

NauRooz Pirooz, the Dawning of a New Day

In English, “new day” can mean just another sunrise, or the beginning of a new phase in life, or even the dawning of a new age. *NauRooz* means all of the above. But most of all, *NauRooz* is a happy time, a time for welcoming the new, saying good bye to the past.

The last Zarathushti king, Yazdegard III was crowned on *NauRooz*, 632 at the age of 21. The Mahestan Assembly, which consisted of Zoroastrian religious leaders and clan elders, wanted Yazdegard, the grandson of Khoshro Parviz, to restore the Sasanian Empire to its past glory. There was great pomp and celebration. But the Yazdegard era did not turn out the way people had expected. The sovereignty of Iran passed into the hands of invaders in 641. Yazdegard died 10 years later. And with his death, the religious hierarchy and organization that the Sasanian elite had built up to sustain the Zarathushti faith, crumbled and fell.

But the Faith survived. Zarathushtis continue to celebrate *NauRooz*, wherever they live, regardless of who is the ruler or who is in charge.

NauRooz arrives at the moment of spring equinox: 08:07 pm Eastern Daylight Time on March 20. It signals the start of the growing season, the opening of flowers, and the sprouting of seed. It teaches us the law of the farm: one must plant the seed, water it, fertilize the soil, and provide the right environment for it to grow and produce fruit. If you plant something and neglect to take care of it, it will die.

So it was that a seed was planted by a few Zarathushtis in 1986. They sat down and drafted a constitution for a Federation that would stand the test of time. The constitution was signed and FEZANA was born the next year, in 1987. There was no coronation, no fanfare -- just a feeling of accomplishment and a hope for the future.

The mission of FEZANA is: “To further the cause of Zoroastrianism in North America.” The essence of FEZANA’s constitution is that we have resolved to work together to address the issues facing us in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, while at the same time guaranteeing the autonomy of individual associations and individual Zarathushtis. The focus is on resolving issues, not on personalities, politics, or power. It is indeed a new beginning for Zarathushtis, a *NauRooz*.

Over the last 20 years, we have strived to live up to these expectations. We have nourished the seeds and made FEZANA grow. But as we tried to work together, we found many differences. Zarathushtis have a distrust of leaders telling them what to do! Our different roots in Iran, India and Pakistan caused conflicts. The autonomy of the Associations makes it difficult to find common ground.

We are still learning how to work together. And we are finding commonalities and we have many talented people who truly love the community and want to work for the cause. We are addressing difficult issues, one by one. We have built trust.

So now on **NauRooz** 1376, let us resolve to make more effort to learn from one another, to understand each other, to respect our differences and strive for synergy. Synergy is signified by *barsom*. When the thin, pliable *barsom* rods are tied together, it is impossible to bend or break them!

NauRooz celebrations start on the day of the spring equinox and continue for 12 days. **NauRooz** is a time to forgive and forget all grievances and differences and start the year with a fresh, new outlook. Whatever wishes one makes on NauRooz will come true during the year. On the 13th day, Sizdeh Bedar, everyone goes outdoors to enjoy Mother Nature. The FEZANA Annual General Meeting on April 6-8 will fall during this auspicious period. We will listen to the success stories of our Associations to learn about community building, we will discuss different viewpoints on what it is to be Zarathushtis in North America, and we will find synergies that will pave the way for our bright future – a future that we will all be proud to have created!

NauRooz Pirooz,

Have a Successful New Day!

Rustom Kevala

FEZANA President

March 20, 2007