



ZAH Publication Team wishes the MANASHNI readers a Very Happy Healthy Prosperous New Year 2025

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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: January 12, 2025

Children's Session: The Sunday School session starts at **10:30 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 **11:00 a.m. In person**



UPCOMING EVENTS

Please mark your calendars for the Events for the year -
<https://zah.org/events/>

Until Jan 20, 2025 - [Living with the Gods \(Zoroastrian exhibit\) at Museum of Fine Arts Houston \(MFAH\)](#). Don't miss it!

Timings below:

- 11 am to 5 pm – Mon, Wed
- 11 am to 9 pm – Thu, Fri
- 11 am to 6 pm – Sat
- 12 pm to 6 pm – Sun

Saturday, February 1, 2025 – Jashn-e-Sadeh. See flyer for details
RSVP [here](#) **BEFORE MIDNIGHT 1/26/25**

Saturday, February 15, 2025 – Golden Group Event

Wednesday, Thursday, March 5, 6 2025 – Z-Day at the Capitol Austin and Rice University

Friday, March 21, 2025 – Navroze Humbandagi

Saturday, March 15, 2025 – 10.30 am to 2.30 pm – Navroze event at Asia Society.

This event is being highlighted as Zoroastrian Day for Navroze and ZAH community will participate. All are welcome to attend. More details to follow

Saturday, March 21, 2025 – Navroze Function

Sunday, April 13, 2025 – ZAH Carnival

Sunday, June 1, 2025 – Gahambar

Friday, July 11 to Sunday July 13, 2025 – ZAH Z-Camp 2025

Friday, August 15, 2025 – Navroze Humbandagi

Saturday, August 16, 2025 – Navroze Function

Sunday, September 28, 2025 - Gahambar

NAZC 2024

ATASH NYAISH by all Mobeds on Day1



National Anthems (USA and Canada)



Keynote Speaker – Boman Irani



Youth Keynote Speaker – Sanaya Master



REPORTS

The North American Zarathushti Congress 2024 (NAZC 2024)

By Kayo Sidhwa

Faith, Fellowship, and Growth: A Four-Day Congress Inspires the NA Zoroastrian Community

Over four transformative days, members of the Zoroastrian faith gathered for the 18th North American Zoroastrian Congress, an event filled with worship, spiritual enrichment, and fellowship. Held at the Royal Sonesta Galleria Hotel, the Congress drew 700+ attendees, creating a space for connection, renewal, and collective growth.

The Congress opened with a spectacular show "Visions of Paradise" followed by a rousing keynote address by the legendary Zoroastrian Bollywood star, Boman Irani, focusing on our theme, Generation Z: Propelling Zarathushti Resurgence. Each day was thoughtfully structured, featuring a mix of sessions, workshops, and panel discussions that addressed various topics related to our religion, history, culture, and contemporary existence.

Our theme, Generation Z: Propelling Zarathushti Resurgence resonated powerfully throughout the event and our goal of having at least 40% of our attendees under 40 years was successfully achieved. Attendees left with a sense of empowerment and tools to carry the message of faith back to their communities.

Highlights of the event included:

Day 1: The opening ceremony set the tone with an inspiring call to action, followed by a vibrant evening consisting of the Rhythm India dance performance and the Denim and Diamonds themed evening show termed "The Good, the Bad and the D'ugly". The icing on the cake was some melodious songs by our Keynote Speaker, Boman Irani jamming with our home-based Z-Band.

Day 2: Engaging sessions and panel discussions allowed participants to explore their faith in practical ways, while youth programs encouraged the next generation to deepen their connection. The evening program started with a Play in our ethnic language followed by DJ Gary making all dance to his beats.

Day 3: It was a very captivating one particularly for the Young Adults with many relevant current topics facing our Community. The Congress came to a close with a spectacular Magic/Illusion show followed by a passing the torch ceremony where the Co-Chairs passed the torch to the organizers of the next Congress in Sacramento in 2028. Once the multi course dinner ended, DJ Masti took over and regaled the attendees making them dance the night away into the wee hours while welcoming 2025 at the stroke of midnight.

Day 4: The final day which happened to be New Year day was capped with an auspicious prayer service at the Zoroastrian Center in Houston followed by lunch where participants renewed their commitment to our

Zoroastrian mission before the attendees headed back home.

Aapro DJ Gary Rocking the house



Exhibit Hall at the Royal Sonesta Hotel



Visions of Paradise (Opening Show)



The Good, The Bad and The D'Ugly



Pestonji Pakrai Giya



The core team consisting of Co-Chairs - Aderbad Tamboli and Kayomarz Sidhwa, Treasurer - Lyla Daroga and Secretary - Percy Master, expressed heartfelt gratitude for the dedication of the volunteers and performers, support and generosity of Sponsors and Donors, and the enthusiasm of the attendees.

With renewed energy and a strengthened sense of purpose, participants returned home, ready to make a difference in their communities. Plans for the next Congress in Sacramento are already underway, promising to build on the success of this unforgettable gathering.

More Details to follow in the NAZC 2024 Special Edition coming soon.

LIBRARY Report

By Jango Mistry

The Bapsi Sidhwa Award

Two years ago, the Bapsi Sidhwa Literary Prize was established. It was awarded for the first time at the 2022 Zoroastrian World Congress. The award honors our very own, the late Bapsi Sidhwa, who passed away last December. The ZAH Library administers the award under the sponsorship of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) and FEZANA Information Research Education System (FIRES). The Award, a brainchild of Aban Rustomji, addresses two separate needs: (1) recognizing Bapsi for her contributions to fictional literature and (2) the need to showcase and recognize the wide swath of talented Zoroastrian authors.

The first inaugural award was awarded at the 2022 World Zoroastrian Congress in New York to Tanaz Bhatena, who won the prize for her work "Hunted by the Sky."

The second Bapsi Sidhwa Literary Prize was awarded to Roxana Trabulsi, who accepted the award at the 2024 North American Zoroastrian Congress in Houston in December. Roxana's compelling novel, "Of Mud and Honey" is a poignant story of kinship, hope, and transformation. Submissions for this award were particularly strong with entries from Zoroastrian authors across, India, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. A distinguished panel of judges selected the winner, who received a commemorative medal and a cash prize.

Nawaz Merchant, who writes under the pen name of Nev March was also recognized with an honorable mention for her acclaimed work "The Spanish Diplomat's Secret".

Bapsi Sidhwa herself was looking forward to presenting the Prize, but sadly, she passed away just a few days before the award ceremony. (These books and many others by Zoroastrian authors like Thrity Umrigar, are in the ZAH Library collection).

The Rohinton Rivetna Outstanding Zarathushti Award

This prestigious award recognizes a Zarathushti who has made outstanding contributions to further the cause of Zarathushtis in North America and all over the world. Leadership and selfless service to the community for several years deserves to be recognized and this award does that.

Rhythm India Dance Performance



Aban Rustomji announcing the Bapsi Sidhwa Literary Prize



Roxana Trabulsi awarded the Bapsi Sidhwa Literary Prize



Aban Rustomji awarded the Rohinton Rivetna Outstanding Zarathushti Award



Aban Rustomji speaking after receiving the award



At the 2024 NAZC in Houston, this award was given to our very own Aban Rustomji, chair of the ZAH Libray Committee, active sponsor and leader of FIRES, and an ever-present driving force in organizations and events all over North America. For over 60 years, Aban has championed intellectual growth by organizing lectures and presentations that preserve and promote our culture and religion. Through her untiring efforts, and her husband Purvez's support, she has strived to continue the legacy of community service and philanthropy of her parents and grandparents in Pakistan.

Through her vision and work, Aban has built vital hubs for Zoroastrian scholarship, preserving manuscripts, archiving stories of first-generation immigrants, establishing the Bapsi Sidhwa Prize, and supporting research efforts that preserve our heritage. Her "legacy", the ZAH Library, now houses over 1,500 books and notable collections of precious manuscripts and artifacts. Several North American and World Zoroastrian Congresses have relied upon Aban's contacts and her worldwide network to put together the program that brings so many distinguished speakers from all over.

Way to go, Aban! We are proud of you and forever appreciative of the example you have set for the younger generation and the legacy you have left behind from your selfless work over six decades.

A Trip Down Memory Lane

The Purvez Rustomji Room has a special treat for all Zoroastrians—especially Houstonians. The walls are plastered with a unique display of historical documents, photographs, and chronicles of significant events that eventually led to the establishment and building of the ZAH Center and the Atash Kadeh.

The "Founding Fathers" of this country are often remembered for the Constitution they gave us in 1787. It's only natural that we also remember the "**founding members**" who had the vision to start and shepherd the Association and the buildings that we enjoy to this day. Putting this together required going through countless notes and documents needed to draw a timeline of the last 50+ years that records steps that have brought us to this day. Photographs tell the story – photographs that recall the pioneers and their efforts through the years. You will chuckle at how much people have changed through the years and make you say, "I didn't know that!"

For any Association to grow and thrive, the members must have a good knowledge and appreciation of the past actions that let us enjoy today's facilities. We owe a deep gratitude to Arnavaz Sethna who kept meticulous records for so many years. Others who have contributed to this challenging effort also need to be thanked: Aban Rustomji (who spearheaded the whole project), Darayus Kolah (who helped with the logical and attractive displays), Yezdi Engineer (who worked hard to do everything that put this together),

This display was done in time for the North American Zoroastrian Congress and its 700+ attendees last month, but will be of special interest to us Houstonians. It will be available for viewing through January. Do see it. You will find it most interesting.

ATASH KADEH Report By Persis Behramsha

Mobeds with Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastur



Behram Roj Jashan Sponsors for December 2024



ZAH CHRISTMAS PARTY

Holly Jolly Christmas Tree



Attitude for Gratitude



As we reminisce the many memories we made during the year 2024, we look forward to making even more joyful memories in 2025. Our last Behram Roj of 2024 was sponsored by families of Naozer & Persis Behramsha, Ken & Villi Bhappu, Kershaw and Bakhtawar Byramji, Rustum & Nina Challa, Homi & Nargis Cooper, Neville & Farida Divecha and Yasmin Medhora.

During the Gatha Class, Meheryar Rivetna discussed Yasna 47. Zarathushtra advocates that humans have a common-sense mindset. Ahura Mazda's supreme principles lie in virtue. Zarathushtra promotes the idea that humankind must strive for righteous deeds and engage in the advancement of virtuous ideals. Perfection is achieved when humans solemnly practice and advance Ahura Mazda's laws as taught by Zarathushtra.

December was a dynamic month of planning and activities leading up to the much-anticipated North American Zoroastrian Congress. The new year began on a high note with a Grand Jashan at the Atash Kadeh, a truly memorable event graced by the presence of Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastur. Joining him were Mobeds from Houston and across North America, coming together to lead a wonderfully uplifting ceremony.

While the Atash Kadeh accommodated our out-of-town guests, the wider community came together at the ZAH Center, where over 600 locals and visitors enjoyed a delicious lunch in the spirit of unity and celebration. In conjunction with these festivities, we launched the "Securing the Future Fund Campaign," an ambitious initiative aimed at raising over \$2 million. This fund will support our Mobeds and the operational needs of the Atash Kadeh, ensuring that we can preserve the sacred flame for generations to come.

We encourage all members and friends to contribute generously to this vital campaign, helping us secure the future of our cherished Atash Kadeh and Zoroastrian heritage.

YOUTH GROUP Report

By Natasha Dungor

The ZAH Youth Group would like to wish everyone a Very Happy New Year!

December was a very successful month for our ZAH Youth Group. We hosted our annual Kids Christmas Party along with being a collaborating member in the Zoroastrian Youth of North America's Attitude of Gratitude drive this winter.

A detailed report on the Christmas Party is shared below.

We are thrilled to share the success of the ZAH Youth Group's participation in ZYNA's Attitude of Gratitude Drive, and we want to take a moment to thank each and every one of you for your generosity. From December 1 through December 20, we collected non-perishable food items to support local food pantries in Fort Bend County. The outpouring of donations was nothing short of heartwarming. Over the course of the 20-day drive, we received donations beyond what we envisioned—an incredible demonstration of our community's spirit of giving.

Santa Claus is coming to Town



Gingerbread Houses.. Yummm!



Hard at work



Who Wants Cookies?



Thanks to your kindness, all donations were delivered to food pantries across Fort Bend County, providing much-needed resources to families in need during the holiday season. Your contributions will help ensure that those facing food insecurity have access to nutritious meals and can experience a brighter, more hopeful holiday season.

We are truly grateful to everyone who donated, whether it was a single can or a full bag of goods. Your support made a real difference, and together, we've helped spread an attitude of gratitude throughout our community.

Thank you again for your generosity and for being a part of this wonderful initiative. We look forward to hosting this drive again next year to make a positive impact on the lives of those who need it most.

Warm Regards,
Natasha N. Dungor
ZAH Youth Group President (On behalf of ZAH Youth Group Officers)

Kids Christmas Party 2024

By: Shireen Anklesaria

Although the weather that day was not chilly, feelings and spirit of the holiday were in the air. As the Christmas tree filled with presents galore, kids dressed up in holiday clothes, and cheer shone for the excitement of what was to come.

We are happy to share that the 2024 ZAH Youth Group's Christmas Party was a huge success! With over 80 people in attendance, the ZHCC hall was filled with chatter and joy. Of course, we had lots of food, as it would not have been a Zoro party without it. Guests enjoyed delicious pizza, chicken nuggets (spicy and regular), fries, and a sweet treat of brownie bites. After eating until their tummies were stuffed, the kids' activities started. They divided into four groups to compete in the gingerbread house-building competition, played an engaging game of musical chairs (which had a very exciting ending), and decorated cookies with creativity and imagination. Lastly, the moment everyone has been waiting for... presents with Santa! Seated on stage next to the tree, Santa called each kid, one by one, to receive their gifts. The kids got to talk to Santa about what they wanted for Christmas, take pictures, and share their gifts with their parents and friends. Sadly, Santa had to leave early to deliver more presents, but he left leaving joy on the kids' faces.

Thank you to all our donors and volunteers; this event wouldn't have been possible without your contributions and continued support! Thank you to the following families for their contributions:

- Parynaz & Khushroo Vimadalal for Pizzas
- Nali & Danesh Desai for Chicken Nuggets
- Khursheed & Barjor Dastur for Fries
- Zia & Rustom Anklesaria for Brownies
- Serena & Kaiwan Bharucha for Cookies
- Vehishta & Sarosh Kaikobad for Gingerbread Houses
- All Kids, Middle Group, and Youth Group Parents - thank you for donating all the drinks, paper products, utensils, and other necessary items and for volunteering your time to help!

OUR FEZANA AWARDS 2024 WINNERS

Aban Rustomji – Outstanding Zarathushti Award



Vehishta Kaikobad - Excellence in Performing Arts, Painting or Literature Award



We also received generous monetary donations from our community members. We can't thank them enough for their continued support and contributions.

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

At the NAZC 2024, two of our ZAH members were recipients of FEZANA Awards 2024. These ladies need no introduction. Their incredible contribution and service to the ZAH community and the Zarathushti community at-large is immensely appreciated.

Aban Rustomji was awarded the **Rohinton Rivetna Outstanding Zarathushti Award** for her outstanding and well-recognized contributions to further the cause of Zarathushtis in North America and worldwide through outstanding leadership and service. Aban was presented this award by her entire family

Vehishta Kaikobad was awarded the **Dinshaw Framroze Joshi Excellence in Performing Arts, Painting or Literature Award** for her commitment to enrich our society through visual, performing arts, and painting. Through literary education and artistic endeavors, she remains committed to promoting the Zarathushti community and advancing its global recognition. Vehishta was presented the award by Kaemerz Dotiwala. Her grand-nephew Ryan Vajifdar accompanied her on stage.

Heartiest Congratulations to our Aban Rustomji and Vehishta Kaikobad for their accomplishments and for keeping the Zarathushtis light shining bright and the Zarathushti flag flying high both in North America and beyond.

In Memoriam: Bapsi Sidhwa

It is with a very heavy heart we announce the passing away of our dear Bapsi Sidhwa, wife of Late Noshir Sidhwa on December 25, 2024 (12:17 a.m.). She is survived by her brother Feroze Bhandara, sister-in-Law Shernaz Bhandara; daughter Mohur Sidhwa; son Khodadad Kermani, daughter-in law Bakhtaver (Baku) Kermani; and daughter Parizad Sethna, son-in-law Khurshed Sethna, grandsons Zersis, Cambayses and Behram Kermani and Nozar Sethna; nephews Zubin, Berzin and niece Zareen Bhandara.

Courtesy FEZANA



Bapsi Sidhwa was a pioneering literary voice whose works transcended boundaries and bridged cultures. Born in Karachi, raised in Lahore, a proud Houstonian, and beloved around the world, Bapsi was a storyteller of remarkable depth and insight. Her novels illuminated the complexities of identity, history, and the human spirit, resonating across generations and geographies.

Through seminal works like *Ice-Candy-Man* and *The Crow Eaters*, Bapsi masterfully wove narratives that captured the struggles, joys, and resilience of communities often overlooked. She brought the Parsi experience to the forefront of English literature, creating unforgettable characters and vivid worlds that showcased the diversity and richness of South Asian life. Her evocative prose not only shed light on the tumultuous histories of Partition and cultural diaspora but also highlighted universal themes of love, survival, and humanity's enduring strength amidst chaos.

Within the global Zoroastrian community, Bapsi was a trailblazer and a beloved figure. She brought the Parsi ethos to life in her work, portraying with warmth and wit the traditions, challenges, and indomitable spirit of this small but vibrant community. Her contributions extended to her active involvement in the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH), where her warmth, humor, and generosity of spirit touched the lives of many.

Bapsi was more than a literary icon. She was a mentor, an advocate, a role model for women, and a beacon of hope for marginalized voices. Her indomitable spirit, sharp wit, and profound compassion left an indelible mark on all who knew her.

To honor the life and work of Bapsi, FIRES (a FEZANA Committee) initiated the Bapsi Sidhwa Literary Prize in 2022, an accolade that continues to nurture and celebrate literary excellence. This award stands as a testament to her unwavering commitment to storytelling and her belief in the transformative power of words.

JASHNE SADEH RSVP LINK

**JASHNE SADEH
SATURDAY FEBRUARY 1, 2025**

**At The Zarthushti Heritage and Cultural Center
8787 W. Airport Blvd., Houston, TX 77071**

**All Prayers at the Atash Kadeh
Boye Ceremony at 4:30pm
Ateash Nyaesh prayers at 5:15pm
Sadeh Fire immediately following prayers**

**DELICIOUS
CATERED FOOD**

**DJ!!
Dance the
night away!!**

**Questions? Contact:
Banafsheh Mondegarian
(832) 420-2586
bmondegarian@yahoo.com**

BYOB

RSVP LINK PROVIDED ABOVE

**RATES: (Under 5 yrs. Gratis) RSVP Deadline:
1/26/25 RSVP Rates before midnight 1/26/25
Adult: \$29
Child: \$15
After RSVP Deadline: Adults \$40 Child \$20
LAST MINUTE WALK-IN: \$50 (Adult/Child)**

Organized By: ZMI Entertainment Committee