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SEPTEMBER 7-SEPTEMBER 20, 2019

₹ 50 (Total pages 44)



Muktads in  
Singapore

**Faith and fellowship**

The community in Singapore observed their first muktads and brought in the New Year on a festive note

*Parinaz Gandhi*

Nearly 200 members of the 350 strong Zoroastrian community in Singapore came together on the occasion of Navroz, August 17, 2019. "We had a lot of new things happening," stated Neville Dotivala, president of the Parsi Zoroastrian Association of South East Asia, Singapore, commonly known as the Parsi Zoroastrian Association of Singapore (PZAS). The play Bawaji Na Gota-lah was enthusiastically performed by around 11 adults and 11 children. Additionally they had a lucky draw for a gara. For the second consecutive year they flew down chef Zubin Rupa from Bombay to cook Parsi food for the Navroz dinner.

Muktads too during the preceding five Gatha days were organized for the first time at their Zoroastrian House "in an endeavor to unite the small Parsi community in Singapore," wrote Dotivala. An antique marble table with six vases bearing flowers honored the fravashis of the dear departed. Around 20 Zarathushtris would regularly attend the prayers recited by Ervad Percy Khambatta. The attendance doubled for the fifth day jashan on Pateti.

"The managing committee of the PZAS has worked relentlessly to make this possible," noted Dotivala in his email responses to our queries, giving credit to former president Homiyar Vasania, secretary Natasha Karanjia, vice president Hormuz Avari and committee member Monira Bhada for spearheading the initiative taken by the Association. "The overwhelming enthusiasm and fervor of the committee members" ensured that the prayers with corresponding names, vases, flowers, fruits could be offered for six families.



Top: muktad table and prayers at the Zoroastrian House in Singapore; above (from l): Burzeen Driver, Natasha Karanjia, Homiyar Vasania, Azmin Daver, Hoshi Deboo, Neville Dotivala, Khurshid Choksey, Hormuz Avari, Monira Bhada, Rummy Kanga Photos: Armin and Neville Dotivala

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Touching Mumbai's local railway station Khardi Hills, 700 ft high, near Igatpuri



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*Exteriors and interiors of Zoroastrian House gifted by Homiyar Vasania in memory of his father Dara (above r)*

A resident of Singapore for the last 21 years, Dotivala, who took over as president in March 2018 is considered the "life" of most of the Singapore gatherings. A chartered accountant by training, he is currently regional tax manager at Schlumberger, Singapore. Earlier he was council member on the Inter Religious Organization (IRO), Singapore. The other office bearers and committee members, as introduced by Dotivala, are Avari who is the "go-to guy" in the committee and a strong contributor, whether to organize events, manage external relations or represent the community. A chartered accountant working in the banking industry, he is currently the Parsi Zoroastrian representative on the IRO. Karanjia runs her own professional cake business and is always willing to help organize and participate in programs to drive stronger community engagement. Honorary treasurer Burzeen Driver is the grounding force in the committee with his calm demeanor and quiet, behind-the-scenes contribution. Having lived in Singapore for 26 years, this engineer works in S. T. Microelectronics as a yield enhancement manager.

The other committee members include Vasania, the "ideas guy" on the committee, the driving force and patron. He is known to always challenge the committee to take up new and different projects. It was thanks to his largesse that the 3,000 sq ft Zoroastrian House materialized in 2010 when he offered the premises to the PZAS on a three-year rolling lease contract at one Singapore dollar (Rs 52) per month. He is also a trustee on the Parsi Lodge Charity, Singapore. A graduate of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Vasania runs his own investment management company in Singapore. With his 'can do' attitude, Rummy Kanga, erstwhile treasurer, has contributed quietly and selflessly to PZAS over the years. An IIM graduate and a marketing guru, he is the regional head of marketing for Abbott Labs in Singapore. Associated with the PZAS over a long period of time, Hoshi Deboo has recently joined and made valuable contributions on the committee, coordinating with outside agencies and is the managing partner of M&A, a management consulting firm.

The ladies on the committee include Bhada who serves as a voice of reason and comes up with out-of-the-box ideas. She helps organize as well as encourages participation at PZAS functions. Past secretary of PZAS, Khurshid Choksey has ensured the Association has held some amazing events and at the same time been within budget with her good organizing and public relations skills, being an event organizer. With her enthusiasm for Parsi natak and storytelling for kids Azmin Daver brings a youthful exuberance to the committee. As a teacher she is building the future of numerous children in Singapore. The youngest member on the committee, Tushna Antia helps organize and participates in community events. As a real estate agent she sells high end property in Singapore.

Khambatta, as described by Dotivala, "is the most dynamic and accommodative priest you can ever find. He has been in Singapore for almost 30 years and has held the mantle of head priest in Singapore for at least 20 years. He has been working in the food and beverage industry since a long time."



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