ATASH KADEH INAUGURATION

MANASHNI
SPECIAL EDITION
And they came. Young parents with babies in carriers, families with children in strollers, young girls all dressed up in their fineries, young boys looking spruced up in long pants, young adults, distinguished men in white daglis and Fentas or Paghris, women in their gorgeous sarees, seniors on walkers and wheelchairs ... they all made their way to the Atash Kadeh to witness the first baaj ceremony about to be performed at 4:00 p.m. All the Ervads in their jama, pichhori and paghri stood at the entrance door, ready to receive the Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor of Udwada, India.

Arnavaz Sethna
RIBBON CUTTING

Collecting Sukhad/kathi (wood) etc from Hamdins.

Assembling Afarganyu

Ribbon Cutting
Feroze & Shernaz Bhandara with Daughter-in-Law Eloisa and grand daughter Angela

Assembling Afarganyu

Assembled Afarganyu in the Kebla

The Afarganyu is made of German Silver and was manufactured in India by Chandresh & Priti. Chandresh is the third generation in this business. The two Afarganyas—one for the Kebla and one for the Urvishgah were made in two parts—the top urn and the base. The finished Afarganyas and Bells, with all the accoutrements—khumcha (round tray), karasyo (water jug), chamach (ladle), chipyo (tongs) – and bells for the inner sanctum, were packed in eleven boxes and crated and shipped to Houston.
Dastur Khurshed Dastoor, Vada Dasturji of Udvada, India

Dasturji Khurshed attained his religious education at the Dadar Athornan Institute in Mumbai and gave his first Boye (prayer offering) at the age of 12. Since then he actively participates in complex liturgical procedures and has been instrumental in the renovation and repairs of the Atashbehram in Udvada.

Dasturji Khurshed Kaikobad Dastoor is an advocate of preserving our religious heritage, instilling strong values in a new generation, and providing our society with a needed source of openness, and stability and continuity in a rapidly changing world.

Did you know that the tradition of Hambandagi was brought over from Karachi, Pakistan? We started the practice of Hambandagi — Communal Prayers — at ZAH from the time we formally opened the Center and has continued to be practiced till now. We met in the main hall to sing/recite the prayers and Munajat, at times in the Atrium too. Now we will meet in the Atash Kadeh. On March 21, 2019 after performing Maachi in the Prayer Room, the Atash was carried in the small Afarganyu ceremoniously to the Atash Kadeh, where it was united with the Atash that was started in the Urvishgah for the Baaj Ceremony. See pictures of the procession.
PROCESSION OF ATASH

Senior Mobeds— Er Shapur Pavri and Er Pervez Patel (NY) hand the Atash to ....

Er Maneck Sidhwa and Er Pervez Gonda— Senior Mobeds, who pass it to ....

... next generation of mobeds Er Kayomarz Sidhwa and Er Khushru Vimadalal ...

Er Khushrav Nariman and Er Zubin Kotwal, who pass it on to ....

... young adult mobeds Er Bahrom Firozgary, Er Noozar Boomla ...

Er Viraf Nariman, Er Noshir Khumbatta
Er Rayomand Katrak and Er Fabian Katrak (NY) who hand it to ...
Dr. Katie Irani with son Dr. Adel Irani paying their respect to the united fire from the Prayer Room to the Atash Kadeh, now in the Urvishghah. Dr. Katie and Late Dinshaw Irani were the donors of the Prayer Room in the ZAH Center. Dr. Dinshaw Irani passed away in February 2000 but left the legacy of the Prayer Room at the Zarathushti Heritage & Cultural Center.

Feroze & Shernaz Bhandara paying their respect to the united fire of the Prayer Room and the Fire of the Urvishghah started at the time of Baaj Ceremony. Now we have Bhandara Atash Kadeh where Zoroastrians and their non Zoroastrian families and friends can go, pay their respect and experience the serenity and sanctity of the spiritually.

THREE GENERATION UNITE IN WORSHIP. MAY THIS GIFT GIVEN BY FEROZE & SHERNAZ BHANDARA CONTINUE TO INSPIRE FUTURE GENERATION.

Parents and their kids paying respect to the fire.

A NEW FLAME BURNS BRIGHT
Haft Seen table
Every item in Haft seen is a symbol from Fertility, Abundance, Wealth, etc.
The common items and their symbolic definitions:

1. "Sib" (Apple): Its main symbolic definition is **Health**
2. "Sabze" (Grass): a symbol **Nature**
3. "Senjed" (Sea-buckthorn): symbolizes the **wisdom**
4. "Serkeh" (Vinegar): symbolizes the **Disinfection**.
5. "Samanu": a symbol for **Power** and **Bravery**.
6. "Somaq": a symbol for **Patience** and **Tolerance**.
7. "Seer" (Garlic): a symbol for **Disinfection**.

Rangoli is an art form, originating in the **Indian subcontinent**, in which patterns are created on the floor using materials such as colored rice, dry flour, colored powdered chalk.

How Rangoli is drawn. Take the powder between thumb and index finger and sprinkle and make the shape you want.
The evening started with ZAH Choir, joined by some members of the Chicago Choir, sang Chhaiye Hamay Zarthisi. This song, sung to the tune of Blue Bell March by Theodore F. Morse and Edward Mullen in 1904 — Firoz Rustomji Batliwalla composed the lyrics to this tune. This song later became a Zarathoshti anthem and is sung at most Zarathoshti events.

Commemorative Silver Coins were sold as a fund raiser for the Atash Kadeh operation and maintenance.
BEFORE MERRIMENT AND FEASTING
SOME WELL DESERVED RECOGNITION

Congress 2000 legacy scholarships are merit-based award with emphasis on academics. Cyrus Rohinton Desai scholarship is given to youth going to college for the first time. This year Nali & Danesh Desai contributed $3000 towards one more Legacy Award. This family also wanted the Scholarship to go to a student going to college for the first time.

ASHISH CHAKRABORTY
ZAH LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP

RAYOMAND HORMUZDI
CYRUS R. DESAI AWARD

ZUBIN MASTER
CYRUS R. DESAI AWARD

ERVAD YAZAD SIDHWA
DANESH & NALI DESAI

Rayomand Hormuzdi receiving MNE Scholarship

Mike N. Engineer (MNE) Scholarship is a need-based scholarship with financial need being the primary criteria, followed by academic and community service.
FEROZE BHANDARA RECOGNIZES SEVERAL KEY PERSONNEL IN THE CONSTRUCTION PHASE OF THE ATASH KADEH
Vendidad— or Avesta Vi-Daeva-Data means The Law to turn away from evil. Vendidad by Maneck Sidhwa and Pervez Gonda with five other Ervads from Houston, Dallas, Washington DC and London—from 1:45 am to 6:00 am in Urvishgash.

Quite cheerful and ready for breakfast despite being awake all night. And why not be cheerful looking at pora/pao, sev and dahi.

DOWN MEMORY LANE
EXHIBITS IN THE LIBRARY

Typical Parsi kitchen of the yore

Poster created/painted by Edul Chikhliwalla
How to weave Kusti (the sacred thread). Requires:
- Junter (handloom)
- Thread spun from wool and other implements

Typical Parsi stores selling sarees, toran, topees, vases and other articles of silver, kastis and other prayer table items

Hand made beaded prayer caps. In 1940’s young girls/boys had to wear caps to school. Men wore fentas or paghris even to work, particularly in the Central Bank of India.

A typical Parsi couple—wife in gara saree with head covered and husband in dagli and Paghri (Tanaaz & Edul Chikhliwalla)

Parsi kitchen of 1940’s. “The objects that Aban was able to gather from the homes of many Parsis was mind boggling! My favorite was the pressure cooker – scary – perched atop a queer looking stove”. Reflections of Jehanbux Mehta

Dinner table setting—Royal Albert china

Courtesy Naozer Billimoria

Aban’s tour of the exhibit is on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mtjfHVtpEY
Tea Samovar—Sighri—Pressure Cooker and candelabra in a Parsi home of 40's before the advent of gas

Paghris worn by greatgrandfathers are worn even today: Homi Gandhi, FEZANA President and Jehanbux Mehta, ZAH

Hand Embroidered Pictures—prevalent in those days
Kaikhosrov, an esteemed, venerated and much cherished scholar of the Zarathusti religion lived by the principles, tenets, and teachings of the Prophet. He lived by it in his daily life. He was a universal human-being. He had no use for so called doctrinal or theological restrictions as to who can and cannot follow the timeless message of the Good Religion.

Framroze Patel

From the Cabinet of Curiosity containing Artifacts from Kaikhosho D and Piroja K Irani Trust

Silver Casket
To
Dinshaw Irani
From
Sir Cowasji Jehangir

Prof K D Irani
1922—2017
Aban Rustomji welcoming everyone

EVENING CONTINUES—

Bapsi—Feroze’ older sister—recounting how she was a matchmaker for Feroze & Shernaz and how the sibling connection is still prevalent as he visits her and brings her flowers every so often.

Homi Gandhi, President of FEZANA, commended ZAH for pioneering many religious initiatives through the decades.

Yash Chiniwalla and Cyrus Desai—Finale of a song

Children’s choir welcoming the Vada Dasturji with a song Texas style

Ending with a gift of cowboy hat to Dasturji

Keynote speaker Vada Dastur Khursheed Dastoor spoke on “Zarathushti Way of Life in Today’s World” - a fascinating talk making the audience think of the survival of the Zarathushti faith amidst the tribulations and controversies of modern times. The Vada Dasturji summed up the Zarathushti faith in its basic principles: Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds. Zarathushti tenets are not words that are to be nonchalantly muttered, but actually put into practice. Evil is a choice, Dasturji said, adding, Angre Mainyu, the personification of iniquity (the counterforce of the good spirit Spenta Mainyu), resides in the mind from where it must be dispelled. A true Zarathushhti commits to righteousness, Dasturji Khursheed Dastoor asserted, not to look good or please somebody, but does it from the heart because it is the right thing to do. Dasturji touched upon the quintessence of the Yatha-Ahu -Vairyo prayer in which the supplicant expresses a heartfelt yearning to serve and help those in need. And the core of Ashem Vohu, another basic prayer in the faith: Happiness to him who makes others happy. Succinct and profound are the teachings of these short prayers. One can overcome all adversities and controversies by observing the essentials of these principles. Thus, the will for the religion to survive is sustained. Excerpted from an article by Meherya Rivetna

Rustom Engineer, presented a small token gift to the Vada Dasturji from ZAH Library
Cyrus Rivetna, the only architect who knows and understands the architecture of our traditional Atash Behrams and Adrans and has the ability to retain all those old qualities and requirements and merge them with a more modern design.
DINNER TIME
LETS ENJOY THE IRANIAN FEAST

Is Dasturji having fun?
Grand Jashan: Vada Dasturji resplendent in his white shawl with multi colored paisley border came with Feroze Bhandara and was greeted at the doorstep by Shernaz Bhandara. He entered through the guard of honor of 12 Ervads on either side.

Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor led the Jashan—Zaotar, and was assisted by Ervad Bahmansha Sanjana—Rathvi. Other Mobeds:

**Houston Mobeds:** Noozar Boomla, Bahrom Firozgary, Pervez Gonda, Rayomand Katrak, Vispi Katrak, Noshir Khumbatta, Zubin Kotwal, Khushrov Nariman, Viraf Nariman, Shapur Pavri, Bahmansha Sanjana, Maneck Sidhwa, Kayomarz Sidhwa, Yazad Sidhwa, Khushroo Vimadalal, Freyaan Vimadalal.

**Out of Town Mobeds:** Poras T. Balsara (TX), Zerkixs Bhandara (CA), Yazdi Dastur (TX), Kurush Dastur (DC), Fabian Katrak (NY), Arda-e-viraf Minocherhomjee (CA), Jimmy Madan (UK), Pervez Patel (NY).

After the Jashan, fire in the big afganyu in the kebla was lit, and the first boye ceremony took place. First Atash Niyayesh was recited.

A 24 hour wood burning Atash Dadgah has now been established—Roj Adar, Mah Ava 1387 YZ.
CAMARADERIE AFTER THE JASHAN
GRAND GALA
MARCH 23, 2019

AUDIENCE STANDING FOR
NATIONAL ANTHEM (LEFT) AND BENEDICTION (RIGHT)

MC'S
Mitra Khumbatta & Darius Tamboli

NATIONAL ANTHEM
BY
CHLOE CHOUDHURY

ZAH Presented a Plaque to Feroze & Shernaz Bhandara from Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) for their munificence, vision and leadership creating a spiritual foundation for our future generations.

Sheroy Haveliwala, on behalf of ZAH requested Sarosh Collector to present this award.

Feroze & Shernaz accepting award from Sarosh Collector, a long time friend, philosopher and guide of the Bhandara family.

Sarosh Collector
GIFTS & AWARDS

Certificate of Occupancy arrived just a day before the festivities started. Feroze & Shernaz handed it over to ZAH. Sheroy Haveliwalla, past Chair of the ZAH Executive Committee, accepted it. It now hangs at the Bhander- ra Atash Kadeh

Homi Gandhi, President FEZANA giving a gift for the Atash Kadeh

Arda-e-Viraf Minocherhomji, President, North American Mobed Council (NAMC) presenting a gift of framed Ahunavaly Gatha Yasna 28.1 with translation of which one line reads “Grant that I perform all actions in harmony with righteousness"
Al Green is the U.S. Representative for Texas's 9th congressional district since 2005. The district includes most of southwestern Houston, including most of Fort Bend County. He congratulated Feroze Bhandara on the inauguration of the Bhandara Atash Kadeh. Feroze gifted Al Green with a blue Parsi Topee which he gladly wore and had his picture taken with Vada Dasturji.

CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mike Laster, City Council Member Dist J. with Dasturji, Martha Castex-Tatum Shernaz and Feroze Bhandara

David Robinson, Council Member at large, Mike Laster, City Council Member Dist. J, Martha Castex-Tatum City Council Member Dist. K presented the Proclamation "I, Sylvester Turner, Mayor of City of Houston, hereby proclaim March 23, 2019 as BHANDARA ATASH KADEH DAY"

CONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA

Dr. Anupam Ray, Consul General of India in Houston, congratulated the Bhandara family and the Zoroastrian community for the new Atash Kadeh. He ended his speech with announcing that the Parsis from Pakistan will be given visa to India without much hassle. Parsis from Pakistan applauded loudly upon hearing this. Dr. Ray too was given the gift of a Parsi blue velvet cap,
Paramis Khatibi, a resident of Houston about 20 years ago flew in from California specifically for the Atash Kadeh Inauguration.

Ervad Bahrom Firozgary reading out a message from his grandfather, Ervad Mehraban Firozgary, High Priest of Iran

Sunday School kids of Vehishta’s class—Zenia and Cyrene Nariman, Parsa Edalat and Sanaea Warden recited two songs—Ashem Vohu and a Persian Song

Chloe Choudhury singing La Campanella (Grandes Etudes de Paganini S. 141 no. 3).

Tayte Choudhry playing Franz Liszt and Niccolo Paganini
AND LET’S PARTY
A conceptual well—a fountain where Dar ni Pori was offered, but not thrown in
The growth of the Zarathushti diaspora led to the creation of Zarathushti Associations and Centers, many with prayer rooms, where the followers of Zarathushtra gathered for religious, cultural and social events. That this dedication continues unabated among contemporary Zarathushtis is evident with the construction of the Atash-Kadeh in Houston, the first of its kind, thanks to the generosity of Shernaz and Feroze Bhandara of the Zoroastrian association of Houston.

*O Divine Ahura Mazda grant us the bliss which is your reward to the adherents of the religion. Enlighten us with thy tongue, O Ahura Mazda, so that I may convince all human beings to put their faith in the religion.* (Gatha Ha 31.3)

Meheryar Rivetna

What was very significant was that we were graced by the presence of our Vada Dasturji, Khurshed Dastur, who had flown in from Udvada specially for this occasion. Another notable and very appealing sight was the attendance of sixteen [or more?] mobeds, from the very young to the elderly, with several from out of Texas. All the prayers were led by Dasturji Saheb with the mobeds reciting alongside him. Beautiful, it was!

Jehanbux Mehta

First of all, I join you all in congratulating my kid brother Feroze (he’s a lot younger than me) on the completion of the first freestanding Atash Kadeh in the Americas. ... Our father carried Feroze proudly and I often heard him talk to him in Gujarati, “Baba tu Motto Thai ne sun thasay. “What will you be when you grow up? A lawyer? A doctor? Or a dukandar (shopkeeper) like me?” ... After finishing school in Lahore, Feroze went to a college in Idaho in America. He had scant money and sold bibles door to door during the vacations and survived somehow until he received his inheritance.

Bapsi Sidhwa

Head priest Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor gave a resounding oration, welcoming all the members of the community that were present. He emphasized the value of the three-word motto of the Zarathushtis: Manashni, Gavashni, Kunashni (think good thoughts, speak good words, do good deeds) with which, each humble person can aim for perfection in this life, if one has the will to do so.

Jamshed Udwadia
Feroze in many past meetings has credited me for providing the inspiration for building the Atash Kadeh. This evening I would like to set the record straight. The vision of an Atash Kadeh came from a white paper written by Roshan and Rohinton Rivetna and presented at one of the AGMs (not exactly sure what date). It talked about anchors to make the community a cogent one, and to provide for a permanency to the new emigres on a new soil. One of these anchors was an Atash Kadeh. Many FEZANA presidents advanced this thought. NAMC and CIMNA published a white paper on what and Atash Kadeh required at a minimum.

Sarosh Collector

Seeing the main fire lit in the kebla of the Atash Kadeh gave me a revelation that took me by surprise. For the last 50 years, visiting the Agiaries and Atash Behrams of Mumbai for me was a necessary and important part of the whole trip. Back in America, there was always a “spiritual hole” that could not be filled properly, and one whose existence I had not even recognized. The Atash Kadeh fire suddenly made that hole visible and filled it for me. Now, my life in America is complete.

Jangoo Mistry

Our keynote speaker is Vada Dastur, Khurshed Kaikobad Dastur.

He was in Houston in 2016. It was at that time the City of Houston issued a proclamation and declared Sept 9, 2016 as Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor Day. Since then he has been active with the Udvada Utsav, two of them, which have been a resounding success. He was also appointed as the member of the National Minorities Commission by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Ever since Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor succeeded his late father in 2002 as the High Priest, he has evoked admiration from the priesthood and laity in his endeavors to encourage and protect Pak Iranshah Atashbehram, Udvada. He has set up a Zoroastrian Information Center in Udvava which is a permanent exhibit that imparts information about the religion, culture and way of life of the Parsis in India. Vada Dastur is an advocate of preserving our religious heritage, instilling strong values in a new generation, and providing our society with a needed source of openness and stability in a rapidly changing world. Vada Dadsturji’s talk is on the “Zarathushti Way of Life in Today’s World”.

Aban Rustomji
**The Jashan Layout** *(From an Explanation of Jashan Ceremony)*
By Yasmin Pavri

The layout for a Jashan includes all the elements of creation and their guardian Amesha Spentas (the seven divine attributes of Ahura Mazda):
- The floor or ground represents the earth and the Amesha Spenta Armaiti
- The fire represents the eternal flame, the spiritual fire, and the Amesha Spenta Asha
- The priest represents humans and Spenta Mainyu
- Milk represents animal life and the Amesha Spenta Vohu Mano
- The metal in the utensils represents the sky and the Amesha Spenta Khshathra
- Water represents a vital creation of the environment and the Amesha Spenta Haurvatat
- The flowers and fruits represent vegetation and the Amesha Spenta Amertat

**Haft Seen Table** — From a write up on Haft Seen
By Yasmin Pavri

Unfortunately, even though everyone seems to agree on this explanation, everyone knows and acknowledges that there are several essential symbols that must be on every haft sin table that don’t start with a “sin.” Notably, these symbols are Sham (candle), Ayeneh (mirror), Mahee (fish), and Tokhmeh Morgh (Eggs).

Most of us who attended the Vendidad ceremony for the first time, it certainly was a truly memorable and spiritually uplifting 6 hours of our lives. It also gave us time to reflect on the role this Atash Kadeh will play in keeping the flame of Zarathustra’s teachings burning in the hearts of Zarathushtis in North America for many generations to come.

Rustom Engineer

Excerpted from an article by Jasmine Mistry

The four-day long Atash Kadeh Inauguration and Navroze Event was one of the smoothest in the history of ZAH thanks to all the hard work and effort of numerous volunteers and the strong leadership of ZAH’s Entertainment Committee Members Arzin Italia and Lyla Daroga. Now, as Vada Dasturji said, it is up to Houston Zarathushtis to keep this holy fire in the Bhandara Atash Kadeh burning perpetually.

Jasmine Mistry

Excerpted from an article by Jimmy Kumana

Mr. Feroze Bhandara wished the audience of over 600 people a Happy Navroze and thanked the community for their support. He spoke about the inspiration to build an Atash Kadeh that would meet the spiritual needs of our second and third generations in North America. He explained that he and his wife, Shernaz, felt privileged to have built this fire temple. They want the Bhandara Atash Kadeh to be a safe, inclusive and welcoming spiritual place of worship for all in our community in the hopes that Non-Zoroastrian family members can share our faith and spiritual beliefs thus carrying the Zoroastrian faith onward to the next generation. He concluded by turning over ownership of the Bhandara Atash Kadeh building to the ZAH.

Jimmy Kumana
MEET THE COMMITTEES

ATASH KADEH COMMITTEE
Feroze Bhandara
Shernaz Bhandara
Khushrav Nariman—NAMC member
Persis Behramsha—ZAH Member
Nazneen Khumbatta—ZAH Member

ZAH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Lyla Daroga
Nozer Dungor
Khursheed Hormuzdi
Percy Katrak
Sweta Sethna
Khursheed Dastur—Secretary
Mitra Khumbatta—Treasurer

LIBRARY COMMITTEE
Nauzer Billimoria
Pearline Collector
Yezdi Engineer
Rustom Engineer
Noshir Khumbatta
Darayus Kolah
Sarosh Maneckshaw
Zubeen Mehta
Jangoo Mistry
Yasmin Pavri
Meheryar Rivetna
Aban Rustomji
Arnavaz Sethna

KEY MEMBERS ASSOCIATED
WITH THE ATASH KADEH
Cyrus Rivetna—Architect

PHOTOGRAPHERS
Percy Behramsha
Yezdi Engineer
Percy Katrak

VIDEO CAPTURING THE HISTORY OF THE ATASH
KADEH
Judi Carlison
Jimmy Kumana

MANASHNI TEAM
Khursheed Dastur
Aban Rustomji
Arnavaz Sethna
Editor

EDITORIAL BOARD
Jangoo Mistry
Yasmin Pavri
Aban Rustomji