

# FEZANA *bulletin*

May 29, 2013 / VOLUME 3 • ISSUE 5



## UPCOMING DATES

June 20-Aug 4, 2013  
*Cyrus Cylinder Exhibit,*  
*Metropolitan Museum of Art,*  
*New York City.*

June 30, 2013  
Application Deadline for  
FEZANA P&CA Scholarship

August 1, 2013  
Application Deadline for  
FEZANA EXISS Scholarship

August 1, 2013  
Application Deadline for  
FEZANA Academic  
Scholarships

Aug 9-Sept 22, 2013  
*Cyrus Cylinder Exhibit, Asian*  
*Art Museum, San Francisco.*

Oct 2-Dec 2, 2013  
*Cyrus Cylinder Exhibit, J. Paul*  
*Getty Museum at the Getty*  
*Villa, Los Angeles. Contact*  
Parmis Khatibi,  
[parmis99@aol.com](mailto:parmis99@aol.com)

Oct 10 - Dec 14, 2013  
*The Everlasting Flame. Brunei*  
*Gallery, London, U.K.*  
[www.theeverlastingflame.com](http://www.theeverlastingflame.com)

December 27-31, 2013  
*10th WZC; Mumbai, India.*  
<http://www.wzcmumbai.com/>

## FEZANA Annual General Meeting



The FEZANA 2013 Annual General Meeting (AGM), hosted by Zoroastrian Association of North Texas (ZANT) was held in Grapevine, Texas from May 3-5.

Homi Gandhi was elected, unopposed, as Vice-President after having completed the unfinished term as interim Vice-President.

Nahid Dashtaki was heartily thanked for her hard work and commitment over her two terms of office as Secretary.

On behalf of the FEZANA Executive I would like to thank the following whose active participation contributed to the success of this AGM:

- 16 Presidents/Representatives from member associations, 22 Committee Chairs, 3 FEZANA Past Presidents, and members of the FEZANA Executive
- President & representatives of North American Mobeds Council (NAMC)
- Global Vice President & representatives of World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC)
- Co-Chair and representatives of Return to Roots Program, and
- Members from the hosting association (ZANT)

The FEZANA Executive is working on the minutes of this AGM and as promised will strive to get them to you for your review and comments shortly. This will provide you an opportunity to refresh your understanding of the topics discussed at this AGM and encourage you to implement and promote the action items included therein.





**Federation of  
Zoroastrian  
Associations of  
North America  
(FEZANA)**

President  
Katayun Kapadia  
president@fezana.org

Registered Address  
5750 S Jackson Street  
Hinsdale, Illinois 60521

Administrative Office  
8615 Meadowbrook Drive  
Burr Ridge, Illinois 60527

Phone: 630-468-2705  
E-mail: [admin@fezana.org](mailto:admin@fezana.org)  
Web: [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org)



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7524](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Fezana/146727472067524)



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(Roster) with the Economic  
and Social Council of the  
United Nations



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FEZANA INFO

Inside this Bulletin issue, you will find information on the following topics that were discussed during the AGM as well as in the pre & post AGM sessions. We request you to distribute it among your membership and local communities to promote their active participation & involvement in these projects and programs:

1. Infrastructure Development in North America
2. FEZANA Second Ten Year Strategic Plan
3. Return to Roots Program
4. Demographics

I would like to thank Jamshed Rivetna, ZANT President, the ZANT Board of Trustees, and Sherazade Mehta, ZANT Coordinator for this AGM for their warm and wonderful hospitality to all AGM participants. The yummy heartwarming Parsi/Irani snacks, lunches and dinners were great for our tummies and gave us the energy to engage in meaningful discussions.

The FEZANA Executive and I look forward to working with all of you in 2013-2014 on the items as detailed in the FEZANA Second Ten Year Strategic Plan as well on the on-going Programs & Projects being coordinated by the FEZANA Committee Chairs.

Regards  
*Katayun Kapadia*  
FEZANA-President



## Strategic Plan Update

Update from the FEZANA AGM  
By Mahrukh Motafram



On Friday, May 3, in a pre-AGM session, a Strategic Planning Session discussion was conducted. The "Way Forward" phase was introduced and discussed. The discussion resulted in identifying a few action items and the responsibility of each committee for the five goals for the 1-2 year (2013-2014) period. This was presented by Katayun Kapadia and Homi Gandhi at the meeting on Sunday. It was duly emphasized that the Member Associations and the Corresponding Member Associations will participate in this exercise together with the Committees to complete the process.

"Way Forward" is the implementation phase of the Strategic Plan that includes the following:

- Standing and Ad Hoc committees of FEZANA to start implementing their own individual plans; assistance from the Member Associations and Corresponding Member Associations is strongly recommended
- Vice President of FEZANA and the Planning/Coordination Committee chair, Homi Gandhi will initiate this phase with the help of the Strategic Planning team

Most of the Standing committees have been contacted to begin work on their own individual plans for 1-2 years, 3-5 years and 6-10 years. The goal is to have all work sheets completed by June 30, 2013.

In addition to the Committee work sheets, the Terms of Reference for all Standing and Ad Hoc committees will be reviewed, revised and updated. □



## Infrastructure Development for the Zarathushti Diaspora in North America

Update from the FEZANA AGM

By Rohinton Rivetna

During the weekend of the FEZANA Annual General Meeting from May 3-5, 2013, two sessions were focused on the topic of Infrastructure Development for the Zarathushti Diaspora in North America. To summarize:

**Rohinton Rivetna** gave an overview. Zarathushtis have been in NA for a half century and have now reached a critical mass, with a population of over 20,000, making it second only to India. Since our arrival in the 1950s, we have established over 27 Associations, 12 Dar-e-mehrs/Centers, a North American Mobeds Council, and our crowning glory – FEZANA. With shift in demographics (declining/aging population in India and possibly Iran, and increasing/younger population in North America) we are now transforming from the status of a satellite community to that of an independent diaspora with concomitant responsibilities.

The essence of this initiative is to nurture and lay the foundation for establishment of sound infrastructure, both organizational and physical, to provide essential services and structures, for the growth, sustenance and perpetuation of our Religion and Community in NA. This deserves the collective attention of the world community.

**Rustom Kevala** presented a paper (in abstentia). ‘Physical Assets’ recommended by the 2006 Infrastructure Working Group, have been implemented: FEZANA office and administrator, Infrastructure Endowment Fund, and FIRES. ‘Inner Assets’ are being developed: academic scholarships, Religious Education materials, congresses, etc. Future suggestions include leadership training.

**Rustom Engineer** presented a list of “Needs”: Building dar-e-mehers; Establishing Atash Kadeh(s); Zoroastrian Shop; Energizing entrepreneurial spirit (WZCC); Retirement homes; Services of Priest(s); Athornan Institute for ordination/training Mobeds; FEZANA Center (Office, archives, museum...); Enhancing FIRES; Retreat/Learning Center; Servicing immigrants; Demographics; Zarathushti ‘oasis’.

**Kobad Zarolia** stressed the importance of having a proper Atash Kadeh to serve the spiritual needs of the community. NA Mobeds (NAMC) are ready to help and guide the community. It is a requirement for our survival in North America.

**Darius Bharucha** felt our biggest challenge was perpetuation of the faith and practices. We need to build emotional ties and a sense of attachment to our sacred spaces with a multi-pronged approach involving education, intellectual, emotional and physical infrastructure. **Homi Davier** presented (in abstentia) a “five year plan” to make FEZANA the vehicle for providing service and leadership to the Zarathushti community.

**Gev Nentin** cited challenges of diversity and dispersal of the community. The proposed structures must be independent, objective and honest, and not drain funds from local projects. **Hosi Mehta** felt that our generation has ties to Iran and India, but our children do not. If we do not do what is necessary to maintain our practices and traditions, our religion will be redefined by subsequent generations.

**Nazneen Spliedt** mentioned that their ZANC Center was a big help in holding the community together. **Tehmi Damania** shared that ZAC-California would love to have a Prayer Hall, and urged FEZANA to fit them into the Infrastructure Plan. From an Iranian Zarathushti perspective, **Fariborz Rahnamoon** of Vancouver mentioned there was a disconnect from FEZANA. Language may be an issue with the older generation. For the first time, in Vancouver, all 7 directors are Iranian Zarathushtis.





### POINT OF INTEREST

Every year thousands of Australians tie the knot. But two newly-weds in Sydney are not only celebrating their new life together, they're also helping to save their religion from dying out.

By Jeanette Francis for  
*The Feed.*

Courtesy: Jehangir Bisney

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/1771428/The-rare-marriage-of-two-Aussie-Zoroastrians>

**Firdosh Mehta** moderated the discussion: involve the next generation, ZYNA; get the youth perspective; keep children “Z-proud;” include cultural center, museum; money can come internationally; start with small steps; iron out priorities; plan for future generations of clergy. **Homi Gandhi** reported that an informal survey of AGM participants showed the top two “projects” as “Atash Kadeh” and FIRES. **Furrokh Irani** proposed ways and means to generate funding.

**Next Steps.** Rohinton Rivetna said this had been an exercise to: socialize the vision for Infrastructure Development; and present a starter list of “Needs/Projects.” Katayun Kapadia appointed Rohinton as chair of the ad hoc Infrastructure Committee. Rustom Engineer, Hosi Mehta, Bomi Patel, Gev Nentin, Kobad Zarolia, Katayun Kapadia, Soli Dastur, Homi Gandhi and Tehmi Damania will serve on it. Soli Dastur showed his support with a spontaneous donation of \$1,001.

The Committee will review and develop a comprehensive list of Needs/Projects; group them into 5 foundations; prepare draft documents; hold an Infrastructure Convention, get general consensus, and thenceforth, begin the journey of developing infrastructure for North America. □

## Demographic Study of Zarathushtis in North America

Update from the FEZANA AGM

By Roshan Rivetna

At a pre-AGM session in Grapevine, Texas, Roshan Rivetna presented a demographic study of Zarathushtis in North America. While the estimated **population** of the world showed a decline by 11% (from 124,953 to 111,201) since a similar study done in 2004, the population of North America has increased by 24% (from 16,769 to 20,727). Largest population was in California (5481), Ontario (4179) and NY,NJ,CT (2694). Largest growth was seen in California and Washington State both largely due to immigration from Iran.

**The percentage of children** was 18% (same in India). **The percentage of seniors** was 15% (24% in India). **Parsi/Iranian origin** was distributed as 71% Parsi and 29% Iranian. During the last two decades, Fezana Journal recorded 1,022 **births** and 706 **deaths** in North America, compared to 3,456 births and an alarmingly high number of 17,715 deaths, recorded by Parsiana in Mumbai!

A disturbing observation is the very significant upward trend in **intermarriages** over the last two decades, as reported in FEZANA Journal (from 24% in 1991 to 60% for the last three years, 2009 - 2011). From data received from a few areas it was determined that over **26% of the children of intermarriages are not Zarathushtis**. It was reassuring that **Conversions** to other religions (mostly Bahai’ism and Christianity) was minimal, less than 0.5%.

Post-AGM, Roshan conducted a brainstorming session to identify concerns and look for solutions.

**Concerns.** In North America, while there is significant growth in population, there are indications of subtle decline due to assimilation; we can expect this to be exacerbated in succeeding generations. Major concerns were: Gradual assimilation due to increasing number (60%) of intermarriages, with over 25% of the children of intermarriages not Zarathushtis; Late marriages, no marriages and low number of children.

**Solutions** suggested were: (1) Encourage/facilitate intra-marriages through youth get-togethers, social networking, websites, “introductions” by family and friends. (2) Parents, Rel Ed teachers and Community to give foundational life teachings



and inculcate a sense of responsibility to perpetuate the religion. (3) Make special effort to integrate the inter-married couple into the community and inspire children to follow the religion; (4) promote early marriages and more children; and (5) facilitate immigration from Iran. □

**Disclaimer.** While every effort has been made in good faith to seek out data from reliable sources, this compilation is not an official, statistically correct census. The raw data is presented, as received, to get a flavor of the Zarathushti world and help the community to identify concerns, and take corrective actions where necessary.

## Message From Return To Roots Program

By Dinsha Mistree

*[Please share the information noted below with your membership and your community.]*

We are very excited to announce the launch of Zoroastrian Return to Roots, a program designed to connect youth from all over the world through short (10-14 day) trips of Zoroastrian India, and eventually through Zoroastrian Iran. The inaugural trip will take place in Mumbai and Gujarat, India from Dec 27th 2013-Jan 8th 2014, and it will include participation at the World Zoroastrian Congress.

We are currently accepting applications for youth who would like to participate in the inaugural trip. We have 20 slots available. We are looking for mature young Zoroastrians from all over the world who are poised to become leaders in their local and national associations. The trip is heavily subsidized for participants: financial considerations should not discourage anyone from applying. Furthermore, we are positioned to arrange visas for participants regardless of nationality, offering otherwise non-existent opportunities to our Pakistani and Iranian brothers and sisters.

To apply, please go here: [www.zororoots.org/apply/](http://www.zororoots.org/apply/) Also, please like us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ZoroastrianReturnToRootsProgram](https://www.facebook.com/ZoroastrianReturnToRootsProgram) If you have any questions, please ask on facebook or email us at [zororoots@gmail.com](mailto:zororoots@gmail.com)

Note: Return to Roots is supervised and maintained under the umbrella of UNESCO-PARZOR. We are affiliated with the Bombay Parsi Panchayat and FEZANA. We also enjoy the support of many private individuals and local associations. If you would like to make a donation, please contact us or follow the directions on our website (<http://zororoots.org/partners/>). We have title sponsorships available. □

## Orlando Zarathushtis Host Satum Prayers and Gahambar



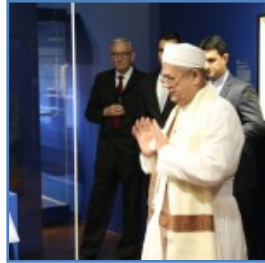
On May 26, 2013 over 100 people enjoyed the 3rd Annual Gahambar hosted by WZCC-Central Florida. Preparations began many days before the Gahambar with a hard working team who even overcame a power outage while the doing prep work.

The Gahambar festivities began with a short Hum Bandagi led by the local children. Ervad Soli Dastur then recited the Satum prayers. Afterwards, the afternoon was filled with fun and games and topped off with the nine course Gahambar lunch served on banana leaves! □



## ZAH Gives Royal Welcome to the Cyrus Cylinder

By Meheryar N. Rivetna



**Erv. Bomanshah Sanjana**

A 2,600 year old nine inch clay cylinder with cuneiform inscriptions that has shaped modern governments in most of the free world arrived at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, TX (MFAH) on May 3, 2013. "The Cyrus Cylinder," one of history's most significant objects is on display at the MFAH until June 14, 2013.

The Persian Emperor Cyrus the Great was the first monarch in history to establish a model for governing a heterogeneous nation. His ideas are engraved on a clay cylinder that bears his name and these ideas can be found in The Magna Carta and even the U. S. Constitution. The cylinder is on a five-city U.S. tour with Houston being its second stop. The exhibit in Houston opened with a cocktail party and one of Houston's Zoroastrian priests, Ervad Bahmanshah Sanjana, recited a blessing at the exhibit's opening. "Righteousness is the greatest good," Ervad Sanjana said at the end of the blessing summing up the emperor's message and the core Zoroastrian principle.

John and Vesta Curtis, curators of the British Museum, gave a special presentation on the cylinder to the MFAH docents on the opening day. Vehishta Kaikobad, an active member of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) and a docent at the MFAH arranged for the ZAH members exclusively to attend this presentation. Vehishta also deserves commendation for conducting tours of almost 300 students in the first week since the exhibit opened to the public.

On May 5, the MFAH director welcomed Neil Macgregor, director of the British Museum which is home to the cylinder. Mr. Macgregor gave an outstanding talk outlining 2,600 years of Middle East history through this cylinder.



**Dr. Jennifer Rose**

The eminent Zoroastrian scholar and historian, Dr. Jennifer Rose of Claremont Graduate University, CA, graced the ZAH on the evening of May 10 with a "Meet & Greet" program sponsored by the ZAH library committee. Dr. Rose gave a talk tracing Zoroastrianism in Central Asia having just returned from a three week tour of that region. She presented a lecture "*Cyrus the Great: 'Friend of God' and Paradise Builder*" that afternoon at the MFAH. The lecture was repeated the next day to an audience packed in an auditorium that seats only 450 people with many standing to be enlightened on Cyrus the Great's governance reflecting the Zoroastrian creed. A thunderous applause broke the silence in the room when the ZAH was acknowledged as the co-sponsor of Dr. Rose's talk. Nearly 80 members of the

ZAH attended Jenny Rose's lecture on May 11 which is a testament to the association's commitment to arouse an interest in as many people as possible in all aspects of Zoroastrianism---religion, history, and culture. This dedication was also evident with the Khosravian family of Houston chartering a private bus to transport people to the MFAH to view the cylinder and



**Dr. Jennifer Rose and the ZAH Library Committee.  
Photo by Meheryar Rivetna**



#### POINT OF INTEREST

A very short snippet of Ratan Tata's interview with Fareed Zakaria

[http://m.youtube.com/#/watch?v=hVlrfZQT7Ss&feature=youtu.be\\_gdata&desktop\\_uri=%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DhVlrfZQT7Ss%26feature%3Dyoutu.be\\_gdata](http://m.youtube.com/#/watch?v=hVlrfZQT7Ss&feature=youtu.be_gdata&desktop_uri=%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DhVlrfZQT7Ss%26feature%3Dyoutu.be_gdata)

appreciate the history behind it. Fifty people took advantage of the Khosravian family's generosity and were served snacks and soft drinks on the way to the museum.

Throughout history statesmen have tried to liken themselves to Cyrus the Great. In May, 1948 on the birth of the state of Israel, the United States was the first to recognize the sovereignty of Israel. President Harry S. Truman, in recognizing Israel's independence proclaimed, "I am Cyrus," an allusion to his being the emperor acknowledging the right of the Jews to be free.

In 2010, the Cyrus cylinder was on exhibit at the National Museum of Tehran. The Vice President of Iran, on returning the cylinder to the British Museum authorities said, "It belongs to the world." It certainly does. □

## ZAKOI and ZAPA Celebrate the Cyrus Cylinder

By Bakhtavar Desai

The Zoroastrian Association of Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana (ZAKOI) community celebrated the arrival of the Cyrus Cylinder to the U.S. in a few ways.

We focused on learning about Cyrus the Great and the Cyrus Cylinder during our religion classes this spring.

Our high school / college kids' group gave a presentation on Cyrus the Great and the Cyrus Cylinder at the ZAKOI Nowruz function on March 23, 2013. At the



presentation a table was set up exhibiting the replica of the Cyrus Cylinder and pictures of the accompanying items in the special exhibit. The ZAKOI community members enjoyed the presentation and the table exhibit.



Also, ZAKOI hosted an Informational and Awareness Booth on Cyrus the Great and the Cyrus Cylinder, and Zoroastrianism at the Cincinnati Museum Center during the Asian Fest weekend on April 13-14. ZAKOI had three tables at this booth. One table was to display an informational poster about the Cyrus Cylinder and Cyrus the Great along with the replica of the Cylinder and pictures displayed on easels of the artifacts accompanying the special exhibit of the Cyrus Cylinder. The second table was for Kids' Activities such as writing in Babylonian Cuneiform, solving a crossword puzzle after reading the poster, and having a ZAKOI member write kids' names in calligraphy in Farsi.

The third table displayed objects of religious relevance in a Zoroastrian's daily life, along with brochures and books on Zoroastrianism available for distribution to interested persons.

The ZAKOI group also participated in cultural activities at the Asian Fest. They presented two things: a group of Parsis dressed in gara style embroidered clothing, parsi-style sari, dagli, Jhablu etc; and a group of Iranians in their traditional regional clothes from Iran who also presented a couple of Iranian dances.

The Museum had advertised this booth as their Hot Spot which helped the booth get special attention from the public. Many people even signed up to receive an electronic copy of the script on the poster about Cyrus and the Cylinder. It was a successful attempt to inform and create awareness about Zoroastrianism and the Cyrus Cylinder among the Cincinnati general public.

Then on May 11, 2013, Bakhtavar Desai took her religion class kids with their families to Pittsburgh where the kids gave a presentation to the Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania (ZAPA) community on Cyrus the Great and the Cyrus





### In Search of My God

Available now as a  
FREE download at  
[www.insearchofmygod.com](http://www.insearchofmygod.com)

Don't wait to download your copy of this beautifully illustrated book that explores the Zoroastrian religion complete with a fully interactive table of contents and integrated audio files of our prayers. This well written book spans the Zoroastrian story from its history to its rituals and prayers. As a *bonus*, all donations received for this e-book will support the FEZANA Critical Assistance Fund.

Cylinder. The children's presentation was accompanied by an exhibit of the Cyrus Cylinder replica along with pictures of other artifacts/objects of the special exhibit travelling the nation. This presentation was done in the home of Sarosh Sepai, ZAPA's president, followed by a community dinner. The ZAPA community enjoyed the presentation and the cylinder replica / pictures exhibit.

The events in Cincinnati and Pittsburgh were part of the efforts being taken to involve non-touring cities to celebrate the arrival of the Cyrus Cylinder in the U.S. and to create awareness about it among the local communities. □

## 10th World Zoroastrian Congress Updates

By Bomi Patel, FEZANA External Affairs

*[Please circulate this information to your membership by e-mail and news letter]*

### SECURING VISAS FOR DELEGATES WHO PREVIOUSLY HELD PAKISTANI PASSPORTS

Mr Dinshaw Mehta, Chairman – 10th WZC has confirmed as follows: The Organizing committee of WZC is very confident of securing permission from the Indian Home Ministry for the Congress before the deadline of July 31<sup>st</sup> for the early bird registration.

If you wish you can register before the early bird deadline so that WZC committee can issue each one a letter of accreditation for attending the WZC and accordingly apply for Visa. If there is any problem securing the visa due to issues at WZC / Indian government, the organizers will refund the delegate fees.

It stands clear that only if the Indian government refuses to grant a visa that a registered delegate can avail of a refund in full. Please note Visa's applications may take 12-20 weeks.

Please register and send the following details to BOTH [10wzc@fezana.org](mailto:10wzc@fezana.org) and [admin@fezana.org](mailto:admin@fezana.org) : Name of Delegate; Registration Ref #; Registration Date; Expected Date of Travel; Date of Arrival in India; Date of Departure from India

### YOUTH DELEGATE SPECIAL RATE

To ensure participation of the younger members of the community to the 10th WZC and its deliberations, especially as it pertains to the future road map of the overall growth of the community, the Organising Committee is pleased to announce a special rate for youth delegates. This is applicable from the age group **16 years to 25 years** i.e., individuals born after 26<sup>th</sup> December 1988 and those born before 26<sup>th</sup> December 1997. To avail of the special discount, you will need to send us a scanned copy of your age proof on [info@wzcmumbai.com](mailto:info@wzcmumbai.com) OR courier it to us at the office of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet.

### Special Registration Fees for persons under 25 years of age:

Indian Delegate: Rs. 5,000 + Rs. 618 service tax per delegate

Foreign Delegate: \$125 + \$16 service tax per delegate.

This offer is valid only till **July 31, 2013**

### DELEGATE CRITERIA

The World Zoroastrian Congress is a forum for discussion on all issues pertaining to the community, including social, economic, cultural and religious. There are academics and experts from other communities who will share their knowledge and views as in past Congresses. In that, it is an open forum.

The Organising Committee of the 10th WZC has received many queries whether non-Zoroastrian spouses of Parsi Iranian Zoroastrians and their children can register as delegates at the Congress. In light of the above, it stands to logic and reason that the Congress should not be exclusionary but be inclusive for all those who have an interest in the community, its affairs and in its future.

Accordingly, the Organising Committee has decided that non-Zoroastrian spouses and their children (16 years and above) can register as delegates for the Congress. □