitlam, BC	200
Noshir K. Balsara, Burnaby, BC	200
Schwab Charitable Fund - Dhun Mehta	200
Zerin D. Bharucha, Herts, UK	160
Baizad Todiwalla	151
Marzban Marzbani, Schaumburg, IL	130
Shahrukh Tarapore, Philadelphia, PA	121
Adi & Freny Gandhi, Los Angeles, CA	102
Sheroy Haveliwala, Missouri City, TX	101

Nozer Dungor, Spring, TX	101
Naju R. Homavazir, Toronto, ON	101
Jasmine & Yazdi Mistry, Sugar Land, TX	101
Erna Fatakia, Riverside, CA	101
Burjor & Vira Santoke, Huntington Beach, CA	101
Parvez Mody, Orangevale, CA	101

59,834

(Continued)

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DONATIONS RECEIVED - MARCH 1, 2014 TO AUGUST 31, 2014 (Page 2)

FEZANA WELFARE & CRITICAL ASSISTANCE FUND (Continued)

Xerxes Dorabjee, San Francisco, CA	\$100
Vispi Shroff, Buena Park, CA	100
Sorabji Family, Campbell, CA	100
Shahrukh Kanga, Sugar Land, TX	100
Zenobia Sribnick, Rego Park, NY	100
Sarosh Patel, Fremont, CA	100
Roshni Hebert, Largo, FL	100
Nergish J. Pardiwalla, Rockford, IL	
Kersi Choksey, Lombard, IL	100
Kairas Rabadi, Indianapolis, IN	100
Hormuzd & Binaifer Dolasa, Coquitlam, BC	100
Homyar Madan, Mason, OH	100
Hilla Singh, Hainesport, NJ	100
Giti Rostami, Dayton, OH	100
Debbie Marolia, Hartland, WI	100
Daulat Engineer, Glen Ellyn, IL	100
Bahadur Sarkari, Richmond, TX	100
Kershaw Byramji, Houston TX	100
Scheherzade Kassim, Longwood, FL	100
Behram & Shireen Divecha, Richmond, BC	88
Tina Karanjawala, Houston, TX	51
Percy & Roshni Kanga, Cherry Hill, NJ	51
Marzi Daroowalla, Westminster, MD	51
Jimmy Antia, Cincinnati, OH	51
Shiraz Irani, Tampa, FL	50
Pervin Amroli, Woodland Hills, CA	50
Parveen Irani, Houston, TX	50
Ollia Revocable Living Trust, Lakeland, FL	50
Jamshid & Dilshad Kekobad Family Fdn., Santa Clara, CA	50
Hoshang & Amavaz Sethna, Missouri City, TX	50
Rusi Tavadia, Novi, MI	50
Farrokh Bhandari, Toronto, ON	30

62,407

GRAND TOTAL

\$ 81,683

FEZANA JOURNAL SPONSORSHIP

Anonymous	\$6,000
Keky Dastur, Karachi	50
	<hr/>
	6,050

RETURN TO ROOTS PROGRAM

Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania & New Jersey	1,000
Pearl Ball, West Caldwell, NJ	1,000
	<hr/>
	2,000

Do all the good you can. By all the means you can.

In all the ways you can.
In all the places you can.
At all the times you can.

To all the people you can.
As long as ever you can.”

John Wesley (1703-1791)

The birth of a new Dar-e-Mehr is a rare and momentous occasion. We were lucky to witness the inauguration of the newest Dar-e-Mehr in North America on September 20th, 2014 in Boyds, Maryland, in the vicinity of Washington D.C.



The Kamran Dar-E-Mehr is the home of the Zarathushtis of the Washington D.C. area and the permanent home of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington (ZAMWI: www.zamwi.org) (photo above)

Navroz Gandhi, President ZAMWI writes (photo left)

“I am writing to inform you that the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, Inc. (ZAMWI) is having its opening celebrations for the Kamran Dar-e Mehr this Saturday, September 20th.

This Dar-e Mehr is due to the munificence of the late Khodaramod Kamran, his wife Banoo, and the entire Kamran family, and is also made possible with the donations of over 200 additional individuals and 5 associations.





While Mr. Kamran unfortunately passed away before he could see the opening of this Dar-e Mehr, we will be remembering him with deep gratitude and affection during the opening jashan and calling on his fravashi to bless this auspicious occasion.”

Saturday September 20th was a beautiful, sunny, bright day in Boyds, MD as over 250 Zarathushtis gathered at the Dar e Mehr. The gathering was called to order by young MC Urvaksh Patel who invited the mobeds to come up on stage to begin the Jashan. ZAMWI’s own Ervad Brigadier Behram Panthaki led the Jashan accompanied by Er. Soli Dastur of Florida, Er. Adi Unwalla of New Jersey, Er. Noshir Karanjia of New Jersey and youth Mobydyar Zen Pandey of ZAMWI. After the benediction was over, Mrs. Banoo Kamran cut the ceremonial ribbon to inaugurate the Dar e Mehr. (photo above)

Navroz Gandhi and other past Presidents of ZAMWI spoke about the process of building the Dar e Mehr, of Mr. Kamran’s massive drive and determination, and the entire Kamran family’s support both in terms of time and money, without which this would have remained a pipe dream. Donors big and small were thanked for their contributions.

Other dignitaries including Katayun Kapadia, President FEZANA and Homi Gandhi, Vice President FEZANA conveyed the congratulations of the Zarathushtis all over North America. This was done both in English and Persian.

Shahin, the daughter of Mr. Kamran thanked the audience and laid out the vision of her father in building the Dar e Mehr. Shahin is also the President of the Kamran Foundation, a new entity that owns the property and has leased it to the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, Inc.

The immediate past-President of ZAMWI, Mr. Mehrdad Aidun, also spoke. The previous Board served for almost five years and completed the bulk of the transactional and construction issues. The ZAMWI Constitution was specially amended to allow the previous Board to stay in office for an additional period in order to finalize the complex transactions with the Kamran Foundation.

The formal part of the program was followed by music and dance performances by the local ZAMWI youth, and concluded with the melodious rendition of the Khan Ashem Vohu.

The function ended with a beautiful lunch spread out on the lawns of the Dar e Mehr.



Everyone present realized that they had been part of a very historic event. We are in the 14th year of this century and this is only the second Dar E Mehr to be inaugurated. The previous one was in Dallas, Texas. The last one to be inaugurated in India is even further back. The strength of the Zarathushti community of ZAMWI can be seen in the fact that two functions needed to be organized, the first one in the morning and a similar one (without the jashan) in the evening. The building has occupancy restrictions set by the local fire department; and the 500+ folks who RSVP'd forced the organizers to split the crowd into two functions.

While most of the work is done, the Prayer Hall is still to be furnished. ZAMWI hopes to do it in the weeks and months ahead.

Dar E Mehrs in North America are growing. Many of them are brand new buildings from the ground up, that showcase the architecture, hopes and aspirations of the Zoroastrian diaspora in the "new" land. In the next few years other Dar E Mehrs are poised to be built, most notably the one by the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York, that broke ground in July of this year.

Interesting and happy times for the Zoroastrian diaspora in North America loom ahead.

The above write-up has been edited and updated since it was first published. Corrections and further details were provided by Navroz Gandhi, President ZAMWI and Kersi Shroff, ZAMWI Board Member.

ARZAN SAM WADIA

Photos Parsi Khabar 2014

THE LONDON COMMUNITY DISCUSSION GROUP

Zoroastrians of London, Ontario, Canada came together sometime around 1986-1987. At that time there were quite a few young children and the parents expressed a desire that their children should have some formal teaching about our religion. So we began with 5 or 6 children aged around 6 years and in a span of 10 years we had expanded to 25 children with 2 classes! We followed the curriculum devised by our late Putli Byramji of Oakville and Putli Mirza. Some of our scouts who were in the scouting movement earned their religion badge. The classes were held once a month and at the end of the year (June) children got a certificate for their successful learning.



After 10 years we changed the venue to a rotating one (each family hosting one a year) but still held on the 1st Sunday of each month under the leadership of Ervad Tehemton Mirza as by now the children had grown up and were able to follow discussions. We have two Iranian Zarthushti families who are eager participants and our group helped one family with their immigration as well as settling down in London.

There are no *formal* goals of the group; as Tehemton often says "our religion is a fun religion!" We get together for all the happy events such as Navroze, New Year in addition to getting together on the first Sunday of each month. We conduct Jashans and Ervad Tehemton Mirza was also responsible in training 2 Mobydars who were successfully initiated almost 2 years ago. At each session participants contribute (not compulsory) and at the end of the year the money is distributed to a worthy charity or individual. Last year we started the muktad prayers for the 5 gatha days with everybody participating and contributing.

London being a University city (University of Western Ontario) attracts many Zarthushti students and we always make them welcome and include them in our activities. Please feel free to contact us if you are passing through London and would like to participate in our discussion group. In conclusion, the approximately 10 Zarthushti families who live in our beautiful university city, live in harmony and mutual cooperation.

Submitted by Guloo Austin, London, Ontario, Canada, gulooaustin@hotmail.com

THE 14th ZOROASTRIAN GAMES – A HUGE SUCCESS

NIMA PATEL
Zoroastrian Sports Committee

In 1988, the Zoroastrian Sports Committee (ZSC) began organizing the Zoroastrian Games, or Z Games, as a means of uniting Zoroastrians, particularly youth, through the venue of sports and healthy competition. The Z Games have since come to be one of the most anticipated events in the Zoroastrian community worldwide.

THE 14TH Z GAMES BY THE NUMBERS

This year, the Games attracted roughly 700 athletes and over 2000 spectators from six countries (USA, Iran, Canada, France, Germany and Australia), serving as a unique showcase of the diversity among Zoroastrians. For the first time, Zoroastrian athletes from Iran were able to obtain visas and participate in the competition. And though ZSC was founded by a small group of Iranian youth, the events have each year been attended by an increasing number of Parsi Zoroastrians – a trend that the group actively works to expand.

We had 14 adult volleyball teams, 12 adult basketball teams, 7 youth basketball teams, over 100 track n field participants, over 70 table tennis, over 30 tennis and over 45 swimming participants. Over all we had 700+ athletes and 2,000+ spectators. A fantastic showing of Zarathushti sportsmen!!

While the competitors spend the months leading up to the Games preparing in the gym, the eight people that make up ZSC (**Niaz Kasravi, Behnaz Dianat, Behrouz Mehrkhodavandi, Katy Salamati, Ramin Shahriari, Samira Kasravi, Arsham Dianat, and Nima Patel**), spend those months actively engaged in preparation mode.

A LABOR OF LOVE

The Games are traditionally held on the 4th of July holiday, yet the Committee begins planning almost a year in advance. The process includes: selecting a university; creating a fully web-based registration platform; booking social event venues and entertainment; marketing the event using traditional and social media; booking and assigning dormitories for participants; and ironing out the complicated logistics of scheduling the competition itself.

Another key task for the group is fundraising to meet the growing costs of the event. On average, the Z Games cost \$200,000. As the official sports committee of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA), and a nonprofit entity, ZSC relies wholly on donations from generous community members, working to cultivate the idea of philanthropic giving among Zoroastrian adults and youth.

COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION IS KEY

Due to expanded fundraising efforts and the coming of age of a group of Zoroastrian youth who grew up attending ZSC events, this year ZSC garnered the financial support of a large number of Zoroastrians under the age of 30. Their contributions, along with donations from other supporters, allowed the group to increase the quality of the event and offset the growing cost of hosting the Games. In addition to those who contributed financially, the Games were made possible by over 100 volunteers who gave their time taking on tasks large and small to ensure a successful event.

Zoroastrian parents also play an important role in helping ZSC meet its goal of creating unity among the youth. It is solely due to their support and encouragement that the Z Games are able to attract a large number of young people as athletes and participants.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

In the end, the growing success of the Z Games is based not only on community support and the time that volunteers put in to making these events great, but also the underlying notion that the only way to move forward as a community is to integrate all the diverse parts that make the Zoroastrian Community unique:

Iranians, Parsis, those who have chosen to accept the Zoroastrian faith as their guiding philosophy, and community members scattered all across the globe. With support from the community, ZSC looks forward to celebrating another 25 years.

The 2016 games will be held in Chicago For more information and to see the photos from this year's event, please visit: www.zathletics.com.

Organizing committee standing from left : Katy Salamati, Ramin Shahriari, Arsham Dianat, Behrouz Mehrkhodavandi, Nima Patel. **Sitting from left:** Niaz Kasravi, Behnaz Dianat, Samira Kasravi



14th ZOROASTRIAN GAMES-- PHOTOS



GAHAMBARS AROUND THE HAFTA KESHWAR ZAMIN A TRADITION TO PERPETUATE

Ervad Soli P. Dastur, Guest Editor

After the Tele Class on Gahambars, which was broadcast from Hira Villa, Sarasota, Florida, on Subnday April 6th, Dolly Dastoor, Editor-in-Chief of FEZANA Journal, wrote to me:

Thank you for a very educative and illuminating teleconference. I learnt a lot. And, it also gave me an idea: To dedicate the cover story of the Fall FEZANA Journal to Gahambars. It will also coincide with the (NA) Congress (in LA in December 2014).

She requested me to be the guest editor for this issue and select a co-guest editor to help. Of course, Dolly would be available to advise, guide, and help. I selected Kayomarsh Mehta, from Chicago, as our co-guest editor; Kayo graciously accepted the position.

The Fall 2014 FEZANA Journal's theme is:
GAHAMBARS AROUND THE HAFTA KESHWAR ZAMIN—A TRADITION TO PERPETUATE!

With this theme in mind, we collected articles authored by renowned writers from the Hafta Keshwar Zamin that expound on the meaning of the Gahambars, their scriptural references, their celebrations in Iran during the 19th and early 20th centuries, and during the early 20th century in Mumbai (and in Gujarat villages), including separate Gahambars for only Parsi women.

Next, we have a great synopsis of how Gahambars are celebrated over the Hafta Keshwar Zamin — from Iran to India, from Mumbai to Dubai, from Sydney to Auckland, and throughout North America. This kaleidoscope presents a smorgasbord of Gahambar celebrations going on all over the Hafta Keshwar Zamin and covers aspects such as prayers, Hum Bandagis, communal cooking, and sharing of the feast.

We will look at the marked difference between the Gahambar celebrations held by our Iranian Humdins and our Parsi/Irani Humdins. For example, our Iranian Humdins distribute only dried fruits (*lork*) and large naans (*siroog*), they do not have meals; whereas, our Parsi/Irani Humdins prepare sumptuous

meals, generally served on banana leaves. Another difference is that the Iranian Humdins use the Fasli (seasonal) calendar, which has all six Gahambars occurring at their correct seasonal times; whereas, our Shehenshahi and Kadmi Humdins celebrate the six Gahambars according to their local calendars — which do not take place during the appropriate seasons. For instance, they celebrate the last Gahambar which should be just before the Jamshedi Navroze, the vernal equinox (March 21), during August or July, respectively. This shift is the result of local calendars not being intercalated with a leap day every fourth year.

We are making a fervent appeal to our Parsi/Irani Humdins to celebrate our six Gahambars according to the seasonal Fasli calendar, regardless of whichever calendar they may use day-to-day.

With this as background, here is a summary of the articles appearing in this issue for your reading pleasure:

We start off with our respected Dasturji Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary of Tehran, Iran, explaining how all six Gahambars are now celebrated in Iran. He writes about his experiences as a young boy in Mumbai and describes how the Irani Humdins in Mumbai used to celebrate these Gahambars at the correct seasonal times. He tells us how he used to go on a bicycle for miles to collect donations, especially from Irani restaurants throughout Mumbai. What dedication!

Then we have our own Mobed Saheb Ervad Jehan Bagli who presents the meanings of the six Gahambars and the exact times they should be observed, as required by our scriptures. He augments his article with many helpful scriptural references. He emphasizes the importance and sanctity of the Gahambars and stresses how well our Irani Humdins celebrate all six Gahambars at their correct seasonal times. He mentions the old custom of *Vaqf* (charitable bequests) that is observed by many Irani families (the setting aside of their estates in a trust that fund local Gahambar celebrations). He also compares *Vaqf* trusts with the Gahambars started by the First Baronet Sir Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy in

Gahambars

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Mumbai and in Gujarat villages. He quotes a very interesting episode during the reign of Noshirwan Adel, as written in the Bahman Punjya's *Rivayat*,

In his article, *A Link to Ancient Times*, our Iranian scholar, Fariborz Rahnmoon, emphasizes that — unlike the holy, but unscientific modern era calendars — the ancient Zarathushti calendar was a scientific and precise solar calendar. All Zarathusti festivals were the celebration of solar and seasonally-related events. He explains how the ancient word New Year in King Jamshid's time was named New Day (*Now Rooz*) by Zarathushtra at his Lake Hamoun observatory, in the Balkh kingdom, during 1725 BCE when the vernal equinox coincided with sunrise.

He also explains how the two original Gahambars (when originally celebrated in the Arctic) became six when the Aryan's migrated south to the temperate region. He laments that the Gahambars' historic mood has changed since the Islamic invasion and genocide from one of merriment to a somber ritual of prayers for the departed. He also hypothesizes that the ancient Iranian Siroog was transformed to *Papri* by the Parsis in India and the sweet with semolina to Parsi *Malido!* He concludes by stating that Gahambars should be joyful seasonal festivals of the farmers and celebrated in the open fields with dance music and merriment—of course, during the correct seasons, as dictated by their names.

Then we have yours truly presenting two articles taken from our 16th Tele Class. The first is *Gahambars — A Tradition To Perpetuate*, the second is *Gahambars in Olden Iran and India*. (Go to <http://zoroastrians.net/2014/04/07/gahambars-2/> to view the videos and slides.)

A Tradition to Perpetuate discusses the origin of Gahambars, their exact seasonal timings and ancient scriptural references for them. *Gahambars in Olden Iran and India* gives a glimpse of how Gahambars were celebrated in 1878 Iran, as recorded in an old travel book written by Kavasji Dinshawji Kiash and his friends who traveled in Persia during 1878–1880. He notes the stark differences between the observances of Gahambars in the dignified spiritual environment found in Iran versus the *Dhanshak* Gahambars observed in Mumbai and states his feeling that the Mumbai Parsis should adopt the Iranian model. This

article continues with a narrative by Sir J. J. Modi made during his travels in Iran in 1926 and compares the Gahambar celebrations held in Iran and India.

An interesting book, *Les Parsis* (written in Paris during 1898 by the French lady scholar Mlle. Delphine Menant), has some remarkable observations about contemporary Parsi customs, ceremonies, and celebrations in Mumbai. *Les Parsis* was translated into English by M. M. Marzban and renamed *The Parsis* and published in 1917. An interesting photo in the book shows a group of Mobeds at a Gahambar Feast eating from plantain tree leaves placed on a cloth laid on the ground — tables were still taboo to them. They ate their meals in *baj* (silence). After the food was served on plantain leaves, an attendant would shout, *Baaj Dharo, Saahebo!* (Mobed Saahebo! Now begin the Jamwaani Baaj and eat your meal in silence!). It also contains a photo from the Framji Kavasji Banàji's Atash Behram whose trustees inaugurated Gahambars solely for women of the Parsi community. WOW! Finally, it presents the annual Petit Gahambar in Udvada celebrated on the Iranshah Saal Gareh on Aadar Mahino and Aadar Roj.

Next Nairika Cornett covers Gahambars in Hafta Keshwar Zamin, in UK, Dubai, India, Australia, New Zealand, and North America as mentioned above. Kayomars Mehta then presents the Mobed Gahambars celebrated over the years in ZAC Chicago, sponsored by the Mobed family.

Finally, yours truly presents *A Tale Of Two Gahambars*, a nostalgic look at how Gahambars were celebrated outdoors during olden times in my village, Tarapur, near a Saghdi and Dokhma — today, they are in ruins. I will also discuss how the Gahambars are celebrated annually in Tarapur Dharamshalla, thanks to my brother, Mobed Palanji Dastoor.

I have included a brief article, with photos, of my charming meeting with Maestro Zubin Mehta, where I presented a bottle of our famous Soli sauce to him after his concert in Miami.the (see page 89)

Well, this just about explains this special edition on Gahambars. We fervently hope you will enjoy reading it!

May the Flame of Fellowship, Love, Charity, and Respect for all burn ever eternal in our hearts so we

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Soli at Vancouver WZYC Conference



can do HIS work with humility, diligence and eternal enthusiasm!

Atha Jamyaat, Yatha Aafrinaamah!

(May it be so as we wish!)

ERVAD SOLI P. DASTUR was born as the last of 11 children to a priestly family from Udwada. He was born in Tarapur a small village in India, Soli completed his high school SSC in the M. F. Cama Athornan Institute boarding school, completing his Navar, Martab, and Samel ceremonies in Udwada Iranshah Atash Behram. After B. Chem. Eng., he proceeded to Northwestern University, Evanston, IL to complete his Graduate studies. He joined P&G and retired after 30 years after which he consulted for 5 years.

At the NAZC, Houston, December 2010, Soli was awarded the Rohinton Rivetna Outstanding Zarathushti Award.

Since January 2011, Soli has conducted 17 tele-conferencing Zoroastrian Religious Classes. He started and has published over 80 weekly scripture extracts with translation. He has contributed articles in FEZANA Journal and WZO Hamazor Journal.

He met Jo Ann in Cincinnati on a blind date and has been married to her for 48 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 in his free time.

**Tele Classes Videos on Internet
Presented by Ervad Soli P. Dastur
Available at:**

<http://zoroastrians.net/category/z-tele-class/>

**WZSE – Weekly Zoroastrian Scripture Extract
An 80 weeks milestone reached the week of November 17
all extracts available on Joe Peterson’s website at:
<http://www.avesta.org/wzse/index.html>**

**Daily Zoroastrian Prayers Recorded in mp3 Format on Internet
By Dasturji N. D. Minocher-Homji and Ervad Soli P. Dastur
All of the Daily Prayers, Hormazd and Avan Yashts and Jashan
Prayers
<http://avesta.org/mp3/index.html>**

GAHAMBARS AROUND THE HAFTA KESHWAR ZAMIN – A Tradition to Perpetuate!

Kayomars Mehta. Co-Guest-Editor

In this issue of the FEZANA Journal we have highlighted the tradition of Gahambars around the Hafta Keshwar Zamin. As you go through the various articles, you will come to know that one of the most important obligations a Zarathushti has is to perform the six Gahambars every year or at least participate in their performance, according to our Zarathushti scriptures.

Gahambars are festivals set apart for congregational worship and for offering thanksgiving to Ahura Mazda. Liturgical services are performed to thank God for the different seasons, on the regularity of which depends the prosperity of mankind. The liturgical service is followed by a solemn feast, wherein members of the congregation participate. 'Gahambar-ni-Chashni', the ceremonial and communal eating of the things offered in the Gahambar ceremonies, forms an important part in the Gahambar celebration.

The Gahambars are festivals during which the people "join hands together to get benefit of mutual aid" as stated in the prayers. The subtle rationale of the Gahambar then is to promote brotherhood and fellowship in the community. The rich and the poor, the rank and the file are brought together to meet, interact socially and respect each other. Feasting with simple food should inculcate a reverence of Ahura Mazda for His simpler yet profoundly essential basic gifts of His creations, which are to be shared by each and every one of us. Sitting together at the common table should inspire each of us to ponder and realize that we have an obligation to strive to share the good things of life with others. That this sharing attitude need not be restricted to the Gahambar only, but indeed should extend into all other walks of our life. Last, but not the least, Gahambar festivity imparts a sense of timeliness. To participate in a Gahambar is akin to disciplining one's self that there is law and order in the universe and everything needs to be done at its proper opportune time (Gah).

In the 'Gahambar Aafrikan' it is stated that each Zoroastrian should participate in the Gahambar by either donating in kind or by donating cash to support and promote the activity. If a person cannot afford to donate in cash or kind, then at least he should be present

at the Gahambar prayers to participate in the praise and thanksgiving to Ahura Mazda for His creations.

The four words used in the 'Aafrikan of Gahambar' are **Yazad, Sazad, Khurad, Dehad**. They mean: *Pray, Perform, Eat, Give*.

The Shayasht la Shayast in Chapter XIX, enjoins, that in returning from a Gahambar feast one must recite four Yatha Ahu Vairiyo. This injunction seems to have been suggested by the fact of the recital of four Yatha Ahu Vairiyo at the commencement of the Aafrikan of Gahambar. According to J. J. Modi this number four symbolizes the above four ways in which one can participate in a Gahambar. They seem to suggest the different ways in which one can participate in the celebration of the *Gahambars*:

1. *One may join in the prayers recited and pray.*
2. *One may do some manual service for the good of others.*
3. *One may participate by offering some article of food.*
4. *One may give/donate something in kind or money. One is expected to perform an act of charity to celebrate the Gahambar.*

In the Pahlavi literatures of Gahambar Aafrikan and Gahambar Aafrikan, the Gahambars are identified with the six evolutionary stages with which the Universe was brought into manifestation by Ahura Mazda. Each Gahambar symbolically represents an evolutionary stage in the creation of the universe. If they were really representative of the stages of creation, their names would have been different from what they are. For example the name of the first Gahambar would have been 'Asmo-daiti' (creation of the sky), of the second 'Ap-daiti' (creation of waters), of the third 'zem-daiti' (creation of the earth), and so on. But the names of the six Gahambars are obviously the names of the times of certain seasons of the year, and not of creations. In whatever philological way we examine these names, none of them leads us to the idea of creation, as has been erroneously understood by the medieval tradition.

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One may also argue that at present, due to the different cultural, geographical and climatic conditions, these Gahambars do not fit into the current mode of our lifestyle. Historically, these celebrations were quite suitable to their peculiar life style and climatic conditions. Let us understand that the underlying purpose of the practice of Gahambars was to set apart an opportunity for the congregation to meet, worship and offer thanksgiving to Ahura Mazda. With the advent of Social Media, advances in communications, and with time and other constraints, observing Gahambars six times a year may not fit with our modern lifestyle. The community members have ample means of interacting amongst themselves. Also, as many of our community organizations offer regular, and often monthly, opportunities for the community members to congregate and worship together, the underlying purpose of Gahambar does get served. In some locations, Gahambars are observed on mutually convenient days, on weekends, instead of the precise dates of their observance. They are sometimes referred to as Community Gatherings instead of Gahambars.

You will also notice that in the past most Gahambars were funded by a corpus established by individual families. We need to come to grips on how to fund them going forward, if we are to perpetuate this tradition. The successful and desirable model would be to fund them with individual contributions of the community members. It is my wish that each community will tackle the challenges of frequency and funding of the Gahambars to the best of their ability and keep this tradition alive. With participation in Gahambars, we will ensure:

1. We are always conscious of and in touch with the Divine.
2. We have a grateful mindset for all that we have.
3. We constantly remember to live in consonance with Nature

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***Kayomارش**, along with his wife Nergish, is a founder member of the 'Zarathushti Learning Center of North America' which disseminates the teachings of the Zoroastrian religion with a goal of offering university level courses on Zoroastrianism. He is a regular host to college students of Comparative Religions at ZAC, Chicago.*

Kayomارش is the current President of WZO US Region and involved with various philanthropic activities of WZO worldwide. He is the Trustee, Assistant Secretary and Past President of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago, Past Chair of Religious Education Committee of FEZANA and a recipient of the FEZANA Outstanding Zarathushti Award in 2002.

Professionally Kayomارش is a graduate of Northwestern University with an MBA in Finance and is self employed as a broker and financial advisor. He enjoys the opportunity to educate individuals in matters of Personal Finance and is passionate in his mission offering his services pro-bono in order to work with families to change their financial lives, become financially independent and achieve their goals & dreams. Nergish and Kayomارش have four children and four grandchildren.

GAHANBARS: THE IRANIAN PERSPECTIVE

Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary

Our Iranian forefathers, mostly agriculturists and herdsman, donated a portion of their yield (cultivated grain, fruits, or animal offspring—or their bartered values) into a pool for community benefits. The amounts contributed were at each person's discretion—no set figures were specified, as is the case with government taxes or obligatory as in some religious edicts, e.g. the Islamic *Khoms* (1/5) and *Zakat* stipulate.

These voluntary contributions were made at seasonal intervals that coincided with the harvest seasons' yields and could be grain, other agricultural produce like fresh or dried fruits, or animal offspring. These intervals were called *Gaahanbaars* (*Gaah* = time/period and *Anbaar* = store room/act of storing). These cultural practices originated during ancient Iranian times and are believed to be pre-Zarathushtrian.

The periods, as we know from the Yasna and other Avestaic Scriptures, are:

1. *Maediuzarem* (mid-spring: from Roz Khorshed till Roz Dae Pa Meher of Mah Ardibehesht)
2. *Maediushahem* (mid-summer: from Roz Khorshed till Roz Dae Pa Meher of MahTir)
3. *Paeteshahem* (summer-ending: from Roz Ashtaad till Roz Aneraan, of Mah Shahrivar)
4. *Ayaathrem* (Animal fertilizing period: from Roz Ashtaad till Roz Aneraan, of Mah Meher)
5. *Maediarem* (Mid –year, long winter Aryan years: from Roz Meher till Roz Bahraam, of Mah Dae)
6. *Hamaspasmaedium* (Day time equalization/Spring Equinox are the Five Gatha Days)

Each of the Gahanbars is five days long, a duration that is popularly known, in Iran, as *Chahre*. As the sixth Gahanbar includes the additional five days of our religious year (six days, in the case of a Fasli Leap Year), it is popularly known as the *Gahanbar e Panje*. With the belief that *All Souls* return to visit their earthly abodes during the ten days prior to Navrooz (which starts at the dot of the Northern Hemisphere Spring Equinox)—an additional *Chahre*, called the *Panje Koochak* or Minor *Panje*, was added prior to the Gatha Days between Roj Ashtaad and Aneraan.

The basic and cultural background behind the practice of Gahanbars has been to instill the value of anonymous charity (*Dahesh* = *giving*). Donors contribute to a Gahanbar Pool (or fund), as a Religious duty and recipients withdraw from the Pool – as a religious duty. Contributions and withdrawals are a group, not individual, activity. Neither party becomes obliged to the other.

The *Aafrīngān ī Gāhānbār* Prayers, which form an essential portion of prayers during Gahanbars, urge each Zarathushti to give, within their means, into every Gahanbar Pool and, also, considers it a religious duty for every Behdin to attend and partake of the Gāhānbār Offerings

The idea, philosophy, and practice of Gahanbar has been so broadly adopted in Iran that Gahanbar Fund collection boxes are located around community centers for every conceivable occasion, even outside the Gahanbar Chahres, ranging from event celebrations to warding off evil times. Celebrations occurring outside the Gahanbar Chahre are called *Toojee (Public) Gahanbars*.

Gahanbar Celebrations, provided they are religiously maintained and conducted, are meant to achieve:

1. A chance for community members to get together in a festive social/religious gathering
2. Prayer recitations, mainly in the memory of *Hamaa Ravanan*, i.e. All Souls.
3. Distribution of meals and other items of daily needs amongst the participants and delivery of them to the doorsteps of those who reasonably could not attend.

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4. Instilling the Spirit of Charity into the community members, especially into our youth.
5. Creating and perpetuating the reputation that “Zarathushti thy name is Charity.”
6. In Iran, bequeathing one’s earthly assets to a Gahanbar Fund has been common for those who have had no offspring or who felt threatened with looting, forced confiscations, or the possibility that the entire estate might go to one or more family members who embraced Islam. Such endowments have been registered under the Islamic Waqf laws and have, always been honored and protected by the State and by Public.
7. The rules governing the well-known Islamic law *Waqf* (endowment funds or properties) require that the main investment must remain “protected” and that only the interest earned on cash endowments, rent, and agricultural produce from properties or land can be spent. As such no property that has been registered can be sold by the inherited party or their trustees. Neither have any of them been confiscated for whatsoever reason.

Because of mass emigration from Iran over the past few decades, numerous Gahanbars have been left in the care of Anjumans or Zarathushti organizations, who hold Gahanbars with multiple name recitations within a common Prayers and Feasting Ceremony. Yet a good percentage of the present Iranian Diaspora, in and out of Iran, has remained faithful to their ancestral commitments to Gahanbar Funding and tries to have individual celebrations.

The Tehran Anjuman e Mobedan faithfully starts every Gahanbar Chahre with a brief *Ijashny* ceremony, beginning with *Ushahin Gaah*, followed by proper Gahanbar Rituals (at the start of *Havan Gaah*), which are well attended on every occasion.

While praying the condensed *Ijashny*, we (Mobed Ramin Shahzadi, Mobed Soroushpour and myself) pound the previously soaked Hoama twigs and prepare gallons of diluted Hoama juice, which will be served to the multitude of attendants who have a strong belief in the positive energy enhancing effects of Hoama. Some believe that by pounding and striking the Havaneem while pressing on the Barasmana (held between the Maahroo stands) and looking up, a portion of the vast storage of energy that surrounds us, all the way up to the Heavens, becomes concentrated and heightens the sanctified solution’s efficaciousness. Besides drinking



*Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary pounding the Hoama twigs
and distributing the water to the faithful on pge 22*

Gahanbars

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the tonic on the spot, many participants take some portions home to the sick and those believers who could not attend.

A sumptuous breakfast donated by a volunteering person or family is served after the ceremony.

As for the Prayers over Gahanbars, we have three, or rather four, versions of Gahanbar Celebrations:

- For the first five out of the six Chahres (specified Gahanbar periods) the *Aafringan Gahanbar*, *Aafringan Dahman*, *Karde Sarosh*, and *Hamazoor Dahman* are recited
- For the *Hamaspas Meidium Gah*, or the *Gatha Days* we replace the *Aafringan Gahanbar* with a special one called *Aafringan Panje Bozorg* (*Aafringan* for the Big Five Days). We also have the *Panje Kuchak*, (*Small Five Days Gahanbar*) which fall between *Roj Astad & Aneram* before the *Gatha Days*. Here, yet another *Aafringan* is written, called *Aafringan Panje Kuchak*, which replaces the *Aafringan Gahanbar* of item one.

The above Gahanbars are observed as a result of commitments made by ancestral members who left specific portions of their property in the custody of their descendants, or a local Anjuman or priests, often to make sure they are not looted or inherited by a member of the family who embraced Islam. So each Gahanbar is recited in the name of a specific donor or others as specified by the donor.

In addition to the previously discussed Gahanbar celebrations, we have the *Tooji Gahanbars*. These have evolved and are still observed as a group or individual means of meting out charity—for the sake of charity. Occasionally, they are used to drive away evil times and oppression. Such a Gahanbar is prayed, for the benefit of All Souls (*Hama Ravanan*) and may be observed during the specified Gahanbar Chahres or at any time of the year.

Photos courtesy of <http://amordadnews.com/neveshtehNamyesh.aspx?NId=12481>



Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary is a member of the Board of Directors (Managing Committee) of the Tehran Anjuman e Mobedan having been elected repeatedly to serve for over 30 years to manage the Anjuman's affairs and his constitutional duties. He has been authorized by the Iranian Ministry of Justice as the sole Zarathushti marriage license issuing authority in Tehran. Born in Yazd, he received his Electronics degree from St Xavier's Technical Institute in Mumbai and worked at J.N. Marshall in India and at IBM, Honeywell, a medical instrument distributor and as consultant to several Glass manufacturing plants, in Iran firouzgary@gamil.com

GAHANBARS—THE MOST SACRED ZARATHUSHTI FESTIVALS

Ervad Dr. Jehan Bagli

We know that *Gahambars* are seven seasonal festivals celebrated by Zarathushtis. However, little is known when, why, or how they became known as Gahambars.

These annual feasts are religious obligations of all Zarathushtis: six of which celebrate the seasonal changes important to an agricultural society, the other is the festival of New Year Day, Nowruz, which honors and celebrates the creation of the sacred Fire on or near the Vernal Equinox. Zarathushtis believe these festivals were founded by Zarathushtra and, consequently, are held as most sacred¹.

GAHANBARS DEFINED

The six feasts marking the change of seasonal phases were known in the Avesta as *Yairya Ratavo* (times of the year) from *Yairya* (year), which implies annual rites held at particular times. In the Pahlavi or Middle Persian era, *Gathas* are known² as *Gahan. Bar*, in Pahlavi or Middle Persian, means “time or turn.” Thus, the Persian term for Gahanbar can be translated as “turn to the Gathas.”

Gahanbar may have been coined when the five Gathas were intercalated (interpolated in a calendar) in our religious calendar. The recitation of these Gathas’ was considered highly meritorious when done on these holy days that encouraged Zarathushtis to “turn to the Gathas.” The word Gahanbar then became associated with *Hamaspathmaidhya* (the last seasonal festival), traditionally observed during the Gatha days. In time, the term Gahanbar was extended to five other seasonal feasts³. However, some scholars have attempted to analyze the term *Gah-anbar* and have interpreted⁴ it as “the proper time (or, season).” The term Gahanbar in Parsi Gujarati has been altered to *Gahambar*.

The seasonal festivals were originally observed for only a single day. However, at some early time the old 360 day year was changed to the 365 day tropical solar year through the introduction of the epagomenae (intercalation) of the five Gatha days. This resulted in the shift⁵ of all the holy festivals by five days. Iranian Zoroastrians lived with this confusion for several decades with the old and the new festival days—five days apart. Only after the Sasanian era¹ did the confusion end when all festivals became five day observances in accord with the five intercalary days. The Avestan names, their meanings and the days of their observance are listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1. GREGORIAN CALENDAR DATES OF THE SIX AGRICULTURALLY-RELATED GAHANBARS FESTIVALS

Avestan Names	Meanings	Dates of observances	Days from New Year day
<i>Maidhyoizaremaya</i>	Mid-spring	April 30–May 4	41-45
<i>Maidhyoisam</i>	Mid-summer	June 29–July 3	101-105
<i>Paitishahya</i>	Harvesting time	September 12–16	176-180
<i>Ayathrima</i>	Homecoming of herds	October 12–16	206-210
<i>Maidhyairya</i>	Mid-year/winter	December 31–January 4	286-290
<i>Hamaspathmaidhya</i>	Fravardegan days	March 16–20	361-365

Although the meanings of the first three are self explanatory, the last three need to be clarified. The “homecoming of the herd” during *Ayathrema* celebrates bringing cattle to shelter before winter sets in. Although *Maidhyairya* is often interpreted as mid-winter, it means “mid-year.” This suggests that during the checkered history of the Zarathushti calendar the year was reckoned from the summer solstice. *Hamaspahmaidhya* extends over the last five days of the Gathas. It is also the time when daytime and night are of about equal duration and is the time when Zarathushtis remember departed souls. Analytically, this word can be interpreted as “*hama* (all) *pathan* (paths) *maidhya* (in the middle).”

GAHANBARS CELEBRATED IN THE ORDER OF AHURA MAZDA’S CREATION

Eventually, the highest sanctity was conferred on these festivals by associating them with the creations of Ahura Mazda in the order of their creation. The Gahanbars distribution over the year reflects the periods during which the creation came into existence (see Table 2). In the *Afrin-e-Gahanbar*, the lengths of time associated each creation are described as: *Panchacha-chathwarestemcha* (45 days), *Khshavashtim* (60 days), *Panchacha haptaitim* (75 days), *Thrishtem* (30 days), *Ashtaitim* (80 days), and *Panchacha haptaitim* (75 days). These feasts were originally observed during the 45th, 105th, 180th, 210th, 290th, and 365th day of the year. Nowruz, the celebration of the creation of Fire, is observed on the first day of the New Year—*Roz Hormazd* of *Mah Fravardin*. With the adoption of the 365 day calendar, the four days preceding these festivals were added to make them a five day celebration.

TABLE 2. DURATION FOR EACH OF AHURA MAZDA’S CREATIONS

Avestan Names	Creations	Days for each Creation
<i>Maidhyoizaremya</i>	Heavens	45
<i>Maidhyosam</i>	Water	60
<i>Paitishahya</i>	Earth	75
<i>Ayathrima</i>	Plant Kingdom	30
<i>Maidhyairya</i>	Animal Kingdom	80
<i>Hamaspahmaidhya</i>	Humans	75

It is clear from the Gregorian dates in Table 1 that the celebration of the first *Gahanbar Maidhyoizaremya* was during spring. *Bundahisn*, our creation text, states⁶ *Fravardin*, *Ardibehesht*, and *Khordad* are the spring months; consequently, the celebration of *Maidhyoizaremya* must fall during one of these months. This concordance is ideally fulfilled only by the religious calendar of Fasal, which couples *Roz Khorshed* (41st day of the year) to *Dae-pe-mehr* (the 45th day) of *Mah Ardibehesht* for this observance. *Afrin-e-Gahanbar*, in verse 5, says:

“*ardibehesht mah dae-pa-mihir rôz khûr rôz gâh girêt*
dae-pa-mihir rôz sar bahit maidhyôi- zaremayehe bût”

Owing to the lack of proper intercalations in the Shenshai and Kadimi calendars’ computations, over the centuries, observance of *Maidhyoizaremya* has become aligned with *Mah Adur* in the Shenshai and *Mah Dae* in the Kadimi calendars. The *Bundahisn* describes months *Adur* and *Dae* as those of autumn and winter, respectively. This dissonance is perpetuated throughout the annual cycle of celebrations, because these calendars are out of sync with natural events. ***It is spiritually and religiously inconsistent to observe these highly sacred ceremonies on the days conflicted with the religious assignments.***

GAHANBAR CELEBRATIONS: RELIGIOUS OBLIGATION, LOVE, AND SHARING



Figure 1. Sharing consecrated offerings at a Gahanbar in Yazd, Iran.

(Photo from <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/gahanbar/>)

Gahanbar celebrations are the times for worship and joy. Tradition requires that only necessary work should be done during these periods. The purpose of these festivals is to provide religious service and promote social interactions where Zarathushtis can interact in kindness and love, to share the food blessed during the service, and provide for the destitute. Since Sasanian times, the proper, chief liturgy for these ceremonies is the *Visperad* (a “Service to all Masters”) dedicated to the supreme Master Ahura Mazda. The names of these feasts appear in Ys 1.9 and in *Visperad* 1.2 and 2.2 where their spirits are invoked. In Ys 1.9 they are all revered as *ashaone ashaherathwe* (Asha-sanctified master of Asha). In contrast, the *Visperad* defines them as: *Maidhyozarem* (the milk giver), *Maidhyoisem* (the pasture giver), *Paitishahya* (the corn giver), *Ayathrima* (the breeder), *Maidhyairya* (the cold), and *Hamaspathmaidhya* (the time for ritual duties).

We learn from the late Professor Boyce⁷ that in 1964 *Yasht-e-Visperad* was still performed six times a year at the chief fire temple of Yazd, on the first day of each Gahanbar festival for the entire community. However, in Sharifabad and other villages, the services that could be performed were only the abbreviated *Baj* of *Yasht-e-dron* and *Afringan-e-Gahanbar* with a short prayer of thanksgiving.

These Gahanbars spread unevenly over the year, have been regarded as the holiest days of the Zarathushti year. As mentioned in the *Rivayets*, “If during these six periods the Gahanbars are not celebrated and if one who is poor does not resort to the place where the Gahanbar is celebrated it is a great sin, to such an extent that it is not proper for those who tie the kusti to interact with him and enter his house or

bring him to their house or assist him.”⁸

Interestingly, *Afringan-e-Gahanbar* in verse 7-12 of its *karda* describes the day and month when each of these festivals should be observed — this *Afringan* mentions only a single day for the celebration, compared to the five days stated in *Afrin-e-Ghanbar*. This suggests these two liturgies may have been composed during different eras. Furthermore, the verses in the *Afringan* outline penalties for those who do not make offerings or participate in celebrations. For example, a person is considered unfit to take part in the worship service of Mazdayasnians if they do not bring *Myazda* (offerings) to the observance of *Maidhyozarem*. Similarly a person is unfit to take a pledge of Mazdayasnian if they do not participate in *Maidhyosem* celebrations. There are also incremental penalties for lack of participation in later Gahanbars. Persons who do not celebrate *Hamaspathmaidhya* can lose [the protection of] Mazdayasnian Ahuric doctrine.⁹

Similarly, the *Aafrin-e-Gahanbar* systematically outlines the rewards for those who celebrate (*yazad*), perform (*Saazad*), eat or share the sacred food (*khurad*) or donate (*dehad*), and declares it sinful not to participate in these activities.

GAHANBARS: TIMES FOR EXEMPLARY BEHAVIOR AND GIVING

An interesting story described in Bahman Punjya's *Rivayat*¹⁰ starkly reflects the merit of sincerity that one should observe and participate in these festivals:

“Once **Noshirvan the Just** celebrated the Gahambar in Havan-gah of the *Ahunavad Gatha*. All the men of his extensive empire, high as well as low, participated in the festival and a large sum, befitting the great king, was expended on it. Noshirvan thought that no one before him had acquired such recognition as he.

The same night he saw a handsome youth in a dream, who told him that one Marzban of Karsan had that day acquired, through his own celebration of the Gahambar, great meritoriousness which could not even be compared to that accruing unto Noshirvan. Noshirvan sent for this Marzban and wanted to know how the latter celebrated his Gahambar. Marzban told him that he was unable to attend Noshirvan's celebration of the Gahambar and hence he sold one leaf of his double door and out of the income celebrated the Gahambar as best he could. Noshirvan wished to purchase the merit of the Gahambar of Marzban, but the latter refused to sell it. Noshirvan asked of his ministers if Marzban had attained to such high merits. They told him that Marzban expended half his belongings in this world by selling one-half of his doors on the celebration of the Gahambar,



Figure 2. Food for consecration and sharing at a Gahanbar celebration in Tajikistan
(Photo from <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/gahambar/>)

whereas Noshirvan, although he spent an enormous sum, must have spent only one *diram* out of a thousand from his inexhaustible treasure.”

Of all the Zarathushti celebrations, performance of Gahanbars in Iran was held in such high sanctity that they were regularly endowed as late as in the twentieth century. The belief of the benefit to the human soul, through observance of these feasts, was so firmly entrenched that Zoroastrians would set aside a part of their property (a house or a field) to sponsor one of these annual celebrations. The first evidence of these pious foundations comes to us from the Sasanian times.

This Zoroastrian custom provided a model for the Islamic institution of charitable bequests (*Vaqf*). It is interesting to note that such a pious bequest by a Zoroastrian was respected by the Islamic regime, and the endowment could not be alienated¹ even if a Zoroastrian embraced Islam in the hope to inherit the estate by Islamic law. Usually a family member was nominated as a trustee of the endowment who was responsible to set aside the financial resources needed for the annual celebration of the Gahanbar. The tradition of endowing the observances of Gahanbars has been perpetuated in India through the creation of the Gahanbar Fund by the Bombay Parsi Punchayat. Also, Sir Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy, the First Baronet, has donated substantial funds for Gahanbar celebration feasts in Bombay, Navsari, Surat, and Bharuch¹¹.

In Iran, these festivities were open to all; often it was a major undertaking to provide enough consecrated food to share. In contrast with *Dhan-shak*, *kabab* and *kuchumber* served during the Gahanbars in India, the Iranian Zarathushti feasts were generally less elaborate. There were three kinds of foods consecrated and served. The first festival delicacy was composed of seven kinds of fruits and nuts known as *lurk*. Usually this was a mix of dates, raisins, almonds, walnuts, plums, and dried apricots. The second was bread made from rye or wheat baked into little rounds called *dron* (Gujarati, *darun*). The last was meat from a sacrificed sheep or goat. At the common person's Gahanbar, *lurk* or bread would be served, but only at well-endowed Gahanbars were all three food items shared.

The Persian *Rivayats* also mention,¹⁰ “If one is unable to perform the Gahambar ceremonial, then two or three combined must participate in it; if this is still impossible then what is called *Gahambar-i-Toji* wherein all the poor celebrants can assemble together and can take part should be consecrated.” There is a record of such a communal celebration by the Parsi Zarathushtis in eighteenth century India. However, over time all six seasonal feasts were endowed in Iran; *Gahambar-i-Toji* was then reduced to an Afringan service dedicated to Ahura Mazda or Yazata with *lurk* and bread distributed as an act of piety and charity.

There are several other five day festivals in the Zoroastrian year whose observance is praiseworthy, but Gahanbars are particularly distinguished from them for their greater sanctity and their observances to this day remains a deed of highest virtue.

Atha zamyād Yathā āfrinami

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Best wishes, The XVII North American Congress Committee

GAHANBARS: A LINK TO ANCIENT TIMES

Fariborz Rahnamoon

“The coming of the seasons at the proper time of the solar year”

Haptan Yasht Ha 3

“I learn about and I work with the solar year, the righteous period”

Yasna Ha 1.9 Ha 3.11 Ha 4.14

Visparad 1.4

INTRODUCTION

Unlike the holy but unscientific modern era calendars the ancient Zarathushti calendar was a scientific and very precise solar calendar. All Zarathushti festivals were the celebration of solar and season related events.

The moon also played a role but a scientific one within the confines of the solar calendar; it was not used to track the days like in the other ancient civilization; instead they knew of the powers of the moon and took advantage of them.

“When the light of the moon waxes warmer,
Golden-hued plants grow on from the earth during the spring.”

Mah Yasht Ha 4

Modern science has also come to the same conclusion, namely that seeds sown in spring at the appearance of the crescent of the moon will grow better and produce richer fruits.

The Zarathushti year started with the celebration of the first day of spring and was called *Sal e Now* (New Year). According to the Avesta and the *Shahnameh* this celebration dates back to the time of Shah Jamshid, who initiated it by celebrating the first day of spring after the last Ice Age, some ten thousand years ago.

SO HOW DID THE NEW YEAR BECOME NEW DAY - NOW ROOZ?

Zarathustra, who had an observatory near Lake Hamoun, in the kingdom of Balkh, realized that the vernal equinox of 1725 BCE would coincide with sunrise in the vicinity of his observatory near the border of modern day Iran and Afghanistan. In other words the New Year and the New Day would start at the same moment and be a once in a lifetime event for those living in Balkh, so Zarathushtra named that New Year *Now Rooz* (New Day).

Vernal Equinox is a horizontal occurrence of the sun crossing the equator from south to north once a year and sunrise is a daily vertical occurrence from east to west, the two coincide every year at a different location on Earth and it takes about 72 years to return to the vicinity of the same longitude. Thus being a once in a life time event, it was but natural to celebrate that particular year with greater fanfare. When this phenomenon occurred in Persepolis in 487 BCE we see from the bas-reliefs the extent of the celebration.

Zarathustra also coined the word *Nim Rooz* (Mid-Day) to designate 63 degrees longitude as the Meridian, where when the sun is in the mid-day position there is sunshine all over the hemisphere,¹ from Japan and Australia to Europe and Africa. This is a daily feature and can be observed on the website, <http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/sunearth.html>. What better location can there be for a Meridian?

The celebration of these astronomical occurrences demonstrates the scientific knowledge of Zarathustra and his followers 3300 years before Galileo. It was after 1640 CE that the western world realized the role of the sun, and that the Earth was not the center of the Universe. Keeping these facts in mind we shall study the Gahanbars.

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Gahanbars are seasonal festivals explicitly celebrating an important farming related occurrence in each season.² With only four seasons, the celebration of six Gahanbars as seasonal festivals, at first seems to be out of tune. But keeping in mind the fact that the Zarathushtis had advanced knowledge and that their festivals were based on precise calculation like the equinoxes and solstices one realizes that the Gahanbars too are precise, but for the two different regions on Earth, where the ancestors of the Zarathushtis lived and flourished at different periods of their history. Initially the Aryans lived in the harsh Arctic region in *Aryana Vaejah* where

they had only two seasons or *Gahs*, seven months of summer from *Farvardin to Mehr* and five months of winter from *Aban to Esfand* just like in northern Canada.

In the middle of the *first Arctic Gah*, that is the summer season, when they harvested the corn in the month of Tir, they celebrated the harvest and called this celebration *Maidhyo-Shahem Gahanbars* (or the Mid-Summer Gahanbars). (June 29 to July 3) (8 to 12 Tir).

The *second Arctic Gah*, the winter season, which started in the month of Aban was celebrated just before the start of winter and was called *Ayeh-Threm* (the Coming of Winter). This was to celebrate the sowing of the winter crops which were generally root crops. (Oct 12 to 16) (20 to 24 Mehr)

Later when they migrated to the temperate region where they had four distinct seasons they did not discard these two Gahanbars but added the four new ones to represent the four seasons of their new homeland.

It is worth noting that, Mid-Summer in the Arctic region is in the middle of the month of Tir, but in the temperate region it is a month later in middle of Amordad. So also the beginning of winter in the Arctic is in the month of Aban, but in the temperate region it starts two months later in the month of Dey. By maintaining the same name and date, they kept the link to their ancient motherland alive.

The four new Gahanbars that were added to the two from the Arctic past are.

1. *Maidhyo-Zarem* (Mid Spring): when fresh vegetables are in plenty. (10 to 14 Ardibesht – 30 April to 4 May)
2. *Paiti-Shahem* (End of Summer): gathering of fruits. (Sept.12 to 16) (21 to 25 Shahrivar).
3. *Maidh-Yarem* (Middle of perfect rest): when farmers, shepherds and their animals are resting. (Dec 31 to Jan 4) (10 to 14 Dey).
4. *Hamas-Path-Maedem* (Equality of heat and cold, day and night): preparation for the revival of Nature. (March 16 to 20) (25 to 29 Espand).

Modern scholars and writers compare the Persian Zarathushti civilization to other ancient civilizations and cannot comprehend the fact that they were scientifically advanced. Scholars and archeologists have acquired considerable knowledge about Babylonia and Sumerian civilizations, believing that they were at the apex of civilization and, that if the Persians had anything superior, they most probably borrowed it from the Babylonians. Since most civilizations contemporaneous with the Zarathushtis were superstitious, many scholars assumed that Zarathushtis were also. For example, as there are six Gahanbars, scholars associated them with the personified version of Amesha Spentas. Others have linked the number six to the creation of sky, water, earth, plants, animals, and humans. Zarathustra's teachings are evolutionary — not based on creation — for he teaches how to progress towards perfection: *Khordad-Hurvata*.

CELEBRATION OF GAHANBARS

The celebration of Gahanbars over their long history has evolved. According to the *Vispered* Gahanbars were celebrations of events in the agricultural cycle—a kind of thanksgiving and time to enjoy the fruits of their labour. They were celebrated in the farms with plenty of food and wine, and with dance, music, and merriment over a period of five days.

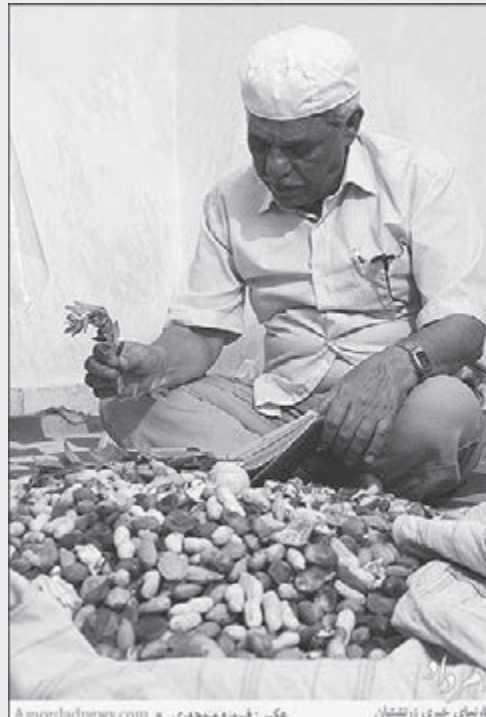
Today, Gahanbars have become a somber and serene event for the remembrance of dead family members. In Iran, at Yazd and Kerman, Gahanbars are celebrated in older ancestral homes some of which are no longer in use and others no longer liveable. Modern Gahanbars are usually celebrated in memory of the departed and not a celebration of the seasons. Food plays a central role and is the impetus for people to attend. They celebrate it according to the non-seasonal Kadmi and Shehenshahi calendars. Although the name and the date both relate it to seasons, nobody questions or understands the relationship any more. Even the prayers recited include those prayed for the departed soul. It has become more of a priestly affair rather than the farmer's festival that it originally was. Prayers have been developed and rituals so well formulated that one is made to believe that that is how it has been since its conception.

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In Iran, fruits and dry fruits of seven types each are part of the prayer rituals. A special fried dough called *Sirog*, and a sweet made from fried flour mixed with sugar syrup, is served with *Aash*, a mixed beans and herb soup — these are part of the customary menu. Other food items may vary depending on the finances of the party sponsoring the Gahanbar. There is no music, dancing, or merriment at these somber events. Up to the early 1900's it was celebrated discreetly, out of fear of their Muslim neighbours.

Of course the change from merriment to somber ritual of prayers for the departed stems from the period after the Islamic invasion and genocide, which left no room for merriment and plenty of departed souls for whom to mourn.



Those Zarathushtis that migrated to India after the Islamic invasion no longer had the distinct seasons in their new homeland in western India and for various reasons their calendars got mixed up and their priests made the calendar a part of their religious rituals, thereby making the calendars holy.

These calendars being seven and eight months behind have made the seasonal events even more meaningless and aided in the loss of the science behind the calendar and festivals.

In the Indian version of celebration, the *Sirog* has been miniaturised and called

Papri and, by adding semolina to the flour, a sweet named *Malido* is created. (photo above)

CONCLUSION

In the CE 1500s, when the Safavids dynasty in Iran reconverted the Muslims from Sunni to Shia, the remaining Zarathushtis were also forcefully converted. At that time, many Zarathushtis and the celebration of the Gahanbars and other cultural festivals went underground. There are stories that if a person bought seven types of dry fruit the shopkeeper flagged him as a potential Zarathushti and followed him to see where he was going — then they raided the location and harassed the Zarathushti that had assembled there. Using the same technique, many Zarathushtis found each other and regrouped. The celebration of these festivals in hiding and in secrecy caused a major change in the way it was celebrated. As music is restricted in Islam, it has slowly and surely been forced out of the Iranian and Zarathushti culture. For the same reason the little Iranian music that is left is sad music.

In the late 1800s there were as few as 7,711 identifiable Zarathushtis left in Iran. They had survived by taking refuge in the harsh desert of Yazd and Kerman. They were harassed in all possible ways, they were forbidden by the authorities to learn reading and writing, although most would secretly learn whatever they could. They were economically in dire straits with the *Jaziyeh* tax hanging over their head. Often, Zarathushti girls were abducted and the boys enslaved, all of which contributed to a change that turned the scientifically advanced culture into a superstitious community having limited knowledge of their history or religion.

It was only after 1860 when Maneckji Limji Hataria, a coreligionist from India, championed their cause

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and bought them partial freedom by paying the King a substantial amount in lieu of the dreaded Jaiyeh tax and secured for them and the other minorities the exemption from paying Jaziye for eternity. It was during this period that western scholars became interested in the Zarathushti religion and deciphered the Avesta language. Scholars visited Zarathushtis and based their translations on what they saw and learned. These initial works have become the bases of modern understanding of the Zarathushti religion and festivals including the Gahanbars. These scholarly researches have influenced the very practice of the religion by its adherents. Thus nobody knows of the science behind the celebration of the various festivals nor do they look for it although it is so obvious.

As for the Zarathushtis that took refuge in India, the majority would have been the younger generation that had the strength to survive the long journey. Naturally these immigrants would have had limited scriptural knowledge and very few would have had adequate theological knowledge. The proof of this is in the fact that in the later years they sent emissaries to Iran with religious questions and the answers obtained from them are recorded in books called the *Rivayats*, which have become the basis for the practice of the religion in India. To understand and find the true philosophy behind the festivals like Gahanbars we need to look beyond the books and information of the last 1400 years. We need to accept that Persians were wiser than their contemporaries and wiser than what most scholars perceive them to have been—most importantly, that their outlook and practices were scientific and not superstitious. That Gahanbars have nothing to do with Amesha Spentas or creation. While Gahanbars are seasonal festivals, they represent the seasons of two different regions on planet earth and are a link to the ancestral home of the Aryans. Gahanbars are joyful seasonal festivals of the farmers and so should be celebrated in the open fields with dancing, music, and merriment, during the right seasons as specified by their names.

May Wisdom Prevail.

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Photos courtesy of <http://amordadnews.com/neveshtehNamyesh.aspx?NId=12481>



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Note from Guest Editor

Mr. Fariborz Rahnamoon in his article follows the solar (Khursheedi) Iranian National Calendar consisting of first 6 months from Farvardin to Shahrivar of 31 days, next 5 months from Mehr to Bahman of 30 days and the last month, Esfand, of 29 days, except in a leap year or a century year, Esfand is of 30 days.

It is not the traditional Fasli calendar observed by some Parsis/Iranis which starts with March 21st as Farvardin Mahino and Hormazd Roj and continues for 12 months of 30 days each to Asfandard Mahino and Aneran Roj followed by 5 Gathas days from March 16 to 20 with Navroze on March 21st. On Leap Years and Century Years, an additional day called Avardad is added after the last Gatha for intercalation.

GAHAMBARS AROUND THE HAFTA KESHWAR ZAMIN—

A TRADITION TO PERPETUATE PART 1

Ervad Soli P. Dastur

NOTE: The following is the first part of a two-part series published in this issue of FEZANA Journal, which are based on the “Tele Class on Gahambars” written and delivered by the author on April 6, 2014 from his home in Hira Villa, Sarasota, Florida. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author.

GAHAMBAR—ITS ROOTS AND MEANING FROM OUR SCRIPTURES

There is no word in the Avesta that corresponds exactly to *Gahambar*; it is a word that came into being later. If one were to coin such a word, it would be “*Gaatuhaambar*.” However, the Avesta word that most closely carries the meaning of Gahambar is *Yaairya* (Yasna 1:9). It comes from *Yâré*, which is the same as the English “year.” *Yâiryâ* means “seasonal divisions of the year.” The word Gahambar is the Pahlavi *Gaasaanbaar*. As the word *Yâiryâ* comes from the root *yâ* (to go), so the word *gaas gaasaanbaar* and *gaah* in Gahambar comes from the root *gaa* (to go). The word means “collection (*ambaar*) of time (*gaah*),” i.e., “the full time,” “the proper (season) time.”¹

The original form of Gahambar is: *Ghaa-ê-ambaar'* (time or season for collection); at which time, food, liquor, fuel, and other stuffs were collected and sent to the chief, or supervisor, of the *Jashan*. This is stated in the *Aafringaan-e-Gahambar*.²

GAHAMBARS—THEIR AGRICULTURAL AND COSMOGONICAL³ ORIGINS

As discussed above, Gahambar means “the proper season time.” There are six Gahambar festivals or holidays, each lasting 5 days and occurring at specific times during the year. Originally, their importance was mainly from the agricultural or seasonal point of view. Later on, they were aligned with the 6 creations of Ahura Mazda: Heavens, Waters, Earth, Vegetation, Animals, and Humans.

Gahambar Name	Seasonal Association	Corresponding Creation
Maidhyozarem	Midspring	Heavens
Maidhyoshem	Midsummer	Waters
Paitishhayem	Harvest Time	Earth
Ayaathrem	Cattle Breeding Season	Vegetation
Maidhyaarem	Midwinter	Animals
Hamaspahmaedaem	Vernal Equinox	Humans

In our scriptures, Visperad 1.2, and Bundahishn Chap. 25, there is a direct reference to the names and their titles as follows:

We announce and perform the precise rites of the (six) yearly festivals: the ***Maidyozarem***, (the milk-giver) the ***Maidyoshahem***, (the pasture-giver), the ***Paitishahem***, (the corn-giver), the ***Ayathrem***, (the breeder) the ***Maidyarem*** (the cold), and the ***Hamaspahmaidyem*** (the vernal equinox), the special time for ritual deeds.⁴

ORIGINAL GAHAMBAR TIMINGS BY SEASONS

The original Iranian Calendar started on Navroze, March 21 (the Vernal Equinox). According to the *Gahambar Aafrin*, each Gahambar starts on a fixed day and lasts for 5 days:

Gahambar Name	Days from Navroze (March 21)	Seasonal Association	Gregorian Calendar
Maidhyozarem	41–45	Midspring	April 30–May 4
Maidhyoshem	101–105	Midsummer	June 29–July 3 (Tirangaan)
Paitishhayem	176–180	Harvest Time	September 12–16
Ayaathrem	206–210	Cattle Breeding Season	October 12–16
Maidhyaarem	286–290	Midwinter	December 31–January 4
Hamaspathmaedaem	361–365	Vernal Equinox	March 16–20, Vernal Equinox (Five days before Navroze, Panjeh Meh)

In Gahambar Aafrin, Verses 7 and 8, the exact timing of the first Gahambar is prescribed as:
(NOTE: Original text may be read in endnotes 5 and 6.)

Verse 7—On the 45th day (from Navroze), in the Ardibahesht Maah on Dae-pa-Meher Roj, Maidyozaarem Gaahambaar: On this 45th day, I, Ahura Mazda with the Amashaaspands named this Gaahambaar and created the Heavens.⁵

Verse 8—We consecrated this Gaahambaar up to the Dae-pa-Meher Roj of the Ardibahesht Mah (month), we named it Maidyozaarem Gaahambaar. It starts in Ardibahesht Mah on Khorshed Roj and ends with Dae-pa-Meher Roj, which is the Maidyozaarem Gaahambaar. During which Heavens were created. A big feast was performed by Me with Ameshaaspands, And all the Human Beings should also perform such feast!”⁴

Similarly, the other five Gahambar timings and their corresponding creations are mentioned in the same Gahambar Aafrin.

Only the Fasli calendar observes the correct timings of all 6 Gahambars, as it accurately adds a leap-year day every fourth year. The Kadmi and Shehenshahi calendars do not add leap-year days, which has resulted in the Gahambars being displaced by 4 and 5 months over the centuries, respectively. According to the Shehenshahi calendar, we celebrate the last Gahambar in mid-August rather than in mid-March.

GAHAMBAR CELEBRATION IS A ZARATHUSHTRI REQUIREMENT

Some of our scriptures discuss the importance of celebrating Gahambars by a Zarathushti.

In the Pahlavi *Mino Kherad* (Chap. 4) scripture, seven Principal Acts of Righteousness to be followed by Zarathushtis are enumerated—the first two are Charity and Truth. The third is The Celebration of Gahambars: “Gahambars or the phenomena of the seasons are one of the great acts of Wisdom worthy of the Omniscient Lord.”

Other references include:

The *Shayest Na-Shayest*, Chap. 12:31, (<http://www.avesta.org/mp/shayest.html>) lists some liturgical ceremonies that a Zarathushti should celebrate. The first among them is the need to celebrate the Gahambars.

The *Sad Dar*, Chap. 6:1-2, (<http://www.avesta.org/mp/saddar.html>) also places the celebration of the Gahambars at the head of a list of six religious acts.

The *Vohuman Yasht* Chap. 2:45), (<http://www.avesta.org/mp/vohuman.html>) prophesies that the non-celebration of the Gahambars will be an evil day for the world.

It means that it will be an evil day when man will cease to offer thanks to God for the creation of the phenomena of the seasons and their respective gifts.

PURPOSE FOR CELEBRATING GAHAMBARS

The primary purpose for celebrating the Gahambars is to offer thanks to Ahura Mazda for the proper Seasons. The world's prosperity depends on the Seasons; the celebrations of Ahura Mazda's six creations were added later.

Two principal functions in the Celebrations of Gahambars are:

- The performance of liturgical services like Jashan, Baj, and Visperad.
- The Communal Solemn Feast wherein members of a family, street, or town participate in *Gahambar ni Chaasni*—the ceremonial and communal partaking of things offered in Gahambar ceremonies.

HOW SHOULD GAHAMBARS BE CELEBRATED?

The four words used in the Gahambar *Jashan Aafrin*: *Yazad* (pray), *Saazad* (perform), *Khurad* (eat), and *Dehad* (give) are ways by which the Gahambars can be celebrated:

- Yazad—join in the prayers recited and pray.
- Saazad—perform some manual service.
- Khurad—participate in the feast by offering some article of food (the most favorite Parsee way to celebrate Gaahambaar!).
- Dehad—donate in-kind or monetarily.

I am sure all of us perform at least one of these four requirements in a Gahambar!

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5. "Panchaach Chathwarestemcha Maidyozaremyehe ashahe vahishtahe dathusho; Pa chahel-va-panj roj man Ahura Mazda Awaa Ameshaashpendaan, Fraaj-taasheed-hend, ku Aasmaan daad!" (Ervad Kangaji Gujarati Khordeh Avesta, pages 446 – 447)
6. "Gahambaar Yasht wa Maidyozarem-gaah naam nehaad, Ardeevahisht-maah Dae-pa-Meher Roj, Khur Roj, gaah geerad, Dae-pa-Meher Roj sar bahod, Maidyozaremyehe bood. Ku winarashneh Aasmaan andar aan zamaan paedaa be-kard. Awaa Ameshaaspedaan myazda kard, Mardoomaanach pa humanghusheete aawaayad kard!" (Ervad Kangaji Gujarati Khordeh Avesta, pages 446 – 447)

**Ervad Soli Dastur
(for bio see pp 17)**

Gahambars

AROUND THE HAFT KESHWAR ZAMIN - A tradition to perpetuate Gahambars in the Diaspora

GAHAMBARS IN THE DIASPORA

Nairika Kotwal Cornett

The most striking characteristic of Zarathushtis is our sociability. Social relationships pervade every aspect of Zarathushti lives and these bonds allow us to take action and affect. Our inherent sociability stems from the adaptive advantages of our ancestors who left behind an egalitarian culture, defined by a collective communal identity. Nothing better describes this communal unison than the celebration of *Gahambars*. Gahambars are possibly the oldest festivals celebrated by Zarathushtis. They are the only festivals mentioned in the Avesta. These festivals were originally agricultural in nature, but as the religion spread, they took on a religious dimension. Gahambars are communal festivals paying tribute to Ahura Mazda and his Amesha Spentas and creations. The celebrations of these festivals, which occur six times during the year, are a reminder of our roots, our principals and the most important tenets of our religion.

The celebration of Gahambars spurs Zarathushti communities into action and highlights their humanitarian efforts of being charitable, equitable, honest, and generous. Today, the Zarathushti diaspora continues to celebrate Gahambars, and in this article we focus on a variety of communities around the globe paying homage to their religion, its age-old practices and its people.

HONG KONG, CANTON AND MACAO

The Incorporated Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton and Macao have observed the Gahambar ritual and ceremony since the organization's inception. This group has tried to uphold its culture and traditions for younger generations to join in and appreciate and, at the same time, maintain harmony within the community as its first priority. During Gahambars, morning prayers are held at the Zoroastrian Building Prayer Hall and are typically open to only Parsis and Zarathushtis.



Over the years, to accommodate non-Parsi spouses and to honor the wishes of the deceased (which they had requested of their kin), Gahambar

dinners have been adjusted in respect of these wishes and are hosted as "Dinners in memory of ..(photo above)

This organization has six Gahambar dinners, which are attended only by Zoroastrian families and six modified Gahambar "Dinners in memory of ..." which are attended by Zoroastrians and their non-Zoroastrian families and friends. (photo right)



Neville Shroff, HongKong

Gahambars

AROUND THE HAFT KESHWAR ZAMIN - A tradition to perpetuate Gahambars in the Diaspora

ONTARIO, CANADA - ZSO

The Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) celebrates all six Gahambars according to the *Fasli* and *Shehenshahi* calendars. These celebrations are held at the ZSO *Darbe Mehr* and are sponsored by various families or the *Anjuman*. If the celebrations fall on a weekend, community members purchase groceries and volunteers help prepare the food at the *Darbe Mehr*. Weekday celebration dinners are prepared by Zoroastrian caterers and delivered to the *Darbe Mehr*. Ervad Bomansha Kotwal started the practice of *Gahambars* for ZSO approximately 30 years ago.

ONTARIO, CANADA - ZRCC

The Zoroastrian Religious & Cultural Centre (ZRCC) of Ontario celebrates all six Gahambars according to the *Fasli* calendar, as they are synchronized with the seasons on this continent. ZRCC has celebrated Gahambars ever since the formation of the Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation (OZCF), about fifteen years ago. Prior to having their own property they celebrated Gahambars at a local Ramada Inn, provided through the generosity of Mr. Avari, of Karachi, who owned the hotel. He not only gave them a place to hold prayers but also provided attendees with coffee and snacks.

Once a place of their own was established, ZRCC celebrated the Gahambars there. Attendance at the Gahambar averages approximately one hundred adults and children. Every Gahambar is sponsored by a family or group of families. They either cook the food themselves or order the food from a caterer. They also look after the fruits, flowers, dry fruits, *Malido*, *Sev*, *Ravo*, and other food, as well as the plates, glasses, forks, and spoons. On average, four priests conduct the prayers. ZRCC is blessed with several young priests who actively participate in all religious events and now lead most of the prayers with confidence, taking on the role of *Joti*. ZRCC also has an active *Mobedyar* who participates in almost all ceremonies. Priests usually pray *Atash Niyayesh*, *Doa Nam Setaayashneh*, two *Kardaas* (Gahambar & *Sarosh*), Gahambar *Afrin*, and *Tandoorasti*. For the last Gahambar, which falls during the *Gatha* days, they also pray the *Gatha Afringaan*. The association also performs a *Hum Bandagi* of *Tandoorasti* for all the ailing people within the community. Often, a short talk on a religious topic follows the prayer ceremony. As the Gahambar prayers can be done during a five-day period, ZRCC normally performs the prayer ceremony on a Sunday morning to enable more people to attend. If the five-day period does not cover a Sunday, the prayers are performed on a day convenient to most.

PENNSYLVANIA AND NEW JERSEY, USA

The Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey (ZAPANJ) community has an annual Gahambar; the 2013 Annual ZAPANJ *Gahambar* was held on October 27 at the Palace of Asia restaurant in New Jersey. This thanksgiving Jashan was conducted by Ervad Adi Unwalla, Ervad Noshir Karanja, Ervad Cawas Desai, Ervad Rohinton Madon, Ervad Behram Panthaki, Ervad Minocher Dadachanji, and *Mobedyar* Sam Bapasola.

The Gahambar was attended by about 120 members, which is about 60% of its local community. It was followed by a scrumptious lunch of *Dhanshak*, *Kababs*, *Navratan korma*, chili chicken with the *bha-naailu* (consecrated) fruits and *Malido*.

ZAPANJ Gahambars usually take place during the fall and are catered by the restaurant. The *Malido*, fruits, and flowers are donated by members of the community. In keeping with the spirit of the Gahambars, all costs for the function are covered by voluntary donations from members of the community.

Gahambar

AROUND THE HAFT KESHWAR ZAMIN - A tradition to perpetuate Gahambar in the Diaspora

Australian Zoroastrian Association (AZA) in Sydney:

The Sydney Zoroastrian community makes up the membership of Australian Zoroastrian Association (AZA) NSW. The AZA organizes one Gahambar, which is always held on the second Sunday in the month of June. It is winter in the Southern Hemisphere.



event was catered by community members and was held at the Darbe Meher in Annangrove, Sydney. The Gahambar started at 11 a.m. Jashan ceremonies are usually performed by five or six Mobeds (priests). Well in advance of the event, the AZA committee requests members of the community to contribute dishes for the Jashan, as well as a cooked lunch. The food is prepared voluntarily by individual families that contribute generously. Volunteers are requested to prepare food from a set of traditional menus. Some offer to bring traditional dishes for the Jashan prayer. People enjoy the *Dhanshak*, salad, and *kebabs*. Volunteers cut and clean the fruit after the prayers, and help serve the lunch. The community also encourages all to help with clearing and cleaning up the area after the celebration. Thanks to the community's involvement, the annual AZA Gahambars are always a happy and successful gathering.

Gahambars

AROUND THE HAFT KESHWAR ZAMIN - A tradition to perpetuate Gahambars in the Diaspora

WESTMINISTER, CALIFORNIA, USA

The California Zoroastrian Center (CZC) Gahambars are celebrated with full fanfare in accordance with the dates and times of the Zoroastrian calendar. Several years ago, a Gahambar Committee was formed. The Committee organizes these two day events and collects donations made specifically for these events. Committee members gather at the center on Saturday afternoons prior to each Gahambar for a potluck meal and to prepare the food. The evening culminates with music played by a DJ — from fifty to one hundred people, including youths, attend.

The next day, a religious service is held where three Mobeds perform the prayer followed by talks, lectures, and, finally, the feast. Anywhere from 250 to 400 people attend this event. The exception is *Tirgaan* which is always held at a park where participants can enjoy water play.



Gahambar

AROUND THE HAFT KESHWAR ZAMIN - A tradition to perpetuate Gahambar in the Diaspora

ZARATHUSHTI ASSOCIATION OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA (ZANC)

FOSTER CITY, CALIFORNIA, USA



The Zarathushti Association of Northern California (ZANC) holds their annual Gahambar with a traditional Jashan ceremony, usually in the fall of each year. This tradition was started about 1989 by the late Dastur Jimmy Makujina, who made it coincide with the American Thanksgiving holiday. In 2000, this event was moved to late September with the hopes of all enjoying better weather. For the past several years, volunteers have cooked the entire meal at the association's Darbe Mehr under the leadership and guidance of Bomi Patel. Prior to this, each family was requested to bring various dishes. This worked well when the community was small, but as the community grew larger, this was not always feasible, especially as everyone had their own methods and recipes for cooking.

ZANC does not ask for any specific contributions, but encourages everyone to donate any sum they wish. Sometimes members of the community have underwritten the meal or donated the main items for the meal. As this event has grown in popularity, the Darbe Mehr is too small for the 250 to 300 persons who participate.

The main purpose for this Gahambar is to get the community together to celebrate and work together. Everyone who volunteers to help with the cooking has a lot of fun, as there is much camaraderie and joking as we chop onions and shape the kebabs. Frying 600 of them, always a time-consuming process is done with great humor and dedication on the part of the people who labor over the hot oil! The menu usually consists of *Dhanshak dar*, rice, beef kebabs, *Kachubar*, and *sali-gosh*—and, there is always something for the vegetarians. One year a family volunteered and made Parsi custard, otherwise we have donors for ice-cream and other desserts. Volunteers serve the meal, then clean and wash the big *dekchis* (cooking pots) at the end of the evening — a thankless and tiresome job. ZANC is fortunate to have big cooking pots and gas stoves in a large outdoor cooking shed at the Centre, which they share with members of the Persian Zoroastrian community.

Gahambars

AROUND THE HAFT KESHWAR ZAMIN - A tradition to perpetuate Gahambars in the Diaspora
ATLANTA ZARATHUSHTI ASSOCIATION (AZA), GEORGIA, USA



The Atlanta Zarathushti Association (AZA) holds an annual Gahambar usually during the *Muktad* prayers (August). This event is typically sponsored by two or three families who pay for and prepare the entire meal. The purpose of this event is to raise funds for a future Darbe Mehr in Atlanta. The event is free for all attendees, but a plea for donations is made after the Jashan prayers. The Jashan is usually held outdoors and is officiated by Ervad Rustom Kanga, who generously donates his time for the community's religious ceremonies. For this Jashan, Ervad Kanga requests all AZA members to send, in advance, the names of their dearly departed to be recited aloud. The ethereal scents of *Loban*, *Sukhad*, and fresh flowers permeate the air with blessings of our guardian angels. Lunch follows the Jashan and gastric delights include, vegetarian *Dhanshak*, chicken *faarchaas*, mutton kebabs, Kachubar (onion, cilantro, and tomato salad), and dessert. AZA is blessed with ebullient cooks capable of making authentic *Malido*, *Sev*, *Ravo*, and more for its Jashans. The community comes together so that its actions, effects, evaluations, and thoughts complement its goals of creating a self-sustaining Zarathushti community for future generations, in and around Atlanta. Sharing is main stream community-building is highly advocated, and egalitarianism pervades the theme of this event. Approximately seventy-five

AZA members and friends attend this event.

The Sunday school lesson prior to this Gahambar discusses the historical prominence of Gahambars, their significance and purpose in the present day and the importance of sharing in keeping with the Zarathushti tenets of Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds.

ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF QUEBEC Montreal, Quebec, Canada

The Zoroastrian Association of Quebec has celebrated the Ayaathrem Gahambar in October for more than twenty years. Of the six Gahambars, this was chosen as the days almost coincide with the Canadian Thanksgiving Day, and as the two concepts are very similar, they are easily understood by the children.

A simple meal is prepared by the members of the community. Those who cannot prepare food will donate soft drinks, snacks, dessert, plates, cutlery, and so forth. We really try to make this Gahambar a participatory community event. For three years, our Iranian members have prepared the food in the on-site kitchen from which delicious aromas waft, making the food taste even more delicious!

Jashan e Mehregan also coincides with the Ayaathrem Gahambar so we generally have a double celebration

Mehregan is a community celebration of nature, a festival of seasons, and the birthday of light. It commemorates the triumph of good over evil and knowledge over ignorance. For thousands of years, Iranians have celebrated Mehregan as a harvest festival and thanksgiving. The colorful festival of Mehregan marks the beginning of autumn, which is a time to gain strength from the past and look to the future with love,

Gahambar

AROUND THE HAFT KESHWAR ZAMIN - A tradition to perpetuate Gahambar in the Diaspora compassion, and understanding.

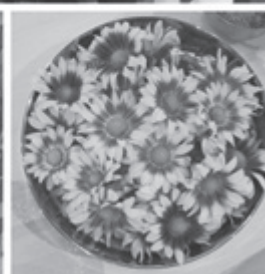
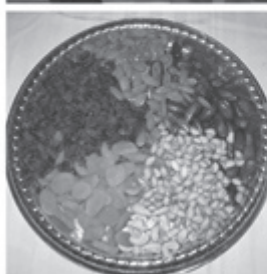
Mehregan is celebrated for six days, starting on the sixteenth day of the seventh month (Mehr), this day is called Mehregan e-Khordeh (small) and ends on the twenty-first of Mehr, (Mehregan e-Bozorg). According to the Fasli calendar, the first day of Mehregan falls on October the second this year.

Similar to Nowruz, people wear new clothes and set a beautiful and colorful table. The table is decorated with the holy book of Avesta, a mirror, sweets, flowers, vegetables, and fruits — especially pomegranates and apples.

On Saturday October 19, 2013, our community gathered at the Arthur Séguin Chalet to cook together, join in prayer, celebrate Ayaathrem Gahambar and Mehregan and give back to the less fortunate. What a great day it was!



We also had the students of the religious class prepare and decorate money jars as a craft which was used to collect donations for the needy at the Gahambar and Mehregan function. The basic objective was to teach the students the importance of sharing with those less privileged. All collections



Gahambar

AROUND THE HAFT KESHWAR ZAMIN - A tradition to perpetuate Gahambar in the Diaspora

were donated to Montreal's largest food bank: Moisson Montreal.

COOKING

Our Iranian and Parsi friends all came together to cook various dishes for this celebration. From geymeh to multiple curries, we were very lucky to have such wonderful meals prepared for us.

Thanks to all the children who participated! With these jars, we were able to collect an additional \$101.16 for

Moisson Montreal. They were grateful for our food drive efforts and for the monetary donation! Thanks, also, to those who gave generously to this cause. It makes a difference.



Dolly Dastoor

ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF FLORIDA, Florida, USA

ZAF Miami celebrates a Gahambar during November each year. In 2013, we celebrated in an open Pavilion in Miramar, Florida. We had four Mobeds performing a *Satum* ceremony and about 120 *Humdins* from all three south Florida groups took part in the solemn feast! The cooking was done by one of our ZAF member in his restaurant and brought to the Gahambar place in trucks. Volunteers then served the *Humdins* delicious Parsi food on banana leaves. This was an ideal place to have the Gahambar in open pavilion like they used to be in olden days in our villages. (see photos page 71)

ORLANDO, FLORIDA, USA

Orlando Zoroastrians have celebrated Gahambar for a few years under the able leadership and guidance of our own Dinyar Mehta. We were also blessed by a professional kitchen in a resort that made it very easy to cook for more than 140 people. All cooking and prep work credit goes to our Master Chef Urvazi Ichhaporia. A number of volunteers help cook on Friday and Saturday under the watchful eye and direction of the Master Chef Urvazi. The prepared food is stored in the resort's walk-in freezers. On Sunday, a *Satum* prayer is first performed with many *Humdins* performing the *Loban* ritual following the *Satum*. Then the whole volunteer corps springs to action. Teams are formed to perform various jobs and everything is accomplished like clockwork. The food is served to all on banana leaves. (see photos page 71)

DUBAI, UAE

Each year, in December, the Parsis of the United Arab Emirates look forward to partaking in simple food, together as one community during the Gahambar. The feast is held in a school hall in Sharjah with the support of the Emirates Parsi Working Group, community members, and volunteers, with a few outside helpers. This

Gahambars

AROUND THE HAFT KESHWAR ZAMIN - A tradition to perpetuate Gahambars in the Diaspora

event has been held continuously for the last several years and gives an opportunity to the community to come together, renew ties and friendships, pray together, and eat a hearty meal in the general bonhomie of a communal get together. Every year between 250 and 300 community members attend the Gahambar—it is easily the most popular event on the Parsi calendar in the UAE.

As part of the event, a nominal charge is made to the attendees, the proceeds of which go to a variety of charities, including appeals that are received by the community members and the Emirates Parsi Working Group. A raffle is also held to augment the funds collected. At first, the community's *Mobed sahebs* conduct a *Hum Bandagi*. It is composed of two *Yatha Ahu Vairiyos* and one *Ashem Vohu*, which lend a solemn and religious note to the gathering and instill a common bond for the members, especially the younger members who get an opportunity to meet Parsi Zoroastrians of their age. After that a delicious lunch of carrot-raisin pickle, rotlis, cutlets, sali chicken, mutton pulav dal, and ice cream are served on traditional banana plantain leaves.

The event also provides a platform to some community members to sell traditional *masalas*, savorys, religious books and calendars, artifacts, and other items. The UAE community is grateful and fortunate that we are able to hold at least one *Gahambar* each year, instead of the six that are traditionally held elsewhere, such as in India.

This very important cultural and social event is entirely sponsored by Mrs. Freny and Freddy Sidhwa who have been benefactors to the UAE Parsi community for the last two decades.

Percy Tantra, Dubai

THE ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO (ZAC) Illinois, USA

TWO GHAMBARs -- THE MOBED FAMILY GHAMBAR AND THE GHAMBAR SPONSORED BY DIFFERENT FAMILIES

The Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC) celebrates two Gahambars each year. The celebrations are held at the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr in Burr Ridge, Illinois. These celebrations have been enjoyed by the community members since its inauguration in 1983.



Keikhosrow and Parvin Mobed



Gahambars

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The **Mobed family** of Chicago sponsors a Gahambar in the month of September each year for the community. On September 3, 1983 Bahman, Jehangir, Banoo and Keikhosrow Mobed donated a generous sum of \$5,000.00 to the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC) with a stipulation to organize the Paitishahem Gahambar every year in the month of September. The Association set up the "Mobed Gahambar Fund" to fund this annual activity. . Each year the Mobed family continues to contribute additional funds to perpetuate the Mobed Family Gahambar.

The first annual Gahambar, a get together of the community members was initiated in 1983. It was the beginning of an annual tradition that continues until today, to bring the community together year after year. Chicago community is grateful to Bahman Mobed, Banoo Shahzadi, Jehangir and Keikhosrow Mobed of Chicago, for their dedication to host these annual Gahambars and bring the community together year after year. The latest Mobed Family Gahambar was celebrated at the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr in Chicago on September 13, 2014.

The tradition of hosting Gahambars in the Mobed family dates back to two and a half centuries ago. There is an interesting history that was narrated to me by Keikhosrow Mobed, as to how their passion for hosting the Gahambars originated. In about 1750 A.D., their ancestor, Mobed Zohrab, who was the Great Mobed (Dastoor Bozorg) of Khorassan, had moved to Yazd, where he was also regarded as the Great Mobed. The state of constant panic brought about by Nadershah Afshar was the cause of his immigration to Yazd. In his lifetime, Mobed Zohrab had met a nomad - Mohamad Ali Khan Lor, a Muslim individual of the Lor tribe from Lorestan, South of Shiraz. Mohamad went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and left a considerable sum of money and Jewelry in Zohrab's trust. This was a normal practice in those days when banks did not exist and travelling with cash was considered very risky.

Years rolled by and Mohammed did not return. Zohrab presumed that the man was dead. He therefore, set forth in buying land and bazar with Mohamad's belongings. He named the bazar after Mohamad Ali Khan. The land was about 100 acres which was in Abshahee, about 4 Km outside Yazd. This land, the bazar and its yield was donated to Waghf for religious festivities and annual Gahambars.

Eight years had passed by since Mohamad Ali Khan had gone to Mecca. One day in the midst of the Gahambar while the Prayer ceremony was taking place, Mohamad Ali Khan appeared at Mobed Zohrab's door step. He saw many people sitting inside and outside the house. Mohamad Ali Khan was deeply impressed when he saw that everybody got Lork (dried fruit), bread and food.

After the prayers were over, Mobed Zohrab revealed to Mohamad Ali Khan, that he had spent all Mohamad's belongings to purchase land and bazar. Mobed Zohrab offered, that, he could sell everything and recover the money that Mohamad Ali Khan had left with Zohrab. Though Mohamad Ali Khan was a Moslem and had just returned from Karbala, he told Mobed Zohrab that he did not want anything back. He gave his blessings to Mobed Zohrab for whatever good Mobed Zohrab had done with his worldly wealth and told him to continue to have the Gahambars for the good of the community.

The '**Gahanbar e Lor**' has been faithfully celebrated and is still maintained to this day in Yazd. The tradition continues two and a half century later.

We hope that this example inspires many other Zarathushti families to donate funds to their Associations to set up funds to perpetuate hosting of annual Gahambars in their own communities.

The **second Gahambar** is sponsored by the Association in November and coincides with the traditional thanksgiving holiday later in the month. In the true spirit of *Tuji*, two families volunteer to host the ZAC Gahambar each year. This Gahambar is well-attended; home-cooked Parsi meals include Malido, Papri, Ravo and other goodies are prepared by volunteers.

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These Gahambar are in addition to the regular monthly community gatherings with *Hum Bandagi* prayers and traditional meals that are cooked and provided by two families every month. The prayer ceremonies are offered by our voluntary Mobeds — young and elderly. Prayer ceremonies are open to all without any restrictions as to who can attend. The prayer room at the Darbe Mehr is also open to anyone who wishes to pray. We are grateful to all our Mobeds who offer their services to the community members, as and when needed, even at the cost of significant personal inconvenience and sacrifice.

With Blessings of Ahura Mazda, the Zarathushti community of Chicago enjoys and takes pride in maintaining a balanced and harmonious relationship between the Iranian and Parsi membership of the community.

Kayomarsh P. Mehta, Chicago

ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF GREATER BOSTON AREA (ZAGBA), Massachusetts, USA

Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston Area (ZAGBA) holds its annual Gahambar at a local church as the association does not have a place of its own. The church allows for the Jashan fire to be lit indoors—though



their smoke alarms proved to be problematic once, when the alarms were triggered and summoned the local fire department, which showed up at the church for some added excitement. Approximately 90-120 members attend this event. In the past, to keep the costs low, each attending family was requested to prepare a dish

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to share with thirty friends. ZAGBA offers an extensive Gahambar menu of *Dhanshak Dar*, chicken/lamb/goat *Pulav*, *rai naa papetaa*, *taabotaa par eedu*, the traditional Gahambar *nu papeta ma Ghosh* and *Sev/Ravo* for dessert. *Malido* is prepared for the Jashan and later enjoyed by all with the consecrated fruits. Recently, ZAGBA decided to have the Gahambar food catered by local members, making it easier and more consistent. ZAGBA sees Gahambars as a time for the community to come together, to remember their ancestors and benefactors, to feast and most importantly bond with one another. Traditionally, well-to-do benefactors donated or paid for the food, but today there is a cost per person.

The ZOROASTRIAN WOMEN ORGANIZATION (ZWO) Sacramento, California, USA

The Zoroastrian Women Organization (ZWO) of Sacramento celebrated a Gahambar with its fellow Zoroastrian members on May 3 this year. In the morning, Zoroastrians of the Sacramento area gathered to prepare *Aash*, a thick Persian soup consisting of grains, legumes, vegetables and herbs and *Siroog*. It was a time for sharing and caring. Community members donated the price of the *Aash*.

In the afternoon, *Mobed Keyghobad* performed the Gahambar Jashan. (photo right below)

While the purposes for which Gahambars are celebrated may differ worldwide, it is evident that the practice of gathering the community to share traditional foods, harmony, and cohesiveness is well and alive. Zarathushtis are convinced that food is for sharing. Despite all the conveniences available today, a meal of quality, which requires someone's time and attention, is something we all instinctively appreciate sharing with others. This is why we enjoy sitting down with community members and celebrate a reconnection that one can smell, touch, and taste.

Food is more than simply fuel to keep our bodies going throughout the day — a truth that is perhaps best grasped through the cultivation of intentional habits of thankfulness, stewardship, and hospitality in connection with eating. With practices like these, eating can become a spiritual discipline, and a mealtime shared equally with others can become more than just food, but rather a celebration of Ahura Mazda's providence, His creation, and our invitation to participate in it all!



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GAHAMBARS AROUND THE HAFTA KESHWAR ZAMIN—

A TRADITION TO PERPETUATE --Part II

Ervad Soli P. Dastur

NOTE: The following is the second part of a two-part series published in this issue of FEZANA Journal, which are based on the “Tele Class on Gahambars” written and delivered by the author on April 6, 2014 from his home in Hira Villa, Sarasota, Florida. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author. Several paragraphs are set in block format, which has been used to identify material originally translated by the author from referenced public domain sources and paraphrased for this article.

GAHAMBARS IN OLDEN DAY RAN

According to Firdausi’s *Shahnameh*, the first Iranian king, King Jamshed (of Jamshedi Navroze), celebrated the first Gahambar!

The famous king Noshirwan-e-Adel is said to have celebrated a Gahambar feast on the *Ahunawad Gatha* day in the Haavan Gah prayer by inviting everyone to a Gahambar feast for *Chaasni*, serving them *naan va gosht va naqlai mae* (bread, meat, and wine).¹



Nushirwan Holds a Banquet for his Minister Buzurgmihir: Illustration from the “Demotte” Shahnama (ca. 1330). Source: The Cleveland Museum of Art. Adapted from a full page, public domain image.

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GAHAMBARS IN OLDEN IRAN IN 1878-1880²

Kavasji Dinshawji Kiash and his friends traveled in Persia from April 2, 1878 through May 22, 1880. He wrote a book in the Old Gujarati language about their experiences in Iran with the Iranian Behdins. He describes their customs, ceremonies, rituals, Holy Places (Pirs), and culture. He was very impressed by the Iranian Zarathushtis' sincerity as they observed their ceremonies, like the Gahambars — he noted that he wished the Parsis of Mumbai would follow suit.

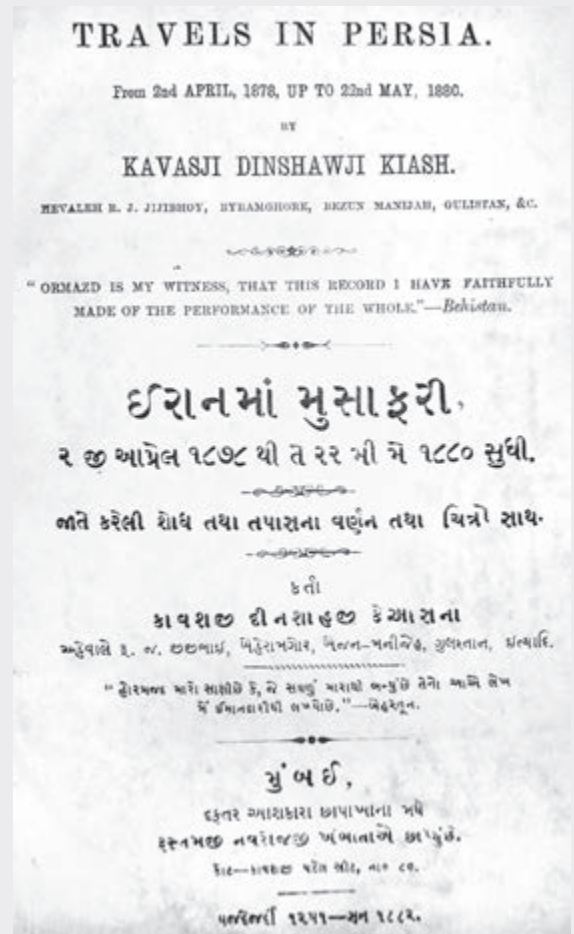
Kiash's book provides a thorough description of how the Iranian Humdins passed their daily lives under very trying conditions; however, they used a Moslem custom of *Vaqaf* (charitable contributions made for religious purposes) to their advantage. He states:

Vaqaf was used as an outlet by the Iranian Humdins from the Moslem's subjugation with onerous results. Vaqaf custom of Moslems was used by Iranian Humdins to donate whatever they could to religious charities while they were alive, after equally sharing their estate with their Zoroastrian children.

Once signed by the Mullahs, the Vaqaf document guaranteed that no one could claim the estate — which could be composed of land or money. Many *baugs* (places for worship), estates, and gardens were donated via Vaqaf to Zoroastrian charities. Income from Vaqaf-held assets provided funding each year for public Gahambars where all rich and poor Zoroastrians came together and shared the food at these Gahambars. Vaqaf trustees decided the date for the Gahambar and all Humdins were invited to partake.



Lork/Lorg/Ajil, Dried Fruits for Distribution



Title page from Kiash's Travels in Persia.

The arrangements and rituals for these Gahambars were quite good and worthy of being followed by the Indian Humdins. In Iran, there were no meals served in the Gahambars; however, many Avesta prayers were made. Ceremonies started at 5:00 p.m. There were two offerings during the ceremony. In the first, fresh and dried fruits, flowers, milk, wine, meat dishes, Daruns, and *Sheerosadaab* (a mixture of vinegar, melted sugar, and garlic [to get rid of evil by its smell]) were offered. In the second,

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all of the above items and many naans, omelets, and other foods were offered. All these items were placed in *Khumchaas* (large trays) located in a large hall. Two to three *deevaas* (oil lamps) were lit and the *Atash* (fire) was started in an *Afargaanyu* (fire urns).

All Humdins arrived ahead of time and performed their Kushti Prayers, followed by their daily prayers. When the chief Dastur arrived, all Humdins were given a flower. The Dastur started the prayers and when he stood to recite certain prayers in the Jashan, everyone picked up their flower and recited the prayers in unison with the Dastur. After doing this one or two times, and after all prayers were completed, one person would take the *Afarganyu* and carry it to all Humdins; they, in turn, would fan the *Atash* smoke on themselves, while saying a prayer. After that, men-with-men and women-with-women performed the *Hamaa Zor* greetings with good wishes and love.



Mobed holding a myrtle twig.



Humdins using their right hand index finger

One or two Humdins distributed the dried fruits and naans equally to all Humdins who collected them in their handkerchiefs, without discussion, and took them to their homes. What a wonderful way to celebrate a Gahambar! Many Gahambar were performed like this; often, all the poor Humdins got enough dried fruits and naans to last them for two to four months, thus alleviating hunger for a while.

Kiash then compares the Gahambar in Iran with those celebrated in Mumbai as follows:

The Gahambar performed in Mumbai and other Indian places are performed shabbily, with people stepping on food that fell on the ground. Instead of accruing good deeds, they are committing sins. Hence, they should get rid of such acts and follow the good example of our Irani Humdins in celebrating Gahambar. Our Indian Humdins should not expect to do a good deed by just attending a Gahambar to partake its food only; but they should perform the Kushti prayer and perform their daily prayers then only they will receive the reward of good deeds.

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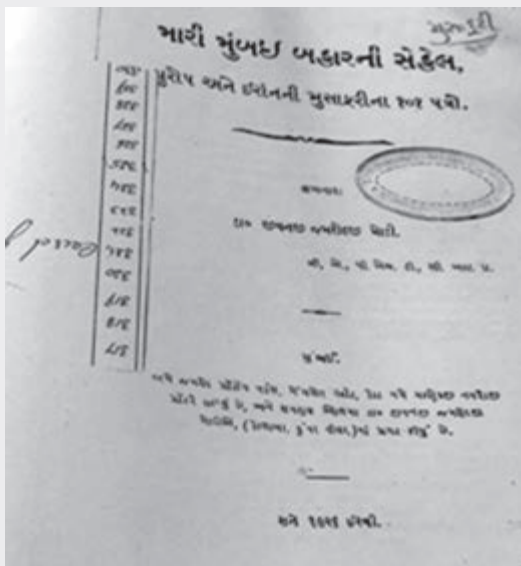
Kiash then continues:

Because of their daily job, many Humdins cannot attend such celebrations which is understandable; however, it is a bounden duty of all Humdins to attend such meritorious celebrations. Our Irani Humdins are such true Humdins who in spite of their busy lives, they attend these Gahambar as their duty.

Many of my Parsi friends after agreeing to follow the example of our Iranian Humdins will follow me, I hope, to wish that we in India should abolish the Gahambar Jamans (dinners) and perform them like our Iranian Humdins.

GAHAMBAR IN IRAN DURING 1925–1926³

Dr. J. J. Modi travelled extensively through Mediterranean countries, UK, Europe, Russia, and Iran in 1925. Wherever he went, he studied and sought out any information about our religion and especially in Iran, where he compared their customs, celebrations and prayers with what we were doing in India at that time. He composed 101 letters to the Jame Jamshed newspaper, which were published for more than a year. In 1926, he compiled and published them in *My Travels Outside Mumbai: 101 Letters of my Travels Through Europe and Iran*.



Cover of Dr. Ervad J. J. Modi's *My Travels Outside Mumbai: 101 Letters of my Travels Through Europe and Iran*.

KADMI MAIDHYOSHAHEM GAHAMBAR - TIR MAHINO, KHORSHEH TO DAEPMEHER ROJ 1295 YZ

Dr. J. J. Modi states in this book:

I was lucky to visit Yazd during their Maidhyoshahem Gahambar, which is typically the harvest time for the Zoroastrian farmers around Yazd. During this season, they pick the best fruits, vegetables, and grains for Gahambar Myazd and send them to the person in charge of the Gahambar. These Zarathushtis have the greatest faith in the Gahambar and perform them with faith. The Gahambar are sponsored by different Behdins during five day periods, at several places.

Early morning, a *Yazashne* is performed in the Yazd Atash Behram, where many Mobeds and Behdins participate. Although there was no dress code for the participants white was the least present even among

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the Mobeds. Only the Yazashne Atravakhshi wore white. Most Yazd Mobeds do not grow beards—as compared to the custom to growing beards in India. The congregation took part in the Yazashne prayers at specific points. Some even had a Yazashne book with them. I saw a lithographed copy of one from 1897.

In the room where Yazashne was performed, a *Paywand* (chain) was established with Kushtis during the Atravakhshi ceremony, while reciting prayers with the congregation. Daruns in Yazashne were very big compared to those in India. This ceremony is called *Waaaj (Baaj)-e-Yasht-e-Gahambar*. After some initial Yazashne prayers, the *Mijlas* (congregation) leaves and two Mobeds complete the Yazashne.

The announcement of a Gahambar's first day is done by the entire Anjuman gathering. For Yazashne ceremonies held in Iran, the congregation may not find a date palm tree nearby for tying the *Barsom* by *Aivyaaonghem*. In such cases, they substituted a mulberry tree twig for the date palm. If such trees are not available within the Yazashne Gah, they would be brought from nearby Zarathushti homes—no Pavis were dug up for this.

One Mobed in the Gahambar Jashan got my attention. He was called *Daftar-Khan* (Reader of the Register). The Register contains a list of all the *Anjuman's* (community's) departed souls. As only a nominal fee is charged for including the name of a departed soul, the Register can accumulate many names. The Reader of the Register continues to read these names concurrently with the other Mobeds who pray the Jashan prayers. In the half to three-quarter hour of the main Jashan prayers, the *Daftar-Khan* can only recite a few of the names, he then continues with the list during the next Jashan, and so on until all the names have been recited.

This Register is called *Kebab-e-Khudaa aamuzee-e-guzast-e-gaan* (The Book for Forgiving the Departed by God). At another Gahambar ceremony, a Gahambar *Mijlas*, there were a number of Mobed and Behdin witnesses. Mobeds and Behdins did not wear whites as we do in India; they wore clothes of all colors, especially black. At this Gahambar, a *Deh-Mobed* (Village Mobed) has an important role. Actually, the *Deh Mobed* may not be a Mobed; he may be a Behdin. He also takes an important part as a facilitator in *Sedreh Pushis*, weddings, and obsequies.

These are public Jashans and all are invited. In these Jashans, they place large naans as an offering. After the Jashan prayers, one person distributes a fistful of the *Lork* (a mixture of dried fruits and nuts) and one or two naans to each person. During the five Gahambar days, these distributions of food are made to everyone present; many poor families get a good stock of food during these five days. There are many poor families in Yazd who deserve this food.

On reciting the paragraph *Ahurahe Mazdaao*, all Mobeds make a *Paywand* with a Kushti or a string. In old times in India, even though all Mobeds were on the same carpet, *Paywand* was done using handkerchiefs during the "Gahambar Pavi" ceremony. This custom is no longer practiced.

After the completion of the Gahambar Jashan in Iran, all Mobeds get up and perform the Kushti prayer. This is not our custom in India. However, if the Indian Mobeds sit in the *Gahambar ni Pavi* ceremony, after it is completed, they get up and perform the Kushti prayer.

It appears that the *Gahambar-ni-Pavi* ceremony was introduced in India. Anquetil de Peron in his *Zand Avesta* book describes the Gahambar-ni-Pavi ceremony performed in Surat. The Mobeds created a Pavi and then sat inside it to perform this ceremony. Hence, it is called Pavi ceremony. Although Pavis are not created in India today, the ceremony continues to be called Pavi.

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Our *Padaan* in Iran is not used at all. In India, after the end of the Ahurahe Mazdaao paragraph, the *Joti* indicates the four directions and four corners using the *Chamach* (ladle or tongs). In Yazd, the *Joti* takes a metal bowl filled with water and uses it to indicate the four directions and corners. This bowl is called *Naaveh* (vessel). In India, I have also seen some Mobeds, when performing the Afargaan alone, uses the water *Karasyo* (bowl) to indicate the four directions and corners, which is the Old Iranian *Naaveh* method.

In India, we do not use any utensils made from clay for the Jashan ceremony, only metal vessels. In Iran, they use clay vessels in Jashan. In India, we perform Afringaan and Jashan sitting on a carpet; in Iran, Mobeds sit on chairs.

At the Jashan ceremony in India, at the paragraph *Ahurahe Mazdaao Raevato Kharenanghahto*, all Mobeds pick up a flower in their right hand. In Yazd, the Deh Mobed comes forward and recites these words and loudly recites Aafrinaami. At this time, the *Joti* takes one of the Myrtle twigs from the Khumchaa and gives it to the *Atravakhshi* and holds another with his right hand; whereas, the other Mobeds and participating Humdins lift their right index finger instead of a flower or a twig after reciting Aafrinaami. It seems that in the olden days in India we had the custom of lifting the finger, but was replaced by the flower.

To understand the use of Myrtle twig in Iran, we should refer to *Bundahishn* Chapter 27.24 which discusses the association of different flowers for each Ameshaaspad and Yazad. For example, myrtle is the flower associated with Ahura Mazda.

GAHAMBARS IN MODERN IRAN 2014

IJASHNY RITUAL IN GAHAMBAR – CURRENT IRAN SEE PAGE 20

TEHRAN, IRAN

I would like to report about my personally inspiring account of this year's first day of the *Fasli Paithi Shahim* Gahambar, on Friday September 12th 2014.

After performing the Gahambar short Ijashny at the very well attended Tehran Adoran, I drove my family to the annual *Kaviani* Gahambar, some 20 kilometers outside Tehran.

This Gahambar, founded seventy-six years ago by **Mr. Fereidun M. Kaviani** and dedicated to the **Yazata Sraosha**, has been faithfully maintained until now despite the demise of Mr. F. M. Kaviani who was crushed to death with his wife and one son as a result of the Bam Earthquake.

Mobedyar Ms. Mehrzad Kaviani and her four remaining brothers have been keeping up their parent's Gahambar Trust in an amazingly grand manner. Every year Behdins flock, in hundreds, to a vast orchard outside Tehran to participate and partake in the Kaviani Gahambar. Besides catering to the crowd, loaded mini trucks of food are distributed among orphanages and senior citizen homes.

The photos on page 54 illustrate the grandeur of this religious feasting.

Mehraban Firouzgary

Gahambar

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KAVIANI GAHAMBAR, IRAN



Gahambars

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GAHAMBARS IN INDIA OF THE 1910s⁴

Ervad Soli Dastur

An interesting book, *Les Parsis* (written in Paris during 1898 by the French lady scholar Mlle. Delphine Menant), has some remarkable observations about Parsi customs, ceremonies, and celebrations of that time in Mumbai. It was finally translated into English by M. M. Marzban under



THE PARSIS

the title *The Parsis* and published in 1917 — it was enlarged and copiously annotated with up-to-date information by Mr. Marzban. The English Edition was reprinted in 1994 by DANAI in Khar, Bombay, and contains 55 halftone portraits and illustrations.

An interesting photo in the book shows the Mobeds at a Gahambar Feast, eating from plantain tree leaves placed on a cloth on the ground — tables were still taboo to them. They ate their meals in *baj* (silence). After the food was served to everyone on plantain leaves, one attendant would shout, “Baaj Dharo, Saahebo!” (Mobed Saahebo! Now begin the Jamwaani Baaj and eat your meal in silence!).

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Mobeds (-Parsi-priests) at a Gahambar (-Seasonal) Feast.

They eat from plantain-tree leaves placed on a cloth on the ground, tables being still table to them. They take their meals in leg, i.e. in silence.—(See p. 202, footnote 201, ante.)

The Mobeds at a Gahambar feast, eating from plantain tree leaves placed on a cloth, on the ground.



Parsi women at a Gahambar (-Seasonal) Feast, served on Plantain-tree leaves.

(Of late years, the Trustees of Parsi Kavasji Banaji's Atash-Behram Gahambar Fund have inaugurated Gahambars solely for women of the Parsi community. (See p. 208.)

Parsi women at a Gahambar (Seasonal) feast served on plantain leaves. (M. M. Murzban: The Parsis)

Later on, the Framji Kavasji Banaji's Fire-temple's trustees inaugurated Gahambars solely for women of the Parsi community (*photo above right*).

PUBLIC GAHAMBARS IN BOMBAY DURING THE 1920s (J. J. Modi)³

The Bombay Parsi Panchayat created a Gahambar Fund of Rs. 150,000 during 1920s. All 6 Gahambars were religiously celebrated. Each cost about Rs. 780 (Rs. 20–25 for the religious part) for a public dinner called the *Niaat* (lit. caste dinner for the entire community). Public invitations were distributed and between 2,000 and 3,000 persons participated. Sir Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy, the 1st Baronet, had great faith in Gahambar celebrations and set apart a large fund for the Gahambar Celebrations, not only for those held in Bombay, but



Gahambar feast served under a large, colorful mandap (tent).

Gahambar

AROUND THE HAFT KESHWAR ZAMIN - A tradition to perpetuate Gahambar in the Diaspora also those in Navsari, Surat, and Bharuch, as well.

TYPICAL PARSİ GAHAMBAR COOKING AND SERVING IN UDVADA

In Udvada, the *Pak Iranshah Atash Behram Saal Gareh* is celebrated each year on *Adar Mahino* and *Adar Roj*. Udvada Vada Dasturjis lead the Jashan prayers attended by the entire congregation in the inside hall. Traditionally, the Petit family funded the Gahambar celebration on this particular day and is open to all Humdins.

A big colorful *mandap* (tent) is erected just behind the Atash Behram compound and the entire Gahambar feast is cooked by predominately Parsi chefs consisting of Palav Dar, Papeta-ma-Murgi, famous Udwada fried Boi (fish) and Papeta per indoo, (eggs on potatoes), and lots and lots of rotlis hot from the Lohri. After the Jashan prayers approximately 2,000 people are fed free of charge. Multiple Panghats are used to serve these people. I had the privilege of watching the cooking and partaking of this delicious Gahambar feast.



Fresh rotlis baked on open fire.



Vegetable and papeta ma Gosht (meat with potatoes.)



Famous Udvada boi (fish) and papeta per idoo (eggs on potatoes).



Three Parsi babarchis (cooks) in front of their famous Parsi dishes.

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GAHAMBAR AT THE PARSIGODREJ BAUG, NEPEANSEA ROAD, MUMBAI 2013

Since the enthronement of the Dadgah at the beautiful *Shapoorji Fakirji Jokhi Agiary*, every year on Bahman Roj, Mah Amardad, the Godrej Baug Residents Welfare Association organizes a *Melaavdo* Gahambar function, which consists of several activities — starting with a Jashan and Maachi, then a Rangoli (chowk purvanu) competition, and a program featuring children of our Baug. Later in the evening, eminent speakers address the gathering. This year they had a banker, Ms. Homai Daruwalla, encourage the youth with her kind words. They also had Ervad Pervez Bajan as the keynote speaker, who enlightened everyone on our Religion's tenets. This time, each year, the Association honors the Baug's achievers in various fields: academic and non-academic. The evening ends with a Gahambar for nearly a thousand people, which was produced

for a reasonable cost. The Association is committed to distribute free passes to economically challenged Zarathushti Brethren, mainly from the *Doongerwadi* and various Agiaries of Mumbai, in keeping with the true essence of Gahambar. Thank you to Nilufer Nasirabadwala and Managing committee of Godrej Baug Resident Welfare Association for this information and photo (*below*).



Song by Godrej Baug Children

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In Conclusion, we have this fervent appeal to NAMC, FEZANA, and all North American Zoroastrian Associations.

There is always a reluctance to change one's Zoroastrian calendar, whether Kadmi, Shehenshahi or Fasli. **I challenge all of you that 80+ percent of the Humdins do not even know the Roj or the Mah of the calendar they strictly adhered to and are still trying to hold on to it.** As discussed in Part 1, due to not adding one leap-year day every four years over many centuries, Kadmi and Shenshahi calendars are lagging four and five months, respectively, from the actual seasons (e.g. Navroze New Year for Kadmis falls in July and for Shehenshahis in August), instead of the correct time, which is the Vernal Equinox (March 21). The six Gahambar are also misplaced by four and five months from their actual seasonal times.

Our holy obligation to Ahura Mazda mandates the correct observance of the Gahambar—this includes not only *Yazad*, *Saazad*, *Khurad*, and *Dehad*, but also **when to celebrate them**, as well.

So, here is a fervent plea to all North American Humdins. We all can follow our own Zarathushti calendar – Shehenshahi, Kadmi, Fasli, Iranian, on a day to day basis.

However, we should start celebrating the required six Gahambar by their exact seasons as in Fasli calendar—this is our bounden duty as Zarathushtis!

Gahambar

AROUND THE HAFT KESHWAR ZAMIN - A tradition to perpetuate Gahambar in the Diaspora

We will have an opportunity to come together for the NAZC in LA in December 2014. **This is the correct time when the Maidhyarem Gahambar (Mid-Winter) will be falling during the five days from 12/31 – 1/4. Let us celebrate one of these days as our traditional Maidhyarem Gahambar with a Jashan or a Satum prayer performed by all the Mobeds present followed by a Gahambar Chaasni or a meal!**

May the Flame of Fellowship, Love, Charity and Respect for all burn ever eternal in our hearts so we can do HIS work with humility, diligence and eternal enthusiasm!

Atha Jamyaat, Yatha Aafrinaamahi! (May it be so as we wish!)

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ZAMWI CHOIR AT 35TH ANNUAL INTERFAITH CONCERT, WASHINGTON, DC

Kersi B. Shroff, Washington DC

An Adult Avesta Choir, of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington (ZAMWI), performed at the 35th Annual Interfaith Concert, at the Washington Hebrew Congregation organized by the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington (IFC) on Nov. 20, 2014. ZAMWI is one of eleven faith communities that are members of the IFC.

The Choir, formed in September 2014 under the direction of Ms. Sima Sekhvat, ZAMWI's Trustee at Large is made up of Pianist: Yasna Goshtasbi, Anne Khademan, Parisa Mazdeyasni Izadyar, Shahrzad Nasrabadi, Shahrzad Yazdani, Shirin Bavafa, Behram Pastakia, Farzad Aidun, Jamshid Parsinejad, Mehran Khadivi, and Mehrdad Izadyar. According to the Program Notes "*The Adult Avesta Choir brings a rich and soothing tone to the stage with a diverse repertoire including traditional Zoroastrian hymns as well as classical and pop Persian pieces*".

The Choir's rendition of two songs: "**Yasna 28**" based on Karl F. Geldner's Avesta, the Sacred Books of the Parsis, (Stuttgart, 1896), and "**Jashne-e Sadeh (Winter Festival)**" by Khodi Kaviani and Nooshafarin was rousingly applauded. The Yasna 28 translation: "Ideal are the thoughts, ideal the words, ideal the deeds of the Righteous Zarathushtra. Let the ever-living promulgators present the Gathas. Salutation under Ye, O Sacred Gathas." The Choir also joined in the performance of a Combined Choir Anthem.

Ted Koppel, Master of Ceremonies, explained the spiritual significance of the blazing fire before which the Avesta Choir sang. He also noted that this was the third time that ZAMWI has participated in IFC Concerts. ZAMWI members are proud of the Choir's depiction of Zoroastrian values in the songs and congratulate its young Director and all the participants of this event.

Gahambars

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A TALE OF TWO GAHAMBARS

A GAHAMBAR RETROSPECTIVE—AT THE SAGHDI!

Ervad Soli Dastur

When I was a small boy, the last of eleven children, growing up in the little village of Tarapur, our entire family was very involved in celebrating Gahambars at the *Saghdi* (Bangli: small bungalow). It was located about 2 miles from the *Parsi Waad* (street) and a few hundred yards from an operating Dokhma. On the other side of the Saghdi was another utility building that was used by the Mobeds for changing; for storing wood for the *Choolaas* (makeshift pits used for outdoor cooking); and for storing supplies. My father, Mobed Pirojshah K. Dastoor, was the Panthaki of Tarapur.

The following photos of the Tarapur Saghdi and environs were taken last January during a visit to the site. The mental contrast of my fond memories to the reality of what we saw brought tears to our eyes. These photos are a harsh reminder of what happens when Parsi places in the villages are not properly maintained.

Building next to Saghdi



Tarapur Saghdi in tatters



Tarapur abandoned Dokhma



During my childhood, in the 1940s, there were over 100 Parsi families that lived in Tarapur. Back then, the entire village participated in the Gahambars. Many families owned large parcels of land in nearby villages where they grew a variety of grain, some of which was donated to the Gahambar.

Everyone would gather at the Saghdi early in the morning. Families brought rice, dal, potatoes, onions, coriander, rotli flour, big pots for cooking (which were stored in the Tarapur library), and wood for cooking. One Mobed would start the fire in the *Dadgah*, and then perform the morning *Bui* ceremony. Items for the morning Satum Prayer were placed on one side of the fire and, on other, my father and other Mobeds prepared food for the Jashan after the Satum. All prayers were performed inside the Saghdi building.

Saghdi Koowa (well)



Dadgah in the Saghdi



Saghdi interior



Simultaneously, outside the Saghdi grounds, the chefs started the Choolaas. They placed the huge cooking vessels on three big stones and inserted firewood between the stones. Soon the food would be ready for the

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solemn feast. Teams were assigned to clean up the inside of the Saghdi; fetch water from the Saghdi well; start the *rotli* dough; clean vegetables, tomatoes, and coriander; peel potatoes and onions; make heaps of *Kachubar*; feed the Choolaas' fires; set up tables and benches; and other chores.

Outdoor Choolaas (stove)



Old Gahambar pots rusting in Tarapur Library



Final Baking of the Rotlis



Shortly after the Satum prayer was finished, the Jashan prayer would start. Usually, between my family and my maternal grandfather's family, we would have six to eight Mobeds who performed the Jashan prayer. I had the distinct privilege of participating in one of these Jashans. Inside the Saghdi, the devotees reverently and silently listened to the hour and fifteen minute prayer. Afterwards, my father led everyone in a *Hum Bandagi* prayer. What an uplifting spiritual moment it was to see and hear the entire village Humdins praying together in unison! Then, in a flurry of activity, the team started cutting the fruit and letting the people partake of the *Chaasni*.

After prayers, a variety of activities started on the Saghdi grounds. Early morning, the village Muslim butcher brought a good size goat and slaughtered and dressed it on the grounds. A team took over and cut the meat for *Dhanshak* and for *Potata-ma-gosh*. Concurrently, the village fisherman and his helpers brought two huge six foot long *Daahraa* or *Gol* fish to the feast and cleaned them. After they finished, another team dressed the fish and cut it into small pieces for the famous Tarapori fish *Paatio*.

Other chefs were busy cooking *Vaghaarela Chaawal* (Brown Rice) for the *Dhanshak*, *Dhanshak Dal* with the freshly cut goat meat, *Potata-ma-gosh*, *Ravo*, *Malido*, *Kachubar*, and other savory meals.

A specialist team then used two Choolaas to prepare lots and lots of rotlis. Perhaps the term "production line" started with this team! What a pleasure it was to see them work in unison kneading the dough, making rotli balls, and rolling the rotlis with "singing metal rolling pins" (hollow metal rolling pins filled with small stones, which when rolled make a pleasing sound. I still have my mom's singing rolling pin!). An expert chef baked the rolled rotlis on a huge, round Lohri (a slightly concave, circular metal utensil) 6 to 8 at a time, deftly switching them around its periphery, while cooking one in the center of the Lohri until it puffed up (*foolkaa*). When done, he would neatly arrange them on a *Saadri* (large rectangular woven mat from dried coconut palm fronds). Helpers collected the cooked rotlis and stacked them on utensils. What a sight to see!

Ah, being a kid back then! We were on our own, having a ball running around playing games like *Dhaabhaa Dhubhi*, *Naargolyo*, *Hu-Tu-Tu*, and *Santaa Kukdi* (I Spy). All was good, as long as we were out of the elders' hairs and crisply did all our "go-for" like, bringing wood, masala (spice jars), and water for the chefs to drink; wiping the sweat from the chefs' foreheads; and helping to stack the rotlis. Yes! That was my favorite chore! And if we were nice, we were rewarded with the best prize—a hot off the Lohri Rotli, with ghee and sprinkled sugar, a Rotli Roll! What a delight!

After all dishes were cooked, it was time for the noon Satum prayer, which we all silently attended. Afterwards, my father led us in the *Jamwaani Baj* prayer (a prayer made before a meal). We then partook in

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the solemn Gahambar feast, where we were served in *Panghats* (group of people served at a time depending upon the seats available) on *Paatraa* (dried leaves woven together with wooden pins). Depending on the number of people to be served and the seats available, two or more Panghats might be needed. The last Panghat was reserved for the chefs – they were served by the children.

After everyone was served, the big job of cleaning started and everyone pitched in. Leftovers were distributed among families; the utensils were cleaned, dried, and placed into the *Balad Gaallis* (a cart pulled by two oxen); and hauled away to be stored in the *Library Godown* (storage room).

Our family was the last to leave. By then, it was time to perform the *Uziran Geh Bui* ceremony by one of our family Mobeds. After that, everything was locked up and we headed home. One more Gahambar became history!

Today, many people have the misguided thought that we gathered in these bygone Gahambar just to eat and drink. Even in *Gahambar Aafrin*, Dadar Ahura Mazda and His *Ameshaaspands*, after creating His six creations, gathered for a big feast and enjoined humankind to do the same. Sure we had big feasts, but there were also prayers and *Hum Bandagi* and *Jamwani Baj*. These classic community gatherings fostered pride and communal awareness that I have yet to find elsewhere.

A CONTEMPORARY GAHAMBAR—AT THE DHARAMSHALLA

Fast forward 70 plus years to today's Tarapur where villagers are profoundly grateful to many of the old families for keeping traditions alive and vibrant: the Vicaji and Pestonjee Meherji brothers, Kawasji Mobed Panthaki (serving for over 50 years), Seth Framji Sidhwa, Regal Cinemas, and my dear brother, Ervad Palanji P. Dastoor—a native Tarapur son who maintains the Tarapur Agiyari and Dharamshalla.

With thanks to Ervad Palanji, every twenty-sixth of January, the Indian Republic Day and anniversary of the Dharamshalla, a Parsi/Irani Gahambar is celebrated in the old fashion. I have had the distinct privilege of attending this Gahambar over the years. This past January, I wanted to see what goes on behind the scenes. So, with my brother Palanji, former JD Colaba Agiary Panthaki, we drove to Tarapur from Udvada on the twenty-third of January.

Early on the twenty-fourth, we visited our beloved Agiary for our daily Farajyaat after Palanji tied my Paghdi. After breakfast and tea, Kersi Taraporewala and Ronnie Irani, both Tarapur Trustees, went to the bazaar in Boisar to buy all the Gahambar ingredients. What an experience for me! First we visited our Muslim master chef to schedule him for the twenty-sixth. We then visited several open stalls in the market to buy vegetables, onions, potatoes, coriander, tomatoes, and other food. And, of course, the *Chhaanto Paani* (liquor), without which the Parsis/Iranis Gahambar is not a Gahambar. Back in Dharamshalla, we ate lunch and then drove to the neighboring village, Chinchani, where we ordered soft drinks and *Kulfi*. After dinner, Palanji cooked his famous *Malido* for the Gahambar!

*Boisar Master Chef
Negotiations*



Vegetable Bazaar in Boisar



Chhaanto Paani Purchase



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At 7:00 AM, on "D-day," the twenty-sixth, the Dharamshalla was teeming with activity. Jashan items were arranged on the floor, the benches were arranged for the faithful, the cooks were busy starting fires outdoors for the sumptuous Parsi Bhonu for over 250 people, the rotlis were started by a group of ladies, and the tables were arranged outdoors under a beautiful *Mandap* (tent) with chairs. At 9:30 AM the reserved bus from Godrej Baug arrived with over 30 attendees from Mumbai.

The busy cook



Eight Mobeds performing Jashan



Ervad Burjorji delivers a stirring speech!



During all this hustle and bustle, Ervad Palanji was giving instructions to everyone. Without Ervad Palanji and his co-trustees, Ronnie and Kersi and their wives, this annual gathering would not have been possible.

The festivities started with the Jashan performed by eight Mobeds led by Tarapur-born Ervad Soli P. Dastur from Florida. After that, Ervad Burjorji Antia led all in a Hum Bandagi of two Yathas and one Ashem Vohu .

Next, the formal meeting was started by Ervad Palanji. He thanked all the dignitaries and asked Ervad Burjorji Antia to say a few words. Ervad Burjorji, in his usual enthusiastic style, gave a stirring presentation that exhorted everyone to preserve our Religion and community, set aside petty differences, and work in Hamazori for the good of the community. Soli thanked him and placed a garland around his neck; he then announced that Ervad Burjorji gave one crore (one crore equals ten million) rupees to BPP to be used for giving to deserving mobeds all over India for their betterment.

We learned that Ervad Burjorji wrote and published *In Praise of Ahura Mazda*, which is available from the Parsi Panchayat office, and that he has donated all proceeds to the Mobed fund.

Ervad Palanji then recognized President Jal Tata of the Dharamshalla who thanked Ervad Palanji and the hard working Trustees for arranging this annual gala affair.

Homi Dhalla making a point for preservation



Ervad Burjorji garlanding



The Gahambar Feast is on



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Then Soli acknowledged the contributions of his elder brother, Ervad Palanji. With a round of rousing applause, the audience recognized his innumerable efforts to keep this Dharamshalla and the Agiary going for many years and requested Ervad Burjorji to garland him. The meeting was then adjourned and there was the usual rush to secure a chair for the first Pangat.

Our youths were inspiring as they served the attendees with delicious *Bhonu*. More than 250 people took advantage of the sumptuous meal. Everyone was satisfied with the entire event.

We hope to see everybody next year!

What a difference the 70 plus years has made to my childhood village of Tarapur! Where more than a hundred Parsi families attended festivities during the 1940s, only a single Parsi lady attended in January. The old Parsi glory and pride are gone. The venerable institutions of Library, Saghdi, and Dokhma are in tatters. The only beacons of hope are the old Agiyari and Dharamshalla. How long will they be maintained and kept?

May Ahura Mazda bless us all at this Gaahambaar festival and may we perpetuate these fabulous seasonal festivals with community pride, togetherness, prayers, tolerance, humility, and service to all mankind!

Atha Jamiyad, Yatha Aafrinaamahi! (So we wish, May it be so!)

GAHAMBAR

In the land of
Ancient Persia
There lived
Simple humble Folks
Who toiled in the
Open Fields
In spite of aches
As well as pains
In their bones

Maidhyozarem Maidhyoshahem
Paitishahem Ayathrem
Maidyarem Hamaspathmaedyem
Are seasonal festivals
Activities performed
During these festivals
Whether it be sowing
Harvesting as well
Storing of crops
Tending to newborns
Of animals born on the farm

The last day of every
Seasonal festival

The entire community
From all walks of life
Living near or far
Gathered to greet
Meet & eat
Contributing according
To their means
Towards these festivals
We called "Gahambar"

Even before the feasting could begin
Their thoughts turned towards
Ahura Mazda our Creator
With a Prayer thanking Him for
These sumptuous feasts
Along with a little plea:
"May all our woes
As well worries vaporize
From now until eternity
Till the sun begins to rise!"

Farida Bamji
Ottawa, Canada

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GAHAMBAR IN NEW ZEALAND

The Traditional Mazdayasni Zarathustee Anjuman of New Zealand known as TMZANZ have been performing all the six Gahambar for the last 18 to 20 years in Auckland.

These joyous occasions bring the community together, new friends are formed and above all encourage our youth to participate and learn from the rituals. It started off by gathering in community halls but due to the triggering of fire alarms, we felt very restricted. Once the Dar-e-Meher was built the Gahambar prayers were shifted and open to everyone in the community.

Due to limitations in space, currently it is restricted only to those who are members of the TMZANZ & their families.



Gahambar are held at different homes on these auspicious days starting with prayers performed by our Dasturs, followed by shared lunch.

Each family brings in their home cooked dal and rice, kachumbar, and kebabs are pitched in too. The dal is mixed with dal brought by different families, same with rice and every one dines together. The taste is unbelievable.

The last of the six Gahambar [Hamaspahmaidem] is donated by six families. The sense of togetherness and goodwill all serves to build and strengthen the community. We are trying to achieve as much as possible by following the basic philosophy and keeping with the real meaning of Gahambar.

This is what TMZANZ does during the Gahambar days in order to keep our dear community together.

Written by Pervin Kersi Medhora, edited by Farokh A Kolah;



***Pervin Medhora** migrated to New Zealand along with her family in 2001. She is a qualified Project Manager implementing software projects to Law businesses. For her rituals are a repetitive social practice; be it birthday celebration, thanksgiving or graduation ceremonies from the non-religious perspective and Gahambar from a religious angle. They tend to drive us away from the routine life and get into the practice of following some sort of schema that everyone looks forward to participate.*

CELEBRATION OF GAHAMBAR IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

ARNAVAZ CHUBB

Gahambars are perhaps the most important and obligatory of Zarathushti religious observances. Along with Navroz, the six gahambars are the most holy days of the Zarathushti calendar. They are ancient seasonal festivals instituted in honour of Ahura Mazda and the six Amesha Spentas. Zarathushtis of old celebrated these festivals for a period of five days in mid-spring, mid-summer, harvest time, homecoming of the herds, mid-winter and Nowruz.

Parsi *akabars* of old had instituted benevolent gahambar trust funds so that these festivals could be celebrated but as the Zarathushtis of India grew more urbanised the celebration of the gahambars grew less significant and their meaningful observance was altogether forgotten. More recently, the celebration of a gahambar has been revived albeit in a guise far removed from its original significance and meaning.

The Zoroastrian Association of Victoria celebrates a gahambar annually. It is a day that is randomly selected depending on the availability of a venue and the convenience of its integration into the calendar of events for the year. It is generally held sometime from May to July, which corresponds to the winter season in Australia. Any connection to its seasonal nature is non-existent, nor are all six gahambars celebrated. ***The gahambar has largely come to signify a free communal meal. The true significance of the gahambar which is the honouring of Ahura Mazda, the Amesha Spentas and the creations of sky, water, earth, plants, cattle, mankind and fire; the communal contribution and sharing of the bounty of nature in thanksgiving by rich and poor, young and old in solidarity and equality is all but forgotten.***

A jashan is celebrated prior to the meal. Individuals may contribute fruits, flowers, dried fruits and nuts and malido/papri or ravo to be included in the jashan ceremony. As many local mobeds as are available on the day will participate in the jashan, including young navars. This makes for an impressive and heart-warming spectacle. A humbandagi with the congregation will follow at the end of the prayers. The priests performing the jashan are Ervad Keki Madon, Ervad Kaivan Antia and Ervad Fezan Antia, a new navar.

The significance of the gahambars is sporadically explained at these events but is not always the case. The



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Chef Yazd Mirza with Kazween Boiko, President ZAV



tenor of the event is largely dependent on the management committee of the day and whether or not they are aware of the import of the celebrations and their meaning. Various committees over the years have attempted to infuse the celebrations with more meaning and engage the community at large in contributing and celebrating with togetherness but this has been done intermittently and not consistently.

On occasion, fund raising is carried out at the gahambar for a particular charitable cause. In previous years, money has been raised to feed poor Parsis in Mumbai, for the Navsari boys orphanage and other deserving causes amongst the Zarathushtis in India.

Contributions of ingredients for the preparation of the gahambar meal are also made by individuals, but this is infrequent and by and large the onus of defraying the cost of the celebration is the responsibility of the ZAV. The gahambar meal is generally prepared by members of the management committee assisted by more competent cooks. The ZAV is fortunate to have a professional chef among its membership who generally heads the cooking team on such occasions. The gahambar meal consists of the mandatory masala dar-chawal with a few accompaniments. The gahambar celebration is generally well attended as it is open to all Zarathushtis at no charge regardless of whether or not they are members of the ZAV.



Arnavaz Chubb has been actively involved in community activities in Melbourne. She has been a past president of the Zoroastrian Association of Victoria and served on its management committees in various capacities over the years.

Gahambars

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GAHAMBARS CELEBRATED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF

THE ZOROASTRIAN TRUST FUNDS OF EUROPE (ZTFE)

Noshir J Avari
Counsel Emeritus and the
Honorary Life Member of ZTFE

The celebration of Gahambars is a very ancient Iranian custom practiced by the Zoroastrians. The purpose of the celebration is to give thanks to Ahura Mazda for giving us the different seasons of the year, on whose regularity of occurrence depend the prosperity of the world. King Jamsheed is said to be the first Iranian monarch who celebrated *NoRuz* (New Year) on the vernal equinox followed by the seasonal Gahambars.

In Zoroastrianism, “charity” is the first principle of righteousness, followed by “truth”, and then comes the celebration of the Gahambars. The celebration of the Gahambars is an opportunity for people from the same street, village, or town, whether they be rich or poor, successful or not so successful, wise and intelligent or not so endowed, to come together under one roof to join in a liturgical celebration of thanksgiving to Ahura Mazda, followed by the partaking of food and wine. Universal brotherhood, which we often speak of, was one of the principal objects for the sponsor of Gahambars under Zoroastrian traditions.

The Zoroastrian religious calendar does not have a concept of weekends, thus in Zoroastrian (ancient) Iran, Gahambars were occasions of public holiday, each of five days duration that occurred at specific times of the year. These occasions are referred to as occasions of seasonal or agricultural importance. There are six Gahambars in a year, signifying seasonal festivals:

the first – *Maediozarem* – falls some 45 days after the New Year and signifies “mid-spring” in the context of the seasons occurring in Iran;

the second – *Maedioshahem* – signifies mid-summer;

the third – *Paeteshahem* – signifies autumn ie the time for harvesting the crops;

the fourth – *Ayaathrem* – signifies time of prosperity and nourishment – it is associated with the breeding season of the cattle;

the fifth – *Maediam* – signifies mid-winter time, when owing to extreme weather conditions all agricultural work generally ceases;

and,

finally, *Hamaspathim* – signifying a time prior to the vernal equinox, when Zoroastrians spring clean their house and welcome the fravashis of the departed. The very next day after *Hamaspathim* is vernal equinox or *NoRuz* when days and nights are of equal duration. The combined festival lasted for over a fortnight until *Khordad Sal* and was the longest public holiday, which is marked even today by all Iranians in the Islamic Republic of Iran where the whole country is on extended leave.

Though each of the six Gahambars lasts for five days, the principal day of the Gahambar is the last day. The preceding four days are for preliminary preparation and enjoyment. In the Pahlavi commentary of the Afringhan of Gahambars, these occasions are connected with the following six principal creations of Ahura Mazda; these being the heavens, water, earth, vegetable kingdom, animal kingdom and man. The seventh and last creation fire is connected with *NoRuz*. As stated, the Gahambars are thus occasions for offerings of thanksgiving to Ahura Mazda for the institution of different seasons, on whose regularity depend the prosperity of our world. Indeed, the Bahman Yasht prophecies that the non-celebration of the Gahambars will be an evil day for the world.

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In the past, in Iran and in India, it was considered to be the duty of all Zoroastrians to celebrate the Gahambar. The Afringhan of the Gahambar tell us that everyone should participate in the public Gahambar and pay their dues, however big or small, according to their means. Every Zoroastrian need not celebrate the Gahambar individually; it is an occasion to be celebrated by a group of people where, as far as one can afford, one is expected to make a monetary contribution or in kind towards the Gahambar. The Afringhan, for instance, says that if one can afford, he may 'offer a fat healthy goat or sheep for public feast'! The Afringhan goes on to say that even if a poor person cannot afford to make any monetary or in kind contribution, so be it. That person should also participate in prayers and the feast of the Gahambar. The four words used in the Afringhan of Gahambar – '*Yazadz, Shazad, Khurad and Dehad*' – ie *pray, perform, eat or give* – seem to suggest the different ways in which one can participate in the celebration of the Gahambar.

One of the greatest advocates for the celebration of Gahambar in India was the late Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, 1st Bart, who had great faith in the celebration of the Gahambar. He had set aside large funds with the Parsi Anjumans of Bombay, Surat, Navsari, Broach, etc, since of all the ceremonial occasions, the Gahambar are considered to be the principal occasions for ceremonial gatherings.

Besides celebrating NoRuz and the six seasonal Gahambar, Zoroastrian Iran in ancient times also celebrated other thanksgiving days including *Khordad Sal, Zartosht – no Diso, Jashn – e Sadeh* and when the day of the month coincided with the name of month known as Hamkara Jashans by the Parsis, oldest of them being *Jashn – e Tirgan* and *Jashn – e Mehergan*. Although these are not seasonal festivals, but these important thanksgiving days were celebrated with a Gahambar being organised, where the entire community, rich or poor, gathered to witness the Afringhan being performed and then share a meal together. At the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) in London, this religious practice continues into the 21st century!

The ZTFE simultaneously follows Shahenshai Parsi calendar and the Irani Zoroastrian calendar. It has been celebrating Shahenshai Navroze since its inception in 1861 and Jamsheedi NoRuz on 21st March since 1906 with pomp and splendour, while Shahenshai Fravardin mah Fravardin roj at the Zoroastrian Cemetery in Brookwood since 1863. During the 1950s under the stewardship of Dasturji Sohrabji H Kutar, High Priest of UK and Europe, ZTFE commenced the '*Hamaspathim*' Gahambar as per the Shahenshai

The mobeds of ZTFE led by Ervad Rustom Bhedwar, first on right, facing



Gahambars

AROUND THE HAFT KESHWAR ZAMIN - A tradition to perpetuate Gahambars in the Diaspora

calendar known popularly by the Parsis as 'Muktads'. Iranian Zoroastrians began to settle in the UK after the Islamic Revolution, thus in the 1980s the ZTFE commenced celebrating some festivals according to the Iranian Zoroastrian calendar. Gahambars were endowed for *Maedioshahem* and *Jashn – e Tirgan* by the Zartoshty Brothers, *Jashn – e Mehergan* and *Jashn – e Sadeh* by Goli and Mehraban Farangi and *Khordad Sal* and *Zartosht – no Diso* by Nahid and Bahman Mobed. In the 1990s the ZTFE commenced the practice of celebrating all the Hamkara Jashans as per the Shahenshai calendar. Under the presidency of Mr Malcolm M Deboo, the ZTFE has done particularly well in the last three or four years to preserve this ancient custom for our members, because all the Hamkara Jashans are celebrated, followed by a Gahambar meal, which are generally sponsored by private individuals who, on occasions, even sponsor the food, when the token monies collected are allocated towards some specific charity. Under the presidency of Mr Malcolm M Deboo, in the last five years, the ZTFE has also commenced the practice of celebrating the '*Hamaspathim*' Gahambar or *Panjeh* as per the Iranian Zoroastrian calendar, which is also sponsored by private individuals. Next year it is anticipated that the ZTFE will commence the practice of celebrating the remaining four Gahambars as per the Iranian Zoroastrian calendar according to the seasons.

As a community, we at the ZTFE are, of course, eternally grateful to all our team of mobeds who perform the requisite Jashan ceremonies followed by Gahambars, where the members of our community break bread together. Thus ensuring these ancient Zoroastrian festivals are celebrated in accordance to the Zoroastrian religious calendar, instead of scheduling them at the nearest weekend. We are particularly lucky to be served by reliable caterers who do not charge an earthy sum for catering services rendered. Our meals have, therefore, by necessity, got to be modest; one dish only, with ice cream generally for desert.

Zoroastrian rites, rituals and customs are thus nobly being preserved by ZTFE and practised in the 21st century, for which successive Managing Committees and the Trustees ought to be saluted. If we keep these noble traditions going, the future wellbeing of our community is bound to be preserved. I would, therefore, urge all co-religionists to attend as many of these functions as and when it is possible to do so; therein lies the future continuing wellbeing of our Zoroastrian community.

Atha Jamyat yatha afrinami.



Noshir Avari originates from Mombasa in Kenya, and has been settled in the UK since the early 1960s.

Noshir served the Zoroastrian Association of the UK for many years as a Trustee and upon retirement in 2007, was made an Honorary Life Member and the title "Counsel Emeritus" conferred upon him.

Gahambar

AROUND THE HAFT KESHWAR ZAMIN - A tradition to perpetuate Gahambar in the Diaspora



GAHAMBAR OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF FLORIDA (ZAF) MIAMI (see pg 43)



GAHAMBAR OF CENTRAL FLORIDA ZOROASTRIAN GROUP - ORLANDO (see page 43)



PLEASE HELP US CURE BLINDNESS

Four years ago, the RDH12 Fund for Sight began the journey toward a cure for genetic blindness. With each dollar donated to the Fund, we take one step closer to the cure our children are desperately waiting for. That is what we are asking for now – a dollar to help us close this chapter of our children's lives.

With the launch of our **"One for a Million"** campaign the RDH12 Fund for Sight is asking for your help. We are asking for two things: a donation (even as little as a single dollar helps) and your help spreading the word and work of the RDH12 Fund for Sight. And in exchange for the continued generosity of all the Fund's supporters, we will be offering exciting rewards, **including a new Ipad.**

To start – go to our website www.1foramillion.com. Here you will find out about the campaign we are running and how you can participate. You can earn points to earn rewards. There are so many ways you can contribute to the cause and all of it is recognized and rewarded. You can donate money right online using your credit card or bank account. You don't even have to get off the couch to help our foundation reach our goal and earn fantastic prizes. We hope that you will consider donating AND participating in some of our contest in order to help us raise a million dollars as fast as we can.

We are in our last push to raise the 1.6 million dollars needed to get clinical trials off the ground by the end of 2015. Please help us reach our goal. In the end you can say you helped cure blindness in our children.

To learn more about our foundation please visit www.rdh12.org.

In The News

THE BRILLIANCE OF EVERLASTING FLAME

The 11th Annual Zoroastrian Association of Houston Lecture Series

Meheryar N. Rivetna

In 2013, the School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London held a fabulous exhibition *The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination*, a visual narrative of Zoroastrian religion, history and culture. On November 1, 2014, some Houstonians, who missed the exhibition, were enthralled to view many of the artifacts and hear about the exhibition from a talk given by Sarah Stewart, organizing curator of the exhibition as well as lecturer in Zoroastrianism at SOAS. The library committee of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) invited Sarah Stewart who studied under the doyenne of Zoroastrian studies, Mary Boyce, to speak to the ZAH members as part of its eleventh annual lecture series to enlighten the community on varied aspects of Zoroastrianism.

The ZAH event titled Pictures at an exhibition--Voices of the People was a two-part lecture program. Sarah Stewart captivated the audience during the morning session as she pictorially described sections of the exhibition highlighting artifacts from the ancient world stretching from Mesopotamia to the Indus Valley offering scholarly perspectives on the relics exhibited. The exhibits also brought light to the sacred Zoroastrian texts including the Gathas and the concept of the Amesha Spentas, the manifestations of Ahura Mazda. The exhibits also focused on early Zoroastrian merchants arriving in China culminating in the Parsis dominating trade in cotton and opium in the Far East.

During the afternoon talk, *Themes of Self Definition among Zoroastrians in Contemporary Iran*, Dr. Sarah Stewart gave a fascinating account of what it means to be a Zoroastrian in Iran today. Her talk centered on what makes Zoroastrians in Iran stand apart from other Iranians as well as what are their shared identities. This was an interview based project conducted in Iran by Dr. Stewart and her students in areas with a fair concentration of practicing Zoroastrians. Amongst the many informative points she communicated, it was interesting to hear that the Iranian Zoroastrians are steadfast in their sense of Zoroastrian identity. The Zoroastrians have an unwavering loyalty to Iran and live well with their Muslim denizens. Dr. Stewart determined that there are 60 Zoroastrian priests in Iran and eight are female. The Iranian government has mandated formal religious education in the nation's schools every Friday. While the Muslim youth learn about their faith during this class period, the Zoroastrian students study Avesta. The Shah-Nameh, the Farohar, the tomb of Cyrus the Great and the Cyrus cylinder are shared symbols of national pride among all Iranians--Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian.

The day ended with a few ZAH members showcasing their talents in song and dance to entertain the attendees. Some of the performers may have missed their calling!

On Sunday, November 2, Sarah Stewart presented her Everlasting Flame talk at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston to an audience outside of the ZAH community. Dr. Stewart addressed a packed auditorium and with superior acoustics and projection facilities the talk was a roaring success.

Needless to say, programs of this caliber bring awareness of the richness of the Zoroastrian religion and history to its adherents and beyond and the ZAH is in the forefront among the Zoroastrian Associations of North America in this endeavor.

Needless to say, programs of this caliber bring awareness of the richness of the Zoroastrian religion and history to its adherents and beyond and the ZAH is in the forefront among the Zoroastrian Associations of North America in this endeavor.

Meheryar Rivetna is employed at Merck & Co., Inc. as an Executive Customer Representative. Meheryar enjoys cooking, reading, writing, and photography in his spare time. Meheryar is an active member of the ZAH/ FIRES library committee. He and his wife Zubeen Mehta live in Houston, TX.



In The News

HISTORIC MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA, **Narendra Modi**

To be called to meet the PM of India at less than 24 hours notice is not an everyday event. One such event took place on Monday June 30 at 16.30 hours,



Figure 1 The Foundation for Development of Udvada delegation from left : Homai Engineer; Dasturji Khurshed Dastur, PM Narendra Modi; Dinsha Tamboly, Jehangir R.J. Cama

On Sunday, June 29, Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastur received a telepho ne call from the PM's office at 1700 hours informing him that PM would like to meet him and other members of the core Foundation for the Development of Udvada (FDU) team on Monday June 30 at 16.30 hours i.e. within less than 24 hours !!!

The four members intrinsically connected with the FDU, Dasturji Khurshed Dastur & Dinsha Tamboly were in Mumbai, Jehangir R.J. Cama, hotelier from Ahmedabad was in Ahmedabad but Homai Engineer, industrialist from Vapi was fortunately already in Delhi. The appointment with the Prime Minister, who enjoys a particularly cordial rapport with Dasturji Khurshed, was kept. Dasturji was out of the country when the results of the election of the PM was announced. But upon his return he had sent a letter congratulating him and wishing

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him a successful term as PM and gave him a brief update on Udvada and FDU (Foundation for Development of Udvada).

Narendra Modi always took a keen interest in Udvada when he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat and he had the Government of Gujarat set up **The Udvada Area Development Authority (UADA)**. He had visited Udvada in April 2011 and had sought and received the blessings of Iranshah. Since then the Foundation for Development of Udvada (FDU) team had met with Mr Modi a few times.

No one from the Parsi press or any other institution was invited to this meeting. Once there the visitors had to go through a rigid security process to meet the PM; no one is allowed to carry cell phones, cameras etc. However the official photographers and videographers were present when the group entered, and the first few minutes were devoted to photo ops.

The meeting opened with Dasturji reciting a benediction invoking a long life filled with good health and a very outstanding tenure as leader of the country. The PM was visibly moved by this gesture and expressed his sincere gratitude. *(Photo right)* He not only recalled having visited Udvada in 2011 and being similarly blessed but also mentioned his interest in visiting there once again to mingle with the Parsi community.



The team gave an overview of the strategic plan to develop Udvada as a pilgrim centre by UADA by focusing on infrastructure development.

The other community matters discussed was the outstanding contribution of Field Marshal Sam Maneckshaw and requesting the conferring of the Bharat Ratna upon him. The restoration of lapsed reserved seats for Parsi students in medical and engineering colleges, seats which had been originally endowed by Parsi philanthropists. The PM requested that a list of institutions founded by Parsis with endowed seats be compiled and sent to him for consideration of reinstatement of these seats.

The FDU delegation presented three books to the PM: 1, **The Life and Times of Field Marshal Sam Maneckshaw** by Zenobia & Behram Panthaki of USA, 2. **Parsis** (a pictorial by Soonni Taraporevala), 3. **Ashavans**, brief sketches of eminent Parsis, edited by Meher Bhesania post World Zoroastrian Congress at Dubai.

The impression of the delegation as expressed by Dinshaw Tamboly was “the Prime Minister Narendra Modi is very serious and focused, involved in whatever he undertakes; and there is nothing superfluous about him. Hailing from an economically challenged background, and having started as a worker at grass root level he understands how to look at the ‘total picture’. He has a sharp, shrewd analytical mind and a genuine soft corner for the Parsi community”. May this be a harbinger of a new era for Parsis of India.

Submitted by Dinshaw Tamboly

Jehangir N Cama, 76 died suddenly in Ahmedabad on August 25, 2014 from cardiac arrest.

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Visit of Dasturji Khurshed Dastur, Vada Dasturji of Udvada to the Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation in Oakville, Ontario.

Dasturji Khurshed Dastur, vada dasturji of Udvada was on a private visit to Mississauga, Ontario to perform a navjote.

Taking this opportunity the OZCF religious committee lead by Khurshid Engineer organized a meet and greet session on Friday July 18, 2014 for the Dasturji to address the community and for the community to pose questions to him.

Dasturji was warmly welcomed



with a traditional Achu Michu and was jokingly introduced as the *“Dasturji who has the ear of the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi.”*

He then gave an inspirational talk on the origin of our holy fire, the grades of fire and the individual identity of the holy fire found in different atashbehrams and agiaries.

He then went on to dispel the myth held among the laity that Parsis brought the holy Fire from Iran when they landed on the west coast of India in 761 CE.

“Contrary to popular belief we did not bring any fire with us, instead we consecrated the Fire in India from 16 different fires, each of which had to undergo an elaborate process of prayers for consecration.” (for a total of 1250 hours of prayers)

Dasturji then traced the historical journey of this Fire and where it was housed starting with the first fire temple in Sanjan consecrated by Dasturji Nereosang Dhaval and named Iranshah to symbolize our king whom we had left behind in Iran.

The fire is constantly purified by the prayers of the mobeds who say the *“Boi.”* 45 Atash Niyash are said everyday by these mobeds in rotation 9 per each geh.

For this reason he reemphasized that when entering the agiary or an Atashbehram the highest respect should be shown in the way we dress and in our behaviour as we are entering in the presence of the King *“Iranshah”*.

City of Oakville Counsellor Max Khan, the representative of the Mayor of Oakville presented Dasturji with a welcome letter and thanked the Zoroastrian community for *“sweetening Oakville with their presence just as they had done centuries ago in Gujarat.”*

The President of OZCF, Firdosh Bulsara then requested Ervad Nozer Kotwal to present Dasturji with a shawl as a mark of respect of the community. (Photo right)

Dasturji then went on to patiently answer and address, with good humour and always with a twinkle in his eyes, upwards of two dozen questions from the audience some of which were tricky and controversial. As the event was live broadcast all over North America, there were questions from the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario as well, through text messaging.

He was asked his views on a consecrated fire in North America,

to which he replied with candour that initially we would be very enthusiastic about it, but cautioned we take *‘one step at a time.’*

His advice was to start with a perpetual *Dadgah fire*, observe it for a few years. See how the community can deal with it. Then take the next step of establishing an agiary.

He gave the example of what is happening in India where in many agiaries the fire is locked up most of the time due to lack of mobeds. In India there are only about 35-40 young boys every year who qualify as navars from the Athornan madressas. This number is not even sufficient for India, how will the west get a supply of Mobeds and Kathi? He challenged the crowd, *“how many of you are going to go to the Agiary on a daily basis and sustain it?”*

He cautioned us to think of future maintenance, both spiritual and physical of the agiary we want to build. He concluded that he would be happy to come back to help consecrate the fire once we are comfortable in maintaining the dadgah.

The evening concluded with a delicious dinner prepared by a member of OZCF..

Report prepared by Teenaz Javat



In The News

SOCIETY OF SCHOLARS OF ZOROASTRIANISM (SSZ) CONFERENCE – 2014



Mobedyar Boman Damkevala

The Ninth SSZ Conference was held at the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr in Chicago on September 6, 2014. These conferences have been held in Chicago each year since 2006. The mission of the Society is to revive the tradition of scholarship within our community and to promote interaction among academicians, theologians (priests), educationists, lay scholars, and practitioners of Zoroastrianism through round table discussions, conferences and publications. All community members, students, scholars, and members of inter-faith communities are invited and encouraged to participate.

This year the conference was dedicated as the “*Keki Bhote Memorial SSZ Conference*” in recognition of his lifelong support and dedication to learning, enlightening the community and scholarship.

OPENING

The attendees were treated with a sumptuous breakfast followed by benediction by Mobedyar Boman Damkevala and a Monajat by Mani Rao. ZAC President, Ervad Rayomand Ravji, welcomed the presenters and other attendees. He thanked Rohinton and Roshan Rivetna for their efforts in organizing the conference. He stressed that conferences like this enrich our minds and are instrumental in spreading knowledge. Rohinton Rivetna provided a brief introduction to SSZ, drawing attention to the SSZ logo which includes the words “Light” and “Learning,” stressing that study and scholarship are important for a religion to survive. He urged the participants to visit www.s-s-z.org.

SESSION I: Urvaksh Patel, CHAIR

This session started with next-generation speakers.

Persis Driver spoke about Zoroastrians as collaborators in the Phenology Network which deals with seasonal changes in plants and animals from year to year, such as flowering, emergence of insects, and migration of birds, especially their timing and relationship with weather and climate. The great strength of the Zoroastrian faith is that it enjoins the caring of the physical world. **Khursheed Ichaporia** spoke about the importance of the Gahambars, pointing out the gathering and sharing of food at Gahambars as a means of reconnecting with each other.

Ervad Rayomand Ravji touched upon the concept of “*Tushnamaiti*” referenced in Gatha Ushtavaiti. Tushnamaiti, meaning silent meditation, is one of the earliest references to meditation. In his presentation, Rayomand pointed out the various benefits of meditation and also gave a short demonstration of meditation.

Kersee Kabraji, of Pune, a committed student of the religion and author of “A Gathic View of Zoroastrianism” presented an overview of Zoroastrianism with a Gathic perspective.

LUNCH SESSION: Pervin Taleyarkhan; Emce

Mani Rao, gave a vocal presentation entitled “India Taro Upkar” and there was a screening of “Bhonu Prakash” (Zoroastrians and food in historical Perspective) by Dr. Dan Sheffield, post-doctoral fellow and lecturer in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University.

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From left Kayomarsh Mehta, Kersee Kabraji, Joseph Peterson, Dilshad Antia, Dastur Kersey Antia, Rohinton Rivetna

A special award, the “**Zoroastrian Scholarly Studies and Service Award**,” was presented to **Joseph Peterson** for his invaluable service to the community and for his dedication to advancing learning of the Zarthushti scriptures. The award was presented by the guest of honor, **Kersee Kabraji**. Congratulatory letters from Ervad Jehan Bagli, JoAnn and Ervad Soli Dastur, and Kayomarsh Mehta were read out. Dastoor Dr. Kersey Antia also read his write-up about Joseph Peterson and presented him with a plaque on behalf of his wife and himself.

After tea, Kersee Kabraji, (photo below) continued with his presentation. In the Gathas, Zarathushtra details several principles that have made

Zoroastrianism the most rational religion and one that is ideally suited to fit the yearnings of the modern man. He also pointed out the difference between religion and religiosity.

SESSION II Eric Elavia, Chair

High priest and scholar, Dastoor **Dr. Kersey Antia** presented his thoughts on **Spenta Mainyu in Zoroastrianism**. Dr. Antia said that while Vedic parallels could be found for the words of different Amesha Spentas and even for Ahura Mazda Himself, Spenta Mainyu is regarded as Zarathushtra’s own creation. Spenta Mainyu represents God’s progressive spirit.

Dr. Wouter Henkleman, (photo below) Associate Professor of the Elamite and Achaemenid world at Ecole Pratique des Haute Etudes, France, who is studying the Persepolis tablets at the Oriental Institute of Chicago gave an interesting presentation on “**The Royal Table of the Achaemenids**”. The Persepolis Fortification Archive, found at Persepolis/Takht-e-Jamshid in 1933-34, presently

being studied and edited at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, is rapidly taking its due place as a prime source for the social and economic history of the Achaemenid empire. Among the themes understood with the help of the archive is

the institution known as the Royal Table. The tablets show not only the incredible logistic operations needed to feed the immense itinerant court on its travels, but also the social hierarchy symbolized and confirmed by the Royal Table and the importance of gifts and counter-gifts.



THE NEXT GENERATION PANEL AND DISCUSSION

Khushrow Madon, Chair.

The panelists were **Eric Elavia, Urvaksh Patel, Mehrab Deboo, Ervad Rayomand Ravji, Cyrus Rivetna, and Pervin Taleyarkhan**. The

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From left Eric Elavia; Ervad Rayomand Ravji; Parvin Taleyarkhan. Cyrus Rivetna; Urvaksh Patel; Khushrow Madon;

panel members talked about their vision of the practice of Zoroastrianism in North America. They mentioned the unique challenges facing them and their perspective on how we could shape our future. Some of the ideas presented were: understanding the challenges; determining objectives; creating an action plan; learning from our past and building upon processes that were successful; the importance of proper physical places of worship to uplift our spirituality and perpetuate our practices; listening with our ears, but using our illumined minds; learning the meanings and significance of our prayers; congregational worship; and need of a link to be connected. This was followed by some questions, answers and several positive comments.

All participants, next-generation speakers and scholars expressed appreciation for the excellent opportunity afforded by this Conference, to learn and educate themselves and impart their knowledge – which is essentially the mission of the SSZ.

KERSEE KABRAJI GATHAS PRESENTATION

PARASTU DUBASH, ZAGBA

On September 3rd, 2014 Kersee Kabraji of Pune, India stood along the 2nd floor balcony of the Memorial Church at Harvard University to talk about the Gathas – a set of 17 hymns which are considered the most sacred texts of the Zarathushtrian faith. This open room on the second floor of the Memorial Church overlooks the sanctuary and provided an appropriate setting for a philosophic and religious presentation at one of the most renowned academic and research institutions in the world. Seated in the wooden pews, the audience sat in close proximity as they were given a glimpse into the 238 stanzas which are believed to have been composed by Zarathustra himself and speak of the faith in terms of a universal religion, open to all mankind. From the perspective of a layperson, Mr. Kabraji began his own journey of reading and studying the Gathas about 25 years ago and continues that journey by bringing that knowledge and enthusiasm to other lay people around the world.

On the heels of his visits to Pittsburgh and Dallas, Mr. Kabraji and his wife arrived in Boston and were hosted by Firoza and Farhad Panthaki. Due to Mr. Kabraji's busy travel schedule, the presentation was scheduled for a weekday evening in Cambridge. About 40 ZAGBA members and their friends were in attendance for the talk.

Mr. Kabraji had a fast-paced, power point presentation with topics including one God of Good Life and Wisdom, the attributes of Ahura Mazda (Amesha Spenta), Athar (Fire), Twin Mentalities, and Hamkar (the co-worker of Ahura Mazda). He also emphasized the principal messages in the Gathas as freedom of choice and will, responsibility of consequences, spirit of service, spirit of independent inquiry, twin mentalities, righteousness, helping the poor and needy, acceptance into Zoroastrian faith, acting as Hamkar for perfecting the world, equality of sexes and protection of environment. Offering translations of select Gathic verses, he showed their universality, simplicity and timelessness in contrast to other scriptures of the Zarathushti religion which were written at different times, in different languages by different followers of Zarathushtra, based on

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their own understandings (“or mis-understandings”) of his teachings, and often included the social and cultural regulations of the time periods in which they were written. Mr. Kabraji also shared quotes from scholars across the globe in admiration and praise of the Zarathushti faith.

Each of Mr. Kabraji’s powerpoint slides contained bullet points, verses or quotes which could each, on its own, have been the focal point of an hour-long discussion. He spoke quickly to present the material he had prepared and unfortunately there was not enough time to discuss the topics at length. At the end of his presentation, Mr. Kabraji took questions from the audience. One of the more controversial topics that came up involved differing opinions about the role of rituals in the Zarathushti religion. This is definitely a topic that will continue to be debated at Zarathushti dinner tables, talks and conferences in the years ahead.

Daryush Mehta, the Zoroastrian representative with Harvard Chaplains who arranged for the venue and helped plan the event along with the ZAGBA Board, thanked Mr. Kabraji for his presentation and also the audience for coming to the event. ZAGBA President Firoza Panthaki thanked Mr. Kabraji for his time and his energy and presented him with gifts from Boston and Harvard University. Mr. Kabraji expressed gratitude for the turnout of enthusiastic listeners. He praised the audience for wanting to learn more about the Gathas. While some in attendance thought the talk was overly simplistic, many others appreciated his non-scholarly overview of themes and highlighting of specific passages. Mr. Kabraji shared copies of his paperback book, “A Gathic View of Zoroastrianism and Ethical Life,” thankful to those who had encouraged him to be a student of the religion and become “A Follower of Zarathushtra,” as well as those who supported him in creating this book allowing him to further share the principal messages of the Gathas with a wider audience.

Mr Kabraji also presented in Pittsburg, Houston, Dallas, Boston, Chicago and London between August 23 to September 14, 2014.

In The News

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP OF PUBLIC SPEAKING – TOASTMASTER INTERNATIONAL

Sharookh Daroowala, originally from Mumbai, and now living in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, achieved the unique honor of competing in the Finals of the World Championship of Public Speaking. The contest was held on August 23, 2014 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and was organized by Toastmasters International, a world leader in communication and leadership development.



Sharookh was one of the 9 speakers who reached the Finals from an original pool of 35,000 contestants from 125 countries.

Sharookh is a 2-time public speaking champion of British Columbia, Canada. In 2013-14, in the 80-year history of Toastmasters International, B. C., Sharookh was the second speaker to win the triple crown of public speaking in the same year viz ***the International Speech (prepared speech), Speech Evaluation and Table Topics (extempore speech) contests.***

In recognition of his communication and leadership skills, in 2004, Toastmasters International honored Sharookh with its highest award: ***Distinguished Toastmaster.***

Sharookh is a keynote speaker, speech coach and mediator. Congratulations Sharookh

NEW ZOROASTRIAN CENTRES IN NORTH AMERICA A FEZANA Panel Discussion

A Panel Presentation ***“How to Build/Buy/Upgrade Association Centers”***, chaired by Homi Gandhi, FEZANA Vice-President, held prior to the Annual General Meeting in Seattle, Washington State, May 2014, is available for viewing on the FEZANA website.

This video is made possible with the help of Fred Bhesania of Zoroastrian Society of Washington State (ZSWS) and Arzan Sam Wadia, FEZANA webmaster and Co-Chair of the Information Technology Committee.

Panelists, Tehmi Damania, President, ZAC-LA, Behram Irani from ZANT, and Edul Daver from ZAGNY, have shared their power point presentation in the public domain and agreed to be the resource individuals if any association or small group needs their help.

Tehmi Damania : ZAC_Presentation New_Centers_FEZANA
Behram Irani : ZANT_Presentation_New_Centers_FEZANA
Edul Daver : ZAGNY_Presentation_New_Centers_FEZANA

THIS PANEL WAS PART OF THE FEZANA STRATEGIC PLAN FOR INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

In The News

100 Toronto-first Zoroastrian Scout Group

Celebrates its Silver Anniversary



From left Ervads Khushroo Bharda-ex-scouters of 100th and founder of the new 100th Oakville Zoroastrian Scout Group (sponsored by the OZCF). Arman Panthaki (past member); Farhan Panthaki; (past member); Xerxes Dastur (present scout and the Zaotar performing the jashan); Noshir Mirza-past Chair of the 100th Group Committee helped organize the jashan; and Kamraan Panthaki (past member).

100 Toronto Scout Group kicked off its 25th Anniversary Celebrations with an Inaugural Jashan & Lunch held on Sunday August 24th 2014 at the Darbe Mehr from 10:30 a.m. to about 2 p.m. It was attended by approximately 190 past and present leaders and youths and their immediate family members. The Jashan ceremony was performed by present and past Scouts Ervad Xerxes Dastur as “zaotar”, assisted by Ervads



Plaque presented by AC Doug O'Corroll on behalf of Scouts Canada to Rusi Unvala and Ferozshaw Ogra, Group commissioners of 100th Toronto.

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Farhan, Kamraan and Arman Panthaki (brothers), past Chairperson and Jashan organizer Ervad Noshir Mirza, and past leader Ervad Khushroo Bharda.

The Group invited ZSO and OZCF Presidents (Bina Behboodi and Percy Dastur), Willow Valley and Sunny Brook Area Commissioners (AC) of Scouts Canada, Central Ontario Scout Council, Scouters Erika Druke, Heather Graheme, Sharon and Doug O'Carroll and William Wong. Erika was the AC who helped in 1990 when the Group was established, and Doug is the most recent AC. Doug presented a plaque of appreciation from Scouts Canada to the Group for providing 25 years of scouting program to the youths. Rusi Unvala and Ferozshaw Ogra accepted the plaque on behalf of the Group.



Founding members from left Freddy Mirza, Noshir Dastoor, Phiroz Dastoor, Maneck Sattha, Noshir Mirza, Vispi Patel and Jimmy Mistry not in photo

Next Freddy Mirza, one of the founding members, introduced the other founding members, **Noshir Dastoor, Noshir Mirza, Vispi Patel, Maneck Sattha, and Phiroz Dastoor** - as well as **Jimmy Mistry** who could not attend as he was in Mumbai. Rusi Unvala presented Scouter Vispi Patel with a certificate and a token gift of appreciation for his 25 years of extremely dedicated service as Group Treasurer and for keeping immaculate records and accounts. Since 5 of the 7 founding members were from 11th Central Mumbai District Association (ex-100th Bombay), also known as the **“Ardeshir Homavazir Scout Group”** in Dadar Parsi Colony, Mumbai, the entire



Leader Mondana Bastani being invested with the Group Scarf by Group Commissioner Ferozshaw Ogra

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Group of current members

Homavazir family of Toronto was invited and Dara Homavazir gave a brief sketch of his grand-father, Ardeshir.

The speeches and the presentations were followed by the Scout Group Opening ceremonies outside in the garden. The weather was excellent. This was followed by a “*swim up*” (transfer ceremony) of youths from Beavers to Cubs, Cubs to Scouts, and Scouts to Venturers.

The outdoor Scouts Closing Ceremony was followed by a sumptuous, delicious lunch of dhan- daar, patio, tarelli macchi, (fried fish) tarellavengna (fried garden eggs) and dessert of malido, ravo, sev and falooda. Kersi and his merry band of volunteers cooked all night until almost 5 o’clock in the morning! During lunch, there was a slide presentation of old and recent photos as well as a display of photo albums. The entire event was hosted by 100th Toronto Scout group.

The success of this historic event is due to the blessings of Ahura Mazda and the combined efforts of the 100th Toronto Scout Group members. It will be remembered for a life time by all those who participated in this Silver Anniversary Inaugural Ceremony.

Submitted by “Group Committee - 100 Toronto”

Be Careful with your words
Once they are said
they can only
be forgiven not forgotten

In The News

MILLION HITS FOR ZOROASTRIANS.NET



In 2007 Yazdi Tantra started a blog, a resource base, for young Zoroastrians who always complained that they did not have enough material on Religion, Culture and Social Practices. There were many resources all over the Internet which were scholarly and useful but were spread all over and difficult to access. From this need, grew the idea of creating www.zoroastrians.net, to get as many resources as possible for the community, ***ALL UNDER ONE ROOF!*** With the active encouragement of Rohinton Rivetna and Behram Pastakia through the erstwhile “*Coming Together Roundtable*”, the initiative flourished further. And, the response has been overwhelming, A million hits in seven years!!! 10,000 viewers per day through multiple related channels!!!.

Over the years, young and old, Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians, from over 200 countries (with India and USA topping the list) have been accessing the site for a reliable gateway to valuable on-line Z-resources, including a visitor from Vatican City! A Ph D student from Belgium used the site for his research on how Zoroastrians apply their religion for business, and a Japanese professor of Inter-Cultural Studies, Tenrii University, used it as a launching pad for studies of Zoroastrian Corporations, resulting in submitting a paper on the success of Tata Consultancy Services as a Z-Corporation.

The site focuses on positive, non-controversial material e.g. food, education, matrimony, religion, rituals, navjotes and weddings, interesting galleries, news, and some fun-stuff too! It has in one place, the most comprehensive collection of scholarships (both from within the community and outside). Nostalgic gujarati songs, monajats and some fun songs, parsi recipes and tele-classes on religion.

The other sister sites connected with Zoroastrians.net are

1. www.TheParsiDirectory.com - The World's Largest Free Listing of Parsis and Iranis with more than 78,000 listings from all over the world, which can be searched by name / location / profession. An extremely valuable resource.
2. www.TheParsiInstitutions.com - The World's largest listing of Parsi Institutions. Easily searchable, city wise, lists of Agiaries, Atash Behrams, Anjumans, Associations, Clubs / Dharamshalas / Sanatoria, Hospitals / Dispensaries, Hostels, and many more.
3. www.TheParsiFamily.com - A unique initiative to keep The Parsi Family together, worldwide. The vision is **to connect each and every Zoroastrian through a single, online family tree.**

In addition, the site also offers the following features and benefits:

1. Each association / federation can publish their events online

In The News

2. Individuals can advertise their businesses / Professional prowess / Job requirements / availability online in the Classified Section. Business or profession can also be posted on the Yellow Pages.
 3. Matrimonial matches can be easily made.
 4. Parsi Publications which are freely available online can be put up on a common platform, encouraging a high level of readership. Currently FEZANA Journal, FEZANA Bulletin, ZAGNY Newsletter and Parsi Times are uploaded, and many more will be added shortly.
 5. The entire site is multi-lingual – comments can be posted in English and/or Gujarati, which makes it easy for Zarathushtis in all areas.
 6. FREE SMS service for Uthamna (third day prayers for the dead) all over India – Give a missed call to 022-61816369 – currently more than 3,500 SMSs per day are sent.
 7. FREE Android App for Zoroastrian news across the world – More than 2,000 downloads already!
4. **www.TheMissingParsi.com** - another one-of-a kind resource, open to all who are looking for Parsis / Iranis across the world. More than 50% of cases referred are solved, uniting friends and family across the world.

Over seven years, Zoroastrians.net has gone much beyond the original brief. The exciting journey continues with full support from the community and others. Comments and criticisms are always welcomed – which means that the site is visited, read and found relevant !

With a view to the future, Tantra is exploring new areas of delivery, especially through the smartphone mobile route on a multiplicity of channels and platforms and pledges to leave behind a legacy for future generations to admire and cherish ! Yazdi reflects “With our dwindling numbers, I thought it might be a good idea to leave something behind for posterity. Long after we are dead and gone and our numbers go beyond redemption, this site may just turn out to be a valuable resource for the world to refer to, to understand and appreciate the wonderful community!”

Thank you Yazdi for this invaluable resource that you have created.



Yazdi Tantra is a Chartered Accountant by training, Computer Consultant by Profession, Entrepreneur Developer by hobby and Trainer in his leisure time. He has been active in promoting several Zoroastrian Websites in the firm belief that this modern medium, will help unite our far-flung community across the globe. Yazdi writes a regular weekly column for Parsi Times, Mumbai, on Android apps for efficiency at the workplace. He is currently Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the IT Committee of Zoroastrian Co-operative Bank Ltd. He runs a medium-sized Computer Company ON-LYNE for the last 24 years, developing websites, portals, payment gateways, sales and service of computer hardware. He was the director and Technical Chair of World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce and is associated with an educational trust that handles 4200 students - from kindergarten to Senior College, with vocational courses thrown in ! He is active on Social Media and runs several other blogs.

In The News

ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF HOUSTON

Z Camp 2014



The ZAH Z-Camp held from July 11th – 13th 2014 was a tremendous success. 78 campers had a wonderful experience. Though most of the participants were from Houston, 18 came from Austin, San Antonio, Dallas, Cincinnati and Boston. The camp was designed to provide youth a chance to reflect on topics at hand, to connect with real-life situation and to apply their knowledge to their personal growth. Varied activities and sessions were conducted by experts in their respective professions that included dancing, cooking, acting, web and sporting skills along with sessions like treasure hunt, and how to be successful community leaders.

WELCOME

The excitement started on a hot and sultry evening on Friday, July 11th when local members heard that the out-of-town guests were relishing on “ribs” on their way to Houston and strategizing on how to create mayhem when they got here. Meanwhile ZAH participants were trickling in and already making plans for the next two days. By 10 pm the Dallas, Austin and San Antonio entourages were at the Center along with a couple of participants from Cincinnati and Boston. The kids were at the basketball courts playing, talking to their hearts content and the adults feasted on the *lagan-nu-custard*, *bataasas*, *phudina chai*, etc. All went to bed around midnight waiting for the official Z-Camp to kick-off the next day.

PROGRAM

Saturday morning, the ZAH Center started buzzing around with kids. Once the registration activities concluded, the Z-Camp started with our customary prayers and housekeeping announcements. The campers, ages 5-20, were divided into four teams. They chose their own team names that ranged from, The Raging Super Sexy Kolmi No Paatio, Zoro’s Finest, Oh Reallv, that’s what your Momma told me last night and The Wet Goatlas (how did they possibly come up with these names???) . The competition started

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in earnest. The Z-Camp kicked off with sporting activities like “*Nargolio* or seven tiles” as well as the Ultimate Frisbee games. After a sumptuous lunch the Treasure Hunt session began around 1 pm and the teams were seen running around gathering clues. Next came the dance session where kids had a lot of fun as they displayed their Bollywood style talents.

What transpired over the next two days was a consolidated effort by the youth, the facilitators and the organizers which resulted in a cohesive unit that achieved results. There was an element of competition in each activity. From demonstrating cooking skills to Bollywood dancing, to designing innovative costume design, to skit production, to a session on leadership. Practical tips on web design and internet security were also introduced and the regular Sunday school sessions were held. Needless to say every few hours there was a food fest and meals like *curry-chawal* to snacks were enjoyed by all. A “no soda and no cell” policy was enforced and the camp schedule was moved up on the last day as everybody wanted to watch 2014 FIFA World Cup Soccer Finals.

WRAP-UP

The camp designed for the youth once again brought the ZAH community together. One evaluator wrote, “Can we stay back with y’all in Houston?” and another said, “Great – superb camp, great fun weekend, made lots of new friends, invite more out-of-towners”. Participants were charged \$20 and donations from members covered the rest of the cost. A big vote of thanks to all the parents, volunteers, donors, presenters and above all our dear campers without whom this camp would not have been possible. Au Revoir and see you all in 2015!!!



Kayo Sidhwa on behalf of the ZAH Z-Camp 2014 Team, Houston, TX.

Kayo Sidhwa is ZAH’s Treasurer, resides with his family in Sugar Land, TX, He is an IT professional with SAP Americas, Inc.

In The News

ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF HOUSTON HAS ONCE AGAIN PROVEN THAT IT SUPPORTS THEIR YOUTH.

SAROSH COLLECTOR, ZAH

Over the past TWO years, the youth Group of Houston have prepared and presented TWO shows for the Houstonians, produced with help and guidance from parents and Youth mentors in the community. The first show **“A blast from the past”** was a 1.5 hour extravaganza of music and dancing (both Hollywood and Bollywood), which was very well received by the audience, , who danced and sang along in their seats. Of course, the entire audience was made up of ZAH membership that supported the efforts.

In July 2014, the youth presented a play **“The Ballad of Rudy and Zal”** a modern take on the Shahnameh. Again, the mentors and parents supported the Youth. In two years the youth were able to raise funds from the community, which will enable a majority of the youth to pay for their registration, travel and lodging expenses to the NAZC 2014 in LA, along with three chaperones. The ZAH executive has also contributed by providing assistance in registration fees and travel. This is NOT the first time that the ZAH membership and Executives have done this. In fact ZAH for the last 20+ years has fielded a very strong contingent to the Youth Congresses whenever they have taken place in North America (32 youth to Vancouver, 23 to Fremont, California, 18 to New York etc). 23 youth and three chaperones to NAZC 2014)
To the entire ZAH family, we say a big THANK YOU!!!!!!!.

FROM LIVING IN A MUMBAI BROTHEL TO SEEING THE WORLD

ZANEETA E DAVER, DC,

Shweta Katti and Kavita Hosmani, both born in Kamathipura, the red-light district of Mumbai, India, grew up in a brothel as best friends not knowing they had the same father who died from AIDS when they were just four years. From age 15 as best friends they started planning their lives that they would live together, go to university together, and move to America together. In just a few years with the help of the Indian NGO Kranti, their dream has been partly realized. Shweta is now a student at Bard College in NY and Kavita is studying in preparation for applying to college. Shweta was honoured as one of the six awardees at the 2014 United Nations Youth Courage Awards ceremony on September 22, for her contribution as an agent of change in her support for girl's education and women's rights. Both, Shweta and Kavita were accepted to sail on Semester at Sea, (SAS) a “study abroad” program based at the University of Virginia. SAS is special to me as I too sailed as a college student in 1994, this ship docks every year in India at Cochin.

Both of these women were told they would never amount to anything and would never get out of the red-light district, but despite the odds and hardships they have excelled. Both women have worked intensively to make up for their lost years of education and they need to be rewarded and helped to chase their dreams of studying together. Shweta and Kavita need funding to complete program fees, shipboard expenses, participate in field programs, and travel while in port.

Please help me, help them be able to participate fully in this amazing study abroad opportunity. We need to raise \$10,000 by the end of the year. As Robin of Kranti wrote: They say it takes a village to raise a child, but I think it takes the whole world to make Kranti's work successful. Thank you so much for taking on this role to help Kavita and Shweta fulfill their dreams!"

To make a donation to the fund to help them participate, please visit www.gofundme.org/shweta-kavita You can learn about Semester at Sea at www.semesteratsea.org and read about their specific voyage at <http://www.semesteratsea.org/voyages/spring-2015/>.

You can watch Shweta's TEDx presentation at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGYNGy1dUU>

In The News

MAESTRO ZUBIN MEETS *Soli Sauce* !

Ervad Soli P. Dastur

AT THE CONCERT

Ever since I read a long time ago that **Aapro Maestro Zubin Mehta** loves hot foods and carries hot peppers with him wherever he goes, I dreamt of a day when my wife, Jo Ann, and I would personally present a bottle of our “famous?!” Soli Sauce to him!

Well, with the help of our very good friends *Lyla and Sam Todywala and Nancy and Jahan Daruwala*, the epic moment came on March 23, 2014 (my 50th anniversary of joining Procter & Gamble in Cincinnati, Ohio), when we attended his concert at Arsht Center in Miami, Florida. Jo Ann and I were very fortunate to meet him, with these friends, and present our Soli Sauce.

On seeing me in my Paghdi and Dagli, his first words were, “Dasturji! tame maare maate khaas malwa aawyaa?” (Dasturji! you came just to see me?)



Maestro Zubin opens fancy Soli Sauce package.



Maestro Zubin firmly grasps the treasure.

Then I mentioned about my long time wish and presented him with a bottle of our Soli Sauce! He was impressed with the logo caricature on the bottle as well as the poem my very good friends Gary and Cathy wrote for the chutney. He was very gracious in accepting it and even mentioned to his wife: “Look what they brought for me! Their homemade hot sauce!”

In The News



*Left to Right: Jango Bativa, Lyla Todywala, Maestro Zubin Mehta, Dhun Bativa, Nancy Kovack
(Zubin's wife)*

(NB: Dhun Bativa, Lyla's mother, studied the violin under Zubin's father, Mehli Mehta, an accomplished musician!)

IN THE KITCHEN

The quest for the perfect chutney started in 1968 when my wife, Jo Ann, and I made the first batch of Soli Sauce. Forty-five years later, Zarathushtis from around the world, FEZANA friends, and, now, Maestro Zubin have popularly proclaimed Soli Sauce as a noble addition to any Indian meal—others claim that it is the perfect topping for cottage cheese and ice cream. Not too sure about that!!

Soli Sauce is made in small, ten quart, batches from a secret blending of the world's greatest fresh spices (cayenne pepper, onions, garlic, ginger, coriander, canola oil, tarragon vinegar, salt, and love). Our kitchen crew, (*photo page 91*), mixes, tastes, adjusts, bottles, and labels jars of Soli Sauce that will be our gift at various functions that we attend during the year.

Our across-the-street neighbors of some years ago, Cathy and Gary Paucek, fell in love with Soli Sauce and were willing helpers in the kitchen. Cathy's niece from Perth, Australia, is an accomplished caricature artist who created the graphic for the labels, the Pauceks created the label's poem and had both printed for us.

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The Kitchen Crew: Chef Jo Ann, Chef Soli, and Mahrukh Motafram (photo by Soli)



WARNING: Hot Stuff!



Soli the Dragon

Alas, Soli Sauce isn't sold. Following my dear mother's advice, "When you sell what you like, you lose two things: your friends and money!" So, to get a taste of Soli Sauce, you'll need to come to those events where we donate a jar or two. How will you know where we're at? Stay in touch, I'll be on Twitter soon.

Love and Tandoorasti,

Ervad Soli Dastur

In The News

TRAVEL...THE GREAT EDUCATOR



Nairika Kotwal Cornett

A trip to India is always conjured with excitement from the planning stages to the days after our return spent living vicariously through what the camera has captured. My boys are now at an age when their memories will serve them for life, so I start on this adventure consciously in an endeavor to narrate bits of my childhood years. I try to do this with not more than a tinge of nostalgia but by means of enchantment through the curious eyes of little children. I fear my nostalgia might undo the magic of allure and charm – a past idealized – paralyzing their ability to live in the present and absorb honestly what lies before them – the assault on their senses that is essentially India! I did not want to undermine the possibility of liberating them to make real their own experiences.

I braced myself upon landing for the many questions I thought I would be ambushed with. I then realized I had viewed my children through my jaded eyes, only capable of noticing the dirt, sweat and smells I associate with India. Instead the colorful pictures and artwork of **'India Shining'** that embraced the airport walls captivated their imagination with a playful twist of magical realism. I started to internally debate the contours of my reality and soon realized this vacation was going to be one of as much discovery for me as for my eager-eyed boys.

I learnt fast that children are mostly unwilling to make themselves easy targets of cynics who mumbled incessantly about the grandeur of the west revealing a repugnance for their own rich culture. It is mostly the wealthy that grumbled and yet displayed a complete apathy to civic and political change. My boys on the other



hand employed any route to communicate their inner amazement at an ambiance so immensely different from their norm. It wasn't long before they found methods to communicate with the house help who spoke no English, be it through gestures, embraces or honest guttural laughter. They enjoyed cleaning vegetables in the kitchen and eagerly awaited daily for the constantly ringing doorbell that brought with it a bevy of vendors selling everything from freshly baked goods, dairy products, fruits, vegetables, seafood... These individuals became their friends with whom they shared a non-verbal yet explicable affection. Watching them relish and live, albeit for a short time, my childhood experiences stirred my soul in ways that had me fighting back misty eyes.

It was time to take my boys to *Udvada*, a dreamy village where the holiest of Zarathushti fires resides inside the awe inspiring structure called *Iranshah*. My boys were oblivious to the villagers who did not comprehend their fascination for rural life - cows intoxicatingly ambling on cobbled paths, street side market places, stray dogs sunning themselves and the occasional happy ring of bicycle bells. For the villagers it was hard to reconcile the reality of urban westerners reveling in bucolic scenes and pastoral lifestyles while they daily sought escape routes from their poverty and boredom.

Iranshah stood in all its glory before us – its winged bulls



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establishing majesty and reverence. The first room we entered was like an art gallery – flanked with high ceilings, colossal portraits and marble busts of priests and financial donors. Instantly I was aware of what I consider to be the greatest Zarathushti trait – charity. If I impart nothing else to my boys but the need to carry on this inimitable legacy, I will have succeeded as a parent.

We sat in silence watching the pureness of the fire illuminate the inner sanctum; its age old determination feeding us spiritually. The sonorous esoteric chanting by the priest was pure music, echoing a universality of truth and triumph. While the ambiguous nature of something larger than self is hard for children to grasp, my boys sat fairly motionless watching the flames flicker, taking in sights and sounds I am not able to offer them often. Their spirit was effervescent and I could tell they were very much at peace in this temporary new world.



Our adventures took us to muck-filled fish markets, 5-star hotels, pristine beaches, sewer filled slums, haute-couture boutiques, lavish weddings and walks among earth's poorest...all along my boys taking in stride what they witnessed. One particular moment that stood out was when my older son was confronted by the sight of an elderly woman, barely clad, displaying a distorted, partially amputated leg, begging for anything anyone with mercy had to offer. He asked me for money and started walking towards her. As I watched passersby walk past her with rehearsed feigned ignorance I was suddenly alerted to the possibility of my son being shocked by her disturbing visage upon closer inspection. I ran up to him explaining gently that he had nothing to be of afraid of and that I expected him to show her respect by bending down and handing her the money in her hands. What I did not expect was to see my son kneel down on the dirty pavement, hand her the money with a gentle smile, stand up and bow down to her. Yes, he bowed down to her showing that he knew no difference between a beggar and royalty. Despite my best intentions to teach my child kindness and humility he gave me a lesson that will last a lifetime – one is never too great to bow in the face of humanity. I had witnessed the unexpected presence of the divine through my child.



This trip was a success. With distant introspection I was able to see the larger picture. My children's experiences needed to be their own. I had to step back and allow them to embrace it all. Sometimes, one step back is all it takes...up close a mosaic is nothing but a plethora of broken, colored tiles, the true image is hiding at a larger perspective. Hopefully, I have allowed their wings to start spreading, one feather at a time.

Nairika Kotwal Cornett is a mother of two beautiful boys, through whose eyes and minds she lives vicariously. She works at The Arts Council, Inc. serving Northeast Georgia where she is the Director of Marketing and Arts in Schools. "My passions in life include ballet, books and my Zarathushti community". nairika@bellsouth.net



In The News

SINGAPORE (PZAS) celebrates Shenshahi Navroz on August 24

It is the most wonderful time of the year – sang Andy Williams on Christmas, but nothing beats the month of August for the Parsi community worldwide when they celebrate Navroz and Khordad Saal and it was no different in Singapore this year. Conveniently scheduled on the Sunday after Khordad Saal on Aug 24, over 150 Parsis congregated at the Crystal Ball Room at Holiday Inn, Orchard in their finest garas and crisp daglis to celebrate together.

The event started promptly at 12 noon by Jasmine Billimoria, the emcee for the afternoon with a prayer led by Behroze Sethna accompanied by Ervad Percy

ceremonies as and when requested by members of the community. He was presented with a plaque by President Russi Ghadiali and awarded a life-time membership to PZAS.

This was followed by a felicitation of a long-standing couple of the Singapore Parsi community who has called the island city their home for over 47 years. The lives of Drs. Pesi and Pilloo Chacha were showcased via a slide-show of over 70 year old photographs, The couple was presented with a plaque thanking them for their selfless support to the community. A standing ovation with an applause greeted the couple who



From left Russi Ghadiali, President PZAS; Dr Pesi B. Chacha; Dr Pilloo Chacha; Hormuz Avari, Secretary, PZAS

Khambatta and 25 children.

Ervad Percy Khambatta was then recognised for his dedicated service of performing prayers at the Zoroastrian House every Sunday and other contributions of performing ad-hoc religious

spoke a few words on stage.

New members Ava Madon, Kayanush Paymaster and Pervin Jassawalla were welcomed on the stage and they introduced themselves.

In The News

This was followed by a talent show where Dr. Pesi Chacha was back on the dais, to enthral the audience with his singing of three vintage songs from Indian movies. The younger generation then took over. Aryanna Shetty displayed her mastery on the violin, followed by a beautiful rendition by Roxanne Dotivala of one of the most popular songs– **Let It Go** from the movie *Frozen*.

provided compliments of PZAS

The celebrations ended around 3.00 p.m. after a hearty game of Bingo with Shanaya Jamaji winning the FULL HOUSE!!

The PZAS committee would like to thank Daisy Driver for single-handedly coordinating and organizing this



Participants in the talent show

Surprises were then delivered by 3 colour coordinated girls aged between 4 and 6 Ellora and Persis Devitre and Urvi Sukhani did a cute act of innocence dancing to some popular Bollywood tunes. The finale was delivered by our most regular performers Rukshana Driver, Zeena Avari and Parinaz and Arnaz Bavaadam who again entertained us with style and graceful moves on latest pop music. Each of the performers were presented with a traditional red envelope as a gesture of appreciation whilst Dr. Chacha was gifted a bottle of wine.

A sumptuous dinner was served of butter chicken, Goan fish curry and Rogan Gosh, daal, chawal, naan and sukko papeto, (dry potato) supplemented by achars (pickles) and kachumbar with gulab jamuns and ras malai as dessert. Cabernet sauvignon was

event, Hormuz Avari for arranging the plaques, Freddy Bavaadam for managing the finances; and Jasmine Bilimoria for compeering the event vivaciously.

Submitted by Rustom Ghadiali, President

AWARD FOR ROTARIAN RUSTOM GHADIALI

RUSTOM GHADIALI, A LONG TIME ROTARIAN, RECEIVED AN AWARD FROM ROTARY INTERNATIONAL D 3310 ON SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 27, AS A **TRIBUTE TO PIONEERS for BUILDING HARMONIOUS NATION IN SINGAPORE.**

THE AWARD WAS PRESENTED BY MINISTER LAWRENCE WONG, MINISTER FOR CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH ON BEHALF OF THE PRIME MINISTER.

In The News

PRESERVING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE – PARZOR FOUNDATION AND GOOGLE CULTURAL INSTITUTE JOIN HANDS



Parsi Zoroastrians - From Persia to Akbar's Court' -- Online exhibition for Google Cultural Institute.

At a point in time where preservation of heritage is transcending time and space, Google Cultural Institute requested UNESCO Parzor to create an introductory Virtual Exhibition bringing awareness of the basic history, religion and culture of the Parsi Zoroastrians. The exhibition has been launched recently with the promotion of the Google Cultural Institute Project India by the Minister of Culture, Government of India – Shri Shripad Yesso Naik.

The exhibit, curated by Dr. Shernaz Cama and Ms. Vanshika Singh, showcases some masterpieces by the stained glass artist – Ms. Katayun Saklat whose brilliant works portray the life of Zarathustra and depict the Amesha Spentas. Apart from the vast collection of images and audio-video materials that Parzor Foundation entails, the exhibit has expressed gratitude and acknowledged all the academics, photographers and singers whose works has been used with due consent. Since Zoroastrianism is a huge topic, the exhibition provides a historical overview from Persia to Akbar's Court with text, pictures, film, music and chanting starting with the 'Gathas' right through 'Monajats' of today. The exhibition can be viewed at <http://goo.gl/u4s3g5>

The purpose for this particular exhibit was twofold - a) Provide a historical overview that could be enjoyed online by everyone via audio, video and text, and b) To focus on intangible cultural heritage and give an

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overarching body and flavor of our upcoming online exhibits.

Parzor Foundation, which has officially partnered with the Google Culture Institute, plans to follow such researched presentation on Parsi Textiles, Parsi Food, and later on Navroze.

Given that Google is almost a second brain for most of the world, this project hopes to bring together information and experience for the Zoroastrians in India. It is hoped that with the help of Google which has the largest hits online in the world, to create maximum knowledge about this little known religion and its people.

Google has partnered with hundreds of museums, cultural institutions, and archives to host the world's cultural treasures online. With a team of dedicated Googlers, they are building tools that allow the cultural sector to display more of its diverse heritage online, making it accessible to all.

Suggestions and Inputs from viewers are always welcome!

Vanshika Singh
Intern, Parzor Foundation

PARSI CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD WAR 1

Commodore Mediona Bhada

2014 is being celebrated as the Centenary year of the commencement of WW I. The British High Commission in India along with MEA, represented by the United Services Institution, New Delhi, is planning to digitalize as much information as they can on the contribution made by Indians in this war effort.



The **OLDEST (1926) and the ONLY War Memorial** (other than the one at India Gate, New Delhi) established by the civilians, was built by the Parsis, inscribed with the 46 names of those of their community who sacrificed their lives in WW I. This cenotaph stands at the Khareghat Colony, Hughes Road, Mumbai. Next to the main structure stands a smaller memorial built later by the BPP in memory of those who lost their lives in WW II & the subsequent Indo-Pak wars.

The British HC in India along with MEA, represented by the United Services Institution, New Delhi, are very interested in collecting and collating more information on the involvement of Parsis in WW I. A crew from their production department was sent to Mumbai to photograph the monument and get more information on it.

People are requested to send Commodore Bhada any information by way of letters, pictures, medals etc, which he can pass on to the Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research or you may send it directly to cafhr@gmail.com with a cc to Commodore Bhada. Every year on All-Souls Day as per the Zoroastrian calendar (Farvedin Mah & Farvedin Roj), a wreath laying ceremony is held with a bugler in attendance playing the Last Post & the Reveille

In The News



6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress



Auckland, New Zealand

28th December 2015 to 2nd January 2016



For an adventure of a lifetime...

Attend the 6th WZYC in Auckland, New Zealand

The destination of the 6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress is the spectacular city of Auckland, New Zealand also known as Tamaki Makau Rau, 'the maiden with a hundred lovers'. Whether you are an eco-enthusiast, a lover of art or architecture, a shutter-happy tourist or just enjoy the finer things in life, this big-little city is going to charm your socks off. With its irresistible combination of breathtaking, natural scenery and the vibrant city lifestyle, Auckland is a place of exciting contradictions waiting to be explored.

Under the guidance of Zarathushtrian Association of New Zealand (ZANZ), The Zoroastrian Youth of New Zealand (ZYNZ) are the proud organisers of this Congress happening between 28th Dec 2015 & 2nd Jan 2016. All Zoroastrians between the ages of 15 and 35 are invited to attend. The youth organizers have confirmed Kings College as the venue as it offers top class facilities including number of boarding houses, large dining rooms, world class sports grounds, lecture theatre, halls and fitness facilities (including gyms and a heated swimming pool). The venue will also have round the clock security to ensure top safety for all those that attend.

The delegates will be taken on a journey that will engage and motivate them to embrace New Zealand's treasured culture, enhance Zoroastrianism's unique traditions and evolve to create a united future. The

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Congress agenda is designed to educate the participants about the rich Zoroastrian culture and inculcate a sense of Zoroastrian pride. The Congress will host world-class speakers that will empower the participants and encourage the youth to add to the great Zoroastrian legacy. It will also be packed with exciting activities that will allow the participants to explore the magnificent city of Auckland and allow the youth to connect with each other, forming new friendships across the globe that will last a lifetime.

The ZYNZ are working diligently to ensure that the 6thWZYC is an unforgettable experience, but none of this can be possible without the participation and generous donations from philanthropic individuals, Zoroastrian and Non Zoroastrian associations and the larger global Zoroastrian community. The ZYNZ are reaching out to the wider community for donations and sponsorships that will further contribute towards making this Congress a monumental success. A range of sponsorship packages are available that offer different advantages to the sponsors.

Any amount donated large or small will be sincerely appreciated. We look forward to Zoroastrian Youth from all parts of the world attending in large numbers and we promise you an experience of a lifetime.

Don't blame us if you love it so much that you don't want to leave!

Early Bird Registration details will be out soon. See you in December 2015!

Kings College, Auckland New Zealand



Sponsorship Packages

❖ **Platinum - \$20,000 NZD**

❖ **Gold - \$15,000 NZD**

❖ **Silver - \$10,000 NZD**

❖ **Bronze - \$5,000 NZD**

For more information

Website: www.6wzyc.co.nz

Email: 6thwzyc@gmail.com

In The News

ASHTA NO KAI'S KARATE CHAMPIONS

Ashta No Kai-India (ANK-I), a grassroots NGO has been working in villages in Shirur County, Pune District, India, for the last 15 years to empower, educate and improve the economic status of rural women as well as promote education for the girl child. (see FJ Spring 2012 Vol26, No 1 pages 74-76) In recent times, India has seen a sharp rise in the number of reported cases of rapes and sexual crimes against women and children, as is evident from recent horrific cases that have been in the news. The violent rape of a young medical student on a Delhi bus in December 2012 shamed India and shocked the world.



Karate Champions from left Sneha Dange, Ujwala Punde, Ujwala Sable, Tejashri Taywade

With the increase in such incidents of violence against women, including a tragic rape-murder case in one of its villages, ANK introduced self-defense techniques such as Karate classes for adolescent girls to instill discipline, self-esteem and self-confidence so that girls could protect themselves if attacked. Accordingly, in 2012, Karate classes were initiated to raise a cadre of empowered women in the country, to combat increasing gender-

based violence, and be armed with the skills needed to lead a life free from the fear of violence.

At the South Asian karate meet in Nepal organized by the Nepal Olympic Committee and from participants from China, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Hong Kong and India three teenage girls from Nimgaon Bhogi village, 40 kms from Pune, Maharashtra won one gold and two silver medals. These girls were supported and trained by the NGO Ashta Ni Kai-I which works for the empowerment of the girl child. These girls belong to agricultural families and live on farms with their parents. They balance their lives between farming, household chores, studies and karate classes.

Armene Modi founder and chairperson of Ashta No Kai said " we started the classes about three years ago and it has been a motivating journey, the girls have excelled beyond our wildest dreams. Our village girls have won gold and silver medals not only at State and national meets, but most recently at a South Asia meet in Nepal where all three girls from ANK villages who entered won medals. The gold medalist will be competing in Hong Kong at the Asia meet. A lot of parents are getting motivated after this achievement and are willing to send their children to learn the sport" .

These empowered village girls, most of whom had never traveled beyond their village, are to be credited for being open to exploring new worlds and facing new challenges. The girls are so proud of their achievements and they all said "The boys in our village are afraid of us now"

Report Armene Modi

BUILDING PATHWAYS OUT OF POVERTY

17th Microcredit Summit Conference, Mexico, Sept 3-5, 2014

Armene Modi was invited to speak at the 17th Microcredit Summit Conference in Mexico from September 3-5, 2014, an important milestone in the worldwide movement to end extreme poverty. This prestigious conference brought together innovative leaders from around the world led by **Nobel Laureate, Muhammad Yunus, Larry Reed, the Director of the Microcredit Summit Campaign, USA, Alfonso Mora from the World Bank, Dr. Bhanwala, the head of NABARD, (National Bank for Agriculture**

and Rural Development) India, among others. The thousand delegates from seventy-five countries represented a wide range of backgrounds and sectors with an interest in social and economic innovation, sustainable development, poverty reduction and social justice; all working in solidarity towards the major goal of building pathways out of poverty, especially for the ultra poor.

The Microcredit Summit Campaign the brainchild of

In The News



Armene Modi with Prof Muhammad Yunus

Professor Muhammad Yunus, was launched in 1997 with the target of reaching 100 million of the world's poorest families, especially poor women, by the year 2005, by providing them credit for self-employment and other financial and business services. It is the largest global network involved in microfinance and, coinciding with the UN's Millennium Development Goals, committed to achieving two goals by 2015: help provide sustainable livelihoods to lift 100 million families out of extreme poverty and reach 175 million poorest families with microfinance.

Despite substantial progress, about one in five people worldwide still lives on less than \$1.25 a day. According to Professor Muhammad Yunus ***"Poor people didn't create poverty. It's the system that created the poverty. If we want to end poverty, we have to change the system"***. Innovative solutions to change the system were discussed at the Summit by representatives of international organizations like the World Bank; government officials from various countries; business and finance leaders, as well as civil society. The Summit delegates focused on creating new partnerships and sharing strategies and

best practices to ensure that financial services could reach even those living in extreme poverty. Creating self-managed savings banks, and asset-building cash transfer programs would enable the ultra-poor to have sustainable livelihoods, helping to lift them out of poverty.

Armene presentation ***"Women in Leadership at All Levels: Empowering Poor Women To Become The Next Generation of Microfinance Leaders"***, focused on how impoverished and illiterate village women were in the villages Ashta No Kai, (the NGO she is involved with) is working in, have spearheaded a silent revolution through the Self-Help Group (SHG) movement. The 125 Self-Help Groups that Ashta No Kai has organized have empowered rural women to take charge of their own destiny to become not only economically independent, but also leaders and decision makers in their communities. The insights and experiences Armene shared at the Summit were well received.

Armene was able to meet and network with heads of development agencies such as Grameen, Oxfam, Freedom from Hunger, BRAC, AGFUND and PLAN International.

Personal Profiles

Finding the Path to Enlightenment Through One's True Passions

An explorative interview with a modern day renaissance woman,

Shirrin Kumaana-Wadia

An interview with Ferzin Patel

One cannot use one title to describe the multi-talented Shirrin Kumaana-Wadia. Referring to her as an architect, interior designer, dancer, or photographer and more recently, a spiritual/meditational blogger are just a few of the facets which make up the creative palette of this accomplished and versatile young woman. But as of late, this flourishing photographer is now unleashing herself through a new medium and using social media to reach out to thousands of followers who have embraced not only her photographic talents but her spiritual and positive teachings to help people see the world a little differently.

She has chosen to express her talents and ideas through various mediums. How she sees the world is beautifully interpreted through several creative portholes. She interprets the sound of a city through her dance, and visually translates the landscape/cityscape through her photography. However, presently she is reaching deep within her own soul to capture the essence of her spirit and conveying it through her blog on Facebook- *Shirrin-Love and Miracles*.

After completing her degree at Rizvi College in Mumbai in architecture, she met her husband Arzan Sam Wadia and married in 2006. They both came to the US and settled in NYC.



After years of studying dance, Shirrin is a trained semi-professional dancer in Latin Jazz, Afro-Cuban and Salsa and has performed regularly on the New York Dance circuit.

Her love for photography began two years ago by accident when she was confronted with the mortality of her ailing beloved grandfather whom she was very close with. She held his frail hand against her youthful clasp and was overcome with emotion. She reached for her iPhone to capture this moment of human fragility and hence led to the beginning of her photographic journey. *(photo left below)*

Over the course of several months she captured over 9,000 images.

After a successful debut exhibition at The Viewing Room in Mumbai titled, "To Eternity and Back" in December 2013, Shirrin is working towards future exhibitions in New York, Mumbai and Singapore in 2015.

Before I sat down with this multidimensional young woman, I was curious about Shirrin's blog so I went to her Facebook page, called, *Shirrin-Love and Miracles*. I was astonished to learn that she has a following of 19,000 and growing. She encapsulates her followers with aesthetically pleasing and beautifully captured photos of nature, elements of a dichotomous New York City, and matches them with strong healing messages of affirmations which come from her daily meditation. She began this journey in February of 2013. After completing a course in Intuitive Training with Dr. Laila Ahmed, her spiritual guide and teacher in Mumbai, she found herself receiving strong positive messages for healing and change. She began writing down these select verses and sharing them with close friends and family.



FP: (Ferzin Patel) Where do you draw your daily affirmations from?

SKW: (Shirrin Kumaana Wadia) My own affirmations

Personal Profiles



would come to me during my daily meditation. As I expanded the reservoir of positive thinking through meditation and writing down my affirmations, I started quite naturally to seek out the thoughts and writings of others. I read many different blogs, am constantly researching new spiritual content, and am current on spiritual books and authors. When you create a positive change in your own life, you naturally gravitate towards people who share your life views and help foster them even more.

FP: Do you meditate? Has this facilitated you generating these daily affirmations and in what way?

SKW: Yes, I meditate and also say my prayers two to three times a day. I practice a powerful form of healing meditation called “White Light Meditation” that was taught to me by Dr. Laila Ahmed. I generate most of my affirmations in a meditative state, and write my affirmations down immediately afterwards in a process that is often referred to as ‘automatic writing.’ This happens only when the spiritual self is in an awakened state, and momentarily eclipses the conscious mind.

FP: What are you hoping that people will gain with sharing your ideas and feelings in your blog?

SKW: My great hope is that in some small way, I can be part of the positive changes in the world. I saw my own life transform in ways I couldn’t have imagined through a radical change in my belief systems, and I want to be able to share my inner experiences with others if only – at the moment - to plant seeds in their minds for positive change. The blog covers a diverse spectrum of thoughts, feelings, affirmations and life situations, to encourage a more positive and

generous outlook which can impact positive changes, both big and small. We can’t change circumstances or situations, but we can change the way we look at them.

FP: How do you inspire people with your daily affirmations while knowing people struggle in their daily lives and face the daily realities of life?

SKW My blog is intended to inspire, uplift, encourage and motivate people to be better versions of themselves, thereby making the world a better place. Have you ever seen an artist start with a blank canvas in front of them? Do you ever wonder what goes through their minds when faced with that infinite space, full of possibilities? We are all like that artist; we are always creating something out of nothing. If you are having a series of negative thoughts in a day, it can feel like being on a downward spiral. One positive message can change your day, and that day may change your life. My blog is not a solution to life’s problems, it is a positive aid.

FP: Are the affirmations based on how you feel? Or do you draw upon the emotions and spirituality of others around you?

SKW My affirmations come from within and sometimes they are triggered by what’s happening around me – it may be a major event like the plane that crashed a few months ago, or the struggles of someone near and dear to me, or something that is happening in my own life that needs resolution. My affirmations (and the ones I appropriate from others that resonate with me) bring a sense of balance back into my mind and restore internal order: they are always the right ones for that day. That said, I select my posts very intuitively. If you focus your mind on giving unselfishly, I believe that some of the positive energy you generate will find its way back to those who need healing.

FP: How have you grown as a photographer and used the various mediums of all your trades (dance, interior design, architecture)?

SKW: Being an architect and interior designer by profession, my visual sensibility was already very defined with relation to subject, color, design and composition when I started taking photographs. I started very simply with my iPhone since I always had it with me. I progressed to using other cameras and lenses and enjoy experimenting with new techniques all the time. Most of my photographs are shot in New York City, and a few in Mumbai and some in other

Personal Profiles

places around the world. I take every opportunity to shoot but I would admit, that I have a special place in my heart for New York City.

FP: Of all the mediums, which one do you think encapsulates your creative prose?

SKW: Dance. When I dance, I lose myself completely. Hours can go by, sometimes I bleed from my feet, and for days my soles hurt. I realized relatively late that I had a flair for dance, but I have pursued it for several years now, getting better and better at it. Nothing gives me more pleasure – or pain! I feel totally connected to this thing called existence when I am in the middle of a dance, it's like a trance really.

FP: You say that NYC gave you so much opportunity to grow as a person. Did you come to the States with a certain perception of America? Has that perception changed living here?

SKW: I came to NYC as a young woman in my early twenties, and up until that point, I had a very sheltered and protected life. The western world to me, especially America, was a remote place in my imagination: one full of possibilities and yet, also quite overwhelming. I was very curious about America, but my first few years here were anticlimactic. I love the passion and ambition that drives people from all over the world to

this mad city to be the best, and amongst the best, in the world.

I was raised in India with very fixed perceptions of being a woman in this world that were extremely limiting. I admit I did hit rock bottom at some point in those early years in the States, and then I had just two choices. I could either sink or swim. I chose to swim, and I chose to enjoy the good things. I've had an amazing life transformation in New York. Today, my reality is construed out of all the positive things in my life. Today, I am a changed person, from the inside out.

Khalil Gibran, one of my favorite writers and a huge source of inspiration said *"Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars."* There's beauty and truth in those words. I don't wish to lead people away from reality with my affirmations, but to look at it instead with loving eyes.

Readers can learn more about Shirrin Kumaana-Wadia or follow her on <https://www.facebook.com/ShirrinLoveMiracles>

Ferzin Patel is a Psychotherapist living and working in NY and is an active member of the ZAGNY Community.



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Loroastrian Youth at the **un**
dpi/ngo 2014



Tanya Bharda, Mississauga, Canada

“WE ARE ALL BROTHERS AND SISTERS” was said continuously by speakers and panellists at the United Nations Department of Public Information/ Non-Government Organizations Conference (UN DPI/NGO). Homi Gandhi and I were very fortunate to represent FEZANA at The 65th Annual UN DPI/NGO Conference at the UN Headquarters in New York City from August 27th to 29th, 2014. We all live in the same world and we all need to work together for a better future. We can use methods that other nations have used to create a stronger and united front and work together no matter where we reside in the world.

The main focus of the conference

is the current Eight Goals for the 2015 Millennium Development Goals as it is coming to an end next year and to also create attention on how we can enhance the goals for the next 15 years.

The Millennium Development Goals are

to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
to achieve universal primary education;
to promote gender equality and empower women;
to reduce child mortality;
to improve maternal health;
to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
to ensure environmental sustainability

to develop a global partnership for development.

These global issues cannot just disappear overnight but needs to be worked on by every individual in the world. There are four different issues that were the centre of the conference since these issues affect the international community, which are **Poverty Eradication, Sustainable Development, Human Rights and Climate Change**. During these sessions, there were panellists that represented their nations and shared how they overcame these issues.

To improve on these international situations, grassroots organizations and policy making

Zoroastrian Youth at the **un** dpi/ngo 2014

go hand-in-hand and one does not work without the other. Without the policy, organizations will not have anything to implement and no amount of documentation will work until it reaches the people it directly relates to. Youth involvement in global issues is extremely important because we, the youth are the future of this world and without the support of youth, we will not be able to succeed. The youth need to be exposed to these kinds of situations that are evident especially in developed countries. These young professionals are not aware of issues like international sustainable development or poverty eradication and human rights, and they need to play an active role in the international community.

I am very grateful to get the opportunity to represent the Zoroastrian community at the UN DPI/NGO Conference. My experience in New York was one of the most enriching and educational.

I have learnt a lot and I hope to see everything I have learnt to implement it towards the people who are affected by poverty and human rights. Every youth needs to take a stand and to become part of a global community which helps each other and to encourage one another to play an active role in creating positive change for the world.

Tanya Bharda is from Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, a graduate student in Women and Gender Studies from the University of Toronto. She has spent two summers in India working with various NGOs serving and educating street kids and working with women. Her passion for social work backed with her education has brought her to the UN Women's Conference for the second time. She has also participated in the UN DPI/NGO Conference at the UN headquarters. Tanya is hoping to pursue her Masters in International Development Studies in the future.

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INTERFAITH INTERALIA

Zoroastrianism Represented at the North American Interfaith Network

Shernaz Minwalla
President of the Zoroastrian Association of Michigan (ZAOM)



Figure 1. Maneck Bhujwala and Shernaz Minwalla

Maneck Bhujwala from Southern California and I had the honor of representing FEZANA at the annual North American Interfaith Network (NAIN) Connect Conference, held in Detroit, Michigan from August 10 through 13, 2014. Our goal was to educate participants on the main practices and beliefs of our faith. We showcased FEZANA publications and pamphlets, a small *ses and diva* to encourage browsing and questions. As we attended various sessions, we asked questions, shared bits of our history, collected information, and met many leaders of other faiths who were interested in sharing ideas with us.

Dr. Daniel Buttry, the Global Consultant for Peace and Justice with International Ministries of the American Baptist Churches, was Sunday evening's plenary session speaker who spoke eloquently and passionately about the responsibility of religious groups to help resolve conflicts amongst differing beliefs and within our own populations. As Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) threatens to recreate the history of our Zarathushti ancestors, Dr. Buttry's talk was thought-provoking and inspiring as he provided examples of how potentially large local conflicts can be dissipated through conversations and initiatives.

On Monday morning, Maneck attended the workshop, *Bridging Faiths and Healing Relationships with Labrynth*, led by **Rev. Dr. Stephen Albert and Rev. Abiligail Albert**. The goal of the workshop was to share

INTERFAITH INTERALIA

IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
RELIGIONS
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Religions Working for Peace and Justice

easy-to-use, positive approaches to bridge the language gaps that can exist within a population of different faiths and cultures. Maneck attended the workshop with our own language barriers in mind that continue to exist between Farsi and Gujarati.

As a teacher, I was anxious to attend the workshop on *Sharing Metro Detroit's Interfaith Best Practices: building community through understanding*, in which five leaders of various organizations shared mechanisms for discussing religious and cultural differences. **Dr. Claude Jacobs from University of Michigan, Dearborn**, uses pilgrimage as a focus in his Religious Studies course and World Views Seminar. I thought this was a brilliant idea; we focus greatly on our ancestors' pilgrimage to Sanjan but I would love for our students to explore ways in which this experience compares and differs from others. **Reverend Bob Hart, a member of the Interfaith Council of Metropolitan Detroit's educational committee**, uses stories or songs to discuss umbrella topics such as birth, coming of age, marriage and divorce, illness and death in his classes; Rev. Hart was very amenable to the possibility of including members of the Zoroastrian Association of Michigan into this group because we have traditional ceremonies surrounding these life events that others find fascinating.

Maneck also attended a session on *Conversations on Pluralism: Share in the experience of the Interfaith*

Café in which five representatives from the Southern California Parliament of the World Religions (SCCPWR) and All Paths Divinity described a dynamic series of conversations they launched in Los Angeles as a way to create meaningful bridges between diverse religious communities and educate people about the value of pluralism in America. I was curious about how Michigan's highly diverse cities—Dearborn, Hamtramck, and Warren—faced challenges of racism, segregation, religious discord, and changing demographics. It was interesting to hear from these cities' mayors how they pursued community building initiatives to cross the racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious divisions through interfaith efforts. Soon after the session, Maneck and I were able to witness the harmony of Hamtramck with mer-



chants from Poland, Bangladesh, and Yemen who share city blocks. Our tour ended at the Islamic Center of America in Dearborn, where I wore my scarf and Maneck proudly wore a white topi, providing an opportunity for participants to ask questions about the practice of covering our heads during prayer. During the panel discussion of the evening, *From Hate to Hope*, members of the Jewish, First Nation, Muslim, and Hindu faiths answered questions about misunderstandings regarding their religions and discussed strategies to increase understanding. At the end, Maneck, ever-ready to disperse knowledge about Zoroastrianism, shared similarities of the ISIS terror reigning today and the Muslim invasion that forced our ancestors into persecution and exile.



INTERFAITH INTERALIA

The main focus of NAIN's work has been to support the growth of interfaith understanding by supporting the work of member organizations. Based on the many connections Maneck made throughout years of active interfaith participation, it is no surprise that Maneck was elected to the NAIN Board of Directors at the AGM, as FEZANA's representative. His experience with interfaith councils and organizations will enhance the excellent, ethical, and engaging work of NAIN.

The session on *Inspiring our Young People: Passing the torch to the next generation* was enlightening and productive as we learned about Religious Diversity Journeys for 7th graders and the Zinn house for children of interfaith marriages. I have already been in contact with the leaders of these groups to discuss opportunities for our youth to connect with each other and share stories about their customs, in effect, strengthening their understanding of the teachings and traditions of Zoroastrianism and improving their knowledge of other faiths.

I took great pride in Detroit as Maneck and I toured Underground Railroad sites that escaped slaves used as they traveled to freedom in Canada. The tour took us to St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church, a Syrian church. The priest was delighted to meet us as "people of an ancient faith". After another panel discussion on leading the fight against enmity, Maneck spoke with an Imam about ways in which interfaith groups should and can publically demonstrate outrage at the acts of groups such as ISIS.

I thank FEZANA for giving me this great networking opportunity, and I look forward to participating in future interfaith activities that will strengthen our faith, identity and sense of community. Be sure to look for information on the 2015 NAIN conference to be held in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada; Maneck and I encourage representatives from nearby Zoroastrian Associations to attend this conference to spread knowledge and understanding of our religion and to gain ideas for your communities.

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INTERFAITH INTERALIA

IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FOR PEACE

Zarathushti Community of Central Connecticut



The South Windsor Human Relations Commission in Connecticut invited the Zarathushti community in Central Connecticut to make a presentation on Zarathushti religion and culture on 24 April 2014 as part of a multi-cultural and inter-faith discourse. Although Connecticut does not have a formal association, about 10 Zarathushti families got together to put up an evening of display, demonstrations and presentations for an audience of over 80 Zarathushtis and non-Zarathushtis.

Manned display tables illustrating Zarathushti customs and culture, ancient religious books and manuals, clothing attire, symbols of faith, our foods and spices and a sari-draping demonstration generated a great deal of interest and appreciation with the non-Zarathushti audience. **Ervad Noshirwan Hormazdiar**, our Zarathushti priest, spoke on the religion and its foundations, and **Phil Vakharia** spoke on the Parsi community, its history, its philanthropy and achievements. The question-and-answer session following the presentations offered considerable interaction between the speakers and the enlightened audience. Snacks and desserts such as sev, ravo, chutney sandwiches and the 'lagan-nu-custard' and their recipes were very much relished by all who attended the successful function.

Report by Phil Vakharia

The Editor, FEZANA JOURNAL



Dear editor

My short comments to the talk Mr. Khojeste P. Mistree delivered in the event of 10th World Zoroastrian Congress Mumbai – December 2013, Published in Vol 28, No.1 March /Spring 2014 FEZANA Journal

I read Mr. Mistree's talk with due care. The point Mr. Mistree is emphasizing on, as Zoroastrianism being an Iranian Religion is absolutely valid and acceptable to me. As Judaism is an Israelite/ Hebrew Religion and Tradition, as Islam is an Arabian Religion/Tradition and as Hinduism is as Indian Religion/Tradition, Zoroastrianism/Mazdayasna is so intertwined with the history, culture, and customs or Iranian Peoples that it is an Iranian Religion/Tradition.

I have always believed and emphasized that Zoroastrians whether Iranians in Diaspora and specially the Parsis must keep their full contact with Iranian history and traditions.

Zoroastrianism with all its belief system (that has evolved and is to evolve around the core belief system of the founder, Ashoo Zarathushtra) will be an empty shell if it loses its connection with the girdle of the past.

As such to be taken and planted in other areas of the world, if like most of the plants only a green stem of it is taken without a portion of the root and is put into that soil, it will wither and die in short time.

I however, will put this discussion in front of Mr. Mistree. There are hundreds of thousands of Iranian Peoples, whether living in the boundaries of Iran, Tajikistan, Kurdistan, Azerbaijan, and elsewhere; who have kept their love, affection, connection and knowledge of their glorious ancient Iranian past, often more than, many Parsis that I have met while being out of Iran.

Among them, there are knowledgeable, well versed, educated, dedicated, and at times sacrificing (whether name, security and well being) individuals who are either confessing to be Zoroastrians, or willing to be named as Zoroastrians.

The Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians like minded as Mr. Mistree. have pushed them away and so they have taken the affairs in their own hands, calling themselves Zoroastrians, at times performing a version of navjote (unfortunate but is happening) and starting their communities and going their own ways, and no one can stop them in the western democracies.

As I said they are from Iranian Peoples, they know the history and many of the traditions. It is simply in their psyche and in their daily lives. They can read Farsi including Shahnameh and other rich texts of Zoroastrian heritage. They celebrate Nouruz, Sadeh, Mehregan and other Iranian/ Zoroastrian festivals.

By not helping, guiding and accepting (carefully and thoughtfully though) them but rather pushing them away, Mr. Mistree and his like minded, have not stopped the spread of Zoroastrianism, but have left the doors and gates open for people to create versions of Zoroastrianism that at times could be very different than the authentic traditional Mazdayasna.

Bahman Noruziaan
Canada

REPLY FROM KHOJESTE MISTREE



Dear Mr Noruziaan,

With reference to your "Comment" to my article published in the FEZANA Journal, you have made valid points that we as Zoroastrians need to view, each from our own prism and understanding of Zoroastrianism.

My personal view is that there are any number of people who wish to be Zoroastrian and nothing stops them in North America, Europe, or England, to follow and practice Zoroastrianism. Over the last 30 years many Zoroastrian Centres follow a known policy of encouraging those who wish to convert or re-convert to Zoroastrianism. This is an institutional choice that is made and those from Central Asia can contact such institutions to learn about the faith. In the age of internet there are numerous learning websites and books in Persian, Russian and English to learn from.

I have had very little contact with Central Asians and on the one occasion when someone from Tajikistan visited our office, we gifted him a copy of *Ethnic Perspective* and *Who are the Zoroastrians*. At his request, we watched a 20 minute video, on the sacrifice of the Bull, at their then newly established Zoroastrian Centre in Tajikistan.

Academically, we at Zoroastrian Studies, support the study of Zoroastrianism in Central Asia, as it promotes an understanding of the overarching practice of the faith in Central Asia.

To hold me singularly responsible for someone in Central Asia, following a different form of Zoroastrianism, seems to me in the least quite unfair. I would like to add that I have been told time and again that Zoroastrianism is all about freedom of choice and so in adherence to this philosophy I choose to take a path that appeals to me and others are free to choose a path of their liking. I cannot be fairer. If some people wish to adhere to a different format of Zoroastrianism it is a matter of choice.

The Parsis like the traditional Jews wish to maintain their specific identity and therefore work from a format they have adhered to for over a 1000 years in India. Surely the Parsis cannot be the sole repository of Zoroastrian doctrine and practice in the world and in any case, as you have pointed out, and I agree with you, that unfortunately even the Parsis follow variant forms of the faith.

My job is to teach what I believe is Zoroastrianism as understood by me. It is up to the seeker to accept or reject it. On the other hand there are innumerable places be it North America or elsewhere, that will teach and accommodate the desire of Central Asians to be Zoroastrian.

I am just one person in the Zoroastrian firmament and there are **many** capable Parsi and Iranian scholars who can help the Central Asians in their quest to follow Zoroastrianism, in ways that I may not be able to do so.

I trust this explains my position and please feel free to email me if you wish to raise any further issues.

Peace and Light

Khojeste

Zoroastrian Studies, India

Dinshaw K. Tamboly

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July 14, 2014



**Trustees,
Bombay Parsi Punchayet,
Mumbai.**

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Re: Ban on Priests

I have since some time now been following, what is uncouthly referred to in some community circles as “the renegade mobeds” case. I believe that the dignity of any human being is inviolable and it does no credit to those who use such insulting and offensive terms to describe others whose views and actions are not in sync with theirs.

From what I have understood so far, the Trustees, ostensibly on the advice from some of the community High Priests, passed a resolution banning two priests from performing ceremonies at two Ajiarys of the Punchayat, as well as at the Doongerwadi. This was done for the reason that these two priests were known to be performing Navjote ceremonies for the children of mixed marriages.

This action by the Trustees was challenged in an Originating Summons Suit filed before a Single Judge of the Bombay High Court. The Learned Single Judge before whom the same was agitated found such summary proceedings taken out to be non maintainable, and the suit was dismissed for that reason. The original Plaintiffs filed an Appeal before the Division Bench of the Bombay High Court to challenge such a decision. After several hearings, the Hon’ble Division Bench ultimately allowed the Appeal, and struck down the impugned resolutions, holding that the Trustees of the Punchayat had no powers under the Trust Deed to issue such bans.

The Trustees have filed a Special Leave Petition before the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India for leave to appeal against the Division Bench Judgment of the Bombay High Court. It appears that during the pendency of this Special Leave Petition, attempts have been made to settle the issue amicably out of Court, and for that purpose an expert Mediator was also appointed by the Supreme Court. I am informed that on several occasions, the Mediator has met with the Trustees and the original Plaintiffs both separately as well as jointly, to aid them in arriving at a solution acceptable to all. Whilst I find such attempts laudable, it was distressing to learn that the mediation proceedings had failed, and the matter is now back before the Supreme Court.

As a former Trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayat (November 1996 to September 2008, I am

familiar with the workings of the Trust, the pressures it faces from within as well as from outside, as also the ultimate goal of charity and philanthropy.



I find it distressing that a matter of this nature, which I perceive to be related to the interpretation of the Trust Deed, and the powers of the Trustees there-under, has dragged on for so long and before so many Courts in the hierarchy of our great Judicial System. Although during my tenure as a Trustee, there was nowhere near as much litigation by or against the Trust as there has been in recent times, I am not unfamiliar with the litigation system. Being aware of the great costs involved in getting decent legal representation, I am sure that this 'Ban on Priests' case since its inception till date must have caused the trust to spend a great sum of money. Whilst I can only surmise the amount on the basis of past experience, you as present Trustees would be aware of the actual legal expenses incurred.

However I am sure that whatever be the actual figure, had it been spent on the actual objects of the Trust, it would have been enough to feed, shelter, clothe, medicate and educate several financially challenged members of our community.

I have no doubts that where third parties illegally try to usurp the funds and properties of the Trust, the best possible legal action must be taken and followed to its logical conclusion, but, in a matter such as that of the 'Ban on Priests', which in my opinion has been fuelled by the misplaced and misconceived religious beliefs and orthodox egos of some individuals, I find it a shame that vast sums of community funds have been expended, which should have been put to much better and fruitful use.

Ultimately, poor Parsi / Irani Zoroastrians are not going to be better equipped in life whether the two priests in question are allowed to, or disallowed from, performing ceremonies / offering prayers at BPP managed Agiaries or at the Doongerwadi.

BPP Trustees cannot justify their action by taking refuge under the premise that they acted as per direction of the High Priests, because the High Priests are known not to speak in unison, they themselves express views that are not compatible with those of one another, and in the not too distant past there has even been an instance where they had passed a 'fatwa' but then retracted when they realised it would not stand legal scrutiny.

Whilst on the High Priests, it will not be out of place to mention that the views expressed and actions taken by earlier High Priests have been at complete variance with the present day High Priests. Surely, religion, rites & rituals cannot keep on changing, depending on the views of individuals occupying the position of High Priests.

To give an example, on the issue for which two Priests have been banned, for performing Navjote ceremonies for the children of mixed marriages, if one were to refer to 'History of The Bombay Parsi Punchayet' (1860 to 1960) by Sapur F. Desai, page 13, it is clearly mentioned that Dastur Kekhushroo Jamaspasa (grandfather of our present day Dasturji Jamaspasa) performed the Navjote ceremonies on 26th June 1882 of 9 children born of Parsi fathers and non Parsi mothers.

Further, if you were to refer to 'The Persian Rivayats' of Hormazyar Framarz and others (Their version with introduction and notes by Ervad Bamanji Nusserwanji Dhabhar, M.A., published by The K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, Bombay, pages 275-277, dealing with 'peaceful and forcible conversion' it very clearly mentions "If they (a grave digger, a corpse burner and a *darvand* - one of a foreign faith - observe the rules of religion steadfastly and keep connection with the religion and if no harm comes on the Behdins, it is proper and allowable (that is conversion). It is also mentioned that if a Behedin turns *darvand*, he can be re-converted into our faith by performing certain ceremonies.



From the above two references, I do hope your good selves will realise the futility of the stand that BPP has taken.

You will all be aware that in a very recent judgment dated July 07, 2014, Hon'ble Supreme Court of India has ruled that fatwas have no legal standing or force and cannot be enforced using coercive method. If you all wish I can send a copy of the judgement.

As a former Trustee of BPP, I feel it my duty to counsel the present Trustees that:

- a) The practices followed by earlier High Priests were quite different from those being sought to be imposed on the community by some of our present day High Priests.
- b) The ban on priests is an ill-conceived idea, not supported by any legal authority which during the tenure of the earlier Boards would never have been resorted to. The present ruling of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India is indicative of how our justice delivery system views fatwas.
- c) Funds should not be used for this purpose – it is not within the remit of the BPP to become self-appointed custodians of the faith. The main purpose of BPP is to look after the poor and needy and not waste precious funds on such matters.
- d) The BPP Trustees should try to be more inclusive and keep the community together, not divide and cause friction within the community.

Keeping the above in mind, I sincerely hope your good selves will see reason and take all necessary steps to close this controversy once and for all at the earliest. No good will be achieved by continuing with this expensive litigation.

Kind regards,

Very Sincerely

Dinshaw K Tamboly

Mumbai Priests- Have the Courage to say no- Have the courage to face the Truth



To The editor,
FEZANA JOURNAL

Good leaders are invaluable to a community and the country. Bad leaders and gutter politics can destroy the very foundation of the pillars of any organization into economic disrepair and third rate status. Much of the wealth gifted to BPP was by the benevolence of the rich and famous families, whose fore-sight towards community welfare can be visualized through The Tatas, Wadias, Petits, Jamsetjees and many others of Mumbai.

We can see the systematic erosion of the core values that BPP once stood for and what it is today. What we see is a complete reversal in its objectives towards community work. Agenda of cheap personal politics with a cocktail of religious dogmas and ill-conceived ideas, is destroying the foundation of BPP. The trustees are wasting their time and money on petty issues like the banning of priests, who prayed for those who opted for cremation, from conducting any prayers at Doongerwadi. It very much reflects the dogmatic belief of a bishop in Canada a few years ago who issued a pastoral (decree) banning the eulogies at catholic funeral masses.

On the other hand a few years ago a retired priest in Ottawa died suddenly of a heart attack while cycling. "His funeral was remarkable in that more people attended than expected. This Oblate priest, Fr. John Hunt, had developed a funeral ministry outside of the physical church. He went to funeral homes when called upon and sat down with families to develop a history of the deceased person. He helped them in their journey through the grief with a ritual in which they were a part, and that resulted in a true memorial. The moral here is that Fr. John connected with people and they in turn remembered and came to say goodbye to the one who helped them in their need to say good bye."

Our banned priests Ervad Khushru Madon and Ervad Framroze Mirza and a handful of others like them can be likened to the services that Fr John Hunt rendered to the community. To be a good priest starts first and foremost with your relationship with God. This has nothing to do with one's relationship with the High Priests of the organized religions. A true priest is the one who is in sync with his God - Ahuramazda, and he speaks God's truth fearlessly and never promotes his own agenda. Priests like Ervad Madon and Mirza stand up and are visible when the laity look for direction. They lead by example. Many in Mumbai and the rest of the world are looking up towards them with great respect and admiration. For what it's worth, one cannot imagine a world without all the good priests who pray for those dearly departed in Australasia, North America, and Canada, where burial or cremation is used as means of disposal of dead, in the absence of our traditional Dokhmenashini.

Some trustees at BPP call them Renegade and even support their dehumanizing rhetoric by quoting the meaning from Oxford and Webster's dictionary. **Unconventional, resisting tradition, Rebel and so on.....** Those who call them renegade are often so busy looking at the traditional customs and clergy laws that they have failed to live up to their own spirituality and failed to fully comprehend the teachings of our beloved Prophet. There exists no scriptural evidence in our faith

that directly proscribes cremation as mode of disposal of dead. It makes no sense but to wonder in amazement at this dictum of the high Priests to an equally senseless committee at BPP.

The candles and divas might be burning bright in the Agiaries and Atashbehrams, but sadly that inner light which exists within each one of us is diminishing in its pristine fight and search towards realizing the truth of why we have arrived on this earth. Silence, blind obedience and unquestioning trust on the part of the faithful

Zarathushtis can no longer be viable options if the Zarathushti religion is to survive, with the High priest and the clergy at the center. To the Parsis in Mumbai, I say- raise your head and look beyond your borders at the religious and social harmony that exists in places like Calcutta, Indore, Delhi, where the Anjumans and their Priests embrace the socio-religious needs of all people, including the non-Zoroastrian spouses and a wider circle of non-Zoroastrian friends and families to co-exist in a happy and peaceful way.

Dasturji Late Dr M.N. Dhalla wrote in his book ***Mankind Wither Bound*** “*Righteousness is not the monopoly of the followers of any one particular religion. It is universal. So is Truth. Mankind knows many religions, but God the giver of Religion knows only One Religion.*”

As Ervad Jehan Bagli in his book ***Religion of Asho Zarathusht and Influence through the Ages*** very poignantly describes “*The collapse of the priestly hegemony left behind a class of ritual performing priesthood, which in time, was at the mercy of the grass-root community for their livelihood*”. Are we treating our Mobeds fairly? But the priests need to ask- whether they are indeed truly serving the needs of the community. In my mind if the priestly duties is reduced to a mere profession of rattling/mumbling prayers from a book - like that of a hospitality industry, beckoning some tipping, then the Mobeds are only self-serving their own livelihood. Once again Ervad Jehan says- “*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 Zarthusht. A priest of the future must cultivate tolerance for harmonizing such differences.*”

The Citadels of our religion in India especially in Mumbai have to change their mind set to be inclusive towards the diverse views and not be monolithic in their thinking. Otherwise the priestly profession will disappear, not because of lack of funding, but because of the distancing of the people from such institutionalized priesthood, whose views differ widely from today’s time and age and the power to challenge- not for the sake of challenge, but for the sake of truth and proper interpretation of teachings of Zarathushtra.

May Ahuramazda Bless our Zarathushti religion with people of vision, wisdom and courage. And May the courage and strength of Ervad Khushru Madon and Ervad Framroze Mirza and others who offer these services bring solace, strength and joy to those who feel left out and persecuted within the folds of our very own community.

Jehangir Mehta, Perth Australia



M I L E S T O N E S

as of October 1, 2014

BIRTHS

Ashna Irani Williams, a girl, to Malachi and Feruzan Williams in Atlanta, GA on November 20, 2013.

Jehan Cyrus Bhedwar, a boy, to Cyrus and Naina Bhedwar in Atlanta, GA on February 11, 2014.

Katie Damkewala, a girl, to Nazneen and Jamshed Damkewala, granddaughter to Rhoda and Erach Vandrewala (Mumbai, India) and Late Parvez and Daulat Damkewala (Delhi, India) in Redmond, WA February 26, 2014.

Darius Firdosh Ghyara, boy, to Firdosh Rohinton Ghyara and Armaity Falak Irani in Bellevue, WA on March 28th 2014.

Jolene Aloo Gump, a girl, to Michael and Dilshad Gump, granddaughter to Adi and Zarin Balaporina and Ray and Sandy Gump, niece to Rita Balaporina and Tanaz (Andrew) Walendziewicz, and cousin to Aiden Walendziewicz in IL on March 31, 2014.

Ava Elena Mancherji, a girl, to Isabel and Zubin Mancherjee, sister to Advij, granddaughter to Jeroo and Hosie Mancherjee and Isabel and Alvaro Cascante, niece to Janine and Kevin Mancherjee, and cousin to Xerxes and Zane in Toronto, ONT on April 5, 2014.

Jilian Cooper, a boy, to Farrah and Neville Cooper, brother to Arianna, grandson to Farida and Dara Bhesania and Aniheeta and Kersi Cooper

in Markham, ONT on April 18, 2014.

Kian Christopher Irani and **Dilan Bradley Irani**, twin boys, to Farzeen and Leanne Irani, brothers to Cyrus, grandsons to Kekoo and Dilnavaz Irani and Joseph and Missy Cimarossa, great grandsons to Banoo Barhamand and nephews to Arash (Carolina) Irani and Xerxes (Heidi) Irani in IL on May 15.

Calvin Cyrus Irani, a boy, to Cyrus and Cindy Irani, grandson to Phiroze and Nargish Irani and Jin and Lucia Park, nephew to Freda, Darayus and Henry in Chicago, IL on June 4, 2014.

Zen Vakaria Dadabhoy, a boy, born to Mazarin and Darius Dadabhoy, grandson to Arnavaz and Adi Vakaria (Flower Mound, TX) and Zerine and Porus Dadabhoy (Downers Grove, IL), great grandson to Shirin Irani, nephew to Dina (Amir Darki) Dadabhoy, Keshvar (Kali) Buhariwalla, Cainaz (Michael) Heaton, cousin to Cyrus and Arianna Darki, Zal, Cyrus, and Hormaz Buhariwala and Kashmira, Aryana, and Zubin Heaton in San Mateo, CA on June 19, 2014.

Diya Farzan Bharucha, a girl, to Farzan and Anu Bharucha in Atlanta, GA on July 14, 2014.

Rohan Godrej Khambatta, a boy to Arnaz and Godrej Khambatta, grandson to Katy and Hoshang Khambatta (San Diego)

and Gity and Sheriar Haveliwalla (Toronto), great grandson to Villu Motishaw. In San Diego, on July 16, 2014

Zia Gheewala, a girl, to Adil Gheewala and Navaz Nekoo, sister to Zeenia Gheewala, granddaughter to Jeroo and Adi Gheewala (Mumbai, India) and Yasmin and Farsosh Nekoo (Mumbai, India) in Bellevue, WA on July 18, 2014.

Viraf Motafram, a boy, to Shenaya and Pirzad Motafram, grandson to Silloo and Erach Tarapore (Lafayette, CA) in Los Altos, CA on July 22, 2014.

Kosmy Zubin Khambatta, a boy, to Amanda and Zubin Sarosh Khambatta in Fairfield, OH on July 23, 2014.

Eliza Max Tannenbaum Barhamand, a girl to Alexandria and Adam Barhamand, granddaughter to Fariborza and Barbara Barhamand, in Chicago, on August 6, 2014.

Tanya Damania, a girl, to Minu and Marzi Damania, sister to Tanisha Damania, in Sammamish, WA on August 14, 2014.

Ava Pavri, a girl, to Numazer and Shermeen Pavri, granddaughter to Dinar and Dinyar Pavri (Pleasant Hill, CA) on August 21, 2014.

Daena Byramji, a girl to Tashan and Zane Byramji, grand daughter to Firoza Punthakey Mistree and Khojeste P. Mistree, (Mumbai) and Lyla and Ronny Jal H.P.

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Byramji of Pakistan, in Philadelphia, on September 28, 2014.

NAVJOTES

Jehan and Armand Patel, children of Jamshed and Shanaz Patel (Atlanta, GA), grandsons of Nanabhai and Khorshed Patel (Mumbai, India) and Jal and Hilla Kanga (Mumbai, India) in Mumbai, India on December 29, 2013.

Davin Patel, son of Ferzin and Rajan Patel, grandson to Dr. Firoze and Khorshed Jungalwala (Sudbury, MA) in Mahwah, NJ on May 18, 2014. *(photo bottom)*

Friana and Ariana



Siganporia, children of Roshnak and Zareer Sigaporia (Atlanta, GA), granddaughters of Hufreez and Rohinton Jambusarwalla (Pune, India) and Veera and Meherji Sigaporia

(Pittsburgh, PA) in Atlanta, GA on May 18, 2014.

Ryaan and Aiden Gowadia, children of Jennifer and Purazar Gowadia, grandsons of Gool and Alam Limzerwala and Dhun and Asprie Gowadia in New Jersey on June 7, 2014.

Ahva Minina, daughter of Hormuz and Raquel Minina, granddaughter of Jehangir and Roda Minina (Mumbai, India) and Debra Bishop Bedard and Robert Philip King (Atlanta, GA) in Atlanta, GA on June 7, 2014.

Arian Taraporewalla, son of Aspy and Dilkush Taraporewalla (Atlanta, GA) in Dahanu, India on June 14, 2104.

Sanaya and Rayan Irani, children of Farzad and Nazneen Irani, grandchildren of Khodi and Jeroo Irani and Farokh and Zarine Jamshedian in Toronto, ONT on June 22, 2014.

Milan and Zane Boga, children of Cyrus and Shernaz Boga (Danville, CA) on July 3, 2014.

Ness and Zane Damania, sons of Zenobia and Darius Damania; grandsons of Roshan and Rohinton Rivetna and Minoo Damania, in Hinsdale, Il, on July 26, 2014.

WEDDINGS

Anita Khory, daughter of Fredoon and Pervin Khory, to **Mehrdad Irani**, son of Rohinton and Delbar Irani in Vaughan, ONT on June 29, 2014.

Shiraz Buhari, son of Fram and Behroze Buhari (Stockton, CA) to **Amrit Kaur** in Stockton, CA on July 6, 2014.

Darius Contractor, son of Shazad and Dorothy Contractor (San Jose, CA) to **Priscilla Scala**, daughter of Kikko and Giordana Scala (Genoa, Italy) in Gargonza, Italy on July 8, 2014.

Farhad Doctor, son of Firoze and Katy Doctor to **Laura Castillo** in Foster City, CA on July 12, 2014.

Rofida Bahmanian, daughter of Mojgan and Bijan Bahmanian to **Shahin Sheidaei**, son of Farangis and Cyrus Sheidaei in Caledon, ONT on July 18, 2014.

Shireen Cama, daughter of Shahnaaz and Farhad Cama to **Jamshed Daruwalla**, son of Nilufer and Parvez Daruwalla, in Pittsburgh, PA on July 19, 2014.

Rashna Wadia, daughter of Noshir and Arnavaz Wadia to **Calvert Lee**, son of Sim and Donald Lee (Antioch, CA) in Morgan Hill, CA on July 24, 2014.

Tila Tamoureszadeh, daughter of Farahnaz and Daryoush Tamoureszadeh, to **Faraz Farrahi**, son of Jahan and Khosrow Farrahi, in Toronto, on August 1, 2014.

Sara Sethna, daughter of Jehangir and Shirin Sethna to **Prashant Kandathil**, son of Rajan and Purnima George in Whistler, BC on August 2, 2014.

M I L E S T O N E S

Kianoush Moobed, daughter of Dinyar and Shirin Moobed to Ahmed, in Toronto on August 16, 2014.

Rustom Dessai, son of Soonamai and Jamsheed Dessai (Santa Rosa, CA) to **Kathyrene Villariba**, daughter of Maebel and Carmelo Villariba in Berkeley, CA on September 5, 2014.

DEATHS

Arnavaz Patel, (73) wife of Ardeshir and mother of Maneck and Nashman, in Florida, on February 5, 2014.

Coomi Jassawala, mother of Rusi, in Queens, NY on February 20, 2014

Jehangir Oshidari (93) husband of Iran Taj, father of Noushin Hemati, Shirin Herman, Nariman and Houman, in California, March 18, 2014.

Bahmard Felfeli, husband of Daulat Felfeli, father of Farshid and Behram in Karachi, Pakistan on March 31, 2014.

Firdosh K. Mistry, husband of Hutoxi Mistry, father of Natasha Mistry, brother-in-law of Havovi and Rohinton Viccajee (Toronto, ONT) in Toronto, ONT on April 18, 2014.

Mehroo Tehmton Mody, 75, wife of Tehmton Jimmy Mody, mother of Hoshedar (Toronto, ONT), Pervez and Delna, daughter of Kershasp Manchershaw Mody and Piroja Kershasp Mody, daughter-in-law of Jimmy Manchershaw Mody and Aloo Jimmy Mody, sister of Nergish Noshir Motiwala and Hoshang Kershasp Mody in Mumbai, India on April 22, 2014.

Gool Homi Rabadi, mother of Roshni Noshir Khory, Nazneen

and Burjis Rabadi, grandmother of Ferina in Palatine, IL on April 26, 2014.

Hoshang Pavri, husband of Marguerite Pavri, father of Eric and Bettina, brother of Dinyar Pavri, Coomie Patel and Katie Pavri in Colorado Springs, CO on May 6, 2104.

Keyvandokht Safrang Bordbar in Whittier, CA on May 16, 2014.

Minoo Daruwalla on May 17, 2014.

Rati Avasia, 99, mother of Hoshang and Rohinton Avasia (Mumbai, India) and Homai Arvand Kasad (Belmont, CA) in Mumbai, India on May 17, 2014

Sheroo Fracis, wife of Hoshang Fracis, mother of Xerxes, grandmother of Sylvie, Hunter and Aaron, daughter of late Sorab and Dowlat Talati (Shanghai), sister of Pesi, Bepsi, Zerine and late Mary in Charlottesville, VA on May 18, 2014.

Homayoun Shirmadi Zadeh Paridokht, wife of Mobydyar Rostam Sales on May 22, 2014.

Nergesh Desai, 92, mother of late Behram Desai in San Rafael, CA on June 7, 2014.

Mani Katrak, 99, mother of Kersi (late Pouroo), Vancouver BC, Mary (Hoshi) Mody, Mumbai, Roshan (Ness) Lakdawala Montreal; Yasmin (Flicky) Shroff (Flicky), Mumbai; grandmother of Khushroo, Farida, Lena (Aurelio) Useche; Roxanne (Quintino) Rico; Farzad and Vispi Shroff, great grand mother of Vanesa, Zachary, Sebastian, Yasmin, Siena, Ness-Angelo, in Mumbai, on June 8, 2014.

Nergish Patel, mother of Dhun Sadry and Cyrus Patel in ONT on July 23, 2014.

Sirous Rahnammoun, father of Touraj Rahnammoun, in Tehran, July 23, 2014

Banoo Kurlawalla, mother of late Persis Rustom Engineer, Hoshang (Jane) Kurlawalla, Rohinton (Sophie) Kurlawalla in Antioch, CA on July 28, 2014.

Behram Pheroz Cooper (97) father of Darsi Cooper, Dinaz Cooper; Shenaz(Rohinton) Parekh, grandfather to Tishtar and Pareshtar Parekh, in Mumbai, on August 8, 2014.

Nariman Bomansha Mehta (94) father of late Nadine, Perrin (Jeff) Burton of Raleigh, ; Anita (Wes) Sartin of Burlington, son Norman (Sonia) Mehta of Canada; and 4 grandchildren, in Burlington, on August 22, 2014.

Kersie Burjorji Mehta, husband of Jolly Mehta, father of Jehabux (Orlando, FL) and Pervez (Richardson, TX) on August 31, 2014.

Shahrokh Shahrokh, husband of Simin, father of Kourush, Taraneh Syrus Zomorrody, grandson of Arbab Keikhosrow Shahrokh of Kerman, Iran, in England, on September 16, 2014.

Adi Balsara, (82), husband of Ruby, father Zubin (Shahnaaz), grandfather of Daryush, Daria ad Brinaz, in Calgary, (previously of British Columbia) September 19, 2014.

Cyrus Jhabvala, (94), husband of late Ruth Praver Jhabvala, father of Renana, Ava and Pheroza, in Los Angeles, on September 23, 2014.

Nargis Tata (77), wife of Jal Tata, mother of: Naozad (Bhavan) Tata, Huafrish (Farokh) Irani; Friyana (Romel) Prashad, grandmother of Shanaya, Zenia, Shayan, Zaraan, in State College Pennsylvania, October 5, 2014.

Obituary

Journalist Jehangir Pocha Succumbs to Cardiac Arrest 1958- 2014



Sunita Sohrabji, India West India West

Jehangir Pocha, editor-in-chief at the New Delhi-based television station NewsX, died of cardiac arrest. The journalist, who was a foreign correspondent for the San Francisco Chronicle, is shown here with his family. From left: son Adi, wife Ranjana, baby twins Darius and Daeya, and Pocha. (Facebook photo)

Jehangir Pocha, editor-in-chief of the New Delhi-based news television station NewsX, died unexpectedly early morning July 12, 2014 of cardiac arrest. Pocha, 56 at the time of his death, leaves behind his mother, his wife Ranjana and three children: toddler twins Darius and Daeya, and an older son, Adi.

Pocha began his career as a foreign correspondent for the San Francisco Chronicle, and later The Boston Globe. He then went on to television, founding the NewsX channel, and serving as a senior editorial member of the ITV Group, which owns the channel.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi immediately tweeted the news of Pocha's death. "Jehangir Pocha will be remembered as a leading voice on television, print and social media. His frank and insightful views on issues will be missed," Modi said, offering his condolences to the family.

Pocha spent the day before he died reporting analysis of the new Modi government budget, which was released July 10, 2014.

Born in Mumbai, Pocha attended Campion School and then the SP Jain Institute of Management and Research. He attended the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University to attain a Master's degree in Public Administration.

But Pocha left the corporate world soon after he started. San Francisco Chronicle Foreign Services former editor Jack Epstein told **India-West**: "Jehangir was an astute businessman who gave up his career to follow his passion for writing."

Pocha was a correspondent for the Chronicle and wrote from India, Sri Lanka and China. In 2005, he travelled to Sri Lanka to cover the impact of a devastating tsunami in the now ghost-town, Hambantota. Pocha also travelled to Bangladesh to report on a new \$1 billion fence India was constructing along the 2,500 mile border the two countries shared. At the same time, India was also constructing an 1,800 mile fence — at a cost of \$3 billion — along a western border it shared with Pakistan.

In China, Pocha in 2006 reported a ground-breaking story about working conditions for Chinese laborers,

Obituary

noting that workers spent 15 to 18 hours a day at the factory to go home and sleep a few precious hours in over-crowded dormitory rooms.

“Cheap labor — along with market reforms, disdain for intellectual rights, disregard for the environment and cheap capital from state-controlled banks — is what has allowed China to offer global investors a unique combination of 19th-century business practices and 21st-century infrastructure that has attracted more than \$800 billion in investment since 1979,” wrote Pocha.

“He was a first-class journalist,” said Epstein. Sree Srinivasan, co-founder of the South Asian Journalists Association, told **India-West** in an e-mail: “Jehangir was a pioneer in many ways, but especially worth noting is his recognition of the importance of covering China — its society, its culture and its ambitions — long before most other journalists did.”

“What he learned living there informed his work for years to come,” said Srinivasan, former professor at Columbia Journalism School and currently chief digital officer of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Zareen Karani Araoz, a close friend of the family, told **India-West** that Pocha’s family took him to a nearby hospital as he went into cardiac arrest early morning July 12, but attempts to revive him were unsuccessful. “His wife said he had blood pressure problems for two years, but it wasn’t really bothering him, so they didn’t do anything,” said Araoz, president of the Massachusetts-based company Managing Across Cultures. “He was working too hard, long hours, but he wanted to make a difference.”

“Jehangir was a very respected journalist, and had started his own entrepreneurial News Channel in Delhi, mentoring many others, who really looked up to him, and gaining the respect of the media community,” said Araoz in an e-mail sent to the small Parsi community around the globe. “He was always on the cutting edge of things, and gave his own unique and candid perspectives on them, with humor and sharp intellect,” she wrote, adding that he was also a devoted and doting father.

Pocha’s last rites were performed July 12 at Nigambodh Ghat in New Delhi

DR. NARIMAN BOMANSHAW MEHTA (April 8, 1920 - August 22, 2014) Pioneer of patented anti-depressant drug Wellbutrin dies at age 94

Nariman Bomanshaw Mehta was an organic chemist and pharmacologist who designed, synthesized, and patented the organic compound Bupropion, marketed under the name Wellbutrin as an antidepressant and smoking cessation aid. It was patented by Burroughs Wellcome in 1969, which later became part of what is now GlaxoSmithKline. It was first approved for clinical use in the United States in 1989 and originally called by the generic name amfebutamone, before being renamed in 2000. Its chemical name is 3-chloro-N-tert-butyl- β -ketoamphetamine. It is a substituted cathinone (β -ketoamphetamine), as well as a substituted amphetamine.

Nariman was born in Bombay, India to the late Bomanshaw Mehta and the late Dhunbai Daruwalla Mehta. Dr. Mehta was a loving father, grandfather, brother and friend. He was preceded in death by his parents, daughter, Nadine Nariman Mehta,

sisters, Freny Calagopi and Thriti Tarapore, and brother, Burjor Mehta. He is survived by his daughters Perrin (Jeff) Burton, of Raleigh; Anita (Wes) Sartin of Burlington, son Norman (Sonia) Mehta of Canada; 4 grandchildren, several nieces and nephews



Dr. Mehta retired from Burroughs-Wellcome, Inc., now GlaxoSmithKline, as a Principal Scientist and Organic Chemist. He was a member of the American Chemical Society and the Royal Chemical Society in U.K.. Nariman was passionate about his field of study; he tutored many students over the years and held over 55 patents worldwide, most notably **Wellbutrin, a commonly prescribed antidepressant**. His invention brought great relief to millions of people.

He was an avid fan of classical music and above all enjoyed spending time with his children and grandchildren.

Obituary

Cyrus Jhabvala

An architect, a teacher, an artist, a visionary dies **at 94**



Architect Cyrus Jhabvala, 94, who designed the Delhi Parsi Dharamsala, the Bhiwandiwalla Hall & the Dar-E-Meher passed away September 23rd, 2014 in Los Angeles where he was staying with his daughter Pheroza. He was preceded in 2013 by his novelist Oscar winning wife Ruth Praver Jhabvala and survived by his three daughters Renana, Ava and Pheroza. He was the son of pioneering Trade Unionist Savaxshah Jhabwala.

Born in Bombay, in 1920, he studied architectural studies in Bombay and London, was elected an associate member of the R.I.B.A. (Royal Institute Of British Architects) in 1948 and later became a Fellow of the same Institute. He returned to India in 1949 and set up a practice in partnership with Mr. Anan and Mr. Aptay in Delhi.

He taught architecture at the Delhi Polytechnic from 1949 to 1957 and from 1966 to 1978, he was the head of the Department of Architecture and Director of the School of Planning and Architecture for one

year. His dedication and contributions to architectural education in India are widely acknowledged. His major works include some large university campuses in North India and various exhibition pavilions at the Trade Fair Grounds, Delhi for which he was awarded four Gold Medals. He designed the Kirorimal College buildings, Delhi University in 1954-55. He was consultant to the World Bank for the Tamil Nadu Integrated Nutrition Scheme, Health Sub Centers, Nutrition Centers and Training Centers.

A legendary teacher, he taught generations of architects in Delhi and also became the subject of a film written by Arundhati Roy, who was also his student at SPA. In the last few years, he was living in New York with his wife, the famed novelist Ruth Praver Jhabvala, who passed away there in 2013. He dedicated the last many years in making drawings of the cities of Delhi and of New York, which have been most recently published by Penguin.

Obituary

Shahrokh Shahrokh grandson of legendary Arbab Keikhosrow Shahrokh, of Kerman, Iran dies in England on September 16, 2014.

Born in India, Shahrokh was a long standing member of over 40 years of Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, (ZTFE), as well as its past president. He was on the steering committee that established the ZTFE library Project and on the steering committee which launched the Zoroastrian Education Project in 1990. He was the joint Vice –Chair of the 8th World Zoroastrian Congress hosted by ZTFE in 2005. Together with Dr Rashna Writer he edited the Memoirs of Keikhosrow Shahrokh, published by Mellon Press in 1994. He was a well-respected member of the Zoroastrian community. He is survived by his Simin, his son Kourush and daughter Taraneh Syrus Zomorrdy.



KERSHAW K. KHUMBATTA, P.C.

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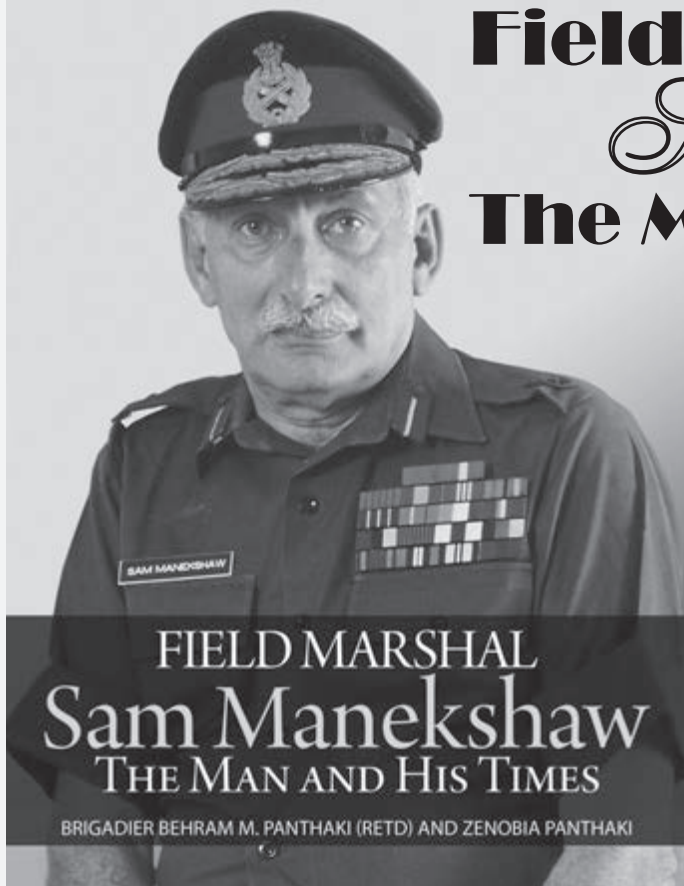
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Field Marshal

Sam Manekshaw: The Man and His Times

by BRIGADIER BEHRAM M. PANTHAKI (RETIRED)
AND ZENOBIA PANTHAKI
Published (NEW DELHI: NIYOGI BOOKS, 2014) PP
214, PRICE RS 1495.00, ISBN978-3-83098-30-9

*Reviewed by Rostum K. Nanavatty Lieutenant
General (Retired)
05 Aug 2014 Dehradun (India)*

Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw is, arguably, the foremost military commander of modern India. He was blessed with a fine mind, absolute integrity and great moral courage. His warm and friendly manner, his ability to reach out and connect with his officers and men, and his ready wit, endeared him to his troops. Good fortune – luck as he termed it – gave him the opportunity to script history in the service of his country: he seized it with both hands.

This book is the Sam Manekshaw story as seen through the eyes of his ADC, Brigadier Behram Panthaki and wife, Zenobia.

Behram and Zenobia were married while he was Sam Manekshaw's ADC. They saw Sam at close quarters. They were devoted to him. In return, the Manekshaw family took them into their warm embrace. Behram spent an aggregate six years on the personal staff of the Field Marshal. Yet every time the bugle sounded, he made it a point to revert to his unit.

The book is laid out in fifteen short, sequential chapters.

The first chapter recounts life in the close knit Manekshaw household in Amritsar, where Sam's father chose to set up his home and medical practice. It also provides the reader with glimpses of Sam as a cadet at the Indian Military Academy.

The next six chapters trace his military career – from subaltern to Field Marshal.

In 1942, on the Sittang River in Burma, Captain Manekshaw received an immediate award of the Military Cross for gallantry, for his "excellent leadership and bearing" in a successful counter attack by 4/12 Frontier Force. He was grievously wounded during the action.

In the tumultuous days before and after India's Independence, he was a Lieutenant Colonel on staff in the Military Operations Directorate at Army Headquarters in Delhi. He was witness to and participated in the dramatic events of that period. In the process, he rubbed shoulders with senior civil servants and political leaders alike, at the apex levels of government.

In the years preceding the India-China War 1962, Major General Manekshaw came under a cloud. His plain speaking and allegiance to the Army Chief had antagonised the Defence Minister. Trumped-up

charges questioning his loyalty were levelled against him. Eventually, a Court of Inquiry exonerated him. In the wake of the Chinese invasion he was chosen to resurrect a beaten 4 Corps. He arrived on the scene and promptly proclaimed “from now on there will be no withdrawal ...” There was no looking back.

During the period between 1964 and 1969, as the Army Commander Eastern Command, Lieutenant General Manekshaw established “a position of ascendancy” over the Naga and Mizo rebels and created conditions for a political dialogue.

Of the eight assorted chapters that follow, two – “The 1971 War” and “The Finest Hour” – expand on the most significant events of his tenure as the Chief of Army Staff. As Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee he orchestrated a brilliant campaign that resulted in an outright military victory and the birth of Bangladesh. His refusal “to be bull-dozed into a misadventure” assured victory in war.

The chapter “I did it My Way” highlights his unique style as a leader: someone who was kind and generous but completely uncompromising when it came to dealing with any lack of integrity. “Quirks and Humour” brings to the fore his delightful – often wicked - sense of humour.

To their credit, the authors have thoughtfully included a chapter on Mrs Silloo Manekshaw – “The Woman behind the Successful Man”. Silloo was rock-like in her support for her husband and family. She was un-demanding and non-interfering in matters military; and yet deeply caring of soldiers’ families, the sick and the wounded.

In the Indian Army stories about Sam Manekshaw are legion. For the storyteller this book serves as a reference point. It authenticates conversations and incidents; and destroys myths. Importantly, the book offers the discerning reader fascinating insights into the Field Marshal’s personal and professional conduct.

Between doing the Staff College in 1943 and the Imperial Defence College in 1956, Sam Manekshaw - like many of his peers - received little or no formal military education. Yet when the time came he was prepared to command and lead his Army in the acid test of war. It was hard work and self-education; a sense of the practicable; experience gained from having to shoulder responsibility early; confidence derived from dealing with civil servants and political leaders at the highest levels; but above all it was character that made it possible.

Sam reposed implicit trust in the members of his team. Nothing exemplifies his unique relations with his subordinates and staff better than his association with Major General Inder Gill, his officiating Director of Military Operations during the war.

His personal code of ethical conduct is a revelation and worthy of emulation especially today.

The book is not a military biography. Nor is it a serious attempt to analyse and assess Sam Manekshaw as a military leader. Indeed, it is unabashedly adulatory: and why not? The Field Marshal and his ADC had an enviable relationship; and Behram and Zenobia loved and admired the man.

The authors have made an invaluable contribution to the limited literature that is available on Sam Manekshaw. The book is very enjoyable reading. It is written in an easy, fluent style and is punctuated with humour. It is a treasure trove of Manekshaw-isms – “Sweetie”! The book is well illustrated with photographs, copies of documents, letters and notes from the Manekshaw family papers, the 58 Gorkha Training Centre Museum and regimental albums of the 2nd Battalion 8th Gorkha Rifles.

The book is a tribute to a true ‘Ratna’ of secular ‘Bharat’. Reading it should fill every Indian and every Zoroastrian with pride.

This BOOK REVIEW is Exclusive for the FEZANA Journal

Books & ARTS

Religions of Iran

FROM PREHISTORY TO THE PRESENT

By Richard Foltz

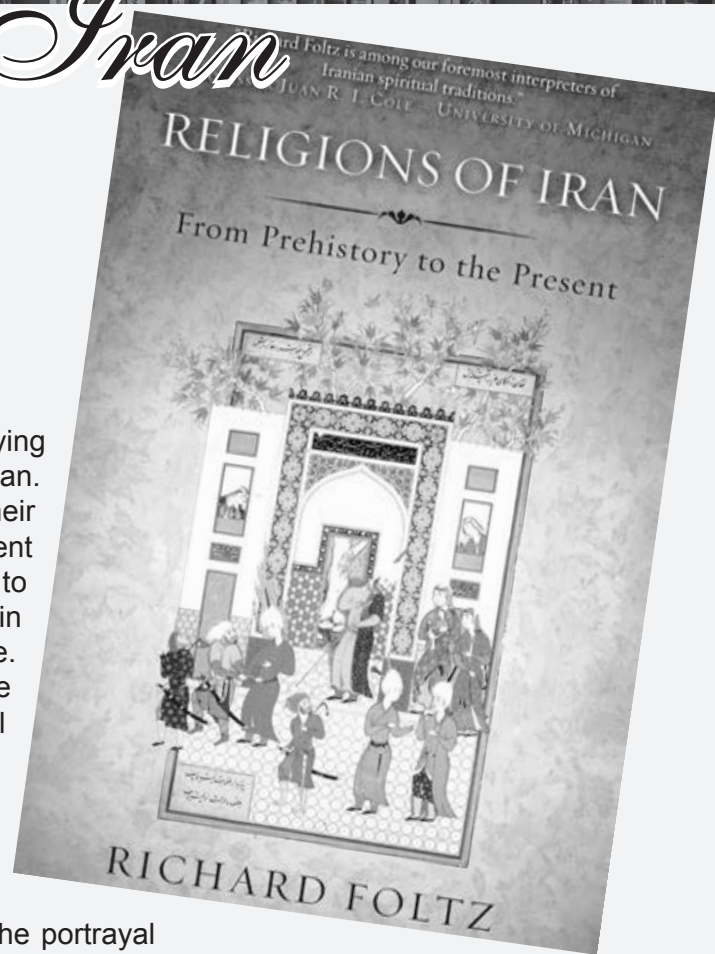
Published by Oneworld PP 314 US \$30

ISBN 978-1-78074-308-0

Few would dispute today that religion has been playing a pervasive role in the political and social lives of people in Iran. Indeed, never has cogent understanding of religions and their complexities in Iran seem more important than in the recent decades. Increasing number of scholars are curious as to how religious attitudes and activities affect communities in Iran, both large and small, and in the Middle East at large. Some argued that the globalization of communication, the twenty-four hour news cycle, and the proliferation of social media have amplified an increase in secular activism. The mainstream media has emerged as the main source for fresh examples of religious traditions and perspectives, in practice, offering vivid—but selective—glimpses of religious events and adherents. We cannot deny that since the events leading up to the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, the portrayal of the country and its people within the expanding channels of media productions in North America has been very negative. Undoubtedly, through ubiquitous depictions, they have very much shaped—and continue to shape—our views and understanding of Iran, its civilization and Iranians at large. Certainly, we should not allow quick glimpses to define our understanding of decidedly complex phenomenon such as religion(s). Cogent understanding must come from systematic exploration of both the historical underpinnings of—in this case—Iran and its religion(s). Zoroastrianism, Iran's own unique and ancient religion, whose past is prologue to its present and future, defines Zarathushties' comprehensive belief system in Iran, India and especially in the diaspora.

Richard Foltz, in his recent book *Religions of Iran* (Oneworld, 2013) provides a much needed and a systematic exploration of Iranian religions, allowing readers to make sense of a tangle of information from a plethora of sources. Foltz's survey of recent scholarly literature, and his distinct presentation of both the history and divergent worldviews in Iran, proves the book's value and effectiveness. Facilitating comparisons and contrasts, his study encourages readers to appreciate the compelling diversity of religions in Iran while recognizing many fundamental similarities, perhaps stemming from the unique character within Iranian culture that has remained pervasive through millennia.

Foltz's *Religions of Iran* is, admittedly (p. ix), an expansion upon his earlier book *Spirituality in the Land of Noble: How Iran Shaped the World's Religions* (2004). He is intent to counter the prevailing view amongst many scholars and individuals in dividing Iran's *longue durée* history into two separate pre- and post-Islamic historiographies (p. ix). On the contrary, Foltz argues, the existence of uniquely Iranian traditions that are shared by diverse religious traditions in the Iranian plateau—namely the celebration of the Nôrûz by Muslims, Baha'is, Jews and Christians, as well as esoteric teachings of heterodox spiritual masters, known commonly as 'irfân, to name but a few—underlines the unbroken character of what may be branded as an Iranian religious



tradition (p. xv).

In five sections/parts Foltz discusses topics as varied as Indo-European migrations, Mithraism, the quest for historical Asho Zarathushtra, Mandaicism, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Manichaeism, Mazdakism, Islam, Sufism, Kurdish Yezidis, Babism, the Islamic Republic and the conditions of contemporary Zarathustries in Iran. A sub-chapter titled 'Iranian Goddesses' (pp. 56-74) is a contribution from his wife Ms. Mania Saadi-nejad, who holds an M.A. in Ancient Iranian Languages and Culture (Tehran University), and who studied for two years in the doctoral program at the Sorbonne in Paris.

In Part One Foltz starts off with a short section on the aforementioned structure and argument of his book. This section is cogent and argues very well for the points of entry and selection of topics. In discussing the historical Zarathushtra he has relied on recent works by Kellens and Skjærvø, and seems to agree with their preference in translating *Yasna* (Vedic *yajna*) as “sacrifice” rather than simply “worship.” Although he qualifies the term “sacrifice” not as the act of surrendering or forfeiting—of something dear/valuable to a deity, etc.—as is commonly applied today; but rather “making [something] sacred” (p. 16). Accordingly, the middle Persian compound *mazdēsnih* (Mazdā Yasna)—traditionally understood to mean “worship of [Ahura] Mazdā”—would be translated as “Mazdā sacrifice”. Yet, one wonders why Foltz refrains from applying the same translation to the similar Middle Persian compound *dēvāsnih*? For he translates it not as “Daeva sacrifice”, but “demon worship” (p. 51)?

Moreover, in discussing the notion of religion in the Shāh-nāme, specifically those stories pertaining to the hero Rostam, Foltz emphasizes the fact that religion is ever-present, and that the hero constantly prays to God (Yaz[a]dān: ‘deities’). Yet, he maintains, there is little reference to Zoroastrianism (p. 54). Clearly a more careful examination of the epic Shāh-nāme would have clarified this perplexity: in narratives describing the hero in the epic, Rostam frequently calls upon and prays to the god/lord Mehr (Mithra) or *khodāvand-i Mehr*. At one point in the epic Rostam praises the noble religion of Zarathushtra, but confesses that his/or that which is suitable for him is none other but the āyēn-i *Mehr*, or the Mithraic cult. The reason was—it is implied by the poet—that as a man living in the wilderness, Rostam was unable to observe the principles of the Good Religion, namely killing and consuming *xrafstras* (obnoxious animals), instead of “bounteous animal” such as (Av. *geuš-spenta*) *gospand* (sheep/cattle). This notion, in my opinion, corroborates with views presented in other, secular/non-religious Pahlavi texts—namely *Khosrov-i Kavadān ud Rīdakī*—which similarly do not conform to orthodox Zoroastrianism exemplified in religious Sasanid texts.

In Parts Two to Five of his book, Foltz presents stimulating and thought provoking discussions on histories and developments of Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, Mandaic, Manichean and Mazdakite religions in Iran, as well as the introduction of Islam after Muslim conquest of the Iranian plateau. In addition, Foltz provides fascinating accounts on the 19th century millenarian movement in Iran known as Bābī, and the later Bahā’ī faith. Relying on his earlier fieldwork in Iran, the results of which had appeared in valuable articles in the *International Journal of Iranian Studies* in 2008/9, Foltz discusses the condition of the small Zarathushty minority in Iran today.

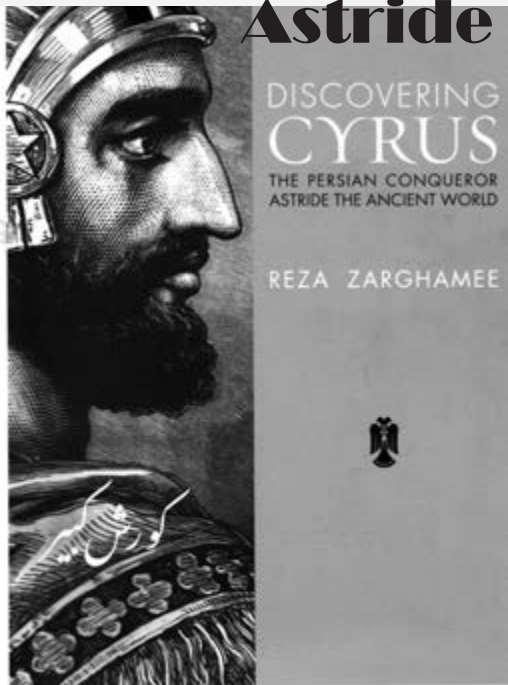
Foltz’s book succeeds in contextualizing religions in Iran, specifically in the arena of paradoxical cultural situations.

Rastin Mehri (PhD SOAS), is currently a faculty member at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences in Douglas College, New Westminster B.C., Canada.

Cyrus

The Persian Conqueror

Astride the Ancient World.



Washington D.C.: Mage Publishers, 2013. pps 735
 Official price: Hardcover \$85 from Mage Publishers
 ISBN-13: 978-193382338-6 - ISBN-10: 193382338-0

In *Discovering Cyrus: The Persian Conqueror Astride the Ancient World*, Reza Zarghamee relates a shocking omission. "Ferdowsi does not mention Cyrus in the *Shahnameh*, and the Sasanids seemingly have no memory of him through local Persian traditions" (535). The King of Kings memorialized in Greek texts and recently celebrated with the North American tour of the Cyrus Cylinder was virtually forgotten by Iranians. Zarghamee rectifies the propensity to forget by offering a volume about Cyrus, which is engaging, accessible, and well written. That is no simple feat for a 735-page book that includes twenty appendices and over a hundred pages of endnotes. Don't be intimidated though! This may not be a book that you finish in one sitting, but it is a book that you will savor as you make your way through the compelling anecdotes, careful scholarship, and balanced perspective.

The book is divided into three sections. Chapters 1 through 6 depict the political configuration of the Ancient Near East and Cyrus' origins, rise to power, and connections to the Zarathushti religion. Chapters 7 through 11 detail Cyrus' conquests and political administration. Chapter 12 through 15 discuss the Persian army and Cyrus' legacy. These chapters are followed by twenty appendices, which treat different problems within Iranian history. For example, Why the use of the title "King of Anshan"? How do we understand the Median worship of Mitra? What is the historical significance of the Cyrus Cylinder? What is Cyrus' legacy in Iranian epics?

For the reader discovering Cyrus for the first time, the book is a useful work that synthesizes mainly Greek sources and current scholarship. For seasoned Achaemenid readers, there are several thought-provoking sections. The treatment of Achaemenid women – including Cassadane, Amytis, Artystone, and Atossa – is illuminating and a welcome change from the intense focus on Iranian male warriors celebrated in Ancient Near Eastern texts and scholarship. The discussions of the origins of Zarathustra and Jews of Babylon provide a useful synthesis and demonstrate Zarghamee's own deft approach. And if you are wondering how Zarghamee answers the longstanding question "Is Cyrus Zoroastrian?," be sure and review his discussion in chapter 6 where he argues that Cyrus probably considered himself Zarathushti, but his beliefs may have been more "eclectic" compared to Darius and Xerxes (136).

Mage Publishers is to be commended for producing a volume of such length and giving Zarghamee the freedom to develop his insights, especially in the appendices. Nonetheless, while the book is treat, it would be wonderful to see a condensed version that may appeal to a wider range of readers.

Book reviewed by
Nerina Rustomji is an associate professor at St. John's University (Queens, New York) where she teaches Middle Eastern History.

EDITORIAL NOTE: Mr. Kerawala's is probably the first novel set in any period of Zoroastrian history. Despite taking a "novelist's licence" relating to the time period of events and the intensity of persecution inflicted on Zoroastrians after the Arab conquest of Iran, as noted in its Foreword, the book will give a feel to our young and old of our history in that period that led to the exodus to India. It certainly has, to a 12 year old Zarathusti in Falls Church, Virginia whose review of that book is published below:

THE PHOENIX OF *Persia*

Jhangir Kerawala

Published by Unicorn Books 2014 pp 239 Rs 295

ISBN 978-81-7806-347-8

BOOK REVIEW

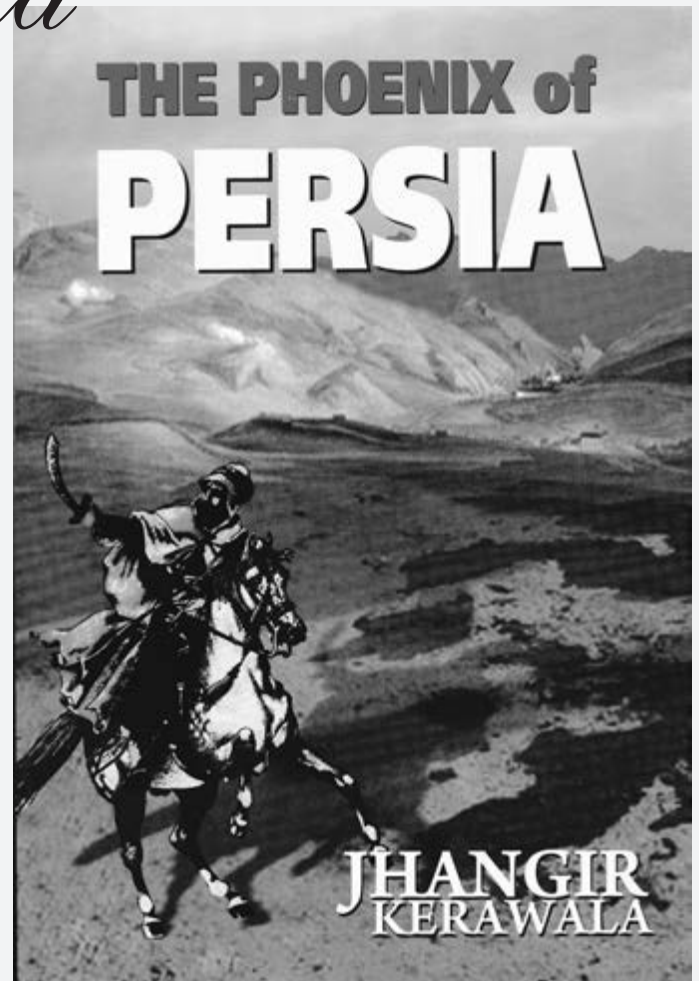
Zara Green, Falls Church, Virginia

The Phoenix of Persia is a good book about Zoroastrian history. It is about a young boy named Jamshid and how he, and a group of Zoroastrians, find a way to practice Zoroastrianism freely and safely, because the Arabs and the Islamists did not allow it after they conquered the Persian Empire. Jamshid and the group of Zoroastrians travel for a long time, trying to escape the Arabs so they can practice their religion. During this time, Jamshid matures from a young boy to an adult, and learns more about what it means to be a Zoroastrian.

There are some things I liked about this book, and some that I did not. I liked how the author described Zoroastrian history. Instead of just writing about what happened to these Zoroastrians, he wrote about what happened to them through a person, so I could understand what it must have felt like to be in their place. Another thing that I liked was that it described things uniquely and in detail, so I could visualize clearly in my mind what was happening and why.

The things I didn't like about this book were probably because this book is meant for adults, and I am only 12. I disliked that the print was small, because it made it difficult to read. There were also many words I did not know the meaning of.

The beginning of the book was a little slow for me. But once I got into it, the plot was very gripping; I kept wondering what would happen next. I also think that I was a little young to read it. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in Zoroastrian history, from the age 14 and up. I think that in a few years I would like to read this book again, and I am sure that I will enjoy it even more than I did this time.



Books & ARTS

SOME OPINIONS ON THE DIVINE SONGS OF ZARATHUSHTRA

I got acquainted with this great man of spirit and a great Zoroastrian through his unique voluminous book *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra*. It helped me immensely to comprehend the profound thoughts embodied in those divine songs.

It is not such an easy task to unravel the spiritual teachings and message of the Gathas. Firstly, because the language of the Gathas is a dead language, and secondly, because the message is expressed in the form of poetry, and regular rhyme and rhythm, each verse presenting a sublime thought. A scholar of the Gathas should be really in love with ZARATHUSHTRA's teachings and have complete faith that here is the hidden Divine Treasury and go after it. I think that Dr. Irach Taraporewala was such a man. He was in love and had complete faith in the TRUTH of the religion into which he was born. Whole-heartedly and tirelessly he went after it and was able to produce such a masterpiece and scholarly work in 1166 pages.

The excellence of his work lies in the fact that in his translation and interpretation, he is not dogmatic. He picks up the essential words and phrases of the Gathas and describes the meaning and interpretations by different European and Parsee scholars, and at the end he expresses his own opinion, in this way allowing you to think and choose for yourself.

— Dr. Rostam Sorfieh (La Jolla, California, U.S.A.)

Few men have the love of scholarship and the love of their religion in as strong a measure as Dr. Irach Taraporewala. He had the unique distinction of being a scholar both of Sanskrit as well as of Avesta. He obtained a Tripos in Sanskrit at Cambridge and studied Avesta under Dr. Bartholomae.

I was greatly impressed by his innate modesty and his quiet but deep love of scholarship which shunned publicity. He spent twenty years translating the Gathas and his translations, both literal as well as free, are inspiring masterpieces.

— Mr. Justice Jal R. Vimalatal (Bombay)

THE RELIGION OF ZARATHUSHTRA

Third Revised and Enlarged Edition
by Dr. Irach J.S. Taraporewala

This is an excellent introductory book, lucidly written and authoritative, having been written by a scholar of world reputation. The present edition gives a representative selection of Dr. Taraporewala's writings. It is in three parts. The first part provides a basic knowledge of the ethics, philosophy and morals of the faith of Zarathushtra. Dr. Taraporewala had spent twenty years in translating the Gathas of Zarathushtra, which form the second part and the heart of the book. The third part presents a historical perspective in the form of essays on three forgotten religions of Iran — Mithraism, Manichaeism and Mazdaism.

FEZANA has obtained permission from the Hukhta Foundation to reprint the *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra — Translations of the Gathas into English* by Irach JS Taraporewala.

At the FEZANA AGM in Seattle, Washington State, 18 May 2014, seed money for the reprint of this book was sanctioned.

Donations are now sought from individuals, from member associations and small groups to cover the costs of publishing this very valuable religious education resource to benefit our Zarathushti community.

Checks can be made out to **FEZANA** (marked for "Taraporewala Publication" in the memo section) and mailed to:

**Niloufer K. Shroff, FEZANA Treasurer,
Cherry Hill Post Office Box 3873, 1175 Marlgress
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The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra, the Gathas of Zarathushtra, have stood the test of Time, the most impartial of all critics. The thoughts of illuminated souls like Zarathushtra are as vital, dynamic and powerful today as they were when they were first uttered. They have the power of influencing and changing the lives of those who come into contact with them. These thoughts, however, are enshrined in Avesta, a language that has not been spoken for centuries. Hence, the necessity of translating them.

Throughout his life, the late Dr. Irach J.S. Taraporewala tried to understand and interpret the message of the Gathas. After obtaining a Tripos in Sanskrit from Cambridge and a Doctorate from Wurzburg, he studied Avesta under Professor Christian Bartholomae. He returned to India and occupied the Chair of Professor of Comparative Philology at the Calcutta University. While at Calcutta, he brought out three volumes of *Selections from Classical*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gujarati Literature, which were full of devotional poetry.

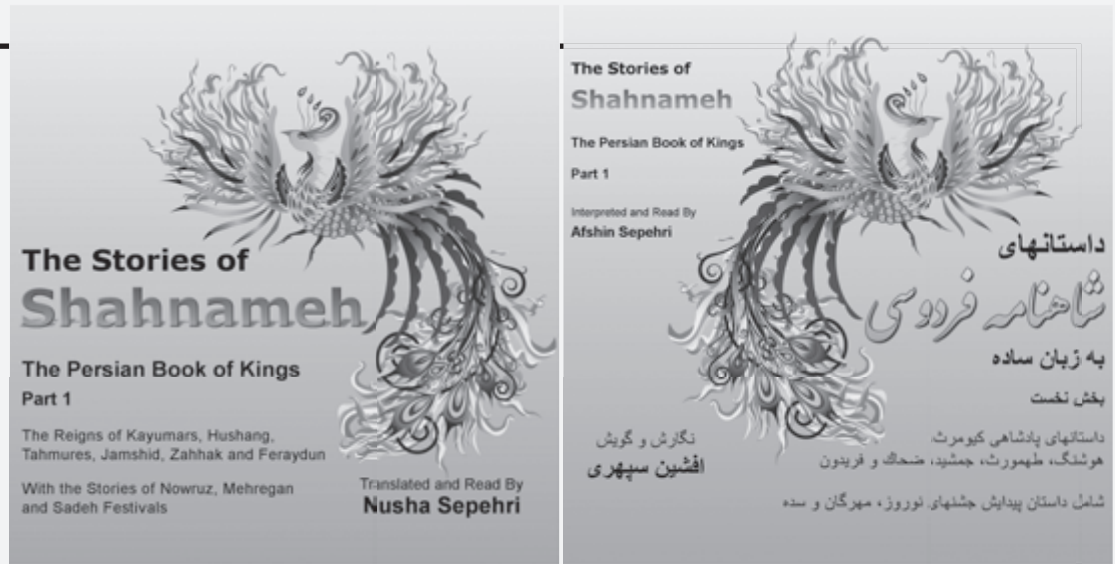
Dr. Taraporewala had studied the translations of the Gathas by foreign scholars, but he found that their renderings lacked the *inspiration* which should have formed their chief characteristic. He felt that only a Zoroastrian could supply that inspiration based upon reverence for the sublimity of the teachings of the Prophet. He had the privilege of studying with European savants to learn their methods of meticulous scholarship and research. Yet, he possessed something which his Gurus never had—a living ardent faith and zeal to spread the Message of Zarathushtra. To him the Gathas were not merely some interesting documents of Ancient Iran, but the supreme foundations of spiritual life.

While translating the Gathas he followed the maxim: "Read things of the flesh with the eyes of the Spirit, not things of the Spirit with the eyes of flesh." He spent twenty years on the project. The romanized Text of the Gathas follows the standard text of Geldner. For each verse is given first the Text, with a word for word translation, in which each word is numbered to correspond with the Text. After this literal translation is given a free English rendering in blank verse, which strives to reach the thought and spiritual content of each verse. Then follows the commentary and notes, analysing each verse, line by line, word by word, observing the meter and the syntax, and following the rules of grammar and philology, along with quotations of parallel passages conveying similar ideas from the Vedas and other scriptures.

The training which Dr. Taraporewala had received in Germany in objective research, and his mastery of classical Gujarati poetry enabled him to capture the beauty, the power, the sublimity and the spirit of the original Gathas in his translations. His learning and devotion to his work resulted in a translation which may well be considered a masterpiece.

“The Stories of Shahnameh, The Persian Book of Kings” is an audio book in English and Persian languages created by Afshin Sepehri and Nusha Sepehri with the goal of introducing the beautiful stories of Shahnameh, the masterpiece by Iranian poet Ferdowsi to both Iranian and non-Iranian audience.

The first part of this collection includes the stories of the first six kings of Shahnameh as well as early civilizations and is now available as two CD (one for each language) and also as a downloadable album. Afshin narrates the stories in Persian language and his daughter, Nusha who is 10 years old, narrates the same stories in English. The CD's are available for \$10 each on Amazon and CD Baby websites. They can also be downloaded from digital music stores such as iTunes, Amazon, Google Play etc. For more information visit the products' website: www.shahnameh-audio.com.



Spenta Multimedia

Spenta Multimedia, India's largest custom publisher, is seeking to expand its online digital business. We are looking for marketing and technical persons to intern or work with us in a full time capacity. This would be for persons who are interested in working either for a few years or for relocating back to India. We would prefer persons of Indian origin. We would also help in securing a work permit. Interested persons can correspond with Mr. Viraf Hansotia on ho@spentamultimedia.com.

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