

FEZANA *bulletin*

August 2015 / VOLUME 5 • ISSUE 8



UPCOMING DATES

September 1, 2015

Submission Deadline: 2016
Nowruz Banner Contest
[Farhang Foundation contest](#)

September 1, 2015

Submission Deadline: 2016
Proposals for Nowruz related
Performing Arts pieces
[Farhang Foundation at LACMA](#)

September 5-6, 2015

[Zoroastrian Unity Cup Games](#).
Redondo Beach, CA.

September 13, 2015

Community Appreciation
Afternoon, hosted by ZAGNY.
Pomona, NY. [Click here](#).

September 19, 2015

Society of Scholars of
Zoroastrianism (SSZ)
Conference. Burr Ridge, IL,
www.zac-chicago.org

October 9-11, 2015

Survival of Zoroastrians in
North America. Hosted by ZAH
Library – Home of FIRES.
Houston, TX. [@yahoo.com](mailto:ahsethna)

October 15-19, 2015

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

December 18-20, 2015

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

December 25-27, 2015

Iranshah Udvada Utsav (IUU);
Udvada, India
<http://www.iuu.org.in/>

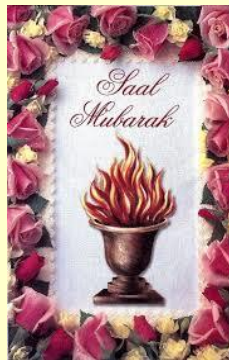
Dec 28, 2015-Jan 2, 2016

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

April 29-May 1, 2016

FEZANA Annual General
Meeting. Novi, Michigan
admin@fezana.org

The FEZANA Executive Wishes You and Your Families Navroze and Khordad Saal Mubarak



May the New Year be filled with new hope, new joy and new beginnings & may each day of the coming year be vibrant and new bringing along many reasons for celebrations. Let us all begin the New Year 1385 Y.Z. with love and understanding towards all humanity and live in peace & harmony for times to come.

Wishing you and your family an Abundance of Good Health, Peace, Love, Joy, Happiness and Prosperity.

May Ahuramazda shower his choicest blessings on you and your dear ones!

*Katayun Kersi Kapadia
President, FEZANA*

An Interreligious Teach-In to Discuss Climate Change

By Meher Sidhwa-Pastakia



[Meher Sidhwa-Pastakia is a sustainable energy professional currently working in the solar energy sector in India. She was partly funded by FEZANA to attend the 2015 Earth-Faith-Peace Interreligious Teach-in on climate change last month in Hyde Park, New York. The Teach-in focused on environmental advocacy through multi-religious cooperation.]

Earth-Faith-Peace 2015 brought together young scientists, engineers, environmentalists and community leaders in an interreligious conference debate (Teach-in) at Hyde Park, New York. Furthermore, the Teach-in selected four individuals to attend the international climate change negotiations at COP 21 -- the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) in November -- and I am deeply honored to be one of them.

First, I would like to thank FEZANA for providing part assistance to make it to the teach-in which further enabled me to get selected for the COP. The teach-in proposed the concept that climate change finds a link to an individual's faith; coincidentally the event was just weeks after Pope Francis released his encyclical on climate change. At first, you may ponder as to what is the connection but then



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



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you realize that we already knew the answer and all we needed was a new perception. As Zoroastrians, we are always taught to preserve and safeguard the seven creations of God. During a Jashan ceremony, we offer our prayers to these seven elements—fire, water, earth, sky/minerals, animals, plants and mankind—which are symbolic to the offerings we present in the ceremony, e.g. milk symbolizes the animal.

The Teach-in, through its participation, helped us understand that every faith promotes sustainability in its own way. By brainstorming we found links among various religious teachings on topics such as waste reduction, water preservation, afforestation, climate justice, and racial equality. On one hand we had policy experts and religious leaders answer queries and on the other hand we brainstormed with environmental scientists from universities like the Harvard, Ohio State and Georgia Tech who shared their experiences on the linkage between science and faith.

As we prepare for our COP mission and countries submit their climate action plans to the UNFCCC, it will be interesting to see the final outcome of this much-awaited COP and its impact on the global and local policy frameworks to combat climate change. □

2016 FEZANA AGM in the Motor City

The 2016 FEZANA AGM will be held in Detroit from Friday, April 29 to Sunday, May 1st. The event will take place in Novi -- on the west side of the city, otherwise known as our Parsi Colony. The Zoroastrian Association of Michigan (ZAOM) is thrilled to host this event in the Motor City and looks forward to ensuring a productive and fun stay for all participants. Details to follow.



Zoroastrian Sports Committee 

is pleased to announce

The 9th Zoroastrian Unity Cup Games

Labor Day Weekend
September 5 & 6, 2015
Redondo Beach, CA

www.zathletics.com | zsc@fezana.org

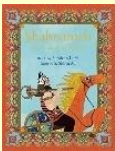
#ZSC  @ZSports  ZSC  @ZSports #UnityCup9



BOOK AWARENESS



You work hard, you play hard - you deserve to curl up with a good book before the summer ends. And there is nothing better than reading stories and myths from ancient Iran, filled with kings, heroes, princesses, magical animal and demons. Both adults and children will enjoy these educational and exciting tales.



Shahnameh by Elizabeth Laird Elizabeth Laird is passionate about bringing this great epic poem, the *Shahnameh*, to the children of western cultures, as well as retelling it for our children living in the West. Laird is a natural storyteller and has kept a strong narrative thread and the level of accuracy is remarkable.



Bruce Bahmani has a series of *Rostam, Tales from the Shahnameh* (Persian book of Kings) that are adapted for the American comic book genre. Rostam, the hero-champion of a mythical land of Iran, is dedicated to protect the throne of Iran from all invaders and usurpers as he faces outer threats as well as his own inner demons. The Rostam comic books have expanded the canon of Persian literature.

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

Recollections of a Mobed on Muktdad Gatha Days

By Ervad Soli P. Dastur

[The following is an excerpt from "Everyday Parsi: Ervad Soli P. Dastur" which appeared as a post on August 16, 2015 on the Parsi Khabar website. Visit [Parsi Khabar](#) to read the full article]



On the P&O SS *Oronsay* ship somewhere near Suez Canal during the first part of August 1960, we some 20 or so J. N. Tata Endowment Scholars on our way to USA/UK for higher studies, read on the ship's daily news flash that Dr. Homi J. Bhabha, "father of Indian Nuclear Program", selected Tarapur, in Maharashtra State, as the site for the first Indian Atomic Energy Station! "What are they doing to my Birth Place?," I wondered at that time!

Yes I was born, as the last of 11 children, to an Udvada Mobed family in Tarapur, where my father was a Panthaky of the Tarapur Agiary. In those days, 1940's and 50's, there were over 100 Parsi families in Tarapur. Most families owned large tracts of agricultural land, referred to as "Vaadi" or "Jungle", within 10 to 30 miles of Tarapur and most of the family men spent majority of their time in these family places whereas the rest of their families resided in Tarapur. My father was in charge of all ceremonies for these families, especially for the 18 days of Muktdad in those days.

Before the Muktdad days, our whole family was engaged in the preparations for the Muktdad Days and one particular activity I still remember with fondness is the preparations of "Deemori" and "Gaanghaa", the specialized Muktdad prayers items. "Deemori" was made from the dough of the "Paapri" but you take a pinch of the dough and make a small ball out of it, size of a big pea, and then these balls were fried. Whereas "Gaanghaa" was a mixture of legumes like whole Mung, and different kinds of whole beans, etc. which were roasted. The two items were then used in the *Satum* prayers during the Muktdad days. We children just loved these items.



Also, the Agiary -- and our home -- was thoroughly cleaned and white washed before the Muktdad days.

During these white washing, we children were the "Go-fers", go for this and go for that and we gladly did those chores with gusto, so as to receive some bonus in terms of "Deemori" "Gaanghaa", or Paapri/Malido, and other sweets! The other preparation was to collect all families' "Behraas" or "Karasyas" for the Muktdad. Each family had to inscribe the names of the departed ones of the families in Gujarati so we knew which family they belong to. In those days, many "Behraas" were double, one on top of the other. All were of German silver and no glass or crystal vases like today. Dad had to arrange with local "Maalis" to supply flowers of different colors, mainly roses -- no carnations or other types of flowers.

On *Asfandard Mahino* and *Ashishvangh Roj*, all the age old 6-8 Marble tables in Agiary were thoroughly cleaned, washed and dried, and all the "Behraas" were cleaned and washed in the afternoon in the Agiary with its "chokhku" well water. Then father would assign tables by families and all the "Behraas" were placed in some order and the flowers were placed on top of them. Then Parsi Deevas were lit and the whole Muktdad arrangement was ready for the 18 days prayers starting on the next day of *Aastaad Roj*.



OPPORTUNITIES

Zarathushtis Without Borders: Opportunities to Serve Abroad

RAD-AID Conference on Global Health radiology for Resource Limited Countries. November 7 – Washington D.C. www.rad-aid.org

For more information, contact: Garshasb Soroosh [gsoroosh \(@\) rad-aid.org](mailto:gsoroosh (@) rad-aid.org)

GRANTS FOR STUDENTS

GreenWorks! Grants Program now accepting applications



Project Learning Tree (PLT) is accepting applications from schools and nonprofit organizations for environmental service-learning projects through its GreenWorks! grants program. The program is designed to help students make their schools more green and healthy, for example by implementing recycling programs, conserving water and energy, improving air quality, or establishing school gardens and outdoor classrooms and integrating these projects into the curriculum.

<https://www.plt.org/apply-for-greenworks-environmental-education-grant>

The whole Parsi Waad (street) was teeming with activities since all the family men from their lands would be visiting their families during the Muktdad. Each day, early evening, the huge grounds in front of the Agiary and the huge ruins of Vicaajee Meherjee Palace was used for Hu Tu Tu, wrestling, cricket, and such other sports. I was too little to participate but was an awed spectator at the strength of these young Parsi men.

Just before sunset, my dad would come to Agiary to conduct *Hum Bandagi* every day of the Muktdad. Few minutes after sunset, the *Aiwisruthrem Geh* will start and all the men (only) will be coming into the Agiary, do their *Kusti Paadyaab*, and gather in front of the Muktdad tables and my dad will lead all of us in a *Hum Bandagi*. What a sight that was!! After that the crowd scattered, some continue praying, and others gathered outside Agiary in groups swapping tall tales and some others went home. We had to continue our Daily *Farajiyat* including *Fraamraot Ha*, *Satum no Kardo*, etc. One of the brothers will perform the *Boi* ceremony. After our prayers, Dad will orchestrate the preparations of khumchaas with fruits for the *Aafringaan* and *Farokshi* prayers next day. Then all brothers went home for our family meal and to bed for the big day tomorrow.

Every Muktdad Day the whole family got up at 4 AM or so, took bath in an open Moree (bathroom) with cold and hot water pails from our well, which we mix to create hot water for the bath using a “karasyaa” (no shower). Then after a short morning prayer, we were in the kitchen to help out with the preparations of the morning *Satums* in Agiary. Mom and my sisters were busy preparing food for the *Satums* which consist of eggs, rotlis, a sweet dish and chaai. By this time, dad had gone to Agiary to prepare for the *Satum* prayers, followed by us brothers carrying *Satum* items in big Khumchaas. The main hall of the Agiary was transformed into a magical ambiance with Parsi Deevas, German Silver “Behraas”, fresh flowers in them and the sweet smell of sandalwood. □

[continued at [Parsi Khabar](#)]

The Presidential Citation Award Presented to Shahrokh Mehta



Shahrokh Mehta from Syracuse, New York, was awarded the Presidential Citation Award, Toastmasters International’s Highest Honor, on August 13, 2015 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Seen here with Muhammad Yunus, Nobel Peace Prize winner, who was the Guest speaker for the Golden Gavel event.

Shahrokh Mehta led FEZANA’s first workshop at the United Nations, at the Commission on the Status of Women in 2004, entitled “Microfinancing: A Step Towards Uplifting Women.” [See *FEZANA Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 2, Summer 2004, p 9-10]



GRANT OPPORTUNITY

Grants for Kids Doing Community Service

SUBMISSION DEADLINE:
Rolling Deadline

Start a Snowball.

Any youth (ages 5-18) led project that does good is eligible for a grant. Funding to act as "seed money" of up to \$100 for projects. Individuals and organizations are eligible to apply.

<http://startsnowball.com/philanthropic-grant-for-kids/>

ARTS CONNECTIONS

Call for Submissions: 2016 New York Indian Film Festival (NYIFF)

SUBMISSION DEADLINE:
October 1, 2015 and
December 1, 2015

Presented by the Indo-American Arts Council, film submissions are invited for consideration at the NYIFF to be held May 7-14, 2016.

Categories:
Feature Narrative
Short Narrative
Feature Documentary
Short Documentary

<http://www.iaac.us/nyiff2016/>

Return to Roots Program, Tour 2 Report

FEZANA, and some of its Member Associations, are proud to have supported the second Return to Roots (RTR) tour last Spring, giving fourteen Zoroastrian youth (seven from USA and Canada) the unique opportunity to experience their ancestral communities in India from March 10-22, 2015. This was the second trip run by the Return to Roots program. Started in 2012 by a small group of passionate volunteers, and supported by Parzor, the inaugural journey was held in December 2013 to January 2014 coinciding with the World Zoroastrian Congress in Mumbai, India. The success of these trips is apparent not only in the transformational experiences of the participants but the overwhelming support of the community.

The full report of the recent March 2015 trip has been circulated and is available for viewing [online](#). The full report includes details of the Return to Roots trip with participants' bios and comments, colorful day by day entries, and photos. Below is an excerpt with highlights from Day One of the program.



DAY ONE: DELHI. Return to Roots 2015 officially kicked off on March 10 at the Delhi Dharamshala. As an introduction to the Parsi community in India we started by watching a screening of "Qissa-e-Parsi," an insightful documentary created by Divya Cowasji and Shilpi Gulati. After the film we had the special treat of speaking with the film's directors. Divya and Shilpi shared the challenges and rewards of working on such an important cultural project. As we were all starting



our own return to our roots, it was powerful to hear about the journey these filmmakers went through to discover and narrate the story of our shared ancestry. After a lively discussion of the film and a delicious meal we moved to the Agiary for a *Boi* ceremony.

Agiary: For Diaspora youth, the opportunity to visit an Agiary is likely rare. For some, this was their first time in a fire temple. We each lit our Divos and the dasturji conducted the sacred *Boi* ceremony. Each of us took time to have both a personal experience of this

sacred space and also we took in the group experience as well. This balance of inner, personal reflection and outward, social sharing would accompany us throughout the trip.

Sethna Farms: In the evening we took the bus to the Sethna Farms outside of Delhi, home of Adi Sethna, an ex-General of the Indian Army, Representative to the Minority Commission, and President of the Delhi Dharamshala. It is a stunning property and gave us time to settle into the fact we were all together in India, starting this journey together. □ [Read reflections from RTR Fellows in the current *FEZANA Journal* Vol. 29, Summer 2015 p 65-78; Read the full [2015 RTR report](#); More information on RTR at <http://zororoots.org/>]