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OFFICE 713-963-4229

SUNDAY SCHOOL

PLACE: ZHCC
8787 W. Airport Blvd.
Houston, TX 77071
Tel: 713-270-9339

TIME: Different timings for each group

DATE: December 10, 2023

Children's Session: The Sunday School session starts at 11:00 a.m. in-person and by Zoom

Middle Group: The Sunday School session at 11:00 a.m. – in-person & by Zoom



Youth Group: The Sunday School session at 10:00 a.m. In person



UPCOMING EVENTS

- New Year's Eve Gala – Sunday December 31, 2023 (See Flyer)**
- Jashn-e-Sadeh – Saturday, January 27, 2024**
- Navroze Hambandagi – Thursday, March 21, 2024**
- Navroze function – Saturday, March, 23, 2024**
- North American Zarathushti Congress – December 29, 2024 to January 1, 2025**

REPORTS

LIBRARY COMMITTEE REPORT

Happy Holidays and best wishes for 2024 from the Library Committee

We want to thank the many generous donors who continue to help expand the ZAH Library. We have the infrastructure to house and maintain extensive collections.

We feel privileged that so many have made ZAH Library/FIRES the destination for their treasured personal collections.

No matter the size or form of the gift, we are aware of the honor and the heavy responsibility that comes with each gift.

We are aware of the sacred trust placed in us by each donor and promise to cherish, preserve, and share each item by our mission.

At this time of the year, we thank all those who have given so generously in so many ways and who have helped make our library a shining beacon of its kind.

Happy New Year and we look forward to your support of our events, collection, and speaker programs.

And a special shout out to Yasmin Pavri, who carried a suitcase full of new books from her recent visit to Mumbai. Some of the latest titles are:

ZAH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Aderbad Tamboli – Chairman
Percy Master – Secretary
Farokh Billimoria – Treasurer

Zia Anklesaria – Member
Nikita Gagrat – Members
Kershaw Khumbatta – Member
Fiona Setna – Member

Nazanin Sarkari – FEZANA Rep

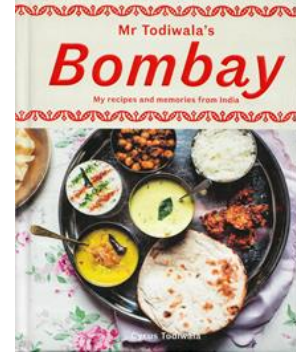
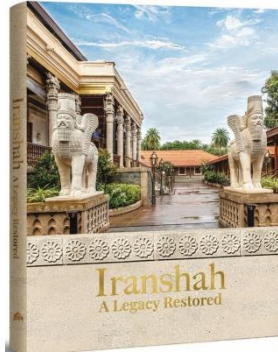
OUR ERVADS (PRIESTS)

Boomla, Noozar
Buchia, Kyrus
Dastur, Barjor M
Dastur, Darius B
Desai, Farrokh
Firozgary, Bahrom
Gonda, Pervez
Kanga, Neville
Katrak, Rayomand
Katrak, Vispi
Khumbatta, Noshir
Kotwal, Zubin
Masani, Dara
Nariman, Khushrav
Pavri, Shapur
Sanjana, Bahmanshah
Sanjana, Kurush
Sidhwa, Kayomarz
Sidhwa, Maneck
Sidhwa, Yazad
Unwalla, Peshotan
Vimadalal, Freyaan
Vimadalal, Khushroo

BEHRAM ROJ JASHAN SPONSORS



Iranshah - A Legacy Restored
Mr. Todiwala's: *Bombay* by Cyrus Todiwala
1001 Names of Ahura Mazda by Perin Pudumjee Coyaji



ATASH KADEH NEWS – For November 2023

By: Persis Behramsha

Thanksgiving is over; Christmas is around the corner; New Year is almost here! Where did 2023 go?

November brought us a mix of pleasant, cold and rainy weather. That's Houston for us; we all love it anyway.

November 2023 Behram Roj sponsors were none other than the Gonda family. Our dedicated Mobed Pervez Gonda, Viloo Gonda and their wonderful family celebrated their special day by sponsoring the Jashan, as they celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary. Cheers to the wonderful couple – may both of you have many more wonderful years together. Thank you for your generosity.

The 2024 Behram Roj and Parab Calendars are on the website and a printed copy is also available at the Atash Kadeh. Please pick your special date to sponsor a Jashan before the calendar fills up.

The Gatha Study Group is sparking good interest. The November topic was Review of Gathic Ha 28. Ervad Maneck Sidhwa first recited each verse and later Meheryar Rivetna helped understand the meanings with the translation on the presentation slides. Do stop by whenever you can to hear the interesting topics covered by these presentations.

Our sincere thanks once again to Tanaaz and Edul Chikhlwala for their non-stop volunteer service to help keep our Atash Kadeh spotless. You both are such excellent examples of human beings who provide selfless service to the community – giving without desire for recognition or reward.

**ERVAD PERVEZ GONDA
MACHI BEFORE BEHRAM ROJ
JASHAN**



MEHERYAR RIVETNA



At the end of the year, we reminisce about all the happenings at our Atash Kadeh; among them is the sad fact that we have lost some wonderful members of our community. We think of them often; we miss their presence; we value their existence beyond the physical realm; we send healing thoughts and wishes to their families. May their souls rest in eternal peace. Amen.

We continue to perform Machis, Jashans, Special Prayers, Private Prayers, Navjotes, and any other requested prayers. Our Mobeds are happy to conduct Machis remotely and Zoom them so anyone can participate from anywhere.

We are blessed with wonderful Mobeds, Ervad Pervez Gonda and Ervad Maneck Sidhwa, who diligently serve our Atash Kadeh with unmatched dedication. Thank you.

Once again, a Special Thanks to all of you that volunteer, donate sukhar, loban, candles, drop by the Atash Kadeh to keep our Mobeds company, clean and polish silver. **You truly are our precious volunteers.**

Ushta Te
The Atash Kadeh Committee

GATHA STUDY GROUP – SUMMARY

Gatha Information Classes at the Atash Kadeh, continue with a lot of enthusiasm. Many folks are requesting a summary of the presentations from these classes, so here is the summary from the December 10, 2023 class. We plan on updating the summaries soon after these classes are conducted. AK Committee

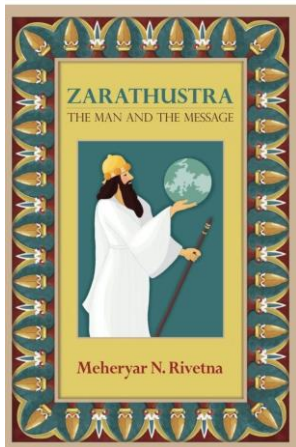
Summary by Meheryar Rivetna – Atash Kadeh Study Group

Continuing with Ys 28, the Gathic verses of Ys 29 were discussed. In Ys 28, Zarathustra stresses the importance of having a Good Mind (Vohu Manah) coupled with righteousness to defeat the forces of evil. It is the only way for humans to be in harmony with Ahura Mazda's (Nature's) laws and realize a good life.

In Ys 29, Zarathustra witnesses and experiences human suffering and is distraught at the inability of those wanting to live a peaceful, harmonious life to combat the evil forces with which humankind is confronted. He uses poetic license to express human frustration through the voice of a cow. Zarathustra uses the cow as a metaphor for humankind, because the cow, in those days, was a primary target of the raiders who plundered the livestock and lands of the peaceful settlers on the plains of Iran.

Zarathustra, through the cow (humankind), questions the purpose of creation if all that the created beings have to endure is oppression, misery and wrath. Zarathustra delves deep within himself and realizes that humankind needs a savior who can show the way to overcome the adversities of life. He does not recognize anyone who, without inflicting cruelty and harm, can offer succor to human beings.

BOOK BY MEHERYAR RIVETNA



DALLAS LOCK-IN GROUP PICTURE



RED TEAM – FLAMING PHOENIX



DALLAS LOCK-IN - ACTIVITY



Zarathustra is convinced that he has the requisite knowledge gained by his own observation and experience of nature and its laws of how to bring prosperity to the world. But he has a lingering doubt if the world will accept him as its guide.

Zarathustra is confident that he can assuage humankind’s suffering by teaching it the importance of having wisdom and rationality (Vohu Manah) along with Devotion (Armaiti) to Truth and Righteousness (Asha). With this conviction, Zarathustra sets out on his divine mission to give the world an understanding of Ahura Mazda’s laws and the benefit of observing and living by those laws. This will be discussed in the study group on January 14, 2024.

Ed Note: A few paperback books are available. If anyone wants, please contact Arnavaz Sethna.

ZANT Lock-in – “The weekend went by too fast!”

By: Mahtab B. Dastur

“Zoroastrian Association of North Texas is excited to host our 2023 youth camp during the upcoming Thanksgiving break from Saturday November 18th at 10:00am to Sunday November 19th at 1:30pm at the Zoroastrian Center of North Texas, 1605 Lopo Road, Flower Mound Texas, 75027. We are delighted to have our Houston and youth join us for this lock-in!”

The month of November was a fun and exciting time for the youth. As tradition holds, ZAH Youth, ages 12 and up, went to Dallas, and participated in the Annual ZANT Lock-in on November 18th and 19th. The 18th started off with everyone arriving late (of course) and around 10:45 am (it was supposed to begin at 10 am), we started off the lock-in. Delnaaz Aunty (Irani) began the lock-in by setting a few ground rules and taking all phones away, and then Nina aunty led the way with icebreaker games, such as heads or tails and the noticing details game (it became detailed!). Following some laughter, a few groans, and some very intense observation, Delnaaz Aunty assigned teams. Due to the large number of kids, we had 4 teams (instead of 3), Red, Orange, Yellow, and Green.

The first activity as a team was team name and mascot. Given poster board, markers, and clay, each team created a unique title and mascot to go along with it. The Red team was now the Flaming Phoenix, with the Phoenix as the mascot. The Orange team was The Cheetos (very original!), with Chester, the Cheeto mascot, as their mascot. The Yellow Team named themselves the Minions and decided upon a minion with a farohar on its overalls to be their mascot. Finally (but certainly not least!), the green team, going the cultural route, named themselves Zarathustra's Sabzeh, with their mascot being a detailed farohar surrounded by grass. To kick off the weekend of competitiveness, there was a “cooking” race. Consisting of a race between two people (of opposing teams), each person had to put on cooking gloves, a pair of pants, a sweatshirt, unwrap a chocolate, cut it in half with a plastic knife, and eat it. The first to do so, wins! It was a sight to see – youth with pants falling down, sweatshirts half blinding them, were trying to unwrap chocolates with their teeth (the gloves were too thick to get a good grip)!

DALLAS LOCK-IN JIDINA AND OTHERS



SUMPTUOUS LUNCH



DANCE COMPETITION



SOME BRAIN GAME



Next was a scavenger hunt, with a twist – all the answers to the clues were in newspapers! Each team was given the same set of clues and had to find the answers in the newspapers given, then cut out the answers and number according to the clue it answered – there was paper *everywhere* after everyone finished! Then it was time to feed all the rumbling tummies, and lunch was a delicious fajita taco bar (most went back for seconds!).

Following lunch, the competition made its transition from brain games to physical games. First up – outdoor games. These games consisted of unwrapping a frozen t-shirt (fingers were frozen trying to unwrap that shirt!), basketball, soccer, volleyball, football, and tug-of-war. Each game consisted of significant yelling, arguing with the judges (Spenta Uncle and Kali Uncle were great referees!), and *loads* of “OVER THERE” and “BRO THAT’S NOT FAIR!”. Before everyone went back inside for the indoor games, a nice snack of delicious, mildly spicy, crunchy Bhel was served.

The indoor games, consisting of scooter racing, ball tossing, and even stacking dice with chopsticks, created a loud environment to welcome guests, as they trickled in for evening dinner. When all indoor games were finished and most guests had arrived, everyone cleaned up and went to the ZANT dadgah for the evening boye ceremony, performed by Ervad Porus Balsara. Then it was time for a scrumptious dinner of foods such as curry rice, which was followed by 2 sets of presentations.

First, a presentation of each team’s name and mascot, and second, a dancing competition. For the dancing competition, each team was given 3 props – a plastic bowl, plastic flowers, and a bandana, which had to be incorporated into the dance. The teams got very creative, with the Orange team even acting out an entire couple’s journey, from dating, to engagement, to marriage (the lucky couple was Darius Dastur and Neville Kanga – give them a “Congrats!” the next time you see them 😊). The team performances were judged on audience noise (the more noise, the higher you get placed), and it became so competitive that some even began hitting tables to create extra noise (oops)! Following an overwhelming round of noise for the Orange Team, the youth all helped to clean up the hall (and kick out all the adults).

After the hall was cleaned and tables and chairs were put up, the youth had lots of fun dancing and singing to loud music and playing limbo (there were some very flexible youth!). After everyone was nice and sweaty, the youth went outside to play basketball and cool down in the 50-degree weather (it felt like pure bliss!). Afterwards, Delnaaz Aunty called everyone inside around 11 pm, and the kiddos all went to get ready for bed (don’t be fooled – we did NOT sleep at 11 pm!). After all the sleeping bags were set up, phones were given back, and everyone was in their pajamas, the youth talked, played games, and snacked on midnight cookies, well until 3 in the morning.

The next morning (or should I say the same morning?), every kid woke up between 8 and 9 am, slowly getting ready and packing up sleeping bags (which is harder than expected!). Encouraged by the scent of Mamaji’s acuri, the youth set up tables and chairs, and quickly ran to the breakfast tables.

AT THE DADGAH



After breakfast, it was time for the annual Huvareshtra service project. This year the project was to support "Weekend Wonders 4 kidz", a nonprofit organization feeding school kids on weekends who otherwise go hungry. Creating an assembly line of sorts, with festive Christmas music in the background, the youth assembled over a 100 food packages for kids! Our project included assembling and providing food packages for kids.

After the service project and about an hour playing outside while parents arrived, a mouth-watering lunch was served (the rice was absolutely incredible!), and finally results were presented. Drumroll please.... in 4th place, missing 3rd by a single point, were Zarathustra's Sabzeh. 3rd was proudly taken by the Minions; 2nd was the Flaming Phoenix's and The Cheetos were crowned 1st. A group picture was then taken, and the lock-in began to end. After MANY goodbyes, hugs, and a gift exchange, one gift from the campers to Delnaaz Aunty, and another from ZANT to ZAH, the campers begrudgingly followed their parents into cars and left.

The lock-in was an absolutely fabulous experience (as always!). A BIG thank you to Delnaaz Aunty, Spenta Uncle, Mamaji, Nina Aunty, Keshvar Aunty, Pearl Aunty, Benaifer Aunty, Kali Uncle, Zenobia Aunty and all the other volunteers who made this lock-in possible. Thank you ZANT for having us – we can't wait for the lock-in next year!

MORE PICTURES ON PAGE 10

BON FIRE IN HOUSTON – 2022



SADEH ON UNESCO'S CULTURE LIST

By: Parviz Varjavand in Zoroastrian Google Group

Ushta dear readers:

This month, UNESCO, during the 5th Ordinary Governing Council Meeting of the Regional Research Center for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, added to its prestigious list the ancient jubilation of Sadeh festival. This elicited waves of joy among Iranians who have cherished their enduring legacy through generations. The festivity, usually occurring on January 30th, derives its name from the Farsi word for "one hundred" (Sad), marking 50 days and 50 nights before Nowruz. Rooted in ancient traditions, it is celebrated predominantly by Iranian Zoroastrians in cities like Yazd, Tehran, Shiraz, and Kerman. The festival commemorates the mythical discovery and domestication of fire by king Hooshang Pishdadi and it is observed with the lighting of a large woodpile during its zenith." The Sadeh festival, aka Jashn-e Sadeh in Persian, was registered as a common heritage between Iran and Tajikistan."

DANCING BY THE FIRE - 2022



The Varjavand family is very happy about this recognition as usually a huge Sadeh Bonfire is lit at a large garden near Tehran named the "Kooshk Varjavand".

Ed Note: When I read this, it reminded me of the first Sadeh festival we had in Houston and it was organized by Farishteh Khatibi & Bahram Varjavand son of Parviz Varjavand, the author of the above news item. For those who were not in Houston the following should be interesting to read.

**JASHNE SADEH
ATASH NIYAESH - 2011**



**RENDITION OF FIRDOUSI'S
SHAHNAMEH BY DR SADEGHI
JASHNE SADEH - 2011**



HOUSTON'S FIRST JASHN-E-SADEH – By Bahram Varjavand: On Saturday February 3, (1996) Houston had not only its coldest night since 1989 but its first celebration of the ancient rite of Sadeh. Sadeh is an ancient festival in which the Iranians build huge bonfires in anticipation of Nowruz. Sadeh is old and mysterious. There is a controversy about when to hold Sadeh: the Yazdi priesthood, of Sasanian descent, claim the date of 100 days to Nowruz (-Dec 12), while the Kermani, of Parthian descent, prefer 50 days to Nowruz (-Jan 30). What is certain, though, is that it should be held "in the heart of winter." It is hard to imagine a better night than the one we picked (and thankfully stuck to, thanks to the steadfast resolve of Purvez Rustomji). Jashne Sadeh has personal importance form, and I want to thank everyone who contributed to the great success of our festival. The Bhandaras, Yazdanis and both Rustomji families were only some of those whose participation was critical. But most critical was the incredible dedication and leadership of Mrs. Fereshteh Khatibi, who galvanized two entire communities into action. You made it happen, Mrs. Khatibi - thank you. Finally, I want to stress that our success was really only possible because of the support of both Zoroastrian populations. The Zarathushtis were generous and eager to share this part of their culture with the Parsis, and the Parsis drove out on what was a horribly cold day to join in a celebration they had never even heard of before. Thank you, you are wonderful!

Fereshteh Khatibi wrote "We would not have been able to old this Jashne Sadeh without the participation of Parsis and Iranians together. Our greatest thanks to Feroze Bhandara and his wife, Shernaz Bhandara and their children, Zubin, Berzin and Zareen."

As information this first Sadeh was held at Bhandara family development site in Katy.

And Manashni Reported:

Saturday, February 3 will leave an indelible mark in the minds of Zoroastrians of Houston!! The freezing cold evening started like any other "fair", a "bazaar" or by whatever you name you call it. There were food stalls and outside the tent were barbecue chicken and chelo kabab stalls. Zarathushtis from Iran, India and Pakistan were mingling together greeting each other and eating to their hearts content. The children, completely oblivious of the cold, played in their tent jumping up and down the trampoline and then the magic moment - Seven Mobeds, in one voice recited Atash Niyayesh in front of an "Afarganyu" - Atash Dadgah. With the Atash Niyayesh over, Peshotan Unwalla, in his melodious voice sang the praises of the Jashne Sadeh in Farsi language - even the children listened with rapt attention! And then Bahram, with a flaming torch ran out and set the bonfire ablaze. The flames rose **60 feet high** and there was enchantment in the air. Everyone stood and watched the fire rise high in the sky and felt its warmth. After a while some went inside the tent which was kept warm by gas heating burners. With the music going full blast, everyone started dancing and having fun.

As the last embers of the bonfire died down the fire engine left with its wailing siren bidding us farewell. The looks of satisfaction on the faces of the Organizing Committee was enough to let the bystanders know that their hard work of the past weeks had paid off!! Is it any wonder why Bahram and Fereshteh so profusely thanked each other and everyone on the Organizing Committee.

MOBILE SHOWER UNIT



SOME DONATED ITEMS



SHOWER UNIT



Naadir Behramji Mehta



GOOD DEED PROJECT FOR ZAH

Upon reading Roshan Engineer's appeal, Abby Erani and Shirin Sarkari, in the true Zoroastrian spirit of giving, took the items needed by *Moving Waters* to their site. The following is a write-up of what they saw and how they were moved by the plight of the homeless.

Moving Waters
By: Abby Erani

It was a very moving experience. Two women have donated their time and energy to providing this gift for the homeless. They have a Trailer with 4 Showers, in 3 locations. These are placed in very poor areas where homelessness is most apparent.

The day we visited, there were about 50 people waiting to take showers. There was a large room where they waited till they were called to the shower unit. Each person was given a towel, toiletries and clean underwear and socks. There is an older gentleman who cleans the shower area after each shower.

The waiting people were also provided with a meal in the room where they were asked to wait, and a haircut if they needed one.

This is one of the best ways to provide help to the needy. There is no big corporation running this charity, where a large chunk of your donation goes to the CEO operating from some fancy office. Two down to earth, simple women are doing all the work and treating each person with dignity and respect. They knew the names of the homeless people and spoke to them with kindness.

This Charity is worth helping. I would love to spread the work of these two wonderful ladies. It is a charity worth donating to. I thank God every day for my comfortable life.

Ed Note: Apparently each shower costs \$21. Those of us who are in shower for 30 to 45 minutes a day, we should think of the ones who have to wait in line for one shower. Yes, we are blessed. If all the ZAH 300 membership give just one shower of \$21, it would help 300 homeless people. Our Z community can help in many ways. The Youth can do a Towel Drive, or you can go directly to their website and make a cash donation – here's the link www.movingwaters-houston.org or you may call Roshan Engineer for the location to go directly to the site with the towels, men's underwear, bra (any size) and some toiletries.

OBITUARY

Naadir Behramji Mehta, 26, son of Ouvnere & Behramji Mehta, brother of Mitra Mehta, grandson of Sam & Gooloo Polad and Late Roshan & Jehangir Mehta, passed away, early Sunday morning November 19, 2023 – Roj Aspandad Mah Tir.

Ouvnere, Behramji, Mitra and Chet, and Gooloo and Sam, would like to thank the Houston Zoroastrian community for all their unwavering love, support, and comfort extended to us and our entire family after our Naadir's passing. It was truly humbling, overwhelming, and a real source of strength to all of us during this devastating time. With deep gratitude, thank you.

NEW YEAR'S EVE



NEW YEAR'S EVE MASQUERADE BALL DECEMBER 31, 2023 at 8 pm

Please do not procrastinate and register soon at this link [NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA | ZAH](#) as **we have only 21 seats left at regular prices** that are still one of the lowest in H-town with unlimited drinks, some great food and fun. **Registrations at the door or walk-ins will NOT be allowed.**

We will have an **OPEN BAR (unlimited drinks)** along with food by the famous CARRABBA'S Italian Grill, customary NYE countdown, balloon drop and the midnight champagne toast. Dress to impress to match our Masquerade theme decor and don't forget your masks. We have games and competitions with prizes, 360-degree Camera, party favors, lucky door prizes and music by our very own DJ Gary.

If you wish to sit with your family and friends for the entire night, please **RESERVE A TABLE** very soon at the above link. All attendees who have reserved their tables, **please make sure ALL 10 attendees on your table are registered.** Do not miss the fun and see y'all on December 31st 2023!!

NAZC TEAM

OUR GRADUATE RAYOMAND HORMUZDI



DECEMBER GRADUATION

Rayomand Hormuzdi graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Computer Information Systems (Magna Cum Laude Honors) from the Cullen College of Engineering, University of Houston. It was a very proud, emotional, and humbling moment for the Hormuzdi family as Rayomand walked up to collect his certificate.

ATASH



FROM THE BOOK KISS-E-GOOLISTANBANOO ESTABLISHMENT OF ATASH BEHRAM

Our forefathers encountered a deadly storm after leaving Div, and they had pledged that if they got out alive, they would establish an Atash Behram in the first stop they made. To honor that pledge, they immediately started the work of settling in the small town of Sanjan. According to the book "Kiss-e-Sanjan" which is written to enumerate the events they started the process of establishing the Atash Behram. With the help of the *Aalat* that they had brought with them when they left Khorrasan, they were able to establish Atash Behram within five years of their residence on the land given to them by Jadiv Rana for this purpose. The Atash Behram was established with all the splendor and pageantry in the year 721 A.D. and gave the name *Paak Iranshah*. This Atash accompanied them wherever they went.

MORE PICTURES OF YOUTH LOCK-IN IN DALLAS



TUG OF WAR – GREEN VS RED TEAM



TREASURE HUNT YELLOW TEAM



ACTIVITY



TREASURE HUNT RED TEAM



AT DADGAH