



Youth Connections:

- ◆ Level One (Ages 5-7): Shireen Gandhi and Anahita Kavarana
- ◆ Level Two (Ages 8-10): Shireen Gandhi
- ◆ Level Three (Ages 11-18) Shernaz Minwalla and Bepsi Sanjana

The focus of this issue is community. Overarching questions challenged the Zarathushtis of Michigan to think about how values and a sense of community helped our ancestors to survive and carry on traditions. These same values hold our community together.

Enjoy.

Shernaz Minwalla

ZAOM President



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Fire Temples are "Cool"

Back in 2013, the youngest of our three religion classes met in both September and October. During these classes, our youngest students learned about many subjects quite relevant to our faith. During the September session, this group was taught some general lessons from the book "My God Ahura Mazda", about who Ahura Mazda really is, and about the differences between Spenta Mainyu and Anghre Mainyu. They also learned about the three different types of fire temples. They learned that the Atash Behram was the highest type of fire temple, and that the only fire temples in the United States are Atash Dadgah. Two kids said that it was really "cool" that they learned about fire temples in class and soon after, they both went to India and had their Navjotes. Then they had the opportunity to visit the Iranshah Atash Behram in Udvada. They have been initiated into our faith, wear their kusti and do their prayers daily, and are proud to be Zoroastrians. During their Gujarati session, they learned some everyday Gujarati words. Then, in October, they learned about our annual November Gahambar and the Jashan. The kids also made wreaths to give thanks for everything in their lives, on the Jashan day. They reviewed upon the meanings of the prayers Ashem Vohu and Yatha Ahu Vairyo. Shireen Gandhi, who teaches this class, said "I enjoy teaching this age group because they are so receptive."

The Value Sort

The middle/high school class had a very interesting lesson on values. Shernaz Auntie first asked us who we thought was a good role model, and why? Then she asked us for an organization that does good work; an organization that is excellent, ethical, and engaging. Some choices were the Red Cross and Salvation Army.

After that we did an interesting activity that really made you think. Shernaz Auntie gave us thirty important values, and gave us six columns to arrange them in. You started in the two middle columns by picking the twelve most valuable values; and then worked your way out and assigned ten less valuable values and finally eight least valuable values. The values were: Honesty, social concerns, power/influence, creativity/pioneering, curiosity, searching for knowledge, teaching/mentoring, faith, enjoyment of the work itself, self-understanding, understanding others, wealth/material well-being, openness, vision, courage/risk-taking, professional accomplishments, rewarding and supporting relationships, spirituality, recognition from one's field, wide-ranging interests, quality, challenge, solitude/contemplation, independence, honesty, professional conduct, fame/success, personal growth/learning, hard work/commitment, and efficient work habits.

This activity made us really think in which values we really believed in. After we arranged our values we looked at everyone else's' values. Everyone had arranged the values in a similar way! Shernaz



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Auntie also had a few adults do the exercise, and their values were sorted much differently than the class.

After that everyone named a value that they thought was the most important. We then discussed why these values were the most important, and how they have to do with everyday life. Next we chose the values that were least important, and discussed why.

At the end of the lesson we had a very good understanding on values, and how they help you succeed in life. It was a great lesson that made us think in what values we really believed in.

Journey to Sanjan

The ZAOM association met in September for their first religion class after the summer. After catching up with each other, everyone split up into their classes. Shireen Gandhi went through a brief recap of the topics the Level 2 Class learned during the previous year. For example good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, the 7 creations, etc. Afterward she started teaching the kids the story of how the Zoroastrian people settled in India.

The children received write ups with the details which explained the Zoroastrian journey to India. The Zoroastrians lived in Ancient Persia (Iran). Around 1000 years later a new group of people took over Iran and they did not allow the practice of Zoroastrianism. A group of Zoroastrians decided to leave. They landed in Sanjan, India, but they had to get permission from King Jadi Rana to stay. The king sent them a bowl of

milk that was filled to the rim and told them this represented Sanjan and there was no more room for them to stay. A Dastur (Zoroastrian priest) put sugar in the bowl and sent it back to the king. The Dastur said since the milk did not overflow with the sugar in it, the sugar would represent the Zoroastrians living there without overcrowding. The King allowed them to stay and keep their religion but they had to follow certain rules. The conditions were: the Zoroastrians had to learn Gujarati, women had to wear saris, they were not permitted to carry any weapons, and marriage ceremonies were to be done after dark.

A girl from the class said, "When we learned about the story it made me think how hard it was for our ancestors to preserve our religion. I'm happy they moved from Iran to India because I get to be a Zoroastrian." This story is told to many Zoroastrian children. The kids are thankful to be part of this religion and for the teachers that teach them each week. Many of them liked the story and happily shared it with everyone. They learned how the Zoroastrians sweetened up India. The most important part of the Gahambar may not be the Gahambar itself, but the idea behind it. The idea of getting together and working as a team to make such an event possible holds many lessons for other communities and organizations as well as our own.



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Good vs. Evil

We read a book about Ahriman and Zarathustra. Ahriman, the evil spirit was going to take over the 7 creations but Zarathustra stopped him with the Amesha Spentas. These Amesha Spentas are Vohu Manah (Good Mind), Asha Vahistah (Truth), Khshatra Vairya (Good Dominion), Spenta Armaiti (Devotion), Haurvatat (Wholeness and Health), and Ameretat (Immortality). The Amesha Spentas protect the creations: animals, fire, the sky, earth, water, plants, and human beings. Ms. Gandhi (Mom) had questions about the story for us to answer. Since we had the story in front of us and we had our old notes on the 7 creations and the Amesha Spentas, it was not a difficult exercise to do, but it did help us learn about what happened when Zarathustra had to fight against evil. We also went over the word-scramble on the Amesha Spentas that was assigned for homework. Then it was time for our Gujrati lesson where we reviewed numbers, fruits and vegetables, and small sentences.

November Gahambar

It is a tradition for the ZAOM Community to have an exciting Gahambar at the Novi Hall. As always, everyone sat for prayers which were led by Tehemton Mirza and Noshir Sidhwa. Later, the Parsi crowd gathered for hors d'oeuvres and snacks. Once everyone had something in their stomach, they all listened attentively to Tehemton Mirza's speech on righteousness. He explained that the Ashem Vahou prayer states that happiness is given to those who

do the right thing. He gave the audience a situation in which you are driving a two-seater Ferrari, but there are three people (old man, friend, and beautiful girl) shivering in the cold rain. What is the right thing to do in this situation? Of course, the answer is driving the old man home. The Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer says to give to those who need. One may think that charity is simply giving money, but it is much more than that. Charity is the giving of oneself. Coaching, knowledge, and community service are all examples of charity. Tehemton Uncle also spoke of the idea of purity. What does it mean to be pure? It is cleanliness of the body and mind. There are different types of purity: mental, environmental, mistreat. Do not pollute the body, environment, or mind. One who gives up activity is no good. One must do something, work, and study in order to earn a living. In conclusion, one must think and make their own decisions, think good thoughts, say good words, and do good deeds, work hard, practice what you preach, be honest, be responsible, be mindful, and enjoy life.

Raising awareness is pretty simple, and while these next few things may seem difficult or time consuming, they are painless. Every true Zoroastrian should say their prayers every day and do their kusti. While not everyone knows all the kusti prayers, they can at least say the main ones. Taking five to ten minutes each day to pray makes you feel good and gives many the feeling of rejuvenation and being one with god. Though this means spending five less minutes watching TV, talking on the phone, or engaging in other pastimes, it is simple and rewarding. We should also attend our prayer classes or do individual research to increase our



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knowledge about our religion's many intricate customs and beliefs.

Although these may seem like large commitments, they are, in reality, all reasonable and achievable. If a significant number of the remaining population takes up a few of these practices, our community will begin to thrive.

Community

In the month of February the high school and middle school students talked about Community. We talked about how community isn't just a word to some people. It's more than that. We made a web, showing all the different characteristics of a community and how they fit together. Some examples were Togetherness, Selflessness, Family, Religion, and many more. Earlier this year, a student at the University of Michigan had a concussion and was rushed to the hospital. When we heard the story, we just had to help. So we set up a schedule for when people come in and see him. We also took care of his parents and sister. We brought them food, washed their clothes, comforted them, and did everything we could do for the family. We didn't know them, yet we still tried to help as much as we could. So you see we didn't know the people, yet we still acted like they were part of the community.

Challenges

Every family, community, person, and religion believes in values. They are important and will always help you. They are a part of you and symbolize

you. So over the past few religion classes we discussed our values and narrowed it down to the top five. In the December class the upper class talked about the challenges to our values, how to face these challenges, and how to do the right thing. This helped everyone share their ideas, experiences, and connections to such an important thing.

Our five main values were creativity, honesty, understanding and helping others, quality of work, and relationships. When asking a classmate about the religion class activity she said, "We put our minds together, and came up with the best definition of our peer group values." One can face various hardships trying to abide by these values. So to start off we talked about how creativity must be sustainable, how there can be disagreements, and how you must have time, energy and resources to put your creative idea into action. Honesty is another important value that can be very difficult to face. Challenges to being honest are the consequences, the peer and parental pressure, and the perception of being critical. All of these challenges to each value were put together by the students of the class who each shared their opinion and personal thoughts. Understanding and Helping Others can be a difficult task to complete. This is because of personal convenience, fully understanding others, emotional investments, and conflict of ethics. Another value that is hard to challenge is Quality of Work. This is because of



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time, effort, procrastination, distractions, technology, and communication with others.

Lastly, relationships are the hardest thing to follow up on. It is due to conflict with others, different experiences, and interests. Doing the right thing can be very hard but we must remember our values so we can always follow the right path.

This religion class gave an insightful view on the importance of our ethics and values. Another classmate said the class was, "very enriching and was a more in-depth discussion of our values." I, personally, will always remember our wonderful class session when having to make the right choice. Our main values will guide us and help us throughout our lives.

A Community Comes Together

Dear fellow members of the Michigan Zarathushti Community,

In January, we heard the tragic news of a young Parsi Engineering Grad student who had collapsed into a coma, and immediately our hearts went out to him and his family. Without the least bit of hesitation, members of our community contacted Khushroo's family in India while others ensured the best medical care and housing for the family. Through the compassionate and hospitable nature of our community, Bomi, Ruzbeh, and Rashna found comfort in our visits to the hospital, nourishment when weak, and clean clothes when needed.

Doctors in our community sat in meetings to make sure the family understood Khushroo's status. When legal advice was required, multiple and persistent phone calls were made to the social worker and lawyers. As Khushroo's condition deteriorated, members of our community handled the necessary details so the family could focus on their son. Throughout this horrible tragedy, we were able to provide the family with some strength, peace of mind, and friendship.

Everyone from the lawyer to the funeral director was awed by this community's willingness to lend financial and moral support for a family we had never met before. Our response was always the same, "It's the right thing to do." After nodding their heads in agreement, they, too, lent support for the family. I quote a friend of the family, "Your helpful and willing nature have impressed and motivated me."

Although our hearts still go out to the Mistry family as they grieve for their young son in Mumbai and Pune, we can be comforted knowing that we are surrounded by wonderful members of our community who utterly embody the three pillars of our Religion: Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds.

May Ahura Mazda keep us all safe, healthy and happy.

Respectfully,
Shernaz
ZAOM -EC



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