

"The highest education is that which does not merely give us information, but makes our life in harmony with all existence ...our consciousness of the world, merely as the sum total of things that exist, and as governed by laws, is imperfect...the highest purpose of this world is not merely living in it, knowing it and making use of it, but realizing our own selves in it through expansion of sympathy; not alienating ourselves from it and dominating it, but comprehending & uniting it with ourselves..."
(Rabindranath Tagore, founder of Visva Bharati at Santiniketan)

"The old Lakota was wise...he knew that lack of respect for growing, living things soon led to lack of respect for humans, too...Knowledge was inherent in all things. The world was a library and its books were the stones, leaves, grass, brooks, and the birds and animals that shared, alike with us, the storms and blessings of earth. We learned to do what only the student of nature learns, and that was to feel beauty."
(Chief Luther Standing Bear of the Oglala Lakota Sioux)

"Any justice, that's only justice, soon degenerates into something that's less than justice! Justice must be rescued by something grander and deeper than justice....subversive love and militant hope!"
(Dr. Cornell West quoting Reinhold Niebuhr)

"AND THE MEN WHO HOLD HIGH PLACES, MUST BE THE ONES' WHO START; TO MOLD A NEW REALITY...TO SOW A NEW MENTALITY, CLOSER TO THE HEART!"
(CLOSER TO THE HEART)

A MODERN DAY WARRIOR, MEAN, MEAN STRIDE, TODAY'S TOM SAWYER, MEAN, MEAN PRIDE...NO, HIS MIND IS NOT FOR RENT, TO ANY GOD OR GOVERNMENT, ALWAYS HOPEFUL YET DISCONTENT, HE KNOWS CHANGES AREN'T PERMANENT, BUT CHANGE IS! WHAT YOU SAY ABOUT HIS COMPANY, IS WHAT YOU SAY ABOUT SOCIETY! CATCH THE WITNESS, CATCH THE WIT, CATCH THE SPIRIT, CATCH THE SPIT. (TOM SAWYER)"
(RUSH, CANADIAN ICONS, ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME)

*"...People talking without speaking. People hearing without listening. People writing songs that voices never share..."**"Fools" said I, "you do not know, silence like a cancer grows..."*
But my words like silent raindrops fell. And echoed in the wells of silence"
(The Sound of Silence covered by the band: Disturbed)

"IT IS AN HONOUR TO BE CALLED A REVOLUTIONARY!" (POPE FRANCIS)

"RESISTANCE TO TYRANNY, IS OBEDIENCE TO GOD!"
(MADAME BHIKAJI CAMA)

Asha Vahishta Initiative (AVI) Conference:
***May 5* May 26* Aug 18* Aug 19** 2018.**

Re-Imagining Faith, **Re-Claiming Fellowship,** **in Diaspora**



A diasporic ethos, 'mission statement' and 'operating system' for the renewal, sustainability, and legitimacy of Daena Mazdayasni

North American Zoroastrians are guests of First Nations Peoples.
Zoroastrianism requires a decolonization of its mind/spirit to recover Daena Mazdayasni, a tradition in solidarity with indigenous faiths.

The AVI affirms First Nations Creation-Centred Wisdom and its visual spiritual literacy, respectfully not claiming/appropriating images, but honouring their Asha Vahishta (Best Righteousness) in hopes that by:
Following the Thunderbird, we re-discover Simorgh and the Faravahar!

Sessions list main guest, but may include others. Chair Shall Mediate All Sessions.

Brief Academic-Professional Biographies Available at: <https://ozcf.wildapricot.org/>

Guest Panelists (May 5):

*Dr. Almut Hintze (Zarthoshty Brothers Professor of Zoroastrianism and Co-Chair Institute of Zoroastrian Studies at SOAS, University of London)

*Zerbanoo Gifford (creator: ASHA for Education, London UK)

*Dr. Randy Woodley (Distinguished Professor of Faith and Culture, Director Intercultural and Indigenous Studies, George Fox Seminary, USA)

*Dr. Ana Maria Bidegain (Historian, Latin American Religion, Florida International University, USA)

*Reverend Dr. Daniel Kanter (Senior Minister, First Unitarian Church, Dallas Texas, USA)

*Dr. Mahmoud Masaeli (Global Ethics at University Ottawa, Ambassador Parl. World Rel, Alternate Perspectives-Global Concerns ap-gc.net)

Guest Panelists (May 26):

*Hamid Rahmanian (Iranian Creator/Director: Feathers of Fire, global tour www.kingorama.com, New York, USA)

*Farrukh Dhondy (novelist, social critic, postcolonial theorist, London UK)

*Dr. Sarfaroz Niyozov (Comparative Development Education at OISE-UofT, Aga Khan University Karachi, Pakistan)

*Dr. Martin Schwartz (Department of Near Eastern, Professor Emeritus of Iranian (Pre-Islamic) Studies, University of California-Berkeley)

*Dr. Enrico Raffaelli (Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, University of Toronto)

*Dr. Antonio Clemente Domenico Panaino (Iranian Philology, Religions and History, Department of Cultural Heritage, University of Bologna)

*Ervad Farhan Panthaki (Mobed, California, USA)

Guest Panelists (August 18):

*Dr. Dolly Dastoor (Editor, FEZANA Journal. Dept. of Psychiatry McGill University, Co-director Dementia with Psychiatric Co-Morbidity)

Session 7 (5:00-6:00pm): MEHRI

History is not your Religion! The Daena in not a Museum Exhibit.
(Re-imagining and Re-claiming is legitimate, intimate, and historic)

Session 8 (6:30pm-7:30pm): BERRY

Effective Messaging Requires Context for Transmission.
(Information is only valuable if it can convey meaning and emotion)

Session 9 (8:00pm-9:00pm): CHAIR, BAGLI, GAZDAR, SIDHWA
AVI Phase III Strategic Goals and Planning.

*AVI Phase I and Phase /II Assessment.

*AVI, Working Committee.

*The Pledge 101, Campaign (What's Your Score?)

*I Am Anjuman, Campaign ("I Am The Fire!" - Lzzy Hale)

*AVI Preach to Teach

*AVI Inspiration-Ambassadors (101 Outreach: Organ Donors ,Veg, Eco)

*Research 101/Resolution 101 (Developing 101 Essays; Use as Matrix)

To Re-Discover Simorgh.....Re-Imagine!

(Female, Unity of 4 Elements, Guardian, Noble, Love)



Asha Vahishta as Thunderbird

(Truth, Righteousness. Fire)

Khshathra Vairya as Wolf

(Indomitable Power, Dominion.

Sky/Minerals)

Haurvatat as Orca

(Unity, Perfection. Water)

Ametatat as Beaver

(Immortality, Liminality. Plants)

Spenta Armaity as Bear

(Infinite Devotion, Nurture. Earth)

Vohu Manah as Eagle

(Wisdom, Consciousness. Animals)

Spenta Mainyu as Harmony

(Creation, Benevolence, Air)



Programme (Aug. 19)



Practical and Applied: What is to be Done?

Main Theme: How do we make faith re-imagining possible to re-claim fellowship in diaspora, in concert with ethos driven institutions and inspirational leadership?

Session 1 (8:00am-9:00am): CHAIR

The Religion We Don't Need, and The Daena We Require.

101 Excuses for Inaction. The AVI as a psychosocial intervention to Re-imagine and Re-claim by recognizing the ethos of faith and fellowship:

*Evocative *Collaborative *Inspiration Messaging *Substance over Form

*Speaking Truth to Power *Challenging Purity/Normalcy

(Coke Studio Pakistan) (Lindsey Stirling/Lzzy Hale: *Shatter Me*) (Matthew West: *Broken Things*)

Session 2 (9:30am-10:30am): SHEKEL

Living Faith Tradition in Diaspora (Insights from Reform Judaism)

(Negotiating and mediating faith/fellowship in diaspora, so as not to partake in polarization between 'authenticity' and 'blasphemy').

Session 3 (11:00am-12:00pm): TUMARKIN

Memories, Remembrance, and Portrayal: Cross-Examining the 'Truth' while Acknowledging 'Their Truth'.

(Lawyers investigate histories, supporting client claims of sequence-consequence, while refuting alternate accounts. How are narratives formed?)

Session 4 (12:30pm-1:30pm): LOUCHAKOVA-SCHWARTZ

Spiritually Informed and Relevant: A Psychosocial Pastoral Model to Decipher the Contemporary.

(Death, Grieving, Coping, Meaning-Making, requires a modality through which faith rationalizes the secular-contemporary).

Session 5 (2:00pm-3:00pm): STANKOVIC

Diaspora as Re-Discovery: Legitimate Expressions of Self and Location, the National Theatre School of Canada.

(European influenced but expressed in diaspora, how a 'national form' was re-imagined to express 'faith' and 'fellowship')

Session 6 (3:30pm-4:30pm): RENDÓN

Sentipensante: Educating for Wholeness, Social Justice, Liberation.

(Communication/leadership from acquisition-accumulation to action wisdom).

*Homi Gandhi (President FEZANA, Hon.Pres. Religions Peace, USA).

*Ms. Shahin Bekhrandnia (WZO, Jt. Hon. Sec., Religious Coord., London)

*Astad Clubwala (ZAGNY, President, New York, USA)

*Dr. Srinavas Reddy (Contemplative Studies, Sitar, Brown University)

*Father Jeff Stone (Minister, St. Jude's Anglican Church, Brampton)

*Reverend Dr. Joshua Samuel (Episcopal Church of the Resurrection)

*Father Susai Jesu OMI (Sacred Heart of the First Peoples, Edmonton)

*Baldev Mutta (CEO Brampton Punjabi Community Health Services)

*Reverend (Ph.D.- ABD) Christine Smaller M.P.S., M.Div. (Birchcliff Bluffs United Church Scarborough; U of T Faculty for MPS)

*Charlene Marshall, MSW, RSW. (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health -CAMH. University of Guelph-Humber, Lecturer Justice Studies)

Guest Panelists (August 19):

*Rabbi Michal Shekel (Har Tikval Synagogue. Exec Dir. Toronto Rabbis)

*Dr. Pola Stankovic (Lecturer, Theatre Studies, York University. Actor)

*Prof. Olga Louchakov-Schwartz M.D., Ph.D. (Comparative Religion, Transpersonal Psychology. School of Medicine, Univ. California-Davis)

*Sivan Tumarkin (Partner, Personal Injury and Insurance, Samfiru Tumarkin LLP; Barristers/Solicitors. <http://stlawyers.ca/>)

*Dr. Laura Rendón (Prof. Emerita of Higher Educ., University of Texas-San Antonio, Co-Director Center for Policy/Research in Education)

*Dr. Rastin Mehri (Dept. Asian Studies, Persian Language, UBC.)

*Sujata Berry (Producer for Radio/TV/Web, CBC. White Coat Black Art)

The AVI Acknowledges Words of Support from those who regretfully could not attend:

*Dastur Hirbad Mehraban Firoozgary (Teheran Anjuman, Iran)

*Father James Martin, SJ (Vatican Sec. Comm.; Editor-Large of America)

*Father Gustavo Gutierrez, OP (Prof. Theology, Univ. Notre Dame)

*Professor Emeritus Iranian, Prods Oktor Skjaervo (Harvard University)

*Rt. Hon. MLA Shashi Tharoor (Former Upd-Sec General UN, Why I Am A Hindu)

*Prof. Emeritus Romila Thapar (Historian, Jawaharlal Nehru University)

*Distinguished Prof. of Systematic Theology, Rev. James H. Cone (Union Seminary, NY)

*Alain de Botton (Creator/Director: School of Life; Religion for Atheists)



Panelists (Local Zoroastrians):

*Dr. Neville Panthaki (Conference Chair, AVI creator/director)

*Ervad Dr. Jehan Bagli (OZCF Mobed, NAMC, FEZANA, Pres. WZO Canada)

*Cyrus Gazdar (OZCF President)

*Phil Sidhwa (OZCF Atash Kadeh project)

*Ervad Jal Panthaky (Active Mobed, Ont.)

*Mobedyar Gool Austin (London-Ont.)



*Khushnuma Doctor (OZCF Director)

*Armaity Homavazir (Speaker, Educator, Organizer)

*Mahiyar Panthaki (OZCF member)

*Ervad Kamran Panthaki (OZCF 'this-gen' Mobed)

*Ervad Armaan Panthaki (OZCF 'this-gen' Mobed)

*Ervad Mehad Dastur (active Mobed in the community)

("Panthakis" in Programme Sessions refer collectively to: Mahiyar, Farhan, Armaan, Kamran)

RSVP (indicate days): nskotwal1@gmail.com

AVI Information: ashavahishtainitiative@gmail.com

Check for Updates! <https://ozcf.wildapricot.org/>



Session 6 (3:30pm-4:30pm): MUTTA

Insights for Introspection and Action in Diaspora: Sikh Social Justice and Affecting South Asian Attitudinal Transformation.

(Self-reflection is painful, embarrassing, and necessary! It is the truest test of Faith, Fellowship, adherence, and courage).

Session 7 (5:00pm-6:00pm): CHAIR AND TBA

Insights from School-of-Life and Atheism 2.0.

(Appreciating the competencies and weakness of faith/fellowship from the perspective of agnostics, atheists, dissenters, and nonconformists).

Session 8 (6:30pm-7:30pm): MARSHALL

Insights for Compassion Driven Faith and Fellowship:

Acknowledging the Value of, All to Be, and to Belong.

(No outcasts. From individual salvation to community wellbeing.

Rehabilitation/corrections needn't be sin-centred work of the self-righteous).

Session 9 (8:00pm-9:00pm): CLUBWALA, GAZDAR, SIDHWA, BAGLI

Organic Institutions and Anjuman Autonomy: From Federation to Confederation.

(Self-governing Faith/Fellowship. What's stopping the majority of disenfranchised congregations from creating reform?).

Session 10 (9:30pm-10:30pm): CHAIR

"The 101 Inspirations" as Axioms, Epistemology, Cosmovision and Covenant.

(Eliminating the contest of 'authorities' ...text, tradition, scholars, priests etc, a mandate for anjuman autonomy).



Creation Turtle Island:
Sky Woman Descends
"The Birth Story of
Creation"
(J.B. Thomas)



Programme Aug 18



Vision Document of the AVI:

Institutional Re-imagining of Faith to Re-claim Fellowship

Main Theme: Fellowship requires constant re-imagining for Faith to remain relevant (A Systems Perspective). The opening address will explain how the AVI attempts to lay the basis for transformed/new institutions of faith and fellowship. Subsequent sessions will reflect on the various elements of institutional rethinking that are necessary, to sustain faith and fellowship in diaspora in the 21st century.

Session 1 (8:00am-9:00am): BEKHRANDNIA, BAGLI, GANDHI, DASTOOR
Broadening Faith by Broadening Fellowship Identity: From Parsis to People.

(Inclusive Faith and Fellowship. Linking Zoroastrian faith and its fellowship to cosmopolitanism and global justice).

Session 2 (9:30am-10:30am): REDDY

Raag: Worship and Wisdom as Inspired Improvisation-Syncopation.

(Hindustani and Carnatic music illustrates that contemplation and substance, rather than immutable form, inspire multi-logical truths about Divinity).

Session 3 (11:00am-12:00pm): STONE

Insights for Living History in the Now: The Anglican 'Middle-Way'.

(Either respecting tradition, or continuing evolution, is a false binary. A lived faith is liminal, it exists between the boundaries within fellowship).

Session 4 (12:30pm-1:30pm): SUSAI

Insights for Re-imagining: Catholicism After Vatican II, Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples.

(Local expression and identity while retaining a universal vision of salvation).

Session 5 (2:00-3:00pm): SMALLER

Spiritual Formation and Scaffolding Faith: Nurturing Clergy and Congregations as part, not apart, from Secular Society.

(How to keep religion relevant in the urban multicultural diaspora).



The 101 Inspirations

The vision document that guides and develops via the Asha Vahishta Initiative (AVI), is The 101 Inspirations. It serves as a contemporary 'Articles of Faith', 'Tenets of Belief', around which all discussions revolve. The AVI attempts to foster anjuman affirmation of itself, as a diasporic, autocephalous, spiritually relevant 21st century entity. This requires an articulate ethos guided vision. Being unaware/unable to articulate a 'mission statement' and perceive an 'operating system' (what is religion, who is it for, how to sustain and achieve it); inevitably leads to talk/education devoid of focus/meaning, which can never translate into concretization, because there is an absence of resolution mechanism preventing the competition of 'authorities' surrounding any discussion (eg. text, traditions, mobeds, academics). The 101 Inspirations articulates axioms and epistemology regarding: the nature of Creation, Divinity, texts, tradition, institutions, leadership, acts, contesting 'authorities'. It creates frameworks to articulate and substantiate the meaning of *Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds*, within the context of diasporic lived faith, by addressing the nexus of Identity-Location-Belonging-Relevance-Experience. The 101 Inspirations is a covenantal code of conduct (how to be in right relationship), rather than a creedal statement. It seeks to prevent congregational disharmony, or the anjuman being held hostage to leadership changes/disputes. The 101 Inspirations seeks to transform institutions into anjuman-centred, ethos mandated, faith administration. It also provides a platform for interfaith and secular-community engagement. By a public attesting of faith/fellowship, the anjuman is committed to a social justice vision. This prevents tendencies towards xenophobia/introversion, and checks insular uncritical practise of dogma. The 101 Inspirations prevents irrelevance in the hearts/minds of adherents by re-imagining faith and re-claiming fellowship, to make Asha...Vahishta. ("The 101 Inspirations" can be found at: <https://ozcf.wildapricot.org/>)

AVI Mission Statement

To invest the anjuman with a faith and fellowship ethos that is articulate, sustainable, and serves as the ‘mission statement’ and ‘operating system’ for a covenant(al) relationship, diasporic Daena Mazdayasni.

Note: From the perspective of the AVI, “the anjuman” is considered the individuals who compose the local congregants, within each faith-organization (community, house of worship, congregation centre, and locality). The “anjuman” does not represent any and all status-quo bodies in existence, which are currently a subject matter of the AVI.

Disclaimer: The AVI, is an advocacy attempting to be transformative. It rejects the notion of building new paradigms to replace old ones, because paradigms by their nature are finite and defy the nature of a fluid, dynamic, intimate, and lived faith. Paradigms easily become dogmatic. Paradigms tend to become procedural legalist applications. If anything, the AVI is an ‘anti-paradigm’. Hence, it is to be understood that the AVI Mission Statement and Objectives may not be employed as argument to defeat either the conceptual framework or legitimacy of the AVI. This is because the AVI does not consider itself bound (meaning it admits and expects revision), enclosed, limited, by a Mission Statement and Objectives statement that are created in the context of specific time/location and conditions of urgency. No Call to Action which is what the AVI represents, can be reduced to and entirely understood by a single document/statement. The AVI is indeed, attempting to transform notions within contemporary Zoroastrian practise/governance that apply such logic.

An Anjuman transformational-education project, has forms the basis of the AVI. It is the AVSS (Asha Vahishta Seminar Series). Phase I has mainly been Educative-Informative (interrogating identity, faith, fellowship, diaspora, rationale for religious expression); Phase II has been Resolution-Building (vision, character, ‘mission statement’, ‘operating system’ for 21st diasporic faith/fellowship). AVSS synopses can be found at: <http://www.ozcf.com/page-1172991>

Session 6 (3:30pm-4:30pm): SCHWARTZ

A History of God(s) in Zoroastrianism.

(Do terms like "monotheism"/"dualism" apply to the Gathas? An overview of historical Zoroastrian worship and belief provides context).

Session 7 (5:00pm-6:00pm): RAFFAELLI

Interdependence and Reciprocity: Zoroastrian Cosmology in Solidarity with Global Indigenous Ways of Knowing/Being.

(Western (Abrahamic religions) notions of theology, differ from Daena Mazdayasni (Earth/Creation centred). Faith deciphers divinity/purpose.

Session 8 (6:30pm-7:30pm): AUSTIN, HOMAVAZIR, DOCTOR, PANTHAKIS

Finding Mashyane in Diasporic Faith and Fellowship: Women in Daena Mazdayasni.

(Making women prominent in faith/fellowship. Citing historic episodes and enlightened text is insufficient. From subjects to participatory agents).

Session 9 (8:00pm-9:00pm): GAZDAR/PANTHAKIS/HOMAVAZIR/DOCTOR

From Out-sourced Zoroastrianism to Dynamic Daena Mazdayasni: Youth Engagement as Diasporic Re-discovery.

(Home-grown youth expression of lived faith and fellowship, not out-sourced Zoroastrianism. Legitimate expressions of self/location/concerns).

Session 10 (9:30pm-10:30pm): BAGLI/PANTHAKY/-KIS/AUSTIN/DASTUR

From Mobed to Mage: Re-conceptualizing Clergy as Pastors of Faith and Fellowship

(Vibrant/dynamic faith requires communicators of inspiration, not detached managers of status-quo religion to their congregations).



**“Artist and Shaman
Between Two Worlds”
(Copper Thunderbird,
aka. Norval Morrisseau**



Programme (May 26)



Conceptual Re-imagining of Faith to Re-claim Fellowship

Main Theme: Faith requires constant re-imagining for Fellowship to be vibrant and dynamic (An Operational Perspective). The opening address will explain how the AVI re-imagines faith/fellowship as an authentic expression of Zoroastrianism in diaspora. Subsequent sessions reflect on the various elements of re-imagining involved, their necessity, and their promotion of fellowship.

Session 1 (8:00am-9:00am): PANAINO

The Foundations for Intercultural Cosmopolitanism: Daena Mazdayasni an Anti-Paradigm and Counter-Narrative to Hegemony.
(Recognizing that the virtue and unique history of the Daena, was its ability to resist a mummification of attitudes, at the hand of religious adjudicators).

Session 2 (9:30am-10:30am): NIYOZOV

Re-Imagining and Re-Claiming: Tajiks and Central Asians.
(How do populations identify and maintain a sense of belonging, despite remote history, and fractured sociocultural connections).

Session 3 (11:00am-12:00pm): SAMUEL

Insights for an Anti-Oppression Methodology Guiding Religion: Dalit, Christian-Dalit, and Comparative Theologies.
(What is the relevance and importance for theology in a 'secular' context? Must theology be comparative for it to truly aspire to liberation?)

Session 4 (12:30pm-1:30pm): DHONDY

Identity & Belonging: Constructing Histories & Choosing Narratives for a Decolonization of Mind and Spirit.
(Writing the history you want to live. Defining oneself, one's faith, and one's actions, through conscious selection.)

Session 5 (2:00pm-3:00pm): RAHMANIAN

Bringing Simorgh to Life (the SHE of the Creator)! Re-Imagining, as Authentic, Intimate and Subversive Emotional Wisdom.
(Art is important to maintain an active connection to Faith. Creative representation communicates ethos. Faith-messaging education).



AVI Objectives



To achieve the Mission Statement by continuing to revise and develop a curriculum and pedagogy towards:

- ❖ Development and adoption of The 101 Inspirations, to serve as the context for legitimacy and justification of the AVI Mission Statement.
- ❖ making the anjuman self-aware of its legitimacy as change-agent and executor of faith and fellowship.
- ❖ to make all external bodies/components (from the perspective of the anjuman) recognize the legitimacy of anjuman concerns, and for all institutional architecture to reflect upon their external nature in respect to anjuman faith and fellowship operation.
- ❖ to develop anjuman centred, anjuman driven, systems/bodies for the promotion of their vision of faith/fellowship.
- ❖ for an AVI Working Committee to be formed in order to expand AVI projects and objectives within (to) the anjuman, and as a body-representative in dialogue with all external status-quo bodies (eg. OZCF, NAMC, FEZANA, WZO...etc. Meaning, local-regional-global or guild bodies).
- ❖ for there to be an education, resolution-building, and conferencing/reflective, component to the AVI in all phases.
- ❖ for there to be a transformation of clergy, or the addition of clergy who serve as faith/fellowship pastors, holding the same rights and respect as officiants. For this endeavour to have anjuman input, support, and supervision.
- ❖ for the aforementioned to result in a decentralized, diasporic, Daena Mazdayasni.
- ❖ for the AVI Objectives and Mission Statement to be achieved in concert with The 101 Inspirations to justify, direct, and adjudicate, anjuman centred faith/fellowship.

From Inside, Looking Out: Conference Rationale



The AVI interrogates faith/fellowship by 'truth and fire' (Asha Vahishta). It affirms that re-imagining is essential for diasporic faith to be lived, dynamic, and relevant within secular existence. This is how religion functions, and more importantly survives as fluid and dynamic, rather than mummified,

onerous, and impersonal. Ideally, faith and fellowship should be the natural expression of what one feels, and not externally conjured, orchestrated by officiants, and defined by jurists. Religion is emotional and atmospheric (ethereal). Attempting to reduce it, or define it solely within the confines of logic/rationality, deny the aesthetic, sensory, and spiritual aspects of the tradition which provide wisdom. Legalism/regulation, although a part of religion, have never been the motives behind its inspiration/adherence. Such things abound in secular life, and most people find religion or remain within it, because of a sense of being liberated. The AVI Conference (AVIC) affirms that that within global faith/fellowship, there are transferable insights for Zoroastrianism. By doing this, the AVIC returns Zoroastrianism to an awareness of its cosmopolitan/ syncretic history. In most AVIC sessions, Non-Zoroastrian guests/faith leaders have been invited to share insights regarding how their activities/communities keep spirituality relevant. Thus, the AVIC fractures the myopia of the same-conversations, by the same-people, regarding the same-subjects, in the same-manner. AVIC sessions attempt a holistic view of faith/fellowship, from inside, looking out. Faith/fellowship is interrogated by viewing these topics through several critical lenses (outlooks): indigenous, marginalization, feminist, disability, palliative care/end-of-life, Marxist, Humanist, egalitarian. The AVI maintains that the process of constructing the history we choose to remember and emphasize, for the future we desire, is historically warranted.

The AVI is dedicated to the memory of Arbab Rustam Guiv (1888-1980). The magnitude of his generosity was for fulfillment of a vision, that faith and fellowship would become vibrant, dynamic, relevant, and rooted within diaspora. Faith is a constant re-imagining of fellowship, not a mummification of attitudes under the guise of preservation.

The AVI acknowledges the work of Dr. Kaikhosrow Irani (1922-2017). His diasporic re-imagining of faith began to reconceptualise a 'Mission Statement' for an anjuman centred 'Zoroastrian Operating System'.



Programme (May 5)



Re-claiming Revolutionary Ethos: Re-imagining Faith

Main Theme: Faith/Fellowship are revitalized, remain contemplative, as contemporary social justice expressions. Faith, and its history, are rooted in anti-establishment critical discourse, not support of the status-quo.

Session 1 (8:00am-9:00am): HINTZE

Daena Mazdayasni: A Continuous Revolution of Awareness and Ability.
(Zarathustra rejected status-quo notions, favouring evolving consciousness).

Session 2 (9:30am-10:30am): GIFFORD

Inspirational Faith Requires Inspired Leadership of Courage.
(Education initiatives fail unless they target or have the support of institutions/leaders. Education must be evocative, leader-communicated).

Session 3 (11:00am-12:00pm): MASAELI

The Resistance: Spiritually Informed Global Ethics/ Social Justice.
(How faith communities can contribute to a spiritual globality).

Session 4 (12:30pm-1:30pm): KANTER

Conversation in Faith—By the Light of the Flaming Chalice.
(Insights for reconciling tradition to a diasporic progressive commitment to social justice. Zoroastrianism in conversation with Unitarian-Universalism).

Session 5 (2:00pm-3:00pm): CHAIR

The AVI and Seeking Support, NOT Sanction, for Diasporic Re-Imagining.
(Recovering the 'radical' Zoroastrianism of Naorji/Cama, requires a decolonization of attitudes and an articulation of vision).

Session 6 (3:30pm-4:30pm): WOODLEY

Conversation in Faith—Shalom, The Community of Creation, and The Harmony Way.
(Insights from First Nations. Zoroastrianism in conversation with revitalized Indigenous Faith).

Session 7 (5:00pm-6:00pm): BIDEGAIN

Conversation In Faith—Liberation Theology and Pastorship.
(Insights of the Vatican II and Medellin Conferences. Zoroastrianism in conversation with revitalized Latin American Catholicism).