Gatha Awareness & Appreciation Project

The Thought behind the Project

Most Zoroastrian Parsis are brought up with the simple heuristic (thumb-rule) of "Good thoughts, good words and good deeds" derived from our religion. Indeed this has stood us in good stead as we sail through the trials and tribulations of human existence on planet earth. The Zoroastrian theology presented in the Gathas (divine songs) which forms the basis of this ethical religion is even more beautiful and comprehensive. Gathas are the poetic expressions of Prophet Zarathushtra. These beautiful verses are directly addressed by our prophet to our divine creator Ahura Mazda and represent His word for truth. However, most Parsis are deterred from studying the Gathas because a) it was written in the Avesta, an alien language, long extinct and therefore subject to a variety of translations and interpretations and b) the abstract nature of the theology as depicted through the seven Ashem Spentaš (aspects of God) and their interrelationships.

When Zoroastrians children ask 'difficult' questions about the religion and fail to get satisfactory answers from the elders, they feel disillusioned and start looking elsewhere for answers. How do we remedy this situation? One way is to form self-help groups for the study of Gathas. The Gatha Study Circle of Ahmedabad is one among several such groups in different parts of the globe, engaged in serious study and reflection on the Gathas. Founded in 2004, under the aegis of Ushita Te Foundation, the study circle was initiated with inspiration from the eminent lawyer and jurist Mr. Robinson Nairn, who himself has been active in the study of Gathas for several years in the capital city of New Delhi. In Ahmedabad we formed a group of about 15 Zoroastrians who meet once a month to study and reflect on the Gathas and related literature, with a view to internalize its messages leading to inward growth and development. Dr. Mr Armin Dayer played a critical role in animating the study circle by drawing upon her large collection of literature and sharing it with the rest of the group. Many of the translations were read and reread verse by verse, not only to understand, but also to imbibe these teachings.

In 2014, the Gatha Study Circle, launched into a unique project to arouse curiosity amongst the Parsis especially the youth in the timeless message of Prophet Zarathushtra as articulated in the holy Gathas. The idea was inspired by the fact that the study circle had a profound impact on each one of us. The once very unapproachable Gathas seemed to be very inviting and inspiring. Enriched by the great experience, and noticing the change in our world-view and lives, we thought of ways and means to spread the word of the Gathas to every Zoroastrian home so that more and more Zoroastrians would shed their inhibitions for study of the Gathas.

The Gatha Awareness Project

After much brain-storming, the group thought of powerful visuals as an appropriate means to achieve its objectives. It was felt that a few selected stanzas of these sacred texts could be depicted in a pictorial form and a calendar could be designed both in English and Gujarati, so that the messages contained in these sacred verses reach out to a large number of Zoroastrians.

The group got in touch with Mr. Rustam Dubash, another Zoroastrian from Ahmedabad who now settled in Baroda, who has been closely involved in studying and propagating the Gathas. Mr. Rustam Dubash, (grandson of our great scholar, respected Ervad Khurshed Dubash) who himself has authored a book on the Zoroastrian religion is a self-taught painter in his spare time. He is known for his inspirational paintings. At the first suggestion, he picked up the challenge to make inspirational paintings illustrating the selected Has (stanzas) from the Gathas. After almost a year Rustam came up with a magnificent set of six paintings which are now available for wider circulation.

The Study Circle now plans to take these beautiful paintings to the homes of fellow Zoroastrians and others in two ways. The first consists of a set of six reprints which will be picked up in suitable boxes for gifting and will be on sale, starting from the Ushita Te Uzana on 25th December 2015. The second idea was conceived to make these even more accessible to the common Parsi home. The group got 'apro' Cyrus Mobedjí of Ashti Designs, Ahmedabad, to design a beautiful calendar for the coming year (2016), using the paintings made by Rustam, Cyrus, of Ashti Designs and a product of the Fine Arts College, M.S. University, Vadodara, is a perfectionist. The calendar designed by him with much passion and enthusiasm, is a piece of art in its own right. It is being brought out in two sizes - regular and large. The calendar has been cleverly designed such that both the English and Gujarati translations of the selected stanzas are provided in an unobtrusive manner, and reading them does not interfere with the visuals. It was decided to use French Taraporevala’s and Pilko Nanavaty's translations of the Gathas, which the study circle found relatively easier to understand.

Pre-booking of the products

Although the reprints and the calendar will be launched during the forthcoming Ushita Te Uzana on 25th December and will be available there at the Ushita Te Foundation’s stall, it will also be possible to pre-book your copies on the net through Ushita Te Foundation (forthcoming) and/or through our representatives (see contact details at the end).

We trust that our endeavors will like the product and give a hearty response to our efforts.

Contact Details for Pre-booking the reprints and calendars

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