



manashni

Volume 34 Issue 03 - March 2020

MANASHNI SPONSORED BY

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SUNDAY SCHOOL

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

TIME: Different timings for each group

DATE: March 8, 2020

Children's Session

The Sunday School session starts at
10.30 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.

Middle Group: The Sunday School session at **10.30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**



Youth Group:



MANASHNI WISHES ALL ITS READERS NOROUZ PIRUZI/ JAMSHEDI NAVROZE MUBARAK.

Along with the rest of the world our ZAH Community is also impacted by the covid-19 pandemic. Please do not fall prey to "i-d-i-o-t" (Internet Derived Information Obstructing Treatment.) CDC.gov will be your best source.

As advised by our Executive Committee, if you need any assistance, please contact Nozer Dungor (nozerd@hotmail.com) or Khursheed Dastur (kbdastur@yahoo.com)

Our Youth are standing by ready to help. Contact Cyrus Mistry (cyrusmistry123@gmail.com) or Zara Italia (italia.zara@yahoo.com)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, Mar 21, 2020 – CANCELLED
Jamshedi Nauroz Hambandagi/Function

Sunday, Apr 12, 2020 – ZAH Carnival – Postponed to September

Sunday, May 31, 2020 – Maidhyrem Gahambar

Friday, July 24 to 26 – Z-Camp 2020

Middle Group: Once again, through modern technology, the Chiniwalla kids joined the Middle Group Session from Scotland, and, through Darius Dastur's I-Pad, were also able to see presentation of the Haft Seen Table by Vehishta Kaikobad & Benafsha Mondegarian in the little kids' room.



ZAH EXECUTIVE MEMBERS 2020

Dungor, Nozer – Chairman
Gandhi, Kamalrukh
Hormuzdi, Khursheed
Katrak, Percy
Khumbatta, Kershaw
Dastur, Khursheed - Secretary
Billimoria, Farokh – Treasurer

YOUTH GROUP OFFICERS 2018 - 2019

Mistry, Cyrus – President
Hormuzdi, Dina – Vice President
Italia, Zara – Treasurer
Mehta, Natalya – Secretary
Bastani, Niousha – Historian
Sarkari, Rukhshana – Web Master

MIDDLE GROUP OFFICERS 2018 – 2019

Kanga, Neville – President
Dungor, Natasha – Vice President
Dastur, Mahtab – Secretary
Kanga, Natasha – Treasurer
Dastur, Darius – Historian

OUR ERVADS (PRIESTS)

Boomla, Noozar
Buchia, Kyrus
Dastur, Barjor
Dastur, Darius
Desai, Adi
Desai, Farokh
Firozgary, Bahrom
Gonda, Pervez
Kanga, Neville
Katrak, Rayomand
Katrak, Vispi P.
Khumbatta, Noshir
Kotwal, Zubin
Masani, Dara
Nariman, Khushrav
Nariman, Viraf
Pavri, Shapur
Rashidi, Farhood
Sanjana, Bahmanshah
Sanjana, Kurush
Sidhwa, Kayomarz
Sidhwa, Maneck
Sidhwa, Yazad
Unwalla, Peshotan
Vimadalal, Freyaan

Youth Group:

Apart from learning about Zoroastrianism, the Middle Group takes on other voluntary projects, like Blood Drive and Food Drive.

On the topic of Zoroastrian Prayers, here is a review by Aban Rustomji on *Mazda – Yasna My Little Prayer Book*.

PRAY OFTEN – PRAY CORRECT



Dr. Cyrus Poonawalla hopes the young and old are encouraged to pray more often and pray correct. 'MAZDA – YASNA' a little prayer book which comprises some of the fundamental, daily prayers in Roman script with English translation, has been re-published by Dr. Cyrus Poonawalla, in loving memory of his dear wife, Late Villoo Cyrus Poonawalla, for FREE distribution within the worldwide Zoroastrian community. We at ZAH received 100 copies, air billed. These

have been distributed to all three Sunday school classes and the Bhandara Atash Kadeh.

This will be of tremendous importance to those in our community who are unable to read the Gujarati script – especially young children and the youth – as it will encourage them to attempt reciting the Zoroastrian prayers with true understanding and true faith

This – 'My Little Prayer Book' – could be a personal possession one is able to carry everywhere. ZAH salutes Dr. Cyrus Poonawalla for his vision and benevolence.

Further on the topic of Prayers, following is excerpted from *Homage Unto Ahura Mazda* by Dastur Dr. M. N. Dhalla:

Prayer transforms my inner life, Ahura Mazda. It creates me anew. I rise from my prayer refreshed and strong, active in body and agile of mind, enlivened of heart and quickened in spirit. I rise a better man with a radiant countenance, purified thought, tranquil mind, clear heart and buoyant spirit. I pass into religious exaltation.

Let me not pray amiss and let me not say my prayer perfunctorily. I cannot pray amid the distractions of my mind. Help me to control my mind and bring it back from aimless wanderings and recall it in thy presence and concentrate on thee. Give me strength to pray with a single and an undivided mind.

Incline thy ear unto me, Ahura Mazda, when I pray. Feeble are my words, but they rise spontaneously from my heart. I will pray with devotion swelling up from my heart to my lips. My lips will speak the language of my heart and express with my tongue what is hidden in my heart. My heart and soul go out to thee in prayer.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

CATEGORY AND RATES

Patron Family Membership	\$500
Patron Single Membership	\$250
Patron Senior Family M'brshp	\$250
Patron Senior Single M'brshp	\$125
Family Membership	\$275
Family Senior Membership	\$ 65
Associate Membership	\$275
Single Membership	\$135
Single M'ber Head of Hshold	\$150
Single Senior Membership	\$ 40
Student Membership	\$ 25

Manashni Surcharge \$ 15
For Printed/Mailed copies

Definition of Categories

Family Member

Parents and their children under 18

Family Senior Member

One spouse is over the age of 65

Single Member

Unmarried individual over age 18

Single Senior Member

Individual over the age of 65

Single Member Head of Household

Single parent with children under 18

PLEASE MAKE YOUR CHECK

PAYABLE TO: ZAH

AND MAIL TO:

ZAH Treasurer
8787 W Airport Blvd.
Houston, TX 77071

Or pay online:

<http://zah.org/become-a-member/>

Membership Dues

Have you paid your Membership Dues yet? 2019 ZAH Membership ended on December 31, 2019. Exciting things are happening at the ZAH. Preparations are in progress for the XVIII North American Zoroastrian Congress from December 29, 2020 to January 1, 2021.

Select the amount from the list of categories given in the column on the left, make out a check payable to ZAH, pay your annual membership as indicated and be a part of this vibrant community.

REPORTS

Atash Kadeh February 2020 News

By Persis Behramsha

We continue our tradition of Behram Roj Jashans in 2020. This March, we completed a full year of uninterrupted, Sponsored Behram Roj Jashans. This is only possible because of our wonderful sponsors who support the Atash Kadeh and enable this tradition to continue.

Sponsors for February 2020 were Sarosh, Pearline & Kian Collector, Rayomond, Sarah, Sarosh & AshaLynnea Collector and Dina, Ian & Natalia Kuecker.

Please note that requests for any prayers at the Atash Kadeh, must be made through the Atash Kadeh Committee. You may request either of the two Mobeds who serve the Atash Kadeh, however, for scheduling and accounting reasons, the committee needs to be informed promptly.

Special thanks to Aban Chhor for helping with the February Behram Roj Jashan.

Thank you to Rustom Challa for continually monitoring the Atash Kadeh and promptly addressing and resolving issues.

Thank you, Yezdi Engineer, for your handy work through the year.

Some members of the Youth Group took time after Sunday School to volunteer to clean the Atash Kadeh. Thank you to Roshni Chikhliwala, Dina Hormuzdi, Niousha Irani, Zal Italia, Cyrus Mistry and Rukshana Sarkari for your service, and to Tanaaz and Edul Chikhliwala for assisting the youth with this.

We are looking for two Parab Sponsors as follows:

Avan Mahino Avan Roj on Monday March 23, 2020 (Daar Ni Pori time !!!)

Adar Mahino Adar Roj on Tuesday April 21, 2020 (Atash Nu Parab)

The Atash Kadeh well wishers continue to donate Sukhar, Tachho, Loban, Candles and supplies for which we are extremely grateful.

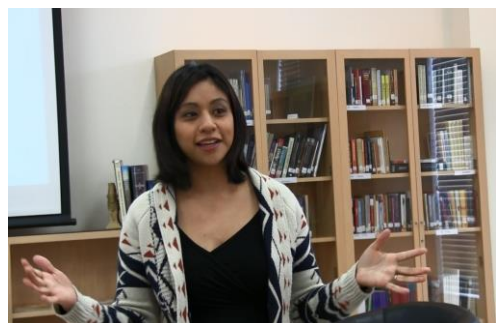
February Behram Roj Jashan



Aban kicking off the Interview Sessions



Orientation Trainer from Rice University



Oral History Interview of Late Peshotan Bhadha



We are also very thankful to all those that donate their time for cleaning and pitching in with anything that needs attention.

March 2020 will bring about the First Year Anniversary of the Atash Kadeh and all of us are very excited to celebrate this landmark with a Grand Jashan at the Atash Kadeh.

DUE TO CORONA VIRUS SITUATION THE GRAND JASHAN WILL BE LIVE STREAMED ON MARCH 21, 2020 AT 11:00 A.M. HERE IS THE LINK TO VIEW ONLINE

<https://www.twitch.tv/reachzah>

Library Committee Report

By Jangoo Mistry

Oral History Rejuvenated

Back in 2014, the ZAH Library launched the ambitious Oral History Project to record and preserve the rich backgrounds and experiences of our fellow Zoroastrians in Houston. A little over 30 seniors were interviewed, sharing their life experiences and recollections of their lives dating back to early years in their homeland, and as immigrants to the U.S.

Every interview has been recorded and cataloged into the new digital Zoroastrian Archive at Rice University in Houston. This means that anyone, anywhere in the world, can now access these Zoroastrian oral histories either as an audio recording or as a written transcript.

On February 5, 2016, the ZAH Library presented a fascinating session that showcased a few of these histories. Since then, the value of these recorded stories have proved invaluable and validated the importance of this project. There are innumerable oral history projects all over the world that have been undertaken whenever there is a need to preserve something valuable before memories fade and life stories are lost forever. We have made just a modest beginning. ***We feel that now is the right time to expand the project to include many more community members*** who have as yet not had the opportunity to share their unique experiences of early lives before and after they migrated to the U.S.

We are fervently asking for those of you who have not yet recorded their oral histories to volunteer for a recording. It will not be a big demand on your time, and we will try our best to make it as convenient as possible for you. We are also looking for volunteers to conduct and record the interviews. Please contact me, Jangoo Mistry (jbmistry@gmail.com) or Arnavaz Sethna (ahsethna@yahoo.com) if you are ready to record your story in the coming months, or if you are available to help record oral histories of one or more of our members.

A sample Oral History report is on Page 9.

Meheryar Rivetna



A House Divided

"A house divided...against itself...cannot stand". In a lengthy article published in the latest issue of The FEZANA Journal (Winter2019), Meheryar Rivetna traces the transformation of our religion through the centuries, and the influence of Western scholars on Zoroastrian thought, leading to two schools of thought: "liberal" and "conservative" practitioners and beliefs.

Meheryar Rivetna is an active member of the ZAH Library and FIRES Committees. His scholarly paper is referenced elsewhere in this issue of Manashni. You are urged to read the entire article for a very rewarding and enlightening experience. **(See page 9 and follow the link)**

Additionally Meheryar is invited to give a talk on Zoroastrianism at Covenant Church on Sunday, April 19, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. His talk is titled: "Zarathustra: A Divine Messenger and His Teachings". **All are invited to attend.** (Covenant (Baptist) church at 4949 Caroline St., Houston, TX 77004)

Pallan Ichaporia



Remembering Dr. Pallan Ichaporia

Dr. Pallan Rustomji Ichaporia, 80, of Oklahoma City, passed away on Saturday, February 22, 2020. Raised in Karachi, Pakistan, he moved his family to the United States in 1979, eventually working in New York, the Philadelphia area, and presenting research around the globe. An Avestan scholar of the Zoroastrian religion, he co-authored several publications, most notably "The Heritage of Zarathushtra" and "The Pahlavi Yasna of the Gāthās and Yasna Haptanhāiti."

Dr. Ichaporia, Ph.D., MBA, served as chair of the FZANA's Research and Preservation Committee and was the co-founder of the Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism (SSZ). He has left an invaluable legacy of research on Avestan and Gathic texts. His rich library of books has been donated to our FIRES collection where his legacy lives on with his name emblazoned for posterity in each book.

Youth Group Report

By: Zara Italia

Having fun while raising money



In January, 2020, our youth group with the help of Mr. and Mrs. Chikhliwala cleaned the Atash Kadeh, and held several practices each week to practice for the February Fundraiser.

In February, our youth group with the help of several youth and middle group students and parents hosted a Youth Fundraiser on Saturday, February 15th, 2020. We had about 216 guests signed up for the event, and we raised \$10,070.04 in net profits. The entertainment, music, food, raffle prizes and bingo were very well organized and we received ONLY positive feedback from all who attended the event. Our young artists donated several beautiful pieces of art that were auctioned along with some other items, such as food and beverages, donated by ZAH members, and we raised \$1,081.00 at the silent auction. We recognized all our donors, volunteers, and performers by publishing their names in an event



Golden Group at Olive Garden



So what did you order?



program that was placed at each table, and by e-blasting a "Thank You Note" to our community after the event. A huge thank you to all the students, parents, and volunteers that helped us coordinate this event. This wouldn't have been possible without them. All cash and checks were handed over to Mr. Billimoria and Ms. Mitra Khumbatta on February, 25th along with an Income and Expense Statement.

Our March Lunches of Love event was cancelled as a lot of our youth group members were out on Spring Break. If we have time, we will add another volunteer activity at ZAH before the end of the month.

Thank you, Cyrus, for the help, with the write up!

GOLDEN GROUP GOES ITALIA

By Jehanbux Mehta

What a wonderful tour of Italy it was for the Golden Group on Saturday, February 29. From the rolling hills of Tuscany and their fruity wines, to the ancient town of Parma for the cheese of cheeses and the inimitable flavor of prosciutto, to the shores of Napoli for the famed zuppa di pesce, and not to forget the quaint town of Moderna – Pavarotti's birth place – for balsamic vinegar for drizzling over salads.

Mamma mia, what a moveable feast! Wish we could have taken in all that, but we are not getting younger and appetites have shrunk. Nevertheless most of us who had lunch at Olive Garden that afternoon did full justice to the vast menu on display. The few others were quite satisfied with the restaurant's popular unlimited soup, salad and breadsticks for an unbeatable price.

The pseudo-italianos among us who had brushed up on the lingua were met with gapes and starry eyes when they conveyed their selections to the servers. An Italian ristorante and no one - si, nessuno – could understand what we were talking about. Just as well, as none of us could either. No wonder it took minutes on end for the servers to take the oft changing orders of the 28 of us who were present and also when presenting the bills. It was for the team of ever ready Helping Hands to come to the rescue.

To test the culinary knowledge of the members, a quiz on Italian cuisine was passed around. Missing was the question "how many varieties of pasta are there?" Easy! Only 200 plus, though the natives claim to have at least 350.

Lovely keepsake prizes donated by Zenobia and Mehelli Behrana in absentia were awarded to the lucky winners. Thank you Z & M.

To round off the lunch, there must be some *mitthoo mohnu* and for that we need to thank Shahnaz Sidhwa for sending us some naan-khatais.

Well satiated Group



Dr. Dolly Dastoor



We say grazie to Avan Bhathena for capturing the moments through the beautiful photographs taken by her. "Memories are made of these" as our beloved Italian friend, Dean Martin, would have reminded us. And, last, but certainly not the least, a very big thank you to our hard working team of Helping Hands for making this event possible and successful.

I hate to say *arrivederci*. I'd rather end on the happy and promising note *essere vederti pronto*.

If You Forget Is It Alzheimer's Disease? - Talk by Dr. Dolly Dastoor
Review by: Yasmin Pavri

When I was asked to write about Dr. Dastoor's talk, which took place over a month ago (February 9, 2020), of course I couldn't remember enough of it to fill an article. I listened to the video tape (see link below) it again and zeroed in on the most important bullet point in the hour-long talk: red wine is good for the brain. So I immediately poured myself a glass to help me fight any memory loss between listening to the talk and writing about it.

Dr. Dastoor is an expert on dementia: what causes it and what we can do to prevent it. She started the talk with general information on how the brain works and how it makes and stores memories. A very encouraging statement was: "Aging is inevitable, memory loss is not".

To preserve memory, good life style choices such as exercise, diet, stress reduction and social interaction are important. Dr. Dastoor outlined the warning signs of dementia, and the cruel progression of the disease from mild to moderate to extreme. She talked about ways for caregivers to cope with the aggressive behaviors exhibited by patients as they go through various stages. The most ominous takeaway from the talk were the exponentially increasing prevalence of dementia globally: 20 million in the year 2000 to 46.8 million in 2015 and expected to be 131.5 million by 2050. We are already short of facilities and personnel so how are we going to care for these increased cases?

I encourage you to listen to the full talk. It is very interesting, and has information that we all can use. So, pour yourself a glass of red wine and click on this link.

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/c9177n4g1m2sagf/AADaz9QjnERviD-TtMXX8aXwa?dl=0>

congress2000legacy – 2019 awards



NATALYA MEHTA
ZAH LEGACY AWARD

I plan to be a Biochemistry Major. I am not sure what college I will be attending, but I am very excited to experience college and further expand my education.



ROXANNA IRANI
ZAH LEGACY AWARD
(Shared with Anosh Irani)

I have not yet decided what university I will be attending next year. I will be studying business with a focus in management sciences.



ANOSH IRANI
ZAH LEGACY AWARD
(Shared with Roxanna Irani)

I plan attending college once I have finished high school. The college I am going to attend is University of Texas at Dallas. My major is going to be Computer Science.



CYRUS MISTRY
THE CYRUS R DESAI AWARD

I will graduate with honors from Stephen F. Austin (SFA) High School in May 2020, and two distinguished endorsements - Public Services Health Sciences Pathway, and STEM Math Pathway.

I will attend the University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) and major in Biology with a Pre-Med Concentration.



DINA HORMUZDI
NALI & DANESH DESAI LEGACY AWARD

I will be studying business at the University of Texas at Austin starting in the fall. Thank you to the Zoroastrian community for always inspiring me to strive for greatness.

Illustration of an Oral History

A narration of early childhood experiences of Peshotan Bhadha
(as narrated at the ZAH Library event on February 5, 2016),
and recorded in full on the Oral History Archive

Peshotan Bhadha's History



My wife Anoo and I interviewed my father-in-law, Peshotan Bhadha, in May of 2014, just less than 6 months before he passed away. He was 97 years old.

Here's a snapshot of his recorded oral history.

Peshotan was born in Udvada, which is a holy place for Zoroastrians. His father, like Peshotan, was also a priest. But unfortunately, Peshotan never got to know his father, because he died in the 1917 plague when Peshotan was only 6 months

old. Peshotan's mother was a very hard-working lady, and she lived in a community place for widows.

So Peshotan lived in Udvada until he was 8 years old. There was no High School in Udvada, so boys could go to school only till the 3rd or 4th grade. Life was school in the morning and learning Navar-Martab prayers in the evening till 7 pm. Most boys in Udvada at that time became priests and earned their living that way. Not a very bright future. But thanks to his elder brother who pushed to have him educated, Peshotan was taken to Bombay and put in an orphanage.

Life in the orphanage was hard. Morning breakfast every single day consisted of a cup of tea and one banana. He was so sick of bananas that he swore he would never touch a banana after he left the orphanage, and he kept his word till the day he died. Meals were mostly vegetables or cereals. Each room had a line of 50 or so beds, and at bath time, all the boys would take off their clothes, and stand in a line to enter the long line of open showers. One man would sit at the top and open all the showers at the same time.



There were no individual controls, and the man would shut the water off for everyone while they all applied soap. Then the water comes on and everyone had to finish up.

Anyway, upon graduation from high school, the orphanage would summon a tailor and have him stitch one new pair of clothes, and then you would be turned out into the world with nothing but the clothes on your back to fend for yourself.

I won't go into the rest of Peshotan's life, but you can listen to his whole history on the web site. How he managed to get 2 engineering degrees, how he found a job with one of the largest manufacturing companies, Godrej; started as a foreman there, and worked hard to rise to Plant Manager where he had several hundred people reporting to him, and where he worked for 48 years.

But even after he became a hotshot at a large firm, he never forgot his friends at the orphanage. You see, a lot of them had become food servers, or what we call bawarchis. So in every Navjote or wedding, he would disappear for a half hour or so to go back to the kitchens, and meet with his friends, and give them cash in envelopes.

As I was preparing this talk, I was struck by how different my history is from his. Like many of you, I came to this country with exactly \$10 in my pocket, and went through experiences that seemed to come straight out of a Hollywood movie. My oral history is also recorded on Rice University's web site.

For Peshotan though, we're really glad that we were able to get him to record his life just before he passed away. My grandchildren, who are Peshotan's great-grandchildren, will someday learn about their ancestors and feel grateful, and feel a sense of pride. But what is amazing is that even though he was my father-in-law for 43 years, and even though he lived with us for the last 15 years, there were things in his early days that we did not know about. Things that were revealed to us only when we sat down to do the recording for this oral history project.

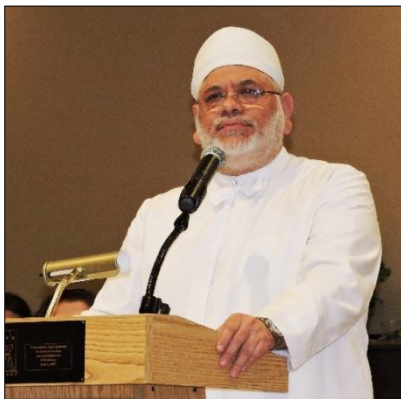


This is what the power of Oral Histories is. It is not a pretentious egotistical exercise. Human nature is such that we always want to be remembered, and for others to know where we are coming from. Events that are the origin of something that changes people's lives are always a matter of interest, and sometimes pride. And each one of us has changed the course of history. Let's face it. We may not be a household name in America, and we may not even have become very wealthy. But by uprooting ourselves and having the courage to start a new life half-way around the world, we have changed the course of future for our children and grandchildren. We should be proud to document our lives for posterity.

A HOUSE DIVIDED...

First appeared in FEZANA Journal
FJ Vol 33 No 4 page 27-32

It was an honor to have the High Priest of Udvada, Dastur Khurshed Dastoor, in Houston during the inauguration festivities of the *Atash Kadeh*. He was the keynote speaker on March 22, 2019 giving a talk on a very apt topic for Zoroastrians not only for the Houston audience, but for all. His subject was **"Zarathushti Way of Life in Today's World."** The talk was very uplifting with some very salient messages in his address on the importance of our individual conduct for the community to thrive in this fast-paced world we live in. Apart from the import of values such as righteousness, charity, good thoughts, words and actions, what was striking was his call for the community to rise and be *united for the survival of the Zoroastrian faith*.



**High Priest of Udvada,
Dastur Khurshed Dastoor**

We all know the importance of unity, yet the community is fractured with people asserting their distorted views deviating from the basic tenets of our prophet Zarathustra leaving many of us wondering on the future of our glorious religion. A laudable endeavor such as the *Atash Kadeh* was the target of unwarranted, idle criticism, at home and abroad, instead of celebrating a monument to our cherished religious principles. And so it is worth reflecting on the High Priest's entreaty for unity as well as attempting to understand the cause for the disunity given our "Way of Life in Today's World." [Read on](#)

Meheryar N. Rivetna

