

## The Holy Vendidad:

by Mrs. Pervin J. Mistry

The Holy Vendidad is the most important part of the Divinely Revealed Manthra contained in the Pak Avesta! Yet, due to unfamiliarity with the Avestan scriptures or sheer religious ignorance, many Parsis believe that the Holy Vendidad is not a part of the original revelation of Ahura Mazda through Asho Zarathushtra. Some even believe, albeit falsely, that the Vendidad is a “lowering of Zarathushtrian ideals” and therefore it cannot be viewed as “transcendental”!

Further, some Parsis even believe it was written by the Parthians who were devout Zarathushtis! Some believe it was written by the Babylonians! Such remarks are unenlightened and must be refuted! The intent for this essay is to let the ones who have not had the time to read and learn about our religion and its scriptures become acquainted with the Sacred **Vendidad!**

While we are on the subject, it needs to be mentioned that **I.J.S. Taraporewala** writes in “The Religion of Zarathushtra”, “**Western scholars lack inspiration. So far, Parsi scholars have been content to be led by Western Gurus and to accept all they have taught us**”. (p. 82) He continues, “**But the fullness of this Eternal Message shall be known only when we ourselves reach the heights of Spiritual Illumination to which HE had attained**” (p. 85). Therefore, if Mr. Taraporewala confesses that Western Scholars lack inspiration and that the Pak Avesta will be known **only** when one reaches the height of Spiritual Illumination to which Asho Zarathushtra had attained, meaning when we all become Omniscient as Asho Zarathushtra, an immortal **Yazad**, is, and **only then** we will understand what is taught, did Mr. Taraporewala reach such heights to pronounce any judgment about the Holy Vendidad which is the 19<sup>th</sup> Nask out of the 21 Sacred Nasks that **irrefutably** carries the “**fullness of Asho Zarathushtra’s Message**”? I wonder! Also, after declaring about “scholars” not doing justice to the Divine Message of Asho Zarathushtra contained in the Gathas, should we believe that Mr. I.J.S. Taraporewala’s translation of the Gathas is correct or better than the rest? Unless, of course he had attained the spiritual height which Asho Zarathushtra, the Yazad, reached!

Let us educate ourselves as to what the **Din-Dasturs of Iran** who were highly learned in our religion, reveal about the Holy Vendidad and that too, in the face of inhumane religious persecution which was still carried on when the **Dinkard** was written between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries A.C.

Due to being subjugated by merciless religious tyranny, our ancestors in Iran, could have married the Muslims or converted to Islam to save their lives. They did not because they valued religion more than their life! They neither intermarried nor converted but in fact, they sacrificed their life just so the religion survives. Hence, please, before condemning the Sacred Vendidad that it cannot be viewed as transcendental; or that it should be totally abandoned because it deals with the sanctity of racial purity, it would be better to first identify that this Sacred Book, Vendidad, is one of the 21 Nasks revealed by Ahura Mazda Himself to Asho Zarathushtra! Irrefutably, it forms the main part of our Pak Avesta! Our ancestors did not marry Muslims to save their lives because they staunchly followed the mandated rules as revealed in the sacred scriptures, especially the Vendidad which **does** promote racial purity!

I have referred to the Sacred Books of the East (SBE) series for concision but the ones written by our Parsi scholars such as Rabadina, Kangaji and Dr. Faramroze S. Chiniwalla far excel in the translation as well as details.

**The Dinkard** (SBE, Vol. 37), written in Iran between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. by Dastur Aturfarbag Farrokhzad and Dastur Aturpat Hemit (descendants of Dasturan-e Dastur Adarbad Maraspand), **unequivocally asserts that the entire Avesta was contained in the 21 Nasks revealed by Ahura Mazda to Asho Zarathushtra.** After the last destruction of our sacred books at the hands of the Arabs in the 7th century A.D. whatever we know today of our Pak Avesta as well as our religion is from oral traditions and also from the Pahlavi Texts, especially the **Dinkard** which is of prime importance.

The two erudite authors of the Dinkard have **not excluded** the Vendidad, Visperad, Yashts, Yasna, Niyayesh, etc. from the Pak Avesta, retaining only the Gathas as the Sacred Words of Asho Zarathushtra! **In fact, the Dinkard reveals the names and contents of the 21 Nasks which were safeguarded by the Irani Din-Dasturs during and immediately after the collapse of the Sassanian Empire.** The Pahlavi writers have not given any dates which would remotely

imply separation of a “younger” Avesta from an “older” one. They have not ridiculed any rituals; in fact, they have praised the relevance and efficacy of gomez, nirang, hom, barshnum, Yasna (Ijeshne ritual), preservation of the sacred Fire, obsequies, dakhma, sudreh-kusti, non-proselytism, “tokhmak-paspaani” (preservation of the inherited genetic seed), as well as the purity rules divulged in the Vendidad. It is because of the wisdom, knowledge, sacrifice and piety of Dasturs like Tansar, Adarbad Marespand, Aturfarnbag Farrokhzad, Aturpat Hemit, Manushchihhr son of Yudan-Yim, Neriosang Dhaval and others that our religion, to this day, has survived after the destruction done by Arabs!

These Din Dasturs affirm (Dinkard, Book III, chapter CLXI, pg. 408, SBE, vol. 37) that **each of the 21 Nasks is based on the 21 manthric words embodied in the sacred Ahunavar Manthra (the Yatha Ahu Vairyo Prayer)**. The Yatha Ahu Vairyo Prayer contains 21 words divided into **3 lines of 7 words** each. Asho Zarathushtra subsequently divided the 21 Nasks into **3 different categories**: Datic, Gathic, and Hadha-Manthric, as per the **3 lines** of the Ahunavar Prayer. Each of these 3 divisions, Datic, Gathic and Hadha-Manthric, **had 7 volumes (Nasks)** ascribed to them **as per the 7 words in each of the 3 lines contained in the Ahunavar Manthra**.

**For example the Vendidad, belonging to the Datic group of 7 (out of the 21), is the only Nask to survive in its entirety.** (The 6 other “Datic” Nasks, Nikadum, Dvasrujad, Husparam, Sakadum, Barash, and Chitradad have survived only as fragments, some are totally lost.)

**The Gathic portion of the original 21 Nasks also contained 7 Nasks out of which the extant Gathas, Yasna and Visperad are a part of the remaining *Staot-Yasht* Nask, number 21, corresponding to the word, “**vastarem**”.** (The other 6 Gathic Nasks Sudgar, Varshtmansar, Bagha, Vashtag, Hadokht, and Spend have also survived only in parts and not in entirety.)

The ***Bagan* Nask**, number 14, corresponding to “Mazdai”, is one in the 7 **Hadha-Manthric** Nasks. It contains 16 extant Yashts. (Other Hadha-Manthric Nasks Damdad, Nadar, Pajeh, Ratudad-haite, Vishtasp-saste, and Kashasrub too have survived only fragmentarily or are lost.)

The Vendidad numbers 19 and corresponds with the word, “dregubyo” in the last line of the Ahunavar Manthra. The word “dregu” is commonly translated

as a “needy” person, indicating one who is materially “poor”. However, one can be materially very rich yet destitute in moral values and religious knowledge. This is the person who is “needy”, who is poor in wisdom and needs help to progress on the path of ashoi and ushta! It is the Vendidad which provides rules to gain “purity” to become rich in “ashoi” and thereby gain “asha” or the everlasting treasure of truth and “ushta”, the true health of body, mind and soul!

If any individual considers that the Holy Vendidad is not “transcendental”, then how will that individual accept the Yashts, such as Hormazd Yasht, Sarosh Yasht, Hom Yasht, Hadokht Yasht, Haptan Yasht, Avan Yasht, Ardibehesht Yasht, Khordad Yasht, etc. as “sacrosanct and transcendental”? **These are from the Bagan Nask (number 14) and the Holy Vendidad is also one of the 21 Nasks (number 19) which contains the Sacred Avesta! How will any individual who denies the Vendidad as being ‘sacrosanct’ accept the Gathas? These are from the Satud or Staot-Yasht Nask!** The Holy Avesta contains all 21 Nasks; can we throw away any of these Nasks and alter the Divinely Revealed Avesta? Certainly **not**; we do not “hear” the entire fullness of the Divine Message as Asho Zarathushtra heard and “saw” Ahura Mazda or holds direct communion with Him! We either accept all 21 Nasks or we desecrate the Pak Avesta by choosing what we think is transcendental and what is not! Religion is definitely not an act of democracy wherein people choose what should be followed and throw out the rest! Our mind is not yet fully developed and is guided by the erring dual mentalities! Hence, religion must be followed with faith and obedience!

**The Dasturs further declare in the Dinkard (Book VIII, chapter I, SBE, vol. 37), that the reason for the triple division, Datic, Gathic and Hadha-Manthric, is the exposition of all knowledge and duty, and the kinds of knowledge needed to attain to Spiritual Illumination.** They declare that **Datic** is superior knowledge about the worldly existence; **Gathic** is superior knowledge about the spiritual existence and **Hadha-Manthric** is superior knowledge about the intermediary existence. Just as the 3 worlds (spiritual *minoi*, meta-physical *hasti* and physical *nisti*) co-exist, just as our spiritual, meta-physical and physical existences are inter-connected through the 9 components of which 3 are spiritual and immortal (*fravashi, baodang, urvan*), 3 are meta-physical (*keherp, tevishi, ushtan*), and 3 are physical therefore mortal (*azda, gaetha, tanu*), it is necessary to divide knowledge into 3 divisions (wordly, spiritual and intermediary), each pertaining to its own reality! The Sacred Avesta containing

spiritual as well as other branches of knowledge pertaining to the physical and meta-physical worlds is essentially formulated in different categories: Datic, Gathic, Hadha-Manthric. Subsequently, the style differs in order to deal with the different subjects elucidated.

Within the Sacred Text of the Avesta, the Holy Gathas reveal the immutable spiritual laws (“dat”) of Nature (“Asha”); life and non-life (i.e. spirit and matter; the co-relation between the spiritual and physical worlds); the moral responsibility of choosing between right and wrong; subsequent reward as well as punishment in both the worlds; how the good Creation will regain spiritual purity by obeying the anti-pollution laws, which refer to spiritual, mental and physical pollution. **These different pollutions or “druj” are explained further only in the Datic group of Nasks, especially the Vendidad. The Vendidad is vital to regain spiritual purity by transforming all kinds of “druj” into “ashoi”.**

The Gathas mention “druj” as “Angre-Mainyu” and declare that in the end, when the Earth will attain to Frashogard, Angre-Mainyu will be ‘converted’, i.e. transmuted into Spenta-Mainyu. The Gathas teach that “druj” is corporeal and exists also as an unseen, incorporeal energy; therefore, defilement is seen as well as unseen. As a form of energy, “druj”, which stems from the mind or “mainyu”, cannot be defeated or “ended” but it can be altered, changed to something else! Hence, **till the spiritual and material universes coexist, till all the physical creation (matter) regains spiritual purity by transforming/cleansing “druj”, immortality (“Frashogard”) cannot be attained. Consequently, Asho Zarathushtra has given the “Law” (“Vi-daevo-dat/Vendidad”) to defeat “druj” through fire, wind, water, earth, nirang, hom, manthra, sudreh-kusti, dokhmanashini, yasna or kriyakaam and other purificatory formulae. Without the “Vi (anti) daev (druj) dat (law)”, Frashogard will not be accomplished.**

Just as body, mind and soul are inter-connected; the physical, proto-physical and spiritual worlds are also coexistent. Similarly, the Gathic, Datic and Hadha-Manthric portions are essentially integrated in every aspect of “manthra”. Therefore, the Holy **Gathas**, as Sacred Text, are essentially Gathic, Datic and Hadha-Manthric; the **Vendidad** is essentially Datic, Gathic as well as Hadha-Manthric; the **Yashts, Yasna and other prayers** are also Gathic, Datic as well as Hadha-Manthric, as per the revelation of Dinkard. (Many portions of Yashts/Niyayesh and other prayers are included in the Gathic stanzas.) **The two**

**Din-Dasturs also disclose the teaching that the Ahunavar itself contains in its 3 lines the Gathic, Hadha-Manthric as well as the Datic divisions.** The Yasna (Gathas included), Visperad, Vendidad, Yashts, Niyayeshes, and other prayers are essentially interwoven within the text of the Sacred Avesta and prose, poetry or style and dialect are hardly the reasons to divide the Sacred Avesta into sections.

It is wrong to maintain that the Vendidad is dubious, dispensable, written by Babylonians, later, etc. Being the Divine Utterance of Ahura Mazda, **all the 21 Nasks are revealed to Asho Zarathushtra by Ahura Mazda Himself.** Our Holy Avesta is not “older” and “younger”, neither segregated nor less divine; nor are the Gathas the only words uttered by Asho Zarathushtra. **All 21 Nasks which comprise the Pak Avesta have the same date and source in spite of the ‘language’ being different.** Even in schools all subjects are not taught in poetry; mathematics is taught in numbers and science and other subjects are taught in prose! Likewise, the Pak Avesta deals with all knowledge pertaining to the 3 inter-linked worlds and therefore, essentially the language differs.

The Vendidad is not to be read as “chapters” or individual Fargards. It is holistic and there is a thread of continuity running through all its 22 Fargards. **The 1<sup>st</sup> Fargard deals with the Earth that was “Garodemán”** or without sin and how it gradually became polluted, i.e. “Drujodemán”, that gave rise to ethical duality. **The 2<sup>nd</sup> Fargard deals with Yim and Asho Zarathushtra,** and reveals their mission in helping this Earth to regain its pure (ethereal) state. It is stated that the Earth enjoyed “eternal spring” and there were no diseases or death during the beginning of the reign of Yim but this utopia began to change with the entry of Angre-Mainyu.

Yim expanded the Earth “three-fold”, organized society as per the wish of Ahura Mazda but he did not accept “Paigambari” as Ahura Mazda wanted him to. He said he was not capable of establishing Ahura Mazda’s Din! Yim is then asked by Ahura Mazda to build a “Var”, an enclosure, to protect the best and purest “seeds” for future re-population of the Earth after the impending Deluge.

After the floods, when the evil “druj” threatened to destroy the creations of Ahura Mazda, **Asho Zarathushtra was sent to Earth to establish the anti-druj, “vi+daevo+dat” laws, i.e. the laws of the Vendidad in order that this world, “Drujodemán”, may be re-transformed to “Garodemán” once again!**

Asho Zarathushtra was sent to reveal the Mazdayasni Zarathuhsti Din. From the 3<sup>rd</sup> Fargard till the 18<sup>th</sup> Fargard, the Vendidad deals with all kinds of “druj” and how the Earth can be saved from this druj/pollution.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Fargard, druj runs away, overcome by the havani-lala and hom (i.e., performance of the Ijeshne ritual) and when Asho Zarathushtra recites the Ahunavar Manthra!

**Fargards 20 and 21 deal with the prescribed cures of all the seen and unseen pollution/diseases.**

Fareedoon Padshah is remembered who is the first to cure all diseases together with Hom, vegetation and with help from the planets and stars of our planetary system, especially Teshtar Tir, Khorshed-Meher and Mahbokhtar Yazads and the Sea of Vourukash. In Fargard 22, Airyaman, Saok and Neriosang Yazads, Mino Marespand and Manthra Spenta are worshiped; protection of the nine furrows “kash” is praised which keeps “druj” at bay, and the Earth regains its purity when druj is completely transformed, and “Drujodeman” once again becomes “Garodemman”!

The real key to understanding the Gathas is through the teachings of the Vendidad! **Since the spiritual and material universes coexist, the Gathas and Vendidad must essentially coexist and supplement each other in order to eradicate “druj”.** It is important to note that “Druj”, as Angre-Mainyu, is a “mino” or an unseen energy, an unperceivable force; and it originates from thought or mind (“mainyu”).

The word Vidaevdat (Vendidad) appears in **Yasna 22** but it is not mentioned in the Gathas. It is of little consequence because the existing Gathas themselves are incomplete and intermittent; and the 17 chapters of the Gathas do not exist separately of the Yasna (Ijeshne).

The Vendidad is just as much mystic and full of spiritual elucidation as are the Gathas or any other scriptures. Gathas do not mention the word “navjote”; yet, we believe in and perform the ritual of navjote. Even if the word “**Vendidad**” does not appear in the Gathas, the obvious concept of evil and good, seen and unseen pollution is stressed throughout the Avesta, especially in the Sacred Vendidad!

**Please remember that without the Vendidad or laws to combat the dual aspects of Nature, Frashogard cannot be achieved! Therefore, to attain to spiritual perfection by defeating “druj”, the ritual of Vendidad, the occult teachings of the Vendidad, is a must.**

The word **Vidaevdat**, referring to both the text and the ritual, appears in **Sarosh Hadokht Yasht, karda 4 and 5**. In these two *kardas*, Manthra Spenta, Vendidad and Long-Standing Traditions are mentioned together. **If Vendidad was not a part of the tradition of Asho Zarathushtra, or a part of the core belief of the Gathas, it would not be mentioned together with Manthra Spenta (“sound”, as energy, destroys “druj”) and other long-standing traditions!**

In the **Kemna Mazda** prayer, we seek Ahura Mazda’s protection from manifold “druj” created by Angre Mainyu. In **Hormazd Khodai**, we entreat Ahura Mazda to keep Ahriman and his evil host such as the wicked “ashmoghs”, “akoman” and other impious ones far away from us and to defend us against these evil ones. **Throughout the Avesta, the concept of ethical duality is mentioned by way of the two opposing spirits called Angre Mainyu and Spenta Mainyu.** Therefore, the Vendidad cannot be called anything but **essential** to understanding our religion holistically.

**It is important to note that Asho Zarathushtra’s divine mission was to establish the Vendidad (Vi+daevo+dat = anti-druj laws) to combat “druj”. The atoms that form the Earth and our own atoms are interconnected as in “dust to dust”. Our physical health depends upon the pollution level of the Earth and its environment.** In turn, just as the spiritual, semi-spiritual and physical worlds are interconnected, the body, mind and soul are also co-related and our health being holistic, the Vendidad deals with and establishes the rules of spiritual, mental and physical purity. **Spiritual perfection, purity and the event of Frashogard can be attained only when the physical Earth also attains to its original spiritual state (“Garodeman”) and mankind simultaneously acquires “tan-pasin” or existence free of diseases and death. This is the mission, the teaching and the goal of the sacred Vendidad!**

The Vendidad does not promote conversion or intermarriage and therefore, it is reviled by the reformists who promote these irreligious activities. It has been proven again and again by our learned Parsi Dasturs and many non-Parsi and Parsi scholars that both conversion and intermarriage are

religiously condemned and these two are the main cause of decline in our faith and obedience towards our religion, as well as a major threat to our survival! We have inherited this religion through countless generations of tokham pasbaani and it is in our every gene, in our every breath, in our very DNA! It is our spiritual being, our very existence, our spiritual sustenance! Every community has its share of the good and the bad. It is hoped that the reformists will choose to become true followers of our own God-given religion of birth and will stop denigrating its teachings which they find inconvenient to follow.

Please know that the Vendidad is sacred, an essential part of the Pak Avesta and deals with the seen and unseen pollution of body, mind and soul. The ritual of Vendidad is performed within a marked area (“kash”) and only at night when druj or Angre-Mainyu gains maximum strength in the absence of light! During the ritual of Vendidad, the 22 *Fargards* of the Vendidad are recited together with certain Yasna *ha* as well as the Visperad.

Without the Nirang-Din ceremony which includes the recitation of the Vendidad and Visperad integrated with the 72 *ha* of the Yasna, there will be no “nirang”, and other ceremonies such as navjote, ashirvad, navar, maratab, *geti-kharid*, etc. would not be performed due to the absence of the holy “nirang”. To discuss the “nirang”, “khaetwadath”, etc. will take some more pages and hope we will discuss it some other time! Who has the authority to discard the Vendidad because it considers conversion and intermarriage as religious sins? Sacred revealed Nasks are not intended to suit conveniences. These 21 Nasks are based, as explained, on the very sacred Manthra of the Ahunavar, as revealed by Ahura Mazda Himself to Asho Zarathushtra! Therefore, the Holy Vendidad is indeed mystical, sacred, and transcendental! Without the laws to defeat “druj”/Angre-Mainyu, Frashogard will be impossible and that is against the Will and Wish of Ahura Mazda! Therefore, the Vendidad is one the most essential, sacred and mystic Book!

Zad-Sparam, the priest of Sirkan, sometime between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. wanted to abandon some rules of purity as mandated in the sacred Vendidad. His brother, Manushchih, the High Priest of Pars and Kerman, wrote to Zad-Sparam “not to seek for new rules, but to adhere strictly to old customs and remain steadfast in the Religion.” (The Epistles of Maushchirh, S.B.E. Vol. 18)!

One cannot, for convenience or lack of spiritual understanding, alter, delete or reorganize scriptures which are Divinely Revealed without turning them into cultish scripts devoid of spiritual revelation! We lost a major part of our scriptures to the Greeks and Arabs; should we discard and discredit what remains, or should we preserve and protect this priceless spiritual legacy through faith and dedication? Our ancestors PRESERVED this legacy; they even gave up their homeland to seek refuge here, in India, where they could continue to preserve their scriptures and rituals. Are we, currently living in a world saturated with materiality and strife, spiritually any wiser to tamper with scriptures that are Divinely Revealed? The answer is known within our heart!

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