



Executive Committee

President:
Rooky Fitter

Vice President:
Firouz Felfeli

Program Chair:
Darayus Mistry

Treasurer:
Persis Choksy

Jt. Secretaries:
Sheila Madon
Mehernosh Amroli

Youth Coordinator:
Daisy Pithawalla

Special Constitution Meeting



Dear ZAC Members,

The **ZAC Executive Committee** is requesting every single member to **ATTEND and make it your TOP PRIORITY** to be present at the upcoming **Special General Body Meeting on April 26th, 2025**.

This meeting is critical. The agenda and primary focus will be aligning our governing documents with California law, by separating the By-Laws from the Policy and Procedures, a much-needed step for clarity, compliance, and the future governance of our community.

Without your physical presence, we cannot proceed. You are very crucial to this process.

There is **NO voting by proxy**, so **your vote and your presence** is essential.

This is a members only meeting.

Date: Saturday, April 26th, 2025

Time: 3:00 pm

Venue: ZAC Center

Please plan to be there on time so the meeting can start and finish promptly.

Please Register if you will be attending the meeting & dinner by Wednesday, April 23rd.

If attending the meeting only, please email committee@zacla.org.



Zoroastrian Association of California

UPCOMING ZAC EVENTS

Saturday, April 26 th , 2025	Special Constitution Meeting
Sunday, June 1 st , 2025	Picnic at William Mason Park, Irvine
Saturday, June 28 th , 2025	Annual General Body Meeting
Saturday, July 19 th , 2025	Bingo Nite
Saturday, August 23 rd , 2025	Navroze Function
Saturday, September 20 th , 2025	Sports Day

Please note that event dates are subject to change; specific times will be confirmed as each event approaches. More dates to follow in upcoming Newsletters & event emails.

Membership

ZAC Annual Membership runs January through December, click here to [complete your membership for 2025](#). If your address/phone number/email has changed, please let the secretaries know so we have your accurate information. *If you registered for Family and your child has reached the age of 18, the child will need to complete a separate membership form.*

Recognition

Beacon of Zoroastrian Devotion at 13: Ervad Kyan Lali



On December 13, 2024 (Roj Hormazd, Mah Amardad, 1394 YZ), the Zoroastrian community witnessed a momentous occasion as 13-year-old Ervad Kyan Arzan Lali ascended to the esteemed rank of Martab at Mumbai's venerable Vatcha Gandhi Agiary. This significant achievement not only underscores Kyan's unwavering dedication to his faith but also highlights his exceptional commitment to preserving and practicing Zoroastrian traditions.

The Martab ceremony represents the second and more advanced level of Zoroastrian priesthood. While the Navar initiation introduces one to the foundational duties of the priesthood, the Martab elevates a priest's qualifications, enabling them to perform higher liturgical services, including the Yasna, Vendidad, and Baj ceremonies, as well as officiate purification rituals like the nahan and bareshtnum.

Kyan's spiritual journey began two years earlier, on December 20, 2022 (Roj Amardad, Mah Amardad, 1392 YZ), when he completed his Navar ceremony at the same Agiary. This foundational rite, performed in memory of his great-grandmother, the late Najamai Kaikhushroo Lali, was conducted by Ervad Khushroo Kanga under the guidance of Ervad Hormuz Dadachanji.

Under the mentorship of Ervad Jal Panthaky and with unwavering support from his father, Arzan Lali, Kyan dedicated over five years to rigorous training. His perseverance and devotion were evident when, shortly after



Zoroastrian Association of California

his Navar initiation, he joined 18 other mobeds in a Jashan celebrating the 166th anniversary of the Vatcha Gandhi Agiary. Kyan continues to serve his community at the Zoroastrian Association of California by performing Jashans during Gahambars, Parabars, Mukhtad prayers, and the Boi ceremony whenever possible under the guidance of Ervad Zarrir and Zerkxis Bhandara. At the 18th North American Zoroastrian Congress held in Houston, Ervad Kyan participated in the Jashan ceremony on January 1, 2025, conducted by Vada Dasturji Khursheed Dastur and 15 other mobeds.

Beyond his religious pursuits, Kyan exemplifies a harmonious balance between spirituality and personal development. Currently a 7th-grade student from D39 Campus in San Deigo, California, he is an avid soccer player with the SD Force Club, holds a second-degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do, and has achieved the First-Class Rank in scouting. Notably, he was recently honored with the Good Life Emblem award from ZAGNY and is ambitiously working towards becoming an Eagle Scout.

The global Zoroastrian community beams with pride at Kyan's accomplishments. His progression from Navar to Martab at such a tender age serves as a beacon of inspiration, illustrating the profound impact of dedication, mentorship, and familial support. Kyan's journey not only preserves the rich tapestry of Zoroastrian rituals but also inspires young Zoroastrians worldwide to embrace and uphold their heritage.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Ervad Kyan Arzan Lali on this remarkable achievement. May Ahura Mazda bless him with continued wisdom, strength, and the zeal to serve and uplift the Zoroastrian community for many years to come.

Past Events

A VISIT OF HONOR US Congressman Lou Correa visits ZAC: Receives tribute to Cyrus the Great's Human Rights Legacy.



US Congressman Correa at the Zoroastrian Association of California on February 3, 2025 (Roj Daepdin Mah Sherevar 1394 Y.Z.), the Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC) was honored by a visit from U.S. Congressman Lou Correa of California's 46th District. The Congressman's presence at the ZAC Community Center in Orange, was a significant occasion for the community.

Congressman Correa was warmly welcomed by ZAC President Rooky Fitter, along with Captains Khushroo Fitter and Zeus Cursetji, FEZANA VP Xerxes Commissariat, Sam Billimoria, Oofrish Contractor, Homayar Gandhi, Phiroze Gundevia, social worker Ketty Alamshaw, Dhun Alamshaw, and Head Priest Ervad Zarrir Bhandara.

As a token of their appreciation, ZAC presented Congressman Correa with two distinguished gifts. The first, a beautifully crafted statuette of Cyrus the Great, symbolizes his pivotal role in establishing the first charter of human rights in history. The second, a unique customized metal plaque, featured a rich wooden frame accented with metallic flame imagery. At its base, the plaque displayed a miniature metallic image of the Cyrus Cylinder, alongside the Congressman's name and the inscription "From the Zoroastrian Community, 2025." This plaque is the first of seven such tributes to be presented to various federal and state officials.

Zoroastrian Association of California

The enduring influence of Cyrus the Great is further exemplified by Xenophon's "Cyropaedia" (370 BCE). This treatise on the education of Cyrus has served as a guide to democratic leadership for Western democracies and, crucially, inspired the Founding Fathers of America in framing the U.S. Constitution. It provided a blueprint for governing a diverse, multi-faceted society in peace and prosperity. The extraordinary legacy of Cyrus the Great has illuminated the path towards freedom and civilization for millennia, contributing significantly to landmark achievements such as the American Civil Rights Act of 1964. This indelible Zoroastrian legacy is etched in eternity.

The plaque's inscription eloquently detailed the freedoms decreed by Cyrus the Great on October 28, 539 BCE: freedom of religion, speech, assembly, cultural and civil rights, equality of women and freedom from slavery. These principles, enshrined in history, represent a gold standard for human rights that remains unsurpassed. Cyrus the Great's historical significance extends even to biblical texts, where he is identified as a Messiah (Isaiah 45:1-45:4). The plaque was penned by ZAC member Sam Billimoria, while the frame and design of both the statuette and plaque were professionally created and generously donated to ZAC by an external source specializing in prestigious awards, including the Oscars & NFL Honors.



If you have any announcements such as weddings, navjotes, births, deaths, graduations, etc., please let the committee know, so we can include your milestone in the next newsletter.

ZYNA RETREAT (Contributed by our Youth Coordinator Daisy Pithawalla)

On the weekend of February 14-17th, ZYNA had their retreat in SoCal! It began with a youth Valentine's Day party at CZC on Friday night, where the group enjoyed a lively atmosphere filled with laughter and celebration. On Saturday morning, we enjoyed the scenic beauty of Los Angeles with a hike to the iconic Hollywood sign. The panoramic views and the sense of accomplishment made it a memorable adventure. Saturday night continued the Valentine's Day festivities with the ZAC community. The evening was full of joy, with some dancing and games, creating lasting connections among the attendees.



Zoroastrian Association of California



Sunday morning at ZAC was all about self-care and inspiration. The day started with an enlightening wellness talk from Naushad Godrej, who shared valuable insights on maintaining physical and mental well-being. This was followed by an engaging discussion with entrepreneurs from the community, Khushroo Fitter, Rooky Fitter and Mehernosh Pithawalla, who shared their journeys, challenges, and successes, sparking motivation and entrepreneurial spirit among the listeners. The retreat concluded with a cozy bonfire at Huntington Beach on Sunday night, and attendees headed home on Monday morning.

NAVROZE CELEBRATIONS

On a balmy evening on March 22, 2025, ZAC celebrated a beautiful Navroze 2025 with a full house. The evening celebrations began with a communal Humbandagi, led by Ervads Zarrir & Zerkxis Bhandara. ZAC President Rooky Fitter then welcomed the community by wishing everyone a happy, healthy & prosperous New Year.

ZACs shared this joyous occasion with esteemed guests from various sectors of Southern California. Representing the academic community were Dr. Carlo Cereti, Ferdowsi Presidential Chair in Zoroastrian Studies at UC Irvine, accompanied by his wife Tiziana; Dr. Ketu Katrak, Professor of Drama at UC Irvine; and Dr. Behroze Shroff, Lecturer in the Department of Asian American Studies at UC Irvine. From the political realm, Ms. Janet Brown, Secretary to Congressman Lou Correa, was in attendance. The diplomatic community was represented by Mrs. Nurida Gurbanova, spouse of Mr. Vugar Gurbanov, Consul General of Azerbaijan in Los Angeles; Mrs. Shahla Shirinli, Cultural Affairs Officer at the Azerbaijan Consulate; and Mr. Samir Salakhov, Office Manager at the Azerbaijan Consulate.

Following the welcome speech and introductions, Ms. Janet Brown presented Ervad Zarrir Bhandara with a Certification for Humanitarian Contributions, acknowledging his efforts in saving over a thousand lives through regular donations of platelets and plasma. Additionally, she awarded ZAC with a Congressional Record from the House of Representatives, recognizing the significant impact of Zoroastrianism on history and civilization.

This was followed by the YOUTH OF THE YEAR AWARD. This initiative began last year with the support from Yasmin & Phiroze Gundevia, Khushroo & Rooky Fitter & Yashmin & Mehernosh Pithawalla. Mr. Gundevia stated that “The idea behind this initiative is to identify and encourage our youth towards our culture, language, custom, food, religion, and volunteerism. By recognizing them we are encouraging certain outstanding youth to influence the others towards our goal in bringing up ZORO youth to be good ZOARASTRIANS, good human beings & good citizens of this country.”



Zoroastrian Association of California

This year's deserving awardees were Daisy Pithawalla, Zara Commissariat, and Kyra Pithawala. Each recipient was presented with a donation envelope as well as a certificate acknowledging their contributions.



The beautifully decorated flower and food-laden Haftseen table was a sight to behold as people entered; laden with sweet & savory goodies to be enjoyed by all. The evening celebrations continued with delicious appetizers, followed by an extravagant dinner catered by our Vistasp Contractor & ably supported by his wife Oofrish. The sumptuous dinner was followed by mouth-watering falooda for dessert, made & presented as always, by Xerxes Commissariat. The evening ended on a happy note, with an enthusiastic crowd dancing the night away.

All this would not have been made possible by (literally) an army of volunteers, too many to name, but you know exactly

who you are 😊. Some came the day before, to help in the kitchen and to set up the hall with the smallest attention to detail; to set up the Haftseen table, and to help with the cleaning-up late into the night.

We appreciate you all more than words can express. Most of you are the backbone of our community, and we appreciate your presence and help more than words can express. THANK YOU.

MATRIMONIAL

A 26-year-old Parsi girl from Mumbai, presently completing her Master's in Boston (graduating April 2025), is seeking well educated Parsi groom from the US. Parents invite proposals from boys, around 30 years old with family values. Interested parties may respond via email to: connectandreachout@gmail.com.

BEAUTIFUL TORANS FOR SALE

Meher Amaria, living in a very interior village of Songardh District of Gujarat, is expert at making beautiful beads torans as per your design and size. Her products are durable and inexpensive, compared to others. She is the only earning person in her family, supporting a young college-going son, along with an old mother-in-law and cancer affected husband. Please help this Parsi lady whenever there's any requirement. She can courier your order anywhere in the world & can be contacted at +91 99780 58222.

A NAVROZE MESSAGE from our dear Ervad Zarrir Bhandara

I wish you and your dear family a very happy Jamshedi Navroze. May from this day onwards new tidings bring about happiness, progress and prosperity.

From Darkness to Brightness: Illuminating the Path with Zarthosti Wisdom: The journey of life is a constant evolution, a movement from darkness to brightness, from ignorance to enlightenment. This transformative process is deeply rooted in the teachings of Zoroastrianism.

The Ahunavar and Spiritual Integrity: The Ahunavar, or Yatha Ahu Vairyo, prayer emphasizes the interconnectedness of worldly actions and spiritual integrity.



Zoroastrian Association of California

Performing good deeds and helping the virtuous is seen as honoring Ahura Mazda. "Ahu" represents Ahura Mazda, the spiritual lord, while Zarathustra is our spiritual guide in the physical world.

The Meaning of "Guru": "Guru" is derived from Sanskrit words "Gu" (darkness/ignorance) and "Ru" (illumination/wisdom). A guru guides us from darkness to brightness through wisdom and intelligence. Chanting the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer facilitates this transition.

Compassion as Illumination: Compassion is not merely charity; it's recognizing our shared humanity. It's the light within us reaching out to illuminate the darkness in others. Offering assistance enriches both the giver and the receiver, creating a ripple effect of goodness.

Responsibility for Actions: We must take responsibility for both positive and negative outcomes. The "Diva no Namaskar" prayer ritual involves taking an inventory of thoughts, words, and deeds. Holding the "Gireban" during this prayer symbolizes storing and reflecting upon our actions. This practice is a check and balance system.

The Significance of Hand Gestures in Prayer: The debate about uplifted versus joined hands in prayer is addressed. In the Yasna ceremony, priests join their hands, signifying surrender to Ahura Mazda. The joining of hands is also explained by the body's polarity. Our bodies have right and left sides and Ida and Pingala nerve channels. These create an electromagnetic field. Joining hands neutralizes this polarity, creating a balanced space. Touching the "Gireban" at the sternum stimulates the vagus nerve. This triggers the release of dopamine, serotonin, endorphins, and oxytocin. Brainwaves shift to an alpha rhythm, which is conducive to meditation. This creates a focused state, enabling heartfelt prayer. Uplifting hands is used in prayers such as Tandarosti to be in a receptive state.

Inner Wisdom and the "Third Eye": The Gathas speak of seeing Ahura Mazda within, the "third eye" (Spentomad Gatha). This represents inner wisdom and spiritual insight. It's accessible to those who cultivate compassion and clarity. Connecting with our deepest selves allows us to glimpse the divine within.

Sarosh Yazad and Continuity: Sarosh Yazad is "Salare Damane Ahura Mazda," the commander-in-chief. Prayers and rituals begin with Sarosh Yazad, symbolizing continuity in life and beyond. Invoking Sarosh Yazad involves reciting daily prayers and chanting Gathas.

The Airyamana Prayer as a Gathic Summary: The Airyamana prayer is presented as a summary of the five Gathas. It's described as powerful, victorious, and capable of removing afflictions. Quoting Kavasji Edulji Kanga, the prayer is highlighted as the "best amongst the Holy Spell of five Gathas." Yasna 53 is the last Gatha, and Yasna 54 is the Airyema-Ishyo prayer.

The Path to Enlightenment: The journey from darkness to brightness is a continuous process. By practicing compassion, taking responsibility, and connecting with inner wisdom, we illuminate our path.

Thank-you & Happiness be to you
Sincerely,
Zarrir Bhandara



Zoroastrian Association of California

Other News

THREE STARS SHINE BRIGHT (Contributed by Ervad Zarrir Bhandara) **Zara, Kyra, and Daisy Named ZAC Youth of the Year**

The Zoroastrian Association of California proudly celebrated the exceptional contributions of its young members by jointly awarding the prestigious ZAC Youth of the Year Award to three remarkable young women: Zara Xerxes Commissariat, Kyra Ashish Pithawalla, and Daisy Mehernosh Pithawalla.

For Zara and Daisy, their connection to ZAC began even before birth, woven into the fabric of their lives. Kyra, a relative newcomer, has quickly captured the hearts of many within the association through her enthusiastic participation alongside Zara and Daisy. Together, these dedicated young women have consistently demonstrated their commitment by diligently cleaning the premises, tirelessly setting up for events, expertly managing audio and video for functions, and faithfully attending Jashans.

Their well-deserved recognition was bestowed upon them during a vibrant Navroze celebration on March 22nd, in front of 240 appreciative ZAC members. The award ceremony was thoughtfully conducted by past Youth Award recipients, Ervad Zerkxis Bhandara and Zane Commissariat, who shared inspiring reflections on the importance of serving their community and family and embracing ZAC as their home. Heartfelt congratulations to Zara, Kyra, and Daisy for this truly well-earned honor!

This significant award is the vision of three dedicated families: Yasmin & Phiroze Gundevia, Capt. Khushroo & Rooky Fitter, and Yashmin & Mehernosh Pithawalla. Their foresight in establishing this recognition stems from a profound desire to encourage youth participation in the governance of ZAC, nurturing them as the future torchbearers of our cherished community.

A REPORT ON AVAN YAZAD PRAYERS (Contributed by Ervad Zarrir Bhandara)

An Ocean of Faith: A Zoroastrian Pilgrimage on the Pacific

On a serene Sunday, April 6th, coinciding with Avan mahino and the auspicious day of Ashishvang roj, the Zoroastrian Association of California embarked on a unique and heartfelt observance of ancient traditions. Instead of a traditional land-based pilgrimage, they chartered a vessel named 'Something Special' from Long Beach, setting sail for an hour-long cruise with their annual mission of spiritual connection. This special undertaking commenced with two dozen devoted Zarhostis uniting in prayer. The rhythmic recitation of the Yatha Ahu Vairyo filled the sea air as they performed the Kusti and Faraziyat prayers. Led by Ervad Zarrir Bhandara, the Avan Ardavishur Niyayesh resonated across the water, their hearts attuning to the benevolent energies of Avan, Ashishvang, and Perendi Yazads. In a beautiful gesture of reverence, they showered the Pacific waves with fragrant rose petals from their gardens, followed by offerings of rice, milk, and sugar. Praying the sacred Yatha Ahu Vairyo aboard the boat evoked a powerful connection to their ancestral journey. It recalled the historical voyage when our forefathers braved the seas to reach India, reciting this very prayer to calm a furious storm – a tradition still honored by the Kolis, who invoke 'Parsi Taro Thabaryo' with unwavering faith, often receiving miraculous aid amidst turbulent waters.

Zoroastrian Association of California

No Parsi gathering is complete without the warmth of shared food and fellowship. This unique pilgrimage culminated at the office conference room of Captain Khushroo and Rooky (the ZAC President), where a delightful spread of vegetarian snacks, lovingly brought by all, awaited them, accompanied by the comforting aroma of chai prepared by Ruzbeh Daruwalla. The devoted pilgrims who participated in this meaningful journey included Captain Khushroo Fitter, Zarine Govadia, Daisy Siganporia, Gulcheher & Adil Rustomi, Dr. Farhad & Houtokshi Contractor, Burjor & Vira Santoke, Freny Bacha, Nauzer Commissariat, Meherwan Irani, Feeruza Bisney, Delna Khambatta, Homayar Gandhi, Annu, Kerman, & Faredun Dangore, Oofrish & Vistasp Contractor, Ruzbeh Daruwalla, Ketty Alamshaw, and Tinaaz & Er. Zarrir Bhandara.



MAJOR GENERAL HONORED

The Indian Railways has honored Major General Cyrus Addie Pithawalla by dedicating a locomotive to commemorate his bravery and service. This initiative is part of the Railways' efforts to recognize and celebrate the contributions of India's military heroes.

Major General Cyrus Addie Pithawalla is a distinguished officer of the Indian Army, renowned for his exemplary courage and leadership. Born on January 13, 1957 in Bengaluru, he was educated at the Air Force School in Delhi and later attended Delhi University. He joined the Officers Training Academy in Chennai after completing his degrees in commerce. In 1981, as a Second Lieutenant in the 17 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles, he was awarded the Ashoka Chakra, India's highest peacetime gallantry award for his valor during operations in Manipur. He holds the distinction of being the first Ashoka Chakra awardee to attain the rank of Major General in the Indian Army.



The Bhusaval Division of Indian Railways has taken steps to honor such true warriors by dedicating locomotives in honor of their bravery. This gesture by the Indian Railways serves as a tribute to Major General Pithawalla's remarkable service and the sacrifices made by countless soldiers in safeguarding the nation.



Zoroastrian Association of California



The Executive Committee values your feedback and would appreciate any ideas, comments, or suggestions you may have for the community. Let us know how you feel and how we can improve. Please email us at committee@zacla.org.

ZAC Recycles! Please be aware of the **BLUE recycling bins** kept in all the rooms and make a conscious effort to put all recyclable materials in the right bin.



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TO: