

Volume 25: Issue 8

August 2012

## SUNDAY SCHOOL

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

 <u>TIME:</u>
 11:30 a.m.

 <u>DATE:</u>
 August 12, 2012

<u>Children's Session</u>: Children will attend the Muktad prayers from 11 to 11.30 followed by a short Sunday school session in the main hall (far corner). Vehishta will host this session. **There will not be a 'Let's Learn Gujarati Together' Session**.

<u>Middle Group</u>: This group is for the children in the middle school. Last year they learnt about the ceremonies, this year they will be learning the Kusti prayers and their meanings. If your child falls in this age group, do please bring him/her to the Sunday School.

Senior Group: Sarosh Collector conducts this session. See a write up by the Youth Vice President

## UPCOMING EVENTS

## Muktad prayers – 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> August and 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> August

7 am by Ervad Peshotan Unwalla

6 pm by Ervad Bomanshah Sanjana

10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> August – 11 am prayers by all Mobeds

Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> August – Navroze Humbandagi and Celebration. See attached flyer.

Please RSVP and pay online for this event. Please click on below link. Go to the events page and click on Navroze Function. See attached flyer for details

Humbandagi Prayers - 7:15 p.m.

Celebration - 8:00 p.m (starts promptly)

*Entertainment:* <u>Talent Show</u> - Showcase your talent on stage, by playing a musical instrument, singing popular songs, dancing, skits, magic show, etc. If you would like to participate, please send an email to Farrokh Firozgary at <u>firozgary@yahoo.com</u> or call 281-685-7245. Each participant has 3 minutes to perform. *Live Band and DJ Music* 

Generation 1 is celebrating 10 years of live performances this August. The all Zarthushti live band from Houston debuted at the Navroze function in August 2002 at the ZAH Center. They will be performing at our function after returning from a live performance at the North American Congress in New York on August 2, 2012. Come dance the night away to a combination of live band and DJ music on August 18th!

If you do not have access to the internet for RSVP, or have any questions or concerns please contact: Roshan Engineer: 281-545-3467 or <u>ryengineer@comcast.net</u>

If you prefer to pay by check, your checks/payments must be received by 8/12/2012, at: ZAH

Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> September – Indoor Sports Day Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> September – Fasli Mehrgan Gahambar Friday, Saturday -26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> October – Library Annual Gala and FEZANA Birthday Celebration

#### **MEETINGS**

GOLDEN GROUP	Fourth Sunday of each month. Interested? Please call Zarine Balsara at (281) 304-6611	
LIBRARY COMMITTEE	First Sunday of each month at 11:00 AM. Interested in helping? Or would like more information, please call Aban Rustomji at 281-493-1275 or e-mail her at <u>aban@coatingindustries.com</u>	

### REPORTS

#### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT (By Jehanbux Mehta)

- The highlight of the month was the delightful *natak* "Minocher na Karastan". The script by Kamalrukh Gandhi, who also starred in the play, with a cast that kept the audience tickled throughout, was well acclaimed by the 200+ audience. A review of the *natak* appears in this issue of *Manashni*.

The EC expresses their great appreciation of the terrific job carried out by Kamalrukh and her very able team for this fund raiser which netted ZAH a handsome sum of \$7,500. The organizers are also to be congratulated for the excellent arrangements made for this event. Involving the teens and the even younger ones as ushers was a wonderful idea. It grooms them for future social responsibilities.

- The date for eliciting views on the revised Operating Guidelines e-blasted to members a few weeks ago has been extended to August 31, 2012.

- The EC apologizes to members, particularly those who have donated towards the setting up of a new security system, who have expressed concern at the delay in its activation and would like to inform them that the Security System Team [SST] is working closely with Kersi Engineer who has taken upon himself the onerous responsibility of getting the system set up as originally envisaged. Kersi is confident that the technician appointed by him should be able to deliver the goods shortly. Significant progress has been made. A few kinks need to be ironed out to ensure that members do not have problems using the system.

We are thankful to Kersi for the time and effort that he is putting into this project and for raising a substantial amount to cover the cost thereof.

- The dreadful red raspberry ants have this year invaded several parts of Houston in hoards not seen last year, not sparing our Center also. Large battalions have been seen entering from the street into our building, heading, we are told, towards the electrical wiring for which they have a voracious appetite, for some uncanny reason. The agricultural department have raised their hands in frustration at eradicating them. To slow their advance, our honorary consultant in such matters, Rustom Setna, has been applying a rather costly spray which for health reasons should be applied sparingly. Rustom strongly recommends not to apply any other insecticide or spray or powder as that will likely lessen the effect of the spray that he has applied. Members are requested to observe Rustom's guidance and should they notice dead ants, to simply sweep them away. Also keep a lookout for these pests around your house.

#### Upcoming event Reminder

#### LIBRARY REPORT (By Jangoo Mistry)

On the day that ZAH will be celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of FEZANA in the evening, the Library Committee is planning a special event during the day, featuring two reputed scholars from outside Houston – Dr. Touraj Daryaee and Dr. Yuhan Vevaina. The event is planned for Saturday, October 27 from 10am to noon, and from 1pm to 3pm. The next day, Sunday October 28, will feature an informal roundtable discussion from 11am to 1pm. More details for the gala will be forthcoming as we approach the dates, but please mark your calendars now for what promises to be another enjoyable and memorable event

#### YOUTH GROUP REPORT (By Cyra Byramji – Youth Vice President)

The summer of 2012 is not over yet! In our last Sunday School Sarosh Uncle shared with us his presentation that he was asked to present at the New York Congress. After viewing his presentation he asked all of the youth

to give him constructive feedback and our thoughts about it. We all know that he will do a great job at the Congress.

On July 28<sup>th</sup>, all the youth got together and had a clean-up day at the center. We love our center, and work hard to keep it in the best condition it can possibly be in :)

Lastly, the youth will be going to Dallas for a lock-in during the Sunday School weekend in August. The Dallas group has got a lot of things planned for our youth and it will be a fun and exciting experience for us. We will also be participating with them in their Mukhtad prayers!!

Well that's all for now, but there will continue to be more exciting news from our energetic Youth Group each month!

#### SPORTS COMMITTEE REPORT (By Kayo Sidhwa)

## ZAH Table Tennis Tournament July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Our first annual TT Tournament held on Sunday, July 29<sup>th</sup> was another accomplishment and a testament to our community for supporting us in making our Sporting events a great success as always. As usual, the day started off a bit slower as we normally follow the ZST (Zarathusti Standard Time), but once the TT games started it was really heartening to see how eager our pre-teens and Youth were to play their rounds. All 4 age group participants went through some very tense initial rounds and battled to get to the Quarter-final stages. Some of our over 25s tried to collude with the "bookies" and sneak into the under 12 rounds.

There was a very strong indication of undercover talent scouts walking around the hallways treating this tournament as the trials to select the winners for the London Olympics 2012. Later on the Sports Committee found out that they were the fixers and took swift action to eliminate any possibility of "Table Fixing".

By 1 pm lunch had come in and everyone gorged on the famous "Cheena Sandwich" from Bellaire as well as some chips to go with them to stop their "growling tummies". Once we finished lunch we got into the knock out round where one mistake would cost their place in the semi-finals and eventually the finals. There was fierce competition amongst all ages and sounds like "Arre Saalo Ball Bekaar chhe" and "Aare Racket Kharaab Chhe" were heard but slowly and steadily the winners inched towards the coveted crown. Tea and brownies intervened to the delight of "some bored spectators" and the games resumed shortly after that. Some of the semi-final and final matches went the distance and were quite intense and exciting to watch. The matches completed around 6.50 pm with the finals of the Open Mixed doubles which seemed more like a "Family Feud" episode.

Some spectators had already started drifting towards the kitchen before the final match ended as the aroma of Chinese food was wafting through the hallways of ZAH. As soon as the last match ended a very scrumptious dinner was served (catered by Alings) and all enjoyed the delicious meal while the prizes were being given away and the winners were vociferously cheered. Some great pictures have been posted on our ZAH web site under Photo Gallery titled ZAH TT 2012.

Last but not the least, we express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to all our volunteers for their unstinted support and cooperation shown and wish to see more attendees at our next event, the Indoor Sports Day on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. Your ZAH Sports Committee welcomes any feedback including any new ideas at zahsportscommittee@gmail.com

Age Group	Event	Winner	Runners-Up	Joint Third Place
Under 12	Mixed Singles	Yazad Sidhwa	Aliya Byramji	Nerius & Natalya Mehta
	Mixed	Yazad Sidhwa &	Aliya Byramji &	Nerius & Natalya Mehta AND Katie
	Doubles	Arshan Aga	Cyrus Mistry	Master & Parinaz Aga
Under 25	Mixed Singles	Farzad Sunavala	Rustom Irani	Khubyar Behramsha AND Zubin Colah
	Mixed	Natalya Haveliwala &	Zubin Colah &	Shayan Bhathena & Kevin
	Doubles	Khubyar Behramsha	Kyrus Buchia	Haveliwala AND Ziba Colah &
				Rustom Irani
Under 50	Men's Singles	Kurush Aga	Kaizad Sunavala	Rohinton Sarkari AND Kayo
				Sidhwa
	Men's	Kurush Aga & Yazdi	Barjor Dastur &	Noozar Boomla & Kaizad Sunavala
	Doubles	Mistry	Kayo Sidhwa	AND Rohinton Sarkari and Percy

#### Prize winners:

				Master
	Ladies Singles	Farzana Sidhwa	Rubina Byramji	
Over 50	Men's Singles	Percy Behramsha	Rustom Khosravian	Percy Katrak AND Faroakh Rajkot
	Men's Doubles	Rustom Khosravian & Faroakh Rajkot	Percy Behramsha & Sheroy Haveliwala	Percy Katrak & Noshir Bhathena
	Ladies Singles	Avan Bhathena	Katie Irani	Persis Colah
Open	Mixed Doubles	Farzana & Kayo Sidhwa	Percy & Tanaya Behramsha	Percy Katrak & Katie Irani AND Natalya & Sheroy Haveliwala

## MISCELLANEOUS

#### THE NATAK - MINOCHER NA KARASTAN

Review by: Jehanbux R. Mehta

What a rascal Minocher turned out to be! But a likeable one at that! The natak written by our versatile Kamalrukh Gandhi, who also starred in it, exploited the foibles of the villain-hero, played aptly by Percy Katrak who not only had the gall of cheating his boss, the actual owner of the house – acted so naturally by Kayo Sidhwa in his debut on stage - by inappropriately converting it into a guest house, but also deceiving guest Shernaz Batliwala [Shernaz Boomla] into having an amorous relationship with him in the belief that he was the proprietor.

The well written plot kept the audience of 200+ wondering how Minocher would extricate himself from one selfcreated problem to another. Thanks to the chicanery of the father-son duo of Sarosh Collector in his ancient shorts and solar hat and Percy Master with his nasal accent and devious mind, Minocher managed to survive the many rounds, and triumphed in the end but sans Ms Batliwala. Each actor played out his/her role beautifully. Sri Devi [Kamalrukh], the likeable babbling house-maid to the brash youngsters [Kevin Haveliwala & Noozar Boomla] all lent very well to the script and were hilarious to watch. And, how the actors [the males, that is] drooled over alluring Anita Batliwala, played by Farzana Sidhwa, every time she appeared on stage, and otherwise too! A cameo appearance by Peshotan Unwalla and Ronnie Sarkari brought forth loud applause from the audience.

Equally deserving the plaudits are those who performed superbly behind the scene. The set design by Lyla Daroga, Aderbad Tamboli and Aspi Colah, the latter two also instrumental in the actual construction of the stage setting, was excellent. Also the children, Friyana and Yazad Sidhwa, Ashtad Boomla, Vispi Katrak, Freya and Zal Daroga who painted the beautiful set wall. The constant wash of waves outside the bay window with bathers and surfers to boot, created a life-like setting. As always, Khushrav Nariman was the sound director with Arna Sethna, Khursheed Dastur and Lyla the backstage crew.

Well done, Kamalrukh, for delighting us with your natak which brought in a sum of \$7,500 net into ZAH's coffers and bravo to all of you named above for taking so much time away from your other activities in the interest of ZAH. I yam liking yall of this vary mach.

Also included in the entrance fee was a chicken roll and chips served during the interval and chicken curry rice, veg stew and coffee cream cake prepared by Naushad and Rustom. Soft drinks were available gratis throughout.

What more could one have asked for!

#### 1600 MILES TO NEW YORK - GENERATION 1 PERFORMS AT NAZC2012

(Aspi Colah reporting from New York)

Generation 1...Our awesome home town all Zoro Band from Houston, Texas did it again! After an incredibly successful performance at our NAZC2010 in Houston, Texas our apex organization FEZANA decided to invite Generation 1 for their 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration and Banquet which was going to be hosted at the 2012 North American Zoroastrian Congress on Aug 2<sup>nd</sup> in New York.

It was so wonderful to see the Band, the Music and the Community come together performing the entire

evening after dinner. The Band started practicing in earnest with a massive list of songs, some nostalgic, some classics and some recent and new were created and every affordable spare moment was used to perfect an already long repertoire of music. Practice continued into the wee hours of the morning with a million cups of CHAI consumed over the six odd months of practice.

The logistical nightmare of how to get the Band and the Instruments to New York was discussed, gas expenses for 1600 miles trip (one way), hotel & motel stay, meals & snacks for the trip, rental equipment in NY, and other miscellaneous expenses. FEZANA and our wonderful ZAH community stepped in to make up for the difference with their generosity...

The Band arrived in New York to an amazing reception. There was so much anticipation and energy around "THEY ARE COMING...THE ALL ZORO BAND FROM TEXAS IS COMING" doing the time, going the distance, coming to entertain us, the crowd was all fired up! With a brief sound check and practice session and after the FEZANA ceremony, and dinner the band was announced by FEZANA president Mr Bomi Patel... a big roar went up.

Everyone was on the dance floor, seemed like all those that were attending. Sound was done by the same AV team that does sound at the Madison Square Gardens for rock concerts and other performances and the Band sounded spectacular. The Band played non-stop for over 2 hours, no breaks. It was out of this world, and the crowd kept dancing till we were politely told that time was up and they needed the ballroom to convert it for the event next morning.

What an incredible event and what a fan base, 40 delegates from the ZAH...love you guys for your support and strength. Generation 1 is available and looks forward to perform at future Z events and Associations

Many Many thanks to all our supporters and fans and the community for all the love and best wishes

#### **AWARDS & ACCOLADES**

Along with honorees Barbara Bush and Sandra Day O'Connor, Nina Godiwalla will be inaugurated into the Texas Women's Hall of Fame. Governor Rick Perry will be holding an awards ceremony brunch on Fri. Oct. 12 outside of Dallas to celebrate.

Heartiest Congratulations to Nina Godiwalla from MANASHNI its readers

#### **MEANING OF MUKTAD** (excerpted from an article by Dr. Ramiyar Karanjia)

Muktad are the 10 days starting from Roj Ashtad of Mah Spandarmad and ending on Vahishtoisht Gatha, when, according to Zoroastrian tradition, all Fravashis and souls collectively descend every year to their houses in particular and into the world in general. They remain wherever there is purity, prayers and goodness. The Muktad days are also known **Farvardegan**, which means "days of remembering the Fravashis." They are considered more precious than other days of the year.

**Fravashi and Ravan** are two of the three spiritual immortal components of a human being. Every creation – spiritual or material – has a Fravashi. Fravashis helped Ahura Mazda in the process of creation and also help Him in upholding creations. They help waters to flow, plants to grow, clouds to go where needed and the sun, moon and planets to go around in their orbits. They uphold the sky and earth. **ARDAFRAVASH** is the **c**ollective of Fravashis of all righteous departed ones.

**Souls (Ravan)** are the immortal and spiritual constituents of men. They have to bear the rewards or recompense in the spiritual world on the basis of their life's actions.

Muktad is to be a joyous and festive occasion to welcome and be hospitable to the Fravashis. The Muktad celebrations have a twofold significance. Firstly the festival is to offer reverence and thank all the Fravashis collectively as they help us in many ways. Secondly these days are to individually remember the souls and the Fravashis of our own dear departed ones.

Whenever the Muktad are properly celebrated, the souls and Fravashis are happy, they bless the world with abundance and comforts of life. They keep the world away from grievous calamities and shower blessings of health, strength and happiness.

The vase in which flowers are kept during the Muktād is called a **Behrā**. It is a Persian word and refers to the sharing aspect (Pers. **ham-behreh**) of these 10 day celebrations. This word reminds us that in the past Muktad celebration was a family affair. Water and flowers in the vase are representatives of Khordad and Amardad

Ameshaspands. They are indicative of Perfection and Immortality of the soul. Water, plant and Fravashis are remembered together at several places in the Avesta, like Yasna 26 and Farvardin Yasht, 23.

#### **Duration of Muktad:**

The texts indicates a ten day period for the Muktad (*dasa pairi khsafnao* Farvardin Yasht XIII; Pahlavi Vd.VIII.22) "ten Farvardegan days" (Anklesaria, 1949, p. 201.) 18 days Muktad is also celebrated and the earliest evidence of this comes from 15<sup>th</sup> century ACE.

#### During the 10 days of Muktad, some days have following significance:

1. Roj Marespand is known as Din Beh Mino Marespand. On this day the miracles of prophet Zarathushtra were manifest, Avesta was shown on that day and four Ameshaspands came to the court of King Gushtasp.

2. On Gatha Vahishtoisht, Patet Pashemani is to be recited to atone for mistakes committed during the year. Hence this day came to be known as 'Pateti.'

3. Five Gatha days belong to Hamaspathmaedhem Gahambar. On any one of the five Gatha days, preferably on Ahunavad Gatha, Gahambar rituals have to be performed.

#### **Customs for Muktad**

Since ancient times, certain customs have been followed during Muktad days. It is interesting to understand their rationale.

1) Not to cut hair and nails: This is done, so as not to create 'naso' and impurity, especially at times when the Fravashis and souls are visiting the house. Naso has a stench and is dead matter.

2) To avoid stitching clothes: This tradition indicates that one was expected to devote time to prayers and remembering the departed ones. They should not engage themselves in any activity other than doing their duty and performing meritorious deeds, and keep away from all avoidable chores.

3) To have a fire in the house with fragrance on it, perform rituals and recite Avesta: The Fravashis and souls enjoy the atmosphere where there is light, fragrance and where prayers are recited.

#### Purpose of Muktad

In many religious tradition the souls of the departed ones descend on the earth once a year. The Hindus refer to these days as Shradh, and the Christians as Lent. According to Zoroastrian tradition the Fravashis descend to clean the world of its impurities at the end of each year. Unlike in other traditions, we remember not just the departed ones during these days, but all Fravashis in Nature.

So during Muktad one needs to devote time to remembrance of Fravashis and do works of charity in their name. Fravashis come whenever they are invited and during the days of Muktad the Fravashis collectively come down irrespective of whether they are invited or not. When they come to the house they are to be remembered and worshipped. If they are satisfied, they give blessings of prosperity and happiness.

#### Preparation for Muktad:

In the past when Muktad was ideally celebrated in the house, the House or at least the room where the prayer were to be done was specially cleaned and white-washed. Provisions and fuel was stored to last at least for ten days so that one did not have to go out to buy during these days.

People in the house, especially the women, who were directly involved with the preparations took a Nahan. People, as far as possible did not go out of the house, as guests in the form of souls and Fravashis were in the house, and it is not right to leave them and go. Often night long vigil was kept by people.

In present times, preparations may be made in a room/corner of the house during the Muktad days to welcome the Fravahis and souls in the house. A room or a corner can be kept aside, where a table – preferably metal and stone is kept on which a metallic Vase (or an unused behru or karasya) can be placed and long stemmed flowers kept in it. Water, preferably from a well is used to fill the vase. Water in the vase is changed daily and the flowers once every few days. This special corner of the house is dedicated to purity, light and chanting of the Avesta. As many prayers as possible should be done at home, preferably by oneself.

Remembering the departed ones fortifies our belief in the teachings of immortality of the soul and the presence of a divine world.

Muktad is a time of REPAYING the debt of gratitude to our ancestors, those whom we know and the countless others whom we don't know, but without whom, life would not have been possible. These days also fortify our MEMORY of the past and kindle HOPE for the future.

The departed ones should be remembered by name. People in the house may devote some time to a family Hambandagi or reciting small prayers.

Muktad are the days of enhancing communication between the physical and spiritual worlds. The needs of humans beings and divine beings is mutually fulfilled – We receive blessings of health, happiness and peace, and the divine beings feel happy on account of our hospitality, prayers and remembrance. The blessings of the Fravashis can give happiness and add meaning to our lives.

#### BIRTH

A baby girl **Saphnaa** is born to Kaneeza and Zubin Sanjana in Simi Valley, California on 7th July 2012, weighing 6 lbs and 11 oz. Delnaz and Ramin are her proud sister and brother.Saphnaa is the seventh grand-child of Freny and Bahmanshah Sanjana.

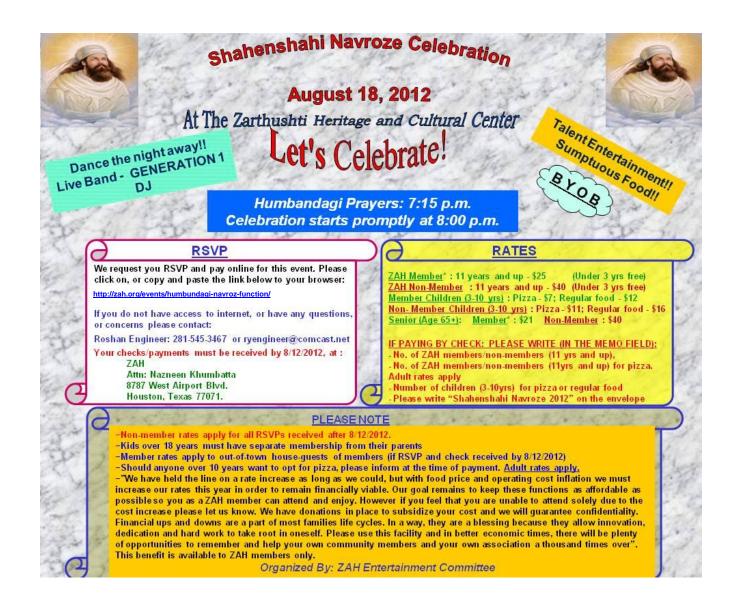
A baby girl **Ava Pundole** was born to Zarina and Faraidoon Pundole on Friday, 20th July 2012.

#### Heartiest Congratulations to the families from MANASHNI and its readers

#### OBITUARY

Chesley's Dad : Kamal Choudhury passed away in Bombay on 27<sup>th</sup> July at 7:00 AM in the morning. He is survived by his wife Marie Celine Choudhury, Son Chesley Choudhury and daughter Carioca Choudhury Mhowdawalla. He will be remembered through his Grand Children, Christoph Mhowdawalla, Chloe Choudhury and Tayte Choudhury.

#### Heartfelt condolences to the Choudhury family from MANASHNI and its readers



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