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SOUL SUSTENANCE

Jashan-e-Amardad, festival celebrating plants, is commemorated on the 7th day of the 5th month (Amardad roj of Amardad mah) of the Fasli calendar and on July 25 of the Gregorian calendar. Through the association of Amardad (Avestan Ameretat) with plants and Khordad (Avestan Haurvatat) with water, the two are often identified with food and drink. In “Homage Unto Ahura Mazda” (1941; revised and extended Karachi, 1947), Dr. Maneckji Dhalla wrote the following:



“Man eats to live; He lives not to eat Man who eats not, has no strength to work for righteousness and fight against wickedness. Man must therefore eat. A healthy and a strong body is indispensable for the soul to live strenuous life upon the earth. Wholesome food is the first essential to prevent the body from languishing and to give it the necessary strength. Fasting forms no part of the faith of Zarathushtra, and the Zoroastrian calendar has no days of fast. It is a sin to fast from food, say the sacred books.

Modern man eats more than he needs. He stocks his tables with delicious courses and sweets and delicacies and luscious wines. He makes a god of his belly and feeds him with heavy and rich offerings to satiety.

Food and drink are for bodily nourishment. Inordinate use of food and drink ruins man's health of the body and impairs the powers of his mind. It is better to leave the dinner table with an appetite not appeased to its fullness, than to overfeed oneself and surfeit the stomach with an excess of food and drink. An intemperate and gluttonous diet breeds grievous infirmities and frightful sicknesses.

Zarathushtra's religion stands not for total abstinence but for rigid temperance. It allows the temperate use of stimulants as an aid to health and for festive occasions and ceremonial purposes. Drink, not evil in itself, becomes evil when man is addicted to heavy indulgence in drinking, drinks to intoxication and loses his reason and wits in his wine cup. Drunkenness, thus, is evil and the drunkard drinks himself to destruction. A gluttonous wine-bibber is as bad as a gluttonous eater. All excess is evil.”

Thus, a way of commemorating Jashan-e-Amardad in gratitude for the wonders of the plant world would be to have a get-together of loved ones and share a delicious vegetarian meal with a glass of wine. **

Summer's Last Hurrah – Kit Hevron Mahoney

My garden's like a floral spread
of pink and purple,
white and red.
It's summer now and I can't wait
to lead you through
my garden gate

From *Blooming Beauties*
By RYME4U



IMMORTAL FLOWER

Ameretat is the Avestan name of an Amesha Spenta (bounteous immortal) signifying a long life on earth and immortality by rejoining with Ahura Mazda. In Sassanian era, the Avestan word Ameretat changed to the Pahlavi word Amardad, which became more popular in usage.

CHAMBE

Jivanji Jamshedji Modi in his book “The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of Parsees” (1922) writes, “The *Bundahishn* (Chap. 27:24) gives a list of the different flowers which were said to be the special flowers of the different Yazatas. The association of the different flowers with the different angels depended upon the moral qualities or characteristics believed to have been associated with those angels” (page 396).

In the table, Modi notes that the flower chambe (champak in Sanskrit) is assigned to Amardad. The Champaka tree (*Michelia champaca*) is native to India and South East Asia, where it occurs in humid tropical evergreen forests from 250-1500 m in elevation.

The flowers range from yellow to orange, growing up to 5 cm in diameter. It is planted in many temples in India because of its strong fragrance. When a Champak tree is in flower the fragrance permeates some distance from the tree.



Although the idea of a “language of flowers” is indeed beautiful and having specific flowers associated with different yazatas is now part of our heritage, it is important to distinguish that this link is more socio-religious than fundamentally Zarathushti.

1. The *Bundahishn*, in which this list is written, was compiled at least two thousand years after

Zarathushtra preached his message. Most of the chapters of the *Bundahishn* date to the 8th and 9th centuries, and some of the later chapters are several centuries younger than the older ones. In fact, the oldest existing copy of the *Bundahishn* dates to the mid-16th century long after links between Iranian and Indian priests were formed.

2. The Champaka tree associated with Amardad, the guardian of plants, is not native to Iran, suggesting the list was compiled by persons who had travelled to other lands or were at least familiar with flora of other lands. It is unlikely that this kind of travel was ordinary at the time Zarathushtra and early Zarathushtis lived.
3. Daryoush Jahanian, in his article “Herbal Medicine in Avesta” (*FEZANA Journal* – Spring 2005 p72) mentions the Iris being associated with Amardad. If at all a flower is linked with Amardad, it is more likely to be iris as it is widely distributed throughout the North Temperate Zone and found in Iran. The Persian Iris is cultivated for its pale lilac-colored flowers. **



FRAGRANT FIRE

The use of plants – flowers, fruits, leaves, plant sap, wood – are familiar in Zarathushti prayers and rituals. Fire is an integral part of the ritual of worship. There are certain qualities for the wood selected for ritual fire such as that it must come from selected trees and bushes that produce the least amount of smoke. There are indications that woods from Juniper and Plane (Chenar) trees were traditionally used for the atash-gah fires in the Iranian-Central Asian region, as well as branches from camel thorns in the more arid regions. Certain plant products are used to make it fragrant.

Aspand

In Iran, Aspand seeds are dropped on red-hot charcoal, where they make a popping noise and give off a great deal of fragrant smoke. Aspand is the common Persian / Dari / Farsi name for *Peganum harmala*, a perennial shrubby herb. The name is also transliterated as Espand, Esfand, and Esphand. When burned, the seeds also kill insects. The plant has been used to treat pain and to treat skin inflammations, including skin cancers.



Sukhar

In India, sandalwood or chandana, called sukhar by the Parsi-Zarathushti community, is offered to the fire. Varieties are found in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Australia, Indonesia, Hawaiian and the Pacific Islands. The paste made from the wood has a cooling effect and it is used for skin ailments.



Loban

Loban, also called gum frankincense, is a resin of a tree, *Styrax benzoin*. It is extracted by making an incision on the stem of the tree, the secreting liquid is collected, dried and used for a variety of reasons including making fires fragrant. It has qualities of an insecticide, reducing malarial epidemics, and is also an antiseptic. This is one of the reasons Parsis used to carry an afarghan with coals and smoking loban into every corner of the house as part of the daily prayer ritual. Though the trees of Loban are found in India, the maximum Loban is imported from Thailand, Malaysia and the Islands of the East Indies. **



Source:

- K.E. Eduljee. *Fire and Light*. Heritage Institute website
- Other internet sites including Wikipedia

DOES PRAYING FOR OTHERS WORK?

On July 1, Zarathushtis celebrate Jashan-e Tiregan in honor of Tir yazad (Tishtrya in Avestan), the angel associated with healing by many Zarathushtis. In Zarathushti scriptures, healing takes many forms. One of the five classifications of physicians in the Ardibehesht Yasht is the *Manthra Baeshazo* – who heals through words (also known as Mantreh Pezeshk). Although this generally refers to priests who heal with holy words or to psychiatrists and therapists, the concept of “healing with words” can be expanded to include the concept of “antirecessionary prayers” or prayers on behalf of others. Although better known as part of Christian practice, it is not uncommon to hear of “humbandagi” prayers within the Parsi-Zarathushti community. These are usually congregational prayers for the wellbeing and safety of someone who is ill or has had an accident.

Carefully monitored studies of the efficacy of prayer are relatively few. The earliest mention is Victorian scientist Francis Galton’s study of praying over crops to see if they would grow faster that showed little difference. He also famously said that if prayer was effective, members of the British Royal Family would live longer than average, given that thousands prayed for their well-being every Sunday. However, Professor Leslie Francis of the University of Bangor studied 31 experiments with hundreds of patients recovering from heart surgery, randomly divided into two groups, one of which is prayed for. None of the patients knew they were or weren't being prayed for. He found that “...patients in hospital who are being prayed for (even when they do not know they are being prayed for) are more likely to recover.” In the USA, the most quoted study is by Dr. Bryd, a cardiologist with San Francisco General Medical Center who did a study involving 393 patients between August 1982 and May 1983. He reported that among other things, group members who were prayed for were five times less likely to develop pulmonary edema, pneumonia, or other post-surgical complications. They also died five times less often than the patients in the control group.

There are other studies that show no discernible difference in recovery so the issue is still scientifically debatable in the medical field. However as Dr. Mitchell Gibson writes, “Quantum physics has shown us that we change the basic nature of matter just by thinking about it. The human mind releases an energy radiation that is capable of interacting directly with matter. Prayer releases an energy that emanates from the human mind that has a direct effect on the environment.”



In this world of increasing emotional distances and of disillusionment with organized religion, it is welcome news that people are less self-centered than is often believed. *The Daily Telegraph* (March 26, 2013) reported that the Church of England conducted a survey which found that almost a third said they might pray for peace in the world, an end to poverty, and for family members. These may not be majority numbers, but by contrast only 15% of those surveyed spoke of praying for guidance or healing for themselves. In spite of thinking of

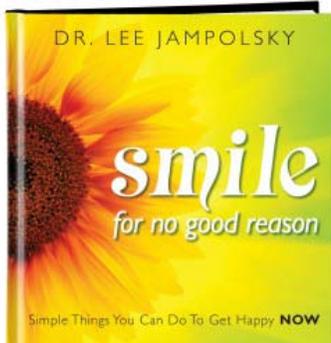
others’ wellbeing rather than our own, when praying for world peace or someone who is ill, the rewards to our own emotional wellbeing is manifold. It makes us more compassionate, it helps us realize how fortunate we are thus inspiring gratitude, and it helps us focus our energies on something positive instead of feeling helpless in the face of overwhelming circumstances.

Praying for others is essentially a combination of the three fundamental principles of Zarathushtra’s message, *humata*, *hukhta* and *hvrashta* – it amalgamates good thoughts, good words and good deeds. **

Source

- Daily Telegraph (March 26, 2013). *The power of prayer endures for six people out of seven*
- Giles Wilson *Does prayer work?* (27 February, 2002) BBC News Online
- Mitchell Earl Gibson (2006) *The Keys to Effective Prayer* www.tybro.com
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SMILE FOR NO REASON



Building on the work pioneered by his father, Dr. Gerald Jampolsky, the author, Dr. Lee Jampolsky shows how Attitudinal Healing will give readers the happiness they seek. This excerpt from the book, “Smile for No Good Reason” (2008) Hampton Road Publishing Company Inc) exemplifies the Zarathushti principle of freedom of choice or Fravarane.

Though at first it may be difficult to accept, freedom depends on recognizing that you're not upset because of what occurred, you are upset because of how you perceive the situation. Key to Attitudinal Healing is recognizing that you are not a victim of the world. How you perceive a

situation will determine your experience and your reaction.

Let's imagine that you have a favorite coffeehouse that you frequent. The staff knows your name and always has a warm and friendly greeting as you walk through the door. An extremely grumpy woman whom you have never seen before serves you this particular morning. She appears preoccupied rather than caring about you or what she is doing. As she pours your hot coffee, a good portion spills in your lap. Despite your jumping in shock, no apology follows. Your experience is anger: both toward the waitress and the owner, Joe, for hiring such an incompetent person. Then, a friend of yours at the next booth says, "Isn't it great that Joe hired her!"

"Great! Are you out of your mind? She just spilled hot coffee in my lap and walked away," you reply with your best indignant voice.

"Oh, you didn't hear the story?" your friend whispers.

"What story?" you angrily reply, still drying off your new slacks, wondering how you will go through the day looking as though you wet your pants.

"Yeah, Joe didn't know her from Adam. He read in the paper that her husband had died last month in a car accident. Apparently her husband's health insurance stopped, and she was looking for another job in order to pay for her sixteen-year-old son's chemotherapy for leukemia," your friend responds.

Now, you still have hot coffee in your crotch, but are you still angry?

Unlikely.

The only thing that shifted was your perception and attitude. Through discovering a reason to be compassionate, your entire experience changed (and there are always reasons to be compassionate).

An important part of healing (i.e., letting go of fear) is developing compassion. Instead of going out in the world and finding plenty of reasons to be upset, go out and discover reasons to extend love. There are thousands of reasons waiting for you right now. A helpful thought to remember is that a miracle is nothing more than allowing an old grievance to become a current compassion. If you ever run short on reasons to be compassionate, remember there is always one good reason: It makes you feel better than anything else you could do.

When you are upset remind yourself the cause of your discomfort is your own attitude. This is freedom. **

ANCIENT KNOWLEDGE

There are many similarities in the beliefs of the First Nations people and Zarathustra's teachings the basis of which lies in their respect for the Nature and its Creation. According to the Anishinaabe teaching, the Creator gave seven Grandfathers, who were very powerful spirits, the responsibility to watch over the people. The Grandfathers saw that people were living a hard life. They sent their helper to spend time amongst the people and find a person who could be taught them the seven principles of how to live in harmony with Creation.

Nibwaakaawin—Wisdom: Wisdom is given by the Creator to be used for the good of the people. In the Anishinaabeg language, this word expresses not only "wisdom," but also means "prudence," or "intelligence."

- This echoes Zarathustra's teachings not only in naming the Supreme Being, Ahura Mazda or Lord Wise, and in his advice to cultivate Vohu Manah or "best mind" in order to make informed choices. Zarathushtra said, "[those who] links his inner self with good thoughts, such a person belongs to divine wisdom and wise righteousness." (Ha 49.5, Sethna)

Zaagi'idiwin—Love: To know peace is to know Love. Love must be unconditional. When people are weak they need love the most.

- Spenta Armaiti (later known as Aspandarmad) embodies the qualities of love, service, kindness, serenity to be emulated.
 - In the Gathas, Zarathushtra talked about blessing even those who committed violence to win them over to the side of righteousness. "O Ahura Mazda, ruling at will, resolve these my remaining doubts quite openly so that against the violence of the followers of falsehood, I may pour forth blessings from my lips" (Ha 32.16, Sethna)



Minaadendamowin—Respect: To honor all creation is to have Respect. All of creation should be treated with respect. You must give respect if you wish to be respected.

- In the Gathas, Zarathushtra talks about treating people respectfully regardless of their actions, "...behave in utmost circumspection in justice towards the followers of falsehood and the followers of righteousness and also those in whom falsehood and truth are exactly balanced." (Ha 33.1, Sethna)

Aakode'ewin—Bravery: Bravery is to face the foe with integrity. In the Anishinaabe language, this word literally means "state of having a fearless heart." To do what is right even when the consequences are unpleasant.

- Moral courage, or the courage to do what is right under all circumstances, is an important pillar of the Zarathushti faith. The Amesha Spenta, Kshatra Vairya (later Sharevar)
- The path to achieving moral courage is through good thoughts and service to others. The Gathas state, "O Ahura Mazda, for my joy and far reaching vision reveal unto me those incomparable gifts of your moral courage, which are the blessings of the good thoughts." (Ha 33.13, Sethna). And The Ahuna Vairya prayer (also known as Ahunavar, Ahunwar, and Yatha Ahu Vairyo) states, "That man develops moral courage who helps his fellow beings."

Gwayakwaadiziwin—Honesty: Always be honest in word and action. Be honest first with yourself, and you will more easily be able to be honest with others. In the Anishinaabe language, this word can also mean "righteousness."

- The cardinal principle of Zarathushtra's message is Asha: "There is but One Path, that of Asha. All other paths are false." (Yasna 72.11, Geldner). The term is complex, with a highly nuanced range of meaning. It is commonly summarized as truth and right(eousness), order, 'right working' divine law, justice, spiritual illumination, enlightenment.

Dabaadendiziwin—Humility: Humility is to know yourself as a sacred part of Creation. In the Anishinaabe language, this word can also mean "compassion." You are equal to others, but you are not better.

- Zarathushtra does not directly stress humility, but he clearly teaches that humankind is less than perfect and must tend towards perfection (Haurvatat, later Khordad) to harmonize with the divine perfection (the spiritual component) embodied within. One can attain this only by recognizing and acknowledging the talents and ability of others and admitting the limitation in oneself.

Debwewin—Truth: Truth is to know all of these things. Speak the truth. Do not deceive yourself or others.

- Zarathushtra's Gathas abound with the idea that wisdom and godliness can only be achieved through truth. According to Zarathushtra "Who gives ear [to righteous words] and realizes righteousness becomes the soul-healing lord of wisdom." (Ha 31.19, Sethna), and the Zarathushti concept of hell is druj demana or the house of lies.(Ha 46.11, Sethna). **

Source:

- Dr Jehan Bagli. Email correspondence, 12 and 28 June 2013
- *Seven Grandfather Teachings*. Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin website. Retrieved from <http://www.iamakindman.ca/IAKM/seven-grandfather-teachings-aboriginal.html>
- K.F. Geldner, *Avesta. The Sacred Books of the Parsis*, Stuttgart (1896).
- T. R. Sethna (1978). *The Teachings of Zarathushtra, the Prophet of Iran, on how to Think and Succeed in Life*. Self-published.
- Image from www.aboriginal.scdsb.edu.on.ca



CORRECTION

In the article, "IS THE FAROHAR A ZARATHUSHTI SYMBOL?" (Volume 5, No. 1 * Spring 2013) the introduction incorrectly stated that the word farohar is derived from Middle Iranian word fravashi meaning soul (page 6). The word used for soul is urvan in Avesta which later changed to ravan. The explanation later on in the article was correct. "Farohar is actually a Pahlavi or Middle Persian word from the root Avestan fravarti or fravashi, which means "protect" thus breeding the idea that a "fravashi" protects us and is, therefore, a guardian angel" (page 7). e-Ushao regrets the oversight.