

FEZANA *bulletin*

January 2014 / VOLUME 4 • ISSUE 1



UPCOMING DATES

Through Feb 2, 2014

Power and Legacy: The Cyrus Cylinder and Persian Expressions of Kingship,
Oriental Institute Museum,
University of Chicago.
<http://oi.uchicago.edu/museum/special/cyrus/>

February 5-7, 2014

U.N. Winter Youth Assembly.
[Click here](#) for registration.

Feb 6, 2014

Application Deadline. \$1000
YSA Grants available for
Global Youth Service Day
2014. [click](#) here for info or to
apply.

February 15-16, 2014

NAMC Seminar. ZAH Library.
<http://zah.org/events/library-event-north-american-mobed-council-namc-seminar/>

February 28, 2014

Nomination Deadline for 2014
Bernard Schwartz Book Award
[click here](#) for information.

March 8, 2014

Annual Nowruz Celebration.
Smithsonian Museums,
Washington D.C.
<http://www.asia.si.edu/events/all-events.asp?trumbaEmbed=dat%3D20140308>

(DATES CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

From the Desk of...

Katayun Kapadia – FEZANA President



Greetings & Best Wishes from the FEZANA Family to Your Family in 2014

May Ahuramazda shower his choicest blessings on you and your family and bestow Abundance of Good Health, Peace, Love, Joy, Happiness and Prosperity

May the New Year be filled with joy, hope and new beginnings bringing along many reasons for celebrations

Let us all begin the New Year 2014 with love and understanding towards all fellow Zarathushtis as well as all humanity and live in peace & harmony for times to come.

I had the pleasure of participating and presenting at the Tenth World Zoroastrian Congress in Mumbai, India held from December 27-30 2013. The Theme of this Congress was **Zoroastrianism in the 21st. Century – Nurturing Growth and Affirming Identity**. I am sharing with all of you *The Retrospective on the 10th. World Zoroastrian Congress 2013*, speech made by Sam Bulsara on the fourth day of the Congress that summarizes the various sessions and key messages.

FEZANA was well represented at this Congress – there were five Past Presidents, current President and Vice-President, Presidents of Member Associations – ZSBC, ZSO, ZACalifornia, ZAQ, and TMZA, a few Committee Chairs and a large number of Zarathushtis from North America.

Thank you for supporting FEZANA's goals and activities in 2013 and looking forward to working with all of you in 2014. □

Faith and Unity
The XVII North American
Zoroastrian Congress
The Light is an earthly manifestation of our highest spirit

The Hilton Los Angeles, California
December 29-31, 2014

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334 days to Congress!

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www.nazc2014.org
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**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
Web: www.fezana.org



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FEZANA INFO

Retrospective on the 10th World Zoroastrian Congress, 2013

Presented by Sam Bulsara, Mumbai December 2013

38 hours of speeches and discussions, 45 sessions, 121 speakers, and I have just 20 minutes to wrap-it-up. So, at best what I can give you is my personal take on the key messages and what impressed me and what did not.

The new NSCI auditorium was impressive and a bit intriguing, given the dark setting that prevailed when we all entered on Friday morning. But I realised soon, that was only to highlight the stunning and majestic back-drop that emerged as the lights came on. The inaugural session refrain seemed to be Gandhi's quote of "numbers beneath contempt, but contribution beyond compare. Whilst the latter made us all feel good, we now need to resolve to adopt an action plan to correct the numbers, however evasive the solution may appear today.

Lord Karan Billimoria's historical and religious perspective impressed me, so did his facility of the English language. He made us feel good by highlighting that the Cyrus Cylinder was so much more than the Magna Carta which the Brits go on and on about. I got a good lesson in history; also told me how much more is required than mere marketing skill to successfully sell Beer in the UK market!

I look forward to reading the book on Gathas by Pilloo Jungalwala to better understand our religion. I cringe at hearing him recall Narayan Murthy's comment "I have never met a bad Parsee". I say cringe because unless all of us in this room take a pledge to consciously and demonstrably act with honesty and integrity, I doubt if Narayan Murthy's successors will, with the same conviction be able to say that to my daughters. It was heartening to know from him that all the three Indian MPs in UK Parliament are Parsees and even more heartening to hear from the President of India that as many as 3 of the 25 honoured by NDTV this month, were Parsees.

Nadir Godrej, described as an unassuming genius by his friend Maneck Davar lightened up the mood for all of us in his inimitable verse, taking us through the life of Parsees in the familiar environs of Bombay.

A very important session of the Congress was on Affirming Our Identity and had a galaxy of speakers from around the world -- India, UK, USA, Canada and Middle East.

Dorab Mistry recalled Prince Philip's comment about the Parsees, saying 150 years is peanuts; you should be around for 2000 years.

Rohinton Rivetna outlined a wonderful construct on what constitutes identity, identified 10 characteristics and in his assessment gave us a 5 on 10, which means we have collectively destroyed half our identity and therefore equity. I noticed that he gave us a '0' on '10' on sartorial identity and he is so right – in the heartland of Zoroastrianism, only 15 men turned up for the inaugural session in our Parsee Dagli, despite the organisers' not so gentle nudge.

The Iranian point of view was unique, but not surprising: If you all are thinking about identity, please think about where you came from. Pack your bags for a trip to Iran. Meher Bhesania the very efficient organiser who unwittingly put pressure on the organisers of this Congress to match Dubai's efficiency and pizzazz reminded us that if we focused on being better than the best, then problems of Identity will not arise.

Dinshaw Mehta representing the largest population reminded us that BPP is the landlord for 4,500 flats, but rued the fact that given the current circumstances there can be no common global identity. He wanted to know why ZTFE had switched sides from BPP to FEZANA? But alas, the answer was not forthcoming.



UPCOMING DATES

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

March 10, 2014

Nomination Deadline for FEZANA Officers, 2014-2016. Contact shirazitalia (@) hotmail.com

March 10-21, 2014

58th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. United Nations. Contact afreed.mistry (@) gmail.com

March to Sept, 2014

A Thousand Years of the Persian Book Exhibition.
Library of Congress,
Washington D.C.
<http://www.paaia.org/CMS/lo c-exhibition.aspx>

May 16-18, 2014

FEZANA Annual General Meeting, Bellevue, WA.
Hosted by ZSWS

July 2-6, 2014

14th Zoroastrian Games. Los Angeles, CA.
<http://www.zathletics.com/>

December 29-31, 2014

17th North American Zoroastrian Congress, Los Angeles, California
www.nazc2014.org

Frank, Honest and Upfront in Dorab's view was Katayun, the Chairperson of FEZANA. Katayun also said that we need to innovate and she is so right, because we need to be less dogmatic at a time when we find ourselves on sinking sands. Our Wise President too hinted at this when he said, the community must handle its "numbers issue" pragmatically and sensitively. I

Canada seemed the most aggressive and now with 40 mobeds wanted to take on Udvada and Navsari. Whilst advocating the "One Community Two Systems" Sarosh welcomed all inter-married and Reformist Parsis to Canada to continue following the faith and retain the right to choose their own disposal option.

ZTFE had a visual solution and said let's make the Afarganyu with a big flame, the symbol of Zoroastrian identity and let's invest in exhibitions to externally communicate the identity so that the outside world can recognize and identify us.

I look forward to reading the book on Field Marshal Sam Maneckshaw on his 100th birthday. We definitely need more young Parsees to take inspiration from his life, persona, presence and more importantly ready-wit and we got a sampling of that with young brides.

We reminded the President that we remain true to the commitment made 1300 years ago. The President threw caution to the wind and reminded us to address the issue of our dwindling numbers. We regaled the President with renditions by the Paramjyoti Coir and I hope he was suitably impressed by the piece inspired by our Ashem Vohu.

Day 2

On Day 2 we began to get into the meat of the matter with the first session on practices in various parts of the globe and discordant notes began to surface. Whilst Katayun and Bomi Patel of FEZANA spoke in one voice and expressed a liberal disposition, though clarifying that we do not force conversion or encourage it, Perveen Mistry from Canada struck a conservative note and urged everyone not to make changes to our time tested beliefs and practices because then our religion will be lost forever. Sarosh Maneckshaw from Houston highlighted the difference between Parsee identity and Zoroastrian identity and he too cautioned the North Americans about losing their Parsee identity. Parveez Varjavand of Iran reminded us about our origins in the Persian Gulf. Malcolm Deboo of UK told us how far back the Parsees arrived in UK, though subsequently we learnt that some Parsees from India had gone to China even before some others went to UK to settle. Pheroze Pestonji of Australia proudly told us that as many as 40% of Australian Parsees are entrepreneurs and they hope to learn from the mistakes made by North America and England since they are a recent Parsee lot from down- under. His flower bouquet analogy was beautiful and underlined that we must move collectively with a proper game plan or we will go NOWHERE.

Legal Eagle Darius Khambata, the Advocate/ Attorney General of Maharashtra with all the legal prowess at his command said that whilst most harp on the "word" or commitment we gave to the King when we landed in Gujarat, he emphasized that in fact there was "no word" that we would not accept others into our religion. He said caste and not religion is the reason for some of our misplaced beliefs and an exclusion based on caste would be immoral. To monopolize Zoroastrianism is to kill it, he said. He suggested- let our agiary open doors to all Zoroastrians and if that is not to be, let us open new agiaries that can accept ladies and children of mixed marriages. He argued, the term Parsee Zoroastrian comes from a trust deed and cannot become the basis for worship.

Khojeste Mistry came on a few hours later and chided us for being willing to listen to legal eagles on matters of religion rather than religious scholars. Contrary to what I was made to understand earlier, he also convincingly argued that the term Parsee includes all Zoroastrians from all around the world. How I wish, the Congress programme designers had the two of them face to face, at



the same time in a debate followed by a panel discussion. It would have provided better fodder and perhaps more enlightenment to those sitting on the fence, like me.

Burjor Antia felt the fire in our hearts is reducing and bemoaned the fact that so many of us are not wearing the sudra -kusti and avoiding rituals.

Roshan Rivetna took us through a fascinating and informative journey of our diaspora spread across the world. Whilst it was heartening to see that the population in UK and USA is going up, it does not make up for the decline in numbers in India and Pakistan, thus resulting in an overall decline.

ZYNG warned us that you try to police them, referring to the youth, you will lose them. Most delegates were impressed with ZYNG's achievements. And as the latest ZYNG calendar proves, Parsees don't only make good doctors and lawyers.

We recognized the formidable influence of Parsees in the area of media, advertising and cinema and felt the community should utilize the power of these new emerging disciplines for its identity and benefit.

The breakout sessions on Day 2 covered a wide range of topics from preserving culture and role of charity, to problems of differently abled and aged people and how to write a will that provided rich and varied fare, to meet the special interests and concerns of a diverse audience.

Day 3

We started Day 3 hearing the disturbing news that there are 700 deaths for every 100 births in our community in Mumbai. The reasons were predictable – Late Marriages, few Children, no children and, more importantly, attitudinal reasons. Dr. Nozer Sheriyar debunked these reasons.

Amongst scientific talks on reasons for non-fertility, I was surprised to hear Dr. Dadachanji say "One of the reasons is non-consummation". Dinshaw Mehta asked for suggestions from the audience that the BPP can act on; whilst none were forthcoming I hope some will send some innovative ideas over to him at BPP.

Dr. Rusi Soonavala, everybody's favourite gynaec, especially of Parsi women went one rung higher up the popularity charts, if that was at all possible, telling us that genetically, females seem stronger of the species. He reminded everyone that friends and holidays can bring about happiness, which is more important than wealth for well-being. In strong contrast to Dr. Soonavala's genteel and friendly disposition and simple advice, Dr. Farokh Udwadia gave us a very learned and educative discourse on human life and developments in the medical world. I was surprised to hear from a doctor of his eminence that prayer can heal because prayer affects the mind and mind affects the body. As he celebrated modern medical developments, he rued the arrival of machines, commercialisation and institutionalisation in the medical world. I still remember the strong and bold message he left us with at the Dubai Congress: "For God's sake, Parsees, eat a little less". But it appears that we have not paid heed to his advice, going by the plateful of foods I saw at lunch and dinner times!

Bergis Desai struck a chord with the audience when he spoke on Parsee Philanthropy Management. He pulled no punches and appeared critical of Parsee Charities in general and the BPP in particular.

For those who missed the opportunity to go to Dubai in 70s or 80s and make big bucks, Meher Bhesania is giving us another opportunity towards end of next year, to see what new business opportunities are emerging in Dubai, over the next decade.



It was thoughtful of the organisers to include a session on Sports. Also, we got a wonderful glimpse of the products of Return to Roots programme, an Iranian expert's world view on the Shahnameh and developments in New Zealand, Pakistan and at WZCC and ZWIN.

Day 4

Day 4, we saw Parsee Leaders from the business world and it was heartening to hear that Parsee entrepreneurship is not dead. I liked Yazdi Tantra's advice to jump in because like a tea bag, the flavour will come out only then.

Air Chief Marshall Fali Major reminded us that we are Indians before we are Parsees and assured us that we can sleep in peace because of our secure borders.

It's really time we sat up and did something about our numbers. It would appear that the Government of India is more concerned than we are. Shame on us! It was heartening to hear our minorities Minister promise to look into the new direct tax code that will adversely affect our Parsee Charities.

Our two Dasturji Sahebs gave us a fascinating account of Udwarda in the Past and Today. They must speak more often to the community as a whole and we must give them a platform to do so.

The FEZANA and ZTFE presentations should provide inspiration to various Panchayats in India and we should send them all a copy.

Conclusion

I would say the 10th World Zoroastrian Congress was a huge success. The subjects covered were vast and varied, the speakers were articulate and subject matter experts and we have begun to debate subjects of great importance to us and we must continue. I would have preferred more discussion and debate rather than monologues and would have liked more Mumbai Parsees to attend given the huge auditorium we had at our disposal. We must find a way to shake off the apathy of Mumbai Parsees in matters of our religion and community and seek inspiration from UK and USA. Be the change you want to see! See you in Singapore! Till then wear your sudreh and kusti, keep the faith and keep the fires in your heart and belly burning! □

27th FEZANA AGM Will Be Hosted by ZSWS

FEZANA is pleased to announce that the 2014 FEZANA Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be hosted by the Zoroastrian Society of Washington State (ZSWS) from **Friday, May 16, 2014 to Sunday May 18, 2014** in Bellevue, Washington.

A detailed agenda for the AGM will be distributed shortly.

The AGM will be held at:

Sheraton Bellevue Hotel

100 112th Ave NE

Bellevue, WA 98004

+1(425)455-3330

<http://www.sheratonbellevue.com/>

Contact Zenobia Damania, FEZANA Administrative Office, admin@fezana.org or Shiraz Italia (shirazitalia (@) hotmail.com) □



Third NAMC Seminar to be held in Houston



ZAH Library, home of FIRES (FEZANA Information Research and Education Systems) will be hosting the Third NAMC (North American Mobed Council) Seminar on February 15 and February 16, 2014.

Saturday, February 15 is an all-day program with four knowledgeable Ervads/Mobedyars with presentations on topics of great interest to all. Lecture attendance is free however; lunch is available for a fee. Please RSVP to (asetna (@) comcast.net) if you plan to attend the lunch.

Sunday, February 16, 11:00am-1:00pm, is an informal question and answer session. Participants are encouraged to ask all you wanted to know about the religion and practices but were afraid to ask. Parents with young children are particularly encouraged to bring them to this discussion.

Click [here](#) for detailed information about the presentations and the event.

The NAMC seminar program is available to any North American Zarathushti community. Presenters are ready to visit your city. For more information on how to arrange a NAMC Seminar in your city, contact Kobad Zarolia (kobadzarolia (@) gmail.com) □

Zoroastrian Youth Without Borders (ZYWB), Cambodian Experience

By Anahita Dua, MD

The medical mission to Cambodia was a great success. I accompanied a team of 8 doctors including a pediatrician, 2 dentists, a family practice physician, an internal medicine physician, 2 emergency medicine doctors, and myself, general surgery. In total over the course of this trip we treated a total of 3,500 underserved patients throughout Cambodia. Aside from consultations with patients, I did a total of 7 surgeries (sebaceous cyst removal, amputation, foreign body removal, granuloma removal, debridement of necrotic tissue) and coordinated a trauma team effort when we came across a horrible motor vehicle accident on our way home from clinic on day 2 (3 dead at the scene, 2 transferred to hospital.)

The next day clinic was held in a rural village about 90 minutes from Phnom Penh. We saw almost 700 patients today - the team worked like they have been together for last 5 years. I diagnosed a case of Yaws, a non-venereal chronic bacterial infection that mainly affects kids under 15 and can be cured with a single dose of Penicillin. We also impacted the lives of three patients by getting them set up for surgery to treat a variety of problems.

We started out early with a 90 minute drive to a rural Cambodian province where 25 high school translators and 11 medical/dental student translators joined our team. 450 tickets had been given out prior to our arrival and patients met us with beautiful smiles as they calmly waited for care.

The team set up clinic as if we had been working together for years - team members split into groups to set up community education, prepare medications



Anahita Dua, MD, on Zoroastrian Youth Without Borders (ZYWB) Cambodia mission, performs a procedure to remove a foreign body that had been lodged in the patient's foot for nearly a year.

that are easily dispensed, set up labs and wound care, clear away desks for patient care hours, set up dental, and get ready for patients. Between registration and the close of clinic we saw 470 patients! TB, high blood sugars, and infections were the order of the day. Our dental team extracted 144 teeth.

That evening on the way home the lead bus saw that a motorcycle accident had occurred a few moments before. We immediately stopped. The team went immediately into action, triaging and performing CPR. The expert,

professional care and the gentle touches of our team made a difference to the three young men we cared for and to the bystanders who provided hand held lights and many thanks for our efforts.

The next day in our community education classes we tackled some of the health issues plaguing the community. Many of our patients don't know to wash their hands and a team member Kyj developed an easy way to get running water and soap in the same space without plumbing (tippy tap)!!! Lots of coloring with the kids also helps to teach the hand washing concept.

The team then split into two groups. The first team saw patients that had all found their way to team's front door at the beachfront. The team I was a part of, the second and larger team, went to a rural northern Cambodian province. This rural agricultural population has LOTS of wounds with many foreign bodies and lots of wounds requiring debridement which I was the main provider of with surgical training. Many of our medical and nursing students had an opportunity to see different techniques of caring for wounds and I did a lot of teaching to get them involved and interested. We saw 450 patients and did 3 surgeries at the local provisional hospital. In addition, they added 9 patients to the TB program in Cambodia.

We, the team, were able to tour the local hospital where we saw the OB ward. This consists of wooden raised platforms upon which the parents and grandparents sit caring for their newborns. Some moms have IV drips, some babies are under little mosquito tents costing \$2.50 each. Many babies have no protection from the mosquito and IMR provided money to the local shop keeper to purchase mosquito nets for them. With 10-12 babies and parents to a new room, there is lots of company for the new parents. In the NICU, we saw premie twins weighing approximately 2 pounds each. The operating room was well equipped with great lights, an anesthesia machine and sterilization. A local anesthesiologist was on hand to help make patients more comfortable. Seeing the Provincial Hospital was a great opportunity to understand the health care better.

I would like to thank FEZANA for supporting this mission. □