

The First Vendidad Sade and Baj in NA at a Dar-e-Meher Inauguration, and Enthronement of Dadgah in the ZANT Brand New, Built From Scratch ZCNT (Zoroastrian Center of North Texas) April 29-30 2011!

Ervad Soli P. Dastur

Background

At the FEZANA AGM in Dallas in 2007, I first saw the dreams and plans of ZANT (Zoroastrian Association of North Texas) for building a brand new Dar-e-Meher in their Zoroastrian Center of North Texas (ZCNT) in Dallas. And I instantly made a pledge that I will be there to celebrate their Center's opening! And with the grace of Ahura Mazda and with the blessings of Pak Iranshah, Jo Ann and I were so fortunate to attend this inauguration with the prayers of the Vendidad Sade and Baj performed the first time in a NA Dar-e-Meher inauguration!

Over the years, I have been in contact with Firdosh Mehta and my good fellow Mobed friend Ervad Poras T. Balsara as regards their Dar-e-Meher installation, what prayers to perform, etc. We contacted Dasturji Feroze Kotwal, Ervad Dr. Ramiyar Karanjia, London ZTFE President Malcolm Deboo and my fellow Mobed Rustom Bhedwar of ZTFE, and others to learn from their experiences and to seek advice and guidance for these ceremonies!

After a number of false starts, I received an email from Poras in Mumbai that the inauguration is finally set to be on April 28th Friday morning with the Vendidad Sade prayers starting after the midnight, followed by a Baj next day in the morning and the inauguration Jashan and Dadgah installation in the afternoon. I had to change my plans to arrive in Sarasota on Tuesday 26th from Mumbai and to Dallas the next day! So, here we were at the center on Wednesday helping out with the next day prayers!

Vendidad Sade Prayers

The first ever Vendidad prayers in North America were performed by Mobed Poras T. Balsara, Mobed Yazdi Dastur, grandson of late Vada Dasturji Ferozeji Dastoor of Udwarda, both from Dallas and me. We started the prayers around 12:20 AM with the participation of about 35 local ZANT members and were very happy and relieved to complete all the 22 Fargarads of Vendidad by 6:10 AM! About 25 ZANT members were still there to see the completion.



Three Mobeds praying Vendidad. Sagar keeping the fire burning! Three Mobeds putting loban at the end!

It was the first Vendidad Sade by me after some 60 years when I became Martab in Pak Iranshah! I prepared for this by going over the prayers in Udwada, as well as at over 30,000 ft. in the planes coming from Mumbai! A great way to be closer to Ahura Mazda!

Baj Prayer of Sarosh Yazad

In the morning of Saturday April 30th, we started the Sarosh Baj prayers, performed by me. The first ever Baj ceremony may have been performed by my brother Mobed Palanji P. Dastoor, Panthaki of JD Colaba Ajiary in Mumbai, in May 1986 in the home of Roshan and Pervaze Rabadi in Toronto at the occasion of Varadh Pattar for their son Neville's wedding. Also, Mobed Gustad Panthaki has performed Baj ceremony in OZCF Dar-e-Meher during Muktaf Days. However, this is the first time in NA that a Baj ceremony is performed for a new Dar-e-Meher inauguration! There were about 50 ZANT members to witness this ceremony.



Making of the Pavi. The complete Baj ceremony layout. Soli performing Baj. Poras, Pearl, Jo Ann & Soli.

Inauguration Jashan

In the afternoon, at about 4:15 PM, under the leadership of Ervad Poras T. Balsara, the inauguration Jashan was performed with 6 other Mobeds: the youngest Ervad Burzin P. Balsara, son of Poras & Pearl, Yazdi Dastur, Cyrus Dastur, Zubin Kotwal, Hormuzd Karkaria, and me. The Jashan was performed with 5 kardas.



The start of the Jashan. The seven Mobeds and the fabulous fruits etc. spread! The attentive children!

Dadgah Investiture

After the Jashan, the fire in the Afargaanyu was led by the Mobeds in a solemn procession to the sanctum sanctorum and was transferred to the main Afargaanyu in the Dadgah. 6 sandalwood pieces were used for the first Maachi arranged over the transferred embers. Then all seven Mobeds participated in the first Boi ceremony performed by Ervad Poras with the recitation of Atash Nyayesh, Doa Naam Setaayashne and Doa Tandoorasti! The first 3 peel of the bell created a magical moment

with many a wet eyes in the prayer hall! The outside weather was cloudy throughout the Jashan ceremony but just about the time when the Mobeds were able to set the fire ablaze, the sun burst through with its wonderful golden rays right on the fire which created a surreal atmosphere to be remembered by all present! Someone up above was showering HIS blessings to this new wonderful Dadgah!



Jashan Atash carried to Dadgah! Poras transferring Atash to main Afarganyu. Mobeds bathed by sunlight!



The ZANT members in front! The sumptuous Parsi/Irani dinner spread! The hard workers finally resting!

Almost 150 ZANT members attended the Jashan and the Dadgah Enthronement as well as the dinner thereafter.

Personal Reflections

In our 45 years together, Jo Ann and I have been very fortunate to have uplifting moments in our lives! However, our participation in this inauguration and my personal involvement in all the prayers will always be with us as one of our most uplifting moments in our lives! We want to thank Dadar Ahura Mazda for allowing us to witness this as well as the whole ZANT community who has adopted us both as one of their own and we bow our heads to all of them in humility and gratitude for allowing us to be one of them! We pray that this center will bring this wonderful community together as one, forever in HIS service and prosper and achieve all that they want to for their wonderful community and the ZCNT!

Final Prayer

In the last Para of Atash Nyayesh, “**Upa-thwā hakhshoit geush vānthwa**”, the fire blesses the devotee who brings an offering (dried wood, sukhad, incense, etc.) to him.

“Unto thee (i.e., in thy family) may the flock of cattle increase - **have ample means**. Unto thee may there be an increase of heroic men (*sons having heroic strength*) – **Blessed with many worthy children!** May thou have an active mind (*may thou be clever and intellectual*) – **Endowed with**

active and alert mind! May thy life be active (*may thou perform benevolent and virtuous deeds*) –
Spending the life for others! Mayest thou live a joyous life – **Enjoying life of larger interests!**
Those nights that thou livest. This is the blessing of the Fire (for him) who brings to that fire dry fuel! “

May these blessings of the ZANT Dadgah Fire be bestowed upon all ZANT families and all the FEZANA families so that we all help to spread the knowledge of our beautiful religion among all our fellow Zoroastrians and to all with whom we come in contact!

Atha Jamyaat, Yatha Aafrinaami! (May it be so that I wish!)