

## **Weekly Zoroastrian Scripture Extract # 325: A Mobed's Recollections and Involvement in Muktdad Gatha Days! (cont. from WZSE #324)**

Hello all Tele Class friends:

### **Shehenshahi 10 days of Muktdad including 5 Days of Vahishtoisht Gahambar/Gatha**

Shehenshahi 10 days of Muktdad Gatha starts next week on Wednesday August 7<sup>th</sup> 2019, Roj Aastaad Maah Asfandaard YZ 1388 with 5 Vahishtoisht Gahambaar and Gatha days starting from August 12<sup>th</sup> Monday followed by our Navroze on August 17<sup>th</sup> Saturday. In India and Pakistan, in all over cities and villages, and especially in Mumbai, all Parsi/Irani Humdins will be going to Atash Behrams and Agiyaris for attending their dear departed ones' Muktdad prayers by their family Mobeds.

We were performing 5 Gatha Days prayers in our ZAF (Miami/Ft. Lauderdale/Boca Raton) for 8 years from 2009 through 2016, and unfortunately, we could not continue after that. In August 2015, our very good friend, ArZan Wadia, currently VP FEZANA, requested me to write my recollections of Muktdad while growing up in the small village of Tarapore, and then in USA. These recollections were included in August 15, 2015 Parsi Khabar Blog of ArZan. I have decided to repeat these recollections today in this weekly but due to its length, divide it up in two WZSEs #324 and #325.

In our last weekly WZSE #324, we presented the first installment of these recollections. Today, in this next weekly WZSE #325, we will present the rest of these recollections.

Since we will not be performing Muktdad/Gatha prayers in ZAF or South Florida, Jo Ann and I decided to go to Houston this year and participate in their 10 days of Muktdad/Gatha prayers in their spank new Bhandara Atashkadeh. We will be there from August 5 through August 16<sup>th</sup>.

Many Humdins always ask me what the prayers are that we should recite during these 10 Muktdad/Gatha days. During the first 5 Muktdad days, Framrot Haa should be recited. On each Gatha Day, individual Gatha should be prayed, Ahunavaiti Gatha on first Gatha Day, etc.

[We have attached an article by my very good friend and the Principal of Dadar Athornan Institute, Dr. Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia on: Making Muktdad More Meaningful.](#) It gives a very detailed explanation of the origin of Muktdad, what we should do during these days and the special prayers we are supposed to pray during Muktdad. Hope you all enjoy reading it.

So, here is the second installment of these recollections:

### **A Mobed's Recollections and Involvement in Muktdad Gatha Days! (continued from WZSE #324)**

When we were in our beloved M. F. Cama Athornan Institute, we used to get enough holidays for Muktdad so we can attend the 18 Muktdad days. After I became Navar and Martab and Saamel, I will pitch in for all prayers like Satums, Afringans and Farokshis a gratis.

Each Gatha Day, there will be at least an Anjuman Jashan in the Ujiran Geh led by Dad and we had to participate in it after being a Mobed. Just before praying the Doa Tandoorasti, the Anjuman Secretary, Nana Bhai, will give Ashodad to all participating priests and we had to slide the Paavli coin (four Anna, 1/4 Rupee) towards Dad in style – no Ashodad for us.

Well these are my recollections of Deemori, Gaanghaa and 100+ homes of Tarapore Gaam! Alas, today there are no such families but one yes one old wonderful lady residing in Tarapore, and the Agiary is hardly attended and once a year my late dear brother Palanji and his children are celebrating Dharamshalla Anniversary on January 26th with a Jashan and a Gahambar lunch for over 200 Parsi/Irani Humdins!

Moving on to M. F. Cama Institute, in our SSC year (High School Senior), we had to go to an accredited school over a mile away on foot. We could not get away for Muktdad and we four SSC students (Dasturji Feroze Kotwal, Mobed Kersey Antia, Mobed Noshir Bharucha and myself) were all alone in the “Aalishaan” (humongous) building of MFCAI. But we were allowed to take leave for 5 Gatha days and I was lucky to be asked by the Panthaky of Patel Agiary down the road from MFCAI to pray for his Behdins for five Gatha days and for the first time in my life as a Mobed, I was paid a princely sum of 125 rupees! With the help of my eldest brother Kawasji, I bought a golden colored watch with lighted up dial in the dark, a prized possession of mine for many a year!

After 2 years in St. Xavier’s College hostel, I moved to Dadar Parsi Colony for the four-year course in Chemical Engineering at the UDCT. During the first Muktdad there, I was asked by the Rustom Fraamnaa Agiary Panthaky to come for 5 days of Gathas to pray for his Behdins! The first day I went there and after my daily prayers, I was given a Naamgharan book of a Behdin family and an instruction of 20 minutes! I was baffled and upset and after thinking for a while, I went to the Panthaky, returned the book and left! That was the end of my Muktdad Days in India!

So, we finally reached New York via London/Southampton after about 6 weeks and settled in Evanston, IL for my Graduate Chemical Engineering. My next Muktdad experience was in 1999, when I was getting lonely not to be involved in Muktdad prayers and so visited Mumbai and took part in Muktdad prayers at the J. D. Colaba Agiary where my late brother Mobed Palanji was the Panthaky. That was a wonderful, uplifting experience of being involved in the Muktdad prayers for 10 days; but it did not compare with my Tarapore Muktdad days!

Well after that, I was reading about Gatha prayers in many major Humdins’ cities like Chicago, Toronto, ZAGNY in NY, Houston, etc. and I informed Jo Ann that I want to be a part of these prayers somewhere and so in 2006 we visited Chicago ZAC and I took part in all 5 Gatha days prayers leading 3 Jashans with my Mobed friends. Then next year in 2007, we were invited by Vancouver Humdins to lead their Gatha prayers since they were having trouble finding Mobeds. Jo Ann and I visited Vancouver and once again I performed all 5 Gatha prayers. One of the highlights of this visit was that I asked Kashmira Suraliwalla, Vancouver President, if Irani Humdins take part in the Muktdad and answer was no. I further inquired if there is an Irani Mobed and yes there was Mobed Jamsheed Jamsheedi. I wanted to meet him and after many denials, he finally agreed for Jo Ann and me to visit them in their home and they were very hospitable to us. I discussed with Mobed Jamsheed about

participating in the Muktdad prayers and first he was quite reluctant but after much persistence and comparing our Jashan prayers and finding quite a bit of similarity, he agreed to join us in Muktdad prayers and lo and behold! He joined us for all 5 Gatha days Jashans and to me that was the most satisfying experience!

The next year we visited San Jose Gatha prayers under the leadership of my very good friend Mobed Kobad Jamshed, an ex-MFCAI and a Udvada Mobed, and we had a wonderful time in their beautiful Dar-e-Meher, most beautiful we have found in North America.

And then came 2009 when one of our best friends, Dick Vazir, passed away unexpectedly in Miami! Dick and his wife Sheroomai have been very big help to Miami ZAF people and it was a shock to hear about his passing away. Dick always used to ask me when we are going to have a Dar-e-Meher in Miami. And his favorite complaint to me was: Sheroo and I have been going to Toronto for over 20 years to attend Muktdad Gatha prayers and when are we going to have Gatha prayers in Miami? So, we started to talk in ZAF Miami to have our first Muktdad Gatha prayers in fond memory of Dick: Sheroomai generously offered her home for the prayers and our own Dinyar Mehta of Orlando CFG not only donated white marble top tables for the Behraas but offered to bring them to Sheroomai's home from Orlando for which we in whole South Florida are very grateful. In fact, Dinyar Bhai is doing it ever since each year!

Our first Miami ZAF Muktdad Gatha prayers started in 2009 with 71 names in Naamgharan. We performed 3 Satums each day, one community Jashan and also "Paachhli Raat nu Bhanwaanu" (prayers after 12 midnight on the last Gatha to say goodbye to all Asho Farohars). Jo Ann's and mine experiences with the three previous years of Muktdad Gatha prayers participation was a big help in arranging and managing our first Muktdad. The whole Tampa ZATAMBAY, Orlando CFG and Miami/Ft. Lauderdale/Boca Raton Humdins participated in this first Muktdad Gatha prayers. Our ZAF President Jahan Daruwala and his wife Nancy and our own Moti Goraani (chief Parsi cook), Arnavaz Irani, were very big help to us to start this tradition in Miami. In 2010, we were very thankful to Hovi and Burjis Shroff for offering their home for the prayers and we did this for four years. Once again, we were without a home when our another very good friend, Soli Irani, passed away unexpectedly in 2014 and his wife Jeroo and his son Furrokh (who is our ZAF President) offered Jeroo's home for our Muktdad prayers in fond memory of Soli Irani. And this year, we are continuing in Jeroo's home again, we have 9 marble tables, 48 families participating and 151 Naamgharan names and same regimen of 3 Satums, one community Jashan each Gatha day and "Paachhli Raat Nu Bhanwaanu" and today is the Ushtavad Gatha and we hope to continue this tradition for some years to come! We know that other Zoroastrian Associations have been performing Muktdad Gatha prayers for a very long time but a smaller group like ours in South Florida are very proud for doing this for 8 years!



The Iranshah, Udvada



Patel Agiary, Andheri; 101st year Celebrations



As the main Mobed of these 3 groups, Jo Ann and I are very happy to be able to do this and personally I get this unbelievable spiritual uplifting in performing these prayers! In my humble opinion, the whole ZAF Humdin group is in it with many many volunteers for collecting names and Behraas, for setting up tables, flowers and daily Satum food items prepared in their homes by themselves and for donating homemade Parsi/Irani food for all attending Humdins 2-3 days of the 5 Gatha prayers. We have never seen such good feeling of belonging among all who help and attend the prayers! That is the Essence of Muktaf Gatha prayers!

In the closing, after a tumultuous year of personal physical problems, staging and selling our beautiful Hira Villa of 21 years, downsizing and buying our Hira Villa II, I often wondered if I would be able to perform this year's Muktaf Gatha prayers (2006)! But with the help of blessings from Dadar Ahura Mazda, Zarathushtra Saheb, Iranshah, my dear wife Jo Ann of 49 years and our girls and their families, and the best wishes of all you friends and families from all over the world, here we are in the second Gatha! Thank you all for your support and these memories will stay with us forever!

Jo Ann and I wish you all a very Happy and Uplifting experience during the 10 Muktaf Days and may our wonderful community live in peace and prosperity with the blessings of the Farohars!

**May the Flame of Fellowship, Love, Charity and Respect for all burn ever eternal in our hearts so we can do HIS work with humility, diligence and eternal enthusiasm!**

**In HIS service 24/7!**

**Atha Jamyaat, Yatha Aafrinaamahi! (May it be so as we wish!)**

Love and Tandoorasti, Soli



*Satum prayer at ZAF Miami Muktd/Gatha prayers.*