

BASZA's Dae-Mas-nu-Jashan

On Sunday 2nd June 2019 BASZAites met at the Rustomjee International School to celebrate their annual Dae-Mas-nu-Jashan with more than 35 members in attendance.

The Jashan was followed by the Association's Annual General Meeting where the secretary's report on the yearly activities of the Association and the audited financial statements as of and for the year ended 31st March 2019 were presented and approved.

After the AGM, members enjoyed playing multiple rounds of Housie until the evening was wrapped up with a delicious buffet dinner.

BASZA at the FPZAI meet

On behalf of BASZA, Minoo Khan (President), and Khurshed Pastakia (Secretary) attended the meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India held at Ahmedabad on 20th and 21st July, 2019.

While the minutes of the meeting of the last AGM held on 29th and 30th April, 2017 were approved with instructions to append the amended Constitution of FPZAI thereto, the house decided that the minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting held on 5th May 2019 be redrafted to: (i) delete detailed description of the heated exchanges that took place at

that meeting; (ii) record the dissent of Pervez Irani (Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman [IZA]) to the formation of the Global Working Group (GWG); and (iii) record the details of the objections that had been raised by Bombay Parsi Punchayet to certain clauses of the GWG Constitution. BPP Trustee Xerxes Dastur pointed out that the GWG, in their meeting in the US that he had attended, had not taken any cognizance of the objections raised. Chairperson Yazdi Desai assured the house that the concerns would be communicated to the GWG leadership and unless they were satisfactorily addressed, the Federation would not become a signatory to the GWG Constitution.

During confirmation of the audited financial statements as at and for the years ended 31st March 2018 and 2019, Chairperson Yazdi Desai informed the house that ***certain issues raised by Khurshed Pastakia of BASZA had been responded to by him on email.***

Elections were then held by secret ballot for the post of Zonal Vice Presidents. Of the two contesting candidates for West Zone-A, Pervez Irani of IZA was elected by a majority of one. Again, in a contest between two candidates, Sam Chothia was re-elected from West Zone-B.

In the election for Anjuman Representative on the Federation's Executive Committee, **from West Zone-A, Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman withdrew its candidature to allow Sholapur and BASZA to get elected unopposed.** From West Zone-B Bardoli Anjuman withdrew their stake, allowing Vadodra and Billimora Anjumans to get elected unopposed.

At the Executive Committee Meeting that followed the AGM, the following were co-opted as members of the Executive Committee: **Minoo Khan (BASZA)**, Farrokh Rustomjee, Yazdi Karanjia (Surat), Percy Buhariwala (Vyara Songad) and new entrant, Pareecheher Daviervalva (Davier), who came in place of Farokh Govadia (Nargol) who stepped down.

At the Executive Committee Meeting, Brig (Retd) Jehangir Anklesaria (Ahmedabad) expressed his desire to step down from the post of Hon Jt Treasurer. **Boman Cama (Vadodra) proposed the name of Khurshed Pastakia (BASZA) to take his place. On a call from the Chair for a vote on the proposal, Khurshed Pastakia got the support from a large majority of the house with no dissent and he was elected as Hon Jt Treasurer of the Federation.**

It was also proposed to include a ZYNG representative and some others, like from WZCC, to attend

Executive Committee meetings in future.

It was decided to induct Brig (Retd) Jehangir Anklesaria as a member of the Defunct Anjumans Committee (DAC).

Those holding all other posts remained the same as during the immediately preceding period.

It was decided that signatories to the bank account of the Federation shall be changed according to the Constitution. Those eligible shall be any two of the President, all the Zonal Vice Presidents, the Hon Secretaries and the Hon Treasurers. Of these, one mandatory signatory shall always be the Hon Treasurer. For matters concerning any particular Zone, the Vice President of the concerned Zone shall also be a signatory.

A long discussion took place on the report of the DAC that included issues of disputed, endangered or abandoned community properties in: Allahabad, Bhopal, Bijapur, Bina, Deesha, Dharwar, Harda, Hubli, Igatpuri, Khambhat, Nadiad, Nanded, Neemuch, Raipur, Rajkot, and Suvali Dokhma & Mora.

Some of the other proposals/decisions taken were: (i) the Federation should make efforts to bring back member anjumans that are no longer attending; (ii) proposals

regarding the Federation's stance on the proposed Uniform Civil Code to be discussed at the next meeting; Anjuman-specific problems to be conveyed to the CEO; and the Fed Newsletter to be restarted.

A shawl was presented by Chairperson Yazdi Desai to Vada Dasturji Saheb Khurshed Dastoor, and Boman Cama (Vadodra) presented a vote of thanks on behalf of the Anjumans present.

The organisation and management of the FPZAI meet by Ahmedabad Parsi Panchayat was excellent, for which kudos and thanks are due to the leadership of Brig (Retd) Jehangir Anklesaria.

The next meeting of the Federation has been scheduled to be held at Banaji Atashbehram Hall in Mumbai on 16th February, 2020.

Zoroastrian Renaissance in Iran

In an article aimed at the Parsis of India, Dr Khosro Khazai Pardis of the European Centre of Zoroastrian Studies, states that so far there have been *not one but two Muslim invasions faced by Iranian Zoroastrians*: one in the 7th century, after which a group of Zoroastrians had to flee from Islamic terror to the more convivial shores of western India; and the second, 1400 years

later, which has resulted in more than 50-60 lakh Iranians fleeing Iran [from the 1979 Ayatollah Khomeini's Enqelāb-e-Eslāmī or Islamic Revolution] to different parts of the western world.

Amazingly, the reasons for both the exoduses of Zoroastrians from their motherland have been exactly the same, and history has repeated itself unmercifully.

The Parsis, who are descendants of the 1st migration, had an identity that was deeply rooted in Zoroastrianism. After coming to India, they had to adapt to a new environment. Indian society, in those days, was based on rigid social divisions based on the caste system. The Parsis had, therefore, to build their own "caste" and live together with the local population of Gujarat.

The formation of this "caste" had two great advantages: one, the Parsis kept their Zoroastrian identity intact; and two, this very identity helped them to keep cohesion of the group that, in time, became a very successful, modern and prosperous community in India. But this success had its price: they had to sacrifice two important pillars of Zoroastrianism – the profound universality of Zarathustra's message and, to an extent, their freedom of choice.

The Iranians who fled Iran in the 2nd migration, on the other hand, had a shattered identity. *A broken culture*

rooted in nothing! They had always been told that they were Muslim, but now they found themselves running away from Islam. They were running away from their own identity, an identity that was thrust upon their ancestors and them.

This situation has seen the birth of a new consciousness, a new awareness – a Renaissance. These Iranians have no knowledge or memory of their Zoroastrian past. For 1400 years everything was set up in Iran to meticulously obliterate this memory. They are a people full of confusion and contradictions. They know nothing of the glorious Persian history. They have lived within an Islamized Arab sub-culture: a culture that reversed all the values of humanity and progressiveness embodied in Zoroastrianism. The Renaissance is making them ask questions like: Who am I? What happened to me? What happened to us? What happened to our country?

The internet and modern electronic communications have been very helpful and instrumental in this awakening.

The core of Arab ideology was, and even today is, simple: The whole world must become Muslim.

Thus, the wars with those who refuse to submit, the infidels, are “ordained by Allah”! If you kill a non-Muslim you can possess all his belongings, and if you are killed by him you go straight

to Allah’s paradise enjoying eternally with 72 houris”.

Believing absolutely and without a shred of doubt in this short, simple but efficient charade was the basis for a solid “ideology” that motivated the Tribal Muslim Arabs to give their lives and take, with good conscience, others’ lives to implement this belief.

It was how they could defeat the powerful Persian Sassanian Empire. The Zoroastrians of Iran had no knowledge and no notion of a “religious ideological war”. Their armies were trained for conquest, fighting with real and concrete armies not with a “belief or ideology”.

The same thing is happening across the world today – for what else is the goal and purpose of Islamic Terrorism across continents?

The Iranian Zoroastrian Renaissance found its resonance and sustenance in the book of Zarathustra’s verses, the Gathas. The Islamic regime confiscated and burned all the several hundred Gatha books in Persian that were sent by activists from Brussels to Iran. Then, the book was uploaded on the internet. In one single night in the year 2005 there were 12000 downloads! By now, over a million Iranians have downloaded the Holy Book. Before the Islamic Revolution, Gathas were unheard of in Iran. Today, the Gatha books are bestsellers.

The reasons why the Gathas became popular are:

- The world view contained in the Gathas is of a way of life based on free choice of everyone. These values are beyond space and time – they are eternal;
- The aim of life in the Gathas is to set up a happy, joyful life on earth and to continue it in the spiritual world. This happiness must also include animals and plants. And *happiness belongs to those who make others happy*;
- The Gathas show how a happy, serene and progressive society can be built. There are neither orders nor commandments to lead a Zoroastrian way of life. There is no do this or do that, no eat this or do not eat that, no wear these clothes or don't wear those, etc.
- In the Gathas the greatest friend of mankind is Righteousness (Asha) and the worst enemy is lies and deception;
- There are no sins and retributions, but there are actions and reactions. Good actions result in good reactions and vice versa. "Good" are the forces that help to set up a happy and virtuous life, and "Bad" are those that prevent us from leading a happy and virtuous life. The judgement between good and bad is made by Divine Wisdom (Vohu Manah) and not by any prescription in a book. Divine Wisdom is born in every human being and has nothing to do with official diplomas or interpretations of texts by scholars, clergy or government;

- Unlike Semitic prophets who related to a tribe or specific people, in the Gathas Zarathustra never says he is an Aryan or an Iranian or belonging to any particular grouping of people. The country he speaks of is all the countries in the world, the people he speaks of are all the people on this earth, and the life he speaks of is all the lives: be they human, animal or plant;
- This makes Zoroastrianism the most modern and relevant religion on earth today – even 4000-5000 years after it was founded by Zarathustra.

There are today over twelve million people in Iran who are calling themselves Zoroastrian. This is frightening the mullahs. They are exercising strong pressure on Zoroastrian Centres in Iran to dissuade them from making any contact with non-Zoroastrians (read Muslims). If they make such contacts heavy sanctions are made on them such as imprisonment and cutting off their budgets.

This forces Iranian Zoroastrians to leave Iran. Some of them who cannot leave Iran permanently are nevertheless travelling on tourist visas to visit Zoroastrian Centres operating in countries in their neighbourhood (Turkey, for instance) and even Europe to secretly get their navjotes (sudreh-push) ceremonies performed and then returning to Iran.

During their navjote ceremony some of these adult men and women weep

uncontrollably from beginning to the end of the ceremony – an expression of the huge emotional turmoil they are going through to embrace the religion of their forefathers, a religion that was snatched away from them. Others, who have been married since decades under Islamic rites, are coming to these Zoroastrian Centres to re-marry according to Zoroastrian rites.

This ardour, this fervour to embrace Zoroastrianism, is arguably just as strong as the ardour and fervour which led Iranian Zoroastrians to flee with their religion to India in the 7th century.

This is what is happening in the world today: **The Iranian Zoroastrian Renaissance**. But most Parsi Zoroastrians living in India are completely ignorant of it. The Iranian Zoroastrians need India's support today like never before.

(Edited with inputs from www.gatha.org)

Is it appropriate to say “RIP”?

When we get news of someone's death, we usually respond by writing “RIP”. Of late, certain self-appointed guardians of religion on social media are seen admonishing us for this response, leading one to inquire whether they truly have a point.

“RIP” is typically a Christian connotation that we have adopted,

without much thinking. We assume that it would be nice if the departed soul experiences peace and a lack of turmoil in the next world – which indeed is a noble thought.

However, “RIP”, in the Christian context, most likely refers not to the soul but to the body that lies horizontally buried in a coffin in its grave, which is seen as being in a state of permanent sleep or “resting” from worldly trials and tribulations.

In our case, first of all we are referring to the soul and not to the body. Secondly, as far as the body goes, we have *dokhmenashini*, which is much different from burial in the sense of “resting”.

One is therefore probably correct in reasoning that use of “RIP” to respond to the sad news should indeed be inappropriate for Parsis.

So, if we do not say “RIP”, what should we say instead? A good alternative would be to say: “ગરોઝ્માન બેહસ્ત હોજોજી” (Garothman Behest Hojoji), to wish for the departed soul an abode in the highest paradise.

But – please do not abbreviate it to “GBH” !!!

Community impoverished¹

In recent months, the Community received a huge setback when three of its most prominent stalwarts passed away: Vada Dasturji Kaikhusroo Minocherji JamaspAsa, Vada Dasturji Kaikhusro Navroze Dastur Meherji Rana, and theatre doyen Dinyar Contractor.

With the demise of the two Vada Dasturjis, the Community is now left with only one Vada Dastur from the “old guard”: Vada Dasturji Firoze M Kotwal – may Ahura Mazda grant him a long, healthy life.

The Community welcomes their successors: Vada Dasturji Jamasp Kaishusroo JamaspAsa, and Vada Dasturji Keki Ervad Cawas Ravji Meherjirana.

As for Dinyar Contractor, there is no successor. He will be hugely missed from the Parsi Natak Stage and the Community will be poorer for it forever.

The Last Symphony...

The 83 year-old Maestro Zubin Mehta performed his final concert with the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra on the night of Saturday, 13th July, 2019,

¹ BASZA expresses gratitude to publications like Parsi Khabar, Jam é Jamshed, Parsi Times, Parsiana, Times of India, Mid-Day, Parsi Bol, and others, from where we may

marking the completion of his impressive 50-year tenure as music director.

The grassy expanse of the Yarkon Park overflowed with an enormous crowd of young and old who rose almost simultaneously as the frail but still charismatic maestro took the stage, opening with the orchestra’s moving rendition of Israel’s national anthem “Hatikvah”.

Tel Aviv Mayor Ron Huldai noted that the Indian-born Mehta had written part of the history of the State of Israel, calling the conductor the “Crown Jewel of Israel’s Cultural Life.”

Mehta, who has held principal posts at the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera New York, the Vienna State Opera, the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, La Scala, Chicago Opera, Bavarian State Opera, and at the Salzburg Festival, has shaped and influenced the development of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra as its director for life.

“When I started my work in Israel, all the members of the orchestra were twice my age, and now everyone is

have condensed the published items, with or without embellishment.

three times younger,” he said jokingly.

Befitting Mehta’s expertise in the operatic world, for his farewell he invited a stellar cast of internationally acclaimed singers, who are also currently on tour with the maestro with performances of “Verdi’s Requiem”.

On Saturday night, American soprano Mary Elizabeth Williams, Russian mezzo-soprano Olesya Petrova, American tenor Gregory Kunde and Moldovan bass Oleg Tsybulko gave a glimpse into the vocally challenging world of arias by Puccini, Gounod, Verdi, Gershwin and Rossini.

The celebration finished with an impressive display of fireworks over the skies of Tel Aviv.

An orchestra player wrote of Verdi’s Requiem the day after:

<< “Liberate me” ... and then just like that, the audience, the orchestra and Zubin Mehta were all crying...

I have no words. >>

પવિત્ર ગાથામાં સમાયલા જ્ઞાન-

ભક્તિ તથા કર્મ માર્ગો²

<< ગાથા ઉશ્તવદ : યજ્ઞસ્ને હા ૪૩ >>

જો કોઈ ઇન્સાન આબાદ થવા માંગતું હોય, તેને બીજાઓને સુખ આપવું જોઈએ. જેમ કરવા રાષ્ટ્રી નો રાહ પકડવો જોઈએ જે માટે કુદરત તેને કૌવત બક્ષે છે.

આ દુનિયા માં જે માનસ પોતાની આબરૂ કીર્તિ જાળવી રાખે છે તે ખરો ભાગ્યશાળી છે.

જે માનસ બીજાઓને આત્માની ઉન્નતિનો ખરો માર્ગ દેખાડે છે, તે તેનો ભલો બદલો મેળવે છે. જે માનસ એકજ અહુરમઝદની ભક્તિ કરે છે તે ડહાપણવાળો હોય છે.

સર્વ શક્તિમાન અહુરમઝદ! તું ભલા તથા બુરાઓને તારી ઇન્સાફ ભરેલી રીત મુજબ સુખ તથા દુઃખ પહોચાડે છે.

દુનયાના લોકોને આબાદ કરવા માટે પવિત્ર વિચારવાલા સ્તાધારીઓ લોકો ને ખરા ડહાપનવાલા માર્ગે લઈ જશે.

ભલા વિચારો ધરાવનાર પોતાના અંતરઆવાઝની મારફતે જગતના માનવીઓને જ્ઞાનની રોશની આપે છે.

² Author: Major Sohrab Rustomji Bamji, FCRA, FRSA, MBE

અહુરમઝદ ની ભક્તી તથા કીર્તિના ગાયનોમાં મશગુલ રેહવું જોઈએ.

જ્યાં સુધી આપણામાં તાકાત હોય ત્યાં સુધી મીનોઈ જ્ઞાન માટે તલબ રાખી તે માટે મહેનત કરવી જરૂરી છે.

રાસ્તી અને અંતરના આવાઝ મારફતે ડહાપણ મળે છે અને તેની મદદથી જગતના માનવીઓને આત્મજ્ઞાન આપી શકાય છે, જે કામ મુશ્કેલ છતાં પાર પાડી શકાય છે.

ઇન્સાનને પોતાના અંતરના આવાઝ (સ્વઓષ) ને સાભળવાની શક્તિ મેળવવા માટે પવિત્ર વિચારોથી તૈયાર થવું જોઈએ.

જ્યારે એક ઇન્સાન પોતાના ભલા વિચારોની મદદ થી અંતરઆવાઝને સમજી શકે છે, ત્યારે તેને માલૂમ પડે છે કે ઇન્સાનને સુખી તવા માટે દરેક સ્થિતિમાં સંતોષ પકડવો જરૂરી છે.

ઇન્સાને હમેશાં જગતમાં રાસ્તીનો ભલો રાહ ફેલાય તે માટે દુઆ ગુઝારવી જોઈએ, કારણ જ્યારે સર્વે ભલો રાહ પકડશે ત્યારે સંપૂર્ણ નમ્રતા જગતમાં ફેલાશે.

DROP

If undelivered, return to:

Mr Minoo Khan, K-605 Nalanda, Sunder Nagar, SV Rd, Malad(w), Mumbai 400064
