

FEZANA *bulletin*

March 2015 / VOLUME 5 • ISSUE 3



UPCOMING DATES

May 1-3, 2015

28th FEZANA Pre-AGM and AGM. Hosted by ZAPANJ. Details on page 3.

April 19, 2015

Persian Parade; New York City. Noon.
<http://www.nypp.org>

May 10, 2015

Application Deadline for FEZANA 6WZYC2015 Subsidy.

May 16-17, 2015

North American Moped Council (NAMC) Annual General Meeting. Washington D.C. [NAMC](#)

October 15-19, 2015

2015 Parliament of the World's Religions. Salt Lake City. [Click here.](#)

December 18-20, 2015

World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC) Annual General Meeting. Panaji, Goa, India. <http://wzcc.net>

Dec 28, 2015-Jan 2, 2016

6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress. Auckland, NZ
<http://www.6wzyc.co.nz/>



NAVROZE MUBARAK NOUROUZ PIROUZ BAD

FEZANA wishes a very Happy, Healthy and Prosperous Navroze/Nourouz to fellow Zarathushtis and to our friends across North America and worldwide.

FEZANA Subsidy for Young Zarathushtis to Attend 6WZYC2015

Funds have been approved by FEZANA to provide subsidies to 40 (Forty) Zarathushti youth from USA and Canada to attend the 6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress (6WZYC2015) in Auckland, New Zealand in December 2015. FEZANA will provide a subsidy of \$500 per person.

Contact Sherazade Mehta (sherazadem @ yahoo.com) or Saghar Javanshir (sjbehroozi @ verizon.net) for eligibility details and application. **Application deadline is May 10, 2015.**

FEZANA encourages its Member associations to match or exceed the FEZANA subsidy of \$500 per person. □

Video: *The Persian Rite of Spring*

Commissioned and Sponsored by The Farhang Foundation, this is a video of a multimedia performance by Niloufar Talebi and Bobak Salehi. at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. [approx 7 min]

<http://zoroastrians.net/2015/03/05/the-persian-rite-of-spring-nauruz/>

Video: *Navroz – The New Day*

This film from India was screened at the United Nations last month as part of the celebrations of the International Day of NowRuz – Preserving an Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

The Film captures the essence of how Navroz is celebrated in India. It aims to bring to the world the uniqueness of the Parsi/Irani community in India and how they celebrate and give thanks. The film takes one through the single day of Navroz, taking the viewer on a journey, through various spaces, of what a typical New Year day is like in a Parsi household - from quiet piety at dawn to a gregarious feast at dusk. [approx 4.5 min]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9XGWgdTUWAo&feature=youtu.be>



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(FEZANA)

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NGO in consultative status
(Roster) with the Economic
and Social Council of the
United Nations



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FEZANA INFO

Second Return To Roots Tour 2015

By Arzan Sam Wadia

Over 13 days in March, 14 young Zarathushtis from USA, Canada, Pakistan and India participated in the Track B of the Zoroastrian Return To Roots Tour 2015 in India. Seven of these youth, between the ages of 22 and 35, hailed from North America.



**Return to Roots Fellows at the
New Delhi Dar e Mehr in March**

The Zoroastrian Return to Roots is a PARZOR administered initiative that began in 2013. The second tour in the program brought participants through New Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Nargol, Sanjan, Navsari, Surat, Bharuch, Dahanu, Gholvad and Bordi; finally ending in Mumbai.

FEZANA has been a supporter of the program since its inception in 2013 as have many local associations like ZAGNY, ZAPANJ and ZSO.

On this trip, the participants convened in New Delhi and had an opportunity to visit the Delhi Dar e Mehr, the Aramgah, Sethna Farms and the newly opened Sodawaterbottleopenerwala Café.

In Pune, visits included a stop at the Della Resorts in Lonavala owned by Jimmy Mistry. The Tata Central Archives welcomed the Fellows for a rare behind the scenes tour of the actual archive area. Cyrus Poonawalla's Serum Institute of India and the Poonawalla Stud Farms were also on the itinerary.

In Mumbai, the Fellows got an opportunity to experience the wealth of Parsi experience. This included a detailed tour of the Doongerwadi with Khojeste Mistree; a talk at the Bombay House, headquarters of the Tata business empire, meeting the patients at the seminal Parsee General Hospital; learning about crafts and arts at the Ratan Tata Institute and many such other experiences. A full on culinary experience awaited the Fellows during the entire trip and the Mumbai leg had its pit stops at Britannia, Jimmy Boy's, RTI, and Bombay Gymkhana among other places.

After Mumbai, the scene moved to four days in South Gujarat which is usually the most transformative experience for the Fellows as was seen in the first trip, and it continued to be the same on this one.

Standing on the banks of the Varoli river in Nargol; which was possibly one of the first landing spots for boats carrying Zarathushtis fleeing Iran was a truly poignant moment.

Visiting the ancient Dakhma in Sanjan with Rukshana Nanji, a leading archeologist in India and the one who spearheaded the project in Sanjan a decade ago; gave the Fellows a sense of how far back Zoroastrian roots go in the Indian Sub-Continent.

Further along in Gujarat, the Meherji Rana Library offered the amazing opportunity to interact with Dr. Ervad Kotwal, the legendary Parsi scholar priest who patiently answered the myriad queries that the Fellows had, while also talking about his life and work.

Visits to the 800 year old Vadi Dar e Mehr and the J.N. Tata House and the Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy home were some of the highlights of Navsari. The Fellows also got an opportunity to see a Kusti making demonstration and try their hand at it, at Jamshed Baug in Navsari.

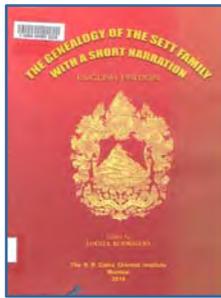
Bharuch offered them a view of the old Parsi settlement on the banks of the great Narmada river. It also allowed us to see some of the old homes and a very old



BOOK AWARENESS



This month, enjoy a glimpse of a new addition that has been generously donated to our FIRES collection.



The Genealogy of the Sett Family / Sethna Family is a four volume series as part of the project by the K.R. Cama Oriental. Edited by Louiza Rodrigues this is a treasure trove of two Parsi families who trace their lineage back to Rustom Manekji, who was born in 1635 in Surat and served as a broker for the East India Company, with extensive business dealings with royals ranging from Marathas to Moghuls. The Sett and Sethna families are the direct descendants of Manekji, who also established the Bombay Parsi Punchayet. Two previous books on the genealogy of these two prominent families exist, both in Gujarati and authored in 1900 and 1930.

Visit our new and improved website at <http://www.fires-fezana.org/>

“tanka” system of water harvesting and storage that is still in use and active today.

In Surat the amazing hospitality of the Dotiwala family gave us an opportunity to have a back-of-house tour of the bakery and indulge in all the amazing goodies they bake. Cyrus Dotiwala told us about the history of the Batasa biscuit which was invented at the Dotiwala Bakery a couple of centuries ago.

In Dahanu, Gholvad and Bordi; the Fellows got a chance to meet with Iranian Zarathusti farmers who have settled there for generations. They also got a chance to see the famed Bordi beach and a Chikoo auction.

At the end of the 13 days, the participants left wanting more of the experience. For all of them, it wouldn't be wrong to say that it was a transformative life experience. It brought them an understanding of the Parsi Zarathusti roots in India and exposed them to a lot of experts, businesses and a whole cultural experience that will remain with them for a lifetime.

Future trips are planned to Iran and India.

If you would like to know more about the program visit www.zororoots.org to get involved. □



Return to Roots Fellows experience a poignant moment on the banks of the Varoli River in Nargol, India.

FEZANA Annual General Meeting Notice

Hosted by the Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey (ZAPANJ), FEZANA is pleased to announce that the 2015 FEZANA Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. Details have been circulated to local FEZANA representatives. Please contact the FEZANA Administrative office if you have not received the full announcement or, to view details on FEZANA website [click here](#).



Pre-AGM Session: May 1, 2015 (2:00-6:00 pm)

AGM Meetings: May 2-3, 2015 (SAT: 8:00am-6:00pm / SUN 8:00am-1:00pm)

AGM Venue and Hotel Accommodation:

Crowne Plaza Philadelphia
260 Mall Boulevard, King of Prussia, PA 19406;
610-265-7500

Reservation link:

[CrownePlazaHotel FEZANA AGM@Philadelphia May1 2015](#)

Important: Please book your hotel soon. The group rate (mention “ZAPANJ”) is only available for reservations that are made by April 1, 2015.

Please RSVP with the number of people attending in your party to: Saghar Javanshir (sjbehroozi@verizon.net) and Zenobia Damania (admin@fezana.org)

PLEASE NOTE: COMMITTEE REPORTS AND MEMBER ASSOCIATION REPORTS ARE DUE APRIL 10, 2015



CONNECTIONS



Haft Seen Table, Persian Parade, San Jose, California
Courtesy of Rusi Sorabji



Chicago Zoroastrians
marched in the Chicago
Nowruz Parade last month

A Look at Gahambar

By Erv. Soli Bamji

Gahambar are seasonal festivals of special significance to the Zoroastrians and occur six times in a year. Each Gahambar spans 5 days and the Avesta refers to them as agricultural festivals but the later writings connect them to cosmogony.

The word Gahambar, *Gasanbar* in Pahalavi, has been linked to the word *Yairyā* in the Avesta. The Avestan word *Yare* means year and *Yairyā* means seasonal divisions of the year [1].

The first Gahambar is called *Maidyoizarem* and is celebrated from the 41st to 45th day after Navroz, which occurs on the day of Spring Equinox, March 21. Its name signifies Midspring, as *maidhya* means middle and *zaremya* means spring.

The second Gahambar occurs from 101th to 105th day and is called *Maidhyoshem* meaning Midsummer, as *shem* means summer.

The third Gahambar occurs in early fall from 176th to 180th day and is called *Paitishhayem*. The word comes from the terms *paiti* and *hahya* (corn) and means bringing in the harvest.

The fourth Gahambar occurs in the fall from 206th to 210th day and is called *Ayathrem*. This time of the year is usually linked with the breeding season of the cattle.

The fifth Gahambar occurs in mid-winter from 286th to 290th day and is called *Maidhyarem*, which means “midst of rest” because during winter agricultural work generally stops.

The sixth Gahambar occurs from 361th to 365th day and is called *Hamaspahmadae*. *Hama* means same, *pathan* means path and *madha* means middle so it signifies the time of the year when day and night are equal.

A prayer called *Afrin* of Gahambar links the seasonal festivals with six principal creations of Ahura Mazda: Sky, Water, Earth, Plants, Animals and Humans. The primary object of the Gahambar was to thank Ahura Mazda for the different seasons as the prosperity of the world depended on it. Later on the object of thanking Ahura Mazda for the six creations mentioned above was added.

The Liturgies usually performed on the Gahambar days are: *Afringan* of Gahambar; *Baj* of Gahambar; and *Yasna* of Gahambar, also known as the *Visperad*

The Achaemenians are known to have celebrated the Gahambar which were linked to Ahura Mazda’s creations and the Amesha Spentas, the guardians of these creations. Each Gahambar was celebrated in honour of one of the creations:

| Gahambar | Creation | Amesha Spenta |
|---------------|----------|--------------------------------------|
| Maidyoizarem | Sky | Khshathra Vairyā (Sovereign Kingdom) |
| Maidhyoshem | Water | Haurvatat (Perfection) |
| Paitishhayem | Earth | Spenta Armaiti (Holy Devotion) |
| Ayathrem | Plants | Ameratat (Immortality) |
| Maidhyarem | Animals | Vohu Manah (Good Mind) |
| Hamaspahmadae | Humans | Spenta Mainyu (Bounteous Spirit) |

On the last day of each Gahambar there is a solemn feast where members of a family or residents of a town assemble to eat and share food communally. The members volunteer to donate their time and money, prepare the food and serve the meals without regard to status. During the meal, Zoroastrians from all walks of life sit together, and the equal sharing of food with everyone serves to help build and strengthen the community. Universal Brotherhood was one of the



CONNECTIONS



Earth Faith Peace 2015: An Interreligious Youth Teach-in July 23-26, 2015

We're facing a climate crisis like never before. To confront this crisis, young people of all faiths need to be connected with other young faith leaders working on climate.

You can be a part of a new movement, by [signing up if you're a young adult](#), or sending this message on to any other young people of faith and goodwill wanting to help end our climate crisis. ***But wait! A small group of participants of the Teach-in will be sent to Paris, France during the Conference of Parties meetings of the UN in December of 2015. All expenses paid!***

Help us pass a strong climate treaty in Paris, by signing up or sending a youth representative to the teach-in.

Contact: Religions For Peace USA, New York City
www.rfpusa.org

principal objects aimed at in the public Gahambars, where King and common person, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak together shared a common meal.

The Gahambars are considered to be the principal occasions for ceremonial gatherings. The *Afringhan* of Gahambar mentions that it is the duty of a Zoroastrian to celebrate and participate in a Gahambar. The four words used in the Afrin are: *Yazad, sazad, khurad, dehad* (Pray, perform, eat, give)

These words suggest the different ways every Zoroastrian can participate in celebrating the Gahambars. The seasonal festival reminds the Zoroastrians of their roots and the good deeds, such as *radih* (charity) and *ratish* (being truthful), they must perform in life. □

References

[1]. Dhalla, M.K., "History of Zoroastrianism", published by K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, Mumbai, India, 1963.

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Message from UN Secretary-General on International Day of Nowruz - March 21

[International Nowruz Day was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution [A/RES/64/253](#) of 2010, at the initiative of several countries that share this holiday.]

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message for the International Day of Nowruz, observed on March 21:

The annual observance of Nowruz is a wonderful opportunity for people to join together to celebrate cultural diversity, dialogue and mutual respect. It is a moment of unity and solidarity, within and among societies, that is all the more important at times of strife and division.

This year's Nowruz also takes on special meaning as the United Nations works to shape a new vision for sustainable future and adopt a meaningful universal climate agreement. These priorities for 2015 are in line with the spirit of Nowruz, which promotes harmony with nature and all peoples to foster cooperation for lasting peace.

This ancient New Year tradition coincides with the arrival of spring, giving rise to a rich array of customs, rituals and festivities, from communities in Western, Central and Southern Asia, to the Caucasus, Balkans and other regions. Nowruz is inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, under United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

I wish joyous and peaceful celebrations to all. May the spirit of Nowruz live on throughout the year.

— U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon