

**NAMC presents a seminar in Houston:  
The Devine Message: Journey through Zoroastrian Scriptures**

The North American Mobed Council (NAMC) held a very successful Seminar in Houston on Saturday April 11, 2009. The Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH), under the dynamic leadership of Aban Rustomji, hosted the seminar at their beautiful Zoroastrian Heritage and Cultural Centre (ZHCC) in Houston.

The subject matter was "**The Devine Message: Journey through Zoroastrian Scriptures**"

The day's proceedings commenced with a short prayer and benediction delivered by five young Ervads from the ZAH. Aban Rustomji then welcomed the speakers, members of the NAMC and the ZAH membership and expressed a hope that such seminars be repeated by NAMC.

Ervad Noshir Mirza, Vice President, NAMC, then thanked Aban and her able helpers of ZAH for inviting NAMC to present this Seminar. He then gave a brief introduction of the NAMC, its objectives and activities, and its future projects. He also thanked Aban and Percy Master for helping NAMC to video tape the seminar and to arrange with Yazdi Tantra in Mumbai to upload this seminar on Internet.

Ervad Noshir also informed all that the same seminar is going to be given in Chicago at the request of ZAC on May 16th and also in Fall 2009 in Toronto.

Mr. Rustom Engineer then introduced the first speaker, Ervad Brig. Behram Panthaki. Ervad Behram gave a brief review of all our Zoroastrian scriptures and how Khordeh Avesta was compiled by Dasturaan Dastoor Adarbad Marespand during the reign of Emperor Shapur II (309-379 AD). Currently, Khordeh Avesta has become every day Prayer Book for all Zoroastrians. He explained the meaning of the name "Khordeh Avesta", its contents and the several different versions that are available. He especially mentioned Ervad Kawasji Edulji Kanga's Khordeh Avesta Ba Maeni, a scholarly work giving word by word translation in Gujarati, which later on was also translated word by word in English.

Mrs. Behroze Daruwalla then introduced the second speaker, Ervad Dr. Jehan Bagli. He spoke about the "Theory and Practice of the Central Yasna Ceremony". With several illustrations and photographs, he explained the ceremony, the prayers, the rituals and stressed the importance of "Purity" in all rituals. He explained the Homa Ritual, the central part of the Yasna ceremony with its significance and meaning. He gave a brief overview of all 72 Has of the Yasna.



Attentive Audience

Speakers with Aban

Mrs. Arnavaz Sethna then introduced the third speaker, Ervad Soli P. Dastur. His presentation was about "Visperad - All RATUS - Spiritual Lords". Visperad is one of our high liturgy and is especially performed during our six Gahambar, the seasonal festivals. It is never recited alone but its 23 Kardehs are always recited interwoven with the 72 Has of Yasna. It is also recited whenever Vendidad is recited. He explained various Ratus - Spiritual Lords of the Ahura Mazda's creation mentioned in Visperad.

Mr. Sarosh Manekshaw was introduced by Mr. Meheryar Rivetna. His subject was the "Vendidad". He briefly explained its contents, especially in terms of the purity laws. He also highlighted the fact that it is probably the only Avesta Nask (volume) out of a total of 21 that may have been saved and salvaged in its entirety from all our scriptures which were destroyed first by Alexander and then by the Arabs. He pointed out the relationship between the Gathas and Vendidad - Gathas lay down the framework of Zarathushtra's message - Spiritual and Physical Purity; The Vendidad spells out the details of "How to" maintain Physical Purity.



Questions and Answers Period



ZAH Young Mobeds

All the four subjects were presented very interestingly with PowerPoint illustrations, pictures and charts. They were followed by a lively Question-Answer sessions which had to be curtailed so as to maintain the time schedule of the overall seminar. Also, it was delightful to see the younger generation in the audience participating enthusiastically in the whole seminar.

The day wound up with gift presentation to the speakers and closing remarks by Mr. Kaermez Dotiwala. The ZAH and its excellent band of volunteers steered the day's proceedings marvelously. All lectures, Q-A sessions, coffee and lunch breaks were managed with military precision and discipline. The eighty plus participants enjoyed the lectures thoroughly.

Aban Rustomji writes: "Y'all did a phenomenal job! All of us attendees felt we learned about our ceremonies and scriptures in a very enjoyable manner. Each of you had a unique style of presentation which made it so easy to concentrate and put pieces together and the day felt like it was too short."

The NAMC wishes to convey its sincere thanks to the ZAH, and especially to Aban Rustomji, for hosting this lecture series and for looking after all "out-of-towners" who were accommodated at several host families.

Last but not the least the NAMC acknowledges and thanks Ervad Gustad Panthaki, Executive Officer, NAMC Executive Committee, who spearheaded this event, contacted and worked with the speakers and made this event happen.