Over ten years ago, two precious Zarathushti handwritten manuscripts [T54(Yasna-Gatha Manuscript); and E1/F4(Khordeh Avesta Manuscript)] which lay under decades of dust, devoured by insects and near the brink of total loss, were rescued and the saga of their meticulous restoration began. Now, under the project leadership of Mr. Malcolm Deboo (ZTFE), the Royal Library Department of Conservation in Copenhagen has just completed the painstaking conservation and re-binding of these 250 year old manuscripts -- holdings of the First Dastur Meherjirana Library in Navsari, India.

FEZANA was instrumental in initiating the 10-year effort of restoring these manuscripts. In 2002, Malcolm Deboo (ZTFE) was invited, through FEZANA, to the North American Zoroastrian Congress to raise awareness of the condition of these manuscripts. With the financial and moral support of FEZANA, Firdosh Mehta and others, including Mr. Tahamtan Aresh, the restoration project commenced. Nearly a decade later, the two handwritten manuscripts have been painstakingly and professionally restored. Soon, the restored manuscripts will be returned to their home in the First Dastur Meherjirana Library, a fitting end to their long journey.

The entire conservation process was conducted in a workshop at The Royal Library Department of Conservation in Copenhagen, Denmark and was executed between 2008 and 2011. When the manuscripts arrived in Copenhagen, they were severely insect ridden. The manuscripts had been fumigated in India to combat the damage. One of the first steps of the conservation process was to place the manuscript pages under a fume hood for 6 weeks to disperse the chemical residue. Next, to repair the insect-damaged pages, a conservator carefully mended each area of insect damage by individually placing strips of a very thin Japanese paper to the damaged parts. Also, many pages had broken loose from their bindings. They too, were carefully rejoined with strips of Japanese paper. The pages were sewn back together and compounds were applied to prevent further insect attacks. Finally, the manuscripts were professionally hand rebound, complete with book boxes and gilded 22 carat gold folios to prevent tarnishing or oxidation.

Ancient manuscripts help chronicle history and bring us awareness and knowledge of our past. Without undergoing this crucial restoration process, these precious manuscripts would have turned to dust and with that a physical connection to a bit of our rich history would have been lost. FEZANA is proud to have partnered alongside many others in the process of bringing these irreplaceable manuscripts back to life.  [For full story, see upcoming Fezana Journal, Fall 2011]  Photographs by Karsten Bundgaard.
In light of the Muktad days upon us for those following the Shehenshahi calendar, with the kind permission of Erv. Dr. Ramiyar Karanjia and the M J Wadia Agiyari Trust (courtesy Mr. Kersi Limathwalla), Mumbai, India, an audio of the Gatha prayers are available online: [http://on-lyne.biz/gathas/](http://on-lyne.biz/gathas/). It is the hope that with this distribution of the audio file of the Gathas sung reverently, it will help Zarathushtis who may not have ready access to a resident priest in their community or for those who are not able to attend congregational prayers.

2012 Marks FEZANA’s Silver Jubilee Year

FEZANA will be celebrating its 25th anniversary year by holding various events throughout 2012 hosted by many of its Member Associations around North America. Stay tuned for announcements of an event near you!