

Weekly Zoroastrian Scripture Extract # 378: A Mobed's Recollections and Involvement in Muktaḡ Gatha Days! (continued from [WZSE #377](#))

Hello all Tele Class friends:

Shehenshahi 10 days of Muktaḡ including 5 Days of Vahishtoisht Gahambar/Gatha

Shehenshahi 10 days of Muktaḡ Gatha starts next week on Thursday August 6th 2020, Roj Aastaad Maah Asfandaard YZ 1389 with 5 Vahishtoisht Gahambaar and Gatha days starting from August 11th Tuesday followed by our Navroze on August 16th Sunday.

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' Muktaḡ prayers by their family Mobeds.

However, due these extra ordinary times due to COVID-19, all Atashkadehs will be restricting all Humdins from visiting Atashkadehs during these holy days and only a few will be allowed to visit them based on the local Government Rulings. However, all Atashkadehs will have the regular Muktaḡ Prayers.

In our last weekly [WZSE #377](#), we presented the first installment of these recollections. Today, in this next weekly WZSE #378, we will present the rest of these recollections.

Since we will not be performing Muktaḡ/Gatha prayers in ZAF or South Florida, Jo Ann and I decided to go to Houston last year and to participate in their 10 days of Muktaḡ/Gatha prayers in their spank new Bhandara Atashkadeh. We were there from August 5 through August 16th, for the first 9 days of Muktaḡ.

Many Humdins always ask me what the prayers are that we should recite during these 10 Muktaḡ/Gatha days. During the first 5 Muktaḡ 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 Muktaḡ More Meaningful.](#) It gives a very detailed explanation of the origin of Muktaḡ, what we should do during these days and the special prayers we are supposed to pray during Muktaḡ. Hope you all enjoy reading it.

So, here is the second installment of these recollections:

A Mobed's Recollections and Involvement in Muktaḡ Gatha Days!

When we were in our beloved M. F. Cama Athornan Institute, we used to get enough holidays for Muktaḡ so we can attend the 18 Muktaḡ 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 used to celebrate Dharamshalla Anniversary on January 26th with a Jashan and a Gahambar lunch for over 200 Parsi/Irani Humdins! Jo Ann and I have attended a few of these Anniversaries in Tarapore. Now, Palanji's children, Kurush and Mahrukh with their families continue this January tradition.

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, at the Northwestern Technology School. 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 Muktaad prayers for 10 days; but it did not compare with my Tarapore Muktaad 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 Muktaad 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 Muktaad 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 Muktaad 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 Muktaad 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 Muktaad 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 was doing it ever since each year!

Our first Miami ZAF Muktaad 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 was our ZAF President) offered Jeroo's home for our Muktdad prayers in fond memory of Soli Irani. We continued Gatha prayers in Jeroo Irani's home for 3 years. In the last year of Muktdad, we had 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". Unfortunately, we could not continue this Muktdad tradition in ZAF after 2016. 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!

As the main Mobed of these 3 groups consisting of Tampa ZATAMBAY, Orlando CFG and Miami/Ft. Lauderdale/Boca Raton Humdins, Jo Ann and I were 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 was 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 helped and attended the prayers! That is the Essence of Muktdad 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 that year's Muktdad Gatha prayers (2016)! 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 were in the 8th Gatha prayers in ZAF! 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 Mukhad 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 Jamyat, Yatha Aafrinaamahi! (May it be so as we wish!)

Love and Tandoorasti, Soli

