

"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)

Asha Vahishta Initiative (AVI) Conferences

May 5 May 26* June 7* June 9* Aug 18* Aug 19*

Sept 22 Oct 14* Nov 10* 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)

*Rev. Dr. Joshua Samuel (Lecturer, Department of Religious Studies at the Marymount Manhattan College, New York. Episcopal Church of America.)

*Dr. Pamela Lightsey (Vice-President Academic/Student Affairs, Associate Prof. Constructivist Theology at Meadville Lombard Seminary, Chicago)

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

*Father Dr. Seán O'Laoire (Licensed Psychotherapist, Pastor, Author)

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)



If there were a 'soundtrack', a musical-emotional inspiration that expressed the AVI, the following would be part of it. The AVI wishes to thank Lindsey Stirling and Lzzy Hale (of Halestorm) for their consideration and their inspiration:



I Am The Fire (Halestorm)

Am I brave enough? Am I strong enough? To follow the desire that burns from within. To push away my fear. To stand where I'm afraid. I am through with this. 'Cuz I am more than this. I promise to myself. Alone and no one else. My flame is rising higher. I am the fire! I am burning brighter. Roaring like a storm. And I am the one I've been waiting for. Screaming like a siren. Alive and burning brighter. I am the fire! ...Shackled by the ghost of what I once believed that I could never be...Won't let the past decide my fate!!!



Shatter Me (Lindsey Stirling ft. Lzzy Hale)



I pirouette in the dark. I see the stars through me. Tired mechanical heart. Beats till the song disappears. Somebody shine a light. I'm frozen by the fear in me. Somebody make me feel alive and shatter me! So cut me from the line. Dizzy, spinning endlessly. If I break the glass, then I'll have to fly. There's no one to catch me if I take a dive. I'm scared of changing, the days stay the same. The world is spinning but only in gray. Somebody make me feel alive..shatter me!!!!



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 and Sherine

The Religion We Don't Need, and The Daena We Require: Insights from the Atheism Bus Campaign and Atheism 2.0 (School of Life).

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

Session 2 (930am-10:30am): Méndez-Montoya

A Theology of Food—Hospitality, Aesthetics, Intimacy, and Ethics: Recognizing the *Sabor-Saber* Connection for Faith and Fellowship.

(The connection and necessity between physical and spiritual nourishment. Eucharist/*Chasni* as a pledge to *Asha*, Creation, Reciprocity, Interdependence).

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): Dastoor

Case Study FEZANA: A Regional and International Faith Organization Projecting Zoroastrianism as More than a Tribal Commitment.

(The choice between remaining irrelevant and renewing faith/fellowship)

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

Fidelity from the Perspectives of Artist and Spectator: The Process of Finding Truth, Meaning Making, Transmission, and Re-Imagining.

(Including a discussion regarding re-discovery in diaspora--how the National Theatre School of Canada developed a 'national form')

Session 6 (3:30pm-4:30pm): Rendón

Sentipensante: Educating for Wholeness, Social Justice, Liberation.

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

Guest Panelist (June 7):

*Dr. Norman Wirzba (Professor of Theology, Ecology and Agrarian Studies, Senior Fellow at Kenan Institute of Ethics, Duke University)

*Dr. H.W. Rico Sneller (Philosophical Anthropology at Institute for Philosophy at Leiden University, The Netherlands)

Guest Panelists (June 9):

*Ervad Farhan Panthaki (Mobed, California, USA)

*Dr. Enrico Raffaelli (Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, U of T)

*Dr. David Clough (Professor of Theological Ethics at Chester University, UK. Methodist Preacher. Founder of CreatureKind)

*Dr. Anantanand Rambachan (Professor of Religion, Philosophy, and Asian Studies, St. Olaf College, Minnesota, USA)

Guest Panelists (August 18):

*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)

*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):

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

*Dr. Ángel F. Méndez-Montoya O.P. (Chair, Theology and the Contemporary World, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City)

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

*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.)

*Ariane Sherine (Journalist, Author, Comedy Writer, London UK)

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

Guest Panelist (September 22)

*Dr. Christopher DiCarlo (Philosopher, Educator, Author)

Guest Panelists (October 14)

*Prof. Olga Louchakova-Schwartz M.D., Ph.D. (Philosophy of Religion, Psychology and Public Health. University of California-Davis. Hult International Business School)

*Ariana Vafadari (Mezzo Soprano, Paris)

*Dr. Richard Foltz (Prof. Religions and Cultures, Concordia University)

*Rabbi Michal Shekel (Executive Director Toronto Board of Rabbis)

Guest Panelist (November 10)

*Dr. Ruth Hayhoe (Professor at OISE at University of Toronto)

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

*Dastur Hirbad Mehraban Firouzgary (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 Und-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)

*Rev. and Right Honourable Lord, Dr. Rowan Williams (104th Archbishop of Canterbury, UK)

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



Programme September 22

Making Spiritual Re-Imagining Actionable (Part 1): Transformative Education Requires Transformed Leadership!



Session 1 (12:45pm-1:45pm): DiCarlo

Humanism and Critical Thinking: Rescuing the World from the Tyranny and Dogma of Religion.

(Institutionalized religion has failed to provide salvation and enlightenment).

Session 2 (2:00pm-4:00pm): Chair, Gazdar, Mahiyar Panthaki

On the Wrong Side of History: Self-Inflicted Wounds of Fear and Intransigence.

(Explaining Zoroastrian 'brain drain', 'spirit injury', and 'drop-outs')

October 14: Programme Cont': Part II

Session 1 (9:00am-10:00am): Vafadari

Re-Imagining the Gathas, Re-Claiming Daena in Diaspora: How Aesthetic and Emotional Improvisation, Inspire Creativity and Celebration.

(Legitimizing syncretic and evolving understandings as legitimate/authentic)

Session 2 (11:00am-12:00pm): Foltz

Notions of Identity and Belonging: How Persians, Zoroastrians, and Iranians, identified themselves.

(Adaptive and cosmopolitan, not reclusive and introverted)

Session 3 (12:30pm-1:30pm): Shekel

Insights from Reform Judaism: A Social Justice Informed Progressive Spiritual Tradition

(A case study of how a diasporic community resolved faith paralysis).

Session 4 (2:00pm-3:00pm): 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).

November 10: (Programme Cont': Part III)

Session 1 (1:30pm-2:30pm): Hayhoe

Observations from the International (Toronto-2018) Parliament of World Religions
(Reflective theology is required for interfaith commitment).

Session 2 (3:00pm-4:00pm): Chair, Gazdar, Mahiyar Panthaki

What Happened? Zoroastrianism Once Engaged the World. But Now is Sequestered.
(Assessing the cause and consequences of irrelevant faith in a cosmopolitan world).



Programme Aug 18



Institutional Re-Imagining of Faith to Re-claim Fellowship

Main Theme: Fellowship requires constant re-imagining for Faith to remain relevant (A Systems Perspective). Sessions reflect on the various elements necessary, to sustain faith and fellowship in diaspora in the 21st century.

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

Organic Institutions and Anjuman Autonomy: From Federation to Confederation. (Self-governing Faith/Fellowship. What's stopping the majority of disenchanted congregations from creating reform?).

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): Clubwala

Case Study ZAGNY: 'Planting' Zoroastrianism in Diaspora. (Contradictions and concerns over faith and fellowship 'ownership' and 'legacy').

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).

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!).

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

Realizing the Global Vision that is Zoroastrianism? Then 'Stand and Deliver'! (Good Deeds illustrate the commitment of Good Thoughts and Good Deeds).

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).

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 2016-18, former/current Board of Directors)

*Phil Sidhwa (OZCF Atash Kadeh project)

*Ervad Jal Panthaky (active Mobed)

*Ervad Mehad Dastur (active Mobed)

*Mahiyar Panthaki (OZCF member)

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

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



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

*Mobedyar Gool Austin (London-Ont.)

*Khushnuma Doctor (OZCF Director)

*Armaity Homavazir (Speaker, Educator, Organizer)

RSVP (indicate days): nskotwal1@gmail.com

AVI Information:

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Check for Updates!

<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, 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 7 (5:00pm-6:00pm): Lightsey

Faith for All, Fellowship for All: Womanist Theology, Black Liberation Theology, Queer Theology.

(M.K. Gandhi and M.L King Jr., both noted that sociopolitical systems must be judged and measured by their treatment of the marginalized).

Session 8 (6:30pm-7:30pm): O'laoire

By Addition not Subtraction, Old Wisdom for a New Age: How the Celts and Christianity were enriched by the *Tuatha Dé Danann*

(A case study in the assimilation and metamorphosis of Irish spirituality, constantly reaffirming a wisdom of interdependence and a worship of reciprocity *Daena*).

Programme June 7

Re-Discovery Through Re-Orientation (continued on June 9)

Main Theme: Self-perception of our relationship to Creation, determines social conduct and toleration for injustice. Re-discovering the stewardship of Earth/Creation requires a mental/spiritual re-orientation.

Session 1 (9:00am-10:00am): Sneller

Disentangling Spirituality from the Narrative of Rationality and Procedure.
(Modernity has imprinted legalism upon Faith, as if its only value is as law).

Session 2 (11:00am-12:00pm): Wirzba

Food and Faith. A Priestly Approach to Ecology and Environment.
(Making reciprocity and interdependence, core messaging of faith).



"Artist and Shaman Between Two Worlds"
(Copper Thunderbird, aka. Norval Morrisseau)



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



Programme May 26



Conceptual Re-imagining of Faith to Re-claim Fellowship

Main Theme: Faith requires constant re-imagining for Fellowship to be vibrant/dynamic (An Operational Perspective). Sessions reflect on various elements of re-imagining, 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).

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).



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 (June 9): OFF-SITE

{Greenbriar Rec. Centre. 1100 Central Park Drive, Brampton. 905-791-2240}

Re-Discovery Through Re-Orientation (continued)

Main Theme: Self-perception of our relationship to Creation, determines social conduct and toleration for injustice. Re-discovering the stewardship of Earth/Creation requires a mental/spiritual re-orientation.

Session 1 (10:00am-11:00am): Chair

The 101 Inspirations: Axioms, Epistemology, Cosmology, Covenant.

(Eliminating the contest of 'authorities'...text, tradition, scholars, priests).

Session 2 (11:30am-12:30pm): Bagli/Panthakis/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).

Session 3 (1:00pm-2:00pm): Clough

A Unified Theology of Ecology, Environment, and All Creatures: Solving Human Made Problems Requires Spiritual Reaffirmation.

(Environmental Degradation, Economic Abuse, Animal Cruelty, are all problems created from human entitlement and spiritual separateness).

Session 4 (2:30pm-3:30pm): Raffaelli

The View of the Cosmos in Zoroastrianism: The Avesta and Pahlavi Sources.

(What do scripture and text tell us about worldview, good and evil, nature and environment?)

Session 5 (4:00pm-5:00pm): Rambachan

A Hindu Theology of Liberation: Inspired Diasporic Re-imagining/ Re-claiming.

(A case study of how a South Asian tradition is successfully re-oriented and re-vitalized towards social justice initiatives. And why this is vital).

Session 6 (5:30pm-6:30pm): Austin, Homavazir, Doctor

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 7 (7:00pm-8:00pm): 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).



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 Naoroji/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).

Contemplation Using the Lens of Indigeneity: Following the Thunderbird to Re-discover Simorgh and the Faravahar (From ‘Ism’ to Faith)

The imperial encounter in South Asia between the British and Zoroastrians, had a profound effect upon the psyche/sensibilities of what became Parsi-Zoroastrian faith/fellowship. The British used their lens of Western Protestant logic to decipher Daena Mazdayasni. Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) are prophet centered revelations, possessing a closed canon (written and organized text serving as both scriptural authority, and liturgy). Responding to criticism that Daena Mazdayasni did not fit the context of systematic monotheism, Parsis began to emphasize aspects of their belief that appealed to a Western narrative of race theory, and allied histories of progress/Empire versus the uncivilized. In defence, but also in admiration, Parsis began to distance themselves or neglect Earth/Creation centred ‘pagan’, ‘tribal’, and ‘Hindu’ (multi-logical), ways of knowing and being within Daena Mazdayasni. Parsis superimposed a presumed logic, to create an immutable ‘ism’ (Zoroastrian **ISM**). A religion of dogma (ZoroastrianISM), replaced an adaptive, mindful, covenantal, **faith** (Daena Mazdayasni). To re-imagine the Daena, a wisdom of interdependence and the worship of reciprocity, Zoroastrianism requires a decolonization of attitudes. As guests of First Nations peoples on Turtle Island (North America), the AVI contemplates Daena Mazdayasni using the lens of indigeneity. Humbly following the Thunderbird, to re-discover Simorgh and the Faravahar.

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 *Orea*

(Unity, Perfection. Water)

Ameretat 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)

Vision Document of the AVI:



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 Moving Forward (Phase III):



Concretization and Action-Ability

In contrast to the AVI Vision Document (The 101 Inspirations), there have been 101 excuses for inaction. The AVI is a psychosocial intervention that seeks to expose these fallacies, the reasons often given for: not-thinking, not-speaking, and not-doing. The AVI is acutely aware that decades if not more, of stagnation in attitudes and approach to faith/fellowship, has caused unequivocal damage to anjuman perceptions of any/all attempts to affect movement. Disillusion with faith is a byproduct of distrust/disgust with faith-admin., clergy, and educators. The AVI maintains that communication and leadership are target concerns. Faith must be communicated by fellowship leaders. These efforts must illustrate a pedagogy that is: **Evocative, Collaborative, contains Inspiration Messaging, affirms Substance over Form, Speaks Truth to Power, and Challenges Purity/Normalecy.** Moreover, for the AVI or any faith/fellowship revitalization to be successful, there must be immediate and repeated displays of leadership and communication commitment to an articulate mission statement and operating system. Without these, any and all initiatives remain talk, and hence, a betrayal of the anjuman's hopes. This is why a Phase III of the AVI requires moving forward towards concretization and action-ability:

- *Forming an AVI Working Committee
- *The Pledge 101, Campaign (What's Your Score?)
- *I Am Anjuman, Campaign ("I Am The Fire!", "Shatter Me!" Lindsey Stirling/Lzzy Hale)
- *AVI Preach to ~~Teach~~ Inspire
- *AVI Inspiration-Ambassadors

