

# JOURNAL

Dae–Behman–Spendarmad 1392 AY (Fasli) 3760 Z • Amordad–Shehrever–Meher 1392 AY (Shenshai) • Shehrever–Meher–Avan 1392 AY (Kadimi)

## Mazda Yasni Festivals

**ARASH-E-KAMANGIR/ARCHER**





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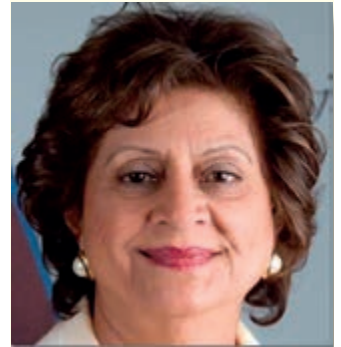
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Spring 2023 Guest Editor: Farishta Dinshaw  
EDUCATION : POWER TO CHANGE THE WORLD

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**B**y the time you will receive the Winter Journal we will be in the second month of the new year 2023, and I wish you all the best for every day of 2023 full of good health, peace and happiness.

We closed 2022 on a very high note as we successfully welcomed the Zoroastrians and friends from around the world to witness the dynamism of the North American Zoroastrians. This was all chronicled in the Fall issue of the FEZANA Journal, a marathon issue of 154 pages, which we distributed with compliments of FEZANA to all the committee chairs, members and presenters as our way to thank them for the incredible work they did to create WZC2022. We hope some of them will subscribe as the Journal depends on subscriptions, advertisements and donations. It is a completely volunteer effort except for printing and mailing. In 2022 we also welcomed the first FEZANA Professor Miguel Andres Toledo in Zoroastrian Languages and Literature at the University of Toronto. Our dream became a reality!!



The Winter issue is guest edited by Fariborz Rahnamon where he gives us an in depth explanation of the Mazdayasni Festivals their origin and celebrations which many of the Zoroastrians immigrants to India had forgotten to observe but these festivals are now coming back into their consciousness. The Zoroastrians in the diaspora observe them with much more vigour and fervor. Maybe reading the treatises from Fariborz will give greater impetus for these celebrations.

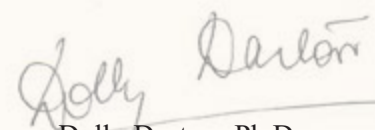
This issue chronicles the achievements of many Zoroastrians as individuals and of the FEZANA associations. FIRES, ZAMWI, and the Society of Scholars in Zoroastrianism (SSZ) held scholarly hybrid seminars both in person and on Zoom, which were all very well attended.

Another positive sign is the growth of our community with our associations expanding. Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington built a beautiful new prayer hall and the California Zoroastrian Centre bought a new property to service religious and social needs of the Zoroastrians in San Diego,

On October 6 2022 the Journal lost Deenaz Paymaster Coachbuilder a very good friend and a regular contributor as a columnist, book reviewer, interviewer, poet. In this issue her friends and admirers from around the country have sent tributes to her memory as an artist, a singer, a musician, a published poet, a loving wife, mother and grandmother. Read her remarkable life journey. The Journal will miss her contributions.

The Journal Team wishes all our subscribers, contributors, our advertisers and our donors all the very best for 2023 and beyond. We would not exist without you.

Looking forward to another successful year



Dolly Dastoor Ph.D,  
Editor -in-chief



# Message FROM THE PRESIDENT

**From** my family to yours, I wish you a very happy, healthy, peaceful and prosperous 2023. May it bring about positive changes in all our lives and in our communities, societies and nations all over the world. 2022 was a flagship year for FEZANA and we continue to fly on the winds of momentum generated. The 8<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Congress to be held in London in July 2023, sold out in 7 hours, with 50% of the youth registered from North America. This is largely due to the enthusiasm, drive and passion generated by ZYNA (Zoroastrian Youth of North America) since the last WZYC in 2019, and the subsequent 12 WZC in 2022, where youth and young adults were at the front and center of everything.

I have just returned from a 4 day ZYNA Leadership Retreat hosted by the youth at ZSO and OZCF in Toronto. 30 young adults from all over USA and Canada gathered over 4 days to deliberate, discuss, brainstorm and

plan activities for 2023 and the long term vision for ZYNA. Besides the sessions, breakout huddles and the partying, they had a chance to interact with FEZANA Professor Miguel Angel Andres Toledo, Armaity Homavazir and the FEZANA Global Glossary Project and Afreed Mistry and the AVA Project. Friendships built over these days will last a lifetime. It was a great experience, worth going to observe and show support, as this was the first ZYNA in-person retreat since 2014. The ZYNA Co-Chairs Farzin Avari (Atlanta), Parshan Khosravi (California) and Kimiya Shahzadi (Michigan) are now a formidable team supported by an amazing set of their sub-committee chairs. If you know youth and young adults in your family or community who are not yet involved with ZYNA, drop a line to [zyna@fezana.org](mailto:zyna@fezana.org) and get them involved.

The share of the financial profits from the 12<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Congress 2022 in New York, will help to set up two initiatives. A 12<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Congress Scholarship will be set up and administered by the Scholarship Committee. FEZANA will also set up from the profits FEZANA received from 7WZYC 2019 and 12WZC 2022, *The ZYNA Youth Endowment Fund*, the first of its kind in the Zoroastrian world. The earnings from the endowment will help fund ZYNA future activities. If you would like to contribute to this Endowment, please reach out to me.

2023 is another busy year at FEZANA. After three years we will be hosting an in-person AGM in Sacramento in April 2023. Our Youth will then head to London in July for the World Youth Congress. FEZANA and North American Zarathushtis will also make their way to the WZCC Global Conclave in London at the end of July. FEZANA's Interfaith Committee will be the Zoroastrian Torchbearers at the Parliament of World's Religions in Chicago in August. All this will be in addition to the amazing activities all of our member associations organize.

Over the holiday season I was visiting family in India and had a chance to participate in the Silver Anniversary Celebrations of the Senior Citizen Center run by World Zoroastrian Trust Funds in Navsari. The celebrations started with a Jashan in the morning at the Senior Center in Pinjar Moholla, Navsari and ended with a fantastic evening function at the Parsi Orphanage grounds in Navsari. Due to my association with the Return To Roots Program, I've had the opportunity to visit The Senior Citizen Center on a regular basis. It is truly one of the most meaningful projects in our community today, worth replicating, especially here in North America. If you would like to be involved in an exploratory phase, drop me a line.

As the days start getting longer and spring beckons, I wish you all well. Let's make 2023 a truly memorable Zarathushti year.

arZan

Arzan Sam Wadia, +1 212 380 7629, [president@fezana.org](mailto:president@fezana.org)





## *Celebration of the Life of* **DEENAZ PAYMASTER COACHBUILDER**

We dedicate this issue of the FEZANA JOURNAL  
to our colleague whose work as a writer, poet and artist  
graced the pages of the Journal for many years.

### **Yesterday**

***“Waste not this moment  
All is but ephemeral,  
Our signposts evaporating  
into a shining stream***

***the nightingale sings  
but for one night.”***

Deenaz Coachbuilder (2014) “Imperfect Fragments”

FEZANA thanks her husband Pheroze,  
and her sons, Shahrukh and Sarvin, for  
facilitating this tribute  
to their beloved wife and mother.



## Deenaz Paymaster Coachbuilder: Tribute for A Special Woman

*Deenaz Paymaster Coachbuilder was a writer, educator, artist, and environmental advocate. She received an MA in Literature from Bombay University, India, an MS in Communicative Disorders and a doctorate in Theater. She retired as a school principal to become adjunct professor in Special Education at California State University, San Bernardino, and a consulting Speech Pathologist. A Fulbright scholar, Deenaz was the recipient of several awards, including President Obama's "Volunteer Service Award." Her books of poems, "Metal Horse and Shadows: A Soul's Journey" and "Imperfect Fragments" received critical acclaim in the U.S. and abroad. She passed away on October 6, 2022 at the age of 82. These tributes share glimpses of this extraordinary woman.*



I met Deenaz in 2014 in Seattle where she hosted us for dinner. Years later I met her again at the California Zoroastrian Association inauguration of the Los Angeles Dar e Mehr where she recited a poem with passion and gusto. When I learned that she loved to write, I asked her if she would like to write for the FEZANA Journal, and she readily agreed. We reminisced of our connection to the hill station Matheran where the Paymasters were a prominent family. From there began our friendship. Deenaz contributed articles, book reviews, conducted interviews, submitted poems. I never heard her say "No I cannot do it, I have no time". She always made time, delivered on time and it was a joy to work with her. Her beautiful poems and her two books, "Imperfect Fragments" (2014), Metal Horse and Shadows: A Soul's Journey" (2019) give the reader insight into her deep spirituality and love for humanity.

Deenaz, your talents in music, art, poetry, literature and penmanship were an asset to the world and to our community. FEZANA Journal is grateful and appreciative for all your contributions. Despite our short time together, we miss you. I miss you. Rest in peace my friend after a life well lived.

***Dolly Dastoor, Editor, FEZANA Journal , Montreal, Canada***



Deenaz was my schoolmate at St. Mary's, Pune during our pre-teens. Seared into my memory is how Deenaz came to my rescue, gently coaxing and calming me down from a panic attack before a school piano recital. That was the start of a wonderful friendship.

We reconnected 30 years later in California and I was overjoyed to have her in my life again. She was the same smiling, giving, positive girl I remembered. Besides her God-given artistic talents, she had the ability to lift up your spirits and make you feel very special. She found joy in nature and her surroundings and permeated it all around her. Behind that sweet kind person was a dogged fighter for social justice. She leaves behind a legacy of love, humanity, and authenticity and showed us the value of extracting and appreciating the goodness that is inherent in every soul. I miss our frequent phone calls, particularly that slow angelic greeting – "Good morning darling"

***Shireen Dastur, New Port Beach, CA***

*From L to R: Grandmother Tehmina Chinoy, Deenaz, great grandmother Avabai Marker, standing behind, mother Freiny.*





I was eleven years old when I first met Deenaz, the sister of my best buddy Shahrukh in eighth grade. She was eighteen then. An eleven-year-old has little sensitivity towards the finer essences of life. But even then, I could sense that there was something ineluctably special about Deenaz. An inner calm, a benevolence, a feminine grace. But at the same time, an adventurous spirit. She was happy to climb the enormous, high jamun tree in her family's Matheran bungalow, to keep up with Shahrukh, myself and the other boys, perilously perched thirty feet up in the air.

I see her now. Her back is on a thin branch barely an inch and a half thick and her face is upturned to heaven. A smile. Content with whatever the future would portend. The beginnings of her new adventures and progress in grace.

**Farok J. Contractor**

*Flemington, NJ*

*Tribute poem by Farok J. Contractor*

### The Woman in a Jamun Tree

Perched on a jamun tree  
Her face up to heaven  
Is what I, a little boy, saw  
At age eleven.

Even at eighteen  
Her portents were clear  
A soul maturing  
And humanity endeared.

We cannot see  
Where she is now  
But progressing in grace  
As God's bequests allow.

I first met Deenaz in 1952 as the elegant and gracious daughter of an illustrious and respected couple, Barjor Paymaster and his wife. They were almost our neighbors, living in Mandi House, and the families often walked over to each other's homes for meals or an after-dinner chat.

I was the age of her brother Shahrukh, and I usually played with him, while in awe of his sweet elder sister.

We were together again in Poona in the late 50s, in the same school. During that time two things stood out for me about Deenaz. One, was her singing voice! Like a nightingale. And yet, so modest and humble, and always kind, gentle and soft-spoken, even though her father was a very senior government official.

In school we were in the inter-school choir together. And I still remember the day, at our concert, when I heard the most beautiful voice I had ever heard. Deenaz was singing "I wonder as I wander". The audience and everyone in the choir was spellbound at her clear and sweet-throated, clear voice, full of expression.

For years, I longed to hear her sing it again. When she came for a St. Mary's old girls meeting one year a few years ago, my wish was granted. Deenaz stayed with me in Poona on that visit. And I requested her to sing for me. And her voice was as beautiful as I had remembered it. Wish I had taped it!

The second thing I remember is a change I saw in Deenaz. She lost her dear brother, very tragically, while we were in Poona. After that a sadness set in, that was something you could sense she always carried.

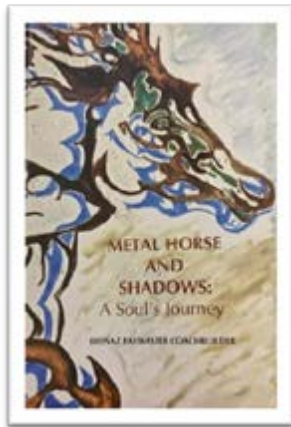
Deenaz was a good and caring friend, warm, compassionate and understanding. We will all miss you and think of you with warmth, and respect for the fine human being you were. Loved by all and harming no one. May your gentle soul rest in peace.

**Zareen Karani Araoz, Boston, MA,**

Deenaz Coachbuilder, may her soul rest in blissful peace, was a beautiful person, inside and out. Her inner beauty always reflected how she lived her life. She saw God and His infinite goodness and beauty in the simplest things in life – from the nest of a hummingbird, to a simple string of Christmas lights. I am immeasurably blessed for having a friend in Deenaz. You made this world a better place, and we continue to be inspired by the legacy of your love and appreciation for life and its beauty, Deenaz, that you have left behind for all of us through your beautiful thoughts, words, and deeds in our world.

**Bakhtavar Desai, Fairfield, Ohio**





I met Deenaz Coachbuilder in Seattle, where she and her husband hosted us for dinner during the FEZANA AGM in 2014. She had an elegant sensibility, refined manners, and forged ahead, stopping at nothing.

She had a prowess at poetry as an award-winning published poet and an artist who exquisitely illustrated her poetry collection. As a citizen of the world, she understood home and personal contentment. Her pursuit of finding and placing friends and family in the Parsi genealogy tree was well known.

Deenaz loved her family. She was summoned, rather beckoned, by a profound inner yearning for all that is and all that can be known. She enriched our lives and will always be remembered for her warmth and generous nature with dignity and humility.



*Aban Rustomji, Houston, TX*

We will all remember Deenaz as a kind, gentle, supremely talented, and intelligent human being. She was a painter, a musician, a literary genius who wrote beautiful poetry and prose. She cared about the human condition and loved nature. I was privileged to know her and to love her as a friend, and I miss her dearly. She entrusted her many works of Art to me, to compile into a “Book of Paintings”, and through that process, I came to admire and love her even more.

Deenaz was a cancer survivor who bravely overcame the ravages of her disease. She lost her singing voice but carried on as she always did and devoted her time to her many other talents. Many years later she had a massive stroke. We had met for lunch that same fateful day! I am no poet, so I will simply quote one of Deenaz’s own poems that touched my heart, “*The Garden of My Mind*”

Your soul is now free of its burdens and will soar high with the Angels! Rest in Peace my sweet friend!  
*Erna Fatakia, CA*

Deenaz P. Coachbuilder came into my Inlandia Creative Writing workshop over a decade ago, shy and not saying anything for many sessions - until I could literally see her flowering into her creative self. She wrote and shared the most beautiful and inspirational poetry during our workshop sessions, gifting all of us with the magnificence and beauty that was and is her enduring spirit. I shall always hear her lovely, fluted voice and see her once again pouring chai tea and Indian delicacies at her stunning home that she opened up to me as her friend and our entire workshop group and for other gatherings, as well. Her generosity of spirit and *joie de vivre* knew no bounds. I will always cherish her friendship, and my life is so graced to have known her.

*Ruth Nolan, Inlandia, Institute, CA.*

*(The Garden of My Mind)*

*I looked into my heart  
and saw a garden.*

*I continued to clear it of weeds  
And nurture it with rich soil.*

*I planted flowers of the faintest of perfumes  
Delicate to the touch.  
that greeted the morning sun with delight  
and quietly folded their garments at night.*

*From the valley of pain,  
I plucked out sharp thoughts  
smoothed out angles, striving to regain  
the view of the mountain top.*

*I lost my voice but began to hear the birds  
that had deserted the denuded plain,  
their song the sweeter  
for I had forgotten their refrain.*



*Dr. Joan/MJ Koerper, Wrightwood, CA*

Deenaz Paymaster Coachbuilder and I met in Ruth Nolan's Inlandia Creative Writing Workshop in Riverside, CA. and forged a sisterhood of soul, depth, love and creativity that honored, challenged, and nurtured our pasts, present and futures. Both professional musicians, artists, philosophers, educators, social and environmental justice advocates, and writers, we knew sorrow and joy

I was privileged to present her poems at book readings, be a reader at her book launches, have her dedicate a poem to me, be introduced to *The Avocet, A Journal of Nature Poetry* in which we both published, be part of her extended family, and share her grandson's christening. Deenaz allowed me to use her as a character in my children's book, collaborate almost daily with her, and we participated as Scholastic Art and Writing Awards Jurors in 2021.

In communion with nature, and soul, filled with grace, inclusion, compassion, gratitude and hope, she changed my life and the lives of countless others. I miss her every day.

Free of physical restraints, I envision Deenaz flying with the Eagles as she wrote, in part, in *Metal Horse and Shadows: A Soul's Journey* (p.8)

*...If I could be a bird  
I would choose to be an eagle.  
It is not only  
the hilltop and mountain meadow  
my eyes would seek...  
but the deep tracks that mark the soul  
and a memory of things past...  
a glimpse  
beyond,  
a night sky filled  
with the silence  
that separates  
the stars.*

*There is repose  
at night  
in the sheltering wings  
of loved ones,  
the living  
and the dead,  
and the desire,  
later  
for other worlds  
to dream in.*



*(from L to R) husband Pheroze, Deenaz, son Sarvin, daughter-in-law, Shaumika, son Shahrukh and baby Barjor*

***"Poetry makes bare what is hidden in the heart."***

Note: The opening quote and the closing poem are by Deenaz.

I first learned about Deenaz in 2015 through a mutual friend and although we never met in person, we became good friends and I am saddened by our loss. Our group, *The Poetry Group* began in 2009 to celebrate Poetry Month by sharing a poem each day in April. Deenaz became a member in 2015 and began sharing her poetry and giving her support to the group. She suggested that we might consider celebrating poetry more often than one month of the year, so she encouraged us to have a *Poem of The Month* for the other 11 months, and also to post Poetry when life events called for the healing power of Poetry. With these suggestions, she greatly strengthened our group.





Deenaz was as passionate about Poetry as she was about her art, her garden, her family, her religion, nature, and the world. And she still found time for volunteerism, receiving President Obama's *Volunteer Service Award*. Deenaz will continue to be with us through her poetry. Her spirit will continue to be a presence in *The Poetry Group*.

*Civilizations and nations flow and ebb  
as do our lives...  
My spirit will continue to evolve after,  
to grow in depth of color and breadth  
of threads  
in richness of being,  
a vast continent ahead  
to be explored  
in another world.*

**Magdalena, Houston, TX.**

When the two of us think of Deenaz Coachbuilder, the word gracious quickly comes to mind. Deenaz was supremely gracious. Her poetry and essays exuded a fluid lyricism. She listened with an unusual attentiveness and spoke with unique kindness, making each person seem important. She was continuously generous in sharing her lovely home for small groups from our creative writing workshops and large gatherings of Inlandia, the Riverside (California) creative writing institute. We'll miss Deenaz, one of the most gracious people we've ever met.

*Carlos and Laurel Cortés, CA*

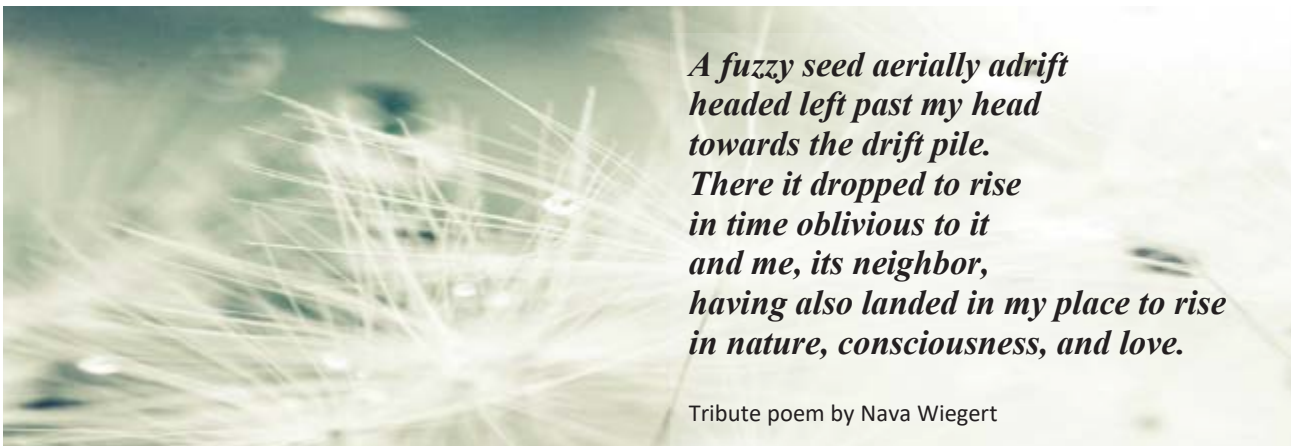


- D:** Dedicated
- E:** Effective
- E:** Extremely talented
- N:** Nicest person I know
- A:** Adored by family and friends
- Z:** Zarathustra's chosen one

*Hilla Singh*

I first met my dear, gentle friend, Deenaz, back in the early '70's when we were both working as speech-language pathologists for LA County. Our friendship was enhanced by our shared family values and interests. As happens over time, we slowly drifted down different pathways. Hers, as a poet, an immersion into the world of words, while as a former teacher, creating stories for my grandchildren was mine. Years, decades really, passed us by until a lucky call to me back home in Michigan from a mutual friend. Amazingly, Deenaz and I discovered my daughter lived within a couple miles of their condo in Seattle. We made happy plans, but then unfortunately there stood COVID in our midst. And now, sadly, our reunion will have to wait. I am a storyteller, but my daughter shares the love, beauty and power of words, just as Deenaz. In my friend's honor, this poem was written by my daughter, Nava Wiegert.

*Marjorie Ballentine, Troy, Michigan*



*A fuzzy seed aerially adrift  
headed left past my head  
towards the drift pile.  
There it dropped to rise  
in time oblivious to it  
and me, its neighbor,  
having also landed in my place to rise  
in nature, consciousness, and love.*

Tribute poem by Nava Wiegert



In 2016, Deenaz contributed 3 charming poems for our Fezana Journal's issue on "Aging Gracefully" which launched our friendship. I read her poetry collections with delight. Her poem *Behind Glass Doors* still brings me to tears as she recalled giving away her late brother's things. (*Behind Glass Doors*)

*Dormant behind glass doors  
lay his books, for thirty years,  
the story of his abrupt life  
untold.*

*Those fights, kisses, shared sibling secrets  
shut away so tears may not disturb  
their silent rest.*

*One day, I gave his books away,  
his passion to share  
with a young generation.  
Each book was a piece of his flesh  
that I gave away.*

When my mother passed away in 2020, Deenaz called as I was navigating the storm of my bereavement. Hearing her voice, her loving tone was like hearing Mum's voice across the divide. Deenaz's generous warmth soaked in. How did she know that was exactly what I needed? As though she knew what we need now, in *Metal Horse and Shadows-A Soul's Journey*, she included a sweet poem to her grandson, *My One Regret*. I salute this wide soul, who stopped to care for so many.



Deenaz with her grandson, Barjor

(*My One Regret.*)

*I do not slip away  
into oblivion  
but will remain  
a part of this sacred earth  
in the animals you pet  
and the mountains you climb,  
the oceans you navigate,  
the soil you till.  
in you,  
for your blood is my blood  
listen to that hummingbird--  
that is my heartbeat.  
and when you choose  
to write a poem  
they will say  
he reminds us of his grandmother.  
In your spirit something of me  
will walk this land again.*

Deenaz was a beautiful charming lady with a calm and gentle demeanor. There was always a sense of peace and serenity surrounding her that drew me close to her. She was in sync with herself, surroundings and people. She was an authentic artist, her paintings colorful and beautiful, poems thoughtfully written, her love for nature and environment reflecting her spirituality.

Her poem, "*Destiny's Journey*" is one that resonated with me the best. A magnificent rendition of the story of creation, taking us on an interesting historical journey through different periods in time.

*"Through the centuries in wealth and in hardship dwelling in mighty cities or scrub land huts in ancient Persia, India or the scattered diaspora of unknown lands we travel, entering into new worlds building, not breaking, serving not searing, endeavoring to make better and brighter, bearing the gentle weight of Ahura Mazda's everlasting cleansing flame."*

May you always shine love and light forever, Deenaz.

**Mahrukh Motafram, Seattle.**

**Nawaz Merchant, Ringoes, NJ.**



Deenaz and her mother Freiny



## FEZANA AGM APRIL 27, 2023, to April 30, 2023

2023 FEZANA Annual General Meeting (AGM) is hosted by **Sacramento Zoroastrian Association**, from Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup> through Sunday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023. (Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup> is Pre AGM Day) at the **Sacramento Zoroastrian Association** (10528 Armstrong Ave, Mather, CA 95655)

### Deadlines

#### 1. Committee Reports – Deadline 03/15/2023

Format same as previous years 5 pages Maximum, pdf preferred plan to submit 5 slides (max) along with your report, to be presented during the AGM as your report is presented. Submit reports to CodiK Partovi ([secretary@fezana.org](mailto:secretary@fezana.org)) and copy the FEZANA Administrator, Zenobia Damania ([admin@fezana.org](mailto:admin@fezana.org)) latest by **March 15, 2023**. Do mention your committee's accomplishments in the past year as they tie in with the FEZANA Second 10-year Strategic plan. Please keep the length of your presentation to a maximum of 5 minutes and 5 slides.

#### 2. Association Reports – Deadline 03/15/2023

Association reports in slide form, should be submitted to Codi ([secretary@fezana.org](mailto:secretary@fezana.org)) and copy the FEZANA Administrator, Zenobia Damania ([admin@fezana.org](mailto:admin@fezana.org)) latest by **March 15, 2023**. Your presentation to a maximum of 5 minutes and 5 slides. Showcase your community by including photos, special events, infrastructure/construction projects, and other memorable activities from your association. Include your organization's name/logo on each of the slides in the bottom right-hand corner for identification.

#### 3. AGM Agenda: A copy will be circulated shortly.

#### 4. Hotel Reservations: HAWTHORN SUITES BY WYNDHAM RANCHO CORDOVA/FOLSOM 12180 Tributary Point Drive, Gold River, California 95670 1-916-3519192 1-415-707-9679 – General Manager – Muhammad Ansari CODE: BBTES \$119 + taxes per day includes Hot Breakfast

**Call the hotel or the General Manager (1-415-707-9679 directly to book at your earliest convenience.**

#### 5. Airport Transportation: SZA (Sacramento Zoroastrian Association) volunteers will provide airport transportation service for Sacramento International Airport (SMF) only. Email your **flight information** (Including arrival and departure time) and your **contact cumber** to Darius Captain at [dariuscaptain@gmail.com](mailto:dariuscaptain@gmail.com) as soon as possible.

#### 6. AGM Registration and Website: Registration is open visit [FEZANA 2023 AGM Information Website](#) to register and for all other information .

*If planning to attend the AGM, please RSVP by **March 19, 2023**, so that an accurate count can be maintained.*

Contact Cody Partovi (916-260-8007) or Zenobia Damania (630-468-2705) if you have any questions.

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## FEZANA Announces A New Office Bearer on the Executive & Committee Co-Chairs

### SHARMIN MISTRY ASST SECRETARY FEZANA

**Sharmin** is a youth member of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario where she conducted many donation drives and initiated events like skating day and maple syrup tours. She is also part of the FEZANA's ZYNA committee, leads the Service and Advocacy sub-committee and currently heads "Attitude of Gratitude" a North American initiative to encourage Zoroastrian organizations to give back to the community through acts of kindness and service.

Her goal is to inspire Zoroastrian women to become an inspiration for other women, through guidance, motivation and mentorship.

Sharmin can be reached at [asst-sec@fezana.org](mailto:asst-sec@fezana.org)



### Dr DINSHA MISTREE CO-CHAIR, Scholarships Committee, FEZANA.

**Dinsha** joins Dolly Dastoor in leading this very important FEZANA Committee. Dinsha and Dolly jointly spearheaded the Scholarship Taskforce over the last two years and the entire scholarship committee functioning has been streamlined to be with the current norms and times.

Dinsha has been involved with a number of national and international community efforts, including the Return to Roots Program. He also teaches Sunday School at ZANC / PZO. Outside of his involvement with the community, Dinsha is a Research Fellow at Stanford University.

He holds a PhD in Politics from Princeton as well as an SB from MIT.

Dinsha can be reached at [dmistree@gmail.com](mailto:dmistree@gmail.com)





## **KIMIYA SHAHZADI CO-CHAIR, ZYNA**

**Kimiya** joins Farzin Avari and Parshan Khosravi in leading the resurgent Zoroastrian Youth of North America (ZYNA). Kimiya grew up in Melbourne, Australia, immigrated to Ann Arbor, MI in 2020 and now lives in the Detroit area with her husband. She is involved in various projects with ZYNA.

She graduated with a Master of Science in clinical behavioral psychology and started a business.

Kimiya enjoys investing and has a black belt in Shotokan Karate. She gives back to the Zoroastrian community by being a ZYNA Co-Chair, a social media manager at NAMC, and donating. Kimiya has begun her training with the Zoroastrian Mobed Council of Iran to become a mobedyar. She can be reached at [kimiayahzadi@gmail.com](mailto:kimiayahzadi@gmail.com).



## **Dr. Persis Driver CO-CHAIR, Religious Education Committee, FEZANA**

**Persis** joins Artemis Javanshir in leading this committee. She has been involved in the multi-year revamp of the education curriculum and brings her professional expertise to this endeavor. Persis is an active member of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago. She is a professor of Developmental Psychology at Dominican University, Chicago with a master's in teaching, and PhD in Educational Psychology. She also runs an after-school creative and academic writing program. She is a religious education teacher, curriculum developer, and Co-Chair of the Children & Youth Religious Education committee at the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAMC) and a recipient of their Community Service Award.

She contributes to the FEZANA education group, providing professional development workshops for educators and evaluating age-appropriate lesson plans. She has compiled two guides on developmentally sound teaching practices for students at diverse ages and for sustaining youth engagement, interest, and advocacy in religious education.

Persis can be reached at [persisd@gmail.com](mailto:persisd@gmail.com)





## A Message from the FEZANA Unity and Welfare Committee

### Urgent Medical Assistance Request for Ervad Sharukh Mirza

Er. Sharukh Mirza, (who is in his 50s) affiliated with the Wadiaji Atashbehran and Doongerwadi has been suffering from Hepatitis B and related Liver Cirrhosis and Hepatocellular Carcinoma. He needs to undergo a liver transplant surgery urgently.

Sharukh requires a portion of a liver from a healthy living donor to give him a fighting chance at survival.

The total cost of the surgery and hospitalization is estimated to be Indian Rs. 3,000,000.00 (approximately US \$36,000.00).

### Medical Assistance Request for Lung Cancer Patient

Our second appeal is for a Parsi gentleman who has been diagnosed with lung cancer. He has been undergoing chemotherapy treatment at Deenanath Mangeshkar Hospital in Pune since October 2020. The approximate cost of each chemotherapy session is Indian Rs. 30,000 and his doctor has also recommended a PET scan every few months at the cost of Indian Rs. 15,000 per scan. The patient is also travelling to Saurashtra for Ayurvedic treatment every 10 weeks.

This has been an especially difficult time for the family as the patient is the only earning member of the family that supports his wife, two young children and his 80-year-old mother.

The patient has already undergone 34 cycles of chemotherapy and the medical expenses so far add up to approximately Rs. 13-14 lacs (approx. US \$17,000). The family is struggling to keep up with the cumulative treatment costs.

During this holiday season, we urge our generous members to support both families with any financial contributions they can afford. A tax receipt will be issued from the U.S. on behalf of FEZANA.

**To Donate Online:** Visit FEZANA.org > Select Donation Portal > Select Welfare Activities > General Welfare Fund.

**In the Honor of section please write “Er. Sharukh Mirza’s Appeal” or “Lung Cancer Patient”**

**You can also send a cheque to:**

Xerxes Commissariat, FEZANA Treasurer, 7 Burke, Irvine, CA 92620

**In the memo line of your cheque please write “Er. Sharukh Mirza’s Appeal” or “Lung Cancer Patient”**

Please Note: In case the needs of the family are met, then the additional funds collected will be used towards similar future appeals.

Thank you.

*Houtoxi Contractor, Sanaya Master, Hosi Mehta  
Co-chairs, FEZANA Unity and Welfare Committee*

As the year draws to a close, the Unity and Welfare Committee would like to thank you all for your generous donations and continued support over the last 12 months. As a result of your kindness, you have become part of a supportive community that has immensely helped several individuals and families navigate tough challenges that life has thrown at them.

We would also like to acknowledge our generous donors who have set up endowment funds in memory of their loved ones or in their family names. A huge thanks to Hormazdiar Damkevala Welfare Endowment, Bhathena Family Endowment, Meherbanoo Bamasipour (Zardoshty) Endowment for Women, Zarin N Sarkari Critical Assistance Endowment, Pheroze Dorabji Tamboli Welfare Endowment.

The Unity and Welfare Committee would like to wish you all a joyful and blessed holiday season. May the new year bring you immense love, happiness, and good health.





FEZANA welcomes Prof. Miguel Ángel Andrés-Toledo as First FEZANA Professor in Zoroastrian Languages and Literatures at the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations of the University of Toronto.

This was effective September 1, 2022

## **PROF MIGUEL ÁNGEL ANDRÉS-TOLEDO STARTS AS FEZANA PROFESSOR AT UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**



“We are elated to welcome Prof. Andrés-Toledo as the first FEZANA Professor in Zoroastrian Languages and Literatures,” said FEZANA President Arzan Sam Wadia. “This milestone achievement will transform and advance the study of Zoroastrian languages and literature in the western hemisphere for future generations, and mark an historic moment for FEZANA, its member associations and small groups, and the hundreds of patrons who donated to turn concept into reality.”

**FEZANA** professorship at the University of Toronto is the single largest capital project in the 30-year history of FEZANA and would not have been possible without the collective participation of individuals and institutions from around the world, and the burgeoning North American Zoroastrian community will remain grateful to every donor who helped realize this dream.

Prof. Andrés-Toledo said. “I feel very honoured and privileged for having been appointed as the FEZANA Professor, a unique position that will definitely boost the academic study of the Zoroastrian cultural heritage in North America and around the world.” He expressed his gratitude to FEZANA and the Zoroastrian community for their long-standing support and generous contribution to establish the FEZANA Professorship of Zoroastrian Languages and Literatures at the University of Toronto. He is committed to: developing a wide range of courses on Zoroastrian languages and literatures to train a diverse population of students interested in Zoroastrianism; to promoting collaborative and top research in different topics of Zoroastrian languages and literatures since antiquity, with a specific focus on Avestan and Pahlavi, that will result in a varied number of publications; and



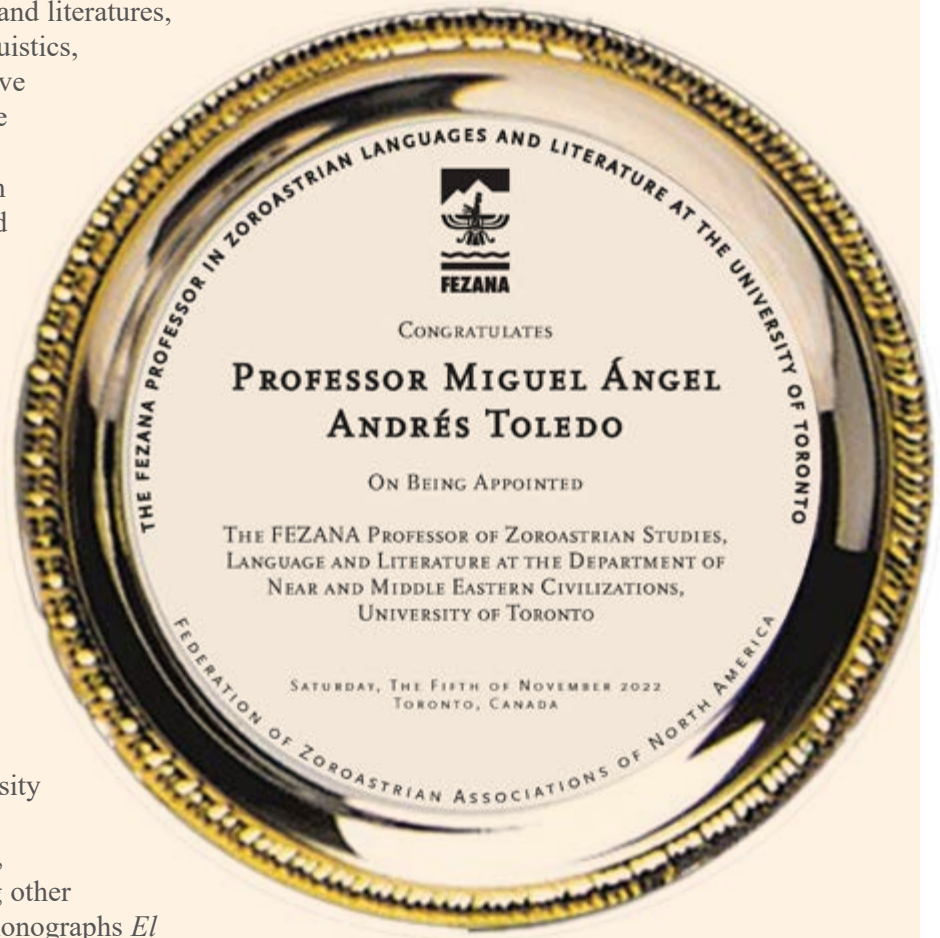
to engaging with the Zoroastrian community in outreach initiatives, public talks and future projects that may be relevant for the community.

He has worked on ten international projects in the fields of Old and Middle Iranian languages and literatures, Zoroastrianism, and Indo-Iranian linguistics, for instance the Avestan Digital Archive (University of Salamanca), the Middle Persian Dictionary Project (Hebrew University of Jerusalem). His research interests mainly cover the Avestan and Pahlavi languages and literatures, with a specific focus on the Pahlavi translations and exegesis of Avestan texts and their written transmission. At the University of Toronto, he will offer courses on Avestan, Old Persian, Middle Persian (Pahlavi), and Zoroastrian Literature of Ancient and Late Antique Iran, and will expand the training of students with other specific courses on these languages and literatures.

Prof. Andrés-Toledo has previously held academic positions at the University of Salamanca, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, University of Copenhagen, and Free University of Berlin. Among other publications, he is the author of the monographs *El hilo de la vida y el lazo de la muerte en la tradición indoiranica* [The thread of life and the noose of death in the Indo-Iranian tradition] (2010. Valencia, Spain) and *The Zoroastrian Law to Expel the Demons: Wīdēwdād 10-15. Critical Edition, Translation and Glossary of the Avestan and Pahlavi Texts* (2016. Wiesbaden, Germany).

**Prof. Jamsheed K. Choksy**, Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Department of Central Eurasian Studies at the University of Indiana – Bloomington. said “The FEZANA Professorship in Zoroastrian Languages and Literature at the University of Toronto ensures that the foundational religion, and its heritage will be studied in perpetuity, it is a much-needed undertaking of enduring value.”

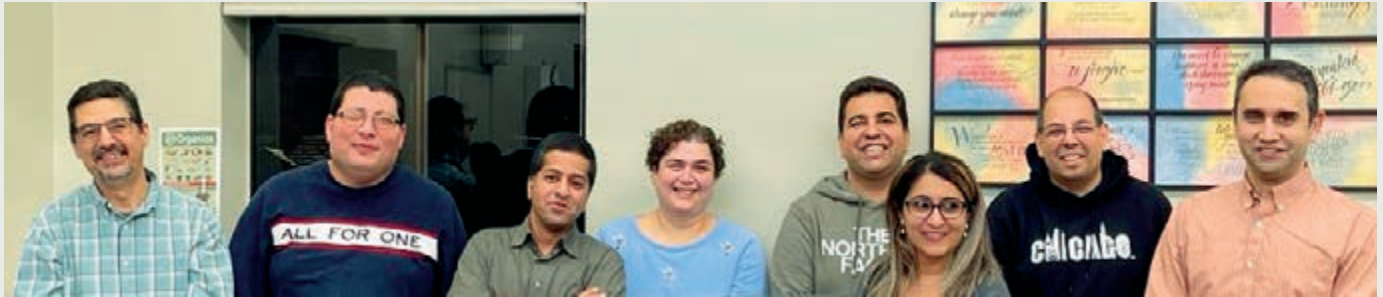
A reception was held jointly by FEZANA, Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) and the Ontario Zoroastrian Cultural Foundation (OZCF) at the Arbab Rustom Guiv Dar-e Mehr in Toronto on November 5<sup>th</sup> 2022, with dignitaries from the University of Toronto present. A commemorative plaque was presented to him by Dr Ervad Jehan Bagli who had initiated the project..





*Zoroastrian Society of Washington State (ZSWS)* held their elections at the Unity of Bellevue Church, Bellevue, WA on November 12, 2022. The newly elected Board of Directors are,

Cyrus Jamula, President; Ardeshir Ravani, Vice President;  
Fred Bhesania, Treasurer; Atosa Monde, Co-Treasurer;  
Nazneen Damkewala, Secretary;  
Bahram Khodadady, Armin Afkham, directors at large.



*From left, Mobedyar Jamshid Pouresfandiary, Bahram Khodadady, Armin Afkham, Nazneen Damkewala, Ardeshir Ravani, Atosa Monde, Cyrus Jamula, Fred Bhesania.*

***Congratulations and much success to the new board.***



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## CZC- SAN DIEGO RUSTOM GUIV BUILDING

Fereshteh Yazdani-Khatibi, President California Zoroastrian Centre

Orange County, September 1984



San Diego, September 2022



Abadian Centre, LA, June 2010

Southern California Zoroastrian Center encompasses the Southern California community from the San Fernando Valley to San Diego. We are well-established and growing! It is so wonderful to see Zoroastrians coming together and building such a wonderful foundation for the future generations.

The San Diego Zoroastrian community has been growing and it was time for us to help them flourish and have a place to call their own. We have recently purchased the historic Women's Center Building in Pacific Beach California to become the San Diego Zoroastrian Center. And thanks to our generous donor it is named the *San Diego Rustom Guiv Building*. Our San Diego Community has been needing a place to meet for over 300 families, especially for their youth and senior groups. We realized that the 2 to 4 hour commute to Orange County for weekly prayers,



classes, meetings and celebrations was preventing the San Diego community from participating in events and knowing that they now have a place to call their own that is easily accessible will help the community thrive and flourish.

After much market research, the CZC Board of Trustees ( Mr. Behnam Abadian, Mr. Shahrooz Ash, Mrs. Fereshteh Yazdani-Khatibi, Mr. Hooshang Farahmand, Mrs. Sima Shidfar, Mr. Ardeshir Baghkhani, and Mr. Parviz Manoochehri), along with their Real Estate committee and the CZC San Diego Board of Directors ( Mrs. Raiti Ranari, Mrs. Ramak Rahnemoon, Mr. Fariborz Mehrshai, Mrs. Mitra Mazdidasni and Mrs. Jaleh Framrose) came to an agreement to purchase this location as the future Dar-e-Mehr for the San Diego community.

The new CZC San Diego is located at 1721 Hornblend Street in San Diego. The building is over 3,500 square feet and stands on a 9300 square foot lot. The seating capacity is at 185 with a large lobby, kitchen area and a stage for our various programs. The property is central as most Zoroastrians live within a 25 mile radius. The building itself has a cultural and historic background as it was home to the Pacific Beach Women’s Club.

In June 2022, after 2 open house events at this location, the General Assembly at all three California Zoroastrian Centers (Los Angeles, Orange County, Los Angeles Abadian Building and San Diego) approved the purchase of this building with more than 90% in favor.

The purchase of this historic building was around \$2 million with a loan amount around \$1 million with an interest rate at 2.55%. and maturity date of October 31st, 2023. We are hopeful that we will pay off this loan prior to its maturity date.

Once the building was chosen, the first phase of fund raising for the down payment of the building began in June 2022. We were able to raise approximately \$800,000 for the full down payment. The second phase of fundraising began in August 2022 to start paying off the assumed loan of \$1 million. To date, we have raised close to \$700,000 thanks to the generosity of the community. We also received a large donation from the Guiv Foundation and thanks to their gift the building will be named after them. The third phase of our plan involves addressing the necessary improvement for the functionality of dar-e-mehr as well as costs associated with building an Atash-kadeh.

The grand opening celebration for our new Dar-e-Mehr in San Diego was held on Sunday, November 6th. with over 160 community members in attendance for this auspicious event. People were welcomed into our beautiful center thru the newly dedicated Javanshir Hall thanks to our generous donor. The California Zoroastrian Center - San Diego has a beautiful Faravahar showcased at the front of the building welcoming everyone in.

The program was started with Moben Fariborz Shahzadi and Mobed Ashkan Bastani reciting prayers and blessing our new center. Our dedicated Board of Directors for San Diego (consisting of Mrs. Raiti Ranari, Mrs. Ramak Rahnemoon, Mr. Fariborz Mehrshai, Mrs. Mitra Mazdidasni, and Mrs. Jaleh Framrose) gave congratulatory remarks and messages of inspiration for what this center represents for the future of our community. Mrs. Fereshteh Khatibi (President, California Zoroastrian Center) gave a beautiful message on the impactful donations of our community for bringing this dream of having a center in San Diego to fruition. As Mrs. Khatibi stated, in a few short months, our

community came together to raise close to \$1 million dollars.

This new center is a second home for our community where our children can gather and build camaraderie, learn about our culture and faith, and hope the principles of our faith help carry them through life. This center could only be attained because of the generosity of our donors, whether it was one dollar or one thousand dollars and because of these donations, our dream for a center in San Diego became reality. Mrs.Khatibi expressed deep gratitude for our community for understanding the value and importance of having a center in San Diego and dedicating their time, energy and financial resources in realizing this vision. Mrs.Khatibi joined by the Board of Directors for San Diego and the Board of Trustees for the California Zoroastrian Center cut the ribbon of the new centre

We welcome each of you to our new home and hope you take the time to come visit us when in San Diego. We will always continue to help our community locally and globally grow and flourish and hope you will be part of our journey of good thoughts that transcend to good words that lead to good deeds.

*Sepas,*

***California Zoroastrian Center - San Diego (Board of Directors)***

***California Zoroastrian Center - Board of Trustees***

The opening dates for the three centers are -

1. CZC - Orange County (September 1984)
2. CZC - Los Angeles Abadian (June 11, 2010)
3. CZC - San Diego (September 2022)





## FIRES & ZAH LIBRARY EVENT: 23RD ANNUAL LECTURE SERIES

*Meheryar N. Rivetna*

**FIRES** and Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) Library strike again! November 11 & 12, 2022 marked the 23rd Annual Lecture Series of this body. Two outstanding speakers, Dr. Janet Kestenberg Amighi and Banafsheh Mondegarian, (photo above) were invited to address an unprecedented large audience.

Friday, November 11, 2022

The event started on the evening of Friday, November 11 with a “Meet and Greet”. Aban Rustomji, Chairperson of ZAH Library, opened the session welcoming the attendees and guests. Aban expressed pride and joy in that this was the 23rd annual ZAH Library event. ZAH Library has brought outstanding speakers over the years to enhance knowledge of the Zoroastrian faith in all its aspects—religious, historical, cultural and social. As Aban observed, it was heartwarming to see the regular attendees to these programs, but even more so to see the interest grow as evidenced by the presence of new attendees. The occasion welcomed members of the University of Houston and from the city’s Museum of Fine Arts to ZAH. With the merger of ZAH library and



FIRES (Fezana Information Research Education System), Aban indicated, the collective efforts of the union have afforded a rise in services and compilations of items of interest and importance to the Zoroastrian community in North America. Part of this 23rd Lecture Series included a call to the artistically inclined Zoroastrians of Houston to showcase their talents. 17 artists presented their excellent art work which was exhibited in the Center’s Purvez Rustomji room.

It was a pleasure to have ArZan Sam Wadia, President of FEZANA, attend this event. Following Aban’s introduction, ArZan expressed his admiration for the joint ZAH Library/FIRES ventures. Its endeavors are unique within FEZANA, mentioned ArZan, as there is no other partnership where a member association steps in to lend its expertise, facilities and volunteers for the betterment of the North American Zoroastrian community at large. He complimented Aban Rustomji for her leadership in steering the FIRES/ZAH Library partnership to enrich the North American Zoroastrian community. ArZan expressed his admiration for Dr. Janet Kestenberg Amighi saying





he follows her work, recognizing its importance not only on the religious front, but also with regard to historical, cultural and social aspects of the world Zoroastrians.

Aban invited the President of ZAH, Percy Katrak, to address the evening's gathering. Percy complimented Aban and ZAH Library on its achievements and for bringing renowned speakers from across the world to enlighten the Zoroastrians of Houston. He reminded the attendees that the recordings of these scholarly talks are on the FIRES website. Percy mentioned that ZAH Library is not just an ordinary library, but a centralized collection of Zarathushti books, manuscripts, literature, magazines, artifacts and works of scholarly research. FIRES was established in 2010 and is managed by ZAH Library. ZAH Library is also the proud owner of Dastur (Dr.) Maneckji N. Dhalla's memorabilia including trophies and awards that the eminent Dastur received in his lifetime. Percy rightly concluded that we need to adopt Dastur Dhalla's forward way of thinking to enrich our lives. He welcomed Dr. Janet Kestenberg Amighi to Houston and to ZAH.

Following Meheryar Rivetna's brief introduction, Dr. Janet Kestenberg Amighi spoke of what initially prompted her to research the plight of the Zoroastrians in Iran after the Arab invasion in the 7th century CE.

Dr. Amighi found a book in her library which talked about the decline of the Parsi community in India due to low levels of fertility and immigration. Previously married to an Iranian Zoroastrian, Jamshid Amighi, Janet Kestenberg Amighi and her husband decided to visit India to study the causes of decline in the Parsi population, but the Indian government, under Indira Gandhi, denied her a visa on the grounds that anthropologists "cause trouble". That brought her to Iran where her husband's family lived and where she studied Farsi, becoming virtually fluent within six months. She lived in Iran for seven years establishing contact with other Zoroastrians from whom she learned of their religion, culture and history. She fielded a host of questions from an audience hungry to learn about the people of their ancient homeland.

The evening culminated in a scrumptious pot-luck dinner where the culinary skills of the Houston Zoroastrians were on full display.

Saturday, November 12, 2022

Meheryar Rivetna opened the morning session informing the audience how he came to invite Dr. Amighi to Houston. About a year ago the NAMC approached him to be an instructor on one of its courses designed to study the fate of the Zoroastrians after the Arab invasion of the Sasanian Empire. Meheryar's research led him to the scholarly work of Dr. Amighi on this subject. That spurred him to invite Dr. Amighi to Houston to give the community a deeper understanding of the plight of the Zoroastrians during the different regimes that ruled over Iran.

Zoroastrians from South East Asia, unlike the Iranian Zoroastrians, have a very sketchy knowledge of the Zoroastrian dilemma under the various reigns of their ancient conquered land. Yes, they know of the *jizya* tax and forced conversions to an alien religion and how bad

the conditions, generally, were. Dr. Amighi spoke at length on this subject particularly during the Qajar and Pahlavi



*Photo L to R Arzan Sam Wadia, President FEZANA, members of the FIRES Committee, Nazanin Sarkari, Arnavaz Sethna, Aban Rustomji, Chairperson FIRES, Dr Janet Amighi, Meheryar Rivetna, Zubeen Mehta, Rustom Engineer, Yasmin Pavri, Yezdi Engineer,*

dynasties and the post-1979 Iranian revolution. The historical accounts she narrated brought tears to the eyes of many in the audience.

A Q&A session followed her phenomenal presentation (also projected via Zoom) with the audience roundly applauding Dr Amighi's work and depth of knowledge in this area.

After a short catered lunch break, Yasmin Pavri, a member of ZAH Library, introduced the next speaker, Banafsheh Mondegarian, a young, enthusiastic Houston resident. Banafsheh grew up in Kerman, Iran before her marriage to a Parsi from Bombay brought her to India and then to the U.S.

Banafsheh talked about the discrimination against Zoroastrians and how, as a minority, they are deemed social pariahs in their own ancestral homeland. Like Dr. Amighi. Banafsheh talked about the Zoroastrians in Iran being branded as "untouchables" (*najes*). They are

considered polluted because of their religion. While some Iranian Muslims, according to Banafsheh, express an interest in learning about the Zoroastrian faith and culture she attested to the fact that many such Muslims remain guarded in their outreach to Zoroastrians.

Banafsheh's presentation was filled with pathos and humor enthralling the audience with a lively Q&A session that followed her impassioned talk.

This exceptional FIRES/ZAH Library event was, once again, a testament to its commitment to widen knowledge of the Zoroastrian faith and its history.

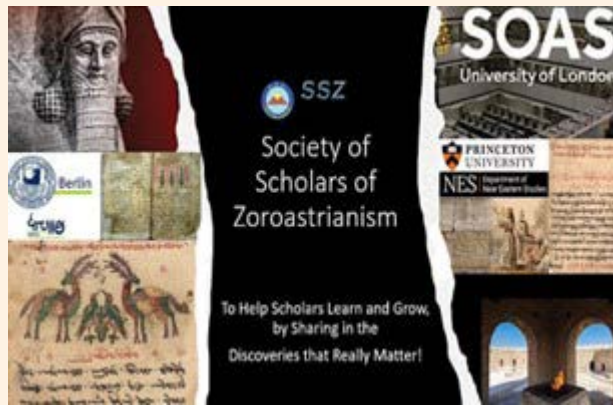




# SSZ

## Society of Scholars of ZOROASTRIANISM

### 2022 SSZ CONFERENCE IN CHICAGO



With exceptional presentations by academicians (from Princeton, SOAS, Freie Universitat Berlin), Dean of the NAMC Institute of Zoroastrian Studies, lay scholars, and practitioners of Zoroastrianism, the 2022 SSZ (Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism) conference, held at the Zoroastrian Center of Chicago-Rustam Guiv Dar-e-Mehr, November 18-20, 2022, truly raised the bar. Over 50 persons attended in person, while almost 200 from around the world, had registered on ZOOM,

The Conference was kicked off with a dinner reception on Friday evening, with a welcome by ZAMC (Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago) President **Jamshed Rivetna**, and a Keynote Address by

Conference Chair **Prof. Dan Sheffield**,

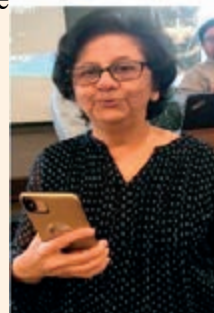
After a hearty breakfast on Saturday morning, a rousing benediction by **Mobedyar Boman Damkevala** and a beautiful recital of “*Khodavand e Khavind*” monajat by **Mani Rao**, SSZ President **Zal Taleyarkhan** explained the goals of SSZ:

“The purpose of SSZ”, said Zal, “is to compile, preserve and assimilate historical truths, on the impacts, and evolution of Zoroastrian thought....The knowledge, catalogued and archived, will be based on peer-reviewed and authenticated fact and historical records ... This Archive will connect scholars from around the world ... SSZ is focused on providing a platform to universities, students and professionals ... to share research papers and discoveries pertaining to Zoroastrianism ... Our goal is to further academic research and study, and encourage the next generation of scholars to advance that said research...”

**Rohinton Rivetna**, who co-founded SSZ, with Pallan Ichhaporia, in 2006, thanked Zal, as “an amazing individual leading SSZ to greater heights” and for orchestrating this event, with the help of Dan Sheffield, Pervin Taleyarkhan and Noshir Contractor.” .....He presented the SSZ financial report, noting that “we are not worth much in dollars” and made an appeal for donations. He thanked FEZANA and WZO-US Region (President Kayomarsh Mehta) for largely supporting the Conference, and ZAMC and community members for their generous hosting.

The morning session, was conducted on ZOOM, by **Prof. Sheffield** and **Zal Taleyarkhan**, assisted by **Afshan Barshan**.

*Clockwise: Jamshed Rivetna, Mobedyar Bomi Damkevala, Rohinton Rivetna, Zal Taleyarkhan, Mani Rao.*







**Dr. Kerman Daruwalla** [photo left], Ph.D. from SOAS, London, presently working in Mumbai as a consultant for the proposed TISS-Parzor academic program on Parsi Zoroastrian Culture and Heritage, presented “*The History of Training of Zoroastrian Priests in India*,” examining the methods employed to commit to memory the large corpus of Avestan texts which is required to qualify as a full ritual-performing priest; and compared training methodology used at various locations.



**Dr. Benedikt Peschl** [photo left], Freie Universitat, Berlin, whose research interests concern the philology of Old and Middle Iranian languages, with a focus in the field of Zoroastrian studies, spoke about “*Zoroastrian Middle Persian Literature and its Relation to the Avesta: current research perspectives*.” He gave a broad overview of how Avesta and Pahlavi (texts in the Middle Persian language) are inter-related, and how this relationship is being further investigated in current research.



**Dr. Dan Sheffield** [photo left] is Assistant Professor in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University, where he specializes in the religious, intellectual, and social history of the medieval and early modern Persian-speaking world. He holds a Ph.D. in Iranian and Persian Studies from Harvard; and is a specialist in exchanges between Safavid Iran and Mughal India, and the transmission of ideas from Late Antiquity into Early Modernity.

In his presentation -- “*The Pahlavi Book of Religious Decrees: a Forgotten Source for the History of Medieval Zoroastrianism*,” Dan argues that this text *Wizikard I Denig*, first printed in 1848, and attacked as a forgery by rival priests, is in fact a genuine compilation, and allows us to better understand the scholarly practices of medieval and early modern Zoroastrian priests.

After a sumptuous lunch, at the Afternoon Session, chaired by **Kamal Saher**, the audience was captivated with thought-provoking presentations by two erudite scholars, and a panel discussion.

**Er. Tehemton Mirza** was ordained *Navar, Martab* and *Saamel* at Iranshah Atash Behram and currently serves as President of North American Mobeds Council and Dean of NAMC’s Institute of Zoroastrian Studies. His presentation, “*Nature’s Spirituality*,” simultaneously offered as an online IZS class, explained the Zoroastrian teachings and practices as they relate to the reverence of nature’s elements: fire, air, water, earth, vegetation, animals

and humans; and the Zoroastrian answer to modern ecological concerns. “Marvel at the modernity of one of the world’s oldest religions,” he said, “Let Zoroastrianism lead us to an environmentally conscious and eco-friendly world citizenry.”

*Meheryar N. Rivetna, after retiring in 2016, from Merck & Co., immersed himself in an intense study of the Zoroastrian religion, and publication of “Zarathustra: The Man and the Message,” an in-depth study of the religion with an aim to dispel the myths contradicting Zarathustra’s teachings. He currently serves on the Library Committee of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston, as well as on FIRES, the education and research arm of FEZANA. In his presentation “Everything You Wanted to Know About the Younger Avesta (But Were Afraid to Ask),” Meheryar presents his research on the evolution of the religion, from the original compositions of Zarathustra (the Gathas), with the addition of prayers and rituals (the Younger Avesta).*



[l.to r] Er. Tehemton Mirza, Meheryar Rivetna

The Panel discussion on “Contemporary Identity and the Role of Intergenerational Memory in the Zoroastrian Diaspora” was moderated by **Persis Driver**, Ph.D., professor of Developmental Psychology, and STEM Faculty Development lead at Dominican University; also religious education teacher at ZAMC and co-chair of the FEZANA Religious Education Committee. Panelists were: **Sarosh Irani**, a third-year medical student from Detroit; Vispi Karkaria, a second year Ph.D. student at Northwestern University; **Delna Balsara**, a junior at University



[l. to r.] Panel: Persis Driver, Sarosh Irani, Vispi Karkaria, Delna Balsara, Teshtar Irani.



Sunday morning Round Table and presentation on Jashan with participation.

of Notre Dame, pursuing a B.S. in Computer Science and Industrial Design; and **Teshtar Irani**, active member of ZAGNY, and recently certified as a Mobedyar by NAMC.

On Sunday morning, interested persons gathered for a **Roundtable discussion** on future plans for SSZ; and demonstration of performing Jashans with participation by the audience, led by **Er. Tehemton Mirza** and **Mehbad Dastur**.

**Grateful Thanks.** We are deeply grateful to: Dan Sheffield and SSZ directors Zal Taleyarkhan (President), Pervin Taleyarkhan (Secretary), Rohinton Rivetna, Noshir Contractor and Kersi Shroff for orchestrating the Conference; ZAMC members for their generous hosting and IT support and all the food volunteers organized by Roshan Rivetna for delicious meals; FEZANA and WZO-US Region (Kayomarsh Mehta) for their sponsorship; and above all, the speakers who gave of their time and talents to enlighten us.

For further information, visit the SSZ website [www.s-s-z.org](http://www.s-s-z.org) (for which we are deeply grateful to Noshir Contractor). The video recording may also be viewed at <https://bit.ly/SSZ22>.





## ZAC Celebrated the 6th Salgreh Blessings and Message

The 6th Salgreh of the Zoroastrian Association of California's Atash Kadeh was celebrated with great religious fervor and Parsi gusto on November 12<sup>th</sup> 2020. The celebration started a week before by deep cleaning the premises. On the day of Salgreh, Chowk was done by Vira & Barjor Santoke, a Hama Anjuman maachi was offered to Atashpadshah in all five gehs. Also, two Hama Anjuman Jashans were performed, one in the morning and one in the evening to facilitate the whole community by Ervads Zerkxis and Zarir Bhandara which was attended by about 75 Zoroastrians. After the Jashans, ZAC president Mrs. Rooky Fitter (in the morning) and Daisy Pithawalla, the Youth Coordinator of ZAC (in the evening) read the following message from the high priest of Iranshah

**Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor:**

**“Dear Humdinds, Greetings from the land of Iranshah!**

I would like to express my heartiest congratulations and best wishes to my dear friend and a sincere Mobed, Er. Zarir Bhandara on this auspicious occasion, the 6th Salgareh of the Dar e Meher in California. In many of my talks, I have expressed the need and importance of a religiously pious and scripturally knowledgeable Mobed who is willing to share his learning and insight with the community. This is the one way, our religious traditions will be protected and our religion preserved. This is what Zarir



has believed in and has made every effort in the direction of preservation. He continues to play a contributory role in organizing and being a part of as many religious gatherings as he possibly can, in his part of the world.

What strikes me as very impressive is that he has not only encouraged and motivated his son Zerkxis but has mentored him to follow his passion. I am grateful to you Zarir, though so far away from your roots, you have in the past 50 years helped lay a strong foundation of religious wealth for the Zoroastrians in the U.S. Your sincere efforts towards maintaining the glory and sanctity of the sacred Atash Dadgah have not gone unnoticed nor have they gone in vain. The community has derived its strength to survive and persevere with the blessings of the burning Holy Fire.

I pray that Dadar Ahuramazda and Iranshah let your efforts bear fruit within our Community and May you receive their blessings in abundance. May the Light of the

Sacred Fire strengthen the Faith, bring Harmony and Guide our community towards preserving our traditions and ethnicity eventually leading us towards enlightenment.”

After this ZAC Secretary Mrs. Vira Santoke (in the morning) and ZAC Treasurer Mr. Phiroze Gundevia (in the evening) read the following message below from high priest

**Dasturji Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal:**

Felicitations on the 6th Anniversary (Salgreh) of the Atash Padshah installed by the Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC)

On this auspicious day of the Salgreh of the Atash Padshah, Rūz Māhraspad, Māh Khordād 1392 AY, it is our sincere prayer that our Holy Fire may continue to shower his choicest blessings on the faithful devotees of







## Agreeh of their Atashkadeh from 3 Vada Dasturs

California. It is our wish that the Holy Fire which is spiritually linked with the Divine Fire of Ahura Mazda, may continue to bestow its spiritual blessings on the Parsi Community until the time of the Resurrection. And may the Holy Fire also bestow his divine blessings on the Parsi Community and lead them always on the path of Truth and Righteousness.

It is very gratifying that the Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC) is fortunate to have a good and sincere priest such as Ervad Saheb Zarrir Bhandara who has been helping the members of the community in all spheres of life to lead them onto the path of virtue.

It is my sincere hope that Ervad Saheb Zarrir Bhandara and his son Zerkxis will continue to serve the faithful and devout members of the Good Religion in matters of the religion and in their everyday life and serve as the true shepherds of their flock. May this father and son team live a long and healthy life and may the divine blessings of Ahura Mazda be bestowed upon them and the devout members of the Parsi Irani Zarthushti community of California.”



*Dastur (Dr.) Firoze M. Kotwal  
High Priest H.B. Wadia Atash Bahram, Mumbai  
November 4, 2022*

ZAC’s immediate past president Mobedyar Houtoxi Contractor then read the following message from *High priest*

### ***Vada Dasturji Cyrus Noshirwan Dastur:***

I wish and pray to Dadar Ahura Mazda that the divine fire that was enthroned in California six years ago, may eternally keep burning and keep blessing the Zarthosty devotees with abundance of happiness, success, progress, and prosperity. I also congratulate Ervad Zarrir F. Bhandara, my guru, on his 50 years of dedicated, selfless, and honorary service to our Zarthosti community in the US, North America, and globally. Zarrir you have been guiding our community with your expansive knowledge about our religion and I commend you for the same, may Ahura Mazda’s blessings be showered upon you forever.”



*Cyrus Noshirwan Dastur  
High Priest (Vada) Dastur of Surat, Gujarat India.*

Finally a note of thanks was delivered by Ervad Bhandara, thanking the ZAC executive committee, Ervad Zerkxis for working behind the scenes to make sure everything runs smoothly, Commissariat family for preparing delicious dhan dar, chawal, vegetable patio, and lagan nu custard, and Yashmin Mehernosh Pithawalla for mouth-watering chutney sandwiches which were relished by everyone.

Report by Ervad Zarir Bhandara



## CELEBRATION OF CYRUS DAY



Cyrus the Great Day was celebrated on October 29 2022 jointly by the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan

Washington Incorporated (ZAMWI) and ARASH the Archer (ATA), a non-profit organization focused on advancing research and scholarship on ancient Iran and the culture and history of Zoroastrianism. Reza S Zarghamee (photo below), was the speaker who enthralled the audience of over 60 people in person and over 100 on Zoom. He related the many facets of Cyrus's life with relevant visuals, held the audience's attention, sifting facts from fiction associated with the life of Cyrus the Great. Reza S Zarghamee, of Persian descent, had always been interested in Middle Eastern history and at age 13 studied old Persian cuneiform under Prof Richard Frye. He is a lawyer by profession, a partner in the legal firm of Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw



Pittman LLP. Zarghamee mentioned that Cyrus has remained an obscure figure in many ways in spite of ruling over a vast empire with brilliant statecraft. The absence of Achaemenid studies convinced him to create his own research pathways and did a deep study for his doctoral research. He is the author of *Discovering Cyrus: The Persian Conqueror Astride the Ancient World*.

Reza Zarghamee delivered a two hours brilliant lecture with detailed source materials. He vividly narrated history like a story, bringing Cyrus and the period he lived in to life. His name Kourash (possibly of Elamite origin) meant "he who bestows care." By 539 BCE he became a local

ruler following tribal conquests. He moved to different frontiers — Macedonia, Bactria, Armenia. "By winning the favor of the local elites you can go a long way in establishing political power" was an early lesson learnt by Cyrus in the sixth century BCE as he proceeded to establish the mighty Achaemenid empire. Within 14 years he unified the lands he had conquered, consolidating his empire and governing a mosaic of different peoples.

Reza Zarghamee asks and answers "Was Cyrus a Zoroastrian? Probably, I cannot prove; I can only marshal evidence together by sourcing Herodotus, Cuneiform tablets and other material". Young Persians were taught three things: to ride a horse, shoot from the bow and speak the truth. Although there may be



many grey areas, "Cyrus acted with magnanimity and chivalry. Vestiges of his deeds have survived," reminded Zarghamee. The Cyrus cylinder is one such vestige. Was he the first to declare Human Rights? Human Rights is a modern concept and it did not come from Cyrus, but his statecraft was special, there was something special about him which made the people he conquered welcome him. His benevolence was politically motivated for pragmatic reasons, one had to be benevolent to manage the vast empire which he ruled over.

Readers interested in viewing the 2 hour and 45 minutes fascinating talk should visit <https://youtu.be/2ldsUFJPtAU>





## PATRA NU DINNER

Sohrab Bhiwandiwala



A traditional dining experience traveling all the way from India to Canada, the Patra Nu Dinner (Dinner on a Leaf) event was a culinary event that brought the nostalgia of eating at a Zoroastrian wedding and navjot in Navsari, to the table of Torontorians at the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) organized by the ZSO Youth Committee and Entertainment Committee on September 10, 2022, as a fundraiser to generate awareness and funds to give access to ZSO Youth to attend the 8th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress (WZYC) in London, UK in July 2023.

As the crowd began to assemble around 6 p.m. The guests were greeted at the door and all attendees wore wristbands, and had the option to buy raffle tickets at the door for prizes given throughout the night.

The ambiance of the event began to take shape. The attendees consisted not only of Zoroastrians but also of curious foodies, and people around the city who had never had a traditional Parsi dining experience like this and

wanted to see what it was all about.

The young and ambitious Kayomaz Patel emceed the event and was explaining the style of eating (with hands) and the different dishes being served throughout the night. He described what Patra Nu Dinner meant to Zoroastrians and gave out the order in which each food item would be presented. *(photo above, guests seated eager to begin their Patra nu Diner)*







The servers began serving the guests with *Gajar Meva nu Achar* (carrot and raisin pickle), followed by Sariyas, and Vegetable Stew, along with their choice of pop. The wonderful *Patra Ni Machi* (leaf steamed fish) was then served together with Chapati, and the vegetarian guests were offered Paneer Steak.

When the diners had completed their *Patra Ni Machi*, the servers arrived to clean up before moving on to the next food item. The famed *Parsi Sali Boti* was then served to the guests, and everyone was given a second serving of everything (parsis love to eat until they can't eat any more). It was finally time for some *Chicken Pulao and Dar*. All of the guests were stuffed to the gills with the delectable meal that was served to them.

After everyone had completed their meal, the servers went around and had each guest wash their hands while sitting with the use of a large bowl, warm water, and soap, as it is done traditionally at a Patra Nu Dinner.

Following that, the folded Patras were removed from the table and the guests were given *Lagan Nu Custard* (wedding custard) and Gulab Jamun for desserts. The famous DJ Hoshi provided music all night. Rostam Pourmandgarian, (*photo page 29 playing the violin*) who traveled all the way from Montreal to play at the event, opened the night with a piano and violin act. His fingers glided lightly across the keyboard, generating pleasant music. He stunned the audience by playing the violin after the piano. At the evening's second performance, was a song by Meherzeen Daruwala who was melodic as a bird.

And finally, Benji Irani closed off the final performance of the night with an opera tune that captivated the audience. Karishma Mevawala and Sohrab Bhiwandiwalla, the bartender combo, not only amused the audience while making beverages for the guests, but also ensured that everyone drank responsibly.

After the show and meal, the floor was cleared for dancing. The crowd began to groove to the latest sounds while several guests took advantage of the \$3 shot special and \$5 cocktails at the cash bar, the cheapest drinks in town. The Patra Nu Dinner was a wonderful success, with the food cooked by our household names, including Percy Daruwala and Kersi Kambatta. This event could not have happened without the help of all the volunteers and all the attendees that came out to show support. We would like to thank the ZSO community at large and all of the donors that donated gifts, alcohol, materials, and tickets for people who wanted to come but couldn't afford them.

If you would like to support this fundraiser, please make a donation here at <https://www.zso.org/donate>. The ZSO Youth Committee is already arranging further significant events, which everyone will be notified of very soon. Please keep monitoring our website here at <https://www.zso.org/events> for the most up-to-date information.



*The ZSO Youth Committee along with the Entertainment Committee*



## ZAMWI's Prayer Room Grand Opening: A Community's Journey

In March 1976, before Nowruz, a young man about 23 years old sat alone at night in the empty Newark airport waiting for his connecting flight to Michigan. He had arrived at John F Kennedy airport a few hours earlier on a flight from Iran. He was nervous and excited, but not afraid, to pursue his goal of a graduate degree in economics and to return to his homeland to work in the foreign exchange department of the National Bank of Iran.

Zarir P. Khademian, MD, Ph.D.  
President, ZAMWI

Unknown to him a different plan was unfolding.

More than forty years later, on Saturday October 1st, 2022, he (Zarir) stood again both nervous and excited, to officially announce the grand opening of the Prayer Room of the Zoroastrian community of Metropolitan Washington, DC. In the days and hours before the grand opening he wondered how an originally mixed Lutheran and Islamic family had grown and matured to contribute to this moment in our community's determination to have their own place of worship in America, far from their homelands in India, Pakistan and Iran.

The journey of our community from distant homelands to the Grand Opening was long and heartfelt, similar to the journey our ancestors took to India 1400 years ago, and those who stayed in Iran, to save and protect the sacred



*From left Mobed Bastani, Mobedyar Hormuzdiar Katki, Evad Pervez Patel, Evad Tehmton Mirza*





religion, to save the culture and traditions, passed on for millennia from generations to generations at so many different times and with significant risk.

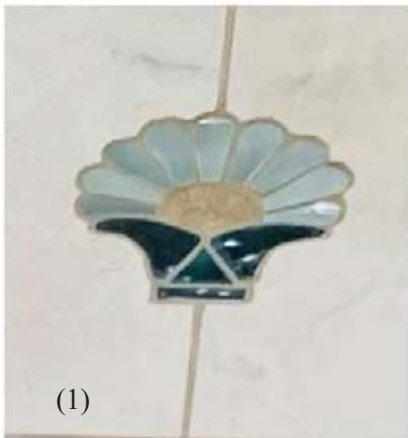
This forty-year journey was fueled by the vision and determination of many volunteers such as the founders of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, Inc. (ZAMWI). Most recently, recognition goes to the Kamran family, especially Mrs. Banoo Kamran and the late Mr. Khodamorad Kamran for making a Zoroastrian Center (the Kamran Dar-e Mehr) a reality.

More recent presidents of the Board of Trustees have played a key role: Mehrdad Aidun, Navroz Gandhi and Anne Khademian. Mehrdad and his Board oversaw the construction of the Kamran Dare Mehr. The Grand Opening of the Dar- e- Mehr was overseen by Navroz. When the Dar-e Mehr was opened in 2014, a space was designated for a prayer room, but not completed. The planning, design and construction of the prayer room was conducted by Anne

and her Board, beginning with community town halls and establishing a Prayer Room Advisory Committee in 2018. The Board began working with an architect, Scott Knudson of Knu Design, LLC., in 2019.

Thanks to the generosity of many community members, \$400,000 was raised in a designated capital campaign by Anne and her Board, and \$359,000 was spent on designing and constructing our new prayer room. The construction permit was issued in December of 2020, and construction began in January 2021.

The prayer room is a reflection of our diverse and inclusive community, with design elements from Ancient Iran, India and Hong Kong. This includes hand-crafted marble with tile inlay lotus flowers as held by Darius the Great in the stonework at ersepolis. (1); a marble portrayal of the sunburst



from the ceiling of the ancient fire temple of Karkuyeh in Sistan, Iran (2); a marble representation at the base of our afarganyu of the petals surrounding the afarganyu at Pir-e sabz Chak Chak; a beautiful silver afraganyu gifted to our community by the Bombay Parsi Panchayet and the late Chairman, Mr. Jamshed N. Guzder, in 1997 that is on display (4); inspiration from the prayer room of the Hong Kong Zoroastrian Building that features mahogany trim beams and screens (3); and a beautiful carpet from a prayer room in Yazd, Iran. Ancient elements have ben combined with modern design to link our past and our future in the United States. A formal recognition of all the Prayer Room donors is underway.





The golden afarganyu installed in the dome of the prayer room, a gift to the community from California, is fueled by ethanol, a clean burning fuel that does not pollute the environment. A second, smaller afarganyu is wood burning and was used during the Jashan and Boi ceremonies for the grand opening. A ventilation system in the prayer room accommodates the modest amount of smoke that is created by the wood burning afarganyu. The Prayer Room Guardian Committee, appointed by the Board, prior to the grand opening and chaired by Parisa Mazdayasni, oversees the care and availability of the prayer room for the community and establishes and implements policies for the use of the prayer room.

The prayer room is open two days per month for several hours, and the fire is lit by our Mobedyar, Hormuzdiar Katki, at the beginning of Avesta Classes on those days. It is also open during other community events. Under the guidance of Ervad Brigadier Behram Pantaki and Mobedyar Katki, several members of the Guardian Committee are being trained to light the afarganyu when priests are not available. Members of the community can light a candle when the prayer room is open, as well. Without a full time priest, the fire in the dome only burns when the prayer room is open.

The young man who landed in New York by IranAir in 1976 was still young at heart as he witnessed the grand opening of the prayer room that Saturday of October 1st, 2022. With his hair now completely white, he sensed that the community was at home as the distinguished Ervads, Mobed and Mobedyar were performing the Jashan, and community members solemnly breathed in the smoke of the fire as part of the Boi Ceremony led by Ervad Tehmton Mirza from the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario, Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation, and President of the North American Mobed Council. Other religious leaders included Ervad Brigadier Behram Panthaki, Mobed Bastani from the California Zoroastrian Center, Ervad Pervez Patel from ZAGNY, Ervad Adi Unwalla from ZAPANJ, Ervad Noshir Karanjia from ZAPANJ, and Mobedyar Hormuzdiar Katki.

We were also joined that day by Arzan Sam Wadia, president of FEZNA, (photo right) as well as by the former president of ZAGNY, Astad Clubwala and his wife Behroze Clubwala. The former President of FEZANA, Katayoun Kapadia also attended, and made it possible for Ervad Unwalla and Karanjia to join us in person.

The closing ceremony brought people together from Iran, North America, India and Pakistan in a common celebration. It was evident to all that we share the same ancient history, same motherland and teachings of Asho Zarthosht. We are not only Parsis, Iranians and North Americans, we are ALL Zartoshtis.





[www.ZEDF.org](http://www.ZEDF.org)



ZEDF is now accepting applications for funding of a ZEDF Scholar interested in pursuing graduate studies leading to a Master's degree with a major in Entrepreneurship from a recognized accredited university.

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## THE MAZDAYASNI FESTIVALS

Guest Editorial

Fariborz Rahnamoon



Fariborz Rahnamoon was born in Yazd and educated in a Catholic school in Bombay. His exposure to the Bible instigated him, while in high school, to research his own religion. He has a unique perspective on the Zarathushti religion and history, resulting from over 40 years of research. He says, "the Zarathushti history that has come down to us has been written by its adversaries over the last 2000 years, and the Avesta has been deciphered and translated by western scholars with preconceived Greek/Abrahamic ideology, thereby leading us astray." His finding and views are available on his website. [www.ancientiran.com](http://www.ancientiran.com)

He is in the process of translating the Gathas, and it is available on his website, [www.gathas.ca](http://www.gathas.ca). Since 2015 Fariborz has compiled and published the Mazdayasni Calendar based on the Bundahishn, and it is available at [www.zarathushticalendar.com](http://www.zarathushticalendar.com)

He has served the community as Youth Director Sazeman Javanan Zarthusti, Bombay, Chair of the Arbab Rostam Guiv Trust Vancouver for 26 years, President and director ZSBC, International director WZCC, Chair WZCC BC, Director WZO. Editor of Iran Zamin a bilingual magazine.

I thank Dr Dolly Dastoor and the Fezana Journal team for the opportunity to present to you, dear readers, the history and evolution of the MazdaYasni Festivals.

In ancient times when they did not have a calendar on the wall to track their days, they looked up to Nature. Most people marked their days based on the moons changing features. Those who wanted an accurate time rendering charted the sun and stars, while others did a combination.

MazdaYasni festivals celebrated the Truth in Nature and trained the mind to always search for the Truth. During the Sassanian era, due to past 500 years of Greek influence, the festivals became a celebration of myths and legends. The myths imparted a moral standard, but most of that has today regressed towards superstition. The Islamic era was an era of cultural genocide. They banned festivals, so celebrations were discreet. Later, Iranians veiled the festivals to make them compatible with the culture of the rulers.

In the 20th century, with the advent of Reza Shah, the ancient MazdaYasni calendar mentioned in the Bundahishn and adapted by Khayam was adopted. Some festivals were re-established but made palatable to Islam. The Zarathustis, under majority influence, embraced these changes and labelled them ancestral.

As for the Parses, they left their country at the peak of Islamic atrocities and took with them just the memory of festivals. In India, there are six seasons, which did not match their calendar, and they fashioned new festivals over the years.

The ancient followers of Zarathustra's Teachings called themselves MazdaYasni. "Reverence to Wisdom". They went in search of Truth and celebrated Truth. They were Seekers, not Believers. They made decisions based on evidence, so it was free of superstition. **What you cannot prove, you believe.**

Zarathustra in the Gathas says we should use all ten senses with Wisdom to achieve enlightenment. Herodotus satirized it by saying, "Important decisions were made twice, once when drunk and again when sober, and if the decisions were identical, the Persians would adopt it or otherwise abandon it." Aristotle limited human senses to five; today, science recognizes upwards of 33 senses, but the world still believes and follows the antiquated Aristotle religiously. They believe what they hear, and those that don't believe get punished for blasphemy.

At least 3000 years before Galileo and the Western World, the ancient MazdaYasni followers of Zarathushtra knew that the earth revolved around the sun. They celebrated the natural landmarks caused by the earth's revolution around the sun as festivals. They had four very distinct seasons in the temperate region, and they celebrated the start of each season as a festival. They celebrated the equality of day and night on the Vernal and Autumnal Equinox, the longest day on Summer Solstice, and the shortest day on the Winter Solstice.

***The ancient MazdaYasni festivals recognized and celebrated the Truth in Nature and strengthened the culture of seeking the Truth. By celebrating myths and superstitions, Truth is no longer of consequence and seeking is replaced by believing.***

Here we shall present the festivals as initiated originally and as celebrated today. We have also endeavoured to highlight the cause of the transformation. I invite you as a jury to judge and decide the right course forward for yourself.

<sup>1</sup> Spring (Vasant Ritu), Summer (Grishma Ritu), Monsoon (Varsha Ritu), Autumn (Sharad Ritu), Pre-winter (Hemant Ritu), and Winter (Shishir or Shita Ritu)

<sup>1</sup> Gatha Yasna 44:18 "Dasa Aspa Arsana Vaitis Ustrem Ca Hyat Moi Mazda". "Ten Senses leading to Illumination through my Wisdom."



# THE CELEBRATION OF TRUTH IN NATURE

Fariborz Rahnamoon

The teachings of Zarathushtra reveal the Truth in nature, and the Mazdayasni festivals celebrate the Truth in nature. These festivals appealed to everyone, irrespective of national borders or ethnicity. Despite the efforts under Greek/Abrahamic influence to mystify them, the Truth coded in the names of the festivals has survived. Their names pinpoint the event in nature and identify the knowledge it wishes to impart. But, the myths later associated with them detract from reality towards fiction. Due to over-enthusiasm, multiple mythological characters and events sometimes get associated with a single festival. Some of the myths have a moral impact, while others promote patriotism. In either case, they limit the universality of the appeal.

Zarathustra recommends enjoying life and living a heavenly life on earth. Using occurrences in nature to enjoy life and spread happiness is paramount. The events in nature are universal; equinoxes and solstices belong to all humanity, and everyone can relate to them, irrespective of geographic location, skin colour or language. The main festivals celebrate events in nature, and just like the teachings of Zarathustra, they are for all humanity. The Avesta constantly blesses all the good people of “*Haft Keshwar Zamin*” Seven Continents.

During the last 1400 years of unrelenting cultural genocide, festivals like Gahanbars got converted into solemn prayer ceremonies in abandoned houses for the souls of the dead. With the massive numbers killed during the millennium-long genocide, Gahanbar has acquired a significant base in religion. With all original manuscripts destroyed, the only available recorded information is from the annals of the Islamic era. The writers, mainly Iranian converts to Islam, were privy to the festival’s camouflaged form of celebrations. Those being the only known records, have established themselves as the “way of the ancestor”. The oldest manuscript of consequence in hand is that of the Vendidad from 1323 CE, copied from an 1165 CE manuscript which no longer exists. It also shows that the Zoroastrians, who took refuge in India earlier, could not take with them any religious manuscripts.

A perfect example of a camouflaged cultural event established during the Islamic era is the character of ‘Haji Firuz’. This black-faced character wearing a red gown is out on the streets every Now Ruz, singing a particular song and dancing to the tune of his tambourine. Neither the singer nor the listener ponders on the song’s meaning or the message in the blackened face and red gown. The fact that he gets paid by the passerby has sustained the character over the last 14 centuries. I invite all readers to Google this character and read the confusion presented by scholars and the laity. Before that, please read the history of this Iranian [national hero at the link provided below](#). This exercise will cause a better appreciation of how a festival can lose its original message and meaning and how a false narrative can replace the Truth simply by repetition.

In the following few pages, we shall review the non-mythical origin of the festivals and their transformation into a celebration of myths. In the modern age, legends have become more appealing than Truth. They provide a patriotic appeal and help in the national sustainability of festivals. Truth is no longer of consequence, and seeking is replaced by believing. Consequently, these festivals have lost the universality of their message. The legends have no appeal outside ethical and national boundaries.

We can divide the festivals into three groups for clarity:

## THE THREE ARCTIC (*Airyānam Vaējah*) FESTIVALS

- 1- Saadeh ([Hiromba in Kadmi Calendar](#))
- 2- Maidhyo-Shahem (Mid-Summer) Gahanbar
- 3- AyeH Threm (Coming of Winter) Gahanbar

## THE FOUR TEMPERATE SEASONAL FESTIVALS

- 1- Now Ruz
- 2- Tirgan
- 3- Mehregan
- 4- Yalda

## THE FOUR TEMPERATE GAHANBARS

- 1- Maidhyo-Zarem (Mid Spring)
- 2- Paiti-Shahem (End of Summer)
- 3- Maidh-Yarem (Mid- winter)
- 4- Hamas-Path-Maedem (Everything is Equal, Middle) – Day & Night, Heat & Cold)

## SADEH

Sadeh is a festival that has its origin in Aryana Vaejah, the arctic home of the ancestors of the Zarathushtis. Saad means hundred, and Sadeh is the celebration of the hundredth day of Arctic winter, which falls on the 10th of Bahman (30 January). Winter in the Arctic begins 30 days after the Autumnal Equinox, marked with the celebration of *Ayeh Threm (Coming of Winter) Gahanbar*. The severity of the Arctic winter reduces after 100 days, and people start preparing for the Arctic summer.

In ancient days the farmers came together at a central location to celebrate, communicate and plan for the start of farming activities. Each family contributed twigs and wood to light a fire and keep warm while enjoying the day with food, dance and music.

Sadeh as a festival continued when the Iranians came down to the temperate region, where winter started two months later. After the hundredth day of the Arctic winter, the severity of winter reduces globally, legitimizing the festival's continuation. A fire was necessary to keep the party warm, so it became the festival's central feature. The Shahnameh attributed the Sadeh festival to Hoshang Shah and his accidental discovery of how to light a fire. After that, Sadeh commemorated the ability to ignite a fire at will and the consequential human progress.

### CELEBRATION

In modern days Sadeh is celebrated by lighting a massive bonfire at sunset at a central location. At dusk, people gather around it while a group of Mobeds recite Atash-Neyayesh in reverence for fire and ignite the bonfire. Then the gathered crowd greets each other, distributes sweets and other delicacies among themselves and enjoys the evening with dance and music as long as the fire provides the heat. During the day, people gather branches, twigs and desert scrubs from the wilderness while children go door-knocking for firewood and then pile them all at the agreed location.



Sadeh Celebration in Yazd



Sadeh Celebration in Kurdistan Iraq

Iranians, Tajiks, Kurds, Uzbeks, Afghans and others celebrate Sadeh; some openly, others discreetly.

### SOME MISCONCEPTIONS

Some count the hundred as fifty nights and fifty days to Now Ruz; this concept fails every four years when there are 51 days and 51 nights to Now Ruz due to a leap year. It is an attempt to distance the festival from its ancient scientific origin. Many repeat it without thinking.

Also, there is a song made-up by adversaries and associated with children's firewood gathering. The song blesses those that give the firewood and curses those that don't. It is very un-Zoroastrian to curse, and it is one of the narratives, publicized to discredit the festival and the community.



Sadeh Celebration by Tajiks <sup>5</sup>



## NOW RUZ

Now Ruz is said to be one of the oldest festivals in human history, claimed to have been started by the legendary Shah Jamshid, who ruled during the Ice Age. He celebrated the first spring after the ice age, and thus the epithet Now Ruz-e-Jamshidi was coined. It is today officially celebrated in over twenty countries, irrespective of religion or ethnicity. UNESCO recognized it as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009.

The name consists of two words, Now meaning new, and Ruz meaning day. Embedded in the name is a depth of scientific knowledge also preserved in archaeology. Now Ruz has become a proper name, and no one thinks about the word's meaning or origin. In the Persian language, New Year is Sal-e-Now. To understand why it became Now Ruz, we must go to Persepolis.



Historians and archaeologists attest that the bas reliefs at Apadana Palace depict the celebration of the Now Ruz of 487 BCE. It was a unique year for the location. The sunrise (horizontal East-West) and the Vernal Equinox (vertical North-South) coincided at this location. Precisely at the moment of the equinox, the Sun rose, casting its first rays on a stone pillar erected in the Apadana palace courtyard. The New Year and the New Day started at the same *moment* in Persepolis. It is a once-in-a-lifetime event for a location, for it happens every year in different areas around the globe.

*The pillar is no more, but the stone pedestal exists in the Apadana palace courtyard. (photo right)*



***Zarathushtra coined the word Now Ruz in 1725 BCE. Thirteen years after King Vistasp had accepted his teachings, Zarathushtra calculated that this astronomical phenomenon of the coinciding of sunrise (horizontal movement) with the equinox (vertical movement) would happen in Balkh. He reported it to the King, who proclaimed the New Year (Sal e Now) of 1725 BCE as the New Day – Now Ruz.***

The coinciding of the sunrise with the equinox at both these locations is a verifiable fact. The pedestal on which the pillar once stood in Apadana palace is still there. The locals visit this location every equinox to watch the sunrise, although it does not coincide with the equinox. ***In 2024, this phenomenon will occur in Erbil, Kurdistan, in Iraq, at 6:06 am local time. The equinox and the sunrise will happen simultaneously in this ancient city of Erbil.*** The Kurds have a custom of lighting a torch and going up the mountain to greet the rising Sun on new year's day. This ancient city has perpetually preserved this culture, and 2024 will be a memorable year for it, as Ruz-e-Now (New Day) and Sal-e-Now (New Year) will commence simultaneously at this location.



*NOW RUZ TABLE – Sofreh Haft SeenE – Seven Trays*



*Sofreh Now Ruz, the Now Ruz table is the main feature of the celebration. It used to be a lavish 7-part spread for the guest to enjoy and was continuously replenished. It symbolized the seven steps of the ancient *Way of Life in the Gathas of Zarathushtra*. In the ancient past, they placed seven large trays on the table, each with numerous eatables for the guests' consumption and some symbolic items. It was famously called Haft SeenE – Seven Trays.*

After the Islamic conquest, they camouflaged the message of the Now Ruz table to be allowed to celebrate it, hoping to one day gain freedom and revive it. Unfortunately, freedom never came, and today the coverup message has become internationally associated with Now Ruz. It diverts attention from the lofty philosophy originally embedded in the Now Ruz table. ***Today in the free world, it is time to make the original Gathic message known with the hope that it will trigger a paradigm change and save the world from impending global disasters.***

The Seven Trays – **Haft SeenE** represents the seven steps derived from the Gathas of Zarathushtra. They are as follows.

- 1- **Good Mind** (*BAHMAN- VohuMana*) **Use your Good Mind to inquire and learn the**
- 2- **Ultimate Truth** (*ORDIBEHST-Asha Vahista*) **the Laws of Nature- the Secrets in Nature -Use them to make**
- 3- **Good Rules** (*SHAHRIVAR- Khash Atra Variya*) **Good Laws- Good Products – Which will lead to**
- 4- **Lawful Desire** (*ESPAND- Spanta Armaity*) **Righteousness – that will pave the way toward**
- 5- **Wholeness** (*KHORDAD- Hurvatata*) **Mental, Physical and Spiritual – which will lead to**
- 6- **Immortality** (*AMORDAD*)- **(a) Being remembered for the good work for generations**  
**(b) Losing the fear of Death –resulting in oneness with**
- 7- Ahura Mazda- **Creation of Wisdom KHOD-AH – KHOD = Self AH = to come.**

To Realize God through **Self Realization.**

***These steps lead to a paradigm shift. Humans no longer strive for dollars and gold. They measure wealth by the good work done, the knowledge gained, and the good name earned. The aim in life is Immortality, by being remembered for generations for the good work done.***

Ye Vaio **Asha** Ufyani

Truly, the **Asha (2)** derived

**Manas** ca **Vohu**

By the **Good Mind (1)**

Apaourvim

Never before known

Mazdam Ca Ahurem

Among the wise and all creation

Yaeiby **Khashtrem** ca Ayzaonvamnem

With it make **Good Rules (3)** and never waning

Varedaiti **Armaitish**

Increasing **Righteousness (4)**

A Moi **Rafedrai** Zeveng Jasata

Leading us towards **Perfection (5)**

Zarathushtra – Gatha -Yasna Ha 28.3 (FR)

At Yeng Ashaat ca Voista

And those who are righteous are known for

Van Gheus ca Datang Man ongho

Good creations and use of the wise mind

Eret weng Mazda Ahura

In harmony with Wisdom in Existence

Aeiby Perena Apanais

Their aim achieved

Kamem at Ve Khas mai bya

Their desire assuredly **Happiness**

Asuna Vaeda Khva raitya

Their reward, **knowledge** and **being known as righteous,**

Vaintya Sravao

**faithful and praiseworthy. (6)**

Zarathushtra - Gatha - Yasna HA 28.10 (FR)

In Asha (Nature, Universe), embedded is the Truth; by using our Good Mind, we can discover the Truth (Ashem Vohu - the good ones) and use them to make Good Rules and good products. It will lead to a Righteous Society, a society in harmony with nature, where everyone has the possibility to achieve Wholeness, Perfection in whatever their ability and inclination are. Their desire is not to amass money and gold but the happiness of having gained such knowledge. Their reward is Immortality by being known and praised for generations for their contribution. At such a stage, the spiritually inclined can discover the God within through self-realization (Khod-Ah).

***With this change in paradigm, no more gouging people to amass wealth, no more underpaid labour, no more wars for natural resources, and no more global warming. Such was the message symbolized by the ‘Sofreh Haft SeenE’ - Haft SeenE Now Ruz Table.***

The Now Ruz table has acquired different names in different countries. In Afghanistan, it is called ‘*Haft Mewah*’. In Iran, it is called *Haft-Seen* or *Haft Sheen*. It was also called *Haft Chin*, where seven types of grain were grown. All have preserved the Haft-Seven in their names. What is essential is to follow the seven steps in life and make the world a better place. These natural steps are not limited to any religion; in the ancient past, the Magis promoted it among humanity.

Jesus Christ, who received the first three steps from the Magis as gifts, followed through and said, “The Father and I are one.” (John 10:30). The Jews stoned him, and the Romans crucified him. ***It is time for the world to accept the gifts of the Magis and follow the steps as did Jesus and “be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect”.*** It is time to discontinue the now famed but erroneous depiction of the Now Ruz table camouflaged with petty philosophies attributed to individual items whose name starts with the letter S, for example.

*I am SUMAC, exotic in my way; I make your Kebabs have a tangy taste. I symbolize Taste.*  
*I am SEER Garlic; I lower blood pressure; I Pacify; I symbolize Peace.*  
*I am SENJED, the tasteless berry of the sorb tree. I am the fruit of a tree that provides shade in summer.*  
*I represent the shelter and security you need when you want to rest.*  
*I am SERKEH the Vinegar; I am sour, but I am an excellent preservative; I symbolize Preservation. Etc.*



*Haft Mewah*

Instead, place Seven Trays (Haft SeenE) and fill them with numerous items irrespective of how their names spell. Now the Egg, the bowl of fish, and the pomegranate that don’t start with the letter ‘S’ have a legitimate place. This presentation will highlight and draw attention to the Seven Gathic Steps towards progress, wholeness and spiritual oneness with the God within.

Gouging others to become millionaires and billionaires will no longer be the objective in life. The goal will be Good Deeds, Good Discoveries, and Good Products to acquire a good name leading to Immortality through the memory of generations. That will blossom the Heavenly Earth, and everyone will enjoy a heavenly life on this only Heavenly Planet in the solar system.

It is a shame to distort a benevolent way of life with superstition and the personification of the Amsha Spentas.



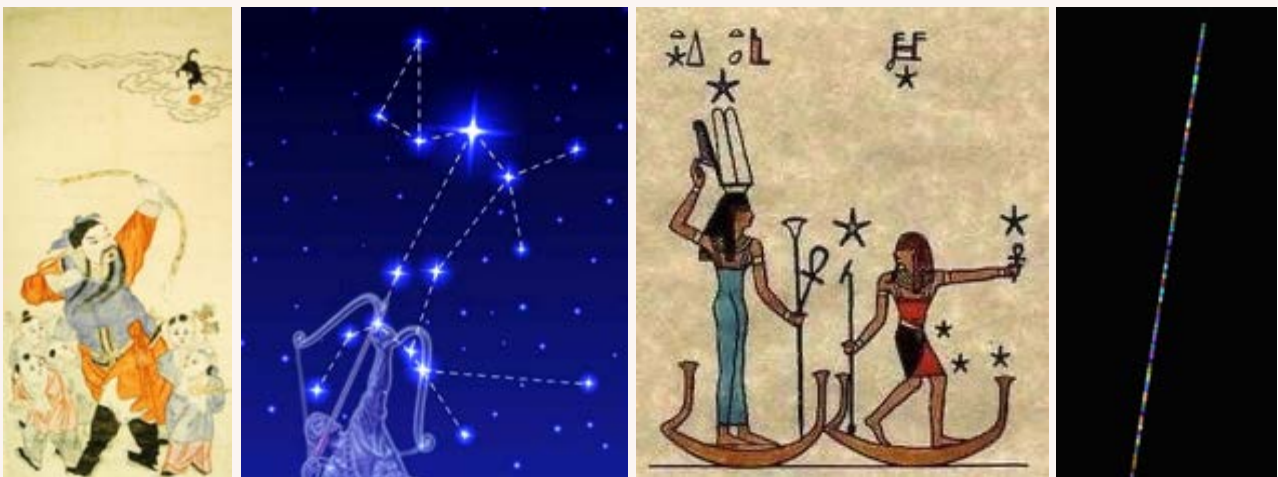
## TIRGAN

## THE LONGEST DAY – THE SUMMER SOLSTICE

The first day of summer, the longest day, the Summer Solstice, was celebrated as TIRGAN and what better way to rejoice on a hot summer day than to douse each other with the life-giving water? It is a day of picnics in the fields and parks and drenching each other with water. It is a day of fun and the enjoyment of nature. It is customary to tie a rainbow-coloured wristband called Tir-o-Bod, representing the colours of the star Tishtar as it flickers in the sky. It shows the ancient Iranians were more knowledgeable than modern-day historians and scholars can imagine. The name of the first month of summer is Tir. Tir or Tishtar is the brightest star visible from Earth as the rising star before sunrise in summer. Its Greek name is Sirius, located in the Canis Major (Big Dog) constellation. Ancient Egyptians noted that when Sirius reappeared before daylight around the summer solstice, the annual flooding of the Nile River followed. The Nile got flooded because of the monsoon rains at its source in Central Africa. When Tishtrya or Sirius appears in the evening sky in winter, there is snow and rain. In summer, the heat turns water into clouds which would convert to rain later, initiating the epithet Rain Star. In Tir Yasht, we read. *“We sacrifice unto Tishtrya; We sacrifice unto the rains of Tishtrya.”* (Tir Yasht 6:12).

The night sky fascinated ancient civilizations, and many myths have developed. Several cultures associated Tishtrya with the bow and arrow. Hindu mythology associates it with hunting and bow and arrow. The Chinese visualized a large bow and arrow across the southern sky, formed by the constellation of Puppis and Canis Major. Similarly, the Egyptians depicted goddess Sopdet drawing an arrow at Sirius. Except for the Greeks, who saw it as a dog.

The Iranians saw in it an archer who they called Erekhsha or Arash. He was holding the bow aiming the arrow at Tishtar. This imaginative depiction found its way into Tir Yasht 8:6, indicating the star’s direction. The constellation’s shape created the mythological archer Arash and the distance of its visibility before sunrise the arrow’s flight path. *“We sacrifice unto Tishtrya, the bright and glorious star; who flies, towards the sea Vouru-Kasha, as swiftly as the arrow darted through the heavenly space, which Erekhsha (Arash), the swift archer, the Arya amongst the Aryas whose arrow was the swiftest, shot from Mount Khshaotha to Mount Hvanvant.”*



1-Chinese Emperor Zang (75-88 CE) draws a bow and arrow toward Sirius. 2- The constellation depicts Arash the archer. 3-Egyptian goddess Sopdet represented Sirius, who brought new soil and fertility to the land by flooding the Nile. 4- Sirius flickers in multicolours across the sky.

During the Islamic era, the Pahlavi text reinterpreted this verse by devolving scientific information and giving it a mythological perspective. Arash, the archer, settles the border dispute by shooting an arrow to demarcate the border between Iran and Turan during the reign of Manucher Shah. Since Arash had infused his arrow with his life force, he melted away as the arrow flew towards its destination. This melting out of Arash dramatizes the constellation’s disappearance with the rising Sun’s light. Once again, mythology replaces science and belief replace truth.

The Arabs had imposed upon the Iranians their lunar calendar. Within a few generations, trying to keep up with

the legal calendar, the ancient Iranian calendar got bungled up. The once blueprint of nature no longer aligns with nature. The festival did not align with the season, so the logical alternative was to set a symmetrical system. The best choice was the alignment of the names of the day and the month. So out went the science, and in came a logic-strengthened superstition. The Iranians who had converted by force to Islam had more freedom; they managed to preserve their culture. They maintained Now Ruz and Yalda; they celebrated it on the correct day on the Vernal Equinox and Winter Solstice. That is why Zarathushtis also celebrate these two festivals on the correct date, not so with Mehregan and Tirgan.

**Conclusion:** Tirgan is the celebration of the Summer Solstice, the longest day, the first day of summer, and the first day of the month of Tir. Being based on wisdom and science, it has the potential for international celebration. Not so when based on the coinciding of the name of the month and the day.

What the Greeks saw as a Big Dog, the Persians, Indians, Chinese, and Egyptians saw as a bow and arrow. Arash-e-Kamangir, Arash the archer, is an Iranian asterism comprising seven stars instead of the Canis Major. The story of Arash-e-Kamangir is a beautiful and inspiring myth. It is a later development and is not from the Avesta or the Shahnameh, as many claim. As per the Shahnameh, Fereydoon divides his kingdom among his three sons, Salm, Toor and Iraj. Iraj gets the lands of Iran; the other two brothers are not happy with their share. They kill Iraj in cold blood. Fereydoon was very angry but did not want to wage war against his sons. The wife of Iraj, who was pregnant, gave birth to a baby girl. This girl grows up and gives birth to a baby boy. He is named Manucher, and Fereydoon crowns him the King of Iran. Manucher goes to war against his maternal uncles, Salm and Toor and kills them both in a battle to avenge his grandfather. So there is no border dispute and no peace treaty. Manucher is a clear winner; he killed the two kings, and the situation does not warrant a peace treaty.

According to the Shahnameh: The peace treaty with the Turanians was during the reign of Kai Ghobad, and it was young Rostam's first combat. Rostam picked Afrasiab up by his belt and held him overhead when Afrasiab's belt broke, and he managed to escape, but it scared the hell out of Afrasiab. He advised his father, Pashang, the Turanian King, to initiate a peace treaty with the Iranians and retreated to the other side of river Jehun. There is no mention of Arash, nor does the situation warrant a contest. Arash as an archer gets mentioned in a few verses of the Shahnameh but for different reasons.

The now famous story of Arash-e-Kamangir is from a poem by Siavseh Kasraei written in 1959. It is not from the Avesta or Shahnameh, as believed.

The relation of Tirgan with science gets even more potent by the multicoloured wristband (Tir-o Baad) representing the visible colours of the star Tishtrya.



Tir O Bod

**MEHREGAN  
THE AUTUMNAL EQUINOX**

Mehregan is the celebration of one of the four unique positions of Mehr, the Sun, in its relation to the earth. It is the celebration of the Autumnal Equinox, the first day of Autumn when trees start to shed their leaves and prepare for winter slumber. Likewise, farmers have gathered the crops and reaped the fruits of their collaboration with Nature. It is time to thank Nature and all who contributed to the endeavour. It is time to enjoy the outcome of working with Nature by sharing the bounties of Nature.

Mehregan has a symbolic table spread like Now Ruz. It consists of Seven Trays adorned with the year's produce and shared with guests - the seven trays represent the Seven Eternal Laws per the Gathas.

Mehr is the manifestation of love. It symbolizes the growth cycle towards wholeness and perfection (*Hurvata*), from the seed sown to the fruits reaped. Mehregan is celebrated by sharing and spreading love and kindness among friends and neighbours. The celebration of equality manifested by the equality of the day and night, just like Now Ruz. **According to Shahnameh, Faraydoon, a pre-Zoroastrian king and a follower of Mithraism (Mehr), crowned himself King on the auspicious day of Mehregan, on the first day of Mehr.**

The proof of the scientific character (Truth) of the festival is in Mehr Yasht, which mentions that when Mithra, the Sun, is at mid-day position at 63 degrees longitude, on the border of Afghanistan and Iran, it spreads its arms and holds the two corners of the landmass. In other words, there is sunshine (arms of Mithra) in the entire hemisphere, from Australia and Japan to Africa and Europe, which is a verifiable fact.



In the Islamic era, the animal sacrifice became part of the celebration to make it compatible with the Abrahamic sacrifice. Autumn was also the time to collect taxes, and some rulers preferred it to Now Ruz and celebrated Mehregan as the New Year.

Mehregan, like Now Ruz, Tirgan and Yalda, celebrate the Sun's unique position in relation to the earth and not a superstitious logic of coinciding names. These festivals remind us of the science of the Zarathustis compared to others who believed the earth was the centre of the universe. Ancient Zarathustis were in search of truth and celebrated the truth. Striving to leave a beneficial legacy and be immortal (*Amordad*) is what the Gathas teach; **celebrating the festivals on the wrong date or commemorating myths, however patriotic, is robbing the ancient Zarathustis of immortality and bestowing it on Galileo millenniums later.**

Mehr, Mithra, the Sun God, is a pre-Zoroastrian deity. Mithraism has formed a very sophisticated ritual over the centuries by portraying astronomy as symbols and rituals of the faith. Zarathushtra drew attention away from myths and rituals and promoted the Truth. Nevertheless, Mithraism never got eradicated, resurfacing whenever there was a weakness. After the invasion of Alexander, the Romans encouraged the resurrection of Mithraism among the Parthians. Their efforts backfired, and the Roman traders and soldiers fell in love with Mithra and introduced it to Europe as the religion of traders and soldiers.

Over the next six hundred years, Mithraism established roots in Europe, adding European features. Finally, the Sun God got replaced by the Son of God by adopting most of the deep-rooted Mithraic myths and rituals into Christianity. Like the date of birth of Christ, the twelve apostles, resurrection, the cross, crucifixion, and the bread and wine, to name a few. Similarly, modern Zoroastrianism incorporated many of its features. Fire is called the son of Ahura Mazda. The place of worship is called Dar-e-Mehr. Mehr Yasht became a prayer instead of the thesis that it was.

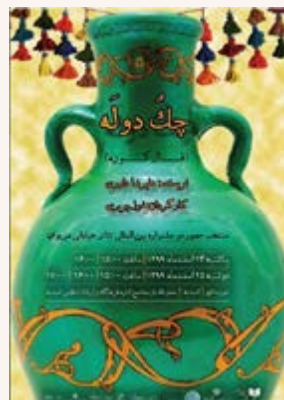


## YALDA

Yalda is the celebration of the Winter Solstice. It is also the celebration of the birth of Mithra, the Sun (“Zayesh E Mehr”). It later became the birth of Jesus Christ by adding two nights and three days to the Winter Solstice. Due to the 23 degrees tilt of the Earth, the Sun seems stationary for three days when it reaches the southernmost point as seen from Earth. After that, the day starts growing, perceived as the birth of the Sun (Mehr).

The word “Yalda” is a Syriac word meaning birth. It is a festival that the Zarathustis did not celebrate after the Arab invasion. The Iranians converted to Islam had more freedom, so they observed it. When the Zoroastrians were able to celebrate it, they copied the Muslim compatriots, but they adopted various names for it, like “Shab e Chella” and “Khorram Ruz” (Joyful Day). The original name is not known.

The longest night of the year is celebrated by reading the poetry of Hafez, the 14th-century poet. Women perform the “Chak O Duleh” ritual, where each woman places a personal item in the Duleh (earthenware) and makes a wish. Then a random couplet from the divan of Hafez is recited while a young girl draws an item from the pottery. The interpretation of the couplet answers the owner’s wish. The recitation goes on till the items in the Duleh are exhausted. Summer fruits like watermelon, pomegranate, and a mix of nuts keep them busy on this long winter night. The recitation of the poems of Hafez means this ritual is from after the 14<sup>th</sup> century CE. It is today copied by the Zarathustis and is one of the two festivals, the other being Now Ruz, celebrated on the right day by the Zarathustis.



Chak O Duleh

Chak O Duleh

During the Islamic era, the Zoroastrians did everything to prove to the rulers that their religion was not significantly different from Islam. They did this to avoid harassment by the rulers and be treated at least like the Christians and Jews. Today these changes are sworn to be the way of the ancestors and are followed ardently. On the one hand, they claim that Zoroastrianism is wisdom associated. On the other hand, they perform acts based on superstition.

1. [http://ahura.homestead.com/files/FESTIVALS/HAJI\\_PHIROOZ\\_-TABARI.pdf](http://ahura.homestead.com/files/FESTIVALS/HAJI_PHIROOZ_-TABARI.pdf)
2. [http://ahura.homestead.com/files/FESTIVALS/STORY\\_OF\\_HIROMBA\\_2022.pdf](http://ahura.homestead.com/files/FESTIVALS/STORY_OF_HIROMBA_2022.pdf)
3. According to the Mazda Yasni Calendar
4. A tradition which attributes to Hoshang the founding of the Sade festival in commemoration of his accidental discovery of fire is “obviously a rather late and popular account” (Yarshater, 1983, p. 421) and occurs only in the *Šāh-nāma* in a passage that Khaleghi (2001, I, pp. 38-40) has shown to be an interpolation.
5. <https://mfa.tj/en/berlin/view/7075/the-feast-of-sada>
6. Bible Mathew Ch 4 Luke Ch 4
7. Bible Mathew Ch 5:48
8. Tishtrya appeared before sunrise and as the sun rose it became invisible to the eye.
9. <https://www.starmythworld.com/>
10. Pictures 1 & 3 Wikipedia Picture 2 created by author. 4 <https://earthsky.org/>
11. <https://earthsky.org/brightest-stars/sirius-the-brightest-star/>

## PARSI, THY NAME IS ALSO MERRIMENT

(Celebration of Festivals)

Meheryar N. Rivetna



Meheryar is the author of *Zarathustra: The Man and the Message*. It is an in-depth study of the Zoroastrian religion with an aim to dispel the myths contradicting Zarathustra's teachings. The book offers a well-researched exegesis of the Gathas and highlights the influence of the religion on other faiths and western civilization among other interesting topics.

The book is a valuable resource for one who wants to grasp the essence of Zarathustra and the religion he founded.

Meheryar has published articles on the Zoroastrian faith in the *FEZANA Journal*, *Chehreh-Namah* and *Parsiana*.

**The** munificence of the Parsis is legendary, and so 'Parsi, Thy Name is Charity' is an apt moniker. To that appellation can also be added 'merriment'. Festivals are a characteristic part of the Zoroastrian religion, a faith which enjoins on man the pleasant duty of being happy<sup>1</sup>. The Parsis of India, as do the Zoroastrians of Iran, celebrate their festive days with much joy. What is often mislaid is the purpose behind the importance of these celebratory days. Akin to the objective of rituals, the festive days are meant to impress upon the adherents the doctrines of the faith.

The chief aim of religious observances is to promote social harmony, charity, and philanthropy. The Zoroastrian religion inculcates sublime moral principles of benevolence, charity, and brotherly love, combined with innocent pleasures<sup>2</sup>. It is enjoined in Zoroastrian doctrines to be as merry as possible since joyfulness is a positive virtue, a weapon to defeat sorrow and care<sup>3</sup>. Worship, i.e., a visit to the *Agiaiy* (fire temple), is an obligatory part of many festivals.

### Nowruz

*Nowruz*, literally meaning New (*Now*) Day (*Ruz*), is the most joyous of Zoroastrian feasts, a spring festival invested with special religious significance<sup>1</sup>. It is one of the most important festive days in the Parsi calendar. *Nowruz* came to be associated with the legend of King Jamshid of the mythical Peshdadian dynasty. Jamshid's reign is marked as an era of sublime happiness, an epoch free of evil, old age, sickness, envy and extremes of weather<sup>4</sup>. The characteristic of the feast is that it is a time of renewal, hope and joy and seeks to make everything fresh and auspicious<sup>1</sup>.

In ancient lore, *Nowruz* was the celebration of spring, when the sun regains strength and overcomes winter's cold and darkness and is a time of renewal of growth and vigor in nature<sup>5</sup>. Thus, *Nowruz* became a traditional spring festival, ushering in the loveliest season of the year with joyous festivities and could be renamed the "(festival of the) New day" celebrated with religious rites<sup>5</sup>. The day became a reminder of the unique "New Day", which, eventually, will bring everlasting bliss<sup>5</sup> (*frashokereti*). Jamshid is said to have commemorated the event by instituting *Nowruz*, the New Year festival at the vernal equinox<sup>4</sup>. This appears to be a way of teaching Zarathustra's doctrines to an ancient, non-literate pastoral people who did not use images to sustain belief but venerated divinity through what they saw and experienced in the world around them<sup>5</sup>.

In India, due to calendar anomalies, the Parsis observe the New Year a few months after Jamshidi *Nowruz*, which is traditionally celebrated on March 21. The Parsis of India, distinct from their Iranian brethren, conform to what is termed as the Shahenshahi calendar, which does not account for leap years. Based on this calendar, in contemporary times, the Parsis celebrate the New Year in the summer months. To alleviate the confusion between Jamshidi *Nowruz* and that celebrated in India, some Parsis ascribe the New Year, per the Shahenshahi calendar, to the migration of some of the Zoroastrians to India, after the Arab invasion and the day on which they settled on the west coast of India, making it their new home. The Parsis, after settling in India, neglected to add one whole month every 120 years to make up for the deficiency

caused by omitting to take into account one-fourth of a day at the end of the year<sup>2</sup>.

## Pateti

The day before the New Year's, called Pateti, is also a day of celebration. In reality, it is a day to atone for sins committed during the past year. The term Pateti is a corrupt form of the Avestan word Paitita which literally translates as "fallen into repentance"<sup>2</sup>. Many Parsis make the error of calling the New Year's day as Pateti.

## Khordad-Sal

Another important festive day for the Parsis of India is Khordad-Sal. This occurs on the day of Khordad in the month of Farvardin and is a day of celebration to honor Zarathustra's revelation of Ahura Mazda's laws<sup>2,6</sup>, and it is also considered as the anniversary of Zarathustra's birth. The best gift the Parsis can give Zarathustra on this auspicious day is adherence to his principles without distorting his teachings.

## Zarathosht-no-Diso

Zarathosht-no-Diso marks the day of Zarathustra's passing away at the age of 77. It falls on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month of Deh<sup>2</sup>. A death anniversary cannot be a day of celebration, but it is an important day in remembrance of Zarathustra and to ensure commitment to the tenets he left for humankind.

## Muktad

The last ten days of the Parsi calendar, including the last five days of the last month, *Spendarmad*, and the five intercalary days called *Gatha-Gahambar* days, are dedicated to the spirits of the departed. Collectively, these are termed *Muktad* days or *Fravardegan* days. The term *Muktad* is said to be a corruption of the word *muktiamā*<sup>2</sup> meaning soul that has passed into paradise and these days are dedicated to prayers and rituals in memory of the dear departed. The word *Fravardegan* means a ceremony to honor the *Fravashis*, i.e., the *Farohars* or guardian spirits<sup>7</sup>. In ancient Iran, these days of remembering the deceased occurred at the end of the year on the *Hamaspahmaedaem Gahambar* days (see below), just before the start of the spring season. At the end of these 10 holidays, the New Year began with the vernal equinox<sup>7</sup>. As mentioned earlier, on fleeing to India after the Arab invasion of Iran, the Parsis neglected to account for the leap years, and so now they have fallen back in their calculation of these festive days devoted to the remembrance of the souls of the departed dear ones<sup>7</sup>.

Theologically, the souls of the dead were presumed to partake of the new life and then begin to circulate in nature that was also supposedly dead (dormant) during the long winter months<sup>7</sup>.

Some Parsis dedicate 18 days to the remembrance of the departed souls.

## Gahambars

Zoroastrian folklore has it that the world was created in 365 days at six equal intervals. At the end of each of these days was a day of rest with these intervals called Gahambar days which fall six times in a year<sup>2</sup>. The Parsis celebrate these days with prayers followed by the partaking of food and fruit. The Gahambars, being seasonal, essentially venerate nature embodied in the six creations of Ahura Mazda—sky, water, earth, vegetation, animals and humans.

The importance of the Gahambars arises from two viewpoints: (i) Agricultural and (ii) Cosmological. The Gahambars are seasonal festivals, the origin of which is found in Ys 1.9 [nivaêdhayemi hañkârayemi ýâiryâêibyô...; translated as: "at this time of piety I invite the Gahambars (ýâiryâêibyô) to this assembly..."].

The primary significance of the Gahambars is to offer thanksgiving to God for the regularity of the seasons. The prosperity of the world depends upon this order in nature<sup>8</sup>. The earth, however, knows only of four seasons. Where does the idea of six seasons come from? The six "seasons" is a misconception of the original intent of the Gahambars. These festive events were to mark pastoral and farming days of the year.

The Visperad (1.2) illustrates the Gahambars as:

The first Gahambar, termed Maidhyôzaremayā, occurs from the 41st day to the 45th day after Nowruz. The term signifies mid-spring and honors the springtime blossoming of vegetation. From a cosmological perspective, it reverses the creation of heaven and astral bodies.



The second Gahambar, called Maidhyoshema festival, occurs mid-summer on the 101st to the 105th days after the New Year. It marks the creation of water, it being an essential factor in the sustenance of all life forms. It heralds the time when there is an abundance of crops and vegetation.

Paitishhayem is the third Gahambar, taking place on the 176th day to the 180th days after the New Year, commemorating the creation of the earth and is the autumnal harvest time to reap ripened crops.

The fourth Gahambar, Ayathrem, celebrates the creation of life forms other than plant life. Falling on the 206th to the 210th days post-New Year, it also observes the end of summer and the breeding season of cattle.

Maidhyrem, the fifth Gahambar, signifies the evolution of human life from lower life forms. It falls mid-winter on the 286th day to the 290th day after the New Year and symbolizes the end of all agricultural functions for the year. With the weather conditions being harsh (cold and rain) it is a time for humans to repose from the labor of previous months.

The sixth Gahambar, Hamaspathmaedaem, falling on the 361st to 365th days is a time of remembrance for departed souls and to celebrate the vernal equinox. These are the five Gatha days referred to as Gatha-Gahambar days.

Although the Gahambar days last for five days, the last day is the principal celebratory day. Reverence for the six elements of creation as part of the Gahambar celebrations was a later addition<sup>7</sup>. The Gahambars tend to be a community event with meals generously provided by the well-to-do. The purpose of these celebrations, often missed, is the social intercourse to promote harmony, goodwill and charity in society, all essential aspects of human life, as pronounced by Zarathushtra.

## Jashans

There are a few celebratory days, such as Jashans, that some Parsis observe. Jashans, such as Avan-Ardavisur-Banu, to commemorate the deity Anahita of water; the Adar Jashan to honor the genius of fire and similar other days. Many of these days are not widely observed. Mehregan and Tirgan, festivals of great importance to Zoroastrians in Iran, are generally not celebrated by the Zoroastrians of India.

In conclusion, the Parsis, true to Zoroastrian tradition, mingle their pleasure with worship and good deeds. Cyrus Pangborn<sup>8</sup>, the late professor of religion at Rutgers University, sums up the Zoroastrians best: "There is sincerity in their piety and reverence...They are also immensely sociable. They love sharing their good times. And they have style. Long may they live".

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# COVER STORY

In **Middle Persian/Pahlavi** texts *Miθra* is represented as 𐭎𐭓𐭕 ‘mitr’ which is an archaism for *mīhr/mehr* (Parthian 𐭎𐭓𐭕 *mitr*). It represents both the 7<sup>th</sup> month, as well as the 16<sup>th</sup> day of a month in Persian calendar.

*Miθra* is frequently mentioned together with *Srōš* (Avestan *sraoša-*) – who is the divinity of ‘obedience’ and ‘loyalty’ (also the 17<sup>th</sup> day of any month) – and *Rašn* (Avestan *rašnu-*) the deity of ‘justice’ and the 18<sup>th</sup> day of a month in Iranian calendar:

𐭎𐭓𐭕 | 𐭎𐭓𐭕 | 𐭎𐭓𐭕 Mehr ud Srōš ud Rašn

*Mehr* is also referred to as the ‘good lord and blesser of the pious’, i.e. a member of the Mazdean community:

𐭎𐭓𐭕 | 𐭎𐭓𐭕 | 𐭎𐭓𐭕 Mehr xvātāy nēvak dahmān āfrīn

Moreover, together with the *Gušnāsp* and *Farrobāy* (*farranbay*), *Mehr* was the epitaph of the 3<sup>rd</sup> sacred Zoroastrian Fire, the 𐭎𐭓𐭕 𐭎𐭓𐭕 𐭎𐭓𐭕 ādur Burzīn-Mehr; the fire associated with agriculturalists and husbandmen in the Sasanid Iran.

### Abstraction:

It is in the Middle Persian literature that the *mehr* semantically drifts from a concrete word into abstractions; most notably ‘compassion’:

𐭎𐭓𐭕 | 𐭎𐭓𐭕 | 𐭎𐭓𐭕 mehr ud zurvān i akanārak ud mēnōg i dātistān

mehr ud zurvān i akanārak ud mēnōg i dātistān

boundless compassion (*mehr*) and time (*zurvān*) and spirit of justice

‘Loyalty’ and ‘friendship’:

𐭎𐭓𐭕 | 𐭎𐭓𐭕 | 𐭎𐭓𐭕 mehr dāšt ud dōstīh varzēt

mehr dāšt ud dōstīh varzēt

s/he had compassion and made friendship

‘Love’ and ‘lovemaking’:

𐭎𐭓𐭕 | 𐭎𐭓𐭕 | 𐭎𐭓𐭕 mehr ud dōšāram i pāk

mehr ud dōšāram i pāk

pure love and lovemaking

The **Mehrigān**/Mehregān/Meheregān 𐭎𐭓𐭕 Festival:

Although it is not attested in Middle Persian/Pahlavi texts, the feast of *Mehrigān* is celebrated on 16<sup>th</sup> day of the of month of *Mehr* in the Iranian calendar.



The word *Mehrīgān* is compound made up of the noun *mehr* and two Middle Persian suffixes. They include the ‘qualitative’ suffix *-īk* (etymologically equivalent to Latin/English *-ic*): *mehr* +

*īk* → *mehrīk* 𐭮𐭥𐭥𐭥 corresponding to Modern Persian: *mehrī* مری ‘of or belonging/having

quality or descent of “*mehr*”; as well as the Middle/Modern Persian plural suffix *-ān*:

*mehrīk* + *ān* → *mehrīgān* 𐭮𐭥𐭥𐭥𐭥 (Avestan *\*miθrakāna*)

Just as in Middle Persian, in Modern Persian مهر *mehr* denotes abstract notions such as

‘compassion’ and ‘love’ as well as the concrete conception such as the ‘sun’, as is attested in the poems below by 11<sup>th</sup> century poets Gorgānī and Ferdowsī:

همه مهری ز نادیدن بکاهد اگر دیده نیند دل نخواهد

*hame mehrī zinādīdan bekāhad agar dīdeh nabīnad del naxāhad*  
all love/compassion lessen with absence heart covets not what eyes do not see

خداوند کیهان و گردان سپهر فروزنده ی ماه و ناهید و مهر

*xudāvand-i kayhān u gardān sepehr frūzandeh-yi māh u nāhīd u mehr*

(Ahura Mazda is) the lord of the universe and revolving sky  
the light of the Moon, Venus and the Sun

### Mythistorical Accounts:

Traditionally it is said that the day on which the usurper Gaumāta was killed by Darius I in 522 B.C.E. was on the day of *Mehrīgān*. It is moreover said that it was during the *Mehrīgān* that the rebellion of KAVEH (Avestan *kauui-*) began, culminating in triumph of FERĒDUN (Avestan *θraētaona-*) over the ZAHĀK (Avesta *aži.dahaka-*).

Similarly, it is said that 6<sup>th</sup> century eradication of Mazdakite by the order of Emperor Xosrow I Anušakruvān (r. 531-79 C.E.) occurred on the day of *Mehrīgān*.

In addition, the festival of *Mehrīgān* is attested in both the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud (תְּלֻמוּד).

### Arabic and Medieval Accounts:

The earliest account of the *Mehrīgān* (al-Mehrajān) is by the tenth century historian and Muslim geographer Al-Mas‘udi, who believed it to be the ‘first day of winter’ الْمَهْرَجَانُ إِنَّهُ الْيَوْمُ الْأَوَّلُ مِنَ

الشتاء for Christian in Syria. By the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the celebration of *Mehrīgān* was adopted by non-Iranians in the Islamic world as Al-Balnubi observed Mehrajān celebrations in Cairo (in the 11th-12th centuries), and in Andalusia (Spain) wherein it was also known as the Nayriz Festival.

The word *Mehrīgān* (al-Mehrajān/al-Mahrajān) is presently a common term in Modern Standard Arabic meaning ‘feast’, ‘festival’ and ‘concert’.



### The Parsis

*Mehrīgān* is not popular in the Parsi calendar; although Anquetil-Duperron (1731-1805) during his sojourn in Bombay in the 19<sup>th</sup> century noted a seven-day festival and witnessed animal sacrifice during the *Mehrigān*.



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## CHAR-SHANBEH SURI

Fariborz Rahnamoon

Chahar-Shanbeh Suri is not an Ancient Iranian festival as publicized. The people of Greater Iran, or Iranshar, the Persian Empire, were all followers of the teachings of the Great Sage Zarathushtra. According to his teachings, they paid Reverence to Nature - Earth, Water, Air, and Fire. Zarathushtis would not have jumped over the fire and cursed the fire with sickness, even if it was their own sickness. Such a thought would sow the seed of pollution of elements. Professor E.Pur-Dawud says, “The choice of Wednesday, as well as the ritual of jumping over fire and “insulting” it, must have originated after the Islamic conquest.”

In ancient times, after the Vernal Equinox, just before the first Sunrise, they would go up on mountains or rooftops and light fires, welcoming the advent of the New Year. The Kurdish people still light torches and carry them to mountain tops to usher in the New Year with the rising Sun.



Chahar Shanbeh Suri is the result of the Cultural Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing committed against the people of Iran. After the millennium-long genocide committed against the Iranian people, only about 7711 followers of Zarathushtra were left in the Persian Empire, hiding in the great deserts of Lut.

When times were favourable, Iranians who had converted by force to Islam tried to revive their ancient culture from stories they had heard because their books got destroyed during the Cultural Genocide. Thus they celebrate Yalda, the longest night, by reciting the poetry of the 14th-century poet Hafez instead of the Gathas, the songs of Zarathushtra. They celebrate Now Ruz by spreading the Now Ruz Table with seven items whose individual qualities they praise. Instead of the Seven Trays (Haft SeneE) representing the Seven Eternal Laws of Nature, which leads humans to wholeness, immortality and oneness with the God within. Just like Jesus, the recipient of the first three laws, from the Magis, achieved it and said, “The Father and I are one”.

Similarly, they brought the fire from the mountain tops to the streets and jumped over it. On a positive note, these celebrations were always in defiance of the ruling Islamic class and are a political defiance movement even today. But if they try and celebrate it in its original form, it has more value because it is meaningful and based on the higher values in life.

Let us help the world shed the Roman way of life of using only one of our senses, the sense of hearing, believing what we hear without contemplating. Let us help adopt the Persian way of life of using our ten senses with wisdom.

“Dasa Aspa Arsana Vaitis Ustrem Ca Hyat Moi Mazda”.  
 “Ten Senses leading to Illumination through my Wisdom.”

*Origin.* According to E. Pūr-Dāwūd (pp. 73, 75), the feast of Čahāršanba-sūrī is derived from the Zoroastrian feast of Hamaspāθmaēdaya, which after the calendar reform under Ardašīr I (a.d. 224-40; see [calendars i](#)) was celebrated six days before Nowrūz. The choice of Wednesday, as well as the ritual of jumping over fire and “insulting” it, must, however, have originated after the Islamic conquest. The choice of the last Wednesday of the year is likely to have been prompted by an Arab superstition that Wednesdays are unlucky (Jāhez, p. 227). This belief apparently became widespread in Persia during the first two Islamic centuries (Manūčehrī Dāmḡānī, p. 220; Massé, p. 274 and n. 2; Pūr-Dāwūd, p. 73).

Bible John 10.30

Gathas Yasna 44.18 (FR) <http://gathas.ca/>



## GAHANBAR

Fariborz Rahnamoon

Gahanbars are seasonal festivals initiated when the Aryans lived in Airyanem Vaejah in the Arctic, long before the advent of Zarathushtra. The Arctic has two seasons: seven months of summer and five months of Winter. They had two Gahanbars to celebrate these two seasons. The names of the Gahanbars indicate the exact day of celebration. Unlike the Mazdayasni festivals, which celebrate the start of each season, Gahanbars celebrate the best time in each season.

**ARCTIC Gahanbars:**

The first Gahanbar of the Arctic year was *Maidhyo-Shahem*, which means **Mid-Summer**. Summer in the Arctic is for seven months (Farvardin to Mehr) or 216 days, so Mid-Summer falls on the 108th day, which is 15 of Tir, corresponding to 5 July.

The second Gahanbar of the Arctic year was *Ayeh-Threm (Saarem)* which means “Coming of Winter”. Arctic Winter is of 5 months (Aban to Espand). Coming of Winter was celebrated just before the Arctic winter started on 30 Mehr, 21 Oct.

**TEMPERATE Gahanbars:**

When the Aryans came down to the temperate region where there were four seasons, they added four more Gahanbars. They continued the trend of naming the Gahanbars with mathematical names. While calculating the exact day, it is important to note that the four temperate seasons are of unequal length. Spring is 92.8 days, Summer is 93.6 days, Autumn is 89.9 days, and Winter is the shortest with 88.9 days.

The names of the four Gahanbars indicate the exact day of celebration.

**Maidhyo-Zarem (Mid-Spring):** Spring has 92.8 days, so Mid-Spring falls on the 46th day (15 Ardibesht /4 May)

**Paiti-Shahem (End of Summer):** Summer ends on the 186th day (31 Shahrivar/21 Sept).

**Maidh-Yarem (Mid-Winter):** Winter has 88.9 days. So Mid-Winter is on the 44th day. In other words, 44 days before the end of the year (16 Bahman/5 Feb.).

**Hamas-Path-Maedem (Everything is Equal/Middle)** day and night, heat and cold, the day before the Vernal Equinox. The last day of the year. (28/ 29 Espand / March 19/20).

The Gahanbars do not divide the year but rather celebrate each season at the best time, like the middle of Spring when plants have blossomed and fruits have formed. It is the time to thank nature for cooperating. Next is the end of Summer; having harvested the fruits of labour, it is time for sharing and thanksgiving. Then comes the middle of Winter, when the severity of Winter is gone, and farmers tend to prepare for Spring. Finally, it is the day before the onset of Spring and the manifestation of equality in nature. Similarly, in the arctic, the middle of Summer is the best time to enjoy yourself. As for the Arctic Winter, just before it sets in.

Gahanbar were a joyous communal feast where people came together, each contributing and sharing the fruits of their labour and expressing their thanks for the collaboration of nature and neighbours. Due to the bungled-up 360-day calendar in the Islamic era, the one-day event became a five-day event. Later in the Islamic period, the celebrations went underground and became solemn events in memory of those massacred during the genocide and have converted to indoor prayer ceremonies ever since.

In Yazd and Kerman, Gahanbars have become prayer rituals for the departed. The attendees get served a mix of seven dry fruits called “Lork”. In addition, some families may serve “Aash”, a type of soup, and “Naan” bread. Others may serve a full-course lunch. Several families may have Gahanbar ceremonies on the same day, and the priest and attendees move from one house to another. Because it is in memory of the departed individual, it is rarely on a communal scale.

In Yazd and Kerman, performing the Gahanbar in the deceased’s home is a practice. Most of the time, the unoccupied houses are in a depleted state; the children have either built new houses for themselves or immigrated, but it is considered virtuous for the kitchen of those houses to become active a few times a year.

The Zarathustis in India had freedom; they were rarely aware of the genocide committed in Iran, so their Gahanbars have remained a communal affair. Usually, a wealthy family will pay for a luncheon in which everyone is free to partake.

In general, Gahanbars have become prayer rituals in memory of the departed. In North America, Australia and London, the local associations organise Gahanbars on varying scales. The minimum would be prayers and serving fresh fruits and Lork (seven types of dry fruits). Sometimes a family will pay for a luncheon, or a group of people will contribute towards it. Other times it is a potluck dinner or lunch.

## MISCONCEPTIONS

1. The division of the year into six seasons is a misconception by priests and scholars who present the Zoroastrian religion as antiquated and ritualistic. A little effort to translate the names correctly reveals the truth.  
Maidh - Maidhyo - **Maedem** are forms of the word meaning Middle; Paiti is End; Ayeh is to come/coming. **Zarem** is Spring; **Shahem** is Summer; **Threm** and **Yarem** are Winter; Remember that the four seasons are not equal, and now analyse the names of the Gahanbars; they pinpoint the day of celebration. Also, Summer and Winter get celebrated twice, but if you study closely, the mid-summer falls at the beginning of the temperate summer, confirming it is the middle of the seven-month Arctic summer. Similarly, the Coming of Winter gets celebrated at the end of the first month of the Temperate Autumn. The Arctic Winter starts 30 days after the Autumnal Equinox. That clearly shows the relation of the Gahanbars to different regions and periods in history.
2. The names of the Gahanbars point to the exact day of the celebration. The Yasnas and the Yashts remind us that the year is a Solar year. *“I learn about and work with the solar year, the righteous period.” “The coming of the season at the proper time of the solar year”*. During the Islamic era, the calendar got bungled due to the imposition of the Islamic lunar calendar. There was a 360-day compromised calendar for a long time; to compensate for the loss of five days, the Gahanbars became a five-day event. The five-day shortage accumulated and dislodged the once-accurate system as time passed. The original MazdaYasni calendar was a blueprint of nature and needed no correction for 110,000 years. As such, intercalation was not a practice. To claim that the ancestors forgot to intercalate the calendar is a wrong assumption.
3. Relating the creation theory to Gahanbars, in the order given in Genesis - water - earth - plants – (beneficial) animals and humans is another of those efforts to show resemblance to the Abrahamic beliefs and avoid the wrath of the Islamic rulers. Otherwise, Zarathushtra openly denies the creation theory, although translators have chosen to mistranslate KAS-NA, fearing blasphemy. Zarathushtra is very clear in his Gathas Ha 44.3, where he says, *“That what is in existence - Kas Na Zantha- No One gave birth to it. Pata Ashahya Pouruyo Kas Na - Father of Ashaya, from the beginning, was none. In other words, no one created Asha.*
4. Amesha Spentas are not deities and have no relation to Gahanbars. Since the numbers do not match, the theory proponents have added Nou Ruz to the list of Gahanbars to make it seven. Amesha Spentas are righteous steps of progress towards wholeness, perfection and the self-realisation of God within - a Creation of individual Wisdom.

Maidhyo-Zarem -	<b>Mid-Spring</b>	15 Ardibesht	4 May	
Maidhyo-Shahem-	<b>Mid-Summer</b>	15 TIR	5 July	*Arctic Gahanbar
Paiti-Shahem -	<b>End of Summer</b>	31 Shahrivar	21 Sept	
Ayeh-Threm (Saarem) -	<b>Coming of Winter</b>	30 Mehr	21 Oct	*Arctic Gahanbar
Maidh-Yarem -	<b>Mid-Winter</b>	16 Bahman	5 Feb	
Hamas-Path-Maedem -	<b>Everything is Equal/Middle</b>	28/29 Espand	19/20 March	

*May Wisdom Prevail.*



Yasna Ha 1.9, Ha 3.11, Ha 4.14  
Haptan Yasht' Ha-3

## HIROMBA

### HOW FESTIVAL DATES WERE SET

*The contemporary history of the “Hiromba” festival is critical in understanding how they may have set the traditional dates of other festivals in the past.* Instead of the Autumnal Equinox, why do we celebrate Mehr Mah and Mehr Ruz and instead of the Summer Solstice, we celebrate Tir Mah and Tir Ruz? Why, instead of Farvardigan we celebrate Muktdad or Panji? Why was science replaced with rhyme and rhythm?

The ancient Iranians had an in-depth knowledge of the Universe and commemorated the truth in nature with festivity. Their ancient science was lost twice, first when Alexander stole most of it. For the next 400 years, they manipulated and romanized the ancient culture that had laid the foundation of a progressive civilization. But the loss was more significant after the Arab invasion, for they killed the learned, burned their books, forbade the use of the Persian language, and replaced the perfect solar calendar with a lunar calendar. For the last 1400 years, an Iranian dynasty seldom ruled Iran, but most tried to revive the ancient festivals whenever they ruled. Of course, the imposed lunar calendar did not help celebrate the festivals on their proper day.

**‘Hiromba’ is the name given to the Festival of Sadeh by the followers of the Kadmi (Qhadimi) calendar. Today Hiromba is celebrated only in ‘Sharifabad’ village in Yazd, in the month of Farvardin (April), with the participation of Zarathushtis from all over.**

The Iranians celebrated Sadeh as a festival when they lived

in the Arctic region (Aryana Vieja), where they had seven months of summer and five months of winter. They welcomed the Arctic winter with the celebration of a Gahanbar named ‘*Ayeh Threm*’ (coming of winter), and *Sadeh* marked the 100th day from the start of this winter. *Sadeh* comes from the Persian word ‘*Saad*’, which means hundred. Winter in the Arctic starts on October 23 (1 Aban), so the hundredth day falls on January 30 (10 Bahman). This weather pattern still exists in the Arctic region.

While on the run for their lives as infidels, with no central organization and no proper coordination, the last 7,711 Zarathushtis of Iran were left with a bungled-up 360-day calendar, to which, upon realization, they added the missed five days and called it the ‘Kadmi’ (ancient) calendar. This Kadmi calendar, having lost five days every year, no longer coincided with the seasons. Thus they could not see the relation of the festivals to the seasons. But they knew that ‘*Saad*’ meant 100, so they wrongly imagined that it stood for 100 days to Nou Rooz.

They celebrated Hiromba on Ashtad Rooz, the 26th day of Azar, which added up to 100 days before the Kadmi Nou Rooz. The Kadmi Nou Rooz was in Fall; every four years, it would move by a day towards summer because it doesn’t have a leap year.

During the reign of Reza Shah, the ancient Mazdayasni Calendar, also known as the Jalali Calendar, was adopted as the national calendar with Zarathusti names of the month. It was approved in 1925 by the Parliament

Fariborz Rahnamoon of Iran. The Iranian Zarathustis reluctantly and gradually replaced their Kadmi calendar with the national calendar in the 1960s. They superimposed it with the 30 names of the days and balanced it at the end of the year with the five Gatha days. They call this calendar Fasli / Seasonal calendar, but ironically, the seasons do not start as they should, on the first day of every 4<sup>th</sup> month like in the national calendar. In other words, only spring starts on Ourmazd Ruz. Summer begins on Shahrivar Ruz, and Autumn and Winter start on Amordad Ruz.

By 2000 CE, only a few elders followed the Kadmi calendar, and the printed Kadmi calendar was no longer readily available in Iran. Keeping track of the Kadmi days and festivals without the printed calendar became a mathematical feat, and then came a chance for conciliation. Since the Kadmi calendar is a 365-day calendar with no leap year, they lose a day every four years, so it came to the point that the Fasli and Kadmi names of days (not the month) coincided with each other for four years. In about the year 2006, Mobed Niknam, who represented the Zarathushtis as a Member of the Iranian Parliament, proposed to the Anjuman of Sharifabad that since the Ashtad Rooz had coincided in both the Kadmi and Fasli calendars, henceforth they should celebrate Hiromba on the day ‘Ashtad’ according to the Fasli calendar. They agreed to hereafter celebrate Hiromba on Ashtad Rooz of the Fasli Calendar on the 26<sup>th</sup> of Farvardin (April 15). But since the Fasli calendar in Iran has a



leap year and the Kadmi does not have one, the Kadmi calendar loses a day every four years, and thus Hiromba no longer adds up to the hundred days before the Kadmi Nou Rooz. Now there is opposition from Mobedyar Belivani of Sharifabad, calling the change a wrong move.

### CONCLUSION

Hiromba, the Kadmi Sadeh festival, was based on a wrong premise; but the number of days added to 100, so they at least had a convincing argument. Switching the

festival to Ashtad Rooz of the Fasli calendar lost that invalid validity. Now Hiromba does not have a legitimate explanation for its celebration. Scholars have to conceive an answer since the days no longer add up to 100 'Saad'. This number of days will decrease every four years as the Kadmi Nou Rooz moves closer to summer.

Just like the Shahenshahi calendar, the Kadmi calendar did not synchronize with the seasons. So the theory of coinciding the month's name with the day was born. However, that did

not seem to be reason enough because they did not follow it in the case of Now Ruz and Yalda. So Tirgan and Mehregan were said also to commemorate events in mythology. Later, when opting for the compromised Fasli calendar because of the 30-day months, it also did not fully synchronize with the seasons, the same problem continued, and they continued with the made-up explanation for celebration. In the process, they sacrificed science and robbed the ancestors of their right to be Amordad (Immortal).

**Instead, Galileo took the credit and is immortal for realizing that the Earth is not the centre of the Universe.**

The Iranians, who, under duress, converted to Islam, preserved the festivals of Now Rooz and Yalda and celebrated them continuously at their proper time on the Vernal Equinox and the Winter Solstice. The Zarathustis inevitably copied them, **but they sacrificed the science of all other festivals at the altar of superstition.**

<sup>i</sup> Bundahishn 25:25. Note this: the 'vehizaki' month Frawardin, the month Ardwasht, and the month Hordad compose the season of spring. The month Tir, the month Amurdad, and the month Shahrewar are of summer. The month Mihr, the month Aban, and the month Adar are of autumn; and the month Day, [211] the month Vohuman, and the month Spandarmad are of winter.

26. And the sun returns to that point that degree of Aries from which it had started in the beginning, in three hundred and sixty-five days, and five hours, and a fraction, which are one year. As every three months, it comes to three constellations, more or less.

<sup>ii</sup> (Aban 30+Azar 30+ Dey 30+ Bahman10 = 100. This is as per the Mazdayasni calendar adopted as the national calendar of Iran) (Oct 9+ Nov 30+ Dec 31+ Jan 30=100).

<sup>iii</sup> This belief has also been transferred to the Fasli calendar and we see that scholars and the lay people both try to legitimize the count of hundred days to Nou Rooz in the Fasli Calendar, by saying that from 10 Bahman (30 January) to Nou Rooz we have 50 days and 50 nights and that makes up the 100. Not realising that every four years it is 51 days to Now Rooz because of a leap year.

<sup>iv</sup> بعد از نایب رییس انجمن زرتشتیان شریف آباد، شاپهرام بلیوانی نیز در مورد هیرمبا توضیحاتی را ارائه داد و گفت بر اساس تقویم قدیم هیرمبا در روز اشتاد ایزد و آذر ماه برگزار می شده است و از این روز تا نوروز دقیقاً صد روز فاصله است و بدین واسطه می توان این جشن را سده نامید. <http://www.berasad.com/fa/content/view/1350/44/>

<sup>v</sup> (Azar 5days + Dey 30+ Bahman 30+ Espand 30+ 5Gatha days = 100.) (April 22+ May 31+ June 30+ July 17 = 100).

<sup>vi</sup> The government calendar introduced by Reza Shah is called the Jalali Calendar and attributed to Omar Khayam who had a Zarathushti teacher **Bahmanyar Marzban**, who taught him mathematics, science, and philosophy. For sure he was told about the ancient calendar by this teacher for all ancient festivals line up perfectly with this calendar which is the same as mentioned in the Bundahishn.

<sup>vii</sup> Except for the combined Fasli / Kadmi calendar printed only in Bombay by the "Sazeman e Javanan e Zartoshty".

<sup>viii</sup> The village of Sharifabad and Mazreh Kalantar were the bastion of the Kadmi calendar and though they no longer follow the calendar but have preserved the festivals as per the Kadmi calendar. The people of Mazreh Kalantar gather in the village every year, even from overseas, to celebrate Panji (Muktad) as per the Kadmi calendar. Although they celebrate Now Rooz on the Vernal Equinox with the rest of the nation.

<sup>ix</sup> وی همچنین در توضیحات کاملی از سنتهای هیرمبا گفت و به چند سال پیش اشاره نمود که اشتاد ایزد و آذرماه همزمان با اشتاد ایزد و فروردین ماه جدید شده و این روز را ثابت کرده اند. از نگاه موبدیار بلیوانی این اتفاق جالبی نبوده است و برای تغییر آن پیشنهاداتی را ارائه داد. <http://www.berasad.com/fa/content/view/1350/44/>

## FESTIVALS as per Shahnameh

Historians, scholars and writers on the subject of Iranian festivals have depicted them as the celebration of Myths, produced stories, and attributed them to the Shahnameh. Usually, people accept the stories and never cross-check the reference. The tale of Arash-e-Kamangir - the Archer, and its relation to the festival of Tirgan, is an excellent example. Here we shall produce sections of the Shahnameh concerning some of the festivals.

## MEHREGAN as per Shahnameh

Mehregan is the celebration of the Autumnal Equinox. Scholars tell us that Mehregan is the celebration of the victory of Faraydoon over Zahak, which was on the day of Mehr in the month of Mehr. They claim their source is the Shahnameh.

The Shahnameh narrates it differently; it says that the coronation of Shah Faraydoon was on the first day of the month of Mehr. It reads, “ On the auspicious day, the first of the month of Mehr, he placed on his head the Kiyanian crown”. It reconfirms the date “The world was refreshed with Justice at the start of the new month”. Faraydoon lived long before the advent of Zarathushtra, and Shahnameh identifies his religion as “ Worship of Mehregan is his religion”.

From this, we understand that Faraydoon was a pre-Zoroastrian worshiper of Mehr (Mithra), the Sun God, and he crowned himself on the first of the month of Mehr, which was already an auspicious day in Mithraism. It is an occasion when the day and night are equal and symbolic of justice and equality attributed to Mehr. What better day could Faraydoon, as a Mithraist, choose to crown himself King?

فریدون چو بر جهان شد کامگار	ندانست جز خویشتن شهریار
به رسم کیان تاج و تخت مهی	بیاراست با کاخ شاهنشهی
<b>به روز خجسته سر ماه مهر</b>	<b>به سر بر نهاد آن کیانی کلاه</b>
زمانه بی اندوه گشت از بدی	گرفتند هر کسی ره ایزدی
دل از داوریهها بپرداختند	به آیین یکی جشن نو ساختند
نشستند فرزندگان شادکام	گرفتند هر یک ز یاقوت جام
می روشن و چهرهی شاه نو	<b>جهان نوز داد و سر ماه نو</b>
بفرمود تا آتس افرختند	همه عنبر و زعفران سوختند
<b>پرستیدن مهرگان دین اوست</b>	تن آسانی و خوردن آیین اوست
اگر یادگارست و از ماه مهر	بکوش و به رنج ایچ نمای چهر

So we see that the celebration of Mehregan on the Autumnal Equinox, on the first day of Mehr month was an existing festival and its origin has nothing to do with Faraydoon. It being a important festival Faraydoon as a follower of Mithra decides to have his coronation on that auspicious day.

Since the Islamic invasion, Iranians have seen in every other ruler a Zahak. They have longed for a Kaveh and Faraydoon to save them from these tyrants. Writers and freedom fighters have preferred to involve the entire story of Zahak, Kaveh and Faraydoon as the inspiration for the celebration of Mehregan. The depiction may have given short-term solace, but it limits the universality of the appeal. The teachings of Zarathustra, when promoted universally, the likes of Zahak as rulers, will not exist.

Truth is universal; it is blind to colour, creed and caste. Celebrating the Truth in nature appeals to everyone; it belongs to everyone. Distorting Truth to serve national or ethnic goals kills the higher value, the spirit of universality. Zarathustra Gathas preaches universality; the Avesta constantly blesses the good people of "Haft Keshwar Zamin", Seven Continents. The Autumnal Equinox is a universal event; everyone can relate to it. Setting the symbolic Mehregan table with seven trays reminds and renews the pledge to follow the natural steps towards wholeness, perfection, oneness and heavenly bliss, as mentioned by Zarathustra in the Gathas.

The celebration of the Autumnal Equinox with slight variations has been a cross-cultural event. Some celebrate it as New Year (Deepawali), and others as the harvest festival of Thanksgiving. Most ancient cultures recognised and celebrated the Autumnal Equinox. Sometimes other beliefs have weighed in and combined into one celebration. For the Chinese, the moon regulates their calendar, so they celebrate the full moon closest to the Autumnal Equinox.

## NOW ROOZ as per Shahnameh

Shah Jamshid designed with his Royal Far a throne laid with gems. He ordered the Devs (giants) to carry it to the sky with him sitting on it. It shone like the sun in the sky, and on it sat the ruling King; the world gathered to see the throne; they were surprised at that sight, dazed at his fortune, and they showered gems on Jamshid; that day was named **Rooz-e-Now** (New Day). At the beginning of **Sal-e-Now** (New Year), Ormazd and Farvardin, the earth was relieved of suffering, the elders dressed for celebrations, and they desired wine and music; such a joyous celebration from that period has remained for us in memory of that royalty.

به فر کیانی یکی تخت ساخت  
چه مایه بدو گوهر اندر نشاخت  
که چون خواستی دیو برداشتی  
ز هامون به گردون بر افراشتی  
چو خورشید تابان میان هوا  
نشسته برو شاه فرمانروا  
جهان انجمن شد بر آن تخت او  
شگفتی فرومانده از بخت او  
به جمشید بر گوهر افشانند  
**مران روز را روز نو خواندند**  
**سر سال نو هر مز فرودین**  
بر آسوده از رنج روی زمین  
بزرگان به شادی بیاراستند  
می و جام و رامشگران خواستند  
چنین جشن فرخ ازان روزگار  
به ما ماند ازان خسروان یادگار



## SADEH as per Shahnameh

Sadeh is a festival that originated in Aryana Vaejah, the arctic home of the ancestors of the Zarathustis. Saad means hundred, and Sadeh is the celebration of the hundredth day of Arctic winter, which falls on the 10th of Bahman<sup>1</sup> (30 January). Winter in the Arctic begins on the first of Aban month, 30 days after the Autumnal Equinox, marked with the celebration of *Ayeh Threm (Coming of Winter) Gahanbar*. The severity of the Arctic winter reduces after 100 days, and people celebrate and start preparing for the Arctic summer.

The Shahnameh attributes Sadeh to King Hoshang of the Pishdadiyan dynasty. It narrates that:

One day (**does not mention the date or indicate the season**), the King of the world was going towards a mountain with a group of his people; when he saw something very long and black, versatile and quick, with two eyes the colour of blood; from its mouth came smoke that darkened the day. Hoshang picked up a stone and flung it at the snake with all his royal strength. The snake fled, and the rock hit a bolder; the impact sparked a fire. It did not kill the snake but revealed a secret. The King fell on his knee and thanked God for such a gift. He designated this fire a Qibla, for he said it was Godsent; the wise should nurse this fire. That night he lit a fire as high as a mountain. The Shah and his group sat around the fire, celebrated the night with wine, and named the feast Sadeh. Sadeh has immortalised Hoshang and his feat.

Note: According to archaeological evidence, humans cooked food 170,000 years ago. According to the latest find in Israel, this date has shifted to 780,000 years. At the same time, there is definitive evidence that *Homo Erectus* controlled fire 2 million years ago.

یکی روز شاه جهان سوی کوه  
گذر کرد با چند کس همگروه  
پدید آمد از دور چیزی دراز  
سیه رنگ و تیره‌تن و تیزتاز  
دو چشم از بر سر چو دو چشمه خون  
ز دود دهانش جهان تیره گون  
نگه کرد هوشنگ باهوش و سنگ  
گرفتش یکی سنگ و شد تیز چنگ  
به زور کیانی رهانید دست  
جهانسوز مار از جهانجوی جست  
برآمد به سنگ گران سنگ خرد  
همان و همین سنگ بشکست گرد  
فروغی پدید آمد از هر دو سنگ  
دل سنگ گشت از فروغ آذرنگ  
نشد مار کشته و لیکن ز راز  
ازین طبع سنگ آتش آمد فراز  
جهاندار پیش جهان آفرین  
نیایش همی کرد و خواند آفرین  
که او را فروغی چنین هدیه داد  
همین آتش آنگاه قبله نهاد  
بگفتا فروغیست این ایزدی  
پرستید باید اگر بخردی  
شب آمد بر افروخت آتش چو کوه  
همان شاه در گرد او با گروه  
یکی جشن کرد آن شب و باده خورد  
**سده نام آن جشن فرخنده کرد**  
**ز هوشنگ مانند این سده یادگار**

<sup>1</sup> According to the MazdaYasni Calendar  
<http://zarathushticalendar.com/>

# TIRGAN ARASH -E- KAMANGIR EREKSHA THE ARCHER

Fariborz Rahnamoon

Arash-e-Kamangir is an Iranian mythological character who shot an arrow from Mount Damavand to the banks of River Jehun to demarcate the border between Iran and its arch-enemy Turan. The festival of Tirgan is supposed to be the celebration of this feat. The belief is that the source of the story is Avesta and Shahnameh. Let us see if it is true. We read about Arash and his skill as an archer in Tir Yasht in the Avesta, but there is no mention of a border dispute or settlement. *“We sacrifice unto Tishtrya, the bright and glorious star; who flies, towards the sea Vouru-Kasha, as swiftly as the arrow darted through the heavenly space, which Erekhsha (Arash), the swift archer, the Arya amongst the Aryas whose arrow was the swiftest, shot from Mount Khshaotha to Mount Hvanvant.”* This verse in the Avesta later caught the imagination of others, and folklore has developed, giving it a historical perspective over time.

**Tir Yasht** is a thesis on the star Tishtarya (Sirius). Mentioned in the Tir Yasht is the cosmological description of the star Tishtarya, the associated stars, planets and constellations. The time, location and season of appearance and disappearance in the sky, its celestial path across the sky, and the distance it travels before its disappearance. There is no mention of any historical event.

The Pahlavi text, like Dadestan-e-Denig (Ch 93) compiled in the Islamic era, explains how Tishtarya turns water into a cloud, transports it, and later delivers it in a purified state as snow or rain; how it does that evenly between lakes, rivers and farms. It also explains how a black demon fights Tishtarya and causes drought, flood and disaster. These two texts, written in different periods, show the degeneration of knowledge. The ancient Tir Yasht is a factual report which has turned into prayers at some point. It sees the star Tishtarya as a marker in the sky, a calendar and associates a climatic event on Earth with the advent of the star. The Pahlavi text takes a mythological approach; it personifies the star and shows it as the creator of the climatic condition on Earth. It claims Tishtarya turns water into clouds.

Tishtrya is the brightest star in the sky and has a luminosity 25.4 times greater than the sun, but it is 8.6 light-years away and does not emit heat toward Earth to evaporate the waters. It is not the cause of the rain. Tishtrya is known by its Greek name Sirius as part of Canis Major's (Big Dog) constellation. It is visible twice. It appears in the evening sky on the long winter night and then vanishes to reappear just before the summer solstice in the morning sky before sunrise. Long before the Greeks, the constellation involving Tishtar was visualized as a bow and arrow.

Hindu mythology associates it with hunting and bow and arrow. The Chinese have depicted it with the Chinese Emperor Zang drawing a bow and arrow toward Tishtar, Tsien Lang, the Heavenly Wolf. The Iranians saw in it a person who they called Erekhsha or Arash. He was holding the bow aiming the arrow at Tishtar. Six stars made the curved bow, and the seventh star, the tip of the arrow, aimed at Tishtarya. In summer, with daylight, the constellation slowly fades and ignites the mythologist's imagination. They see Arash's body melt away, having put all his strength into the arrow.

In winter, there was rain and snow, so the evening star Tishtrya was associated with rain and called the rain star. In summer, there was no rain, but the summer heat evaporated the waters and formed clouds which would later fall as rain; this was reason enough to justify it as a Rain Star. The ancient Egyptians noticed that the heliacal rising of the star Sirius in summer would occur a short time before the annual flooding of the Nile. The flooding of the Nile was a significant event in their life, so the sighting of Sirius (Tistarya) became critical.

North American natives recognize Tishtarya (Sirius) as 'Wolf Star' (Pawnee), 'Moon Dog' and 'Wolf that hangs by the side of Heaven' (Northern Osage).

Bundahishn 2:2 gives us the Avesta / Phalavi titles of “twenty-eight asterisms of reckoning, the names of which [are these]: Padevar, Pesh-Parviz, Parviz, Paha, Aze-sar, Beshn, Rakhvat, Taraha, Azara, Nahn, Maian, Avdem, Mashaha, Spor, Husru, Sroi, Nur, Gelu, Grafsha, Varant, Gao, Goi, Muru, Bunda, Kaht-sar, Vaht, Mayan, Kaht.”

Buddahishn 2:4 “Tishtar [Sirius] is the chieftain of the East, Sataves the chieftain of the South, Antares [Vanand] the chieftain of the West, the Seven Bears [Haptoring] the chieftain of the North; the Lord of the throne, Capricornus, whom they call the Lord of Mid- Heaven, is the chieftain of chieftains; Parand, Mazd-tat, and others of this list are also chiefs of the directions.”

Science today tells us that, Tishtrya was once a main-sequence star. Sirius is slowly moving closer to Earth and will gradually increase in brightness over the next 60,000 years before it recedes. It will, however, remain the brightest star seen from Earth for the next 210,000 years.

With the above information in mind, read the translation of Tir Yasht verses 8.5 to 8.36. To see them describe the path of Tishtrya and the other associated significant stars and planets seen from Earth and reach a conclusion. Is it a prayer, a myth, a scientific paper, or a combination? Below are a few verses.

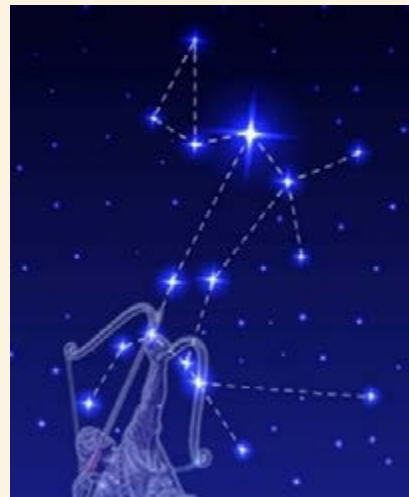
**ACCORDING TO THE SHAHNAMEH:** The peace treaty with the Turanians was during the reign of Kai Ghobad, and it was young Rostams first combat. Rostam picked Afrasiab up by his belt and held him overhead; when he was about to carry him to the king, Afrasiab's belt broke, and he managed to escape, but it scared the hell out of Afrasiab. He advised his father, Pashang, the Turanian king, to initiate a peace treaty with the Iranians and retreated to the other side of river Jehun. Here Rostam is the hero. There is no mention of Arash, nor does the situation warrant a contest. Arash gets mentioned in a few verses of the Shahnameh but for different reasons. During the reign of Manucher, there was no peace treaty signed. Manucher goes to war and kills his maternal uncles, Salm and Tur, to avenge the cold-blooded murder of his grandfather.

*8.8 'We sacrifice unto Tishtrya, the bright and glorious star, that afflicts the Pairikas (apparently shooting stars or comets), that vexes the Pairikas, who, in the shape of worm stars, fly between the Earth and the heavens, in the sea Vouru-Kasha, the powerful sea, the large-sized, deep sea of salt waters. He goes to its lake in the shape of a horse, in a holy shape, and down there, he makes the waters boil over, and the winds flow above powerfully all around.*

*8.13 'For ten nights, O Spitama Zarathushtra! Tishtrya, the bright and glorious star, mingles his shape with light, moving in the shape of a man of fifteen years of age, bright, with clear eyes, tall, full of strength, strong, and clever.*

*8.20 'Then, O Spitama Zarathushtra! the bright and glorious Tishtrya goes down to the sea Vouru-Kasha in the shape of a white, beautiful horse with golden ears and a golden caparison.*

*8.32 'And the bright and glorious Tishtrya rises from the sea Vouru-Kasha, O Spitama Zarathushtra! the bright and glorious Satavaesa (Venus) rises from the sea Vouru-Kasha; and vapours rise above Mount Us-Hindu, that stands in the middle of the sea Vouru-Kasha. Ibus, moveniquas con vil commore temus aribem te mei*





## CONCLUSION

Tir Yasht was originally a cosmological paper on Tishtarya, the brightest star in the sky. The archer and bow and arrow are the asterism formed by seven stars. The arrow's flight from Mount Khshaotha to Mount Hvanvant shows the path of Tishtarya in the sky. It became a prayer by adding a few devotional sentences at some point in history. Later under Greek influence, the Pahlavi text on Tishtarya converted facts into fiction by personifying the constellations. Each writer later, in the Islamic era, presented a different version of the Pahlavi folklore. In the last century, these myths got further developed by nationalists. The latest and more popular version of Arash-e-Kamangir is a poem by the politician poet Siavash Kasrai written in 1959.

Siavash Kasrai portrays Arash as a soldier in the army of Manucher Shah, the grandson of Fareydoon. The Turanians had invaded, and occupied parts of Iran, and a peace treaty was finally signed. One of the conditions was that an archer would shoot an arrow from Mount Damavand and where the arrow lands would demarcate the border between the two counties. Arash, known for his archery, was asked to perform the feat. He puts his might into the arrow, and the Yazata of wind helps the arrow travel till noon, land in a walnut tree on the banks of river Jehun and settles the border dispute. Since Arash had infused his arrow with his life force, he melted away as the arrow flew towards its destination. This melting out of Arash dramatizes the constellation's disappearance with the brightness of the rising sun.

The story of Arash-e-Kamangir is a beautiful and inspiring myth. It is a later development and is not from the Avesta or the Shahnameh, as claimed by many. As per the Shahnameh, Fareydoon divides his kingdom among his three sons, Salm, Toor and Iraj. Iraj gets the lands of Iran; the other two brothers are not happy with their share. They kill Iraj in cold blood. Fareydoon was very angry but did not want to go to war against his sons. The wife of Iraj, who was pregnant, gave birth to a baby girl after the death of Iraj. This girl grows up and gives birth to a baby boy. He is named Manucher, and Fareydoon crowns him the King of Iran. Manucher goes to war against his maternal uncles, Salm and Toor and kills them both in a battle to avenge his grandfather. So there is no border dispute and no peace treaty. Manucher is a clear winner; he killed the two kings, and the situation does not warrant a peace treaty.

As described in Tir Yasht, the asterism made up of seven stars is seen as Arash with a bow and arrow. The arrow's flight path illustrates the path of Tishtarya in the sky. Thus Arash-e-Kamangir is a constellation. Later in history, it became a myth, but the historical references are flawed.

With the degeneration of civilization initiated by the Greeks under Alexander, scientific papers became prayer and a source of legends. Unfortunately, Greek philosophy rules over humanity. Aristotle limited human senses to only five, and the Greeks enforced using only the sense of hearing. People believe what they hear. As a child, the tooth fairy and flying reindeer condition the young mind to believe what they hear. Those who question get accused of blasphemy. The Gathas recommends using ten senses with Wisdom, and modern science names upwards of 33 senses. The world still believes Aristotle.

**May Wisdom Prevail.**

## Haji Firuz

# The Herald of Now Ruz

Fariborz Rahnamoon



The Mausoleum of Baba Shoja Al Din Abu Lu Lu- Firuz

*In the Persian language Phiruz means Victory, but in Arabic alphabet no letter P so it is Firuz*

Abu Lu Lu Ah' was the name given to Phiruz Nahavandi, a Persian who had been taken prisoner in Byzantine and sold as a slave in Medina to an Arab named Al Mughirah. Phiruz witnessed the atrocities committed against Persian women and children who were taken prisoner and sold in the slave markets of Mecca and Medina. When the city of Nahavand was captured in the seventh year of Khalifa Umar's rule (640 CE), the women and children of Nahavand were sold in Madina; Phiruz's heart ached to see their suffering and humiliation.

*"When the prisoners taken at Nihawand were brought to Medina, a servant of al-Mughirah b. Shu'bah, Abu Lu'lu'ah Fayruz, could not meet any young captive without caressing his head and bursting into tears, wailing, "Umar has consumed my liver!"*

Phiruz was a capable artisan and, as a slave, had to pay his master part of his earnings. He had some savings and was able to rescue a small Persian girl by buying her in the slave market and adopting her as his daughter. One day Phiruz meets Umar in the market and pleads with him for justice.

*"Umar went out one day to wander around the market. He met Abu Lu'lu'ah, a young Persian slave of al-Mughirah b. Shu'bah, who said, "Help me, Commander of the Faithful, against al-Mughirah b. Shu'bah, for I pay a great deal of tax." "How much?" enquired ('Umar). "Two dirhams a day," was the reply. "What is your trade?" asked ('Umar). "[I am] a carpenter, stonemason, and smith," he replied. "I do not think your tax is a lot, given the work you do," ('Umar) said. "I have heard that you claim you could make a mill that will grind by wind power if you wished." He replied that he could. ('Umar) asked him to make him a mill. (Abu Lu'lu'ah) replied, "If you survive, I shall certainly make you a mill that will be the talk of everyone in both East and West!" Then (Abu Lulu ah) left ('Umar), who said [to himself], "That slave has just threatened me!" Then he went off home.*

Phiruz was friends with two other slaves, Hurmuzan and a Christian Byzantinian named Jufaynah. Slaves were not allowed to own or carry weapons, but Phiruz, with his friends' help and his blacksmith skills, made a two-sided dagger with its handle in the middle.

*"That morning 'Umar went out to prayers; he used to assign certain men to see to the lines (of those praying), and*

when they were straight, he would come and proclaim “God is great!” Abu Lu’lu’ah slipped in among the people, carrying in his hand a dagger with two blades and its shaft in the middle. He struck ‘Umar six blows, one of which was below his navel, and this was the one which killed him. (Abu Lu lu’ah) also killed Kulayb b. Abi al-Bukayr al-Laythi, who was behind (‘Umar). When (‘Umar) felt the weapon’s heat, he fell and said, “Is ‘Abd al-Rahman b. ‘Awf among the crowd?” They said, “Yes, Commander of the Faithful, he is here.” (‘Umar) said [to ‘Abd al-Rahman], “Come forward and lead the people in prayer.” So ‘Abd al-Rahman led the people in prayer while ‘Umar lay prostrate. Then he was carried away and brought into his house.

“He died later that day. They took him out early the following day, and he was buried in ‘A’ishah’s house along with the Prophet and Abu Bakr.”

“On the morning when ‘Umar was stabbed’, Abd al-Rahman b. Abi Bakr said, “Last evening, I passed by Abu Lu’lu’ah as he was meeting in secret with Jufaynah and al-Hurmuzan. When I came upon them, they sprang up, and a dagger with two blades and its handle in the middle fell out into their midst. Consider (the instrument) with which (‘Umar) was killed!” (Abu Lu’lu’ah) had already slipped through the crowd attending the mosque. A Tamimi went off in search of him and returned to them, having kept after Abu Lu lu ah as he left Umar, caught him, and killed him. (The Tamimi) brought the dagger that ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Abi Bakr had described.”

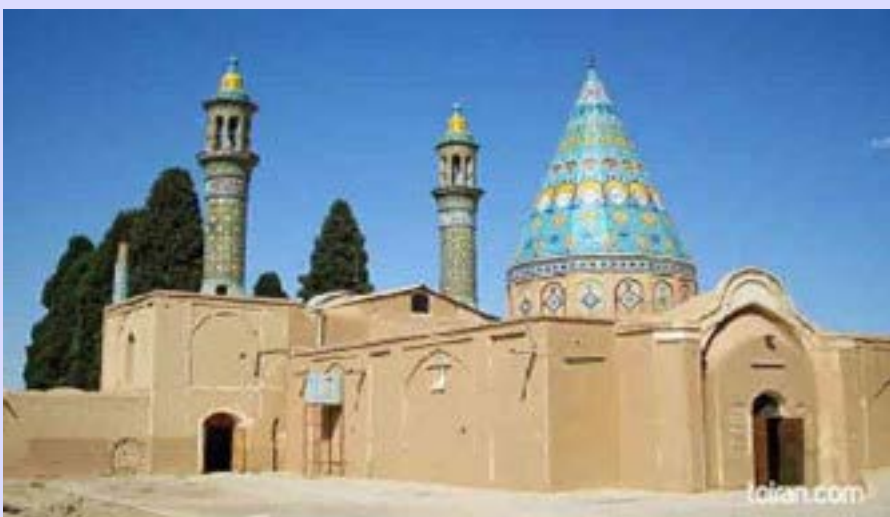
Umar’s son Ubaydallah who hears this, goes on a killing spree and kills Hurmuzan, Jufaynah and Morvarid, the daughter of Phiruz Nahavandi.

“Ubaydallah b. Umar heard about this but held back until Umar died. Then he wrapped his garments around his sword, came to al-Hurmuzan, and killed him. When the sword was wounding him, he called out, “There is no god but God.” Then (Ubaydallah b. ‘Umar) passed on to Jufaynah, a Christian from al-Hirah, foster son of Sad b. Malik and whom he had brought to Medina as a result of the peace between himself and (the inhabitants) and to teach him writing. As he held the sword over him, (Ubaydallah) (struck Jufaynah with it), making the sign of the cross between his eyes.

Since the Slaves had a master, they demanded blood money for their slaves who were killed. Uthman, hoping to be the next Khalifa, took it upon himself to pay their blood money out of his personal funds to their owners.

“Then ‘Uthman sat at the side of the mosque and called for Ubaydallah b. ‘Umar, who was confined in the house of Sa’d b. Abi Waggas. He is the one from whose hand the sword had been snatched after he had killed Jufaynah, al-Hurmuzan, and the daughter of Abu Lu’lu’ah, saying that he was going to kill some of those who were involved in shedding his father’s blood, alluding to both the Emigrants and the Helpers. Sa’d had jumped up against him, snatched the sword from his hand and tugged at his hair until he had him on the ground. He held him a prisoner in his own house until ‘Uthman brought him out.”

‘Uthman said, “I am now their master. I have decided that blood money should be paid in this case, and I shall bear the cost from my own money.”



Abu means father in Arabic, and Lu lu means Morvarid, the Persian word for pearl, which was the name of the adopted daughter of Phiruz. There are conflicting reports of whether Phiruz got killed or he fled and went to Iran. In Kashan there is a mausoleum of Shoja Al Din Abu Lu Lu Firuz. Which has become a shrine, and people pray there in his memory.



## REACTION TO THE NEWS OF OMAR'S DEATH IN IRAN

News of the murder of Khalifeh Omar by Phiruz reached Iran in late winter and spread everywhere, and caused great joy before the Nowruz of the year 24 of the Hijri Solar calendar. It was the only good news after eight years of the oppression, cruelty and crime of the Arabs in Iran. But there was a big problem for the national happiness of the Iranian people. If the people were openly happy about Omar's death, they would get killed by the Arab rulers. So, they had to hide their happiness in some way. Combining the people's joy from the murder of Omar by Phiruz and the need to hide this joy, the Iranians created the interesting character of Haji Phiruz. The title of Haji, given to Phiruz, clearly indicates his presence in Arabia. (Because people called those who went to Arabia, Haji)



The red colour of Haji Phiruz's clothes and the black colour of his face represent War and Resistance.

In ancient Iran, red and black represented war and the resistance movement.

(Pay attention to two of the greatest Iranian commanders, Babak Khorramdin was the leader of the Red Jamegan (outfit), and Abu Muslim Khorasani was the leader of the Black Jamegan. In ancient Iran, the colour of death and mourning was not black, but white, like the Indians)

Haji Phiruz's dance shows the people's joy and happiness from Omar's death.

Even the famous song that Haji Phiruz sings brings out joy mockingly:

“My lord, the goat, the Billy goat.” ارباب خودم بز بز قندی

My lord, why don't you laugh now? “ ارباب خودم چرا نمی خندی

It is, in fact, mocking the Arab lords of that time, especially the greatest Arabs, Omar.

Billy goat is a clear reference to the face of the Arabs

who, according to tradition, grew a beard but shaved their moustaches and looked like a goat with a beard and no moustache. On the other hand, Phiruz struck and killed the greatest lord of the Arabs, Omar, and mockingly said to his lord, Omar, “Why don't you laugh now??”

And, of course, when the ruling Arabs looked at Haji



Phiruz's character, they did not notice the story behind Haji Phiruz, and the Iranians safely celebrated the death of their Khaliph Omar in front of the Arabs and danced and laughed at the beards of the Arabs.

With the incredible popularity of Haji Phiruz's character in all parts of Iran, which has survived to this day, it becomes clear how popular Phiruz Nahavandi was among the Iranians for killing Omar and how much he made the hearts of the Iranians happy.

Phiruz Nahavandi is one of the greatest national heroes of Iran for killing the initiator of the Arab invasion of Iran and the genocide that followed. If in the distant past, Iranians turned the serious character of Phiruz Nahavandi into a comedian and clown for fear of the invading Arabs, now it is a national duty, after 1400 years, to recognize this national character and make him the great national hero that he was.

<sup>1</sup> In Persian language the name Phiruz means Victory, but since in the Arabic alphabets there is no letter 'P' it has become Firuz.

<sup>2</sup> History of Tabari 2632

<sup>3</sup> History of Tabari 2722

<sup>4</sup> History of Tabari 2723

<sup>5</sup> History of Tabari 2726

<sup>6</sup> History of Tabari 2797

<sup>7</sup> History of Tabari 2797

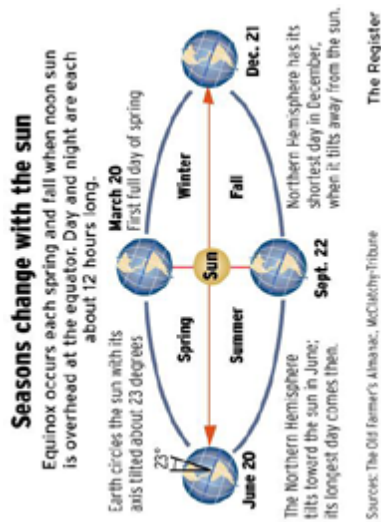
<sup>8</sup> History of Tabari 2796

<sup>9</sup> History of Tabari 2796

## ZARATHUSHTI FESTIVALS

Zarathustra's teachings are about progressing towards Perfection, Wholeness (Hurvatata), which is achievable by being in Harmony with Nature. All Zarathushti festivals are to recognize the laws of nature ASHA, towards that end.

The four key positions of the sun are celebrated, starting with the Vernal Equinox as **NOW ROOZ**, the Summer Solstice as **TIRGAN**, the Autumnal Equinox as **MEHREGAN** and the Winter Solstice as **YALDA**.



In addition, there are 6 Seasonal Festivals called **GAHANBAR**. Two of which relate to the 2 seasons of the ancient Arctic homeland, and 4 pertain to the seasons of their later temperate homeland. **SADEH** is also a festival from the Arctic past celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> day of winter.

**NOW ROOZ/RUZ** (1<sup>st</sup> Farvardin) (MARCH 20/21)  
Now Ruz, the Persian New Year is the celebration of the Vernal Equinox and the Rejuvenation in nature. It has crossed all religious and national boundaries and is celebrated by all the people that once formed the great Persian Empire. The word Now Ruz is made up of two Persian words, **Now** meaning **New** and **Ruz** meaning **Day**. According to Persian mythology, King Jamshid celebrated the first spring after the great ice age, which is believed to have happened some twelve thousand years ago. Ever since then, it has been part of the Zarathushti culture and they have shared it with all whom they came in contact with. As for the

<http://zarathushticalendar.com>

## The Celebration of Asha

coining of the word **Now Ruz**, meaning New Day it goes back to 1725 BCE and was coined by Zarathushtra, the great Sage of ancient Iran who had also given the world its first scientific Meridian, which he named **Nim Ruz**, meaning Mid-Day. When the sun is at the Mid-Day position at 63-degree longitude, the whole hemisphere from Japan and Australia to Europe and Africa has sunlight. Zarathushtra also calculated that in 1725 BCE, the Vernal Equinox and Sunrise would coincide at Balkh, where he lived. Thereby **the New Year and the New Day would start at the same time**. To record this rare phenomenon, he named that particular New Year, Now Ruz - the New Day. **Thus, NOW ROOZ is where and when the Sunrise coincides with the vernal equinox**. As per archaeological evidence, in 487 BCE, once again Now Ruz was celebrated, this time at Persepolis where the First Rays of the rising sun lighted the specially erected stone pillar, in the Apadana Palace, at exactly the same moment as the Vernal Equinox.

**CELEBRATION:** The highlight of the Now Ruz celebration is the arranging of the Now Ruz Table, which consists of seven items. The ancient Persians, who were all followers of Zarathushtra, decorated their table with Seven Trays (HAFT SEENE) filled with numerous symbolic items. The Seven Trays represented the SEVEN ETERNAL LAWS OF NATURE, the **Amesha Spantas** as derived from the "Gathas", the songs of Zarathushtra. It was a way of renewing their bond and reminding themselves of the path they needed to follow in life.

## TIRGAN (1<sup>st</sup> Tir) (JUNE 21/22)

Tirgan is the celebration of the Summer Solstice on the first day of Summer. It also is the longest day; people spend their day outdoors, and being hot, they spray water on each other, and it has become the festival of water.

## MEHREGAN (1<sup>st</sup> Mehr) (Sept 22/23)

Mehregan is the celebration of the Autumnal Equinox. Just like Now Ruz, the day and night are equal, and it was also celebrated at the exact moment of the Autumnal Equinox. It has become a symbol of love and keeping one's promise.

For more information check

## The Ultimate Truth

### YALDA (1<sup>st</sup> Dey) (Dec 21/22)

It is the celebration of the Winter Solstice. It is also the longest night. In Mithraism, it is celebrated as the birthday of the sun god Mithra because from the next day the day grows longer. People used to spend the long night reciting and discussing the Gathas. Today they recite the poems of the 14th-century poet Hafez and predict the future.

**SADEH** (January 30/ Bahman 10) is the 100th day of the Arctic winter & is a festival that has continued from the ancient Arctic homeland. (1 Aban to 10 Bahman =100) (30+30+30+10 Bahman=100) (Oct 9+30+31+Jan30=100).

### GAHANBARS

Gahanbars are seasonal festivals originating in the Arctic homeland long before the advent of Zarathushtra. It continued into the Temperate homeland and became a way of aligning oneself with Nature and reminding themselves of the need to be in Harmony with Nature in order to progress towards Perfection (Hurvatata). In the Arctic, there are two seasons, and they celebrated two Gahanbars; when they migrated to the Temperate lands, which have four seasons, they added four more Gahanbars. The names of the Gahanbars are mathematically indicative of the exact day of the celebration.

**ARCTIC GAHANBARS: Maidhyo-Shahem** (Mid-Summer Gahanbars). (July 5) (15 Tir). Arctic summer is from Vernal Equinox to 30 days after the Autumnal Equinox, a total of 216 days. Mind Summer is the 108<sup>th</sup> Day from Vernal Equinox.

**Ayeh-Threm (Saarem)** (Coming of Winter) (Oct 21) (30 Mehr) Arctic winter is of 5 months from Aban to Espand month. So, it is celebrated a day before the Arctic winter starts.

### TEMPERATE GAHANBARS:

**Maidhyo-Zarem** (Mid Spring): (4 May) (15 Ardibesht) Spring has 92.8 days, so Mid Spring is the 46th day.  
**Paity-Shahem** (End of Summer): (Sept 21) (31 Shahrivar). Summer ends before the Autumnal Equinox.

**Maidh-Yarem** (Mid-Winter): (Feb 5) (16 Bahman). 44 days from Winter Solstice. The Winter season is for 88.9 days  
**Hamas-Path-Maedem** (Equality of heat and cold, day and night): (March 19/20) (28/29 Espand). Last day of the year.

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

## NAR BAYRAMI, TRADITIONAL POMEGRANATE FESTIVITY AND CULTURE - AZERBAIJAN- INTANGIBLE HERITAGE - CULTURE SECTOR - UNESCO

<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/nar-bayrami-traditional-pomegranate-festivity-and-culture-01511>

**Nar Bayrami** is an annual festival in October/November in Azerbaijan’s Goychay region that celebrates the **pomegranate** and its traditional uses and symbolic meaning.

Pomegranate culture is a set of practices, knowledge, traditions and skills related to the cultivation of the fruit, which is used not only in a range of culinary contexts, but is also referred to in crafts, decorative arts, myths, storytelling and other creative outlets.

The element is linked to local agriculture and to the farmers and individuals in rural communities that grow and collect the fruit. These participants have an understanding of environmental characteristics and harvesting techniques.

The fruit enjoys great visibility in society as both the pomegranate and **Nar Bayrami** perform a range of cultural and social functions – everything from its use in traditional meals to being cited in poetry. Symbolically, the pomegranate is associated with long-term productivity, abundance and is considered as a carrier of energy.

Local legends viewed it as a symbol of love and passion, while religious people saw it as symbolizing eternity. The annual celebration displays pride for this festivity and culture related to the fruit and encourages active exchange and communication among communities and visitors to the festivity, a time to highlight local nature and culture.

- 1 Considers that, from the information included in the file, the nomination satisfies the following criteria for inscription on the **Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**:

R.1: The pomegranate and the **Nar Bayrami** festival have a strong symbolic meaning for the inhabitants of Goychay, its surroundings and, indeed, the whole country. The submitting State has provided a clear description of the element as a set of practices, knowledge, traditions and skills related to the cultivation and harvesting of the pomegranate, taking place every year in October/November.

Transmitted from generation to generation mainly within families, the Nar Bayrami festivity and pomegranate culture in general bear a spirit of solidarity, tolerance, respect and hospitality.

The communities concerned consider that the internal structure of the pomegranate symbolizes unity, integrity, diversity, dynamism and perfection.

R.2: As the element is closely linked to **local** agriculture, the inscription will raise awareness about other elements of local traditional culture based on agricultural practices.

At the **national level**, it will raise awareness about other practices of intangible cultural heritage that are part of the identity of communities in Azerbaijan and bear a strong symbolic significance for them

According to the nomination, at the **international level** the inscription will demonstrate and promote the strong link between agriculture, health, food and intangible cultural heritage, in the context of the global agenda for sustainable development.



# Art, Archeology, Aging, Achemenians, and Antioxidants

*The Pomegranate Flower: A Symbolic Message from the Ancient World*

BEHRAM PASTAKIA MD



Holding pride of place on the Haft Sheen Table at Now Ruz, on the Sofreh Mehregan and at the celebration of Deygan (Yalda), the pomegranate is embedded in the cultural psyche of Zarathushtis from Iran. We see engraved on the bas relief at Takht-e-Jamshid (Fig.1), the Achaemenid Monarch, Darius the Great, holding the flower of *Punica Granatu* (Fig. 2), passing on a message to us, through the centuries: to value it for use in our daily lives.

**Fig 1** The flower of the Pomegranate at the Udvada Atash Behram entry gate, Gujarat, India. Photo credit: Bawi Bride



Packed with antioxidants, this gift of nature is revered in many sacred religious traditions (photo right) and has been used for medicinal purposes from Ayurveda in India, to ancient Chinese medicine. Beneficial effects have been attributed to diseases which come with aging, the circulatory system, (atherosclerosis) and prostate health in elderly men. Cherished as a food for millennia, it is time for us to look into its cultivation at our Dare- Mehrgans and Atash Kadehs in North America, bringing back the whiff of the Persian Gardens, with their special spaces reserved for “*Bagh-e Anar*”

The plant grows well in loam and in full sun. It can be grown in pots.

**Fig 2 (left)** Bas relief of Darius The Great at the Apadana Palace, Iran, holding the flower of the pomegranate.



*Madonna of the Pomegranate* by Sandro Boticelli (circa 1487) housed in Florence Italy. (right)



## OVER THE (KITCHEN) COUNTER: POMEGRANATE PLEASURES (1)

Heat 1 cup pomegranate juice to just under a boil.  
Turn off the heat.

Mix in 1 1/2 tea-spoons arrowroot powder (dissolved in 2 tablespoons of water to make it into a liquid).

This mixture will immediately start to thicken.  
Add 1 or 2 tablespoons of maple syrup to taste.

Store in refrigerator for up to several weeks.

- Add 2 tablespoons to sparkling water for a pomegranate spritzer.
- Add 2 tablespoons to your yogurt smoothie.
- Mix 2 tablespoons with 1/2 cup olive oil, 1 clove garlic, a dash of lemon juice and sea salt for a yummy salad dressing.

From FEZANA Bulletin 2016

[https://fezana.org/wp-content/uploads/FEZANA\\_Bulletin\\_2016\\_12.pdf](https://fezana.org/wp-content/uploads/FEZANA_Bulletin_2016_12.pdf)

### REFERENCE:

*National Geographic Guide to Medicinal Plants -- The World's Most Effective Healing Plants*, By Rebecca L Johnson, Steven Foster, Tieraona Low Dog, David Kiefer, Pages 248-251; ISBN 978-1-4351-5658-6

**Behram Pastakia, MD**, Chair, Information Receiving and Dissemination Committee of FEZANA

## AME Professor Receives International Design Engineering Award

Farrokh Mistree, Ph.D., L.A. Comp Chair in the School of Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering, has received an ICONNN Award from the International Conference series on



Research into Design (ICoRD'23) organizing committee.

Farrokh Mistree is one of two recipients globally selected for making outstanding contributions to the advancement of research and/or education in design. ICoRD was established in 2015. The award acronym, ICONNN (pronounced 'icon') stands for ICoRD Outstanding Contribution to design science and education.

In January 2023, he will delivered a keynote titled "From Make to DESIGN and Make" at the ninth International Conference on Research Into Design at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, India.

Farrokh Mistree holds the L. A. Comp Chair in the School of Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma, USA. Farrokh co-directs the Systems Realization Laboratory at OU with his wife Professor Janet K. Allen. Their research focus is on defining the emerging frontier of evolving cyber-physical-social systems when the computational models are incomplete and inaccurate. Their current research focus is titled "Public Policy as an Evolving Cyber-Physical Social System." Farrokh has co-authored two textbooks, five research monographs and more than 500 technical papers dealing with the design of materials, mechanical, thermal and structural systems; ships and aircraft; engineered supply networks. Farrokh is a Distinguished Alumnus of IIT Kharagpur, a Fellow of ASME (American Society of Mechanical Engineers) and an Associate Fellow of AIAA (American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Association)

**CONGRATULATIONS PROF MISTREE ON YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS**

## ROHINTON (RON) MINOO KALIFA OBE, KNIGHTED BY HRH PRINCE WILLIAM



**Sir** Ron Kalifa OBE, was listed by her late majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Honors list in July 2022 for his distinguished service to the financial services industry.

In November he was knighted by HRH Prince of Wales at an investiture ceremony at Windsor Castle. Present to view this

honour was his wife Lady Gillian, son Ryan and his mother Nargis Kalifa.

Sir Ron built up the giant payment processing group called World Pay and led it as its CEO from 2002 to 2013 and was vice chairman until its sale to an American giant in 2017. He is now chairman of Network International Ltd, a FTSE 250 company listed in London but based in Dubai. Sir Ron is a director of the Bank of England and also on the Board of Transport for London. He held various roles with Royal Bank of Scotland, National Westminster Bank, working across disciplines in

Europe, UK and USA. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of East London, for forging a career in finance spanning more than 30 years.

At the ZTFE reception on November 12, 2022 Sir Ron mentioned that he becomes a member of the long line of very distinguished Zoroastrians who had been knighted starting with Sir Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy in 1842, Sir Pheroshah Mehta in 1904, Sir Jivanji Modi in 1930, Sir Mancherjee Bhowndagree in 1897. Lord Karan Billimoria who was elevated to the House of Lords in 2006.

Sir Ron is an avid cricketer and member of the

English Cricket Board. He is an active member of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE), was a major donor for the World Zoroastrian Congress 2022 in New York and for the World Youth Congress in July 2023

Lord Billimoria describes him as "the most outstanding professional in the financial world today".

Born in Mumbai he attended St Mary's High School before immigrating to England with his parents at age 10.

Zoroastrians of the World are proud of your achievements Sir Ron and we wish you greater success for years ahead. Editor, FEZANA Journal

## *Dhun Noria*

## **HONoured WITH THE PRESTIGIOUS QUEEN ELIZABETH II PLATINIUM JUBILEE AWARD-MEDAL**

**Dr.** Dhun Noria of Toronto is a healthcare trailblazer and Chief of Laboratory Medicine at Scarborough Health Network (SHN). She was recently honoured with the prestigious Queen Elizabeth’s Platinum Jubilee Award – Medal, for her formative and ground-breaking contributions to the Shared Hospital Lab (SHL).

This distinguished award together with the Official Platinum Jubilee Pin issued by Heritage Canada and the special commemorative medal as a token of appreciation was presented to her by Han Dong Member of Parliament, Don Valley North for her significant contributions through volunteerism, public service, local advocacy and leadership which has left a long-term positive impact.

At the dedication ceremony, a plaque was unveiled in the gardens, *The Dr. Dhun Noria SHL Staff Wellness Courtyard*. The plaque reads, “Named in recognition of Dr. Noria, MD, FRCPC, O. Ont., a previous Chair of the Board of SHL, her personal story of inspiration and her commitment to patient care and the Ontario health system is unsurpassed. She envisioned, championed and was the driving force behind the creation of SHL.”

In recognition of the tremendous contributions to health care in the province her portrait will be hung in the SHL board room.

A two time breast cancer survivor, Dr Noria has built a career on an unwavering commitment to excellence in health care, and her work has had a significant impact on Ontario’s health care system. She was a founding board member of Birchmount Hospital, and member of the core planning team that brought together Birchmount and General in 1999. Appointed by Premier and Lt. Governor in Council as Chair of Metro Toronto District Health Council with a mandate to Restructure 44 Hospitals in Metro Toronto, she was also a founding member of the Shared Hospital Laboratory.

Recognized nationally and internationally she has earned many awards for her commitment to the health care field in Canada, including Order of Ontario Award – the province’s highest honour; Queen Elizabeth’s Diamond Jubilee Medal; Queen Elizabeth’s Platinum Jubilee Medal; a star in the Scarborough Walk of Fame; Presidential Medal from the Ontario Medical Association; and Professional and Business Woman of the Year through the Canada-India Business Council.

Dr. Dhun Noria arrived in Canada from India with only \$8 in her pocket, as the then Indian government allowed only \$8 in foreign exchange. She has come a long way since then and through her hard work and dedication to health services Dr Noria and her business man husband Farokh Noria have donated over \$1 million cumulatively to SHL Foundation.



*FEZANA Journal and the community is very proud of your achievements Dr Dhun Noria*





## Prof Almut Hintz, Zartoshty Brothers Prof of Zoroastrian Studies received a grant from Arts and Humanities Research Council of Pounds 999,998 (1 million) for project to preserve and document bullae and sealings from the Sassanian Empire

**DR** Yousuf Moradi researcher in the Dept will be the co-investigator on the research project titled

*“Beyond Discovery: Religion, economics and administration in Sassanian Iran through clay bullae from Taxt -e-Solayman”* This was following his excavations of the bullae in 2002-2008 at the World Heritage site of Taxt-e-Solayman (Throne of Solomon) in the province of Western Azarbaijan in Iran. *Photo right: Taxt-e Solaymān, Bulla 10941, sealing 4. A fire stand with blazing fire and a fragmentary inscription.*

Bullae are large lumps of clay which were used for sealing documents and packages. Seals were pressed in soft clay while it was still soft

to prove the authenticity of the document. Widely used in Sassanian Iran (224-651CE) the imagery and inscriptions of the seal provide valuable insights into the economy and religion of the time.,

Prof Hintz and Dr Moradi will categorize and interpret the sealings via technology of 3D imaging, computer vision and artificial intelligence to understand the origin, diffusion and meaning of the imagery.

The project will conclude with two exhibitions in 2028, one in the Museum of Urmia in Azarbaijan and one at the Brunei Gallery at SOAS.

An electronic data set published online with metadata will provide photographs and line drawings of all 824 bullae and 3D models.



*Congratulations Prof Hintz on this substantial grant to further the knowledge of Sassanian Iran and the practice of the Zoroastrian religion .*

## FERDOWSI PRESIDENTIAL CHAIR IN ZOROASTRIAN STUDIES AT UCI SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

Carlo Giovanni Cereti one of the best-known scholars of Zoroastrianism and ancient Iranian studies, will be joining the UCI School of Humanities as the Ferdowsi Presidential Chair in Zoroastrian Studies. Prof Cereti was a professor of Iranian studies at La Sapienze, Rome. At UCI he will teach Zoroastrianism and ancient Iranian languages and cultures, as well as train scholars in the field of Zoroastrian studies.

The new chair is named in honor of Ferdowsi, the 10th-century Persian poet who is often credited with reviving the Persian language and history by composing the *Shahnameh (Book of Kings)*, the national epic of Greater Iran.

The endowed chair is supported by the Massiah Foundation, founded by Fariborz Maseeh, Ph.D., an Iranian American businessman and pioneer in the field of microelectromechanical systems. In 2005, the Massiah Foundation funded the creation of UCI’s Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture, the first independent, interdisciplinary center focused on the Iranian world within the UC system.

Prof Cereti’s research has mainly centered on the Zoroastrian religion; his first book was on a Zoroastrian Middle Persian apocalyptic text composed in late antiquity. He is also working on an archaeological project in Iraqi Kurdistan where he has collected the missing stone blocks of an important Sasanian rock relief at Paikuli, which belonged to King Narseh of the third and early-fourth century CE.



*Welcome Prof Carlo Giovanni Cereti to the North American Academic world*

# SCHEME FOR EXTENDING FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO HELPERS AT VARIOUS ATASHBEHRAMS & AGIYARIES

**ZOROASTRIAN CHARITY FUNDS OF HONG KONG, CANTON & MACAO** have always been in the vanguard of supporting various community causes all over the world.

Over the last many decades, they have been extremely proactive towards extending support through WZO Trust Funds to individuals in India from different walks of life who are economically challenged, and in need of financial support in different situations.

**To elaborate, financial support is presently being extended to Zoroastrians through WZO Trust Funds towards:**

More than 500 individuals are provided financial support to meet their medical & hospitalization needs every year.

More than 150 students are provided financial support to meet their need towards pursuit of higher education.

Financial support is provided on a quarterly basis to 564 individuals who are economically challenged, old or infirm.

(i) 117 Elderly Mobeds who having performed full time Mobedi and retired are economically challenged.

(ii) 31 widows of above Mobeds.

77 pall bearers who work at different Doongerwadia's / Towers of Silence in India are extended support every quarter.

Food grains are distributed to 301 poor Zoroastrian families living in the villages of Gujarat and adjoining districts of Maharashtra, and 688 families at Mumbai.

5. Constructed two buildings at Navsari where poor Zoroastrians reside at very nominal license fees.

6. Support rehabilitation of poor Zoroastrian farmers living in villages of Gujarat and annually fund the replacement of 8 to 10 huts in which they live, into cottages

**Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton & Macao have not only earned the blessings of thousands of Zoroastrians but also earned the sobriquet of being regarded as "Champions of Philanthropy".**

WZO Trust Funds had a few months earlier informed Trustees of Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton & Macao that a list of 103 economically


Dinshaw k. Tamboly, Chairman, WZO Trusts. challenged individuals who work as 'Helpers' (Chasniwallas) at our various Atashbehrams & Agiyaries, was collated and requested that they being very deserving be considered for financial support on a quarterly basis.

**WZO Trust Funds are very pleased to announce that the very generous Trustees of Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton & Macao readily accepted our proposal and have agreed to extend support to them as well on a quarterly basis.**

**Disbursements to the beneficiaries will commence from January 2023 onwards on a quarterly basis.**

The Parsi Irani Zoroastrian community is indeed very fortunate to have benefactors such as Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton & Macao who have always very willingly extended support for various deserving causes for which our community owes them its wholehearted gratitude.

 [SCC - 25th Anniversary - Video.mp4](#)



*Dinshaw and Bachi Tamboly and all the Trustees of WZO TRUSTS, Zarthushtis of the World thank you for the yeomen work and service you provide for our humdins in Gujarat and Maharashtra.*

*For the last 25 years the Senior Citizens Residence in Navsari has brought joy, cheer and companionship to 100s of Zarthushti seniors who had been living alone. We can put our hands in our pocket but you provide boots on the ground!! Bravo.*

*With deep gratitude, Editor in Chief, FEZANA JOURNAL.*

# PARALLELS BETWEEN GĀTHĀS OF ZARATHUSHTRA AND BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

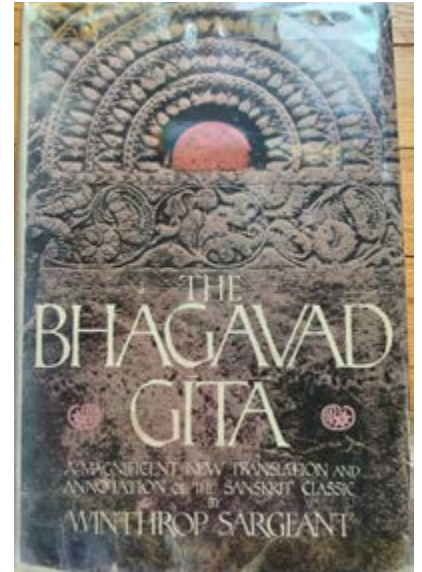
Keki Dadachanji Ph.D



**Dr Keki Dadachanji** currently leads two Gāthā Study Groups for the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York. He taught a 3-semester in-depth course on the Bhagavad Gītā at the OSHER Lifelong Learning Institute under Rutgers University. He has taught the Upanishads, Dhammapada, Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali, and the Philosophy of Epictetus. Dr. Dadachanji is interested in experimenting with the teachings of these texts in daily living, deriving inspiration from Mahātmā Gāndhi's "The Story of My Experiments with Truth".

Dr. Dadachanji has the doctorate in Operations Research from Case Western Reserve University. He was the Co-chair of the Program Committee of 12<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Congress.

All of us seek happiness and loving relationships that will endure. But we don't always know what happiness and love mean, and we look for them in the most unlikely places, believing that money, power and prestige will make us happy. We spend many years chasing these, only to find that whatever happiness they bring does not last. Late in life we start looking elsewhere. In the second half of my life, I started looking closely at the teachings of great spiritual teachers. This led me to the Gāthās of Zarathushtra and the Bhagavad Gītā, two texts that appealed to me deeply. And at a fundamental level they both gave the same answers to my questions. Here we will discuss the answers I found in the Gāthās of Zarathushtra, and the parallels I found in the Bhagavad Gītā. We have learnt about the physical laws that govern the universe: the laws of gravity, motion, optics, electromagnetism, and so on. We learn to live in harmony with these laws. Not until late in life we start to dimly suspect that there are also spiritual laws that govern the universe. Zarathushtra tells us what these laws are and asks us to live in harmony with them. He calls these laws the *Law of Aša*, and the *Law of Choice-and-Consequences*.



In the Gathas, Aša is described in the 3<sup>rd</sup> verse of Hā 29 <sup>(1)</sup>:

*Ahmāi Ašā , nōit sarejā  
advaēšō Gavōi , paitī-mravat:*

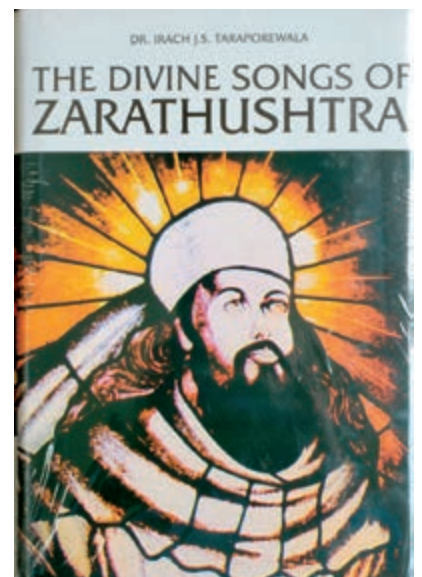
Unto Him Aša, (who) does not disunite  
(and is) non-inimical to (all) Creation, made reply:

"nōit sarejā" - Aša does not divide, looks at all of Mazda's creation as part of a unified whole. And "advaēšō Gavōi" - Aša does not hate, does not bear ill-will towards anyone.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Bhagavad Gītā* we find the verse:

*Adveštā sarva-bhūtānām  
Maitrah karuṇa eva ca  
Nirmamō nirahaṃkārah  
Sama dukhah sukhah kṣami*

"Adveštā sarva-bhūtānām" is a precise equivalent of "Advaešō Gavōi". Both these great texts teach us that if we want to find happiness, we should refrain from having





ill-will, resentment, or hatred for anybody. They tell us, the secret of happiness to cultivate loving, compassionate disposition, without any expectation that others will reciprocate.

The Law of Aša establishes order in the universe. If all of life is united, connected, then harming any part of it is going to harm the whole, and every part of it. If rain-forests are destroyed in Brazil, that assault on the environment will have effect on a small village in India.

The practical application of the Law of Aša is that if we seek happiness at the cost of other people, other creatures, or the environment, we may find fleeting pleasures along the way, but sorrow will be our final resting place. Conversely, if we have a compassionate disposition, are mindful of the effect our acts and words have on others, and work always to add to the happiness of others, our relationships will flourish and our hearts will be filled with joy. This is how we find “*uštā*” in daily living.

The Eternal Law of Aša, that all life is inter-connected, has been reiterated by poets, philosophers and scientists.

Quoting English mystical poet Francis Thompson:

*“All things, by immortal power; near or far,  
Hiddenly to each other linked are,  
That thou canst not stir a flower  
Without troubling of a star.”*

The principle of Aša unambiguously rejects violence in any form. The verses in the Gāthās that speak of responding to the enemies with weapons need to be interpreted within the comprehensive world-view of Zarathushtra, and not literally. Irach Taraporewala carefully translates Verse 18 of Hā 31 as:

*“So resist these with (spiritual) weapons.”*

Zarathushtra teaches us in Hā 30 that we encounter innumerable little choices in everyday living, which all carry consequences. He gives us the measure by which we should evaluate our choices. Choices that enhance Aša, enhance the collective happiness of Mazda’s creations, are the right choices. Their consequences will be abiding joy, inner happiness, and peace. When we perfect ourselves in making the right choices always, we will live in heaven in this very life. We will reach *Haurvatāt and Ameretāt, perfection and immortality*.

Conversely, being insensitive to the well-being of other people, animals, or nature, we will suffer in the end. Whatever wealth, power, and fame we may gain, alienation and lovelessness will be the hell in which we will live. In presenting this Law of Choice-and-

Consequences, Zarathushtra teaches us that happiness is not to be found outside; it is a state of mind.

## AŠA AND RITA

I found parallels to these two fundamental spiritual laws in the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad Gītā. The principle of Aša is called Rita in Sanskrit. Dr. Irach Taraporewala demonstrates that the two words are cognates. And the *Law of Choice-and-Consequences* is called (italics removed) *the Law of Karma in the Gītā*. Both these traditions refrain from giving specific commandments, but give these Eternal Laws as the guiding principles.

The Bhagavad Gītā gives us a more nuanced understanding of the Law of Karma. It is not the result of what we do (or say, or think) that produces consequences, but the intention with which these actions were undertaken, and the effort expended to realize the intended results. The results are not always in our hands. This is expressed in the famous verse 2.47 from the Bhagavad Gītā:

*“Karmanyevādhikāraste, mā phaleṣu kadācana...”*  
“You have the right to work, but never to the fruit of work...”<sup>(2)</sup>

A healthy body is essential for us to promote the welfare of Mazda’s creations, hence we take good care of the body by eating nutritious food, exercising, getting good sleep, and meditate. But we can still get cancer or heart attack. The results of our well-intended efforts are not always in our hands. We should do all that is in our control and leave the results to the Lord. We should think of these well-intentioned works as our offerings to the Lord.

Zarathushtra tells us that Ahura Mazda has empowered us with everything we need to live in harmony with the spiritual laws of Aša and Choice and Consequences. We need no interpreters, advocates, or intermediaries. We possess *Vohu Manah, Good Thinking*, which enables us to grasp what is right and what is wrong in any given situation. To be guided by this inborn wisdom, we need to free ourselves from the fog of negative tendencies such as greed, lust, anger, and fear. This is powerfully expressed in Hā 30 Verse 2, one of the foundational verses of the **Gāthās**:

*Listen with-(your)-ears to the Highest (Truths),  
consider (them) with-(your)-mind illumined,  
before-deciding between-the-two-Paths, -  
man-by-man, (each) for-his-own-self, -  
before (this) great ushering-in  
wake-ye each-one [indeed] (and) spread this  
(Message).*

This compact verse is broken out over two verses of the **Gītā: (BG)**

**BG 18.63** *I give you these precious words of wisdom; reflect on them and then choose what is best. [freedom of choice]*

**BG 18.68** *He who teaches this supreme mystery of the Gītā to all those who love Me will come to Me without doubt. [importance of teaching]*

Once our Vohu Manah tells us what the ideal resolution of any given situation is, we are expected to work tirelessly to attain it. This impulse to act upon what is recognized as *Truth is called Ārmaity*. Thus Ārmaity gives life to Truth. Working constantly to move the world towards Truth is how we express our devotion to Ahura Mazda. Therefore, *Ārmaity* is sometimes interpreted as Devotion. Our efforts to realize Truth are supported by *Xšathra*, the spiritual power, endowed by the Lord to those who do His work. When our life is spent grasping and realizing Truth, we reach a state of perfection in this life, called *Haurvatāt*, and immortality in the life hereafter, called *Ameretāt*. ***Aša, Vohu Manah, Xšathra, Ārmaity, Haurvatāt and Ameretāt were called Amešā Spentās in later texts. These are attributes of Ahura Mazda.*** When human beings emulate these attributes, they gradually resemble the Divine, and attain perfection. Those who walk on the path of Aša develop a benevolent disposition. Whenever they see suffering or injustice, they want to correct it. This inclination or disposition for benevolence is called ***Spentā Mainyu***.

### **A WORLD-VIEW AND A WAY-OF-LIFE**

All religions have two components: a world-view and a way-of-life. Different religions often diverge in their world-view regarding what happens after death.

The Gītā and the Buddha are unambiguous in their world-view that we continue our journey towards perfection by acquiring new bodies until we reach that goal. For these traditions, reincarnation is a logical extension of the Law of Karma.

The notion of reincarnation is foundational in the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad Gītā. Discourse 8 of the Bhagavad Gītā tells us that the context of the next life is determined by the last thought we have before we die, and that last thought is the summation of everything we have done, said or thought throughout this life.

Zarathushtra is ambiguous in his position on the subject of reincarnation. Does the Verse 11 of Hā 49 support reincarnation or refute it? There are opinions on both sides. How do I read it? Zarathushtra speaks to me of an afterlife that includes reincarnation. how do I reach that position. Yasna Hā 30 says unambiguously

that all choices we make will have consequences. So what happens to choices we made in this life for which we have not realized the consequences by the moment of death? One needs to envision an afterlife in which we face these consequences. I know this life, and can relate to continuing it in another body, where I pay the unpaid debts. I do not know other realms of existence and cannot speculate about them.

In a significant part of the Gāthās Zarathushtra speaks to Ahura Mazda as a friend. He seeks reassurance, counsel, answers to questions, and support. This is an internal communion. To me, this is prayer. In its purest form, silent and inward-looking. These verses represent loving and devotional elements in Zarathushtra's teachings. In my view, *living in accordance with the Laws of Aša and Choices-and-Consequences is ethics. It is a pre-requisite to being a Zarathushti.* But higher states of spiritual awareness call for an intimate relationship with Mazda. Zarathushtra clearly expresses such states in parts of the Gāthās. Thus, I consider meditative silent prayers as part of my spiritual and religious practice.

Zarathushtra tells us that if we have chosen to follow his path, it is important that we share the learning from that journey with others. Zarathushtra himself says:

*Yavat isāi tavā cā*

*Avat xšāi aēšē Ašhyā*

“As long as I have will, and wield the power,  
So long will I teach mankind to strive for Aša.”

Teaching is not lecturing, though sometimes it can be that. Teaching is listening, questioning, and demonstrating in one's own life. Sharing with others, whatever spiritual knowledge we may have acquired, is a fundamental Zarathushti responsibility. Teaching requires skill, humility and patience. Zarathushtra expects us all to be teachers.

A mystic poet has said, “*Seek what you seek, but it is not where you seek it.*” In our seeking of personal happiness, we forget that we are not isolated creatures. We are connected to all life. Zarathushtra, in the Gāthās, gives us insight into the Eternal Spiritual Laws, and shows us the path that will lead us to what we seek.

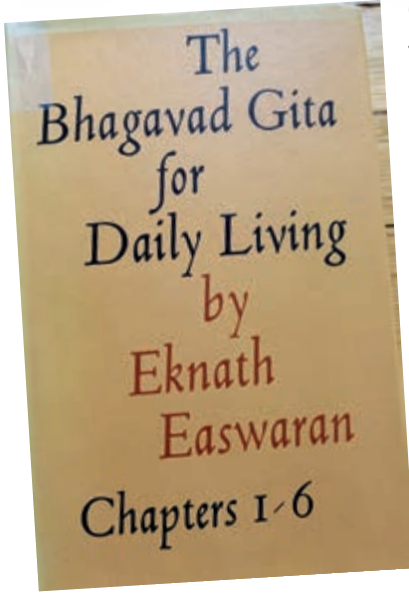
*Aevo pantāo yo Ašahe, vispe anyaešām apantām.*

The only path that leads to abiding joy and love, to the state of Uštā, is the path of Aša. All other paths are blind alleys. They are no paths at all.

(1) *All translations of the Gāthā verses are by Irach Taraporewala.*

(2) *All translations of the Bhagavad Gītā verses are by Eknath Easwaran.*

# A BRIEF BACKGROUND ON THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ



(For a background on the Gāthās of Zarathushtra, please refer to the FEZANA Journal Vol. 35 No.1 Spring/ March 2021: “Zarathushtra’s Gāthās in the Contemporary World”)

The Sanātana Dharma, ordinarily called Hinduism, distinguishes between “Lower Knowledge” (*Apara Jñāna*) and “Higher Knowledge” (*Para Jñāna*). The Lower Knowledge includes what we learn in schools and colleges: languages, sciences, mathematics, literature, economics, finance, etc. and is useful in navigating the affairs of the world. The Higher Knowledge seeks answers to the questions, “Who am I?”, “Where do I come from?”, “What happens after death?”, “What is the purpose of life?” and so on. *The Upaniṣads, the Bhagavad Gītā, and the Gāthās of Zarathushtra are all concerned with the Higher Knowledge.*

The Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad Gītā are composed in Sanskrit. There are 108 Upaniṣads, many of them composed by anonymous sages. The Bhagavad Gītā, a distillation of the Upaniṣadic teachings, is framed within the epic “The Mhābhārata”, attributed to Krishna Dvaipāyana Veda Vyāsa. The framing of the Gītā within the apocalyptic battle of Kurukṣetra has sometimes raised questions that have distracted the readers from the actual content of the Gītā, hence the text is best read as a standalone work.

The Bhagavad Gītā is a dialogue between Krishna (a human manifestation of the divine), and Arjuna (a warrior, represented as an ordinary man asking Krishna probing questions) on wide-ranging subjects that include all the major Upaniṣadic themes. *It is comprised of 18 discourses*, composed of strictly metrical verses.

*The Gāthās of Zarathushtra are voiced in Old Avestan, a language very similar to the Rigvedic Sanskrit. It is comprised of 17 Hās. It is composed in verses using similar metrical structures as the Bhagavad Gītā (such as the Anuṣṭup meter). The thematic similarities between the two works are brought out in the article above.*

Both these works were composed in the Indo-Iranian region, in broadly similar timeframe, the precise timeframes of their construction are a matter of debate. We believe that neither of them “copies” the other, but both are inspired by similar cultural milieu and similar probing and enlightened minds.

Zarathushtra (as well as the Buddha) rejected the dogma and rituals of the first two sections of the Vedas (Samhita and Brāhmaṇa), and the oppressive powers of the priests who performed these rituals. These are far removed from the sublime teachings of the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad Gītā. Many Zoroastrians do not recognize this distinction, and reject all texts of the Sanātana Dharama. This misunderstanding needs to be corrected.

For readers who may like to explore the Bhagavad Gītā further, a few of the translations, some of them with extensive commentary, are suggested below.

## 1. *The Bhagavad Gītā*

*Translation and Annotation by Winthrop Sargeant, Doubleday and Company, Inc.*

*An essential reference for any serious reader of the Gītā, including a literal word-for-word translation as well as a free rendering, giving the meaning of each Sanskrit word, with an extensive introduction.*

## 2. *The Bhagavad Gītā for Daily Living Volumes 1-3*

*Translated with extensive commentary by Eknath Easwaran, Nilgiri Press*

*This magnum opus is the greatest book written for anyone who wants to translate the Gītā into their life. It has innumerable insights from a man who writes from personal experience.*



# BAHRAM YASHT

DARYOUSH JAHANIAN MD.  
KANSAS

The following comments are about the articles in the 2022 summer issue of FEZANA Journal. Verathraghna, Varahram or Bahram Yasht is devoted to glorification of the Izad of Victory, Bahram. This Yasht was composed long after Zarathushtra and mainly reflects a pre-Zoroastrian belief in which Bahram manifests in ten different configurations. They are: **Pleasant atmosphere**, **Bull** (golden ear, golden horn), **Horse** (white, golden ears), **Camel**, **Boar**, **Youth** (fifteen years, brilliant), **Bird** (Raven), **Ram** (savage and beautiful), **Buck** (fighting, elegant), **Warrior** (keeps a sword).

Many years ago, the late Mobed Firooz Azargoshasb told me these figures reflect astronomical constellations. I have compared them with the Chinese Zodiac constellations and found out that indeed five of those mentioned manifestations matched. However, there are only ten figures in Bahram Yasht as compared to twelve named in the Chinese Constellations. I hope our interested readers will provide more information.

**Geush**-If we translate Geush in the Gathas as Cow, rather than the Living World (Mother- Earth), in every sentence it will be incongruous. For example, in Yasna 29 Cow speaks, in 31/9 the fashioner of Cow has granted her (the cow) freedom to choose a good leader or who is not...But they should choose the leader who is righteous and promotes good thought. Yasna 51-7 is the key to decipher the code: The Wise One has fashioned the Cow? as well as water and plants for the faithful..It is obvious that here the only suitable word to replace the Cow is the living world. Yasna 48-6...The Geush is our dwelling and safe haven... Wise God has clothed her with vegetation and covered her with food...Insler has translated Geush as Cow, but he notices its incongruity and construes each one as a various metaphor. Jafarey maintains that (Go, Gav), literally cow, allegorically stands for Gaetha (in Persian Guiti), the living world and in the Gathas. Yasna 29, Zarathushtra is accepted by the living world (not the Cow)..

In the Persian language the words, Guiti (living world), Jahan (living world) and Kayhan (universe) derive from Gaya or life (ajyaiti stands for unlife in Yasna 30). The Persian word, Zamin (Zam in the Gathas,44-4) stands for the planet of Earth.

After all, if Cow was so sacred, then why was it not a suffix of the first names in the Avestan era. We find plenty of names with the suffixes of horse, aspa (Vishstaspa, Jamaspa, Pourushaspa) and camel, ushtra (Frashaoshtra, Ratushtra), but there is no first name with suffix of Geush or Gava. Furthermore, there is no historical report of the Iranians regarding the cow as a holy creature and we can find no trace of that concept in the Persian literature. Even in the Persian mysticism cow has no symbolic status. However, today in contrast to the Avestan era, Guiti (Gaetha), the living world or Mother-Earth is used as a first name for the girls, perhaps to match the productivity of life by both.

Like other religious books, there are terms and analogies in the Gathas that belong to their era. They must be deciphered and by contemporary terms brought to our time. I would like to quote Dr. Irach Taraporewala "The Gathas must be judged by themselves and in light of their own contents. In other words, it would not be correct to understand a word from the Gathas in the sense it has acquired in Later Zoroastrian Literature. And it would, of course, be utterly wrong to read the ideas of Later Zoroastrian Theology into the Gathas."

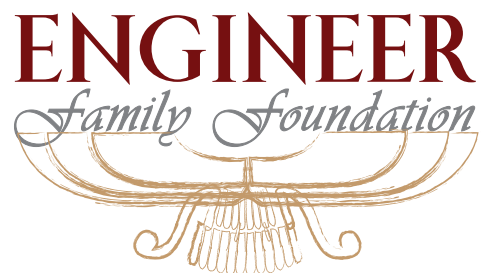
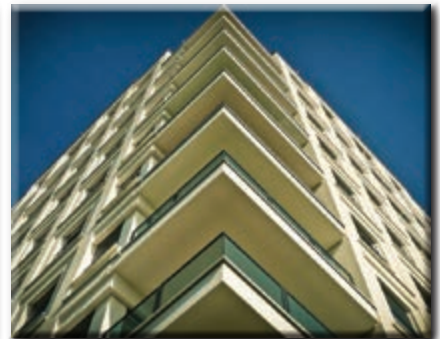
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Our charity invites applications from students aspiring for education, pursuing work related technical diploma's and seeking excellence in the fields of sports and fine arts.

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[www.engineerfamilyfoundation.org](http://www.engineerfamilyfoundation.org)

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## Travel as a Force for Good: May 24 – June 9, 2023

**J**ourney into the heart of Nepal and experience the majestic sights and cultures of this ancient country. From jaw-dropping Himalayan scenery to the once-forbidden Kingdom of Mustang, this trip of a lifetime includes intimate tours of magnificent 15th century monasteries that have been restored to their former glory. Led by restoration expert Luigi Fieni, who directed restoration efforts in the region for two decades, we will experience some of the finest Tibetan art and wall paintings in existence.

We begin with a visit to the world-class HRDC hospital outside Kathmandu. Guided by Dr. Bibek Banskota, we'll meet children and tour the complex where life-changing surgery takes place. Traveling north, we'll spend 10 glorious days in the fabled Kingdom of Mustang. Nestled in the far northern reaches of Nepal, Tibetan culture, religion, and traditions are believed to be at their purest here. We will experience exquisite Tibetan art, witness Tibetan ceremonial dances, and join in a puja in Thubchen monastery. **Don't miss this rare opportunity.**

### Meet Your Leaders

**Luigi Fieni** has served as lead conservator in Nepal, Bhutan, China, and Thailand, restoring ancient Buddhist art and training local people to preserve their own cultural heritage. His work has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *International Herald Tribune*, *The Washington Post*, *National Geographic*, and *Geo*. During the two decades overseeing art restoration in Mustang, he also photographed landscapes, culture, and the cultural heritage of the Himalayas.

**Tsewang Bista** was born in Mustang and is the nephew of the late King of Mustang. His in-depth knowledge of the area, local customs, and history is unparalleled. As one of the founders of the Lo Gyalpo Jigme Foundation, he actively oversees more than 30 social and cultural projects in Upper Mustang. As a tourism entrepreneur he manages customized tours and has led filming trips for *The National Geographic*, *Discovery Channel*, and *WGBH*.

**Eileen Moncoeur**, Executive Director of Sabal Foundation, has worked with local leaders, migrants, and displaced people in South Asia for more than 25 years. Her strategic approach supports local leaders to create and carry out initiatives within their own communities. Eileen has led exclusive trips meeting with local leaders in Nepal, Thailand, and Myanmar.



*Enabling Disabled Children*



Contact [travel@sabal-foundation.org](mailto:travel@sabal-foundation.org)  
[www.sabal-foundation.org](http://www.sabal-foundation.org)



## TRAVEL AS A FORCE For GOOD

In August 2019, Edul Daver, the then Global President of the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce, presented a paper at the United Nations Department of Global Communications Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, entitled:

“Can Entrepreneurship be the Solution to promote a South-South Model of Sustainable Development?”\*\* He concluded by predicting that a shift from a North-South to a South-South model was inevitable and desired.

The context for his talk was the FEZANA workshop and exhibit show casing the humanitarian work being performed to help children born with club feet at the Hospital for the Rehabilitation Disabled Children in Banepa, Nepal [www.hrdcnepal.org](http://www.hrdcnepal.org)

The exhibit was professionally prepared by our partners, headed by Executive Director, Eileen Moncoeur, of Sabal Foundation based in Northern California.

What better way to understand the impact of this life changing humanitarian work for more than 39 years lifting up thousands of lives than to visit the place, and see it personally?

Now our partners at Sabal have put together an opportunity to visit Nepal, and take in it's natural beauty, art and culture.

Questions? Please contact: [Behram@fezana.org](mailto:Behram@fezana.org)  
[Behram Pastakia, Co-Chair, Fezana UN-NGO](mailto:Behram@fezana.org)

\*\*Ref Edul Daver, South South Model for Sustainable Development, FEZANA Journal Vol 33, No. 4, pages 40-42, Winter/ December 2019.

## Matrimonials

**Female, 25**, Masters in Bio-Technology from University of Melbourne, Australia. Working in Melbourne, with PPD-ThermoFisher as an RSM (Remote Site Monitor) for clinical trials. Enjoys cooking, reading, travelling and dancing. Contact [NavazDaver22@gmail.com](mailto:NavazDaver22@gmail.com). [F22.19]

**Male, 33**, residing in Mississauga, Canada. Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, working as Manager of eCommerce Analytics for a multinational Consumer Goods company. Hobbies include cooking, reading, gaming and programming. Looking for a Parsi girl who is ready to settle down and start a family, someone who has a degree, is family-oriented and has strong values. Contact [Jmfdh23c@gmail.com](mailto:Jmfdh23c@gmail.com). [M22.32]

**Female, 39**, B.S. (Finance) and M.B.A. (Finance) from DePaul Univ., Chicago, working in Financial Services Operations in Chicago. U.S. citizen, born in Mumbai, father is non-Parsi. Enjoys travel, reading, exploring cities and trying new things. Contact [Karishma.mehta20@gmail.com](mailto:Karishma.mehta20@gmail.com). [F22.34]

**Female, 28**, 5' 6". BA (Socio-anthropology) from St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. 2-year fashion styling at Pearl Academy, Mumbai. Works on Costume Design for films, ads, etc. Enjoys travel, art and music, films, good food. Resides in Mumbai. Open to moving. Whatsapp: 9987018216. Contact [TanazDaruvala@gmail.com](mailto:TanazDaruvala@gmail.com). [F22.35]

**Female, 31**, 5' 3", Doctor of Medicine from NY, currently completing residency in family medicine in San Antonio, TX. Interested in meeting professional from USA or willing to move to USA. Contact 979 777 4934 or [docnic1@gmail.com](mailto:docnic1@gmail.com). [F22.36]

**Male, 40**, 6' 1". M. Ed. Education (Leslie U., Cambridge). Advanced Masters (American Intl. College). Working as Language Development Coach, Administration, in Framingham Public Schools. Enjoys travel, sports, new restaurants, movies. Interested in alliance with girl with good

values, good sense of humor; preferably currently living in USA and must be willing to relocate to Boston. Contact [mehshroff@yahoo.com](mailto:mehshroff@yahoo.com). [M14.30]

FEZANA Journal will coordinate initial contacts between interested parties. We do not assume any responsibility for verifying credentials. Contact Roshan Rivetna at [roshanrivetna@gmail.com](mailto:roshanrivetna@gmail.com).

PLEASE SEND ALL SUBMISSIONS FOR MILESTONES TO  
MAHRUKH MOTAFRAM TEL 425-961-0298  
[MAHRUKHM83@GMAIL.COM](mailto:MAHRUKHM83@GMAIL.COM)

### Zoroastrian Singles Virtual Meetups Calling all Zoroastrian Singles!

If you are interested in meeting Zoroastrian singles, please sign up on the Zoroastrian Singles database and indicate your age and regional/global preference. You will be notified when there is a virtual meetup where you can meet other single people around your age. These Virtual Meetups happen on a monthly basis, regionally and globally.

To sign up, fill in this form:

<https://forms.gle/wERUTFm6JLnH3NS96>

Questions? Email: [Zoroastriansingles@gmail.com](mailto:Zoroastriansingles@gmail.com)

Regards, Zoroastrian Singles Team

### BIRTHS

**Myrah Benafshaw Magol**, a girl, to Benafshaw and Narius Magol, granddaughter to Cyrus and Diana Magol and Hormaz and Sanobar Dashti, niece of Nerissa Wator and Samanauz Dashti in Terrace, BC, Canada, on August 12, 2022. (photo right above)



**Roxanne Elizabeth Mistry-Gamsby**, a girl, to Farah Mistry and Paul Gamsby, granddaughter to Yasmin and Homi Mistry and Barbara and late Douglas Gamsby, niece of Simonil and Jamshed Bamji, cousin to Darien Bamji in Vancouver, BC, Canada on September 8, 2022. (photo right)



**Jocelyn Mai Trainor**, a girl to Justin and Jasmine Trainor, sister to Jolene Makenna Trainor, granddaughter to Persis and Naozer Behramsha, niece to Kashmir, Zarin, Jorge, cousin to Darius, Zara. on October 23, 2022. (MANASHNI)

**Nina Alamai Divecha Pereyra**, a girl, to Felicity Pereyra and Ashraf Divecha, granddaughter to Farida and Neville Divecha, great granddaughter to Aloo Tata, niece to Phiroze Divecha, in Houston, TX on October 27, 2022.

**Eva Khosravian**, a girl to Farzeen & Darius Khosravian, granddaughter to Nasreen & Rustom Khosravian and Fariba & Farhad Khosravi on December 10, 2022

**Ayla Gwen Bostic**, a girl to Sherazad Bapasola and Stetson Bostic, granddaughter to Khursheed and Noshir Bapasola and Chris Bostic, niece to Sam and Liz Bapasola and cousin to Sara Bapasola, in Media, PA, on Dec 23, 2022.

### NAVJOTES

**Farah and Mehrzana Shroff**, daughters of Nazneen and Adil Shroff, granddaughters of Arnavaz and Dr. Rohin Talati at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library, CA; on July 16, 2022. (ZAC-LA)

**Iyana Bodhanwala**, daughter of Laila and Homi Bodhanwala, sister of Arshan, Arshya, granddaughter of Dolat and Viraf Bodhanwala, Houtoxi and Farhad Contractor at the ZAC-LA Atash Kadeh on July 23, 2022.

**Ness-Angelo**, son of Roxanne Lakdawala and Quintino Rico in Montreal, QUE on August 3, 2022. Ervad Jal Panthaki performed the ceremony

**Zal Contractor**, son of Nauzad & Khushnawaz Contractor on Sunday, July 31st, 2022 (Behram Roj). at the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr in Burnaby, BC, Canada. Ervad Rustom Vazifdar performed the ceremony in front of family and friends. (photo right)



### WEDDINGS

**Kanesh Lakdawala and Zara Patel** on September 24, 2022. (ZAC-LA)

**Michelle Balsara**, daughter of Adil and Diana Balsara to **Ashar Malik**, son of Arshad and Samira Malik in Austin, TX on October 1, 2022.

**Aubtin Yazdgardian** (son of Sohrab and Mahnaz Yazdgardian) to **Znoishta Nejadkay** (daughter of Danesh and Behnaz Nejadkay) at the groom's home in Maple Ridge, British Columbia, Canada on Sunday, November 6th, 2022; *Roj: Daei be din*. Wedding performed by Mobed Jamshed Jamshidi in the presence of family and friends. (photo above)



### DEATHS

**Nergish Fali Lakdavala**, mother of Zend Lakdavala, Farah Khushro Unwalla, grandmother of Arianne, Roxanne, Reanna, in Las Vegas, NV on July 5, 2022.

**Parizad Ardeshir Ardeshiri (Parizad Hamsayeh)**, wife of late Goshtasb Meheraban Hamsayeh, mother of Niloufer Hamsayeh Coulier, Jennifer Hamsayeh, Mehernaz Hamsayeh Farsi, mother-in-law of Behrouz Farsi, David Collier, grandmother of Kamron Bagherian, Asha Farsi, Mitra Farsi on July 10, 2022. (ZAC-LA)

**Roshan Lakdawala 77**, wife of Ness Lakdawala, mother of Leena (Aurelio Useche), Roxanne (Quintino Rico), grandmother of Zachary, Vanessa, Sebastian, Yasmin-

Teresa, Siena-Roshan, Ness-Angelo in Montreal, QC on August 5, 2022.

**Mahvash Mehr** 86, mother of Ardeshir and grandmother of Nika and Dariush in Vancouver, on September 7, 2022.

**Hoshang Shroff, KC.** 89, on September 8, 2022 in Vancouver, husband late Rani Mahrukh, beloved father to Veeda Shroff and Farah Shroff and grandfather of three grandsons, brother of Kersi Shroff of Washington DC, in Vancouver, September 8, 2022.

**Mr. Freidoon Kamdar, husband of Paridokht, father of** Jamshid (Gohar) and Jahangir. daughter Jahandokht (Mehraban) and five grandchildren, in North Vancouver, B.C. on September 15, 2022.

**Nurgez Dabhoiwala**, wife of Noshir, mother of Zal (Dilshad Marolia) Dabhoiwala, Fara (Jo Dunkley), grandmother of Jocelyn, Zoe, Harriet, Kate, Zexxes on October 25, 2022. (ZAGNY)

**Soli Pardiwala**, 93, husband of late Perin Pardiwala (nee Dastoor), father of Zenobia (Harry), Shehnaz (Joe), Tanaz, grandfather of Aiden, Rachel, Lilah, Daniel, brother of Godrej Pardiwala, in Toronto, on November 1, 2022. (ZSO)

**Iraj Oshidari** husband of Golnar Keshavarzi, brother of Parichehr, Parviz and Anoushiravan and uncle of Azita, Babak, Parham and Pedram in North Vancouver, B.C, on November 3, 2022.

**Niloufer Darukhanavala**, wife of Phiroz Darukhanavala, mother of Amy, Jennifer, and Carl Darukhanavala on November 8, 2022. (ZA-Chi)

**Billy Engineer (ex-Lahorite)**, husband of late Mohta Engineer, brother of late Fali Engineer, late Mani Haveliwala, Maneck Engineer, Aban Kavasji, Amy Cooper, father of Freny Pestonji, Hormuzd Engineer, father-in-law of Nelly Engineer, Behram Pestonji, grandfather of Fiona Engineer, Farshad Engineer, Nasha Pestonji, Pankhil Desai, Mahveer Pestonji, Behzad Panthaky, Anya Panthaky, great grandfather of Jamie Panthaky, Zeeva Panthaky, Norah Desai, Rumi Desai in Sydney, Australia on November 10, 2022. (ZSO)

**Armaity Nagarwala**, wife of late Pervez Nagarwala, mother of Farhad, Zarir, mother-in-law of Kashmira, Binaifer, grandmother of Zal, Vehan, Fraron, sister of Farokh, sister-in-law of Khursheed in Mumbai, India on November 16, 2022. (ZAGNY)

**Piloo Nicholson**, wife of Rohinton Nicholson, mother of Karl and Hormazd Nicholson, grandmother of Sydney in Toronto, on December 4, 2022.

**Viraf Banaji Sukhia** .79, husband of Daisy, father of Cyrus and Farida in Vancouver on December 5, 2022.

**Colonel Sam Behramshaw Lalkaka**, 93, father of Parveen Daruwalla, Cyrus Lalkaka, father-in-law of Zarir Daruwalla, grandfather of Freyhan, Danica, Thea. (ZSO)

**Aspie S. Gowadia**, husband of Dhun, father of Huban, Purazar and Jennifer and grandfather of Ryaan and Aidan passed away peacefully in Macon, GA on December 13th, 2022.

**Homyoun Behafarin (Bahrami)** wife of Manoochehr, mother of Jamshid, Farzad & Farzin, and mother in law of Fariba, Irandokht & Kianoosh, grandmother of Artin & Sam, all of Orange County, Cal. in Tehran, on December 12, 2022.

**Dinoo Sidhwa** 93, wife of (late) Bejan Sidhwa, mother of (late) Dinshaw, Phil (Maharookh) and Shahroukh (Rhia), grandmother to Michelle, (late) Darius, Farokh, Lila, Danny, Jahan, Kashmira, and Arman, and great-grandmother to Cyrus, Archer, and Zara. Sister of Fardoon Sidhwa, and many nieces and nephews in Toronto, on December 31, 2022.

**Coomie Pesi Hathiram** 91, wife of late Pesi Dadiba Hathiram, mother of Phiroza (Bruce) Stoneback, grandmother of Rachel(Christopher) Xenophon sister of Jal Mehta (Calcutta) and Perin Cooper (Chennai). in Pennndel, PA on January 1, 2023

**Katy Peshotan Bhadha**, wife of (late) Pesi (Jinnah) Bhadha, mother of Zarin Jamsheed Mehta (Phoenix, Arizona), Dosi Bomanshah Anklesaria, Dinshaw Bhada (Toronto), Sister of Shernaz Noshir Mody (Toronto), (late) Thrity Rami Kooka, (late) Hootoxi Sunny Khursigara, and (late) Khorshed Divecha, Grandmother of Sonya Anklesaria and Freya Mehta, in Toronto, on January 2, 2023.

**Homa Mehri Kalantari**, wife of Dr. Hooman Tahmoorezadeh. (CZC)

Shiawax Keki Canteenwalla (100), husband of late Homai (Nee Mody), father of Zeenia and Jambi, father-in-law of Vahishta, grandfather of Shauna, Zara (Fred Phelps) and Shayne, great grandfather of Livia, Aurelia and Francesca. Passed away in Montreal, Canada on January 31, 2023



## SHIAWAX CANTEENWALLA TURNS 100 YEARS ON NOVEMBER 30, 2022



**Mr. Shiawax Canteenwalla** of Montreal, Quebec (QC) celebrated his 100th birthday on November 30th, 2022. (Govad roj according to the Shehenshahi calendar). He is the last surviving member of 6 siblings.

Shiawax Keki Canteenwalla was born in Kothri, India. While living in Pakistan, he worked for several high-profile companies such as the American Embassy, German Embassy, Phillip Holzman etc. Shiawax emigrated to Canada in 1970 with wife Homai and daughter Zeenia who now resides in Richmond, BC. Later they were joined by son Jehanbux (Jambi). Shiawax and Homai always lived in Pierrfonds, QC.

In Montreal, he was a tennis coach, and later worked in the clothing trade and for Canadian Distribution. Shiawax was married to Homai (nee Mody), for an astonishing 71 happy, healthy years till her passing in 2017. He has been retired for almost 45+ years and since September 2021 has been living in a senior residence in Montreal where his wife Homai also lived for 4 years before she died.

He is well taken care of by the staff there. His son Jambi visits several times a week, and his daughter in law, Vahishta volunteers there every Wednesday. Several friends from Montreal visit him often, bringing mithai, chocolates, etc. which he cherishes. He regularly gets calls from his daughter Zeenia and others in Canada, US and occasionally from Pakistan too. At 100, Shiawax enjoys sleeping and eating. At the present, he is the oldest living person in his residence. (Photo below; Shiawax with his family from left daughter in law Vahishta, granddaughters Shauna, Zara and son Jambi)

Shiawax has been a member of Zoroastrian Association of Quebec since he came to Canada, almost 50+ years ago, attending all the functions, whether he drove himself or in later years had many friends drive him and Homai.

He always talked about wanting to live to 100. He was aware that it was his 100 birthday as he received quite a few cards to tell him that!! Because of his hearing loss it was difficult to Face Time with Zeenia in Richmond, for her to speak and wish him in person. Conversation is challenging.

Milestone greeting certificates were received from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the Governor General of Canada Mary May Simon & MLA Francis Scarpaleggia, all wishing him the best of health and happiness.



*Shiawax passed away peacefully on January 31, 2023*

# In celebration of our Newest Mobed: *Ervad Kyan Lali*



Following the footsteps of many mobeds before him, a new ‘navario’, 11-year-old Kyan Lali of California, completed his Navar ceremony and proudly entered his first stage of Zoroastrian priesthood on 20th December, 2022 (Roj Amardad, Mah Amardad, 1392 YZ)

The Yazashne ceremony was performed in remembrance of Kyan’s great-grandmother Late Najamai Kaikhushroo Lali at the Vatcha Gandhi Agiary (Hughes Road, Mumbai) by Er. Khushroo Kanga and Er. Karl Sidhwa and also under the able guidance of Er. Hormuz Dadachanji. With much love and care from Er. Hormuz, his mother Dhunmai, and all the agiary mobeds and support staff, Kyan completed his naahns with good spirits, fond memories, and much appreciation of mobedi and our Zoroastrian faith. The agiary’s beloved pet dog Ruksh also gave Kyan plenty of comfort & companionship.



“We couldn’t be more proud of our son!” felicitated his parents, Mr. Arzan Lali & Mrs. Del Lali who traveled to Mumbai from San Diego, California, USA, for Kyan’s Navar. (Photo left) Taught by Er. Jal Panthaky (Toronto, Canada) along with guidance from his own father, Arzan, over the past 4 years, Kyan devoted many hours of learning and persevered through challenging moments. The family truly appreciates the dedication, encouragement, and countless Zoom call training sessions by Jal uncle and advice from also their Southern California community mobeds, Er. Arda-e-viraf Minocherhomjee and Er. Zarrir Bhandara with the Navar preparation process.

“One newly initiated into the work of offering prayers, rites, and sacred things to Ahura Mazda is called Navar”. In his very first ceremony as a mobed, Ervad Kyan Arzan Lali joined the other 18 mobed sahebs at the celebratory jashan for the 166th anniversary of Vatcha Gandhi Agiary. With blessings of Pak Dadar Ahura Mazda, his grandparents, and all his loved ones, Kyan hopes to serve our Zarathushti community for many years to come.



## MR HOSHANG SHROFF, KC, 89 (AUGUST 18, 1933-SEPTEMBER 8, 2022)

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of **Hoshang Bhikhaji Shroff on September 8/22**. He was the caring husband of his late wife Rani Mahrukh, a beloved father to Farah and Veeda Shroff and grandfather of three grandsons, Zubin Roozbeh Hoshang Shroff-Mehrabadi, Arman Rohinton Shroff-Mehrabadi and Max Shroff-Chesko; he loved his children and grandchildren very much. Hoshang was born in Karachi to Bhikhaji and Allamai Shroff (nee Casad), brother to Rumi, Kety, Dilnavaz (may she rest in peace), and Kersi. His early years were shaped by poverty. Years later, he'd repeat that he was a "Garība māṇasa" (poor man); socioeconomic challenges shaped his strong character and disciplined work ethic. He overcame many obstacles, such as finding a new home after he went back to Karachi, only to find that it would be very challenging to establish a law practice there, motivating him to move to Kenya, where his law practice flourished. He and our mother left Kenya during politically tumultuous times. Starting over, yet again, he became a successful Vancouver-based lawyer, earning the title of QC.



Hoshang was the first Parsi Zoroastrian to be called to the bar in Canada—all this while parenting us and caring for his ill wife. Thankfully, both his mother, our Mamaiji, and mom's cousin Nergish, moved to Canada at various points to help. He suffered all these challenges with grace. Dad was charming—a true gentleman—and found a way to talk to people of all stripes with humor and delight.

He enjoyed a healthy, full life. When he retired, he continued learning. Hoshang was a respected scholar of Shakespeare, other literature, and Indian and western Classical music. He prided himself in speaking high quality Gujarati and fluent Hindi, Swahili and other languages. Our dad loved words, and he often gifted dictionaries. It was fun for him to open the dictionary at random, study a word, and then use it in a sentence.

His love of music was also legendary. Founder of an Indian classical music society in Vancouver, our family home was often the site of concerts. He was also devoted to learning how to play both the sitar and the violin—a lifelong learner. Every day, Dad practiced yoga. He was a proud Indian who ate with his hands, delightfully proclaiming "I make love to my food when I eat with my hands!". He loved animals, travel, walking, and immersing himself in Nature. He played competitive bridge, badminton and table tennis with gusto, right up until the end of his days. He lives on in our hearts forever.

Submitted by Farah and Veeda Shroff, his loving daughters





## Marzban Jamshedji Giara

### A HISTORIAN AND AN AUTHOR PASSES AWAY ON NOVEMBER 3, 2022 1942-2022,

Marzban Giara, was a treasure trove of knowledge and one of the most notable historians of the Parsi community. Over the past four decades, Marzban Giara published over 45 books and produced many firsts, including the first illustrated 'Global Directory of Zoroastrian Fire Temples' (1998) and its second edition (December 2002); 'The Zoroastrian Pilgrim's Guide' (1999); 'Parsi Statues' (2000); 'All India Directory of Parsi Institutions' (2010) and its second edition in 2015; and 'The Contribution of the Parsi Community during the First World War (1914-1918)'. In 2017, Marzban Giara added yet another gem 'Valiant Parsis In War And Peace', his 42<sup>nd</sup> book, which highlights our community's military stalwarts. It was launched during the Iranshah Udvada Utsav by Vada Dasturji of Iranshah Udvada, Khurshed Dastoor.

In March 2021, Murzban authored, 'Prominent Parsis of Navsari' for the benefit of the community's understanding of some of the eminent members of our community hailing from Navsari. "It is my fervent hope and prayer that this book will inspire the present generation to emulate the examples set by our illustrious ancestors," he had told Parsi Times. His final book, 'The History of Holy Fire Iranshah And Udvada Gam' – a 144-page, richly illustrated, hard bound



edition, sponsored by The WZO Trust Funds, was launched on the auspicious (Roj Adar, Mah Adar) 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2022, at Iranshah Atash Behram, Udvada.

He had a warm personality, always sharing his knowledge with those who came to him, especially the younger generation.

*Since September 2015 Marzban Giara and his wife Bapsy were living in Navsari at WZO Trusts Funds Senior Citizens Centre where he kept himself very occupied updating community related records, writing books which was his passion. In 2019 he created a Directory of Parsi Residents of Navsari in which he inserted photographs of 50 Parsi managed institutions. Publication of these two books and the directory were sponsored by WZO Trust Funds.*

Born in 1942 in Navsari, (Gujarat, India) to a simple and religious Parsi family, Marzban Giara's love for Parsi history and culture was nurtured right from his childhood. He has a B Sc from Ruia College (1959-1963) majoring in Physics and Chemistry and a Post-graduate diploma in Marketing Management. He worked with IBM, as a computer marketing professional, for 14 years.

His contributions to the Parsi community are immeasurable, especially in terms of documenting history and writing books, which is his legacy for the benefit of generations to come.

**He will be greatly missed by the Zarthushti community world wide.  
May his soul rest in eternal peace.  
Editor, FEZANA Journal**



# Between the Covers

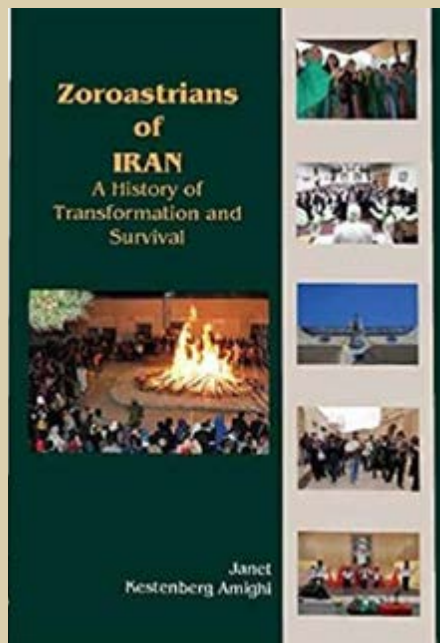
## ZOROASTRIANS OF IRAN: A HISTORY OF TRANSFORMATION AND SURVIVAL

**Janet Kestenberg Amighi**

(Mazda Publishers, 2022; 531 pgs. Price \$45.00)

ISBN 10: 1-56859-367-8;  
ISBN 13: 978-156859-367-8.

Reviewed by Meheryar N. Rivetna



Islamic regimes against the Iranian Zoroastrians. With her collaborator, Bahman Moradian, Dr. Amighi offers a comprehensive study of how the Zoroastrians adapted to the many vagaries of life they encountered and survived the burgeoning threat of annihilation.

Not being a Zoroastrian by birth, Dr. Amighi's interest in the Zoroastrian religion and its history was sparked by her marriage to an Iranian Zoroastrian. She travelled to Iran with her husband and lived there for seven years with her in-laws. During this time she interviewed numerous Zoroastrians learning about their culture, religious practices and history. She also delved into the study of Persian and mastered the language within six months. Her commitment to understand an ancient religion and share her knowledge of its history and people is highly commendable.

The book opens with an overview of early Zoroastrian history and essential theology to acquaint one not familiar with the religion's principles. While the focus of the book is a study of the fate of the Iranian Zoroastrians from the Qajar dynasty upto the 1979 Iranian revolution, Dr. Amighi dedicates a chapter to the carnage, forced conversions to Islam, and decimation of the Zoroastrians by the different regimes before the Qajars came into power circa 1789.

It is from the era of the Qajar dynasty that we have detailed accounts of the struggles of the Iranian Zoroastrians per the book. Many Zoroastrians fled to India from Iran to

According to Zoroastrian lore Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Wisdom, the Creator, created lands that would be dear to its dwellers who were of noble character and virtuous. It was in one of these lands of nobility that Zarathustra was born giving humankind a set of values, a religion, with which to overcome the vicissitudes of life and achieve everlasting bliss.

Over centuries the Zoroastrians of Iran, followers of Zarathustra, suffered and survived many attacks on the nobility of their land and religion. However, it was the Arab invasion of Iran that dealt a dreadful blow to its people and religion.

In Janet Kestenberg Amighi's recently published scholarly book *Zoroastrians of Iran: A History of Transformation and Survival* (Mazda Publishers, 2022; 531 pgs. ISBN 10: 1-56859-367-8; ISBN 13: 978-156859-367-8. \$45.00) we get an in-depth view of the atrocities committed by the

Janet Kestenberg Amighi has written a first-rate book on the plight of the Zoroastrians under oppressive regimes in Iran. The book is not just for Zoroastrians or students of history. It is for a broad spectrum of readers to gain insights into the transformation and survival, under harsh conditions, of a great culture that gave the world its first human rights charter and religious principles that were adopted by later faiths.

Dr. Amighi quotes Babak Salamati, one of her Zoroastrian interviewees, with these words: "...We are like a ship about to sink, but we row fervently to keep ourselves alive and we survive". That fortitude comes from Zarathustra's Gathas which, rightly, in the words of Dr. Amighi, are a symbol of survival.



# Between the Covers

escape persecution and salvage their religion. This was made possible by the tolerance of the Indian rulers towards an alien faith. These refugees came to be known as Parsis. Waves of Zoroastrians seeking refuge in India alerted the earlier Zoroastrian settlers of the atrocities their religious brethren were subjected to in Iran by the ruling class. Maneckji Limji Hataria, one of the first Parsis to travel to Iran, reported that “the lives of Zoroastrians in Iran were of little value”. Dr. Amighi walks the reader through detailed historical accounts of the humiliation, discrimination, forced conversions and turmoil which imperiled the Iranian Zoroastrians. Many resisted these horrific injustices holding on to their religion and culture for their survival, as the author aptly states.

Dr. Amighi informs it was the failing economic policies of the Qajars that gave rise to a Constitutional Revolution in 1906 leading to the establishment of a parliament in Iran. This proved to be favorable for the Zoroastrians. While still second-class citizens, thanks to activists, they gained some rights and privi-

leges denied them for centuries. In 1921, Reza Khan, a military officer, staged a coup d’état overthrowing the existing government and was anointed Shah by the Majles, a constituent assembly, pursuant to the 1906 Constitution. Reza Shah took on the name Pahlavi, hence Reza Shah Pahlavi, based on the Pahlavi language spoken during the pre-Islamic Sasanian Empire. This established the Pahlavi dynasty. The Anglo-Soviet invasion forced Reza Shah to abdicate the throne when his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, became the new Shah of Iran.

Dr. Amighi lucidly provides minutiae of the history of the Pahlavi era. Her eloquent narration of the improved status of the Zoroastrians in this dynasty is a testament to the tenacity of its adherents to survive when faced with adversities. However, the change in their fortunes was ephemeral.

The resilience of the Iranian Zoroastrians was once again put to the test with the Islamic clergy openly expressing discontent with the Shah’s reform policies. Ayatollah

Khomeini, a controversial clergyman, in a speech given from Paris, where he was exiled, said he had no intention of reviving the 1906 Constitution. In other words, he was opposed to democracy. Dr. Amighi points out that he castigated the Shah for giving Zoroastrians civil rights. While other non-Muslims were also targeted, the “Zoroastrians won his special ire”. Khomeini’s indignation towards the Zoroastrians, Dr. Amighi says, was not because their small population was a threat to Islam, but because they were a symbol of the greatness of pre-Islamic empires. He wrote to the Shah’s administration, “If you think you can replace the Quran with the Zoroastrian Avesta...then you are mistaken”.

Dr. Amighi posits whether the Zoroastrian lot has improved since the 1979 revolution. Views on this subject vary. There is progress in some spheres, regression in others.

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holds a Ph. D. in Anthropology and M. S. in Social Work. She is a recognized scholar in the history of post-Sasanian Iran as it relates to the Zoroastrians of that era. She is the author of several acclaimed books notable among them being *Zoroastrians of Iran: Conversion, Assimilation, Persistence* and *Zoroastrians of Iran: A History of Transformation and Survival* (reviewed above).

Her research on Zoroastrian history was funded by the Social Science Research Council which allowed her directly to work with the Zoroastrians of Iran.

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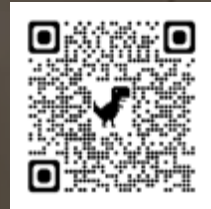
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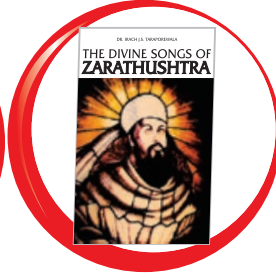


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