



VOLUME III, No. 1 MARCH 1990

FEZANA JOURNAL WISHES ALL ZOROASTRIANS  
A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NORUZ AND MAZDAYASNA 1359

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## THE PARLIAMENT OF WORLD RELIGIONS

On November 4, 1989, Bishop Paulos Mar Gregorios of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Metropolitan Delhi, India, and President of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, declared open the proceedings for the convening of the Parliament of World Religions to be held in 1993. The event will mark the centenary of the first such parliament held in Chicago in 1893. This ceremonial occasion, held at the Rockefeller Chapel, Chicago University, was organized by the Council for a Parliament of World Religions of which FEZANA is a co-sponsor. Members of the delegations from twenty-two different religions - about one thousand in all - joined in a ceremonial procession heralding the commencement of the proceedings for the Centennial celebrations in 1993. Ironically, the delegation of Zoroastrians, representing the tiniest religious community in the world, was one of the largest.

When the music stopped, a translation of Yasna 34.1 was read out, after which Ervad Kersey Antia, the high priest of Chicago, lead his delegation through the centre aisle with a "divo" (an oil lamp) in his hand, chanting a verse from the Gathas. The rest of the delegation followed Ervad Antia, two by two, men, women and children, reciting the chorus of Yatha Ahu Vairyo and Ashem Vohu. Two ladies carried a "ses" (a tray bearing vessels for an auspicious occasion).

When all the members of the delegations present were seated, an invocation was delivered by the Reverend Spivy of the Memorial Church. This was followed by a welcome address and an explanation of the purpose of the Council. The highlight of the evening was the keynote address by Bishop Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios.

In his speech, the prelate outlined a vision of humanity as a family of God. "Absolute loyalty to tribe, nations and races," he said, "is reactionary and anti-human." A tightly knit unity of humanity demands "that the religions of the world come closer to each other in mutual respect and understanding. Various religious organizations must come out of their narrow religious loyalty to affirm a global inter-religious unity and co-operation."

Touching upon the problem of domination of the proceedings by any single religious group, he said, "we need today a Global Concourse of Religions in which mono-religious and multi-religious bodies can take part on an equal footing, with no one group dominating. Such a Global Concourse must be committed to the goal of unity of global humanity." However, he warned that this is only possible in societies of peace with justice . . . co-operating

to promote a life-supported environment. He concluded his address by saying, "we do not abandon our national or religious loyalties; we shall only deepen them in a dialogue with other religions to find those roots which affirm the unity of Global Humanity."

After a chant for the Universe by all present, the programme ended with a prayer led by Dr. Irfan Ahmed Khan, who asked the congregation to join hands and ask for Almighty's help and guidance in our undertaking. FEZANA's President, Rohinton Rivetna, who participated in this event adds, "Zoroastrians have everything to gain by associating with interfaith activities such as this. By our participation, not only do we make ourselves known to the outside world but also learn a great deal from the experience of those who have been where we are today - establishing our roots in North America."

(taken from a report by Rohinton Rivetna)

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#### FIFTH WORLD ZOROASTRIAN CONGRESS - JANUARY 1990

In response to the request by the organizers of the Congress, a list of speakers was generated by FEZANA for specific topics as shown below:

"USA Regional Report - Experiences and Future Priorities":	Rohinton Rivetna
"Salient Issues of Youth Congresses":	Mehr Amalsad/ Darius Captain/ Kaemarz Dotiwalla
"Contemporary Zoroastrian Societies":	Darius Captain/ Dr. Mehroo Patel
"Demographic Issues":	Homi Homji
"Strengthening Community Organizations":	Dr. Mehroo Patel
"Socio-Religious Concerns. Identity in Other Societies":	Fariborz Shahzadi/ Dr. Kaikhosrov Irani
"Religious Education for Pre- and Post-Navjote Groups":	Dr. Kersey Antia/ Farrokh Mistree
"Survival of Tradition in the 21st Century":	Kaemarz Dotiwalla

A meeting with the delegations from other parts of the world was also requested to discuss the following topics: (a) A World Federation; (b) higher training for priests; (c) inter-faith representations; (d) global newsletter; (e) setting up of a Task Force to address the problem of declining numbers.

The following is an abridged version of Dr. Kaikhosrov Irani's talk on "The Enduring Truth and the Evolving Applications in Zoroastrianism at the Fifth Congress."

The theology of Zarathushtra presents a doctrine that can claim to an enduring truth. However, the doctrine does not represent the entire tradition of our faith. The tradition also includes ritual practices, individual way of life, and social practices. The religion of Zarathushtra is a reflective credal religion as against many early organized ones that are sacramental in nature. The religious vision in our faith is a fusion of the metaphysical view of the world with an ethical way of life.

The world view is the creation of Ahura Mazda in its spiritual and material state. Creation in the spiritual state is perfect and unfolds according to Asha, the Ultimate Truth. The physical state of creation is however not perfect, and is afflicted by the actions of the forces of evil. The physical existence is thus in conflict between two opposing forces, and must return to the path of Ultimate Truth in time by effacing the evil.

Humanity endowed with the Good Mind (Vohu Mana) has the ability to recognize the imperfections and chart an ethical way of life to correct them. Human beings can conceive Good Thoughts in accordance with Asha, express them as Good Words and moved by the benevolence of Spenta-Armaity perform Good Deeds to correct the flawed existence. Such ethical behaviour can help generate the Ideal Dominion (Kshthra-Vairya). The actualisation of this state then leads to Perfection (Haurvatat) followed by the Immortal Bliss (Ameretat). These are the doctrinal elements that Zarathushtra offers to humanity and leaves it with the burden of making the choice.

Rituals on the other hand, although not a part of the core of the religion, represents an important aspect of the communal life of the tradition. It is important to realize that the essence of the religion is and has always been the doctrine pronounced by Zarathushtra. This is the enduring truth.

In conclusion, Dr. Irani recommended that a) the elements of tradition be respected and understood and that b) any alteration must justify furthering or implementing the core of the faith. Thus the vision of the faith must and will remain the enduring truth and the rituals will be maintained the best way they can with modifications. The community will thus evolve to actualize the enduring values of the original vision.

In a talk describing demographic issues, Mr. Homi Homji dealt with the problems that face the North American Zoroastrian community. Starting on a historical note he traced how the major pockets of Zoroastrians in North America developed a bond of fraternity over the period of the last two decades. This has led to the genesis of some 30 Zoroastrian associations in North America. In the next phase of development, these bodies initiated a dialogue between themselves every 2-3 years in the form of North American Zoroastrian Congresses to exchange their views. This year the seventh of such Congresses will be held in Houston, Texas.

At the Fifth North American Zoroastrian Congress some 17 associations voted to get together in Chicago to draw up a constitution for FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America). This body has now been duly registered as a 'not for profit' organization.

On the status of demography, the correct head count for the community is extremely difficult to assess. For a variety of reasons not all Zoroastrians



are members of organized bodies. In the U.S., due to vast land areas some states have more than one association. Geography often inhibits individuals from becoming members of the closest organized body. The city of Toronto in Canada is the megalopolis with the largest Zoroastrian population in North America. An ad hoc count in mid-1989 has recorded 480 families or approximately 1537 individuals. This figure does not account for many unlisted families.

The population of the community in North America is estimated from the Directory compiled during the Sixth North American Zoroastrian Congress and other independent surveys. An estimate for this is 3906 head counts. This figure does not include children. The speaker, through his personal experience of the latest listings in Ontario and other statistical factors, has arrived at an average of 3.203 individuals per family. Considering an estimated 2000 families in North America the actual figure may be closer to 6400 Zoroastrians on this continent. Speaking of future growth, he ventured to estimate a 14,193 count by the inception of the next century.

Looking into the crystal ball for the future of Zoroastrian identity, he outlined a number of circumstances that could affect its outcome. Among the important factors that will go into moulding the identity are (1) parental transmission of the values, (2) Sunday school teachings, (3) participation in religious ceremonies, and (4) trends of North American youths. For successful transmission of the knowledge of the religion of Zarathosht, he focussed on the need for a cadre of educators, and the establishment of a seminary to generate learned mobeds. He estimated a cost of \$130,000 for the first five years to train and maintain two Dasturs.

In conclusion, he touched upon the question of the performances of the Navjote ceremonies of ex-zoroastrians from Iran, and of the children of mixed marriages, and how they will affect the demographic picture. He concluded his talk on the important question of the definition of a Zoroastrian that has thus far evaded resolution. He ended on a compromising note saying that there will have to be much give and take and adjustment and reconciliation if Zoroastrianism is to survive in North America and perhaps in the world.

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#### A MEETING OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION - 1989

The annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion was held in Anaheim, California, during November 18-21, 1989, at the Anaheim Hilton Hotel. An afternoon was scheduled for a seminar on Zoroastrianism and the Iranian Religion. The focal topic chosen for this seminar was "Philosophical Issues in Zoroastrianism."

The scheduled speakers and topics were as follows:

Professor James Boyd, Colorado State University: "An Interpretation of the Pahlavi Theology, of Good and Evil."

Professor Kaikhosrov D. Irani, City College of New York: "A Contemporary Perspective on Zoroastrian Philosophy."

Dr. Ali Jafarey, California Zoroastrian Centre: "Fravashi, the Gathas and the Younger Avesta."

Dr. Farhang Mehr, Centre for International Relations, Boston University: "Mysticism and Zoroastrian Philosophy."

Dr. Michael H. Prosch, Bryn Mawr College: "Philosophical Arguments for Dualism - Mardan-Farrukh's 'Shkand-Gumanig Vizar'".

Interested participants were invited to visit the Rustam Guiv Dar-e-Mehr on the evening of November 18 and 19. A programme of short Avestan prayers and brief lectures by Farhang Mehr, Ali Jafarey and Kaikhosrov Irani were also arranged. The invited speaker at the Dar-e-Mehr, Professor David Stronach, spoke on "The Achaemenid Garden at Pasargadae: a Neglected source for the History of the Persian Gardens."

The meeting ended with a tour and refreshments at the California Zoroastrian Centre.

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#### BIRTH OF A NEW ASSOCIATION

Among the youngest of the Zoroastrian Associations in North America is a new body that recently came into existence - the Zoroastrian Association of North Texas (ZANT). Registered as a non-profit organization in the State of Texas, the association received its Certification of Incorporation on March 14, 1989. The Zoroastrian population in North Texas - about 120 - is mainly made up of individuals from Iran, India and Pakistan. The organization is located in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

Their present Board of Directors consists of the following members: Behram K. Irani, Farieda B. Irani, Jamshed J. Jamadar, Khurshid J. Jamadar, Tehmuras B. Namiranian, Parivash F. Namiranian, Anahita F. Sidhwa, Shiawak L. Tengra and Shireen S. Tengra.

Our sincere congratulations to the executives and the Zoroastrians of North Texas. We wish them success through the guidance of Ahura Mazda.

For any further information about this association, please contact: Behram K. Irani, 3633 Wandering Trails, Plano, Texas 75075 (214-867-0509); Shireen S. Tengra, 5304 Pampas Court, Arlington, Texas 76018 (817-467-9003); Anahita F. Sidhwa, 450 Clear Creek Lane, Coppell, Texas 75019 (214-462-1553)

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#### ZAGNY AT THE INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF NEW ROCHELLE

A group of seven ZAGNY members attended a function of the Inter-religious Council of New Rochelle. The dinner function was organized at Temple Israel in New Rochelle to present the annual awards for 1989 to the selected council members for the excellence of their contribution to humanity.

The programme commenced with a welcome address by the President of Temple

Israel, Sandy Scher, followed by greetings and an invocation by Rabbi Amiel Wohl. The President of the Inter-religious Council, Mr. Charles McEntee III, in his brief address welcomed the members of various churches. Members of the clergy from the different religious groups present were then invited to introduce themselves and their faith. Ervad Dr. Jehan Bagli represented and briefly introduced the Zoroastrian religion to the assembly. This was followed by dinner and the presentation of the Awards by Sr. Dorothy Ann Kelly of the College of New Rochelle. The meeting terminated after a closing prayer by the Reverend Odell Lyerly.

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#### FEZANA'S CENSUS AND SURVEY COMMITTEE

The chairman of the Census and Survey Committee, Soli Dastur, has resigned for personal and family reasons. Soli made a significant contribution to the progress of the Committee and his resignation has been accepted with much regret.

The name of Minoo Patel of the Department of Statistics at the University of Illinois has been suggested to chair this Committee. If no objections are received by FEZANA before February 1, 1990, to this suggestion, Minoo Patel's appointment will be confirmed.

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#### EXCHANGE OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

At FEZANA's Annual General Meeting held in Montreal in 1989, it was agreed that member associations send a copy of the educational materials they may have developed or used in conducting educational activities, to the Secretary, Mrs. Dolly P. Dastoor, who would then distribute them to the associations who would be in need of such materials. If you have some materials to share, please forward them to Mrs. Dastoor (3765 Malo Street, Brossard, P.Q. J4Y 1B4).

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#### A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

After reading the article entitled "The US and Canadian Iranian Zoroastrian Refugee Program..." in the December 89 issue of the FEZANA Journal, I decided to express my concern to you and those involved about certain facts of this program. With due respect to all those mentioned in the article, and without trying to undermine their efforts, I must remind you that originally this Program initiated when Dr. Khojeste Mistree, Dr. Hooman Sotoodeh and myself with full support of Ms Susan Varjavand met with officials of the State Department in Washington, D.C. almost a year and a half ago.

After numerous trips to Washington, a number of meetings and conversations with local organization and agencies, after contacts and letters sent to

numerous sponsors in various States and, and, and ... all made with personal funds did this Program get off the ground. The following just gives you a simple statistic of the kind of effort and funding that went into this Program to get things rolling:

- . More than 700 hours of my Company's administrative time (Environmental Innovations Corp.);
- . In excess of 500 pages of back and forth paperwork with Government officials and regulatory agencies;
- . More than a couple of thousand dollars worth of long distance phone calls at various times of day and night, made to all involved parties inside and outside the U.S.;
- . More than a thousand dollars worth of Federal Express, DHL and other overnight delivery services;
- . More than seven emergency flights made to Washington, D.C. for meetings with Federal officials;
- . Contact with a number of National Insurance Companies to find suitable health insurance programs that would waive the six month residency requirement, as well as the initial exam requirement for our fellow Zoroastrian Immigrants prior to entering U.S.;
- . Etc., etc., etc.

Again, with due respect to all those involved with this Program, I was quite shocked and disappointed to see that there was no mention of appreciation for individuals like Ms Susan Varjavand, Dr. Hooman Sotoodeh and Mr. Kai Dotiwala who gave their time freely in support of their fellow Zoroastrian counterparts.

Dr. Ada Adler of the U.S. Department of Refugee Affairs is another individual who must be appreciated for her efforts, sacrifices and diligent work in helping us make this Program a success as well as one of the first in the Nation.

I am sure those who contributed to the success of the Program did it out of their own goodwill and heartfelt joy for being able to help fellow Zoroastrians in need in other parts of the world. A simple letter of appreciation would be an encouraging note for those who continue on the rewarding avenue of giving and helping others.

Signed: Farshid Salamati  
Oakland, California

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#### THE EDITOR'S RESPONSE

Mr. Salamati's letter is particularly puzzling since most of the individuals mentioned in paragraph 4 of his letter have been duly credited for their contributions.

In our report (FEZANA Journal, Vol. 11, No. 4, December 1989) paragraph 3, lines 2 and 3 recognises the services of Mr. Farshid Salamati and Ms Susan Varjavand. In line 11 of the same paragraph and in line 1 of paragraph 4, names of Mr. Kaemarz Dotiwala and Dr. Ada Adler are mentioned for their



contributions. Furthermore, Vol.II, No. 2 (June 1989 issue) also carried a 'special note' under the title 'Mr. Farshid Salamati Speaks about the Re-settlement of Zoroastrians.'

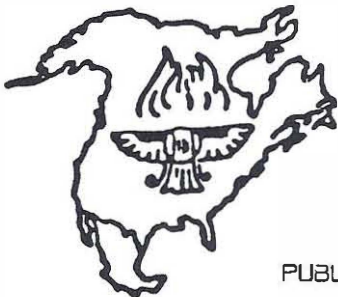
The only name not mentioned was Dr. Hooman Sotoodeh. The reason being that this name never before appeared in any of our correspondence. The above letter is the first time we have learned about Dr. Sotoodeh's contribution. No doubt, he should be duly commended for his efforts in this saga of the Refugee Program.

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#### A JOB APPEAL: ZOROASTRIAN MALE

A 26 year old Zoroastrian male is seeking help with suitable employment. A Bachelor of Science graduate of the University of Bombay, he has also completed and successfully passed a diploma in Computer Science. He has had about 6 months experience working for a computer consultancy firm and also previous experience as a System Analyst cum Programmer with Steelage Industries. He is presently working for Datamatics Consultancy Ltd. on various export projects, on the WANG System. If any one knows of suitable employment, please address the gentleman directly to his address in Bombay: 187 Hirabai Petit Building, 4th floor, Room No. 38, opp. Grant Road Railways Station, Bombay 400-007, India.

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