

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Fellow-Zarathushtis in North America:

I am truly honored by the trust you have placed in me by electing me as the next FEZANA President. Few things help an individual more than to place responsibility upon him, and to let him know that you trust him¹. I thank you. I will do my utmost to live up to your expectations.

I have worked with local associations, FEZANA and interfaith organizations. I was deeply involved in the FEZANA Journal, funds management, religious education, World Body, etc. Then a few years ago, I made a decision to gradually step back. I wanted to feel how it would be to be “outside” the frenzy of activities. Because of that, I believe that I can now see a much wider picture of where we are and what future we are hoping for.

Our long-term vision is clear – we want our religion to be recognized as a major world religion that has contributed significantly to the development of modern ethics, jurisprudence and morality. My own thoughts on the path we should take to achieve this vision are outlined below:

(1) Build a United Zarathushti Community

Napoleon Bonaparte said: *There are only two forces that unite men – fear and interest*². Both the forces are present in our community. There is fear about our identity and relevance. And because our Community is growing and prospering in North America, we have tremendous interest in ensuring a bright future. But we are not yet united.

We must come to a meeting of the minds between Zarathushtis from Iran and the Indian sub-continent. Iranians are the standard-bearers and risk-takers in our religious consciousness. Where would we be today without the vision and wise counsel of Arbab Guiv and Rostam Sarfeh? Neither Iranian nor Parsi Zarathushtis have the final answer for ensuring the survival of our religion. I will encourage frequent forums (via teleconferences, Internet or face-to-face) to air the issues and find synergies to develop a viable agenda for our (and our children’s) future. An excellent suggestion I have received is to include Farsi language classes in our religious education curriculum.

FEZANA’s Member Associations and Small Groups have a strong stake in the future of our community. We must improve FEZANA and inter-Association communications to ensure that every Zarathushti is informed and aware of all that is going on, so that we can act in a unified manner.

¹ Booker T. Washington

² Napoleon Bonaparte, *Military Maxims*, 1804-15

(2) Make Zarathushti Presence an Integral Part of the North American Landscape

United, we must bring much stronger awareness of Zarathushtrian contributions to western ethics and moral principles. Effective public relations are needed through frequent press releases of our festivals and major events. Other avenues are scholarly seminars, distribution of well-prepared texts to schools and libraries, and articles in non-Zarathushtrian publications. This is not easy to do and will require prodigious amounts of time and perseverance, but we have the talent and the resources to do it. Where there is a will, there is a way!

I commend the many part-time mobeds and ervads who selflessly volunteer their services to perform our rituals. Many of them also willingly donate their time to teach our prayers and religious principles to our youngsters. It is time for us now to develop and find financial support for a cadre of highly erudite scholars and mobeds in North America, who would have the time and resources to represent us in scholarly conferences and interfaith doctrinal discussions, and to address the many vexing ecumenical issues that we face. I will appoint a representative to present our views and concerns to the North American Mobeds Council. FEZANA must then find ways to implement the Council's recommendations.

I have often heard people say: The future is in the hands of our youth. I agree. Youth have energy, vision and courage. But that does not mean that we old-timers don't have these qualities. We cannot abdicate our responsibility to do all we can to integrate our youth into the world community as proud Zarathushtis. In addition to the academic, religious study, arts and sports scholarships, I want to help promising youth to attend workshops and motivational seminars to develop their leadership, business and management skills.

(3) Develop a Viable Infrastructure in North America

Even the smallest church, synagogue, or interfaith group in North America has an office, and paid and volunteer staff to serve their constituents. Today, there are almost 25 thousand Zarathushtis in North America. I believe we have gone as far as we can go with an all-volunteer staff to publish the Journal, do all the accounts, correspondence, meetings and seminars, public-relations, website, etc. FEZANA needs equipment, a web server, staff, and an office that is not someone's home address! A symbiotic relationship between FEZANA and the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC) should be explored for mutual benefit.

Our religion teaches us to think, verbalize and then act. Many of the ideas I have put forward above are already being implemented through the actions of foresighted individuals and various FEZANA committees. Now let us act in unison to actualize our broad vision. The results will be far beyond what we can dream of today.

I invite you to come forward and send me your written thoughts on what is most important to you, and what role you would like to play to ensure a successful outcome. Please respond directly to me at RJKevala@aol.com.

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