

FEZANA Initiative for NauRooz Celebrations around the World

Our religion enjoins us to protect the environment, revere nature, and enjoy the bounty of the seasons. We celebrate each change of season with communal prayers and gahanbars. We find great satisfaction in preserving and improving our environment and being in harmony with natural cycles. This attachment with the natural cycles and the environment identifies our unique spiritual heritage.

Zarathushti rulers were crowned at the exact time of the spring equinox, which marked the official beginning of their regimes. Every year, this first day of Spring, NauRooz, was celebrated with great pomp and ceremony. And because they used the solar calendar with proper intercalation, the festivals, gahanbars, and religious celebrations always occurred in the correct season: spring, summer, harvest, and winter.

To show our solidarity and resolve, FEZANA encourages everyone across North America to celebrate NauRooz in a spirit of hamazori, togetherness, on Mar 21. In 2007, Ervad Soli Dastur of Sarasota, Florida prepared and distributed NauRooz prayers with English translation to all associations. Ervad Soli had consulted the mobeds of India and Iran for the compilation and the translations. These prayers allowed all to join in with the mobeds in reciting selected verses to welcome the New Year together.

A press release was issued to publicize NauRooz as the Zarathushti New Year all across the world. This press release not only highlighted our presence in North America, but informed the readers about the history of Zarathushtis from ancient to modern times. The influence of Zarathushtra's teachings on Judaism and ultimately Christianity and Islam were highlighted.

Another purpose of celebrating NauRooz in a big way is to instill pride and belonging to our youth. Nauruz 2007 included a parade in New York in which Zarathushtis participated with enthusiasm.

Based on the success of the 2007 celebrations, preparations were made to coordinate NauRooz celebrations in 2008 on a larger scale. Associations were encouraged to invite local dignitaries to their functions, press releases were sent locally and nationally. The White House displayed the Haft Seen table and the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and the Ontario Legislative Assembly made official comments about the celebration of NauRooz. Time magazine, National Public Radio and several newspapers also made special mention of NauRooz. Homi Gandhi and Dolly Dastoor were interviewed on radio.

In Toronto and New York, the local politicians attended the Zarathushti celebrations on March 21. All the Associations across North America celebrated during the week-end of March 21-13. Zarathushtis joined in the NauRooz parades organized by the Iranian communities in New York and Los Angeles.

A complete account of the celebrations around the world is given the FEZANA journal of Summer/June 2008. FEZANA hopes that NauRooz celebrations will become an integral part of our united Zarathushti heritage across the world. We are also trying to have NauRooz recognized as the Zarathushti New Year by the United Nations and all the countries where Zarathushtis live.

Rustom Kevala

FEZANA President, 2006-2008.